



SUPPORTING STUDENT TRANSITION AND BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE MENTAL HEALTH CHARTER

DEVELOPED BY THE START TO SUCCESS PROJECT, OCTOBER 2020



SESSION OVERVIEW

As part of the **AMOSSHE 'Student mental health: minding the gaps'** professional development event, Start to Success led a workshop that encouraged attendees to look at interventions through the lens of the University Mental Health Charter's principles Learn, Support, Work and Live. The workshop findings are detailed within this toolkit booklet.

The event took place on Wednesday 14 October 2020

START TO SUCCESS

The Office for Students awarded £750,000 to Keele University to develop an integrated community approach to mental health and wellbeing for students in further and higher education, in collaboration with Staffordshire University, as part of a £2.2 million project.

'Start to Success' is a 2-year project which aims to develop a whole community approach to support the mental health and wellbeing of students, led by Keele and Staffordshire University. The region's universities, colleges, local authorities, police and NHS providers have come together with a common purpose to remove barriers, improve support and services, and enable student success.



UNIVERSITY MENTAL HEALTH CHARTER

Learn

- Transitioning into university
- Learning, teaching & assessment
- Progression

Support

- Support services
- Risk
- External partnerships and pathways
- Information sharing

Work

- Staff wellbeing
- Staff development

Live

- Proactive interventions and mentally healthy environments
- Residential accommodation
- Social integration and belonging
- Physical environment



START TO SUCCESS

The Progression & Success Officer has developed a series of initiatives to support students who are taking a break in studies. This will include initiatives such as:

- Clearer guidance for staff and students about what the process entails
- Development of a personalised plan for students when taking a break from studies
- A 'Welcome Back Pack' for students
- Support-focused personalised postcards to students due to return to studies
- Social activities for newly returning students such as coffee mornings
- Welcome back re-induction meetings with staff

For further information contact: Kerry Summerfield, Progression & Success Officer, Staffordshire University

LEEDS TRINITY

Leeds Trinity had a small team of staff visited students on all courses offered by the institution and talked to them about key aspects of resilience and change. The aim was to help reduce the dropout rate. One of the key challenges was the sustainability, however COVID has enabled them to deliver this remotely via a number of pre-recorded sessions. Academic leads were asked to share this as part of a teaching session, or to share with students to access in their own time. This enabled students to get the information across quickly and more practically in an environment they were now accessing all the time. Views of the session are being recorded and will be monitored in the future. Going forward, the plan is to develop these prerecorded sessions and adapt based on the feedback received.

For further information contact:
Toby Chelms, Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager,
t.chelms@leedstrinity.ac.uk

OPEN UNIVERSITY

A colleague from the Open University is working to embed wellbeing into the curriculum using a bottom up approach. They will be reaching out to academic colleagues to pull together areas of best practice to then share back out to colleagues to try and create consistency and good practice within all courses.

For further information contact:
Rachel Wallis, Faculty of Wellbeing

OPEN UNIVERSITY

The OU are working to create resources around triggering conversations for staff and students. They are firstly creating resources for tutors to help them when teaching sensitive and potentially triggering material as part of the course e.g. Psychology. This resource has been very well received by tutors. They are also developing a resource for students in how to manage themselves when this might happen to them and preparing themselves and their feelings.

For further information contact:
Rachel Wallis, Faculty of Wellbeing

START TO SUCCESS REPORT

START TO SUCCESS

The NHS Liaison Officer within the Start to Success Project has developed NHS student Champion roles. This role includes:

- Development of a professional relationship with university support services to enable a direct line of communication
- Knowledge of support services available at the universities
- Raise awareness of student life, mental health and wellbeing amongst teams
- Support the development of seamless referral pathway and discharge protocols
- Logging of student access and engagement using a shared dashboard.

**For further information email:
D.m.boughey@keele.ac.uk**

The Progression and Success Project Officer within the start to success project has developed student journey maps. These will support the university to:

- Identify pressure points throughout the year and develop prevention and early intervention initiatives
- Specific maps for at-risk groups including international and postgraduate students to support the planning of campaigns and wellbeing initiatives

**For further information email:
Kerry.Summerfield@staffs.ac.uk**

EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY

At Edge Hill University numbers accessing support is high and this can cause issues managing referrals. They have focussed on supporting Staff to support students and have recognised the need to upskill more staff, both academic and support, to be able to support students. This has included the development of toolkits and funding for a support officer to deliver training sessions which educate staff about when and how to refer. The training is now an online session to monitor engagement and confidence in staff.

For further information contact: Fay Sherrington, Director of Student Services, Edge Hill University

GLASGOW CALENDONIAN UNIVERSITY

A Mental Health Working group has been set up with Universities in Scotland which allows best practise to be shared and provides support. A 'Thriving Learners' survey has been used to provide information and evidence what works and what is good practice.

For further information contact: Student Services, Glasgow Calendonian

DERWENT COLLEGE

At Derwent College (University of York) personal tutors were hosting virtual coffee sessions with students to catch up. The JCR have also been able to host the inductions online for students. Both examples displayed a good community approach.

There was also work on signposting staff and students to external organisations that work on initiatives around loneliness such as Menfulness and the Connection Coalition which the Jo Cox Foundation facilitated the formation of partnering with other organisations such as MIND, Age Concern, Facebook and the British Red Cross.

For further information contact: Pete Quinn (external member of Derwent SCR)
hello@petequinnconsulting.co.uk

NEWMAN UNIVERSITY

At Newman University, many staff have been trained in Mental Health First Aid. They have developed a rota system, that provided a volunteer to be contacted during office hours to provide guidance to staff and students.

For further information contact: Student Services, Newman University

KEEP ME SAFE

keep.meSAFE's innovative Student Support Program (SSP) helps students by promoting early intervention and 24/7 access to mental health support. They help students manage their mental health so they can fully participate in academic life and complete their studies. keep.meSAFE is the first support program to use linguistically and culturally matched licensed clinicians, providing your students a welcoming place where they are comfortable to seek help.

Mark Sheerin, an instructor from Keep.meSAFE spoke about the benefits of this service for international student especially as advice can be received immediately from someone from the same culture.

Over the last 5 years, over 500,000 students have been supported by keep.meSAFE.

WORK

START TO SUCCESS

Staff training has been developed at Keele and Staffordshire University in collaboration with North Staffs Mind.

The training supports staff to:

- Develop an understanding of common mental health conditions
- Gain skills in how to have conversations about mental health including listening and
- conversation skills (with supporting case studies)
- How to make appropriate referrals
- Staff wellbeing including how to manage distressing information, offloading and looking after yourself

Fortnightly sessions are being run for staff from both universities and are all fully booked. Positive feedback has been received including an improvement in recognition of symptoms of common mental health problems and increase in understanding of their role in support student mental wellbeing

**For further information contact:
info.starttosuccess@keele.ac.uk**

KEELE UNIVERSITY

The Start to Success Project and Keele Organisational Development team have developed training for staff that will cover:

- the difference between mental health and mental wellbeing
- the impact of Coronavirus in relation to Mental health awareness
- the signs to look out for
- the mental health services available
- a range of self-help ideas & resources

Training has been well received and initial sessions fully booked.

For further information contact:
Kara Holloway, Start to Success Project Coordinator

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Colleagues from UEL spoke about demand from staff for support with mental health awareness and how to support students and colleagues. They are in the early stages of developing an online module for staff which will cover this.

For further information contact:
Kris Eskesen, Project Manager within the Student Support & Wellbeing team at UEL

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

Teams at LSE have developed online mental health training for staff to support them to support students. The training is delivered via online module which takes 20-30 minutes to complete. Two versions are available for staff, one standard version, and one for those with enhanced student facing roles. The training includes core skills such as listening skills, how to find the time and space to talk to students about mental health, signposting and how to escalate serious situations.

This work has been facilitated by senior level commitment which has ensured student mental health is a strategic priority.

For further information contact:
Adam Sandelson, Head of Student Wellbeing at LSE

Delegates spoke about how many services that had initially been intended for students such as Silver Cloud and Togetherall are now being widely used by staff at their institutions

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

The University of Stirling have implemented an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provided by 'Innovate Healthcare'. The service offers free, confidential advice. The service is available to employees and their immediate family members. Resources include counsellor support and information services for issues such as:

- work stress
- depression
- marriage and relationship issues
- legal concerns
- coping with change
- parenting issues
- financial problems, and more.

This service has been very well received by staff and has helped to relieve pressure on OH.

For further information contact:

Katie Perrin, Head of Student Guidance and Wellbeing

KEELE UNIVERSITY

The Start to Success Team alongside colleagues from the Sports Centre have developed a weekly staff wellbeing initiative called 'Love Your Lunchtime'. Each week a new activity or challenge is posted in the group such as a language taster session, yoga or baking challenges. The initiative is hosted on MS Teams, and has approximately 200 active users and participators.

For further information contact: Kara Holloway, Start to Success Project Coordinator

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

With the support of the HR team at Nottingham Trent, an online wellbeing platform has been developed for staff supporting them to stay well and connected during the pandemic. Within this platform, a series of sessions have been delivered for staff, approximately 45 minutes long that have included mindfulness workshops.

Many staff have engaged with these sessions and have found them very helpful.

For further information contact:

Susanna Moulton, Student Services Manager

STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

Staffordshire University is unique in that most students reside in private accommodation. The Director of Student Services and the CEO of the Students Union and the student officers met all public landlords to help them see the value of letting students out of their contracts early to go home back to their support networks.

Not all landlords agreed but it raised awareness of the valid reasons why students would want to do this and how it could significantly impact on their mental health.

It enabled a more flexible approach to contracts for many students returning in September and raised awareness and collaboration in terms of what the university was trying to achieve.

Landlords were given advice and resources on how to support their tenants during lockdown and were provided with clear links to the university on how students could contact wellbeing services and support for accessing food and medication.

These relationships continue to strengthen as the university has developed its report and support system and continues to aid landlords to provide appropriate care to those who are self-isolating and have tested positive for Covid-19.

STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

The Residence team at Staffordshire University worked hard to adapt and amend the recruitment and training process of the Residence Life Mentors. These are returning students who stay in student accommodation and make sure everyone is happy and settled.

The recruitment process was extended to include a variety of assessments including a group assessments, role play and individual assessments. The role play had external actors than attended the campus to provide some real life situations that they may face in the ResLife mentor role.

Those that were successful then attended an in depth training programme. This included mental health awareness training which also included case studies, internal and external services and signposting.

For further information contact: Deb Healy, Head Of Residential Services, Staffordshire University,
deborah.healy@staffs.ac.uk

MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY

Many students at Middlesex University have told us they are more likely to first seek support from friends and family ahead of using support services. Work has taken place to support this by:

1. Building webpage information for "student supporters" – friends and family to equip them with information about support available to students at Middlesex, particularly in relation to mental health.
2. Short videos for helping the friends of a student that may be struggling with their mental health to understand what steps to take.

Middlesex University are also working with and external organisation called Open View Education. They provide Multi-Media episodes that consider a series of issues to support the student experience and student life such as life-hacks, practical independence and digital footprints. They provide Multi-Media episodes that consider a series of issues to support the student experience and student life such as life-hacks, practical independence and digital footprints.

The Student Union at Middlesex University are supporting staff and students to implement our Community Responsibility Agreement

For further information contact:
Julie Crabb, Head of Student Support and Wellbeing, Middlesex University, j.crabb@mdx.ac.uk

Uni Life Hacks is the bespoke video series that promotes positive mental health and wellbeing at your University.

Each Uni Life Hacks video equips your students with the skills and knowledge that they need to thrive at University, while promoting your university student support services.

[Watch Uni Life Hacks in action here.](#)

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY

Background: At Edinburgh Napier University, the impact of COVID-19 has been particularly high with over 400 students having to isolate. They have now come out of this challenging time and have 0 cases within their student population. Many students studying at Edinburgh University are local students and live at home, only approx 1300 university accommodation spaces.

Like many Universities, they have moved to a virtual environment and have been working very closely with student accommodation colleagues. A working group has been set up to manage the transition onto the university campus. This "nimble" group has allowed questions to be answered quickly, including those logistical questions such as "How do we get Toilet paper to students isolating". This has developed into a daily wellbeing check to all students isolating.

Drop in Session have been scheduled throughout the week which cover a variety of issues and topics. Some examples of this include transitioning to University in relation to COVID-19 and also other aspects of health such as sleep.

"Shelf-Help" The library staff at Edinburgh Napier University have developed a range of resources for students relating to mental health in a variety of formats such as podcasts, journals and books. A Student Health guide has been created to provide information on all aspects of health including drugs and alcohol.

Within Scotland various organisations are meeting frequently such as the NHS, Scotland police and the Universities. This has allowed for fast paced discussions, support and solutions.


For further information contact:
Mark Wilkinson, Head of Student Wellbeing and Inclusion, Edinburgh Napier University.

COMMON CHALLENGES

- **Communication** has been and still is a challenge but working groups and senior staff buy in has supported this
- **Student engagement** has been found to be particular difficult
- **Staff engagement** within staff training can be very mixed, with some Staff not wanting to engage in Mental Health Training and other staff really wanting to support.
- **Covid-19**: Covid has delayed the implementation of several initiatives, but on the other hand has also been a catalyst to implement other pieces of work. It has been challenging translating support and various systems to online. Lots of universities have had to adapt their plans around the MH Charter given the issues of the pandemic but some who had started to work then progressed to get this accessible in some format. For example one institution had lots of workshops planned around transition to help students settle but instead moved some of this online. This provided some great information to improve access and participation plans for longer term outcomes

RECOMENDATIONS

- **Developing key stakeholder relationships:** delegates spoke of the importance of ensuring senior staff are engaged with the student mental health agenda and also emphasised the importance of working collaboratively with Students' Unions.
- **Dedicated working groups:** Another key recommendation was the development of a dedicated working group who either have strategic oversight or are responsible for the operational delivery.
- **Staff training:** Developing training for staff can help to widen awareness of the support available. Institutions have found that having established longer training sessions for staff has worked well, but have also reported value in shorter 30 minute bitesize sessions and recommend a balance of the two
- **Creating resources:** It is important to tailor resources for your own organisation to ensure it is relevant for the audience for best engagement



This resource has been developed by the Start to Success Team following the October 2020 AMOSSHE mental health conference: Minding the Gaps.

We hope that this document will evolve to include examples of activity from many other institutions. If you have an example or case study that you would like to share please do drop us an email on info.starttosuccess@keele.ac.uk.

If you would like to know more about Start to Success you can visit our [website](#), sign up to our monthly newsletter via the above email address or follow us on [Twitter](#).