

CARES Scheme Policy 2025-2028

APPROVED BY HE Academic Board ON 21/07/2025

Applies to:	
Harrogate College	
Keighley College	
Leeds City College	
Leeds Conservatoire	
Leeds Sixth Form College / Pudsey Sixth Form College	
Luminate Group Services	
University Centre Leeds	x

CHANGE CONTROL

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	21/07/2025	
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Student Success and Inclusion Committee		1
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy applies to higher education students enrolled on full-time undergraduate and degrees at University Centre Leeds, including provision at the further education colleges within Luminate Education Group. It outlines the CARES Scheme and the support it provides to eligible students.

2. POLICY AIMS/OBJECTIVES

The aim of the policy is to:

- Ensure that procedures are explicit, fair, and applied consistently;
- Ensure that information and guidance provided to students is accurate and clear;
- Ensure that decision-making processes and outcomes are transparent, rigorous, and equitable;
- Ensure that outcomes are monitored and reviewed annually in relation to overall student numbers

3. CARES SCHEME

The CARES Scheme aims to provide consistent pastoral and financial support to care experienced, estranged, student carers, and sanctuary seeking students*.

Its overarching goal is to reduce the financial and academic barriers these groups may face, encourage applications from underrepresented students, and support their successful progression through higher education at University Centre Leeds.

The objectives of the CARES Scheme are to:

- 3.1. Provide each eligible, identified student with a bursary
- 3.2. Provide a named contact within the Access and Participation team and coordinate with other services across Luminate HE to provide tailored support to each student. Further support offered is detailed in Section 6.
- 3.3. Monitor the outcomes of each new cohort of students through the Access and Participation Plan, and benchmark against the general undergraduate population, and annually review the service provision.
- 3.4. Provide a fair and transparent process for supporting care experienced students, estranged students, student carers and sanctuary seeking students.
- 3.5. Satisfy the requirements of the Access and Participation Plan(s)

3.1 Our Commitment

We are committed to ensuring that students receive the right support at each stage of their higher education journey. Our staff receive training to better understand the complex needs of care experienced and other underrepresented students, and we actively participate in national networks working to improve outcomes for these learners, including:

- Membership in the Go Higher West Yorkshire’s Care Experienced and Estranged Students Network and the nationwide NorthCLASS Network.
- Signatory to the [Go Higher West Yorkshire Care Leaver Covenant and Estranged Student Pledge 2024-25](#)
- Recipient of the [National Network for the Education of Care Leavers \(NNECL\) Quality Mark](#)
- Commitment to the [Stand Alone Legacy Pledge](#) to support estranged students.
- Recognition as a [Place of Sanctuary](#) status (2023), acknowledging our support for sanctuary seeking students.

4. ELIGIBILITY

Eligible group	Definition	Accepted evidence
Care experienced student	An individual aged under 25 who has spent time living with foster carers under local authority care, in residential care (e.g. a children’s home), looked after at home under a supervision order, or in kinship care with relatives or friends, either officially (e.g. a special guardianship order) or informally without local authority support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from personal advisor or SFE confirmation to confirm they have care experience
Estranged student	An individual aged under 25 at the start of their course with no contact, support, or approval from a family network, often due to a history of abuse, neglect, or family breakdown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from SFE • Letter from a professional (doctor, teacher, support worker) to confirm they are not in contact with their parents
Student carer	<p>An individual who offers unpaid, regular, and ongoing support to a friend or family member with illness, disability, mental health difficulties, or addiction. Eligibility is based on living at the same address at the time of UCAS application.</p> <p>Students remain eligible even if they relocate for study. The person cared for must receive one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance Allowance • Council Tax Reduction / Housing Benefit with disability premium • Disability Living Allowance • Employment and Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter from a professional (doctor, teacher, support worker) confirming the responsibility of caring for a close friend, relative or neighbour and any perceived impact on the student. • A local authority carers’ assessment. • A DLA letter that names the student and must clearly state either higher or middle rate care component. • A letter from a counsellor / support worker or an organisation such as the Carers Trust, a local Carers Centre.

	<p>Allowance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Independence Payment • Tax Credits (with disability element) 	
Sanctuary seeking student	<p>An individual forced to leave their country due to war, persecution, or disaster, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees with Home Office recognition; • Asylum seekers awaiting refugee status; • Individuals under humanitarian protection, Calais Leave, or the Ukrainian Settlement Scheme. <p>*Please note: Asylum seekers are not eligible for financial support through the CARES Scheme as they are not entitled to Student Finance England loans and are typically charged international fees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share Code or Home Office documentation. • If status changes during the student's studies, eligibility for the bursary may change.

6. SUPPORT AVAILABLE

In addition to general student support services, the following is available to eligible students under the CARES Scheme

6.1. Pre-entry support

To help potential students make informed decisions about their higher education and degree choices, we offer:

- Personalised tours
- Named contact
- Impartial IAG on the courses available in higher education
- Foster family/Care experienced taster days
- 1:1 application support
- Contextual admissions
- Enhanced transition support
- Access to the Widening Participation Mentoring Scheme

6.1.1 Accommodation

Eligible students will receive priority consideration for year-round (365-day) accommodation with our partner providers. While a guarantor is usually required, this may be waived upon evidence of CARES eligibility. Applicants will be contacted by the named contact to clarify the accommodation

support offer and will be given the opportunity to select a suitable tenancy. The accommodation team contact information is accommodation@ucleeds.ac.uk

6.2 Financial Support

Depending on eligibility, we offer several forms of financial support in the form of bursaries and grants.

We offer:

- CARES Bursary (up to £1000)
- Support for interview travel and/or materials (up to 50% of costs)
- Graduation gown hire and photography support (up to 50%)
- We also offer guidance on applying for student finance as an independent student.

6.3. CARES Bursary

The bursary is designed to reduce financial barriers and enable eligible students to engage fully with their studies and student life.

6.3.1. Eligibility is assessed during enrolment and confirmed through evidence.

6.3.2. Students will be contacted in September to submit a bursary application.

6.3.3. Bursary amounts and payment schedules are reviewed annually. Awards are made in two instalments.

6.3.4. The bursary is paid directly to the student's bank account.

6.3.5. The bursary is non-repayable.

6.3.6. Eligibility for support is as follows:

- Aged 25 or under at the time of enrolment to the start of your course
- Assessed as a 'home' student by University Centre Leeds
- Enrolled on an undergraduate, postgraduate or PGCE course
- Eligible for the full maintenance loan from Student Finance England
- Able to provide evidence of eligibility, as defined in this policy

6.3.7. Further criteria for all CARES scheme eligible students include:

- Provide a copy of your Student Finance England breakdown
- Provide bank details for bursary payment
- Remain enrolled at each payment point

6.4. ON COURSE SUPPORT

We understand that students from underrepresented backgrounds may face unique challenges throughout their studies. In addition to support available to all students, the CARES Scheme offers tailored, wrap around support to help students feel safe, valued, and able to thrive both academically and personally.

Our on-course support includes:

Named Contact

All CARES students are assigned a named contact within the Access and Participation team who acts as their key point of support throughout their time with us. This contact provides regular check-ins, helps students navigate institutional processes, and advocates on their behalf when needed.

Pastoral Support

CARES students have access to one-to-one wellbeing check-ins throughout the year. These offer a safe, confidential space to discuss any concerns. Our team can also help connect students with appropriate services within and beyond the institution.

Academic Support and Guidance

We support students in developing the skills and confidence needed to succeed academically. CARES students are encouraged to access:

- Study skills workshops and academic coaching sessions
- Personalised guidance on time management, academic writing, and assessment period planning
- Referrals to academic staff or support services if additional learning support is needed
- **Peer Mentoring**
Through the Wellbeing Team, students can be paired with trained mentors who offer encouragement, share their own experiences, and provide practical guidance to support their wellbeing.
- **Counselling and Mental Health Support**
Students will have priority access to confidential counselling services and, where appropriate, may be referred to external mental health services. We work proactively to support students' wellbeing and create a culture where seeking help is normalised and encouraged.

7. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The CARES Scheme is strengthened by our collaborative work with a range of local and national organisations who share our commitment to improving outcomes for care experienced, estranged, student carers, and sanctuary-seeking students. We actively collaborate with:

- Leeds Care Leaver Service
- Go Higher West Yorkshire
- Child Friendly Leeds
- Leeds Virtual School
- Young Carers Leeds
- RETAS (Refugee Education Training Advice Service)
- NORTH Class
- NEON (National Education Opportunities Network)

8. REVIEW

To be reviewed by the Student Success and Inclusion Committee by September 2029.