Developing a Mental Health Strategy for a Higher Education Institute: highlights and lowlights

Dr Diane Phimister and Annette Dix
Coventry University, UK

Abstract

The number of first-year students arriving at university who report a mental health condition is now five times what it was 10 years ago. There's also been a trebling in the number of students dropping out of university with mental health problems (Bewick and Stallman 2018). In addition, there are growing concerns about the mental health and well-being of academic staff with some studies quoting as high as 55% of academics experiencing symptoms including depression, sleeping problems and cognitive impairment (Grove 2018). Worryingly, the number of suicide deaths among UK students have also risen by 56% from 2007 to 2016. In the 12 month period ending July 2017, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) recorded 95 student suicides, with students now being at increased risk of suicide compared to young adults in the general population. University staff are best placed to support students experiencing mental health issues and therefore need to be adequately equipped to respond to them effectively (McAllister et al. 2014).

At Coventry University we recognise the challenges that both staff and students are experiencing in managing well-being and mental health and the impact this has had on the individual. Our aspiration therefore is to work together to develop a culture in which we focus upon peoples strengths, offer effective and accessible support and facilitate the integration and embedding of staff and student mental wellbeing across the institution. In order to take a sustained and considered approach to this issue we have developed a mental health strategy which underpins all our work in this area. The development of the strategy had some significant highlights and also some equally significant low lights. This paper will share learning from that activity and Provide a platform for other institutions to begin to build their own strategy.

Biography:

Diane is leading the implementation of the Mental Health Policy for the group; manages the Mental Health and Wellbeing Zone team and also leads the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Team. Her work as the Associate Head of School for student experience enabled and empowered Diane to support colleagues in developing their skills and encouraged and supported innovation and creativity in teaching practice. Additionally, this post supported Diane's enthusiasm and commitment to taking a student centric approach; she firmly believes that if we are to produce happy, healthy ambassadors for the university we need to ensure students receive an all-round positive experience supported by content, enthusiastic and committed staff. As such she is actively involved in attempting to address the mental health needs of students as a young population coping with the challenges of Higher Education and has trained in all aspects of MHFA to further this

Speaker Publications:

1. "Back on your feet Nurs Stand 2010 Nov 3-9;25(9):61. doi: 10.7748/ns.25.9.61.s54.
2. "Make the most of your time with these coping strategies. Nurs Stand 2011 Sep 28-Oct 4;26(4):67. doi: 10.7748/ns2011.09.26.4.67.p6466..

8th International Conference on Mental Health and Human Resilience; March 09-10, 2020 Rome, Italy

Abstract Citation:

Diane Phimister, Developing a Mental Health Strategy for a Higher Education Institute: highlights and lowlights, Mental Health 2020, 8th International Conference on Mental Health and Human Resilience; March 09-10, 2020 Rome, Italy (https://mentalhealth.insightconferences.com/abstract/2020/developing-a-mental-health-strategy-for-a-higher-education-institute-highlights-and-lowlights)