

**Edinburgh Napier
University/Edinburgh Napier Students'
Association
Student Mental Health Agreement
2020 – 2023**

**Edinburgh Napier Student Association
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Introduction

The Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA) project (co-ordinated by NUS Scotland) aims to bring student associations and their University together to collaborate on mental health initiatives. The agreement documents the activities the Institution organises to improve student mental health.(1)

In addition, the Agreement is part of the Scottish Funding Council's requirements for HE Institutions.

At Edinburgh Napier (ENU), the SMHA is an integral part of, and integrated into, the Counselling and Mental Wellbeing (C&MW) Service and ENSA's objectives. The Agreement ensures that the service, together with the Student Association, is actively achieving its goals to promote student mental health by challenging stigma and raising awareness of mental wellbeing, thus enabling an open and inclusive University community. The Agreement encapsulates this ongoing work from 2020-2021.

In addition, it develops a reciprocal relationship where students (through ENSA) feed into service developments, and the service supports ENSA by offering advice and mental health expertise.

The SMHA also helps highlight new objectives and priorities for the next academic year, based on the student community's evolving needs. The SMHA is reviewed annually and is a vital component of the University's Mental Health Strategy.

Examples of shared objectives 2020-2021;

- Engage the student body in health-related activities through ENSA and C&MW team month-long 'Feel Fab Feb' initiative.
- Through ongoing communication between ENSA and C&MW, increase awareness of access to support, taking into account the impact of the pandemic and the needs arising thereof.
- Increase engagement with the international student community whilst paying attention to the Black Lives Matter movement and developing best practices for students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- Increase student psychological wellbeing through the expansion of psychoeducational workshops.
- Ensure targeted support to students throughout the pandemic via active liaison with frontline stakeholders such as Accommodation, Schools/ PTDs and Sexual Violence and Safeguarding management.
- Feeding into strategic developments such as ENU's Mental Health Strategy and Suicide Prevention Plan.

Moreover, the Agreement breaks down into key sections identifying priority areas that C&MW have been working on together in partnership with ENSA.

As the wider Student Wellbeing & Inclusion service is also involved in many of the University's wellbeing objectives, the report will highlight University-wide as well as ENSA and Counselling & Mental Wellbeing activities (within the focus of mental health).

This report has also dedicated a section to Counselling & Mental Wellbeing's service delivery, including developments arising from the pandemic.

Background

This year has been a year like no other, and it is essential to acknowledge the global pandemic's ongoing impact on student's mental health. The report outlines the work undertaken to mitigate some of these difficulties. However, it is worth considering the unprecedented pressure on the University community and society as a whole.

For the University community, lockdowns and pandemic restrictions have brought it specific challenges, the foremost being the continuation of mostly online teaching and for many students becoming homebound and studying from where they lived. Additional severe pandemic restrictions such as the winter lockdown and the need for quarantine increased the pressure on the student population further. This was perhaps especially evident for the international student cohort as their support network, work opportunities and ability to participate in their new communities was inhibited.

The pandemic resulted in year-long remote/hybrid learning and teaching, and due to mostly online interactions, many student clubs and societies were much less active.

In these trying circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that student's mental health was challenged

- 63% of the students surveyed said that their mental health worsened compared to how they felt before the pandemic (2)
- Based on the UK population as a whole, reports show that there was a tangible increase in feelings of isolation during the pandemic - this is based on increased feelings of isolation as the lockdown(s) progressed - 10% reporting feeling isolated in the first wave to 26% in the second wave (3)
- 67% of young people surveyed believed that the pandemic would have a long-term adverse effect on their mental health, including young people bereaved or having experienced traumatic experiences during the pandemic. (4)

Consequently, during these very complex and challenging circumstances, to ensure students' wellbeing was kept in focus, Wellbeing & Inclusion worked together with ENSA and university departments such as Student

Accommodation, Student Recruitment & Admission, and Schools to ensure a cohesive response to students' pressing and shifting needs.

Examples included, but was not limited to:

- C&MW ongoing liaison with Student Accommodation ensured support was available to students during the lockdown and when quarantining. This included clinical advice, access to mindfulness and psychoeducational workshops and ongoing communication of service provision. This liaison strategy also ensured students in accommodation with specific and urgent needs were given priority access to support.
- Ongoing safeguarding of students at risk ensured the University adhered to its 'duty of care'. This included internal liaison with departments/colleagues and continued liaison with external support structures such as specialist third sector organisations, NHS, Police Scotland and Social Work Services.
- The Student Funding team distribution of the Scottish Government provided Winter Covid Fund (£888 400). This fund was set up to help with essential living costs such as food, utilities and rent and was open to all students who suffered hardship due to the pandemic.
- The Disability Inclusion team ensured that academic and other forms of ongoing support was upheld for students with impairments, including those with mental health difficulties. Key to this was working to ensure minimum disruption to the delivery of reasonable adjustments – including for example exam arrangements. In practice many disabled students reported that access to learning and assessment was improved due to studying from home.
- C&MW and ENSA's student mental wellbeing projects (outlined below) ensured cohesive mental health focus and support was available throughout.

Another example of pandemic specific development is the C&MW's 'Supporting Students abroad protocol'. The need for this protocol became evident due to international students moving back home/ remaining in their country of origin (as a precautionary measure). As a result, the service needed to consider safeguarding, legal and ethical guidance based on best practice.

To some extent, we learned about the impact of the pandemic as it unfolded. However, throughout this year, we actively engaged with students, recent research, and HE networks ensuring that we were guided by evidence and best practice. Thus, keeping student's needs at the forefront whilst supporting them throughout.

The Student Mental Health Agreement

1. C&MW and ENSA yearly events and activities; challenging stigma associated with mental health
2. International Students and BAME developments
3. Peer Support/Engagement
4. ENSA Strutsafe and Safer Taxi Scheme- keeping students safe at night
5. Counselling & Mental Wellbeing Service
6. Developments within the Wellbeing & Inclusion service
7. Appendices

1. C&MW and ENSA yearly events and activities; challenging stigma associated with mental health

- **Feel Fab Feb/Psychoeducational workshops** – ENSA and the Wellbeing team have continued to run this exciting and now well-established month-long series of events. An essential part of this campaign is to tackle stigma by generating conversation and awareness around mental health and wellbeing. This year, due to the pandemic, the events were held online. Examples included;
 - yoga and dance classes (ENSA)
 - psychoeducational workshops (C&MW)
 - Mindfulness workshops and Drop-In (C&MW)
 - Drug and alcohol use & mental wellbeing webinar (CREW 2000)
 - Volunteering workshop (ENSA/ Volunteer Edinburgh) (Appendix 1)
- **World Mental Health Day collaboration**- the service ran an online psychoeducational workshop on the subject of sleep in partnership with ENSA. ENSA also promoted a series of C&MW online recorded psychoeducational workshops
- **Coffee and Chats (online)** - in partnership with ENSA the C&MW team took part in forums where students could ask questions about their academic progress, wellbeing or other related topics.
- **ENSA Club and Society Wellbeing Officer** -. Each Sports Club or Society has a named committee member with a specific remit for the signposting and promotion of Mental, Physical and Emotional Wellbeing to their members. This role is compulsory, and in 2020/21 52 students occupied this role. The Head of Wellbeing and Inclusion delivered online ‘Look After Your Mate’ workshops to the majority of role holders.
- **C&MW Student Inductions** –The Service has updated its student induction content and delivered introductory sessions (online) to new and returning students at the start of the academic year. These sessions promote the Counselling and Wellbeing team and explain the support on offer. By highlighting mental wellbeing at the earliest opportunity, these sessions normalise mental health and thus challenge stigma (workshops in Appendix 1).
- **C&MW Mental Health Training and psychoeducational workshops** – The Counselling and Mental Wellbeing team delivered monthly online mental health awareness-raising sessions for staff and students across the University. This mental health training is open to all staff with student-facing roles, explaining mental health prevalence, support pathways, and how to support students in distress. In addition, as noted, the service offers online psychoeducational monthly workshops for students, and ENSA has actively been giving feedback and promoting these, ensuring that the student voice is incorporated into the planning. Please see the Counselling & Mental Wellbeing Service info for further details about the workshop content.

Priorities for 2021/22

- Continue to collaborate around Feel Feb Feb to ensure students' wellbeing is kept in focus/ wellbeing activities are made available during a time of the year that can be challenging.
- Create and promote a calendar of wellbeing events for the year, including shared events, e.g., Feel Fab Feb, coffee chats, and wellbeing focused days such as world mental health day.
- To continue promoting events by collaborating with ENSA, utilising University communication channels and liaise with ENU colleagues/ departments.
- Continue to seek feedback from ENSA ensuring that the student voice is incorporated into planning and when assessing need.
- Continue to deliver service wellbeing events online whilst ensuring higher levels of interaction through the use of apps and therapeutic engagement models.



2. International Students and BAME developments

- **International Operations and Student Recruitment (IO&SR)**
 - The service worked with the International Support Officers ensuring that they were made aware of support on offer and referral pathways.
 - The service manager and the safeguarding manager set up liaison meetings with the Visa and International Support team ensuring best practice and safeguarding of international students presenting as highly vulnerable.
 - The service presented at the Friendship club highlighting service provision in an easy access/non-clinical language aiming to destigmatise help-seeking. In addition, the service presented a wellbeing theme on 'Nature therapy' highlighting the well documented positive impact nature has on mental health.
 - The service started the development of recording service information specially targeted for international students. The focus is to ensure a non-clinical explanatory language increasing understanding of how to access help.
- 'Race & Equality' Wellbeing Team Training / CPD** – New 'in-house' Race and Equality training has been delivered to the Wellbeing Team. Two sessions led by Nike Oruh, Lead Counsellor, on anti-racist student services. This training has been delivered to the Counselling and Wellbeing team and to the remainder of staff within the wider Wellbeing and Inclusion service – received enthusiastically by those who attended.
- **International students' welcome events** – the wellbeing team is involved in various welcome events for international students. These are essential avenues to promote wellbeing and highlight what the service offers.
- **Interfaith Webinar** – the W&I team supported an ENSA event based on a collaboration with Interfaith Scotland on 'The Role of Faith in Promoting Positive Mental Health. A number of our honorary chaplains participated in this as well as our mental health advisers.
- **Members of the team have participated in the staff/student 'BAME-ish' network** – this is a group who have come together to respond to the Black Lives Matter movement.
- **BAME short life working group** – sponsored by our Principal, Andrea Nolan. Members of the W&I team have been involved in work to develop the strategic response by the University to the BLM. A race equality strategic plan has now been approved and the key contribution from the W&I team will focus on reporting and support for those who experience racism and on further actions to ensure that services are as accessible as possible to all members of our student community.

Priorities for 2020/21

- In conjunction with ENSA, the service will continue to develop stronger connections with the international student societies. The aim is to strengthen relationships with international students, enabling improvement and

accessibility through feedback on existing services and promoting current services.

- C&MW is in partnership with Student Futures team trialling a 'coaching drop-in' with the Business School. This aims to increase access to support, decrease associated stigma, and create a bridge for students in the Business School, many of whom are international students who find seeking help difficult. Staff delivering this will work closely with the C&MW team to ensure active referrals to the C&MW service for students requiring therapeutic support. It will allow students to book in for a confidential 30-minute one-to-one session that can focus on any issues or challenges they face. The coach will work with the student and support them in developing solutions and strategies to build confidence, signposting them to any relevant services and resources that could further help them.
- **'Race & Equality' Wellbeing Team Training** – the training represents the first of several opportunities and training sessions that will be organised over the next academic year exploring and ensuring anti-discriminatory practice within student services. In line with the University's inclusion value, this period of staff development, networking, reflection, and action will guide the development over the coming years. It will ensure the service can reach out effectively to ensure that all students are equally able to make use of our services needed to fulfil their potential.



3. Peer Support/Engagement

- **Student Experience Team (Wellbeing & Inclusion/ School of Health Social Care) buddy system** - As part of the student buddy induction, the service worked with the Student Experience Team providing mental health awareness training with specific suicide prevention and safeguarding input.
- **Student Peer Mentoring** – C&MW team's Mental Health Adviser met with Student Experience Team to explore their buddy system and other peer mentoring models/how they could be placed within schools. It was agreed that this was a detailed process requiring more significant consultation with the wider University; please see below point.
- **ENSA** – delivered a paper to LTASEC around the need to develop a Student Buddy System, presenting clear evidence of positive impact on students' wellbeing. In the first instance, ENSA plans to pilot a buddy system with the School of Computing.
- **Edinburgh Nightline** – The University continues to work closely with this student-led organisation. This year, they were involved in various campaigns, such as Feel Fab Feb and running student-led workshops that included "Alone Together", focusing on settling into the University/ tackling homesickness.

Priorities for 2021/22

- **Partnerships within the University (ENSA/ School of Computing)** – the Counselling and Mental Wellbeing team will work with ENSA to offer expertise to the planned peer engagement/buddy systems (starting with the pilot in the School of Computing).
- **Benchmarking exercise** – ENSA and C&MW to scope best practice regarding other HE successful peer support models.



4. ENSA Strutsafe and Safer Taxi Scheme- keeping students safe at night

- ENSA has continued to explore the 'Safer Taxi Scheme' as part of the Sexual Assault and Gender-based Violence Strategy. The hope is that ENSA will be able to move from a development phase to an implementation phase this academic year. The scheme aims to ensure safety for students by allowing them to order a Taxi with the use of their student card with the bill being charged to and paid by ENSA. Regarding evidence, the scheme is being used by other HE's institutions and has proven to have significant benefits for students' safety.
- Strutsafe Edinburgh – <https://www.instagram.com/strutsafe/> . Strut Safe is a volunteer organisation dedicated to ushering people safely home during the evening and night-time. The users are vetted volunteers who walk the person home or offer a phone check-in service for people to get a call back when they arrive home. ENSA has been liaising with StrutSafe and promoting its service.

Priorities for 2021/22

- ENSA to continue to develop the implementation of the Safer Taxi scheme.
- Review and evaluate the promotion and engagement with Strutsafe.
- To develop these areas in line with the University Gender-Based Violence Strategy.

5. Counselling & Mental Wellbeing Service

Following University and Government guidelines to ensure the safety of students and staff alike, the service kept all its services online or via phone. The service has continued to provide therapeutic support, i.e., clinical assessments, counselling, CBT, Mental Health Advice and Mindfulness, and the three times weekly Wellbeing Drop-In. To read more about the different service options, please follow this link ([Link](#))

It is worth mentioning that during a year of unprecedented challenge, Wellbeing & Inclusion's yearly student questionnaire saw fantastic satisfaction rates for C&MW: 97% for Counselling and CBT and 92% for Mental Health Advice (38% respondent rate – based on registrations to the service).

New Developments

- **Evening Provision:** the service has successfully launched and integrated evening provision seeing students for counselling and CBT up until 8 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. This ensured increased student choice, supporting students with daytime commitments such as work, caring responsibilities and students undertaking placements.
- **Student Survivor Project:** this project is a collaboration with the four Universities in Edinburgh, i.e., Edinburgh Napier University, University of Edinburgh, Heriot Watt University and Queen Margaret University and the Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre (ERCC). The four universities fund one full-time ERCC counselling support worker post for two years. Out of the consortium, University of Edinburgh funds 2 days, Edinburgh Napier 1.5 days, Heriot Watt 1 day and Queen Margaret University 0.5 days. Thus, the funding is based on the size of the University. The 1.5 days of ERCC support supplements the trauma-informed support existing within C&MW. We are pleased to now have ERCC expertise and support in place for ENU survivors of sexual violence.
- **Safe Spaces on campus-** for students who do not have a safe or confidential space at home, the service arranged rooms on the Merchiston campus where students could access online or phone support.
- **Online Support –**
SilverCloud- Evidence-based supported and unsupported online CBT modules tailored to the user need. Covering topics such as stress reduction, building resilience and anxiety/ depression management. SilverCloud is now fully integrated into the service provision.
- **International Student Support:** based on best practice, safeguarding and ethical guidance (AMOSSHE and BACP) and after taking legal advice, the service offers wellbeing support for students living in Europe who have access to 112 emergency services. 112 is connected to the emergency number 999

in the UK and thus allows emergency services to be called if a student discloses issues that indicate a risk to themselves or others. For students out with this area, the service offers email advice focusing on psychoeducational materials, referrals to online bespoke CBT courses on SilverCloud or support through TogetherAll. Also, referrals to university support such as speaking to their PDT, Academic Skills and the Disability Inclusion service. The guidance has been shared with a number of universities (in the UK and Ireland), assisting in developing best practices in the Higher Education sector.

➤ **Online training and workshops**

Monthly Psychoeducational Workshops. These online workshops have been very popular and are based on the need/ themes presented by current research and reports, student therapeutic presentation, and ENSA feedback. Examples include:

- Transitioning/ settling back into university
- Anxiety Management
- Sleep management
- Loneliness & Isolation
- Tackling procrastination
- Introduction to Mindfulness
- PHD stress management

These workshops aim to increase understanding of emotional and cognitive coping strategies considering and seeking to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The majority of these workshops have also been open to university colleagues, allowing these coping strategies to be cascaded to students by the professional services and PDT's. In addition, importantly, it also builds on the concept of a whole, healthy University approach as it strengthens the individual's resilience, be that of students or staff members.

Staff Mental Health Awareness Raising workshops – These workshops focus on increasing staff awareness around students' mental health and how to refer a student for support internal and external to the University.

- **Liaising with the University community –** The Service has continued to liaise with student-facing services within the University, enabling a comprehensive wrap-around service. This includes ENSA, the Disability Inclusion team, Student Funding team, Student Experience team (School of Health and Social Care), Student Accommodation, Widening Participation, Academic Skills, and School Support Services.
- **Review of the services offered to students –** ongoing adaption and response to the impact of the pandemic has ensured that the service is able to act in support of students' identified needs. The service achieved this by monitoring student emotional and psychological presentations, participating in sector-wide discussions, and engaging in networks such as NUS, AMOSSHE, UHMAN and SHUCS – ensuring that best practice and learning is maintained.

Priorities for 2021/2022

- The C&WT will continue to adapt and develop the service whilst moving towards a hybrid service model, i.e., return of some face-to-face support (following University and Government guidance).
- The service will continue to work with ERCC/ Student Survivor project to ensure that students who have experienced sexual violence are offered trauma-informed therapeutic interventions.
- The service will continue to develop its inclusive practices ensuring engagement with hard-to-reach groups such as international and LGBTQ+ students. This includes reviewing the service provision, work with specialists in the field whilst ensuring training is kept up to date and in line with best practices.
- The service will continue to develop its provision and communication to align with the University-wide Suicide Prevention Plan, e.g., increasing the focus of support/ engagement with male students. This will include working with ENSA's wellbeing coordinator and sports societies, involving experts in the field, and developing new male-focused initiatives.
- With Student Futures, develop a wellbeing coaching drop-in for students in the Business School. This is to ensure the service widens its support options and reduces barriers to access mental health support.
- Introduce the possibility of longer-term counselling via community partners (supported by the SAAS Discretionary Fund). This is to ensure students with specific clinical needs can access longer-term therapy.
- Integrate Physical Activity for Mental Health Referral Pathway (PAMH) into the service. This collaboration with the School of Applied Sciences/Sports Sciences Programme will enable students to be referred from C&MW to coached physical activity sessions/ following clear evidence of physical activity contributing to increased wellbeing.
- Continue to liaise with our student association and benefit from engagement with AMOSSHE (the Student Services Organisation) and Heads of University Counselling Services (HUCS), ensuring best practice around student wellbeing and support.
- Continue to follow the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's Ethical Guidance, especially regarding online counselling and support.

6. Wellbeing & Inclusion Developments 2020-2021

Strategic Developments:

- **Gender-based Violence and Hate Incident Strategy**– The W&I service led on the delivery of the existing Tackling and Preventing Sexual Violence Strategy and is leading on the development of a new 3 year strategy – this will tackle both gender-based violence and hate incidents/crime..
- **Report and Support** – the University launched the Report and Support website in November 2019 and staff and students continued to make use of this system to report a wide range of concerns and issues. Those reporting are offered support from trained staff – including from trained Sexual Violence and Misconduct Liaison Officers. (<https://reportandsupport.napier.ac.uk/>)
- **Zero Tolerance Campaign** – the Zero Tolerance Campaign continued and in 2021/22 will broaden its scope to include all forms of hate incidents/crime.
- **The Consent Collective** – the University continued to partner with the Consent Collective who deliver training, events, and information around all aspects of sexual violence and consent. All staff and students can access their materials online. (<https://www.consentcollective.com/>)
- **Promotion and advertising the above across all campuses** – not only for students but for staff.
- **Training on Consent and Active Bystander Intervention** – this is delivered each year to ENSA Clubs and Societies members and to the Student Accommodation's student Resident Assistants.
- **Mental Health Strategy (2021-2024)** Approved by the University's Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Student Experience Committee (LTASEC) this strategy will ensure alignment and coordination of a wide range of key actions in support of mental health and wellbeing. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that the University is recognised as an organisation that safeguards and promotes the mental health and wellbeing of its students and staff. Furthermore, that it treats all members of its community equitably, displaying respect, kindness and empathy. The strategy sets out the University's response to the UUK StepChange Framework and the Student Minds Charter. It sets out the University's vision, aims and high-level objectives for student and staff mental health over the next 3 years.
- **Suicide Prevention Plan** (agreed by LTASEC in Sept 2020) – The Wellbeing & Inclusion service leads on the development and implementation of a new ENU Suicide Prevention Plan. This strategy is based on the UUK/Papyrus Guidance – Suicide-Safer Universities (2018). The Suicide Prevention Implementation Group oversees and coordinates the actions required to deliver the plan.
Examples of work include
 - the development of and implementation of a University-Wide Safeguarding Framework

- the review of the Students in Distress Guide
- collaboration with HR in regard to mental health and suicide prevention awareness-raising training.
- the development of an ENU Bereavement Policy

Priorities for 2021/22.

- **Contribute to and lead where appropriate on the implementation of the strategies and plans noted above**
- **Continue to monitor and evaluate the service** – The service will continue to gather and evaluate statistics and student feedback. Thus, enabling responses and developments to be led by identified need.
- **Added Value** – continue to develop and modify the services we offer students such as psychoeducational workshops, group support, safeguarding resources and training, evaluation and implementation of online and digital resources
- **Mental Health Strategy** – The service will be involved at the core of the implementation of a new University Mental Health Strategy.
- **Suicide Prevention Plan** - The service will be involved in the completion and delivery of the Suicide Prevention Plan.
- **Monitor** – continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of these developments.
- **Sexual Violence and Misconduct Liaison Officers**- The employment of a Student Safeguarding and Equalities Manager will enable the further development of this role within the University.

References –

1. NUS Scotland. Student Mental Health Agreement Project
<https://www.thinkpositive.scot/projects/smha/>
2. Higher Education Policy Institute HEPI Survey & BBC News, April 21
3. Mental Health Foundations Nov 2021
4. Young Minds Covid 19 Survey Feb 2021