

Students' Union Welfare Officers – How to get your university to support the Going Higher in Scotland campaign

Thank you for taking the time to consider supporting Going Higher in Scotland. As Welfare Officer for your Students' Union, you have an important part to play in ensuring that all students are able to reach their potential by improving their lives outside academia.

This campaign focusses on student carers, a group that is often forgotten but whose grades, health and wellbeing can be vastly improved by universities taking a few simple steps.

Carers Trust Scotland research – 'Young adult carers' experiences of college and university' revealed that:

- Half the days young adult carers spent at college or university were affected because of caring. This could be coming in late, leaving early or absence for the whole day
- Young adult carers are four times more likely to drop out of college or university than their peers
- 42% juggled paid employment alongside time spent in education and caring responsibilities.

We need your help to improve the lives of student and young adult carers so they aren't at an unfair disadvantage. Will you join us?



The top three things we are asking all universities to do is **identity, support** and **report** on young adult carers at university. This won't just be your responsibility, or even the responsibility of one team within the university. It is something that everyone needs to get behind.

Identify

- A vast majority of universities do not have a way to formally identify the number of carers attending their institution
- Student carers are not a prioritised group in Widening Access strategies for many universities
- **The Going Higher in Scotland campaign is requesting that universities routinely ask all their students if they have caring responsibilities through their annual admissions procedures, for student carers to become prioritised in university Widening Access Strategies and for institutions to reach out to young adult carers and promote their institution as a good place to study for carers.**

Support

- It isn't just about counting the number of carers. It's about giving them the support to reach their potential
- This can be seemingly small changes for example, extending loans on books so carers have time to read them in the evenings or bigger changes like including

carers within the criteria for emergency grants or giving them access to counselling

- **The Going Higher in Scotland campaign is asking for all student carers to be offered tailored support throughout their time at university and for the support that is available to be widely promoted. We are encouraging teaching staff and university support staff to undertake carer awareness training as standard or as part of their continued professional development. We also want universities to develop their own carer support policy to ensure there are consistent and clear processes for supporting carers at universities.**

Report

- This is the chance for universities to show off about how well they are doing in supporting carers
- If universities monitor how students are doing right from when they apply to the university to when they graduate it will make it easier to find out how best to support them
- **The Going Higher in Scotland campaign is asking universities to monitor and report on the destination of student carers in their institution.**

What can I do to support Going Higher in Scotland?

Campaign supporters are our biggest asset to make Going Higher in Scotland a success. Below is a general list of options of what you could do to promote and support Going Higher in Scotland.

- Post our campaign message on your social network communities:
“I'm supporting Going Higher in Scotland to unlock student carer potential #TTBH @CarersTrustScot”
- Use our Time to be Heard for Young Adult Carers hashtag **#TTBH** when sharing your campaign work on social media
- Tell your family and friends about Going Higher in Scotland and ask them to show their support too
- Write letters to your local MSP about the campaign, asking them to support Going Higher in Scotland
- Submit blog posts to Carers Trust Scotland about your university's campaign efforts
- Publicise these campaign efforts to local media sources
- Keep Carers Trust Scotland updated on what you have been doing to promote and support Going Higher in Scotland. The campaign will be stronger if we can share practice and demonstrate widespread support.

Please also read the full [Supporters Campaign Guide](#) for further background about why this is such an important issue.

Working alongside your Widening Access/Participation team is a great way to promote Going Higher in Scotland and a great place to start for discussing student carers across the university.

A template letter/email is in this pack that you can use when you first approach the Head of Widening Access/Participation.

You should be able to find the name and contact details of your Widening Access/Participation team on your university website but if you are having trouble please get in touch with Paul Traynor at Carers Trust Scotland either by calling 0141 285 7929 or emailing p Traynor@carers.org and he will help.

If you decide to support the Going Higher in Scotland campaign, Carers Trust Scotland will be with you every step of the way to provide advice and guidance.

So carers know that your Students' Union supports carers we will

- add the name of your Students' Union to the [Carers Trust website](#) so prospective students know that your Students' Union will be there for them
- give you **posters** to put up on campus to [raise awareness](#) of student carers, the [difficulties](#) that they can experience and advertise the support that your university offers

- send you a [press release](#) for your student newspaper to publicise your support for the Going Higher in Scotland campaign

You can sign your Students' Union up to the campaign [here](#).

Template email/letter to send to the Head of Widening Access/Participation

This is just a template so don't feel that you have to stick to the format at all. Add as much of your opinions and experiences as you like.

Dear [Name of the Head of Widening Access/Participation]

Introduce yourself

- Your full name
- Your role in the Students' Union
- Why you are writing to them (mention the Going Higher in Scotland campaign)

Information about who carers are

- Not everyone knows about carers or that there are carers at the university
- This is a sample paragraph. You can use this or customise it

At this university, there will be students who are caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend with a disability, mental illness and/ or addiction problem. They can come from any background and be studying for any course. They possess a great number of skills for example being conscientious, budgeting and time management.

Statistics

- This strengthens your argument and shows that this is an urgent issue for everyone. The statistics come from Carers Trust's research on [Young Adult Carers at College and University](#)
- Below is a sample paragraph. You can use it or customise it

This should make them excellent students. However, the results of a survey of young adult carers released by Carers Trust show that they are struggling to fulfil their potential.

- Half the days young adult carers spent at college or university were affected because of caring. This could be coming in late, leaving early or absence for the whole day
- Young adult carers are four times more likely to drop out of college or university than their peers
- 42% juggle paid employment alongside time spent in education and caring responsibilities.

Why this is important to you

- Talk about the meeting that you had with the students who met with you to ask for your support
- Mention if there is anything that particularly sparked your interest in the Going Higher in Scotland campaign

The solution

- This needs to be kept simple and manageable.
- Please keep the boxed section as it is so all universities are aiming for the same thing but customise the rest if you like

However, it doesn't have to be like this. Three simple steps can make all the difference for young adult carers' academic attainment, health and wellbeing.

Carers Trust Scotland is asking all universities to:

- Identify the number of student carers attending their university
- Support all student carers throughout their education to ensure they maintain good mental health, complete their course and achieve the best grades possible
- Report on student carers in the institution and to showcase the university's achievements

Your offer of a meeting

- Make sure this section is very clear so the Head of Widening Access/Participation knows why you have contacted them

I would like to meet with you to discuss the issues that have been raised with me and explore how we can work together to ensure all young adult carers at this university are able to thrive.

Signing off

- Thank the reader for their time
- Add your contact details. This could be an email or your phone number
- Tell them that you are looking forward to their reply. This reinforces that this is a conversation rather than you giving information
- Sign your full name

Make sure that you have read the full [Supporter Campaign Guide](#) first to give you more background about why this is such an important issue.

At the meeting

Again, this is just a suggested structure. It is arranged in chronological order but change as much of it as you like.

Introduce yourself

Information about who carers are

- Not everyone knows about carers or that there are carers at the university
- Add some statistics from Carers Trust's research on [Young Adult Carers at College and University](#) . This will get them thinking about what they could do

Explain what the Going Higher in Scotland campaign is about in detail

- Identify, support, report
- Bring this pack with you to expand more on the detail behind them

Explain why you feel passionately about Going Higher in Scotland

- This is where you can talk about personal experiences of carers and caring

Ask if the Head of Widening Access/Participation can support the campaign

- If they seem reluctant to commit straight away ask them to agree another time to meet to discuss further

Please let us know about your hard work so we can let everyone know that you are part of a Students' Union that welcomes carers.

Tweet **@CarersTrustScot, #TTBH**. Give us a call or send us an email. Your name will be added to our website and your experience can be used to inspire others to support the Going Higher in Scotland campaign and improve the university experiences of young adult carers.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Going Higher in Scotland campaign or are looking for ideas on what else you could do to promote the campaign then please get in touch with Carers Trust Scotland and we will help you.

Just call 0141 285 7929 and ask for Paul Traynor (Young Adult Carer Policy and Campaigns Officer) or email: ptraynor@carers.org