



THE MANCHESTER
METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

from the Vice-Chancellor
Professor Malcolm Press

Becca Bland
Chief Executive
Stand Alone
34B York Way
London
N1 9AB

21 October 2016

Dear Becca

I am writing to commit Manchester Metropolitan University to the Stand Alone Pledge. Manchester is a diverse city with many local populations and groups who can become vulnerable through family estrangement and disownment. Manchester Metropolitan recognises that students who are studying without the support of a family network face challenges that can be detrimental to their academic success. We have embraced the opportunity to enhance our understanding of these issues and have recognised the importance of embedding tailored support to ensure barriers to accessing Higher Education (HE) and succeeding at University are removed.

Manchester Met is currently supporting estranged students through our access to learning fund, as well as providing bursaries to assist students with paying rent over the summer period and offering 365-day accommodation if required.

During the 2015/2016 academic year, we worked with Stand Alone to develop targeted marketing material, which assisted in identifying more estranged students at the University and enabled us to support 97 students over the summer period.

This work is underpinned by the creation of our Linking Opportunities to University Support (LOTUS) project, which has connected different teams across the University to provide a single point through which estranged students are able to access the support we provide. We have also set up a LOTUS ambassador scheme, which provides these students with the opportunity for paid work with our Widening Participation team.

Over the lifetime of the pledge, Manchester Metropolitan will work to improve the identification of estranged students studying at the University, and the support we provide to them. We will seek to break down the stigma associated with disclosing difficult family circumstances to staff and support professionals. Through ongoing work with the LOTUS team, we will aim to provide focused interventions, including peer support; outreach activities to challenge the perceived barriers to accessing HE; and enhanced information, advice and guidance about the support that is available for estranged students studying at the University.

I am delighted we are working with Stand Alone and strongly support the work the organisation undertakes in raising awareness and supporting the needs of students who have removed themselves from their family network without the intervention of the local authority. Stand Alone undertakes vital research to underpin interventions relating to the complex needs and vulnerabilities that come with estrangement. This research has been beneficial in highlighting opportunities for enhancements to the University support provision, meaning we are now better equipped to meet students' needs.

For your information, I have asked Peter Riley, Head of Widening Participation and Student Financial Support, to take responsibility for overseeing our Stand Alone Pledge.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melwyn Preen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.