

Strathclyde Students' Union Advice Hub Policy Booklet



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Introduction & Policy Reviews

Introduction

This booklet provides general guidelines about the policies, procedures and working practices of Strathclyde Students' Union (Strath Union) Advice Hub. These are intended to be clear and transparent to employees of Strath Union, the University of Strathclyde, and students and prospective students of the University of Strathclyde so that our service is delivered in a manner that is consistent and professional. This document reflects our commitment to ensure accessibility, support, and expertise in the advice that we deliver.

Reviewing the Advice Hub Policy Booklet

A review of the booklet and all policies and procedures contained therein will be completed annually as part of the service review. This will be completed annually for the start of the academic year in early September. Each policy will be reviewed and where necessary, updated. Responsibility for the review and updating of the booklet will lie with the Advice Hub Manager in consultation, where appropriate, with Advisers, the Chief Executive Officer, and student Executive Officers.

The Service

Service Description

The Advice Hub is a free, independent, and confidential service available to all Strathclyde University students. The Advice Hub may also work to support both prospective and recently graduated students where it is appropriate to do so; the decision to support a prospective or graduated student is at the discretion of the Advice Hub Manager.

We are a student-focused service with the primary objective of making a positive impact on the lives of students through the provision of clear and effective advice and representation. Our service provides a generalist approach, encompassing advice on academic matters, housing, student finance, and welfare benefits. Staff specialise in one or more of these areas based on their skills and experience. The Advice Hub is unable to offer advice on matters relating to immigration or visas (including Tier 4 visas) or legal matters that are unrelated to housing law.

Where a case is beyond our scope or capacity we will signpost or refer clients to an appropriate organisation. More information on this can be found under the Signposting & Referral Policy in Appendix 5 on page 28.

Client Profile

Strathclyde University is an Higher Education institution based in Glasgow in the west of Scotland. The University operates primarily from one site in Glasgow city centre but also hosts international centres in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, Bahrain, Greece, Malaysia, Oman, Singapore, and Switzerland.

The Advice Hub can offer advice and support to any student registered with the University of Strathclyde studying on an undergraduate, postgraduate taught, or postgraduate research level course. We also offer advice to students engaged in access or pre-entry level study. We are unable to advise students registered on Centre for Lifelong Learning courses that are not acting as pre-entry to degree bearing courses.

Accessing the Advice Hub

The Advice Hub is based on Level 7 of the Students' Union building at 90 John Street. Drop-in times are 2-4pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays both during and outside term-time. The Advice Hub is closed on Saturdays and Sundays, and during the winter vacation. Out of term-time hours may be more restricted due to annual leave, training, and service development activities; information about planned closures will be available on our website, our Facebook page, and through Strath Union social media channels.

Appointments are available to book with advisers through our online booking system hosted by Simply Book¹ Monday to Wednesday and on Fridays 10am to 2pm and 4pm to 5pm.

Advisers can, at their discretion, arrange appointments outside of these times and are prepared where possible to see students in crisis as necessary. Crisis is defined as a time of danger or where there is imminent threat or risk to a student's mental or physical safety, i.e. due to risk of immediate homelessness, harm to self or others, inability to access food.

Advice and support can be offered through a variety of channels: face to face (in the Advice Hub or, upon explicit arrangement, elsewhere on the University of Strathclyde campus or in a public location), by e-mail, telephone, or where a student is studying or working out of the UK, by arrangement via Skype.

Service Level Agreement

Upon contact with the Advice Hub, we endeavour to reply to initial contacts within three working days. Where this is not possible, we will seek to make contact with a student to advise of when we expect to provide a comprehensive reply. This will take no longer than an additional two working days, meaning that a student can expect a reply from an adviser within no longer than five working days total.

Affiliations

In order to carry out and further its work, the Advice Hub retains affiliations, memberships, or subscriptions to various organisations. These include:

- Advice UK;
- Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) Scotland;
- National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA);
- National Union of Students (NUS);
- Shelter Scotland.

Financial Control

The Students' Union maintains a comprehensive financial policy which governs transactions made by the Advice Hub. The Union's accounts are externally audited yearly. Day to day control of the Advice Hub budget lies with the Advice Hub Manager who authorises payments in line with the agreed budget.

Insurance

The work of the Advice Hub is insured by the Union's Professional Indemnity Insurance policy currently held with Zurich to the sum of £2 million. We have incurred no professional indemnity claims in the last 5 years and there are no existing circumstances that may give rise to a PII claim.

¹ <https://strathclydestudentsunion.simplybook.it/v2/>

Range, Depth & Quality of Advice Offered

The subject areas covered by the service are conveyed on publicity materials and the Strath Union website.

Three levels of increasing depth in which a client may receive advice have been identified; these are not mutually exclusive. They are:

- **Signposting** – where a client is referred to another organisation, service, department or individual, and details are provided of how to contact that referral.
- **Information** – where information is provided to a client, but not interpreted or personalised based on their individual circumstances.
- **Advice** – where information is given and interpreted or personalised based on the client's individual circumstances in order to provide them with options.

In some circumstances, an adviser may agree to take appropriate action on behalf of a student, but where possible we seek to empower a student to take action on their own behalf.

Service Ethos

If a query received by the Advice Hub does not fall under an area that we are able to advise on then we will aim to seek information on behalf of a client or, where appropriate and possible, signpost to an appropriate department, service, or organisation. Queries will be dealt with impartially and without judgement. Where possible advisers will indicate options to a client and encourage them to retain control of their own situations and lives, seeking to facilitate empowerment rather than reliance.

Where appropriate, the Advice Hub will make contact with third parties in order to seek information, enquire regarding a client's situation, or negotiate on their behalf. Client consent will always be required in writing for this via completion of the Client Agreement & Mandate Form (see Appendix 7 on page 32). This consent will be recorded on the student's electronic casework file on Advice Pro.

Advisers will keep up to date and act within current legislation. They will also act promptly on any agreed course of action within the constraints of their workload.

Equal Opportunities

Strath Union is actively committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in its activities, in employment practices, and in service provision for its members. Strath Union will not discriminate on grounds of sex, marital status, race or ethnicity, colour, nationality, disability, trade union activity, sexual orientation, age, language, gender identity, family responsibility, social-economic background, HIV/AIDS status, religious or political belief.

We are committed to equal opportunities for all individuals who use Strath Union services and access its premises, taking a proactive approach to equality, supporting and

encouraging underrepresented groups and promoting an enjoyable, comfortable, inclusive and diverse culture which enhances the student experience.

Our full Equal Opportunities Policy is available on our website at:
www.strathunion.com/voice/unionpolicy/equalopportunity

The Advice Hub Team

Team Structure

The Strathclyde Students' Union (hereby referred to throughout as Strath Union) organisational tree that illustrates the team's structure is provided in appendix 1 on page 19.

The Advice Hub sits as part of the Student Engagement Team of the Students' Union, with Representation, Democracy, and Student Opportunities staff and activities led by the Head of Student Engagement. The Advice Hub is led by the Advice Hub Manager, Holly Shaw. The Advice Hub Manager's responsibilities include senior management responsibility for the long-term development of the Advice Hub and directly line managing Advice Hub advisers. In the absence of the Advice Hub Manager, direct responsibility for the service will fall to the Chief Executive Officer, Manish Joshi.

Executive Officers

The strategic direction of the Advice Hub is led by elected sabbatical student officers, particularly the President and Vice President Welfare. They are responsible for:

- Sitting as panel members to represent the wider student voice on Senate Discipline hearings;
- Leading on campaigns related to student wellbeing and welfare, including University policy, fees, mental health, and many more;
- Representation of Strathclyde students on key University committees;
- Representation of Strathclyde students to the University of Strathclyde on wellbeing and welfare matters and policies and procedures.

The Advice Hub Team

The Advice Hub is currently staffed by a manager and three advisers:

- **Holly Shaw** – Advice Hub Manager;
- **Katharine Blanks (maternity leave)** – housing advice specialism;
- **Miriam Middlehurst** – academic advice and student finance specialism;
- **Rick Ellis** – academic advice and student finance specialism;
- **Simon Furse** – housing advice specialism maternity cover

All advisers can be consulted on matters related to welfare benefits.

Staff Management

Induction

All new permanent advisers are subject to a six-month probationary period during which time their work is subject to a greater level of supervision. A new adviser will initially shadow client appointments with other advisers before taking on client cases themselves. The Advice Hub Manager will evaluate when a new adviser can begin work directly with clients. At this stage, the new adviser's work will be reviewed to ensure appropriateness of advice, high level of service, and in order to identify any training requirements.

One to Ones

All staff should have regular one-to-one meetings with the Advice Hub Manager (or Head of Student Engagement in their absence); these will be scheduled in advance. The meetings will be informal to allow for open discussion, but a note of any salient points or points of action will be recorded and held on the staff member's HR file.

New permanent advisers will complete a six-month probationary review meeting. This will be an opportunity for the staff member and Advice Hub Manager to review achievements, progress, identify any concerns, and set future goals. The adviser will be made aware during that meeting if they have passed their probation. If an extension to probation is required, then this will be agreed between the Advice Hub Manager and the Deputy CEO (with remit for HR).

Training & Continuing Professional Development

The Advice Hub has a dedicated budget for staff training and professional events to recognise the need for Continuing Professional Development. Agreed training needs are identified in monthly one-to-ones and are designed to meet both the individual's needs as well as long-term needs for the service. It will be the responsibility of the adviser and the Advice Hub Manager to identify and highlight opportunities for training and development. CPD hours will be recorded on the staff member's HR file.

Supervision

The Advice Hub Manager is the designated supervisor for the Advice Hub. The Advice Hub is based on the 7th floor of the Students' Union with the supervisor based on the same floor; they are available to staff most working hours with the exception of periods clearly marked on a shared calendar. Should an adviser need the Advice Hub Manager's input they should advise the client that they need to clarify matters and raise these with the Advice Hub Manager at the earliest opportunity.

Matters not relating to advice can be referred through the Union's line management structure, there in the Advice Manager's absence via the Senior Management team including the Chief Executive Officer. Supervising and mentoring can be fulfilled in many ways and

styles and the Advice Hub Manager shall be flexible in their approach to ensure that supervision meets the individual's needs and the needs of the service.

Maintaining Professional Knowledge

All staff receive job descriptions and person specifications that detail their tasks and responsibilities. These include requirements to maintain and enhance their professional knowledge and ensure clients are given accurate and up to date information. Staff should therefore familiarise themselves with available opportunities and resources for maintaining professional knowledge.

Reference Books & Materials

Every effort will be made to renew existing text and resources, particularly those relating to current legislation or practice in line with publication. Requests for any materials should be made to the Advice Hub Manager who will have responsibility to allocate budget accordingly.

Digital Resources

Information is often disseminated through email discussion groups (e.g. NASMA) or via online groups such as those hosted on NUS Workplace (e.g. the NUS Advice Caseworkers in Students' Unions group). Advisers should disseminate any relevant content or discuss with colleagues where appropriate.

Networking & Meetings

If staff have attended meetings, conference, training, or events they should disseminate or discuss useful information with colleagues where appropriate; where useful this may involve staff delivering workshop sessions to ensure that all staff are kept up to date.

A named adviser will attend meetings of relevant organisations which the Advice Hub maintains membership of including CPAG and NASMA.

The Advice Process

Student Enquiry Form

With the exception of very brief, simple enquiries all students attending the service will be asked to complete the Student Enquiry Form, either online or on paper. This is used to triage clients to the most appropriate adviser to handle their enquiry and to collate basic contact and demographic information which will be recorded on Advice Pro as part of their casefile (see appendix 9 on page 34). This form contains mention of our privacy statement and confidentiality policy and students are asked to confirm to the sharing of their data in line with the Privacy Statement. This is required for statistical purposes and for Data Protection purposes. Our full Privacy Statement and Confidentiality Policies are made available to the client upon completion of this form (or at any other stage upon request).

Client Mandate/Third Party Mandate

Where it becomes apparent that it will be beneficial to the advice process for an adviser to make contact with another department or organisation on behalf of a student, they will ask the student to complete a client mandate form (see appendix 7 on page 32). This lays out the client's permission for the Advice Hub to act on their behalf on the noted matter only. This form will be scanned and recorded on their digital case file and the paper copy destroyed (or e-mail version deleted if received in this format instead).

Where the Advice Hub is contacted by a third party, e.g. a friend or family member, seeking advice on behalf of a student of the University of Strathclyde, the student in question will be asked to complete a Third Party Mandate form to be submitted in person by the student or by e-mail from their University e-mail address in order for their identity and permission to share information with a named third party to be verified. This will also be recorded on their digital case file.

Case Recording

All case files must be accurate and up to date and it must be clear in the notes what stage the case is at and what action is being taken or is required by both client and/or adviser. Outlined below is the procedure for the recording of case file notes of all clients (with the exception of anonymous enquiries which are recorded as one 'Anonymous' client):

1. Clients should complete the online or paper Student Enquiry Form upon attending an appointment or drop-in.
2. All data collected from the form should be added to Advice Pro in order to create a new client record. It is the responsibility of the individual adviser to make sure that all key information is recorded accurately.
3. Where a client has previously used the Advice Hub a new 'case' or 'enquiry' should be created, though not all client data needs to be re-inputted; however, the adviser should verify the accuracy of previous information gathered including contact details.

4. Case notes should be recorded on their file at the earliest opportunity, with care taken to record the date and time of notes accurately to ensure logical order to the case file.
5. Cases and enquiries should be reviewed regularly and closed at the earliest opportunity upon their conclusion.
6. Where there has been no contact from a client after two months, follow up should be made by the most appropriate contact method. If no reply is received within another month, the case will be concluded.
7. An outcome should be recorded in the 'case outcomes' section of the case.

Cases will be deemed to be closed when there is no more action to be carried out or advice to be given, the case has been referred to another service, access to the service has been withdrawn (see Withdrawal of Service policy on page 17), no contact has been received within twelve weeks and despite reasonable attempts to make contact, all possible options have been explored and nothing more can reasonably be done, or upon completion of appropriate and relevant action following a student's graduation from the University of Strathclyde.

Case Management & Storage

All case files are free to view by clients they are pertaining to (provided that this does not compromise another person) or by other Advice Hub staff. Advisers therefore should ensure that they manage their own casefiles appropriately and refrain from making subjective or judgemental comments in recording notes. Notes should be an accurate reflection of conversations had or action taken.

Where an adviser has concerns about their caseload or it becomes unmanageable, the Advice Hub Manager should be informed immediately if urgent or during the next scheduled one-to-one meeting.

Cases are stored using a secure online database software called Advice Pro. Each adviser has their own username and password. Cases will be stored for no longer than is legitimately reasonable and will be automatically deleted from the system after six years of the case closure (see appendix 3 on page 23 for more information in our Privacy Statement).

All physical paperwork and notes relating to a case that have not yet been recorded on the casefile will be kept in a locked office accessible only by an individual adviser and the Advice Hub Manager. Paperwork should not be left unlocked and unsupervised at any time, and should be destroyed immediately upon recording of the information on the digital casefile.

Case Documents and Files

Relevant documentation relating to a student's case will be scanned and stored on Advice Pro, linked to their case. All emails sent and received in relation to the case will also be stored.

Short & Anonymous Enquiries

Short and anonymous enquiries do not require recording as a full case. Where a student's name is known, their details should be recorded and an 'enquiry' entry linked to their client file. This should detail briefly the nature of the enquiry and the information or advice given, and can then be closed immediately. Where a student's name is not known (due to it not being disclosed or the brevity of the enquiry), the enquiry should be recorded under the 'Anonymous Enquiry' client and the most relevant matter type, e.g. academic or financial, etc. Care should be taken to record these enquiries in order to ensure the accuracy of statistical information gathered about the service.

Cost Warnings

Where a client may become liable for any costs incurred by another party they must be warned of this, it must be recorded on the case file, and confirmed to the client in writing.

Written Confirmation of Advice

Written confirmation of complex or detailed advice – or any advice given upon request from the client – is an integral part of the advice process. The client has a right to consider the advice and their options at their leisure and may not be able to retain complex advice during an appointment or phone call. It confirms the advice given and also provides evidence against claims of inadequate advice. Where possible the Advice Hub will provide advice that is specific to an individual client (rather than simply information) in writing.

Where action is to be taken by either party, the written confirmation of advice should include the intended course of action and any relevant timescales. Any changes to the proposed course of action should also be confirmed in writing.

Key Dates

Key dates are deadlines which may be observed by the Advice Hub and client in the progression of a case. This may be the date of a hearing or an appeal deadline, for example. Advisers should familiarise themselves with potential key dates at the outset of a case in order to support a student with meeting them, but clients remain responsible for providing information or documentation in a timely manner. Key dates and the implications of missing them should be communicated clearly to the client.

Key dates should be recorded in the case file with any future tasks and action highlighted to ensure that colleagues are aware of them if an adviser is away from the office.

If a case needs to be referred to another agency, where possible the adviser must make reasonable steps to ensure that the referral is made in sufficient time to enable the agency to take necessary action before any deadlines.

Keeping Clients Informed

It is the responsibility of the adviser to ensure that the client is kept informed of the progress on their case if casework is being undertaken on their behalf. The client should be informed of a timescale and if this overruns the adviser should inform the client as soon as possible.

Written correspondence received should either be forwarded to the client or time arranged with them to go through the contents. Where advisers are speaking with third parties by telephone or face-to-face they should ensure that any proposed course of action needs to be agreed with the client to ensure that informed consent continues.

Advisers should review cases at regular intervals and ask clients for regular updates where contact has not been made.

Confidentiality

The Advice Hub is committed to confidentiality and has a strict policy found in appendix 2 on page 20 of this manual. The policy covers both the conduct of the interview and advice process and the recording of cases and enquiries. Failure to adhere to this policy can be considered as a disciplinary matter.

Conflict of Interest

The Advice Hub cannot knowingly advise both parties in a dispute that is likely to result in a conflict of interest which could jeopardise confidentiality and the best interests of the clients. Where an adviser becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest they should discuss this with the Advice Hub Manager. Where necessary a client will be referred to another appropriate agency to provide support and advice in order to avoid a conflict of interest. For more information on our Conflict of Interest policy please see appendix 6 on page 30.

Limits of the Service

The ability to recognise one's own limitations is integral to a quality advice service. Where an adviser recognises that a case may be beyond their current expertise, knowledge or workload they must make the client aware and seek advice from the Advice Hub Manager. Initially the Advice Hub Manager will evaluate whether the case can be dealt with by another adviser. The sharing of skills through mentoring and shadowing is an important part of staff development and will be encouraged.

Where the case or enquiry cannot be dealt with internally the client will be signposted or referred to another appropriate agency.

Withdrawal of Service

In extreme circumstances and as a last resort the Advice Hub may withdraw access to the service from a student. In such circumstances where possible, the service will signpost the student to alternative sources of advice and support.

Examples of when access to the service may be withdrawn temporarily or permanently include:

- If by advising a client the Union would be putting itself in a position where it is conflicted because of ongoing complaint investigations by the Union. If a student wishes to make a complaint about the Union then the Advice Hub would endeavour to signpost them to an alternative organisation for advice.
- If a client uses violent, inappropriate or threatening behaviour against staff.
- If a client repeatedly fails to attend appointments, ignores advice on a matter, or continues to pursue a course of action against the advice of advisers.
- If a client is thought to have deliberately misled or provided inaccurate information.
- If a client is thought to require excessive, long-term, or continuous support to the extent that it would have a detrimental effect on other clients.
- If a client requests collusion with fraudulent or illegal activity.
- If the Advice Hub becomes aware that a client is receiving legal advice on the same matter.

If it is apparent that all avenues have been explored over the course of the advice process and the Advice Hub does not feel that it can continue to advise on a matter then a client will be informed of this and the case closed. However, that client will be welcome to attend for advice or information in the future in relation to another issue.

If an adviser, following discussion and agreement with the Advice Hub Manager wishes to withdraw service from a client, then the student will be informed in writing of this decision and the reasons for it. If they wish to challenge this decision, then they will be directed towards the Union's Complaints Handling Procedure to raise the matter formally for resolution.

File Reviews

Once a month all advisers will have one case randomly selected for review for quality assurance purposes. The Advice Hub Manager will select these at random from a report of cases opened that month on Advice Pro. Each review will focus ideally on a different subject area than the previous one. This peer review will assist in the sharing of good practice and enhancing of the advice experience for clients. A template file review checklist can be found in appendix 11 on page 36.

Accurate Resources

Advice Hub staff should check information and resources at least once per semester to ensure that these are up to date and remain accurate. Anything which is no longer accurate

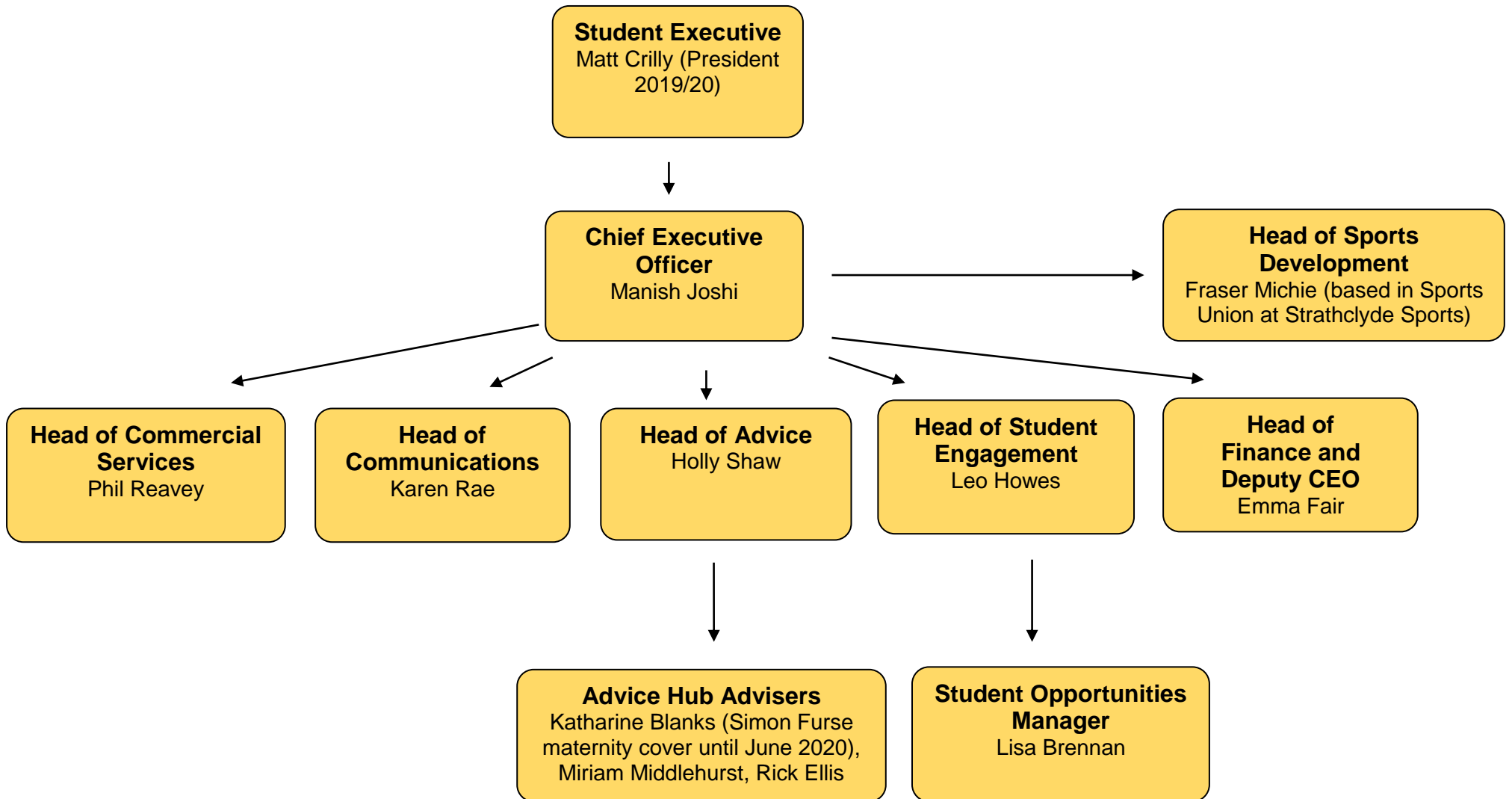
should be removed from display and where an updated version is available these should be ordered/printed promptly.

Complaints

Strath Union is committed to the provision of quality services and operates a comprehensive complaints procedure. All complaints and their resolution are recorded centrally. More information on the complaints procedure can be found on the Strath Union website.

Initial expressions of dissatisfaction with the Advice Hub that are not raised through the complaints procedure are referred to the Advice Hub Manager who shall attempt to resolve the matter informally.

Appendix 1: Strath Union Student Engagement Organisational Chart



Appendix 2: Advice Hub Confidentiality Policy

Managing the Confidentiality Policy

Strathclyde Students' Union Advice Hub is committed to providing a confidential service to its clients.

This policy will be reviewed annually and any amendments agreed by the Executive Officers. Copies will be available on request. Advice Hub staff will be responsible for ensuring the current policy is held on the shared drive and for the destruction of previous copies.

Conduct of the Advice Process

Advice Hub employees will not confirm a client's attendance to the service without their expressed consent to do so. Additionally, no details of any matter you discuss with our will be released to any third party, excluding the detailed exceptions below.

Clients will be offered a confidential interview space.

Advice Hub employees may discuss cases between themselves but will ensure that no discussions which could identify clients of the service take place outside of the service or its staff. All statistical recording shall be anonymous.

Case files including case notes, copies of correspondence and calculation sheets will be held in lockable offices or password protected computer drives. We maintain case notes and information on Advice Pro, a secure online casework recording system.

Documentation will be kept in a secure archive for a maximum of six years after which time it will be destroyed using appropriate confidential waste procedures in line with Data Protection legislation.

Staff will clarify with clients their preferences in terms of contact and will record on the case file where clients have indicated that certain forms of contact are insecure or unacceptable.

When leaving voice messages for client's staff will not identify themselves as working for an advice service.

Where clients request that no contact be made with certain parties this will be recorded and adhered to.

Breaching Confidentiality

Where it becomes apparent that the client is committing or has committed crime the adviser will warn the client of the implications of their actions, bring the interview to an end and refuse to give further advice on this matter. If such a situation arises, it must be treated with

utmost seriousness and consultation with Strath Union Senior Management will be sought at the earliest opportunity.

The Advice Hub understands confidentiality to mean that no information regarding a client shall be given directly or indirectly to a third party without the client's expressed consent except in the following cases:

1. Conflict of Interest

Where the Advice Hub identifies a potential conflict of interest which necessitates informing one party that we can no longer act on their behalf this may draw attention to the fact that we are already acting on behalf of another party. In these circumstances the compromised party will be informed of the breach and no further action will be disclosed.

2. Where required to by Act of Parliament.

3. Where required to by order of a Court of Law.

4. Where an adviser believes there to be a substantial threat to life, either of the client or another person (see Safeguarding Policy).

Where an adviser believes that there may be a need to breach confidentiality deliberately they should inform the client then raise the matter with the Advice Hub Manager. In their absence, the matter should be raised with the Chief Executive Officer.

The Advice Hub Manager will explore the issues with the adviser and decide on whether confidentiality should be breached. A written record of the discussion and decision will be placed on the case file.

Where the decision is to breach confidentiality, a full briefing will be referred to either the Strath Union President or Vice President Support who will seek support in their decision from the Chief Executive Officer. Where the Chief Executive Officer has been involved in the earlier decision they will see advice from an External Trustee. The elected officer's decision will be final and a full written report will be added to the case file.

Awareness of Policy

All members of staff at Strath Union Advice Hub will be made aware of this policy through their induction and training.

All Association employees or Executive Officers who may encounter confidential information will be required to sign a copy of the policy. This policy will be displayed in all Advice Hub staff offices and on the Strath Union website.

Signed Declaration

I acknowledge receipt of the confidentiality policy and agree to abide by its terms.

Signed.....

Printed Name.....

Date.....

This policy was adopted: September 2016

Reviewed: September 2019

Appendix 3: Privacy Statement

1. Introduction

The Advice Hub (“we, us, our”) of Strathclyde Students’ Union takes your data protection and rights in relation to this very seriously. We have written this document to make things as clear as we can, if you have any questions about your privacy in relation to getting support* from the Advice Hub then please contact us (details in section 10).

We promise to respect and protect any data you share with us; we won’t do anything with your data that you wouldn’t reasonably expect us to do when you contact us for support.

Data protection in the UK is overseen by the Information Commissioner’s Office and the main legislation that underpins it is the EU General Data Protection Regulations (2014) (GDPR).

*Support can mean: representation, information, advice etc. and should be read as such through the rest of this document.

2. What Data We Collect

When you contact us and ask for support we keep a record of the information you have provided and our response to you. This can range from one email to detailed notes on meetings that we have had with you – depending on the complexity and nature of your situation.

We may ask you to fill out a form when you approach us for support, this asks a range of demographic questions as well as your basic details. Some of this demographic data is considered special category# data under the law. Because of this we need to get your direct consent to process^ this data. There is more info on what consent means in section 5.

Strathclyde Students’ Union is a distinct organisation from the University of Strathclyde and as such retains sole responsibility for our use of personal detail. For enquiries regarding data held by the University of Strathclyde please contact the Data Protection team (contact details in Section 10).

^processing data includes: collecting, recording, storing etc.

#Special category data is anything related to your ethnic origin, religion, health (including disability), sexual orientation etc.

3. How We Collect and Use Your Data

The Advice Hub is an independent and confidential service (see section 4 for more about what this means). We process your data for our own records, it is stored electronically

externally to the Union and the University servers. We will never use the information about you for marketing purposes.

We collect data about you in three ways, either directly from you, directly from a person/third party you have given consent to share information with us, or from your Pegasus record. We have a data sharing agreement with the University to access certain basic details about you on Pegasus. This includes your student number, name, term time address, student email, gender, whether or not you are a mature student, and course details. This has been set up so that we can make the best service for you, and you don't need to go through it all directly with us. If you have any questions about this see section 10 on how to contact the University's Data Protection Officer.

We use your data for two purposes. The first and most important is to help you with your case/problem, from the GDPR legislation the legal basis we have to collect your data is called a legitimate interest (Article 6 GDPR). This means that we feel you would reasonably expect us to process your data when you approach us for support. For example, it would be very difficult for us to give you feedback on an academic appeal if you didn't tell us your name or what course you were on. Because of this, we don't need direct consent to process your data when it is part of your case/enquiry. It is necessary for the Advice Hub to protect your interests as our client as well as our interests as a service. We believe that you have a right to complain if the advice you receive is incorrect or unsatisfactory. Without storing data, including case details, it may be difficult for you to seek redress. We require your data in the event of a complaint so that we can check if the advice provided was accurate and you were treated in a fair and respectful manner.

The second reason that we process your data is for monitoring and statistical purposes. At this point any demographic data is anonymised, so you can't be directly identified from it. We then use this to look at trends/patterns so that we can focus our work on helping students in the best possible way. For example, if we see that a lot of mature students or students in a particular department are having the same problems we can look at ways to prevent these problems from occurring in the first place. Like approaching the University about changing a policy, or looking at how we can better provide support to a particular group of students.

We also want to make sure that we are giving you the best support possible, so we regularly have monitoring reviews and audits of our service. This means that your case might be looked at by an external party (for example another Advice Service at another institution), but your identifying data will be removed first.

4. Sharing Your Data and Disclosure to Others

In general, we will not share your information outside of the Advice Hub without your direct consent (see section 5 for more info on consent and what this means). However, there are some instances where we have a statutory obligation to share your data. These are instances that are set out in Acts of Parliament or by a Court of Law. They include criminal and terrorist activity, adult and child protection concerns, conflict of interest, or if we believe there is a substantial threat to life/harm of you or another person. You can read more details about this in our Confidentiality Policy.

5. Consent

Consent has been clarified and defined in the GDPR. It has to be a clear process and involve a positive choice from the person giving it (no pre-ticked boxes allowed!). You are also able to withdraw your consent at any time and we can't refuse to support you on that basis alone.

We will ask for your explicit consent for two reasons. The first is to process specially protected data about you (like if you have a disability or your sexual orientation), we use this data to inform our work and monitor our service (see section 3).

The second reason is to get your permission share your information when it is relevant/necessary to support you. If we deem this necessary we will ask you to sign a mandate allowing us to share your information, this can only be to specific people for a specific purpose. For example, if you want representation in an academic discipline case you will need to give us your consent to speak with the University about your case.

6. How to Change and Erase Data We Hold on You

You have the right to be able to see the information we hold on you, have any incorrect facts changed and to have your data erased. If you want to exercise any of these rights, please contact us (see section 10) and we will talk you through the process.

7. Your Rights

The GDPR sets out your rights as an individual, we strive to uphold and protect your rights in balance with our legitimate interest in providing support for you.

1. The right to be informed
2. The right of access
3. The right to rectification
4. The right to erasure
5. The right to restrict processing
6. The right to data portability
7. The right to object
8. Rights in relation to automated decision making and profiling.

You can see detailed explanations on each of these rights on the ICO website.

8. Keeping Information Secure

We have explained why we process your data; we also want to explain the actions we take to keep it secure. We store all of your data on a system called Advice Pro. This is held externally to both the Union and the University and is only accessible to The Advice Hub

staff. Advice Pro advocates privacy by design and as such annually employ the NCC Group to undertake penetration testing, one of the top three companies providing the service. Advice Pro is a highly trusted case management system within the advice sector and is fully compliant with the GDPR

We thought carefully about what storage system we wanted to use and Advice Pro have clear statements on their commitment to the security and protection of your data, if you would like to see these please get in touch.

Any documentation not stored on Advice Pro will be kept in your Adviser's secure personal drive or within a locked cabinet.

9. Time Frames

The GDPR states that we can only keep your data for no longer than it would be reasonable for the purposes that we have outlined. We have considered this, and we feel that a six-year retention period gives you the opportunity to re-engage with our service throughout your time at University. This means that if an issue in first year occurs again in fourth year we still have your details and you don't need to go through the same process twice. Some issues, like complaints, can still be in process after you have left the University, which is why we feel 6 years in an appropriate time scale. After this time all of your data will be automatically archived (fully anonymised and only accessible for statistical reporting) from Advice Pro and any other internal systems.

10. How to Contact Us

If you have any questions about privacy and confidentiality, please get in touch:

The Advice Hub
0141 567 5040
strathunion.advice@strath.ac.uk

Chief Executive of Strath Union and Data Protection Officer
Manish Joshi
0141 567 5000
manish.joshi@strath.ac.uk

For information controlled by the University of Strathclyde rather than Strathclyde Students' Union, please contact:

Data Protection Officer
0141 548 3217
dataprotection@strath.ac.uk

This policy was adopted: May 2018
Reviewed: September 2019

Appendix 4: Safeguarding Policy

A Union-wide Safeguarding Policy is currently under development.

This policy was adopted: xxx

Reviewed: xxx

Appendix 5: Signposting & Referrals Policy

Managing the Signposting and Referrals Policy

Strath Union Advice Hub will ensure that in cases where they cannot act for a client, they will signpost this person or actively refer them to an appropriate organisation. This will be done in consultation and agreement with the client.

This policy will be reviewed annually and the Advice Hub Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the current policy is held in the shared drive.

Where signposting or referral might occur

- The client is not a current, prospective, or recently graduated member of the University of Strathclyde.
- If the Advice Hub does not have expertise or authority in a specific area or if the scope of the case reaches beyond its collective expertise.
- If there is a potential conflict of interest.
- Where there is another organisation more suitable to help the client, e.g. due to access needs, specialist support requirements, or opening times.
- If the Advice Hub cannot take on any further casework due to capacity or time limits.

Signposting Procedure

Signposting is where an adviser identifies an appropriate provider with the client for a service. The client rather than the adviser then contacts the provider. An appropriate provider may be offered from our 'Useful Contacts list' which is reviewed annually and can be found in appendix 13.

Where we signpost any client to another provider we will provide the client with details such as opening hours, location, contact details, and the type of service offered by that provider unless the client indicates that they would prefer to source this information themselves.

Referral Procedure

Referral is the process by which an adviser will contact a selected provider to arrange an appointment and provides the selected provider with appropriate information with consent from the client. A referral takes place when all or part of the case is passed on to another person or organisation who then takes over responsibility for continuing all or part of the case from then on.

An appropriate provider may be offered from our 'Useful Contacts list' which is reviewed annually and can be found in appendix 13 on page 39.

If a referral is made, it must be made clear to the client that any relevant information disclosed to the Advice Hub may be passed to the referral organisation. The client should be made fully aware of any potential costs they may incur from the other agency. It should be made clear that the client can return to the Advice Hub if there are any problem and that any such feedback or problems will be recorded by us.

Details of the referral will be logged on the client's case file on Advice Pro. This will detail the date, subject matter, and organisation or person they were referred to. Where no agency is identified this will also be recorded.

Updating the Useful Contacts List

The Advice Hub Manager will confirm the details and service provisions on an annual basis.

This policy was adopted: August 2019

Reviewed: September 2019

Appendix 6: Conflict of Interest Policy

Managing the Conflict of Interest Policy

An adviser at Strath Union Advice Hub cannot knowingly advise both parties in a dispute that is likely to result in a conflict of interest which could jeopardise confidentiality and the best interests of the clients. It is therefore important to identify and handle a conflict of interest so that the advice we give remains confidential, independent and impartial so that confidence in the service is upheld.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Advice Hub Manager.

Conflicts of Interest

Certain cases may give rise to a conflict of interest; typically, this will be where there is involvement of multiple parties. Examples of where a conflict of interest may arise include:

- Disputes between two or more legal 'sides', for example a landlord/tenant or employer/employee.
- Disputes between two or more members of the student body, for example in cases related to complaints, disciplinary action, joint tenancies, unacceptable academic practice.
- Matters involving the Students' Union, its premises, staff, elected officers or activities.
- Where the adviser is or becomes aware that the client is knowingly giving misinformation to the Advice Hub.

Identifying and Dealing with a Conflict of Interest

If an adviser becomes aware that they are 'conflicted' when dealing with a client who presents to the service, they should notify the Advice Hub Manager who will make alternative arrangements for the client.

In regards to the examples above:

- The Advice Hub provides advice to both landlords and tenants where they are both students of the University of Strathclyde. Where both parties present for

advice, a different adviser will be appointed to manage the case. The Advice Hub provides information only for employees, but cannot provide information or advice to employers; appropriate signposting will be offered instead.

- Where disputes arise between two members of the student body, a different adviser will work with each student with clear instructions provided to the student that they should only discuss their case with that adviser or the Advice Hub Manager in their absence.
- Where the Union is a party involved in an enquiry, it will be explained to the student why the Advice Hub is unable to offer advice on this matter. The adviser may then signpost to another service.
- Where an adviser becomes aware that a client is deliberately giving misinformation to the Advice Hub and our continued involvement may compromise our integrity, the adviser should inform the student that if they continue in this action that we would reserve the right to refuse further advice. If this occurs during a formal meeting where the Advice Hub are acting in a support or representative role, the adviser should seek an adjournment to advise the client.

If the adviser feels that the client's actions continue to compromise their position, they should seek advice from the Advice Hub Manager.

This policy was adopted: August 2019

Reviewed: September 2019

Appendix 7: Client Agreement & Mandate

Advice Hub Client Agreement & Mandate

Client Information

Student Number: _____

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

I consent to The Advice Hub contacting other relevant persons and agencies on my behalf for the purposes of assisting with my enquiry regarding:

I consent to the Advice Hub releasing relevant information to other parties. I consent to those persons and agencies releasing information about me to The Advice Hub.

I understand that The Advice Hub will keep confidential case notes regarding my case and that these are available to me under the provisions of the Data Protection Act if I so wish.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Representation

I have requested that The Advice Hub represent me in the matter outlined above.

I agree to adhere to The Advice Hub's regulations regarding representation, as detailed below:

1. I agree to supply authentic information to The Advice Hub when requested.
2. I agree to keep The Advice Hub fully informed of any communications or other matters relevant to my enquiry.
3. I agree to attend any meeting that has been organised for me by The Advice Hub, or if unable to attend, to give as much notice as possible.
4. I understand that if I persistently and unreasonably fail to co-operate with The Advice Hub staff, they have the right to withdraw representation or other assistance with my case at any stage.

I confirm that I have discussed these regulations with a member of The Advice Hub and have fully understood them.

Signature: _____

Signed on behalf of The Advice Hub: _____

Appendix 8: Third Party Representation Agreement

Client Information

Student Number: _____

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

I consent to _____
[name and relationship to client] contacting and releasing relevant information about me to The Advice Hub at Strathclyde Students' Union on my behalf for the purposes of assisting with my enquiry regarding:

I understand that The Advice Hub will keep confidential case notes regarding my case and that these are available to me under the provisions of the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulations if I so wish.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Representation

I have requested the above named person represent me in the matter outlined above.

I agree to adhere to The Advice Hub's regulations regarding representation, as detailed below:

1. I agree to supply authentic information to The Advice Hub or my representative when requested.
2. I agree to keep The Advice Hub or my representative fully informed of any communications or other matters relevant to my enquiry.
3. I agree to attend any meeting that has been organised for me by The Advice Hub or my representative, or if unable to attend, to give as much notice as possible.
4. I understand that if I or my representative persistently and unreasonably fail to cooperate with The Advice Hub staff, they have the right to withdraw representation or other assistance with my case at any stage.

I confirm that I have been given an opportunity to discuss these regulations with a member of The Advice Hub and have fully understood them.

Signature: _____

Signed on behalf of The Advice Hub: _____

Appendix 9: Student Enquiry Form

Name: _____		Student Number (9 digits): _____	
Course Name: _____			
Is your enquiry primarily regarding (tick as many as appropriate):			
Academic/study/Strathclyde University	<input type="checkbox"/>	Student finance/funding	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Welfare benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal matter	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other (if other please provide a short description here): _____			
Email Address: _____			
Are you a mature student (aged over 21 at the start of your course)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Phone Number: _____			
Student Fee Status (Home, RUK, EU, International): Home <input type="checkbox"/> RUK <input type="checkbox"/> EU <input type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/>			
Gender: Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Binary/Third Gender <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to self-describe as: _____			
Term-Time Housing: Private Rented Accommodation <input type="checkbox"/> University Halls <input type="checkbox"/> Private Halls <input type="checkbox"/> Live with family <input type="checkbox"/> Own/mortgaged accommodation <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>			
Ethnicity: _____			
Are you a parent or carer? Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Carer <input type="checkbox"/>			
Sexual Orientation: Bisexual <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual/straight <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexual/lesbian/gay <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>			
Do you consider yourself to have a disability? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
We take your rights to data protection very seriously. We use your information on this form to help you with your issue and to ensure that you speak to the adviser best placed to support you. We won't share it with anyone without your permission unless we are bound to by law or think there is imminent risk to life. The full details of our Privacy Policy are available at www.strathunion.com/advice/faqs/privacy and our Confidentiality Policy is available at www.strathunion.com/advice/faqs/confidentiality			
I confirm that I consent to the Advice Hub using my data in the way described above: <input type="checkbox"/>			



Appendix 11: File Review Checklist

Case Review Details	
Date of Review	
Adviser	
Reviewer	
Client's Name	
Case Reference Number	
File Management	
Are the client's personal details recorded?	
Are the case records clear, including query, relevant background information, advice given, options given and documents attached?	
Are key dates clearly recorded?	
Has a concluding/closure email been sent?	
Have case outcomes been recorded?	
Reviewer comments/notes	
Quality of Advice	
The advice is accurate and appropriate for the client	
All issues have been covered	
Follow up action has been agreed and recorded	
Adviser has taken appropriate action where required	
Any deadlines have been met	
Reviewer comments/notes	
Corrective Action	
What	
By whom	
By when	
Completed on	
Signed off by reviewer	

This policy was adopted: January 2019

Reviewed: September 2019

Appendix 12: Strath Union Advice Hub – Supporting a Students’ Request for Evidence (Guidance for Medical Professionals)

This information is provided to give guidance when a University of Strathclyde student is requesting information to help support a claim of physical or mental ill health in line with the University’s policies or request.

University regulation allows a student to submit evidence in the form of a letter in cases where they are applying for consideration through the Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure, or to evidence mitigation in cases related to, for example, student conduct. In these cases, medical evidence is required.

What Is Needed

1. Clear information/diagnosis of the nature of the student’s ill health (whether physical or mental ill health).
2. An indication of the likely duration of the condition where possible (e.g. whether it’s an on-going condition or likely to be time limited).
3. A brief assessment of the impact the ill health is likely to have on the student’s ability to study, attend, produce work, or participate in associated activities (e.g. indicating if the effect is mild, moderate, etc.).

A medical certificate/letter which indicates that a student is unfit to attend without the above information would not be considered to be sufficient supporting evidence for most claims. Therefore, we kindly request your cooperation in ensuring that any documentation provided aims insofar as is possible to meet the criteria.

Thank you.

The Advice Hub, Strathclyde Students’ Union

This policy was adopted: August 2019

Reviewed: September 2019

Appendix 13: Useful Contacts List

Addiction			
Drinkline	National helpline for anyone concerned about their alcohol use or someone else's.	0300 123 1110	www.drinksmarter.org/drinkline
GamCare	Information, advice, support and free counselling for problem gambling.	0808 802 0133	www.gamcare.org.uk
Know the Score	Confidential information and advice about drugs.	0800 587 5879	www.knowthescore.info
Alcohol Change	Advice on alcohol reduction for a society that is free from the harm caused by alcohol.		www.alcoholchange.org.uk/
Turning Point	Various support services for complex and challenging needs.	0800 652 3757	www.turningpointscotland.com/
Scottish Drug Services	Search engine for drug support services in Scotland		www.scottishdrugservices.com/
FASS – Family Addiction Support Services	Confidential support service for parents and adult family members affected by or concerned about a loved one's drug or alcohol use.	0141 420 2050	www.fassglasgow.org/
Bereavement			
Cruse	Offers support and advice for bereaved people.	0845 600 2227	www.crusescotland.org.uk
Child Bereavement	Supports families and educates professionals when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement.	0141 370 4747	childbereavementuk.org/for-families/support/glasgow/
Richmond's Hope	Provides support for children and young people aged 4-18 years who have been bereaved.	0141 230 6123	www.richmondshope.org.uk/

Crime			
Victim Support	Supporting people affected by crime or traumatic events including court support.	08 08 16 89 111	www.victimsupport.org.uk/
Broken Rainbow	Online and call chat service for LGBT victims of violence		www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/
Debt			
The Money Advice Service	Free and impartial money advice, set up by government	0800 138 7777 and webchat available	www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en
StepChange	Expert, tailored advice and practical solutions to problem debt	0800 138 1111	www.stepchange.org/
Debt Support Trust	Money advice charity helping people with their debt problems across the UK. The charity office is based in Glasgow providing the debt advice.	0800 085 0226	www.debtsupporttrust.org.uk/debt-advice/debt-advice-in-glasgow
Eating Disorders and Self Harm			
Broken Rainbow	Support and advice for eating disorders	0808 801 0677 or 0808 801 0811 (Studentline)	www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/
NSHN – National Self Harm Network	Online forum for those who self-harm.		www.nshn.co.uk/
Self-Injury Support	Self-Injury Support from a Gendered Perspective	0800 800 8088	www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/support-groups#Scotland
Kibble	Specialist provider of services for at risk children and young people	0141 889 0044	www.kibble.org/
Fearless	Fearless is a specialist domestic abuse support service for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any man - Any LGBT person - Anyone from an ethnic minority community 	Online form	fearless.scot/

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline	Helpline to support anyone with experience of domestic abuse or forced marriage, as well as their family members, friends, colleagues and professionals who support them	0800 0271234	sdafmh.org.uk/
LGBTQ+			
LGBT Health and Wellbeing	Information and emotional support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their families, friends and supporters across Scotland. We are also here to support those questioning or wanting to discuss their sexuality or gender identity.	0300 123 2523	www.lgbthealth.org.uk/services-support/helpline/
LGBT Youth Scotland	Provide quality youth work to LGBTI young people that promotes their health and wellbeing.	07786202370 (text service)	www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/
Terrance Higgins Trust	Support, advice and testing for those with or at risk of contracting HIV.	0800 802 1221	www.tht.org.uk/centres-and-services/glasgow
Scottish Trans Alliance	Information for transgender people, service providers, employers and equality organisations to engage together to improve gender identity and gender reassignment equality		www.scottishtrans.org/support/support-groups-in-scotland/
Sexual Health			
Sexual Health Scotland	Resource and advice line for sexual health queries	0800 224488	www.sexualhealthscotland.co.uk/
Sandyford	Clinic for a variety of services including contraception, fertility and sexual health testing.	0141 211 8130	hwww.sandyford.org/
Stress and Anxiety			
Time Out Scotland	Self-help support group which meets every week.		www.timeoutscotland.org.uk/
Anxiety UK	Resource for information and helpline service.	07537416905 (text service)	www.anxietyuk.org.uk/
Lifelink	Support adults and young people to make positive changes in their lives, realise their own abilities to	0141 5524434	www.lifelink.org.uk/

	cope with stress and develop ways of overcoming mental illnesses.		
Elament	E-resource for Lanarkshire mental health.		www.elament.org.uk/

This policy was adopted: August 2019

Reviewed: September 2019