

The Student Mental Health Working Group¹

Helping students with mental health and emotional difficulties: A guide for staff at Canterbury Christ Church University

¹ The Student Mental Health Working Group is an ad hoc group convened by the Director of Student Support and Guidance and comprising Margaret Simpson (Senior University Counsellor), Margaret Scott (Disability and Equal Opportunities Adviser for Students), Jeremy Law (Dean of Chapel), Joanne Ross (Staff Representative), Marion Stuart-Hoyle (Staff Representative) and Geoff Haworth (Director of Student Support and Guidance)

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Acknowledgement:

The Student Mental Health Working Group wish to acknowledge the help received from the University of Gloucester Counselling Service on an appropriate format for this guide. In addition, we have also drawn upon the models of good practice identified through HEFCE funded projects at various UK universities between 1996 and 2000, reported in CVCP (2000) *Guidelines on Student Mental Health: Policies and Procedures for Higher Education* (Appendix 2).

The purpose of this guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with information on how to recognise when students are possibly experiencing distress caused by mental health or emotional difficulties and give guidance on how to respond appropriately. An easy-to-follow flow chart will direct you to the best course of action, according to the type of situation you are dealing with and whether or not the student will accept your help. Advice on responding to an emergency situation is on page 5.

Introduction

It is estimated² that one in every four adults will experience mental health or emotional difficulties at some time in their life. Student Counselling Services nationally have noted a significant increase in students coming forward for help. Common disorders include depression, anxiety, stress and eating disorders. It is likely, therefore, that academic staff will be teaching students with such conditions, and that students will be living with or studying alongside them. It is, however, unlikely that staff will encounter students who are severely unwell or who are a danger to themselves or to others.

Some students who come to study here will have known mental health or emotional difficulties, but may choose not to declare this. Others may develop a difficulty or illness during the course of their studies. Everyone has the right to decide whether or not to request that this be kept confidential, so please be aware of this in your dealings with students.

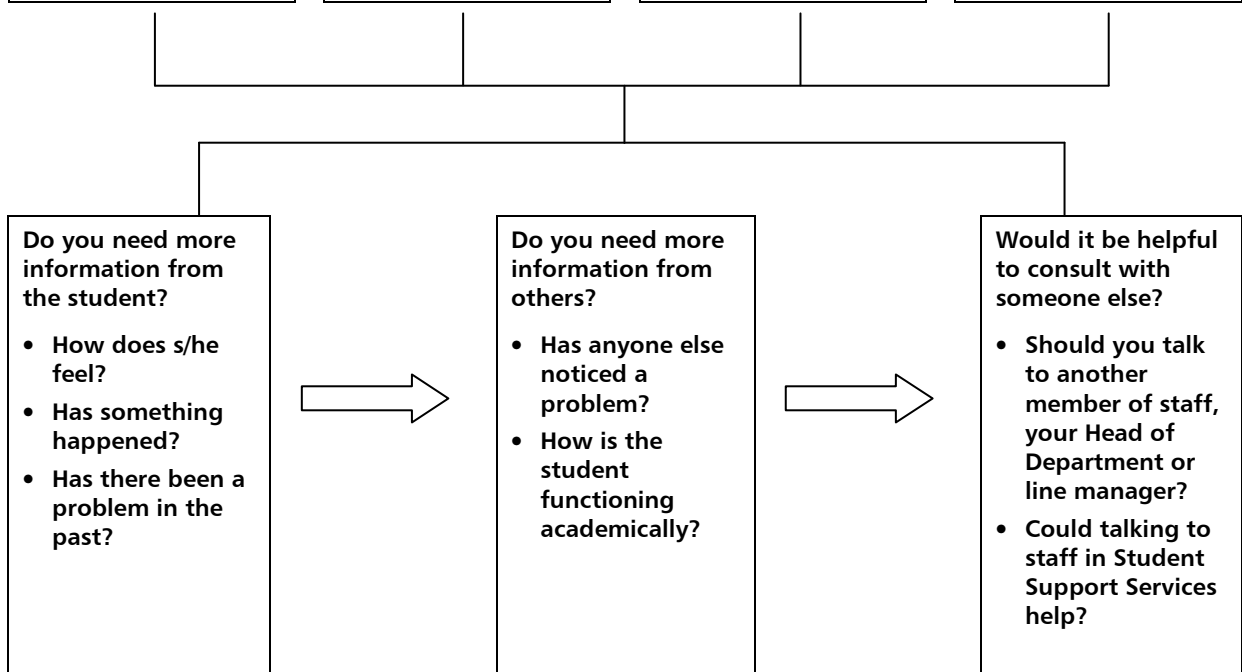
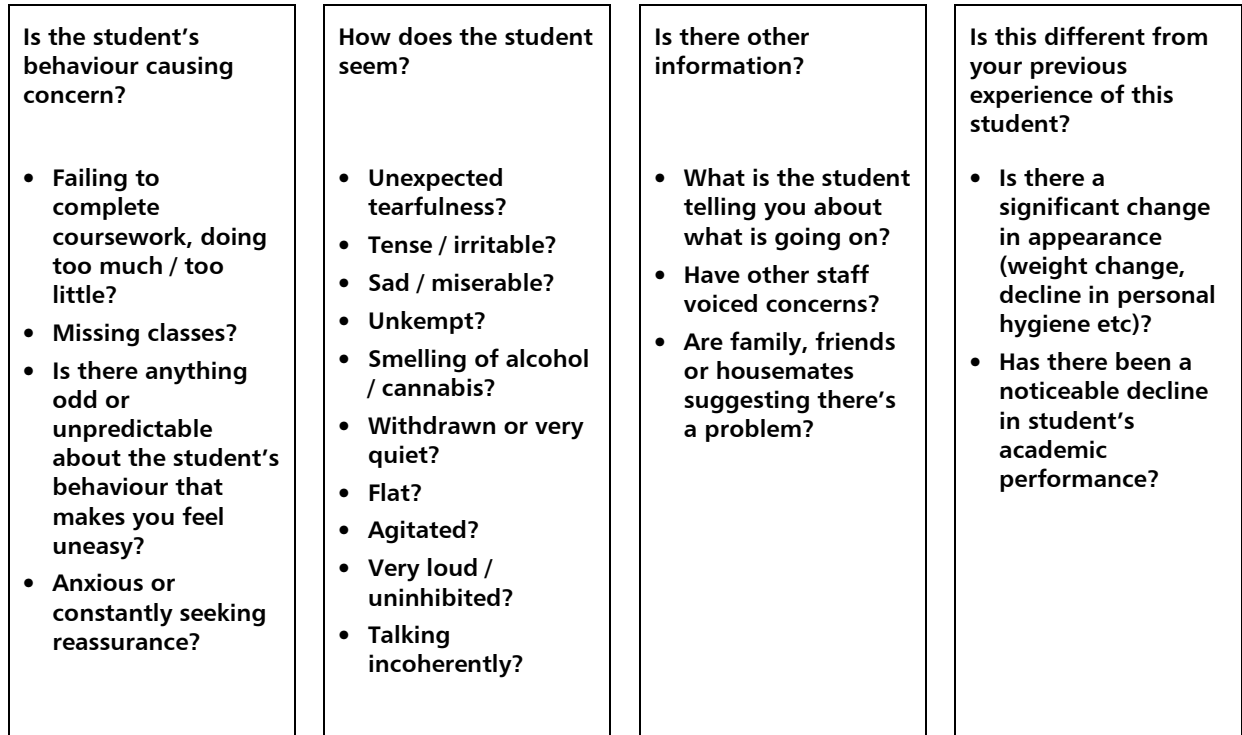
Finding out what to do in situations where we are supporting a student with mental health difficulties is important for all of us, but it is also important to recognise our limitations when offering support and to know when to refer on to the appropriate services. Not everyone will be confident to offer support in this area, but listening to students in distress or informing them about where they can obtain help is valuable.

In these pages you will find advice on identifying, and responding to, students who have mental health difficulties, together with other useful information on supporting students and guidance on recording what has happened. If you wish to discuss your involvement with a student or find out more about the services on offer, then please contact Geoff Haworth, Director of Student Support and Guidance.

² CVCP (2000) *Guidelines on Student Mental Health: Policies and Procedures for Higher Education*, Section 1.8

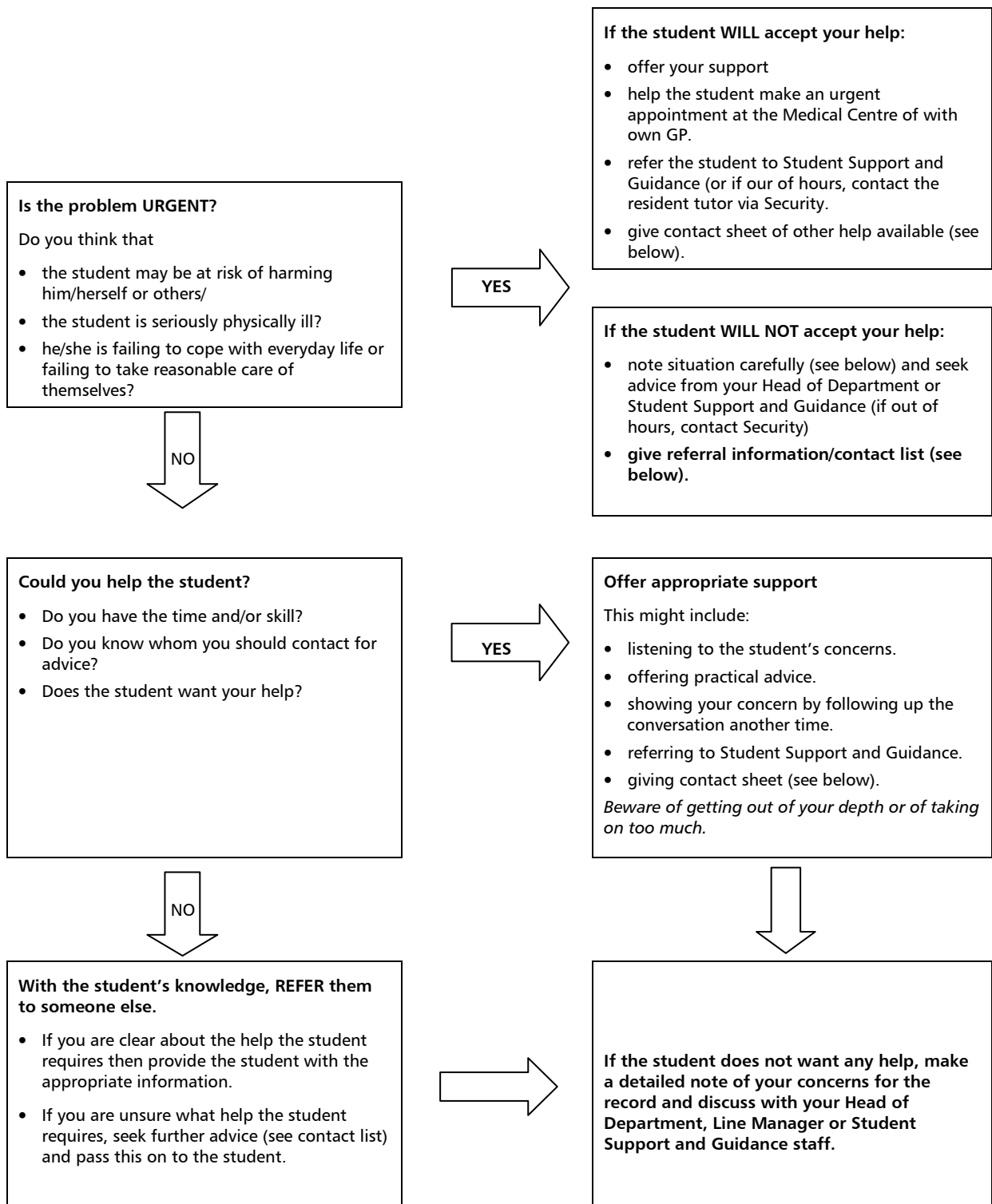
How do you know there is a problem?

There is rarely one single indicator of difficulty. The following checklists suggest possible changes which, in combination, could indicate that a student has a problem.



What should you do next?

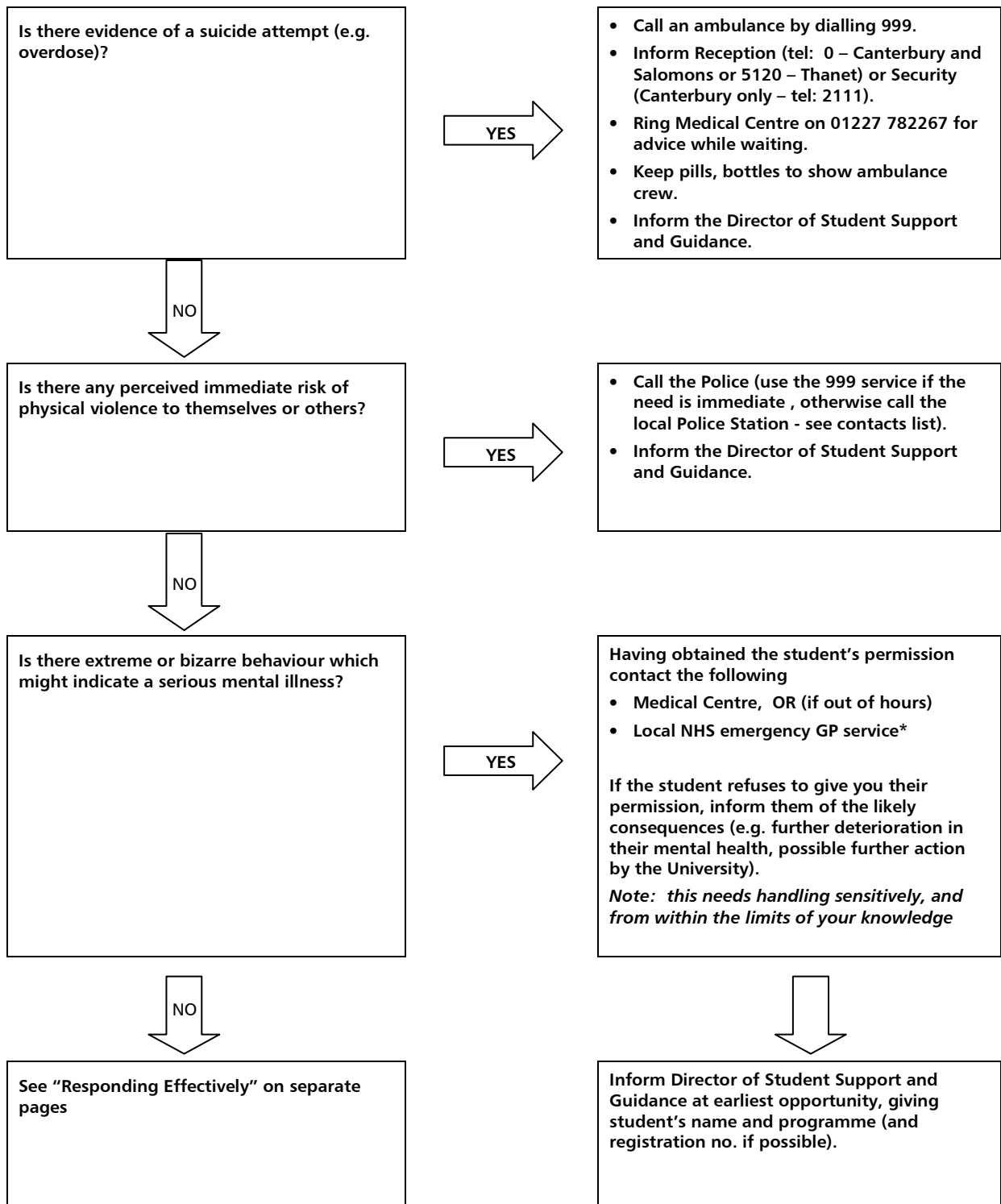
Responding Effectively



NB You may find it helpful to talk through your own emotional responses to the impact of the experience. The Counselling Service can offer this confidential support.

Responding to Emergencies

Very occasionally, students exhibit behaviour that gives rise to considerable concern.



*for telephone numbers of services covering campuses other than Canterbury, see contacts list below

Help for staff in supporting students

Staff may encounter students with mental health difficulties who exhibit behaviour that is difficult to deal with. There may be anger, resentment, intense distress, disinterest in solving the problem, panic or passivity. You may feel frustration, anger or distress yourself. Here are some guidelines to help you to deal with the situation, the feelings of the student and your own feelings.

- Try not to take responsibility for resolving a student's mental health problems. This can be achieved by recognising that there are other people and support agencies available to help if you refer the student on. This will help prevent the student from becoming dependent on you.
- When dealing with anger, keep reminding yourself not to take it personally, but remember to protect yourself from physical danger if you feel that there is any risk of this.
- Try to relax by breathing deeply and by tensing then releasing your muscles. If you stay calm and acknowledge that the other person is feeling angry, this will help them to calm down too.
- Do not respond to their anger by raising your voice or by arguing back. Do not try to stare someone out as this can often exacerbate the situation and is not helpful in trying to address matters.
- Try not to join the student in their distress. You should show empathy but also demonstrate that you are capable of listening and then assisting them. This can be very reassuring for someone in distress.
- Remember that you do not have to resolve the problem there and then. Your aim is more likely to be to contain the situation and to prevent escalation.
- Make sure that you have reached an agreement with the student at the end of the meeting as to what is going to happen next. You may need to write this down for them, as they may forget the details of any future meetings arranged or action they are meant to take (especially if they have been very emotional during their meeting with you).

Recording what has happened - Incident Reporting Proforma

It is important to make a formal record of your encounter or meeting with a distressed student. Please use the following proforma to do this and then refer to the instructions for staff on disclosure of information concerning 'disabled' students on the Disability Advice Service web pages (<http://student-support.cant.ac.uk/disability/staff.htm>) to help you decide what to do next.

Where appropriate (and with the student's permission, if necessary) please send a copy of the proforma to the Director of Student Support and Guidance.

Date of encounter with student/event	
Name of student	
Address (if known)	
Other contact details (eg email or phone)	
Other relevant information, if known (such as programme of study)	
Brief description of the event / meeting / situation (Please include where and at what date/time you met, and whether other people were present - give names).	
Outcome Please list your actions (eg listened and gave reassurance, phoned friend, called GP, called South East Health, etc)	
If you referred the student to another agency or other office / member of staff within the University, please give details	
Your name and contact details	

Useful Contacts within the University

(When calling Canterbury extensions from an external telephone, dial 01227 78 before the extension number – other campus numbers are given in full, where required)

Security (Canterbury)		ext: 2355
Reception	(Canterbury)	01227 767700
	(Salomons)	01892 515152
	(Broadstairs)	01843 280700
	(Chatham)	01634 890800
Health Office		ext: 2222 (via the i-zone)
Director of Student Support and Guidance	Geoff Haworth	ext: 2222 (via the i-zone)
Student Support Services	Enquiries	ext: 2222 (via the i-zone)
Student Counselling Service	Margaret Simpson Jiff Wiffen	ext: 2233 ext: 2686
Disability Adviser	Margaret Scott Jolene Svoboda	ext: 2842 ext: 2748
Dean of Chapel	Revd Jeremy Law	ext: 2747
Chaplain	Revd Simon Rowlands	ext: 2538
Student Adviser (International)	Laura Spencer	ext: 2675
Student Adviser (Finance)	Mary Notley	ext: 2783
Accommodation and Housing Welfare Accommodation Office (Broadstairs Campus)		ext: 2563 01843 609173

Local NHS Emergency (out-of-hours) GP Services

South East Health (www.southeasthealth.com) provides out of hours medical services for when your GP surgery is closed. If you need medical assistance out-of-hours, you must first contact your surgery who will provide you with a recorded message and contact options for you to ring.

This applies to students at Canterbury, Broadstairs, Folkestone, Tunbridge Wells and Medway.

Support Services in Canterbury, Thanet & Tunbridge Wells

Police Stations:	Canterbury	01227 762055
	Margate	01843 231055
	Tunbridge Wells	01732 771055
Alcohol Advice Centre		01227 454740
Citizens Advice Bureaux:	Canterbury	01227 761493
	Broadstairs	01843 594346
	Margate	01843 225973
	Tunbridge Wells	0870 126 4856
Cruse – Bereavement Care	Canterbury & Thanet	01843 594346
	Whitstable	01227 280437
	Maidstone	01622 671011
East Kent Rapeline		01227 450400
Kent Council on Addiction:	Canterbury	01227 454740
	Thanet	01843 596638
	Head Office	01795 590635
Family Planning Clinic : (pregnancy & contraception advice)	Canterbury	01227 597033
	Thanet	01843 255315
	Tunbridge Wells	01892 530855
RELATE – Relationship counselling	Canterbury & Thanet	01227 766094
	Tunbridge Wells	01892 529927
For Young People (sexual health information service)		0800 0728748
Stour Clinic (G.U.M.) Kent & Canterbury Hospital		01227 783120
Dept of Genitourinary Medicine, Kent & Sussex Hospital		01892 528380
Dept of Genitourinary Medicine, QEQM		01843 227903
Victim Support:	Canterbury	01227 779090
	Thanet	01843 296639
	Tunbridge Wells	01892 513969
Samaritans		08457 909090

National Helplines

NHS Direct	0845 46 47
Alcoholics Anonymous	0845 769 7555
Eating Disorders Association Helpline	0845 634 1414
MIND	0845 7660163
Saneline (12 noon – 2.00 am)	0845 7678000
London Lesbian & Gay Switchboard	020 7837 7324
National AIDS Helpline	0800 776600

Useful Websites

http://www.at-ease.nsf.org.uk	General mental health information, aimed at students and young people
http://www.guide-information.org.uk	Useful source of information about local and national health, disability and support services