

# THE LOOKOUT

THE STUDENT WATCH MAGAZINE

SO YOU'RE WORRIED  
ABOUT YOUR HOUSEMATE'S  
MENTAL HEALTH

THE SECRET TO  
FIGHTING RACISM  
ON CAMPUS

HELP YOURSELF  
BY HELPING OTHERS


THE BIG QUEER GUIDE  
TO A SAFE NIGHT OUT

DOMESTIC ABUSE:  
HOW TO HELP A FRIEND



Insurance



A woman with short brown hair is sitting on a windowsill, looking out a window. She is wearing a dark, sleeveless top and shorts. The window is open, and she is looking out at a building with a grey roof and several windows. A large potted plant is on the windowsill next to her. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting it might be dusk or dawn. The overall mood is contemplative and somewhat somber.

# So, you're worried about your housemate's mental health...

Abigail Ani, UCL

Sadly, in every sense, it has become the norm for university students to experience poor mental wellbeing.

The rise of toxic productivity culture fostered a difficult environment even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit; now that environment is even worse. Mind reports that as many as 74% of people aged 18-24, and 60% of all adults, said their mental health worsened during lockdown. Given that pre-pandemic Mind research had found that one in five students have been diagnosed, which doesn't even account for those unable or unwilling to access professional help, it's a problem many will experience

**Students are vulnerable to anxiety and depression – recognise the signs and you can help**

at university, in themselves or others. Check-ins and support can be life-saving.

Mind also identified a lack of support as a key factor making students particularly vulnerable to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. We need a culture of consciousness and care for those within our community, who may otherwise suffer alone. That's why Co-op are working "to bring communities together to improve mental wellbeing", in partnership with Mind, Inspire and the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH).

First, students have to be aware of how a flatmate or classmate may behave when their mental health is suffering. According to Samaritans, signs include: being tired or lacking energy; being distant or not replying to messages; not wanting to do things they usually enjoy; mentions of feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless; and finding it hard to cope with everyday things.

**This is not an exhaustive list.** People can exhibit many other worrying or unusual behaviours when they're struggling. Plus, it's harder to identify such behaviours in the context of a pandemic, with relatively restricted access to one another.

That means it's even more important to engage in open conversations about mental health. Being there for the people in our community requires serious but

worthwhile effort. The 'Be Kind To Your Mind' guide, from Co-Op and their partners, offers five very useful steps in approaching these conversations, so you can support a housemate or fellow student.

### **Prepare**

Find a private space where you won't be disturbed. Phone off. Think about what you want to say, and what you don't.

### **Ask**

Just ask, "How are you?" and give them time and space to reply. If they don't feel ready to meet face-to-face, then offer alternative methods, and if they find it too hard to discuss, let them know you're there when they're ready.

### **Listen**

If someone's ready to talk, simply listening is helpful in itself. Let them talk. Offer reassurance. Be patient.

### **Check in**

Keep checking in to see how they're managing. Offer assistance. If they've mentioned a specific mental health problem, you could learn more about it, helping you to help them.

### **Take care**

Set boundaries and be realistic about what you can do. Share your caring role with others if you can, and if you need to take a break, take a break.

If there's one thing university students really need, it's more support from their peers. Trying with intent to look out for the people around us, including the willingness to start a difficult but necessary conversation about mental wellbeing, will promote that change in culture. And on an individual level? Your input is invaluable.

If you need more information and mental wellbeing support for yourself or someone else, try the resources below, or in the '[Be Kind To Your Mind](#)' guide. Furthermore, most universities offer students free, confidential counselling with mental health professionals, as well as information on how the university can accommodate a student struggling with their mental health.

#### **Mind**

phone: 0300 123 3393  
[info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

#### **SAMH**

phone: 0344 800 0550  
[info@samh.org.uk](mailto:info@samh.org.uk)

#### **Inspire (Northern Ireland)**

phone: 0289 032 8474

#### **Neighbourhood Watch has a**

[Youth Isolation Toolkit](#)

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It's what we do

Recycle Co-op own brand food packaging at selected Co-op Group stores. Limitations may apply to third party packaging. Excludes Isle of Man & other island stores. See [coop.co.uk/soft-plastics](https://coop.co.uk/soft-plastics) for details.



Daniel Fisher, King's College London

I know what you're thinking. *'Great, another article putting the burden of not getting hate-crime'd onto the very community at risk...'*

No. Trust me: Bimini Bon-Boulash did not sing, "Gender bender, cis-tem offender" on the main stage of *Ru Paul's Drag Race UK* for me to come here and tell you to "tone it down".

This is not one of those guides.

The sad reality is that being a young queer person in 2021 can be dangerous. As a visibly queer bisexual who loves a night out, I've had experiences all too common for our community, even in apparent safe spaces. I've been called b\*ttyboy on Camden Market within walking distance of the Pride rainbow zebra crossing. I've been physically attacked by straight people outside queer clubs. I've even heard DJs play Oasis during Pride Month – an entirely different kind of homophobia.

In all seriousness, when even our safe spaces can't guarantee safety, we need to look out for one another. Here's how – and this advice is applicable to everyone, not just the gays!



#### Find safe transport

Cabs are usually safer than the train/tram/Tube, which is usually safer than the bus, and unless you live five minutes from the club, the bus is always safer than walking. Many universities offer free cab services home for students who've had too much to drink or can't afford the journey, so find out if yours does.



#### Look out for your friends (and yourself!)

As someone with the navigational prowess of that ship that jammed the Suez Canal, I realise it's not always easy to stick with friends in a busy club. Try not to get separated, but have a meeting point in case you do (I suggest the smoking area; my lungs do not). Be open with your mates about how much you've been drinking – at least it'll give context to your foray into interpretive dance. And, obviously, don't pressure anyone to do anything they don't want to do. Sobriety doesn't require an explanation.



#### Don't be afraid to ask for help

If someone's being dodgy, let your friends know, and consider informing bar staff or security (they're invested in a fun night, too, after all). If somebody needs medical help, call an ambulance, and be honest to the paramedics about what happened. Their job is to help you, not to get you into trouble, and they'll need all of the information they can get. Also, find out the reputation of where you're going. The existence of safe spaces proves the existence of unsafe spaces.



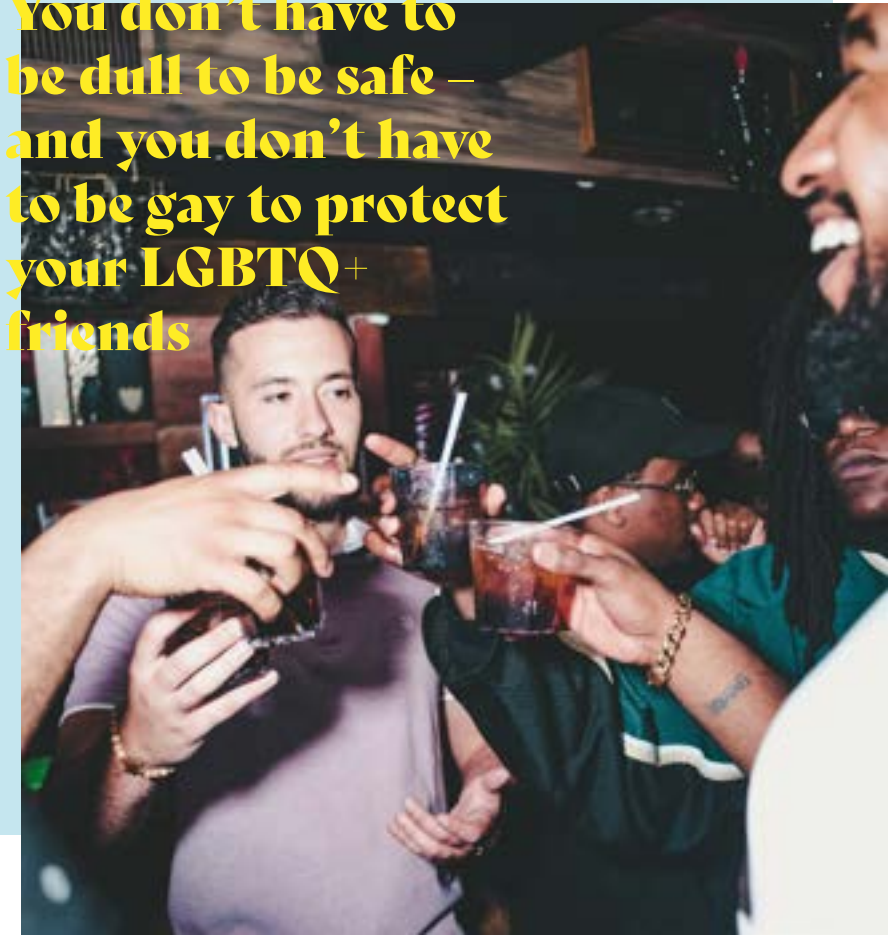
#### Most importantly: have fun!

Part of being queer is dusting yourself off from the violence of a queer-phobic society and not letting it dull your shine, which is why I can joke about these things, and why this *isn't* a guide to 'attracting less attention'. You may experience funny looks and hurtful comments from the terminally un-fierce. Try not to let other people's ignorance ruin your night out. It could always be worse – you could be them...



For information and support for LGBT communities and their allies. Contact Stonewall's Information Service FREEPHONE 0800 0502020 Lines are open 9:30 - 4:30 Monday to Friday.

**You don't have to be dull to be safe – and you don't have to be gay to protect your LGBTQ+ friends**





# Domestic Abuse: how to help a friend

Ashley Bautista Domingo, Kingston University

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## Your flatmate tells you they've been abused by their partner. What do you do?

Every year, 2.3 million adults aged 16-74 experience domestic abuse. There's also a high suicide rate, of approximately 400 people each year, among those who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. These figures underline the importance of ending the emotional and physical pain suffered by its victims.

And, putting these numbers into horrifying perspective, this time it's your friend; a young soul wanting to be loved, respected and valued, seeking happiness and stability. The early butterflies they felt faded away, because their partner – that person they thought they knew – began to treat them in a way they shouldn't.

It begins with small actions that may seem innocent or forgivable in the moment, but which worsen over time. The relationship always involves an imbalance of power and control. These forms include physical abuse; emotional and/or psychological abuse;

financial or economic abuse; coercive control; harassment and stalking; and online or digital abuse. All of them are unacceptable.

The abuser uses intimidating and hurtful words and behaviour to control their partner. And 'control' is the word: according to Crimestoppers, a typical victim of domestic abuse endures up to 35 incidents from their partner before reaching out for help. "He would emotionally degrade me," revealed one student survivor of domestic abuse from their ex-partner. "Sometimes, when I look back, I cry because I can't believe I stuck around and allowed someone to make me feel my lowest."

One in four women and one in six men suffer domestic abuse. Should there be a price for love? The denial, hope, guilt and shame felt for an unsuccessful relationship keeps victims staying with their partners.

But in this hypothetical scenario, you've had enough. You can't – won't – see your friend suffer, physically and/or emotionally. So, how can you help?

Listen to your friend. Support them. Most importantly, **believe** them. Acknowledge their courage for speaking up, and tell them that nobody deserves to be threatened and abused by their partner. Getting involved doesn't mean you have to solve the situation, but you can make them feel heard, feel believed and feel as if they have somewhere to turn when needed. As the witness, to whom your friend has revealed the truth, you're there to help them, and that includes the vital assurance that they must not blame themselves.

You're their friend, so you'll want to fix this – but in such dangerous cases, the best thing you can do is point them in the direction of those best-placed to help. There can be a risk to you and others when with stepping in uninvited. You could suggest they also read stories from domestic abuse survivors, as a reassuring reminder that they aren't alone and that there's an end to the trauma. Encourage them to get in touch with an organisation to receive practical and emotional support, or even advice; these organisations can be found below. Ultimately, though, you must allow to them to make the decision themselves on what to do.

You **can** help. Just as you may have to tell your friend: you can do this.

Just as you may  
have to tell  
your friend:  
you can do this

#### Neighbourhood Watch

[ourwatch.org.uk/DomesticAbuse](http://ourwatch.org.uk/DomesticAbuse)

#### Victim Support

phone: 08 08 16 89 111 (24h)

live chat: [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

#### Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline.

run by Refuge: 0808 200 0247

[www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)

#### Galop (LGBTQ+)

phone: 0800 999 5428

[www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)

#### Men's Advice Line

phone: 0808 801 0327

[www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)

*There is a universal hand signal, created by the Women's Funding Network and the Canadian Women's Foundation, that someone can use to indicate on camera (or, say, when answering the door) that they're suffering domestic abuse. **Palm to camera/visitor and tuck thumb, then fold the four fingers down.***



Insurance

Neighbour of the Year Awards 2021

Do you know of  
someone 21 or younger  
who has gone  
above and beyond  
to be a good neighbour?

Show them you noticed them by  
nominating them for the  
**Young Neighbour of the Year Awards**

Nominations open from  
14th September to 26th October  
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Neighbourhood Watch Network is a charity registered in England & Wales, CIO no: 1173349



# STUDENT WATCH



## PUT YOURSELF FORWARD TO THE STUDENT COUNCIL

Do you want to lead the discussion around safety and community on and off campus? Student Watch empowers students to support each other on campus and in their community to create a safer, happier environment.

Often times, students' opinions on how they think their wider communities could be improved go unheard.

Join the Student Watch Council to help set the agenda for all things student safety, community and wellbeing.

JOIN  
HERE

# The secret to fighting racism on campus

Farida Yusuf, Southampton University

Racism is thriving – so much so, the finer-grain statistics for racially-discussions on the subject can end up painting the problem as broad, impersonal. It isn't. Let's look through the lens of the most violent outcome of racism on an individual level: race hate crimes. And yes, this is a single lens picked from what non-white Britons know to be an optician's storefront.

Race hate crimes accounted for 72% of all hate crimes in England and Wales for the *latest year on file* (March 2019 to March 2020), an increase of 6%. But the prevalence of race hate crimes is merely a shadow cast by the toleration of racism – racist sentiment, reaction

**Effective intervention comes from emotional intelligence, self-confidence & being there when it matters**

moments in current affairs: recorded offences spiked following events such as terrorist attacks and 2016's Brexit referendum. Black Britons suspect that we might just see the fallout from England's European Championship Final defeat referenced in the 2022 report.

and 'humorous' indulgence – in British society, far beyond what is registered as violence, crime, or both. Worst still, the current canon of 'solutions' (as you may now be thinking: reporting, protesting, arrests) are solely **reactive**, serving only as an epilogue of uncertain use to a completed experience of racism. Consequently, Britain's non-white population lives in varying intensities of terror. Yes – terror.

Yet this isn't some tragic morass that can be met only with sympathy, however comfortable or even profitable this yarn may be for the majority, perhaps

even you (and if you are affected by racism, this holds intersectionally as well). **Proactive** solutions to racism begin with looking out within your community, understanding that society is the sum of its people.

And community? We'll start with one that's abstract yet highly significant: students.

In Britain, most universities represent multicultural hotspots within otherwise homogeneous areas, which often leaves non-white students at risk off-campus. Furthermore, many new students arrive on campus to their first experience of a multicultural society, setting the scene for a spectrum of events from kitchen-table gaffes to, yes, hate crimes.

For young BAME people heading to university, an unspoken but widely-recognised protocol is to seek out cultural societies ahead of time. These spaces can offer relief from the constant adrenaline of living and interacting as a minority

in our environment.

All of this is to reinforce that racism isn't an abstract problem, especially for BAME students; virtually all of us have stories. You, reader, may have contributed to such a story, with or without realising it. But here is where you lean in: if you're still reading this, the chances are that, as a student, you've discovered and

**Proactive solutions to racism begin with looking out within your community, understanding that society is the sum of its people.**

embraced people of various places through university; people you wouldn't question defending against racism where you **can** recognise it. To better recognise and acknowledge racism, keep engaging with BAME voices. The camaraderie of student life, with its shared spaces, interests and short-term goals, defines a community. And with community comes accountability.

You're probably now asking the big question: how do I intervene against racism? OK. Let's not add to the genre of instructional guides, and instead present some more fundamental advice.

Upon a knowledge and awareness of racism, speaking up – particularly in personal situations – comes from staying present and exercising emotional intelligence. You cannot stand on your principles if you're worried about being vocal. Don't stay in your head, thinking about 'solving' racism. Find some confidence, and commit to showing up for BAME members of your community in the moments that matter.

It all starts from there.

**To report hate crime or find out more information, visit [True Vision](#).**



# Help yourself by helping others

Laura Elizabeth Bea

As we begin the slow, gradual exit from the past two years, our local communities face an especially difficult recovery period. Just as we'll need space to rediscover our emotional bond with the world around us, the community will need our help, too. Engaging with it is a powerful way to reconnect with others **and** make a difference.

The first question, though: why?

Well, following the devastation wreaked by a certain pandemic, community care will have an important role in both the tangible and emotional recovery of local areas. Self-care remains vital, of course, but community care does aid in the sustainment of the self as well as society. Plus, you can pick the role you'd like to play.

Are you a digital native? You can offer a local business your social media savvy, raising their profile and their income. Are you a good listener? You can brighten the day of an isolated person by offering

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## Supporting your local community benefits everyone – even you

companionship, helping them to feel heard (search '[Neighbourhood Watch Calling Tree](#)' for good advice on this). Or perhaps stray rubbish on the ground makes your skin crawl – if so, you could organise a quick and dirty community litter-pick.

In short, there are loads of opportunities to engage. To see examples close to you, spiritually as well as geographically, just browse [coop.co.uk/co-operate](https://coop.co.uk/co-operate). Co-op's local community missions are access to food, mental wellbeing support and opportunities for young people, and Co-operate is an online community centre that helps people to make good things happen.

There's another incentive, too. Engaging with your community will provide experience that could be vital in your career.

It's no reflection at all on your worth, your skills and your value as a person that,

right now, finding a job is difficult. This is the situation we're in. But, with every little advantage mattering that little bit more, expanding your skillset is valuable whether you're carving out a career or simply looking for work. A commitment to making positive changes around you suggests that you have passion, professionalism and interpersonal skills.

For example, you might be able to say in a job interview that you were involved in a scheme bringing young people together to develop a green space, in order to take them out of loneliness and into nature. Even if your would-be employer is a cynical soul who thinks compassion is something to do with compasses, they'll be impressed by your ability to identify an issue, take the initiative and implement a plan. You're developing skills. The 'how' matters even more than the 'what'.

How, then, do you get involved?



When generating ideas, think about your intention. There's no manifesto to dictate how you can take action, because everybody sees it differently. A good place to start is by considering where you want it to end up. Work out your aim; what impact you hope to have.

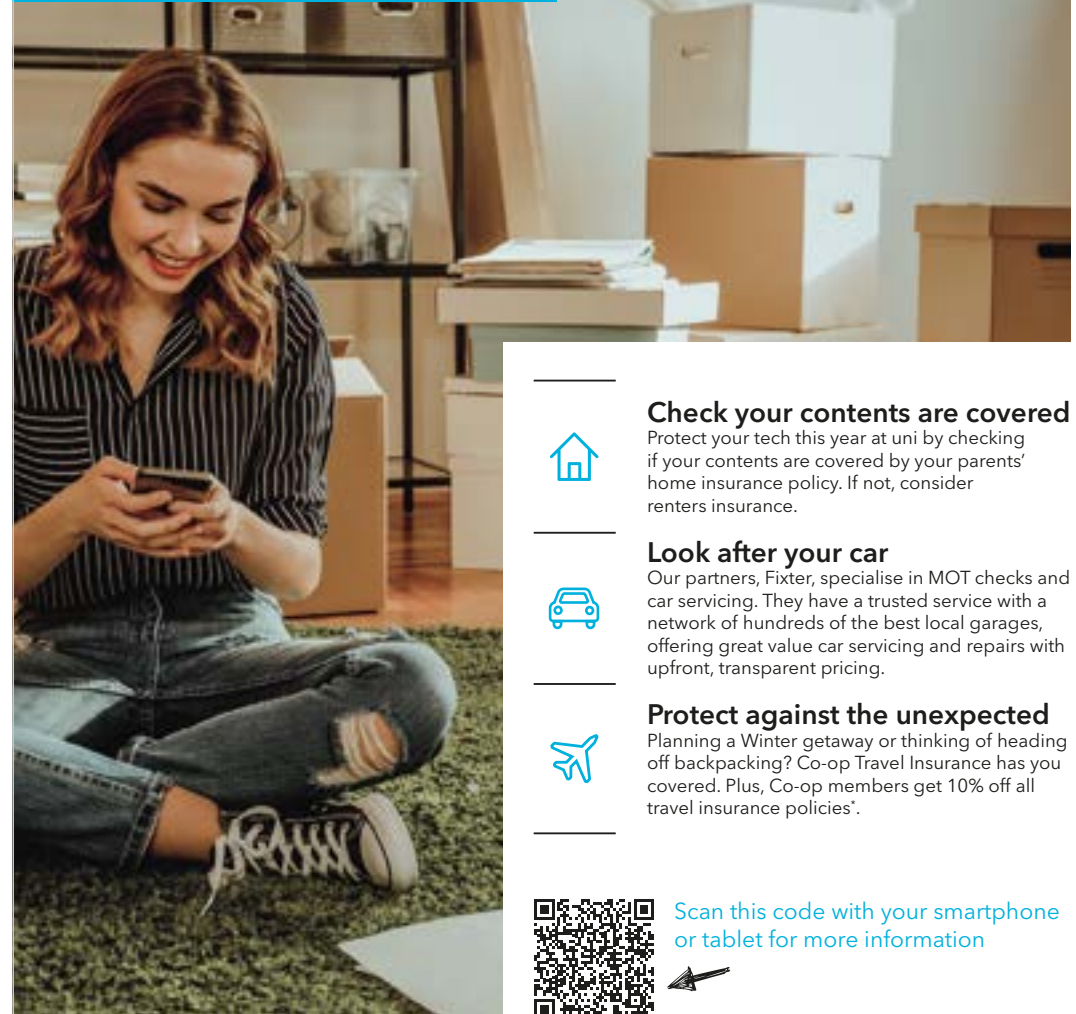
You don't have to create something entirely new. Through charities, like Neighbourhood Watch, local groups and your university, there are many existing ways to support communities. These initiatives are probably crying out for someone with your skills, passion, expertise... or simply time. You can find opportunities through your Students' Union, or through volunteering organisations such as **Student Hubs**. Both can help you with creating **and** finding what's right for you, so you don't feel as if you're starting from scratch.

Supporting your community is something you can hold close to you forever. Even if it was something small, you had a positive impact. How wholesome is that? Get involved and you can make good things happen.

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Brought your car to uni?

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It's what we do

# STUDENT WATCH



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