



University of  
**Nottingham**

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## **Are you worried about another student at the University of Nottingham?**

**A guide to help you support a friend in difficulty.**





“People often come to University feeling a pressure for their time here to be ‘amazing’ and ‘the best time of their life.’”

### **Are you worried about a friend or colleague studying at the University?**

The university encourages students to form positive, caring relationships underpinned by its values of respect and inclusivity. It is proud of the many students who provide welfare support to their friends and colleagues, in personal, academic and voluntary roles.

It is important to the university that it supports students to ensure the help they provide to others, does not step into taking on caring responsibilities which could undermine their own student experience and studies.

People often come to university feeling pressure for their time here to be ‘amazing’ and ‘the best time of their life’. We hope that students will enjoy their studies and university experience, but the likelihood is that at some point, life may become difficult. Being able to access help and support, when needed, is key to a successful university experience.

### **How do I respond to a friend who asks for support?**

Our health and wellbeing is something which varies and fluctuates throughout our lives. We encourage our community to be proactive about their health and wellbeing through the [HealthyU initiative](#).

University is a time of transition and personal growth during which students can encounter challenges and difficulties which they may require support. We aim to empower our students to access the support they need, to develop the skills to overcome these challenges and promote their personal growth.



If your friend is struggling, be a good friend. Listen and encourage them to identify where they can get help and advice.



## Tips when listening to a friend in difficulty

- **Make sure you sit with them when you have the time needed**  
If you have to be somewhere else, explain and make a time to talk to them when you can be confident you have the time and space to do so without either of you feeling rushed.
- **Talk to them in a quiet space**  
If you can, be a listening ear, talk to them in a quiet space where you are unlikely to be disturbed – this does not have to be a private space if this does not feel comfortable – it could be in a quiet public area such as on an outdoor walk or in a café.
- **Listen to them attentively**  
It can be useful to put phones on to silent to enable this. If they ask questions, or for advice, try not to provide answers and guidance, you do not feel confident, or comfortable to give. It may be helpful to explain what you would do to help yourself and encourage them to seek the solutions that would work best for them.
- **Only offer the support you feel confident and comfortable providing**  
Many things will affect the amount of support we feel able to give – our relationship with the person, our circumstances, our mental health. It is not your responsibility to provide help but a choice you can make when you feel able. If you are not the right person to listen to your friend, you can help them by identifying with them whom they can speak to (see ‘Who could your friend talk to’).
- **If your friend asks to talk to you in complete confidence, try not to promise this**  
Assure them you will keep their confidence as much as possible and will not share what they say with friends and peers, but do not offer complete confidence. They may share difficult information with you that is distressing and/or worrying that you may need to share with appropriate staff to protect them and yourself.

### **BOUNDARIES**

If someone is struggling it is important to recognise that **your role is not to advise or provide care**, but to listen and provide support that **encourages them to access other welfare support services.**

Help your friend to feel confident and seek help, rather than do this for them. But if you are worried about your friend, or the situation is affecting your own wellbeing, you should seek advice and support.





## Who is available to help you and your friend?

### Support at the University

All staff play a part in supporting the welfare of students, but there are staff with specific roles which include supporting student welfare and wellbeing.

#### Personal (Academic) Tutors

Links will lead to the University's website with more information

Encourage your friend to speak to their personal tutor, particularly if their problems are caused by, or are affecting their studies. If a personal tutor is not able to help directly, they will be able to suggest others who can.

If you are seeking help for a friend and need some advice, you can talk to your personal tutor about the situation.

#### Support and Wellbeing Officers and Managers (Formerly School Welfare Officers)

Every school has an identified support and wellbeing officer or manager who supports the pastoral care within the school.

They are staff who have specific welfare-related training, and they can be a good point of support for students who are not able, or comfortable, speaking to their personal tutor.

Encouraging a friend to speak to their support and wellbeing officer can be a helpful place to start. If they are reluctant to do this and you are seeking help on their behalf, or you need to raise your concerns for their welfare, you can contact either the support and wellbeing officer for your school or your friend's.

Although the support and wellbeing officer can't discuss your friend in any detail with you, the officers work closely together and will be able to pass the information on to colleagues, if needed, to help reach out and offer appropriate support to your friend.



## Residential Life Team

Students living in university-supported accommodation can access support from the on-site residential support team. The team are a point of contact and support for students in their accommodation. There is a **duty phone system** **students can ring** if they need advice during the night.

Encourage your friend to speak to their hall team, but if they are unwilling and you are worried, you can talk to the team in your hall, or in the building, your friend is living in. The team will be able to react pro-actively to your concerns but will not be able to share with you what happens, without the permission of your friend. If you do not want your friend to know you have spoken to the team, explain this to them when you report your concerns and they will try and protect your confidentiality.

## Off-Campus Student Affairs

If your friend is living off-campus and needs advice, particularly if the issues are affecting their home or off-campus community, [contact the off-campus student affairs team.](#)

## Counselling Service

The University Counselling Service offers a range of services including groups and workshops, self-help resources and individual counselling. **The service is free and confidential to students and staff.**

If you are worried about a friend, you can **ring the service and ask to speak to the duty counsellor** who will be able to offer you advice and guidance.

It is important to note **that the service is not an emergency service**, so if more urgent, immediate help is needed, contact another service (**see section Security**).

If supporting your friend is affecting your mental health and wellbeing, you may want to consider accessing counselling yourself.



## Mental Health Advisory Service

The Mental Health Advisory Service is **referral-only and supports students with significant mental health problems.** Mental health advisors are professionals employed by the university to offer specialist support.

If you think your friend requires support from this service, they will need to be referred by a member of staff.

A duty service responding to urgent referrals and crises is offered throughout the working week, **from 9am-5pm**. The team may contact you if you have raised a serious concern about the welfare of a friend. They will offer support to your friend and may also provide advice to you about the situation.





## Chaplaincy

Chaplains support students and staff of any faith or none.

The team are part of the welfare support network. Chaplains provide support to students in difficulty and have experience in supporting students with loss and bereavement, as well as with spiritual and faith guidance and questions.

You or your friend may find it easier to speak to a chaplain, as the first point of call, especially if you have a faith which is significant to you.

Oasis is a safe space on A floor of the Portland Building. It is open for anyone to drop in from **9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday**. If you want to chat with a team member or you can contact one of the chaplains via their website to set up a time to meet.



## Security

The **university has a 24-hour Security service** which provides support to the community throughout the year.

Security Control is a central point of contact for anyone who has a serious concern about the welfare of a student, especially outside of regular working hours. The team are both first aid trained, and mental health first aid trained to enable them to provide support to students in difficulty.



### Contact Security

Control Room  
**0115 9513013**

In an emergency  
**0115 9518888.**

**Urgent help off-campus call  
the emergency services on  
999**

## Support from the Students' Union

### Students' Union Advice

Offers information, advice and representation around all aspects of student welfare and education, such as financial, housing and course issues.

Phone: **0115 846 8730**

Email: **SUAdvice@nottingham.ac.uk**



### Nightline

Nightline is a student-run anonymous and confidential listening and information service. Nightline is **open every night during term-time from 7pm-8am**, as well as providing a **24-hour service during the exam period**. Nottingham Nightline provides a telephone, email and instant messenger service, Skype as well as running a PostSecret service for students.



You can find all their details on the website.

Phone: **0115 9514985**

Email: **nightlineanon@nottingham.ac.uk**

### Student Minds

If your friend is looking for peer support, they can access Student Minds. As well as campaigning, Student Minds run a term-time self-help group.

### Welfare Officers (Welcome, Network, Clubs and Societies)

Every SU society and sports club has a welfare officer who receives training on welfare support. They can signpost members to support them.

### Local support

#### GP/Cripps Health Centre

If your friend is struggling with their mood, encourage them to **speak to their GP**. If your friend starts to experience suicidal thoughts, they should see their GP urgently, or you should seek advice on their behalf. There is a range of NHS and voluntary services.

[Information about other support can be found here.](#)



## FAQs



***My friend is struggling to settle into their hall?***

Encourage them to speak to their hall tutor or warden.

***My friend keeps waking me up in the night for someone to talk to?***

Encourage them to ring Nightline (0115 9514985) and seek medical advice if they are struggling to sleep regularly.

***My friend is struggling to make other friends and has become very dependent on me?***

Encourage your friend to join a society or club or take up volunteering. There is a useful matching link on the [SU website](#) to help them identify the right group for them. There is a diverse range of opportunities, and there will likely be a society they will enjoy.

***How can I help my friend access information about how to improve their mood and wellbeing?***

There is a range of resources available to your friend:

- [HealthyU](#)
- [Counselling](#)
- [Peer support](#) is also available from Student Minds.

***I am worried my friend is being bullied?***

Encourage them to report the harassment to the university, or if necessary, you can report on their behalf. You can email [harassment@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:harassment@nottingham.ac.uk) or via the **harassment tab on the MyNottingham app**.



***My friend has become depressed and withdrawn?***

Encourage them to speak to a member of staff and/or their GP. If they are unwilling or unable to seek help and you are worried that their mental health is getting worse, or the situation is undermining your wellbeing, you should speak to a member of staff (see the section in the guide: Who is available to help you and/or your friend?)

***My friend is barely leaving their room, and I can't get them to come out and seek help?***

If you are in university accommodation, speak to your Residential Tutor, Deputy or Warden. If you are living off-campus in other housing, please contact a **support and wellbeing officer** or the **off-campus student affairs team**.

***My friend has stopped attending lectures, and I am worried they will drop out?***

Encourage your friend to speak to their Personal Tutor or Support and Wellbeing Officer. If they are not able to do this and you are worried, you can talk to a Support and Wellbeing Officer yourself who can then arrange for someone to reach out to your friend.

***I am worried that my friend is self-harming?***

They can access help from the University Counselling Service, their GP, or a voluntary organisation such as [Harmless](#). If you are worried about their safety and welfare, and/or the impact this is having on you. You should also consider seeking help from the Counselling Service or your [support and wellbeing officer](#).

***I am worried my friend may have an eating disorder?***

Encourage your friend to speak to their GP or access the Eating Disorders in Students' Service (EDISS), **Wednesday Morning Drop-in Clinic at Cripps Health Centre**. Tel: **01332 367571** email: [info@firststepnotts.co.uk](mailto:info@firststepnotts.co.uk).

***My friend has started behaving bizarrely and is saying and doing very odd things?***

If a friend starts to behave in a way that seems irrational, they may be experiencing an episode of psychosis. Odd behaviour can include hearing and responding to voices, hallucinations, delusional thoughts (especially paranoia) and dramatic changes in mood. [Find more information here](#). If you are worried that this is happening to a friend, it is important to get advice as it may be difficult for your friend to understand that they have become unwell. You can access advice from a member of staff (see the section in the guide: Who is available to help you and/or your friend?) who may then refer your concerns on to the University Mental Health Team.

***I am worried that my friend is drinking too much/taking drugs?***

You can access information and advice from the [HealthyU website](#), and your friend can access specialist support from the [Nottingham Recovery Network](#).

If you feel your friend's behaviour is putting you or others at risk you should seek advice from a member of staff (see the section in the guide: Who is available to help you and/or your friend?).

***I am worried my friend is not safe?***

If you think your friend is at risk from domestic violence (within or outside the university community), please encourage your friend to seek help urgently, or seek this on their behalf, from [Security](#), the [Police and/or specialist services](#).

***I am worried my friend has been sexually assaulted?***

Specialist services and support can be found on the [‘Let’s Be Clear on Consent’ website](#), and concerns can be reported online by you, or your friend via [consent@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:consent@nottingham.ac.uk).

***I am worried that my friend is suicidal?***

Support your friend to see their GP urgently. If it is out of hours, you can help them access support at Accident and Emergency, where they can see a specialist from the Department of Psychological Medicine. If your friend refuses to accept help and you are concerned for their safety, ring Security if you are on campus (0115 9518888) or the Emergency Services (999) if you are off-campus. If you are worried, but not immediately concerned, ring Security on 0115 9513013 for advice. [More information about suicide](#).

***I am worried about my friend, but they insist that they are okay?***

If your concerns aren’t urgent, contact your support and wellbeing Officer or the University Counselling Service for advice.





## Watch the signs

The signs below are to help you consider if your friend may be in difficulty but not to diagnose or identify their potential problems.

### **Signs a friend may be struggling with their mental health**

- Problems sleeping – usually sleep is less and broken, but sometimes can be sleeping too much
- Changes to appetite – usually a loss of appetite but can be overeating
- Loss of concentration and poor memory
- Feeling very negative about themselves, their studies, the world about them
- Becoming socially isolated and withdrawn
- Feeling very anxious – having panic attacks
- Drinking too much alcohol, using drugs
- Change in appearance – especially self-neglect
- Bizarre behaviour, not making sense
- Paranoia

### **Signs a friend may be experiencing domestic violence**

- Unexplained bruising and signs of possible physical violence
- Loss of confidence/change in behaviour
- They have become isolated from friends and family
- They have stopped attending lectures, completing work
- They receive a high number of messages and calls from their partner when not together and continuously check their phone, must respond immediately, check-in
- They seem very controlled by their partner
- Their partner may put them down, humiliate them in front of others





## Finally...

Remember, friends are often the first people that we approach when we are having a difficult time. Supporting a friend can impact on our health and wellbeing. Look after yourself in this situation.

Remember your priorities, self-care is essential and it's vital that you are looking after your wellbeing.

Student Minds has produced a guide which will help support you to look out for your mates, from starting a conversation to navigating the student journey.

[You can view and download the full guide here.](#)