

# UNI CONNECT ESTRANGED AND KINSHIP STUDENTS PARTNERSHIP

2022-23

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ESTRANGED &  
KINSHIP  
STUDENTS  
PARTNERSHIP

# THE UNI CONNECT ESTRANGED & KINSHIP STUDENTS PARTNERSHIP

The objective of the UCP Stand Alone working group is to provide a common framework of support for Uni Connect Partnerships, and their partner institutions, to support Stand Alone students in their area. We are doing this by:

- Developing and rolling out a CPD package for practitioners across professions (education, youth work, social work) who may come into contact with Stand Alone students, to raise awareness of this target group and the challenges they face across the 3 key areas of student finance, accommodation, and their mental health and wellbeing
- Providing signposting information on the different agencies (public, third sector and at university level) able to provide different types of information and support to this group both prior and during transition into Higher Education
- Encouraging Uni Connect partnerships to work proactively with their local University and HE provider partners to map and signpost to locally and regionally available support; and
- Providing a timetable of key dates and events held nationally which are of relevance to the Stand Alone group, so that local practitioners can stay up to date on the support available, and where relevant also plug students into this information and support.

Research conducted by the Office for Students has shown that students who lack support from their parents and wider family are less likely to enter higher education (HE), and if they do, are less likely to succeed in their studies.

This could be lots of different reasons, many of them outside the control of the individual. However, national data indicates there are particular equality gaps and support needs that can be addressed by universities and other organisations to help increase access and participation for estranged students. Uni Connect partnerships are therefore keen to support students who are at risk of estrangement, and those who are living in estranged or kinship circumstances already, to make sure this does not present a barrier to their future progression.

## THE FACTS

The continuation rate of estranged students in HE is lower than of students who are not estranged (in 2017-18 the continuation rate of those who were estranged from their parents was 8.2% lower than students who were not estranged, in comparison to 11.2% in 2014-15).

The attainment rate (achieving a first or 2:1) of estranged students is lower than students who are not estranged (in 2018-19 it was 13% lower).

## ESTRANGED STUDENTS

The term 'estranged' applies to young people who are under 25 and have limited or no communication with either of their parents due to an irreconcilable breakdown in the relationship with them. Estranged students may have been in local authority care at some stage of their lives but do not fall within the definition of a statutory care leaver i.e a Care Leaver is someone who has been in the care of the Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks or more spanning their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Unlike care leavers, estranged young people therefore do not have support from a local authority.

They will therefore be studying without the support and approval of their parents – this might be their biological, step or adoptive parents, and sometimes their wider family members. Although they are most likely to remove themselves from damaging parental relationships or be disowned by their families between the ages of 16–19, many will become estranged while already studying in higher education.

While no official overall statistics are collected about the number of estranged students in UK higher education, the Office for Students estimates 3,000 estranged students enter universities and colleges in England each year.

## KINSHIP STUDENTS

Kinship care is when a child or young person lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or friend who isn't their parent, usually because their parents aren't able to or willing to care for them. That relative or friend is called a 'kinship carer', and it's estimated that around half of kinship carers are grandparents, but many other relatives including older siblings, aunts, uncles, as well as family friends and neighbours can also be kinship carers.

Kinship carers are also often referred to as 'family and friends' carers' or 'connected people' by local authorities and in official documents.

## KINSHIP CARE

There are lots of different types of kinship care, and the term includes children who may be:

- Living in an informal arrangement made by their parents
- Living in an informal arrangement chosen by themselves and their relative – when in higher education these young people are likely to be defined as estranged as there is no involvement of a local authority
- On a Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship Order – in relation to higher education some of these young people may be estranged if there is no contact with parents
- ‘Looked After’ by the Local Authority and placed with kinship foster carers. In higher education these young people may be assessed as care-leavers if they fit the statutory care-leaver definition.

## KEY CHALLENGES

### Three Key Challenges for Estranged and Kinship Students Applying for University

Research highlights three key areas where estranged and kinship students may need support while studying in higher education:

ACCOMODATION



FINANCE



MENTAL HEALTH &  
WELLBEING



# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## BURSARIES

Are usually non-competitive and based on financial need. They may also be described as 'awards'. They can be offered by universities/colleges (often donated by alumni), employers or organisations.

## CARE EXPERIENCED

Anyone who, at any stage in their life, for any length of time (no matter for how short a time period): has been in care; or is currently in care; or is from a looked-after background, including adopted children who were previously looked-after. This could be looked after in the UK or Overseas.

## CHILD ARRANGEMENTS ORDER

A legal order where the court decides either where a child will live or who a child can spend time with and for how long.

## CONFIRMATION OF ESTRANGEMENT FORM

A form to complete for Student Finance confirming that you are estranged from your parents.

## ESTRANGEMENT

Where one family member voluntarily and intentionally distances themselves from another because of an ongoing negative relationship or is disowned or rejected by their family.

## ESTRANGED STUDENT

A student studying (in higher education this is usually applied to students aged between 18 – 25 years of age) without the support and approval of their parents due to an irreconcilable breakdown in their relationship – this might be their biological, step or adoptive parents, and sometimes includes their wider family members.

## INDEPENDENT STATUS

Students who are estranged can apply for student finance as 'independent students' so their finance is calculated solely on their own income rather than their parents' income – this allows them access to full financial support.

## KINSHIP CARE

When a child lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or friend who isn't their parent.

## KINSHIP CARE (INFORMAL)

Where you are looking after a child who is closely related to you, but you do not have parental responsibility for them, and they are not 'looked after' by the local authority.

## **KINSHIP CARE (FOSTER CARE)**

When a friend or family member becomes an official foster carer for a child. This is different to other forms of kinship care as the child is then considered 'looked after' and you won't have parental responsibility. There are two main ways in which a child can become 'looked after' by the local authority – either with their parent's agreement or because they are subject to a care order made by the court.

## **LETTER OF ESTRANGEMENT**

A letter or statement (supporting document) of evidence by an independent person with good standing in the community which satisfies Student Finance that the young person is irreconcilably estranged from their biological parents.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

A form of financial aid, provided to a student by a university to further their education. This is free money and non-repayable.

## **SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDER**

Often known as an SGO is a legal order where the court appoints a carer – usually a relative – as the 'Special Guardian' of a child until they turn 18. The Special Guardian shares parental responsibility for the child with the parents and can make nearly all the major decisions about the child without having to consult them.

## **STATUTORY CARE LEAVER**

The legal definition of a care leaver comes from The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 which states that a Care Leaver is someone who has been in the care of the Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks or more spanning their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## **STUDENT FINANCE**

A service provided by the Student Loans Company. They provide financial support on behalf of the UK Government to students entering higher education in the UK. Student Finance England offer funding for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The financial support potentially being a tuition fee loan and maintenance loan.

## **UCAS**

An independent charity providing information, advice, and admissions services. A service to help people figure out what the next step in their education might be and to support them when they take that step.

# USEFUL LINKS AND KEY DATES

## ESTRANGED STUDENTS

- [UCAS - Estranged Students](#)
- [Office for Students](#)
- [Student Finance England - Estranged](#)
- [Stand Alone Charity](#)
- [The Stand Alone Pledge](#)
- [Unite Foundation](#)
- [Buttle UK](#)

## KINSHIP STUDENTS

- [UCAS - Kinship](#)
- [Student Finance England - Care Leavers](#)
- [The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers](#)
- [Unite Foundation](#)
- [Kinship](#)
- [Buttle UK](#)

## 2022

### NOVEMBER

2<sup>nd</sup> | Stress Awareness Day

20<sup>th</sup> | Universal Children's Day

21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> | Estranged Students Solidarity Week

## 2023

### JANUARY

30<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Feb | National Storytelling Week

### FEBRUARY

3<sup>rd</sup> | Time to Talk Day

7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> – Children's Mental Health Week

### APRIL

Stress Awareness Month

### MAY

10<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> | Mental Health Awareness Week

9<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> | Foster Care Fortnight

### AUGUST

12<sup>th</sup> | International Youth Day

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