

# **Estranged Students and Care Leavers- Outreach**

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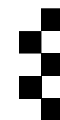
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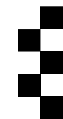
# What we'll be covering

- **Definition of an estranged student**
- **Past issues for estranged students**
- **Policy changes for estranged students and the Stand Alone Pledge**
- **UCAS**
- **How you can help estranged students considering Higher Education**
- **Summary of considerations of estranged students**



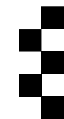
# What we'll be covering

- **Care Leavers – definitions**
- **Financial support for care leavers**
- **UCAS**
- **Summary of considerations for care leavers**
- **Useful website and information and links**



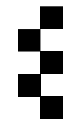
# Definition of an estranged student:

- **Students who are estranged have no communicative relationship with either of their biological parents and often their wider family networks as well.**
- **Students under 25 at the start of the academic year are usually considered ‘dependent’ and are expected to provide information about their parents’ income when applying for finance. However, estranged students should only be assessed on their own household income and not that of their biological or adoptive parents.**



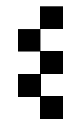
# Definition continued....

- **They may come from backgrounds similar to those of care leavers and may have experienced abuse, neglect, rejection or have been disowned for coming out as LGBTQ+ or for rejecting honour-based practices such as forced marriage.**
- **There are currently 9,300 estranged students in UK Universities.**



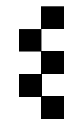
# Historic Lack of Support

- **Very few estranged young people receive statutory support with their family breakdown and mostly these issues occur in their teenage years and are not picked up by Social Services**
- **Without statutory support young people struggle to communicate their experiences to external agencies and have no avenues to address and overcome their experiences.**



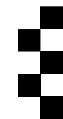
# The Past

- **Before Stand Alone, a charity for estranged young people's project in 2016 higher education providers had a low level of awareness around estranged students, did not acknowledge they needed support to overcome the barriers they faced and they were not recognised as a priority group.**
- **Although young people were able to qualify for the maximum statutory financial support for higher education as independent students, the stringent requirements made this almost impossible to evidence.**



# Policy Change in Higher Education

- **Estranged young people are now defined as a disadvantaged group of students and their need for support is recognised by Governmental regulators such as the Office for Students.**

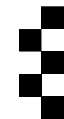




**84 UK Universities and Colleges  
have stated that they will be  
supporting estranged young  
people in their Access and  
Participation Plans**

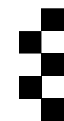
**£2.8M**

**per academic year has been allocated  
in bursaries for the estranged young  
people from the 46 pledging  
institutions**



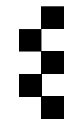
# The Pledge

- **Stand Alone Charity have created the Stand Alone Pledge**
- **This is a commitment by Higher Education providers and more specifically their Vice Chancellors to review and develop support for estranged students.**
- **This is approximately a 1/3 of the sector have decided to review this.**
- **It is worth any prospective estranged student looking at Universities they are interested in, to see if they have signed the pledge and if so what they are offering, and compare them.**
- **The pledge asks Universities to look at three key areas – finance, accommodation and mental health. This will vary depending on the University.**



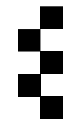
# How you can help students

- It is no longer necessary for students to prove their estranged status each year to Student Finance England, although this is evidence dependant.
- So it is really useful to provide students with a letter stating who you are, how long you have known them, what you know about their personal circumstances and if they are irreconsibably estranged and you foresee this being the case for the duration of their studies.
- That letter and confirmation by SFE is often used to provide grants and loans to students at University too.



# Stand Alone's impact

- **Despite the introduction of fees and the abolition of student maintenance grants, Student Loan's company data shows that applications from estranged students have only seen a very negligible drop.**
- **Over 4500 estranged students are now covered by better support in their higher education institution. These students have better financial support, accommodation policies and wellbeing strategies, including Essex.**

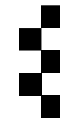


**One of our biggest challenges is to identify estranged students. Students were due to be able to self disclose through the UCAS form from 2021 but postponed currently.**



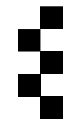
# Summary of considerations for estranged students considering University

- **Support at Universities will differ, please ask them to look at the ‘Pledge’ website <https://www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk/>**
- **Check the website of the institutions they’re considering and encourage them to get in touch in advance, so they know the support available and can plan accordingly.**
- **A carefully worded letter from a third party such as a teacher, social worker or foster carer can be invaluable to securing the maximum statutory loan through Student Finance and also for getting University grants and bursaries.**
- **We can help support these students in Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service- every University will have an equivalent - so please signpost students to us! We have no other way of currently knowing who they are unless they self disclose, as there is no ‘tick box’ on UCAS.**



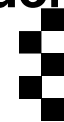
# Care Leavers

- **The broad definition of a care leaver (as described by the Care Leavers Association) is “Any adult who spent time in care as a child (i.e. under the age of 18). Such care could be in foster care, residential care (mainly children's homes), or other arrangements outside the immediate or extended family”**



# Definition

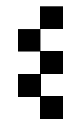
- **Care leaver – someone who was in care on their 16th birthday and has spent more than 13 weeks in care since the age of 14.**
- **Care-experienced – a wider definition which includes anyone who has any experience of being in care (e.g. including those who may have been adopted or returned to live with their birth family).**
- **Many estranged students are care experienced but would not be defined as Care Leavers, as 18% enter care at 16-17 years old or move around the system.**
- **If they are under the age of 25 then they are still under the care leaver team at their local council.**





# Why focus on Care Leavers?

- In the UK, care leavers are significantly less likely than their peers to be in higher education at age 19
- Care leavers have a higher risk of being of not being in Education, Employment or training – NEET at 19
- Care leavers that do attend university are more likely to do so through non-traditional routes (e.g. A Levels) and have delays or re-starts within their studies.



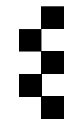
# However...

- **Care Leavers who do complete their degree are just as likely to achieve a first or upper class second as their peers.**

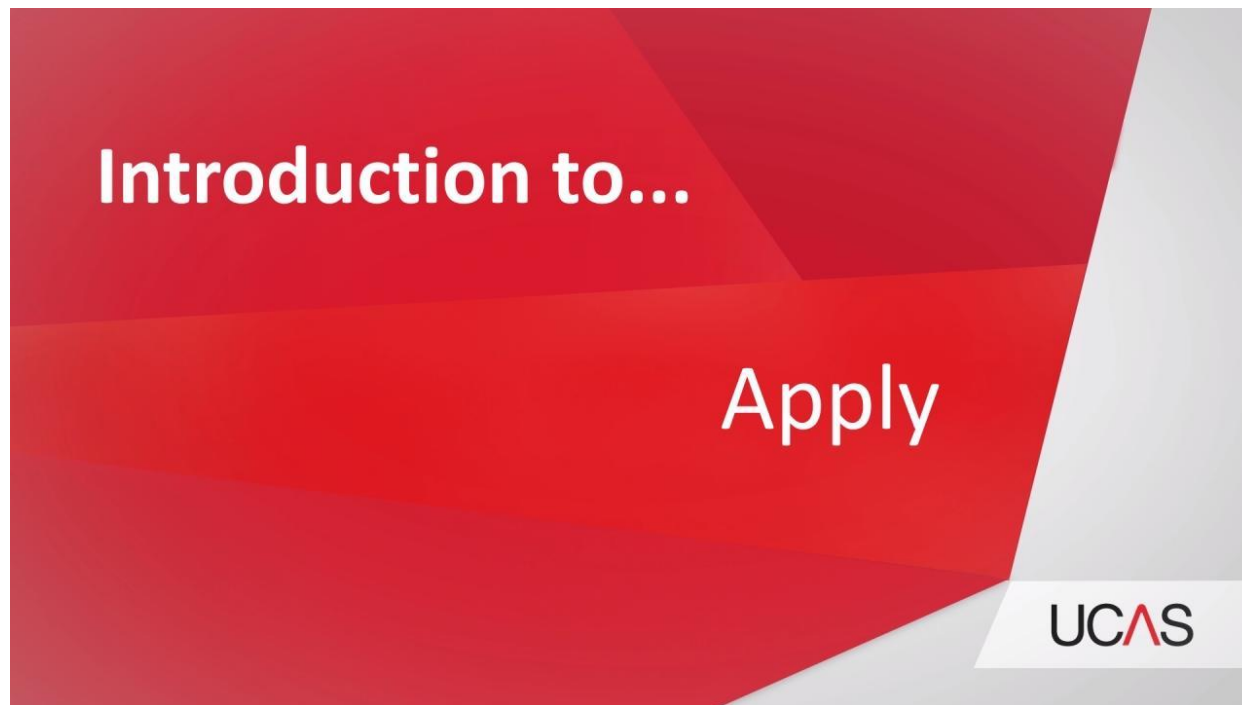


# Financial Support

- Essex University provide care leavers and estranged student bursary – this is up to £1k paid in May, and for care leavers we just need a letter from their social worker- other Universities support will vary.
- A care leaver grant of £2000 should be available from the Local Authority - paid in instalments over the duration of your course. Students would need to individually check with their local authority about this.
- Financial support will vary for care leavers depending on their council.



**There is a tick box on the UCAS form to identify care leavers although this information is held confidentially.**



# Considerations for care leavers:

- Each University will offer slightly different support, look on their websites or contact their Student Support/Wellbeing teams.
- Encourage students to disclose on UCAS, so we can make pro-active contact about the support available
- Look for Outreach sessions or activities
- They should have a pathway plan from their local council.

# If you'd like further information about the University of Essex

- Both care leavers and estranged students come under the care of the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service. We have a specialist webpage for estranged students:
- <https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/groups/estranged.aspx>
- Any potential students who you think might be care leavers or estranged and interested in Essex please refer to our services if they have not already done so:  
[include@essex.ac.uk](mailto:include@essex.ac.uk) or [fkthorne@essex.ac.uk](mailto:fkthorne@essex.ac.uk)

# Sources of Information

- The Local Authority will create a Pathway Plan for each Student who is defined as a care leaver.
- There is a National Network for the Education of Care Leavers
- [Propel](#) provides online resources for care leavers – this can be used to check out the support the university offers and the name of the person responsible for care leavers
- [UCAS](#) provides information and support to care leavers wishing to apply for university and a page for [estranged students](#)
- [Stand Alone](#) – charity that provides advice and support for estranged young people



# Questions

Any questions?

