



**University of
Sunderland**

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Dear Becca

I am delighted to commit the University of Sunderland to the *Stand Alone Pledge*, and fully support the work that Stand Alone undertakes in raising awareness and supporting the needs of young people who have found themselves removed from their family network.

This is something very close to us here at the University of Sunderland. We have been one of highest performing institutions in the UK for attracting students from under-represented groups for more than twenty five years. We operate in an area where young people are least likely to access higher education.

Having worked for many years to raise aspirations and attainment levels in the region, the University is recognised as an exemplar in this field and renowned for its widening participation success. We have previously been recognised by Buttle UK as an exemplar organisation and have won numerous national awards in this area.

We already have a strong support package in place for vulnerable groups such as care leavers, and this support will be extended to those who are studying without the foundation of a family network as we recognise the challenges these students face.

Our dedicated Access to HE Team, which provides outreach support for such students in schools and colleges, as well as supporting our own students, has a wealth of experience and makes such a difference to the lives of vulnerable students.

I am delighted we are working with Stand Alone, to build on our good practice with other schools, colleges and universities to raise awareness and support for those estranged from their families. It is essential that we are able to offer those with talent, regardless of background, the opportunity to have that life changing experience.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage any young person considering higher education to contact us through our Care Contact Centre on 0191 515 2216 or care.contact@sunderland.ac.uk

Yours Sincerely

Shirley Atkinson
Vice Chancellor
University of Sunderland