

Policy Briefing – Print the emergency helplines and the Violence Meter onto UCL’s food products’ packaging

Welfare & Community Zone, May 2022

What is the current situation at UCL related to this proposal?

UCL’s Report + Support (R+S) tool and accompanying Full Stop campaign provides students and staff with one place to find out about support, report anonymously, or contact an advisor about bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct, or domestic abuse. From February 2020 – February 2021, 166 students (<1% of the student body) made a report.¹

UCL also offers a variety of Support and Wellbeing Services,² including support for mental health, disability, health, safety, and other areas. The SU offers an Advice Service³ and the Active Bystander online training programme.⁴ Both the UCL and SU webpages direct students to numerous charities that offer helplines and support for victims/survivors of abuse and violence.

What is the relevant national/ international context to this situation?

Domestic violence and abuse are unfortunately prevalent in society, and among students at university. The Crime Survey for England and Wales, which ended in March 2020, found that female students are more than twice as likely than male students to have experienced abuse. Among full-time students, 10.5% of females and 4.8% of males had experienced domestic abuse in the last year.⁵ In terms of sexual harassment and assault, the National Union of Students (NUS) found in a 2019 report that 75% of respondents in higher education had had an unwanted sexual experience at least once.⁶

Reports of domestic violence have also increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. The National Domestic Abuse Helpline in England registered a 22% increase in callers from March 2020 to March 2021.⁷ Police also recorded an increase in domestic abuse cases during the pandemic.⁸

¹ <https://d2gppjca7iyv2p.cloudfront.net/e1303899-3626-4c3d-9bd0-9ed0a16b14cc/2fda728e-78cd-4317-affa-e8c397a21ace>

² <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/support-and-wellbeing-0>

³ <https://studentsunionucl.org/advice-and-support/find-help/advice-service>

⁴ <https://studentsunionucl.org/active-bystander>

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<http://clock.uclan.ac.uk/37526/1/Domestic%20Abuse%20Policy%20Guidance%20for%20UK%20Universities%202021.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/report-on-sexual-violence-in-further-education>

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2021>

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseduringthecoronaviruscovid19pandemicenglandandwales/november2020>

Are there any legal implications to this policy proposal?

No.

Does this relate to any existing SU policy?

The Students' Union has a zero-tolerance stance to any kind of sexual harassment.⁹

Are there any financial, resource or stakeholder/ public relations issues with this policy proposal?

Yes, in term of finances and resources, the SU would need to redesign and print new food packaging.

In terms of stakeholder/public relation issues, the SU would need to determine which resources/information/helplines to include. There are several UCL-based (such as Report+Support) and non-UCL based resources which could be included.

It also important to note that while some students may find these resources helpful, it may also be upsetting or triggering to some to have descriptions of violence (such as in the Violence Meter in the proposal) widely printed on food packaging.

Gendered language (as included in the Violence Meter) should also be carefully considered. Although women are more likely to experience domestic violence and abuse, men may also experience it. Additionally, trans* and non-binary people and people in non-heterosexual relationships can experience it, too.

What would the next steps be if the proposal passed?

The SU would need to determine which resources/information/helplines to include on the food packaging and the design of it.

⁹ <https://studentsunionucl.org/advice-and-support/safety/sexual-violence-and-harassment>