

23 March 2020

Dear Vice Chancellor

Support for students with no family networks during the COVID-19 emergency

In this difficult time of dealing with the effects of the Coronavirus, we know that universities and colleges are facing significant and unprecedented challenges to keep their students and staff safe. We are aware of the range of measures in response to government guidance on isolation and social distancing.

While many students are going back to their parental homes, and leaving their tenancies, there are a considerable number of students who have no family home to return to and for whom the university campus is home. This is because, for example, they are estranged from their families or they are care-experienced.

These students too often fall under the radar of governmental and sector policy. Many are not recognised as statutory care leavers and some have not been in local authority care at any stage of their lives. They are often invisible within the student cohort and struggle without support from parents, family or a corporate parent through education even in normal times.

This current situation exacerbates the battles these students face throughout their student journey in the following ways:

Financial: losing their part-time and often insecure jobs and so a vital source of income to cover living costs, rent and other basic needs.

Accommodation: finding the money to pay rent if they can't work, or they are fearful of losing the place they call home during social distancing measures if their tenancies expire in June.

Mental health: these young people will have a particular need for emotional support to deal with the increased stress and difficulties that they are facing in the current situation, including isolation and no family network to fall back on.

For many of these students, university or college provides their home, their support network and their stability. We ask you at this difficult moment to make sure they continue to be provided for and can feel safe and supported. It would be a catastrophe if any of our estranged or care-experienced students found that they had to leave university as direct or indirect consequences of the current circumstances or were made homeless.

If you are already implementing measures that include estranged and care-experienced students – maybe as part of your Stand Alone Pledge commitment or as part of your current commitment to care leavers, we thank you very much.

If not, then we urge you to be fully inclusive in your response to the current situation for as long as it lasts. Moreover, please be flexible and responsive to the needs of students who rely on your university or college campus as their home and community, and the place where they will see out this emergency.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debra Clothier". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid.

Debra Clothier- Director NNECL

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Mueller". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid.

Susan Mueller – HE Director, Stand Alone