



Supporting EaCE students through higher education.

Foreword:

This is the early launch document for Safety Net HE, an organisation which will seek charity status, aiming to raise awareness of and support Estranged and Care Experienced (EaCE) students in higher education.

This document is a skeletal blueprint of what will become a more comprehensive founding document and funding proposal for business consideration. Within, the reason why EaCE students need additional support, alongside the initial partnership framework model, will be outlined.

Safety Net HE aims to work with the private sector to create new recruitment streams for EaCE students. This will involve sponsoring individual students throughout their education, and referring them into the recruitment process after the student has been given the opportunity to attend application workshops and insight sessions in their respective field of interest.

Safety Net HE will also seek to collaborate with other social mobility charities to bolster EaCE representation, and ensure support is available and accessible for EaCE students from charities who aim to break down barriers of opportunity for under-represented groups.

The secondary function of Safety Net HE is to work with elected representatives to enact policy change to make university more accessible for EaCE students, alongside campaigning for policy change to implement comprehensive, mandatory, support frameworks to reduce the attrition and attainment gap between EaCE students and the average student.

Thank-you for taking the time to engage with this document. You can reach out to us by emailing SafetyNetHE@gmail.com. We are seeking assistance from experienced trustees, and encourage businesses to reach out to express interest in partnering with us once we are fully established as a charity.



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1. Definitions -

Estranged - a student who has little or no contact with their parents (either biological or adoptive) and this is unlikely to change.

Care Experienced - a student who has spent time living with foster carers under local authority care, in residential care (e.g. a children's home), looked after at home under a supervision order, or in kinship care with relatives or friends, either officially (e.g. a special guardianship order) or informally without local authority support.

2. The Contemporary Picture -

This section will outline the problems faced by EaCE students in higher education. There is a primary focus on the outcomes, with a brief outline of why we see these outcomes. The below will collate the latest research, though it must be noted there is a lack of comprehensive research in this field of study.

2.1 Higher Education Progression Rates –

EaCE students attend university at lower rates, and often at a later stage in life, than the average student. Just 13% of care experienced individuals attend university, compared to 47% for non-care-experienced students. There is a lack of research on estranged students' progression rates, but we do know that prior to attending university, 30% of estranged students have been officially registered as homeless. It is estimated that with current rates of progress, it would take 107 years before the entry gap between EaCE students and the average student is closed.

2.2 Number of Estranged Students in Higher Education -

UCAS estimates there are 3000 estranged students who enter higher education each year, which has been increasing in recent years. That means there are roughly 10,000 estranged students in undergraduate education. These statistics are based on estimates of officially registered estranged students, which is a status with restrictive requirements. Studies suggest the number of estranged students beyond those who meet SFE criteria to be significantly higher.

2.3 Number of Care Experienced Students in Higher Education -

Roughly 4000 care experienced students enter higher education each year, meaning there are roughly 12000 care experienced students in undergraduate education.

2.4 The Attrition Rate -

There is an average continuation gap of 19% between EaCE students compared with the average student. Care experienced students are 38% more likely to drop out of university than non-care-experienced students. Research suggests that 41% of



estranged students have considered dropping out of their course, with [14%](#) actually dropping out.

2.5 The Attainment Gap -

[Studies](#) have found that the attainment rate for a 'good' (a 2:1 or above degree) for estranged students in 2018-19 was 13.0 percentage points lower than students who were not estranged. There is a [10% attainment gap](#) for a 'good' degree for care experienced students.

2.6 The Financial Burden -

The main reason cited by students for dropping out, and having a negative academic impact, is [financial pressure](#). Further research illustrates that [88% of care-experienced](#) students said they worked in paid employment compared to 58% of non-care experienced. An [NUS study](#) found 85% of estranged students worry about finances 'all the time', with 75% of care experienced students reporting the same.

3. A Case Study of Outcomes Driven Grants and Scholarships -

[The Unite Foundation](#) is a charitable foundation of [Unite Students](#), a large student property company operating in the UK. They offer a scholarship to EaCE students which gives them free accommodation throughout their time in university, reducing on average a [£7,566](#) financial burden.

3.1 The Evidence -

The following was [presented as evidence](#) to the Children's Social Care Committee:

"In 2022 the Unite Foundation commissioned Jisc to undertake an independent comparative analysis of 10 years of our data. Jisc's objective analysis suggests "strong evidence that the scholarship improves educational outcomes of the students we support, specifically in year-to-year progression and completion". The findings showed that:

- + Unite Foundation students progressed from their 1st to 2nd year of programme within 2 academic years at the same percentage as non-care leaver students and at a statistically significantly higher percentage to the other care leavers groups examined.
- + When looking at year 2 to 3 continuation, again within 2 academic years, Unite Foundation students progressed at a greater percentage than other care-leavers and within 5 percentage points of the non-care leaver population.
- + Finally, Unite Foundation students achieved a 'good honours' degree within 3 percentage points of non-care leaver students and at a statistically significantly higher percentage than all other care leaver student groups."



4. Partnership and Support Model

Safety Net HE intends to manage an application process for EaCE students to access a cost-of-learning grant throughout their time in university, alongside offering mentorship and career guidance. This will be achieved by partnering with businesses who recruit graduates paying an annual subscription fee to Safety Net HE. For this, the business will be marketed as a sponsor in all Safety Net HE media output, and receive permission to use Safety Net HE's logo and name in any promotional materials. Businesses will also have early access to the talent pool coming through Safety Net HE's sponsorship programme, with referral of sponsored students into recruitment streams. The annual subscription fee is TBC.

4.1 Partnership Model

The following provides visual representation of the intended partnership model. This is subject to discussion with individual partner businesses.

Flowchart

This visual map outlines the proposed partnership structure between business sponsors and Safety Net HE.

