

# Mental Wellbeing in HE Conference 2023: Putting theory into practice - Creating a whole university approach to student and staff wellbeing

16 May 2023, Mercure Piccadilly Manchester

## Session abstracts

Keynote presentation, 10:10-10:50, International Suite

### Mental health in higher education: what's next?

John De Pury, Assistant Director of Policy (Health) Universities UK

Current and future priorities for Mental Health in Higher Education: a view across the mental health and higher education policy landscape.

Parallel Session 1.1 – Oral presentations, 10:55-11:55, International Suite

### 1.1a - Initiations: How common, what happens, what impact?

Jonathan Hansford and Molly Reckord, University of Bristol Medical School

Initiations: They're common in university societies all over the UK, but little research has been done into how common they are, what happens at them and what students think of them. Until now. Join us for a session discussing the results and learnings from our survey of Bristol University students.

### 1.1b - The effects of trauma in higher education

Dr Sarah Allen, Northumbria University and Dr Nikki Carthy, Teesside University

Previous trauma is a widespread issue in university students. Exposure to trauma can increase susceptibility to mental health issues, lead to difficulties with self-esteem and emotion regulation and impair the ability to persist with studies. The current study comprised of an online questionnaire to examine relationships between trauma, academic persistence, resilience and mental wellbeing in a sample of UK students. 75.6% reported at least one trauma, and increased trauma was associated with more mental health symptoms; higher perceived resilience and reduced academic persistence. Findings hope to inform policy and practice with regards to embedding trauma-informed approaches in higher education.

### 1.1c - Extending the reach of wellbeing, from the services to the Schools (Faculties) and Residential Colleges

Fiona McAuliffe, University of Western Australia

Effective prevention, promotion and early intervention approaches can significantly reduce the increasing demand on established and existing mental health and wellbeing services in the tertiary sector and have the potential to reduce future adverse outcomes. Embracing a 'continuum' model, a unique wellbeing adviser role effectively allows for greater collaboration with Schools and residential Colleges prioritising early intervention and stigma reduction. In 2022, The University of Western Australia launched a university wide Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework which embraces a strengths-based approach to mental health and wellbeing, by building the capacity of staff and students to encourage a healthy place to study, work and live. Support for students has been enhanced through initiatives that are evidence-based, feasible, prioritise impact and are sustainable.

## **Parallel Session 1.2 – Oral presentations, 10:55-11:55, Senate Suite**

### **1.2a - Can restorative supervision positively impact the emotional wellbeing of HEI lecturers in Healthcare?**

Lisa Jennison, Jayne Walker, Nicki Credland, Luke Sargent, Moira Graham and Sarah Butler, University of Hull

This presentation will examine a research project completed over six months in a higher education institution. The project explored whether restorative supervision could be used to support healthcare professionals working in a HEI setting. Findings (post-intervention) demonstrated an increase in compassion satisfaction and a decrease in burnout and secondary traumatic stress. The challenges of moving from a clinical to an academic role were explored by several of the participants. They often felt that they had embarked on a second and completely different career. Findings will be applied to the audience by discussion and validated during the presentation Q&A session.

### **1.2b - Meeting the needs and mental health concerns of students within the Adult Nursing BSc Undergraduate Programme through a Coaching GROW model with a Student Buddy Support System: Implementing a pilot study**

Stephen Thompson, University of East London

Over the last 20 years, the demand for nurses has led to an increase in recruitment and training at a national and local level. A Nurse Academic, wishing to support the transition of students to nurses within the Nursing programme, and to address mental health concerns set up a pilot study, focusing on a buddy support student system. Current literature suggests advantages to students receiving and giving the support, but lacks standardisation, frequency, and motivation. To address this issue, the implementation of the coaching GROW model has been provided to those providing the peer support.

### **1.2c - Pastoral support training for personal tutors and doctoral supervisors**

Jessica Hayball, University of Bath

The University of Bath has developed Pastoral Care training for staff working with students, to increase awareness, knowledge, and confidence in working with student mental health and wellbeing needs, outside of any expert intervention. This has been developed in conjunction with needs identified through academic colleagues, as well as our student community, evaluating needs disclosed via our annual wellbeing survey. This presentation will explain what our training covers, discuss how we have developed and delivered this initiative, and the process in which this training has become mandatory for personal tutors and doctoral supervisors, supporting the university's wider Student Experience Strategy.

## **Parallel Session 1.3 – Oral presentations, 10:55-11:55, Portland Suite**

### **1.3a - Positive Digital Practices: Embedding wellbeing in higher education**

Dr Elena Riva and Dr Sharron Wilson, University of Warwick, Professor Kate Lister, Arden University and Alison Hartley, Bradford University

This session will showcase the Office for Students' (OfS) funded Positive Digital Practices project. Led by the Open University and partnered by Bradford University and the University of Warwick, the project aims to embed and sustain positive practices that support the wellbeing of part-time, commuter and distance learning students. Covering three key themes; Positive Learner Identities, Positive Digital Communities and Positive Pedagogies, the session will provide an overview of the projects' goals, methodology, and outcomes, and highlight key insights and resources developed from the projects' application.

### **1.3c - Embedding wellbeing in an undergraduate curriculum in China: What do students think?**

Doran Lamb, Nottingham University, Ningbo China UNNC

In China since 2020, we have watched student wellbeing deteriorating. Within our preliminary year programme at University of Nottingham Ningbo, China (UNNC), we trialled incorporating wellbeing into the curriculum with a writing assignment on the topic of individual wellbeing, but did the topic have any impact or was it just another essay? Join me to discuss the results and find out if a similar initiative could work at your university.

## **Parallel Session 2 – Invited workshops, 12:10-12:50**

### **International Suite**

#### **2.1 - Cost of living impact on student mental wellbeing**

Géraldine Dufour, MWBHE Expert Group and Sarah Cavendish, AMOSSHE

Using her expertise on matters related to student mental health, Geraldine Dufour will be facilitating this session on the impact of the cost-of-living increase on students' mental health.

In this workshop, participants will develop their understanding of the effect of finances on mental health, learn about examples of student support interventions in universities, find out about useful free resources and share insights with colleagues, to take back learnings to their institutions to improve student support.

### **Senate Suite**

#### **2.2 - Intersectionality and mental wellbeing**

Nike Oruh, Edinburgh Napier University

This workshop aims to explore creative approaches to wellbeing support in higher education (HE) while specifically addressing the intersectionality of mental wellbeing, gender, and ethnicity. By considering the diverse and interconnected experiences of students, we can develop effective strategies that promote mental health and address the unique challenges faced by individuals with intersecting identities.

### **Portland Suite**

#### **2.3 - Prioritising positive mental health and wellbeing in Higher Education: How can we create a compassionate campus culture?**

Professor Bridgette Bewick, University of Leeds

This interactive workshop session will introduce insights from Professor Bewick's Pedagogical Wellbeing project. In small groups, together we will reflect on the challenge of developing institutional-wide practices that enable and support positive mental health and wellbeing. We will consider our own practice, pedagogy, and/or service delivery and the importance of compassion, inclusion and belonging to developing a campus culture that prioritises student (and staff) mental health and wellbeing. Together we will explore how we can act to collectively transform higher education into an environment where students have an equitable opportunity to flourish and thrive.

## **Parallel Session 3.1 – Lightning Talks, 13:40-14:30, International Suite**

#### **3.1b - A cross-university collaborative programme to support disabled PGR students manage their mental health and wellbeing: An introduction and impact analysis of the new PGR Group Specialist Mentoring Programme**

Hayley Rennie, University of Sheffield

An exploration of the University of Sheffield's new programme of support for disabled PGR students was introduced in September 2022, in part in response to the findings in current research such as The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2019. Various internal student voice activities demonstrated that the PGR community felt that all current

disability focused mental health support was not tailored to their specific academic and personal needs whilst completing their research. This led to a cross-university project with a variety of vested contributors including academics, other support services and the students themselves. This new programme has now run for seven months, student feedback is very positive and further developments are being established.

### **3.1c - Exploring the experiences of undergraduate students managing the transition through higher education in Wales**

Dr Bradley Woolridge, Cardiff Metropolitan University

This research project has focused on understanding how undergraduate students transition through university, focusing on the transition from year 1 to year 2. A mixed-methods approach was adopted to explore the experiences before developing a questionnaire to examine the experiences.

### **3.1d - Understanding your wellbeing self-help tool: A case study of whole-university approach to student and staff wellbeing**

Dr Melita Panagiota Sidiropoulou, Lucy Sharp and Denise Meyer, University of Portsmouth

During the pandemic, the University of Portsmouth ran the 'Your Wellbeing in Difficult Times' research project in order to measure, understand, and improve student and staff wellbeing. Furthermore, the project was aimed at establishing a robust framework for evaluating the impact of innovative interventions to improve staff and student wellbeing, resilience and inclusion. This project offered a self-help tool using standardised measures. Even when the project ended, the self-help tool was redistributed. This tool offers personalised feedback and contains suggestions for self-care strategies and information about how to get help. This presentation describes the context, content, and benefits of this tool.

## **Parallel Session 3.2 – Lightning talks, 13:40-14:30, Senate Suite**

### **3.2a - A-EQUIP led wellbeing days for student midwives**

Natasha Jayne Carr and Paola Armato-Harris, Birmingham City University

Students were asked what support looked like for them on a Midwifery programme. Students in year 2 and year 3 both identified that wellbeing days were required. The wellbeing days are designed around self-care and the recognition of a student's own needs, and provide coping strategies, RCS and some treats so students feel valued.

### **3.2b - Embedding active self-care into curriculum: A case study on the use of targeted newsletters**

Dr Lovleen Kushwah, University of Glasgow

Higher education institutions are investing financially to assist students who need counselling. However, not enough has been done to understand how the mental wellbeing of students can be enhanced during critical times when they feel vulnerable, and access to these services is limited; especially (pre-, post-, during) assessment, which is reported as one of the top stressors. This research is in the context of embedding mental wellbeing into the curriculum, with emphasis on assessments. It provides a practical solution to address mental wellbeing challenges through the use of psychoeducation and provides tailored support to students by focusing on specific needs of a cohort.

### **3.2c - Embedding the Advocating for Education & Quality Improvement Model (A-EQUIP) into an undergraduate Nursing curriculum**

Susie Guthrie and Kat Sethi, Birmingham City University

The A-EQUIP model has been introduced for nurses in the NHS to improve wellbeing and resilience, following the C19 pandemic. Nationally, within higher education the increase in students struggling to cope with their mental wellbeing and the subsequent impact on success is well recognised (Chen & Lucock, 2022). Nursing students manage both clinical

practice learning and academic study. We have embedded key elements of the A-EQUIP model into our curriculum, with the aim of contributing to improved resilience, academic self-efficacy and a reduction in student stress and anxiety. This presentation will detail our experience and explain concurrent research and preliminary findings.

### **3.2d - How can we care for others if we do not care for ourselves: A thread of self-care in undergraduate Midwifery training?**

Carla Jayne Avery, Buckinghamshire New University

The World Health Organisation recognises that self-care is essential for healthcare workers and more so now than ever. As health professionals, we need to recognise that if you do not recognise when you need to care for yourself, you are unable to effectively care for others. We have developed a self-care thread throughout the Midwifery curriculum to enable student midwives to firstly recognise the importance of self-care and secondly, provide skills to support them to embed this as part of their midwifery practice for their future careers.

## **Parallel Session 3.3 – Lightning talks, 13:40-14:30, Portland Suite**

### **3.3a - Student mental health profiling: A whole-university approach to targeted and personalised support**

Carly Foster, Northumbria University

“Student mental health profiling: a whole-university approach to targeted and personalised support” is a presentation taken from a completed PhD which focused on creating and validating profiles using mental health data and data collected from practitioners and service designers in a university setting. The session will discuss briefly the methodology used so as to be transparent about transferability and the focus on the findings of the research which include recommendations for data capture and service design.

### **3.3b - The Impact of Personal Tutoring on Personal Tutors**

Rebecca Upsher, King's College London

Personal tutors provide both academic and pastoral support for university students. However, little is known about how personal tutors cope with the exposure to mental health-related and personal concerns from university students and subsequent support required. We conducted a qualitative study using one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 21 staff across several disciplines at one UK-based University. Data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Three themes were generated: mixed sense of personal tutor identity, inadequate training and support, and need for clear boundaries and expectations for staff and students. These findings can inform the development of appropriate training resources for personal tutors.

### **3.3c - Integrating and normalising coaching as a routine practice in doctoral supervision**

Dr Claudia Bordogna, Nottingham Trent University and Dr Mariangela Lundgren-Resenterra, EMCC Global

Research highlights the growing decline in doctoral students' mental health and wellbeing, caused by the pressures, stress and isolation of doctoral studies and also by existential issues around personal development and future prospects. Consequently, there is an urgent need to reassess the supervisory process to support doctoral students in addressing these concerns. This paper offers a potential solution to this challenge by exploring and examining how integrating coaching methods into doctoral supervision can support doctoral students' growth and development, thereby increasing their wellbeing and human flourishing. This paper explores how coaching methods could be made a feature of doctoral supervision.

### **3.3d - Writing together: Communities of practice in support of student wellbeing**

Dr Katherine King, Bournemouth University

This presentation will explore the design and implementation of Dissertation Writing and Wellness Retreats for final year undergraduate students. The programme aimed to bring final year students and staff together as a community of practice during a key time in their dissertation journey. Writing Retreats provide a space away from the everyday environment, support from programme staff, and incorporated wellbeing activities including the utilisation of outdoor spaces and the physical and emotional health benefits of slowing down in nature. The presentation will explore the role of peer-learning environments through communities of practice theory in the support of student wellbeing.

## **Parallel Session 4 – Invited workshops, 14:35-15:15**

### **International Suite**

#### **4.1 - A cross University approach to deliver role based mental health and wellbeing awareness and support for front line staff**

Marcus Hill, Greg Evans, Matt Barker, Sue Green, Katie Hughes, Toria Thomas and Andrea Kerslake, University of Leeds

An innovative and collaborative approach to supporting front line staff which brought together colleagues and stakeholders from 7 different services across the University of Leeds campus. This session will give insights into how colleagues came together, sought buy in and clarity of need from front line staff, created a tailored training package which was delivered through a collaborative group of staff from key support teams. The session will also look at the impact of this approach and how the model is being rolled out across campus. The session will hear from some of the colleagues who have been at the heart of the development, approach, design and delivery.

### **Senate Suite**

#### **4.2 - How to CREATE a mental health strategy**

Julie Castleman and Mark Fudge, Charlie Waller Trust

National policy guidance in the University Mental Health Charter and Universities UK Stepchange framework increasingly advocates a whole university approach to mental health and wellbeing. However, there remains a lack of clarity and consensus about what a whole institution approach entails, and how it should be implemented and evaluated in practice - particularly in a context characterised by professional diversification and time / resource limitations.

This session introduces the new CREATE mental health policy toolkit, which complements existing frameworks through the provision of specific, practical, and accessible guidance to support the implementation of a whole university approach in practice. The toolkit was developed by the Charlie Waller Trust with peer review from across the sector. Explore an application of the toolkit to develop your understanding and skills of what, why, how, and who needs to be considered when designing an effective mental health strategy, policies, and/or practices as part of a whole university approach.

## **Parallel Session 5.1 – Oral presentations, 15:30-16:10, International Suite**

#### **5.1a - The future of HE counselling services: Leveraging data for collaborative innovation**

Fabienne dos Santos Sousa, Annabella Feeny and Pierre Musa Halime Wessel, Phronesis Research Group

Are you ready to revolutionise your university or college counselling services? Join us for an interactive session that will demonstrate how a data-driven approach can innovate collaborative work and improve the accessibility and efficiency of counselling services. We'll

provide you with five practical examples of how to leverage routinely collected data to identify service gaps and enhance interdepartmental collaborations. From promoting counselling services to hard-to-reach student groups to developing culturally competent and inclusive care, we've got you covered. Get ready to leave with a comprehensive practical guide that will help you to implement a data-driven approach at your own counselling service.

### **Parallel Session 5.3 – Oral presentations, 15:30-16:10, Portland Suite**

#### **5.3a - Evaluating SELF: A new model of reflection for learning and promoting wellbeing**

Dr Rebecca Rochon, John Knight, Matthew Smith, Carla Avery and Natalie Allan, Buckinghamshire New University

This session will share results from the evaluation of SELF, a model of reflection for promoting wellbeing funded by MedTech SuperConnector. As a key tool for learning and a professional requirement in healthcare professions and related higher education courses, reflection presents a natural opportunity to foster wellbeing. An evaluative study with 37 Midwifery students examined students' use of the new model. Results and recommendations for the use of reflection as a means of fostering wellbeing will be shared.

#### **5.3b - The Make a Difference Leadership curriculum: Embedding student-led community for authentic belonging, wellbeing and learning success**

Dr Denise Meyer, Canterbury Christ Church University and Dr Catherine Murgatroyd, University of Portsmouth

Learn about a pilot project partnering with students to develop a curriculum-embedded foundation for a distinctive community-focused whole-institution approach to student wellbeing and inclusion. Engaging blended learning resources introduce students to a simple psychological literacy framework, fostering a compassionate and inclusive mind-set towards self and others. Through practising associated teamwork and leadership skills within small peer groups, students are activated as both agents and beneficiaries of authentic belonging within strong, peer-led learning communities. Critically reflecting on these experiences of teamwork and leadership equips students with key meta-learning and employability skills and the ability to make a difference in the world.

### **Keynote presentation, 16:10-16:50, International Suite**

#### **Libraries, learning and life: Mental health and well-being across the whole university**

Dr Liz Brewster, Non-Clinical Senior Lecturer in Medical Education, Lancaster University

The idea of taking a "whole university approach" has become established as an important aspect of ensuring the availability of support for good mental health and wellbeing. But what does it mean to try to embed these partnership approaches in practice? Drawing on examples from ten years of working across diverse universities, I will explore what this approach means for our physical spaces, online presence and the processes and systems that support the teaching and learning at the heart of university life. Using the academic library as a case study, the aim will be to highlight and share good practice across the sector, with a focus on thinking about the new challenges this also brings for those working in the sector.