

The University of Manchester

Protocol for Recruiting & Supporting Care Experienced Students

1. The Manchester 2015 Strategic Plan

- 1.1 The following protocol for recruiting and supporting care experienced students (looked after children/leavers from care) is set within the context of The University of Manchester's broader strategic goals concerning widening participation and student support.
- 1.2 Equity of access to higher education is enshrined in the University's strategic plan¹. We seek to pursue exemplary fair access and admissions processes to identify and attract the very best students to Manchester, regardless of background. This includes identifying and supporting students who have experienced educational disadvantages as a consequence of being in care.

2. Raising aspirations and awareness of HE

- 2.1 Care-experienced students are a key target group within Aimhigher Greater Manchester², of which The University of Manchester is a partner.
- 2.2 In particular, A *Looked After Children Forum* has been established by Aimhigher Greater Manchester to ensure a coordinated set of interventions are developed across the sub-region and The University of Manchester is making an active contribution to this group.
- 2.3 Across the different boroughs of Greater Manchester, Care leavers are being included as part of the WP and 'Gifted & Talented' cohorts so that they should be able automatically to access and benefit from mainstream WP activities.
- 2.4 The University of Manchester funds a wide-ranging programme of widening participation educational outreach work. Within this work, processes have been instigated with School and College contacts to ensure that care experienced students are part of our defined target group for widening participation activity. Further to these sets of generic interventions that set out to ensure they form part of mainstream WP activities, the University also works with the Manchester Local Authority to support specific initiatives with smaller, targeted groups to ensure care experienced students are able to receive appropriate information, advice and guidance concerning issues of access to HE and a broad range of curriculum activities designed to increase motivation to study in HE.³
- 2.5 For all such activity we ensure that costs associated with travel and subsistence are not a barrier to participation.

¹ See www.manchester.ac.uk/2015 for the University's strategic plan

² See www.aimhighergreatermanchester.com for Aimhigher activities across the sub-region

³ See www.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/undergraduate/WP-report.pdf for the University's annual report on widening participation activity.

3. Support through the application process

- 3.1 In order to ensure that Manchester is able to identify the very best students from all educational backgrounds a major review of admissions led to the introduction of the use of 'contextual data' to inform decisions on certain applications. For entry in 2010 this is confined to 5 of the University's academic Schools and it will be extended to all Schools for entry in 2011.

Four pieces of additional information are supplied to academic Schools, one of these being whether a candidate has been looked after/in care for more than 3 months, as determined by the UCAS application form. In such cases, applicants predicted to achieve our standard academic entry criteria are recommended for further consideration by admissions tutors. This further consideration does not result in either an automatic offer or a lower offer to candidates but can include, *inter alia*: additional examination of the personal statement; making available information about an applicant's background to interviewers; further consideration during confirmation of final results.⁴

- 3.2. Through our literature, outreach programmes, and development of relationships with Local Authorities we raise awareness with schools, local authorities and applicants that Care leavers can request a meeting ('New Student Advisory Meeting') with an adviser from the University's Advisory Service.
- 3.3 Across Greater Manchester, the University offers a Manchester Access Programme (MAP)⁵ – a compact arrangement with local post-16 students that offers structured admissions and financial incentives to successful completers of the programme. Care leavers are specifically targeted to join this programme which offers 40 additional UCAS points for entry, a guaranteed conditional offer and an additional £2,000 Manchester Achievement Scholarship to those successfully completing the programme.

Note: Care leavers who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers are eligible to join this programme. See paragraph 4.9 for further information about making an application to The University of Manchester as an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker.

New Student Advisory Meeting

- 3.4 Care-experienced applicants are entitled to request a New Student Advisory Meeting which will be convened by the Advisory Service.
- 3.5 The Advisory Service has a particular role as a key contact to support care experienced students throughout their time at The University of Manchester. As a centrally placed service and a constituent part of the Office of Student Support and Services it has a close relationship with other offices in the University on whom it can call for advice and information.
- 3.6 The New Student Advisory Meeting will bring together the prospective student with a named adviser from the Advisory Service. Following discussion with the student a number of other individuals can be included, for example staff in the Student Services Centre's Financial Support Team, the Warden of a Hall of Residence or a representative of the School to which the student is applying.

⁴ Further information is available at

www.manchester.ac.uk/undergraduate/howtoapply/generalentryrequirements/

⁵ See www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/map

- 3.7 Students may choose to come on their own, or to be accompanied by, for example, their mentor/personal adviser.
- 3.8 Prospective students may request a New Student Advisory Meeting at any time during the application and admission process by contacting the Advisory Service either by telephone, email, by post or in person.
- 3.9 Applicants who have indicated on the UCAS form that they are care leavers will be invited to attend a New Student Advisory Meeting. Students are not obliged to take up this offer but we will proactively provide them with information about the support services at The University of Manchester which they can access at any time during their programme of study if they wish to do so.
- 3.10 The aim of a New Student Advisory Meeting is to:
- identify and supply any support needed through the admissions process;
 - ensure that the applicant is aware of their full entitlement to bursaries, grants and loans and offer advice and guidance on financial applications;
 - ascertain accommodation requirements and arrange an accommodation viewing if the applicant has not attended an accommodation Open Day;
 - ascertain childcare requirements;
 - answer questions and address any concerns raised by the applicant;
 - raise awareness of the support services which are available at any time during the student's period of study at The University of Manchester.
- 3.11 All requests for appointments with the Advisory Service will be treated confidentially and will have no bearing on the candidate's application. Disclosure of information to agreed members of staff following a New Student Advisory Meeting will only take place at the individual applicant's request.
- 3.12 The Advisory Service can be contacted by telephoning 0161 275 3033, or by emailing caas@manchester.ac.uk. There is a named adviser who is responsible for coordinating support for care experienced students.

4. Entry and ongoing support

- 4.1 Applicants may make their own arrangements by contacting the individual services described below. Alternatively, they can access both financial and immigration advice, and help with finding suitable accommodation by requesting a New Student Advisory Meeting (see above).
- 4.2 Accommodation**
- 4.3 Care experienced students can request 52 week accommodation for the duration of their programme of study. A large number of current students stay in residence during the University vacations, for various reasons, so care experienced students can be assured that they will not become isolated over such vacation periods.
- 4.4 To request 52 week accommodation, applicants should contact the Accommodation office either themselves directly, or *via* their New Student Advisory Meeting. The Accommodation Office will ask for evidence of status in the form of, for example, a letter from their Local Authority, or a letter from the Advisory Service if they have had a New Student Advisory Meeting. The

Accommodation Office can be contacted on 0161 275 2888, accommodation@manchester.ac.uk.

4.5 Financial Advice

- 4.6 Advice on bursaries, scholarships, applying for a student loan and a student grant, budgeting and more is available from the University's Student Services Centre (SSC).
- 4.7 Care Leavers are one of the priority categories in the government funded 'Access to Learning' fund which is administered by the Student Services Centre. Staff in the Student Services Centre can advise on applications to this fund. Information is also available online at www.studentnet.manchester.ac.uk/crucial-guide/financial-life/funding/financial-support-funds/access-to-learning-fund/
- 4.8 Contact the SSC by emailing ssc@manchester.ac.uk or phoning 0161 275 5000 (select Option 5).

4.9 Applicants who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

- 4.10 The Student Services Centre's International Advice Team provides advice about visas and visa conditions to applicants and students who are also unaccompanied asylum seekers.

Contact iat@manchester.ac.uk or phone 0161 275 5000 to make an appointment.

The Student Services Centre's Fee Assessment Team provides advice about fees and fee status. Although there are different fees for home and international students unaccompanied asylum seekers who are admitted to a full time undergraduate programme at The University of Manchester may be eligible for a tuition fee concession equivalent to the difference between the 'home' and 'international' fee, provided that they have proof that an application for asylum in the UK has been made.⁶

4.11 On-course support

- 4.12 Care experienced students can contact the Advisory Service at any time. If they wish to involve their personal adviser or other individuals, the Advisory Service will facilitate that. The Advisory Service has been identified to be the University's key contact with respect to the needs and entitlements of care experienced students, and can call on other offices within the University for advice and information.
- 4.13 The named adviser will provide a 'signposting' service to help individuals to assess and solve their own problems, rather than giving prescriptive advice.
- 4.14 As we become aware of care leavers within the University, we will seek to engage with them about the support we are offering and the degree to which it meets their needs.
- 4.15 All requests for appointments with the Advisory Service will be treated confidentially. Disclosure of information to agreed members of staff following an

⁶ University of Manchester, *Tuition Fee Administration & Policies for 2009 – 2010*. Conditions apply: not all degree programmes are included and applications for a place must have been received by UCAS by the deadline of 15 January. Contact the Fee Assessment Team for further information: 0161 275 5000 (Option 5)

appointment at the Advisory Service will only take place at the individual student's request.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 5.1 Aimhigher Greater Manchester will ensure that information is collected on activities organised across the sub-region.
- 5.2 The University of Manchester's Student Recruitment, Admissions & Widening Participation Division will collect information on Care leavers who may take part in its Manchester Access Programme.
- 5.3 The Student Recruitment, Admissions & Widening Participation Division will collect information on patterns of applications, offers, acceptances and enrolments from Care leavers.
- 5.4 The University of Manchester's Office of Student Support and Services (Advisory Service) will keep a record of:
- the number of approaches it makes to Care leavers/care leavers
 - the Care Leavers' home Local Authority
 - the number of New Student Advisory Meetings it arranges
 - the nature of support sought by care leavers
- 5.5. The University of Manchester (Advisory Service) will seek to engage with care leavers who are also current students about the support we are offering (through the 'New Student Advisory Meeting' and when they are studying here), and the degree to which it meets their needs.

Office of Student Support and Services & Student Recruitment, Admissions & Widening Participation Division, The University of Manchester, October 2009

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