

Mental Health Strategy:

Partnership working for better Student and Staff
Mental Health

2022-2025

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UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER

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Summary:	This document outlines our institutional mental health strategy and vision for the next 3 years

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Vice Chancellor's Introduction

Good mental health and wellbeing is an integral part of student success. As a community we seek to support our students in maintaining their mental wellbeing and in doing so we work together to ensure our students are able to actively engage, thrive and succeed in their time with us. Over the last 5 years we have grown and enhanced our student mental wellbeing services, in response to needs and a national pandemic. We have sought to increase confidence across our staff body in supporting our students in maintaining their mental health.

We have also invested in support for our staff body, as we recognise the importance of good mental wellbeing within our staff community. Just as supporting our students assists in their learning outcomes, supporting our staff facilitates a community of engaged colleagues who are able to deliver high quality teaching and research.

For these reasons we have adopted a whole University vision for embedding a culture of promoting and supporting positive mental health and wellbeing; working together to enable all our community thrive and achieve their full potential. The actions set out in this strategy and the associated operational plan will support us in achieving this vision, committing us to continue offering and developing meaningful support provision, building partnerships across and outwith our community and using data to inform and shape our approach.

For us to achieve our vision, our first objective is to further create a culture where mental health is everyone's business, where staff and students alike feel confident and empowered to talk about mental health and wellbeing, to seek or offer support and guidance as required.



Sarah Greer
Vice Chancellor

Definitions

The terms 'mental health', 'mental wellbeing' and simply 'wellbeing' are often used interchangeably but can hold very different meanings. Our Mental Health Strategy sees Mental Health and Wellbeing as being intrinsically linked, as encompassed by the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition.

Good mental health is described by WHO as "a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."¹ It is in this sense that the terms Mental Health and Wellbeing are used throughout this strategy and its supporting operational plan.

¹ World health Organization, (2018), "[Mental health: strengthening our response \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response)" (online), available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>, accessed 29/3/22

1 Introduction

The University of Winchester takes the mental health of our community very seriously and takes an iterative and progressive approach to ensuring the University environment and experience supports the maintenance of good mental health and wellbeing. This document outlines the approach we are undertaking, namely using the University Mental Health Charter² to underpin our whole institutional approach. As acknowledged by the University Mental Health Charter, to be effective, a mental health strategy needs to think beyond mental illness and should take into consideration the mental wellbeing of a whole community. Thinking holistically across the whole community will enable us to both minimise and tackle areas where practice could negatively impact on our community's mental health and wellbeing.

This strategy builds on our existing mental health and wellbeing activities. It acknowledges the recent investment in staff and student mental wellbeing and in supporting non-specialist staff to feel more confident and skilled in supporting others in the area of mental health and wellbeing. The strategy is supported by an operational implementation plan, developed in partnership with staff and students from across the institution, that will be reviewed on an annual basis.

2 Our Vision

Our vision is to be a University that nourishes staff and students, providing a supportive, yet academically challenging environment, which promotes and supports good mental health and wellbeing. Our environment should enable all students and staff to succeed and achieve their potential. Our vision aligns with three strategic objectives in the OfS 2022-2025 strategy of *participation, experience and outcomes*.³ We want all staff and students to be able to participate fully in our university community; we want staff and students to be able to have a positive, high-quality experience; and we want our staff and students to flourish and succeed in their areas of expertise and studies.

² <https://universitymentalhealthcharter.org.uk/>

³ Office for Students Strategy 2022 to 2025 <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/2bd39abc-837c-4745-ab86-c37c0c0b7a7c/ofs-strategy-2022-final-accessible.pdf>

2.1 Strategic Aims and Scope

This strategy covers all aspects of University life and applies to:

- All students enrolled at the University
- All staff directly employed by the University
- Firm offer holders who have disclosed mental health challenges

Our strategic aims are:

- To create and embed a whole institutional approach to mental health, ensuring all aspects of our community are confident in understanding and supporting the institutional mental health strategy.
- To create an institutional environment that supports and maintains good mental health and wellbeing, both within and outwith the curriculum; actively working to reduce stigma around mental health concerns and to minimise risk factors for poor mental health.
- To ensure all students who experience poor mental health whilst at the University are well and appropriately supported. Facilitating positive transitions in, through and out of higher education.
- To develop and enhance collaborative partnerships and links with key external agencies within Winchester and Hampshire; additionally, to develop appropriate data sharing as required, to enable continuity of support and care across organisations – following the no wrong door principle.
- To support those students and staff who may be less likely to disclose a need, or come forward for support, to feel confident and safe so to do.
- To capture and make best use of data, research and feedback from students and staff to inform service development.

2.2 Operational Plan

The strategic aims are underpinned by an active operation plan. This plan is based on the

Mental Health Charter Framework, which is composed of 4 domains (workstreams):

- Learn
- Support
- Work
- Live

and these are supported by the following enabling themes:

- Leadership, strategy and policy
- Student voice and participation
- Cohesiveness of support across the provider
- Inclusivity and Intersectional mental health
- Research, innovation and dissemination

The operational plan will run alongside this 3-year strategy but will be reviewed annually with workstream owners. It will be developed on an iterative basis to provide a platform for regular reflection and to drive forward continuous improvement.

3. Summary Operational Plan

The University, in partnership with students, and external agencies where appropriate, will:

1. Establish a cohesive transitions/student journey programme to support students both entering the University and as they transition throughout their academic careers.
2. Promote positive mental health and wellbeing to staff and students, creating a holistic supportive and inclusive environment.
3. Further develop our inclusive curriculum work, with a specific eye to embedding positive mental wellbeing support within the curriculum whilst maintaining academic standards.
4. Work with our Student Union teams to promote key campaigns around mental health and wellbeing issues.
5. Review and enhance our specialist mental health support, including seeking ways to improve disclosure, service access and positive outcomes.
6. Work to ensure meaningful data and metrics are collected and interrogated to support service, institutional and campaigns development.

7. Provide clear leadership to ensure this strategy is embedded across the institution at all levels and that appropriate resourcing is in place to adequately meet student and staff need.

4. Achieving our vision

As we strive to enable our people, both staff and students, to become healthy, successful, resilient individuals we must work together as a community to support each other. Together we will work to create a supportive environment both physically and pedagogically and we will ensure this vision is communicated and the operational elements embedded across departments. By sharing its purpose and reporting progress we can achieve our vision of becoming a Mentally Healthy University.