

Policy name: Mental Health First Aid Provision

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Student Council notes: *(Facts)*

Recent statistics reveal the extent of the student mental health crisis in the UK. In 2015/16, over 15,000 first year students in UK Universities reported they had a mental health problem, compared to approximately 3,000 in 2006.²

This increase in disclosure is mirrored by a 94% of higher education institutions reporting an increase in demand for their counselling services.² Despite the surge in help-seeking behaviour, there is evidence to suggest that there are many more students who do not seek treatment for mental health problems.¹

More to the point, many students are forced into a position to leave home for the first time either into student accommodation on or off campus. In this light, it is apparent that there is not enough signposting or awareness of appropriate support for someone presenting in crisis or someone experiencing difficulties.

There are a range of implications of worsening mental health among students. Poor mental health has been associated with poorer academic outcomes³, as students tend to be less able to effectively manage stress and pressure and, thus, their ability to perform given tasks productively is diminished.⁴

They may also be more likely to drop out of university; statistics highlight a 210% increase in university dropouts among students with mental health problems from 2009/10 to 2014/15.² Of even greater concern is that student suicides have increased by 79% from 2007 (75) to 2015 (134).²

Student Council believes: *(Opinions)*

With First aid being provided by Noonan, a similar process needs to be followed for Mental Health First Aid. The structure of many departments around the University and the Union are both moving in the direction of wellbeing. In line with these changes, it should be proposed that each department/School in the University should have a designated Mental Health First Aider that can respond to students/staff in high risk situations who are seeking help.

This person who is designated, will act as the first responder to these high-risk issues. As with First Aid there is a course which must be completed, the same is with Mental Health First Aid. These designated persons should be provided with a certificate which allows them to deal with these situations before signposting to internal or external support networks.

Student Council resolves that: *(Actions)*

- The UUSU Student Executive should work in partnership with Ulster University (including but not exclusive to Campus Life, Student Wellbeing and Associate Deans for Education) to explore implementation of staff policy for Mental Health First Aid.
- To engage student counsellors in Mental health and wellbeing workshops to raise their awareness around the topic.

References

1. (1), pp.163-172. 3 Hunt, J. and Eisenberg, D. (2010). Mental Health Problems and Help-Seeking Behavior Among College Students. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 46(1), pp.3-10.
2. Institute for Public Policy Research (2017) Not by degrees: improving student mental health in the UK's universities. Available at <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/not-bydegrees> [Accessed on 24/08/18]
3. Bruffaerts, R., Mortier, P., Kiekens, G., Auerbach, R., Cuijpers, P., Demyttenaere, K., Green, J., Nock, M. and Kessler, R. (2018). Mental health problems in college freshmen: Prevalence and academic functioning. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 225, pp.97-103.
4. Poh Keong, P., Chee Sern, L., Ming, F. and Che, I. (2015) 'The relationship between mental health and academic achievement among university students–A literature review', in *Second International Conference on Global Trends in Academic Research*, Bandung, Global Illuminators.

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