

University of West of England

Healthwatch engaged with students studying at the University of the West of England to find out their experiences and responses to our emotional health and wellbeing questionnaire. Researching what mechanism they have in place in order to deal with the stresses of university. The survey aimed to find out what university or health services students had used for support, what was good about their experiences and what students think could be improved:

- Bristol has higher rates of mental health diagnoses than the national average.
- Many students said that they had felt some kind of stress related to university work and felt under pressure with assignment deadlines and exams. The majority of students, when asked what helped support them, all said that peer support was one of the most significant mechanisms students used to help support their emotional health and wellbeing.
- Supported by Healthwatch Bristol, university students shared their experiences responses highlighting the important of peer groups and various other types of health and social care services which students found helped aid their health and wellbeing needs, further affirming which services could be improved.

Healthwatch Bristol is working on a city-wide project concentrating on emotional health around the city. With one in four adults and one in ten children affected by mental health this is an issue that affects everybody. Bristol City Council is prioritising this matter and tackling it, with a key objective of this project to improve emotional health and wellbeing across the city.

Healthwatch Bristol is keen to find out people's experiences on this topic and have put together a short survey, with a focus on emotional and health and wellbeing. Please click on the link to access the questionnaire.

<http://bit.ly/2iVHJnV>

Healthwatch Bristol (HWB) was keen to hear from students attending University of West of England's about mechanisms they used

This report shows strong evidence of the stress and pressures student feel when studying at university and the importance of peer support.

Healthwatch Bristol

"My friends and colleagues from my study course help to relieve my study related stresses and concerns!"

University student

"GP at University helped with advice for my anxiety and stress after meeting, this was acknowledged by university and I was able to have additional time for my exams due to my anxiety."

University student

Call: 0303 303 0023

Text: 07592 787 533

healthwatchbristol.co.uk

Healthwatch Bristol speaking to students at University of West of England Bristol about emotional health and wellbeing.

Follow up

to help support their emotional health and wellbeing.



Data Analysis: Feedback from 10 participants

Question 1

Question one asked about if people had received any support from voluntary /community groups or peer support. Eight out of ten student participants stated that peer support had a positive impact and helped support their emotional and mental health. One participant stated, "Peer support has allowed me to talk about stress and worries to people who are in similar situations." One out of ten said that they also had church support network stating, "My

faith is very helpful particularly during difficult times." Three out of ten people said how they would access support and advice from their tutor. Two out of ten said that they participated in sport activities with one saying, "It provides me with social contact and a platform to meet friends, as well as being good for my physical health and wellbeing." Three out of ten students participated in part-time work, which they said helped keep them busy and was a distraction from studies.

Question 2

This question aimed to find out which services people used to support their needs: From a community psychiatric nurse, psychotherapist/counsellor, a social worker, psychiatrist, mental health support, GP, or another type of NHS Health and social care worker, and LIFT/Wellbeing therapies staff.

Six out of ten stated that they used their GP for advice for anxiety and stress. One out of ten said that their GP helped refer them to a bereavement counsellor, which they used after a close relative died. One out of ten was given medication

for their depression which they said helped but felt that closer attention and monitoring was needed. Also being informed about alternative therapies would have been better. Four out of six who went to see the GP for emotional support got advice and information about how to deal with stress and anxiety. One out of six received counselling and stated, "It helped to talk to someone especially not having my family here." One out of six who received support from their GP/ UWE GP said that they were diagnosed with stress and anxiety which helped extend their timeline for exams taking this into consideration, stating this helped to alleviate some pressure.

Question 3

This question focused on how well these services supported their needs. One person thought that more options from the GP of various medication for depression should have been given, rather than antidepressants. One out of six stated that their GP service's supported their needs very well and that they felt they were listened to. Two out of ten who had received counselling said, "I was happy with the service

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Follow up

but I received a different person each time.” They felt that had they received the same person they could have built a rapport which would have helped support them better. The other student said that Time 2 Talk had helped support their needs very well.

One participant said that bereavement counselling had helped aid them very well during a difficult period of time. Out of the six people who accessed their GP/UWE GP for their mental health, three of them said that they felt the service supported their needs very well. Two said quite well and one said not very well, stating that the medication they were given had caused them lots of side effects and felt more attention and monitoring should have been received.

Question 4

Question four asked if there was anything else that they would like to see instead or in addition to this. Two out of ten participants said that there could be more activities on site for students to participate in as a way of relaxing away from pressures of university work.

Summary.

This report strengthened and articulated well that eight out of ten students had experienced some form of stress on their emotional and mental health. Most participants stated how peer support was a great benefit and how it helped to air concerns, worries and issues.

The majority of students would turn to peer support. Evidence shows how beneficial it is sharing experiences, problems and concerns with others who understand and with similar circumstances. This is in comparison to just a few students who received support from their families. Several participants added how activities like sports and volunteering helped them socialise, meet other people and was a good distraction from university work. Many participants stated they would contact a GP for advice and support with emotional and mental health, whether it was advice about how to cope with emotional challenges, sleeping issues or seeking counselling or medication.

Participants who used health and social care services to support them with their

emotional and mental health: those few who had used them for this reason felt well supported and found these services to be very beneficial, helping them with anxiety, stress, sleeping and advice. Students were also referred to additional support of counselling.

Recommendations.

Some GP services who are treating patients for depression should provide a range of methods to help support depression and not just medication. GPs to make more referrals to social prescribing or holistic treatments as an alternatives to medication.

HWB found strong evidence that peer support helped students. Universities could try and encourage students to share worries and concerns with peers. These groups could encourage them to share their feelings and could help others to talk more openly about emotional stress, pressure and anxiety.

We recommend that more information is given on campus about what services can help if people are feeling stressed, ensuring students are well informed.

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