

We Care during Lockdown



Our We Care team's tireless work to support students without family support has been highlighted as an example of excellent practice in a briefing from the Office for Students. The briefing note looks at the practical steps universities and colleges are taking to help students without family support during the pandemic and beyond.

For students with no family home to go to and no family member to rely on, talk to or ask for emotional or financial support - the COVID-19 pandemic is particularly challenging. The University's We Care team is supporting 128 care experienced and estranged students during the current health crisis.

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Wendy Price, We Care Team Manager and her small team, are the dedicated contact point for care experienced and students estranged from their family, offering support tailored to help students how and when they need it.

Wendy commented: "During lockdown we have been in regular contact with our care experienced and estranged students. Some have no option but to stay in student accommodation, so this has been a worrying time for many of them. We have been checking to make sure they are managing with online study, are keeping engaged and active, and offering practical support and help with money worries. I am very proud of the students we are in contact with, who are coping really well in difficult circumstances."

Fran Carey, Director of Home Student Recruitment, added: "I am so proud of Wendy and her team who are genuinely committed to helping the students here at Sunderland, who do not have family support. As a highly skilled and experienced widening participation practitioner, Wendy is a sector leader, and celebrated her 20th anniversary at the University last week. To have this work recognised as an example of best practice by the Office for Students is testament to Wendy's leadership, the work of the We Care team and the University's values. Helping students to overcome their, often significant, challenges and reach their potential is rewarding to see and life changing for the students, but does not happen easily – well done!"

Eddy, BSc (Hons) Psychology with Integrated Foundation Year, shared his lockdown experience and tips for keeping well [HERE](#). He said: "During this time I have personally received a huge amount of support and contact from the We Care Team who have kept in regular contact via email, telephone and Facebook. It has really been helpful, not only to my positive mental health but they have also promoted healthy physical exercise via fun informal exercise classes via conference call."

More about the Office for Students' briefings

Working with universities, colleges and other stakeholders, the Office for Students (OfS) has produced a series of briefing notes on the steps universities and colleges are taking to support their students during the coronavirus pandemic. The reports are designed to share ideas and reflect how universities are responding to the rapidly evolving situation.

The briefing note on students without family support highlighted the University of Sunderland's financial support for care experienced and estranged students:

The University of Sunderland has added to its hardship fund and is prioritising applications from care experienced and estranged students. Personalised support (including financial support) has been offered to care experienced and estranged students, and the university will continue to be in touch with them over the coming weeks. It has increased its 'We Care' scholarship (for care experienced and estranged students) from £1,500 to £2,000. This means each scholarship student will receive an additional payment of £500 in July 2020, when they have said they will most need the money. The university is also sending supermarket vouchers to students experiencing financial hardship.

Some students who do not have their own laptops are being loaned university laptops (which are being couriered directly to them) for their academic studies. Final year students can also use them to apply for jobs.

You can read the full briefing note [HERE](#).

To contact the We Care team email care.contact@sunderLand.ac.uk or call 0191 515 2216.