

10th March 2017

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

Dear Becca,

I write to pledge the commitment of the University of Derby to the Stand Alone pledge.

The University has a tradition of operating as an inclusive and friendly organisation. We pride ourselves on providing a warm and welcoming environment and being the University of choice for students from non-traditional backgrounds. We value the diversity of our student group and this is reinforced through our Mission statement and Values.

We know that the majority of students will have solid support from their families, friends and the communities they belong to. This support is a vital factor in building and sustaining confidence and success. Students who are not able to benefit from that consistent source of support face greater barriers. We recognise the disadvantage this can place on students; not just on achieving in their studies but also on navigating their way through higher education systems and processes.

We are pleased therefore to build upon the work we have already started for care experienced and estranged students and will be developing our services in order to extend provision. We currently offer:

- Accommodation in our Halls available 52 weeks of the year. We also have a Christmas Day lunch and social activities for students who are in Halls over the Christmas period.
- In relation to financial support we have a commitment to providing additional support to students from low income backgrounds. The Student Money, Advice and Rights team provide specific support and guidance to students estranged from their families to ensure they can access the full student funding they are entitled to. In addition, estranged students are a priority group for support for the University Bursary and Hardship Fund.
- Appointments with a Wellbeing Practitioner to address any issues affecting their wellbeing.
- Psycho-education workshops, delivered on academic programmes, focused on raising motivation, supporting students to manage their own emotional arousal, building

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understanding of the links between wellbeing and academic performance, setting goals and improving performance.

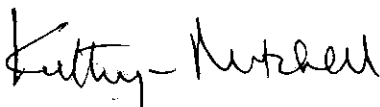
We will be seeking to build upon and develop further in the following areas:

- Our first priority is to meet with a group of estranged students and understand better the developments that are a priority for them.
- We note from Stand Alone's research that, of those students who are estranged from their families, 79% were affected before their 18th birthday. However, 76% of that group received no perceptible support from their local authority. At the University of Derby, Student Wellbeing and the Education Liaison teams are already working in partnership to deliver specific experience days for care experienced young people and to communicate the support available.
We will therefore ensure that we extend this in our outreach work in schools and colleges in order to convey the support available to estranged students. We will also develop opportunities for estranged young people to attend experience days and events in order to assist in the process of considering and applying to university.
- We know that a supportive and meaningful relationship with a significant adult at University is helpful in order to try to compensate for the lack of familial support that many other students will be receiving. A named mentor that each student can be linked into will enable this to happen.
- We will work with Halls management staff and University registered landlords (through Student Living) to identify other ways that we can seek to reduce the pressures that estranged students may face with accommodation.
- We will be working with other areas of the University to raise awareness of the needs of estranged students and look to set up further appropriate support in consultation with students.

We are pleased to be making this pledge and to be able to work with Stand Alone to develop our services. We are committed to developing models of excellent practice and we welcome the opportunity for monitoring on our commitment. It helps us to be challenged about what we do and how we do it so that we retain a focus on continuous improvement.

This pledge is a statement of our commitment both at the current time and to the development of future services.

Yours Sincerely,



Professor Kathryn Mitchell
Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive
University of Derby