

Good Practice Case Studies

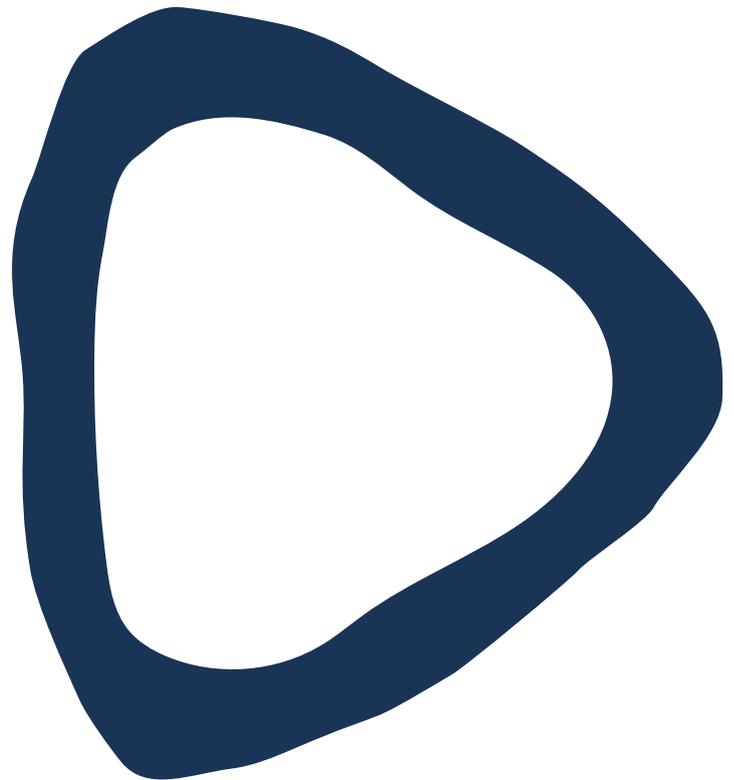
POST-16 MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Introduction

Across Wales, there is a range of projects and collaborations being delivered by post-16 education providers to support students' mental health and well-being.

From support for transitioning into further and higher education, to well-being focused initiatives and innovative counselling solutions developed through the pandemic and beyond - mental health provision for post-16 learners in Wales is being offered often through effective partnership working.

The following case studies highlight just some of the good practice examples of support for mental health and well-being in further and higher education in Wales. Additional funding made available by Welsh Government during the pandemic has gone towards establishing and enhancing these projects. Continuity of funding is vital in protecting and embedding this good practice.



1. Well-being support

Connect is a HEFCW-funded project between Swansea University and the University of Wales Trinity St David. The project aims to promote positive and healthy behaviours, improve well-being and reduce loneliness amongst students at the universities, through peer support and group activities. Connect offers a safe and confidential peer support service, enabling students to talk to other students.

Well-being Assessments - The pandemic changed the way Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion helps learners in need of support, with support being quickly moved to online or telephone provision. The variety of assistance on offer was also expanded, with online group work and referrals to self-help resources ensuring learners were contacted and supported in some capacity and were not held on a waiting list. A new approach to triage has helped reduce delays and minimise waiting lists. These changes are providing a far more effective method of working with learners than was in place before the pandemic.

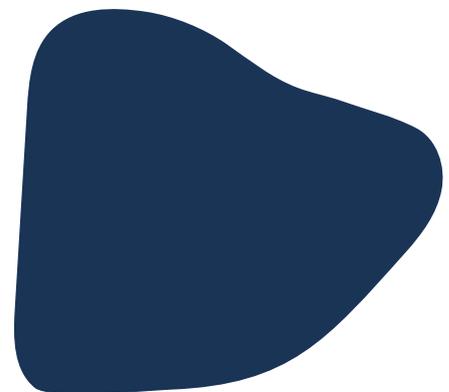
2. Transitions

University Ready is a collaboration between Wales' universities and partners, which has been curated by the Open University in Wales, to provide an online hub for prospective students going to university for the first time. It offers a range of resources from universities themselves to provide young people going to university with a better understanding of what they can expect, linking to mental health support resources and a range of other support services.

Supporting transitions - Coleg Cambria has developed a new transition process in partnership with Community Adult Mental Health Services, schools, and the Young Person Counselling Service (YPCS). A well-being early identification tool enables immediate signposting to well-being services and referral to support services. A weekly Mental Health and Risk Panel has also been established as part of the programme to provide a timely and effective approach to support learners with complex needs. The panel process includes a multi-agency weekly meeting that enables a holistic support approach.

3. Active well-being

Active Well-being at Bridgend College delivers opportunities for physical and active well-being to all students across the college. The intention is to support groups of students or individuals on a one-to-one level to promote healthy, balanced lifestyle choices to support their physical and mental health. The Active Well-being lead was put in place during the pandemic, but that work has continued. The role has had a positive impact on the well-being of students and would benefit from long-term funding.



4. Counselling

Social prescribing is a HEFCW-funded pilot project where students self-refer themselves into community support through a special website run by social prescribing firm, Elementals. Students can also be referred to services via chaplains, year heads, counsellors and housing, funding, and inclusion officers. The project aims to transform the way Wrexham Glyndŵr University works in partnership to promote and deliver well-being for students, based on best practice from other successful social prescribing projects.

5. Collaboration

Building Resilient Communities in Further Education project is a multi-strand collaborative project between the six south-east Wales colleges. Phase 1 of the project in 2020/21 trialled different interventions to improve learner and staff mental health, well-being, and resilience in partnership with external organisations including Valleys Steps and Platform 4YP. Project activity included the development of mental health resources for use by tutors and other staff to support learners directly, and the delivery of mindfulness and resilience workshops and courses to both learners and staff. The second phase now sees staff from all institutions undertaking Mental Health First Aider instructor training and a newly developed qualification in social prescribing, with e-learning modules being developed alongside this to disseminate basic knowledge to a wider range of staff.

Mental Health University Liaison Service is a partnership in south-east Wales between Cardiff University, Cardiff Metropolitan University, the University of South Wales, the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, working to improve student mental health. The HEFCW-funded scheme can be accessed via a referral from the University Student Services department, Adult Liaison Psychiatry, or a GP. The new NHS team is for students who require an NHS assessment for moderate mental health problems or more complex long-standing mental health issues, and will be based within student support services on university campuses to complement existing services.



Student Intervention is part of Cardiff University's tiered student support model. The only one of its kind in the UK at the time of writing, it is loosely based on Behavioural Intervention approaches common in North American higher education. It is a multi-disciplinary professional team with a two-fold role: firstly managing and de-escalating risky or in-crisis student presentations to the University; secondly working with colleagues across the University, especially staff in academic departments, to help them understand how to respond to someone in crisis in an appropriate way and refer those cases on.

The staff team is complemented by a redesigned Student Support Intervention Procedure which provides a tool for management and escalation of cases. It places a focus on supporting the student through the issue they are experiencing, whilst managing the impact of their situation on the people around them.

6. Online support

The mental health and well-being collection (Wales), provided by the Open University in Wales, is a hub of free, bilingual resources that aim to promote positive well-being and support good mental health. The collection, funded by HEFCW, provides resources on a range of well-being subjects for students studying at higher or further education level. Staff can also use the resources to improve their knowledge of positive health behaviours, building their capacity to support students and supporting continuing professional development.

Togetherall is an online community which supports learners' well-being and mental health at Merthyr College. There is a community section where learners can give and receive support, a section where users can complete courses to support their mental health and well-being, and a resources section with self-assessment tools, articles and journaling/goal setting tools. The site is monitored 24/7 by mental health professionals. So far, 60 students have signed up to the site and 42% of log-ins happen outside of college working hours

7. Student self-development

Self-development - Aberystwyth University offers its students the opportunity to enhance and develop their skills in managing mental health and well-being. Students have access to 24/7 online support platforms with chat, assessments and module options, links to NHS and other evidenced based online courses and information. The university also provides practitioner-led quick video guides and more comprehensive training sessions which students can book onto to improve their own knowledge to help themselves and others.

8. Using the outdoors

Walk and Talk at Bangor University are walking events held monthly by the Students' Union. The sessions provide students with the opportunity to meet other people and enjoy the beauty of the local area. The scheme connects people who may be feeling lonely as well as connecting them with the natural world. Bangor also exploits expertise already in the university with weekly drop-in mindfulness sessions online, suitable for beginners and those with little experience of mindfulness or other forms of meditation.