

Neighbourhood Helpline Procedure

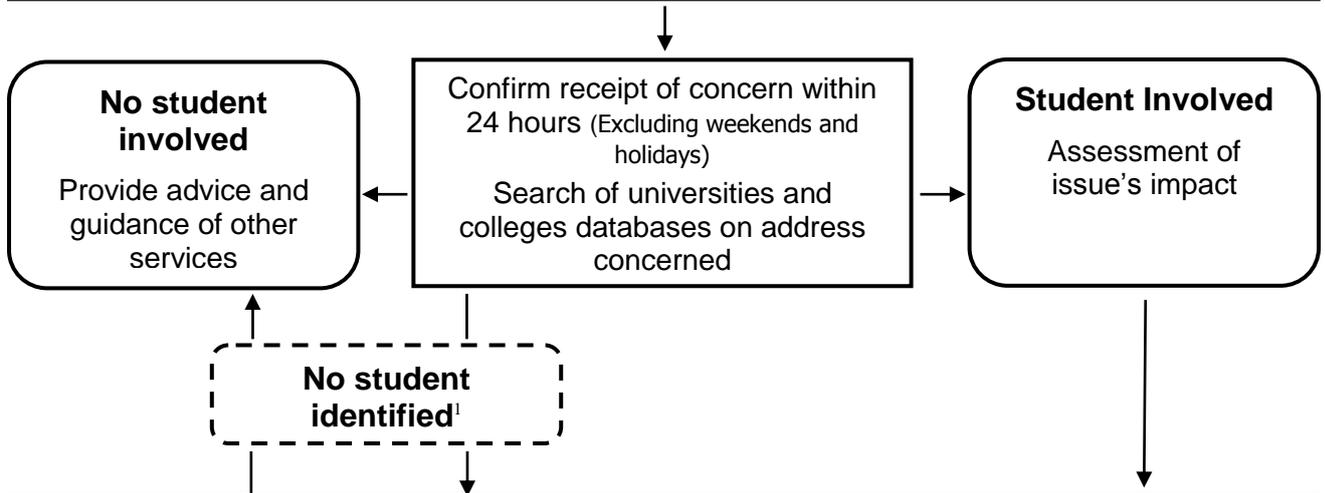
Information and Awareness Raising

Informing students and residents through publicly available documents and literature including Living in Leeds, Unipol newsletter and Websites and student portals. Engaging with students and residents through attending freshers fairs and community events.

Stage 1 24 Hrs

Complaint received

In addition to the Helpline, staff across each institution will redirect any correspondence concerning students conduct in the community to be managed by Helpline partnership.



Stage 2 1 Week

Mediation and Conciliation

All students identified are contacted through a letter or home visit detailing the following:

- Details of the allegation.
- Advice and guidance on living in the community
- The outcome and process of further complaints

Letter: All students identified are written to by their institution.

Home Visit: A home visit will be undertaken should a further minor complaint be received or we receive a complaint about a different neighbourhood issue.

Stage 3 2 Weeks

Further Complaint Registered

Students attend an Enquiry Meeting at the university/college involving Neighbourhood Helpline Staff.

Stage 4 2 Weeks

Referral to the designated officer for student discipline

¹ A home visit will be undertaken by a Safer Student Partnership Officer should student involvement be suspected but cannot be identified through the standard process.

Neighbourhood Helpline Code

The Neighbourhood Helpline is a 24-hour dedicated voicemail and email service operated by the University of Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds Trinity, Leeds College of Music and Leeds City College. It is available to both students and local residents, to raise issues of concern regarding their surrounding environment and the communities in which they live. Helpline staff work with complainants, in a mediation role, to resolve any disputes which involve our students.

All calls are dealt with in a professional manner and all institutions work closely to resolve any issues which have been raised.

Background and Context

The universities and colleges are committed to maintaining the good relations we have established with our neighbouring communities and to making a full contribution to the economic, cultural, and social fabric and infrastructure of our region. We are proud of the depth and extent of our community engagement.

We recognise that our students have a marked impact on our local communities and tensions inevitably arise in those areas of the city most densely populated by students. To resolve any tensions which may occur, the Neighbourhood Helpline Service has been in operation since 2000 to mediate and provide further information on the agencies available to tackle individual problems.

We take a proactive approach to educate and guide students on their responsibilities as Leeds residents and living harmoniously within their host communities. For example, the Living in Leeds webpages provides University of Leeds students with advice and information on the practical aspects of being a resident of Leeds.

In addition, a range of communications are produced throughout the year to raise student's awareness of their neighbourhood responsibilities. These include waste, recycling and noise reduction messages on the student's portals, a Unipol tabloid article about living in the community and a joint email was sent to all University of Leeds students from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Education and Leeds University Union's Community Officer to remind students of the issues around changeover and end of year parties.

The Helpline is publicised widely in inner North-West Leeds and new users continue to make up a significant proportion of the people using the service. The service is publicised through posters and cards that are circulated through key community services Police and Councillors and through attending local meetings and events.

Helpline Procedure

The Neighbourhood Helpline Code outlines the procedure which Helpline staff follow in the event of receiving a complaint. The procedure which has been developed takes into account each institutions legislative requirements which has resulted in certain limitations and legal requirements. The process is as follows:

Stage 1- Call or Email Registered

All emails and calls are responded to within 24 hours, with the exception of correspondence received at weekends or holidays. These are responded to promptly the following working day.

Residents can contact Helpline staff by either the telephone mailbox (0113 343 1064) or email (neighbourhood.helpline@leeds.ac.uk). Additionally, key personnel across each of the

institutions are aware of the Helpline Service and will redirect any correspondence concerning students in the community to be dealt with by the Helpline partnership.

Monitoring and handling of initial calls is alternated between staff at the University of Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan University every calendar month and under agreement in other instances (holidays and sickness) to ensure the Helpline maintains a high level of service throughout the year. Overall management of the Helpline is the responsibility of the University of Leeds Community and Housing Policy Officer.

The Neighbourhood Helpline is not an emergency service nor is it the intention to replace the functions provided by Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police. However, Helpline staff will give their full co-operation and work alongside these statutory organisations as and when required to resolve any matters arising.

The Helpline will also work with landlords to resolve any issues which are a symptom of faults with a property or unsuitable accommodation. In the event that a landlord fails to cooperate and resolve the problems, we will inform Unipol. In the case of multiple occupancy homes the Helpline will also inform the HMO Licensing Team at Leeds City Council.

Helpline staff gather details of the problem and advise the complainants of how their complaint will be managed. An address is required in order for the universities and colleges to identify student occupancy and take action. Details of all complaints are shared between partners and a simultaneous search is conducted to identify any students living at the address concerned.

Stage 2- Letter, Mediation and Conciliation

Where students have been identified as being involved in a complaint, each institution initiates an assessment of the gravity of the situation before determining the best course of action.

Minor or one-off incidents: each student found to be residing at the address concerned is written to by Helpline staff within one week of receiving the complaint. The letter outlines details of the allegations made and the distress and/or nuisance caused and that the university/college expects its students to conduct themselves appropriately. Advice and guidance on living in the community is also enclosed as it often the case that students are not mindful of their actions or how they are affecting others. The letter also clearly outlines the sanctions at the disposal of the university/college and Leeds City Council should further complaints be received. The letter also includes the contact details of Helpline staff should the student wish to discuss the matter.

Home visit: In the event of a further minor complaint is received or we receive a complaint about a different issue, a home visit will be undertaken. In the case of the University of Leeds, the home visit will be undertaken by the Community and Housing Policy Officer accompanied by a member of Security. In the case of Leeds Metropolitan University, the home visit will be undertaken by the Safer Student Partnership Officer.

A home visit will also be undertaken by either the University of Leeds or Leeds Metropolitan University's Safer Student Partnership Officer should student involvement be suspected, but cannot be identified through the standard procedure.

More serious incidents: In the event of more serious incident which is causing significant distress or harm, Helpline staff may decide to bypass stage 2 and/or 3 of this procedure.

No student involvement: In the event that no students are found living at the property complainants are provided with advice and guidance and are referred to the relevant agency to deal with their query such as the Police and/or Leeds City Council regarding noise issues and to the relevant Student Advice Centre regarding victimisation or bullying of our students.

Stage 3- Enquiry Meeting

In the event of receiving a further complaint a meeting will be held, with a minimum of three days notice, at the relevant institution involving the students, Safer Student Partnership Officer, Helpline staff, a representative from the relevant Students Union and a member of university/college staff previously uninvolved (such as the Head of Security in the case of the University of Leeds). Students are provided with a terms of reference for the meeting and advised that they may be accompanied at the meeting if they wish. Students may seek independent advice and support from their Student Advice Centre. At the meeting the full facts are ascertained and the students are advised that any further complaint may lead to them being formally disciplined. It would be disadvantageous to any student who refuses to engage in this stage of the process.

Stage 4- Referral to the designated officer for student discipline

If after the enquiry meeting there is any further substantiated complaint the students may be called to attend a formal disciplinary hearing.

If the officer considers that the students' conduct is likely to bring the university/college into disrepute, action can be taken under the relevant institutions disciplinary regulations through which a number of sanctions are available ranging from fines to ultimately dismissal from their course of study.

No feedback can be provided to the complainant following a referral to a disciplinary hearing.

Limitations and Legal Requirements

The universities and colleges are not *'in loco parentis'*¹ with regard to our students nor are we responsible for our students actions living in the wider communities of Leeds. Our role is to advise, guide and educate our students on the impact which they have on their host communities and support their involvement and engagement with the wider community. We will, however, take action where our students are having a sustained and detrimental effect on their neighbours and consequently we feel are bringing the institution into disrepute.

Universities and colleges are bound by the Data Protection Act 1998 and are unable to disclose whether students are involved with a complaint. In the event that the parties involved wish to resolve a matter between themselves, Helpline staff will seek permission from students to pass on their details. Likewise, Helpline staff will not reveal the identities of any complainants, unless we are instructed to do so by the complainant.

Proceedings and penalties imposed under the universities and colleges discipline procedures shall remain confidential between the accused student and the members of staff who are directly concerned with dealing with the offence.

¹ The term *in loco parentis*, Latin for "in the place of a parent", refers to the legal responsibility of a person or organisation to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent.