**Responding to Covid-19: Mental health and wider wellbeing support for higher education students in England**

**Signposting to useful information sources for universities and colleges**

This short guide is intended to provide a helpful summary of key sources of support available to help promote and protect the mental health and wellbeing of higher education students and university and college staff at this challenging time.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| For **guidance and information** | **University UK guidance:*** [**Stepchange: Mentally Healthy Universities**](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/stepchange-mhu.aspx) document sets out an approach to help universities think through and strategically plan how they can prioritise the mental health of their students and staff by taking a whole university approach, embedding it as an integral part of all practices, policies, courses and cultures.

[**Self-Assessment Tool**](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2020/uuk-self-assessment-tool-stepchange.pdf) developed with the Child Outcomes Research Consortium to encourage universities to plan and implement a whole university approach* [**Suicide -Safer Universities**](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/guidance-for-sector-practitioners-on-preventing-student-suicides.PDF) developed with [**Papyrus Hopeline UK**](https://www.papyrus-uk.org/) *(0800 068 4141)* provides a framework to understand student suicide, mitigate risk, intervene when students get into difficulties, and respond to these tragic deaths.
* For urgent mental health support or advice, students can check [**NHS.UK**](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health) for local services,[**NHS 24/7 Mental Health urgent helplines**](https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/) or text [**SHOUT**](https://www.giveusashout.org/)to **85258**

The [**University Mental Health Charter**](https://www.studentminds.org.uk/charter.html) provides a set of principles to support universities across the UK in making mental health a university-wide priority. It forms the basis of the Charter Award Scheme, being developed in 2020, which will recognise and reward universities that promote good mental health and demonstrate good practice.**The UK Healthy Universities Network** supports its members to develop and implement ‘whole university’ approaches to health, wellbeing and sustainability. Under the ‘News’ section of the [**UK Healthy Universities website**](https://healthyuniversities.ac.uk/news/)**–**there are links to key organisations supporting student populations that have their own dedicated COVID-19 support web pages. |
| For **student mental health programmes** | **The** [**Office for Students**](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/) **(OfS) programmes:*** The OfS **Mental Health Challenge Competition** involves 10 projects aiming to improve mental health outcomes for students.
	+ In August 2020, the OfS published a [short report](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/impact-of-coronavirus-on-ofs-mental-health-challenge-competition/) exploring the impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had on the delivery of the projects.
	+ In September 2020, the OfS published an [evaluation report](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/evaluation-of-the-ofs-mental-health-challenge-competition-early-findings-report/) on the delivery phase of the Challenge Competition to find early findings for the sector.
* The OfS **Mental Health Funding Competition** (funded by £1m from DHSC) seeks to identify innovative approaches to target mental health support for students.
* Universities and colleges can divert more of their **Student Premium funding** (worth £256 million for 2020/21) to their hardship funds to support students or to bolster their mental health support services.

**The Drug and Alcohol Impact programme** with Universities is delivered on behalf of NUS by Students Organising for Sustainability UK (SOS-UK). The Drug and Alcohol Impact programme is a whole-institution strategic framework designed not only to embed responsible drinking on campuses but also develop drug harm reduction policies and interventions to reduce the negative outcomes of student drug and alcohol use. |
| For mental health **training** programmes  | PHE has a free [**e-learning module**](https://publichealthengland.kallidus-suite.com/KIP/SignIn.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fKIP%2fSTS%2fIssueClaims.aspx%3fwa%3dwsignin1.0%26wtrealm%3dhttps%253a%252f%252fpublichealthengland.kallidus-suite.com%252fLMS%252f%26wctx%3drm%253d0%2526id%253dpassive%2526ru%253d%25252fLMS%25252f%26wct%3d2020-05-21T17%253a04%253a55Z&wtrealm=https%3a%2f%2fpublichealthengland.kallidus-suite.com%2fLMS%2f) on Psychological First Aid to help support people with the emotional impact of COVID-19.The [**Zero Suicide Alliance**](https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com) provide a range of awareness training options, which provide a better understanding of the signs to look out for and the skills required to approach someone who is struggling, whether that be through social isolation or suicidal thoughts.[**MindEd for Families**](https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/) has advice and information from trusted experts and will help you to understand what problems occur, what you can do to best support your family, and how to take care of yourself. MindEd for Families is written by a team of specialists and parents, working together. You do not need to register to use these resources |

**Mental health support for students**

There is a large amount of mental health support available for students, detailed in the table below. This ranges from self-guided emotional support to support for those in crisis. Universities and colleges are reminded that **NHS mental health services remain open** and will be throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

We do not recommend you share this list directly with students but rather integrate with information about your existing local support offers.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If you are experiencing a **mental health crisis** | If you or someone you know needs help for a **mental health crisis,** or breakdown, you should get immediate expert advice and assessment. **In an emergency, call** **999**.It's important to know that support is available, even if services seem busy at the moment. **NHS urgent mental health helplines** are for people of all ages. You can call for:* 24-hour advice and support – for you, your child, your parent/carer, friend or someone you care for
* help to speak to a mental health professional
* an assessment to help decide on the best course of care

You can find a local NHS urgent mental health helpline (England only) [**here**](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline). Please note that there may be different numbers for your home and university areas so make sure you check which number to call. You can also contact the following **free listening services** from the voluntary sector:* Call **116 123** to talk to [**Samaritans**](https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/) **24/7**, or email:**jo@samaritans.org** for a reply within 24 hours
* Text **"STUDENT" to 85258** to contact the [**Shout Crisis Text Line**](https://www.giveusashout.org/), or text **"YM"** to the same number if you're **under 19** for support from [**Young Minds**](https://youngminds.org.uk/)**.**
* If you're under 19, you can also call **0800 1111** to talk to [**Childline**](https://www.childline.org.uk/) on their 24 hours helpline. The number will not appear on your phone bill.
* Text THEMIX to **85258** to contact [**the Mix**](https://www.themix.org.uk/get-support/speak-to-our-team/crisis-messenger)
* If you are experiencing thoughts of **suicide**, phone [**Hopeline UK**](https://www.papyrus-uk.org/) on **0800 068 41 41**, or text them on **07786 209 687** between 9am – 10pm weekdays, 2pm – 10pm weekends or email **pat@papyrus-uk.org**
* Call the CALM helpline on **0800 58 58 58** between 5pm and midnight.
 |
| If you are experiencing a mental health problem and would like **support from the NHS** | **NHS mental health providers** are **continuing to operate** and many have already transitioned to delivering elements of care digitally to help people access the care they need during the pandemic, maintain continuity of care and make best use of resources. For **NHS mental health support**, students can contact their GP (this can be your home GP if you haven’t yet moved to a GP near your university address) or refer to NHS 111 online. You can find more information about NHS children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS) and how to access them on the [**NHS website**](https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-services-cypmhs/)**.** Self-referral options are commonly available, and many services offer single points of access. This means there is a single set of contact information through which all queries and referrals are channelled through. |
| If you are experiencing **anxiety** or **depression** | You can self-refer to NHS talking therapies for anxiety and depression via [**NHS psychological therapies services (IAPT)**](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-psychological-therapies-service/). These therapies can be delivered effectively remotely on-line and on the telephone. These services are free, and you can self-refer to your local service directly. You will need to access the local service where you are currently registered with a GP – this can be your home location if you have moved for your course and aren’t yet registered with a nearby GP. If you need help for your anxiety or depression then don’t wait to contact your [**local service**](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-psychological-therapies-service/find-your-gp). |
| If you are looking for **self-guided support** for your mental health and wellbeing | [**Student Space**](http://www.studentspace.org.uk) is here for students through coronavirus. However you’re feeling, help and guidance is available. Explore a range of trusted information, services and tools to help you with the challenges of student life. You can use their [**search tool**](https://studentspace.org.uk/find-support) to find the services available at your university.[**Every Mind Matters**](https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/) is a website with advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing, including creating a personalised “Mind Plan” full of self-care tips. The advice and guidance available on the Every Mind Matters website is being delivered in partnership with leading children and young people’s mental health charities, including Young Minds, The Mix and The Anna Freud Centre. [**NHS website**](https://www.nhs.uk/) has a mental health information section signposting to a range of helplines hosted by voluntary community organisations.[**NHS Apps library**](https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/)helps people find apps and online tools to help manage their health and wellbeing. For example:* [**Calm Harm**](https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/calm-harm/) is designed to help people resist or manage the urge to self-harm.
* [**Catch it**](https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/catch-it/) helps people manage feelings like anxiety and depression and improve mental wellbeing.
* [**Sleepio**](https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/sleepio/) is an online sleep improvement programme which is free for people living in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire.
* [**The Student health app**](https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/student-health-app/) is designed to reduce your worries, feel more confident and get the support you need at what can be a challenging time for any student.
* [**Thrive**](https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/thrive/)helps you prevent and manage stress, anxiety and related conditions.

[**Students Against Depression**](https://www.studentsagainstdepression.org/) is a website offering advice, information, guidance and resources to those affected by low mood, depression and suicidal thinking.[**Togetherall**](https://account.v2.togetherall.com/register)is available for students at eligible universities and colleges who are feeling stressed, anxious, low or not coping. It provides an anonymous online community who share troubles and support each other. It is a safe space as it is moderated by trained professionals who are available 24/7.[**The Wellbeing Thesis**](https://thewellbeingthesis.org.uk/) is an online resource for **postgraduate research students** to support your wellbeing, learning and research.  |
| If you are feeling **lonely** | Visit the[**Lets Talk Loneliness**](https://letstalkloneliness.co.uk/advice/) website for advice on how to help others or yourself if you are feeling lonely. |
| For information, help and advice about **drugs** | Find confidential local **drug and alcohol support services** [here](https://www.talktofrank.com/get-help/find-support-near-you) or phone **03001236600** for confidential support from Talk to Frank. |
| For support with an **eating disorder** | Phone Beat’s studentline on **0808 801 0811** or go to the [**Beat**](https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/)website to access their one to one chat forum.If you are worried about an eating disorder, please contact your GP, visit 111.nhs.uk or call 111 |
| If you are considering issues around your **sexuality or gender identity** | Call the[**Switchboard LGBT+ helpline**](https://switchboard.lgbt/) on **0300 330 0630** between 10am and 10pm every day. |
| If you have a mental health condition and need help shopping for food or picking up prescriptions | You can self-refer to the **NHS Volunteer Responders** programme using this [**link**](https://volunteering.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/nhs-volunteer-responders-portal/isolating)  |
| For training to help you **support others** experiencing a mental health problem | PHE has a free [**e-learning module**](https://publichealthengland.kallidus-suite.com/KIP/SignIn.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fKIP%2fSTS%2fIssueClaims.aspx%3fwa%3dwsignin1.0%26wtrealm%3dhttps%253a%252f%252fpublichealthengland.kallidus-suite.com%252fLMS%252f%26wctx%3drm%253d0%2526id%253dpassive%2526ru%253d%25252fLMS%25252f%26wct%3d2020-05-21T17%253a04%253a55Z&wtrealm=https%3a%2f%2fpublichealthengland.kallidus-suite.com%2fLMS%2f) on Psychological First Aid to help support people with the emotional impact of COVID-19. The [**Zero Suicide Alliance**](https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com) provide a range of awareness training options, which provide a better understanding of the signs to look out for and the skills required to approach someone who is struggling, whether that be through social isolation or suicidal thoughts. |
| If you have **lost someone to suicide** | The [**Support after Suicide Partnership**](https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/when-a-friend-has-died)have launched information for students at university with The Ted Senior Foundation - publishing help and support through the website and a series of [**podcasts**](https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/story?_sft_medium=podcast) which are available free on the website, and all major platforms. [**Survivors of bereavement from suicide**](https://uksobs.org/?doing_wp_cron=1602171642.3665690422058105468750)have a national helpline which runs 9am to 9pm, 7 days a week, on **0300 111 5065****.** |