

2-7F Student Mental Health Awareness: A community approach

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Good mental health is vital for personal development, learning, and living. Yet the incidence of mental health problems is increasing among the general population and among the student population in particular. While there are services available for students in distress, it is undoubtedly the case that stigma associated with mental health disorders prevents many students from seeking help (Thorley, 2017). Furthermore it is imperative that we create an environment in which students with mental health issues can be supported to help them thrive during their academic studies. This is consistent with the Scottish Government's mental health strategy 2017-2027 as well as the University's Mental Health Action Plan (2017).

In an effort to build this supportive and inclusive environment and to raise awareness of mental health, staff in the School of Psychology in collaboration with the Student Psychology Society organised a Student Mental Health Awareness week from October 16th – 20th 2017. Throughout this week together we hosted daily workshops on a variety of topics: Trichotillomania, Transitions, the importance of sleep, suicide prevention, staying active to de-stress, and countering stigma and discrimination in psychosis.

The initiative was intended to enhance the student experience and create a more inclusive learning space for all students. Its success was evidenced by the attendance and engagement of both staff and students. We plan to build on the success of this week in terms of community engagement and awareness by organising further workshops and presentations on a variety of topics suggested by staff and students who attended the events.

During this presentation the staff and students who organised this week of events will share their reflections on impact from both staff and student perspectives and the next steps in building an inclusive and supportive community for both staff and students.

References

Thorley C. (2017) Not by Degrees: Improving student mental health in the UK's Universities, IPPR