

Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan

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| Revision number | 1.1 |
| Review date | 01/09/2022 |
| Next review date | September 2023 |

Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is to raise awareness of the importance of student and staff mental health and wellbeing at St Brendan's Sixth Form College. This document will outline the support currently available to students and staff who access the College and will outline the vision for expanding the mental health and wellbeing support across the college.

Context

Mental health and wellbeing is an area of increasing focus within St Brendan's Sixth Form College, and education in general. Attending College can be an extremely exciting time for students, but it can also be very daunting and present its own challenges. Students must balance assessments, deadlines and coursework alongside responsibilities in their home life. At St Brendan's Sixth Form College we recognise that an individual's mental health can and will be influenced by course and life factors throughout their student journey. Students may also belong to one or more vulnerable groups at any point in their lives and we will ensure appropriate support is available whenever it is required.

Within the current college provision we have a four tiered mental health service which includes the following:

- First stage- Academic Mentors trained in Off The Record's Resilience Lab.
- Second stage- Counsellors in training who are with us on placement. They have one to one telephone or face to face appointments.
- Third stage- Welfare officer, who has one to one telephone or face to face appointments.
- Fourth stage- Counsellor who have one to one telephone or face to face appointments. They also deliver group sessions that are themed for specific students.

For staff at St Brendan's Sixth Form College, we know that the mental health and wellbeing of our colleagues is fundamentally important in enabling people to engage, perform and flourish. It is key to how our college feels as a place to learn and underpins the success of those who work here.

Currently we have a supportive management process in place for our staff and have packages such as the Employee Assistance Programme and access to other services such as occupational health to support staff.

From a wider contextual view of Mental Health and Wellbeing the following commitment has been made by Bristol Local Authority:

By 2050...

- Everyone in Bristol will have the opportunity to live a life in which they are mentally and physically healthy
- Children will grow up free of adverse childhood experiences having had the best start in life and support through their life

What is Mental Health?

Mental Health is about building positive wellbeing in individuals and communities. It achieves this by creating a culture of care and support and raising awareness of issues surrounding mental health.

At St Brendan's, we want to promote and support healthier learning, working and social environments, based on an organisational culture that enables people to flourish.

A key part of this is about empowering our college community with the knowledge, confidence and personal resources to:

- Understand mental health and wellbeing.
- Recognise the associated signs of mental ill-health.
- Know what support is available, in times of critical need and to help prevent mental health problems before they arise.

One in four people will experience a mental health problem in any given year. Yet, unfortunately, there is still a stigma attached to mental health, with many people feeling scared and confused about confronting the issue. Mental health is the mental and emotional state in which people feel able to cope with the normal stresses of everyday life. Mental health problems include stress, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Mental health problems may emerge suddenly as a result of a specific event, or gradually over a period of time when the situation may worsen or improve.

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are negative experiences in early life and childhood that can have an impact on health and wellbeing throughout life. This can include:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Living with someone who abused drugs
- Living with someone who abused alcohol
- Exposure to domestic violence
- Living with someone who was incarcerated
- Living with someone with serious mental illness
- Parental loss through divorce, death or abandonment

The Research:

- Adverse Childhood Experiences are unfortunately common yet rarely asked about in routine practice (Felitti et al., 1998; Read et al 2007.)
- In the English National ACE study, nearly half (47%) of individuals experienced at least one ACE with 9% of the population having 4+ ACEs (Bellis et al 2014.)
- There is a strong and proportionate (dose-response) relationship between ACE and the risk of developing poor physical health, mental health and social outcomes (Skehan et al 2008; Kessler et al, 2010; Varese et al 2013; Felitti & Anda, 2014.)
- ACEs increase the risk of adult onset chronic diseases, such as cancer and heart disease, as well as increasing the risk of mental illness, violence and becoming a victim of violence

- ACEs are associated with a large proportion of absenteeism from work, costs in health care, emergency response, mental health and criminal justice involvement

What we need to do

We already deliver many services to students and staff. Providing this in a more joined-up way and understanding their impact on student and staff mental health is an important part of this new approach.

To ensure that this happens, we have developed some clear objectives that will drive our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and form the basis of our approach:

- **Leadership:** to foster a positive and supportive organisational culture that ensures mental health and wellbeing is embedded as a strategic priority and removes the stigma associated with it.
- **Active communication:** ensure a range of targeted communications that reach staff and students informing and explaining about the range of support available, how these resources can be used, along with actions that all staff and students can take to improve their mental health and wellbeing.
- **Prevention:** to ensure mental health and wellbeing is everybody's responsibility, by providing evidence-based individual and college-level interventions to promote good health, raise awareness and increase resilience.
- **Support:** to have appropriate and timely support, training and toolkits in place to improve mental health and wellbeing for our students and staff.
- **Partnerships:** to further develop external partnerships with health bodies, local authorities and the voluntary sector to deliver a joined-up approach that supports students and staff.
- **Data:** to use relevant data to measure the impact of mental health and wellbeing interventions, to inform decisions and future strategy development.

What we hope to achieve

Objective 1: is to establish a whole-college approach to staff mental health and wellbeing through creating safe healthy environments to work and learn;

A whole-college approach to staff and student mental health and wellbeing led by the senior leadership team and supported by teaching and support services and students, through getting involved and contributing to creating the wellbeing agenda. Encourage a sense of community and inclusion. Recognise that staff wellbeing and student's wellbeing are connected, build on connections to support mental health and wellbeing across the college community. Providing a safe physical, psychological and cultural environment that enables and actively promotes health and wellbeing to create a thriving campus community.

Objective 2: is to design and deliver a mental health stigma reducing campaign. Developing new tools and resources where needed to support maintaining healthy minds, signposting to existing resources and creating simplified pathways to support.

Fostering a culture where staff and students feel safe and can build / maintain good mental health in the college, access support when needed with confidence. Providing psychologically safe working and learning environments. Empowering managers to have confident conversations around health and wellbeing of the staff they manage. Launch Mental Health Champion community of Mental Health First Aiders and Mental

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Health and Wellbeing Champions to raise awareness of support accessible. With a focus on enabling conversations, managing uncertainty, work life balance in a pandemic, stress management and anxiety.

Objective 3: is to promote tools and design interventions to encourage awareness of mental health and wellbeing through working towards / maintaining a healthy body in an individual context.

Providing a physically safe working and learning environment, ensuring that practices and conditions identified as contributing to poor mental health is proactively managed. Prioritising the Public Health challenges identified as a health risk through Covid-19 by providing opportunities to improve health through interventions and signposting.

Delivering the strategy: what will change?

A number of initiatives are being introduced through our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy with further actions following as we take our strategy forward. We will closely monitor this activity to ensure that it is having the desired impact and delivers for our students and staff. We recognise the diversity of our College community and we will work to ensure that our offerings reflect the diversity of individuals accessing them.

Measuring success

This is a long term strategy to improve and maintain the mental health and wellbeing of staff and students. It is important to recognise that, whilst some aspects of improved health and wellbeing can be measured in the short term, consistent and constant improvement is essential.

There are a number of tangible measurements that we will consider immediately:

- One of our organisational objectives is improve attendance rates. Success in this area will be measured through a reduction in sickness levels and adopting strategies to deal with particular issues that we uncover such as stress.
- Research has shown that staff wellbeing is linked to retention rates. It's acknowledged that whilst staff leave for a variety of reasons, those who are fit and well are more likely to stay with their employer. We should therefore see a reduction in turnover as a result of improved wellbeing at work.

It's essential that we continuously monitor and evaluate any wellbeing initiatives to ensure that they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of our staff. We will therefore review referral rates to staff support services such as Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme.

There will be a number of pulse surveys throughout the year specifically dedicated to wellbeing. Targeting improvements on these will be crucial, as well as measuring progress regularly through pulse tests.

Key Performance Indicators

Quarterly key performance indicator reports will be produced will be used to evaluate and monitor progress against the action plan.

| Key Action | Sub Actions | Timeframe | Performance Indicator |
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| Leadership | | | |
| A member of the senior leadership team to be a MH champion and take a lead on MH | Demonstrating visible leadership and senior ownership of mental health as a priority to promote open conversations and sustain change | March 2022 | New marketing campaign launched. |
| Launch a Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group chaired by CLT | Formed of key stakeholders from staff groups (MHFA, Health and Safety, HR, Student Services) and student groups with input from external organisations | September 2022 | Members to be invited and meetings to be held. Minutes to be published via our website. |
| | Identifying and implementing Mental Health and Wellbeing initiatives and promotion events that are evidence based and are focussed on both intervention and prevention. | | |
| Sign up to and commit to a MH or wellbeing pledge | Time to change; workplace wellbeing charter | October 2023 | Be a member of a charter connected with the wider city. |
| Active communication | | | |
| Develop a co-ordinated comprehensive communication plan inclusive of multiple and targeted channels (email, social media signage etc.) throughout the year | Awareness raising via National Campaigns | Introduction April 2022 then ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of informed communications Plan. • Reportable usage of Wellbeing Hub. • Questions on wellbeing support awareness, understanding and action included within staff survey. • Questions on wellbeing support awareness, understanding and action included within student survey. • Wellbeing and Mental Health calendar produced and shared on social media and website. • Directory accessible via website and staff/student bulletin. |
| | Awareness Raising via a wellbeing hub - establish a Wellbeing Hub that provides a one stop shop for wellbeing support and resources available within the college community. Provision within the Wellbeing Hub, to be split into (a) staff resources and (b) Student resources. | | |
| | Creation of a slogan to raise profile via social media #itsoktosay / #speakup / #itsoktonotbeok / #beingwelldoingwell | | |
| Awareness Raising – Local Information | Creation of a directory of mental health resources with a focus on local services to provide information for staff and students on available support. | | |
| Promote the positive benefits of a conversation about mental health and wellbeing, provide opportunities for skills development and share good practice. | Develop understanding of Mental Health and Wellbeing across the college for students and staff. | September 2023 | Embedded within the curriculum, Tutorial and RPE program. |
| Training and support | | | |
| Mental Health and Wellbeing Toolkits | Development of mental health and wellbeing toolkit and resources to support staff, including training online guidance, toolbox talks, and recruitment and training of mental health representatives | January 2023 | Training toolkits delivered to all staff and released to staff to access. |
| Development of mental health champions | Provide training to a number of staff to undertake the role of MHFA – at least one rep per staff group / faculty | Summer term | Named staff members who are clearly identified to all staff and students. |
| | Establish supervision and support sessions for Mental Health First Aiders | Summer term | Supervision in place for MH First Aiders and measured impact via evaluation. |

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| Development of an enhanced Mental Health training offer across the institution for all staff who interact with students | Mental Health Training schedule produced and released to staff and students. | Summer term | Evaluation conducted after every training delivery. |
| Design clear pathways to support, enabling staff and students to easily identify the appropriate support and how to access. | Clear posters and social media indicating support across the college. | Ongoing | Mental Health Audit- learning walks conducted to check and student voice measuring impact. |
| Enhanced counselling service provision for students | Counselling Service to develop facilitated support groups bringing together students facing similar issues and/or life experiences. Scope for these groups to develop into peer-led resources | Ongoing | Ongoing student voice obtained from all services to measure success and evaluate provision. |
| | Counselling Service to be available to provide appropriate training for student led groups if/when required | | |
| | Inclusion of the Chaplaincy and Faith Support | | |
| Staff development | Mandatory resilience training as part of staff induction programme | Introduced September 2022 | Evaluation conducted after every training delivery. Register held. |
| | Mental health awareness training as mandatory training for all staff | April 2023 | Evaluation conducted after every training delivery. Register held. |
| | Enhance staff on-boarding to ensure health and wellbeing support, resources and training is embedded as part of the wider staff experience | September 2023 | Clear mapping across the curriculum and embedded within curriculum overviews. |
| | Manager training to raise awareness, development understanding and gain confidence to discuss MH | Summer term | Evaluation conducted after every training delivery. Register held. |
| | Revise and develop robust policies, procedures and practice protocols to support mental health and wellbeing | Ongoing | Published to all staff and students. |
| Student development | Ensure mental health is covered as part of the student induction programme | September 2023 | Embedded within the Tutorial program and evaluated through student survey. |
| | Develop inclusive and engaging curricula that promote the principles of student wellbeing. | September 2023 | Clear mapping across the curriculum and embedded within curriculum overviews. |
| | Deliver student-led projects to enhance student engagement in collaboration | Introduce May 2022 then ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear mapping across the curriculum and embedded within curriculum overviews, tutorial programme and RPE. • Evaluation conducted after every training delivery. Register held. • Student voice shared • Presence of Mental Health materials. |
| | Implement a programme of student mental health and wellbeing workshops, campaigns and targeted interventions. | | |
| | Target information and support for student groups who experience wellbeing challenges and those at risk of isolation and discrimination. (i.e. students with disabilities, LGBTQ+ students and students exposed to trauma). | | |
| | Provide jargon-free, easily accessible, online information and guidance materials for students and staff, including how to access specialist and crisis support | | |
| | Improve practice protocols and guidance for staff when responding to students in distress or in crisis, students at risk of harm, or those presenting risk to others | | |