



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING WORKING GROUP

Thursday 1st July 2021 at 15:00, remotely, via Teams.

PRESENT: Duncan Stuart (Chair) (DS), Naomi Taylor (Clerk) (NT), Garry Fisher (GF), Rebekah Walker (RW), Karen Scaife (KS), Debbie Dyker (DD), Abbe Brown (AB), Marylee Anderson (MA), Ceri Trevethan (CeT), Janine Chalmers (JC), Anna Goldhawk (AG), Anna Shea (AS), Mary Pryor (MP), Christine McGrath (CM), Brian Paterson (BP), Student Association President (AK), AUSA Communities Officer (CTB), Vice President for Welfare (ID),

APOLOGIES: Nick Edwards (NE), Tracey White (TW), Clare Trembleau (CT), Christopher Berry (CB), R. Arnold (RA), Morag Beedie (MB), Jacqueline Tuckwell (JT), David Hutchison (DH), Kerry Harrison (KH), Timothy Baker (TB), Christina Cameron (CC), Ernesto Compatangelo (EC), Stephen N Davies (SD), Alison Jenkinson (AJ), Jenny Killin (JK), Jane MacKenzie (JM), Alysia M Reid (AR), Tommy Daly (TD), Sherine Tabsh (ST), Nicola Stokes (NS), Richard P.K. Wells (RW), Gail McKeitch (GM), UCU.

1 INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The group welcomed Anna Shea, Acting Head of the Counselling Service, Alisa Koester, Student President for AUSA, Ivana DrdÁková, Vice President for AUSA Welfare, and Camilo Torres-Barragán, Vice President for AUSA Communities, to their first meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21ST APRIL

The notes of the meeting held on 21st April were approved.

3 MATTERS ARISING

All items were noted as completed or highlighted under items in the agenda.

4 MENTAL HEALTH UPDATES

- 4.1 AG updated the group on progress with the Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA). To date there have been some good discussions around the issues raised by previous student focus groups and informal consultation. Over the coming months further consultation will take place with students to inform the development of the SMHA. A small working group, with representation from the University and AUSA has been formed to take the project forward. An update on this matter will be provided at the next meeting.

Action: AG

- 4.2 A student intern has been working on a project to evaluate the Mental Health First Aid Network (MHFA network). CeT provided a verbal update. Initial feedback

gathered from the MHFA network indicates a large percentage of the network were female with a varied age range and from schools and departments across the university. MHFAs see their role primarily as a signposting role and for raising awareness of mental health. The main issues highlighted from the evaluation relate to workload and burnout closely followed by anxiety, depression and mood change.

- 4.3 Focus groups will be created for further discussion, and a full summary will be available to the group.

Action: CeT/GF

- 4.4 RW provided an update on the MHFA Network. A cheat sheet is under development to support the MHFAs when dealing with staff or student interactions.

- 4.5 An updated list of MHFAs and their department or school can be found on staffnet. Work is ongoing to make the list more accessible e.g. with a search function.

- 4.6 Further work is ongoing to identify areas where more MHFAs are needed to provide adequate representation throughout the university.

- 4.7 The group discussed raising the profile of the MHFA role to encourage more male members of staff to become first aiders.

5 TRAINING

- 5.1 GF discussed the plans to take forward proposals for training for stress, including work and personal related stress. He noted the extensive amount of work required to take this forward, and he will be working closely with CT on this item. An update will be provided on this matter at the next meeting.

Action: GF/CT

- 5.2 BT highlighted the need for training for all staff and not solely line managers and that the training should be specific to support their roles at the university.

- 5.3 RW told the group she is currently developing a series of videos to raise awareness of the various support services available to staff and how they offer support.

6 POLICY AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 The group received the policy and strategy paper. KS provided a brief update to the group, noting the stress policy received by the group is an updated version of the original stress policy.

- 6.2 The mental health policy has gone through various approvals, with changes made to align it more closely to the strategy. Staff and student consultations have taken place, and the paper is now going through the committee approval process.

- 6.3 KS welcomes all comments on the policy and strategy to be sent to her by close of play July 7th.

Action: All

- 6.4 An action plan will be developed following the launch of the strategy to highlight key priorities. An update will be provided on this matter at the next meeting.

Action: KS/GF/RW

7 WELLBEING UPDATES

- 7.1 The group received an overview of activity for April to July, including engagement and feedback. It was noted that a number of updates have been carried out to make the student wellbeing web pages more accessible to students.
- 7.2 RW highlighted the positive aspects of meeting face to face on wellbeing and mood following feedback from the staff walking meeting campaign.
- 7.3 The Men's Health Week campaign received high engagement from staff and students who submitted content for the mental health video.
- 7.4 Engagement through May was significantly lower than recent months - following feedback from other universities this wasn't unusual for that time of year.
- 7.5 It was highlighted that students and staff engage more with personal experiences shared by other members of the university community. Topics relating to mental health, sleep and study tips and resources continue to see the highest engagement throughout all communication channels.

8 ANNUAL LEAVE

- 8.1 DS opened the discussion on annual leave, highlighting the concerns that some staff may feel unable to take their full annual leave entitlement due to workload pressures.
- 8.2 MP shared her concerns with the group for staff who are struggling to take their annual leave due to the increased demand for support for students.
- 8.3 It was highlighted that staff should be encouraged to take their annual leave and that this year has been exceptionally challenging with many staff experiencing an increase in workload due to the ongoing pandemic.
- 8.4 Discussion took place on the limit of carrying over annual leave, noting the concerns if staff continued to extend annual leave it could lead to burnout and stress.
- 8.5 It was noted that staff with specialist skills can find it challenging to arrange cover for their role while on annual leave and often interrupt their leave for work commitments.
- 8.6 It was agreed that more encouragement and support is needed for staff feel able to use their annual and this matter will be raised with SMT for further discussion.

Action: DD

9 HOME WORKING/RETURNING TO WORK

- 9.1 DS opened the discussion for home working and returning to work.
- 9.2 There were no comments from the group on this matter.

- 9.3 Information on the home working policy and guidance for returning to campus will be circulated to staff week commencing July 5th.

10 UPDATE ON THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACTION PLAN

- 10.1 The group received the updated action plan. GF provided an update on any changes to the plan since the group met in April. He welcomes any comments and asked for them to be sent to wellbeing@abdn.ac.uk

11 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- 11.1 Trauma, GF will meet with NE to discuss the matter of trauma for students.

Action: GF

- 11.2 The Counselling Service would like to offer their support on this matter.

12 AOCB

- 12.1 There were no other matter of competent business raised for discussion.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1 Tuesday 12th October 2021 at 15:00, remotely, via Teams.