Mental Health and Well Being

Health Promoting Universities Conference  19th June 2012

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What is Mental Health Promotion?
It’s More than...

• promoting access to treatment
• getting people to change so they ‘fit in’ / are more acceptable to others
• getting other people to change their discriminatory attitudes
• stalls, and head massages
• just theoretical
Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
Mental Health as a Public Health Concern

- It is about a whole university / systems approach (*and beyond...*)
- It includes Anticipatory and Reactionary adjustments required by the Equality Act
- It includes cultural changes aimed at promoting the inclusion of people with protected characteristics (with particular attention to MHD’s)
Mental Health Promotion includes all activities which are designed to...

- Provide helpful and accessible information
- Promote inclusion (N.B. not just about people with MHD’s)
- Make healthy choices easy choices
- Facilitate more positive outcomes for traditionally ‘hard to reach’ groups
- Identify and change practices which are non-inclusive or create unnecessary stresses / barriers
- A healthy approach to mental health can not be solely about private individuals going and discussing their inner most concerns in secret with a designated ‘expert’
- Etc...
Exercise / Health Living

- Mental Health Advisor with Sports Disability Officer on developing accessible exercise with mental health focus (Nottingham University)
- Gym Buddy Scheme (Nottingham University)
- Mental Health Advisor running Badminton groups for students with psychosis and female group of students with Personality Disorders (Birmingham University)
- Fruit and Veg stalls on campus (NTU)
- Welcome Week – including non-alcohol related activities (NTU)
- Exercise Referral Scheme (NTU)
- Self Help Book Scheme (NTU) Books on Prescription (Nottingham University)

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Rights and Finance

• Promoting disclosure and increasing uptake of DSA (Equality Challenge Unit, HEFCE funded project)

• Work with Student Finance England on increasing understanding of mental health, and creating clarity around medical evidence required for DSA (UMHAN)

• Access to Learning Funds / Summer Vacation Funds for students who will find combining work and study difficult (NTU)

• Information on the Equality Act as it applies to students with MHD’s leaflet (NTU)
Challenging Stigma

- What will I tell my Friend Resource (NTU)
- National annual Student Mental Health Day (UMHAN, Warwick University, and other participating HEI’s)
- Student Groups (e.g. Mental Wealth UK)
- Queer Café (NTU SU) – note the high incidence of suicide / attempted suicide in LGBT communities
- Challenging Stigma campaign / Time to Change Pledges (Northampton University)
Promoting Inclusion

- **Well aHead Project** – aims to encourage people with mental health difficulties to consider studying and prepare them for the challenge (NTU)

- **UMHAN activities** / website [www.umhan.com](http://www.umhan.com)

- Mental Health 1\textsuperscript{st} Aid training for staff (Leeds Trinity, UEA)
- Multi Faith provision (UCL)
Access is a key issue!

- Legal requirement that when a course is accredited the potential needs of student with MHD’s considered as per legal requirements? (awaiting example...

- Course teams demonstrating their compliance with the anticipatory adjustments required by the Equality Act? (awaiting example...

- Reactive adjustments need to be consistent across a university, not based on individual attitudes / course culture? (awaiting example...

- Meeting the obligations of the Equality Act in terms of assessment design and review (Sociology course at NTU)

- Creating accessible Curricula (awaiting example...

- **Inclusive approaches are better than providing alternatives**
Useful websites

- [www.umhan.com](http://www.umhan.com) University Mental Health Advisors Website
- [http://www.mhhe.heacademy.ac.uk/themes/about-themes/student-mental-health/](http://www.mhhe.heacademy.ac.uk/themes/about-themes/student-mental-health/) Mental Health in Higher Education website, collated resources

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**Things to think about?**

- What do you / your institution do which could be described as mental health promoting?
- What else could you / your institution do?
- How well do you / your institution consider access issues for students with mental health difficulties?
- Why would a student declare a MHD at your institution?
- Do your senior management team recognise the huge business potential in addressing mental health appropriately?
- Do Student Unions promote positive mental health?
- What is the culture of your institution? – are some course described as ‘stressful’, what is the culture around exams?