

# OU Scotland Cares

## APRIL 2024

### Welcome

Welcome to our newsletter. We hope that you are keeping well, and you are enjoying your studies. We are sending this mailing to celebrate Care History Month, which takes place every year in April. 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 OU, so make a note of the contacts below for when you might need them. We are here to help you succeed. 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](mailto:OUScotland-Cares@open.ac.uk). Ewe and Gemma, 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.



### What Is Care Experienced History Month?

In April each year we celebrate Care Experienced History Month. The purpose of this month is to tell the stories of Care Experienced people past and present. Throughout April, WhoCares? Scotland are sharing different stories and moments from the history of care.

WhoCares? want to share the [journeys of Care Experienced people](#) you haven't heard of, as well as well known figures, throughout history and to the present day. In doing so, they highlight their care experience or their stories that are untold.

At the end of the month, 30 April is **International Care Experienced Day of Remembrance**. This day was created by Care Experienced people across the world who called for the recognition that Care Experienced people have been part of societies in all corners of the world for as long as can be remembered.

This image represents a bridge from the past to the present, a bridge to the people, a bridge to the future and bridging the divide in understanding of the history of Care Experienced people.



## TOTUM Card Giveaway

### TOTUM Card

OU in Scotland partnered with OU in Wales for a time limited TOTUM card giveaway. This is a unique chance to apply for **free three-year TOTUM cards** offered to care-experienced students in Wales and Scotland facing financial hardship. Please note that we have a limited number of cards to give away. Once we reach the capacity, the application form will close.

You can register for this here: <https://forms.office.com/e/Cavf3QtaEa>

A TOTUM card, powered by the National Union of Students (NUS), is the number one discount card in the UK and allows students to benefit from a range of discounts including food, essentials, technology, and goods. [The Student Association's TOTUM page provides more details about the card.](#)

## 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](mailto:OUScotland-cares@open.ac.uk).

For Care Experienced History Month, a member of the Student Reference Group, Cinomen, has kindly provided a message to our care experienced students.

"For those students who grew up in any sort of care system outside of what we call the traditional family we don't always realise what we have missed out on. But it really hits home when you go to a traditional university and so many students have had parental support and financial help from them, and you just don't.

For some of us there is still some familial contact, and you can try to lean on that, but even then there can still be concerns. Can you ever be on the same playing field? Can anywhere replicate that network? Probably not, but we as care experienced individuals have to try to build something different that works instead.



Supporting care experienced students means accepting that the ability to rely on a traditional nuclear family is unlikely to happen. We can sometimes have a background of trauma and hurt that these educational environments can inadvertently trigger.

Especially if you are on a module that deals with traumatic stuff, and there are some FASS and WELS subjects particularly that can be hugely triggering if you have a background of trauma and/or familial isolation or abandonment. Then you need to have some sort of support network in place to deal.

Does studying psych models that make you confront your past have some safety nets for those that this may upset? Yes, I know they do, but care experienced students have to unpick an extra layer of corporate parenting or being looked after that most students don't ever need to consider.

We also have issues around trust and consistency. For me the constant home-hopping that came with being labelled a 'troubled teen' meant that I have very little faith in the system and people in positions of authority. It takes a lot to earn my trust, and those that do I am loyal to for life. My key worker from when I was 14/15 is still a valued friend to this day, and has cheered me on from the sidelines during my university journey. She encouraged my writing capability and was one of the first people I shared the news with when I gained my MA in Creative Writing. Those networks can last a lifetime.

Seeing happy families and extended support networks can also put us off wanting to go to things like graduation ceremonies, as that again can drive home the isolation and alienation some of us feel, but with the OU having the opportunity to build your own support networks via your classmates, community groups and societies at the Students Association, or through volunteering can make that journey that bit easier.

Here at the OU we have a care experienced support network that works directly with the university to enable our voices and ideas to be taken seriously. We have a student steering group that we input to, so that we are the ones helping to drive the changes that will affect us. We are encouraged to input on all things care experienced so that they can get it right for us and those students that come after us. Please consider getting involved."

# 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** (requires OU sign-in) - 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** (requires OU sign-in) - 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

### **OU In Scotland Care Experienced Catch-Up | Tuesday, 16 April**

To celebrate Care Experienced History Month, Access Participation and Success team invites you for a networking catch-up open to all care experienced students studying at the OU in Scotland.

This will be a very informal 45 mins, where you have a chance to find out about the specific support available to care experienced students and chat to one another. We offer two time slots and will host the sessions based on the demand. Please register for the session in the afternoon 13.00 – 13.45 or in the evening at 18.30 – 19.15.

**To register for the session, please complete the form below:**

<https://forms.office.com/e/SLJXJBISML>

### **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 April/May includes:

- [Critical Thinking \(Advanced\) - 9th April](#)
- [Memory and Learning: making the connections - 11th April](#)
- [Neurodiverse community/neurodivergent students: planning to complete your module with success - 16th April](#)



- [Interpreting and using ideas and facts - 18th April](#)
- [Tackling procrastination successfully - 23rd April](#)
- [Preparing for, and producing your best EMA - 2nd May](#)
- [Support and Wellbeing for Student Carers - 7th May](#)

For the full programme please go to Student Hub Live page.

# Career and Employability Services

## Opportunities

### **Become a Careers and Employability Services Student Representative**

The OU's Careers and Employability Services (CES) are looking for a new [Careers and Employability Services Student Representative](#) (sign- in required) from Scotland. This your chance to make your voice heard, gain skills valued by employers, and help shape an inclusive and sustainable careers service for all OU students and alumni. Apply by 15 April 2024.

### **12 April competition deadline for commercial or social enterprise funding grants in 2024**

Enter the [Open Business Creators Fund 2024](#) competition **by Friday 12 April 2024** to apply to win a funding grant of £1,000–£10,000 in either the commercial business or social enterprise category to help set up or grow your company. Get creative about your business thinking and start with the [Becoming an entrepreneur](#) help hub.

## Events

### [Explore Arts, Culture and Heritage in Scotland](#) (sign- in required)

18 April, 1.45 pm till 2.45 pm

Hear from professionals what it's really like working in a range of roles in this vibrant sector. Whether you're studying for an arts or humanities degree or have an interest in the arts, culture and heritage, join us and gain insights, inspiration and expert advice from our panellists including **Creative Scotland, The National Library of Scotland, Publishing Scotland, and Museums and Heritage Highlands.**

### [The Changing world of language careers](#) (sign- in required)

30 April, 12 noon till 1 pm

The changing world of language careers employer panel event answers key questions for language and linguistics students and alumni. Join this lunchtime session to hear from representatives from **The British Council, Euro London Appointments Ltd, Lindsay Does Languages, Food Sans Frontières, Crossbow Translations** and **Business Language Champions** about opportunities and career pathways with languages and applied linguistics in this changing digital world.

## **The Future is Green: Insights into sustainable career pathways**

If you're interested in making a positive impact on the environment while building a successful and fulfilling career, view our [The Future is Green: Insights into sustainable career pathways live event recording](#) (sign-in required) to gain valuable insights from experts in this field, discover the latest trends and learn from like-minded individuals, including professionals, students and enthusiasts. A [transcript](#) (sign-in required) for the recording is available.

## **Jobs**

### **[Advocacy and Participation Worker - Western Isles](#)**

**Who Cares? Scotland is Scotland's only national independent membership organisation for Care Experienced people.** This unique role offers the opportunity to listen to and work directly with children and young people with experience of care, in an individual relationship-based advocacy role, and within participation and group activity across our North region. Closing date 3 April.

### **[Advocacy and Participation Worker \(West Central\)](#)**

Who Cares? Scotland is Scotland's only national independent membership organisation for Care Experienced people. The post holder will work directly with children and young people with experience of care, in an individual relationship-based advocacy role, and within participation and group activity across our West Central region. Closing date 14 April.

### **[Project Worker, Link Group Ltd](#)** (sign-in required)

Passionate about improving lives? We're seeking a Project Worker for our trauma-informed team, dedicated to innovative solutions. You'll engage participants early, offering mental health programs, independent living skills, and various qualifications including employability and leadership awards. Based in Edinburgh. Closing date 16 April.

### **[Mental Health & Wellbeing Worker - Forth Valley SLS, Penumbra Mental Health](#)** (sign-in required)

Penumbra's Supported Living services offer personalised and flexible support to people who are living in their own home. Our staff work across the Forth Valley area and offer recovery focused practical and emotional support that is based on the individual needs and goals of each person. Based in Forth Valley. Closing date 15 April.

### **[General Assistant, Edinburgh Military Tattoo](#)** (sign-in required)

Want to be part of the team bringing the Tattoo to life? This is your chance! We're looking for enthusiastic, passionate, and friendly people to work with us and support the world class event that is The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. This is a temporary position from 24 June – 6 September 2024, involves shift working. Based in Edinburgh. Closing 14 April.



# 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.



Everything you need to know about the [OU Students Association](#) and upcoming events they are running can be found 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](mailto: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](#) (sign- in required)

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](#) (sign- in required)

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](#) (sign- in required)

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](#) (sign- in required)

Students in Scotland can access free, confidential video and phone counselling through our partnership with Lifelink. 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](mailto:OUScotland-cares@open.ac.uk)

**Keep well,**

**Ewe and Gemma  
OU Scotland Cares team**