Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our Student Strategy

December 2018
Introduction from
the Vice-Chancellor
and President

Professor Hugh Brady,
14 December 2018

Being at university is an exciting, rewarding and transformational time – a chance to acquire new knowledge and skills, stretch yourself academically and make new friends for life. At Bristol, we are proud of the world-class, research-rich education and the excellent job prospects enjoyed by our graduating students. We also seek to equip our students with the broader health awareness, lifestyle habits and resilience that will position them for long, productive and fulfilling lives.

We recognise that there can be times when some students struggle with the demands of studying or life in general. Nationally, and indeed globally, there is increasing concern about mental health challenges facing young people as a result of the growing pressures they face living, studying and working in today’s world. We also know that staff in higher education are reporting higher levels of stress and anxiety than in previous generations. It is our absolute priority at Bristol to work with our students and staff to promote good physical and mental health, and to support students and staff who need help. In short: at our University, mental health is everybody’s responsibility.

Our Student Mental Health Strategy has been formulated under the guidance of an internal Vice-Chancellor’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce. It has been further informed by an Expert Advisory Group of national and international research experts, policy makers and practitioners to ensure our approach is informed by best practice in higher education, health and social care. Importantly, it has been developed in partnership with our students, whose insights have brought to life the challenges faced by young people today. We are committed to a proactive and inclusive approach to mental health, integrated across all areas to provide the best possible experience for all our students. We recognise that this support needs to be tailored to reflect the diversity of our student body and aligned to our commitment to be an inclusive and welcoming community for students and staff of all social and cultural backgrounds.

We aim to support students’ wellbeing during their transition into Bristol and throughout their time with us. While the University cannot, by law, act in loco parentis (ie accept the legal responsibilities of a parent), our new ‘opt-in’ contact procedure means that all students are encouraged to provide consent for the University to involve a third party, such as a parent, guardian or friend, if we have significant concerns about their mental or physical health.

Once in the academic environment we continue this proactive approach by offering students the academic support of Personal Tutors led by a Senior Tutor in each academic school. We have also introduced our new suite of Bristol Futures courses, supported by world-leading lecturers and professors, whose themes include elements specifically designed to improve personal resilience and adaptability in a rapidly changing world. Our Bristol Doctoral College is reviewing the support available to PhD research students to ensure consistency and effectiveness of approach across academic disciplines.

We are partnering with Bristol Students’ Union to encourage greater student engagement in sport, clubs and societies to foster community-building, support teamwork and further strengthen resilience.
Our new Student Wellbeing Service includes the Residential Life Service and Wellbeing Advisers, placing dedicated full-time staff into halls of residence, academic schools and faculties whose core remit is pastoral care, community building and early identification and support of vulnerable students. These initiatives complement our established range of support services including the Students’ GP Health Service, the Mental Health Advisory Team, the Student Counselling Service, the Multifaith Chaplaincy, Disability Services, and 24/7 self-help support – all of which have received increased investment over the past two years. The comparative data available indicate that Bristol invests more resources in mental health support than the clear majority of UK universities. We will continue to rigorously review the size and shape of these services to ensure that they grow in line with increases in student numbers and demand.

Graduating from university and moving on to the next phase of life has been identified as another key transition for students, and a source of stress to some. We support this transition by offering careers guidance that focuses on living a meaningful life as well as on specific employment pathways.

Complex mental health challenges cannot be addressed by universities alone, and universities cannot be expected to replace the NHS. However, we are committed to working closely with the NHS to ensure that students have well signposted and easily understood access to NHS services. Central to these efforts will be our Students’ GP Health Service, which offers same-day mental health appointments in urgent cases and rapid transfer to the NHS where required. We are also committed to partnering with our students to lobby for increased NHS support for mental health to meet rising demand.

Hand-in-glove with our partners in the NHS, we are strengthening our links with Bristol City Council, the University of the West of England, Public Health England, the Samaritans and other third-sector groups, and with Universities UK – striving for a co-ordinated and effective city-wide approach to mental health. We have also signed the national Time to Change pledge aimed at reducing the stigma associated with mental health, and we have adopted a University of Bristol Suicide Prevention and Response Plan that was developed in collaboration with local Public Health colleagues and the University of the West of England (UWE).

We are boosting our research capacity in this area, via the establishment of a Mental Health Research Network, and we will draw on the expertise of our academic researchers to ensure we make evidence-based decisions and critically assess our plans for mental health support in the future.

The steps we are taking are part of a journey that will evolve over time. New activities and initiatives will emerge as we learn from our work here at Bristol, and as all parts of our society understand more about these complex challenges. Working together with staff and students I believe we can build an environment where everyone can thrive and where all aspects of wellbeing are reflected in every facet of the University of Bristol experience.
Student mental health and wellbeing affects every aspect of student life, which makes it a key priority for your Officer team, Bristol SU and the University of Bristol. Placing student mental health and wellbeing at the forefront of University decisions and working alongside our student body to shape policies is crucial to creating a representative Bristol community. Every student deserves to feel supported through their university experience and every student has a voice which should be listened to. We want the University to be a place where there is an emphasis on community and working together to make sure there is a supportive and inclusive environment.

The environment, social life, academic attainment and finances are just some of multi-faceted aspects of the student experience which can affect mental health and wellbeing and which we’ve been keen to acknowledge in this Strategy. Everyone experiences mental health differently, and therefore we need an approach which caters for and supports students with a diverse range of needs.

As mental health and wellbeing is so important to students at the University of Bristol, we felt that our voices as Officers alone were not enough. We wanted the whole student body to have an input into the direction and implementation of this Strategy. As an Officer team we’ve made sure students had the opportunity to feed back on the Strategy and that your priorities were included, such as the importance of culturally competent mental health support to reflect our diverse student body, so we are pleased to have worked collaboratively with the University and with students on this Strategy.

This is the final version of the Strategy, based on your feedback. The consultation ran for a period of four weeks, allowing students to give individual feedback on the Strategy, by submitting their own responses relating to personal experiences and by giving verbal feedback at open forums. We’re passionate that student feedback should be at the heart of decisions that are made at the University, and hope that this piece of work can help set the tone for the way that work will be done in the future.

There will be an action plan to complement the Strategy, and we will continue to work with the University, and hold them to account to make sure this is carried out and benefits our students. Crucially, the discussion about mental health will remain at the top of the University of Bristol and Bristol SU’s agendas. We are proud to be part of this inclusive and thorough Strategy and look forward to continuing to improve the overall student experience here at Bristol.
University of Bristol
Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Vision

At Bristol we are placing wellbeing at the heart of our University, as it impacts on how we all feel and our ability to function. We aim to equip our students with the understanding, skills and experiences to lead satisfying, worthwhile and happy lives. We are taking an institution-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing to provide the best possible experience for all our students and staff. We are committed to mental health permeating every aspect of the University culture and experience and it being part of the language of education.

Our approach will reflect and foster the diversity of the student and staff community at the University of Bristol. We acknowledge that mental health interconnects with all aspects of student life and that every student will experience mental health differently. Working together, we can build an environment in our University where our students and staff can thrive, and where all aspects of mental health and wellbeing are supported in every facet of the University of Bristol and Bristol SU experience.

Aims

We will:

- foster a whole university community that is committed to supporting student and staff mental health and wellbeing, and to communicating well about mental health;

- provide focused support for students at key points of transition into and out of the University and at all transition points where students may be particularly vulnerable;

- promote healthy behaviour and positive mental health within the University’s educational mission and curriculum, in co-curricular activities, and in the use of the spaces on campus;

- ensure that the early identification of students at risk is facilitated by a co-ordinated range of services and practices including personal tutor and wellbeing adviser support, peer support, engagement monitoring, and readily accessible report and support tools;

- deliver effective student support services which are easy to access, meet the needs of a diverse student body, and are resourced sufficiently to meet demand;

- provide training and support for staff relating to mental health and wellbeing, connecting support for staff and students to mutual benefit and foster mutually-supportive initiatives among staff and students;

- foster collaborative working and strong partnerships with external organisations in the region and nationally to support the delivery of comprehensive mental health and wellbeing services;

- use data and research to support mental health and wellbeing, conducting regular surveys, monitoring trends, devising improvement plans and measuring success in relation to our aims in an evidence-based and transparent manner.
Mental health is one of the most challenging public health issues of our time. About one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year, and around three-quarters of adults with mental illness first experience symptoms before the age of 25.

Today’s generation of young adults are more likely to report mental illness than previous generations. A 2017 Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) report notes that in England 19% of 16-24 year olds (28% of women and 10% of men) experience a mental health condition, up from 15% in 2003. Data presented to the National Suicide Prevention Advisory Group shows a rise in suicides in 15-19 year olds in England since 2010. Nor is it a UK-specific problem: research shows that there is a long-term trend of increasing mental health problems among adolescents in many Western countries.

Students of any age can be at risk of experiencing poorer mental health and wellbeing due to factors relating to academic, financial and social pressures. This is evident in the high levels of mental distress reported by students, and the extent to which universities have experienced significant increases in the number of students seeking counselling support, and in the proportion of students who disclose a mental health condition to their institution. A recent analysis by Universities UK (UUK) highlighted a six-fold increase in the number of UK students who disclose a mental health condition to their university since 2007.

This is even more concerning when considered against a 2017 IPPR report which noted that just under half of students who reported a mental health difficulty chose not to disclose it to their university. The same IPPR report noted that, over the last five years, 94% of universities had experienced an increase in demand for counselling, with 61% reporting an increase of over 25%.

Our own 2018 annual student Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey, which was completed by 20% of the student population, shows that 44% of students rated their mental health as good or excellent, 34% as fair and 22% poor. Just under half (45%) of students reported some depressive symptoms. 41% of students who reported poor mental health said that they had not disclosed this to the University. Levels of mental wellbeing were lower and depression higher in females and those who did not categorise themselves as male or female (non-binary), students from minority ethnic backgrounds, overseas students, those in receipt of bursaries, first generation HE students, and those with physical disabilities. These figures are comparable with those reported in recent national surveys.

Concerns about student mental health have been acknowledged at a national level. A UUK working group has been set up to look at what more can be done to tackle the problem. UUK launched its #StepChange framework during the 2017-18 academic year, and we are using its principles to inform our work at Bristol.
This Strategy has been developed in partnership between the University and Bristol SU to provide a framework enabling the whole institution to support mental health and wellbeing. It complements the Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The Strategy references the eight strategic themes proposed by UUK’s #StepChange framework for mental health in higher education.

We will measure the impact of these strategies through a range of data sources. We will use this data and feedback from students and staff to produce an annual mental health and wellbeing report and to inform our annual University planning.
Cornerstones of our Strategy

Leadership /  
Fostering a whole-university approach

Mental health and wellbeing will be a strategic priority supported by the Vice-Chancellor’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce and through the appointment of a new Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience to lead on student wellbeing, inclusion and student voice, with a commitment to working in partnership with staff, the Students’ Union and wider student networks.

Transitions /  
Supporting students at key transition points

We will encourage students to share any pre-existing mental health issues prior to arrival so that the University can proactively offer them support, provide additional study skills resources to support their transition into our learning community, more joined-up support for students at key transition points during their studies, and tailored guidance for students as they transition to employment or further study.

Prevention /  
Promoting healthy behaviour and positive mental health within the curriculum and in co-curricular activities

We will support students to maintain a healthy lifestyle through education and campaigning around exercise, sexual health, eating a balanced diet and drug and alcohol misuse. We will do this by encouraging participation in sport and physical activity and promoting the B:Active and Healthy Minds programmes, and by embedding wellbeing skills development into our teaching programmes via Bristol Futures open courses and optional units.

Early intervention /  
Taking early interventions and campaigning against stigma

We will encourage early disclosure via open discussion, via Bristol SU’s campaigning initiatives like ‘Mind Your Head’, via the induction sessions run in Residences, and via the academic and wellbeing advice offered through Personal Tutors and Wellbeing Advisers. We will review our Acceptable Behaviour Policy to make it more accessible to students and to help reduce the incidents of bullying and harassment, and strengthen engagement and attendance monitoring.

Support /  
Delivering effective student support services which are easy to access and meet a wide range of student needs

We will ensure that the newly established Student Wellbeing Service offers easy-to-access support for students from a range of backgrounds, such as mature students, international students, black and minority ethnic (BME) students, disabled students, LGBT+ students, and students from our widening participation initiatives. Residences, academic schools and central services will provide an integrated range of wellbeing services with clear signposting and appropriate data-sharing practices.
**Staff** /  
**Connecting our work with staff and students, for mutual benefit**

We will provide enhanced staff counselling, training and online resources to support staff wellbeing, and better equip staff to support students. We will include training relating to student mental health in the suite of required training for staff to help align student and staff mental health.

**Partnerships** /  
**Fostering strong partnerships with external organisations to support mental health and wellbeing**

We will work with UUK, UWE and local Public Health colleagues to embed our Suicide Prevention and Response Plan, which has been informed by international best practice and aligns with the UUK Suicide-Safer Universities framework. We will develop our partnership working with the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and with the local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, and we will partner in the city-wide wellbeing initiative Thrive Bristol.

**Data and research** /  
**Using data and research to support mental health and wellbeing**

We will undertake an annual student Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey to inform future initiatives, and will establish a Mental Health Research Network to ensure that we take an evidence-based approach to interventions. We will hold ourselves to account by setting transparent performance indicators.
The Vice-Chancellor’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce is leading the University-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing, reporting to the University Management Team.

The Taskforce is advised by an Expert Advisory Group of regional, national and international experts.

Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
Time to Change pledge
Suicide Prevention and Response Plan: www.bristol.ac.uk/university/governance/policies/
Report and Support tool: https://reportandsupport.bristol.ac.uk/

The University Management Team will provide formal governance oversight of the Strategy with assurance oversight from the Board of Trustees, supported by a new, annual strategic mental health report and annual review for the University.

The Student Services leadership team will continue to support the implementation of this Strategy and embed a consolidated Student Wellbeing Service, which includes the Residential Life Service, Wellbeing Advice Service, Health Service and Counselling Service.

We will foster a whole university community that is committed to supporting student and staff mental health and wellbeing, and to communicating well about mental health.

What we are doing now:

- The Vice-Chancellor’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce is leading the University-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing, reporting to the University Management Team.
- The Taskforce is advised by an Expert Advisory Group of regional, national and international experts.
- We are appointing a Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience to provide an enhanced level of leadership on the Bristol student experience, and with responsibility for leading on student voice, inclusion and the delivery of the commitments in this Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

What we will do next:

- We will continue to work with Bristol SU, including its full-time elected Officers, relevant networks and interested students, to ensure student feedback and voices are heard consistently throughout the development of our approach and implementation of this Strategy.
- We will foster a supportive environment that encourages early disclosure and ensures that students know how to access appropriate support services. This will include consideration of when and how to communicate with students on sensitive topics or following serious incidents, including student deaths.

Related policies and resources:
- Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Time to Change pledge
- Suicide Prevention and Response Plan: www.bristol.ac.uk/university/governance/policies/
- Report and Support tool: https://reportandsupport.bristol.ac.uk/
We will provide focused support for students at key points of transition into and out of the University and at all transition points where students may be particularly vulnerable.

What we are doing now:

- We support students’ transition to university by providing information and guidance relating to student wellbeing within our recruitment and admissions activities. We encourage students to declare any pre-existing mental health issues prior to arrival.

- Our Residential Life Service supports students to live independently, and to develop a sense of belonging in our diverse student community.

- ‘Find your Bristol’ for new undergraduates: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/new-undergraduates/

- ‘Find your Bristol’ for new postgraduates: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/new-postgraduates/

- Sexual consent e-induction materials: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/services/consent/e-induction/

- Personal Tutoring information page: www.bris.ac.uk/esu/studentlearning/ug-support/

- Careers Service: www.bristol.ac.uk/careers/

- We will increase our engagement with students through the admissions process, post-offer, and once they arrive at University to ensure that there are multiple opportunities for them to declare any pre-existing mental health issues. We will explain that we will treat this information confidentially and will only use it to help us to provide appropriate support.

- We will develop a range of targeted support measures for students who may face challenges during transition (eg BME students, disabled students, international students, widening participation and LGBTQ+ students), and tailor support for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students.

- We will review our interactions with parents and carers, noting our legal obligations under the Data Protection Act and commitment to fostering the independence and resilience of our students as adult learners.

- We will provide support for additional transition points where students may be particularly vulnerable, such as suspension of studies, supplementary years and years in industry or abroad. We will support transition out of university, ensuring careers and employability activities are informed by an understanding of wellbeing principles.

- We will continue to review and improve Welcome Week from a student perspective to support student transition and build an inclusive community.

- A new ‘opt-in’ emergency contact procedure has been introduced in which students are asked each year to give consent for the University to use their chosen emergency contact details where there are serious concerns about a student’s wellbeing.

What we will do next:

Related policies and resources:
We support students in their schools via Student Wellbeing Advisers, (academic) Personal Tutors, Senior Tutors, School Administration Managers and Graduate Administration Managers.

A new University Education Director for Personal Tutoring has been appointed to provide increasing institutional leadership for transitions and academic support. Personal Tutor Guidelines have been redrafted and enhanced.

The Bristol Futures curriculum has been introduced to enhance support for students to develop their academic skills and personal attributes; the ‘Sustainable Futures’ online course directly addresses questions of positive mental health and happiness.

We encourage participation in sport and physical activity.

We engage on city-wide issues relating to substance abuse and have developed a University substance misuse education programme in partnership with local agencies.

We support campaigning in initiatives like Bristol SU’s ‘Mind Your Head’. We aim to reduce financial stress and provide a student hardship fund to reduce financial pressure on students and rent bursaries to lower the cost of accommodation for those students most in need.

What we are doing now:

Prevention

We will integrate healthy behaviour and promote positive mental health within the University’s educational mission and curriculum, in co-curricular activities, and in the use of the spaces on campus.
What we will do next:

- The next phase of Bristol Futures will address over-assessment, assessment bunching and single assessments with student and staff wellbeing in mind.

- The structure of the academic year will be reviewed, with a focus on wellbeing and reducing stress, anxiety and workload, including considering the length of the teaching term coupled with a commitment to drive through assessment and feedback changes.

- Leading academics in our School of Psychological Science will pilot the provision of a new Science of Happiness academic unit that will cover themes of positive mental wellbeing, based on international best practice.

- Additional study skills resources will be developed to support improved health and wellbeing.

- We will enhance our physical environment to encourage spaces that support wellbeing and community development. This will include wellbeing spaces in libraries; enhanced sports and physical activity spaces; new study, social and catering spaces; and green spaces.

- The University will commit to programmes of activity that can help relieve stress during major examination periods which will be available for free to all students.

- The consolidated Student Wellbeing Service will focus on creating supportive communities of learners. Inclusive activities in academic schools and halls of residence will support and educate students about healthy lifestyles and encourage the development of positive communities.

- We will work with Bristol SU to develop and promote awareness initiatives that address issues relating to wellbeing such as healthy eating, sleep, drugs and alcohol, and work/life balance.

- We will continue to support initiatives to increase our students’ physical activity levels.

- We will provide support for sports clubs, societies and volunteering activities that build social connection and support positive wellbeing.

- We will actively seek opportunities to reduce the cost of living for students, including considering rent, transport and the costs of studying.

Related policies and resources:

- Study skills for current students: [www.bristol.ac.uk/students/studyskills-development/study-skills/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/study/skills-development/study-skills/)
- Sport, Exercise and Health: [www.bristol.ac.uk/sport/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sport/)
- Funding advice: [www.bristol.ac.uk/fees-funding/advice/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/fees-funding/advice/)
What we are doing now:

- We have signed the ‘Time to Change’ pledge and monitor our progress in relation to the actions being undertaken as part of this pledge.

- All staff are required to take mandatory mental health training, with more intense face-to-face training for those in key student support roles.

- We have introduced additional Mental Health First Aid training.

- We have launched a new, confidential tool, Report and Support, for reporting instances of bullying or harassment in any form. We believe that bullying, harassment, assault and discrimination are never acceptable, and we are committed to ensuring both students and staff receive appropriate support.

- We are reviewing the information-sharing arrangements across the University to ensure students showing poor engagement are picked up early.

What we will do next:

- The University and Bristol SU will plan collaboratively to ensure maximum impact from our campaigning, educational and development work with students, including educating students on how to identify and respond to friends who are struggling.

- We will continue to develop and deliver appropriate mental health and wellbeing training for staff across the University.

- We will investigate systems for the early identification of students withdrawing via engagement activities and provide targeted support in cases of Extenuating Circumstances, extensions, missed exams etc, which are often an indicator that students are struggling.

- We will ensure that support services are visible and easy to access so that students receive timely interventions before issues escalate.

Related policies and resources:

- Time to Change pledge
- Acceptable Behaviour Policy for students, Student Complaints Procedure and Student Complaints: www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/student-rules-regs/
- University of Bristol Report and Support tool: https://reportandsupport.bristol.ac.uk/
Support for students is available through a range of integrated services to help students access support that is right for them.

We provide enhanced guidance to support the Personal Tutoring system and facilitate the Senior Tutors in each school in their work to support students.

We provide dedicated support for students from under-represented backgrounds, including our Bristol Scholars.

We have created a new student hub in Senate House, incorporating a front-line student information service and dedicated space for postgraduate research students.

Bristol SU provides a range of high-quality student support services, including Just Ask and Nightline (which operates 8pm – 8am during term time).

Our Student Funding Office provides financial information relating to withdrawal, suspension and transfer of studies as well as emergency short-term loans and access to bursaries and scholarships.

We offer significant scholarships and bursaries, including support for accommodation costs and financial hardship packages and support for students who find themselves in financial difficulty.

What we are doing now:

We will deliver effective student support services which are easy to access, meet the needs of a diverse student body, and are resourced sufficiently to meet demand.
Student wellbeing at the University of Bristol

First point of contact
A friendly face, wherever you are
- Residential Life Advisers
  24/7 support in residences
- Student Wellbeing Advisers
  in your school
- Personal Tutors
  offering academic support
- Research Supervisors
  for research students

Specialist services
Make an appointment directly or be referred by your first point of contact
- Students’ Health Service
- Student Counselling Service
- Mental Health Advisory Service
- Multifaith Chaplaincy
- Disability and Inclusion Services

Help yourself
Services here to support you
- Report and Support
- Big White Wall
- Just Ask and Nightline (SU)
- Security
- Self-help resources
- Academic Support

Support (continued)
Support (continued)

**What we will do next:**

- We will continue to invest in Student Wellbeing and will regularly review the effectiveness of these services, adapting these in a flexible manner as necessary.

- The Student Counselling Service will grow in line with planned student growth and will explore ways to reduce wait times for individual counselling, increase flexibility around the number of counselling sessions available to an individual and increase the availability of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

- We are committed to ensuring that our support and wellbeing staff are representative of our community, including BME, LGBTQ+ and multi-lingual professionals.

- We will review the range and level of provision of different services available to ensure that there is adequate support for survivors of sexual violence and students facing identity-based issues.

- We will continually review the case for new services to target gaps in existing provision and will review access routes to services.

- We will provide structures for peer support via the senior and chief residents in student accommodation, and via peer mentoring and peer assisted study in academic schools, adopting a co-creation approach with Bristol SU.

- We will make improvements to relevant procedures and regulations, including student Fitness to Study, Fitness to Practice and Acceptable Behaviour Policy. We will review our engagement and attendance activities and approach to ensure it supports this Strategy.

- We will provide an increase in targeted information and advice relating to the withdrawal, suspension and transfer of studies, including support for staff engaged in these issues.

- We will improve information sharing and referrals between services so that vulnerable students do not have to make these connections themselves or tell their stories multiple times.

**Related policies and resources:**

- ‘Where to get help’ for students: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/services/
- Residential Life Advisers: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/services/residential-life-service
- Student Wellbeing Advisers: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/services/student-wellbeing-service
- Personal Tutoring Guidelines: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/study/faculty-study-support/personal-tutoring
- Supervisors
- Student Health Service: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/services/health/
- Student Counselling Service: www.bristol.ac.uk/student-counselling/what-we-do/
- Multifaith Chaplaincy: www.bristol.ac.uk/multifaith-chaplaincy/
- Disability Service: www.bristol.ac.uk/disability-services/
- Fitness to Study: www.bristol.ac.uk/applicants/media/policy-documents/2017/undergraduate/fitness-to-study.pdf
- Fitness to Practice: www.bristol.ac.uk/health-sciences/student-fitness-to-practice/
- Just Ask: www.bristolsu.org.uk/advice-and-support
- Bristol SU Wellbeing Network/Nightline: www.facebook.com/BristolNightline/
Staff

What we are doing now:

- Staff support arrangements include the Staff Counselling Service and an employee assistance programme which is available 24/7.
- Online staff training relating to student mental health and how staff can best provide support to students forms part of the suite of mandatory training within our staff review and development processes.

What we will do next:

- We provide focused training and resources for staff in the Residential Life and Wellbeing Services, and for Personal Tutors.
- We will take a strategic approach to the planning and delivery of staff training relating to mental health and wellbeing, identifying priorities across our whole staff community, including developing the role of Personal Tutors and meeting the needs of postgraduate research supervisors.
- We will review the training and strengthen ongoing professional development requirements for Personal Tutors and postgraduate Research Supervisors and clarify the expectations of staff in these roles with respect to the provision of mental health support and guidance for students. These expectations will be clearly communicated to both staff and students.

Related policies and resources:

- Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- PositiveWorking@Bristol
- Staff Development: wellbeing workshops
What we are doing now:

• The Vice-Chancellor has established an Expert Advisory Group to inform our work on student support and wellbeing, and an external consultant has reviewed our student mental health support arrangements.

• We work closely with Bristol SU on mental health and wellbeing. The Bristol SU Chief Executive is a member of the Vice-Chancellor’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce.

• The University fosters a strong collaborative connection with public health authorities at Bristol City Council and with third-sector groups including the Samaritans, Papyrus and SARI. The University is a key partner in the city-wide wellbeing initiative known as Thrive Bristol.

• We have worked within the UUK Suicide-Safer Universities framework and with Public Health colleagues and UWE to develop a Suicide Prevention and Response Plan (see appendix) informed by international best practice. This will continue to inform our wider mental health strategies and approach.

• The Student Health Service has strong, established links with the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and with the local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group aimed at improving pathways into NHS specialist mental health provision. We invest in our NHS-funded primary care practice, but our responsibilities do not include providing healthcare more properly provided by NHS secondary care or the emergency services.

What we will do next:

• We will continue to work with external partners to improve pathways between the University and local mental health services and help students and staff to navigate this pathway.

• We will continue to advocate for further government investment in services in our community and lobby for increased investment in local mental health services, and for local charities that provide vital services for students but are over-subscribed or have long waiting lists.

• We will continue to partner with UUK in their national work to develop a place-based, collaborative model of mental health support and treatment for students.

• We will draw learning from national and international best practice as we continue to enhance our services supporting student wellbeing.

Related policies and resources:

• NHS Bristol Wellbeing Therapies: https://iapt-bristol.awp.nhs.uk/
• Bristol Mental Health: www.bristolmentalhealth.org/
• The Bridge: www.bridgefoundation.org.uk
We will use data and research to support mental health and wellbeing, conducting regular surveys, monitoring trends, devising improvement plans and measuring success in relation to our aims in an evidence-based and transparent manner.

**What we are doing now:**

- We invite all students to participate in an annual wellbeing survey designed by an expert team of academic staff in collaboration with students and Bristol SU staff to provide baseline data and opportunities to identify trends and priority areas where interventions are specifically required.

- Our staff survey gathers feedback on questions relating to health and wellbeing; we will review the content of this survey to include mental health questions as with the student mental health survey.

- Student support services employ a range of monitoring and evaluation methods, including service usage and satisfaction ratings.

- Bristol SU participates in relevant national research, such as the recent Alterline Union Futures report.

**What we will do next:**

- A student wellbeing assessment will be introduced at student registration from 2018-19 onwards. The resulting data will be used to inform staff and students where help might be appropriate. These results as well as other student survey results will provide baseline data to identify trends and priority areas where interventions are specifically required.

- We will collaborate with Bristol SU on implementing assessments and surveys to reach the widest possible audience.

- We will establish a Mental Health Research Network as part of the Elizabeth Blackwell Institute to deliver excellent research in student and staff mental health. We will take an evidence-based and transparent approach to developing and refining future interventions, ensuring that students can see the outcomes of the research they contribute to.

- We will monitor progress against our stated aims via a comprehensive monitoring dashboard that will be reviewed regularly by the University Management Team, by Bristol SU and by the University Board of Trustees. The University will present a strategic mental health report in 2019, drawing information from a range of data sources.

- We will analyse wellbeing data and evaluate the impact of our wellbeing initiatives and appoint a Vice-Chancellor’s Fellow in young people’s mental health.
Appendix:
University of Bristol Suicide Prevention and Response Plan

This Plan has been produced to help prevent student suicides at the University of Bristol. It was developed in collaboration with local Public Health colleagues and UWE. For the University of Bristol this work was overseen by the Suicide Prevention and Response Group.

The plan is a key part of the University’s commitment to ensuring that mental health permeates every aspect of the University culture and experience and becomes part of the language of education. It is our aim that all staff and students are aware of the Suicide Prevention and Response Plan within the context of the wider Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, its key themes and actions.

We recognise that suicidal thoughts are common and should always be taken seriously. Suicide is a difficult thing to talk about and we are therefore committed to training staff in identifying and responding to suicide risk. Lack of understanding and stigma around suicide and mental illness can be a barrier to seeking and offering help and we are therefore committed to tackling this through training and education of our students and staff.

The effect of a student suicide can be far-reaching with a significant impact on family and friends; students both on and off campus; and teaching and support staff across the University. Suicide prevention is everybody’s responsibility and we are committed to a whole-university approach that facilitates wide engagement and the involvement of students, parents and staff.

The Plan is available at www.bristol.ac.uk/university/governance/policies/ and draws on the JED Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention for Colleges and Universities.