

Important information for care leavers

If you've previously been in care, you may be able to apply for student finance without having to provide details of your household income.

How do I know if I qualify as a care leaver?

You can apply for student finance as a care leaver if you meet all of the criteria listed below:

- You've been in the care of, or given accommodation by, your local authority
- You were in care for at least 13 weeks
- Your time in care ended after you turned 16
- You have not returned to the care of your parent(s) before the first day of the first academic year of your course

What do I need to send to prove that I'm a care leaver?

You can provide evidence of being a care leaver by sending us:

- a letter from your local authority; or
- a letter from your case worker or social worker.

This letter must confirm:

- that you were looked after by a local authority (this includes being placed in foster care by your local authority)
- the dates that you were in care
- that you have not returned to the care of your parent(s) prior to the first day of the
- first academic year of your course

You only have to send evidence of your care leaver status when you first apply for student finance for your course. For any years of your course after that, you'll be awarded the maximum package of Student Support you're entitled to.

[You can find your local Student Finance NI \(SFNI\) office](#) to send your evidence to.

What does this mean for my student finance application?

If you get student finance as a care leaver, you won't be asked to provide any of your parent's financial details. You'll be assessed as an independent student and will be awarded the maximum package of Student Support you're entitled to.

Remember to always apply for student finance as soon as possible to make sure you get your money in time for starting your course.

Universities and colleges also provide care leaver support. You can talk to advisers within Student Services/Wellbeing or the Student Union.

You can also visit the following care leaver advice services:

- The Become Trust - **www.becomecharity.org.uk**
- Brightside - **<https://brightside.org.uk>**
- National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) - **www.nnecl.org**
- The Care Leavers' Association - **www.careleavers.com**

And remember, your Care Leaver Team at your local authority can help support you with your student finance information and any additional support available.