

## **MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY**

### **PROJECT PLAN FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN/ CARE LEAVERS.**

This plan sets out to identify the support structures which will be put in place with the aims of:

- Supporting the aspirations of looked after children to consider university as a valid option.
- Increasing the number of care leavers who come to MMU
- Ensuring high quality support is put in place for care leavers (who identify a need, or for whom a need is identified by their Personal adviser) once they are studying here.

The plan is set within the wider context of the University's broader strategic goals concerning widening participation, student support, and retention. It is based on the principle that any support which is put in place will be with the consent and prior agreement of the 'Looked after Children'/ Care Leavers themselves. Any information pertaining to their 'care leaver status' will be disclosed only to those university staff to whom they feel it is appropriate.

#### **1. Raising aspirations and awareness of Higher Education**

MMU has a long tradition of reaching out to parts of the community who haven't traditionally participated in HE. Through its own outreach programmes and active participation in collaborative partnerships such as Aimhigher, the University continues to push forward the Widening Participation agenda.

The University has recently been involved in a 'Looked After Children' Summer School for Manchester residents in partnership with the Aimhigher Manchester Borough Partnership. The University is also running a pilot mentoring project for LAC children in Manchester and is looking to participate in a Greater Manchester wide mentoring programme funded by Aimhigher. This will look to bring current HE students with personal experience of living in care together with LAC in school to encourage them help raise their aspirations. In addition the University is currently organising HE taster days for LAC from 2 Local Authorities and these events will be refined and further developed over the next year.

Aimhigher Greater Manchester has established a LAC Forum to bring together HEIs with representatives of Care Leaving Teams throughout Greater Manchester and Care leavers who have progressed onto HE. MMU is an active member of the Forum and has also provided a student representative who is a Care Leaver. Through this involvement the University will continue to push forward the LAC agenda and contribute to and participate in any projects established to benefit LAC.

In addition to specific initiatives for LAC, the University believes that there needs to be a conscious effort to integrate LAC into mainstream outreach activities. The University will encourage schools and colleges to include

suitable LAC in their Widening Participation cohorts and involve them in pre-entry activities the University organises. In order to determine the effectiveness of this inclusive approach the University will ask participating schools to identify the numbers of LAC they are including in their visiting cohorts. Through monitoring and evaluating how many LAC are accessing the University's outreach provision we will seek to work with partners to increase the numbers involved year on year.

## **2. Support through the application process**

**2.1** We will raise awareness of the fact that any 'looked after' young person can request an interview with a 'Student Support Officer' at any point during the application process. We will advertise this support via leaflets; outreach activities; and the development of relationships with Local Authorities.

**2.2** The aim of this meeting will be to:

- Discuss any issues relating to choice of course.
- Identify any issues with finance to ensure that the full entitlement to bursaries, grants and loans is claimed and refer to relevant staff as appropriate.
- Find out if there are any accommodation requirements;
- Find out if there are any childcare requirements;
- Answer any general queries/ concerns concerning university life.
- Raise awareness of the support services which are available for all students during their time at MMU.

**2.3** If applicants are unsure who the best person is to speak to, they can ring Student Services on 0161 247 6888 or email [studentservices@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@mmu.ac.uk) and someone will help them and/or refer them to the relevant Student Support Officer.

## **3. Entry and ongoing support**

**3.1** Any 'looked after' young person who identifies themselves as such on their UCAS form or who has agreed that their name can be disclosed by their Local Authority Care Leaving Team, will have their name forwarded to the relevant Student Support Officer for their course.

**3.2** The Student Support Officers (SSOs) who are based in each of the 8 faculties, and affiliated to the centrally based Student Services, have been identified as the University's key, named contacts with respect to the support and entitlements of Care Leavers. A key function of their role will be to provide a 'signposting' service to help individuals to assess and solve their own problems and ensure that they get the most out of their time at university rather than giving prescriptive advice.

As well as fulfilling an important diagnostic/ advocacy role in the referral to other services such as finance, counselling, disability support, careers, accommodation etc, the SSOs also provide valuable support in the

development of study skills, vital to making a success of time at university. The fact that they are based out in the faculties where students are based and study, also makes them easily accessible and available to all students, not just care leavers. It also means that support can be accessed discretely.

**3.3** A customised letter inviting them to a meeting with the 'student support officer' (SSO) for their faculty will be sent out (appendix 1). A leaflet (appendix 2) detailing the range of support available to care leavers as well as giving information on the contact details of all the Student Support Officers will also be available. The letter will state the fact that the wishes of care leavers who do not respond/ or who do not feel that they need support at that time will be respected.

**3.4** At this initial meeting the Student Support Officer will get together with the student to identify any immediate support needs. If necessary/ appropriate the SSO will advocate on the student's behalf with other service providers within the university and arrange appointments for them if, for example, the young person has issues with financial support/ accommodation etc. Or they may just point them in the right direction.

**3.5** The SSO will make it clear to the student that the 'disclosure' of their Care Leaver status does not need to be shared with anyone else in the university unless they request it.

**3.6** Students may choose to attend the meeting on their own or to be accompanied by their personal adviser or a friend etc.

**3.7** Students can identify a need for support at any time. If they don't feel they need it at the start of their course, they can get in touch at any time during their time at university.

**3.8** At any time, applicants/ students can make their own arrangements by contacting the following, individual services direct rather than through an initial meeting with a Student Support Officer.

### **3.9 Accommodation**

Care leavers can request 'year-round' accommodation for the duration of their time at MMU. To apply for this, applicants need to tick the relevant box on the on-line application form. The Accommodation Office will ask for evidence of status in the form of, for example, a letter from their Local Authority. The MMU Accommodation Office can be contacted on: 0161 247 2958 or [accommodation@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation@mmu.ac.uk)

### **3.10 Financial Support**

For information on bursaries, Access to Learning fund etc, phone the Student Information Centre on 0161 247 1039.

### **3.11 International Office**

The International Office can provide advice about visas, visa conditions and fees to applicants who are also unaccompanied asylum seekers. Contact them on 0161 247 1022 or [intoff@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:intoff@mmu.ac.uk)

**3.12** As the process for identifying care leavers within the university is developed, we will work to set up a system whereby new students from the care system can, if they wish, be put in touch with existing students, for mentoring and social reasons.

## **4. Monitoring and Evaluation**

**4.1** Aimhigher Greater Manchester will ensure that information is collected on activities organised across the sub-region.

**4.2** Student Services will liaise with the Head of Recruitment and Admissions to collect information on the patterns of applications, offers and acceptances from 'Looked after Children' (the system for collecting this data will be much clearer once the UCAS form is developed to capture this information for '08 entry.)

**4.3** From 2008, we will also be in a position to monitor enrolments and will set up systems to ensure that we capture data on the retention levels for identified Care Leavers.

**4.4** Student Services will work with the Faculty Student Support Officers to ensure that a record is kept of:

- the number of enquiries they receive from LAC/ Care leavers
- the number of meetings which take place with LAC/Care leavers
- the nature of support sought by care leavers and the types of referral made.

**4.5** Student Services will also work with the SSOs to develop an evaluation strategy to ensure that we are getting good quality feedback from Care Leavers on the support we are offering and suggestions for improving services.

MMU Student services/ Collaborative Partnerships Unit.

August 2007.

## Appendix 1

Dear [insert name]

Welcome to MMU.

My name is [insert name] and I am the Student Support Officer for the [insert name] faculty.

My role is to provide support and advice for all students within this faculty. If you would like more information on how I can help you generally, or want to find out what extra support may be available to you as a care leaver, then ring me on [insert number] or email me on [insert address] and we can arrange a meeting at a time to suit you. Alternatively, just pop in to see me. My office is [insert address].

If you don't feel the need to meet up at the moment, that's fine, but remember that you can contact me at any point during your time here at the university.

Best wishes

[insert name]

## **LIVING IN CARE? THINKING ABOUT GOING TO UNIVERSITY? WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S AVAILABLE AT .....**

### **MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY?**

At MMU we recognise that you may not need, or want, any extra support when you come to university, but it's always good to know what you are entitled to— especially when you are still thinking about applying, or in the first days of settling in to a new course and a new place to live. Sometimes, it can just be easier to know that there is one person who can point you in the right direction.

So, what can we offer you?

1) A '**Student Support Officer**' who you can go to with any queries in the first instance. Student Support Officers work with all students and can be useful in:

- Answering any questions you have about the course you are thinking of applying for.
- Acting as a link between you, the university and your local authority.
- Helping you with strategies to improve your studies and giving advice on how to manage your time effectively; how to structure your essays etc.
- Referring you to other people in MMU if you need more specialist support— such as careers advisers, counsellors, disability advisers.
- Or just being someone you can go and have a chat with.

The full list of these Student Support Officers and their contact details is available at the end of this leaflet. They are there to help you both with questions you might have before you apply, and to support you if you decide to come to MMU.

**2) Financial Support.** In addition to the financial support you get from your local authority -

- You are entitled to £1000 from MMU, which you don't need to pay back, to help towards your accommodation costs – we just need proof that you are a care leaver.
- You can also apply for additional financial support every year you are at university to help you with other expenses (again, you don't need to pay this back).

**Contact:** The Student Information Point directly on 0161 247 6888 or ask your Student Support Officer to do this for you.

**3) Support with Accommodation** which is available all year round, if you need it. Let us know when you fill in the accommodation form on-line.

**Contact:** The Accommodation Office directly on 0161 247 2958 or [accommodation@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation@mmu.ac.uk)

**Any questions at all, then just contact your Faculty Student Support Officer. If you aren't sure which one covers the course you would like to do, then just ring Student services on 0161 247 3480 or email us [studentservices@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@mmu.ac.uk)**

**Tell us what course you are thinking of doing, and we'll put you in touch with the right person.**

**Art and Design** – Helen Bowman - Tel: 0161 247 1711

Email: [h.bowman@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:h.bowman@mmu.ac.uk)

**Science and Engineering – vacancy**

**Humanities, Law and Social Sciences** – David Peters - Tel: 0161 247 6459

Email: [d.peters@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:d.peters@mmu.ac.uk)

**Food, Clothing and Hospitality Management** – Juliette Leeks Tel: 0161 247 2500 Email: [j.leeks@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:j.leeks@mmu.ac.uk)

**MMU Cheshire** – Mike McGarry – Tel: 0161 247 5237 Email:

[m.mcgarry@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:m.mcgarry@mmu.ac.uk)

**MMU Business School** – Emma Flynn Tel: 0161 247 3857 Email:

[e.flynn@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:e.flynn@mmu.ac.uk)

**Health, Social care and Education** – Hetal Patel (Didsbury Campus, Monday, Thursday & Friday Tel: 0161 247 2040; Gaskell Campus Tuesday & Wednesday Tel: 0161 247 2535) Email: [h.patel@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:h.patel@mmu.ac.uk)

