

EDUCATION



Don't let cancer wreck your study plans. The timing is tough, but there are people and services available to help you. Here's how you can speak up about your diagnosis and get help while you study.

What support can I get?

Whether you're just starting out, part-way through or wrapping up your education, cancer can send plans into a spin. Help is out there. Let's take a look at what your college or university could offer:

- Recognising you may need time off for hospital appointments and treatment
- Extra time for coursework and extensions to deadlines
- Access to someone to take notes for you
- Help for your food needs (eg access to storage for chilled food, or eating extra snacks in class)
- Flexibility in attendance and punctuality to help with hospital visits
- Supervised rest breaks during exams
- Support from teachers when you're away
- Staff awareness of cancer and its impact (your situation can remain confidential).

Do I have rights?

Absolutely. The Equality Act protects disabled people from being treated unfairly. And you automatically meet the Equality Act definition of 'disabled' from the day you're diagnosed.

Colleges in England, Scotland and Wales must not discriminate against disabled students. In Northern Ireland you have similar rights under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO). Your college/university also has to make reasonable adjustments (like the list above) so you're not at a disadvantage. It's their legal duty.

How do I get support?

Tell your college/university about your diagnosis so they can start putting things in place. It's your choice if – or even when – you tell people, but doing it early will give more time to organise support.

Meet your support staff (AKA learning support advisors, inclusive learning coordinators or disability advisors). You can usually request a first appointment on the phone or by email. It's all confidential.

Will I be assessed?

Some colleges and universities will ask you to do a needs assessment. This is a face-to-face meeting with someone who understands how to support students with health conditions. They can make extra recommendations to get any additional support you need.

In **England**, you may also have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessment. The EHC plan will look at all your education, health and social needs up to the age of 25. This plan can be shared with your place of education so they can provide the necessary support.

If you live in **Wales** you could be assessed for a statement of educational needs.

For **Northern Ireland**, head to eani.org.uk to find out more about assessments and support.

Or for **Scotland**, visit enquire.org.uk for more information about assessments.

Can I get special equipment?

If you need equipment while on campus, you should be able to loan it from your college/university. Extra costs (like employing support workers, note-takers etc) should be covered in your college or university's Learning Support budget so you won't be out of pocket. If you're going to university, check out the Disabled Students' Allowance to see if you could be eligible for financial support, specialist equipment and access to support workers.

Do I have to keep paying for my student accommodation?

Check your agreement

Look at the legal agreement that sets out your accommodation rights. If you're in halls or other uni accommodation this may be a licence agreement; for private accommodation, a tenancy agreement. Remember that Scotland and Northern Ireland each have separate laws to England and Wales.

Your agreement is probably for a fixed term, but you may have the right to end it early if you stop your studies. This may be a standard break clause after six months, or a special right of termination if you're formally interrupting your studies. If you're a private tenant in Scotland (ie not in halls) you may have the right to terminate with 28 days' notice.

If you're a joint tenant, discuss any early termination with your housemates, as it could affect them as well. It may only be possible with their cooperation, so have a chat about what you need. Sometimes you can end your agreement early without penalty if you find someone who'll take over your room. Try asking around in university/college groups on social, or look into advertising online.

Negotiate

If you don't have a legal right of early termination then you could approach your landlord, explaining your situation and asking what they can do. If your accommodation provider is the university itself or another large organisation, then it's in their interest to be seen as sympathetic. A private landlord may not feel under this type of pressure, but may well be understanding.

Financial obligations

If you can't terminate your agreement early, either by right or through negotiation, you'll probably have to pay rent for the remainder of the fixed term. You need to take all debts seriously, but there are always ways to handle them and lots of support available. The important thing is not to ignore debts and hope they'll go away.

Get advice

You don't have to sort this all out alone. Contact us on the details below, or try:

- Citizens Advice
- Shelter
- Housing Advice NI (for Northern Ireland)
- Stepchange and National Debtline.

There may also be a Student Welfare service at your university or college that can provide support.

Contact us for support, Monday to Friday:

Phone: 0300 303 5220 (9am–5pm)

Email: getsupport@younglivesvs cancer.org.uk (9am–5pm)

Live chat at [younglivesvs cancer.org.uk](https://www.younglivesvs cancer.org.uk) (10am–4pm)



**Scan the QR code for more support
if cancer is affecting your studies**

Young Lives vs Cancer helps young people and their families find the strength to face everything cancer throws at them. We've been there before. We'll face it all, together.