

Studying at university and living away from home can be a time of exciting challenges, but also of difficulty and sometimes hardship. Churches in towns or cities where there are universities have real chances to make a difference to the lives of the students in those places.

Churches have a huge amount to offer to students but not many churches can do it all. A group of local churches might consider meeting together to discuss what each church might contribute, extending the range rather than competing.

Churches have the opportunity to be beacons of hope and centres of support for students, offering God's love and fellowship in their communities.



27 Tavistock Square
London
WC1H 9HH
www.freechurches.org.uk

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

SUPPORTING UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS IN YOUR COMMUNITY



Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Meeting needs...

- **Food cupboard:**
Food poverty can be a real issue for students, particularly towards the end of term. It's always good to offer hospitality involving a meal, but you might also like to stock a cupboard in the church with bags of pasta and rice, jars of pasta sauce, tins of soup and baked beans, tea, coffee, hot chocolate and other non-perishables, along with a supply of carrier bags. If someone becomes aware of a student who is running short of money, they can discreetly offer a bag of food that will keep them going for a few days.
- **Study space:**
Churches often have spaces that are empty during the week. University buildings can often be very busy and it can be difficult for students to find a place to work. A study space can be offered on a regular, perhaps weekly, basis or, with more knowledge of how the university works, when assignments are due in. The church provides a warm and comfortable room, with tables and chairs. Volunteers from the church are available to make drinks and provide a listening ear.
- **Mentors:**
Volunteers from the church work with students who want help in organising their work, their finances or even their prayer life. It is important that the volunteers are given some training in listening skills and are able to recognise when they cannot meet the needs of the student, but should refer them to another service.
- **Discretionary fund:**
A pot of money, from donations, that can be used to help students who are struggling financially.
- **Build up a resource with details of particular services that support students, both on the campus and in the community, including helplines and web-based resources.**
Put notices about support services on the church notice board and have leaflets available

Going further ...

- Employ a chaplain or student worker, perhaps through a group of local churches. They can get to know the students, organise events, build links with chaplains and Christian student workers on the campus. They offer support to students and can call in support if there is a problem.
- Keep in touch during university vacations. Use a social media group to keep them up-to-date with church news and to find out how they are doing.



With thanks to the students and student workers from King's Church in Portsmouth for sharing their experience and ideas.