

# CELCIS Blog - Just do it!

Louise Martin, the University of Strathclyde's Widening Access Support Officer, talks about what care leavers and their carers need to know about going to university. The podcast is Jennifer Lynch a second year Chemistry student. She talks about her experience of coming to Strathclyde as a care leaver and the support she received.

## Jennifer Lynch

Strathclyde were great from the minute I applied, I ticked a box on UCAS, I got an email through from their widening access team saying we're here if you apply this X, Y and Z. Particularly about grants and applications, because those deadlines were coming up, and through that and those emails, I managed to get a scholarship in order to come here, which is massively beneficial. And then from the minute we arrived, you got the emails reminding you we are here, that is what you can access this is who to contact. And particularly, they were really good for flagging up the extra opportunities that were available to care leavers. So, any kind of extra support groups, any opportunities for widening access, they were right there. And inviting us onto the Strathclyde Cares Committees were brilliant because it was a chance for us to be directly involved in any kind of procedural application changes, in regards to care leavers. It was really nice to have that openness because in social work a lot of the time you know, that's not common. You're just told this is what's happening - and maybe we'll see and be involved in that process of understanding care leavers needs, in particular and catering to that and the university trying to bring more of us into our education was really rewarding.

I like to think that all unis do that, but here just it has been a brilliant opportunity to get really involved into trying to broaden the experience of care leavers coming into uni and trying to build us more as a demographic and our own right. Through some of the stuff that they've done here, I've gotten involved with various charities that link into care support. Various other students that are at the university that want to do some kind of thing as me try and get a group of us together, trying to talk and promote the fact that, you know, coming to university isn't exclusively normal, I guess - If anyone can be classed as having normal backgrounds. If you're a care leaver, you're just as welcome here, you're just as likely to succeed here. And it has, it has just been a brilliant opportunity working with Louise and the rest of the widening access team throughout the two years I've been here and I really look forward to working with them in the future.

So Strathclyde, I really love the fact that they endorse the positive care identity, they really reinforce that you should talk about your care experience, you should be proud about it. And it shouldn't be something that's kind of hidden away, which I think some institutions do encourage it's like, oh, no, you're the same as everybody else. Whereas here, it's very much like you're not like everyone else, but that's a good thing. You know, you should be proud of what you've been through and you should be proud that you've gotten this far to uni. So we'll give you the support you need to really make a success of that. And being around other care leavers who have that same attitude is really empowering as well. If you ever getting down about it, you know that there's loads of them around, above and below you year-wise that have gone through exactly the same thing. And having the network that the widening access team provides to do that is brilliant.

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