

# Advice & Support Centre

## CODE OF PRACTICE

### Introduction

This Service Level Agreement outlines what Hertfordshire Students' Union Advice & Support Centre provide to clients and what, in return, is expected from users of the service. The users of the advice services are students of 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 Clients

- We aim to ensure that all clients are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities, so they can make the most of their time at University.
- We will provide accurate, up-to-date and relevant information to enable clients to make informed decisions on issues affecting them.
- We will provide professional advice, support and signposting to assist clients in resolving their problems.
- We will give free, impartial and non-judgmental advice and will respect client confidentiality at all times within the service\*.
- We will monitor issues on which we can take positive initiatives to benefit students.
- We will ensure that our service is of the highest standard.
- We are committed to actively promoting equal opportunities.

\* All details will remain secure and will not be passed to any other company or organization, subject to the exceptions [here](#) in this document.

### Advice & Support Centre Services

The Advice & Support Centre is open from 10:00-16:00, Monday to Friday, in the Hutton Hub Students' Union Office on College Lane Campus. The Centre offers an open door policy, with clients able to drop-by for a consultation at any point during the Centre's opening hours; alternatively clients can pre-book appointments.

The Advice & Support Centre can also advise students on De Havilland Campus, during term-time, but the client must have pre-booked an appointment with at least 24 hours prior notice. This is subject to Adviser availability.

Clients can also access the Advice & Support Centre by telephone (01707 285022) or e-mail ([advice@hertfordshire.su](mailto:advice@hertfordshire.su)); our Advisers are happy to provide full advice services via these mediums, particularly as the University has a number of commuting students, or individuals that are affected by course placements and/or distance learning.

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*We reserve the right to cancel your appointment at short notice, but will offer an alternative appointment time in its place.*

Due to our levels of casework and involvement in other activities, we will strictly adhere to the opening times that have been stated above; we ask clients to respect this.

Advice Services may 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).

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

**Legal Advice Clinic** - Advice & Support run a free legal advice Clinic on Wednesday afternoons (13:30-16:00), during term time. The Legal Advice Clinic runs by appointment only, clients must pre-book to be seen by the Legal Adviser.

**Chlamydia Testing Kit Pick-up Point** - The Advice & Support Centre is a pick-up point for Chlamydia self-testing kits, available for Students and Staff aged under 25 years of age. Chlamydia self-testing kits can be picked up from the Advice & Support Centre waiting area – the process is managed by [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.

**CaSH Clinic Host** – We host a regular free and confidential clinic run by [health professionals](#) covering testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections\*, HIV testing, contraception\*, pregnancy testing, free condoms, emergency contraception and advice and support for contraception and sexual health queries (\*Some contraception and STI treatments may require a referral to a local sexual health clinic within a hospital, but this can be booked for clients from the CaSH Clinic). CaSH Clinic runs from 10:00-16:00 on the clinic dates and no appointment booking is necessary.

**Herts Aid Clinic Host** - A free and confidential clinic run by the local charity [Herts Aid](#); providing on-the-spot HIV testing and results. Using finger-prick testing, clients get the result in minutes. There is also support for those living with a diagnosis. Free condoms and chlamydia testing is also available. The Herts Aid Clinics run from 10:00-16:00 on the clinic dates; appointments can be booked in advance or clients can walk-in.

## Principles of Advice Work

### Free

Advice services are offered to all clients free of charge.

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## Confidential

Hertfordshire Students' Union Advice & Support team are delighted in offering a service of the highest standard and committed to safeguarding and preserving privacy and confidentiality at all times.

Hertfordshire Students' Union 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 Team, to ensure that the best possible support is provided, but cases will not be discussed with anyone outside of the Advice Team without explicit consent.

In exceptional circumstances we may be obliged to disclose information without your consent; such as where an Adviser believes that the safety of you or another person is at risk – or if we are required by law to break confidentiality. In these instances, the following areas may be contacted:

Dean of Students – University of Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire Constabulary (or client's local Police team)

Medical Centre – University of Hertfordshire

NHS 999

Student Wellbeing – University of Hertfordshire

## Independent

The Advice & Support Centre is part of the Students' Union, which is independent of the University. The University of Hertfordshire Students' Union © 2018. is a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, Company Number 7703890, Charity Registration 1143101.

## 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.

## Equal Opportunities

The Advice & Support Centre is committed to ensuring that all clients are treated fairly, and will not discriminate on grounds of ethnic group or nationality, sex, 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

Hertfordshire Students' Union Advice & Support Centre staff 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](#)).

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“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 a written or 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, gender, 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, contact details and how the student heard about the service. 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 individuals cannot be recognized. Clients reserve the right to request that their data is removed from statistical analysis and reporting. If a client wishes for their data to be omitted from statistical analysis and reporting, they must inform their Adviser.

Clients have a number of rights that they can exercise regarding the processing and use of their personal data:

RIGHT	EXPLANATION	APPLICATION
<b>The Right to be Informed</b>	Organizations should be transparent over how personal data is used.	Clients are encouraged to read our code of practice for details about how personal data is used.
<b>The Right of Access</b>	Individuals have the right to be given a free copy of the personal data that an organization has for them, upon request.	Clients can request a copy of their personal data by e-mailing the Advice & Support Centre Manager ( <a href="mailto:advice@hertfordshire.su">advice@hertfordshire.su</a> ).
<b>The Right of Rectification</b>	Individuals have the right to request corrections to the personal data that an organization holds for them, if there any are inaccuracies.	If it becomes clear that there are inaccuracies within our case information, we will correct them at the soonest possible opportunity



<b>The Right to Erasure</b> (also known as ‘the Right to be Forgotten’)	Individuals can request the deletion or removal of personal data where there is no compelling reason for its continued processing.	Clients can choose to have their data either deleted or archived on AdvicePro. The Advice & Support Centre Manager can do this upon request.
<b>The Right to Restrict Processing</b>	Individuals have a right to ‘block’ or suppress processing of personal data.	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.
<b>The Right to Data Portability</b>	Individuals can obtain and reuse their personal data for their own purposes across different services.	This can be considered upon request.
<b>The Right to Object</b>	Individuals have the right to object to the processing of their personal data, the use of their personal data for marketing purposes or the processing of their data for statistics.	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 and a note would be put on their file that their data should be omitted from reporting.
<b>Rights Related to Automated Decision Making (including profiling)</b>	The GDPR provides safeguards for individuals against the risk that a potentially damaging decision is taken without human intervention.	Not applicable as no automated decision making or profiling takes place at the Advice & Support Centre.

\*More information can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights/>

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.

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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@hertfordshire.su](mailto:advice@hertfordshire.su)).

If clients want to know what personal information the Advice & Support team holds for them, they can make a written request to [advice@hertfordshire.su](mailto:advice@hertfordshire.su) 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 ([advice@hertfordshire.su](mailto:advice@hertfordshire.su)).

### 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.

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

The Advice Centre will be open 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. For drop-in's, a clear statement will be made regarding when the Advice & Support Centre will re-open.

With regards to telephone and e-mail queries, we aim to respond as soon as possible; 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 in question.

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. For complicated cases, we encourage clients to physically attend an appointment at the Advice & Support Centre (wherever possible), as it is often easier to ascertain the facts via a consultation in-person.

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 Centre.

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.

## 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 to the *Advice & Support Manager, Hertfordshire Students' Union, College Lane, Hatfield, AL10 9AB*.

If the complaint is about the Advice & Support Manager, the complaint can be sent to the *Chief Executive, Hertfordshire Students' Union, College Lane, Hatfield, AL10 9AB*.

### Appeal Stage

If the client feels that the complaint has not been resolved, then they can complain to the Union's Chief Executive or if they are appealing their decision, the client can write to either:

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*VP Education & Welfare or the President, Hertfordshire Students' Union, College Lane, Hatfield, AL10 9AB.*

### **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 action accordingly)
- To dismiss the complaint where it is judged there is no action that we can take to resolve the matter or where there is deemed to be no case to answer or 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.

## **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.

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.

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