

28 September 2016

Stand Alone  
34b York Way  
London  
N1 9AB

Dear Sir/Madam

**The University of Strathclyde's commitment to the Stand Alone Pledge to support estranged students**

As Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Strathclyde, I wish to publicly commit Strathclyde to Stand Alone's Pledge and become Champion for Scotland to support estranged students.

At Strathclyde, we understand that estranged students often have unstable family backgrounds. They are likely to face financial barriers and may lack a social network to support them during their studies. Estranged young people are likely to be under-represented within the student population and those who do navigate the application process will be more vulnerable to withdrawal, academic failure and homelessness than other groups of students.

Improving understanding of, and support for, this group aligns with many of Strathclyde's current priorities and activities. For example, our broad definition of 'care experienced students/care leavers' already encompasses those who inform the university that they could not live with their family and were cared for by, for example, a sibling in an informal arrangement. Our work with care leavers was recognised at the 'exemplary' level under the Buttle UK Quality Mark. The higher frequency of estrangement for transgender students has been echoed in very early findings from our SFC-funded Trans.Edu Scotland research project and has parallels with our Equally Safe project exploring issues of gender-based violence. Finally, the Pledge aligns with our Widening Participation Strategy which provides support throughout the learner journey for any group currently under-represented at Strathclyde.

We are committed to supporting estranged students and to developing our offering for this group. I will meet with estranged students studying without family support, to personally learn more about their experiences and their support needs. Under the direction of our Widening Access Team, the University will also outline the current support offering in the four key areas of finance; accommodation, mental health and wellbeing; and access and transition. We will then identify objectives within each key area in a three-year improvement plan to enhance support for estranged students.

Yours faithfully



Professor Sir Jim McDonald  
*Principal and Vice-Chancellor*

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**The place of useful learning**