

It's week seven at university, and those assignment deadlines have come and gone. You might expect that now, you'd feel some relief—but instead, the stress just sticks around like an unwanted guest. If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. Persistent stress that doesn't let up after deadlines can be tough to manage, but there are practical steps you can take to get the right support and start feeling more in control.

In this post, I'll walk you through some key things to do, including registering with a GP during Freshers Week, how pharmacy-first care can help, navigating prescription charges, and making the most of support tools like the NHS Low Income Scheme.

Why Your Stress Might Stick Around After Deadlines

University life can be intense. Even after those assignments are handed in, ongoing worries about exams, finances, homesickness, or relationship pressures might keep your stress elevated. Plus, when you're juggling everything, it's easy to overlook your own mental health.

The important thing is: persistent stress doesn't have to be the new normal. There are NHS and university wellbeing services set up precisely to help students when stress lingers.



Step 1: Register With a GP During Freshers Week – Don't Delay

One of the first and most important steps is to **register with a GP (General Practitioner) at your university address**. Many students don't do this right away, thinking they can wait until they feel worse, but early registration can make all the difference.

Why during Freshers Week? It's typically a quieter time for GP surgeries in university towns before term really ramps up. Registering early means you:

- Get timely access to appointments when you start to feel anxious or stressed
- Have a GP who knows your current living situation (important for mental health support)
- Can access local NHS services without delay

Registration is usually straightforward: just find your nearest GP (using NHS Choices online or university health services info), bring proof of address and ID, and fill out a form.

Tip: Don't put off registering because you think you "aren't sick yet." GP mental health support is preventative as well as reactive - reaching out early can stop stress spiraling.

Use Social Media to Find Local Support Groups

During Freshers Week, keep an eye on Facebook groups or university Twitter accounts for student wellbeing events or forums. Peer support can be a strong buffer against stress, and these platforms can help you connect easily.

Step 2: Understand Pharmacy-First Care and Common Conditions

If your stress feels linked to physical symptoms like headaches, upset stomach, or trouble sleeping, your first stop could be your local pharmacy. Pharmacists are trained to advise on common issues, often quicker than waiting for a GP appointment.

Pharmacy-first care means consulting your pharmacist for:

- Mild anxiety or sleeplessness advice
- Over-the-counter remedies for common ailments
- Information on when to seek further medical help

They can also check whether your symptoms may be side effects of existing medication or recommend next steps. It's a quick way to get practical advice without the wait.

Step 3: Prescription Charges, Exemptions, and Avoiding Overpaying

If your GP prescribes medication to help manage stress or related conditions (like antidepressants or sleep aids), it's vital to know about prescription charges and exemptions so you don't pay more than necessary.

Who Pays NHS Prescription Charges? Who Is Exempt? Most adults in England pay a fixed charge per item (£9.35 per prescription as of 2024). Under 16s, under 19s in full-time education, pregnant women, those on specific benefits, and more.

Since students are often on tight budgets, it's worth checking whether your prescriptions qualify for exemptions. If you're not eligible for free prescriptions, consider the NHS Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC), which lets you pay upfront for a set period and cover unlimited prescriptions.

NHS Prepayment Certificate (PPC) Quick Math

Here's how to decide if a PPC saves you money:

- 3-month PPC costs £30.25
- 12-month PPC costs £108.10
- If you expect to need 4 or more prescriptions in 3 months, PPC saves you money

Given that repeat prescriptions are common for ongoing stress or mental health support, PPC is worth discussing with your pharmacist or GP.



Step 4: Access University Wellbeing Services and Student Support

Universities usually have dedicated **wellbeing services** that provide mental health support, counselling, and workshops designed for student life.

Check your university's website or intranet for details. Many services allow confidential appointments, group activities, and self-help resources.

How To Get The Most From Your University Wellbeing Service

1. **Book early:** Waiting lists can stretch into November (or beyond) if you leave it too late.
2. **Be clear about your needs:** Explain your ongoing stress clearly when booking so they can match you with the right support.
3. **Ask about peer support and workshops:** Sometimes group sessions can complement one-to-one counselling.

If you feel overwhelmed navigating this system, student unions often have advice centres or helplines. Also, platforms like the university's official Twitter page often post updates about wellbeing events and support available.

Step 5: When To Seek Further Medical Help

Persistent stress that affects your sleep, appetite, mood, or daily functioning might be a sign to speak to your GP about mental health support options like:

- Referral to counselling or therapy services
- Medication options or adjustments
- Advice on coping strategies tailored to your situation

If you're already registered with a GP, book an appointment as soon as possible. If you can't get a timely slot, mention this to your university wellbeing service—they might fast-track support or help liaise with health providers.

Bonus Step: Manage Your Mental Health With Practical Strategies

Managing stress is about small, daily actions. Here's a quick 5-minute checklist you can try every day to take control:

1. **Breathing exercises:** 3 deep breaths in, hold 3 seconds, slowly out.
2. **Move your body:** A short walk or stretch can reset your stress response.
3. **Limit social media doom scrolling:** Follow only positive or helpful wellbeing accounts on Facebook/Twitter.
4. **Set one tiny goal:** Like writing one sentence or making a cup of tea.
5. **Reach out:** Message or call one friend or family member.

This checklist isn't a substitute for professional help but can make the difference until you get it.

Summary: Your Stress After Deadlines Is Manageable

To recap, if your stress isn't fading after university deadlines:

- **Register with a GP during Freshers Week** to access medical advice quickly
- **Check with your pharmacy first** for common issues and quick advice
- **Understand prescription charges and exemptions** to avoid overpaying
- **Make use of university wellbeing services** and plan early if demand is high
- **Seek professional help if stress affects daily life**
- **Use practical daily stress-busting techniques** backed by a routine

If you keep these tools and steps in mind, you'll be better placed to tackle ongoing stress realistically without waiting for "just feeling better." And remember, you're not alone: many students feel this way, and support education.clickdo.co.uk is available through the NHS, your university, and peers.

Keep an eye on Facebook and Twitter for local support initiatives and don't be shy about reaching out early.

Need immediate advice or want to share your experience? Join the conversation on our Facebook page or Twitter feed.