



Supporting teachers and careers advisors to provide evidence of care experience for the Care Experienced Students Bursary

This **how to guide**, created by the [HUB for SUCCESS](#) (HfS), aims to support **teachers and careers advisors**, and care experienced learners, with **providing evidence of care experience when applying for the Care Experienced Student Bursary (CESB) at college and university**.

Providing evidence for an individual, in relation to their care experience, is usually quick and easy!

Sharing care experience when applying to college or university is not compulsory. However, answering 'yes' to the question 'Have you been in care?' on UCAS or college applications **ensures the student can access important financial and learning supports available to them** (which they may otherwise miss out on).

We know that some students are unaware that they are care experienced and may also be unaware of the support that is available to them at college/university. **Teachers and careers advisors** can play a key role in promoting an understanding of care experience in conversations with young people, and therefore ensuring all care experienced students access the supports available to them to support their future at college and/or university.

It is important to let students know that sharing their care experience does not mean having to give in depth details of their personal care experience, it simply alerts the institution that the individual is eligible for additional support if they want it.

About the HUB for SUCCESS

The [HUB for SUCCESS](#) supports care experienced individuals to get in, stay in, and return to college and university. We do this in collaboration with our partners: City of Edinburgh Council and the colleges and universities based in Edinburgh and the Lothians. We offer bespoke one-to-one information, advice, and guidance/support for care experienced learners ([*see note](#)).

Established in late 2018, the HfS has now developed into a hybrid partnership which works directly with people with experience of care alongside lobbying for change. We analyse the data we collect from our one-to-one work, combine this with partner data, and use this information to influence systemic issues getting in the way of progress.

We are committed to ensuring care experienced people's educational rights are understood and promoted.

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Why teachers and careers advisors providing evidence is so important...

We know it can be challenging for our students when gathering evidence of care experience. This is particularly the case where their circumstances have changed since being in care. For example, they may no longer be on a Compulsory Supervision Order, and/or social work may no longer require to be involved with the family.

This often results in them being advised to make a subject access request to the social work department to access their records which can be both time consuming and emotionally triggering for them, and ultimately unnecessary when their school can also supply this information.

Teachers and careers advisors can make this much easier for students, by providing the evidence required.

Often delays in accessing evidence can mean that a student misses out on the lifeline of financial support which can impact both entries to college and university and longer-term retention and completion.

What is the Care Experienced Students Bursary?

Introduced by the Scottish Government in 2017, the CESB is a **non-repayable, non-income** assessed financial package to support those with care experience in college and university.

The CESB amount is £9,000 per year.

Students who plan to study full-time at **further education level at college (SCQF Level 6 courses or below)** apply for the [CESB through the college](#) at which they plan to study. For more information, access the Hfs' factsheets on the CESB in FE [here](#).

Students who plan to study full-time at **higher education level at college (HNC/HND) or at university (undergraduate degree)** apply for the [CESB through SAAS](#). For students studying at higher education level, the CESB amount equates to the maximum amount a non-care experienced student can receive via a combination of student loan and bursary. For more information, access the Hfs' factsheets on the CESB in HE [here](#).

The CESB is **not** available to students studying part-time courses.

Who can apply for the Care Experienced Students Bursary?

Individuals with care experience aged 16 years+ can apply for the CESB. There is no upper age limit for the CESB.

What is Care Experience?

Below is an overview of the circumstances that indicate that a child or young person is care experienced. Students are eligible to claim the CESB if they have ever been looked after by a Local Authority in the UK, before they turned 18. Their care experience can have taken place at **any time during their childhood** and for an **undefined period** for them to meet the criteria. A young person does **not** need to currently be in care to be eligible for the CESB.

Looked After at Home

When **looked after at home** the child or young person still lives at home with their parent(s) and they and their family are, or have been, supported by the social work department. A **Compulsory Supervision Order** is, or was previously, in place through the Children's Hearings System. This means that there are significant concerns about risk of harm or a child's needs not being appropriately met. The social work department are mandated to intervene to ensure that the child is protected from harm and their needs are met. Usually there has been social work involvement, often extensive, prior to a legal order having been sought.

Foster Care – Looked After Away from Home

This is when a child or young person is living, or has previously, lived in a **foster home** due to concerns about harm within their parental home. Predominantly, this requires a **Compulsory Supervision Order** (as above) through the Children's Hearings System which states their legal address with the foster carers. The child will have, or have had, extensive involvement with social workers.

Residential Home/Secure Unit

As above, this is when a child or young person lives, or has lived, within a residential home or secure unit. Residential homes and secure units are different settings but when a child or young person has lived in either, it is usually under a **legal order issued via the Children's Hearings System**. The child or young person will have had extensive involvement with social workers.

Formal/Informal Kinship Care

This is when a child or young person lives, or has lived, with a family member or friend during a period when their parent(s) are not able to care for them within their own home. This can be arranged formally via the local authority or informally via the family themselves. **Both circumstances must have had some level of social work involvement for the individual to meet the criteria for the CESB**. A child or young person in these circumstances may not have the same extensive level of social work that might be expected within the circumstances of those described above; this is generally since significant risks of harm have been lessened through the child or young person's move to a Kinship home.

Adoption

Children and young people who have been adopted **and** were in foster care for a period prior to their adoption are eligible for the CESB.

Follow these hyperlinks for further information on definitions can be found, as determined by the [Scottish Funding Council \(SFC\)](#) and [Student Awards Agency Scotland \(SAAS\)](#).

What evidence is required when applying for the CESB?

Put simply, evidence is confirmation from a professional that an individual is care experienced. Evidence does **not** require details of the circumstances leading to the individual's entry into the care system.

Who can provide evidence?

A series of professionals can provide evidence for care experienced students in support of the CESB application.

Teachers: can provide evidence for students applying at **both FE and HE level**.

Careers advisors: can provide evidence for students applying at **HE level (some colleges may accept evidence from careers advisors for the FE level CESB but not all)**.

A student's care experience can be confirmed by:

- Referring to the student's records on school and local authority systems, such as SEEMiS
- And/or via a relational approach with the young person.

Often a school will have known a young person for many years and have knowledge of the individual's home and family circumstances. However, we understand that sometimes staff involved at the time may have moved on. Teaching staff and careers advisors do **NOT** need to have been directly involved with the circumstances around the pupil's care experience to be able to provide the evidence required for the CESB.

The information in this document is believed to be correct at the time of writing – October 2023.

What do I say when providing evidence, and in what format?

SAAS/Higher Education – preferred method

1. Student shares their care experience when completing their SAAS application form.
2. **SAAS will then send the student an evidence form with a short section for a professional to complete.**
3. The professional completes **sections D and E** of the form, which simply asks for your role, contact details and signature (no further info required!), and returns to the student.
4. The student then uploads the completed form via their SAAS online portal.

Note: Teachers and careers advisors can complete this SAAS form to provide evidence for students!

Further Education – preferred method

1. Student shares their care experience when completing their college application form.
2. **The college will then either sent the student an evidence form with a short section for a professional to complete, or professionals can access the current SFC form [here](#)** (see 'Annex – Care Experience Form').
3. The professional completes **sections D** of the form, which simply asks for your role, contact details and signature (no further info required!), and returns to the student.
4. The student then uploads the completed form via their college application online portal.

Note: Teachers can complete the SFC FE form to provide evidence for students. Some, not all colleges, will accept from careers advisors.

Another option...providing an evidence letter (FE and HE)

1. Using headed paper or in the body of an email (using your school or SDS email address), adapt the below template statement.
2. Template statement...

{Insert date of writing}

To whom it may concern,

I can confirm that {insert individual's name and date of birth} is care experienced. I respectfully request that this statement is accepted as evidence of care experience when considering their application for the Care Experienced Students Bursary.

Yours sincerely,

{Insert own name, job title, school, and contact details}

3. Student uploads completed letter via their college/SAAS online portal.
4. We suggest giving the student a copy of the letter for their records and future use.

When it's not straightforward...

We appreciate that understanding what constitutes care experience is not always straightforward as individual circumstances can be complex and difficult to make sense of.

For example, you may have a young person who has been on the **fringes of the care system**, never formally looked after, but has had significant social work involvement, support, and supervision in their lives.

This can make it anxiety provoking for professionals when being asked to provide evidence, particularly as they may not be familiar with the language of the care system and what constitutes care experience.

At the HUB for SUCCESS (HfS) we are always happy to have discussions that will support professionals to make confident decisions about confirming care experience ([*see note](#)).

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Note: The HfS is funded to support care experience individuals who 1) are from the City of Edinburgh, 2) or who are applying to/considering applying to study at one of our partner institutions. This extends to the professionals supporting those individuals too. Our partners are:

- *Edinburgh College*
- *Newbattle Abbey College*
- *West Lothian College*
- *Edinburgh Napier University*
- *Heriot-Watt University*
- *Queen Margaret University*
- *The Open University Scotland*
- *The University of Edinburgh*
- *City of Edinburgh Council*

