

About 50% of young people now go to university, and many of them will move away from their family and home church. For most of those it will be the first time that they experience independence - living amongst strangers, managing finances, balancing the demands of study and socialising.

Going to university offers new experiences - some positive, some perhaps less so.

Christian young people may face new moral choices and may feel isolated if they are not amongst others who share their faith.

Churches can provide important support to these young people, both in preparing them for their first weeks and months away from home, and in the longer term.



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BRANCHING OUT

**SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE WHO
ARE GOING TO UNIVERSITY**



Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Getting ready to go ...

- Invest in building good relationships with the young people in your church before they go to university. It will be easier to keep in touch with them if you have already established friendships.
- Invite students who have just finished their first year, and perhaps others who are further on, to meet up for a meal, talk about their experience and answer questions from the prospective students. If your church doesn't have young people who are already at university, see if you can arrange a joint event with some other local churches.
- Put on a series of informal seminars or group conversations in a relaxed environment on issues or challenges that young people might face at university, for example mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, relationships. Invite facilitators from Christian organisations to run these events if you don't have the expertise within your congregation.
- Ask the young people what they would like to know about and provide appropriate literature.

Initial contacts ...

- Make contact with a church from your own denomination and ask if someone (with the student's permission to pass on contact details) will contact the student and invite them to a service or social event, perhaps arranging to meet them beforehand so that they feel more comfortable in going for the first time.
- Put the student in touch with a university chaplain. Their contact details are usually available on the university website.
- Find out if there are any Christian groups in the university and pass on the details to the student. You will find links to some of these groups on the FCG website: www.freechurches.org.uk/higher-education



Practical help...

- Find out if anyone in your church or another local church knows students already at the university. It is often helpful for young people to have a point of contact for asking questions about accommodation, university life and getting around, and Christian students may be able to offer insights into the different churches in the area.
- Help students to find accommodation. There may be people in your church or other local churches who have family or friends in the university town or city, and they may be able to help with finding accommodation.

