

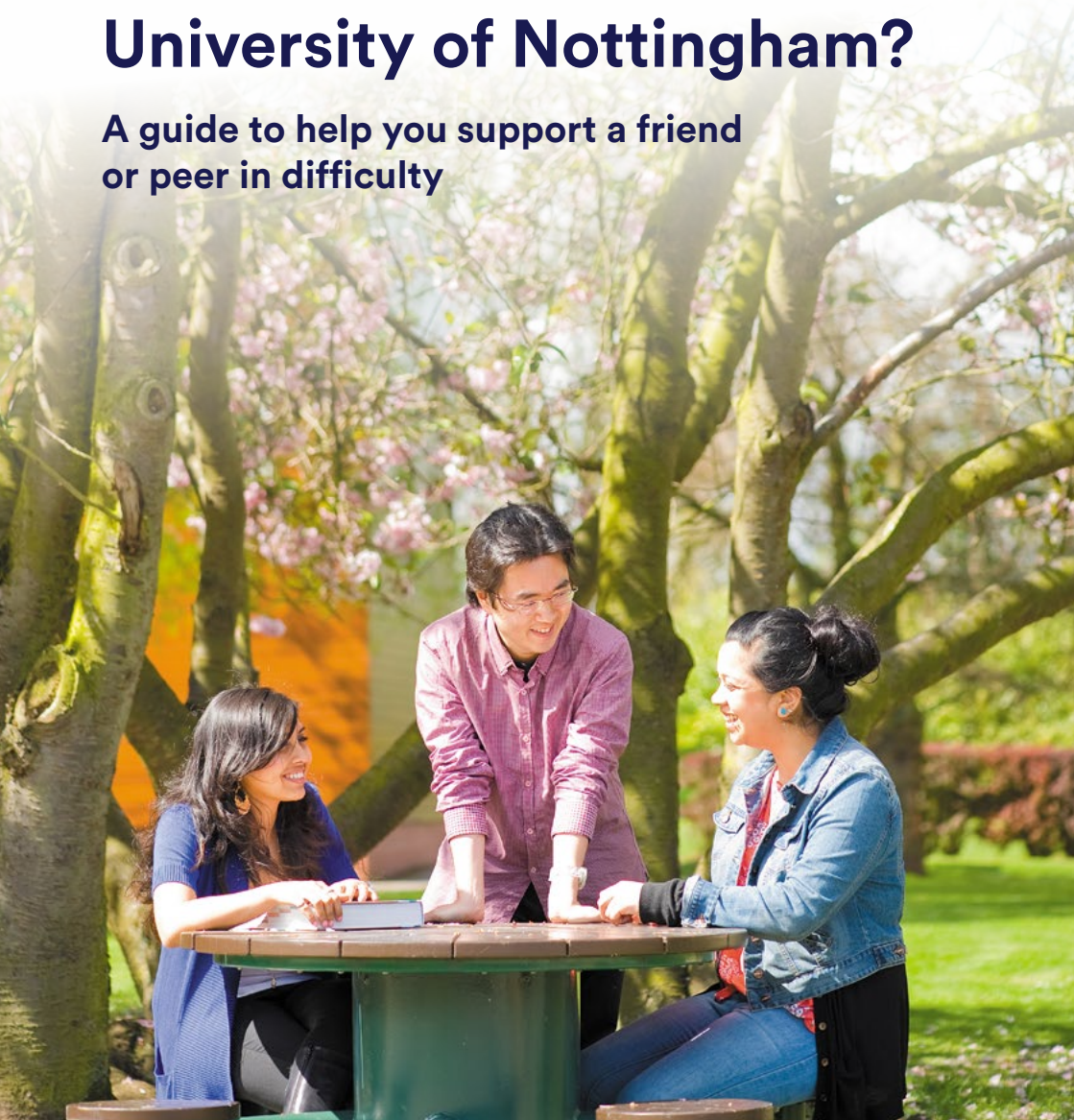


**University of
Nottingham**

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Are you concerned about another student at the University of Nottingham?

**A guide to help you support a friend
or peer in difficulty**



This guide provides supportive information to students who are concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of other students. It is particularly useful for students who also have a role supporting other students. It will help you identify when a friend or peer may be in difficulty and explain the support available at the university.



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Are you concerned about a friend or peer 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 peers in personal, academic, and voluntary roles.

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

We want students to 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 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. You can find lots of resources and information to support you and help you stay healthy on our HealthyU webpages. nottingham.ac.uk/go/healthyu

Tips when supporting a friend or peer

- Don't be afraid to ask, it shows you care about them.
- Encourage the person you are supporting to be independent, so they have control.
- Provide an open and non-judgemental space with no distractions.
- Keep questions open ended and listen attentively. 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 useful to repeat what they have said back to them to ensure you have understood what they have said.
- If appropriate talk about wellbeing and the importance of self-care, you may want to include healthy eating, sleep, exercise, rest and relaxation etc.
- Only offer 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 own personal circumstances, etc. It is not your responsibility to provide help. If you are not the right person to support your friend, you can help them by identifying who they can speak 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, others, 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. Support your friend to feel confident about seeking help, rather than do this for them.

- Provide information and signpost. The HealthyU webpages are a good place to start, you can find information about support at the university, the students' union as well as support in the local community. nottingham.ac.uk/go/healthyu
- Finally, know your limits and look after yourself. Supporting people who are struggling can impact negatively on our own mental health. If you need to, get help and support for yourself. The NurturingU webpage sets out some of the things you can do to take care of yourself. nottingham.ac.uk/go/nurturing-u

Help available 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

Encourage your friend to speak to their personal tutor, especially 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 own personal tutor about the situation. nottingham.ac.uk/studyingeffectively/teaching/personaltutors/index.aspx

Support and wellbeing service

The support and wellbeing team work alongside personal tutors, supervisors, and other university support services. They can help students find the right service, even if students are unsure where to go. They also offer advice on policies and processes such as extenuating circumstances. They are 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 good 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 in your own or your friend's school. 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 information on to colleagues, and if needed will reach out and offer support to your friend. nottingham.ac.uk/go/support-wellbeing

Residential experience team

Students living in university supported accommodation can access support from the residential experience team. The team is made up of resident managers and coordinators who are full time staff who manage the hall system and can provide help to students living in halls who may be struggling.

Email: resx@nottingham.ac.uk if it is an urgent or serious concern, they can also be contacted via the 24/7 telephone line: **0115 7487600**.

Peer to peer support is provided by residential assistants. Residential assistants are returning students living in halls who are employed to provide support to their hall community. They are available from 6-10pm. They receive training to enable them to have supportive conversations with students in difficulty and can help them access further help where needed.

Encourage your friend to speak to their residential experience team, if they are unwilling and you are worried, you can contact the team yourself. The team will respond to your concerns; however, they will not be able to share with you the outcome without the permission of your friend. If you do raise a concern about your friend anonymously, inform the team so that they can protect your confidentiality. nottingham.ac.uk/go/resx

Off campus student affairs

Provide help if your friend is living off-campus, particularly if the issues are affecting their home or off-campus community. nottingham.ac.uk/yourcommunity

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.

This service is not an emergency service, so if it is more urgent and immediate help is needed, contact another service (see section on Security).

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

Mental health advisory service

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

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

The service runs a duty service responding to urgent and crisis situations in the working week, 9am-5pm. You may be contacted by the team 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. They provide support to students in difficulty and have experience in helping students with loss and bereavement, as well as with spiritual and faith guidance questions.

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

Oasis (A floor, Portland Building) is a safe space. It is open for anyone to drop in from 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. If you want to chat to a team member you can contact one of the chaplains via their website to set up a good time to meet. nottingham.ac.uk/chaplaincy

Security

The university has a 24-hour security service available throughout the year. Security control are a central point of contact for anyone who has a serious concern about the welfare of a student, especially outside of normal working hours. The team are both first aid trained, and mental health first aid trained.

You can contact the security team via the control room on [0115 9513013](tel:01159513013) or in an emergency, on [0115 9518888](tel:01159518888).

If you need urgent help off-campus you should contact the emergency services via [999](tel:999). nottingham.ac.uk/estates/security/home.aspx

Support from the Students' Union

Students' Union Advice

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

Call [0115 846 8730](tel:01158468730) or email SUAAdvice@nottingham.ac.uk to get in touch. su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice

Nightline

Nottingham Nightline is a student-run anonymous and confidential listening and information service. It operates every night during term-time from 7pm-8am, as well as providing a 24-hour service during the exam period.

Call on [0115 951 4985](tel:01159514985) or email nottinghamnightline.co.uk

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.

Local support

GP (doctor)

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 Cripps Health Centre on University Park campus and Orchard Practice located in Kegworth near to the Sutton Bonington campus.

There are a range of NHS and voluntary services. Information about other support can be found here

nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthy/generalhealth.aspx





What can I do if:

My friend is struggling to settle into their hall?

Encourage them to speak to the residential experience team.

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 on a regular basis.

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

Encourage your friend to join a society, club or take up volunteering. There is a diverse range of opportunities, and it is very likely there will 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:

- HealthyU: nottingham.ac.uk/go/healthyu
- Counselling: nottingham.ac.uk/counselling
- Togetherall – a digital mental health service available to students – you can access using your university email. togetherall.com/en-gb

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. Students and staff can report anonymously or ask to speak to an advisor. reportandsupport.nottingham.ac.uk

My friend has become depressed and withdrawn?

They can 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 own wellbeing, you should speak to a member of staff (see section in guide: Help available at the university p.6-8)

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 the residential experience team. If you are living off-campus in other accommodation, 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?

They can contact their personal tutor or support and wellbeing officer. If they are not able to do this, you can speak 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 (harmless.org.uk) 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. If the student is living in university supported accommodation, you could also contact the residential experience team.

I am worried my friend may have an eating disorder?

Encourage your friend to speak to their GP who will be able to refer them to specialist support. If you are concerned you can speak to a member of staff (see section in guide: Help available at the university p.6-8)

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. Behaviour can include hearing and responding to voices, hallucinations, delusional thoughts (especially paranoia) and dramatic changes in mood. 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 section in guide: Help available at the university p.6-8) who may then refer your concerns on to the university mental health advisory service.

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

You can get information about where to access support and advice on the HealthyU drug and alcohol web pages.

You and your friend can also access specialist support.

If you live in Nottingham
nottinghamrecoverynetwork.com

If you live in Nottinghamshire
changegrowlive.org/Nottinghamshire

If you feel your friend's behaviour is putting you or others at risk, you should seek advice from a member of staff (see section in guide: Help available at the university p.6-8)

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 help on their behalf, from security, the Police and/or specialist services.

More information about support can be found at nottingham.ac.uk/go/domesticviolence

Use Report and Support anonymously to tell us what happened or ask to speak an advisor. This is not making a formal report to the university, it is to enable you to access the support you need to make an informed decision on what to do next.

Any concerns can be reported by you or your friend.

reportandsupport.nottingham.ac.uk

I am worried my friend has been sexually assaulted

Specialist services and support can be found on the 'Let's be Clear on Consent' webpage nottingham.ac.uk/go/clear-on-consent

The university has a dedicated team of qualified sexual violence liaison officers (SVLOs) to support students who have experienced sexual harassment and or violence either recently or in the past. More information about SVLOs can be found online at: nottingham.ac.uk/go/svlo

You can access this service via Report and Support. You will be able to anonymously tell us what happened or ask to speak an advisor. This is not making a formal report to the university, it is to enable you to access the support you need to make an informed decision on what to do next.

Any concerns can be reported by you or your friend.
reportandsupport.nottingham.ac.uk

I am worried that my friend is suicidal?

Help your friend by suggesting they 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 and support available can be found here
nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthyu/mental-health/concerned-about-suicide.aspx

I am worried about my friend, but they insist that they are fine

If your concerns are not urgent, contact your support and wellbeing officer or the university counselling service for advice.

I am worried my friend is experiencing financial difficulty?

The university finance department will discuss the options available for students facing an unexpected financial hardship. There are useful links to other information such as budgeting on their webpage:

nottingham.ac.uk/financialsupport

My friend is an international student and is finding it hard to adjust to living and studying in the UK.

If your friend is finding it difficult and it has started to impact on their health and wellbeing, suggest they talk to their personal tutor or support and wellbeing officer.

There is lots of information to support international students including an international student welcome kit that can be found here nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthyu/health-services-for-international-students.aspx





Finally

Remember friends are often the first person we approach when we are having a difficult time. Supporting a friend can impact on our own health and wellbeing. Look after yourself in this situation. Remember your own priorities, self-care is important and it's vital that you look after your own 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. It can be found online: studentminds.org.uk/uploads/3/7/8/4/3784584/interactive_laym_guide.pdf

Appendix 1

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

- Behaving differently than they normally do
- Crying or tearful
- 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 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 high number of messages and calls from their partner when not together and constantly check their phone, must respond immediately and check in
- They seem very controlled by their partner
- Their partner may put them down, humiliate them in front of others
- Limited or no access to finances



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nottingham.ac.uk/healthyu