

Advice & Support

Service Level Agreement

Introduction

This Service Level Agreement outlines what Hertfordshire Students' Union Advice & Support Centre provides to UH students and what, in return, is expected from users of the service. The users of the advice services are students at the University of Hertfordshire (and automatic members of Hertfordshire Students' Union), however within this service level agreement they will be referred to as "clients".

Our Commitment to our Clients

- We aim to ensure that all clients are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities, so that they can have the optimal student experience at the University of Hertfordshire.
- We will provide accurate, up-to-date and relevant information to enable clients to make informed decisions regarding issues affecting them.
- We will provide professional advice and support to assist clients in resolving their problems, and signpost clients to other professional services which can offer further support also.
- We will give free, impartial and non-judgmental advice and will respect client confidentiality at all times within the service*.
- We will monitor case trends and use our insight to inform plans for positive initiatives which aim to either benefit students and/or enhance the student experience.
- We will ensure that our standard of service is of the highest quality and strive for the continuous improvement and professional development of the Advice Team.
- We are committed to actively promoting equality of opportunity, access and care; following the principles of FREDIE. FREDIE stands for fairness, respect, equality, diversity, inclusion and engagement.

* All details will remain secure and will not be passed to any other company or organization, subject to the exceptions specified in this document

Advice & Support Services

Advice services are available from 10:00-16:00, Monday to Friday (excluding University Closed Days). The Advice & Support Team is based within the Hutton Hub Students' Union Office on College Lane Campus.

Advice services can be provided in-person, either via pre-booked appointment or by visiting the office and requesting a same-day appointment. Advice services can also be provided via pre-booked online appointment (either via Microsoft Teams or Zoom) or telephone (01707 285022). Advice can also be provided via e-mail (advice@hertssu.com).

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The Advice Team also have access to a small consultation room within the Students' Union Office on the De Havilland Campus; in which students can pre-book in-person appointments with the Advice & Support Team (term-time only and subject to Adviser availability).

The Advice & Support Team reserve the right to cancel any appointments at short notice, where completely necessary, but will offer an alternative appointment time in its place.

Advice services may also be suspended in the interests of worker safety (for example, if an Adviser is the only member of staff working in the Students' Union office). Due to our levels of casework and involvement in other activities, we will strictly adhere to the opening times that have been stated above; and we ask clients to respect this.

The Advice & Support Centre also runs the following specialist services:

Chlamydia & Gonorrhoea Dual Testing Kit Pick-up Point – The Advice & Support Centre is a pick-up point for Chlamydia / Gonorrhoea self-testing kits, available for Students and Staff aged 15 years of age and over. The dual testing kits can be picked up from the Advice & Support Centre waiting area or SU Reception Desk – the dual testing scheme is co-ordinated by Terrance Higgins Trust and Sexual Health Hertfordshire.

Hate Crime Reporting – The Advice & Support Centre is registered as a third party hate crime reporting centre, therefore Students and Staff can come to us to report a hate crime – instead of going to the Police Station. This process is completed via True Vision and is monitored by Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Wellbeing Items Available – The Advice and Support has a selection of Personal Alarms available. Condoms and pregnancy tests are also available free of charge.

Trussell Trust Food Bank Referral Agency – The Advice & Support Centre are a referral agency for Trussell Trust Food banks – through which students can be issued with e-voucher codes to access emergency food supplies from any of the Trussell Trust Food Banks nationwide.

SU Buddy Scheme – The Advice & Support team leads the SU Buddy Scheme; facilitating peer-to-peer support for new students at the University of Hertfordshire and offering a valuable volunteering opportunity (which is recognised by the Go Herts Award) for continuing students.

Principles of Advice Work

Free

Advice services are offered to all clients free of charge.

Independent

The Advice & Support Centre is part of the Students' Union, which is independent from the University. The University of Hertfordshire Students' Union © 2019. is a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, Company Number 7703890, Charity Registration 1143101.

Confidential

Hertfordshire Students' Union Advice & Support team are committed to offering a service of the highest standard, whilst always safeguarding and preserving privacy and confidentiality.

Hertfordshire Students' Union is independent from the University and the SU Advice & Support Centre provides a confidential service to all clients.

An Adviser may discuss a client's case with the other members of the Advice & Support Team, to ensure that the best possible support is provided, but cases will not be discussed with anyone outside of the Advice & Support Team without a client's explicit consent.

In exceptional circumstances the Advice & Support Team may be obliged to disclose information without a client's consent; such as where an Adviser believes that the safety of a client or another person is at risk – or if an Adviser is required by law to break confidentiality. In these instances, the following areas may be contacted (however this list is not exhaustive):

- UH Dean of Students Office
- UH Medical Centre
- UH Student Wellbeing / Mental Health Team
- Hertfordshire Constabulary (or client's local Police team)
- NHS 999

Impartial

The advice and information that is provided is unbiased and not directed towards any viewpoint. The personal views of the Adviser are not reflected in the advice that is given.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

The Advice & Support Centre is committed to actively promoting equality of opportunity, access and care, following the principles of FREDIE: Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement. Our team are committed to ensuring that all clients are treated fairly and respectfully; and will not discriminate on grounds of ethnic group or nationality, sex, gender, age, disability, marital status, family commitments, sexuality, political or religious beliefs. The service is accessible to all, and all clients' problems will be treated in an equal regard.

Use of Personal Data

Advisers record all enquiries from clients on AdvicePro (a system developed by AdviceUK & ACM Solutions). The information stored on this system is for the sole use of the Advice Team and personal details will not be passed on to any other organization (other than in exceptional circumstances).

"Legitimate interests" is our lawful basis for processing personal data, due to clients potentially wanting to evidence that they sought support from the service in the future. Consent is gained from clients prior to consultations wherever possible (in an electronic

format) however all contacts with the Advice & Support Centre are recorded to ensure that all advice work is logged and accounted for.

The details that are collected by the Advice & Support Centre are the client's; name, student ID number, date of birth, nationality, course name, year of study, school, mode of study (i.e. full time or part time), academic status (i.e. undergraduate or postgraduate), fee status (i.e. home or international), disability details (if provided), contact details and how the student heard about the service. Other ad hoc or case specific details may also be requested as and when necessary, however a client is not obliged to provide these if they'd prefer not to.

Identifying data (such as a student ID number) is required for advice services to be offered, however clients reserve the right to withhold other information if they wish to. Client contact details will not be used for any other purpose than to contact clients for case updates and feedback.

Anonymous statistical data is collected and shared with the wider Students' Union staff to support learning, to inform campaigning and the development of the service. Anonymized statistical data may also be shared with the University with the aim of improving the student experience. All statistical reports are created so that service users cannot be identified. Clients reserve the right to request that their data is removed from statistical analysis and reporting (by enacting the right to restrict processing). If a client wishes for their data to be omitted from statistical analysis and reporting, they must inform their Adviser.

Clients have several rights that they can exercise regarding their personal data:

The right to be informed - Clients are encouraged to read our service level agreement for details about how personal data is collected and used.

The right of access - Clients can request a copy of their personal data by emailing the Advice & Support Centre Manager (advice@hertssu.com).

The right of rectification - If it becomes clear that there are inaccuracies within our case information, we will correct them at the soonest possible opportunity. Clients can also request for corrections to be made whenever they notice an inaccuracy.

The right of erasure - Clients can choose to have their data either deleted or archived on AdvicePro. The Advice & Support Centre Manager can do this upon request.

The right to restrict processing - Clients could ask, whilst their case is still active, that their case details are removed from statistical reporting; and when their case is closed, they can choose to be archived or removed from AdvicePro.

The right to data portability - If a client wishes for us to share the data we hold for them with another SU department, they can request that we do so.

The right to object - Personal data within the Advice & Support Centre is not shared with third parties for marketing purposes. If clients do not want their data to be processed for statistical analysis, the client must notify their Adviser of this (by enacting the right to restrict

processing) and a note would be put on their file that their data should be omitted from reporting.

Rights related to automatic decision making – No automated decision making or profiling takes place at the Advice & Support Centre.

Casework data will be kept for a period of six years, after which time all identifiable data will be destroyed; this destroyed data includes all personal data (including basic client details), contact details, equality monitoring information and all case notes/attachments kept on file. Other data may be retained for future benchmarking purposes.

Hertfordshire Students' Union is a data controller. The Union processes personal information relating to students, staff and visitors. The Board of Trustees delegates day to day responsibility for implementing this policy and related procedures to key personnel within the Union. The Students' Union and its subsidiaries are registered as a Data Controller with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and renews these registrations annually.

The Chief Executive is the Students' Union Data Protection Officer and is responsible for the implementation of the implementation of Hertfordshire Students' Union's Data Protection policy.

The Data Processor for the Advice & Support Centre is Faith Goligher – Advice & Support Centre Manager (advice@hertssu.com). If clients want to know what personal information the Advice & Support team holds for them, they can make a written request to advice@hertssu.com FAO The Advice Centre Manager. Also, if a client wishes to raise a concern or complaint about how personal data is used, they can do so by contacting the Advice & Support Centre Manager.

Case Records and Management

Data will be recorded for all clients receiving advice from the Advice & Support Centre. Case notes are written following each interaction with the Advice Centre via our online case management system, AdvicePro (a system developed by AdviceUK & ACM Solutions); the only staff members that have access to the case management system are Advice & Support Centre staff and technical staff from Advice UK (who manage the software).

The information stored on this system is for the sole use of the Advice Team and personal details will not be passed on to any other organization (other than in the exceptional circumstances).

Case information is not shared with the University or any other departments, unless if the client has given their consent for the Adviser to do so.

Advice Work in Action

When advising clients, Advisers will adhere to the following guidelines:

All clients will be respected and treated equally; Advisers will remain sensitive to the cultural, religious and political background of the client.

Advisers aim to provide clients with all relevant information within one consultation time, however when this is not possible another consultation can be arranged.

Whenever relevant, the Adviser can offer to e-mail the client with a summary of the information that has been discussed – the client also reserves the right to request this.

Advisers should seek confirmation, at the end of a consultation, that the client has understood all the information that has been given to them – and give further clarification if necessary.

The Adviser may contact a university department on the client's behalf, but only with the client's prior permission.

Advisers will be approachable, friendly, and professional when advising clients; giving their undivided attention and the necessary time to discuss their concerns (within the confines of their appointment time).

Client Expectations

A 45-minute appointment will be offered to any client that wishes to seek advice; shorter appointments may be fitted-in upon request (this is down to the discretion of the Advice Centre staff).

Clients can request an appointment on De Havilland campus (during term-time), but this is subject to the availability of an Adviser.

Advice services are available during the advertised opening hours and, if for any reason, the Centre has to close, clients with booked appointments will be advised as far in advance as possible and an alternative appointment time will be offered.

With regards to e-mail queries, the Advice & Support Team aim to respond within 2 working days of the e-mail being sent or (wherever possible) sooner; this is subject to Advice Centre opening times and the availability of Advisers.

Advice Centre staff expect their clients to keep them up to date with any developments that may occur with their case. Advisers also expect clients to be honest, as the Centre relies solely on the reliability and accuracy of information given directly by clients. If, at any point, an Adviser feels intentionally misled by a client they reserve the right to withdraw advice services.

Advice Centre Provision

We may be unable to see a client who has arrived more than 15 minutes late for their appointment time. This is due to the high likelihood of the appointment over-running and affecting further appointments later in the day. Therefore, we ask that clients notify us as soon as they can if they know that they are going to be late for their appointment.

Advisers will not discuss client cases with other clients or clients' parents, without prior consent from the client.

We encourage students to access the Advice & Support Centre directly, rather than discussing the issue through parents or friends. This is to ensure that all the facts gathered are reliable and accurate.

The Advice & Support Centre does not provide counselling; the Advisers are not trained Counsellors, and if it becomes clear that the client wishes to receive counselling, we will signpost them to the University's Student Wellbeing team. We are happy to continue offering practical advice and guidance, as per our remit.

Our Advisers are not able to provide guidance outside their area of knowledge and expertise; in such cases, clients will be signposted to services that provide more relevant guidance relating to the subject matter.

Client Conduct

The Advice & Support Centre will not tolerate abuse or potentially threatening or intimidating behaviour; whether verbal, written or physical. The Advice Team reserve the right to withdraw advice services if these behaviours occur. Where necessary, this information may be shared with the wider Students' Union, University and/or any other relevant organizations.

Advisers do not provide advice outside their place of work; if the client wants further guidance, they should visit the Advice & Support Centre or contact the team through the appropriate channels.

Advisers will not knowingly misrepresent a client's circumstances or pass on incorrect information. If information given by the client is found to be false, the Adviser reserves the right to withdraw the advice services. Similarly, the Adviser reserves the right to withdraw advice services from clients who decide to take dishonest or illegal action; an Adviser may also be obligated to make appropriate reports regarding such action.

Complaints

Hertfordshire Students' Union Advice & Support is responsive to the needs of our students and welcomes comments and complaints as a means of improving our service.

Hertfordshire Students' Union Advice & Support will always be confidential and impartial in dealing with complaints and we will try to be as quick as we can in responding to you.

Informal Stage

If a client has a complaint, in the first instance they are advised to discuss this with the member of staff that they are working with to try and resolve the matter. In this instance the complaint can either be verbal (but polite) or written - but if the client feels unable to speak about the complaint, clients are welcome to speak informally to the staff member's manager or they can proceed directly to the Formal Stage.

Formal Stage

If a client is unhappy about the response to their informal complaint, or the complaint is actually about the member of staff involved or if the client feels that the complaint warrants further investigation then the client must complain in writing (e-mail) to the Advice & Support Manager via e-mailing advice@hertssu.com FAO Faith Goligher (Advice & Support Manager).

If the complaint is about the Advice & Support Manager, the complaint can be sent to the [Head of Student Services \(Steve Owen\)](#).

Appeal Stage

If the client feels that the complaint has not been resolved, and wishes to appeal for a review of the formal decision, they can complain to the Students' Union's [Chief Executive \(Rebecca Hobbs\)](#).

Timescales

Hertfordshire Students' Union Advice & Support aims to provide a response to complaints within 14 days of receiving a letter of complaint. In complex cases, or those where the incident took place a long time ago, this may take longer but we will endeavour to keep clients notified of progress.

Who can complain?

- Students who are using or have used Hertfordshire Students' Union Advice & Support.
- Parents/Guardians of students if they have written permission from the student which must be supplied at the time of raising the complaint.
- University of Hertfordshire staff who feel they have a complaint about the service.

What happens next?

In dealing with a complaint the following actions can be taken:

- To uphold the complaint (and take appropriate action).
- To dismiss the complaint where it is judged that; (a) there is no action which can be taken to resolve the matter, or (b) where there is deemed to be no case to answer, or (c) that the complaint is trivial, malicious or vexatious.

The complaints procedure cannot be used for:

- Matters where the courts have already become involved.
- Matters where police action is pending, or a criminal charge has been laid.
- When a client is dissatisfied with the outcome of their case – where there was no fault of wrongdoing of the Adviser or Advice & Support Team.

Feedback

Feedback is welcomed from all clients of the Advice & Support Centre. This feedback is used to help us assess the quality of the service and plans for further improvement.

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Clients may be contacted at certain points throughout the year with the request for feedback; alternatively, Clients are welcome to provide us with feedback via e-mail or to complete the online feedback form (on the Advice & Support Centre webpages) at any point.