



South
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College

East Kilbride



South
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College

Students' Association

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

2019-24

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this Strategy is to raise awareness of the importance of student mental health and wellbeing at South Lanarkshire College. This document will outline the support currently available to students attending the College and will outline the vision for expanding support services over the next five years.

CONTEXT

As outlined in the Scottish Funding Council's Letter of Guidance 2019, all educational institutions must develop their own Mental Health Strategy and Mental Health Agreement to ensure students health and wellbeing is being supported.¹ This focus is shared by NUS Scotland with the launch of their Think Positive Campaign, an initiative funded by the Scottish Government to help progress work on breaking down the stigma of mental ill health.² As part of our commitment to this area, South Lanarkshire College created a Student Mental Health Agreement in AY 2018-19. Created in partnership with the Student Association, the Agreement highlighted four working areas as priorities; areas which will be reflected in this Strategy and Action Plan. Circulated to all current students at the time, the Agreement is available for download on the College website for all new and prospective students to review. This Agreement will be reviewed and updated in AY 2019-20.

Mental health and wellbeing is an area of increasing focus within South Lanarkshire 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 South Lanarkshire 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.

Part of the support available at South Lanarkshire College includes our Student Counselling provision, which has seen an annual increase in demand. A 38% increase took place in 2018/19 compared with the previous year, as well as an increase in the number of male students accessing the service. We are delighted by the Scottish Government's commitment to acknowledge the importance of student counselling and look forward to the commitment of an additional 80 counsellors across the sector.³

In keeping with the Scottish Government's aim of 'wrap-around support for students'⁴, South Lanarkshire College is committed to ensuring that students are fully supported throughout their College experience. By providing integrated support services such as student counselling, pastoral support, mindfulness classes, in addition to guidance and emotional support from fully trained staff, students should feel comfortable requesting support and advice as and when it is required.

1. http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/AboutUs/SFC_Letter_of_Guidance_2019-20.pdf

2. <https://www.thinkpositive.scot/about/>

3. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/delivering-today-investing-tomorrow-governments-programme-scotland-2018-19/pages/8/>

4. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/delivering-today-investing-tomorrow-governments-programme-scotland-2018-19/pages/8/>

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH VISION

At South Lanarkshire College, our vision is to ensure that students feel confident and able to access the mental health and wellbeing support services that are available to them, without fear of judgement. By creating a welcoming and inclusive environment we can foster dialogue about the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing, in addition to supporting those suffering from mental health concerns. This will allow us to work proactively and seek new ways of supporting students enabling them to gain the best possible outcome from their studies.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The College's Student Mental Health Strategy is based on three strategic priorities:

1. Tackle Stigma & Discrimination
2. Support Provision & Staff Training
3. Partnership Working

1. TACKLE STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

1.1 EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

South Lanarkshire College hosts a variety of mental health and wellbeing events and activities throughout the academic year. Continuing to promote and expand upon these events will assist with breaking down barriers surrounding discussion of mental health.

Several of these events will be co-ordinated in close collaboration with the Students' Association to ensure the student voice is heard and that events are relevant to their needs. This partnership will continue to result in the additional benefit of increased student participation and engagement.

1.2 AWARENESS OF COLLEGE SUPPORT SERVICES

It is vital that we continue to increase awareness of College support services to prospective and current students. Within South Lanarkshire College, students can access free student counselling, pastoral support, free weekly Mindfulness sessions, guidance sessions through the Faculty and one-to-one tailored support within the Advice Centre. Through continued promotion of these services, students will feel confident accessing these facilities, without fear of discrimination.

Greater participation in College events and activities by facilitators of support services, such as student counselling and mindfulness, will raise the profile of such services. In turn this should result in an increased uptake of provision.

Student Services, the Student Association and Faculties all have an important role in promoting the support services that are available to students, in addition to ensuring referrals to these services are streamlined.

1.3 INCREASE UPTAKE OF SUPPORT SERVICES BY MALE STUDENTS

By breaking down the stigma attached to discussing mental health and promoting the services available to students throughout the College, this should have the knock-on effect of increasing uptake of support services amongst all students and particularly male students within the College.

To date, there has been an annual increase in the number of male students accessing student counselling and this is a trend the College hopes to encourage. It is our aim that eventually there will be a 50:50 split reflected in the number of female to male students accessing support services.

To achieve this aim we will be launching the 'Promoting Positive MENTAL Health' campaign in AY 2019/20, in addition to encouraging open dialogue about men's mental health and wellbeing in general.

1.4 PROMOTION OF POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING INITIATIVES

It is important to remember that everyone has mental health and just as we would promote physical health benefits, it is equally important to promote the benefits of positive mental health and wellbeing. Highlighting simple ways of maintaining good mental health will help support a preventative approach rather than a reactive approach. This can be achieved in conjunction with our mindfulness classes, events planning provision and open dialogue about mental health and wellbeing.

2. SUPPORT PROVISION & TRAINING

2.1 ONGOING STAFF AND STUDENT TRAINING

A programme of ongoing staff and student training in relation to mental health and wellbeing is imperative to providing an understanding and supportive environment to students. An effective CPD programme will be made available to staff throughout the academic session and will include a variety of mental health and wellbeing options.

Training will be cross-college to ensure all areas are able to access training provision.

Mental Health First Aid and ASIST courses are already a training requirement priority for numerous staff across the College. We would expect this trend to continue with additional staff receiving training in these crucial areas.

Students will also have access to training opportunities as they arise. To date we have provided SafeTALK training to class groups in order to raise awareness of suicide prevention. Student Association Executive Officers can access CPD training opportunities via Staff Development Days and external training opportunities. The training available to date has included ASIST, Mental Health First Aid, LGBT Equality, Gender Based Violence Prevention and Going Further for Student Carers.

2.2 HOLISTIC SUPPORT INITIATIVES

Working in conjunction with the first strategic priority of breaking down barriers and promoting services, the College recognises the need to provide a 'wrap-around' service, in order to provide holistic support that is streamlined throughout all college areas.

Students should feel supported throughout their student experience from when they first apply to the College to transitioning into employment or further study. As outlined above, staff training and promotion of mental health and wellbeing initiatives will help to create a holistic support service. Campaigns will be carefully selected and naturally follow on through each academic year to maintain momentum. Cross-College partnerships and Working Groups will allow discussion to ensure support needs are being met. A referral flowchart will allow staff to clearly pinpoint how best to support or refer students as required.

2.3 ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

It is essential that a culture of continuous analysis and review is in place to guarantee that student support needs are being met. Analysis will take place through multiple channels such as Student Question Time, the annual Student Counselling Service Report, student questionnaires, anecdotal feedback from students and In-Course Questionnaires. Student testimonials will be gathered in order to assist with a review of processes and to help promote services in the future.

The Student Mental Health Agreement will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure it is current and relevant for the student body. A report will be filed each year as part of this review to gauge the success of the Agreement and to identify if there are any areas requiring amendment.

3. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

3.1 EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

Fostering a collaborative approach with external partners is integral to maintaining current staff training and student referrals. The College will continue to forge excellent external partner relationships and investigate if new partnerships can be forged in the future.

We will continue to link into national campaigns in order to remain current with the needs of the student population.

3.2 CROSS-COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

Internal cross-college partnerships are equally important in ensuring streamlined support services are available to all students.

The College Mental Health Working Group remit is to review the mental health and wellbeing initiatives taking place within the College and update these as relevant. Group membership should involve participation from all three Faculties and from college support areas such as the Student Association, Student Services and Human Resources.

3.3. STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AGREEMENT (NUS THINK POSITIVE CAMPAIGN)

Student Services and the Student Association launched the South Lanarkshire College Student Mental Health Agreement in 2018/19, as part of the NUS Think Positive Campaign.

This framework will be a recurrent focus for both the College and the Student Association. A review will be generated after each Agreement is launched to allow for reflection and discussion on ways to build upon the work being carried out in relation to student mental health and wellbeing.

ACTION PLAN

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY 2019-2024

Each priority has a set of aims designed to progress the priorities and ensure implementation across all areas of the College during AY 2019-20 through to AY 2023-24.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.

Tackle Stigma and Discrimination

Aim	Actions	To be completed by whom / timeline	Arrangements for monitoring progress / impact	Progress to date
1.1 Events & Activities	<p>Co-ordinate Mental Health and Wellbeing events and activities to take place throughout the academic session across the College. Cross-College partnerships required to organise these events and to investigate new opportunities.</p> <p>Close partnership working with the Student Association to ensure the student voice is heard and acted upon.</p>	<p>Events and activities to continue during AY 2019/20 through to AY 2023/24.</p> <p>Student Services, Student Association, Faculties and Human Resources.</p>	<p>Ongoing progress monitored through Mental Health Working Group, Student Association meetings and AGM, Operational Plans & Self Evaluation.</p> <p>Event questionnaire feedback.</p> <p>Student and Staff informal feedback.</p>	<p>To date the College has already hosted several very successful events with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. We will continue to review these events and build upon them as required.</p> <p>Annual World Mental Health Day and Health and Wellbeing Activities already in College Calendar.</p>
1.2 Increase Awareness of College Support Services	<p>Continued promotion of student counselling service, free weekly mindfulness classes, pastoral support services, guidance support and one-to-one emotional support sessions with Student Services staff.</p> <p>Designated mental health & wellbeing section on the College website continues to be current and maintained.</p> <p>Information on mental health and wellbeing updated annually in the Student Handbook.</p> <p>Mental health and wellbeing focus as part of the Learner Induction Videos to be updated annually.</p>	<p>Promotion to continue throughout AY 2019/20 through to AY 2023/24.</p> <p>Student Services, Student Association, Faculties and HR.</p>	<p>Uptake of counselling appointments as a result of class visits noted on counselling database.</p> <p>Counselling referrals/waiting list statistics.</p> <p>Annual Counselling Service Report produced.</p> <p>Student and Staff informal feedback.</p>	<p>Table in main atrium for student counsellor organised for start of academic session to raise awareness of counselling services.</p> <p>Class visits by student counsellor at start of academic session.</p> <p>New pastoral support pull-up banner created and provided to Pastoral Support Team.</p> <p>Student Association class visits highlight support services available.</p> <p>Pocket guide of Student Support leaflet created and available at key locations throughout College.</p> <p>Annual review of College website and Student Handbook.</p> <p>Creation of designated student support email student.support@slc.ac.uk</p> <p>Explore online mental health resources with a focus on self-help and resilience strategies</p>
1.3 Increase Uptake of Support Services by Male Students	<p>Launch 'Promoting Positive MENTal Health' campaign in November to link in with national 'Movember' initiative.</p> <p>Creation and launch of Respect Campaign. Promotion via posters, website and social media.</p> <p>Promotional posters located throughout College premises to encourage increased uptake.</p>	<p>The College's 'Promoting Positive MENTal Health' and 'Movember' campaigns</p> <p>November 2019.</p> <p>Student Services, Student Association and Faculties.</p> <p>Respect campaign launch during AY 2019/20.</p> <p>Led by Student Association with support from Student Services.</p>	<p>Analyse statistics of uptake of student counselling.</p> <p>Student Questionnaire as part of 'Promoting Positive MENTal Health' Campaign.</p> <p>Student and Staff informal feedback.</p>	<p>The 'Promoting Positive MENTal Health' campaign was launched in November 2019. Male staff members and students took part by wearing pink t-shirts and pink hi-visibility vests to show their support for the event.</p> <p>Local coverage took place with an article in the local newspaper highlighting the success of the event.</p> <p>Student feedback was incredibly positive and included emails to the designated student support email address requesting support as a direct result of the event.</p> <p>The 2020/21 Student Counselling Report reflects the important work being undertaken in this area, with the ratio of male to female students seeking talking support shifting from approximately 4.6/1 to 3/1.</p>
1.4 Promotion of Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Initiatives	<p>Co-ordinate positive mental health and wellbeing events and activities, such as World Mental Health Day, Health and Wellbeing Week and Refreshers'. Cross-College partnerships required to organise these events and investigate new opportunities.</p> <p>Review of Student Mental Health Agreement 2018/19 and Report. Creation of new Student Mental Health Agreement during 2019/20 session.</p> <p>College website to be reviewed on regular basis to ensure current and up to date information available.</p> <p>College and Student Association social media accounts to promote importance of positive mental health.</p> <p>Mindfulness practitioner to participate in College events and activities to raise health benefits of mindfulness.</p>	<p>Events and activities to continue during AY 2019/20 through to AY 2023/24.</p> <p>Student Services, Student Association, Faculties and HR.</p> <p>Student Mental Health Agreement to be reviewed on an annual basis. Student Services, Student Association, Mental Health Working Group.</p> <p>College Website annual review by Student Services and Marketing Department.</p>	<p>Student Questionnaires provided at annual events.</p> <p>Student and Staff informal feedback.</p> <p>Interaction on social media accounts.</p> <p>Student Mental Health Agreement Annual Report.</p> <p>Annual review of uptake of Mindfulness classes.</p>	<p>Free weekly mindfulness classes available for all students to access.</p> <p>Annual World Mental Health Day and Health and Wellbeing events in College Calendar.</p> <p>Annual review of College website in place.</p> <p>Student Association social media plan for 2019/20 created.</p> <p>Mindfulness practitioner has attended several College organised events, including Freshers' and Refreshers'.</p> <p>Ongoing annual review of Student Mental Health Agreement.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.

Support Provision & Training

Aim	Actions	To be completed by whom / timeline	Arrangements for monitoring progress / impact	Progress to date
2.1 Ongoing Staff Training	<p>Acknowledge and review staff CPD opportunities.</p> <p>Continue to increase number of ASIST and Scottish Mental Health First Aid trained staff.</p> <p>Head of Student Services to attend annual Faculty Team Meetings to update staff on developments.</p> <p>Staff attendance at regular Staff Development days.</p>	<p>Ongoing CPD/ Annual Career Reviews.</p> <p>Head of HR/Training Officer.</p> <p>Faculty/Departmental team updates.</p> <p>Head of Student Services</p>	<p>In-house Career Review Process will highlight ongoing training needs for staff.</p> <p>Ongoing progress monitored through Mental Health Working Group.</p> <p>CPD Requests.</p> <p>Feedback through formal questionnaires.</p> <p>Training evaluative statistics.</p>	<p>Designated staff development days scheduled annually.</p> <p>Faculty Team Meeting briefings take place on a regular basis.</p> <p>As of January 2022, there are twenty three Mental Health First aiders. All of whom have received specialised in-house training.</p>
2.2 Holistic Support Initiatives	<p>Support Services within the College should be easily accessible and well sign posted to encourage students to request support.</p> <p>Referral Flowchart to be created to assist with signposting students to appropriate support services.</p> <p>Clear online, phone, email and one-to-one support is to be promoted. Designated student support email available student.support@slc.ac.uk</p> <p>Continue to provide confidential, non-judgemental assistance for those requesting support with their mental health.</p> <p>Designated Mental Health & Wellbeing section on the College website to be current and well maintained.</p>	<p>Ongoing initiatives. Faculties, HR, Student Services and Student Association.</p> <p>Referral Flowchart to be distributed to all staff. March 2020.</p>	<p>Ongoing progress monitored through Mental Health Working Group.</p> <p>Ongoing Guidance and Support function monitored by the Head of Student Services.</p> <p>Counselling referrals/waiting list statistics.</p> <p>Annual Counselling Service Report produced.</p>	<p>Continued promotion of Student Support Email address.</p> <p>Well trained staff and support structures already in place and working well.</p> <p>Pocket guide of Student Support leaflet created and available at key locations throughout College.</p> <p>Referral Flowchart format agreed by Mental Health Working Group. Forwarded to Marketing for review and distribution.</p> <p>Creation of Pathways to Wellness document created to highlight both internal and external mental health support services.</p>
2.3 Review and Analysis	<p>Monitor current evaluative systems such as You Said, We Did.</p> <p>Listen to student feedback and continue to build upon services, as required.</p> <p>Liaise with Quality Forum in relation to Quality Audit Group.</p> <p>Update Student Mental Health Agreement for each Academic Year.</p>	<p>Ongoing evaluation by Curriculum Manager for Quality, Faculties, Student Services, HR and Student Association.</p> <p>Student Mental Health Agreement to be reviewed at the end of each Academic Year and Report to be generated.</p> <p>Student Services & Student Association.</p>	<p>Student Surveys and Evaluative methods</p> <p>Student Question Time</p> <p>You Said, We Did evaluation.</p> <p>Student Mental Health Agreement review.</p>	<p>Annual Student Question Time system in place.</p> <p>Quality procedures firmly established.</p> <p>Annual review of Student Mental Health Agreement.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3.

Partnership Working.

Aim	Actions	To be completed by whom / timeline	Arrangements for monitoring progress / impact	Progress to date
3.1 External Partnership Initiatives	<p>Continue to work in partnership with local and national support organisations.</p> <p>Ensure clear referral processes to external agencies, as appropriate.</p> <p>Continue to link into national campaigns such as 'Movember' Campaign and World Mental Health Day.</p> <p>Continue to invite external agencies to training sessions for staff and students.</p>	Ongoing partnership initiatives. Human Resources, Student Services.	<p>College website provides links to external agencies.</p> <p>Feedback from student and staff training sessions.</p> <p>Student Questionnaires from College events.</p>	<p>Strongly established referral routes to external agencies.</p> <p>Current campaigns already linked with existing external agencies.</p> <p>Training that has taken place to date in AY 2019/20 includes Going Further for Student Carers; LGBT Awareness; Resilience Screening (ACEs) and Students and Gambling: Education, Prevention and Support.</p>
3.2 Cross-College Partnerships	<p>The Student Mental Health Strategy and Student Mental Health Agreement will be a recurrent item on the Mental Health Working Group agenda.</p> <p>Ongoing collaboration on current initiatives between Student Services and the Student Association.</p>	Ongoing initiatives. Student Services, Student Association, Mental Health Working Group, Human Resources.	<p>Progress monitored at quarterly Mental Health Working Group meetings.</p> <p>Minutes of Mental Health Working Group.</p>	Ongoing discussion at Mental Health Working Group.
3.3 Student Mental Health Agreement (NUS Think Positive Campaign)	<p>Review and expand upon the Student Mental Health Agreement on an annual basis.</p> <p>Close working partnership between Student Services and the Student Association to ensure the Agreement is reflective and inclusive of the student voice.</p> <p>Create a visual version of the 2019/20 Agreement to improve accessibility</p>	Ongoing review. Student Services, Student Association and Mental Health Working Group.	<p>Progress monitored at quarterly Mental Health Working Group meetings.</p> <p>Minutes of Mental Health Working Group.</p> <p>2018/19 Student Mental Health Agreement and Report.</p>	<p>Creation and publication of 2018/19 Student Mental Health Agreement and subsequent report.</p> <p>Ongoing creation and implementation of Student Mental Health Agreement.</p> <p>Video created to introduce Student Mental Health Agreement, as part of improving accessibility.</p>



MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY