



EALING, CARE LEAVERS NEWSLETTER

The **UNIVERSITY** edition

AUTUMN 2020

LEAVING CARE, VIRTUAL
SCHOOL & HORIZONS

Welcome to our university newsletter for Ealing Care Leavers. We hope your first term is going well and that you have settled in well at university. We appreciate that this is an unusual year and university life for you is a bit different due to Covid 19. We hope you are keeping well and you have everything you need to successfully complete your studies this term. Please contact us for advice and support with your education and anything else you'd like support with - we are happy to help!

News update

Success of our 2020 graduates

This year 16 students have graduated from university this year with 13 first degrees and 3 post graduate degrees with outstanding results; including three First Class Honours Degrees. Congratulations to our 2020 graduates and very well done!



SUPPORT

Have you been in touch with the Widening Participation officer for Care Leavers at your university?



ADVICE

Do you need any support or advice with your work or with anything else?



FUNDING

Have you applied for and received your bursary from your university?

University Tips and Key Information

Sundeep Gill, Post 16 Teacher Virtual School

Email: gills@ealing.gov.uk Tel: 07983596705

1. How do I reference for my university essays and assignments?

Your referencing format must ensure which parts of your assignment are from a reference source. This website gives good examples for referencing different sources including books, articles and online articles and generates the reference for you: <https://www.ukessays.com/>

3. How do I apply for Student Finance for my University Course?

You can access funding through Student Finance England as well as Ealing Children's Services

Student Finance England

Student Finance England provides tuition fee loans, maintenance loans to pay for course fees and living costs. You may also be eligible to the DSA (Disabled Student's Allowances) if you have a disability that affects your learning. E.g. Specific Learning Difficulty. E.g. Dyslexia, mental health condition, e.g. anxiety or depression, physical disability, e.g. if you have to use crutches, a wheelchair or a special keyboard, sensory disability, e.g. visually impaired or hearing impairment or long term health conditions.

To check eligibility and how to apply for Student Finance please refer to link <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

2. How do I find out about what support universities offers care leavers?

The following link provides up to date information for each University including the support, accommodation and funding offered as well as the link for the widening participation officer that supports care leavers at each university. <https://propel.org.uk/UK/>

Some universities offer specific funding for Care Leavers, pre application help, careers advice as well accommodation to live all year around. Go to above website and enter the university you're interested in applying to in the search engine and the support for Care Leavers will come up.

Book an appointment with Sundeep Gill, Post 16 Advisory Teacher and she can go through this with you.

4. How does Ealing Children's Services support with funding at University?

In your first academic year at university you will be provided with a sum of up to £5,500.00. from Ealing. This is a discretionary allowance. This allowance in the first year includes the £2000 HE Bursary. From the second year and third year Ealing agree to continue to fund up to £5500 per year, this does not include a HE bursary, as this is only an offer for the first year.

Ealing will still provide up to £5500 per year. For young people who require resits or are on courses that are longer than three years, a further financial agreement should be agreed via Care Leavers Funding Panel. All decisions on funding are made at the Care Leavers Panel.

Our intention is for you to use the Ealing Education Grant to secure and maintain accommodation for the full year.

5. Can I receive extra help with my assignments?

Yes, you can access extra support from Sundeep Gill, the Post 16 Teacher in the Virtual School and we can also email your university with your permission to enquire about extra support. Please do get in touch with Sundeep as soon as possible so she can help you with your work.

The support you will receive from the Leaving Care service

1. Keeping in contact - Your leaving care worker will be contacting you and other young people at University by the 6th November to agree how we will stay in touch with you over the coming months. We know that it is a stressful time with studying, living away from home and during a pandemic. We want you to feel held in mind, even though you may be living further away from us. We will be offering more frequent contact and letting you know how we can support you.

2. Feeling unwell? Need to self-isolate?

If you do start to feel unwell, let your leaving care worker/friends/family and University support worker know and contact the NHS 111 online service for advice about coronavirus, or contact your GP for further advice.

The symptoms which indicate possible coronavirus are:

- A new continuous cough
- A high temperature
- A loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste, or smell.
- If you have any of these symptoms you will need to self-isolate immediately, and have a test for the virus.

There is a possibility that you may have to self-isolate, we will help you with this and hopefully not feel too stressed by it, if it does happen. Some preparation can really make a difference in how you experience self-isolation. Below we have tips that may help makes things easier.

Preparing for self-isolation

Your university should have a policy about self-isolation. This can be useful if you need to self-isolate. Please keep up to date with government guidance as it can change daily and varies from area to area, so please check the information for your area.

Make sure that you're registered at a university GP or a local GP. If you have moved away from home to go to university, you do need to register with a GP near your university. This will be make it easier for you to speak to a GP for advice.

Ask for contact details for university staff, so that you can inform them you are self-isolating. This can include your tutor, accommodation team and wellbeing/welfare teams.

Try and create a network of friends for support and to keep safe. If you do need to self-isolate, tell your family, friends and/or carers.

Make sure you have all that you need, this includes a supply of food, medication that you may need, fresh bedding, clothes, and toiletries.

They can check in with you and make sure you have everything you need. Maybe connecting with friends, support groups online can help if you can't physically see anyone.

3. Care Packages

During these difficult times looking after each other has never been more important and having access to nutritious and healthy food is essential for your physical and emotional wellbeing. If you are feeling unwell or vulnerable and experiencing difficulties in accessing food, toiletries or other essential items the Leaving Care Team will support you and arrange delivery of a care package to your university halls or residence. To get a care package contact your allocated worker or the Horizons Leaving care helpline 020 8537 4940- and a member of staff will be there for you.

4. Emotional Support

We recognise at this time you may need additional emotional support and we want you to know that we are here for you. Spyros, our new leaving care psychologist has provided helpful information of support that you can access on pages 5 & 6. We want you to feel you can contact your Leaving care worker/ Horizons/Sundeeep if things feel too much, so that we can think about how best to support you.

5. Housing

If your university halls have to close due to the COVID 19 pandemic and the accommodation is your primary residence, contact your student support department to find out your options for remaining on campus. Universities often make concessions for students with extenuating circumstances and may keep a certain portion of housing open during the pandemic.

If you are asked to leave your university accommodation for safety purposes, or would like to return home, please contact your allocated worker in the Leaving Care Team or contact the Horizons Leaving Care helpline . We will support and help you to find a new home, transport your furniture and belongings and assist you with the costs of your new accommodation.



Staying well at Uni



Going to University can be an exciting and rewarding experience. It is also one of the most significant transitions in people's lives and, as such, it can impose new challenges. New beginnings can be tricky at times. It is natural to feel nervous going to University and it might take some time for you to feel settled in your new life.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created more challenges which might impact on your student experience. It is natural for people to feel stressed and anxious amidst all the uncertainty and the rising of infections. However, prolonged periods of stress can negatively impact on your wellbeing.

We know that students are more likely to feel anxious, low, and experience thoughts to hurt themselves during the pandemic. It is also likely that some people will feel more isolated and withdrawn. We also know that people from Black and Minority Ethnic, LGBTQ+, and low socio-economic backgrounds (amongst others) have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19, because of the discrimination and racism in the society that we live in.

The above can negatively affect the way we see ourselves and live our lives, as well as our wellbeing.

What is wellbeing and why is it important?

Being well is all about being healthy and feeling safe in yourself and in the environment around you. The World Health Organisation defines 'health' as a complete state of social, physical, and mental wellness.

Staying well is important because it helps to make the most of life and to focus on things that we value and enjoy doing.

Nevertheless, sometimes keeping well feels harder than others. When life takes a toll on people, it is natural that some might experience significant mental health distress. This is when the way you feel, think, and interact with the world around you might feel quite overwhelming.

At those times you might find it helpful to reach out and talk about what is going on, so that you can get the support that you need.

Below you can find some information about some of the most common mental health difficulties as well as some **TIPS** to help you and your peers to stay well.

As a person who is leaving care, you might already have experienced lots of transitions and uncertainty in your life. It is natural that, as a result, you might have grown more wary of change and feel more apprehensive about student life. Some people might catch themselves worrying about how they are going to manage the academic expectations, or how they are going to make new friends, or what others might think of them, or how they are going to make ends meet.

As a person who is leaving care, you have also shown incredible strength and bravery to what life has thrown. When facing the new challenges that student life in covid times might bring, it might be helpful to ask yourself about how you have coped previously in difficult situations and try and apply those skills:

- ◆ What did you do that helped?
- ◆ What did you think that helped you to keep going?
- ◆ Who did you turn to for support?

Anxiety

Click [here](#) for more information about anxiety and how to cope.

- ◇ You might find yourself feeling very agitated. You might experience panic, butterflies in your stomach, or you might find that shake or that your heart rate is going up.
- ◇ You might experience thoughts that you can't cope with situations, or that things have got too much.
- ◇ You might end up avoiding things (e.g. not attending lectures, avoiding socialising etc.). In the short term this might feel enough to get you by, but in the long term you might end up reinforcing the thought that "I can't do this".

Substances

Click [here](#) for more info about substances & how to cope.

- ◇ Some people use alcohol and drugs in order to cope with distressing thoughts and feelings. They often find that alcohol and drugs numb the pain and help them to forget about problems that they might be facing.
- ◇ However, this does not help to manage the problem and puts their health at risk.

Click [here](#) for more information about low mood and how to cope.

Low mood

- ◇ Some people might feel low in mood or depressed. This is different from being sad about something.
- ◇ When people are low in mood, they might feel low in energy, they might think that it's their fault that things are not going well or they might think that no-one likes them. The future might also seem bleak.
- ◇ Moreover, they might feel quite hopeless and helpless. Low mood might make it harder for people to engage with the things that they used to enjoy and they might start to withdraw. Although this might make life feel more manageable in the short term, it will lead to feelings of isolation and will reinforce low mood as people have no joyful things to look forward to.

Self-harm & Suicidal thoughts

- ◇ When things get quite overwhelming, a lot of people experience thoughts of hurting themselves.
- ◇ Some people use self-harm as a way of numbing the pain.

Click [here](#) for more info about self-harm & suicidal thoughts, alongside how to cope.

If you are in an immediate danger please go to A&E.

If you want to speak to someone please contact the [SAMARITANS](#) or [PAPYRUS UK](#)

How I can support my wellbeing:

Be active

Eat a healthy diet

Sleep well

(RE)CONNECT

- * Stay in touch with important people in your life.
- * Stay connected with your community.
- * Reach out (speak to your key worker and/or GP for support).

DO WHAT MATTERS MOST

- * Think about what is important for you in your life. What gives you meaning? What keeps you going? Do what matters most to distract yourself and to live by your values.

TAKE NOTICE: Use STOP skill!

- * Step back.
- * Take a deep breath to allow yourself to calm down and to centre yourself.
- * Observe what is going on—what am I thinking? What am I feeling right now? What urges do I experience right now?
- * Paced breathing—breath in through your nose for 5 secs and out through your mouth for 5 secs. Repeat as many times as you need.

Resources:

'Calm' <https://www.calm.com/> (relaxation, mindfulness, sleep application)

NHS recommended mental health apps—<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/searchapps/?query=cbt>

'Headspace' <https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app> (mindfulness, meditation application)

Student minds <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/> (mental health charity for students—lots of helpful resources and tips!)

Mind <https://www.mind.org.uk/> (mental health charity—lots of useful resources and guides)

https://www.studentminds.org.uk/uploads/3/7/8/4/3784584/180813_transitions_interactive.pdf (how to manage transitions)

Covid-19 Advice for University Students

GOVERNMENT ADVICE

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS LIVING IN COVID HIGH ALERT AREAS

Please check your university website regularly for updates regarding online lessons, key dates and Covid 19

UNIVERSITY WEBSITE FOR UPDATES

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-levels-what-youneed-to-know>

ONLINE LEARNING

Do you have access to your online university portal to complete your work? We hope you have established a good network of friends and an online community for support at university.

ARE YOU FACING LOCKDOWN AND NEED SUPPORT FOR FOOD OR ESSENTIALS?

Please contact your

- Allocated Worker
 - Leaving Care Manager
 - Post 16 Teacher Ealing Virtual School
- University Widening Participation Team

DO YOU NEED ACCOMMODATION TO BE SET UP OVER CHRISTMAS VACATION DUE TO COVID 19?

Please contact your

- Allocated worker
- Leaving Care Manager
- Leaving Care Duty 020 8825 8481

ARE YOU AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS DUE TO A BREAKDOWN OF ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENTS DUE TO COVID 19?

Please contact your

- Allocated worker
- Leaving Care Manager
- Leaving Care Duty 020 8825 8481

DO YOU REQUIRE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT?

Please contact your

- Allocated worker
- Leaving Care Manager
- Leaving Care Duty 020 8825 8481
- We can send you online support materials
- Contact your student support officer/ widening participation team.

Our next edition of the university newsletter will be in Spring. If you'd like any specific areas covered or would like to contribute please email gills@ealing.gov.uk. Have a great term!

