

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

1 STRATEGY AIMS

- 1.1 The University of Aberdeen strongly believes that safeguarding the mental and physical wellbeing of its staff and students is of paramount importance.
- 1.2 The aim of this strategy is to promote the University's intention to actively support and improve the physical, mental and social health of its community.
- 1.3 The University recognises that positive health and wellbeing is not just the absence of illness; it combines many aspects including the physical, social, emotional, spiritual, mental and societal.
- 1.4 The University also recognises that many factors, both internal to the University and external to it, influence the health and wellbeing of the staff and student communities.
- 1.5 A key aspect of the strategy is the focus on promoting the opportunities for support which the University offers and also raising awareness of wellbeing and mental health. Prevention of mental health problems are critical to any strategy which seeks to support the mental health of staff and students.
- 1.6 This strategy supports the University in reminding staff and students that discrimination or harassment on the basis of mental health will not be tolerated, in accordance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy and Code for Staff and Students.
- 1.7 This strategy underpins a culture in which staff and students can continue to achieve their goals and reach their full potential.

2 OBJECTIVES

- 1 Embed a culture of openness regarding mental health and wellbeing issues;
- 2 Engage with the University community to establish how the University can improve the mental health and wellbeing support available;
- 3 Increase awareness-raising and communication strategies to promote the wide range of health and wellbeing services available to staff and students within the University;
- 4 Empower staff and students to recognise and support colleagues and peers who may require help to achieve mental health and wellbeing goals.

3 IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1 The strategy will be delivered through:
 - Awareness-raising campaigns and events for both staff and students;
 - Partnership-working across the University;
 - Embedding the ethos of the strategy through integrating it within the structures and values of the University;
 - Communicating this strategy to the University community and seeking active participation in implementing it.

- The University is committed to continuously reviewing and improving the support available to staff and students regarding mental health and wellbeing. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan sets out the actions which the University will take to further enhance those services.

4 UNDERPINNING STRUCTURES

4.1 The strategy will be supported by:

- Strong leadership – senior managers leading by example;
- Regular reviews of implementation and progress by the University's Mental Health Working Group and the University Management Group;
- Engagement with the University community;
- Engaging with external agencies to ensure that the University's practice is consistent with best practice by national and sectoral standards and guidance.

5 MEASURING SUCCESS

5.1 The success of the strategy will be measured through:

- Student and staff experience questionnaires
- Student and staff retention
- Sickness and absence data
- Healthy Working Lives accreditations

6 NURTURING STUDENTS

6.1 Improving and supporting the mental and physical wellbeing of students is a key strategic priority for the University of Aberdeen. The University recognises that, while University life is stimulating, exciting and rewarding; for some it can pose challenges.

6.2 The University does offer a range of mechanisms for supporting students through difficult periods. The University will review and monitor the effectiveness of those services and seek to continuously improve the support available to students.

6.3 The University will promote to students strategies which will help them to prevent mental health concerns in themselves and others.

7 STAFF SUPPORT

7.1 The University of Aberdeen is committed to achieving a healthy workforce by placing real value on both physical and mental health.

7.2 The University recognises the importance of ensuring that all staff are able to work in a supportive, professional and caring environment, where they are valued and respected. By applying these values to our work practices the University aims to promote mental and physical wellbeing.

7.3 The University appreciates that many of its staff are juggling busy work and home lives and that achieving acceptable work/life balance is important to maintain good physical and mental health. The University also accepts that mental health issues can be triggered by workplace situations and/or stress and it is the University's duty to take reasonable measures to preserve and promote the mental health and wellbeing of its staff.

- 7.4 The University promotes a comprehensive approach to tackling mental health issues arising from the workplace or from personal circumstances by offering prevention strategies and implementing effective and caring approaches to managing staff who experience mental health or wellbeing challenges.
- 7.5 It is recognised that staff across the University may be supporting students through periods of difficulty and that this can be a source of stress for members of staff. The University will empower staff to manage these situations and will provide support and training for staff managing challenging situations.