

Media release

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New 'life-support' service for students and their families launched in UK to improve mental health and well-being

A NEW 'life-support' service for students and their families has been launched in a UK first as figures show a rise in students disclosing mental health issues.

The 24-hour confidential Studentline, manned by trained counsellors and fully qualified GPs, offers advice and counselling sessions to help not just students but their families as well with emotional, legal, medical or financial problems – which could range from anxiety, depression, and addictions to worries around childcare, landlords, exam pressures or homesickness.

The service's launch comes amid a fivefold increase in the proportion of students who disclose a mental health condition to their institution, according to research by the Institute of Public Policy Research. It has urged the university sector to make mental health and wellbeing a priority, and increase funding for support services.

In the UK, Arden University is the first higher education institution to launch Studentline for its students in partnership with occupancy health specialists and employment assistance programme consultants Co-Health. The service is also being promoted by Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England to all UK universities, and being launched in Canada with five universities there.

'Universities need to do more to support not just students, but their families as well. The pressures they face often go beyond the lecture seminar, and for someone to drop out because a life event happens to them unexpectedly can be a tragedy,' said Susan Bastock, head of student achievement at Arden University.

'Not only could Studentline make the difference between a student finishing or dropping out, it will offer a very human helping hand when people most need it. It's not just about the academic journey. It's also about nurturing people's well-being and overall experience, which is why Arden wanted to be the first UK university to launch this service.'

Mrs Bastock, who leads Arden University's support team, said the service was akin to an internal employee support programme offered by large organisations – and a recognition of serious issues facing students beyond the classroom.

'Our student base is not your average or traditional university student. They are likely to be working, could be married or have children. Arden's student support team is here to help. However, if people feel they can't speak to them, the Studentline is there,' she said.

'The service's trained professionals can offer help, arrange counselling sessions or direct individuals to other support. Confidentiality is a key element to the Studentline programme.'

Phillippa Haydon, Director of Co-Health Ltd and founder of Studentline said the changing dynamics of education and employment meant new services to support students were now required.

'We feel very strongly about supporting the lives of young people leaving home for the first time or those working independently at home as a 'single student' of any age, as both situations can be lonely and frightening as well as exciting and exhilarating,' she said.

'We're extremely excited to be working with Arden University, who have shown a huge interest in the health and welfare of their students and staff in a true innovative style.'

Ms Haydon added: 'Studentline is our combined product of many years outlining the need to provide physical and clinical wellbeing in addition to psychological and social wellbeing, having worked with universities and organisations throughout the UK and Ireland for more than 30 years.'

Caroline Hounsell, Director of Partnerships, Product Development and Training, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England, said Studentline would provide much-needed advice and counselling service.

'Studentline is exactly the kind of service we encourage Mental Health First Aiders to signpost those in need of further support to. We are delighted to support the launch of this initiative,' she said.

'Transitioning to and moving through student life can present challenges impacting individual wellbeing including housing, relationships, academic work, employment pressures and changes to lifestyle and support networks. Accessible services like Studentline are vital to ensure young people can access the right support at the right time,' she added.

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Notes to editor

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[Arden University](#) is a specialist in flexible distance and blended learning. It started out as family-owned business RDI in 1990. Since then, more than 50,000 students have studied with them – and in April 2014, they were awarded degree giving powers and in August 2015 officially became Arden University. Arden offers career focused higher education courses endorsed by professional bodies.