

Vice-Chancellor and Warden

SC/DB

19 December 2018

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

Dear Ms Bland,

The Stand Alone Pledge: Supporting Estranged Students

Durham University is committed to supporting students underrepresented in Higher Education. We believe very strongly that if an individual has the academic potential to study at Durham they should be supported right across the student journey, from application to graduate employment. We recognise that some students face particular challenges as they lack the family support that the majority of students have. With this in mind, we are committed to ensuring that students estranged from their families receive a level of support that will allow them to thrive whilst part of our community. We are happy to commit to the Stand Alone Pledge.

In order to support students estranged from their families we can offer the following:

- **Student Financial Support** – Designated staff provide information, advice and support. Those defined as an estranged student by Student Finance England (or equivalent) are eligible to receive the full Durham Grant, currently £2,000 per year. The university also operates a hardship fund for cases of urgent financial hardship.
- **Accommodation** – University accommodation is available 365 days a year. At Durham students are not required to provide a guarantor or pay a deposit for University accommodation. Our Students' Union are also working on a guarantor scheme to support estranged students in private housing.
- **Mental Health & Wellbeing** – We recognise the particular needs that estranged students might have, especially around mental health. Our Colleges provide a pastoral support network able to offer support and guidance, as well as signposting students to relevant services such as Disability Support or the Counselling Service. Academic Advisers, responsible for providing academic support and guidance, are available in academic departments.

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Professor Stuart Corbridge

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- **Outreach & Transition** - Estranged students are prioritised for the University's two Year 12 outreach programmes (Supported Progression and Sutton Trust). Successful completion of either programme can lead to a guaranteed conditional offer that is typically two grades below the standard offer.

In order to bring this support together Durham has a single point of contact for estranged students. Jordan Donohue is available to offer advice to any student pre or post enrolment. Her details are available, along with more information about the support we offer, on our new dedicated webpage for estranged students - <https://www.dur.ac.uk/estranged.students>.

We realise there is still a lot more we can do and we are committed to tailoring support for estranged students by listening to the students themselves. It is our sincere hope that anyone with the ability and desire to benefit from a Durham education can do so, regardless of background, or family circumstance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Corbridge', written in a cursive style.

Professor Stuart Corbridge
Vice-Chancellor and Warden