

**Date:** Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021  
**Time:** 10:30-12:00  
**Venue:** Online via Zoom  
**Resources:** [Available here](#)

## **MINUTES: Health and Wellbeing Topic Support Network: Anxiety**

### **Attendees**

Giulia Basana	Marketing Assistant	Togetherall
Kenneth Blake	Head of Estates & Environment Student Engagement and Wellbeing Coordinator	University of the West of Scotland
Meredith Brown	Depute Manager - Business and Creative	North East Scotland College
Beth Brownlee	Health and Safety Advisor	West Lothian College
Billy Cassidy	Lecturer - Health and Social and Care / Children and Young People	University of the West of Scotland
Barry Charmichael	People Advisor	Dundee and Angus College
Jane Cooper	Acting Vice-Dean & Assistant Vice Principal	Dundee and Angus College
Helen Gallagher	Health & Wellbeing	Glasgow Caledonian University
Laura Glennie	Support for Learning	West Lothian College
Sue Henderson	Executive Assistant	University of Oxford
Jonathan Jones	Universities Lead	Togetherall
Suzanne Marshall	Advisor- Equalities	College Development Network
Katie McIntosh	Mental Health Coordinator	New College Lanarkshire
Seona Mckenzie	Health and Fitness Lecturer	University of Strathclyde
Rachel Simpson	Project Officer	Glasgow Caledonian University
Vicki Simpson-Price	Student Counsellor	Dundee and Angus College
John Thorne	Sustainability Coordinator	Glasgow School of Art
Rebekah Walker	Wellbeing Adviser	University of Aberdeen
Yvonne Wark	Health and Safety Manager	University of the West of Scotland

	<b>SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS</b>	<b>START</b>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Welcome</b>  <i>Beth Brownlee, Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources, West Lothian</i></p> <p>Everyone was welcomed to the event and the theme of anxiety highlighted. Beth highlighted that people seem more aware of climate anxiety now but questioned whether we are well enough equipped to act against it.</p> <p>Beth introduced our three speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barry Carmichael, Lecturer- Health and Social and Care / Children and Young People and L&amp;T Mentor - Academic Development Team, Dundee and Angus College</li> <li>• Vicki Simpson-Price, Psychotherapist and Student Counsellor, Dundee and Angus College</li> <li>• Johnathan Jones, University Lead, Togetherall</li> </ul>	0.00
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Wellness Recovery Action Plan</b>  <i>Barry Carmichael, Health and Social Care Lecturer, Dundee and Angus College</i></p> <p>Barry joins us from the Gardyne Campus of Dundee and Angus College where he is on break from leading one of his Wellness Recovery Action Plan sessions with students. These WRAP® courses develop people’s self-determination based on the concept that no one knows you as well as you know yourself. It aims to reduce and modify symptoms of low mental health through use of a personal action plan.</p> <p>Barry is evidently enthusiastic about the course which he took himself as CPD in 2016 and then trained to lead in 2018. He predominantly delivers it to childcare students but has delivered it to staff as well with positive feedback from both.</p> <p>There are a number of benefits outlined from participating in WRAP®:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in severity of symptoms</li> <li>• Increased hopefulness</li> <li>• Increased confidence</li> <li>• Greater willingness to ask for help</li> <li>• Better goal orientation</li> <li>• More able to rely on others</li> <li>• Self-advocacy</li> </ul> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Improved physical and mental health</p> <p>WRAP® was developed in the USA in the 1970’s by Mary Ellen Copeland and made its way to the UK in the Early 2000’s. Its now heavily utilised in the Dundee area particularly by the NHS.</p> <p>Over 2 days (12 hours) attendees create and learn to use a ‘Wellness Toolbox’ which is the cornerstone of WRAP. This is a tangible resource that can be as simple as list of things that make them feel better, e.g. walking the dog, having a bath, or having a cup of tea in a nice mug. They are encouraged to consider the time frame of these actions: daily, weekly,</p>	2.27

monthly, yearly. Barry uses an actual toolbox of 30 physical objects in his sessions to represent his actions in an engaging way.

Following from the Wellness Toolbox attendees create a daily maintenance plan. This is a three-part plan which aims to make people more self-aware by addressing the following:

- What am I like when I am well (Barry does this by asking to describe themselves from A-Z e.g. Animated, bubbly, calm...)
- List things you need to stay well (things done daily e.g. brushing teeth, eating breakfast)
- List things you might need to do to stay well (non essentials e.g. meeting friends)

At the end of every 24 hours actions should be ticked off. Barry admits he was struggling recently so went back over his daily maintenance plan to see what was missing and was able to help himself by reintegrating these actions in his routine.

The next hour of a WRAP® session would identify triggers/stressors, how to limit exposure to them, and how to cope when they occur. These will be different person to person and as such the personalised wellness toolbox from earlier is useful to refer back to at this point. Staff in particular can find focusing on themselves in this context rather than others for a change challenging at this point, particularly staff involved in student wellness.

Finally WRAP® discusses early warning signs of a mental health decline that are often internal changes only perceptible by yourself. Barry shares that he gets a twitchy eye, spots in his vision and is more placid than usual. Common other symptoms are difficulty sleeping or craving unhealthy foods – which are regularly reported by students. Improving self-awareness of mental health this way can allow people to access their Toolbox sooner and prevent further things getting worse.

Barry concludes his presentation by inviting people to reach out to him by email ([b.carmichael@dundeeandangus.ac.uk](mailto:b.carmichael@dundeeandangus.ac.uk)) and encourages devising a local WRAP unit that students and staff at multiple colleges or universities in the community can access.

### **Questions:**

'How many people attend at one time?'- Helen Gallagher

Barry: The course is funded by future skills college for 12-16 students. Shorter 2 hour sessions have been run for the students association on 'stressors and toolkits'

'How long did the training take?' -Suzanne Marshall

Barry: It was a 5 day course

'Do you have a counselling service at the college you are involved with?'

John Thorne

Barry: There is funding for professional counsellors in the college, including Vicki who is on the call. I cover more of the curriculum side and they focus on the counselling.

'At West Lothian we run a living life to full course similar but only with students, not staff. How do staff respond?' - Beth Brownlee

	<p>Barry: Feedback has been really good one member of staff said "The world needs WRAP®". I think it's because it offers simple solutions rather than overcomplicating it as academics can tend to. It acknowledges good things you're already doing.</p>	
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>What is Anxiety?</b>  <i>Vicki Simpson-Price, Psychotherapist, Dundee and Angus College</i></p> <p>Vicki has owned her own psychotherapy practice for 7 years and has been a student counsellor at Dundee and Angus for the past year. She is one of a total of five counsellors at the College all from different backgrounds. Vicki has specific interests in the effects of sleep and technology on mental health. She believes today's session is really important as, since the pandemic, reports of mental health issues have tripled with anxiety having the sharpest increase.</p> <p>Nerves and anxiety are often used synonymously but are not same. Nerves are gone after the situation while anxiety persists. Vicki wants to normalise stress and nervousness as responses to specific events as part of the body's natural flight-or-flight response. Anxiety is much vaguer but can also be part of this natural response.</p> <p>The difference between everyday anxiety and an anxiety disorder is a disorder is more persistent and begins to affect our ability to go about daily activities. Panic attacks are also a common symptom of anxiety disorders and can make the sufferer feel like they are having a genuine medical emergency. The hormone cortisol is released in this fight-or-flight response which suppresses appetite making anxiety disorder sufferers often avoid eating. Setting up a regular sleep routine can help anxiety disorders.</p> <p>Vicki is seeing a lot of delayed emotional fallout in NHS workers as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>There are a number of types of anxiety disorders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generalised anxiety disorder. You feel excessive, unrealistic worry and tension with little or no reason (mainly affects 17-19 year olds)</li> <li>• Panic disorder. You feel sudden, intense fear that brings on a panic attack. During a panic attack you may break out in a sweat, have chest pain, and have a pounding heartbeat (palpitations). Sometimes you may feel like you're choking or having a heart attack.</li> <li>• Social anxiety disorder. Also called social phobia, this is when you feel overwhelming worry and self-consciousness about everyday social situations. You obsessively worry about others judging you or being embarrassed or ridiculed.</li> <li>• Specific phobias. You feel intense fear of a specific object or situation, such as heights or flying. The fear goes beyond what's appropriate and may cause you to avoid ordinary situations.</li> <li>• Agoraphobia. You have an intense fear of being in a place where it seems hard to escape or get help if an emergency occurs. For example, you may panic or feel anxious when on an airplane, public transportation, or standing in line with a crowd.</li> <li>• Separation anxiety. Little kids aren't the only ones who feel scared or anxious when a loved one leaves. Anyone can get separation anxiety</li> </ul>	<p><b>30.08</b></p>

disorder. If you do, you'll feel very anxious or fearful when a person you're close with leaves your sight. You'll always worry that something bad may happen to your loved one.

- Selective mutism. This is a type of social anxiety in which young kids who talk normally with their family don't speak in public, like at school.
- Medication-induced anxiety disorder. Use of certain medications or illegal drugs, or withdrawal from certain drugs, can trigger some symptoms of anxiety disorder (e.g. thyroxin).

Anxiety can present as any combination of the following symptoms:

- Feelings of stress and apprehension
- Irritability
- Struggling getting to sleep or stay asleep
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling fearful
- Not wanting to go out
- Overthinking
- Alcohol/Drug misuse
- Headaches
- Muscle pain/tension
- Tensing jaw
- Decreased appetite
- Not meeting deadlines
- Work quality slips
- Upset stomachs
- Hypervigilant
- Trying to control everything
- Feeling sick
- Shortness of Breath

The Biopsychosocial Model by Delphis (2019) illustrates the many factors interacting to influence mental health.

Again, Vicki has seen the consequences of the pandemic on mental health as many staff at Dundee and Angus college are experiencing compassion fatigue – a type of burnout – from constantly helping students and other staff. Also worry of 'what if' has got worse as people have always been sitting in a future-orientated mood state. Therefore, the pandemic has officially been classed as a traumatic event capable of causing PTSD.

Vicki focusses on avoiding anxiety through preparation but also advises; breathing to send relaxation signals around the body ([check 7:11 technique](#)), staying positive, physical activity, eating which tells the body to calm down, and distractions e.g. chewing gum.

If nerves and anxiety do occur they could be reduced by: talking to someone, getting into nature, ditching tech, setting a good sleep routine (this is a pillar stone, it's even more important than food and water), setting daily routine and structure, proactively asking yourself 'what do I need?', reduce sugar and caffeine intake (particularly predominant in students), peer support groups (there is a list of support groups on [mental health foundation](#) to direct students to).

A student of Vicki's showed her the Pomodoro technique he uses for a healthy workload routine which lots of her other students have found useful.

"Circles of control" give perspective over worries, encouraging consideration of whether what you're worrying about is something you can control. It does this by breaking down areas into controls, influences and concerns. In this model the things we have control over are in the smallest circle. Vicki gives the example of someone caught in the rain, rain is the concern, putting on a coat is a control and the type of coat is an influence.

Mental health is the biggest barrier to success in colleges so encouraging peer counselling could be key to offer immediate support to those struggling

	<p>while they wait to see a professional. In many cases where this has taken place students have no longer felt the need to see a professional.</p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p>'Do you run sessions like this with your students?' – Helen Gallagher  Vicki: Yes, student come with gaps such as phone over-usage and I run large scale sessions for them.</p> <p>'Climate psychology alliance looks at controls possible in different subject areas such as sculpting or making music' -John Thorne  (links from John <a href="https://www.sallyweintrobe.com/engaging-with-climate-change/">https://www.sallyweintrobe.com/engaging-with-climate-change/</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/ClimatePsychologyAllianceScotland">https://www.facebook.com/ClimatePsychologyAllianceScotland</a> <a href="https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/scotland">https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/scotland</a>)  Vicki: That's great, that could even fit into the circle of influence as it's a two-way street.</p>	
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Anxiety Support</b>  <i>Johnathan Jones, Universities Lead, Togetherall</i></p> <p>Johnathan already works with some of the institutions in attendance. His company, <a href="#">Togetherall</a>, provide them with an online support community that is accessible by all staff and students. The website provides an immediately accessible, 24/7 platform for individuals to anonymously share their problems. The platform has a team of clinical professionals to act as 'wall guides' that moderate the content and employ risk escalation processes to get people in crisis the help they need. Togetherall is a vibrant, growing community that has already helped thousands of students and staff (supporting 134,000 students across 24 Scottish institutions and a further 2 million in the entire UK).</p> <p>The format of the platform has encouraged numerous people to ask for the help they need, some for the first time. In an emergency users can be deanonymised to share their details with the emergency services or their institution.</p> <p>Having a community in which to discuss such personal issues allows personal development and normalises feelings that may otherwise not be shared. Feelings can be shared through words in groups called 'talkabouts' or through the sometimes easier medium of art in groups called 'bricks'. For those not ready to share they also provide self help options.</p> <p>Togetherall is not here to replace services but instead aims to integrate and enhance existing provision. Their 'wall guides' talk directly to students but also with institutional professionals on how to improves their mental health services. Jon himself used to work at Edge Hill university in counselling and would receive 9/10 of emails looking for help at 2am which not only left the students without response for hours but meant staff such as Jon's wellbeing suffered from the stress too. By providing a 24/7 easily accessible service Togetherall overcomes the issues associated with working hours that don't align with mental health trends.</p> <p>Johnathan took us through a demo of the site which was a very pleasant and easily navigable interface. There is also the option to embed the Togetherall platform as an API within institutions own websites.</p>	<p><b>1.09.02</b></p>

	<p><b><u>Questions:</u></b></p> <p>'How do you get word out to people about the service?' – Beth Brownlee  Johnathan: We are working to linking our resources to self help modules that are now growing in prevalence. Even if students don't need our services now this way they can refer back when they do.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Next Meeting</b>  <i>Helen Gallagher, Assistant Vice Principal Health &amp; Wellbeing, Glasgow Caledonian University</i></p> <p>The next Health and Wellbeing TSN will focus on burnout, particularly in the wake of COP26, and will take place in Spring 2022. If anyone has any suggestions for its agenda please <a href="#">contact us</a>.</p> <p>Vicki will be leading a talk on burnout to senior leaders at Dundee and Angus College in the following week as high levels of staff are reporting suffering from it. She is willing to share her data to help with our next session.</p>	<p><b>1.32.15</b></p> <p>LP: Follow up with Vicki about resources on burnout</p>
<b>11</b>	<p><b>Thanks and Close</b>  <i>Helen Gallagher, Assistant Vice Principal Health &amp; Wellbeing, Glasgow Caledonian University</i></p>	<p><b>1.35.08</b></p>

Minutes prepared by:

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19<sup>th</sup> October 2021