



University of  
Nottingham

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# Identifying and responding to students in difficulty

A guide for staff



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# Introduction

A number of students will encounter problems during their time here and members of staff may be called on to provide some help. The problems may be academic, personal or practical and difficulties in one area can often have an impact on other areas of the student's life. Some students may directly approach staff members to ask for support. Others may be reluctant to ask and try to struggle on but problems may become apparent.

## What to do about this will depend on a number of factors:

- Your role in the University and whether you have a specific responsibility for supporting students.
- The seriousness and urgency of the situation.
- Your level of skill and experience in helping others.
- The amount of time and resources available.

Some members of staff (for example, personal tutors, School Welfare Officers, Disability Liaison Officers, hall wardens and tutors) have a defined role in supporting students. Those who do not have this formal role but who have contact with students may notice that something is wrong or be approached by students with personal difficulties.

## This guide is intended to help members of staff to:

- clarify their own role and the limits of their responsibility towards students in difficulty
- work out when (and when not) to intervene
- identify problems
- decide what to do about them

It also aims to provide some strategies for dealing with more complex and difficult situations.

Section 1

# Your responsibility towards students in difficulty

## Staff with a specific support role

### Personal Tutors

The University regards this role as having central importance to the support of students' progress and development on an individual basis. The personal tutor fulfils key academic and pastoral functions, often closely interrelated, by providing a clear and crucial point of contact for the individual student in their interactions with the institution.

Along with other members of staff, the personal tutor has a responsibility to respond to students who ask for help. This may involve offering direct support (particularly if the problem is a course-related issue) or helping the student to obtain appropriate support elsewhere.

Students do not always express problems directly or ask for help. They may feel embarrassed or concerned about the consequences of telling someone in their school or department or simply hope that the problem will go away. It is therefore an important part of the personal tutor's role to identify when there may be problems which are impeding the student's progress (academic or personal) which are not raised directly by the student.

There may be indications in the student's academic work that all is not well. The personal tutor is the only person who has an overview of the student's work and personal development, and is therefore in the best position to recognise when there may be a problem. Other indicators of problems can be found in the *How do you know there is a problem?* section of this guidance document.

It is not always possible, however, to know that something is wrong, particularly if the difficulties predate the student's university career and there is no observable change in behaviour or appearance. Tutors are not expected to do the impossible, but they are in a good position to

be aware of what is happening to their tutees. Support and consultation are available to tutors from the Senior Tutor, Head of School, School Welfare Team and other experienced colleagues within the institution.

### Summary of responsibilities of personal Tutors

- Maintaining regular contact with tutees may help to contain their anxiety and so prevent problems from developing
- Identifying problems (where possible)
- Assessing the situation
- Deciding what to do next
- Consulting with colleagues and referring on, where necessary, to the appropriate service

### School welfare support

Whilst students are encouraged to see their personal tutor as their main port of call within the School for any problems they may face, each School also has a Welfare Officer whose role is to provide pastoral and welfare support to students within their School. Students may be referred to them by their personal tutors or may access them directly. The Welfare Officers will work closely with personal tutors and can offer advice about services available to students in difficulty. Welfare Officers can help students to access more specialist services including referring on to central University support services as required.

## Disability Liaison Officers

Each school appoints a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) to provide a source of reference, advice and guidance for members of staff and students in the school about disability issues and support.

Students who are concerned about a disability may approach the DLO directly or may be referred by another member of staff. The role of the DLO is to liaise with colleagues to ensure that the school responds appropriately to the needs of the student and that they are referred to other sources of support as necessary. Students with diagnosed mental health difficulties may be referred to Academic Support or Disability Support for advice about study resources and to their GP or the University Counselling Service for medical or psychological support or to the Mental Health Advisers.

There may be times when students bring personal problems to the DLO, especially if a positive relationship has been established. An initial sympathetic response may be sufficient but if further support is needed, information about other relevant sources of specialist help should be provided, so the student can be appropriately referred to the School Welfare Officer.

### Summary of responsibilities of Disability Liaison Officers

- Where necessary, liaising with the student's personal tutor about referral for specialist help.
- Responding to problems presented directly by students by making an initial assessment and deciding on a course of action.
- Referring on to the student's personal tutor or to others in specialist services as appropriate.
- Acting as a referral, advice and information point about disability issues and support, indicating available sources of information about managing the teaching and learning environment in an appropriate way. Also, taking a lead within the School/Department in assisting with any necessary disability-related arrangements for a student anticipating a period of study abroad or clinical/work placement.
- Contributing to the Disability Liaison Officer Network by attending meetings to discuss and share good practice.

## Hall Wardens and Residential Tutors

Support for students in University catered halls of residence as well as at Broadgate Park, St Peters Court and Raleigh Park is provided by hall tutors and wardens. This is especially helpful in the first few weeks and months when students are adjusting to life at the University.

### Residential Tutors

Hall tutors play an important part in the welcoming process on the first day when they meet and greet the new arrivals. They continue to do this in the following weeks when they meet their tutees in small groups and provide advice and guidance on the University and hall systems.

It can be very tempting when welcoming new students to tell them what a good time they are going to have. More realistically, it is better to let them know that it is also a normal part of student life to encounter difficulties. Most students in difficulty believe that they are part of a tiny minority of people who 'can't cope'. It can be enormously reassuring to hear that lots of people have difficulty settling in during the first few weeks and months.

For many students, simply knowing that there is someone they can go to if necessary (and indeed, someone who knows their name) can help them to contain initial anxieties and manage without needing any additional help.

The hall tutor has a responsibility to be available for tutees who want to come and talk to them. Each hall has its own guidelines as to how much tutors should be available.

In order to ensure that tutors are able to get on with their own lives and work, it is important to set out clearly the limits to the times when they are available and communicate these to students.

Support and consultation within the hall are available to tutors from the Warden or Deputy Warden.

### Wardens and Deputy Wardens

Students may take their problems directly to the Warden or Deputy Warden. However, more often the role of Wardens and Deputy Wardens is to ensure that the support system in the hall is working effectively, to provide support and consultation to the hall tutors and to become involved directly only in more complex or serious situations.

### Summary of responsibilities of Hall Tutors, Wardens and Deputy Wardens

- Regular availability and accessibility may help to contain anxiety and prevent problems.
- Identifying indicators of major problems; for example, when a student stays in their room for long periods.
- Responding to problems students present by making an initial assessment and deciding on a course of action.
- Responding to concerns about students brought by others; for example, friends or other hall staff.
- Referring on to the personal tutor, School Welfare Officer or one or more of the specialist services as appropriate.
- For hall tutors – informing/ consulting with the Warden or Deputy Warden as soon as possible if a problem seems serious or urgent.

## Staff in specialist services

The University has a number of specialist services (see *Specialist Services* section of this guide).

Staff in these services work in their own area of expertise but also have a role in signposting students to other relevant sources of help. If a student has formed a positive relationship with a staff member in one service, they may disclose other problems, which should then be referred on to the appropriate service.

## Staff who support students as a first point of contact

A number of staff members in the University, particularly in schools, departments and residences, have an informal role in supporting students. Students may often find it easier to talk to someone who is not directly involved in assessing their work and who may appear more approachable. This group includes administrative and secretarial staff in Student Services Centres, library staff, staff in schools and departments, laboratory staff, and hall secretaries.

The University sees this role as being a first point of contact; someone who will listen sympathetically, offer some practical advice within their own area of work and refer the student on to another member of staff or service if necessary.

For many students, simply knowing that there is someone they can go to if necessary (and indeed, someone who knows their name) can help them to contain initial anxieties and get by without seeking help.

### Summary of responsibilities

- Responding to requests for advice and information when this falls within the staff member's role.
- Listening sympathetically when students bring problems or express emotional distress.
- Making an assessment as to whether this is enough to resolve the situation or whether more is needed.
- Referring on where necessary to the appropriate person or service.
- Informing the student's personal tutor if there is concern or if the problem is affecting the student's academic work (staff in schools and departments) or informing the hall tutor, Warden or Deputy Warden if the student is living in a hall of residence.

## Staff with no formal support role who are on call to respond to difficult situations

Security staff may be called to deal with situations where a student is disturbing others or causing concern. Some assessment needs to be made as to what is going on; for example, whether the student has simply had too much to drink, is under the influence of drugs or has mental health difficulties. In some situations, more than one of these circumstances may apply. It is not always easy for staff who have no previous knowledge of the student to know what may be happening. There may be other people who can provide information; for example, whether this behaviour is out of character or if there have been previous concerns about the student.

Situations involving drunkenness or drugs are most likely to occur in the evenings and at night. As long as there is no obvious risk to the student or others, the main focus will be to get the student home safely, possibly with help from friends or housemates, and from the duty tutor if the student is living in one of the halls of residence with tutor support.

If neither alcohol nor drugs appear to be the main problem, it will be important to try to obtain further information about the student from hall staff or friends.

### Summary of responsibilities

- Deal with any immediate risk to the student, other people or property by taking appropriate action; for example, applying first aid or contacting the emergency services

- If there does not appear to be an immediate risk, make a judgement about what is going on, based on direct observation and any information which can be obtained from others
- Contact the duty tutor if the student is living in a hall of residence
- If there are concerns about the student's mental health but there does not appear to be an immediate risk, it may be possible to help the student to calm down by encouraging them to talk about what it is that is distressing them and then suggesting where further help may be obtained
- If the concerns are more immediate, it may be possible to contact a member of staff who knows the student and who can take responsibility for deciding what to do next. If it is not possible to do this and you are not certain of the best course of action, advice can be obtained from the following sources: during normal surgery hours you can contact the University Health Centre and/or the University Mental Health Advisors. If it is outside normal surgery hours, contact NHS 111. If the situation needs an urgent response, the student can go to the Emergency Department at the Queen's Medical Centre if it appears to be safe for them to do so. If not, contact the emergency services to send an ambulance
- Follow normal policies on reporting the situation

# Initial responses to a request for help

In busy lives, listening can often be fairly casual. We may be distracted by work or other pressures. When we are talking to someone else we can usually tell if the person is attentive. When a student asks to talk to someone about a personal difficulty, it is important to try to switch off the other pressures and to listen in a more focused way.

- Make clear how much time is available. This may also help the student to work out how much time they need. If there is an urgent deadline or an imminent appointment, say so and offer time later. In most situations this will be acceptable to the student. It is usually better to offer a specific time, rather than simply to ask the person to come back later, which they will often experience as a brush-off.
- If the person appears to be very agitated or upset and is unable or unwilling to wait, a brief meeting should be offered immediately, if possible, to be followed up at a specified time soon afterwards. Alternatively the student could be directed to someone who can offer time immediately (after checking this out with the colleague concerned).
- Try to ensure that the time offered is free from interruptions and that there is a private space. This is not always possible for staff who do not have their own offices.
- Listening can be therapeutic in itself and may be enough to help the student work out their own way of dealing with the situation.

## Assessment

When listening to the student, part of the task is to make sense of what is being said and to decide what kind of response might be helpful. It can be useful to focus on the following questions as the basis of a rough and ready assessment. These are questions to reflect on, rather than to directly ask the student. Staff members are not expected to diagnose mental health problems.

## What is going on?

- What seems to be the main issue? Is the problem as presented by the student the whole story or are there other problems which are not being directly expressed?
- Does the problem seem to be serious? Is it having a major impact on the student's wellbeing?
- How urgent is the problem? Is the student at risk in some way?

## What to do next?

- Can the situation be resolved by a brief intervention; for example, advice or sympathetic listening?
- Is it appropriate to your role to offer this? Do you have the time and ability to do so?
- Is specialist help required? If so, from whom?
- Is there a need to act quickly?

## Mental health problems

Mental health is not fixed and static but varies for all of us over time. On some days we feel better than others, as also happens with physical health. The two are often linked. Distress is a healthy reaction to some events.

In differentiating mental ill health from the normal range of human emotions, the following criteria may be helpful:

- Unusual or unexplained symptoms; for example, hallucinations or delusions which do not follow the use of any mind-altering substances.
- A sudden and dramatic change in behaviour or personality.
- Duration of symptoms; for example, persistence of depressive symptoms or of high levels of anxiety.
- Intensity: the feelings or symptoms may seem overwhelming or unmanageable.
- Effects: the symptoms interfere with normal functioning.
- Is there a need to inform or consult with someone else?

## Concerns of a serious nature

Naturally, all concerns about the wellbeing of a student are important. But some concerns because of their nature require a more sensitive response. Where a concern is of a serious nature specific safeguarding interventions may be required to appropriately support the student and those connected to them. Examples would include:

- Where it is identified that the student has been the victim of any form of assault or abuse
- Where it is identified that the student is vulnerable to on-going abuse
- Where it is identified that the student may have impaired ability to protect or look after themselves but would be deemed as “having capacity” and as not ‘vulnerable’ under the law
- Where it is identified that the student is at risk of radicalisation
- Where it is identified that the student has been arrested or is subject to any form of investigation by the police or other statutory service

This list is presented for illustration and is not exhaustive. If you are unsure as to whether a situation would be classified as serious in nature, advice can be sought from the Head of Student Welfare, the Head of Security, or the Campus Life Director.

## Preventing radicalisation

Preventing violent extremism by countering the ideology of extremism and by identifying those who are being drawn into radicalism has for some time formed part of the University's approach to safeguarding its students. The Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015 now imposes a duty on a wide range of bodies including all universities and schools.

The University will continue its approach of delivering the Prevent duty as part of its welfare and safeguarding activities. We are committed to maintaining an inclusive and supportive environment where all members of the University community are encouraged to engage in debate and to pursue both academic and non-academic interests. At the heart of this, we will continue to encourage a culture whereby all members of the University community feel involved and socially included in University life and support others to do the same. We consider this the most effective means of reducing the likelihood of individuals becoming isolated and vulnerable to the risk of radicalisation.

If you have a concern that a student may be at risk of radicalisation, this should be treated in the same manner as any other welfare case. This means that:

- For non-urgent cases, the concern should be referred to the School Welfare team or other welfare services such as the Counselling Service or Mental Health Advisory Service.
- For urgent cases, the concern should be referred to the Head of University Security.

We encourage a culture of openness where people feel able to speak up about their concerns knowing that support will be forthcoming and without fear of recrimination. Requirements of the Prevent duty are on the institution, not the individual. We are not expecting you to make decisions about individuals yourself without support. Where you have a question, please ask one of the following people who will be able to advise you:

### Head of Student Welfare

Claire Thompson

[claire.thompson@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:claire.thompson@nottingham.ac.uk)

Internal: 67908

### Head of Security

Gary Stevens

[gary.stevens@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:gary.stevens@nottingham.ac.uk)

Internal: 13597

### Campus Life Director

Andy Winter

[andrew.winter1@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.winter1@nottingham.ac.uk)

Internal: 15758

## Section 3

# Your guide to referrals

Staff members have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate help is offered to the student, not to resolve the problem. It is important to communicate concerns about a student to a line manager or other colleagues as appropriate and not to take sole responsibility for the situation.

The term referral is used throughout this guide and describes two approaches:

- Talking informally to a student about a particular service and encouraging them to make contact.
- Making a more formal approach to a service on behalf of a student by telephone or in writing.

## When to refer?

- When the problem needs specialist help.
- When the problem is complex or serious.
- When there would be a conflict with other aspects of your role if you offer support yourself.
- When the situation needs more time than you can offer.

## Where to refer?

It is not always possible to know what the best source of support might be. There may be more than one problem or the initial problem may not be the most central. What is most important in the first instance is to guide the student to a service that is acceptable to them. A further referral can be made later if appropriate. A list of example situations with suggested referral routes can be found in the *What sort of support does the student need?* section of this guide.

Usually this will be to one of the specialist services on campus and staff in these services will refer on to other sources of help if they think it appropriate. If a student does not want to use on-campus services, they can be helped to find appropriate support elsewhere. A list of useful off-campus services can be found in the *Off-Campus Specialist Services* section of this guide. You can also look at the comprehensive information on services available on the HealthyU website: [nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/services/healthyu.aspx](https://nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/services/healthyu.aspx)

## How to refer?

It is usually best if a student can take the initiative to approach a service. There may, however, be times when this seems too difficult for the student. It may then be helpful for the staff member concerned to take a more active role in either telephoning or writing to the

appropriate service to make an appointment on their behalf.

Those who do not have a formal student support role may encourage the student to talk to someone who does have this role and who may be able to help those students who want help but do not feel able to approach the specialist services directly.

## When a student doesn't want to be referred but wants to continue to talk to you

It may be that, even after you have referred the student onto another, more appropriate service to address their need, the student tells you that you have been so helpful and sympathetic that they would prefer to talk to you than to see someone else. It is important that you maintain an appropriate relationship with the student by taking the following steps:

### Explaining your role

It is often enough to explain to the student that you are not in a position to offer further help since it isn't appropriate to your role or that you lack the specialist expertise or the time to give ongoing support.

### Exploring the student's concerns

If the student is worried about going to see someone else, it may help to explore this in more detail. For example, a student may be worried about talking to someone involved in assessing their work or believe that there would be a stigma attached to seeing a counsellor. If it is not possible to reassure the student, try to suggest an alternative person for them to talk to from the list of specialist services available within the University (see *Specialist Services* section of this guide).

### Setting clear limits

Having revealed personal difficulties, the student may wish/expect to continue to receive further support from you and ask for quite a lot of your time. If they are unwilling to be referred to someone in a more appropriate role, you may experience quite a lot of pressure to provide this support directly. You may feel concern for the student and worry that they may feel rejected if you do not offer support. It can also feel flattering to be sought out in this way. It is, however, important to set some limits, otherwise you may end up feeling out of your depth and spending more time than you can afford on one student. This can be done in a positive way by letting the student know how much time can be offered and making clear the limits to the support that you can offer.

Personal tutors, for example, need to make it clear that their role is to help the student with academic difficulties created by the situation, not to deal with personal problems directly. It may be necessary to keep reminding the student of the specialist help available to them.

### Providing information

It can be useful to guide the student towards sources of information about their specific difficulty. The University Counselling Service has produced a series of leaflets on issues such as bereavement, anxiety, depression and eating difficulties. These are available in various places across the University. Copies can be obtained from the University Counselling Service or accessed from their website. More details can be found in the final section of this guide.

## What sort of support does the student need?

Examples of difficulties students may encounter and who to refer them to

There is anxiety about a particular study problem or academic issue

- Personal Tutor
- School Welfare Officer
- Academic Support (via Student Services)

They are facing accusations of academic misconduct or have some other course based difficulty where they need impartial advice

- Students' Union Advice
- School Welfare Officer

The student wants to apply for a bursary, scholarship, student loan or support funds

- Financial Support Team (via Student Services)

They are having a problem as a result of loss of motivation or difficulty concentrating

- University Counselling Service
- GP or Cripps Health Centre

There is a disability-related issue

- Disability Support Team (via Student Services)
- School DLO

The student is experiencing panic attacks or disabling anxiety (e.g. perfectionist tendencies, works unrealistic hours, avoids starting or finishing work)

- University Counselling Service
- GP or Cripps Health Centre
- Mental Health Advisors

There is an issue with their employment situation

- Students' Union Advice

There is a clear health problem

- GP or Cripps Health Centre

The student states that they have been a victim of assault, harassment, or a hate crime

- Head of Student Welfare
- Head of Security
- Campus Life Director
- Off-Campus Affairs Team
- School Welfare Officer
- Hall Warden

You have concerns about the student's psychological wellbeing and need further advice

- University Counselling Service
- Mental Health Advisors
- GP or Cripps Health Centre

They are experiencing financial difficulties or have a financial query

- Students' Union Advice
- Student Services Financial Support Team

The student is concerned about their use of alcohol or drugs

- GP or Cripps Health Centre
- University Counselling Service

There is an issue with housing or accommodation (including problems with housemates)

- Students' Union Advice
- Off-Campus Affairs Team
- Hall pastoral team (if in University supported accommodation)

The student has told you directly about a psychological problem (e.g. bereavement, relationship breakdown)

- University Counselling Service
- Personal tutor
- School Welfare Officer

The student is concerned about religious or spiritual beliefs or is adversely affected by life events

- Chaplaincy
- University Counselling Service

An international student is experiencing practical problems concerning immigration or academic issues

- Student Services
- Personal tutor
- School Welfare Officer

## Section 4

# Responding to more complex situations

## If concerns are raised by others

From time to time staff may be approached by students who are concerned about a friend or by a student's family. Concerns may also be raised by colleagues who do not have a formal support role. There are a number of possible courses of action:

- Use your own observation of the situation to help you to decide if/when to intervene.
- Encourage those who approached you to persuade the person to seek help directly, either from you or another appropriate person. It may help to provide them with some relevant information (a leaflet, for example) to give to the student.
- Talk to the student yourself, either by enquiring generally about their wellbeing or, with the agreement of those who approached you, let them know that concerns have been expressed.
- Make a note of the information and the course of action you took.

Please remember the importance of maintaining confidentiality if speaking to family and friends. You can listen to their concerns but you cannot share any information with them, not even to confirm a student is studying with us. It can help to explain confidentiality, share generic information and ensure it is understood that no feedback can be given about any response to their concerns will be given without the consent of the student. It can be helpful to encourage them to ring again if their worries continue or worsen.

## If the student denies there is a problem

It may be helpful to challenge their denial gently by letting the student know that this is not how the situation appears. Let them know why there are concerns; for example, if there has been a deterioration in the quality of academic work, or if they have changed in some important way.

If the student refuses to acknowledge the problem or discuss the situation, it may still be helpful to pass on sources of information and support so the student can access this later. In addition, you may wish to discuss the situation with one of the Mental Health Advisers.

If there are serious concerns, or if the student's behaviour is causing problems for others, consult a line manager or another senior colleague.

## Section 5

# Urgent situations

The first step in the process of assessment is to ascertain whether the concern requires a prompt response.

## A prompt response is required if there is reason to believe that:

- a student may be at risk of attempting suicide.
- they may be at risk of hurting themselves or someone else.
- their behaviour appears to be significantly odd and either this is not part of a longstanding problem or there may be a longstanding problem which has deteriorated: for example, the person appears highly agitated and out of touch with reality.
- the student is not functioning effectively in terms of the academic work or in other areas of life, for example spending long periods in bed
- the student is vulnerable to significant self neglect or exploitation by others.
- the student has been the recent victim of, or is at risk of, serious assault.

In situations where there is an immediate risk of significant harm to the student or others, call Security on extension 18888. The Security team will make an urgent response, including contacting emergency services as required. They will also ensure that appropriate staff members such as the Head of Student Welfare are drawn into the response to the situation.

In situations where there is no immediate risk but where the concern is of a serious nature (as defined in section 2 of this document: *Initial responses to a request for help*), colleagues should refer the matter to the Head of Student Welfare, who will make a judgment about appropriate next steps.

## In any other situation the following steps should be taken:

### Staff who have a specific supportive role should consider:

- Allowing the student space to discuss what is distressing them. If there is only limited time available, there may be a need to provide a brief intervention and offer more time later. Offer support to any other students who may have been affected by the situation.
- Planning with the student where they can access support in the future to help to avert further crises.
- If the student is agitated or angry, it will help to try to appear calm and in control of the situation, even if you don't feel that way. It may help to sit down and persuade the student to do likewise.
- When the student is under the influence of alcohol or drugs it will not be possible to resolve any problems. It will be helpful to encourage them to come back and talk to you or another member of staff when they are calmer. If the student is creating a disturbance, or if you are concerned about your personal safety, contact Security.
- It should not be necessary to spend hours sitting with a student. Giving the student some time and then following this up later can often be more useful as it is giving a message that the anxiety/ distress can be managed.

### Staff who do not have a formal support role should:

Inform a line manager or a senior colleague as soon as possible. The person informed should either act on the guidelines directly or inform someone who will.

A flowchart to help you assess what steps to take can be found at the end of this section.

## Responding to students in a heightened emotional state

From time to time staff may be called on to deal with a student who is agitated, angry or upset. Drugs or alcohol may be a factor or the student may have made an attempt at harming themselves. These situations are most frequently encountered in student residences. In such circumstances, the University has a legal as well as moral responsibility to act in the best interests of the student, especially if the student lacks the ability to do so.

If there is any injury, ensure that the student receives appropriate medical attention by contacting Security who are first aid trained. If the student refuses, a judgement will have to be made as to the seriousness of the situation (i.e. whether to override the student's refusal of help and call for an ambulance via Security).

If you think the student is at risk, the GP can be contacted with or without the student's consent. In situations when students are unwilling or unable to say who their GP is, the doctors at the University Health Centre have agreed that they will see such students in an emergency.

In this scenario, ensure that relevant colleagues are informed about the situation. Where possible, you may wish to involve someone else in helping you to deal with the situation. Problems occurring at night can be particularly difficult as there are fewer resources available to call on for support and incidents can often seem worse at night. Advice on physical or psychological concerns can be obtained from NHS 111. The University Security Team is available 24 hours a day.

## When a student appears to be suicidal

Situations can occur where a student may indicate that they are planning a suicide attempt. It is important to try to ensure that the student gets medical help as soon as possible. How this is achieved will depend on the circumstances.

During surgery opening hours, and if the student is willing to see a doctor, it may be enough to contact the surgery to explain the situation and make an emergency appointment. Check with the student that they feel safe to go alone. Having someone listen and take them seriously may be sufficient containment for the student to get help. If you do not think it is safe to leave the student alone, you will need to find someone to accompany the student or to stay until a GP can visit. You may decide to do this yourself, but it is important that you only do this if you feel safe to do so. If you have any concerns about personal safety, contact Security.

Outside surgery hours, urgent medical and psychiatric help can be obtained from the Emergency Department at the Queen's Medical Centre.

**If you believe there is an immediate risk to life, call Security on extension 18888.**

## What to do if you are concerned and the person refuses medical help

The person's consent can be overridden if you think that they are at risk or lack capacity to make decisions i.e. if they are very intoxicated by drugs and/or alcohol.

- Contact the person's GP (or Cripps Health Centre if the GP is not known) and ask for an urgent visit. Ideally, someone should stay with the person until the GP arrives. If you do not feel it would be safe for you to do so, contact Security.
- If the student is actively behaving in a suicidal way, notify Security on extension 18888. It will help if you can do this discreetly so as not to alarm the student. If possible, and it feels safe to do so, ask another member of staff who knows the student to stay with them while you arrange this.

When the risk appears to be less imminent, but a student reveals suicidal feelings, it is important to take the person seriously, even if you have some doubts as to whether a suicide attempt will be made. It will be important to encourage the student to see a GP, to go to the University Counselling Service, refer them to the Mental Health Advisory Service or to obtain some other psychological support that is acceptable to them. If the student is unwilling to access help it is advisable to discuss the situation with one of the Mental Health Advisers.

It is not always possible to prevent suicide. Even when a great deal of care and support is offered someone who is very determined may still go ahead. It is important not to feel personally responsible for the situation.

If you have been involved with a student who has killed themselves or who has made a suicide

attempt, it may be helpful to talk with one of the counsellors or chaplains or someone in a similar role. The chaplains offer support to all members of the University community, people of all faith and no faith. They can also put people in touch with contacts for other faiths not represented within the multi-faith Chaplaincy.

## Responding to students reporting sexual violence

The University has specific guidance available to help students to understand consent and how to report sexual assault. This is a useful resource for staff to use with students who approach them for support and can be found on the 'Let's Be Clear on Consent' website: [nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthy/lets-be-clear-on-consent.aspx](https://nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthy/lets-be-clear-on-consent.aspx).

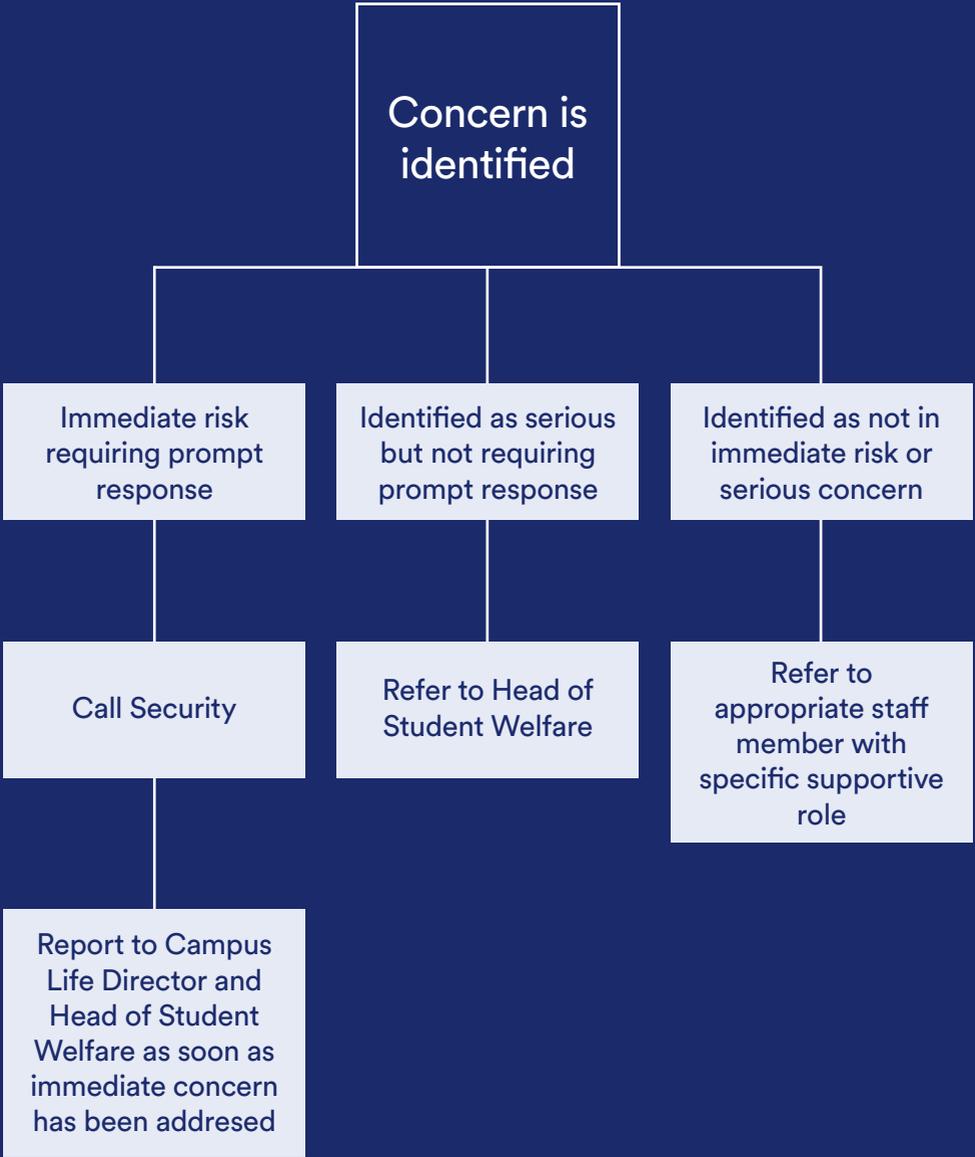
It can be helpful to encourage the student to look at the information to help them understand what has happened and their routes to support and reporting. You may also want to encourage them to access help from the professional services, in particular Topaz. Try to avoid the student discussing their experience with you in any detail. Our aim is to ensure the student feels safe, believed and empowered to seek expert help, and if possible to report the situation. The University can assist in reporting to the Police and/or accessing Topaz via Security and Welfare services.

If a student seeks support following sexual assault, please discuss the case with the Head of Student Welfare to ensure appropriate help is offered and safeguarding fully considered. We will support the student whether they decide to report the assault or not.

If the student is under 18 the Campus Life Director must be informed irrespective of whether the student wishes to report the assault, as the University has a legal duty to report such situations.

# Steps to take having identified a concern with a student

In situations where there is an immediate risk, call the emergency services, either directly on 999 or through Security on extension 18888. Security should always be notified if the emergency services are called.



# Confidentiality and its limits

When a student discusses personal problems with a member of staff, it is important for them to feel that the person can be trusted not to broadcast the information, unless the student asks for it to be passed on.

This applies to all members of staff but particularly those with a specific supportive role. Most members of staff do not, however, have a professional duty to maintain absolute confidentiality within the University and indeed it is important to be able to consult when necessary. What is important is discretion, which means passing on personal information only on a 'need-to-know' basis.

If a student insists that they need to talk to someone in confidence, there are services on campus which are professionally bound to maintain confidentiality: the GPs, Chaplains, Counsellors, the Mental Health Advisers, and Advisers within the Students' Union Advice.

## Talking to parents

It is not uncommon for staff in schools and halls of residence to be asked to speak to concerned parents. While it may be helpful for the parents to be offered a sympathetic ear, the University's position under Data Protection law is that personal information must not be disclosed to anyone outside the University, not even confirming that a student is studying at the University. Enquiries may be answered with an offer to forward a message from the parents to the student concerned. It will be important to make clear that it will not be possible to report back to the parent about any contact with the student. If a parent expresses particular concern, an offer to talk to the student and check how they are may be helpful. More details on Data Protection and the University's responsibilities under law can be found on the University website.



## Section 7

# When to consult

Staff members have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate help is offered to the student, not to resolve the problem. It is also not expected that staff members will know exactly what to do in every situation. From specialist services such as the University Counselling Service and the Mental Health Advisers through welfare support staff in schools to the Head of Student Welfare, there are a number of individuals you can approach for consultation when concerned about a student in difficulty.

You should also look to inform your line manager or another senior colleague if:

- you have serious concerns about a student
- you feel you are getting out of your depth
- you think there may be legal issues
- you are not sure of the best course of action

To check where might be the best place to refer a student or to talk over the situation more generally, don't be afraid to consult with colleagues.



## Section 8

# Key points to remember

- Consult with others if you think the student's problems may be serious or if you are uncertain what action to take.
- Be clear about what is realistic for you to deal with yourself. Decisions about what support to offer will depend on your role, whether you have relevant expertise and the time available to you.
- Situations requiring immediate action are rare.
- If you are in doubt about how to respond to a student, it is nearly always possible to give yourself time by saying that you need to think over what is the best way to help and arranging to see the person again.
- Ensure that you have information about other support services on campus which you can pass on to students.



# Appendices

Note: Information listed is correct at time of going to press. For the most up to date information go to HealthyU webpages: [nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthyu/index.aspx](http://nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthyu/index.aspx)

# Appendix 1

## Specialist services within the University

### Student Service Centres

The centres are the first point of contact for the following services:

- Advice and support on all student funding and finance
- Payment of fees
- IT support
- Production of documentation (letters and transcripts)
- Disability Support
- Academic Support (general study support, dyslexia assessment and support, ACCESS Centre)
- Advice and support on immigration regulations, employment, and visas
- Online information and self-help facilities

#### Location

Portland Building, University Park  
Amenities Building, Jubilee  
Main Building, Sutton Bonington

#### Open times

University Park: 9.30am–5pm, Monday to Friday  
For opening hours of other centres, visit [nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/student-servicescentres](http://nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/student-servicescentres)

#### Contact

0115 951 3710 University Park and Jubilee  
0115 951 6004 Sutton Bonington  
[ssc@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ssc@nottingham.ac.uk)  
[nottingham.ac.uk/ssc](http://nottingham.ac.uk/ssc)

### University Counselling Service

Offers a confidential service from professionally qualified counsellors for a wide range of issues, including anxiety, depression, family concerns and relationship issues.

#### Location

The Orchards, University Park

#### Open times

9am–1pm, 2–4.30pm, Monday to Friday  
Please see website for information on how to make an appointment.

A limited service is offered at Jubilee, Sutton Bonington and Derby campuses

#### Contact

0115 951 3695; internal extension 13695  
[counselling.service@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:counselling.service@nottingham.ac.uk)  
[nottingham.ac.uk/counselling](http://nottingham.ac.uk/counselling)

### Cripps Health Centre

#### Surgery hours

8am–6pm, Monday to Friday

#### GP appointment times

8am–12pm and 2–5pm, Monday to Friday

#### Out-of-hours calls will be re-routed to NHS 111.

Note that 111 is a freephone number but you may not be able to dial from a University telephone.

#### Contact

0115 846 8888; internal extension 68888  
[unhs.co.uk](http://unhs.co.uk)

## Mental Health Advisers

0115 848 4652  
internal extension 86452  
[mh-support@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:mh-support@nottingham.ac.uk)

## Students' Union Advice (Students' Union)

Professional welfare and education advisers who can offer help on a wide range of concerns including housing, finances, employment and legal rights. They also offer advice on academic issues such as appeals, extenuating circumstances and disciplinary matters.

### Location

Portland Building, University Park

### Opening times

#### Term-time

9am–4pm; Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday  
10am–5pm, Wednesday

### Holidays

9am–4pm, Monday to Friday

### Contact

0115 846 8730; internal extension 68730  
[student-advice-centre@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:student-advice-centre@nottingham.ac.uk)  
[su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice](http://su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice)

## Chaplains and faith advisers

Offer support and advice to all members of the University community, students and staff, Christians and non-Christians. They also have information on contacts for other faiths.

### Location

Portland Building, University Park

### Contact

0115 951 3931; internal extension 13931  
[chaplains@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:chaplains@nottingham.ac.uk)  
[nottingham.ac.uk/chaplains](http://nottingham.ac.uk/chaplains)

## Accommodation Services

### Location

Portland Building, University Park

### Opening times

9.30am–4pm, Monday to Friday

### Contact

0115 951 3697; internal extension 13697  
Undergraduates email:  
[ugaccommodation@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ugaccommodation@nottingham.ac.uk)  
Postgraduates email:  
[pgaccommodation@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:pgaccommodation@nottingham.ac.uk)  
[nottingham.ac.uk/accommodation](http://nottingham.ac.uk/accommodation)

## Support in University residences **Nightline**

All catered and non-catered halls of residence have a Warden or Deputy Warden who has responsibility for the welfare of students when they are in halls. In catered halls each student will be allocated a hall tutor who is available to offer advice and support and who is accountable to the Warden or Deputy Warden. The Students' Union also has welfare reps in all University undergraduate residences, including self-catering accommodation, who offer informal support and advice.

## Support in schools

Each school has a Senior Tutor who has overall responsibility for the personal tutoring system in schools. They offer support and guidance to personal tutors and will assist students in cases where the student feels unable to approach the personal tutor. Each School also has a Welfare Officer who can support students.

[nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/healthwelfare/welfare-support.aspx](https://nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/healthwelfare/welfare-support.aspx)

Confidential listening and information service, run by students.

### Opening times

7pm–8am seven nights a week, term-time only

### Contact

**0115 951 4985; internal extension 14985**  
[nottinghamnightline.co.uk](https://nottinghamnightline.co.uk)

## Centre for English Language Education (CELE)

Provides English language support for international students.

### Location

YANG Fujia Building, Jubilee

### Contact

**0115 951 4405; internal extension 14405**  
[cele-enquiries@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:cele-enquiries@nottingham.ac.uk)  
[cele.nottingham.ac.uk](https://cele.nottingham.ac.uk)

## Appendix 2

# Support services in Nottingham

### Drugs and alcohol services

#### Nottingham City

##### **Nottingham Recovery Network**

(NRN) deal with referrals to adult drug and alcohol services.

NRN deliver a complete and confidential access, advice, support, treatment and recovery service in Nottingham. Telephone or drop in for advice and an assessment of your needs.

Information and help line: 0800 066 5362

[nottinghamrecoverynetwork.com](http://nottinghamrecoverynetwork.com)

#### Nottingham County

##### **New Directions – Nottinghamshire**

Change, Grow, Live (CGL) is a free and confidential drug and alcohol service for adults. 0115 896 0798

[notts@cgl.org.uk](mailto:notts@cgl.org.uk)

#### Derby

##### **Derby Drug and Alcohol Services**

Provides advice, information and support.

The service is provided jointly by Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Phoenix Futures and Aquarius.

0300 790 0265

### EDISS Eating Disorders in Student Services (NHS)

A confidential weekly clinic offering advice and support about eating difficulties.

Drop in Wednesdays 10am–5pm at Cripps Health Centre, Meeting Room, University Park.  
[info@firststepsnotts.co.uk](mailto:info@firststepsnotts.co.uk)

### NHS Direct

Offers medical advice and health information.

Available: 24 hours, 365 days a year

Freephone: 111 (Please note that you may not be able to dial this number from a University telephone)

[nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

### NHS Urgent Care Walk-in Centre

Nurse-led centre offering health information and advice and treatment for minor illnesses and injuries.

#### Location

Seaton House, City Link, Nottingham NG2 4LA

#### Opening hours

7am–9pm, 365 days a year

#### Contact

0115 883 8500

[nottinghamcity.nhs.uk/your-services/urgent-care-centre.html](http://nottinghamcity.nhs.uk/your-services/urgent-care-centre.html)

### Notts & Nottingham Lesbian Gay Bi & Trans Network

Call: 0115 934 8485

text: 07481 344 040

[info@nottslgbt.com](mailto:info@nottslgbt.com)

[nottslgs.org.uk](http://nottslgs.org.uk)

## Sexual Health

### **Nottingham Sexual Health Service**

Sexual health services in Nottingham and South Nottinghamshire are led by Nottingham University Hospital Trust offering contraception, sexual health advice, sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) testing and treatment, specialist counselling and pregnancy testing and termination advice.

0115 962 7627

@NUHsexualhealth

[nuh.nhs.uk/](http://nuh.nhs.uk/)

### **Integrated Sexual Health Service – Loughborough Health Centre**

0800 318 908 or 0300 124 0102

### **Derbyshire Integrated Sexual Health, London Road Community Hospital**

0800 328 3383

### **Terrence Higgins Trust**

Provides HIV Rapid Testing and STI screening.

0115 822 0121

[tht.org.uk](http://tht.org.uk)

### **The Health Shop**

Advice and support on substance use and sexual health including STI testing, sexual health advice, pregnancy testing, emergency contraception, free condoms, lube and dams.

0115 905 5001

healthshop@nottshc.nhs.uk

[healthshopnottingham.co.uk](http://healthshopnottingham.co.uk)

## Sexual assault

### **Topaz Centre**

Topaz is the Nottinghamshire Sexual Assault Referral Centre. It offers support to people who have experienced rape or sexual assault.

0845 600 1588

[nottssvss.org.uk](http://nottssvss.org.uk)

### **Nottinghamshire Sexual Violence Support Services (NSVSS)**

Support to anyone (aged 13+), who have experienced any form of sexual violence, whether recently or in the past.

0115 941 0440

[nottssvss.org.uk](http://nottssvss.org.uk)

### **Domestic abuse**

24 Hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline

0808 800 0340

[equation.org.uk/](http://equation.org.uk/)

### **Samaritans**

National helpline available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Call 116 123

[jo@samaritans.org.uk](mailto:jo@samaritans.org.uk)

[samaritans.org.uk](http://samaritans.org.uk)

## Primary Care Mental Health Services

Primary care mental health service that provides assessment and treatment for what are referred to as 'mild to moderate common mental health problems' without the need for a GP referral. These problems are considered common as they affect one in four of us over the course of our lifetime and include stress, depression and anxiety.

### Trent PTS

You can make a self-referral over the phone 01332 265659 for Derbyshire, or 0115 896 3160 for Nottingham/Nottinghamshire or via their website [trentpts.co.uk/self-referral/](https://trentpts.co.uk/self-referral/)

### Let's Talk-Wellbeing

For self-referrals in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire call 0115 956 0888 or visit [iaptportal.co.uk/ServiceUser/SelfReferralForm.aspx](https://iaptportal.co.uk/ServiceUser/SelfReferralForm.aspx)

For Leicestershire County or Rutland call 0115 8760157 or visit [iaptportal.co.uk/ltw.html](https://iaptportal.co.uk/ltw.html)

For Leicester City call 0116 2927010, email [leicesteropenmind@nottshc.nhs.uk](mailto:leicesteropenmind@nottshc.nhs.uk) or visit [iaptportal.co.uk/leicself.html](https://iaptportal.co.uk/leicself.html)

Insight Healthcare - self-refer online, call on 0300 555 5582 (local rate) or email [east.midlands@insighthealthcare.org](mailto:east.midlands@insighthealthcare.org)

### Turning Point

Email completed referral form and send to [nottingham.talking@turning-point.co.uk](mailto:nottingham.talking@turning-point.co.uk). Call 0300 555 0456 (local rate) 9am–4pm Monday to Friday.

### Talking Mental Health Derbyshire

To self-refer call 0300 123 0542 or visit: [derbyshirehealthcareft.nhs.uk/services/talkingmental-health-derbyshire/how-to-access-the-service/self-referral-form/](https://derbyshirehealthcareft.nhs.uk/services/talkingmental-health-derbyshire/how-to-access-the-service/self-referral-form/)

## Appendix 3

# University policy on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Any staff member who suspects that a young or vulnerable person has been, or is at risk of, being abused; or has a disclosure of abuse made to them; or receives a complaint relating to safeguarding issues at the University – either from within the University or an external agency – must report the matter to the Lead Safeguarding Officer for the University without delay either directly or through their line manager.

A young person in terms of the legislation is someone under 18. If you have concerns about a student who is not yet 18, please ensure you discuss concerns with the Head of Student Welfare to ensure appropriate action is taken

Lead Safeguarding Officer – Campus Life  
Director  
0115 951 5758; internal extension 15758  
[andrew.winter1@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.winter1@nottingham.ac.uk)

Full details of the policy can be found online at:  
[nottingham.ac.uk/governance/policy-finder/policy-finder.aspx](https://nottingham.ac.uk/governance/policy-finder/policy-finder.aspx)



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t: +44 (0)115 951 5559

e: [alternativeformats@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:alternativeformats@nottingham.ac.uk)

### **University Counselling Service**

t: 0115 951 3695 e: [counselling.service@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:counselling.service@nottingham.ac.uk)  
[nottingham.ac.uk/counselling](http://nottingham.ac.uk/counselling)

The University of Nottingham has made every effort to ensure that the information in this brochure was accurate when published. Please note, however, that the nature of the content means that it is subject to change from time to time, and you should therefore consider the information to be guiding rather than definitive.

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