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HELPING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

A GUIDE FOR STAFF

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HELPING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS:

A GUIDE FOR STAFF

Many people experience emotional and psychological difficulties at some point in their lives. Usually these difficulties can be resolved by talking them through with family and friends. Sometimes professional help is needed.

If you are required to offer extra assistance to a student it is important to be mindful of your competence and capabilities, as well as the boundaries of your role.

This guide has been produced to :

- Help you to recognise when a student may be in difficulty
- Provide advice to help you respond/refer appropriately and effectively
- Remind you of the sources of support within the University
- Raise awareness of issues relating to student mental health



The health and welfare of all members of the University is everyone's concern. This guide gives you advice on dealing with students in crisis, as well as guidance on supporting students in emotional distress. It is important to be prepared for emergencies, but also to be aware they occur rarely and that expert help is always available.

A safe campus is the responsibility of everyone who is part of the University community: staff, students and visitors. If you are concerned about something that has happened, you can contact any of the services listed in this guide or use the online Report and Support service to let us know: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/strathlife/reportsupport/>

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Listen
- Give the student time to talk
- Understand the situation from their point of view
- Be sympathetic and not dismissive
- Help the student to feel supported
- Make appropriate referrals

WHAT YOU CAN'T DO

- Solve all the student's problems
- Take responsibility for their emotional state or actions



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF SUPPORT

It is not always possible to know what the best source of support might be. The student may have more than one problem, or the initial problem may not be the most central.

What is important in the first instance is to refer the student to somewhere that is acceptable to them.

A further referral can be made later, if appropriate.

OFFERING SUPPORT DIRECTLY

If you offer support yourself, you must ensure that:

You have sufficient time within the context of your other commitments to do this.

It does not conflict with other aspects of your role.

You have access to appropriate advice and support.

You seek advice from colleagues or Student Support and Wellbeing services if you have persistent concerns.

**Remember —
You are not solely responsible for a student's emotional state.**

CONFIDENTIALITY

Treat personal information about students with discretion.

Do not promise absolute confidentiality; advise the student that you may have to consult a colleague or other services.

Do not disclose personal information about a student to anyone outside of the University, including parents, without the student's explicit consent.

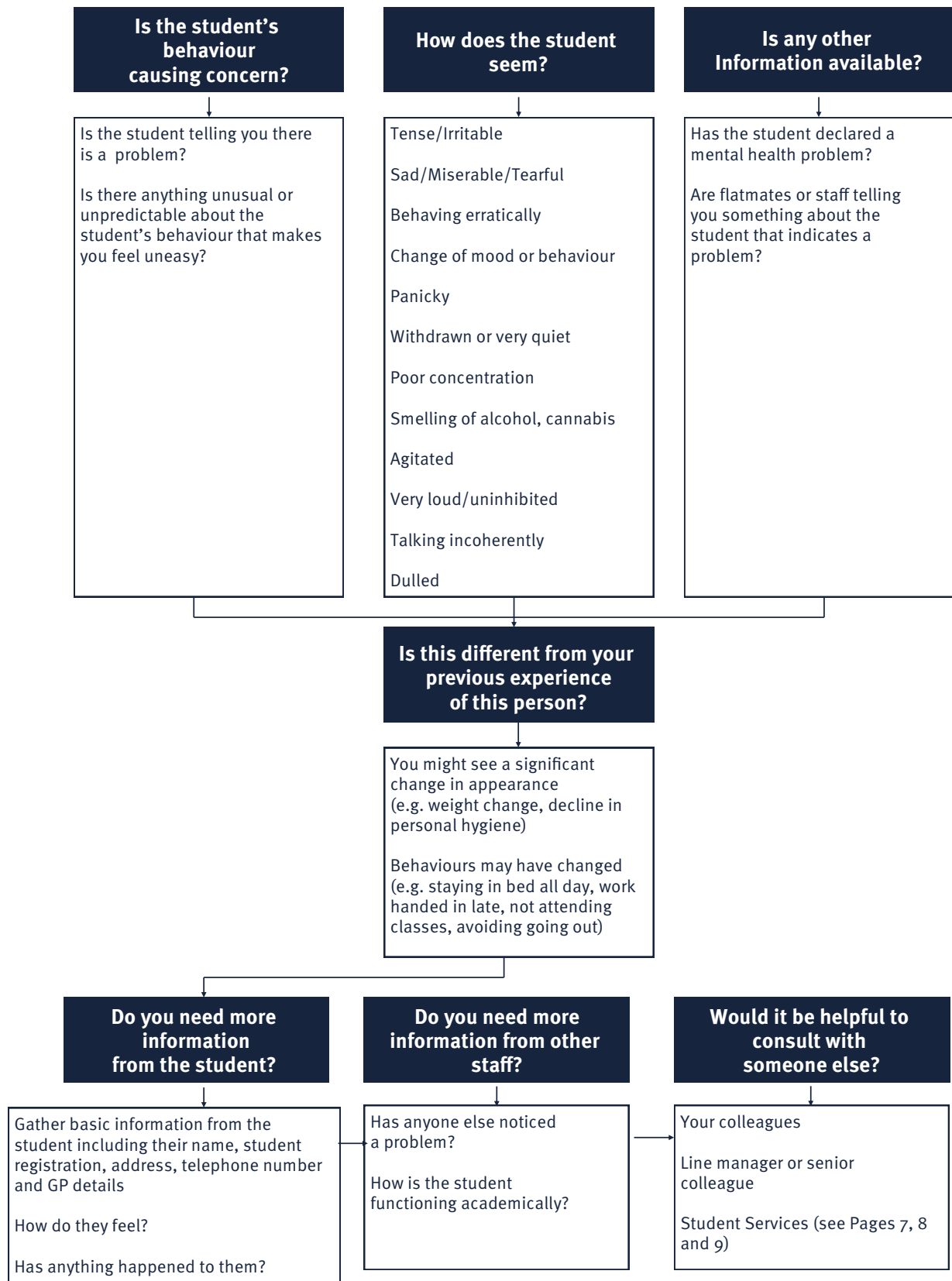
If parents wish to contact a student, you can offer to forward a communication or tell the student they have been in touch.

The Disability and Wellbeing Service offers a confidential consultation service to all staff who may wish to discuss their concerns about students in difficulty or distress.

How do you know there is a problem?

Trusting your own judgement

– check the following



What to do if the situation does NOT require immediate action

The student may be displaying signs of emotional distress due to some of the following situations:

Depressed, anxious
generally stressed

Having problems
with relationships

Having health issues

Homesick, lonely
and isolated

Suffering from low
self-esteem

Having unexplained study
or money problems

Bereaved

However, these situations should NOT be deemed urgent if you perceive no immediate risk to the student or others.

**If the student will
accept help**

Decide with the student who is
the best person to help
(See Page 7)

**If you feel that you could
help the student you
must ensure that:**

Offering support does not
conflict with your role

You will be able to:

Listen to the student's
concerns

Offer practical advice

Provide reassurance

Show your concern by
following up your conversation
at another time

**If you agree someone
else could help the
student:**

Are you and the student clear
what the student needs?
(See Page 7)

If so, refer directly.
Further information on referral
to other support services can
be found on Pages 7, 8 and 9

If you are unsure then seek
further advice from a
colleague or one of these
support services

**If the student will not
accept help**

You can make it clear that you
will help if the student changes
their mind

Seek advice from University
Services listed on Pages 7, 8
and 9

You can monitor the situation

You could alert the student's
PDA or other relevant person

You can provide the student
with a list of contacts should
they later decide that they
would like to engage in support

In all situations

- Make sure that you get support by talking the situation through with a colleague or one of the services on Pages 7, 8 and 9
- Make a record of the conversation and your concerns and inform your line manager/Head of Department
- Consider whether "Report and Support" is appropriate
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/strathlife/reportsupport/>

What to do if the situation is urgent

It is **URGENT** if:

You believe the student may be at risk of harming themselves or others.

You are concerned for one or more of the following reasons. The student:

May be at risk of serious self-harm

Has completely stopped functioning

Is violent or threatening violence to people or property

Seems very disorientated and out of touch with reality

Expresses suicidal thoughts/plans

Whether the student will accept help or not, in all situations of medical emergency where there is an immediate risk to the student's life, i.e. overdose of drugs, serious self-harm, physical emergency: Contact Security Services on 2222 for help in contacting emergency services.

If the student will accept help

In office hours:

If the student is registered with a Community Mental Health Team and presents in psychological distress:

Help the student to make contact with their Community Mental Health Team to request an emergency appointment. Where appropriate, the student should attend the appointment independently.

If the student is registered with a GP:

Help the student to make contact with their GP to request an emergency appointment. Where appropriate, the student should attend the GP appointment independently.

If the student is not registered with a GP, or their GP is closed:

Contact NHS 24 on 111 for advice or
Contact Security Services on 2222 for help in contacting emergency services.

Out of hours:

Contact Security Services on 2222 for help in contacting emergency services.

If the student will not accept help

Both within and out with office hours:

If the student presents at risk of harming themselves or others, and will not accept help, this is an urgent situation.

Contact Security Services on 2222 for help in contacting Emergency Services.

It can be helpful to take a physical description of the student, alongside basic details (i.e. Name, Student Registration, Address, Telephone Number, GP details) to pass onto Security Services and/or Emergency Services.

Inform your line manager.

In all situations

Try to stay calm

Engage with the student if possible, but put safety first

Keep an accurate written record

Consider whether "Report and Support" is appropriate

Prioritise your own safety and that of others at the scene

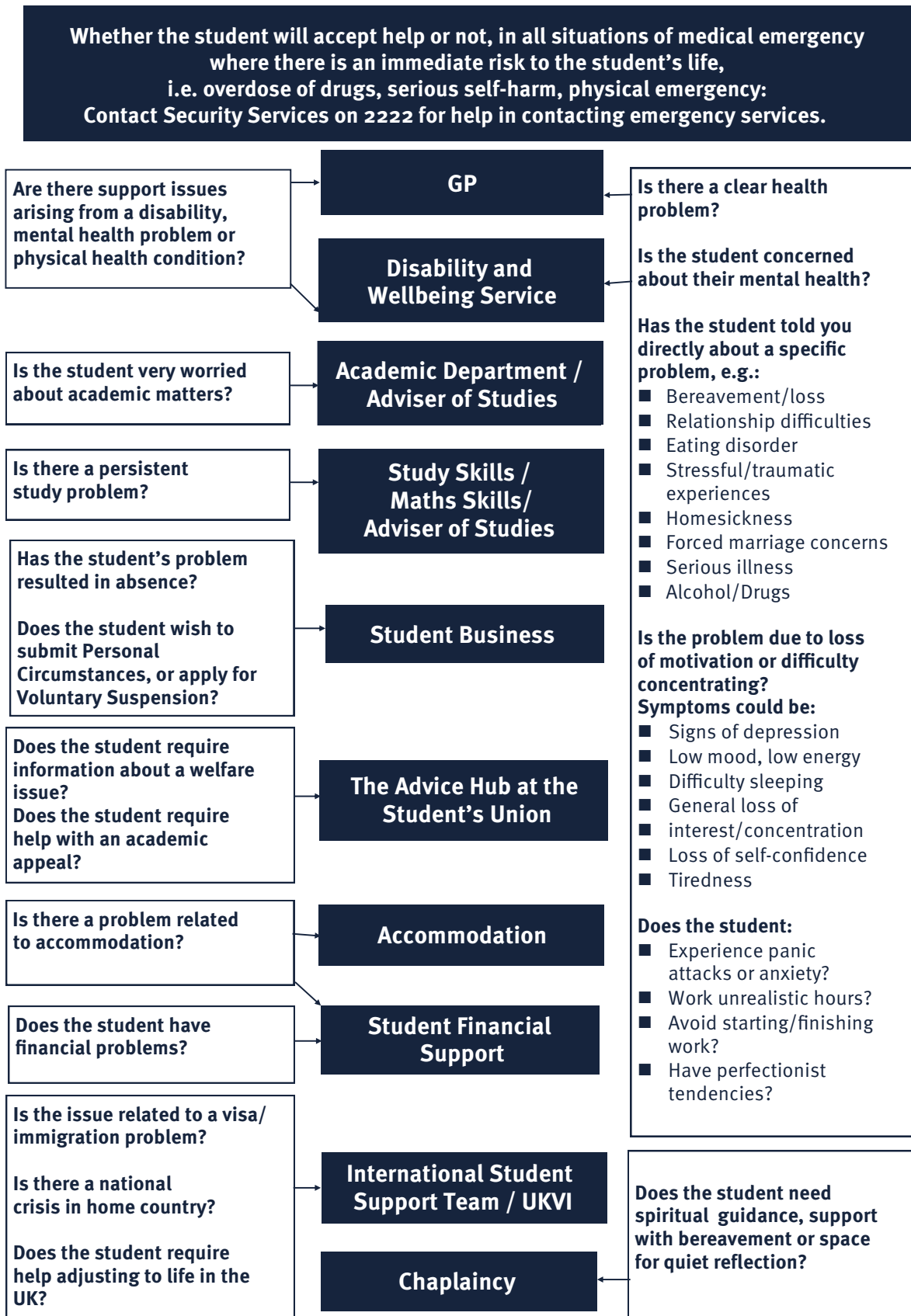
Whenever possible, make sure that you have back-up available

Make sure that you get support by talking the situation through with your line manager, a colleague or one of the Support Services on Pages 7, 8 and 9

When dealing with urgent situations, it is important that any referrals or agreed action plans are followed up, preferably with the student directly

What support may benefit the student?

You may wish to show this page to the student to help them to identify any issues that they are experiencing, and decide which service could best support them.



See the contact list on Pages 8 and 9 for details of other sources of support in the University and externally.
Remember - friends and family are a source of support.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Careers

t: 0141 548 4320
e: yourcareer@strath.ac.uk
www.strath.ac.uk/careers/

Chaplaincy

t: 0141 548 4144
e: chaplaincy@strath.ac.uk
www.strath.ac.uk/chaplaincy

Data protection

[www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/
dataprotection/](http://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/dataprotection/)

Disability and Wellbeing Service

t: 0141 548 3402
e: disability-wellbeing@strath.ac.uk
www.strath.ac.uk/disabilityandwellbeing

International Student Support

t: 0141 548 4273
e: infoandadvice@strath.ac.uk
www.strath.ac.uk/sees/infoint/

Law Clinic

t: 0141 548 5995
e: lawclinic@strath.ac.uk
www.lawclinic.org.uk

Maths Skills Support Centre

t: 0141 548 3343
e: mathsskills@strath.ac.uk
www.strath.ac.uk/mathsskills/

Security Services:

General Enquiries t: 3333
Emergency t: 2222
Emergency services
(ambulance, police, fire brigade)
t: 999
(note that Security Services staff have
responsibility for summoning emergency services.)

Strathclyde Sport

t: 0141 548 2446
e: strathclydesport@strath.ac.uk
www.strath.ac.uk/strathclydesport/

Student Accommodation Office

t: 0141 548 3454
e: student.accommodation@strath.ac.uk
[www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/
accommodation/](http://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/accommodation/)

Student Business

t: 0141 548 3165
www.strath.ac.uk/studentlifecycle/

Student Financial Support

t: 0141 548 2753
e: financial-support@strath.ac.uk
www.strath.ac.uk/studentfinancialsupport/

Study Skills

t: 0141 548 4064 / 4062
e: studyskills@strath.ac.uk
www.strath.ac.uk/studyskills/

Widening Access

t: 0141 548 3799
e: wideningaccess@strath.ac.uk
[www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/
wideningaccess/](http://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/wideningaccess/)

USEFUL CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

USEFUL NUMBERS

Security (General Enquiries)	X3333
Security (Emergency)	X2222
NHS 24	111
Breathing Space (Helpline)	0800 83 85 87
Samaritans (Helpline).....	0141 248 4488
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	0141 211 4000
Nightline (Helpline)	0141 55 22 555
Advice Hub	0141 567 5040

SilverCloud

Silvercloud offers secure, immediate access to online CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) programmes, free to all students and staff members at the University of Strathclyde. These programmes are tailored to your own specific needs, and have demonstrated high improvement rates for depression and anxiety.

The programmes consist of seven to eight modules, you can complete these at your own pace and in your own time. The goal of each module is for you to take the information and techniques learned, and to start applying them in your day-to-day life.

It's flexible - you can access it anywhere, on your computer, tablet or mobile phone. It's easy to use – interactive tools and activities make your experience interesting and motivational.



SilverCloud

If you are interested in learning more about Silvercloud, please visit the website at :
strathclydeuni.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/



the place of useful learning

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For further copies and feedback on the usefulness of this document,
please contact: disability-wellbeing@strath.ac.uk

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