

# LIFE, CHANGES.

IMPACT REPORT 2020  
[unitefoundation.co.uk](https://unitefoundation.co.uk)

**Unite**  
Foundation



Asher

TO

KYLE

Dear Kyle,

Hi! My name is Asner and I'm a recent graduate of the University of Bristol. I heard that you are thinking about going to university but are unsure of the support available, so I thought sharing some of my experiences might help!

Looking back now, I think I was most worried about money and fitting in. But really, there was nothing to worry about as there is so much support out there! All universities offer bursaries and scholarships, and there are often extra ones to support care leavers and estranged students so I would recommend looking carefully at your chosen university's website! The Unite Foundation scholarship is one of the best, as it provided me a place to call home and knowing I had free year-round accommodation really lifted a weight off! In terms of fitting in, going to university provided me the opportunity to meet a whole host of people from all different backgrounds and I've definitely made friends for life! There are so many people brought together that you are bound to find someone with similar interests and experiences. For me, getting involved in volunteering and societies definitely helped!

Now I've graduated, I would for sure go back and do it again so my best piece of advice is to go for it and don't let circumstances hold you back!

Best of luck! Asner



# LIFE, CHANGES:



Going to and graduating from university are major life changes for anyone, and all the more challenging without a supportive family network to help you.

This is where the Unite Foundation comes in. We work with 27 partner universities across England and Scotland to offer wrap around support as part of an accommodation scholarship for care leavers and estranged students, providing a stable home for success.



We play our role, in partnership with the HE sector, by reaching out to young people as they apply to university, and staying by their side throughout their university years and beyond. We know that without targeted support, almost 20% of care leavers drop out of university before they finish their studies and we want to help change that because evidence shows that completing university enables people to overcome earlier academic disadvantage.

Young people who have been in care or become estranged from their families have often faced many years of instability, trauma and stigmatisation through no fault of their own. As a society we owe these talented young people the same opportunities as any other student.

Read the letters from Unite Foundation scholarship students, hear their voices, and then use yours to make a positive difference to a young person's experience of university.

Each letter is written by one of our scholars, in their own words.



Tyler  
TO  
CHLOE

Study trips, societies, friends; the extra-curricular is where the renowned university experience actually happens.

Our scholarship offers more than a stable home for academic success. The freedom from financial strain means our scholars can actively take part in everything that university has to offer. That means new opportunities, networks, confidence and CV clout.

Hi Chloe,  
Congrats on getting into uni, It's a great place to meet new people and experience new things, especially at the clubs and societies. Joining one or two of them is a great place to meet people with similar interests to you which will help you settle in so much faster. I love to read and having people around me with that interest made me feel at home alot quicker than if i didn't meet them, so i highly recommend it. Whilst you're at uni, make the most of it, try not to overthink things and worry about everything. The scholarship really helps with that, not having to worry about bills, tracking every expenditure or wondering if you can afford equipment for your course really puts your mind at ease and helps you focus all of your attention on doing the best you can. Also, not having all that stress on you lets you enjoy the time at university and pursue your interests in your spare time. Thanks to unite students and the unite foundation scholarship i'm really enjoying my time at uni, without them i wouldn't be here. I know you'll enjoy it too. Good luck and all the best,  
Tyler



# OUR WORK IN NUMBERS.

*unite*



Continuation rate from 1st year of study\*



Scholarships awarded in total



University partners in 18 cities



Current students supported



Graduates so far



\* 7.8% attrition rate at the end of the first year, as compared with 6.3% average of all students (source: Unite Foundation, HESA report 2017/18)



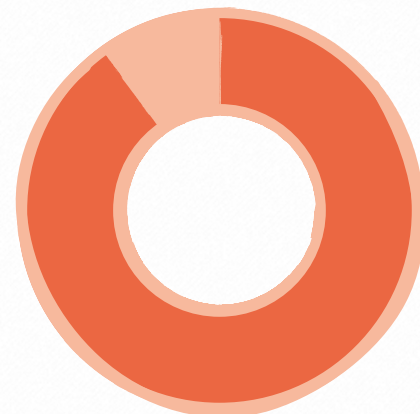
## MONEY WELL SPENT

- RESEARCH AND RUNNING COSTS
- INVESTMENT INCOME



Our research and running costs of  
**£223,785**  
 are completely covered by income of  
**£251,155**  
 from our endowment fund

- ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP COSTS
- UNITE STUDENTS' DONATION



Our annual scholarship costs of  
**£1,559,928**  
 are wholly funded by Unite Students' donation of  
**£1,740,600**

## FUNDRAISING

This year we've fundraised **£32,587** thanks to marathon runners, sponsored bike rides, Unite Students staff fundraising, Twitter supporters, The Cotton Trust and other individual donors.



This money means we can go even further to give that personal touch that we know really makes a difference.

Our Student Fund is aimed at supporting the transition into university, and the next leap onwards to the world of work. All new scholars in 2019 received a **#WelcomeHome** pack with bedding and kitchen essentials, we've hosted welcome events and social activities to help scholars settle in to their new surroundings and sent handwritten birthday cards to everyone. For those approaching graduation, the fund has also helped to support travel costs to job interviews and internship opportunities, helping them to build a better future and make the most of their skills.

Our **#WelcomeHome** appeal inspired a family to make a gift in memoriam for a loved granny and mother who had been a social worker and passionate supporter of families and education, ensuring our 2020 intake are welcomed in to their student home.

You can help us to support our young people in many ways.

Thank you to Glide PLC for providing 'career coaching summer internships', giving the gift of a living wage, experience and skills to propel young people toward their career goals.



Ahmad  
TO  
MEL

Graduation should be a celebration and launch pad for the future but for care leavers and estranged students it can be a daunting prospect.

The Foundation's impact extends through the summer following graduation; providing an additional three months' accommodation.

This creates breathing and saving space, and gives our graduates the chance to pursue the opportunities available to them.

Dear Mel

I hope my letter finds you well, and I would like to share my experience at university with you. Since my childhood, I always wanted to become a civil engineer, as I had the eagerness and curiosity to learn about construction and apply it into real-life projects. I am really grateful that I am now doing the degree I enjoy doing the most. Last summer, I did a 4-months summer placement with Glide as an internal sales advisor and developed my teamwork and communication skills. I bought a laptop from the money I earned, which is helping me to use engineering software to do my coursework. I am also working part time at the university shop to gain experience in retail & customer service. I am now looking for a 2020 civil engineering summer internship opportunity to strengthen my CV, brush up my technical skills and ~~and~~ gain enough knowledge in the practice field of civil engineering to get ready for 2021 graduate job applications. I am planning to get the career I am studying for, so I can work, gain experience and become a successful civil engineer. Plus pay my rent after I graduate. At the end of my letter, I would encourage you to work hard with a positive mind set, do your daily tasks and stay on top of everything until you achieve your goals. And remember: "The only thing that stays with you until tomorrow is how much work you've done today!"

Best of luck with the degree you're doing, and the career you've chosen.

Kind Regards,

Ahmad Helmi



## RESEARCH

We commissioned Sheffield Hallam University with consortium partners StandAlone and the Rees Centre, University of Oxford to identify the causes of differential outcomes for care leavers and estranged students.

### What have we learned?

#### University is transformative

Care leavers who complete their university courses really can transcend their backgrounds and do as well as other students – but too many care leavers and estranged students leave university early.

#### Bureaucracy is a barrier

Students have to reveal their personal situation again and again to access the support and help they're entitled to, and this impacts on mental health and wellbeing.

#### Support needs unity of purpose

Too many young people are passed from pillar to post to get the help they need; they need a single point of contact to act as an holistic guide.

#### There's still too much we just don't know

Government and the sector do not collect some fundamental information, such as the number of young people who are estranged from their families or the impact of bursaries on young people, so statistical evidence for what really works is impossible to find.



## WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The Unite Foundation will continue to champion care leavers and estranged young people, to help them have the same life chances as every other young person.

We're proud that our scholars have near-normal first-year completion rates\*, and we are looking at how we can have an even greater impact on our cohort's access and success at university.

We'll campaign to reduce the burden, and the trauma, of the bureaucratic hurdles that care leavers and estranged students face on a daily basis.

We will continue to use our own data and commission research that will help the whole sector work towards equality of outcome for these determined young people.

\* 7.8% attrition rate at the end of the first year, as compared with 6.3% average of all students (source: Unite Foundation, HESA report 2017/18)





# James TO YOUTH SERVICES.



Dear Sam,

Only 6% of care-experienced young people end up attending university.

Dealing with uncertainty and overcoming countless obstacles, all whilst trying to apply to uni can feel like an insurmountable task. But, a lot of support is out there and it is OK to ask for help!

Even after receiving my offer, I was still worried about moving from foster care in Belfast, to uni in London. However, being awarded the UNITE Foundation Scholarship provided me with the support I needed throughout my degree.

Last year I achieved a 1<sup>st</sup> in Molecular Genetics at KCL and have now started my PhD, also here, with the MRC DTP KCL.

Care-experienced young people can't change their past, but support offered by UNITE and others can help create a bright future.

Don't be afraid of stats, change them.

Best wishes, *James Glover*



Ashleigh

TO

HESECTOR.

I've graduated from university and now I'm working as a nurse. I love my job and I'm really happy I decided to go to university, I didn't think it was ~~as~~ something I'd be able to do, but the support was there. Accessing it can be really hard though when people don't understand your situation, you have to keep talking about really personal things again ~~and~~ and again to get what you need and that's really difficult.

I'm so happy that the Unite Foundation has asked for a cover letter from Student Loans Company that someone can take with them to university. This way they only have to explain their situation once and then hopefully can just use that same letter to get access to the support they need throughout their degree.

I would really like to see all universities acknowledge this and make it a part of their standard process. It's like they assume that everyone ~~the~~ comes from the same situation and that makes it much harder for people who have a different background. We should all be able to have a smooth journey through university and get the support we need without having to explain ourselves over and over again. -Ash





# #TellUsOnce



Being a care leaver or an estranged student is enough to warrant our support. We can't yet support everyone but we're not interested in a 'competition of need' where young people feel there's no choice but to reveal and share really intimate circumstances in order to secure much needed help.

Young people tell us that they often have to share the nature of their situation with multiple contacts throughout their university journey and on graduation. The practicalities associated with the lack of family to fall back on often requires our graduates to continue to explain themselves.

We know our partners and other universities across the HE sector are working really hard to reduce stigma, to educate internally and to develop whole institution approaches for students without family support. If together we could enable a young person to have dignity and to carry their own 'passport' on this journey, we will be making one giant leap forward.

We designed our application process to generate demand to the Student Loan Company to create a simple cover letter confirming estranged or care leaver status so we could afford our applicants the dignity they deserve. We want this to be recognised and utilised across the HE sector to ensure a smooth journey through university for all young people.



## WRITE YOUR OWN LETTER

So now it's your turn. We'd like you to write a letter for us to pass on to someone. You might like to:



①

Write to us with your letter of support for our **#TellUsOnce** campaign. Tell us who you are and where you're from and why you or your institution believes a young person should be able to access relevant support on their university journey without repeatedly explaining their family situation. We will add your voice to our call for care leaver and estranged students to journey through university with dignity.

②

Write to a young person at school or college considering going to university but not feeling sure. What advice and encouragement can you give?

Simply detach this envelope, write your message on the letter inside, and post it to us (no stamp is necessary). We'll pass it on to a relevant young person or policy maker.







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