

Susan Mueller
HE Project Director
Stand Alone
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Dear Susan,

At Goldsmiths, we are committed to supporting our students and creating opportunities for people to study what they love and gain qualifications to help them change their lives.

We understand that students bring many different life experiences with them and Goldsmiths is a richer academic community thanks to this diversity.

Among this rich mix are students who, for whatever reason, do not have family support. We aim to provide these students with the advice, guidance and practical help they need.

We do not assume that our students leave a traditional family to join us at the age of 18; many of our students are parents themselves, carers, care leavers, have travelled from a different country or have not had a straightforward pathway to university life.

Goldsmiths has in place excellent professional student support services as well as informed and specifically appointed academic staff in our departments who take an ongoing interest in the pastoral care of students as well as their academic progress.

We are currently undertaking a project to enhance the support provided for care leavers and join up the support we provide at outreach, finance and accommodation to provide an applicant to alumni support journey: ensuring that those without a family network become an integral and valued part of ours.

Contact with care leavers is part of our outreach activities, we work with our regional access network and social workers to provide support and awareness of higher education opportunities to young people in the care system. We prioritise the applications of those who indicate that they have an experience of care. Some of our Student Ambassadors involved in outreach work and welcome activities are care leavers and so are able to understand the experiences of students without a family network.

We award five care leaver scholarships of £4,000 each year and offer all students with experience of care an all-year accommodation contract to cover the holiday periods when students may normally wish to return to family homes. We also have a rent guarantor scheme whereby the university will act in this capacity for students who wish to rent in the private sector.

In addition to this we have a team of Campus Support Officers who are trained members of staff who cover out of hours support so we are able to be there for our students 24/7. Campus Support Officers make themselves known to students who may have more difficulty settling into campus life for whatever reason – so aiding their transition into a new community.

All student have access to our Wellbeing Team and Inclusion & Learning Support Teams who support mental health, counselling and disability needs of students. Our chaplains offer support to

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students of all faiths and none and run many events throughout the year. One new initiative being put into place is the building of a yurt to create a space for mindfulness, meditation and quiet contemplation.

In addition to all of this we are incredibly proud to be home to one of the sector's leading widening participation initiatives.

Our Open Book project this year won The Guardian's Student Diversity and Widening Participation Award – and is nominated for the Widening Participation or Outreach Initiative of the Year prize at the prestigious Times Higher Education Awards.

Open Book works with socially excluded people and has helped hundreds - including those with an offending or addiction background - complete undergraduate and postgraduate degrees or to simply engage in education for education's sake.

By committing to the Stand Alone pledge and continuing with our existing projects we hope to enhance the support we provide to estranged students and care leavers by joining up the support journey and making it very clear to students that they have help if they need it at every step of their student journey. We intend to:

- Enhance applicant information on our website and give more advice about applying for financial support and disclosing/evidencing an absence of family support and guide specific advice to those who disclose experience of care/estrangement at offer stage.
- Create a tailored pathway in the on-line accommodation induction
- Quick guides to finding and bursaries
- Peer to peer mentoring scheme
- A proposal to create a part time Student Union officer post
- Specific Careers support for preparedness for employment and gaining internship opportunities
- Graduation support packages
- To create an alumni network to continue the community post-graduation and encourage students to share experiences and inspire those coming along behind them.

The project will explore enhanced support for care leavers and estranged students, ensuring that we have definitions that feel applicable to both groups so the support can be presented as accessible.

The person leading the project is one of our students who has experience of care, Thomas Ankin and the member of staff with overall responsibility is Louise Jennings, Head of Student Advice and Wellbeing.

I am very proud of the support we offer to students but I feel strongly that we must always look for opportunities to extend the range and depth of our support.

In committing to the Stand Alone pledge I believe we are doing just that – and that by working together we can ensure that Goldsmiths students will never need to stand alone.

Yours sincerely,


Patrick Loughrey
Warden