

OU Scotland Cares

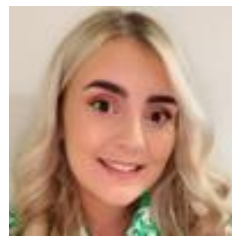
January 2024

Welcome

Welcome to our January care experienced newsletter. We hope you enjoyed your festive break and wish you all a Happy New Year.

You are receiving this newsletter because you have told us you have experience of being in care. There is lots of support available for care experienced students at The Open University, so make a note of the contacts below for when you might need them. We have some news and opportunities that may interest you.

Did you know? All Universities in Scotland are named corporate parents. As Proud Corporate Parents we have a dedicated mailbox for care experienced students OUScotland-cares@open.ac.uk. Ewe and Katrina, members of our Access, Participation and Success team, are on hand to respond to any questions you may have or to signpost you to relevant support.



Student Reference Group

We have a Student Reference Group that represents the views of care experienced students at The Open University. The group meets at least twice a year to review the Open University in Scotland's Corporate Parenting Action Plan and set priorities for the coming year. The group keep in touch on MS Teams between meetings and attend the Corporate Parenting Steering group twice a year.

If you are interested in joining the Student Reference Group or would like to find out more, please get in touch with the team via OUScotland-cares@open.ac.uk.

Financial Support

We would like to remind you that if you haven't already applied, there is still time to apply for financial support which is available for care experienced students.

Care Experienced Bursary – This bursary offers students a single payment of £250 to support study costs such as purchasing a laptop or organising connection to the internet.

Discretionary Fund – Funding designed to assist with study-related costs such as internet costs, stationery and set books.

Digital Inclusion Fund – Funding to help students access information and communication technology equipment; items include laptop, tablet, monitor, printer, headset, mouse and keyboard.

Opportunities and Events

Student Hub Live Events

[Student Hub Live](#) platform is a series of live, online and interactive events open to everyone at The Open University. At-a-glance upcoming events schedule in January include:

- [OU Essentials – 16 January](#)
- [Well-being for students – 18 January](#)
- [Effective academic communication – 23 January](#)
- [Neurodiverse community/ neurodivergent students: progressing effectively on your module – 31 January](#)



Big Blether

The Open University in Scotland and OU Students Association will be hosting a Big Blether session on **Wednesday, 7 February, 18:30 – 20:00**. A good blether can help us through a tough time, give us the confidence to overcome a hurdle or just put a smile on our face at the end of a long day. More information about the session and how to register will be sent to students in Scotland.

Student Voice Festival

SAVE THE DATE for the [Student Voice Festival](#) which will run from **24 February to 9 March**, both online and face-to-face. During the festival, you will have the opportunity to meet other OU students, share your thoughts and experiences on topics ranging from cost of living, sustainability, mental health and wellbeing, to tuition, and get inspired by the positive changes student feedback has made to the University so far.

Career and Employability Services

The OU Careers and Employability Services are here to help you explore your options, plan and work towards your career or personal goals and support you with searching and applying for opportunities. You can visit www.open.ac.uk/careers to access a wide range of online tools and resources. Our [Navigate Your Future](#) activity pathway makes the process of working out your goals and next steps simpler. It's designed to build your confidence and help you progress towards your goals at your own pace.

At [OpportunityHub](#) you can find hundreds of vacancies, events and volunteering opportunities and book a [careers consultation](#) with our dedicated Scotland Careers and Employability Consultant. Examples of current opportunities in Scotland include:



- [Volunteer Mentor, MCR Pathways](#)

By becoming a volunteer mentor, you have the power to make a difference in the lives of young people who need someone to chat with, listen to them, and encourage them. MCR mentoring transforms lives, with 81.6% of mentored care-experienced young people achieving a positive destination after leaving school. Comprehensive training is provided by MCR Pathways and optional ongoing training, and development opportunities are available throughout the year. **Closing date Tuesday, 30 June 2024**

- [Careers in Health & Social Care across the Nations](#)

Tuesday, 30 January 2024, Scotland panel 13:45 – 14:45

Demand for health and social care workers is growing in all the four nations of the UK and the sector is becoming an increasingly popular career destination for OU students. We've set up four nation-focused sessions featuring a range of employers from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. Join us to find out more about the different entry roles and opportunities near you, including some which don't require gaining an additional qualification before entry. We'll also cover career progression options for those already working in the sector. In the Scotland session we will be joined by Penumbra Mental Health, Children's Hospices Across Scotland (CHAS), Scottish Social Services Council and NHS Education for Scotland.

- [Empower your journey: Unlocking the rewards of Volunteering](#)

Thursday, 8 February 2024, 12:00 – 13:00

The beginning of a new year is a time to think about what's important to you and set some personal goals and if you have ever considered volunteering, many charities need your help now more than ever. There are many benefits to volunteering, for some it offers the chance to give something back to your community or make a difference to the world around you. For others it provides an opportunity to develop new skills or build on existing experience and knowledge.

OU Students Association

The OU Students Association provides opportunities to get involved, socialise, find information and news, get help, attend events, access services to support your learning and to have fun being an OU student.



Freshers Fortnight will take place from **22 January – 4 February**. To view the Freshers programme, please see [here](#).

Everything you need to know about the OU Students Association and upcoming events they are running can be found [here](#).

The Why Not? Trust

The [Why Not? Trust](#) is a community developed with and for people with experience of care. Their aim is to have a community open to all with experience of care where people can come together and be there for each other.



The Why Not? Trust have set up a digital community centre, [The Why Not? Hub](#), as an online community for people with experience of care at any stage of their journey. The Hub allows for specific communities and allows everyone to choose the groups and communities that best suit them. The Wee Campus has been set up as one these online communities. Wee Campus has been developed and codesigned with students with experience of care to be a safe place to engage, share experiences, advice, find information, and encourage others through their higher education journey.

If you are interested in signing up to The Why Not? Hub or finding out more, please see [here](#).

Mental Health and Wellbeing Support

If you feel as though you're struggling to cope with your studies, please reach out to either your Student Support Team or tutor as they'll be able to offer alternative options and solutions for any study related issues you may be having.

You can contact the Scotland Student Support Team by phone on **0131 226 3851 (Mon to Fri: 08:00 – 17:00)**. Alternatively, you can email at scotland@open.ac.uk. Please note, emails are usually responded to within 5 working days.

If your mental health difficulties are not study related, we have more specialised services that could help you.

[TalkCampus – for more information click here](#)

TalkCampus provides a safe, totally anonymous online space to air concerns with other students and get support for your mental health and wellbeing. It's available to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

[Shout 85258 – for more information click here](#)

We are proud to partner with Shout 85258 to offer free and confidential support to any OU student who is feeling overwhelmed or is struggling to cope. Shout's text message support service is anonymous and available 24/7.

[OU Wellbeing app – for more information click here](#)

The OU Wellbeing app provides a fun and interactive way to create positive habits to help maintain good wellbeing. The app offers many features including weekly posts providing advice and support and a library of self-help tools and podcasts to help you improve your wellbeing as well as your study skills.

[Lifelink - video and phone counselling for students in Scotland, for more information click here](#)

Students in Scotland can access free, confidential video and phone counselling through our partnership with Lifelink. They have over 30 years' experience in supporting people to make positive changes in their lives. You'll be offered an initial assessment by a Lifelink therapist followed by one-to-one sessions with a fully qualified counsellor who is matched to your needs

The Open University in Scotland

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Unsubscribe from the message:

You are receiving this email because you have told us you have experience of being in care. If you think you are getting these mailings by mistake as you have never been in care, or if you would prefer not to hear from us, please let us know by contacting us at OUScotland-cares@open.ac.uk

Keep well,

**Ewe and Katrina
OU Scotland Cares team**