University Peer Support for Student Mental Health & Wellbeing

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Direction of Travel

- Overview of PhD research
- Systematic Review Findings
- Peer Support in Practice

1st Up

ESRC Funded PhD Research:

Peer Support Study

University Peer Support: Can non-professional interventions improve student mental health & wellbeing?

RATIONALE

There is currently no exhaustive research reviewing the peer support interventions evaluated in university settings.

Evaluation and engagement of the programmes that do exist are disparate making it difficult to understand how peer support affects student mental health or wellbeing, if at all.

University Peer Support PhD Project

1

Systematic Review

2

Thrive Pilot Study

3

Staff Perspectives Study

4

Barriers & Assumptions Study

'What current practice exists in university peer support for student mental health and wellbeing?

What do university students understand peer support to be and what factors influence if they access it?

Study 1
Systematic Review

How do university peer support programmes affect student mental health or wellbeing?

Aim & Objectives

The review **aim** was to screen relevant literature for peer support interventions evaluated in university settings worldwide to understand what current practice exists and what effect it has on student mental health and wellbeing.

The review had the **objectives**:

1. To categorise types of peer support and define ‘peers’ according to study characteristics.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of university peer support on improving student mental health and wellbeing according to the developed intervention categories.

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Systematic Review Methodology

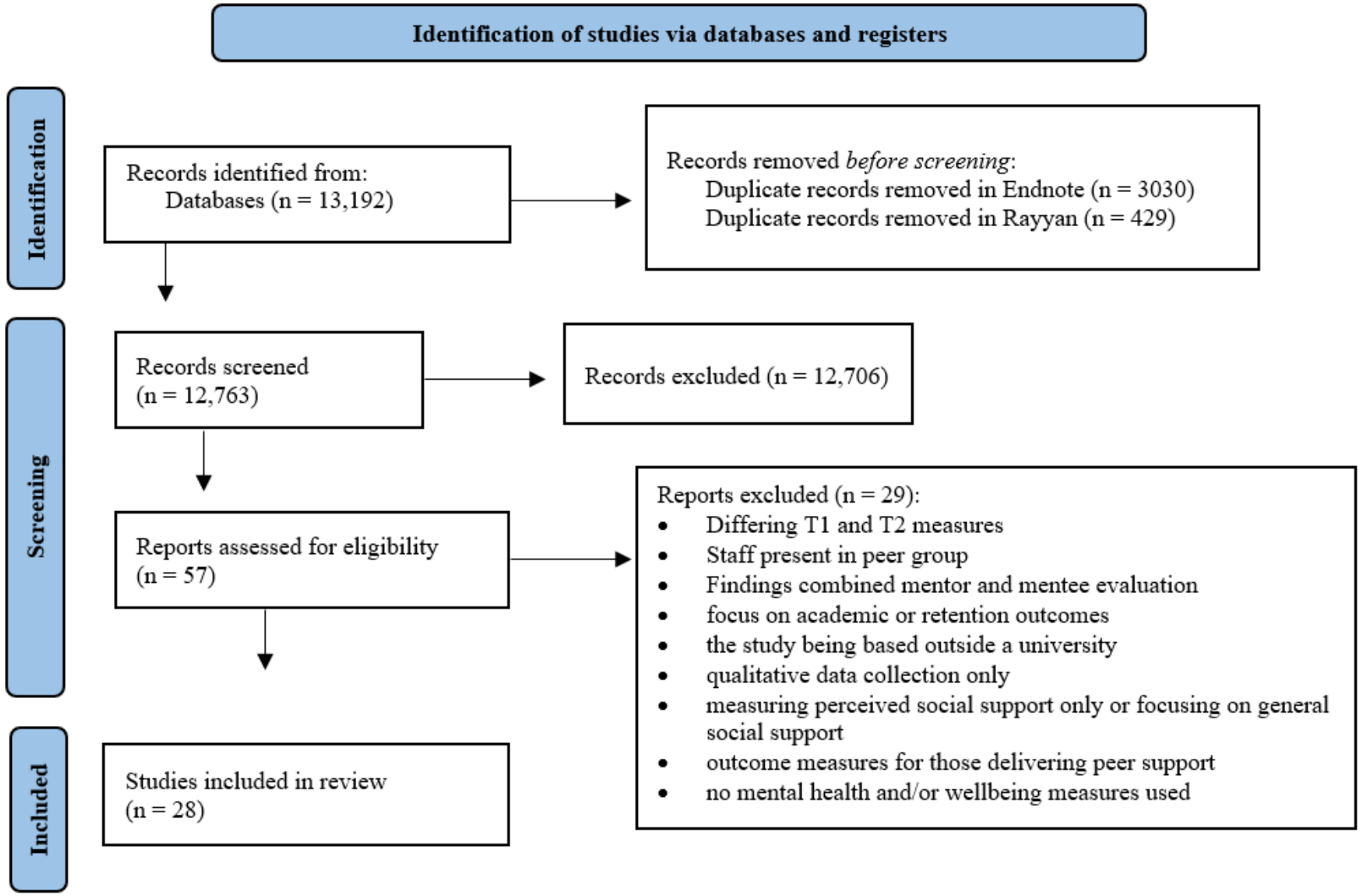

Figure 1: *Process of identifying eligible studies for inclusion*

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Results

28 papers were included representing 3 types of peer support:

1. **Peer-Led Support Group (n=14):** aims to gather groups of students together for mutual support.
2. **Peer Mentoring (n= 11):** relies on higher year/more experienced students to support lower year/less experienced students.
3. **Peer Learning (n= 3)**: convenes students based on academic objectives.

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Results | Types of Peer Support

Peer Learning	Peer-Led Support Group	Peer Mentoring
Co-operative Learning (17) Peer-Assisted Learning (1) Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) (6)	Peer-Led Social Support Group (18, 19)/Peer social support group (25) Peer-led group-based intervention (5)/Peer-Led Stress Management Intervention (8)/Peer Leader (Group)(15, 21)/Group peer support led by Peer Leader (PL) (16) Mutual Support Group (9)/Student-Led Support Group (14) Group Peer Support (22)/ Peer support: Peer run Self-Help Groups (3) Peer Education/Peer-Facilitated Stress Management Group (10) Peer Coaching – all trained to coach each other in group (26)	Peer Mentoring (4, 11, 12, 13, 20, 23, 24, 28) Specialised Peer Mentoring (27) Peer Dyad Mentoring (2) Peer Helper/Peer-helping programme (7) (one to one and homework)
3	14	11

Group/Dyad (2 peer learning, 1 peer mentor)	One-to-one (all peer mentors)	Mix (one to one/homework or 1-3)	All participating (co-operative learning, peer coaching, student-led support group, peer social support)
14 (one online)	**7**	**3**	**4**

Peer-Led Support Groups

The results for the most common outcomes of depression, anxiety and stress were mixed for this category.

- Four studies analysed if the intervention improved depression. One study had significant results (25% (95% CI 0.63% - 80.59%), p = 0.625) with a decline in depression symptoms.
- Three studies considered whether the intervention reduced anxiety. One study (33.3% (95% CI 0.84% - 90.57%), p = 1.00) favoured the intervention with reduced anxiety.
- Three studies analysed stress as an outcome. One study (33.3% (95% CI 0.84% - 90.57%) p = 1.00) had a significant decline in stress.

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Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring mostly improved stress:

- Two peer mentoring studies measured anxiety. One had a significant decrease in anxiety; the other found non-significant results.
- **Eight studies considered if the intervention reduced stress. Five studies (62.5% (95% CI 24.49% - 91.48%), p = 0.73) found significant results for stress.**

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Peer Learning

Peer learning was the smallest category with three studies. **All studies measured anxiety.** While one study had mixed results, the other two favoured the interventions significantly (66.67% (95% CI 9.43% - 99.16%), p = 1.00).

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Conclusions

- The heterogeneity of measures and outcomes makes it difficult to say that university peer support improves mental health and wellbeing.
- Because of poor reporting, retention, and lack of power analysis, most studies were rated ‘poor’ or ‘fair’ (n = 19) in the risk of bias; less were rated ‘good’ or ‘good/fair’ (n = 9).
- Although many hope that university peer support offers an accessible, setting-based solution to improving support for students, the findings of this review are mixed.
- **Universities can use these categories to have more constructive conversations about the possibility of peer support and investigate it further** collectively with larger cohorts, a shared language and agreed outcome measures.

2nd Up

Peer Support in Practice

Developing a student-led wellbeing service with students as partners

Students as Partners

- What is wellbeing?
- Our model of student support
- How we partner with students
- Key takeaways

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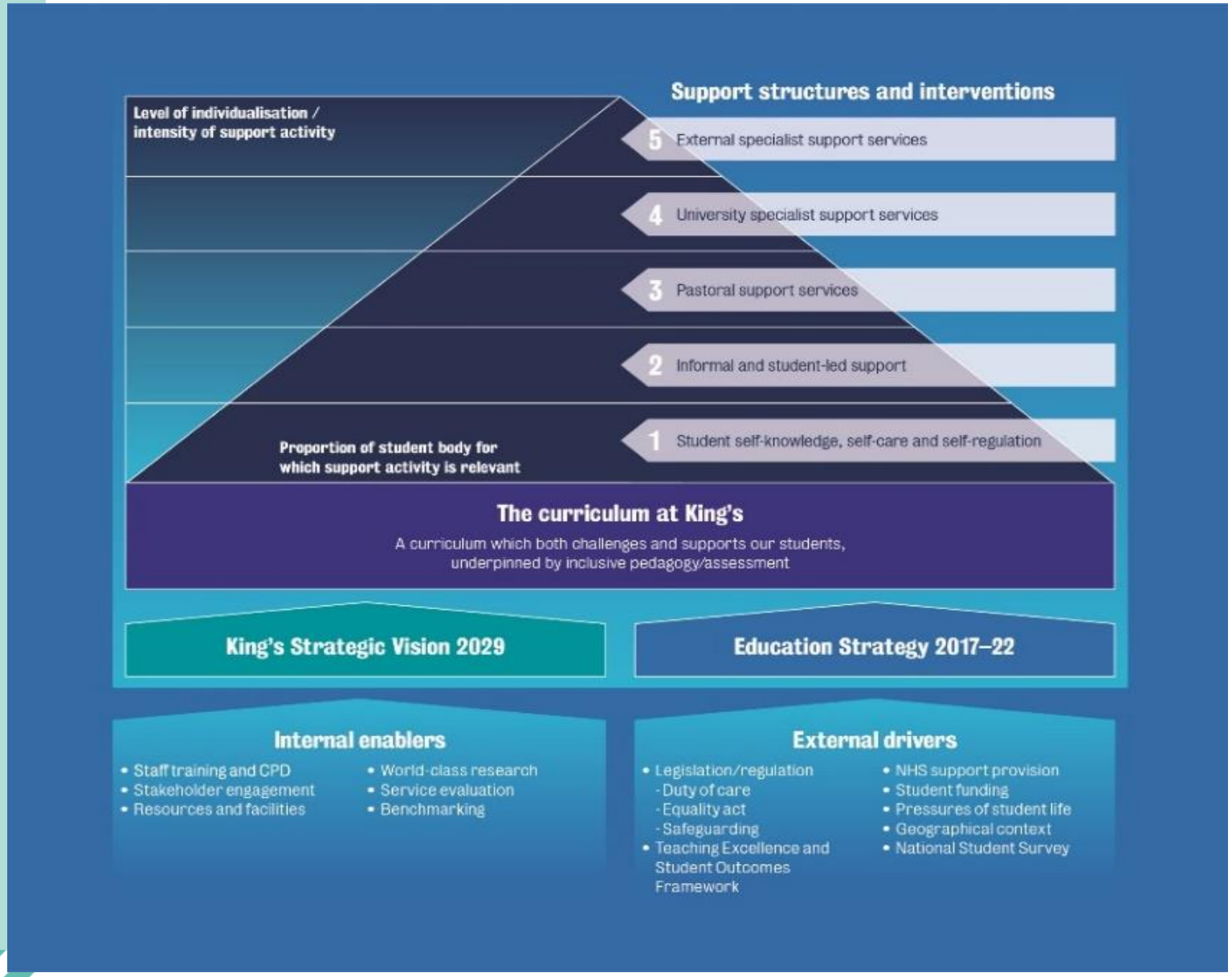
What is wellbeing?



Our model of support

- A more holistic, whole-university approach to support student mental health and wellbeing.
- Relevant levels of support are highlighted ahead.

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KCLSU WELLBEING AIM

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King's & KCLSU work together so
'Students are empowered to build a community of good wellbeing where they feel able to support themselves and others to thrive'

kclsu Our Students' Union

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- **wellbeing activities and resources** that students co-create so that good wellbeing is accessible for all students, no matter their background
- consistent, high quality **peer support** throughout the student journey

KCLSU Wellbeing supports Levels 1-3 of the King's Model of Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Support in the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Report & Strategic Plan.

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What is KCLSU Wellbeing?

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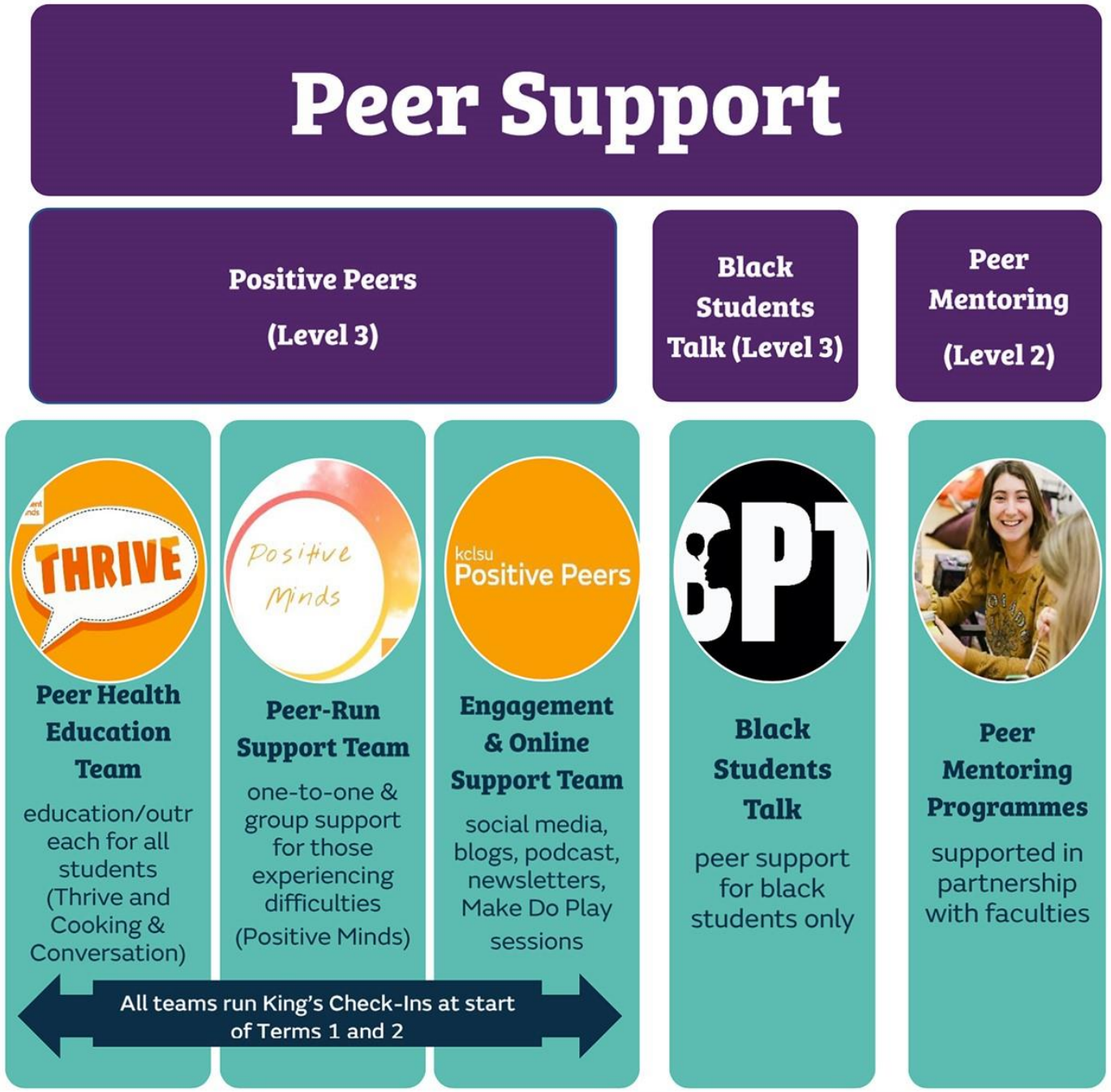

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KCLSU Wellbeing 2021/22 Snapshot

225 Wellbeing Initiatives

222 Wellbeing Leads

Wellbeing Hub achieved 44,000 page views

Over 4,000 students were supported

245 students completed 'Look After Your Mate'

89.5% of students said these initiatives improved their wellbeing

95% of students said they would attend another wellbeing event

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Peer Support in Practice: KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓Students should be recognised as contributing to creating communities of good wellbeing.
- ✓Equipping and empowering student leaders takes:
  - ✓Improved health literacy and knowledge (training)
  - ✓Ownership (structure)
- ✓Students want to be part of a whole-university approach
- ✓More research is needed into student-led wellbeing activities and peer support

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Questions?

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