



# SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT STUDENTS WHO ARE CARE LEAVERS OR ARE ESTRANGED

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## This session will cover:

- Warwick's definitions of these two key groups
- The challenges that such students may face
- Support available
- Lessons learnt and next steps

### *Before we begin*

*Please consider the support you accessed (or are accessing) during your own educational journey. For example:*

- *Where did you live while you studied and during school/university holidays?*
- *What were your plans once you finished your educational journey? How did you decide on these plans?*
- *What were your main priorities or challenges during your studies?*

## Definitions

### Independent students who are Care Leavers

Care leavers are young people who have been in care for at least 13 weeks at any time since the age of 14 and were in care on their 16th birthday (*The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000*).

*This care may have been provided in many different settings, including:*

- *Living with foster carers*
- *Living in a residential children's home*
- *Being looked after at home under a supervision order*
- *Living with relatives under a guardianship agreement*

### Independent students who are Estranged


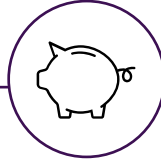


An 'estranged student' is a young person under the age of 25 who is studying without the support and approval of both of their parents due to a breakdown in their relationship – this might be their birth, step or adoptive parents, and sometimes their wider family members.

*Students in this situation are able to apply to Student Finance England (or equivalent student finance bodies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) as 'Independent and Estranged' if:*

- *They haven't had any contact with both of their parents for 12 months or more*
- *The relationship with both of their parents has broken down within the last 12 months and they don't expect this to change in the near future*

*The above definitions usually apply to UK-based Home students only*

## What challenges may students face?

|   |                               |   |    |
|--|---|--|---|
| Practical challenges   | Financial challenges  | Academic challenges  | Wellbeing challenges  |
| E.g. moving into accommodation, organising living arrangements for duration of course, completing enrolment forms/ emergency contact information | E.g. difficulty accessing/navigating through Student Finance, lack of financial 'safety net', high living costs | E.g. difficulty asking for help or navigating complex processes (some students may have lost trust due to previous experiences), other challenges can impact on academic study | E.g. emotional trauma from childhood, reliving/retelling their experiences to multiple staff members, anxieties around graduation and plans after university, making friendships, feeling settled |
| Challenges around identifying as an independent student, particularly if a student is 'estranged' or is at risk of estrangement                  |   |  |   |

**Important:**

*Students who are independent because they have left care or are estranged also bring a huge amount to the university community. This shouldn't be forgotten and should be celebrated.*

**Accommodation support**  
Access to 52 week on-campus accommodation for duration of studies

**Pre-arrival support for applicants/offer holders**  
e.g. signposting to internal/external services, support with Student Finance

**Access to Warwick Scholars Undergraduate Programme**  
For students who join the university from a care leaver/estranged background



**Financial support while on course**  
Warwick Bursary (£2,000 pa)  
Additional Bursary (£1,000 pa)  
Care Leaver/Estranged Student Bursary (£1,000 pa)

**Other bespoke support while on-course**  
e.g. single point/team of contact (WP Lifecycle Team), advocacy and signposting support

**Additional consideration for Warwick Taught Masters Scholarship**  
Up to £10,000 scholarship towards PGT study

## Learning points and next steps



### Learning points so far:

- Independent students who are care leavers or are estranged show a huge amount of resilience and determination and really care about their studies
- No two students' journeys are the same – even if they are both independent because they are a care leaver or are estranged
- The risks to students from these groups can be significant (e.g. homelessness if temporarily withdraw, no family safety net)
- The number of students becoming estranged while on course is growing



### Upcoming areas of focus:

- Better information sharing and liaison with student services/ departments to raise awareness and collaborate on support
- WP Committee subgroup for 'priority groups' work
- Raising awareness of the support available and encouraging referrals/ signposting to [lifecycleteam@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:lifecycleteam@warwick.ac.uk)

### Useful links:

1. [Independent students who are Care Leavers webpage](#)
2. [Independent students who are Estranged webpage](#)
3. WP Lifecycle Team email address: [lifecycleteam@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:lifecycleteam@warwick.ac.uk)

