

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

*Strategy and Action Plan
2020-2023*



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ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

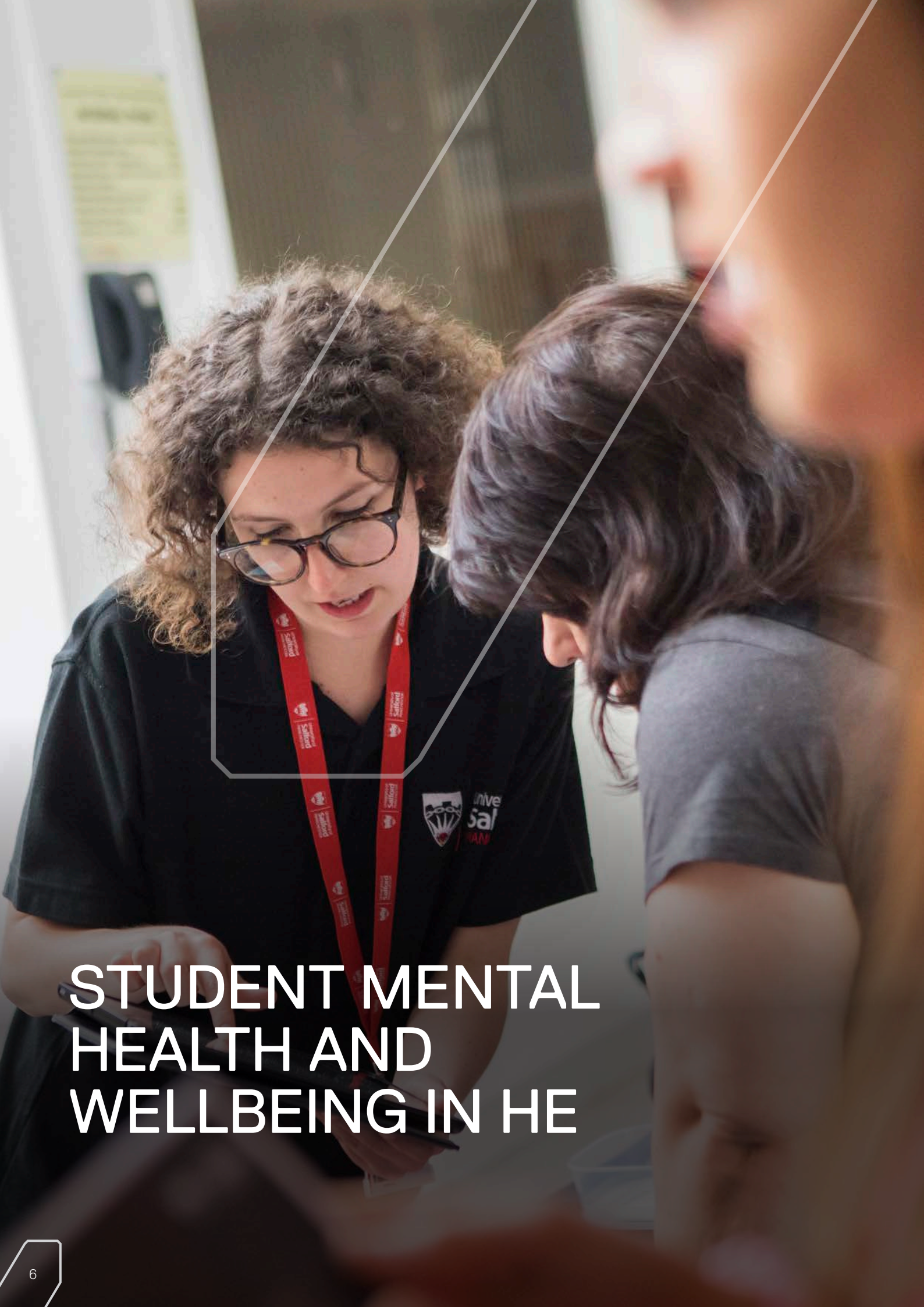
The University of Salford has already taken significant steps to respond to the challenges to student mental health, as well as to support students with diagnosed mental health conditions.

The purpose of this strategy is to help us take our next steps. Therefore it is designed primarily for our staff to use, however because it is about students, we want it to be accessible to students, and promoted to them. It can also serve to inform our wider community and partners as to what we are working on in this area.

We did not want to delay in bringing our strategy to life. As such, while we have consulted staff and students in the development of the strategy, we propose that it should continue to be a live document under review and subject to continuing planned consultation during its lifetime.

In order to help keep the strategy relevant, we suggest that there should be a communications plan for promoting it, and progress made against the action plan, and should include opportunities to elicit feedback from staff and students.

We expect that a working group would be established to manage the further development and delivery of the action plan and any management tasks in relation to the strategy, such as ensuring the governance requirements are met and communications and evaluation activities delivered. Within the document we have indicated in which year of the lifetime of the current Action Plan we expect the action to be completed.



STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN HE

The mental health of our students is of paramount importance and we are committed to providing the right level of support.

Since 2014/15 the number of students experiencing poor mental health or declaring a pre-existing mental illness has more than doubled and with this comes an unprecedented rise in demand for services.

The Office for Students highlights that students experiencing mental illness are more likely to:

- / withdraw from university
- / to underperform academically and
- / are less likely to secure higher level employment or go on to post-graduate study¹.

Our priority is to support our students to succeed, working together to reduce or prevent as far as possible the harm that mental health problems can cause.

Understanding the impact that poor mental health can have on students, this is clearly an issue that requires immediate response with greater understanding of:

- / Triggers, causes and signs of poor mental health
- / Access to resources and expertise
- / Efficiency and effectiveness of interventions and treatment
- / Suicide prevention

The impact that mental health difficulties can have on students is clearly an issue that requires an immediate response with greater understanding of:

- / 78% of students said they have experienced mental health issues, but 33% said they wouldn't know how to access mental health services.

- / One in five young people aged 16 to 24 has experienced depression or anxiety
- / The numbers of students seeking help from their universities has grown steadily from around 10,000 a year in 2007/8 to around 57,000 in 2017/18
- / 94% of UK universities have experienced a sharp increase in the numbers of people trying to access support services
- / The number of students dropping out of university because of mental health problems has trebled in recent years

In its 2018 review "Minding our future: starting a conversation about the support of student mental health", Universities UK advocated working at a city-region level with NHS and third sector organisations, councils and business².

In recent years, the University of Salford has stayed at the forefront of student support in a number of areas, including joining in a ground-breaking collaboration with other Greater Manchester (GM) Universities and the NHS to establish a dedicated service for students requiring particular types of specialist support– the GM Mental Health Service.

CONCLUSION

Whilst there are many challenges and barriers to overcome, student mental health has developed a higher profile and focus on a national, regional and local level. For universities, this acknowledgement of the scale of the challenge is developing a support structure that will begin to address these issues in tandem with the NHS, Councils and the wider society.

¹ "Innovation, partnership and data can help improve student mental health in new £14m drive"

² "Minding our future: starting a conversation about the support of student mental health", UUK

INTRODUCTION

We know that poor mental health and wellbeing can be a huge barrier to success, and we need to help break down that barrier for our students. With the launch of our innovative new strategy and action plan, there is potential to change lives; providing more effective diagnosis and treatment at an early stage and helping all our students gain the skills to manage their own mental health so they are enabled and empowered to succeed.

Professor Helen Marshall

*Vice-Chancellor
of the University of Salford*

Being a student is new, interesting and most importantly – exciting! Especially if you are a student at Salford University. There are a variety of academic and social activities for students to take part in here at Salford with wellbeing and mental health awareness at the heart of everything we do.

The Students Union have worked in partnership with the University to create a Mental Health Strategy for students. I had the privilege of being able to sit on this working group along with another staff member from the Students Union, to represent the student voice and to ensure that the strategy was the best that it could be for students. We also asked students to take part in a student consultation so that their thoughts and ideas could be shared with this group and their feedback helped shape the strategy.

You can expect the mental health strategy to outline to you, as a student, the systems in place to support your mental health and a range of different areas the University focus on surrounding student's mental health, including to raise awareness and create inclusive spaces for everyone.

Abbie Baker

*Vice-President for Health and Society,
University of Salford Student's Union*

Evie Adams

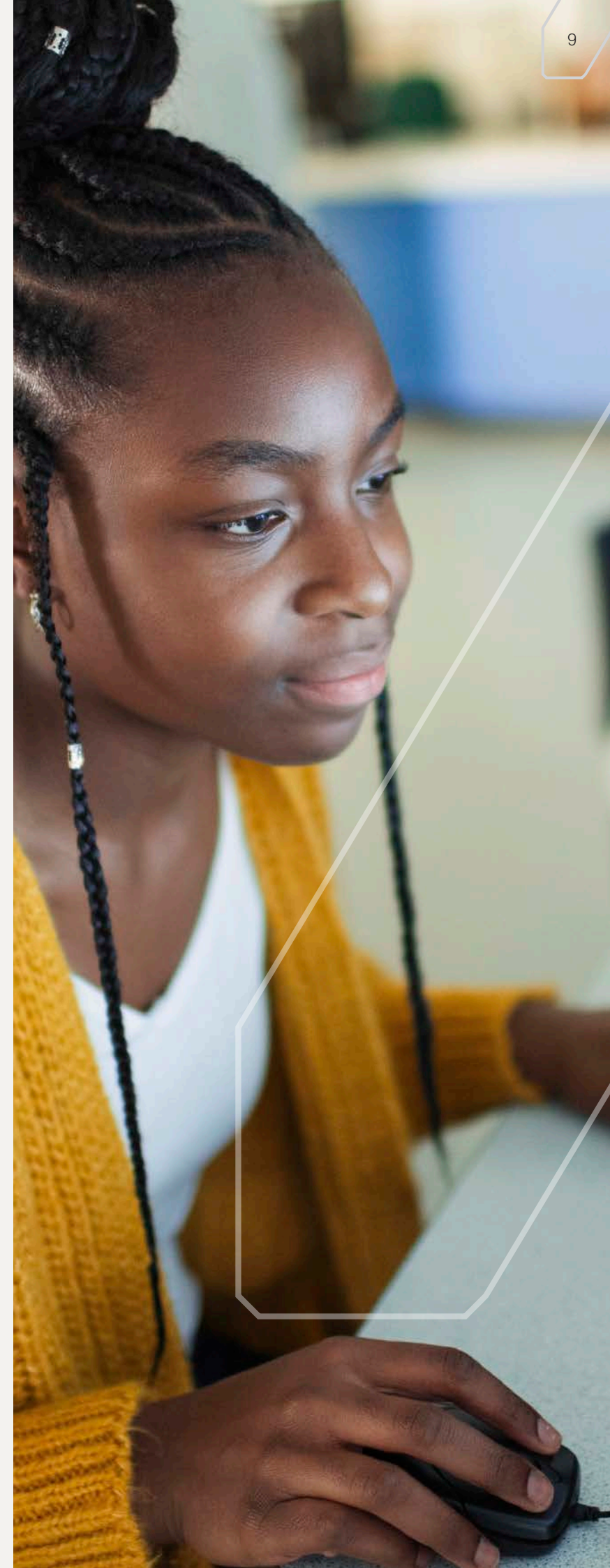
*President
University of Salford Students' Union*

At the University of Salford we recognise the importance of mental health and wellbeing and the effect this has on our learning. We are committed to assist and support students through the transition from School/ College to University study and on to the world of work. We appreciate the difference between mental ill health and mental well-being, but we are not experts, our role as a University is to support students, recognising that student experiences are unique to the individual. We aim to provide guidance and support by sign posting services and guarantee that students are not discriminated when facing mental ill health challenges. We are committed to working with students to ensure we promote positive behaviours and values, ensuring co-creation and ongoing implementation of the strategy as an authentic partnership with our students.

Chair of the Mental Health Strategy Board

Professor Margaret Rowe

Dean of the School of Health & Society

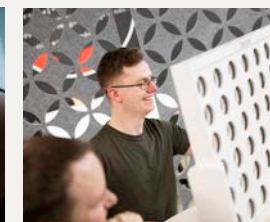




OUR STRATEGY

OUR STRATEGIC VISION

- / An institution in which we are confident in supporting our own mental wellbeing and each other, accessing services when needed.
- / A community of members who understand that experiencing periods of low mental wellbeing is not unusual and should not be an intrinsic barrier to study in Higher Education.
- / High quality services which are based on a good understanding of our students' requirements.
- / A campus, curriculum and services which are inclusive by intention and design.



PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY

- / We will support all our students in their learning and their student life, enabling them to develop skills and strategies, increasing confidence and capability in managing their own wellbeing throughout their University career.
- / We will work to improve access, engagement, and success for students with mental ill health, and to remove barriers in partnership with the student body.
- / We will provide appropriate support services for our students with mental ill health while recognising their status as independent adults and the requirement to be fit to study.
- / We will consider the requirements of suicide prevention in action planning and implementation.
- / We will acknowledge that our primary duty is in providing education and enabling access, and that we are not equipped to provide specialist health services, and therefore we will need to allocate our resources accordingly.

OUR OBJECTIVES

- One:** Create the conditions for cultural change and **Enable Wellbeing as a Community** through a whole-institution approach.
- Two: Enable the Individual** to enhance their own wellbeing, plan for good health and be able to access the support they need when they need it.
- Three:** Plan, manage, evaluate and resource appropriate **Support Services** including in partnership with external agencies.
- Four:** Create an increasingly **Inclusive Environment** for all and actively identify and address barriers to participation for students with mental ill health.

OUR KEY ACTION PLAN

2020 - 2023

OBJECTIVE ONE: ENABLE WELLBEING AS A COMMUNITY

Create the conditions for cultural change

Key Action I: *Creating opportunity and encouragement for the pursuit of good mental health and resilience by all*

We will explicitly promote the value of time spent on developing and nurturing our own mental wellbeing and that of our university community. Through our actions we will reinforce our explicit messages about the importance of activities which support our mental wellbeing.

What we do already:

- / Deliver a comprehensive communications plan for students which provides basic wellbeing information and encourages students to prioritise their mental wellbeing.

What we will do:

- / Increasingly align all our activities to enable the five themes in the Theory of Change stated in the University's Access and Participation plan: **Sense of Belonging, Sense of Purpose, Self-Efficacy, Resilience, and Engagement.** **Year 1**
- / Provide activities and experiences that support good mental and physical wellbeing. **Year 1**
- / Talk about wellbeing at induction and key transition points: encourage students to value mental wellbeing, to understand what works for them, and to prioritise activities which support it. **Year 1**

- / Work with the Students' Union to increase wellbeing activities subject to agreed resource capacity. **Year 2**

- / Ensure we engage with students and respond to the student voice **Year 1**

- / Make mental health/wellbeing support and preparing for living away, topics to address by Student Outreach and Recruitment. **Year 3**

Key Action II: *Awareness-raising, destigmatisation and compassionate conversations*

In order to encourage a positive culture around mental health in our university community we need to foster open inclusive conversations, enabling people to speak about, and hear about, experiences of mental wellbeing and mental ill health, without apprehension.

What we do already:

- / Provide an introductory on-line module on mental wellbeing, mental health problems and suicide prevention available to all staff in the university.

- / Run campaigns around key dates such as World Mental Health Day.

What we will do:

- / Have a "big conversation" around mental wellbeing and mental ill health, led by students for students, including social media and real-world events. **Year 1**



- / Implement dedicated engaging suicide prevention initiatives such as 'Three Minutes to Save A Life' or 'Save Lives with Small Talk' or 'Ask Twice'. **Year 1**

- / Run workshops for students to develop their own stories and narratives. Find opportunities to share some of these digital stories for awareness raising and training. **Year 2**

- / Build inclusivity awareness into curriculum so that Salford graduates have this as part of their graduate skills. **Year 2**

Key Action III: *Enabling a genuinely inclusive community which is engaged in promoting mental health*

We will create a culture where it is seen as normal for individuals and groups to identify less formal ways to support mental wellbeing in our University community, whether by providing mutual support and wellbeing activities, or fundraising, volunteering or creating times and spaces to focus on our mental health.

What we do already:

- / Directorate of Student and Academic Support events team (staff volunteers) run events for staff which promote engagement, belonging and fun, and also volunteer and raise funds for local charities.

- / Provide a small amount of funding for student/staff-led initiatives which benefit students through the Salford Advantage Fund.

- / University of Salford Students' Union have established trained volunteer 'wellbeing officers' in all Students' Union sports clubs and societies.

What we will do:

- / Work to develop appropriate staff skills and awareness training which can penetrate into all staff types including academic staff, cleaning, catering (Salfood and Atmosphere Kitchen & Bar), professional services etc. including outsourced services and contracted staff where appropriate. **Year 2**

- / Providing increased training and resources for student leaders (of clubs and societies) – how to spot students who might be struggling, how to support them etc. **Year 2**

- / As part of the University strategy recruit wellbeing champions from the university community to build capacity for peer support (possibly building from the existing student-run Rafiki peer support project). **Year 3**

- / Support students in setting up peer support groups for purposes that they would find helpful, such as for those bereaved by suicide. **Year 3**

- / Break all non-essential activities on Mental Health Day and encourage students and staff to spend that day on relevant activities which they are empowered to lead. **Year 3**

OBJECTIVE TWO: ENABLE THE INDIVIDUAL

Enable the individual to enhance their own wellbeing, plan for good health and be able to access the support they need when they need it.

Key Action I: Self-knowledge, skills & tools

As an institution of learning, which is committed to preparing students for life, we will provide resources and opportunities for students to continue to develop their skills and strategies for wellbeing.

What we do already:

- / Targeted encouragement, for example, the University Library provide a specific study skills workshop called 'Academic Resilience – Facing the Challenges of University study' which provides practical advice.
- / 'Social prescribing' by referral to the Sports Centre and Students' Union sports & societies as well as local charities providing e.g. artistic



and gardening activities – providing students with options and strategies to explore and find out what works for them – including in their forward planning for mental wellbeing.

What we will do:

- / Further develop the Skills for Learning / Living Well for Learning on-line skills development resource. **Year 1**
- / Develop an on-line resource for students of practical tools and guidance anchored around a self-assessment tool that will allow students to reflect upon their mind-set and track change/growth over time. This can be embedded alongside curriculum and/or used by students independently. **Year 1**
- / Provide the opportunity for students to identify personal goals that relate to their wellbeing, to track their progress and access coaching support if needed. **Year 1**
- / Use of innovative methods to facilitate access to resources e.g. podcasts for commuter students. **Year 2**
- / Develop a "Writing for Wellbeing" module, available university wide, which will give students the writing skills to minimise stress around text-based assessments, while also teaching reflective and mindful skills to build resilience. **Year 2**



Key Action II: Building informal support networks

To help individuals in establishing a firm foundation for life and study at university we will encourage and enable students to recognise the importance of their informal support networks and develop these.

What we do already:

- / Students' Union sports and societies activity and social programme.

What we will do:

- / Provide apps to facilitate students in building networks for support. **Year 2**
- / To use the student newsletter to promote information on the web for parents, friends and supporters on how to provide support and raise any concerns for the student. Update web and add fresh content periodically in order to keep relevance. **Year 2**
- / Create additional 'base' rooms / spaces similar to the commuter student common rooms for all students, to allow students to relax and interact in convenient low-pressure spaces. **Year 2**



Key Action III: Drawing on support as needed

We will help students to understand what services are available to them, feel that the services are relevant to their needs, feel able to access services, and contact services as early as possible when they recognise a need.

Examples of what we do already:

- / Promote our services to ensure students know what is available to them, regularly and at key times during the year.

What we will do:

- / Develop strong partnerships with schools and colleges to ensure a more robust transition to university with early access and support planning for students with mental ill health. **Year 1**
- / Produce a wellbeing directory and personalised action plan and make available to all new and returning students. Involve students in the production of the resource, so that it is seen as "by students, for students". **Year 2**
- / Understand why students may not engage with services when aware of them which could be useful in identifying ways to remove barriers. **Year 3**
- / Promote opportunities and support offered by external partners to which students can self-refer. **Year 1**

OBJECTIVE THREE: SUPPORT SERVICES

Plan, manage, evaluate and resource appropriate Support Services including in partnership with external agencies.

Key Action I: Pastoral support & peer services

We should provide the types of services at a level and in a way appropriate to the students' need. For this reason, it will be appropriate to enable peer-led services which may be more accessible and effective for students, and to provide effective pastoral support at the points where students engage with the University.

What we do already:

- / The Students' Union has enabled the development of the Rafiki Service which is staffed by students offering a peer-support talking and listening service.
- / The Student Progression Administrators determine whether students may need additional support if not engaging with their programme, and are trained to appropriately refer students for additional support.
- / askUS service have increased delivery locations across campuses and offer drop-in and pop-up events in a variety of locations around campus.

What we will do:

- / Continue to explore options for peer-led support in partnership with the Students' Union and the student body. **Year 2**



Key Actions II: Professional support services

We should have a clear understanding of the nature, purpose and standards of services which we will offer to students with existing mental ill health and to the wider student body who may have undiagnosed conditions, may develop mental ill health, or may face mental health challenges at different times.

What we do already:

- / Provide Counselling & Wellbeing and Disability & Learner Support services.
- / Continuous improvement work to maximise efficiency and improve student experience of services:
 - / Call back for every student
 - / Extended evening opening

- / Provide additional resources to these services each year 2017/18 - 2020/21.
- / Provided significant resources to develop the new mental health service for students with specific unsupported needs, in partnership with the GM Universities and the NHS.

What we will do:

- / Provide an 'out of hours' student wellbeing phone line (evenings, weekends, holidays). **Year 1**
- / Agree a way to quantify, manage and resource the student demand for support services, balancing needs/requirements vs. need to stay within financial constraints. **Year 1**
- / Include wellbeing questions in On-line registration similar to the Careers & Employability questions and use to target resources. **Year 3**

Key Actions III: Dedicated support relating to key risks (such as periods of transition)

We should proactively identify actual and potential risks to wellbeing and dedicate appropriate resources to mitigating these risks.



What we do already

- / Fitness to Study policy & procedure supports structured engagement with students as concerns arise in relation to mental ill health which may be affecting self or others in study or student life.
- / Additional targeted support for students with specified characteristics which are known to be linked to higher prevalence of mental ill-health and low wellbeing.
- / All Wellbeing advisers and employed Counsellors undertake the specialist Lime Culture training in appropriate handling and response of sexual assault reports.
- / Resources dedicated to managing relationships with partner accommodation provider Campus Living Villages and other local providers.
- / Partnership between University and Students' Union to offer social activities over the winter holiday break.
- / Developed a plan for supporting students in the wake of a student death, including a suicide 'postvention' checklist.

What we will do:

- / Introduce a Report and Support -style facility to encourage disclosure of problems and concerns at an early stage. **Year 1**
- / Consider the needs of students at periods of transition, for example during arrival and when leaving University, over vacation periods, and whilst on placements. **Year 2**
- / Develop resources and ideas to help students prepare for living away, thinking about practical, physical, mental, and emotional challenges. **Year 1**
- / Review suicide 'postvention' plans and identify whether they can/should be further developed. **Year 1**

OBJECTIVE FOUR: INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

Create an increasingly inclusive environment for all and actively identify and address barriers to participation for students with mental ill health.

Key Actions I: Accessible & healthy spaces, services and technology

We should make it easy for students to integrate healthy behaviours into their usual pattern of activity, by offering a range of services and options which are accessible at relevant times and places, and by considering how we can support good mental wellbeing through our design processes at every stage. We also should remove barriers for students with mental ill health.

What we already do:

- / Extensive redevelopment of estate and neighbouring Peel Park (in partnership with Salford City Council) in order to create appealing accessible spaces.
- / Development of spaces for students to socialise and relax whilst on campus.
- / askUs provide links to self-assessment and self-help tools / guides from the NHS including for depression, anxiety, paranoia and delusions, coping with suicidal thoughts, bipolar mood management, bulimia and anorexia.
- / Use of data analytics (Jigsaw) to identify students at risk and for intervention monitoring.

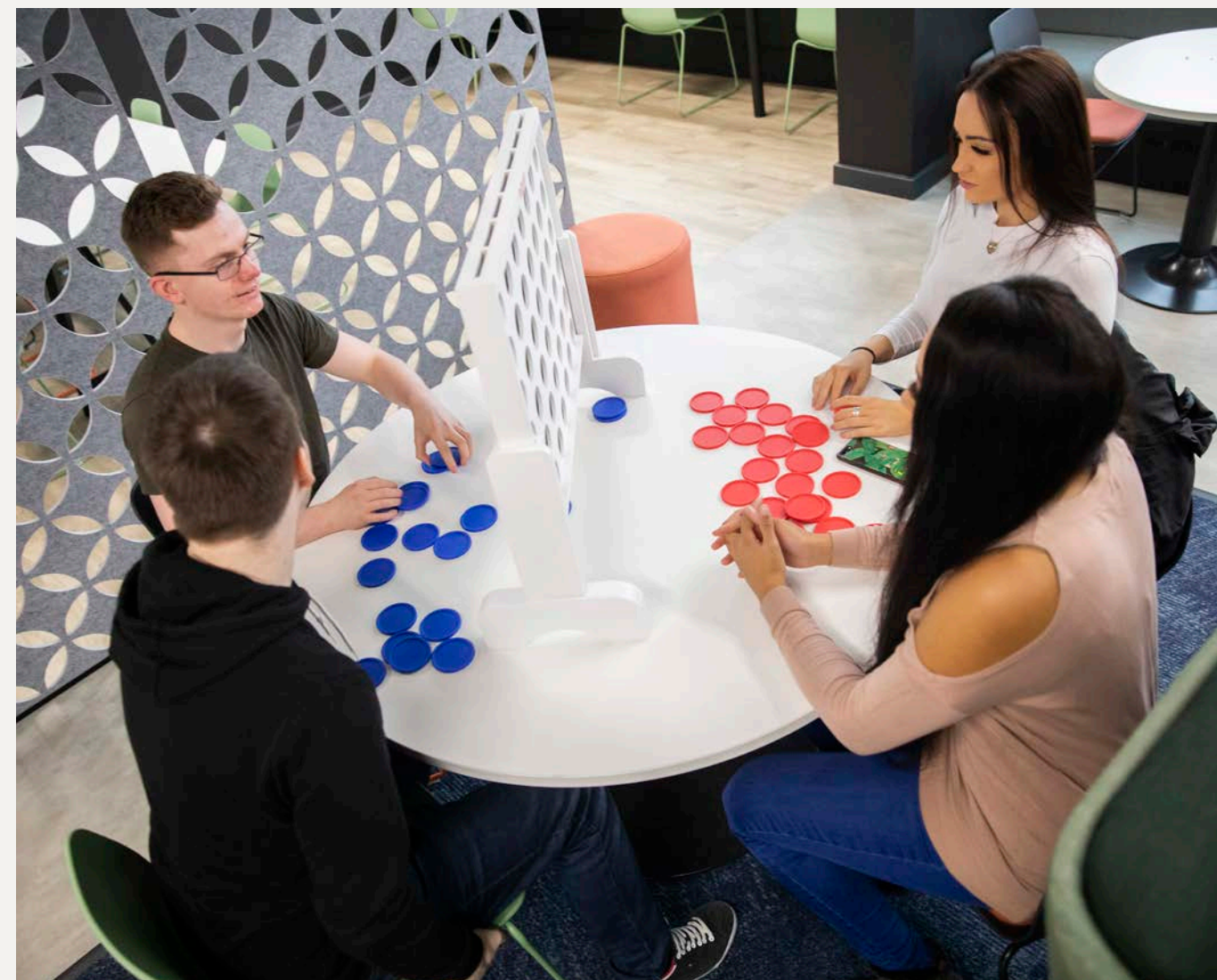
What we will do:

- / Adopt design guides for Building, Space and Service design. **Year 1**
- / Develop and publish our Sport and Physical Activity Strategy to model a more coherent offer to which services, facilities and activities can be aligned. **Year 3**
- / Review and report on Estates planning and the ways in which space on campus supports wellbeing such as through safe walking routes, social meeting points etc. **Year 1**
- / Extend promotion of healthy eating/living advice/classes in accommodation or around campus. **Year 2**

Key Action II: Working proactively through, and with, partners

What we already do:

- / Engage regularly with partner provider of accommodation, Campus Living Villages, in order to support students experiencing challenges in their accommodation.
- / Students Union Denizen scheme to provide additional support for students in local private halls of residence.



What we will do:

- / Explore options for better communication from NHS services to the University, especially after a student has experienced a crisis. **Year 1**
- / Provision of wellbeing items at affordable prices on campus or to loan out for free. **Year 1**

Key Actions III: Inclusive design and practice: actively challenging barriers

What we already do:

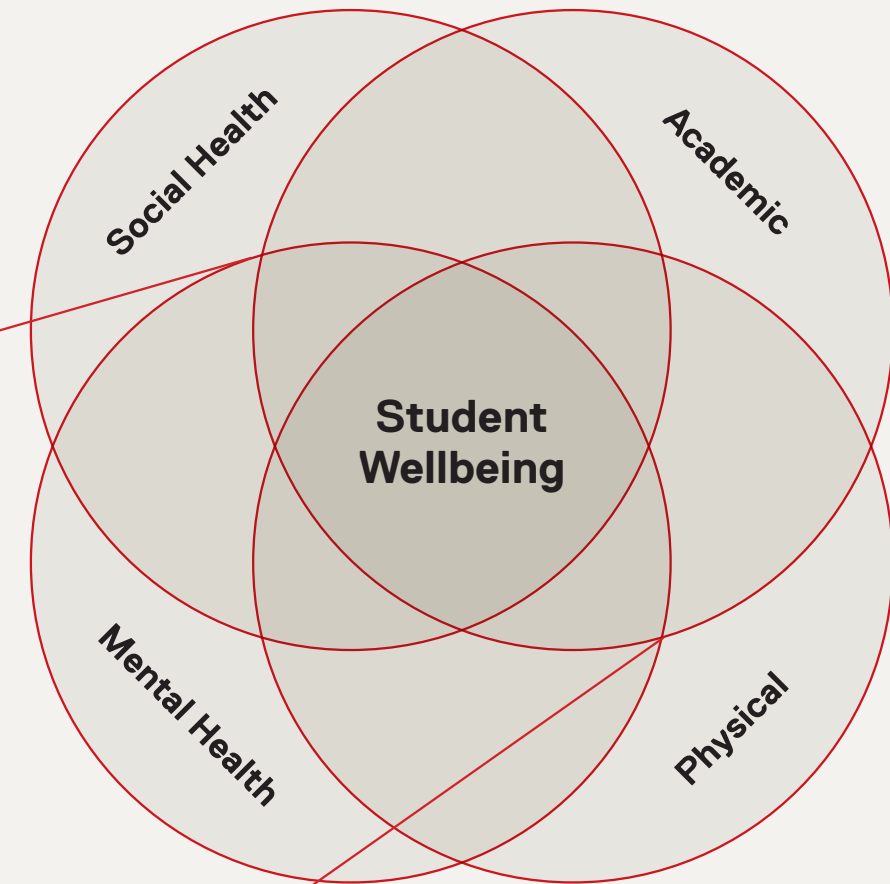
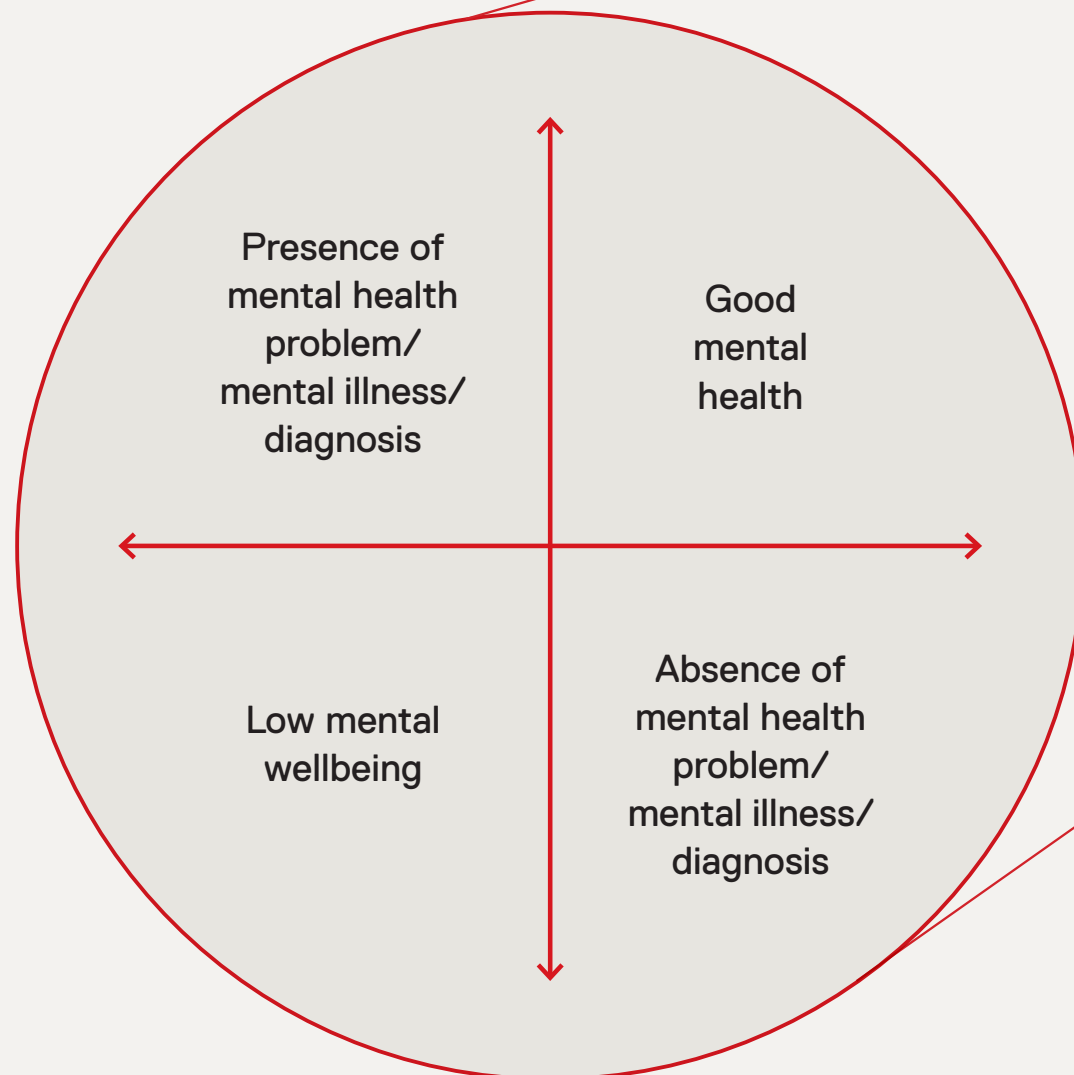
- / We introduced inclusive practice in teaching in 2016 to remove barriers to learning for all students, including those with mental illness or poor mental health.

What we will do:

- / Review models of assessment/re-assessment with the view to removing barriers for students with mental illness or poor mental health, for example, reducing avoidable clustering of assessments. **Year 1**
- / Review the academic calendar with a view to identifying possible benefits which may arise from re-shaping it, removing / reducing current pressure points and creating new opportunities. **Year 1**
- / Take mental health and wellbeing into consideration during programme design and delivery. **Year 1**

DEFINITIONS/CONCEPTS

Student wellbeing concept as described in the Student Minds University Mental Health Charter.



WHY ARE DEFINITIONS IMPORTANT?

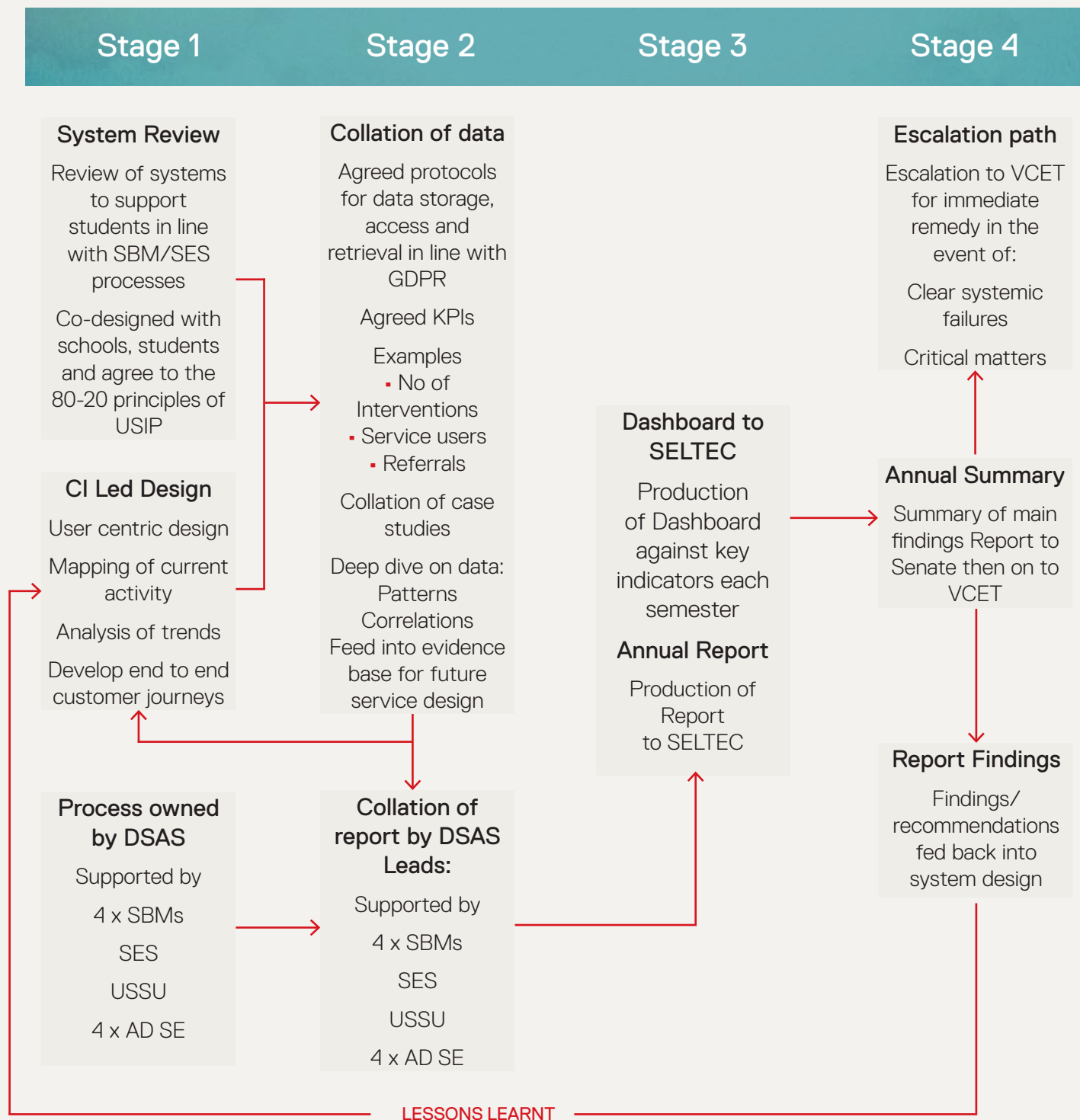
From the Higher Education Policy Institute Policy Note 13:

“The terms ‘Mental Health’ and ‘Well-being’ are often used interchangeably. Conflating mental health and well-being can be damaging to individuals and the provision of support services.

While both terms are difficult to define precisely, well-being is generally regarded as a broader term than mental health. The mental health charity Mind defines the relationship between mental health and well-being as follows:

“If you experience low mental well-being over a long period of time, you are more likely to develop a mental health problem. If you already have a mental health problem, you’re more likely to experience periods of low mental well-being than someone who hasn’t but that doesn’t mean you won’t have periods of good well-being.”

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY GOVERNANCE



SENIOR SPONSOR

DSAS LEAD

4 x SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGERS

4 x ASSOCIATE DEAN STUDENT EXPERIENCE

USSU LEAD

The assurance of our Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be a pan university responsibility embedded from the senior team through to front line staff working directly with our student body. The PVC Student Experience is the Strategy sponsor and will have support from the Dean of Students, a DSAS Lead, the Business Managers and Associate Deans Student Experience for each school, alongside the Student Union and Student Body representatives.

In **Stage 1**, our systems will be rigorously designed with clear ownership of service delivery, resourcing and responsibilities at school and professional service level. A data evidenced review from KPIs and student feedback at regular intervals in **Stage 2** will be fed back iteratively into **Stage 1** to ensure we are continually improving our provision.

Termly dashboard reporting through agreed service metrics to SELTEC in **Stage 3** will culminate in an annual report to Senate in **Stage 4**. Findings from the annual report will be fed back into **Stage 1** to ensure any lessons learnt are integrated into future service design.

Within **Stage 4** any escalations required throughout the year around critical matters or systemic failure will be directed to VCET via the Chair of SELTEC.

REFERENCES

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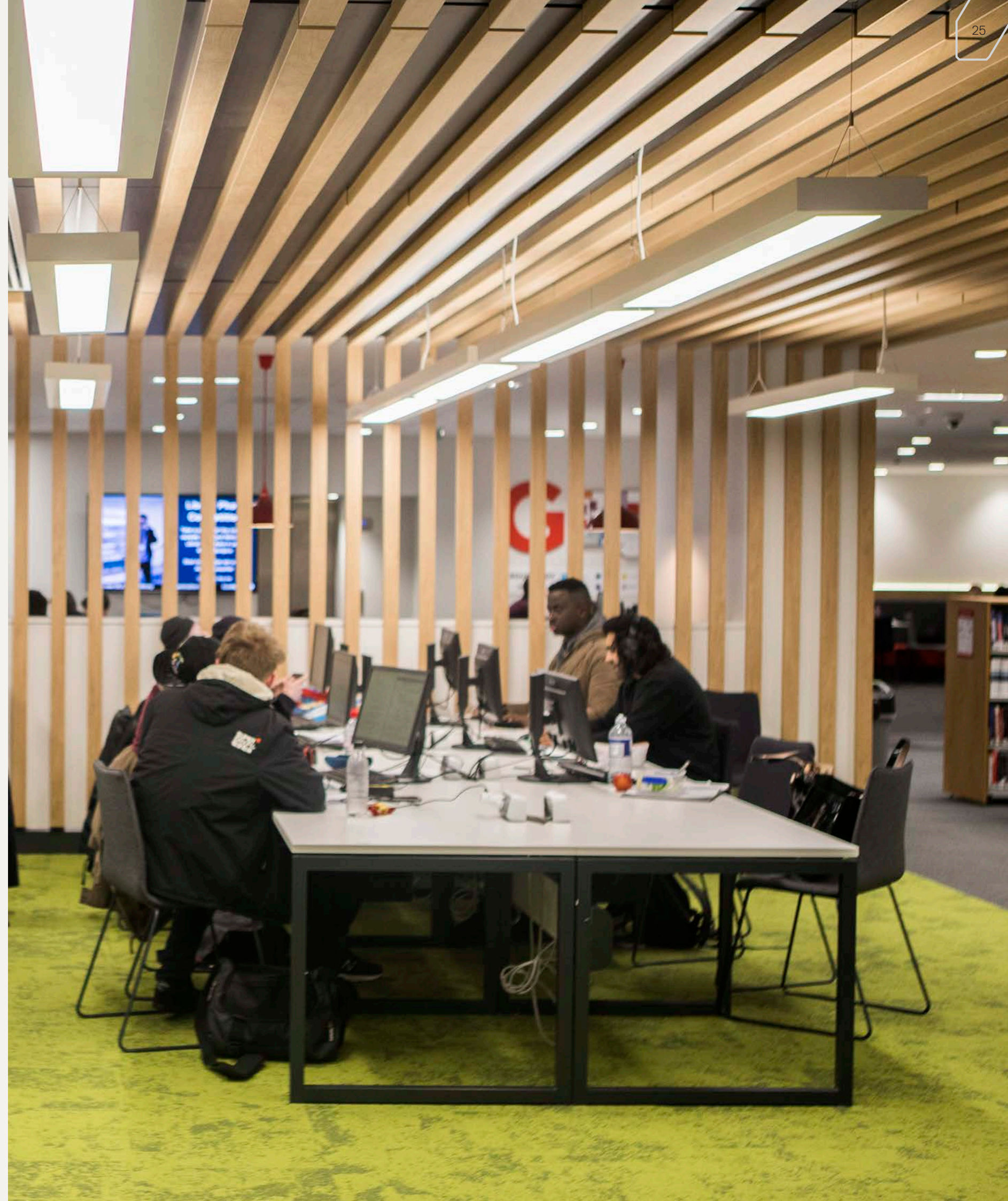
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universitiesuk.ac.uk/news/Pages/mental-health-care-is-letting-down-students-agree-NHS-and-university-leaders.aspx

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Universities UK (2017) 'Stepchange: Mental Health in Higher Education'

www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange



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Review date: February 2021

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