

WHO CARES? SCOTLAND

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# Care Experienced Learners

## Rebecca's Journey

A Case Study and Best Practice Guide



EQUALITY | RESPECT | LOVE

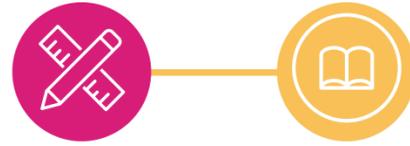
# REBECCA

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Rebecca is Care Experienced and graduated from The University of St Andrews this year with a First Class degree in MA (Hons) Geography. For Rebecca, education has been an incredibly powerful and affirming experience. She has generously decided to share her learning journey with us, to help us gain an understanding of education through the lens of a Care Experienced student.



HIGH  
SCHOOL COLLEGE



## HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE

### CONSIDERING UNIVERSITY

Rebecca left school with a plan to take some time for herself. When she was 20 years old she enrolled in **college** to study **four subjects at higher level**. Whilst at college, Rebecca **attended an event** hosted by representatives from The University of St Andrews. They were visiting the college to speak to students about **studying at university**.

Rebecca hadn't considered attending university, however listening to the presentation and **learning about what supports would be in place for her as a student** gave her the **confidence** to apply to The University of St Andrews, The University of Edinburgh and The University of Dundee.



COLLEGE UNIVERSITY



## COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY

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### SELF-DECLARATION

Up until this point, Rebecca had **never disclosed that she was Care Experienced**. She didn't discuss her care background with anyone. She was receiving funding via college as she had identified as an **estranged student**.

Rebecca **opened up to a college lecturer** about her care identity. The lecturer **encouraged Rebecca to disclose her Care Experienced identity** when completing her UCAS form. Rebecca was worried she would face **stigma** if she self-declared as Care Experienced. However, **the opposite turned out to be true**. Once The University of St Andrews were aware of Rebecca's Care Experience, someone got in touch with her to inform her of the **supports available** for Care Experienced students studying at the university.



UNIVERSITY

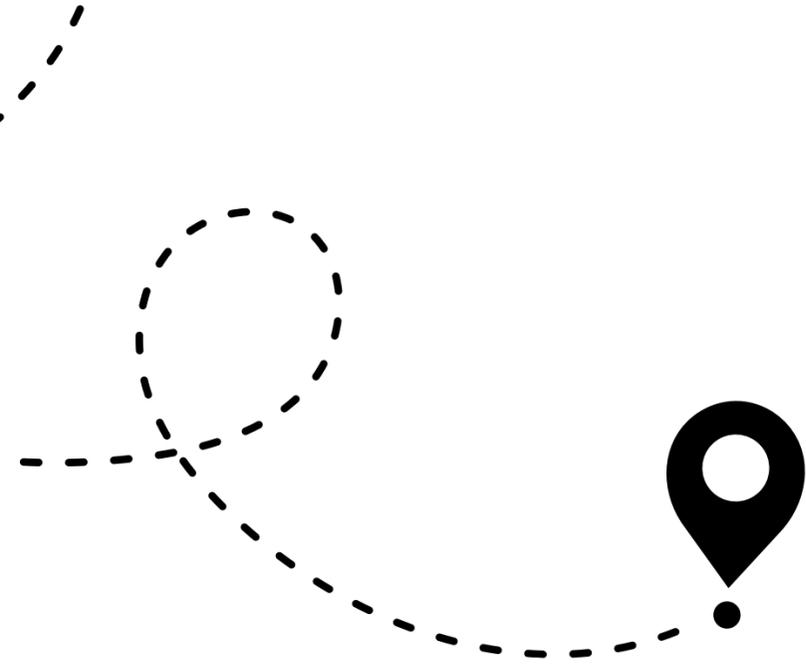


UNIVERSITY

BEGINS UNIVERSITY

At 21, Rebecca was considered a mature student. She applied for the general degree through **lifelong entry**. When Rebecca attended her university interview she was prepared to answer questions about why she wanted to study at The University of St Andrews. She was really pleased when the interviewer **started to explain to Rebecca the different types of support that would be available to her as a Care Experienced student**. They also advised Rebecca of the numerous **scholarships** she would be eligible to apply for.

Rebecca was **accepted** for The University of St Andrews with a conditional offer. Rebecca couldn't believe that she was about to start studying at a university with such prestige and reputation. As a Care Experienced person, this sounded so far away from what she thought she would achieve.



UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY

## STUDENT LIFE AND FINANCES

Rebecca was soon introduced to the Care Experienced Officer at university. Both the Care Experienced Officer and the university admissions department were very helpful. They helped Rebecca to apply for her **SAAS application** and for a **scholarship**. Rebecca acknowledges that a big factor in why she felt so supported at university was because of the **help and guidance** she received as a Care Experienced student.

It was important for Rebecca to integrate into the student body at university. She was commuting between Dundee and St Andrews every day, and she **also had a part-time job**. She was still able to enjoy student life. Rebecca **was awarded a scholarship** to help fund her life at university. From second year onwards she was eligible to apply for the Care Experienced Student Bursary from SAAS. **Knowing she was financially secure was a huge relief for Rebecca**, she recalls, *“the worries that come with financial instability were gone so I could focus on my studies”*.



UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY

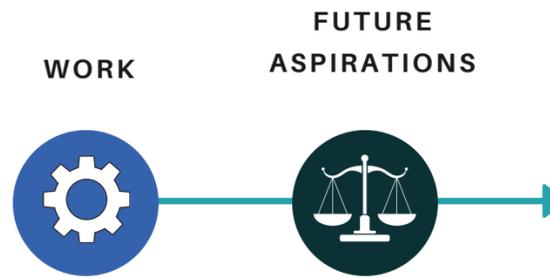
## GRADUATES FROM UNIVERSITY

Rebecca felt that **she belonged** at The University of St Andrews. Rebecca graduated in 2020 with a First Class degree in MA (Hons) Geography. She is **delighted and very proud** of her achievements.

Rebecca has also been awarded another scholarship which will fund her to go to university in America. This has been delayed due to Covid-19 but is set to go ahead in 2021. When Rebecca was applying for the scholarship, she wrote about her Care Experience. She was very transparent about her past and her care identity.

Education has been transformative for Rebecca, she says, ***“Education made me feel like I’d found myself, it gave me something to hold on to.”***





## WORK & FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

### STUDYING ABROAD AND POST-GRADUATE PLANNING

Rebecca is currently working at The University of St Andrews as part of the admissions team. She is focusing on **widening participation** to reach out to atypical students from all backgrounds to encourage them to apply to The University of St Andrews as **they also belong there**.

In the future, Rebecca plans to study law. On returning from America in 2022, Rebecca would like to study a **post-graduate degree in Law** and then **train to become a lawyer**.



# REBECCA

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## KEY LEARNINGS



### **BE PROACTIVE IN REACHING OUT TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS**

It wasn't until representatives from a university came to speak at Rebecca's college that she even considered going to university. Be proactive in reaching out to prospective Care Experienced students, you could play a hugely important role in building their confidence to apply to university.



### **RELATIONSHIPS MATTER**

Rebecca hadn't told anyone about her Care Experience until she confided in a college lecturer. Treat each Care Experienced student as a unique individual with respect and care as well as having a good understanding of what Care Experience means.

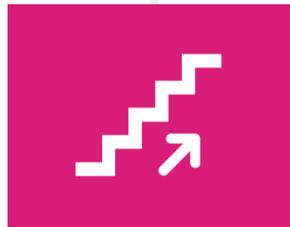


### **ENCOURAGE CARE EXPERIENCED STUDENTS TO ACCESS SUPPORT**

Rebecca was concerned about what might happen if she self-declares, however it turned out to be hugely positive. Be mindful that it can be hard for Care Experienced students to self-declare when they are worried about stigma. Remind them of the help that is available and explain that this is in place to support rather than stigmatise.

# REBECCA

## KEY LEARNINGS



### **BE AWARE OF THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE**

Scholarships have been a huge help for Rebecca financially, and have also allowed her to travel abroad to study for a year. Be aware of the unique supports your institution offers, and be ready to signpost and support Care Experienced students to apply.



### **PROVIDE MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Rebecca is currently working within the admissions team at the university she attended. Her focus is on widening participation, helping others to feel the sense of belonging she did. Consider what opportunities you could offer to Care Experienced people as an employer.



### **SUPPORT NEXT STEPS**

Rebecca has plans to return to her studies at post-graduate level and to ultimately train as a lawyer. Support Care Experienced people to achieve their goals, get to know them and what they want to do in the future. Consider how you could support their next steps.