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A commitment to the Mental Health Framework

student
minds

Updated: April 2021

Introduction

Bucks Students' Union recognises that the wellbeing of our members and staff is paramount to our success in delivering our unique, award-winning offer. This year, more than ever, positive mental health and wellbeing is at the top of our agenda and we have therefore invested in the Student Minds Mental Health Framework.

The Students' Union Mental Health Framework has been created as part of the Student Minds SUs programme. The aim is to provide SUs with a helpful framework that can support the adoption of a whole-Union approach to mental health and wellbeing.

The framework has been informed by research, learning and insight that Student Minds has gained through its work in UK higher education so far. It draws from the University Mental Health Charter, the Co-Production Toolkit and a wide range of reports and publications that the Charity has led or supported.

This framework is designed to support informal self-assessment of an SU's organisational approach to mental health and wellbeing and help SUs to identify areas for improvement. It provides a set of 10 principles for good practice in achieving a whole-Union approach to mental health.

As a Union, we have formed a working group including staff and students from all areas of our work and together, by working through the framework, have created an action plan that we believe will ensure we continue to deliver outstanding support to our members.

Already we have implemented new policies and procedures, reviewed our current activities and scheduled some clear timelines to ensure the framework is not only a series of actions to be taken now, but embedded into our day-to-day operations as a Union for many years to come.

Your **Vice President Education and Welfare**, Tash Neal had this to say: *"The Mental Health Framework is a fantastic opportunity for us to carry out a 'self-check' on what we do as a Students' Union already to support mental health and wellbeing as well as areas to focus on going forwards. We know that the majority of our activity is really proactive and supports our members and staff to a high standard. By using the framework we are able to identify any gaps in our offer to ensure that we are doing our absolute best for our staff and students to promote and encourage positive mental health and wellbeing"*

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Principle 1

Whole union approach –

The Students' Union has a strategic, whole-Union commitment to mental health and wellbeing

A strategic commitment is important to achieving a whole-Union approach. It helps to ensure that activities across the SU work in a joined up way towards a shared goal. A true whole-Union commitment considers how every part of the organisation can have a role in creating positive change and considers the mental health and wellbeing of the whole community, both students and staff.

However, strategic commitment alone is not enough to lead to real, sustained change. Successful strategies are driven by leadership, which creates a clear plan for their implementation and are held accountable for achieving outcomes. They are relevant to the needs and experiences of the communities they serve and there is a sense of shared ownership for the strategic vision across the organisation. Finally, effective strategies are evident in the policy, procedures and everyday practice of the organisation.

Modelling the principle

- The SU has a strategic commitment to mental health and wellbeing.
- The strategic commitment includes a commitment to mental health and wellbeing of both students and staff, and considers how all aspects of the organisation can impact mental health.
- The SU communicates its strategic commitment publicly.
- The SU Trustee Board has a defined role in ensuring a whole-Union approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- There is a clear plan to implement and deliver on the strategic commitment and there are clear structures of accountability for delivery.
- The strategic commitment is evidence-informed and has been co-produced with both staff across the Union and members of the student population, including staff and students who are less engaged and from underrepresented groups.
- The SU has embedded the strategic commitment in everyday culture and practice, and considers it as part of other strategies, policies and procedures.

Actions

Bucks Students' Union commits to:

- Encourage a whole-Union approach to mental health and wellbeing by incorporating wellbeing themes in the organisation's strategy and sharing new initiatives, policies and procedures at strategic focus reviews
- Support the needs of our employees and members by creating and publishing a Wellbeing Strategy
- Remove the stigma around mental health by encouraging conversations around wellbeing amongst student groups and through open forums such as Union Council
- Ensure all stakeholders including members, employees and trustees have confidence in the Wellbeing Strategy by providing appropriate training in positive mental health and wellbeing
- Demonstrate positive impact by providing reports on campaigns for the Trustee Board
- An informed approach to activities planning by gaining feedback from all stakeholders on the Union's commitment to positive mental health and wellbeing
- Provide an inclusive programme by actively promoting activities that support the strategic objectives around mental health and wellbeing
- Ensure awareness of wellbeing campaigns by sharing details on a regular basis with all stakeholders of the Students' Union including the University, our members, employees and trustees

We will encourage a whole-Union approach to mental health and wellbeing by incorporating wellbeing themes in the organisation's strategy and sharing new initiatives, policies and procedures at strategic focus reviews

Principle 2

Processes and culture –

The Students' Union's internal processes and culture support a high level of understanding and insight into the student experience, which informs their approach to mental health and wellbeing.

The determinants of mental health and wellbeing are diverse and complex, and so are the needs and experiences of our student communities. Any activity to improve wellbeing requires proactive engagement with, and understanding of, a wide range of student views. This improves the relevance and likely success of any service, activity, campaign or intervention.

Understanding the complex needs and experiences of students means being proactive in creating ongoing, multiple and varied opportunities for students to share their views. It means identifying and addressing barriers to engagement wherever they may be. Democratic structures in SUs can be effective in amplifying student voice and driving change. However, unless they are informed by an understanding of wider student experiences, reliance on elected representatives could mean some experiences are overlooked or create gaps in the SU's approach to mental health. Instead, the SU should listen to and consult with a diverse range of students regularly, and empower staff and student leaders to do the same.

Listening is not sufficient on its own. To truly empower students, SU's need to systematically consider the information they receive from multiple sources and create processes for insight to lead to action.

Modelling the principle

- The SU takes action to understand the perspectives and experiences of its diverse student population all year round and through a variety of methods, that go beyond formal democratic structures and mandates.
- The SU provides staff, officers and student leaders with a clear structure and support for listening to and consulting with students.
- The SU supports staff, officers and student leaders to identify and remove barriers to engagement and understand the needs and experiences of students from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- The SU considers research, student data and student voice from multiple sources as part of a systematic, evidence-based approach to identifying priorities with regard to student mental health and wellbeing.
- A high level of insight and understanding of the student experience is used to inform the SU's strategic approach, campaigning priorities, co-production of services and interventions and representational and advocacy work in relation to student mental health and wellbeing (See principles 1, 4, 5).

Actions

Bucks Students' Union commits to:

- Ensure Executive Officers have the confidence to support their student groups and lead on wellbeing initiatives by providing appropriate training and platforms
- Maintain relevance in campaigning and support services by gaining feedback from our members specifically around wellbeing through membership surveys, wellbeing groups and Honest Hours
- Effectively support positive mental health and wellbeing by clearly promoting its committee structures, roles and services
- Being considerate of the differing needs of its members by effectively planning all events and activities (including democracy and governance)
- Enable staff and student leaders to address wellbeing and mental health concerns by providing mental health awareness training
- Provide relevant interventions by monitoring trends and themes of the support sought
- Ensure University support and wellbeing services are well promoted and accessible to all student groups by feeding back to relevant departments
- Encourage cross departmental projects and foster and maintain positive relationships with University departments

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We will ensure Executive Officers have the confidence to support their student groups and lead on wellbeing initiatives by providing appropriate training and platforms

Principle 3

Shared language and understanding –

There is a shared language and understanding between staff, officers, representatives, volunteers and stakeholders around mental health and wellbeing at university.

A whole-Union approach requires all staff, students and volunteers to have shared responsibility for mental health and wellbeing, alongside staff and volunteers who have a specific responsibility in this area. Similarly, a whole-university approach, as outlined in the University Mental Health Charter, stipulates that all aspects of university life can support good mental health. As such, any staff or student leader with a campaigning or advocacy role can influence mental health, whether they are involved in welfare, liberation, housing and community, academic representation or beyond.

In developing this framework, Senior Leaders and Officers identified that there is often a varied understanding or lack of confidence around mental health and an individual's role in promoting good mental health at university. This can be a barrier to proactive activity and effective collaboration in this space.

Modelling the principle

- The SU supports staff, officers and students across the organisation to develop their understanding of the history of mental health, mental health in higher education and different models and definitions that can be used to talk about mental health and wellbeing.
- The SU supports staff, officers and students across the organisation to develop their understanding of their responsibilities with regards to promoting mental health as part of the whole-Union approach, even if they do not have a specific welfare or wellbeing role.
- The SU supports staff, officers and students to understand the whole-university approach to mental health and that all aspects of the university should support good mental health.
- This understanding is used to inform priorities with regards to mental health and wellbeing (See principles 1, 4, 5).

Actions

Bucks Students' Union commits to:

- Ensure staff and students have the confidence to talk openly about mental health and wellbeing through adequate training and support
- Encourage a whole university approach to positive mental health and wellbeing by building and maintaining positive working relationships with the support services of the University
- Support the University in the effective delivery of its support services by challenging them to commit to a wellbeing and mental health strategy or framework
- Continue to provide access to support by creating, maintaining and publicising resources dedicated to positive mental health and wellbeing
- Identify priority initiatives to encourage positive mental health and wellbeing through effective gathering and analysis of research
- Ensure all plans for wellbeing initiatives are well received by communicating in appropriate formats and using language that is empathetic to the needs of our members

We will ensure staff and students have the confidence to talk openly about mental health and wellbeing through adequate training and support

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Principle 4

The wider student support landscape –

Understanding of the SU's role in the wider student support landscape within the community and carrying out that role effectively in partnership with the University.

All SUs are part of the student support landscape as students often reach out to SUs for help and advice. Our research has shown that inconsistent advice, ineffective signposting and misinformation about support services can have negative impacts on student mental health. However, when different teams collaborate and work well together, support to students is more effective. Effective partnerships with support services and can ensure SUs are able to give clear and accurate information to students who seek help.

Although SUs rarely offer counselling or specialised mental health support, they often run advice centres, support student-run wellbeing services, societies and groups and create wellbeing-related educational interventions and resources. It is important that interventions designed to support mental health and wellbeing are safe, appropriately resourced, well managed and, where appropriate, delivered or overseen by clinical professionals.

Modelling the principle

- The SU takes proactive steps to build relationships with relevant support services including University, NHS, third sector and social care services.
- The SU Advice service works in partnership with University services, to build collaborative relationships and a shared understanding of each other's roles and support pathways between services.
- The SU routinely maps out the different support pathways available to students across the University and wider community and ensures students are aware of where to access support.
- The SU ensures that any student-led or peer support interventions are safe, appropriately resourced, well-managed and supervised by an appropriately qualified staff member.
- Students involved in leading interventions are equipped with the knowledge, confidence and skills to understand their role in supporting student mental health and respond effectively to a student disclosing that they are experiencing difficulties (see principle 9)
- The SU works with the university to define its place in the whole university approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- The SU works with the University (and constituent departments) to develop a shared vision and understanding towards mental health.
- The SU has staff and representational input into university committees or working groups that have both an operational and strategic focus on mental health and wellbeing.
- The SU works in partnership with the University and students to shape the ongoing development and oversight of support services and interventions, encouraging co-production (see principle 5).

Actions

Bucks Students' Union commits to:

- Ensure all media resources are informative, concise and regularly shared across all available platforms
- Continue to offer support in line with best practice and safe working procedures by regularly reviewing all policies and procedures through the committee structure
- Enabling student leaders to effectively fulfil their roles by providing additional training, guidance and support wherever possible
- Make all avenues of support accessible by creating, implementing and publicising signposting procedures in all appropriate formats and across all platforms
- Ensure the student voice is represented at the University through Sabbatical Officers and/or Students' Union staff attending all relevant University committee meetings
- Plan activities and campaigns that are relevant and appropriate by asking the membership regularly 'what is important to you?'

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We will ensure all media resources are informative, concise and regularly shared across all available platforms

Principle 5

Co-production –

Actively practicing and promoting co-production with students, student campaigning and movement building in order to create change locally and nationally

SUs can empower students to influence change locally and nationally through co-production, lobbying, campaigning and movement building. Co-production is based on the principle that service-users have valuable knowledge through experience and so should be involved in joint decision-making about their mental health care. When students are involved in co-production, this can lead to a number of benefits for both students and organisations, including improved mental health outcomes, the feeling of connectedness among communities and increased likelihood of project success. SUs can practice co-production in their activities and encourage the university to co-produce strategies, interventions and services.

SUs can also empower students by supporting them to identify areas for improvement, turn these into structured, impactful campaigns and connect with others to build movements for change. It is important to support students to distinguish between awareness-raising campaigns and campaigns that lead to change and improvement. Although raising awareness of mental health can change perspectives on mental health, awareness raising alone does not tend to significantly alter behaviours or improve wellbeing. SUs can support students to create campaigns that focus on improving services and aspects of student life that contribute to better mental health.

Modelling the principle

- The SU actively engages students at all levels to co-produce interventions, services and projects relating to student mental health and wellbeing.
- The SU champions co-production with the University, constructively challenging the institution where appropriate to engage with a diverse range of students and seek meaningful involvement in all areas relating to student mental health and wellbeing. This could involve the designing of strategies, services, interventions, policies and procedures.
- The SU supports student campaigning and lobbying to create change and have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of students.
- The SU encourages mental health and wellbeing activism by building grassroots student movements to create change and have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of students in the institution, in the local community and wider society.
- The SU uses a clear and consistent campaigning model that distinguishes between awareness raising and change campaigns.
- The SU uses listening and understanding the student experience to shape its campaigning, lobbying and change-making priorities and activities.
- The SU supports officers and students to develop the knowledge, confidence, skills to campaign, lobby and work in partnership with staff effectively.

Actions

Bucks Students' Union commits to:

- Encourage student-led campaigns by involving members in the planning stages of activities and ensuring Executive Officers are well supported and encouraged
- Support the University in their whole-University approach to wellbeing by building and maintaining collaborative relationships with University colleagues
- Ensure staff offer support to members in campaigning and lobbying initiatives through training and communicating of the campaign procedures
- Continue to be considerate of member views and opinions by listening to and considering all ideas submitted through the student ideas platform on our website
- Increase awareness of national and local campaigns through forging strong links with local community partners and national agencies
- Deliver best practice interventions by better utilising the skills and knowledge of the wider University community
- Ensure that all campaigns are safely delivered through effective training of officers and student leaders and utilising feedback gathered from previous activities

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We will encourage student-led campaigns by involving members in the planning stages of activities and ensuring Executive Officers are well supported and encouraged

Principle 6

Sabbatical team –

The Students' Union has well-supported, performing and thriving sabbatical officers

Through our listening, staff and student officers continually highlighted the unique pressures associated with the sabbatical officer role. The role often comes with a large sense of responsibility, long working hours, and a lack of clarity over where their role sits between being a staff member, student and sometime trustee. Officers are often approached by students seeking support, and many take on student casework with limited support. Officers report finding it difficult to manage their wellbeing, maintain an appropriate work-life balance and find the time to be proactive in creating positive change for students.

SUs can support officers by clarifying the requirements of their role and investing in their personal and professional development. Supporting officers to develop the skills to manage their wellbeing can be helpful, but this must be balanced with creating a role and workplace culture that is conducive to maintaining healthy and fulfilling working practices. They can also help officers to support students and colleagues whilst maintaining appropriate boundaries.

Modelling the principle

- The SU clearly defines the role of sabbatical officers with regard to mental health, ensuring they are not responsible for casework or advising students.
- The SU proactively supports their sabbatical officers to understand, maintain and communicate appropriate boundaries to students and staff.
- The SU supports sabbatical officers to develop the knowledge, confidence and skills to respond when a student or colleague is experiencing mental health difficulties (see principle 8).
- The SU trains, develops and supports their sabbatical officers to carry out their role effectively whilst managing their wellbeing in all phases of their journey, from campaigning for election to transition out of the SU.
- The SU has a strong culture of mentoring and coaching for sabbatical officers, utilising both internal and external support.
- The SU has a strong and supportive culture, allowing for constructive conflict. Staff feel comfortable and safe to challenge officers on their projects, campaigns and work plans - with an appropriate balance of professional support and insight into the student experience blending to create impactful campaigns and activities.
- Staff in the SU role model good working behaviours for newly elected sabbaticals.
- The SU enables their sabbatical officers so that their day-to-day duties are primarily representative; limiting the amount of operational and administrative duties.
- The sabbatical officers are able to enjoy all the same employee benefits as other members of the staff team.
- As an employer, the SU prioritises officers' wellbeing by being proactive in taking responsibility for ensuring a healthy work-life balance and preventing burnout, and ensuring they can speak openly about their mental health (see principle 7).

Actions

Bucks Students' Union commits to:

- Ensure Sabbatical Officers are clear on the responsibilities of their roles through effective induction and ongoing support and training
- Continually develop the skills and experience of Sabbatical Officers by offering advice, training and support with specific scenarios around boundaries, situations with friends who are students and signposting procedures
- Enable Sabbatical Officers to be confident in talking openly about mental health and wellbeing through development sessions, appropriate social media channels and regular, informal check-ins
- Provide extensive support to Sabbatical Officers so they can effectively manage their time by way of 'meeting mapping', formal induction procedures and a 'mentor' on the Senior Management Team
- Promote a culture where Sabbatical Officers are able to cope with challenges from Union staff and the University through formal training and induction procedures for all staff
- Ensure Students' Union staff are supportive and inclusive of Sabbatical Officers through induction procedures and reminders to teams of the role of Sabbatical Officers
- Sabbatical Officers being well informed of the responsibilities of each role within the staff team through appropriate induction training
- Make Sabbatical Officers feel equal members of the staff team by providing employee benefits and development opportunities that are available to all

We will ensure Sabbatical Officers are clear on the responsibilities of their roles through effective induction and ongoing support and training

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Principle 7

Staff wellbeing and development –

Staff wellbeing and development is a strategic priority and people can speak openly about their mental health

Staff wellbeing is crucial to any whole-Union approach. Although working to improve students' lives can be incredibly motivating and rewarding, employees of charities and non-profit organisations experience higher sickness absence rates than in the private sector. Our listening highlighted that long hours, staff burnout and a perception of student concerns taking priority over those of staff are real risks amongst SU staff. Our research with academics shows that, when staff are not adequately prepared to respond when students are experiencing poor mental health, this can also have negative consequences for staff wellbeing.

Staff should have access to support services and interventions that encourage them to improve their wellbeing. However, these must be grounded in a working culture in which staff can speak openly about mental health, adopt healthy working behaviours and feel valued and supported.

Modelling the principle

- The SU provides staff with a platform to openly discuss their wellbeing, and raise concerns about aspects of SU culture and practice that might impact their mental health.
- The SU responds proactively to feedback, changing or adjusting their approach to improve staff wellbeing.
- Staff are able to talk about any problems they are experiencing without fear of judgement or negative consequences for their career.
- The SU has a person-centred culture, encouraging staff to work in ways that are best for them.
- The SU has a number of proactive approaches that seek to prevent burnout.
- Line managers are supported and developed formally to enable them to promote good wellbeing within teams, understand the challenges staff may face, provide appropriate support for their teams and have knowledge of resources that could help.
- The SU ensures staff have access to effective and easily accessible support, either within the University or external that staff are both aware of and understand.
- The Union has specific interventions to support staff to improve their mental health and wellbeing as part of a wider strategic approach.
- The SU provides mental health training for staff that is context and role specific (see principle 7).

Actions

Bucks Students' Union commits to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing by offering employee benefits including flexible working, wellness action plans, training and guidance through the line management structure
- Provide a safe environment where team members have the opportunity to raise issues through the provision of mental health first aiders, the performance management system, wellness action plans and the employee engagement survey
- Respond proactively to feedback ensuring actions identified to improve wellbeing are delivered on by being formally reported through the committee structure
- Encourage the views of team members when implementing wellbeing initiatives, policies and procedures through the committee structure, staff surveys and strategic focus reviews
- Support employees in establishing and maintaining a healthy work-life balance through regular communication with direct reports, promotion of available support and regular monitoring and analysis of leave processes
- Ensure line managers have the knowledge and the confidence to effectively manage the wellbeing of their teams through formal training, the utilisation of the employee database and implementation of the Wellbeing Strategy and a Managers Guide
- Continue to provide accessible and relevant external support by regularly communicating the Employee Assistance Programme, the staff benefits offer and any other service(s) available to promote positive mental health and wellbeing
- Ensure student staff (both paid and volunteer) feel well supported by reviewing the current benefits provision and monitoring training feedback

We will promote positive mental health and wellbeing by offering employee benefits including flexible working, wellness action plans, training and guidance through the line management structure

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Principle 8

Staff knowledge, confidence and skills –

Students' Union staff have the knowledge, confidence and skills to respond to a student or a colleague experiencing mental health difficulties

Our research into The Role of an Academic and for the University Mental Health Charter found that student-facing staff often respond to students in distress, and are seeing an increase in students presenting with difficulties. SU staff we talked to during the development of this framework reported similar experiences. They, too, feel as though their role in regard to responding to students isn't always clear and that they don't always have the knowledge, confidence or necessary support to respond effectively. This can present a risk to the mental health of students and the staff themselves. Many of the recommendations in the reports above can be translated into the SU context.

Modelling the principle

- The SU helps staff understand their role and boundaries with regard to supporting staff and student mental health and supports them to set and maintain these.
- All staff, officers and volunteers are supported to have good knowledge of the support landscape at the University.
- The SU has clear signposting policies and procedures.
- The SU supports staff that work with students to recognise and respond appropriately to a student that they think may be experiencing poor mental health, identify signs of risk and signpost effectively, and maintain the safe boundaries of their role.
- The SU supports line managers in their role to respond to a student or colleague disclosing that they are experiencing difficulties.
- Line managers are equipped with the knowledge, confidence and skills to debrief with staff and students that have had to navigate individual disclosures.
- The SU invests to support the development of knowledge, confidence and skills as a part of a wider wellbeing approach/strategy/plan.

Actions

Bucks Students' Union commits to:

- Deliver role-specific mental health training and ensure signposting procedures are widely promoted to equip staff with the knowledge and confidence to support their colleagues and students
- All staff being aware of relevant policies and procedures, available support and lines of communication through effective induction procedures, the employee handbook and strategic focus reviews
- Gaining knowledge around the diverse and extensive range of potential wellbeing issues through industry updates and ensuring this information is shared wherever appropriate
- Ensure support services are accessible, valued and well promoted to all student and staff groups through all appropriate and relevant channels by obtaining feedback from users and through regular procedural reviews
- Continuous personal and professional development through the performance management system, strategic focus reviews and the annual training plans

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We will deliver role-specific mental health training and ensure signposting procedures are widely promoted to equip staff with the knowledge and confidence to support their colleagues and students

Principle 9

Student leaders and volunteers –

Student leaders and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, confidence and skills to understand their role in supporting student mental health and respond effectively to a student disclosing that they are experiencing difficulties

There is strong evidence that many students turn to their friends when experiencing problems with their mental health and that peer support, when done well, can be effective. However, it is important that student leaders and volunteers understand their role with regards to supporting students and are equipped with the necessary skills to maintain boundaries, respond to students in distress and signpost effectively, in order to prevent any risk to students or student leaders themselves. Those in welfare specific roles might also benefit from additional, role-specific training and support. Student-led activities can also contribute to a culture and environment that promotes good mental health.

Modelling the principle

- The SU supports student leaders and volunteers to understand their role in supporting student mental health and wellbeing and that they are not responsible for giving advice.
- The SU supports student leaders and volunteers to develop the knowledge, confidence and skills to maintain and communicate appropriate boundaries to students.
- The SU trains and develops student leaders and volunteers on how to respond effectively to a student disclosing that they are experiencing difficulties.
- The SU has a clearly defined signposting process, which student leaders and volunteers are engaged with at training, meetings or at an otherwise appropriate juncture.
- The SU has tools and resources available to assist student leaders and volunteers in responding to a student in distress.
- Any new systems or processes that the SU introduces with regards to student groups responding to individuals disclosing are fully researched, have been co-produced with students, and have had clinical oversight.
- Any student leader that is elected or appointed in a role that involves student welfare does not undertake that role without appropriate and role-specific training and support.
- Student leaders and volunteers are supported to understand how they can create safe, inclusive activities that promote positive wellbeing and healthy behaviours (see principle 10).

Actions

Bucks Students' Union commits to:

- Ensure student leaders understand their responsibilities in supporting student mental health and wellbeing through training and the implementation and widely publicised Signposting Procedures
- Provide tools and resources to student leaders by way of a dedicated webpage so they can effectively signpost students within their groups
- Respect and consider student opinions in the creation and approval of policies and procedures through the committee structure, focus groups and informal feedback
- Enable student leaders to effectively deliver on their responsibilities by providing training, refresher training and support
- Support student leaders in delivering safe and inclusive events and activities by implementing adequate procedures and training

We will ensure student leaders understand their responsibilities in supporting student mental health and wellbeing through training and the implementation and widely publicised Signposting Procedures

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Principle 10

Environment and culture –

The SU creates an environment and culture that supports positive mental health and wellbeing

Our environment and culture has a significant effect on our behaviour, wellbeing and mental health. There are many ways in which the SU's everyday activities can promote good mental health. We have already noted how participation in community-building activities can create belonging, which is so essential to our wellbeing. Community-building activities can also encourage students to engage in behaviours that have been shown to be good for wellbeing, including volunteering, exercise and connecting with nature. However, some students face additional barriers to creating a sense of belonging. Also, some sports clubs and societies have been associated with cases of excessive alcohol consumption, bullying and harassment, all of which can have negative implications for mental health.

The physical environment can support good wellbeing, too. It can promote connection with nature, create supportive working environments and encourage socialising. To support the wellbeing of all, environments should be inclusive, accessible and help promote positive wayfinding. All of the principles in this framework need to be supported by an SU culture that clearly prioritises mental health and wellbeing, in which staff and students can talk openly about their mental health and feel supported to disclose if they are experiencing poor mental health.

Modelling the principle

- The SU provides multiple, varied opportunities for staff and students to engage in community-building activities and supports its staff and students to create activities that are inclusive, encourage healthy behaviours, and support positive wellbeing.
- The SU actively works to prevent and address marginalisation, discrimination and harassment among staff and students.
- The SU takes steps to create a culture in which staff and students feel safe and supported to disclose when they are experiencing poor mental health.
- The SU ensures that the working environment supports the wellbeing of its staff, including access to natural light, good ventilation, appropriate temperature, a space that is physically comfortable and is appropriate to the work being carried out.
- Social spaces facilitate and actively encourage connection and wellbeing.
- SU spaces are accessible and the SU invests in positive wayfinding.
- Any redevelopment of space or new designs that are to be SU spaces are designed with accessibility and wellbeing in mind.

Actions

Bucks Students' Union commits to:

- Continue to deliver a diverse and inclusive programme of activities for staff and students through the Big Deal, social events and development and volunteering opportunities
- Challenge all forms of discrimination, marginalisation and harassment through the implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy and Code of Conduct
- Ensure all staff and students feel safe and supported in raising wellbeing and mental health concerns by providing accessible support services and widely shared Signposting Procedures
- Provide a safe and appropriate environment by ensuring the Wellbeing Strategy and health and safety procedures are always observed.
- Encourage engagement from all student groups for all events and activities by ensuring spaces are well maintained, fit for purpose, accessible and accommodating of the diverse needs of our members
- Provide a wholly inclusive offer by identifying reasons why students may not be engaging in particular activities through member research

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We will be delivering a diverse and inclusive programme of activities for staff and students through the Big Deal, social events and development and volunteering opportunities

