

## **Resources from M25 Consortium Wellbeing Task and Finish Group Blog Archived in November 2024**

**Created 2020**

**Blog deleted 2024.**

### **1. Blog Name: Academic Libraries and Wellbeing**

### **2. About**

The M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries is a collaborative organisation that works to improve library and information services within the M25 region and more widely across the East and Southeast.

The M25 strategy Connecting libraries; developing staff places an emphasis on bringing staff from member libraries together and offering them opportunities to develop new skills and enhance their understanding of shared issues, experience which will benefit them, their services and the Consortium generally.

One initiative which is central to embedding the principles within the strategy is the creation of new task and finish groups. These will consist of staff from member libraries supported by a Steering Group sponsor. They will focus on an area of current interest, and by gathering information about experiences and approaches from across the diverse range of member libraries, will produce useful and relevant resources to inform decision making.

This Task and Finish Group is concerned with wellbeing. Under the umbrella of UUK and the Office for Students there are various projects under way to achieve a step-change for student wellbeing. The intention is that we will investigate these projects as well as library-specific initiatives and identify what more libraries might be able to do both individually and collectively to address student wellbeing for our diverse communities. We will also take this opportunity to look at the staff experience as it is assumed that student and staff wellbeing are equally important and invariably inter-linked.

This blog will be used to update on the work of the group and to share resources and ideas as we come across them. Material will also be published on the M25 website. Feel free to contact us for more information about the project.

**Published 6 February 2020**

### **3. Posts (18 in total)**

#### **3.1 How the University library is becoming the hub of mental health support**

Matthew Lawson, M25 Chair and Director of Library and Student Support at Middlesex University talks about mental health and wellbeing support at Middlesex in CILIP's

Information Professional. <https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/596257/How-the-University-library-is-becoming-the-hub-of-mental-health-support.htm>

**Comment:** [An introduction to bibliotherapy](#)

*wow!! 71How the University library is becoming the hub of mental health support*

**Published: 3 March 2022**

### **3.2 Four recent papers about academic libraries and wellbeing**

Last year, one of our Task & Finish Group members, Clare Hunter, graduated from Robert Gordon University via distance learning. Clare works as a Senior Information Assistant at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Her dissertation was about how academic libraries can support students' mental health. Here, she highlights four recent articles which she found particularly relevant and which would serve as a great starting point for further reading in the subject. Clare's dissertation (including a full list of references) can be downloaded [here](#).

**Ramsey, E and Aagard, M.C. (2018). Academic libraries as active contributors to student wellness. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 25(4), pp. 328-334.**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2018.151743>

This paper provides a useful overview of the important role that academic libraries can play in the wellbeing of students. The authors look at previous research and refer to their own experience to identify the important qualities academic libraries have that could make them useful for supporting mental health and wellbeing. By using their role as trusted information providers and community centres, academic libraries can partner with other on campus agencies to effectively support wellbeing.

**Robison, M. and Muszkiewicz, R. (2018). Whiteboards, Blanket Forts, and Autonomy: Using Self-Determination Theory to Improve Library De-Stress Programming. *Public Services Quarterly*, 14(4), pp. 309-328.**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228959.2018.1485531>

This paper focuses on initiatives that have been undertaken at Valparaiso University in Indiana, USA to help reduce stress in students. These have included 'group scream', 'build your own blanket fort', and punching bags. Interestingly, most of the de-stress initiatives were suggested and voted on by the students themselves. Focus groups conducted by the authors found that students liked the sense of agency that choosing their own activities gave them and were more likely to attend programs they personally suggested or voted for. Hosting the activities also increased positive perception of the library.

**Cox, A. and Brewster, L. (2020). Library support for the student mental health and well-being in the UK: Before and during the pandemic, *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 46 (6).**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102256>

This paper looks at the changes that have occurred in mental health and wellbeing for students in the UK, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey the authors conducted found that prior to the pandemic much of the focus for wellbeing in libraries was on library-specific services such as a fiction collection or self-help books, whereas the pandemic has shifted this focus to the anxiety around e-resources. The authors also developed a model of library support for student mental health and wellbeing, based around eight principal aspects: inherent library value, library services impact, wellbeing as a library service, detection, hosting, signposting, library as a good partner, and library staff wellbeing.

### **ALISS Quarterly, 14(2). Special issue: Wellbeing and Libraries**

This [special issue](#) highlights initiatives for improving staff and student wellbeing from several different UK universities. It is a good starting point if you are looking for simple and interesting ideas for how your own library can begin to support wellbeing.

### **Comment [Wellbeing services at London South Bank University](#)**

*This was great to read*

**Published: 20 July 2021**

### **3.3 Wellbeing guidelines and toolkit launched at QMUL**

The library at Queen Mary University of London has created [some guidelines and a toolkit](#) for line managers to help promote the wellbeing of its staff.

**Published: 9 July 2021**

### **3.4 An introduction to bibliotherapy**

Just published on the M25 website: Emma Fitzpatrick's comprehensive [overview](#) of the practice of bibliotherapy.

**Published: 28 June 2021**

### **3.5 Promoting 'belonging' in library spaces at the University of Kent**

This [case study](#), submitted by Emma Mires-Richards, a Liaison Librarian at the University of Kent, describes efforts to promote a greater sense of belonging amongst students at the Templeman Library. It is also included in our list of [Wellbeing Resources for Library Staff](#) on the M25 Consortium website.

**Published: 27 April 2021**

### **3.6 Library staff wellbeing during the lockdown: a case study from QMUL**

*Paula Funnell, Faculty Liaison Librarian at Queen Mary University of London, describes the efforts made by her library to keep staff engaged during the pandemic.*

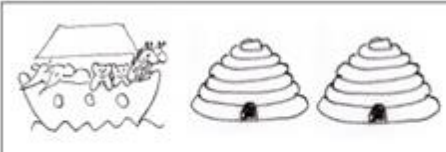


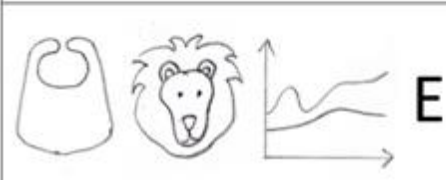
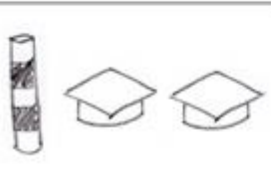



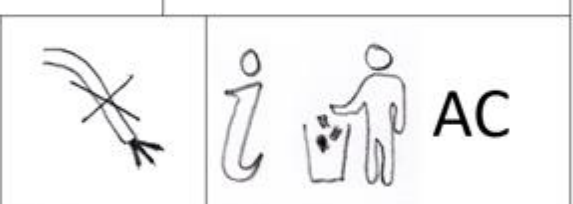
During the first national lockdown everyone was suddenly thrust into working from home, sometimes without the necessary tools and equipment and often with children or family members also at home. Others were locked down alone and felt isolated; anxiety and stress levels were high.

Queen Mary University of London Library's Staff Development & Wellbeing Group wanted to provide staff with activities to give them time away from work duties, as well as focusing on opportunities to stay connected to colleagues at a time when everyone was apart.

#### **Wellbeing afternoon**

Our first organised activity was an afternoon event to replace part of our usual annual staff conference, the afternoon of which always focuses on wellbeing.

We used breakout rooms in Zoom to enable icebreaker activities and to put people in teams to do a quiz. This enabled members of staff to interact with colleagues that in many cases they hadn't had any contact with during lockdown, and for some new members of staff it gave them the opportunity to meet colleagues that they'd never even met!

Say what you see – all are library-related			
			
1) Archives	2) EndNote	3) Enquiries	
			
4) Bibliography	5) Postgraduates	6) Shelves	
			
7) Trolley	8) Catalogue	9) Wireless	10) Information literacy

Through the group members, and thanks to contacts across the university, we were able to provide a choice of activities including cookery demonstrations, games, craft, meditation and yoga. Everyone who attended seemed to have a really good time and gave positive feedback.

### Very enjoyable

Excellent sessions, and the quiz was a great way to get us working with each other. Thanks!

### Amazing

I had so much fun today, your round the world quiz was really great ❤️❤️

## Wellbeing activities programme

Following on from the success of the wellbeing afternoon it was decided that during the summer months we should offer a regular programme of activities. We ran activities twice over a two week period to enable as many staff to attend as possible. These included similar events to those provided as part of the wellbeing afternoon, such as mindfulness meditations, quizzes and cookery demos.



Although attendance at these events wasn't high, they provided a good opportunity for staff to take a break from work activities and come together with colleagues. They were very much appreciated by those who attended.

### **Weekly coffee breaks**

Alongside the programme of events it was decided to also provide weekly 30 minute coffee breaks. These allowed staff the opportunity to connect in an informal setting for some down-time and just catch up with colleagues.

### **The autumn term**

The regular wellbeing events paused during the autumn term as many front-facing staff were back on campus, and other staff were particularly busy with getting resources online, student inductions, and information literacy teaching sessions. We did run an online festive event and made use of a variety of online tools to make it as interactive as possible, including Zoom breakout rooms, Padlet and Socrative. The afternoon comprised of a festive traditions icebreaker, a "who's the baby?" quiz, a Christmas-themed team quiz, and "best seasonally decorated object / person / space" competition.



The formal activities were followed by the chance to meet and chat informally using another new tool recently discovered by a member of Library staff, [Gather.town](#). This provides the closest virtual equivalent to mingling.

Again, those attending really enjoyed the activities.

Just wanted to thank you for taking the time to make a really nice afternoon for us all. I thought it was a lovely couple of hours and very well put together.

A huge thank you for organising the excellent online Christmas party last week - it was brilliant!

Finally, in the week before Christmas, once everything had started to calm down, we ran a couple of Christmas-themed wellbeing sessions: a truffle making demo and an informal lunch chat with a game of bingo.



## Moving forward

With many staff continuing to work remotely and facing increased stress and anxiety, the need for continued wellbeing provision continues. The aim is to continue with regular coffee breaks, to provide staff with informal opportunities to connect with colleagues, and to sometimes include an additional wellbeing activity such as a game, quiz, or mindfulness meditation. It is hoped that our wellbeing programme will continue to evolve over time to best meet the needs of our Library staff.

**Published: 16 February 2021**

### 3.7 Student and staff wellbeing: Jisc and Emerge Education report



This [report](#) examines how wellbeing support services have moved online since the start of the pandemic and how digital technology (in the shape of specific apps, tools and platforms) is being used to support student and staff wellbeing. Includes case studies from a number of different UK universities.



**Published 15 February 2021**

### **3.8 An interview with Liz Brewster**



[Liz Brewster](#) is a Senior Lecturer in Medical Education at Lancaster University and has written extensively about student wellbeing and bibliotherapy. In the summer, Emma Fitzpatrick and Pete Williams from the Wellbeing Task and Finish Group caught up with Liz over Microsoft Teams to talk about how library collections can promote good mental health and what academic libraries can do to support student wellbeing.

Liz had lots of interesting things to say. You can read the full interview [here](#).

### **3.9 Object-led wellbeing at Central Saint Martins**

The Museum and Study Collection at Central Saint Martins has been able to build upon its long-established practice of object-based learning to provide object-led wellbeing activities for both students and the wider community. Read about it [here](#).

You can also hear Judy talk in more detail about object-led wellbeing in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trkxKAdInpo>

**Published 8 January 2021**

### **3.10 Reading Well: finding resources for a wellbeing collection**

*Emma Fitzpatrick, Serial and Digital Resources Co-ordinator and member of the Wellbeing Collection team at Senate House Library, explores the Reading Well book lists curated by The Reading Agency and explains how they can help you find books and resources for your collection.*

For libraries thinking of starting a wellbeing collection, it is not always clear where to begin looking for resources. [Reading Well](#), a campaign from the Reading Agency, offers lists of books chosen by health professionals and people with lived experience of the conditions covered in the reading lists. They have curated five book lists, all freely available, focusing on the following topics:

[Reading Well for mental health](#)

[Reading Well for young people](#)

[Reading Well for children](#)

[Reading Well for dementia](#)

[Reading Well for long term conditions](#)

A promotional banner for the Reading Well campaign. It features five book covers: 'Reading Well for mental health', 'Reading Well for people with long term conditions', 'Books on Prescription Dementia', 'FIND SHELF HELP in your local library', and 'Reading Well for children'. To the right, the text reads 'READING WELL' in large pink letters, followed by 'Find helpful reading at your local library' in bold blue text, and 'Recommended by health professionals and people with lived experience' in smaller blue text. Below this is a white button with the URL 'reading-well.org.uk'. At the bottom, there are logos for Wellcome, Libraries Connected, Arts Council England, and The Reading Agency, along with the text 'Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND'.

Reading Well also provides lists of what they refer to as [Mood-boosting Books](#). These lists are designed to promote reading for pleasure and relaxation. The lists are mostly made up of fiction, poetry and some non-fiction titles which readers found uplifting. The books on these lists are recommended by readers and reading groups.

The Reading Well scheme is widely used by public libraries to offer support for people suffering from common physical and mental health problems. The books on these lists form part of the Books on Prescription service which allow GP to “prescribe” books to patients to help support their recover. Individuals can also discover these titles using the Reading Well website or by visiting their local library.

There are many titles on the Reading Well book lists which would be of great help to university library users seeking support for their wellbeing. The lists are also a great

source of information and a good starting point for any librarians thinking about starting a wellbeing collection or looking for ways to use their library's existing collections to support the wellbeing of their users. The Reading Agency has recently produced a helpful [guide](#) for colleges and universities looking to get involved in Reading Well.



I am part of the team at Senate House Library who have been working for the last year to build a Wellbeing Collection to support our users. When we were searching for resources, we found the Reading Well lists extremely helpful. It was wonderful to have lists of books curated by health and wellbeing professionals and recommended by readers, which focus on many of the different physical and mental health difficulties that influence our overall sense of wellbeing. The lists really helped us to find themes to focus on and start building a successful collection.

I am pleased to say that we launched the SHL Wellbeing Collection in February 2020 and so far it has been very well received. We hope to continue growing the collection and exploring new ways to support wellbeing in the library over the next year.

**Published 7 January 2021**

### **3.11 Building your wellbeing collection: some things to consider when starting out**

*Emma Fitzpatrick, Serial and Digital Resources Co-ordinator and member of the Wellbeing Collection team at Senate House Library, looks at some of the key considerations when planning a wellbeing collection.*

For a librarian setting out to build a wellbeing collection, a reading for pleasure collection or any collection aimed at offering wellbeing support to library users, one of the biggest and most important tasks is putting together the list of the books and







Our mental health is of course central to our wellbeing but there are many other factors that affect wellbeing. Our physical health, for example, can have a profound impact on our wellbeing, as can our finances and our housing situations. Take a holistic view of wellbeing and try to include items that will offer support for the many different challenges to wellbeing.

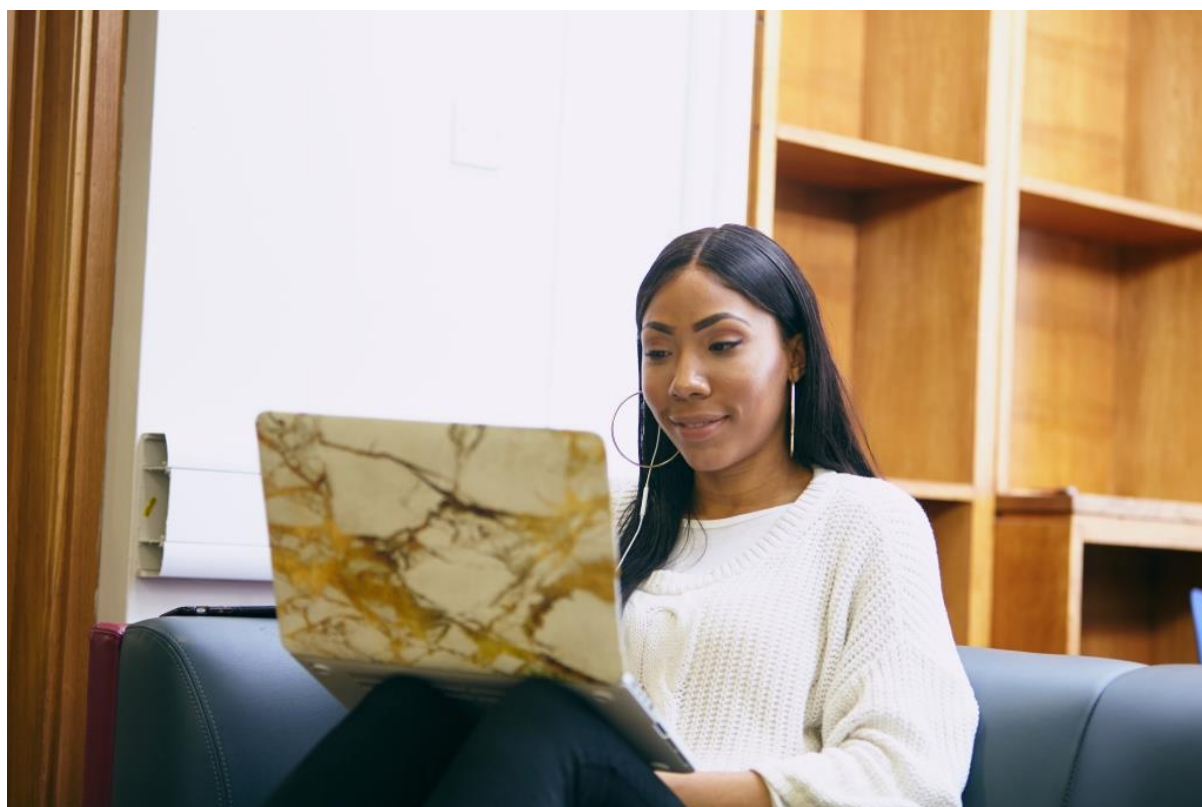
These could include books about budgeting for student, links to organisation that can help people manage their money, and resources to help with accommodation and housing problems

Another dimension to consider is study skills. Your collection could include resources about essay planning, how to reference, or how to overcome procrastination. This is an area where libraries are already very good at providing information and training.

You should also consider whether there is a way to use the study skills training that you already deliver to support wellbeing. There is growing evidence that the increased cost of higher education is making students feel more and more pressure to work hard and perform well. Failing to achieve the grade they were hoping for or feeling like they have not done as well as they could have, can have an adverse impact on wellbeing. Teaching students how to revise, plan essays or write bibliographies can contribute to students feeling more prepared and able to manage their workload.

Finally, you could include resources that support “digital detoxing” and healthy relationships with technology and social media.

## **Include e-books and online resources**



This may seem like an obvious suggestion in the post Covid-19 world where so much learning and teaching has moved online but it is still worth mentioning. When we started putting together a list of books for our Wellbeing Collection at Senate House Library, we made sure that e-books were included from the outset. We also curated a list of online resources, including government-sponsored websites and material from charitable organisations such as Mind and Citizen's Advice.

The initial idea behind our inclusion of online resources was to make our collection accessible to distance learners and to make sure that at least part of the collection would always be available even when the library was closed. We also wanted to provide a more discreet way of accessing wellbeing resources for users who might be reluctant to be seen browsing these books in the library space.

However, this really worked in our favour when SHL was forced to close for several months during the Covid-19 lockdown. With the help of a tech-savvy colleague who manages our website we were quickly able to create a new page called the SHL Wellbeing Collection Online ([link](#)) and move across all the e-books and online resources. This meant that although our buildings were closed the collection was still there to support our users - as it continues to be as we emerge from lockdown.

## **Think about what you already have**

The chances are that as you already have some great resources to support wellbeing in your collections. Your psychology or social sciences sections (if you have them) may already have books that can support users who are struggling with their wellbeing. Similarly, a literature section can be utilised - don't discount the role of fiction and reading for pleasure in supporting emotional wellbeing. The chances are that you already have a treasure trove of books which could be used to support your users' wellbeing. You just have to look at how to draw user's attention to those books and how to encourage your users to read for pleasure and for relaxation.

*Lightbulb image by [Pixabay](#) from [Pexels](#).*

**Published 5 January 2021**

### **3.12 24-hour library opening can support student wellbeing**



Do longer library opening hours have a negative impact on student wellbeing? A survey at Birkbeck suggested that, for many students, the effect may be more positive. Find out more [here](#).

**Published 17 December 2020**

### **3.13 Wellbeing services at London South Bank University**





Task & Finish Group member Shupaula Mistry interviewed her colleagues in the Wellbeing team at LSBU to find out [how they support both students and staff](#).

**Published 12 December 2020**

### **3.14 Some tips for improving staff wellbeing**

#### **Do**

- Make it possible for staff to achieve a reasonable work-life balance by taking regular breaks, not working or emailing outside of their regular hours, and not coming into work when sick.
- Encourage managers to set a good example by doing the above themselves.
- Set realistic deadlines and allow staff to pace themselves.
- Actively observe colleagues and notice any unusual patterns.
- Deal with any concerns as soon as they arise.
- Offer staff rewards and incentives.
- Try to create an environment where people feel comfortable talking about stress, pressure, and mental health.
- Ensure staff know about the support that is available from the university and other organisations.
- Make any wellbeing activities inclusive and accessible for all staff.
- Ensure line managers encourage involvement in wellbeing activities.

- Provide time at work for colleagues to get together informally e.g. having a coffee as a team.
- Keep wellbeing activities fun.

### **Don't**

- Tolerate a negative workplace culture.
- Just provide tokenistic events. Events should be part of an embedded effort to foster an environment in which wellbeing is a priority.
- Minimise issues if someone opens up about them. What might seem small or trivial to one person might cause real distress for someone else.
- Treat staff differently if they have any sort of disability, mental health issues or long-term health conditions.
- Bombard people with information about wellbeing!

**Published 8 December 2020**

### **3.15 Student mental wellbeing in higher education: good practice guide (UUK report)**

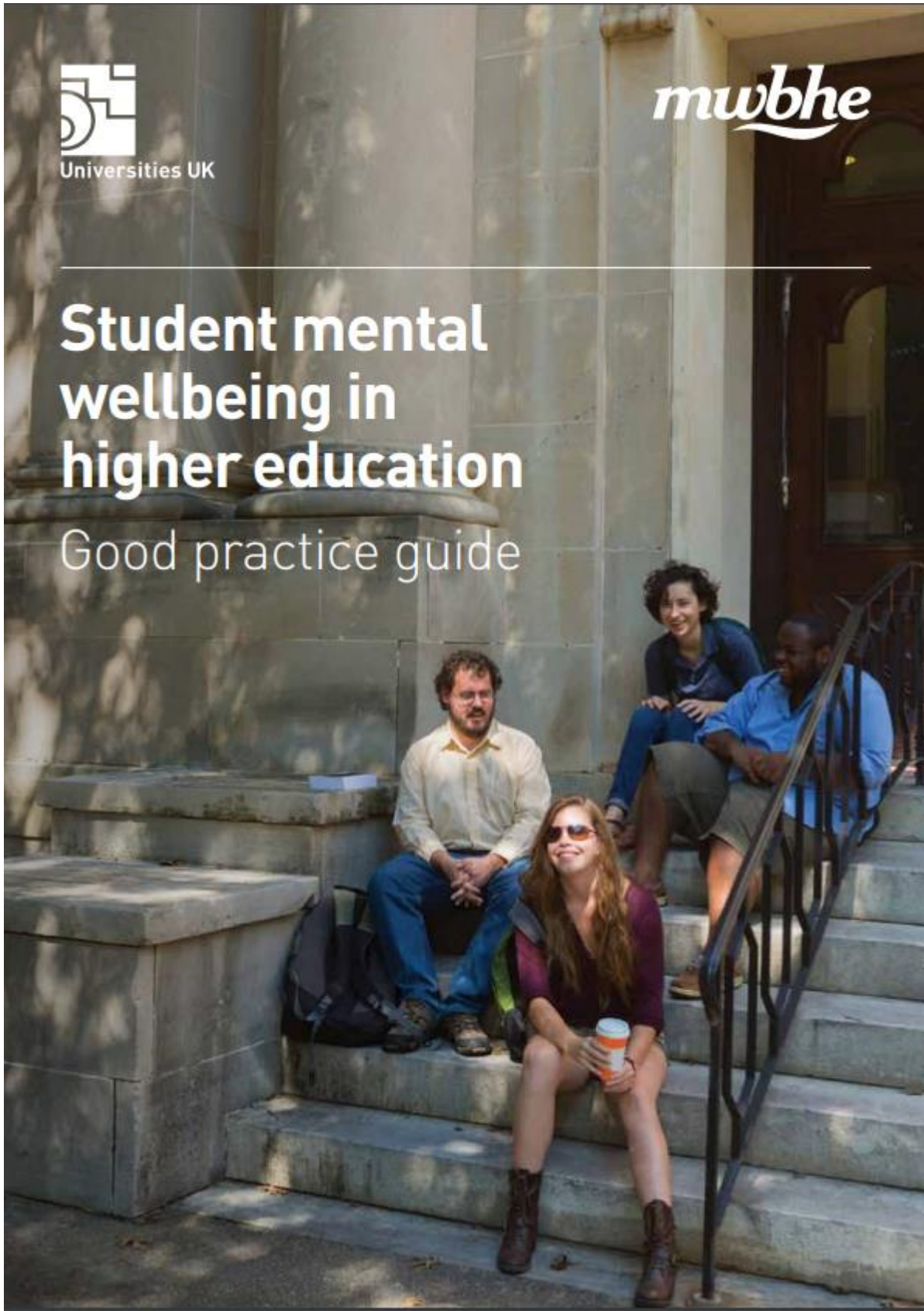


Universities UK

*mw**b**he*

# Student mental wellbeing in higher education

Good practice guide



This key report from 2015 champions the Whole University Approach to mental health. Student mental health problems have a number of causes and require a joined-up

approach to transform institutional cultures and embed mental health initiatives beyond student services.

Universities should aim to create a healthy learning and work environment for all by focusing on community, learning, living and support.

The full report is available [here](#).

**Published 8 October 2020**

**3.16 Not by degrees: improving student mental health in the UK's universities (IPPR report)**



Since the early 1990s, there has been a rise in the prevalence of common mental health conditions amongst young people, particularly young women. This has coincided with a significant expansion in student numbers. A student is five times more likely to disclose a mental condition to their HEI than ten years ago. However, only 29% of universities have a mental health and wellbeing strategy and only 43% say that wellbeing is considered during course content and design.



Reasons that might explain this increase in disclosed mental health conditions include the lessening of societal stigma, the long-term underfunding of mental health care, and cuts to community-based services. For students, the academic experience has changed, with less contact time and an increased expectation that learning is 'self-directed'. Other possible factors include increased financial pressures and the rise in the use of digital technologies.

Mental health and wellbeing issues are generally the remit of Student Services teams within universities but collaboration with other support services, students' unions and academic departments is crucial. There should also be greater strategic leadership within universities, increased funding for support services, and better links with the NHS.

The full report is available [here](#).

**Published 7 October 2020**

### **3.17 Student Minds**



[Student Minds](#) is the UK's student mental health charity. It promotes student-led activities to tackle mental health issues and aims to support university staff deliver on a 'whole university approach.' Their website includes a very useful series of [guides and reports](#) which make recommendations about how universities might create a more welcoming and supportive environment for students.

### **3.18 #stepchange: Mental Health in Higher Education**



Since 2002, Universities UK (UUK) has hosted a standing group on Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education (MWBHE). The group produced the [Student mental wellbeing in higher education: good practice guide](#) in 2015 and, following this, UUK adopted mental health as a proactive policy priority in 2016, launching a programme to improve the mental health of students and staff across higher education. The [#stepchange](#) website includes a framework and checklist for university managers along with some useful research data.

**Published 3 October 2020**