

30 September 2020

Dear Ms Donelan,

Thank you for taking the time to host the roundtable yesterday, and for engaging with the views of the three estranged students present. The commitment you gave to identify and break down the barriers to progression and success in Higher Education (HE) for estranged students, alongside those faced by care leavers, is a welcome one. We look forward to working with the government to advance those goals.

The issues raised in the roundtable discussion clearly demonstrated that there are many similarities between those who have been in care and those estranged from family. This is especially true in their experiences of information, advice and guidance pre-entry and the inconsistency in on-course support across the HE sector.

You re-iterated the value of the Care Leaver Covenant and committed to encouraging HE providers to sign up to the Covenant. Given the similarities already outlined, we would like to ask you to do the same for estranged students and encourage all HE providers in England to take the Stand Alone Pledge, a commitment to develop institutional support for estranged students.

However, it is important to recognise the significant differences that distinguish estranged students as a separate cohort from care leavers. I would therefore like to ask you and the Minister for Children and Families, Vicky Ford, for a separate roundtable with estranged students, sector representatives and relevant government officials. This would be a valuable opportunity to explore those differences and what specific solutions are required to bring the support available to estranged students in line with their care-experienced peers, ensuring consistency in support provided for them by higher education institutions.

Thank you again for your time and attention, and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.



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