



# Mental Health Toolkit



national union of students

# Mental Health Toolkit

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## Foreword

The NUS Disabled Students' Campaign and the NUS Welfare Campaign are proud to present this toolkit which offers Students' Unions, activists and officers information, guidance and ideas on how you can raise awareness of Mental Health in your institution and campaign on Mental Health issues that are affecting your students.

With 1 in 4 adults experiencing a mental health problem, it is inevitable that there will be students in your institutions who this affects. With the right help, support and guidance, people who experience mental health problems can carry on with their day-to-day lives and participate in every-day activities, such as education, work and the many activities available within society, without these problems affecting their ability to participate. However, with cuts to services and funding, it is becoming increasingly difficult to access the already limited, yet vital services they need. It is our role, as representatives and activists, to campaign to change this and ensure we fight to extend and defend these services.

We hope that this toolkit will offer you information on how you can support your students and join the campaign to create, save and improve Mental Health services available to your students, to ensure that the education in your institution and activities that your students participate in are accessible and create positive thinking and perceptions around Mental Health. Together, we can achieve this and we look forward to finding out about many other examples of the fantastic campaigning that is taking place in your institutions and students' unions across the country to support this.



**Rupy Kaur**  
NUS National Disabled Students' Officer



**Pete Mercer**  
NUS National Welfare Officer

# The Fact Sheet

This factsheet offers facts and stats on key mental health issues that can affect students on your campus. Use it to do some myth-busting and highlight people's experience of mental health.

## General Facts

- **1 in 4** British adults experience at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any one year and 1 in 6 experiences this at any given time.<sup>1</sup>  
Mixed anxiety and depression is the most common mental disorder in Britain.<sup>2</sup>
- **6.7%** of students in 2010 indentified themselves as having mental health difficulties.<sup>3</sup>
- **4%** of students are currently accessing support for mental health issues.<sup>3</sup>

Mental health issues disproportionately affect different groups within society for a variety of reasons. However, this information is often overlooked in general mental health statistics.

## Women

- Women are **more likely** to have been treated for a mental health problem than men (29% compared to 17%). This could be because, when asked, women are more likely to report symptoms of common mental health problems.<sup>4</sup>
- Depression is **more common** in women than men.
- **1 in 4** women will require treatment for depression at some time, compared to 1 in 10 men.<sup>5</sup>
- Women are **twice as likely** to experience anxiety as men. Of people with phobias or OCD, about **60%** are female.<sup>1</sup>

## Men

- One in eight men (**12.5%**) has a common mental health problem
- **Suicides rates** show that British men are three times as likely to die by suicide than British women<sup>6</sup>
- 1 in 4 people diagnosed with an eating disorder are male
- Young Black Men in the UK are much more likely to have a mental health problem but least likely to seek any treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> The Office for National Statistics Psychiatric Morbidity report, 2001

<sup>2</sup> Mind

<sup>3</sup> Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)

<sup>4</sup> Better Or Worse: A Longitudinal Study Of The Mental Health Of Adults In Great Britain, National Statistics, 2003

<sup>5</sup> National Institute For Clinical Excellence, 2003

<sup>6</sup> The National Mental Health Development Unit

## **Black**

The Mental Health Foundation found in general, people from black and minority ethnic groups living in the UK are:

- more likely to be diagnosed with mental health problems
- more likely to be diagnosed and admitted to hospital
- more likely to experience a poor outcome from treatment
- More likely to disengage from mainstream mental health services, leading to social exclusion and a deterioration in their mental health.

## **LGBT**

- More than a quarter of gay men and almost a third of lesbians have self-harmed themselves deliberately, compared with one in seven heterosexuals. Of those who self-harm, **65%** of gay men and **48%** of lesbians attribute this wholly or partially to difficulties associated with their sexual orientation.
- **85%** of LGBT people have experienced verbal insults.
- LGBT people are **10 times more** likely to commit suicide than their heterosexual friends.
- There is a strong association between homophobic bullying and mental ill health including low self-esteem, fear, stress and self-harm.<sup>7</sup>
- The UK's largest survey of trans people (N = 872) found that **34%** (more than one in three) of adult trans people have attempted suicide.
- Those who are LGB are three times more likely to have anxiety disorders and up to six times more likely to have depression than heterosexuals.

## **International students**

There is a lack of data around international students and mental health. However, for a variety of reasons, insuring international students are aware of mental health issues and the support available is particularly important.

In addition to the stressors faced by students in general, international students also have to contend with varying degrees of culture shock, transition from one academic system to another, a change in identity, additional financial burdens and, for many, communicating in a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> language.

It is important to note that the term international student covers a very diverse group of people. The perception of mental health may vary widely amongst international students, depending on where they are from. For example, many American students are already familiar

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<sup>7</sup> The National Mental Health Development Unit

with mental health diagnoses and interventions, whereas students from Africa, Asia and the Middle East, where mental health difficulty frequently carries a stigma and support is not readily available, may be less familiar.

### **What does the statistic 1 in 4 people experience mental health problems actually mean when we're talking about Mental Health?**

Well, it tells us that 1 in 4 people in the United Kingdom will experience mental health problems at some point in their lives. However, it is important to note that this statistic is based on those individuals who have come forward for support or have been formally diagnosed. Given the high number of individuals who do not, for whatever reason, ask for support this ratio is likely to be much higher.

## **Case Studies**

We have searched the country for some of the best campaigns, which have been led by Student Officers and Unions, to help inspire you with your own campaigns. And here they are:

**Who:** Winchester Student Union

**What:** Mental Health Forum

Winchester Students' Union has been working with a local mental health charity from Southampton to start a Mental Health Forum. It runs fortnightly and is a drop-in style informal discussion group. The forum discusses all things relating to Mental Health and ways to combat the stressors that students naturally face.

The forum also provides an opportunity for its members to learn about a variety of mental health illnesses and issues. This is supported by a staff member from Solent Mind, who is diagnosed with bi-polar disorder themselves, which helps.

The forum recently designed a survey to fully research the needs of students and what they'd like to learn about mental health so the union can distribute relevant information around campus. This research provided them with useful information that is being used to develop the Mental Health Forum to meet students' needs.



**Who:** University of Manchester Students' Union

**What:** Memorial Bench and Memorial Garden

### Memorial Bench

Students at the University of Manchester Students' Union held numerous fundraising events throughout the semester in order to commission a Welsh artist to carve a memorial bench for students who have committed suicide whilst at University. The bench was created in the shape of a giant phone. On one side of the phone there is a post box where people who don't feel like talking but want to get something off their chest can post letters. These letters are not read and are destroyed. A plaque was put on the side of the bench that detailed the phone numbers of various support networks and help lines that might be useful to students. The Bench is carved with 'dedicated to students gone too soon' on the seated area.

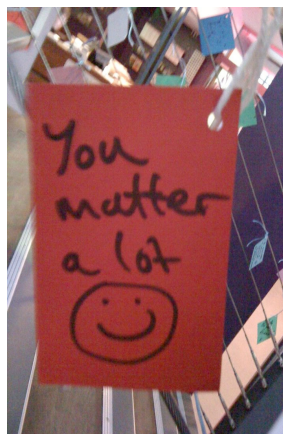


### Memorial Garden

The University of Manchester has dedicated a small area of land to the Mental Health Campaign at the University of Manchester Students' Union. A group of Gardening Students have taken the lead on the project trying to clear the land and help other students to get out in the fresh air, as gardening has been shown to have positive impact on mental health and enables students to meet other people and get out and about. The garden provides a central point for students to think about and remember anyone they need to.

### Mental Wealth Matters Campaign

The University of Manchester Students' Union ran a mental health campaign that included creating a wall of what makes you happy and tagging the campus with positive messages. Mental Wealth Matters is a student led group at the Union aimed at promoting good mental health and wellbeing throughout the campus.



**Who:** Kent Union

**What:** Campaign against closure of eating disorder clinic

"We recently had our University Medical Centre stripped of its eating disorder clinic.

A group of students visited the Students' Union to ask about the clinic and whether or not there was anyway to have it reinstated. After discussions with the University we recognised that it would be a huge task to engage with the NHS on putting money back in the system for this clinic.

Students on campus began a petition campaign, asking their fellow students on campus to get involved. The petition will eventually be sent to the local health authority, who we have been in discussions with about possible alternatives, if there can no longer be any such service."

**Who:** Oxford University Students' Union

**What:** Mind Your Head

2011 saw the creation of the 'Mind Your Head' campaign at University of Oxford. Mind Your Head is run by a group of students who want to get people thinking and talking about mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The objectives of the campaign are:

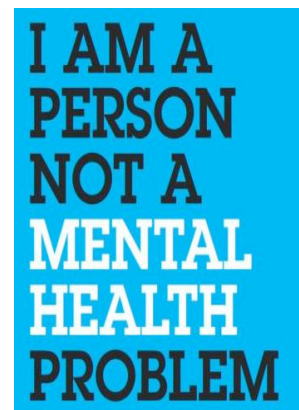
- To reduce the stigma surrounding disclosing mental illness and discussing mental health in general
- To raise awareness of different mental health conditions and their treatments
- To promote a positive attitude towards wellbeing amongst students at Oxford

The campaign is relatively new, with a launch event in the planning stages and a number of events taking place in the different colleges on campus. The union will be focusing the campaign activity around their Wellbeing Week in May.



**Who:** Coventry University Student Union

**What:** I am a person



Coventry University Students' Union ran a week of events designed to promote mental health and wellbeing. The events included:

- Live Music
- An Advice, Information & Guidance day with mental health charities
- Healthy Body, Healthy Mind food workshops
- Zumba, dancercise and yoga workshops
- A Pledge Wall and Radio Show, allowing students to share experiences about their mental health

The events were promoted through their website, facebook, fliers and t-shirts.

**Who:** Edge Hill University Students' Union

**What:** World Mental Health Day Fund and awareness raising Event

The event ran with the involvement of small charities and departments within the university that helped to promote a healthy lifestyle for those struggling with mental health difficulties. The event aimed to increase the awareness of mental health to students on campus. They brought in some external agencies in the mental health field and aspects of holistic health, such as massage and exercise. The day's activities raised £176.02, which was shared equally between two charities, MIND and RETHINK.

**Who:** Aberystwyth University Guild of Students

**What:** Aberystwyth Mental Health Campaigns

Mental Health provision in the Aberystwyth area is low. There is a Guild-run counseling service, but the University itself needed a mental health policy and the expertise to implement it. So on Oct 10<sup>th</sup>, World Mental Health Day, the Guild of Students organised a petition lobbying Student Support Services to hire a Mental Health Advisor. After getting 400 signatures to the Student Support Committee, they are setting up a Student Mental Health Action Planning group that will start in 2012.

The student officer has also been attending the local third-sector mental health forum (West Wales Action on Mental Health) to make sure that the student perspective is added to their lobbying power to the local health board (Hywel Da).



## NUS Scotland: Think Positive

### Think Positive – improving student mental health

Think Positive is the student mental health project at the National Union of Students Scotland. Funded externally by the Scottish Government, the project has been running for almost three years now, and its overall aim is to **promote good mental health** among students **and tackle the negative attitudes** that exist around mental ill health.

While society says that being a student is “the best time of your life”, we know that all too often that just isn’t the case. The pressure to juggle paid work and family responsibilities with exams, deadlines and assessments means that being a student today can be very stressful.

That’s why Think Positive is working to improve the supportive environment available to students at their college or university. From conducting research into student mental health issues to supporting student-led mental health campaigning, Think Positive aims to make a real difference to students.

Think Positive has a number of resources available for download from our website:

**[www.nus.org.uk/thinkpositive](http://www.nus.org.uk/thinkpositive)**

### Research

*Silently Stressed* (2010) – A research report based on a national student survey looking into student stressors, where students seek support for their mental health and the barriers and concerns students have which deter them from getting help for an issue concerning their mental health.



nationalunionofstudentscotland

*Breaking the Silence* (2011) – a follow up research report into the revealed results of the *Silently Stressed* report, based on qualitative research conducted across Scotland. This report also looks closely at the challenges facing student support services at institutions across the country and these are impacting their delivery of mental health support.

### **Campaign Toolkit**

The Think Positive Campaign Toolkit provides a comprehensive guide to mental health campaigning. Whether you are campaigning to tackle stigma and discrimination, lobbying to protect or improve student services or trying to introduce a new support option for students like peer mentoring, this Toolkit has all the information you need to get an effective mental health campaign off the ground at your college or university.

It provides you with the most relevant information on student mental health campaigning - facts about mental health, tips on planning and designing a campaign, case studies of previous student campaigns, essential resources and key contacts.

### **How can you get involved in Think Positive?**

- Run a mental health campaign on your campus and get in touch for support
- Use Think Positive materials and get in touch if you have any questions or comments about these
- Join us on Facebook and Twitter
- Encourage your institution to take part in our Healthy Body Healthy Mind Awards\*
- Help organise Scottish Mental Health First Aid training to be delivered on your campus\*

\*Scottish institutions only

For more information about Think Positive get in touch with Katie Rafferty on [katie.rafferty@nus-scotland.org.uk](mailto:katie.rafferty@nus-scotland.org.uk) or on 07595 057 391.



national union of students scotland

## **NUS-USI - Open Your Mind**

The NUS-USI project, Open Your Mind, is a five-year partnership project between NUS-USI and MindWise (a Northern Ireland based organisation) which aims to address the specific mental health needs of students aged 16-25 in both Further and Higher Education across Northern Ireland.

The project's aims are:

- Promote awareness of mental health issues amongst students aged 16-25 across Northern Ireland
- Reduce the risk factors related to mental illness through awareness raising
- Overcome the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness

Key areas of the project include recruiting and training Volunteers from the universities here in Northern Ireland. They receive training in the following areas:

- Understanding Disability, Society and the Law
- Developing Personal Confidence and Self-awareness
- Developing Group and Teamwork Communication Skills
- Understanding Stress and Stress Management Techniques
- Understanding Mental Health
- Improving Assertiveness and Decision-making Skills
- Mentoring for Students with Learning Disabilities
- Media Skills Training

The project supplies resources for both FE and HE campuses, and a lot of the campaign is focused around events during Freshers' week.

## Hot Seat: Tayaba Nicholson



### ***What inspired you to set up your mental health campaign?***

I was studying mental health nursing and one of my colleagues committed suicide. I knew that she had plans to set up a mental health society and was working with Papyrus to do this, so I got in touch with them and everything else just snowballed.

### ***What were the most pressing challenges that you faced during the course of the campaign?***

It was hard balancing the society alongside academic commitments as it started during my final year of study, and particularly because it was fun, but I did become quite good at managing my time and prioritising, and sometimes saying 'no', which was really hard to do!

### ***Part of the campaign was a film night and discussion group. What were your thoughts behind this?***

I wanted a regular event that could be in the evening and didn't revolve around drinking and pressures of socialising. Films brought people together as part of an anonymous community. Initially we chose films that had an obvious connection to mental health.

However, we soon realised that any film could be related, and the differing topics we chose attracted a real range of people, and that was fantastic for spreading the word on our campaign and also meeting new people.

### ***Over 500 students were involved in your positive messages campaign. What was the key to engaging so many people?***

We placed ourselves in the foyer of the students' union, which is really central and a focal point to the university with hundreds of students walking through it every day, and we made

the campaign really accessible, fun and attractive.

We had a broad idea of positive messages and we let participants define what their message was about. The people involved on the day were also really passionate and enthusiastic about what we were doing, and not afraid to speak to strangers!

***How did you manage to balance the campaigning work with your degree?***

It was tough, but it was something I was really passionate about, and that made me want to succeed. I also worked with a really good team of people who were keen, and full of campaigning ideas and the energy to see them through. Prioritising and delegation was key.

***Why do you think there is such a stigma attached to mental health problems and what do you think can be done to address this?***

There are many reasons why there is a stigma. One of these could be attributed to the way mental health is portrayed in the media: 95 per cent of stories relating to mental health include crime or violence when, realistically, since the introduction of care in the community the number of stranger homicides by people with mental health problems has not increased.

There is also a lack of education on the subject from an early age, which increases this fear and stigma. People need to look beyond a symptom and see a person, and in our society where you get ten minutes with your GP if you're lucky, the stigma will never change if we don't take the time to understand someone and their life experiences.

We require a greater understanding of social factors and their relevance, and we need people to work in mental health services because they care and are empathetic, and they are not there to abuse the power that is given to them.

***You must have met a lot of incredible people through your campaigning work. Is there anything that particularly sticks in the memory?***

The society was really formed after the loss of my colleague after her suicide, and that is the most important story to me. The last event I ran last year was during exam week and full of stress-busting activities and at the end of the day the Harmony Gospel Choir did a flash mob for us and that was one of my favourite moments of the year.

***What do you hope will be the legacy of the campaign?***

I honestly don't know! I just hope the campaign will continue and I look forward to hearing about how it develops. It is a fantastic platform for putting yourself on the map and learning new skills as you go.



### ***What are your personal ambitions for the future?***

I am starting a career in mental health nursing and I am really looking forward to stepping out of the student bubble and embracing newer and bigger challenges. I am really grateful to everyone at the University of Manchester who has helped this campaign to be a success and supported us.

## **Personal experiences of Mental Health**

Personal experiences can be used to inspire your campaigning, help raise awareness of what having mental health conditions is like and help people develop their own identity.

[www.LiberateYourself.co.uk](http://www.LiberateYourself.co.uk) contains personal stories which individuals have submitted around a variety of liberation areas, including mental health.

## **Ways to campaign around mental health**

Campaigning can be done in lots of different ways. However, it's important to know what the issue is that you want to change. You need to have a plan and some clear objectives of what you want to achieve. Campaigns don't have to be massive to achieve change. A successful campaign is often focused and manageable. You can't change everything at once! But a small change can make a big difference.

Here are some campaigning and event ideas:

- You can challenge attitudes around the stigma of mental health using posters, talks and events. Find useful facts, figures and personal stories that will change perceptions and challenge people to think positively about mental health.
- Raise awareness of mental health services in your local area and those run by your institution. You might want to invite the services to run an event or provide information for your students on what their services offer.
- Set up a forum to look at mental health in your institution.
- If there is an obvious issue around mental health that is affecting students in your institution, you could start a petition with a clear indication of the desired outcomes and submit it to the relevant person/department.
- Run a film night with a mental health theme.
- Run a quiz night.

- Run an alcohol free social activity.
- Distribute information around good mental to social groups at your union.
- Produce a top tips for good mental health leaflet.
- Celebrate mental health by running an event around the contribution made by people who have experience mental health issues.
- Have a debate around a mental health topic.
- Run a sporting event, with the aim of sport helping to encourage positive mental health.
- Run a session on stress management/relaxation.
- Produce an art instillation around mental health.
- Join up to national and local mental health organisations, events and campaigns.
- Get your union/institution to mark world mental health day.
- Hold a tea and talk drop in.
- Get your institution's library and/or resources department to promote books that look at personal experiences of mental health.
- Set up a facebook page around mental health at your institution.
- Ask for a page on your institution's and/or Students' Union's website to be dedicated to mental health, information on local support services and tips on positive mental health.

## Concluding remarks

**Students all too often have pressures coming at them from all angles** which trigger depression and the support services are either **over subscribed or just not there.**

We need to **do something** to ensure that mental health is talked about more. Since being diagnosed with bi-polar shortly after my experience, I've been an active campaigner on issues surrounding mental health, and I want to continue that.

**Nathan Sparkling**, NUS UK Disabled Students' Committee

NUS Disabled Students' Campaign and NUS Welfare Campaign would like to take this opportunity to offer a special thanks to Nathan for his contributions to the toolkit and his continued inspirational campaigning on Mental Health.

## Useful links and information

### Mental Health support

**Bipolar UK** [www.mdf.org.uk](http://www.mdf.org.uk)

**Depression Alliance** [www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org)

**Liberate Yourself** [www.LiberateYourself.co.uk](http://www.LiberateYourself.co.uk)

**Mental Health Foundation** [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

**MIND** [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

**National Survivor User Net work (NSUN)** [www.nsun.org.uk](http://www.nsun.org.uk)

**Rethink** [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

**Samaritans** [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

### Mental Health support for students and young people

#### Mental Wealth

**Charlie Waller Memorial Trust** – [www.cwmt.org.uk](http://www.cwmt.org.uk)

**Mental Wealth** - <http://www.mentalwealthuk.com/>

**PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide** [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

**SOS** - Higher Education Institutions and International Students' Mental Health  
[www.mhhe.heacademy.ac.uk/silo/files/sos-young-mind-in-he.pdf](http://www.mhhe.heacademy.ac.uk/silo/files/sos-young-mind-in-he.pdf)

**Students Against Depression** - <http://www.studentdepression.org/>

**The Site** - offers advice on a range of issues for 16-25 year olds including mental health  
[www.TheSite.org](http://www.TheSite.org)

**Young minds:** Promotes child and adolescent mental health [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

**Nightline** Student listening service [www.nightline.ac.uk](http://www.nightline.ac.uk)

## **Mental Health support for different liberation groups**

**Afiya Trust** report on the mental health of Black and minority  
Ethnic children and young people:  
[www.afiya-trust.org/images/stories/reports/afiya\\_young\\_people\\_report.pdf](http://www.afiya-trust.org/images/stories/reports/afiya_young_people_report.pdf)

**PACE** is a London based organization supporting the LGBT community on  
Mental health issues [www.pacehealth.org.uk](http://www.pacehealth.org.uk)

## **Support for Men**

**Calm** is an organisation looking at young men and suicide [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

**Men Get Eating Disorders Too** [www.mengetedstoo.co.uk](http://www.mengetedstoo.co.uk)

## **Support for people with eating disorders**

**Beat** provides helplines, online support and a network of UK-wide self-help groups to help  
adults and young people in the UK beat their eating disorders  
[www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)

## **NUS**

NUS Disabled Students' Campaign  
[www.nusconnect.org.uk/disabled](http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/disabled)

NUS Welfare Campaign  
[www.nusconnect.org.uk/welfare](http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/welfare)