

University of Strathclyde & Strathclyde Students' Union

Student Mental Health Agreement

2023/2024 Academic Year



Reflection on Academic year 2022/2023

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Vice President Welfare 2023/2024

The mental health of our students has remained a major topic the university and union are working to improve. With COVID-19 greatly impacting this, the following years has shown how our services are evolving with the changes affecting us globally.

For the first half of 2023, good work was done by Lewis McDermott (VP Welfare 2021-2023) who worked hard to update the agreement at the time, which highlighted everything the institution and the student's association is doing around mental health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, the agreement for this academic year was never finalised and passed over. Although a great deal of positive work took place which is identified in this paper. Much of the work was coordinated by the Student & Campus Support Services (SCSS) Group, which is a representative group from university departments and Strath Union which meets monthly to coordinate and develop wellbeing initiatives for the students at the University of Strathclyde.

Most of the reflections would be from June 2023 till date. This period saw new additions like the wellbeing fair that ran for few days in October, which was well attended by students, other successes were the addition of counsellors during the first semester exam, we saw students led initiatives in societies and clubs that allowed students time to socialize with one another and reduced isolation.

Although we had successes this period, we also had some services providing vital support to students being overwhelmed with numbers. The disability and wellbeing service reviewed their service during this time and saw a few students waiting longer to access support due to huge numbers of students being referred to their service against the available capacity for that service. The strath union Advice hub was also affected by huge numbers during this period and had to close their service to new cases for two weeks in the first semester of the 2023/2024 session. By the end of the year, the two services were able to take proactive steps to resolving the drawbacks and have put plans in place to prevent it from reoccurring.

This agreement would continue to be reviewed and updated, it therefore provides an opportunity for learning and growth. We remain hopeful that we are making progress on improving the mental health and wellbeing of students studying with us at Strathclyde. Their mental health and wellbeing will always be our number one priority.

Introduction and Background to the agreement 2023/2024

The University of Strathclyde and the Strathclyde Students' Union is wholly committed to student mental health and wellbeing. This collaborative agreement embodies the commitments made by both parties to work in partnership to ensure that the mental health and wellbeing of students is kept at the forefront of all activity and operations.

The aim of this agreement is to have a positive impact on student mental health and wellbeing through the delivery of training, promotional campaigns and the creation of a socially inclusive campus community that removes barriers and positively embraces the diversity of the student population.

This agreement reaffirms the continued support to all students at the University of Strathclyde through different partnerships and undertakings to ensure that the University of Strathclyde remains a place of useful learning. The agreement has been collectively developed by the "Student Mental Health Working Group" comprising representation from Strath Union, Strathclyde Sport and Disability and Wellbeing service. This allows a holistic approach to student wellbeing which ensures there is the appropriate support at every stage of the student journey.

This year's agreement has been created in a different way from the last published document. We would collate, record and publish the 2023/2024 agreement, highlighting various provision from the student's union and university from 2022-2024, after that we hope to run a survey and focus group sessions for student's feedback in March 2024, which would inform the student mental Health agreement working group and Student Experience committee on areas they are doing well and areas they could improve on.

The working areas in the document remain the same as the 2021/2022 agreement. This agreement would have recommendations from the working group and benchmarks for measuring success. The hope for this agreement is becomes a guide for services and committees working to improve student mental health at Strathclyde, with their activities and projects being fed into the student mental health agreement working group and which would be the central place for assessment and review. This agreement would be promoted to students and all the relevant stakeholders.



List of Groups involved in this agreement:**1) The student mental health Agreement working group:**

A sub-committee of the Student Experience Committee (SEC) which meets monthly to monitor the SMHA progress.

The group made up of representatives from the Disability and wellbeing service, the students' union, and Strathclyde sport.

2) Student Campus Support Services Working Group:

This is a large committee made of representatives of different services that are students facing. It includes representatives from the Students' Union, the Disability and Wellbeing Service, the Chaplaincy, Student's Accommodation, Learner Development Service, the Student Experience Helpdesk, University Safeguarding, Strathclyde Sport, Career Services, Student Support and Development Services, Widening Access service with directors of the student experience.

This group is behind activities like, exam breakfasts, students' arrival in university accommodation, along with National Health promotion Campaigns including University Mental Health Day.

3) Think Positive:

A subsidiary of the National union of student (NUS) Scotland and funded by the Scottish government. They support institutions working on their student mental health agreement and signpost to students to where they can get support.

Think positive aims to create a more joined up student mental health support sector and to improve student wellbeing. Find out more here: [Home - Think Positive - Student Mental Health - Scotland](#)



Working Areas

The University of Strathclyde Student Mental Health Agreement 2023/2024 continues with the working areas from the 2021/2022 agreement. There are four main working areas with actions for each. These areas were determined following consultation with the student body in the form of focus groups and survey. They were then deliberated on by the working group:

1. **Communication & Engagement:** To improve awareness of mental health and wellbeing support and other services available to students, and, to create a safe and open environment to enable students to make positive social connections within the Strathclyde community.
2. **Training & Education:** To ensure that staff and students are mental health aware and equipped to support the mental health and wellbeing of the Strathclyde community.
3. **Social Inclusion:** To offer targeted support to students who may face additional barriers and endeavour to remove these barriers.
4. **Healthy Lifestyle:** To promote healthy behaviours, including sport and physical activity, known to benefit mental health and wellbeing, taking a proactive approach to student mental health.

1. Communication & Engagement:

The key actions:

- 1) To improve awareness of mental health and wellbeing support and other services available to students, and, to create a safe and open environment to enable students to make positive social connections within the Strathclyde community.
- 2) There are currently too many channels for information. University website is more tailored towards prospective students, not current students.
- 3) Work towards making information on activities and projects clearer to students, possible use of students in comms roles in different university services.
- 4) Addressing support for students who are on campus during weekends and the summer periods.
- 5) Work in using native languages in communicating some wellbeing initiatives, this could be in various forms from students been allowed to use native languages in some spaces or some services having the option to change language.

Overview of working area in the past session:

In the 2022/2023 session, we made progress in this working area as the groups involved did better in publicising events, campaigns and activities that promoted students' mental health. In turn, most of the events were adequately attended. There was more in-person support for students but other initiatives that began during COVID are still available but are being adapted, so they remain relevant.

Highlights of Achievements during 2022-2023

Student & Campus Support Services

- Student Wellbeing Map created and distributed in card and banner format across all support services.
- Project has started on supporting academic staff to be able to signpost appropriately.
- Project has started on establishing the routes to access to services with an aim of streamlining of this based on anecdotal evidence.
- Events have been held on University Mental Health Day and World Mental Health Day to raise awareness and improve engagement of both internal and external services

Strathclyde Sport

- Health promotion campaigns have been run focussing on mental health and wellbeing including Know Your Numbers Campaign, National Osteoporosis Day, World Menopause Day, National Stress Awareness Day, Eating Disorders Awareness Week, Mental Health Awareness Month, National Walking Month, and International Women's Day.
- Strathclyde Sport continued to be part of SamH, Mental Health Charter for Sport & Physical Activity signatory & submitted updated action plan.

Sports Union



- Successful wellbeing week in Spring of 2023
- First Strathclyde Intramural competition set up:
 - 5-a-side football tournament with 4 events throughout the year (23/24)
- Come and Try sessions during freshers and refreshers:
 - All 48 clubs hold free come and try sessions for students to attend.
- **The Strath Union Welcome Team:** They play an important role in creating a warm welcome to new and returning Strathclyde students in September during Freshers and again in January for ReFreshers. In addition to running popular events such as campus tours and speed meetings to help students meet each other and feel connected to their new environment, being part of the Welcome Team is a rewarding experience for the helpers/volunteers. Being part of this community has a great impact on the individual students who are able to get immersed in campus life and can really feel at home when at university. Read more about Jo's Welcome Team experience here: <https://www.strathunion.com/news/article/strathunion/Volunteer-Voices-Jo-Fitzpatrick/>
- **Time to Talk Day & Uni Mental Health Day:** On Time to Talk Day 2023 and Uni Mental Health Day, the student's union ran stalls on Level 1 of Strath Union with 'Hear to Listen' volunteers in collaboration with the Mental Health Action Group and Tiny Changes Society. This was an opportunity to engage with students on mental health, speak to them about self-care and promote the 'Hear to Listen' service, as well as the Mental Health Action Group survey on student wellbeing.
- **Mental Health Action Group:** Between 2022-2023, the Mental Health Action Group's weekly meetings were a space for students to come together, share frustrations and concerns about mental health related issues and begin to build campaigns to change things. The group had in-depth discussions about how those with marginalised identities and experiences (e.g. Black students and students of colour, international students, students of marginalised genders and those with disabilities) often struggle with their mental health and their specific needs are often not sufficiently met by provisions in the university and in the UK more broadly. They began to brainstorm next steps to encourage the university to address these gaps. The group also organised several social events, which welcomed students interested in mental health campaigning to share their concerns and contribute. One big achievement of the group was its solidarity campaign for fellow student activist Karen McKeown in her fight for justice. The group ran an info session on the campaign and protest rights, banner making sessions, and organised a group of students to attend a demonstration outside Holyrood. Read more about Karen McKeown campaign here: [Solidarity with Karen McKeown \(strathunion.com\)](https://www.strathunion.com/news/article/strathunion/Solidarity-with-Karen-McKeown)
- **Tiny Changes:** [Tiny Changes](https://www.tinychanges.org/) is Scotland's Youth Mental Health charity, established in memory of musician Scott Hutchison who died by suicide. The charity had pop up stalls in the Union in 2022/23 and a Tiny Changes Society was established to raise awareness and funds for the organisation. They held a coffee morning to raise awareness of their activities.

- **Strath union's Hear to Listen:** It is a peer wellbeing support service which provides an open space for students to speak about their mental health and wellbeing. Volunteer listeners are trained in active listening, providing a safe environment for discussion. Hear to Listen is also an important signposting service, raising awareness of different support services and wellbeing activities available to students. In addition to regular listening sessions in the Union, listeners also hosted pop-ups in the Library, reaching out to students and sharing information about the service with an increased visibility on campus. In 2022/23 Hear to Listen also partnered with StrathActive, organising regular Walk and Talk events, which helped with engaging with students who might not have engaged with 'Hear to Listen' in its original format while promoting good habits to boost student wellbeing.
- **Glasgow Students' Nightline:** Two Glasgow-based Nightlines (Strathclyde & Caledonian and Glasgow University) merged in 2021/22 and completed their pilot year successfully at the start of 2022/23. In this year the service successfully expanded its coverage to 6 nights a week, delivered training to two cohorts of new listening volunteers, answered 257 calls from fellow students, and maintained a 91% shift coverage across the year.
- **Library Lounge:** These are sessions run by library staff, where they invite people from various services across campus to give valuable information to students. They are virtual and in-person sessions. They were greatly attended during the induction weeks of each semester.

2. Training & Education

The key actions under this working area are:

- 1) To ensure that staff and students are mental health aware and equipped to support the mental health and wellbeing of the Strathclyde community.
- 2) To make sure trainings and educations are in line with the union and university values and are updated and assessed following feedback from participants.

Overview

There were a host of trainings, short courses for staff and students that provided education and enlightenment on how best to support students, improve students' mental health and safeguarding for everyone working and schooling at Strathclyde.

Materials developed for the delivery of online training sessions and modules are available, a number of training are also in-person on campus as well.

Highlights of Achievements 2022-2023

- BEAT delivered training specifically aimed at Higher education staff supporting students with eating disorders
- Project has started on supporting academic staff to be able to signpost appropriately (Dealing with Students in Distress)
- Cohort of staff trained in GBV Active Bystander.
- Participation of 10 trainers on a T4T "What's the harm" Self-harm training programme.
- GBV First Responder and Bystander training available for sport clubs' committees.
 - Promoting a safer and more inclusive environment within clubs.
- **Suicide Prevention Strategy**

Since our Suicide Prevention Project Coordinator came into post in March 2023, we have been making progress towards delivering a Suicide Prevention Strategy for staff and students. Some of the key areas we have focused on are: prevention subgroup, intervention subgroup, postvention subgroup and external advisory group.

Strategic Oversight

We have established a project board which includes representatives from University of Strathclyde Senior Management, University of Strathclyde Student Association (USSA), staff representatives and those with lived experience.

A key part of our strategy involves aligning with Universities UK guidance and the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, 'Creating Hope Together'. Both documents place great emphasis on creating a multi-agency approach where we can learn from expertise in the wider community. With this in mind, we have also established an External Advisory Group to our Project Board made up of partners from the statutory and third sector.

Lived Experience sessions.

In line with the National strategy, we see it as essential that our work in suicide prevention 'should be informed in equal weight by lived experience and academic research'. To build on this we have established a partnership with the Mental Health Network who have facilitated a lived experience focus group for students which will inform the strategy.

Training

A subgroup including the Suicide Prevention Project Coordinator have been working on a mental health training framework for staff and students. So far, we have followed the NHS training pathway to create priorities for different groups that fall into the informed, skilled and enhanced levels. This framework is still being developed but it will give us a clear plan of what our key training objectives should be.

- **Strath Union advice hub workshops:**

The Advice Hub developed a number of interactive workshops that were delivered to students (and interested and relevant University colleagues) across the year. Ranging from 1-2 hours in length depending on the topic, we offered workshops online and in person on the following topics: finding accommodation in Glasgow and your tenancy rights; support and advice for disabled students; and employability and employment rights for students. These have been well received with positive feedback on other areas students would like to see workshops on which we will continue to develop work on going forward.

- **Faculty Outreach:**

One of our Union Advisers collaborated with a University colleague on a programme of outreach to Faculties across the University. They had heard reports from colleagues that there was low level of general understanding in academic department staff handling wellbeing-relating concerns from students about how they could refer into support services and, crucially, which service would be most appropriate depending on the circumstances.

- **Hear to Listen Training:**

All the 25 volunteer listeners running 'Hear to Listen' in the 2023/2024 session received training in active listening, equipping them to provide mental health support to their peers. In addition, 15 listeners completed 'Ask, Tell, Save a Life' training, which is a suicide prevention training that was delivered by the University's Disability and Wellbeing Service.

- **Counselling Skills Course:**

Alison, Volunteering Coordinator at the student's union at the time, received part-funding and time to complete the COSCA Counselling Skills Certificate from April-Dec 2023. This has directly contributed to her own working practice in supporting students and colleagues and has also allowed her to feed into 'Hear to Listen' training on active listening.

- **Student Carers Training:**

Hear to Listen volunteers received tailored training on the experiences of Student Carers. In collaboration with the Student Carers Society,

3. Social Inclusion

The key actions are to offer targeted support to students who may face additional barriers and endeavour to remove these barriers.

Highlights of Achievements 2022-2023

Sports Union

- Come and Try sessions at the start of term offered.
- Continued to promote and grow the StrathActive programme.
- Within the StrathActive programme new sessions were added.
 - StrathActive programme is growing with over 700 attendees in semester 1 of 2023/24.
 - New sports have been added to the programme, namely: netball and social jog.
- November Charity Month – movember fundraising for Men’s Health:
 - Many SU clubs completing challenges, holding events and more to raise over £15,000 for Movember.

Student & Campus Services Group

- Events have been held on University Mental Health Day and World Mental Health Day to raise awareness and improve engagement of both internal and external services.
- Exam Breakfasts in semester 1 of 23/24– 1600 pieces of fruit 800 + hot drinks

Strathclyde Sport

- Strathclyde Sport continued to offer quiet sessions in the gym and actively promoted footfall patterns along with support information for neurodiverse individuals, women transitioning through the Menopause, exercising during Ramadan and menstruation.
- Strathclyde Sport have launched David Sherrington Disability Sport Award in the Performance Sport Scholarship programme.
- Strathclyde Sport has trained one of the Health & Fitness Coaches in Exercise for Disabled Individuals.
- Women and Enby swim session and Trans swim session weekly.
- Both men’s and women’s health supported and promoted. Men’s health was promoted during Movember and Mens’ health week in June. Women’s health through specific ladies lifting sessions and women only classes. Additionally, a social media campaign on ‘73 questions’ featuring strong females in Strathclyde Sport have been posting as part of work to increase female participation. Finally, Girls-Night-In planned for Feb 24 to celebrate active health in women. This was an evening when the sports facility was open to only females for few hours.
- Strathclyde Sport are delivering a pilot project supporting Widening Access STAR Scholars to engage and participate in activity to improve their wellbeing.

- Student referral scheme continues to engage with the Participation Fund to support student with financial difficulty on leaving the scheme.
- **Library:**

The Library Nook is a calm & comfortable space in the heart of the library, designed to allow staff and students to take some time out. The space includes colouring, crafts, books, and puzzles. The wellbeing collection includes books and e-books, covering a range of topics designed to improve wellbeing. Help to access appropriate library services and support depending on individual requirements.

- **Multi-Faith Chaplaincy:**

There is a drop-in by appointment, non-judgemental listening, and support service for people of all worldviews, faiths and beliefs. Safe space for social connection and sharing, celebration of faith, reflection, meditation, personal and spiritual exploration and learning, inclusion, and development of community. The Chaplaincy facilities include café, flexible seating area, multi-faith sacred space, seminar/meeting rooms for student groups and societies.

- **Participation Fund:**

The Participation Fund continued to support students through 2022-23 by providing funding upon successful application to students who are more likely to experience financial barriers to extra-curricular activities. The fund's support helped 119 students across a range of widening access backgrounds to engage with sports, societies, study trips, and a host of other activities.

- **Quiet Hour in the student's union building & Neurodiverse Students' Association:**

Working with the Neurodiverse Students' Association, we trialled a 'Quiet Hour' which was well received. We also incorporate a Quiet Hour on our Freshers' Fair days to ensure that loud music isn't playing, screens are off and generally the volume is kept as low as possible, to allow time for students who may experience sensory overwhelm.

- **Strath Union Pantry:**

As a response to the still ongoing cost of living crisis and in recognition of its disproportionate impact on students, led by Strath Union VP Community and Strathclyde University Foodbank Society, Strath Pantry was launched in November 2022. It is located on level 1 of the Union and accessible to all students, the pantry provides essential food items and toiletries to students free of charge. Any items left at the end of term as the Union closes for breaks will be donated to the Trussel Trust Northeast Glasgow Foodbank, promoting positive relations between students and the wider community.

- **Free Breakfasts:**

Free Breakfasts were trialled initially on a weekly basis, then in the second semester of 2022/2023 on a daily basis. This allowed students to help themselves to a free tea or coffee and toast to start their day. It also offered them an opportunity to connect with other students. Hear to Listen volunteers attended at least one or two times a week and a member of staff would always be available to chat to any students in need.

4. Healthy Lifestyle

The key action under this working area is to promote healthy behaviours, including sport and physical activity, known to benefit mental health and wellbeing, taking a proactive approach to student mental health.

Highlights of Achievements 2022-2023

Student & Campus Support Services

- Exam Breakfasts were offered to engage with students studying or attending for exams.

Sports Union

- Wellbeing Wednesday at the Sports union. Wellbeing is celebrated on wednesdays during term time by sport clubs.

Strathclyde Sport

- Nutrition seminar on Eating for strength and endurance activities were delivered: 40 places were booked and 39 attended with 100% reporting they benefited.
- ExHALE platform has been updated to improve user engagement.
- Tree trails walk information was added along with regular upload of new monthly walk. Students' engagement in the Step Count Challenge increased and we were awarded the Walk @ Work Award for all initiatives involving walking.
- Various National Health Promotion campaigns along with signposting were promoted on Social media.
- 'Active Classes' designed for those starting/returning to activity introduced and promoted.
- Different membership options making activity more accessible including Multi Visit passes introduced.
- Continued promotion of our Members Assurance for Eating & Exercise Disorders.
- Participation in Strathclyde Sport referral scheme showed the following results:
 - o Increase of 20% in overall WEBWMS score.
 - o 14% increase in WEBWMS 'feeling loved' score.
 - o 18% increase in WEBWMS 'interested in new things' score.
 - o 27% increase in WEBWMS 'feeling cheerful' score.
 - o 53% increase in active minutes active per week.
 - o 18% increase in those achieving moderate intensity activity.

- o 10.6% decrease in time spent sitting.
- New Performance Lifestyle Advisor to support the Sports Scholars
- Continued to deliver against the Action Plan for SamH Mental Health Charter for Sport and Physical Activity.
- **Strath Union Litter Pick:**

A day of litter pick around campus and beyond was organised across two sessions in the morning and afternoon. 12 volunteers participated and successfully gathered 21 bags of litter from areas surrounding the University, local primary schools, a major hospital, and residential streets.

- **Tree Planting at the student's union:**

Strath Union volunteering team organised a very successful tree planting event together with charity partner 'The Conservation Volunteers'. A group of students and staff from Strathclyde joined TCV at Cathkin Braes to plant over 500 trees while enjoying fresh air and building positive relationships with nature. [Guest blog: volunteering – doing good, feeling good | University of Strathclyde](#)

- **Nature Walk – Glasgow Goes Green:**

As part of Glasgow Goes Green Festival, and in collaboration with the 'Every Tree Tells a Story project' and Sustainable Strathclyde, the Student Engagement Team ran a Nature Walk on campus. We explored the different plants and trees on campus, gave some background to these and encouraged participants to stay for a tea or coffee afterwards and write their reflections on an 'Every Tree Tells a Story postcard'. There were 14 attendees, a combination of students, Strath Union, and University staff. We promoted the 'Every Tree Tells a Story project': [Every Tree Tells a Story – The project is simple, seeking to use community participation to share stories and knowledge of trees in Glasgow and beyond.](#)

- **Strath union Walk & Talk:**

In 2022/23 Hear to Listen worked together with StrathActive to organise regular Walk and Talk events for students, promoting healthy habits to improve wellbeing. During the exam period that is known for being a particularly stressful time for students, Walk and Talk events were well-attended and students taking part were offered a nutritious lunch at the Union.

Priority for 2024-2026 sessions:

These priorities have been developed from students' feedback from the mental health survey ran in the student's union, focus group sessions facilitated by the Student Mental Health Agreement working group, consultation and deliberations with the various university stakeholders and support from Think positive. They would serve as a guide for students, students' union and university in working to improve mental health in the coming years:

- 1) The university is working to develop a Student Mental Health Strategy that would be linked with this agreement and the two groups would be working closely together.
- 2) To continue to put students and particularly students from minority backgrounds at the forefront of the activities and projects ran by the students' union and university.
- 3) To have students trained to deliver suicide TALK training to their peers. Through this peer-to-peer suicide awareness training we will encourage other students to take an active role in suicide prevention in their community.
- 4) To prevent isolated projects in the coming years, the student mental health agreement working group would be fully aware of activities and projects ongoing at various services in the university and would create a means of accountability for these projects.
- 5) The services involved would prioritise gathering feedback from students for all projects and commit to acting on them, as this is the way they can continually improve on their provision to students.
- 6) To improve communication and engagement with projects and activities that improve mental health and wellbeing, exploring student roles and student friendly modes of communication should be a priority for various university services. Active partnership with the student union communication team should be in place.
- 7) Investment of resources into visibility of some of the well being services at the university. Examples are using badges that link students to wellbeing service on staff emails, use of billboards for publicity, updating university web pages to capture activities and ongoing projects for current students, updating university screens with relevant mental health information etc.

Evaluation and agreement assessment between 2024-2026:

The Student Mental Health Agreement working group agreed to continue to assess the various services and activities that go on year-round at the university. This could be student led, the student union activities, the university services programs, and updates within their services.

The proposed timeline for this agreement:

May 2024: Launch of Agreement. Distribution to relevant stakeholders including student's parliament.

June 2024: Submission to university's Student Experience Committee.

June to December 2024: Student Support Campus committee (SSCC) members feed planned projects to the students' mental health agreement working group.

December 2024- January 2025: Submission of report on planned projects by SSCC members to the mental health working group.

January 2025- June 2025: Student focused campaign on gathering feedback on mental health services, collaborative work with the university's mental health strategy.

July 2025 – End of the year: Review of current agreement and production of new agreement.

Review Process and Signatories

This Agreement signifies that the University of Strathclyde and Strath Union will endeavour to achieve, and promote, the objectives at every possible opportunity.

This Agreement stipulates that an annual review will be carried out by the “Student Mental Health Agreement Working Group” which will report back to the Student Experience Committee and Strath Union Student Parliament.

This working group shall be comprised of representation from Strath Union, Strathclyde Sport, Disability and Wellbeing, Library services and all other relevant parties. This group will meet monthly and chaired jointly by a member of the students’ association and a member from Disability and wellbeing services, representing the university.

Signed by: _____ President, Strathclyde Students’ Union.

_____ Principal, University of Strathclyde.