

# ESTRANGED AND CARE-EXPERIENCED STUDENTS

Covid-19: safety, health and wellbeing of students and staff webinar series

This briefing includes recommendations, case studies and resources for universities, sector bodies, regulators and government to ensure care experienced and estranged students are fully supported during the Covid-19 pandemic. The briefing is part of a series informed by UUK's Covid-19: Safety, health and wellbeing of students and staff webinar series.

## ■ KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Care experienced and estranged students may be experiencing **feelings of isolation, loneliness, and stigma** as a result of the pandemic.
- Universities **recognise the unique vulnerabilities** of estranged students who do not have local authority support or a family safety net.
- Universities should **think holistically to mitigate the absence of familial support**. Regular personal check-ins that focus on wellbeing and relationship building with staff and peers are invaluable, alongside essential practical support with finances, accommodation and food supplies.
- Universities should continue to build on the successes they have had during the pandemic in **creating networks and communities** of care experienced and estranged students.
- Ideally, care experienced, and estranged students will have **a key contact** who can support them with accessing cross-departmental university services.
- **Universities should ensure that their policies and procedures** for students requesting support are fully accessible, acknowledging that students may not be able to gain supporting evidence of their circumstances during the pandemic.

- **Universities should consider removing any pre-set age limits on support for care experienced students.** Many students with care experience enter university as mature students and may be particularly vulnerable during the pandemic, for example, those who are parents or who may be facing a significant loss of income.
- **Graduation may be a very challenging time** for care experienced and estranged students as it can mark a ‘cliff edge’ end to support. Universities should consider the support they can offer these students in terms of bursaries, discounted postgraduate studies and ongoing careers advice and guidance. Careers advisers can help care experienced and estranged students to plan for their futures, working with local authorities and acknowledging their need for immediate income but also working towards their long-term career goals.

## ■ CASE STUDIES

**University of East Anglia** – [This study from UEA](#) aims to investigate how LGBT young people in care experience growing up in foster and residential care and how they negotiate their identities.

**University of Worcester** – Care experienced and estranged students have been offered volunteering opportunities in their local communities and security teams play a community-focused role on campus.

**University of Exeter** – The university offers accommodation costs for the summer and graduation bursaries including a rent deposit for graduating students. There is more information on the university website for [care leavers](#) and [estranged students](#).

**Sheffield Hallam University** – The university has an [applicant support scheme](#) which offers personalised help for certain groups of students, including care experienced and estranged students. This scheme provides students with a personal advisor, financial assistance for open days and events and personal visits to the university to meet staff and students.

**University of Wolverhampton** – [University of Wolverhampton](#) has seen an escalation of the use of social media platforms during the pandemic. Students have also been active in team meetings and are forming societies to support incoming students in the next academic year

## ■ RESOURCES

### Research papers

- [Stand Alone: Resources and Research](#)
- [Unite Foundation: Evidence, reports and blogs](#)
- [Supporting care-experienced and estranged students in higher education – responding to Covid-19](#)

### Student support

- [Stand Alone Student Portal](#)
- Become Care Advice Line: Freephone telephone (0800 023 2033) and email ([advice@becomecharity.org.uk](mailto:advice@becomecharity.org.uk)). Information available here: <https://becomecharity.org.uk/for-young-people/care-advice-line/>
- [Become Coronavirus Advice](#)
- [Propel](#)

### Institution support

- [Submit and update an institution's information on Propel](#)
- [Stand Alone Pledge](#)
- [Guide for good practice in institutions](#)

### Sign ups

- [Termly newsletter from Stand Alone](#)

### Events

- Become's weekly link-up events on Zoom: sign up via social media: [@Become1992](#) on Twitter; <https://www.facebook.com/BecomeCharity/> on Facebook; [@becomecharity](#) on Instagram.
- [Discord group for care-experienced and estranged students](#)

### Events

- [Become podcast series](#)