

08 April 2019

Dear Professor Rothwell DBE,

**The Stand Alone Pledge to support estranged students – a public commitment**

I am writing to you today to request a meeting to discuss with you how the University of Manchester can take the Stand Alone Pledge to support estranged young people in higher education. I am doing so following the coverage of your university in The Times on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

Estranged students are young people studying without the support of a family network. Individuals in this position often have no contact at all with their family.

Forced marriage, LGBTQI+ rejection, and divorce and remarriage are key reasons why young people become estranged or are rejected by their family. Whatever their background, it is undoubted these students are some of the most vulnerable young people in our university communities.

The Stand Alone Pledge aims to change outcomes for estranged students, facilitating the development of better services to support them with their unique struggles. This might be a bursary to prevent students falling into homelessness over summer – a time when many students are expected to go home - or it might be 365 day access to university accommodation, or it could be better access to mental health services.

It also raises awareness of estrangement amongst staff and helps to promote support available to those students who may need it.

Unlike care leavers, [our research in partnership with Student Finance England](#) in 2015 showed that there is a lack of any kind of social service intervention in roughly 60% of estranged student cases.

[SLC data](#) from 2017/18 identified over 80 officially recognised estranged students studying at the University of Manchester that academic year. We know these numbers are likely to be higher as many estranged students remain hidden if they fall outside of the SLC processes to evidence estrangement. Importantly, University of Manchester has the highest number of estranged students of all Russell Group institutions.

34B York Way, London, N1 9AB.

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[www.standalone.org.uk](http://www.standalone.org.uk)



It is undoubted that students who are estranged from their family struggle with retention in Higher Education. 41% of students had considered withdrawing or suspending from their course due to money pressures, stress and mental health struggles, 14% actually had, which is a rate three times higher than the average.

[Our research](#) also found that over 30% of these students had registered homeless or had considered registering homeless before their course began and also struggle with homelessness once on course, especially during the summer vacation months.

I would be delighted to meet with you to discuss how the University of Manchester can further develop support for estranged young people at key points across the student lifecycle, and enhance the success and experience of its estranged students as part of its Stand Alone Pledge commitment.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with your availability.

Yours sincerely,

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