

'Did not attend' rates for Open Door worry YUSU

By [Chloe Kent](#), Film and TV Editor (2016/17)

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Image: Wikimedia Commons

The Open Door Team (ODT) have experienced a spike in students failing to attend their appointments.

Did not attend (DNA) rates are currently at a spike of 33 per cent.

Dominic Smithies, community and wellbeing officer raised the alarm in a Facebook post, stating that "It's hard to make a case for more financial provision for the ODT when one third of their [appointments] aren't being [attended]", reporting that one member of the ODT had "seven appointments booked in one

day this week and only one person showed up.”

The ODT aim to provide a short-term counselling services for students at the University of York. The official document on student mental health and mental wellbeing policy states that they offer “brief interventions to enhance strategies, improve skills, address emotional blockages and challenge self defeating beliefs.”

This can include access to self-help documents, up to six counselling or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) sessions, referral to the Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds programme offered through the University sports centre, and group workshops.

The ODT also offers a ‘case management’ approach for students with more complex, long-term needs.

There have been complaints levelled towards the ODT in the past. In March 2016, *Nouse* reported that students were struggling to get in contact with the team, their emails going without response.

Students also reported difficulties in obtaining emergency appointments, feeling patronised by counsellors, and criticised the short-term nature of the service. Many felt that they needed longer term counselling than only six sessions, which the ODT are only able to provide in rare cases.

Recent years have seen an “epidemic” in reports of mental health difficulties among students at UK universities. The most recent survey on the matter from the National Union of Students (NUS), conducted in 2015, reported that 78 per cent of respondents said they had experienced mental health difficulties within the year prior.

A third of respondents also reported suicidal thoughts. Among those who did not identify as heterosexual the figure was higher, at 55 per cent.

According to *The Sunday Times*, the University of York has the highest number of suicides reported among the student body of any UK university.

Last May, a report revealed that half of all ambulance call-outs to the University were related to incidents of attempted suicide or self harm. In the year prior it was 32 per cent, and before that 14 per cent, showing a dramatic increase.

The University announced in September that £500 000 would be spent over the next three years on improving mental health provision. Promises were made to expand the ODT, bringing in two new members of staff, as well as protect funding for services such as Nightline.

Nightline is a confidential student-run listening service at the University of York and York St John. Student volunteers are available for contact in their office, over the phone, or via instant messenger between 8pm and 8am. They are also contactable over email, and aim to respond within 48 hours.

Smithies encouraged those who cannot attend their appointments to contact the ODT and cancel. “Taking the five minutes to let Open Door know you’re not coming in means they offer others an earlier appointment. There is no shame or judgement” Smithies stated, “but it means that another student might be able to get support that they’re waiting on.”



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