Chronic Illness and Disability Support and Advice

Welcome to the University of Exeter. Getting started with a new degree in a new place can be overwhelming – especially if you have a disability or chronic illness. This guide was put together to be a quick reference for support in and around Exeter, as well as online for those with chronic conditions and disabilities. It will help you identify and access support as easily as possible. It also offers practical suggestions for living in Exeter with some of these conditions.

This guide has many options and has been put together considering as many conditions as possible. Many of the links and contacts are great pointers to more effective or in-depth support or medical assistance. This guide was made to be as comprehensive as possible, however, there must be a disclaimer that there are possibly other groups or conditions that were not included at the time of publication. This guide is also no substitute for medical intervention or the expertise of a trained GP, therapist, or medical specialist.

Emergency Support

The Moorings

Offers out-of-hours mental health support to anyone aged 18+

Address: St Leonards GP Practice, Athelstan Road, St Leonards, Exeter EX1 1SB (near the War Memorial on Denmark Road).

Open:6pm-midnight, Monday-Friday (including bank holidays), 12pm-midnight, Saturday-Sunday.

07990 790 920 or devonexeter.mhm@nhs.net

https://www.mhm.org.uk/the-moorings-devon

Samaritans

The Samaritans run a support service for those experiencing mental distress. Their support is largely over the phone and runs 24 hours a day.

https://www.samaritans.org/

For Medical Emergencies please phone 999 for an ambulance, ring your GP, or contact the 111 urgent care help line.

Generic Help

The University's Well Being page is a great place to start and learn about ILP options, study skills help, and other offerings the university has for students with disability or chronic illness.

https://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/support/

The University also offers basic workbooks for those who may be having mental health struggles for free as a starting point.

https://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/resources-and-services/takingcareofyourwellbeing/workbooks/

Professional Mental Health Assistance

TalkWorks

TalkWorks is a good starting point for any mental health issue. You can fill out a self-referral form via this link:

https://www.talkworks.dpt.nhs.uk/

Dartmoor Centre

Dartmoor Centre is an affordable option for counselling and psychotherapy services. There can be wait times but often they are shorter than the NHS and can sometimes be used in conjunction with NHS services depending on the circumstances.

https://dartmoorcounselling.org/

Iron Mill

This is another option for talk therapy and regular psychological appointments, some of the counselling services offered are with counsellors who are currently in training.

https://www.ironmill.co.uk/counselling-service/overview

Day to Day Living for Those with Disabilities

Public Toilets and Radar Keys for Bowel/Bladder Disorders

A guide to Exeter's public toilets can be found here:

https://exeter.gov.uk/clean-safe-city/environment/public-toilets/

Some public toilets require a radar key for entry, more information about this can be found here:

https://shop.disabilityrightsuk.org/products/radar-key

Celiac and Gluten Free Food Options

Most restaurants in Exeter have gluten free options, and major supermarket chains offer 'free from' ranges.

CoeliacUK has a list of verified places in Exeter and the southwest for those with gluten intolerance made by their office in Exmouth. On this site you can also find the Exeter and East Devon contact information for events and news relating to Coeliac as well as further local support.

https://www.coeliac.org.uk/local-groups/exmouth/?&&type=rfst&set=true#cookie-widget

The Exploding Bakery has an excellent selection of gluten free options.

https://explodingbakery.com/pages/cafe

As does Cocorico if you are looking for baked goods and treats.

http://www.cocorico.co.uk/

Baked to Taste is a Wheat Free bakery based in Honiton (not far from Exeter) if you are struggling to find things in the city centre.

https://www.bakedtotaste.co.uk/

Mobility and Accessibility on Campus

Accessable offers a comprehensive guide to the university's campus buildings and which accessible features they have – including toilets, hearing assistance, lifts, and automatic doors.

https://www.accessable.co.uk/university-of-exeter/streatham-campus

Exeter has some mobility scooters for free hire in Princesshay, as well as a ring and ride minibus service for Devon. There is also a listing of accessible toilets provided. More information can be found here:

https://www.visitexeter.com/info-maps/disabled-access

Traveling from Exeter's Airport

If you find you need to use Exeter's airport during your studies, they offer a variety of services to assist those with disabilities.

This page offers links for those with wheelchairs, hidden disabilities, service dogs, and more.

https://www.exeter-airport.co.uk/special-assistance/

Wheelchair Accessible Taxis

There are a few companies that can accommodate wheelchairs. It is advised to **call ahead and book**.

https://maexeter.com/

https://www.facebook.com/Accessible-Taxi-4-Hire-2-U-Exeter-279373865420058/

https://www.exetercars.com/about/

https://www.appletaxisexeter.co.uk/

https://www.waveexeter.co.uk/contact

At the bottom of this page are two links to vehicles in Exeter that are available for hire that are accessible.

https://exeter.gov.uk/licensing/taxis-and-private-hire/taxi-services/

Hidden Disability Support

Devon has a service called Living Options Devon. It has a large list of providers who support a variety of conditions. They have links for Neurodivergence, ME & Chronic Fatigue, Epilepsy, Fibromyalgia, COPD, Heart Conditions, Learning Disabilities, and general mental health. Some of the sources on their site have already been listed here, but it is a good starting point when looking for support while in Devon.

https://www.livingoptions.org/help-and-support/your-hidden-disability/

Living Options also offers a support helpline for those with chronic conditions, and features a service for those who are deaf and need to communicate with BSL over a video call.

https://www.livingoptions.org/projects/time-to-talk/

Sunflower lanyards from Hidden Disabilities are available from several locations in Exeter, as well as most major airports. The sunflower lanyards indicate to people in public spaces such as train stations, supermarkets, and airports that you may need a little extra assistance or time.

https://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/for-you

Peer Support Groups and Charities (Alphabetical)

Support groups and charities are often more informed as to what is available to students with chronic conditions with regards to both daily help and support. Contacting these groups or joining a local support group is often a great way to find help when not much is listed online. There are also often emergency support resources and peer to peer support lines.

There are some support groups offered through the University Student Guild. You can check https://www.exeterguild.org/societies/ for more details. However, sometimes these options are not available for use. Below are links to other support groups, many of which are online, that you can sign up for.

ADHD

ADHD Aware has a variety of groups, some face to face (but not local to Exeter) but many with online options. You can check here to see if any work for you

https://adhdaware.org.uk/adhd-support-group-meetings/events-calendar/

The is a local ADHD meetup support group in Exeter that can be found here:

https://www.meetup.com/Exeter-Adult-ADD-ADHD-Support-Meetup/

Anxiety

Anxiety UK has support groups that are affordable once you have joined as a member – there is a student membership option available.

https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/

No Panic has a volunteer staffed helpline to assist with panic attacks and severe episodes of anxiety that need urgent support

https://nopanic.org.uk/the-no-panic-helpline/

Asthma and Lung Conditions

Exeter pulmonary fibrosis support has a local group based in the city centre.

https://www.blf.org.uk/support-in-your-area/exeter-pulmonary-fibrosis-support-group

For asthma, COPD and other lung conditions Asthma + Lung UK have support groups available.

https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/manage-your-asthma/emotional-support/network/

Autism

There is a comprehensive guide to Devon's support and services for those with Autism put together by Dimensions for Autism. This can be found here:

https://irp.cdn-website.com/daa5b68f/files/uploaded/AutismServiceGuide_2_04.pdf

Bipolar

Bipolar UK offers a support group in Exeter as well as a national support group that meets regularly.

https://www.bipolaruk.org/exeter-support-group

Bipolar UK also offers a Peer Support Line for those who wish to have one on one conversations.

https://www.bipolaruk.org/support-line

Cancer

There are numerous charities for cancer support in the UK depending on the type you may have. Below are two general cancer support charities and resources that can help with support, information, and guidance for this condition.

FORCE is a local cancer group that provides support, counselling, complementary therapies, and more to patients and their families.

https://forcecancercharity.co.uk/

Cancer Support UK offers coaching, kits to use while undergoing treatment, and general support for cancer patients.

https://cancersupportuk.org/

Macmillan Cancer Support is another national group providing a large amount of information and support services to people undergoing cancer treatment.

https://www.macmillan.org.uk/

CFS/ME

ME has a helpline available to those who need support and guidance with their condition. There is also other information and advice about living with ME/CFS on their site.

https://meassociation.org.uk/about-the-mea/telephone-helpline/

There are a variety of support groups in and near Devon for CFS, please check the latest listing here for contact information and how to join.

https://meassociation.org.uk/information-and-support-line/localsupportgroups/

Crohn's/UC/IBD/Other bowel conditions

Crohn's and Colitis UK has an Exeter meet up and support group, as well as a national helpline and easily accessible information. There are also virtual social events and a newsletter for the Exeter area on their site.

https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/info-support/support-for-you/local-networks/south-west-england/exeter-and-district-local-network

GutsUK offers a site with fact sheets for a variety of conditions of the digestive tract. Each listed condition has links to further resources and support.

https://gutscharity.org.uk/advice-and-information/conditions/

Depression

Many other mental health resources already listed can assist with depression.
Mind's Devon branch does specifically offer support for depression as well.

https://www.devonmind.com/find-help/groups/depression-support

Diabetes

For support in addition to GP care, Diabetes UK does have an Exeter branch with a Facebook page.

https://www.facebook.com/DiabetesUKExeter/

You can also get general information, advice, and support from DiabetesUK.

https://exeter.diabetesukgroup.org/?_gl=1*1x7kcs4*_ga*OTQzMjE4ODAwLjE2NTU2NzMyNjc.*_ga_J1HFNSGEX6*MTY1NTY3MzI2Ny4xLjAuMTY1NTY3MzI2Ny42MA..&_ga=2.163797305.761705719.1655673268-943218800.1655673267

Dyslexia

There is support from the Wellbeing Centre for Dyslexia, but for further support there is a helpline from Dyslexia Association.

https://www.dyslexia.uk.net/services/helpline/

There is also University based support for different learning difficulties (dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia).

https://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/support/specificlearningdifficulties/

Eating Disorders

The University offers a support group for students with various eating difficulties.

https://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/resources-and-services/peer-support/eating/

There is also a student-led online group available on Facebook.

https://www.facebook.com/EDPSGexeter/

Beat Eating Disorders also offers several online support groups.

https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/get-information-and-support/get-help-for-myself/i-need-support-now/online-support-groups/

Epilepsy

There is a local epilepsy support group in Exeter that has regular meetings that can be found here:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/epilepsy-action-exeter-talk-and-support-group-39156489093

There are online support groups for epilepsy as well.

https://www.epilepsy.org.uk/virtual-groups

Basic advice for those newly diagnosed can be found on the official NHS web page.

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/epilepsy/living-with/

The Brain Charity offers free counselling sessions to anyone with a neurological condition that may be struggling.

https://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/service/counselling/

Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia Action UK offers email support, reference guides, helplines, and other kinds of support through their comprehensive website.

http://www.fmauk.org/

UK Fibromyalgia has a listing of support groups in the Southwest but also has listing of Facebook pages, doctors, and advice blogs and podcasts.

https://ukfibromyalgia.com/southwest-support-groups

Hearing Impaired

The Deaf Led team with Living Options provides counselling for those who are hearing impaired.

https://www.livingoptions.org/projects/counselling-service/

There is also a sport community designed to include the deaf community in sports and accessibility.

https://www.livingoptions.org/projects/deaf-get-active-and-volunteer/

They also have a Facebook page called Deaf Get Active which can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/DeafGetActive

Mental Health - Mind

Mind has its own series of support groups for a variety of mental health conditions.

https://www.devonmind.com/find-help/groups

OCD

Both OCDAction and OCDUK offer advice on coping with OCD in day to day life, as well as access to different types of support including regular online groups.

OCDAction - https://ocdaction.org.uk/online-support-groups/

OCDUK - https://www.ocduk.org/support-groups/online/

PTSD

PTSDUK offers a listing of where to find help and support for a variety of trauma related conditions.

https://www.ptsduk.org/treatment-help/where-to-get-help/

Supportline also offers a list of places to get help with trauma related issues, and has its own support line.

https://www.supportline.org.uk/problems/trauma/

Thyroid

The British Thyroid Foundation offers support, information, webinars, and forums, for patients with a variety of thyroid issues.

https://www.btf-thyroid.org/

There is also a specific support group for thyroid cancer patients.

http://www.butterfly.org.uk/

Vision Impairment

The Royal National Institute of Blind People offers excellent resources and support for those who are vision impaired. There is a helpline as well as information on assistive technologies.

https://www.rnib.org.uk/supportingyou

Devon In Sight is a Devon based charity for those with sight loss and blindness. They offer a local helpline, emotional support, information on assistive technologies, online chats, and counselling.

https://devoninsight.org.uk/supporting-you

General University-based help:

If you require significant or immediate support, the PGR Education Support Advisor for Welfare can be found at: Welfare.pgr@Exeter.ac.uk or 01392726207

For help and practical advice about working from home, writing up, building resilience, and mindfulness, there is welfare-focused Researcher Development online in the form of courses on ELE which can be accessed at: https://www.exeter.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/researcherdevelopment/training/

Postgraduate students with mental health concerns are entitled to access workshops, webinars, and counselling sessions through the Wellbeing Centre. This can be accessed here: https://www.exeter.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/support/pgrsupport/wellbeing/

There is a mental health service offered through the university called Spectrum and you can sign up here: https://exeter.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/

There is also a student run Nightline service for students who need help which can be found here: https://www.exeter.nightline.ac.uk/

International postgraduate students who have concerns about support or how it could impact their visa status should contact the International Student Support Office here: https://www.exeter.ac.uk/internationalstudents/