

The Ragdoll Foundation unlocks opportunities for University of Sheffield students most in need

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Over the next five years, the Ragdoll Foundation is set to offer crucial financial and career assistance to 30 students from underrepresented backgrounds. Their generous gift of £195,000 will support scholarships and employability initiatives at the University of Sheffield to level the playing field for those students most in need.



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Investing in young people

With a longstanding commitment to attracting and supporting students from lower income and underrepresented backgrounds, the University of Sheffield is passionate about providing equal opportunities for all. Now, even more young people will be supported to reach their full potential here, thanks to the Ragdoll Foundation's generosity.

The Ragdoll Foundation Scholarship and Employability Programme at Sheffield will create four new undergraduate and two new postgraduate scholarships each year for the next five years. Ragdoll Foundation Scholars will also receive bespoke careers coaching, internship opportunities in local small and midsize enterprises (SMEs), and employability funding - giving them the best possible chance of building successful, fulfilling careers after graduating. With a focus on widening participation amongst underrepresented groups, the initiative is particularly keen to support young women and students from the North East of England who want to take on a degree with a strong creative element.

A gift from personal experience

Sheffield alumna, Dr Anne Wood CBE (HonLittD 2014), is the visionary behind the Ragdoll Foundation and creator of iconic and innovative children's programmes such as *Teletubbies* and *In The Night Garden* through her company, Ragdoll Productions. Anne deeply understands the value of this shared mission to create a climate of equal opportunities for all and is passionate about giving young people a voice.

"I have long admired the University of Sheffield's history and its record of enabling students from less secure economic backgrounds to achieve their full potential. As a girl growing up in the 1950s in the North East of England, options were limited. It gives me great personal pleasure now to be able to make a contribution towards lifting those limits and encouraging bigger creative aspirations for today's students."



Dr Anne Wood CBE, HonLittD 2014
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"We are tremendously grateful to Anne Wood and the Ragdoll Foundation for this extremely generous donation, that will change the lives of so many students here at Sheffield.

"The University of Sheffield has always been, and remains, fully committed to empowering students from underrepresented backgrounds and helping them to achieve their full potential. The generous philanthropic support of partners like the Ragdoll Foundation, and alumni and friends like Anne Wood, means that we can go further and faster in achieving this mission.

"We are delighted to be partnering with Anne and the Ragdoll Foundation on this transformative programme that will help to deliver our mutual ambitions for widening access to education, redressing inequalities in skills development, promoting employability, and unlocking young people's creativity and talent.

"We extend our sincerest thanks to them for their generosity, vision, and dedication to making such a profound impact on the lives of young people at the University of Sheffield."

Professor Koen Lamberts
President and Vice-Chancellor
The University of Sheffield



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Additional information

The Ragdoll Foundation Scholarships will be awarded each year to four eligible undergraduate and two postgraduate students who embark on their degrees between 2023 and 2028. Eligible disciplines will include English, Modern Languages, Music, Architecture, Landscape, Marketing, Education, Philosophy, Urban & Planning Studies, and Archaeology.

Ragdoll Foundation Scholars will receive:

- **Scholarship funding**
Four £3,600 undergraduate scholarships and two £10,000 postgraduate scholarships are available per year for the next five years.
- **SME internship**
70-hour internship in an SME or charity in the South Yorkshire region through the University's SME Summer Internship Programme.
- **Personal Equal Opportunities Fund**
Employability expenses for purchasing professional work clothing, travel expenses for interviews or placements.
- **Careers coaching and mentoring**
Bespoke 1-2-1 careers coaching and mentoring sessions through the University's Careers service.
- **Financial support**
Additional targeted financial support as needed to help scholars secure paid work, internships, placements, or work experience.

Notes for Editors

The Ragdoll Foundation, founded in 2000 by Anne and Barrie Wood, with the support of Ragdoll Productions, is dedicated to nurturing imaginative and innovative work that reflects the world from a child's or young person's perspective.

Between 2016 and 2023 the Ragdoll Foundation awarded project funding to support the cultural sector's creative engagement with children and young people. The Ragdoll Foundation Programme at the University of Sheffield is a legacy initiative of the Foundation. <http://www.ragdollfoundation.org.uk/>

Press Enquiries

For enquiries about Ragdoll Productions or Dr Anne Wood CBE, please contact Mary Hagger, mary@haggerpr.com.

For University of Sheffield press enquiries, please contact Alice Fletcher, Media and PR Assistant, Corporate Communications alice.fletcher@sheffield.ac.uk.

For student enquiries about the Ragdoll Foundation Scholarships, or other scholarship opportunities at the University of Sheffield, please contact funding@sheffield.ac.uk.

Link to the full University of Sheffield news release: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/new-scholarships-will-unlock-opportunities-sheffield-students-most-need>.