

## Boundaries for campaigning volunteers

You need boundaries in place if you are having any contact with students in which you may feel under pressure to support them. For example;

- If you run a stall in your students union.
- If you run an event and are around before / after the event.
- If you are engaging students on campus to talk to you about mental health as part of a campaign.

It is important that you can do all of this without it impacting upon the rest of your life.

If someone opens up to you about a problem they are struggling with, it may have taken them considerable effort to open up and come and talk to you. You have a responsibility to ensure that this effort is well directed; that you sign post the student on to people who can offer appropriate support.

**If students indicate they are struggling with their mental health during an organised mental health event or campaigning activity, you should not provide them with support or offer to meet them outside of the event – signposting is key!**

### Why?

**For your sake:** you may find that this is a difficult relationship to maintain and that the student you are supporting needs far more support than you can manage. This may become draining for you, putting a strain on your own personal life and work.

**For their sake:** you may not be the most appropriate person to be supporting them. You may not be able to offer the support that they need. While you are supporting that individual, there is a chance that they won't be seeking other support from individuals or organisations better placed to support them.

We are kindly supported by Comic Relief, The Welton Foundation, UnLtd, The Matthew Elvidge Trust, The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, The James Wentworth-Stanley Memorial Trust and Student Hubs.

Student Minds is a charitable company registered with Companies house, no. 7493445 and the Charities Commission, no. 1142783

## How?

**Online:** Using social networking and media sites like Facebook and Twitter;

- Don't initiate personal contact or send them private messages.
- Check your privacy settings and be wary of uploading content that may be construed as offensive or inappropriate.
- Do not accept Facebook friend invitations from students you don't know.
- Running a social media campaign:
  - Run your campaign through a charity account (not a personal account).
  - If students contact you asking for support, explain that you do not provide support.
  - Sign post to [www.studentminds.org.uk/further-support](http://www.studentminds.org.uk/further-support)
  - If a student posts something distressing / upsetting...
    - Delete the post as soon as possible
    - Contact the individual: explain what you have done, that it is your policy to do so.
    - Note that you can't provide support but would like to draw their attention to support that exists...

## Offline:

- Always be polite in explaining that you can't provide support outside of the events that you run.
- What if I bump into someone on campus;
  - Smile – ignoring them is just rude.
  - Respond if they say hello.
  - Don't initiate communication – they may not wish to have to explain the relationship to others.
  - If they wish to talk further, be as polite as possible while limiting the conversation.

## Talking to people who might like to volunteer

You will obviously want to get students involved in your project and will always be looking for passionate students who would like to get involved. You should always feel free to encourage people to do so.

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There is a distinction between you staying in touch with a student because they are now **volunteering** with your project and staying in touch with a student because you think that you might be able to **offer them support** for the problems that they are currently facing.

## Recruiting new volunteers

It is always important to have a careful conversation with any new volunteer wanting to get involved in your project.

- Volunteering with your project needs to be the right thing for them right now.
  - For some people who have current or past experience of mental health problems, being involved in a mental health campaign organisation is a really positive experience.
  - For others, it may bring up triggering or upsetting thoughts for them, making the experience of volunteering distressing or simply emotionally tiring.
  - Some people with mental health problems find that it is helpful to get some space from their problems and get involved in aspects of life that have nothing to do with these problems.
  - Everyone is different. This is why it is important to encourage new volunteers to think about whether the organisation is the right one for them right now.

We ask all volunteers to look after their own mental health and put their mental health first.

- All new volunteers must complete a volunteer form for Student Minds.
  - This covers a few basic pieces of information.
  - This will include a question about whether the volunteer has ever or is currently experiencing a mental health problem. This is to ensure that we are able to offer support to student volunteers where necessary.
- We do not encourage students struggling with acute mental health problems to take on or maintain the responsibilities of **running** a campaign project (i.e. acting as a group leader).
  - We take the term acute mental health problems to refer to problems that substantial impact upon your quality of life and / or capacity to engage in your university education.

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- Running a group is a substantial commitment and we want to ensure that if you are experiencing acute difficulties, your own mental health is being put first. We will encourage volunteers or potential volunteers experiencing acute mental health problems to become involved in other various aspects of our projects, if keen to be involved in the charity.
- If you have queries around what a specific volunteer role entails and want to think about whether running a group is right for you at this time, we would love to have a conversation with you. We want to find ways for anyone to get involved with Student Minds in a way that best suits them.

Should you have concerns about the emotional wellbeing of your colleagues, we ask that you contact the Student Minds project manager as soon as possible, so that we can provide support, where possible and appropriate.

You can also direct questions about this document to [info@studentminds.org.uk](mailto:info@studentminds.org.uk)

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