

# **Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-21 – summary of objectives and achievements**

[Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2021](#)

Date: September 2021

## **Objective 1 - Establish a whole-university approach to student health and wellbeing.**

Leads: Denise Long – UCL; Alex McKee – Students' Union UCL

### **Action 1A**

**Establish a Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy Group to have oversight of the strategy and responsibility for its implementation. Members of the Group include key stakeholders from across UCL, the Students' Union and students, together with external partners. The Group is co-chaired by representatives from UCL and Students' Union UCL.**

Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy Steering Group - established in June 2019 and co-chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education & Student Experience) and formerly Pro-Vice-Provost (Student Experience) and Director of UCL Medical School, and the SUUCL Welfare and International Officer. The Group brought together SUUCL, academic and professional services staff from across UCL and key external healthcare providers to oversee the implementation and review of the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The Group ensured a critical commitment to work in partnership with SUUCL and that any actions and changes were informed by student voice. The Group considered any emerging issues, trends and guidance in the sphere of student health and wellbeing including those arising from the pandemic. The Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy has remained relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic period and has guided support services' work towards further fostering a sense of care, connection and belonging within UCL.

### Action 1B

**Set up a Student Health and Wellbeing Community of Practice. The Community strengthens the connections between academic units, central services and the Students' Union, as colleagues can discuss challenges, share expertise and co-ordinate plans for enhancing the support we offer to students.**

Student Health and Wellbeing Community of Practice – launched in June 2019 and brings together staff in pastoral roles from across UCL to learn from each other, share updates and work collaboratively on improvement projects. The Community of Practice is thriving and fosters an inclusive community that is supportive, caring and respectful for all at UCL.

The Community of Practice committed to complete five projects that would be beneficial to students and those staff supporting students:

1. 'Remarkable Stories' - a series of inspirational podcasts in collaboration with some of our notable alumni.
2. PGR Student Support and Wellbeing project - to enhance support for PhD students.
3. Student Triage and Referral Tool (STaRT)\* - an online tool to help staff members across UCL direct students to the best form of support.
4. Departmental Wellbeing Resource Bank – collating a wide-range of materials to help staff in departments embed student wellbeing.
5. Data and Feedback Review project - looking at how we quantify the impact and share the successes of our student support initiatives.

\*The Student Triage and Referral Tool' is a notable success. The tool is available to all UCL staff providing tailored guidance and signposting, allowing staff to direct students to the most appropriate information and services depending on their individual situation. It continues to evolve and remain relevant and is already a valued resource by many staff.

### Action 1C

**Develop a network of Student Advisers, who are UCL staff members based in academic departments, to act as a first point of contact for student welfare enquiries.**

Following a successful and highly commended pilot during 2020/21, a network of Student Advisers will be in place to support new undergraduate students at the start of 2021/22 academic year. The Student Advisers are managed by Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) but based and embedded in academic units, with a local manager and support agreed at faculty level. They will be a personal contact for these students and help them feel they are part of UCL taking a student-led approach. This is an important and positive step towards improving a sense of belonging within UCL for our students.

#### Action 1D

**Make key concepts related to disability awareness, inclusive learning, health and wellbeing an integral part of relevant professional services staff and Personal Tutor training. Incorporate these concepts into curriculum development, design and governance.**

Established in 2020 a Student Experience Committee (StEC) Working Group: improving the experience for Disabled Students, co-chaired by Vice-Provost (Education & Student Experience) and the SUUCL Welfare and International Officer reported termly to the StEC with the aim of working in partnership with UCL's disabled student community to improve and ensure inclusive teaching, learning and practices and disability awareness.

The Task & Finish element of this group identified a series of actions to drive improvements and ongoing work will continue to be monitored by StEC. It was agreed that a staff and student forum should emerge from this group, with a new Head of Student Inclusion, reporting to the Director of Access and Admissions joint-chairing the forum with SUUCL to ensure students with disabilities have their voices heard going forward and that UCL takes a more anticipatory or agile approach to challenges for students with disabilities. The Head of Student Inclusion will be the UCL lead for ensuring appropriate staff training and incorporating these concepts across UCL's curriculum and regulatory frameworks. This role has approved funding for 2021-22 and recruitment to the role is progressing.

#### Action 1E

**Strengthen collaborative work with the Students' Union throughout their wide range of services, in particular Project Active, student networks and student clubs and societies.**

Student Support and Wellbeing and SUUCL are co-delivering a wide range of student support, health, mental health and wellbeing initiatives some of which are outlined in the update on Objective 2. This not only has the benefit of pooling resources but there has been an important increase in student engagement and participation in many activities. This was particularly noticeable with the Self-isolation Support Programme developed by Student Psychological and Counselling Services.

#### Action 1F

**Expand UCL's collaborations with other higher education institutions and voluntary organisations locally, nationally and internationally. Facilitate exchanges of expertise, research and experiences with regard to student health and wellbeing.**

UCL's academic community are leading the way and have a vast reach and impact with regards to student health and wellbeing locally, nationally and globally. UCL's Department of Psychology and Language Sciences (PaLS) PsychUP for Wellbeing programme aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of university students and staff, informed by an Advisory Board of national leaders in higher education and mental health and student members.

PaLS has joined forces with UCL Partners and the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families to mobilise the resources of academic psychology departments, health science networks and voluntary organisations to empower higher education, healthcare partners and, above all, students and staff. PaLS is also leading a project with other HEI's as part of an Office for Students Challenge Competition: Achieving a step change in mental health outcomes for all students.

#### Action 1G

**Ensure the impact on student health and wellbeing is considered in any future policies and strategies developed across UCL. Reflect on the opportunities to stimulate good health and wellbeing through the development of a sustainable built environment.**

UCL has demonstrated over the past 3 years that student health and wellbeing is at the core of its thinking and strategic direction. This is clearly evidenced through additional financial investment and resource to extend support for students with a particular focus on wellbeing, a range of amendments to UCL's regulatory framework that offer greater flexibility for students experiencing

unexpected circumstances, new senior roles to champion and improve UCL's equality, diversity, inclusion and student welfare and more focused research activity in this domain. UCL East is providing a particularly exciting opportunity for UCL to place good health and wellbeing at the core of plans and across activities. Sustainable UCL is delivering on sector-leading commitments to improve our environments and connection with the community to enhance wellbeing at UCL. A positive outcome of the pandemic is the broader attention to student health and health protection matters, the heightened importance of relationships with GPs and NHS services and access to healthcare for our students. UCL has committed to the University Mental Health Charter Programme and has started the application for the Charter Award, a further recognition of the importance of mental health and wellbeing for students and staff.

#### Action 1H

**Engage with student feedback to enable continuous monitoring and reshaping of the support provision in line with student needs.**

UCL has a range of rich resources that provide crucial student feedback. Of particular relevance are the Student Priorities Action Tracker monitored by StEC and the SUUCL Student Priorities for Wellbeing Report. This report builds on and contributes to UCL's Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy and unambiguously outlines good practice and recommendations for improvement in relation to student wellbeing within both UCL and the Students' Union. The recommendations are derived from an evidence-based approach reviewing feedback from core UCL student surveys as well as incorporating other relevant sources to provide a national context.

## Objective 2 – Support students in their integration into life at UCL

Leads: Wes Durdle – UCL; Guy Stepney – Students’ Union UCL

### Action 2A

**Provide more online information, preparation programmes and resources to facilitate a smooth and effective settling-in process.**

The Countdown to UCL blog and email campaign was made more personalised with the creation of PGT- and PGR-specific content and by segmenting the emails, so each audience group saw content relevant to them. Emails have maintained an average open rate above 70% (well above the HE sector average of approximately 30%) and the campaign has had positive feedback in ‘New to UCL’ and local surveying.

The Welcome to UCL app received more than 20,000 downloads in 2020, its highest ever number, and was again well received by students. It facilitated improved uptake of central induction events, such as the new ‘Welcome to UCL Support Services’ event led by Students’ Union UCL, which brought together several key services and attracted more than 7,000 attendees.

Several new online induction modules were launched in 2020, including the Introductory Programme, the Online Orientation for New Students, and the Connected Learning at UCL module. Each of these helped new students familiarise themselves with UCL’s history and values, as well as the practicalities of starting out, before the first day of term. Each module saw completion rates in the thousands, e.g. approximately 3,000 completed Connected Learning.

### Action 2B

**Promote UCL and the Students’ Union as inclusive, caring and supportive communities to prospective and new students. Facilitate the development of inclusive personal networks and enable a sense of belonging in a culturally diverse context.**

A clearer presence was given to Student Support and Wellbeing and other support-based departments (e.g. UCL Careers) at open days, with dedicated sessions and routes for students to ask questions about support before starting; this is continuing into 2021.

Various mechanisms were put in place to allow new students to meet one another and establish inclusive personal networks despite the disruption caused by the pandemic. These included Virtual Common Rooms, International Commons Rooms and a wide array of virtual events run by departments and the Students' Union.

The Transition Mentor scheme has seen growing success, and in 2020 was extended further into Term 2, to allow new students to continue building an effective personal support network with their peers. It received positive feedback and was viewed by many students as an important means of settling in and building connections.

In lieu of an in-person event, the virtual 'Welcome to UCL Support Services' talks saw over 7,000 students learn more about the support available to them in a range of different areas. This successful collaborative project led by the Students' Union ensured that messages of inclusion, support and caring communities were front and centre at welcome and induction.

#### Action 2C

**Deliver comprehensive local induction programmes in students' learning and living environments. Encourage and facilitate personal interactions between new and current students as well as staff to foster a sense of community.**

With many students unable to come to campus due to the pandemic, the Flourish programme run by UCL Accommodation and wellbeing events run by Student Psychological and Counselling Services for self-isolating students were doubly important last year. These helped students to connect with others and feel a greater sense of community, as did the Virtual and International Common Rooms and other local initiatives.

Student Support and Wellbeing's team of Student Residence Advisers provide dedicated support to students in halls of residence, and make sure to introduce themselves and what they do at the start of the academic year. Through open-door events and a more visible presence in communal spaces, they have helped foster a greater sense of community within students' living environment, and along with campus welcome ambassadors, campus tours etc. have been a vital means of connecting new and current students.

The International Student Orientation Programme (ISOP) has been replaced by the Online Orientation for New Students, with no limits on capacity. Although its remit has been broadened to include home students as well, international students are still given bespoke content to help address some of their common concerns, such as healthcare and finances.

#### Action 2D

**Identify best practice and strengthen the co-ordination of UCL and the Students' Union's many induction activities, ensuring that all students receive a welcoming start to their life at UCL.**

As above, the 'Welcome to UCL Support Services' central induction talks saw several different central Professional Services areas and the Students' Union come together to run a large-scale coordinated welcome event, which was very successful.

Online enrolment has now been introduced, which reduces the time that a new student needs to spend undertaking administrative tasks and also reduces resource burden on central teams. This has helped to streamline processes and will allow for new students to have improved access to information and resources to help them settle in, sent to them at the most relevant points in their onboarding journey.

The New to UCL survey continues to be an invaluable source of relevant data and feedback, helping staff members involved in organising welcome and induction to identify and work to solve potential issues. Together with the facilitation of best practice sharing through platforms like the Student Induction Forum, this has led to enhanced welcome and induction activities that are more responsive to students' needs.

#### Action 2E

**Develop a web-based platform for staff providing guidance and resources for effective student inductions. Facilitate sharing of best practice between programmes, departments and faculties.**

The Student Induction Forum – originally a small working group that later moved to Microsoft Teams – has over 600 members, all colleagues who are involved in welcome and induction of new students. This collaborative and open space has been a helpful resource for the sharing of best practice between UCL's disparate academic and Professional Services units, and has contributed to the development of an emerging staff community centred on this discipline.

A new staff section of the New Students website was developed as a repository for best practice ideas and information that would be relevant to welcome and induction staff in academic departments, such as a comprehensive set of FAQs.

#### Action 2F

**Ensure induction programmes promote academic success in the context of positive health and wellbeing.**

The 'Welcome to UCL Support Services' talk and all information shared with staff through the New Students website had a clear health and wellbeing angle; students were encouraged to put their health and wellbeing first and to look after themselves. This was also a prominent thread throughout the Countdown to UCL campaign, with themes including 'Health and wellbeing', 'Support services' and 'Staying safe'.

The 'Here to Support You' guide to internal and external support services has been updated every year and continues to be made widely available online for new students. In previous years, print versions have been handed out at enrolment to ensure students have a hard copy of this important support catalogue.

The Active Bystander programme from Students' Union UCL was adapted in response to the pandemic, with an online self-guided element followed by virtual group workshops.

#### Action 2G

**Offer dedicated information to student groups who may require additional support to settle into UCL, such as care leavers, students transitioning gender, students affected by health conditions, students with disabilities, students who are parents or carers, BME students.**

Dedicated support and information is provided to students who declare as disabled, which includes a bespoke orientation event for students with an autistic spectrum condition (ASC) and introductory appointments with our Disability Advisers.

A wide variety of information and links to further resources are shared with many different student groups, including care leavers, BME students, students who are parents, and others. A key theme of the Countdown to UCL is 'Our diverse community' which includes introductions to student

representation networks in the Students' Union as well as Sabbatical Officers, to help students from under-represented groups feel connected to UCL and properly supported.

#### Action 2H

**Parental support is an essential part of university life for some students. Develop dedicated web resources for parents and guardians who wish, for example, to engage with the processes of settling-in and accessing specialist services.**

The 'Information for parents and guardians of current and prospective UCL students' site is an invaluable resource, and has helped parents of in particular new first-year undergraduate students better understand how they can support their child in their transition to university life.

## **Objective 3 – Develop resources to encourage awareness of wellbeing and facilitate peer support**

Leads: Mitesh Vagadia – UCL; Katie Sykes – Students' Union UCL

### **Action 3A**

**Develop a web-based 'Wellbeing for Success' platform to inform students and encourage them to set goals and make choices for a healthy life at university and beyond. Work in partnership with students to develop content for the platform that reflects diverse views and experiences.**

The UCLcares platform was one of the early achievements of objective 3. The platform went live in 2019 and has continued to grow and develop. It is currently a library of self-help resources offering a variety of blogs, videos, podcasts and wellbeing-focused events. The platform now works in collaboration with the Students' Union and signposts to Wellbeing Events and Activities page on the Students' Union website. This page is now the home of all Project Active events and SSW related events such as Personal Development Strategies: Deep Work, Learning from TED Talks: The Brain and Emotions, Podcasts and personal development and Calm the Body. Hosting SSW events on the Students' Union webpages has continued to increase the number of attendees to events and has been a positive partnership outcome.

### **Action 3B**

**Isolation, perfectionism, time-management difficulties, exam anxiety, sleep problems, imposter syndrome and financial worries are faced by students. There is experience and expertise across UCL on managing and overcoming these issues. Encourage exchange of ideas and best practice through the Student Health and Wellbeing Community of Practice.**

The Community of Practice (CoP) continues to grow with over 600 members on the MS teams channel sharing best practice, exchanging ideas and supporting the community to better support their students. The CoP projects were also a success with the launch of the Student Triage and Referral Tool in September 2020 – with over 5,000 visits (March 2021). The Remarkable Stories podcast series launched in June 2020 with season 2 launching in April 2021, and to date has more than 6,000 downloads.

Recent additions to the CoP include a monthly newsletter sharing the latest information and news with all matters related to Student Health and Wellbeing. We also introduced fortnightly

wellbeing workshops covering a range of topics delivered by guest speakers. These 45-minute sessions have covered topics such supporting students with AD(H)D, having a growth mindset, supporting students with caring responsibilities, domestic abuse, supporting the supporter and managing stress. These workshops were attended by over 1000 staff members since starting in October 2020 and have had positive feedback. The workshops will re-start in October 2021.

### Action 3C

**Provide a range of dedicated resources, such as apps and online training programmes, to promote good health and wellbeing and ways to cope with complex experiences, thoughts and emotions.**

The SSW website has an abundance of dedicated support information and resources. After carrying out some focus groups, the webpages and content were streamlined and changed to make it easier to navigate and more accessible.

In partnership with Rape Crisis and with the support of the Office of the President and Provost (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) in October 2019, SSW launched a sexual consent module. This was made available on Moodle and online for students to complete.

In November 2019 in conjunction with Report + Support, SSW launched the 'I Heart Consent' campaign working with the Students' Union and colleagues. To date the online module/training has been completed by approx. 2800 students. Colleagues in EDI are currently working on a mandatory Respect and Inclusion module for 2022 starters which will include the consent module as a section of it.

In the summer of 2021, the Welcome to UCL app will be behind UCL single sign-on and will enable secure chat function for students to interact and communicate with each other prior to the start of term/arrival.

### Action 3D

**Building networks, learning new skills and contributing to the lives of others can help students stay connected and focused on the present. Encourage volunteering, career development, study abroad and entrepreneurship opportunities to this effect.**

Student Support and Wellbeing continues to build networks and relationships with other UCL departments, Students' Union and external partners to support UCL students. Over the last two years, SSW and Students' Union have collaborated more than ever on projects. The Student Health and Wellbeing CoP has also created a wider networking opportunity for SSW to share practice and information with departments. The Student Adviser roles will continue to develop on this from 2021.

SSW continues to have representation on the Students' Union volunteering steering group and works in collaboration with the service to promote the benefits of volunteering to students.

#### Action 3E

**Enhance existing and develop new peer support programmes across UCL to facilitate health and wellbeing-related conversations and activities.**

SSW continues to work with peer support programmes across UCL such as the transition mentors scheme, Step Up Peer support and the Student Residence Adviser programme. SSW colleagues will continue to shape development of peer mentor schemes by ensuring peer mentors are provided training about the relevant SSW support on offer to students.

#### Action 3F

**Continue to develop the Student Residence Advisers peer support system to effect a culture of care and respect for each other in UCL's student residences.**

SSW continues to work with colleagues in the Student Accommodation team to develop a Res-Life program for UCL student residences. The current Student Residence Advisers (SRA) programme has made significant improvements to supporting students in halls. From September 2020, SRAs focused on and responded only to welfare-related matters and carried out regular welfare check in person and over the phone. They also contact residents who were required to self-isolate.

#### Action 3G

**Students find most beneficial the networks they self-identify with. Facilitate further development of student-led networks through the Students' Union for a range of specific characteristics, such as students who live at home and commute to UCL, mature students, students who are parents and carers, and disabled students.**

SSW has worked with the Students' Union to develop relationships with some student-led networks such as those for parents and carers and disabled students. Some of these have been more successful than others. This objective will be a priority for the upcoming academic year along with peer support programmes.

## **Objective 4 – Establish effective links between UCL, the NHS and other services to deliver integrated mental health care and improved risk management**

Leads: Barry Keane – UCL; Simon To – Students' Union UCL

### **Action 4A**

**Involve expertise from across the UCL academic community, in particular within the Faculty of Brain Sciences, to inform and shape UCL's approach to supporting and improving the mental health and wellbeing of students.**

There have been and are ongoing discussions between the Faculty of Brain Sciences, Students' Union UCL and SSW exploring how to improve the mental health and wellbeing of UCL students. One particular focus has been on a stepped-care model integrating care to improve student mental health, prevent suicide and demonstrate outcomes, and how this model might work in supporting students. There are several areas that are still under discussion such as legal governance, clinical governance, accountability, triaging, GDPR, confidentiality, etc. Please see below where parts of the stepped-care-model currently sit.

### **Action 4B**

**Adopt a new integrated care pathway to expand the range of therapeutic treatments at UCL. The model reflects the diverse treatment needs of the student population. It will be delivered jointly by Student Support and Wellbeing, Occupational Health and the Faculty of Brain Sciences at UCL, and NHS agencies.**

It became apparent that aspects of this aim sit well with Brain Sciences who were the faculty developing the University Clinic in conjunction with the NHS. This is an NHS clinic and provides placement opportunities for UCL Trainee clinical Psychologists and Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners. As well as a pathway for UCL students to be linked into local NHS IAPT services. One new integrated pathway that has arisen from the NHS-IOG collaboration is the University Clinic which [Laura Gibbon](#) has kindly given an overview of:

## **University Clinic**

The Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology department, part of the Division of Psychology and Language Sciences, has set up a University Clinic at UCL: an NHS mental health service providing care for students, based on campus. During the academic year 2020-2021, the University Clinic has continued to offer assessments and psychological treatments to UCL students. The Clinic hosts a NHS satellite clinic linked to iCope, the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service within the Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust.

A senior Clinical Psychologist and two Trainee Clinical Psychologists have provided primary care psychological interventions to the local student population over the course of three days per week. This has included the provision of CBT-based assessment and treatment relating to a variety of psychological concerns, including depression, generalised anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, social phobia, panic disorder, suicidality and self-harm, post-traumatic stress disorder, and low self-esteem. An evaluation of clinical outcomes for UCL students accessing this service, as compared to other student and non-student populations receiving support through iCope, is currently underway.

A further central focus has been the adaptation of psychoeducational wellbeing-oriented workshops to the needs of the student population. These workshops have focused on topics such as stress and relaxation, assertiveness, and perfectionism, and have been made accessible to students online during the COVID-19 pandemic by splitting each 90 minute workshop into four videos, each less than 30 minutes long. Trainee Clinical Psychologists have also provided workshops to students through the Students' Union UCL/ *PsychUP* for Wellbeing peer support pilot project, and continue to provide ongoing support to the peer link workers as they offer follow-up meetings to workshop attendees.

The upcoming academic year will see further increases in the capacity of the clinic to continue this work, and to offer additional clinical sessions as new collaborations with UCL-based research groups and specialist NHS services are realised. A number of additional clinicians from the Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology department, with NHS contracts, will offer clinical sessions, bolstering capacity and improving our understanding of acceptability and effectiveness of interventions aimed at the student population. A new physical space, which will include clinic rooms suitable for sessions and research interventions, will be ready for use by the start of the 2021/22 academic year.

Another new integrated pathway that has emerged from the NHS-IOG collaboration is the University Clinic and Simon To and the Team has given below given an overview of this:

### **Students' Union Peer Link Worker (PLW) pilot project**

We know from research that students can struggle to navigate university and NHS services and that students can find it easier to talk to their peers about their mental health and wellbeing.

Students' Union UCL are piloting a new peer support scheme in partnership with [PsychUP for Wellbeing](#) and the [University Clinic](#). The initiative is being funded as part of the [OfS Student Mental Health Partnerships Project](#). A feasibility and acceptability study is being conducted by a PhD student on the PsychUP for Wellbeing team.

A group of students have been trained with a core set of knowledge and skills that enable them to provide support to their peers. This training has been adapted from the [UCLP Peer Support Competency Framework](#) and associated [training](#). Trained Peer Link Workers (PLWs) provide support to fellow students via 1-to-1 sessions. Through the University Clinic a series of pre-recorded wellbeing workshops addressing common challenges such as low mood have been developed. Students can then attend a live follow-up sessions to these recorded workshops, jointly facilitated by University Clinic staff and PLWs.

#### Benefits of the support

- Creates a network of students able to support their peers through signposting to other support and helping to navigate services.
- Facilitates students linking in with their peers around shared challenges.
- Fosters collaboration between the NHS and the University; development of new care pathways to complement existing ones

#### Challenges faced

Some issues during the planning and recruitment phase of the project meant that the training of PLWs and subsequent launch of the scheme was delayed from the spring to the summer term. Despite this, we have an experienced and enthusiastic group of PLWs and although uptake of the workshops and 1-to-1 peer support has been lower than would be expected during term time, there a steady stream of bookings moving into the summer holidays.

### Plans going forwards

Funding has been agreed to extend the pilot to December 2021. This will allow for a more extensive pilot of the project to support the evaluation. It will also allow implementation of some of the learnings from the early phase of the pilot. Beyond the pilot phase, further investment will be required to continue the initiative

### Action 4C

**Improve access to mental health care for all students and deliver treatment which is not easily accessible within the NHS; for instance, treatment for self-harm, borderline personality disorder, eating disorders, and alcohol and substance misuse.**

SSW has partnerships with many external services to improve access to mental health care for all students and deliver treatment which is not easily accessible within the NHS such as Nightingale which provides clinical treatment for personality disorders and obsessive compulsive disorders, BEAT to support students with eating disorders, Body and Soul who offer Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, The Listening Place and Maytree for students who are at risk of harming themselves.

While also continuing to further our interaction with local NHS General Practice (GP) services by having more frequent regular meetings with the Ridgemount Practice and also initial meetings with Gower Street Practice. This has been helpful in increasing communication and making sure that both parties are aware of the demands on each service and the areas where we are able to work together for the benefit of UCL students.

We have also been in talks with the Brandon Centre, a Camden organisation where young people aged below 25 can access therapeutic support, about our support in their bidding for a grant to be able to see more UCL students and plan to continue talks following their successful bid.

### Action 4D

**Take proactive steps towards a 'suicide-safer' campus and develop a cohesive approach to student suicide prevention, response and postvention. Create an environment that encourages and provides opportunities for anyone affected by suicide to speak openly.**

Staff Mental Health First Aid and Suicide Awareness trainings across UCL are contributing to the development of a cohesive approach to student suicide prevention, response and postvention.

Student Psychological and Counselling Services has recruited additional staff to support steps towards a 'suicide safer' campus. The service has also set up a daily duty rota system to reach out to students, their GP or Next of Kin if necessary, if they present as being at risk to themselves.

In efforts to de-stigmatise mental health we were involved in the UCL-wide SSW Briefing which discussed ways in which SSW work to help students and helped UCL staff with knowing what they could do in the aim to help the mental health of students and equally themselves.

#### Action 4E

**Ensure improved risk management by providing holistic and co-ordinated care to students identified as being at risk of suicide.**

SSW and the Students' Union UCL worked together to develop guidelines responding to suicidal students. This begins with Triaging suicidal students: For any student registering with Student Psychological and Counselling Services that falls into the emergency category (i.e. at risk of taking their life or have previously attempted to take their life), the clinician on triaging duty that day (the "Duty clinician") conducts a telephone screening to get a clearer view of the level of suicide risk. The initial phone screening is used to ascertain whether the student needs an urgent face-to-face risk assessment and if so, whether they can safely wait for the next available appointment with a Duty clinician.

#### Action 4F

**Provide appropriate and timely communications and offer support to those affected in the event of a student suicide.**

SSW/Student Psychological and Counselling Services have continued to offer therapeutic support to those affected by the suicide of a student. We do this by offering groups or one to one sessions for those affected. A bereavement peer support group was also developed to give space to students to discuss together their journey of grief following a death, including those following a death by suicide. We also provide access to external support for those affected by a student suicide. An independent case review is carried out when a student has taken their life to look any gaps that may have occurred in their support.

## **Objective 5 - Ensure support for disabled students or those affected by health and wellbeing difficulties is personalised and the adjustments are effective**

Leads: Natalie Humphrey – UCL; Neal Hickey – Students' Union UCL

### **Action 5A**

**Make sure that disabled students can thrive at UCL. Emphasise a caring community where there is no stigma to disclosing disability and health/wellbeing difficulties. Meet disclosures with consistent and timely support.**

SSW have worked to ensure that disclosures are met with consistent and timely support. Through use of askUCL and our website for staff and students, SSW have made student support information clear and transparent. SSW have trained a range of staff across UCL specifically on disabled student support. The Students' Union have implemented a self-referral tool when joining clubs and societies allowing students to highlight whether or not they have a disability and if they need any additional support.

### **Action 5B**

**Deliver excellent student support to all those who are in contact with Student Support and Wellbeing services. Offer a sensitive, personalised and empowering approach to student support. Maintain integrity to foster a culture of trust and willingness to engage.**

Student Support and Wellbeing Services have received across-service social model of disability training and coaching skills training. We are also working more closely as a service, communicating effectively to ensure that individual needs are met, without students having to contact multiple teams.

### **Action 5C**

**Continue to embed an inclusive learning and living environment for all, thereby reducing the number of individual adjustments required.**

The pandemic created an online learning environment that was more inclusive and enabled a range of inclusive practices to become available. Through various working groups that have been created,

UCL is committed to taking forward these positive changes and creating an enhanced learning environment. Sports clubs at the Students' Union are mandated to host access statements on all of the venues they use, outlining all of the accessible features at each venue.

#### Action 5D

**Offer a personalised approach to student health and wellbeing support by making available a range of interventions to meet individual needs. Interventions include (but are not limited to): awareness-raising and prevention; information, signposting and advice; reasonable adjustments; mental health mentoring; personal tutoring; and external referrals.**

Colleagues in SSW received social model of disability training, which focuses on removing barriers to study. We have been able to ensure that Statements of Reasonable Adjustments are implemented in line with need, we have increased referrals for mentoring and study skills and we have increased the amounts of students receiving Disabled Students' Allowances from undergraduate through to research level.

#### Action 5E

**Effect service efficiency and provide clear, quick and appropriate follow-ups to student appointments and further referrals. Offer dedicated support to students taking or returning from interruption of study and those considering leaving UCL due to health and wellbeing reasons.**

Working with our partners across UCL, we have been able to streamline our Return to Study process and make it more transparent to students, who are now able to see where they are in the process. SSW are working well with askUCL enabling us to measure response times and the team to keep within agreed service level agreements.

#### Action 5F

**Expand the network of partner and affiliated external organisations. Offer effective signposting and direct referrals to specialist support for a range of issues, such as domestic and sexual violence and dedicated LGBT+ support.**

Due to the pandemic, it has been difficult to partner with external organisations, with the local community resources stretched and having limited capacity to work more closely with us. We have continued to work closely with our established partners, including North and South Camden Crisis

Team, Nightingale Hospital and Rape Crisis. Working remotely has seen a significant increase in those working with Gendered Intelligence as their availability to make appointments was increased. The Students Union have partnered with more than 15 disabled sports clubs offering pathways for disabled students to participate in sport for life.

#### Action 5G

**Continue to integrate the student support provision in UCL's student residences into the Student Support and Wellbeing department's activities. This ensures consistent and coordinated specialist support for students in both their learning and living environments.**

We have continued to work closely with the UCL residence services to ensure that students' needs are met. During the upcoming 2021/22 Student Residence Adviser training, we have introduced a training session on disability equality and awareness. A priority for the coming year is to continue to improve the information on disabled student support on the Accommodation Services website.

## Objective 6 - Align student and staff wellbeing policies and initiatives to foster an inclusive and supportive community

Leads: Lina Kamenova – UCL; Danielle Swanson – Students’ Union UCL

### Action 6A

**Advance inclusive and supportive working, learning and living environment, where the health and wellbeing of both students and staff are equally important.**

1. *Engage with relevant research to gain greater understanding of the dependencies between student and staff health and wellbeing.*

Wellbeing is now a popular concept, however despite growing research in the area, defining the concept of wellbeing remains difficult. Most of the existing literature available for review focuses on wellbeing domains at the individual level, not collective (Roy, Riley, Sears and Rula 2018). Roy et al., (2018) identify five key elements of collective wellbeing: Vitality (overall health and positive functioning), Opportunity (attainment of life goals), Contribution (feelings of meaning and purpose), Connectedness (social acceptance and integration) and Inspiration (learning, creativity, goal striving and motivation).

At present, there isn’t a UCL-wide accepted definition of wellbeing, which would allow us to consider how an organisational environment conducive to positive wellbeing can be defined or advanced.

In relation to students, wellbeing is currently defined in this strategy as:

Wellbeing does not mean an absence of physical or mental illness. Rather it is a state of physical, mental and emotional health where a student is able to engage meaningfully in learning and contribute to their community. Wellbeing is personal and multifactorial, but typically includes feelings of being socially connected, a sense of direction and belonging, satisfaction with personal achievements, and low levels of anxiety.

In relation to staff, wellbeing is currently defined in the Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan 2020-21 as:

**Wellbeing:** Creating an environment to promote a state of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation(CIPD)

**Health:** Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition (WHO)

**Psychological Safety:** a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes and that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.” (Edmondson, 1999). Psychological safety is achieved through being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career and where team members feel accepted and respected.

2. *Stay abreast of and respond to emerging best practice on staff and student health and wellbeing within the sector.*

UCL's practice in relation to student and staff wellbeing remains aligned with UUK's Stepchange recommendations. UUK further updated their guidance, creating Stepchange: mentally healthy universities in May 2020. This is a refreshed strategic framework for a whole university approach to mental health and wellbeing at universities.

3. *Liase with the Office of the President and Provost to explicitly acknowledge commitment to staff and student health and wellbeing in UCL 2034.*

Commitment to staff and student health and wellbeing was confirmed as part of approving and supporting the main priorities of this strategy, alongside agreeing the Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan 2020-21.

4. *All Steering Group members, and in particular the Co-chairs, to share key messages related to health and wellbeing widely within UCL and at a senior leadership level.*

Key messages related to health and wellbeing are regularly discussed at senior level, including meetings between SUUCL's Sabbatical Officers and UCL's President and Provost. Student wellbeing was considered and prioritised at senior leadership meetings when discussing and agreeing UCL's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 5. Participate in the review and re-development of Wellbeing@UCL (UCL's Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022, which primarily addresses staff wellbeing). Ensure student and staff wellbeing is addressed in a strategic and consistent manner within UCL.*

UCL's Staff Wellbeing Strategy (Wellbeing@UCL) 2017-2022 was re-developed into the current Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan 2020-21. This update was undertaken in relation to UUK' Stepchange recommendations for a whole university approach; in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on staff and student health and wellbeing; and to align with the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-21.

- 6. Support Workplace Health & Wellbeing to develop, promote and embed the role of Wellbeing Champions within UCL and SUUCL.*

Workplace Health & Wellbeing have developed a network of 197 Wellbeing Champions across the UCL staff community including within SUUCL. Wellbeing Champions receive training in Mental Health First Aid, Health Promotion and attend a termly meeting led by Workplace Wellbeing. A Wellbeing Coordinator supports them in their role. The Wellbeing Champions complete a monthly activity report, which tell us that just under 50 supportive conversations happen each month and on average 20 organised wellbeing events are managed by Champions on a monthly basis. Work continues to embed the roles further.

- 7. Liaise with SUUCL to develop, promote and deliver the role of Welfare Champions within clubs and societies. Add community building and wellbeing promotion responsibilities to the student course representative roles.*

Every SUUCL club and society now has a Welfare Officer who is responsible for the welfare of its members and for ensuring that all activities are accessible and inclusive. Student course representatives report on wellbeing-related matters to their relevant faculties which are then raised and discussed with SSW, and acted on as appropriate.

- 8. Foster a shared working, learning and living environment, which values and promotes student and staff wellbeing.*

Experience suggests that it is now better understood that staff and student wellbeing are linked and interdependent. Many faculties and departments have set up or are in the process of setting up staff wellbeing groups. These groups are intended to provide staff with the opportunity to discuss student-related cases (in a confidential manner), share experience and develop best practice. Some groups are facilitated by external professionals and/or may have an SSW Business Partner on the group.

#### Action 6B

**Enhance the ability of staff to understand difficulties they or students may be experiencing and help them to support students, colleagues and others by making dedicated mental health and suicide prevention training widely available at UCL.**

- 1. Make Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training widely available within UCL and SUUCL and meet demand for this training. Offer MHFA training to Sabbatical and Part-time Officers as well as postgraduate research students.*

MHFA training is now widely available at UCL. Sabbatical and Part-time Officers undertake MHFA training as part of the training programme to prepare them for their roles.

- 2. Identify a network of MHFA training providers who departments can contact directly and book training with.*

A network of MHFA training providers is in place. Training sessions are delivered both by internal trainers and external providers. Training providers are introduced to the UCL context. Training can be booked directly with a MHFA training provider - [Mental Health First Aid training at UCL](#)

- 3. Promote the benefits of undertaking MHFA training and encourage staff to complete this training where possible.*

Over 600 staff in the previous 12 months have attended MHFA training, 500 attended the Aware programme which was promoted to staff in student-facing roles. Wellbeing Champions and Mental Health First Aiders who attended training over two years ago were also offered refresher training

through MHFA, with over 80 colleagues taking up the offer, and we have a programme in place to develop 90 new Wellbeing Champions that have joined the network in the pandemic.

- 4. Increase awareness of health and wellbeing issues as part of leadership and management development programmes. Ensure MHFA training is mentioned at appraisals where appropriate. It is highly recommended that managers and research supervisors complete MHFA training as part of preparation for and ongoing learning in these roles.*

Workplace Wellbeing have worked with colleagues from Organisational Development to embed wellbeing in leadership and management programmes and induction to UCL. Work continues on this. MHFA training along with other wellbeing focused development opportunities are available to staff through the UCL Learning Academy within Organisational Development. Workplace Wellbeing focused on developing managers around wellbeing; over 500 people managers have attended the Managing Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing accredited by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

- 5. Promote the benefits of undertaking suicide prevention training. Identify a network of training providers who departments can contact directly and book training with. Ensure suicide prevention online training is effectively promoted within UCL and SUUCL.*

A network of training providers has been identified and is available from Workplace Wellbeing. In the last 12 months four open sessions focusing on suicide awareness have been delivered in partnership with Papyrus, with over 100 staff attending. Departments have also commissioned Suicide First Aid training (UCL's preferred programme) including SSW and Workplace Health. The Zero Suicide Alliance online training is promoted through Workplace Wellbeing and formed part of the World Suicide Prevention Day campaign across UCL in 2020, and the five days of online and face-to-face events are planned for World Suicide Prevention Day 2021.

#### Action 6C

**Develop and deliver training programmes, providing staff with knowledge and skills to help them to effectively support students' wellbeing and personal development.**

- 1. Conduct a survey and focus groups with staff to gain insight into the information, resources and training they need when working with and supporting students. Develop information, resources and training which are reflective of the findings.*

Interviews and focus groups were conducted with academic and Professional Services colleagues across all faculties from October 2019 to February 2020. The purpose was to identify the following: key challenges which staff experience when supporting students, and what further information, support or training staff may need in this regard. Some of the key challenges relate to accessing appropriate mental health training, support for oneself when supporting others, and developing comprehensive understanding of internal and external support provisions to enable appropriate signposting and referrals.

SSW delivered **42** training sessions in the summer of 2020 to address the above-mentioned training needs. The sessions focused on supporting students during times of change and uncertainty, and covered: looking after one's own wellbeing and support services available to UCL staff, using a coaching approach to have supportive conversations with students, helping students with time management and motivation, supporting disabled students, and appropriate signposting and referrals. More than **500** colleagues attended these sessions.

- 2. Provide clear guidance on boundaries between pastoral roles and responsibilities vs professional health and wellbeing support. This aims to ensure effective and empowered pastoral support alongside timely and appropriate referrals.*

Student of Concern referrals are now well-embedded within university practice. This has helped staff refer on with confidence any students they may be concerned about and also seek advice from SSW colleagues when this is needed.

#### Action 6D

**Develop collaborative and co-ordinated approaches between student and staff support services and other relevant stakeholders to manage complex student cases.**

- 1. Agree shared protocols between SSW, Occupational Health & Wellbeing and other relevant stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach to complex student cases. Ensure that appropriate dedicated support is offered to students and staff when responding to complex student cases.*

SSW and Workplace Health & Wellbeing follow similar processes and protocols towards supporting students and staff who may be affected by a complex student case or a student death. Case conferences are now an established practice, enabling SSW, support

services and departmental/faculty contacts to respond collaboratively and holistically to complex student cases.

#### Action 6E

**Strengthen collaborative initiatives between student and staff support services to offer consistency in the approach to enhancing the wellbeing of the whole UCL community. Offer shared access to resources and facilities where possible and appropriate.**

1. *Optimal health is a dynamic balance of physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual health (O'Donnell, American Journal of Health Promotion, 2009, 24,1,iv). Develop initiatives in each of these categories and make them available to both staff and students where possible.*

In 2020, Workplace Wellbeing and Student Support and Wellbeing delivered the You are Not Alone campaign which focused on loneliness to support the UCL community. We have since connected on the Replenish Festival work collaboratively to share resources. Funding for Workplace Wellbeing has grown with the team doubling in size, from two to four in the 2021/2022 budget year. The team growth will enable a more cohesive approach with SSW going forward.

#### Shared resources and facilities:

Physical	Emotional	Social	Spiritual	Intellectual
Stop smoking clinic	EAP programme	Lunch time walks	Meditation classes	Museums
Cycling schemes	Dignity Advisers	Community building activities	Yoga classes	Lunch hour Lectures
Gym	Sexual Violence Advisers	Wellbeing fairs and events	Quiet rooms	
Shape up programme	MHFA training	UCL Networks		
Flu Vaccinations	SilverCloud (21 programmes)	SU Clubs and Societies		
Connect to Protect				