

Date: Thursday 8th September 2022
Time: 10:00-12:00
Venue: Online via Zoom
Resources: [Available here](#)

MINUTES:
EAUC-S Health and Wellbeing Topic Support Network
Building Student Resilience

Attendees

Pamela Candea	Managing Director	The Surefoot Effect
Tracy English	Lecturer	Fife College
Katie McIntosh	Mental Health Coordinator	New College Lanarkshire
Micole Cochrane	Students' Association Development Officer	West Lothian College
Mary McGuire	Personal Assistant	Glasgow School of Art
Lara Fahey	Scotland Sustainability Project Officer	EAUC
Kathrin Mobius	Scotland Sustainability Project Officer	EAUC
Beth Brownlee	Depute Manager - Business and Creative	West Lothian College
Lizzie Reather	Organisation Development specialist	Glasgow Caledonian University
Chris Maguire	Senior research officer	Mental Health Foundation
Rebecca Upsher	Teaching Fellow	King's College London
Lucy Patterson	Sustainability in the Curriculum Project Officer	EAUC

	SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS	Time
1	<p>Welcome, <i>Lizzie Reather, Organisation Development specialist, Glasgow Caledonian University</i></p> <p>Everyone was welcomed to the event and Lizzie introduced our speakers who were going to share their experiences of strengthening student resilience and ran through the agenda.</p> <p>She then introduced our three speakers:</p> <p>Chris Maguire, Senior research officer. Lead on the Thriving Learners survey which showed there is work to do on student resilience which has given a mandate to focus on this area.</p> <p>Rebecca Upsher, Teaching Fellow. Involved in creation of a toolkit to support student resilience through curriculum.</p> <p>Pamela Candea, Managing director of The Surefoot Effect. Delivers all sorts of training to support mental health particularly in relation to sustainability, one of which is flourishing, not just surviving through resilience skills.</p>	0.00
2	<p>Evaluation and data gathering <i>Chris Maguire, Senior Research Officer, Thriving Learners</i></p> <p>The thriving learners project is looking at student health and wellbeing across students in Scotland. It is a 2 year project, looking at Universities in the first year (just passed) and Colleges in the second. It was started by the Universities Scotland Student Mental Health and Wellbeing working group who recognized there was little sector wide evidence for mental health and wellbeing in Scotland so approached the Mental Health foundation and is funded by the Robertson Trust. It comprised of a Self-selecting student facing survey and got 15,128 responses which is 6% of the Scottish University population! He discussed key trends in regard to age, gender, general wellbeing, life experiences (adverse childhood experienced and food insecurity), mental health, student service awareness and usage.</p> <p>Interviews with staff in student facing roles sat alongside the survey and explored the student mental health journey (promotion, point of access/blockage), general wellbeing. Findings from this were that students come with high expectations of university support and confusion exists about interface of HEIs and NHS. Medicalization of emotions such as sadness and distress over building resilience skills has therefore become a demand of services from students and concern this is disempowering young people was noted. Conversely, there was consensus for students with</p>	2.35

enduring mental health problems universities should not be seen as alternative to NHS.

Chris finished off with recommendations for student wellbeing, mental health, trauma and poverty and explained next steps; to survey college sector, produce papers on priority areas identified in HEIs and hopefully have a follow up study funded for 2022/23.

Questions

BB- Good response rate of 6%, to what extent do you feel it represent the whole university population or do you think the ones that answered the questions need the most support.

CM- 6% is huge, it's the largest mental health survey that been done on students in Scotland- as a proportion of students we think it might be in the world. With a self-selecting survey there is always an element that certain people will be attracted but 14/19 institutions sent out all student emails though central comms channels so was spread as widely as we could. We did have a stronger female response due to existing bias of females to respond to survey and discuss mental health. Other than that we were bang on representation for the sector compared to HESA figures.

BB- I was interested to know why protected characteristics were singled out to be reported on because my guess would be there was under representation from ethnic minorities.

CM- Some, in terms of overall we were slightly underrepresented by white students in the survey. We had 8% response rate from black students which is higher than corresponding average of whole population but we purposely targeted BAME student groups to push the survey through their channels. Primary underrepresentation was gender. We were pleased with breakdown we had.

LP- I found the finding about medicalization overriding resilience interesting and I wonder have others on the call experienced that and also how do we remove that phenomena and recenter/promote resilience skills as the first option for students.

CM- We've been mulling that over for a while. Certainly, for tertiary institutions its tricky as its like a conveyor belt of students arriving with this expectation, so its an issue but not necessarily of their own making. There's beginning to be work coming out about how we speak to young people about mental health being possibly problematic on the back end of decades of mental health campaigns. Young people get half of a language and things to identify with and once you've identified with something its very hard to un-identify with it. If you do SWEM webs, PHQ9, general health questionnaire 12 or GAD7 at a point of distress in your life as an adolescent that's going to tell you you have anxiety which isn't always helpful. Teachers aren't administering those but they deliver lessons on it and have half a language as well so they it needs to be holistic so they're trained to communicate about mental health. No one want to be front of a newspaper for being the person that missed

	<p>something so it's no surprise its been that risk averse. But solution... I'm not that sure on at the moment.</p> <p>PC- I wrote down 'the medicalization of emotions of sadness or distress'. Young people are distressed in my work I see it about climate change and I see it that these emotions are a rational response to the situation and won't go away with medicalization, if there's underlying mental health problems yes of course those need to be dealt with. We have 3 projects one of which had findings that we need to look at where we are and what the situation is around us, acknowledge those feeling then think what can we rationally hope for and move toward which is a tiny resilience skill that lets people think 1- it's okay to feel these feeling and 2- how can we move toward that.</p>	
3	<p>Supporting student wellbeing in the curriculum and Q&A <i>Rebecca Upsher, Teaching Fellow, Kings College London</i></p> <p>Lizzie acknowledged research at thriving learners and Sussex University that showed students struggling with mental health are unable to navigate support services so embedding wellbeing in student experience is necessary. The education for mental health toolkit, which Rebecca was involved in creating, funded by office for students, and released in March 2022, was designed for academic/ curriculum staff to promote wellbeing in curriculum (as they are only guaranteed contact point between students and university).</p> <p>The language around mental health in universities may be encouraging belief that hard study is bad for wellbeing (Kathryn Ecclestone, 2022), leading to assumptions that making the curriculum easier is the way to support wellbeing. But that's not the case it's the way students engage with their learning that determine the impact on wellbeing. Through research with stakeholder groups, consultation with specialists and literature review they came up with the following recommendations to build students resilience skills to thrive when academically challenged:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Underpinning Infrastructure – leverage new academic, professional and student partnerships to facilitate transition pedagogy. 2. Social Belonging- Creating psychological safety in learning communities. 3. Learning Focused- engaging students in meaningful learning for intrinsic motivation and challenging sustainably in assessment. 4. Scaffolded Design- Preparing for students who need the most support in standard curriculum design. 5. Learner Development- Teaching students how to be students on top of content, acknowledge things that interact with learning, can't separate learning and emotion. 6. Getting Students Back on Track- structure to respond to unavoidable life events through signposting and relationships with service support staff. <p>Questions:</p>	36.42

	<p>CM- Not a direct question, but about the link between learning, wellbeing and social belonging. Does anyone have any thoughts on that and the last couple of years? With young people attending tertiary institutions having never sat exams and that's a new challenge they've not encountered before and is that too much of a challenge that's going to impact wellbeing and how to deal with that? Need to acknowledge there's also not been as much social belong and identity and how will that play out?</p> <p>BU- The pandemic has brought that all to the surface, I teach undergraduate students in the psychology department and we're finding we have to build in more icebreaker activities and promote conversations to get students talking to each other. There's more awkwardness not just for first years but for second and third years so we're promoting social cohesion a lot more.</p>	
4	<p>Tools to build student resilience discussion <i>Lucy Patterson, Sustainability in the Curriculum Project Officer, EAUC</i></p> <p>Building resilience skills needn't require support staff to reinvent the wheel, numerous existing resources exist to adopt in Colleges and Universities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Decider Skills- Life Skills for Proactive Mental Health:</i> 12 Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) skills Inverness College UHI has trained staff across all departments to use the decider life skills. - <i>Bloom- Free resilience training for teaching staff:</i> to deliver workshops to young people aged 14-18 to build their skills around resilience, exam stress, friendships, managing studies, social pressures, making decisions about the future, and juggling time. - <i>WRAP- Wellness Recovery Action Plan:</i> supports identification of tools that keep you well and create action plans to put them into practice in your everyday life. Dundee and Angus College deliver workshops on WRAP to their students. <p>In the session attendees partook in a think, pair, share exercise to consider resources or strategies they've implemented, experienced or would like to have experienced as a student to support their resilience and shared via jamboard.</p>	59.25
5	<p>Flourishing, not just surviving and Q&A <i>Pamela Candea, Managing Director, The Surefoot Effect</i> The Surefoot Effect is a community interest organization commissioned 10 years ago to use value based methods to help people realise ambitions for sustainable living. Most work is angled toward building resilience, one project called 'flourishing, not just surviving' and another 'breakthrough for resilience.' A previous 'facing the future, nurturing now' resilience workshop was aimed at those working within sustainable activism. Their upcoming one is called</p>	1.14.10

	<p>'EAR:Eco-anxious resilient peer support' which will help- create self-care planning tools with peers.</p> <p>What is resilience? NOT skilling up to put up with ongoing stress and sudden shocks. It's not break down, not breaking even but instead a break through- using lessons of adversity to grow beyond. There are a lot of stresses in modern working life: full inboxes, to-do lists, and super stressful situations we either experience directly or see in the world (war, cost of living crisis, and of course climate change). Taking action is important, but looking after ourselves so we can continue to support social good comes first.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <p>PC- What do you need to do for yourself to support students? Then what can you pass on to students?</p> <p>LP- Best piece of advice before my teacher training was take the breaks when they come or you won't be there after for the students. So protecting our own wellbeing is a precursor for supporting that of others.</p> <p>KM- climate emergency is so urgent people focus so much on doing something about it and forget to look at themselves so important people working in sustainability need to be aware of that or find a peer to support that.</p> <p>MC- Break it down into manageable bits.</p> <p>PC- Breaking down tasks and the feelings and actions I can take to deal with those feelings eg. I could spend 5 minutes outside next to a tree rather than looking at getting a task done in a day.</p> <p>CM- it seems a lot of this comes down to time. It can be very difficult for staff particularly in student support roles to take breaks when they know a student may not get support if they take the break. Its an impossible situation so there needs to be resource to allow staff in those roles to look after themselves.</p> <p>LR- Letting go of should.</p>	
5	<p>Summary <i>Beth Brownlee, Head of Quality, Student Support & Learning Resources, West Lothian College</i></p>	1.29.30

	<p>Beth thanked all speakers and attendees for contributing and summarized presentations. How thriving learners survey resonated with what's being experienced at front line of student support, even in colleges, particularly influence of poverty and need for training on trauma informed approaches and stigmatization of mental health. How amazing the toolkit seems and how it could support embedding course tutors in student wellbeing journey as they are already trying to do at West Lothian to promote social interactions around learning and wellbeing. How The Surefoot Effect is supporting the sector and leads on from our last session on burnout in relation to climate anxiety 'fixing your own oxygen mask before others' but also Chris's observation of the challenge to take lunch or have that chat that a students finally got courage to have with you, it's a fragile thing. So lots of good things to do we just need discipline to them but also seen from speakers there's systemic changes to make.</p>	
7	<p>Next Meeting: <i>Lizzie Reather, Organisation Development specialist, Glasgow Caledonian University</i></p> <p>The next health and Wellbeing TSN will take place in Spring 2023. If anyone has any suggestions for it's agenda please contact lpatterson@eauc.org.uk. Suggestions of potential topics to include are: trauma, poverty and money, physical health and the environment, inclusivity and sense of belonging (groups and protected characteristics), and suicide-safer universities and colleges, MH first aid and other interventions.</p>	1.33.50
8	<p>THANKS AND CLOSE <i>Lizzie Reather, Organisation Development specialist, Glasgow Caledonian University</i></p>	1.39.10

Minutes prepared by Lucy Patterson, EAUC-Scotland Sustainability in the Curriculum Project Officer,
12/09/2022