MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING WORKING GROUP

Meeting Minutes – Tuesday 12 March @ 10:05am
Teams meeting

Attendees:
Duncan Stuart (DS), Karen Scaife (KS), Jason Bohan (JB), Brian Paterson (BP), Anna Goldhawk (AG), Dr. Christine Roberts (CR), Sai Shradda S. Viswanathan (VP Welfare), Janine Chalmers (JC), Jemma Murdoch (JM), Tim Baker (TB), Garry Fisher (GF), Morag Beers (MB), Keith Campbell (KC), Dr Madge C Jackson (MJ), Chris Berry (CB), Rebekah Walker (RW), Wendy Lowe (WL), Claire Hawes (CH), William Tocher (WT), Dr Mary Pryor (MP), Marwa Elsidiq (ME), Angela Hadden (AH), Johanna Pilskog (JP)

Apologies:
Debbie Dyker, Ellie Dick, Nick Edwards, Christina Cameron, Ian Robotham, Rhiannon Thompson

1. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER** *(Appendix 1)*

    The minutes of the Mental Health and Wellbeing meeting held on 6 September 2023 were approved.

2. **MATTERS ARISING**

3. **WELLBEING STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT** (KS) *(Appendix 2)*
    KS started with extending their gratitude to teams involved in the Arrivals and Wellbeing Hub during Welcome Week January 2024. We had a good turn-out of students at both presentations and stalls. External services offered valuable support for students, especially our international cohort and will become a standing element of student welcome.

    We saw less engagement during the BeWell and Inclusion week in October 2023, particularly at our Foresterhill campus which will direct future planning. Our "Wear it Green Day"-campaign earned lots of engagement with 236 members of staff taking part across the week.

    Mental Health First Aid network
    AG informed on a new structure for the network meetings, including knowledge exchange and training opportunities. After an update to the members list, we currently have 119 active Mental Health First Aiders across schools/directorates. **Action:** AG will identify any gaps across university teams where recruitment of new Mental Health First aiders should take priority.

    Student Helpline app
    The Student Helpline app, Spectrum.Life, has seen a 300% increase in users after targeted promotions and campaigns. We will continue to collaborate with the team behind the app to personalise the experience for UoA students and increase awareness and usage in our community.

    Wellbeing Roadshows
    For the coming quarter the Wellbeing team are delivering 'Wellbeing Roadshows;' information stalls with interactive activities designed to inform, empower, and support our

staff community on wellbeing and mental health across schools and directorates. All visits can be found on the [staff events pages](#).

Wellbeing workshops
As we seek to further embed wellbeing in the workplace, workshops will be offered to directorates and schools including SMT in the form of management wellbeing sessions, line manager/middle manager workshops and team workshops.

University Mental Health Day 2024 (14 March)
Events and resources for students [here](#). Events and resources for staff [here](#).
Collaborating charities: [Scottish Action for Mental Health](#) (SAMH) & [Men Who Talk](#).
Internal sessions offered on the day include 'Introduction to Suicide Prevention' for the PGR School, 'Men's Mental Health workshop' for School of Psychology and for the Mental Health First Aider network.

Corporate Games 2024 – joint team with ASV
CR informed that the university is taking part in this year's Corporate Games as a joint team with ASV. Information can be found [here](#).

4. **NEUROINCLUSIVE CULTURE AND PRACTICE** (MJ)
   Senior lecturer in School of Psychology Dr. Madge Jackson presented slides on 'Neurodiversity and Neuroinclusion in Higher Education.'

   The vision for this project is to foster and maintain a neuroinclusive learning, research, and workplace environment. The project is still in development but will look at suggestions for culture change such as language use, practical change such as environmental adjustments and process change such as recruitment and interview formats.

   Currently in the process of setting up a Neurodiversity Network, a resource hub and plan community events for both staff and students.

   Action: Several to link in with MJ regarding presentation to their areas (Mental Health First Aiders, Registry team, PGR school) See action list.
   Action: KS/JB to link in with MJ for information to include in the 'Good practice for embedding wellbeing in the curriculum'.

   Neurodiversity Celebration Week 2024 (18 – 24 March) [full programme](#).

   VP Welfare asked clarification on a comment made related to de-colonising the curriculum. MJ confirmed plans would highlight cross cultural knowledge and tackling social bias on intersectionality within the community.

   JC highlighted in the meeting chat that the university approved the 'Neurodivergent Equality Policy' last year, this can be found [here](#).

5. **MENTAL HEALTH UPDATE**

   5.1 Suicide Safer University Strategy (KS) *(Appendix 3 + 3a)*

   A discussion was held on what support is available for staff who deem they are providing unreasonable levels of support to students, recognising that first point of contact tend to be the preferred continuous contact for students.

JM advised that staff in those situations should contact Student Support, either via the 'report a concern' form or by email. As per the 'Support for Study Policy' all concerns will be reviewed by Student Support for potential referral through the policy which is collaborative between school and student support. Thoughts will be given on how to make staff in schools aware of the policy and process.

Action: KS to include key for acronyms in paper
Action: KS to link in with JB/JM to distribute information on the 'Support for Study' policy/process to staff
Action: KS/AG to revise resources on pastoral support webpage, including boundaries and signposting

Any other feedback on paper to k.scaife@abdn.ac.uk

5.2 Stress management and supporting staff (GF) *(Appendix 4)*

GF highlighted aspects from the paper including already ongoing measures, training and support available. As per paper there are planned activities going forward to continuously supporting schools and directorates in proactively supporting their staff when it comes to stress.

Suggestions about how we further support the community with stress management within the resources available is welcomed by email to garry.fisher@abdn.ac.uk

6. **RETIREMENT OF SAFEZONE APP** (MB/KC) *(Appendix 5)*

As part of the university's current budget review a decision has been taken to discontinue the contract with Safezone. This decision was made based on low uptake and usage of the app. MB went on to highlight that the app is largely a platform to contact services and support (security office, webpage). Service remains unchanged, it is the way of contacting them that is changing. A communications plan has been created to support the retirement and ensure staff and students are clear on the routes to accessing the same services they would have done through Safezone.

Concern was raised by BP for the currently understaffed security team who might see an increase in phone calls in the absence of the app working as a triage system. It was also highlighted that the recent removal of telephony across the university has created a barrier to reach the security team and that the removal of the app will create another one. In case of critical incidents on campus the app could be used for push notifications to a larger body of people. (Martyn's Law)

VP Welfare raised concerns that the Students' Union, as representatives of the student body, had not been involved in the consultation.

Consultation done by VP Welfare with other universities in Scotland show that despite budget cuts other establishments have chosen to retain Safezone. The Students' Union feel that this could send the message that the university are not concerned for students' safety.

DS asked for clarification if the decision is final, and MB informed that if there are other budgets available it can be reviewed again.

Suggestions made by the group included making the Safezone app mandatory for all, especially if on campus out of hours. BP highlighted that the app works countrywide for access to emergency services at your nearest location.

7. **VERBAL WELLBEING UPDATE**

   7.1 Library wellbeing project (JP)

- Collaborating with a team from the three main libraries and Students' Union to enhance wellbeing activities and spaces in their locations.
- This has included weekly pop-up activities in room 224 in SDRL, such as 'Breathing and Meditation' sessions, Crafting and Gaming. We have seen an increase in both interest and visits for each activity organised. Events/Activities posted here.
- During revision week (project name 'Take a break' 22 – 26 April) room 224 in SDRL will be set up as a wellbeing space throughout, also offering fun and relevant workshops with the Student Learning Service and other activities students can engage with in between studying.

   7.2 Buddy Scheme AY24/25 (JP)

- Change in AY24/25: Moved from one-to-one matching to a group experience. Three Buddies in a Buddy team (where possible diverse and from three different schools) will manage a group of up to fifteen new students from the same schools as themselves.
- Focus will be on settling-in support through a range of social activities in the first few months of the term, with buddies advising about activities and support available from the university.
- Recruitment of Buddies have begun, and this role is open to all UG students. More info here.

   7.3 Wellbeing Roadshow
   Covered in agenda item 3.

8. **ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

9. **AOCB**

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** (4 June 2024 at 10:05 via Teams)

   ACTIONS SUMMARY

Reference	Description	Action by	Status
120324 Agenda item 3	AG to identify any gaps across university teams where recruitment of new Mental Health First aiders should take priority.	AG	
120324 Agenda item 4	MJ to share presentation slides with group	MJ	Completed
120324 Agenda item 4	Several to link in with MJ regarding presentation to their areas (Mental Health First Aiders, Registry team, PGR school)	AG/AH/CH	
120324 Agenda item 4	KS/JB to link in with MJ for information to include in the 'Good practice for embedding wellbeing in the curriculum'	KS/JB	
120324 Agenda item 5.1	KS to share Suicide safe paper with WL	KS	

120324 Agenda item 5.1	KS to link in with JB/JM to distribute information on the 'Support for Study' policy/process to staff KS/AG to revise resources on pastoral support webpage, including boundaries and signposting	KS/JB/JM/AG	