

Impact Report

2026

Unite

Foundation

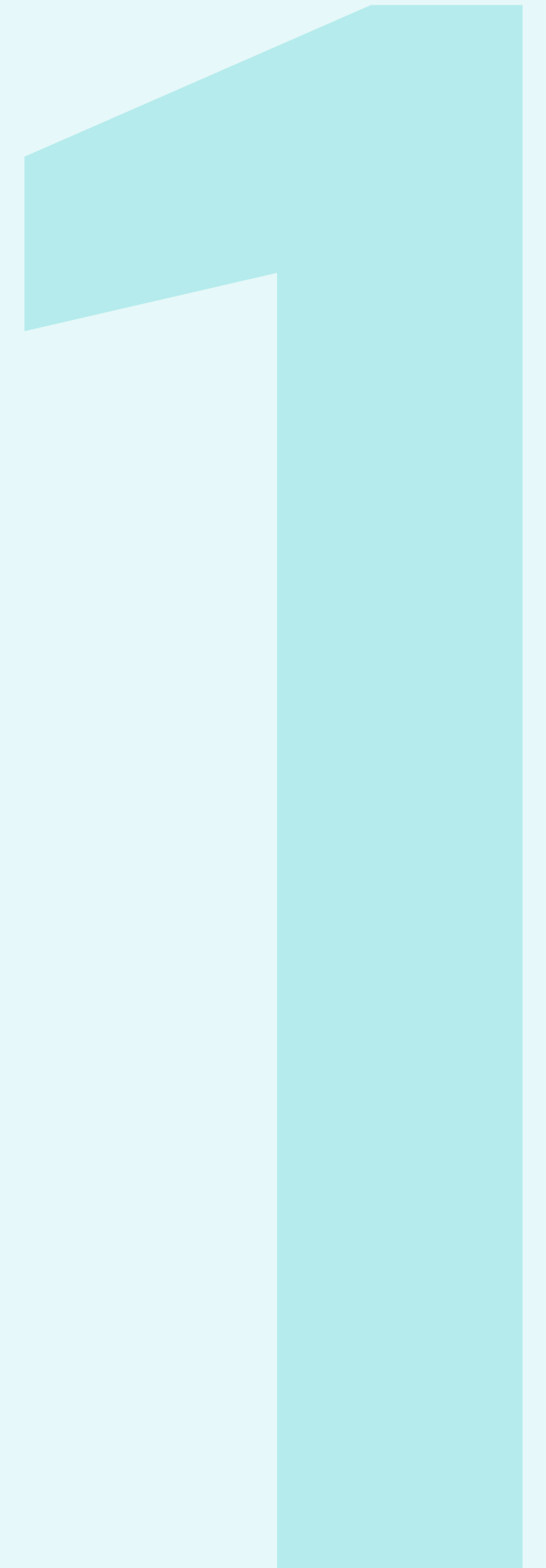
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Welcome to our impact report looking back at the 2024/25 year and forward through 2026 and beyond.

We've continued to deliver our core scholarship offer for care experienced and estranged students, created more opportunities for all care experienced and estranged students to make lasting connections through the All of Us Community, strengthened our advocacy to Government and Higher Education Institutions and for more access to safe and stable accommodation.

This year saw the end of our current strategic period and has provided the launch for our new strategy (more on that later on). For 2024/25 our three strategic pillars were →

A home at university



1 A home at university

Our annual scholarship programme offers care experienced and estranged students a free, stable home at university for up to three years. For young people who've grown up within the UK care system, accessing and completing Higher Education can be transformative – yet too many face barriers that prevent them from getting there, or being able to stay long enough to graduate.

We're proud to show that with the right support every care experienced and estranged young person can get to and thrive at university.

242

students were on the scholarship during the 24/25 academic year at 28 institutions.

70

students joined the scholarship in August 2025.

883

scholarships have been awarded since we were founded by Unite Students in 2012.

449

students have graduated so far.

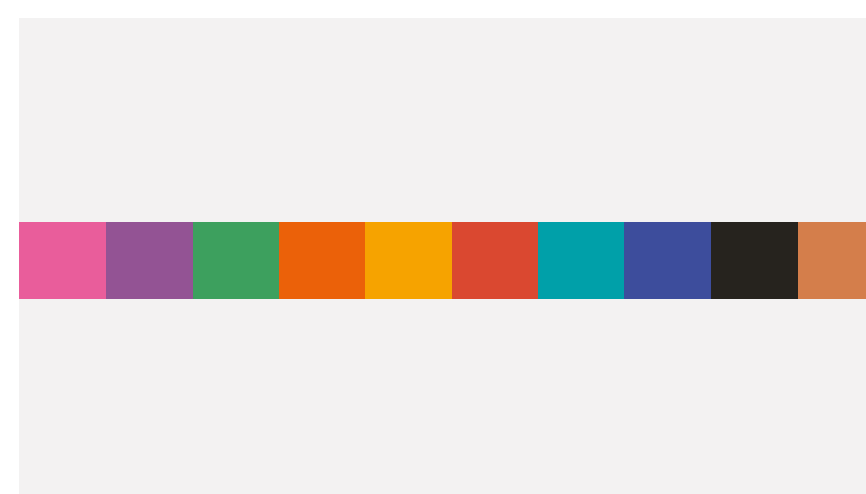
Community



We have grown the number of opportunities we facilitate for care experienced and estranged students to build connections, with ten in-person meetups and four online community events, across a range of urban areas, **engaging 168 attendees** (an increase of 17% on the previous year).

The work on All of Us has been supported by 6 Community Catalysts – students we employ to authentically lead the community, facilitate meet-up's, create newsletters and much more.

This year we brought together the HE Peer Professional Network – a termly gathering of professionals keen to underpin social cohesion and a sense of belonging for care experienced and estranged students. This has helped to build understanding of this group of students, the All of Us Community and how those working in HE can help to facilitate opportunities for connection on campus and beyond.



All of Us



Removing roadblocks



We have continued to champion the issue of rent guarantor provision for care experienced and estranged students. We covered topics including commercial provision, in-house services, and the impact of the Renters Rights Bill, to better support HEIs build their knowledge and services.



Supporting these three strategic pillars has been a growing focus on how we play a bigger role in the sector, building on our advocacy to create the conditions for more care experienced and estranged students to have a home at university.

Sector leadership & collaboration



We've played an active role in shaping the national conversation around care experienced and estranged students in Higher Education. From contributing to major conferences and sector working groups, to publishing thought leadership pieces – we've helped bring to the forefront the importance of safe and stable accommodation in helping care experienced and estranged students get to university and thrive there.

This has included

Universities UK

Enabling care-experienced and estranged students to access and thrive at university.

[Learn more →](#)

HEPI

Unseen and under pressure: the academic experience of estranged and care-experienced students.

[Learn more →](#)

Children's Commissioner

Free and supportive resources from the Unite Foundation's All of Us Community.

[Learn more →](#)

Insights & impact



In December 2024, the Unite Foundation and Unite Students, working with Social Market Foundation, published a report exploring how society and universities can better support care experienced and estranged students to access and succeed in Higher Education.

Recommendations included cross-sectoral engagement to address:

+ Persistent barriers

Care experienced and estranged students face significant challenges including lower school attainment, financial hardship, lack of suitable accommodation, mental health struggles, and stigma.

+ Patchy support

While most universities offer bursaries and accommodation guarantees, support is inconsistent and often doesn't match student need. Institutions with higher numbers of care experienced students are not always resourced accordingly.

+ Evidence matters

The report highlights the need for a stronger evidence base to guide interventions. The Unite Foundation's scholarship is one of the few with statistically significant outcomes in progression and degree attainment.

+ Estranged students overlooked

Estranged students often fall through the cracks due to difficulties in identification and verification, despite facing similar challenges to care leavers.

To support the launch of the report Unite Students and Social Market Foundation hosted a ministerial roundtable, with then Minister for Children, Schools and Families – Janet Daby MP, alongside sector colleagues with whom we've been working over the last year to turn ideas into action, supporting the implementation of key recommendations from the report.

[Read the report in full here →](#)

Partnerships



Our long-standing partnership with Unite Students continues to be the cornerstone of our scholarship programme, providing free, stable accommodation to students who need it most.

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STUDENTS

To date Unite Students has donated **£18 million** to the Unite Foundation. Support from Unite Students has continued beyond their corporate giving, including match funding when staff fundraise for other charities, staff competitions to win gig tickets and staff members who have gone above and beyond through individual feats of endurance to raise awareness and money for the Unite Foundation. We are proud to see Unite Students extend their commitment to these students by being the first PBSA signatory to the Care Leaver Covenant.

This year, we've continued to support our students with welcome packs from UniKitOut, offering practical essentials that help students settle in and feel at home from day one – we were grateful for their match funding partnership. Harford Charitable Foundation provided funding to support All of Us meetup's – helping to foster a sense of belonging amongst all care experienced and estranged students.

In addition we've continued to deliver our wider scholarship offer, working in partnership with match funding partners and nine HEIs to create 3 year scholarships.

[More details in our 2025 impact report →](#)

Built to deliver



This year marked a significant transition in our governance as we said goodbye to Professor Shân Wareing, whose leadership as Trustee & Chair of the Unite Foundation Board has been instrumental in shaping our direction and deepening our impact over the last 8 years. We were delighted to welcome Dr John Cater as our new Chair, bringing decades of experience and a deep understanding of the Higher Education sector. We also welcomed Professor Julie Hall to the Board of Trustees – her expertise in student experience and inclusive education will be invaluable as we continue to grow and evolve.



Dr John Cater
Chair



Professor Julie Hall
Trustee

Our new strategy



For 2025–2028 our new strategy builds on our work to date and remains highly focused; but it is a step-change in its tightening and honing of our work, laser focused on impact and sustainability whilst still delivering our groundbreaking accommodation scholarship.

We will be focusing on three areas:

+ Direct impact on students

A free home at university remains at the heart of our work. Unite Foundation scholarships are the only intervention with OfS-recognised Tier 2 level evidence of impact. We are developing a sustainable match-funding model for our scholarships and offering our university partners the option to utilise their own accommodation for scholarship students, bringing much-needed charitable money directly to sector providers.

+ Practice shift

We will work to grow the breadth and depth of support for a safe and stable #HomeAtUniversity for all care experienced and estranged students amongst universities and student accommodation providers. This work is built around our Blueprint for a #HomeAtUniversity.

+ Policy change

The experience of students is determined not only by accommodation providers but by national and local policy context across all the devolved nations. We will continue to work in partnership across the sector so that the needs of care experienced and estranged students are included in policy decisions around data, student finance, wellbeing and more, and to encourage Local Authorities to play their role in delivering a #HomeAtUniversity.

Thank you.

Care experienced and estranged students face some of the greatest barriers to accessing and completing Higher Education, yet they have just as much potential to thrive if given the right support.

If you'd like to know more about the work of the Unite Foundation, support our work or help us achieve our mission, get in touch: info@unitefoundation.org.uk

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The Unite Foundation is a charitable incorporated organisation registered in England and Wales 1198601 and a charity registered in Scotland SC051987.

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