



Pause.@UoB

An Innovative Wellbeing Service for University Students

Pause.



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

ForwardThinking
Birmingham

NHS

Birmingham Women's and Children's
NHS Foundation Trust

The
Children's
Society



WELCOME

Pause.@UoB

...to our Report 2022



Contents

- 1. **Background** pg7
- 2. **The Partners** pg10
- 3. **The Project** pg16
- 4. **Pause Live** pg22
- 5. **Who Came to Pause?** pg34
- 6. **Summary of Interventions across 2 years of Pause@UoB** pg42
- 7. **Pause Service User Satisfaction** pg46
- 8. **Pause for Reflection how important is wellbeing to students?** pg49

Appendix p54

Case Study p56



1.

Background

The **Pause@UoB** Mental Health and Wellbeing Service is one of ten innovative projects funded by a grant from the Office for Students Challenge Fund tasked with demonstrating how a 'step-change' in Higher Education provision for student mental health and wellbeing could be catalysed. The Birmingham proposal built on the success of a community programme - 'Pause' - that was originally co-designed with young people and The Children's Society as a core part of the innovative 'Forward Thinking Birmingham' 0-25 years mental health collaboration led by Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust. When the OFS funding competition was announced in October 2018, some pilot 'PAUSE' pop-up pilots were already being rolled out on campus at the University of Birmingham, and the opportunity to consolidate the partnership project was enthusiastically taken up by the Student Services leadership. The UoB project soft-launched in October 2019, with a full launch towards the end of January 2020 – just as the Covid-19 pandemic was beginning to impact on our lives. Pause staff along with the wider

student services at UoB demonstrated great flexibility and adaptability in the face of rapidly evolving conditions over the subsequent 2 years – a time when young peoples mental health has been seriously impacted by unexpected and challenging conditions.

Researchers and providers have noted recently rising demand for access to mental health support across the general population of young people and this is reflected in the experience of the Higher Education sector. Disclosure of mental health conditions has increased by 9-fold over a ten-year period beginning 2011 equating to 3.7% of all UK applicants declaring a mental health condition in their application to study at university in 2020 – up from 0.7% in 2011 (Fig 1).



It is unclear whether this indicates a dramatic increase in poor mental health amongst young adults; less stigma in disclosing mental health status or generally improved insight & mental health literacy or some combination of factors. UCAS (2021) reference an Office for Students (OfS) report that students with mental health conditions tend to have lower rates of continuation, attainment, and progression into skilled work or further study without accessing support. A clear indication for Higher Education establishments is that this is an area of

health that appears to be reaching epidemic proportions in the population of youth. Alongside these trends we have for some time understood that the majority of mental health conditions first emerge during youth and early adulthood (75% by age 25 Fig 2).

More students than ever are sharing a mental health condition in their UCAS application

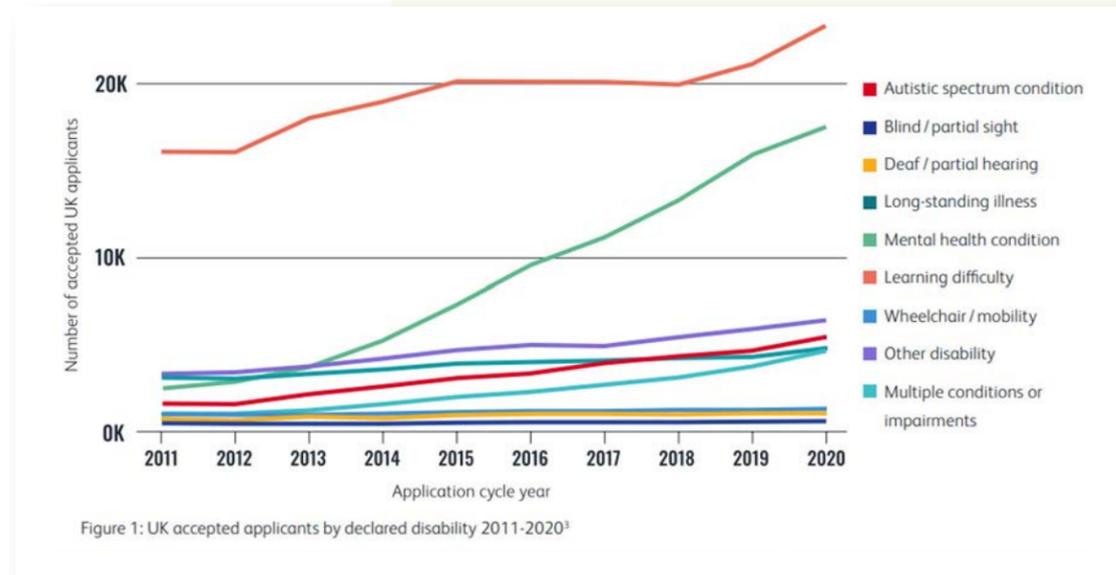


Fig 1: UCAS 2021 - increasing disclosure of mental health conditions from University students ¹

Onset of Common Mental Disorders

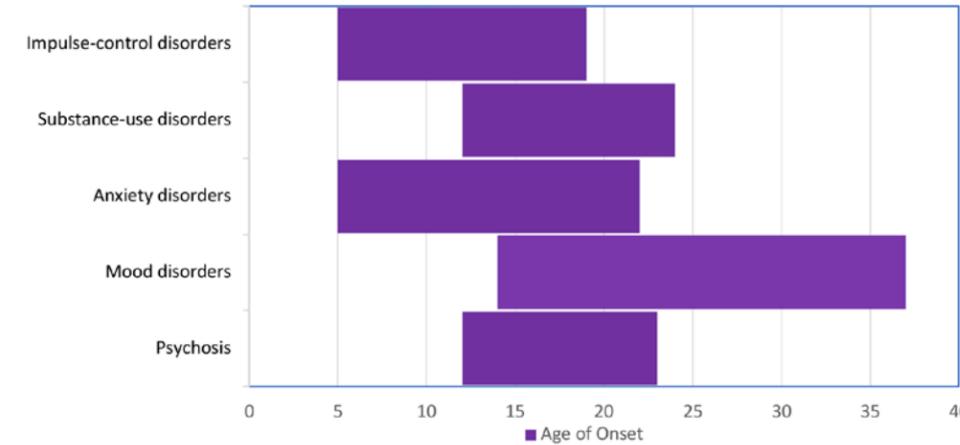
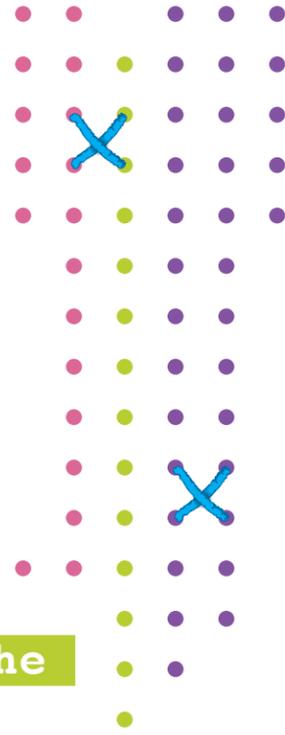


Fig 2: Mental Health disorders emerge during youth and early adulthood ²

It becomes apparent that it will be vital to continue investing in easy to access and engaging wellbeing provision for university students if emotional health and by association - academic outcomes of young people in this sector are to be maintained

Other insights from the UCAS report (2021) include:

- Women are 2.2 times more likely to declare a mental health condition than men.
- Alongside engineering, medicine and dentistry courses have the lowest declaration rates with only 1.4% of accepted applicants sharing an existing mental health condition.
- Some LGBTQi+ students are around six times more likely to share a mental health condition, and care experienced students are almost three times as likely – underlining the value of recognising how mental health intersects with other characteristics and support needs
- One in five students research support specifically for an existing mental health condition before they apply, and more than one in four look at the provision of general mental health and wellbeing service.



2.

The Partners

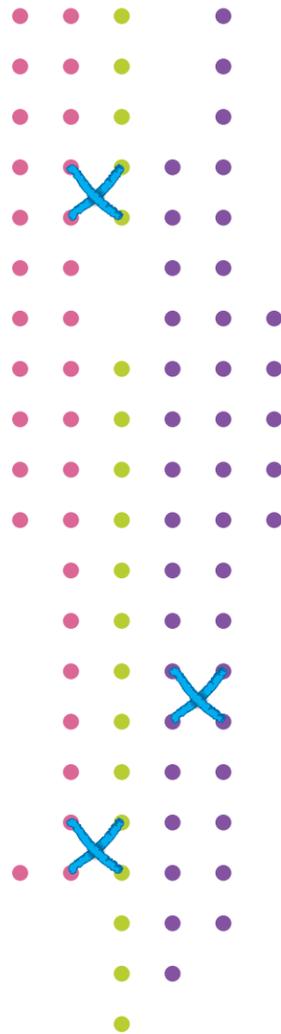
The University of Birmingham (UoB)

Founded in 1900, the University is a thriving academic community of approximately 35,000 undergraduate & postgraduate students including 22,440 undergraduate and 12,395 postgraduate students as well as an international campus and is the fourth largest in the UK. As the first civic or 'redbrick' university located in England's 'second city'. It is a founding member of both the Russell Group of British research universities and the international network of research universities, Universitas 21. The student body of UoB has a higher proportion of students from overseas as a proportion of its population due in part to its high ranking in national and international academic guides and broad ranges of courses and specialisms on offer. As such many students move to stay in Birmingham from other regions for the course of their studies and may not always be registered with local health providers until they require a service. This brings some additional mental health risks for vulnerable individuals who may be more reluctant to report or seek help for mental health and emotional distress than local students (eg Insight Network Report on University Student Mental Health 2020).



UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

In relation to previous NHS relationships for mental health support – the University is one of 5 local Higher Education providers connected to the city and as such was reliant on crisis support from the local statutory NHS providers including 'Forward Thinking Birmingham' (FTB) – which since 2016 has been the statutory provider for the mental health of 0-25 year olds in the city. FTB established new care pathways with education providers across the city through the formation of the **STICK** team outreach provision during 2018-19 and the trialling of a 'pop-up' Pause model on the UoB campus during the same period. This quickly established high levels of interest in the new approach and a successful bid to the Office for Students Challenge fund enabled the current scaled-up Pause model to have a graduated launch at UoB from late 2019 into early 2020.



Forward Thinking Birmingham

Forward Thinking Birmingham (FTB)

Launched in April 2016 - Forward Thinking Birmingham (FTB) is the dedicated 0-25 years Mental Health Partnership for Birmingham UK and the first in the country to take up the challenge of the NHS Long-Term plan of access to care for young people and improve transitions between child and adult mental health services. The model is itself a collaboration of statutory, private and third sector partners led by Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust and is driven by core values of prevention, early access to appropriate intervention and innovative partnership working to meet the challenge of increasing prevalence of mental ill-health in young people.



The Children's Society (TCS)

Since our inception more than 140 years ago we have been an organisation constantly pushing the boundaries, looking for new and innovative ways to have the greatest impact on the lives of disadvantaged children & young people. The Children's Society aims to enable systemic change by influencing legislation and government practice, and to effect a positive shift in public attitudes towards children and young people. It explores the complex challenges in young people's lives by focusing on three areas: risk, resilience and resources. As an organization two governing objectives are to:

- directly improve the lives of children and young people for whom it provides services
- create a positive shift in social attitudes to improve the situation facing all children and young people

The Children's Society are a founding partner in the Forward Thinking Birmingham collaboration and co-developed the original Pause Community service with young people.



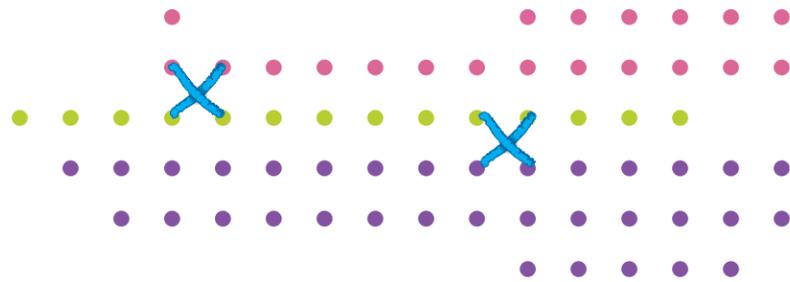
Pause.

Pause – Service History & Aims

The Pause@UoB intervention is based on the successful Pause community drop-in service (originally in Digbeth, central Birmingham) which has been in operation since the launch of FTB in 2016. Designed in co-participation with young people - many of who have used the Pause service - the model is a low-stigma open access drop-in where anyone under 25 (or concerned family members, carers or teachers) can walk in and speak to one of the friendly staff who are skilled in engagement, listening, advice, and support and who can provide brief psychological interventions as well as having a broad understanding of the range of mental health and wellbeing provision across the region. Therapeutic delivery within Pause is designed to be both recovery-orientated and preventative, aimed to serve specific clinical groups with low-level mental health needs or act as a gateway/ safe space for those with a higher needs as well as providing some specialist group work programmes and workshops and a range of online information and resources. The model of care offered is modern, accessible, recovery-focused and remains the first provision of its kind in the country.

What makes Pause different?

A major frustration for young people experiencing challenges to their mental health & wellbeing is difficulty accessing support at the time they need it. Mental health services are perennially under-resourced in terms of staffing and finances at a time when demand for services is markedly increasing year on year. Opportunities for early preventative interventions - 'nipping in the bud' lower-level difficulties - are inevitably missed leading in many cases to difficulties becoming acute or entrenched, requiring more extensive support. Pause has been designed to be available and accessible to young people as needs arise.



Feedback.

Thank you for providing all the links in the email, I will read through them and decide which path may help me tackle these anxious thoughts. After our discussion earlier I feel that the CBT could be very beneficial to help me with this.

Thank you very much for meeting me today and taking the time to listen. I left the session feeling much more positive.

I have heard so many fantastic things about your service. It's like a real jewel for the University

I've definitely got some strategies I can now try out like leaving the situation and the breathing ones both of which I can envisage being very useful.

Thank you so much for your wonderful sharing today which really did make sense to me.

Looking forward to your following sessions.

Thank you again for being so kind and patient earlier, it was nice to talk to you and the idea of categorising the worry into a specific situation has already helped me see it as being much more manageable and I think understanding it in this way will really help me, by it being less overwhelming.

Thank you so much for being so kind to me today, I found the session really productive. I will take a look into CBT, thanks for attaching everything for me and pointing me in lots of other relevant directions throughout today's session.



3.

The Project

Pause at UoB Service Model

The University Pause service is based on the original model but is working with university students under the age of 25 who can visit without appointment and will be greeted and engaged by Pause staff – a friendly team of qualified therapists, practitioners and trained graduate volunteers - during operational hours. Once students complete a short registration and consent form, the student is then invited to a quiet space to talk with one of the service staff about their worries or difficulties and are offered an informed and graduated response and brief therapeutic interventions that are appropriate to the individuals presenting concerns. Sessions are generally completed within an hour and at launch the service was open to students for 30 hours weekly.

The Pause@UoB service integrated the flexibility and ease of access of the parent model with bespoke elements designed to meet the needs of a very different population although therapeutic delivery remained both recovery-orientated and preventative. The initial location of the service was close to the entrance of the main library, central to the Edgbaston campus, moving to a blended telephone / online model through lockdowns and later from two locations on the Edgbaston campus.



| | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Day 1: MAKE AN ORIGAMI HEART</p> <p>Try adding some messages of self-love on the inside of them.</p> | <p>Day 2: WRITE A GRATITUDE LIST</p> <p>It could be as simple as being thankful for your morning coffee or your cosy bed!</p> | <p>Day 3: GIVE A GIFT</p> <p>Anything from cards, poems & cakes to items you can donate such as twiddle muffs to help dementia patients!</p> | <p>Day 4: JOURNAL ABOUT WHAT THE WORD 'HOPE' MEANS TO YOU</p> | <p>Day 5: MAKE A POSITIVITY JAR</p> <p>Fill with things that bring you a smile: favourite quotes, goals, photos etc...</p> |
| <p>Day 6: WRITE A LIST OF SELF-CARE IDEAS</p> <p>Have a bubble bath, watch your favourite movie, light some candles.</p> | <p>Day 7: PRACTICE A GROUNDING EXERCISE</p> <p>Use each of your five senses to help you to focus on the present.</p> | <p>14 Day Isolation Wellbeing Challenge Pause</p> <p>Click on the titles to view the link.</p> | <p>Day 8: CREATE YOUR OWN WALL DECOR</p> <p>Being creative has been compared to meditation due to its calming effect on the mind & body.</p> | <p>Day 9: TRY SOME DEEP BREATHING</p> <p>This technique can reduce anxiety, calm your mind & increase positive thought processes.</p> |
| <p>Day 10: DO A RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS</p> <p>Anything from litter picking to posting positive notes around your local community.</p> | <p>Day 11: JOURNAL ABOUT WHAT 'TOGETHERNESS' MEANS FOR YOU</p> | <p>Day 12: WRITE A LETTER TO SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT</p> <p>You can pop the letter in a handmade envelope too!</p> | <p>Day 13: PAINT A RAINBOW FOR YOUR WINDOW</p> <p>Rainbows are popping up in windows across the UK – they signify hope & positivity.</p> | <p>Day 14: CREATE A SELF-SOOTHE BOX</p> <p>The idea of these boxes is that they are filled with things that make you feel better.</p> |

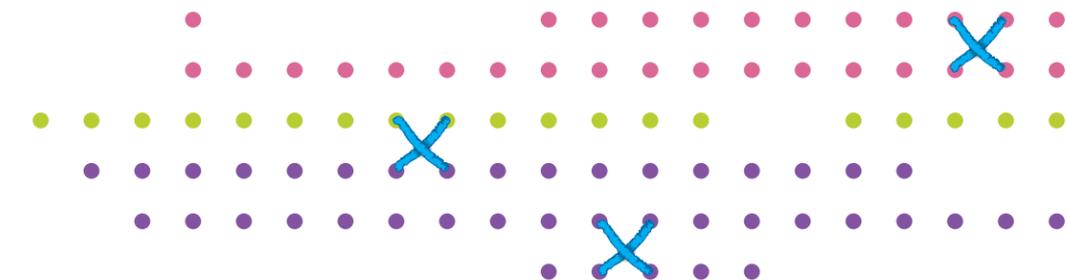
To speak to one of our wellbeing practitioners, please contact: 02028414470 or email sukhrammitchildrensociety.org.uk (Available from 10am-6pm, 7 days a week)



The service aimed to support students who may be experiencing emotional and mental health difficulties by providing an easy to access drop-in service with integrated linkage to statutory and internal student mental health provision. This was planned to help to meet the increasing demand for mental health and wellbeing support for young people at the University and to provide early identification and intervention for emerging mental health difficulties for students under 25 years of age. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on this method of delivery and some short and longer-term remedial actions were instigated as a result.

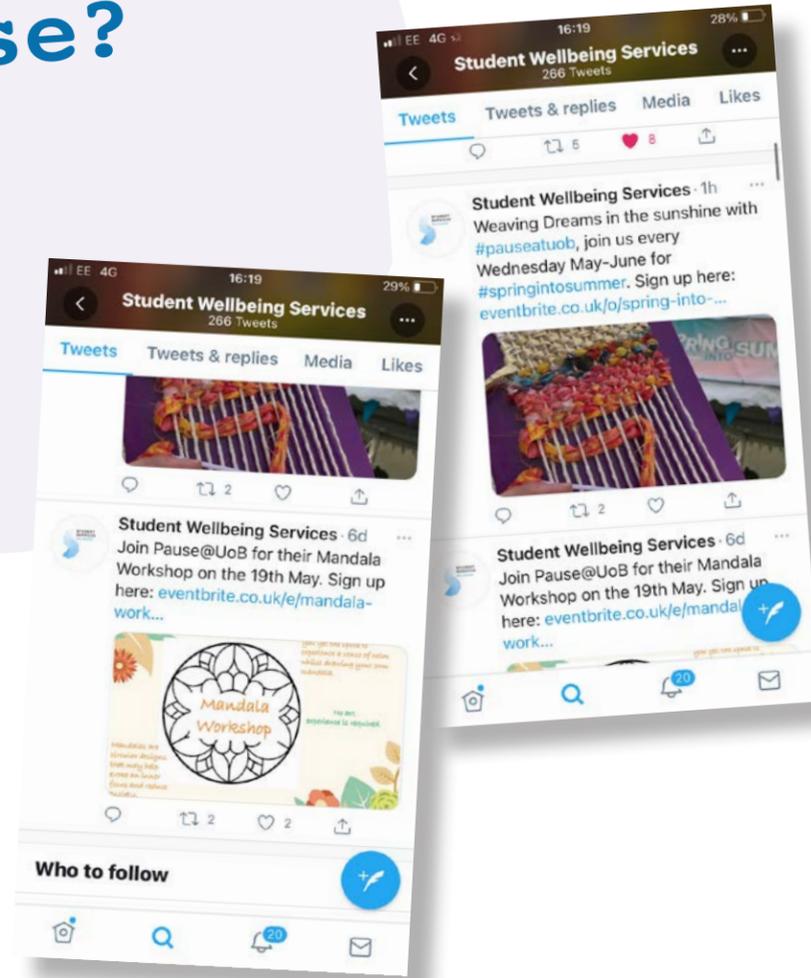
The UoB project wss intended to meet a number of internal and external outcomes including:

- Providing an appropriate response to the mental health & wellbeing needs of students at the University (particularly those who would not normally access other student services)
- Providing early identification and intervention of emerging mental health difficulties
- Adding choice to the University's support infrastructure for student wellbeing
- Enabling easy and rapid access to advice and support
- Providing a complementary approach to current student welfare provision.
- Enabling coherent partnership working to overcome the problems caused by silo working



Who are Pause?

The team at the frontline of the Pause@UoB service was initially made up of 8 practitioners and additional volunteers. The practitioners came from various professional backgrounds such as social work, nursing, teaching, lecturing, play therapy, youth work and artistic. This eclectic blend of team members, complimented by a small, but enthusiast team of volunteers, ensured a creative, reflective and supportive working environment, where theories and methods of intervention were explored and applied to practice effectively. The majority of volunteers were University students from Birmingham and other local cities although there were some volunteers who had joined the team seeking a change in professional direction. Volunteers were subject to a rigorous TCS recruitment process of mandatory learning (face to face and online), references and DBS checks.

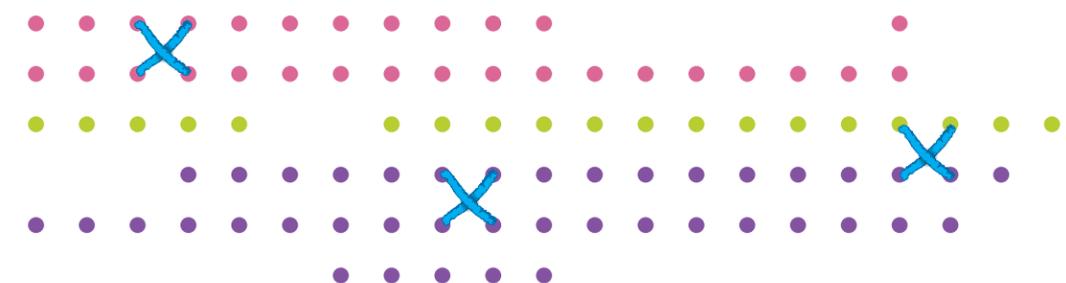


The Setting



The Pause@UoB model is an additional service stream to the already existing range of student services on offer at UoB. The setting is in comfortable open-plan safe spaces and individual students do not need an appointment but can turn up to access help and support without having to make appointments or go onto a waiting list. The initial Pause location is close to the entrance of the main library on the Edgbaston campus. Emotional Health and Wellbeing Practitioners advise and support students based on their presenting needs and the team are fully integrated with the rest of the University's welfare and support services as well as with the local mental health service providers.

One of the major benefits of the Pause@UoB model is that it emphasises **immediate access** – doing away with appointments and allowing young people to be seen at a time of their choosing when they need help and empowering students to be in control of when they engage with support. This open access throughout the day alongside the visible (yet low stigma) central campus locations mark out differences to the existing University service provision.



Feedback.

I made a self-referral for the Living Well Consortium, and have got a triage phone call later today I think. I'm not particularly looking forward to it, however it is movement in the right direction I hope. Thankyou for bringing it to my attention.

Wow, all of this sounds very exciting. As I've submitted my last exam, I'm no longer a student at UoB but I am more than happy to help in any ways that I can. I would also just like to thank you for all of the work you have done, and included me in, with Pause and for you offering to be a reference for me. Please do let me know which details would be appropriate to use. It has been a pleasure to work alongside you and the coproduction group and I wish you all the best of luck in the future.

Email from student following Spring into Summer event participation (photo of weaving activity sent to student after group):

Dear ,
 Thank you so much for providing such wonderful activities, I love them 😊 !!!
 And also thanks for the photo hahah, we are so cute even though we wear masks 😂 "

Feedback in the Chat from students attending the Mandala Creative online Workshop;

'I really love this art and I have some colouring books Thanks for this session.'

Thank you! This was fun!!! Very relaxing activity!'

Student attending for face to face support:

I felt so comfortable last week when I came to the gardening group, that I wanted to come and talk to someone. (This student had not been onto campus during 2021. They attended the Wellbeing Garden in early June- 1st time on campus in 6 months)



4

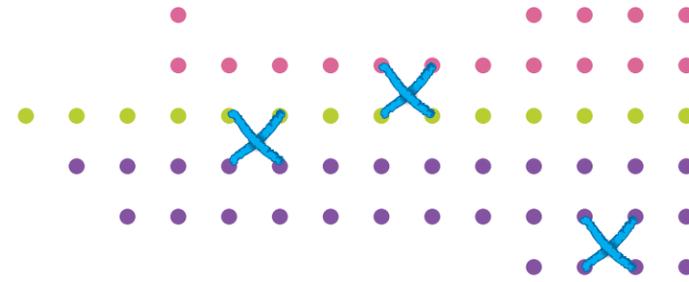
Pause 'Live'

Pause@UoB 'soft-launched' in October 2019 and fully by late January 2020. Staff were based in the main university library lounge – a location chosen for its close proximity to large numbers of students and for the 'normalising' effect of being in a setting where students had other reasons to be present. Previous discussions with library staff had revealed that it was also a common source of refuge for students experiencing wellbeing difficulties and the high visibility of the service also acted as a challenge to any stigmatising attitudes, 'symbolically' declaring that accessible mental wellbeing support should be regarded as 'core business' within a progressive HE institution. Quite quickly the team were seeing students presenting for brief interventions, signposting information and access to resources, information about the service and welfare check-ins.

In March 2020 as the country went into a national lockdown to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus, Pause was unable to continue as an active drop-in. Determined to

still provide a service, Pause@UoB pooled its resources with Pause in Digbeth to firstly offer a telephone and email service to students. After initial lockdown restrictions were lifted, Pause continued to employ a hybrid-model, offering support to students via email, telephone and video conferencing in order to keep the service accessible to those unable to access the service on campus.

In the first year of 'full' service, the majority of brief 1:1 interventions were offered face to face and via video conferencing. Email interventions were the second most common form of intervention providing signposting and resources. Comparatively, in the second year, the most common aspects of support requested by students was sharing service information and brief 1:1 interventions (face to face), suggesting that the drop-in feature would likely have been utilised more frequently throughout had the lockdown restrictions not been in place (Table 2). Additional 1:1's had taken place during the 'soft-launch' period and these are included in subsequent data tables.



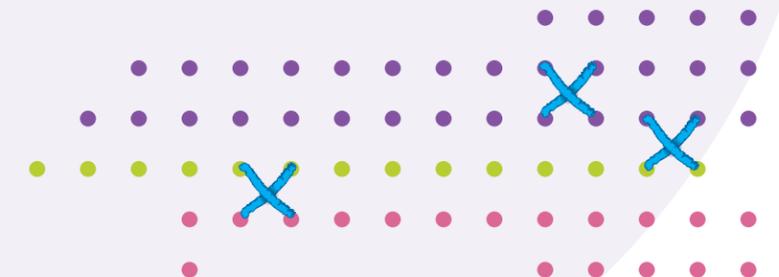
Early Learning from the Pause@UoB project



- In common with all health and University support services the Covid-19 events entailed rapid responses to quickly changing conditions – Pause was particularly quick to adapt with telephone contacts and a new blended model of provision demonstrating flexibility and responsivity to external events
- Regular and effective service management and steering group meetings have enabled rapid problem solving and a positive sense of trust in the partnership to quickly become established
- Locations of the service (UoB library, The Lodge) were responsive to student feedback ensuring the reach and opening times were appropriate and meeting the needs of students. Additional campus locations were provided as part of the blended response to continuing Covid impacts

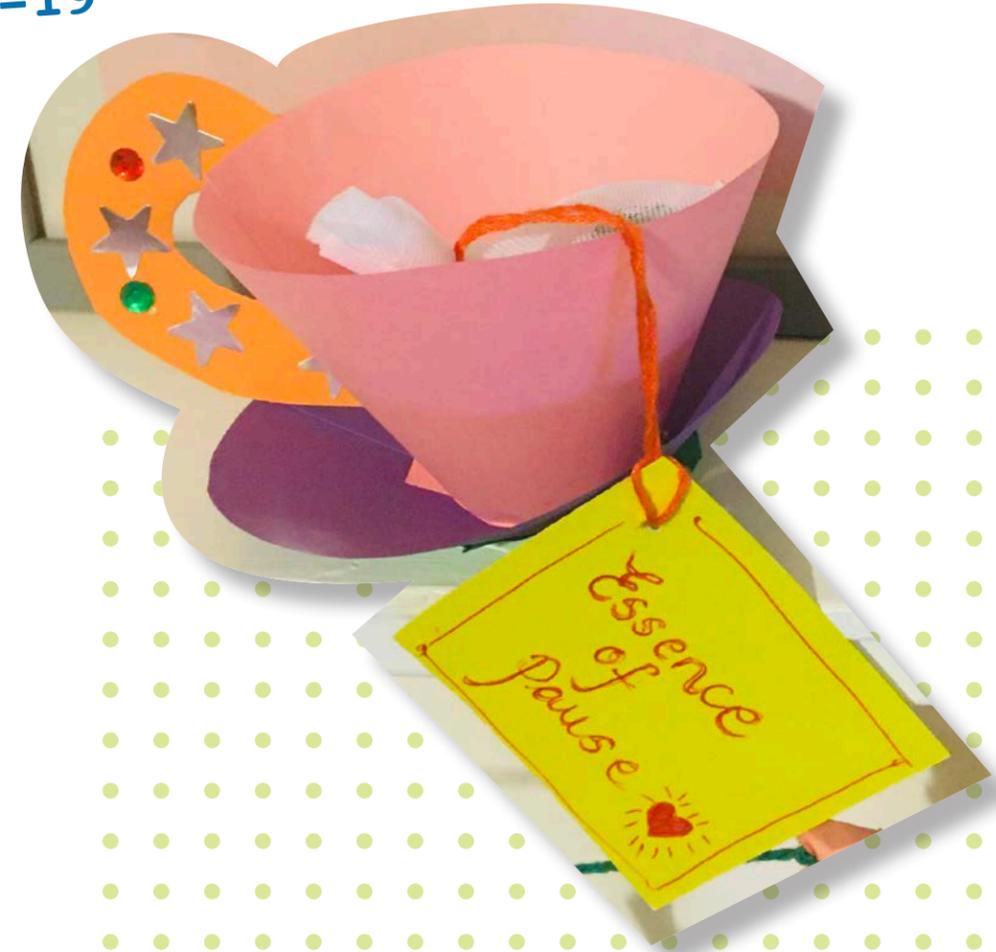


- Some shared training in relation to understanding 'drivers' and conditions' of common mental health conditions and how this could inform 'join-up' and consistency in University wellbeing assessments and coding of presenting issues of students was enabled early in the partnership across the Pause and University wellbeing providers
- Stakeholder engagement and involvement was a vital element of developing a responsive 'system' from launch and throughout the Pause delivery – with new and creative ways of engaging constantly evolving the service model



Adaptations in response to Covid-19

In response to the lock-down conditions imposed to tackle the Covid events – the Pause@UoB physical base on campus needed to be temporarily closed and a new telephone response service was set-up by the combined efforts of TCS services. This has continued throughout to the current period although take-up from UoB students was quite low as most had relocated to family homes or abroad. This flexible blended approach is under continual monitoring and review to enable the service to swiftly adapt to changing conditions and emerging student needs by increasing access options during this period of increased stress on the University system provisions.



Innovation

It is important to highlight that the approach and model is still one of a relatively few innovative approaches to service design that spans the boundary of medical and social models of health care provision – and sits in a moderately exclusive vanguard of service provision for youth mental health. Even under the additional difficulties that the current covid-19 crisis has introduced – the model has displayed flexibility and innovation despite the patent increase in prevalence of mental health difficulties being reported posing substantial challenges across the system. It is our expectation that as the evidence base grows for the efficacy of earlier responsive models of intervention for mental health difficulties that Pause@UoB and similar preventative approaches will soon become regarded as essential aspects of the growing national and international focus on youth wellbeing and the related addressing of social inequalities.

Pause in action

in the Library

During welcome week, I was helping in the wellbeing tent and Pause and S were based in there. One of the days I was in the library and was extremely busy and there was a girl that was very upset. She was a new student and though I'd calmed her down and helped her in some ways, I just felt better if she also had a chat to Pause staff I was happy that I'd spoken to her and someone else had as well so she had that double layer of support which is what Pause does so well.

.. Having Pause in the tent made me feel better knowing that she had the right support and she welcomed it as well. Knowing that I could just take her to Pause with her permission and know she'd get immediate help was part of what it made it work so well. From her point of view, she'd have spoken to wo people that day, myself and Pause, she'd have been listened to and hopefully some of the problems she was struggling with were dealt with or signposted to the right help.

UoB library staff member.

'Twelve Great Things about Pause@UoB!'

1

Just drop-in!

The open access 'no appointment needed' drop in is a key element of the Pause offer and one of the aspects most celebrated by students and staff. Although some students would have preferred a booking system, the majority reported that being able to "drop in" and immediately engage with a staff member without a lot of administration, diary-planning and anxious anticipation made them feel comfortable and was one of the reasons they chose to use the service.

2

Needs-led support

One of the engaging features of Pause is that students can approach the service with any wellbeing concern – it could be an issue with friends, family or anxiety or low-mood. This is one of the features that makes Pause accessible to students as there are no specific criteria required for accessing the service and part of the support they give is meeting students where they are and helping them in the moment. Needs-led support removes the barrier between clinical and wellbeing support enabling a more holistic approach when working with students.

3

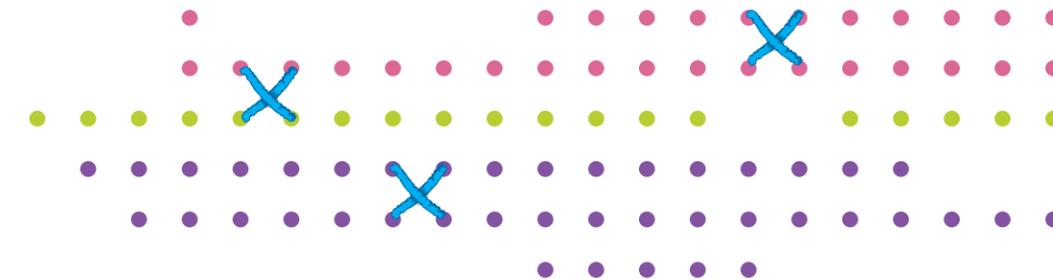
Partnership staff who share the values and priorities of the model

Personality is a huge factor in the success of partnerships because it impacts on everything from communication styles, relationships with colleagues and shared vision "You can have a model for good partnership working but unless you've got good people working in partnership it won't work. You have to have the right personalities with those principles to facilitate a successful model of partnership. There has to be those key priorities of mutual trust and respect, mutual benefits and gain, understanding, creativity and flexibility and unless people adopt those and behave within them, you're not going to get the impact of the outcomes you get through joint approaches." Partner member feedback.

4

Creative engagement

One of the major learnings points of Pause throughout the pandemic has been the adaptability of the service in remaining creatively engaged with students. For example, when conditions meant the service was no longer able to work as a drop-in - it immediately offered online and telephone support. When everyone entered into a partial lockdown but still able to meet up to 6 people outside, Pause initiated 'Wellbeing walks' as alternative ways of engaging with students during a difficult time. The service has also been commended for facilitating creative workshops, opening a wellbeing garden, starting podcasts, providing creative expression opportunities to students and making small gestures such as providing bean bags for students to sit on outside during the summer. Many of these activities fall outside of the traditional clinical intervention model and helpful in facilitating student wellbeing often with students from vulnerable groups or those who may feel marginalised



5

Welcoming environment

Environment is an important factor in supporting student wellbeing how a person 'feels' in an environment will influence the outcome of the intervention. A student accessing mental health services is already likely to feel nervous and a clinical setting can compound that. Alternatively, curating a space that feels comfortable, warm and 'homely' can help people feel more relaxed and connected. This can be facilitated by decorating the space, offering students a drink or something to eat, introducing personal touches, plants, flowers and creating an environment that feels 'welcoming'.

6

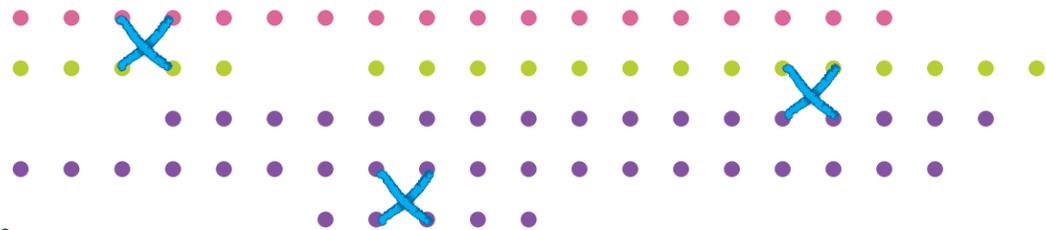
Co-production and responsiveness to feedback

From its beginnings, Pause@UoB has been developed in co-production with a group of students who provided feedback on the service and helped to shape delivery of the service. One of the major outcomes of the co-production work and listening to student feedback that was mobilised by the pandemic was the change in location from the library lounge another nearby campus building - the Lodge. Students were consistently reporting that they would prefer to see staff in a more private setting and so a hybrid-location model was set up with students initially engaging with staff in the library lounge and being accompanied to the lodge for more in-depth support. Students also worked with staff to co-produce training materials for other University student services team staff.

7

Flexibility and adaptability

The flexibility of the Pause model was another of the key features that allowed it to thrive during the pandemic. The model embraces simplicity - at its heart is a practitioner providing a listening space for the student. Keeping this at the centre of service delivery allows adaptation to changing environments or conditions.



8

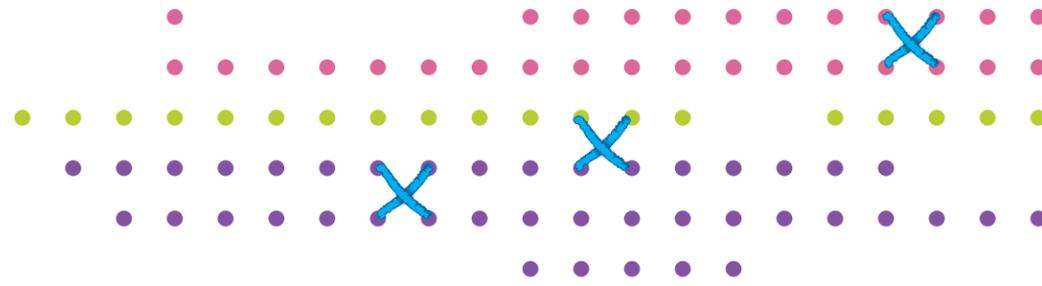
Communications

Good communication is a vital aspect of any mental health service and was demonstrated as such within the project partnership. Communications were initially slightly challenging at the beginning of the service from a governance perspective with 3 different organisation cultures and different ways of working coming together. On the ground the Pause service team also actively sought to build relationships with the other wellbeing services at the University as well as with their operational neighbours - the library staff. Regular formal and informal meetings and communications with representatives from the partnership were paramount in facilitating effective practice across the project.

9

Team culture and staff satisfaction

Interviews with Pause@UoB staff and across the partnership revealed that Pause was a great place to work for staff, who felt supported, encouraged to propose creative ideas, and valued within the team. Staff reported feeling 'lucky' to work on the Pause project spoke about feeling happy to go into work even on days they were not feeling their best. This 'relaxed' and 'comfortable' ethos at Pause was not just something presented to service users but was actively embedded within the team culture. This is an important detail as when staff wellbeing and happiness is not prioritised, service delivery can be affected.



10

Holistic approach to wellbeing

Pause@UoB approached student wellbeing holistically – looking not just at what ‘mental health’ issue the student may have been struggling with but focusing on ‘what is happening in this student’s life’. This important distinction is ‘baked in’ to the model – and as there are no specific criteria for accessing services, students can present with any issue allowing staff to acknowledge and help address drivers of mental ill-health & wellbeing such as poverty, adverse childhood experiences or racism. This broad approach enabled Pause staff to make use of social prescribing – for instance, signposting a student to ‘Tae Kwon Do’ to help with regulating anger (case study reference).

11

Partnership with clinical services

Part of being able to operate as an effective needs-led service able to support the wellbeing of a wide range of students requires links to higher level clinical services to meet the needs of those students that you cannot provide for. Such links to clinical services are imperative and one of the benefits of the Pause@UoB project has been having an FTB staff presence on campus and ensuring open lines of communication between FTB, Pause and UoB to better support students.

12

Visibility

Pause@UoB was very active in making itself visible on campus and was celebrated for this being pro-active in making itself visible on campus both to students and to university staff members who might signpost students to Pause. Pause staff made use of banners, posters, flyers, online communications and advertising from other University departments, organised ‘pop up Pause’ sessions around campus (eg in accommodation halls and the sports centre in order to increase the profile of Pause amongst students).

Pause in action

UoB wellbeing services

A student who was self-harming was being escalated to wellbeing services.. accommodation were in touch with them and supporting – they’d gone above and beyond and were helping to keep the student safe. One of the forms of support that the student felt able to access was Pause and it was a reassurance that the student could access support from a service that had links to FTB and was able to give that steady advice and encouragement to access further support. Pause were also able to look at alternative ways of supporting that student, so looking at financial solutions, spending time with the student on a regular basis and enabling a safe space away from accommodation and academic study to go and talk about how they were feeling. It’s that holistic approach that Pause are able to offer... it’s an example of where there’s a primary mental health issue with lots of other secondary issues that are making the bigger picture.

UoB library staff member.



Feedback.

Student at craftivist activity
(Spring into Summer)

This has hands down been the highlight of my year. I am so proud of what I have made. Thanks so much for letting me join in.

Thank you so much for everything. I looked through the resources and they are really helpful. Again, I can't thank you enough.

Thank you so much for your e-mail. Those resources are really helpful. Nice to meet you too and have a lovely holiday!

I hope you are both really well! I just wanted to say a big thank you for all your help and talking with me it's made a huge difference for me and I hope you both know what a fab job you're doing supporting students through this pandemic and what a difference you're making to people. If I could send a ecard I would have but I'm not good at ecards.

Thank you so much for all your help, honestly since speaking with you and trying to put into practice what we've spoken about I feel so much more positive than I was about things! You're both brilliant and I hope you both have a really lovely Christmas and new year!

I just wanted to pass on my gratitude again for everything you did last week to support this student in particular, although we were able to source a voucher for her, I think that having a friendly face deliver supplies will have gone a long way to making her feel reassured and less isolated, she fed back to me that she was extremely grateful for the support she received.

5.

Who Came to Pause?

The Creative - Pause@Workshops

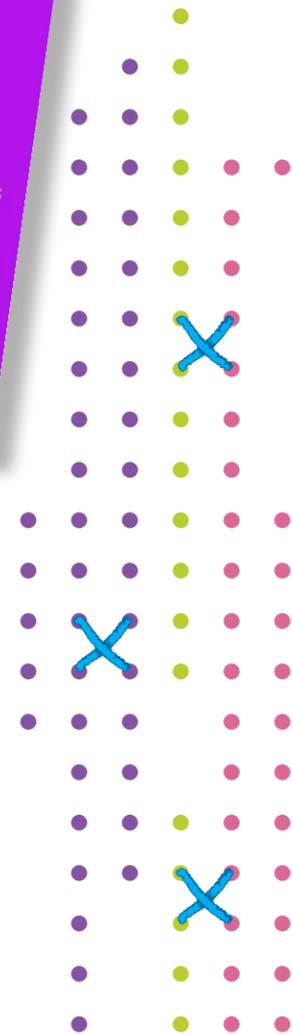
Workshops

In addition to expanding their 1:1 offer to students to include online support, Pause also introduced creative group workshops and social events from April 2020. Many of the Pause@UoB team come from a creative and multi-disciplinary background, so it felt natural to introduce arts-based opportunities into the programme. Using the familiar space of the Main Library, students were encouraged to drop in and engage in “active-rest” activities such as origami, friendships bracelets, zine making, collage jewellery making and a collaborative crochet project.

These free activities were popular, especially with international students. In addition, the team delivered similar creative activities for University events such as Spring into Summer, and UoBe Festival, an annual event to celebrate the end of exam season. These workshops and events were offered online during the lockdown period and in-person once these restrictions had lifted and continued to run throughout the lifetime of Pause.



Table 1 shows a breakdown of the workshops across the lifetime of the service. **Let's Read together** was a popular workshop that was targeted towards international students who were seeking opportunities to socialise, practise their English and talk about the themes of wellbeing. Other popular workshops were the **wellbeing boost**, **spring into summer craft activities** and the **library loungers**.



Arts and craft packs

Pause@UoB also sent over 60 free craft packs to students during 2020-21. The themes of the packs included Zine and Collage making, craftivism and mindful textiles projects including boro and shashiko embroidery. Bespoke crafts projects were also sent to Peer Mentors, who were a team of a furloughed student team, encouraging them to reach out to the service of they felt the need. Packs were also created for the “You Report, We Support” campaign in collaboration with colleagues within the Student Wellbeing and Partnerships Team.



| Type of workshop | n times ran | Total n of attendees |
|------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Wellbeing boost | 4 | 91 |
| Mind craft | 4 | 62 |
| Let's read together | 14 | 67 |
| Write for you | 5 | 85 |
| Zine club | 4 | 47 |
| Flag affirmation | 1 | 9 |
| Hip hop heals | 1 | 25 |
| Journaling for wellbeing | 3 | 42 |
| Conversation corner | 1 | 34 |
| Wellbeing garden | 5 | 19 |
| Fuel your fire | 3 | 18 |
| Resilience tree | 5 | 24 |
| State of balance | 3 | 15 |
| Spring into summer craft workshops | 4 | 86 |
| Mandala workshop | 2 | 34 |
| Winterbourne walks | 5 | 87 |
| Stories for the soul | 1 | 2 |
| Culture shock group | 3 | 6 |
| Library loungers | 6 | 73 |
| Puzzle trail | 1 | 8 |
| Total | 108 | 834 |

Table 1: Number of workshops and social events organised by Pause and number of attendees

Added Value

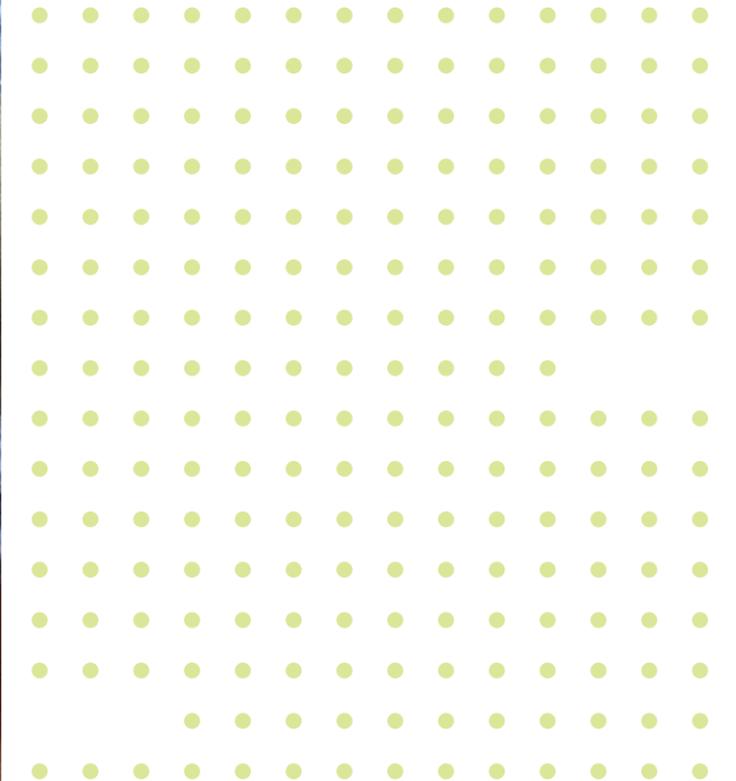
As a part of The Children's Society, Pause@UoB has been able to offer additional opportunities to students, supporting their wellbeing. These have included supporting students to make both individual and group applications to "Golden Ticket" awards - small pockets of funding awarded for activities to support and facilitate ideas. The awards are overseen by a group of young people from TCS. Students at Pause@UoB have benefited in the following ways:

- A care leaver was awarded money to pay for a rail card and fares to visit their birth parent. They had not been able to do so previously, due to the high cost of the fare
- A member of the co-production group was awarded money to purchase an on-line Korean language course. They were planning to talk with male students about mental health whilst on their placement year in Korea.
- A group of students were awarded funding to cultivate and develop a small walled garden in the University, providing a back garden for students to study, rest or help nurture.
- A student was awarded money to visit a local Black hairdresser on two occasions. This significantly contributed to raising their self-esteem prior to attending a placement as part of their course.



The Personal — 1:1 working

Below we describe the demographic and presentation data from the users of Pause services over the lifetime of the project to end of December 2021 with a particular focus on the N=709 students who accessed 1 to 1 support sessions with Pause staff over this period. In addition many other activities and resource signposting took place and these are summarised at the end of this section.



Disability

Pause began to record Disability data from June 2020 - reflected in the rates of student responses in the second-year data. Across the lifespan of the Pause project approximately 10% of service users who responded disclosed a disability when engaging with the project with a slightly larger proportion of students identifying as having a disability in the post-covid period (Figure 6).

Main presenting issues reflected the most common mental health disorders in the young adult general population with Anxiety and Low Mood / Depression being the major issues reported by the total sample and by both males and females whilst 'Stress' and 'Relationship Issues' completing the top 4 issues. Of additional note are the issues of Suicidal Thoughts and Self-Harm being reported by the Pause service users which again is reflective of the general population of young adults. (Figures 7 & 8).

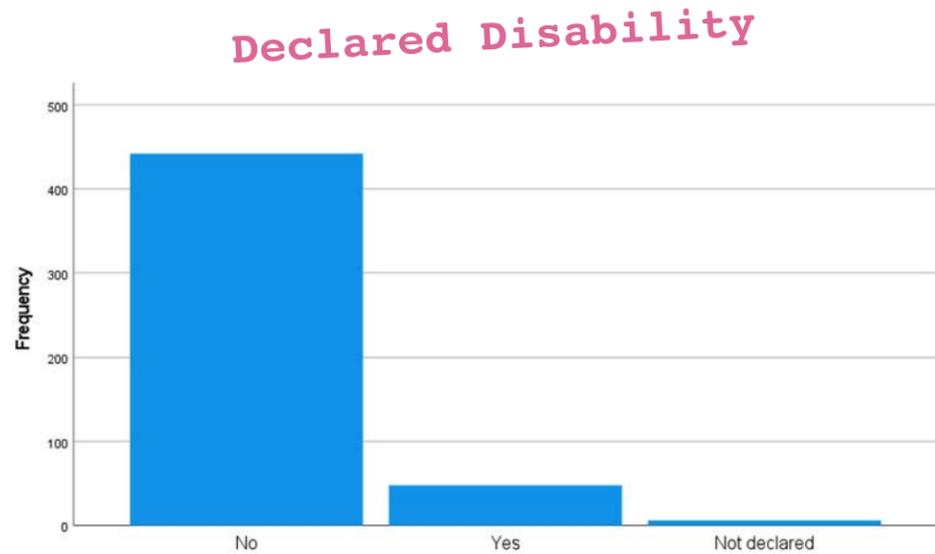


Fig 6: Disability of Pause Users

Main Issue Females

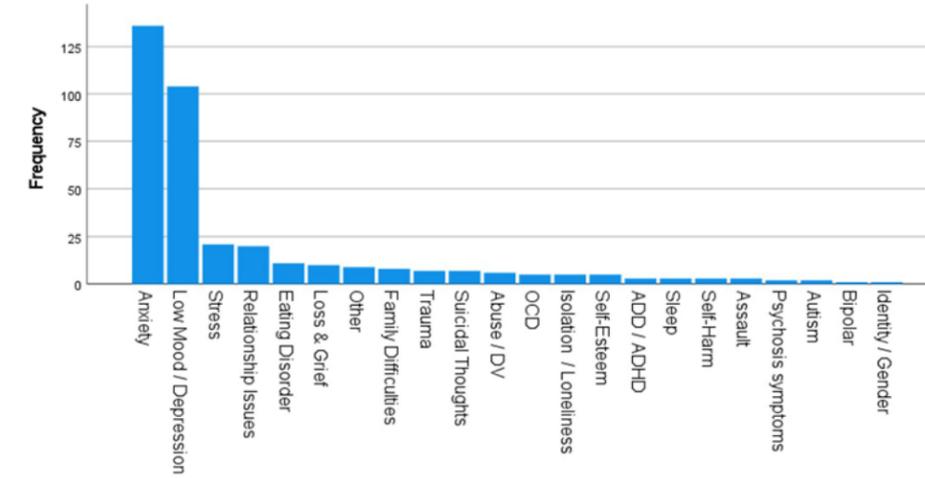


Fig 7: Main Presenting Issues - Females

Main Issue Males

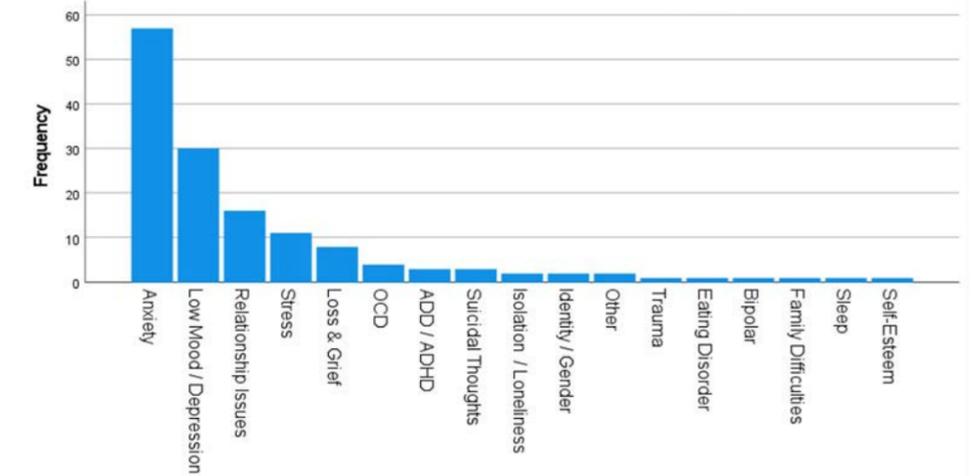


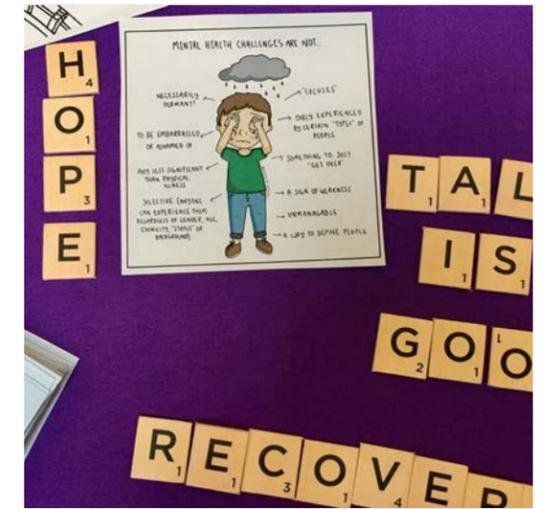
Fig 8: Main Presenting Issues - Males



6

Summary of Interventions across 2 years of Pause@UoB

Pause@UoB has been accessed for support by a diverse group of students with demographic profiles and presenting difficulties broadly representing that of young adult mental health help-seekers in the general population. The service users average age reduced slightly across the lifespan of the project and most common presenting issues were Anxiety; Low Mood / Depression; Relationship Difficulties and Stress. The onset of the Covid pandemic early in the course of the project and subsequent rapid adaptations to the service mode of operation did not appear to have any major impact on the overall profile of students presenting for support although numbers were greatly reduced during the national lockdown periods as many students returned home and telephone / online engagement methods were adopted.



| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| Year 1 total interventions | 475 |
| Year 2 total interventions | 1615 |

Table 1:

| Type of intervention | | Email | Phone call | Video call | Face to face | Total |
|--|-----------------------|-------|------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 Oct 19-Dec 20 (includes soft-launch period) | Brief 1:1 | 3 | 125 | 1 | 96 | 225 |
| | Resources/signposting | 156 | - | - | 6 | 162 |
| | Service information | 59 | - | - | 25 | 84 |
| | Welfare check in | 1 | 2 | - | 1 | 4 |
| Year 2 Jan 21-Dec 21 | Brief 1:1 | 14 | 147 | 112 | 185 | 458 |
| | Resources/signposting | 409 | - | - | 1 | 410 |
| | Service information | 740 | - | - | 9 | 740 |
| | Welfare check in | 7 | - | - | - | 7 |

Table 2: Interventions by Year of Service

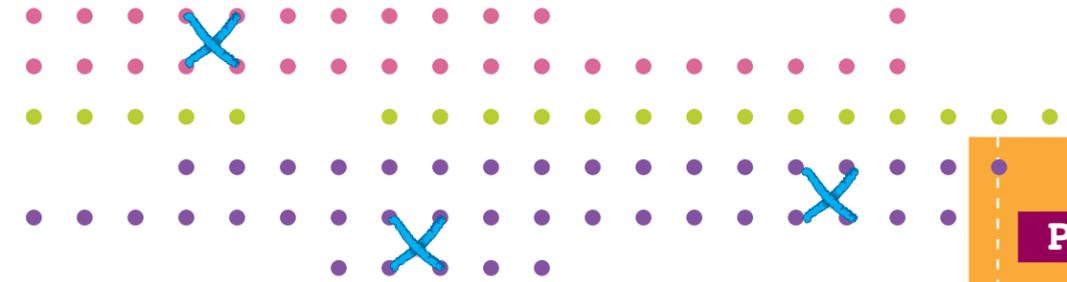


In the first year, the majority of interventions were brief 1:1's offered face to face and via video conferencing. Email interventions providing signposting and resources were the second most common. Comparatively, in the next year, the most common form of service offered to students was sharing service information via email. This is likely due to students seeking service information as Pause became more known and visible on the campus and mental health needs increased due to the pandemic. The second most common service given was brief 1:1 intervention face to face, suggesting that the drop-in feature may have been more utilised in the first year had the lockdown restrictions not been in place.

| | | Pre-pandemic | Pandemic Year 1 | Pandemic Year 2 |
|------------------------------------|-----|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Number of interventions per person | n/r | 5.8% | 1.7% | 9.6% |
| | 1 | 73.3% | 38.3% | 10.5% |
| | 2 | 12.6% | 27.8% | 23.0% |
| | 3 | 4.4% | 9.6% | 35.5% |
| | 4 | 2.4% | 10.4% | 7.0% |
| | 5 | 1.5% | 3.5% | 6.1% |
| | 6 | | 1.7% | 3.8% |
| | 7 | | 0.9% | 1.7% |
| | 8 | | 1.7% | 1.2% |
| | 9 | | 1.7% | 0.6% |
| | 10 | | | 0.6% |
| | 11 | | 0.9% | 0.3% |
| | 14 | | 0.9% | |

Table 3: Percentage and number of repeat presentations to Pause

As Pause operates on a drop-in basis, students are able to access the service without any obligation to commit to further sessions and without any prohibitions on how many times they can use the service. In the early stage of operations the majority of students using Pause did so on only a single occasion. As the service became more established the majority of student users made repeat visits as can be seen in table 3 above.



Pause in action

Transitioning support

A student was being discharged from in-patient services back to their University accommodation and in the dialogue between the student, their clinical nurse and the university it was a much more transparent approach to transitioning back into university than we've had in the past and they had that bit of extra support they needed

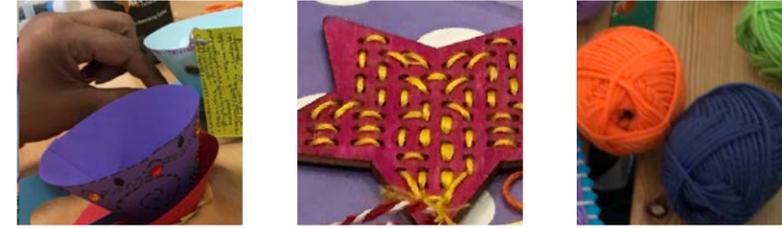
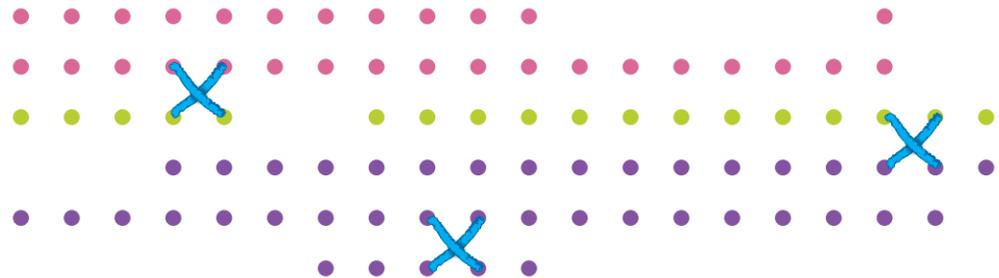
They were made known to the clinical team lead (CTM) at Pause who gave them extra support and were made aware that Pause@UoB were there in case they were struggling and wanted somewhere to go. The feedback from the student was that just knowing Pause was there made a difference..

UoB Student Services Staff member

7.

Pause Service User Satisfaction

Although by its nature Pause is a rapid access / low administrative hurdles model where the emphasis is not on filling forms but on engaging, validating and reflecting together with young people on their presenting concerns – it was reassuring to see that nearly 300 users completed some ‘friends and family’ responses after engaging with the service. For the question: **‘Would you recommend Pause at UoB to your friends or family?’** 282 of 286 who responded to this question recorded yes (99% of respondents). Recent responses to the ‘help’ questions can be seen in **table 4** below also showing a commendable level of positive feedback.



| Overall - Felt able to deal with my presenting issue | Oct-21 | Nov-21 | Dec-21 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| I feel more able to deal with my presenting issue | 21 | 20 | 11 |
| Total paired responses | 21 | 22 | 13 |
| % felt more able to deal with their presenting issue | 100.0% | 90.0% | 84.6% |

| Overall - Felt that helped them to manage how they were feeling | Oct-21 | Nov-21 | Dec-21 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| The skills I have learnt at UoB help me to manage how i'm feeling when I learn | 18 | 21 | 13 |
| Number of respondents | 18 | 22 | 13 |
| % felt that helped them to manage how they were feeling | 100.0% | 95.5% | 100.0% |

| Overall Feedback | Oct-21 | Nov-21 | Dec-21 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| Would recommend Pause at UoB to friends and family | 20 | 23 | 12 |
| % would recommend Pause at UoB to friends and family | 100.0% | 100% | 100% |

Table 4: Pause User Satisfaction

Service users were offered the opportunity to make some open text responses in relation to their experience of visiting Pause - some highly representative example comments are in the boxes below:

What did you like about the Pause Service?

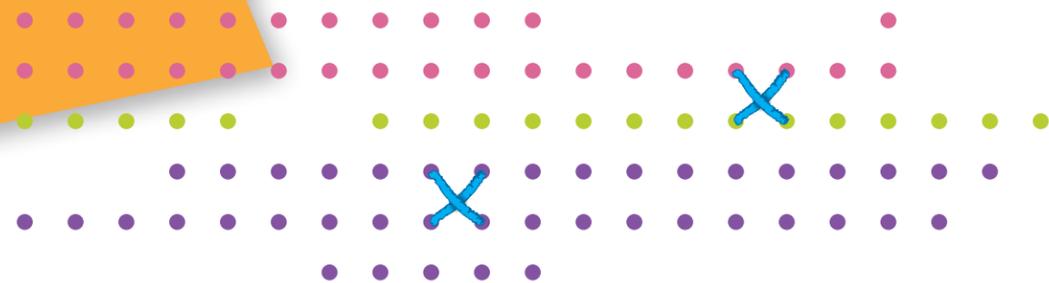
'very welcoming and friendly, non judgmental. It felt easy to chat and be honest about my feelings.'
it felt like a safe space that I could just talk about my feelings
It's not judgemental. I didn't have to book, support available when I needed it
Friendly people, quick response, there when I need it
very easy to talk to and listened to me and cared, gave useful suggestions going forward
very welcoming and approachable, great balance between advice and listening
I gained info and resources to support myself when I am feeling anxious
The drop-in aspect of the sessions makes it so easy and approachable to talk about how you are feeling

What else would you have done if you hadn't come to Pause at UoB?

maybe just left it
I really don't know, I was quite apprehensive about talking about my feelings
Not a lot, probably just sat with my feelings
I don't know. My issues don't seem appropriate to talk about anywhere else

Anything else you would like to say about Pause@UoB?

It is a great experience and I hope other students get the opportunity to be a part of it
so helpful! really glad this support is available
thank you! Keep up the good work!
Keep doing what you are doing!



**Pause for Reflection
how important is
wellbeing to students?**

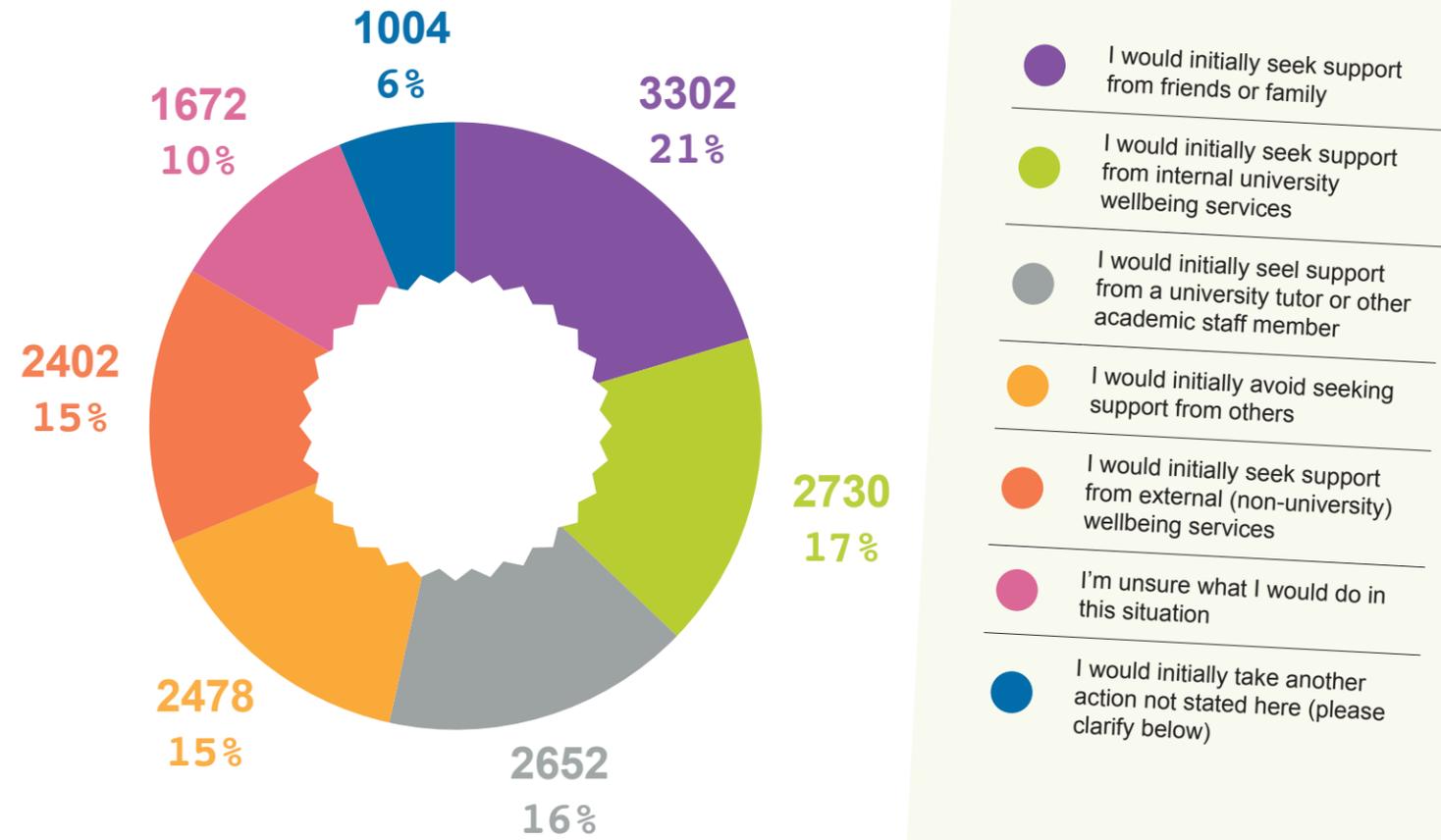


As part of the evaluation of the Pause@UoB and related student services it was decided to develop a short survey to capture some broader student-wide insights into the awareness of the service across the University and a sense of impact and reach in relation to the wider wellbeing offer. In collaboration with Student Services Leads and Partnership colleagues, an initial wellbeing survey was designed to help build a picture of students interface with wellbeing and their opinions and preferences in relation to service provision. We have included in this short report just two charts that reflect the importance to the student population of mental health and wellbeing at this time. Regarding help-seeking it is perhaps of comfort that students who responded would generally consider using the UoB wellbeing services in second place only to engaging support from friends and family. The interface

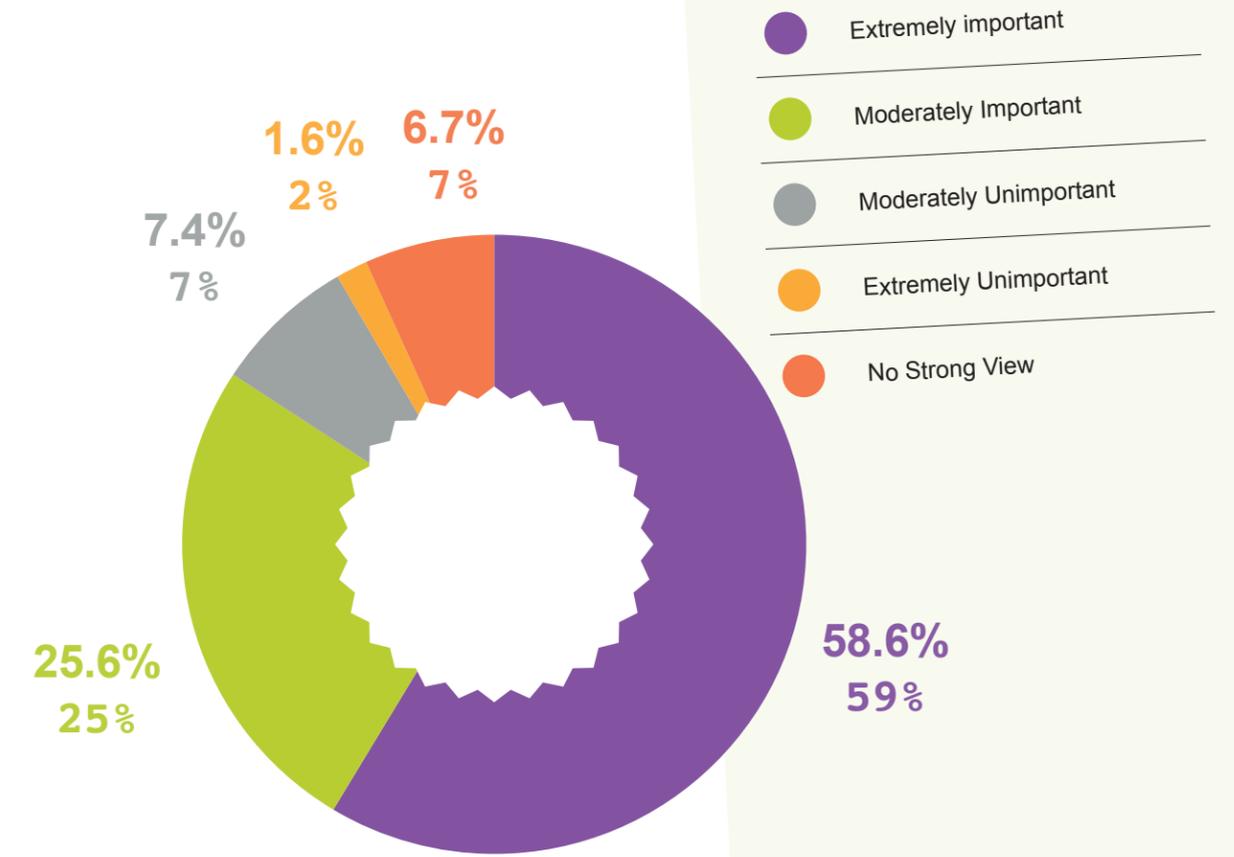
of mental health, wellbeing education and quality of life have never been more important – it would appear that the Pause@UoB Project has made a generally favourable impression on those who have engaged with its highly creative and empathic team. This is quite an achievement for a short-term and innovative intervention in what has been an extremely challenging time for all.



If you were experiencing a wellbeing difficulty whilst a student at University of Birmingham - please rank how you would seek help



To what extent do you feel that accessible wellbeing support at UoB is important to you as a student?



Feedback.

Once again, thank you so much for all your hard work on behalf of myself and the university.

Feedback from UoBe Journaling workshop:

"the pack was so lovely"

"Yeh thanks so much for the pack! Having the mint tea now 😊"

"This has been amazing, thank you so much for this. It's definitely been my favourite session this week!"

I just wanted to drop you an email to thank you for all your hard work in the lead up and during the UoBe Festival. Overall the Festival was a huge success with over 5500 students engaging with online events, much more than we expected. Pause sessions were really well attended with great feedback and interaction in the comments section. Sending out physical packs was a really nice touch in helping students feel more part of the festival and I thoroughly enjoyed being part of your events.

Thank you so much for all your help, honestly since speaking with you and trying to put into practice what we've spoken about I feel so much more positive than I was about things! You're both brilliant and I hope you both have a really lovely Christmas and new year!

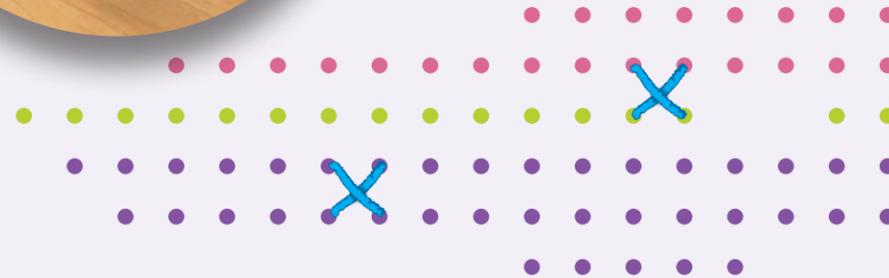
Appendix : Policy Background

There has been an intense scrutiny of services providing mental health support to young people over the past decade leading to many new policies and strategies that have encouraged a greater emphasis on earlier intervention and preventative approaches. In 2011 the mental health strategy, **'No Health without mental Health'** committed to provide early support for mental health problems and building on this in **2014 'Closing the Gap: priorities for essential change in mental health'** included further focus on improving access to psychological therapies for children and young people. The Department of Health and NHS England established a Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce which published **'Future in Mind'** in March 2015 and set out a five year plan with recommendations for improving care. In February 2016 an Independent Mental Health Taskforce published **'The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health'** which made a series of recommendations for the NHS and Government to improve outcomes in mental health by 2020/21.

The University of Birmingham's social policy report: **'Investing in a Resilient Generation'** makes clear the radical steps needed to achieve some of these aspirations.

The NHS Long Term Plan, published on 7 January 2019, provided a number of further commitments to improve mental health services, including plans to provide an additional 380,000 people per year with access to adult psychological therapies by 2023/24

Student mental wellbeing in higher education: good practice guide This important document was commissioned by Universities UK (UUK) from the Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education Working Group (UUK, 2015). It highlights that liaison and joint working between relevant university and NHS Services can be vital for student mental health and wellbeing. Good joint-working can enable safe transitions, ensure access to general medical and specialist mental health supports, avoid duplication, and facilitate the management of risk, and response to crises.



Not by degrees: Improving student mental health in the UK's universities The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (Thorley C., 2017). This emphasises that rates of mental ill-health have increased in young people, and especially in young women. A positive aspect is that it attempts to categorise the areas of concern. It identifies three problem groups:

- Those with a diagnosable clinical condition;
- Those who are mentally distressed but whose symptoms would not hit the threshold for a formal diagnosis;
- Those who score low on standard criteria of mental wellbeing (happiness, life satisfaction, feeling things done in life are worthwhile and low anxiety).

Minding our future: Starting a conversation about the support of student mental health (UUK, 2018) raises the difficulty that students experience in obtaining access to mental health services.



References

Burstow, P., Newbigging, K., Tew, J., and Costello, B., 2018. Investing in a Resilient Generation: Keys to a Mentally Prosperous Nation. Executive Summary and Call to Action. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

Duffy, A., Saunders, K. E., Malhi, G. S., Patten, S., Cipriani, A., McNevin, S. H., & Geddes, J. (2019). Mental health care for university students: a way forward?. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 6(11), 885-887.

²Kessler, R. C., Amminger, G. P., Aguilar-Gaxiola, S., Alonso, J., Lee, S., & Ustun, T. B. (2007). Age of onset of mental disorders: a review of recent literature. *Current opinion in psychiatry*, 20(4), 359.

NHS Long Term Plan UK DH Gov (2019)

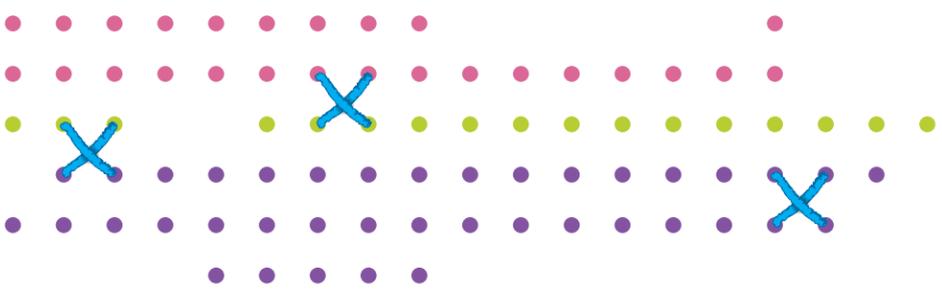
Office for Students. (2018). Office for Students Challenge Competition: Achieving a step change in mental health outcomes for all students. Bristol: Office for Students.

Royal College Psychiatry College Report CR231: Mental health of higher education students (2021)

¹ Starting The Conversation: UCAS Report on Student Mental Health (June 2021)

Case Study

Ariana, a 23-year-old student in the final year of her masters degree had been attending the Pause@UoB wellbeing garden project for a few weeks. As the project was drop-in, and open to all students, there was no prior need to register with the service formally. The group attendees registered their attendance through Evenbtbrite. One week, she became aware of more students becoming involved in the project, began to panic and feel overwhelmed and left. The next day, she came in to have a session to address this incident and gain some support.



Engagement:

Ariana seemed uncomfortable at first, displaying tense body language and hypervigilance, distracted by small movements. This was sensitively reflected to her by a practitioner, and she acknowledged that she generally was uncomfortable around others she didn't know. Ariana was then able to relax during the session becoming reflective and able to explore how and why this is so.

Process:

Ariana explored with the practitioner what may have been the trigger for her panic in the gardening group and was able to identify that she tended to become 'nervous around other girls'. She reflected that this may have been from having a negative experience of going to an all-girls school where she felt she didn't 'fit in'.

She explored being very critical about herself and how she 'used to think that she was smart' but since coming to university had noticed that she was no longer one of the smartest students which had affected her as she felt that this was the only quality that she had. Ariana was able to recognise her tendency to be critical about herself, saying that she didn't think that she was pretty or interesting, realising that her mother had been very critical towards her as a child which had impacted her self-esteem and self-worth.



Once Ariana had linked issues around social anxiety to her self-esteem and self-worth, the practitioner gently introduced some strategies and options for therapeutic support. Ariana shared that she had previously received CBT counselling but the therapist had suggested she try some compassion focussed therapy and had implemented this.

Summary and additional support:

- Fight/Flight/Freeze behavioural response was introduced as perhaps relevant to many past memories being triggered in certain situations and to increase awareness to gain more control and to feel safe in her body when interacting with others
- A range of breathing techniques to help coping with anxiety were discussed
- Concept of the 'inner critic' was discussed and she understood that her negative thoughts may have stemmed from her mum's critical voice. 'Imagining herself as a small child' visualisation technique was explained to enable her to engage with herself in dialogue with kindness and love whenever she heard the 'inner critic'

- Encouraged to write a letter to herself as a child acknowledging that she was not to blame for her mum's anger and that she is valued and loved
- Suggested further counselling could be beneficial with exploring issues linked to her relationships, setting clear boundaries and reflecting on her self-identity.



Pause Practitioner reflections

The gardening project proved a really effective way of encouraging like-minded students to come together, share ideas and passion for horticulture, but also, just as importantly, facilitated solo activity if students preferred. A practitioner oversaw the group with a volunteer so was always vigilant to the changing needs of attendees, and was able, in this instance to respond to the visible anxieties in the student. By enabling a more formal session in familiar surroundings, the student was able to talk freely and explore their concerns growing into an adult.

Drew Linforth

Assistant Director Student Services (Wellbeing & Partnerships)

Aston Webb Student Hub

University of Birmingham

Aston Webb Blvd

Birmingham

B15 2TT

Email: a.h.t.linforth@bham.ac.uk

Pause.



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

ForwardThinking
Birmingham 

NHS

Birmingham Women's and Children's
NHS Foundation Trust

The
Children's
Society