TASO Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education

The Student Mental Health Evidence Hub

Tatjana Damjanovic
Research Officer, TASO

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TASO Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education

Who we are

TASO is an independent charity and part of the UK Government's What Works Movement.

A hub for HE professionals to access research, toolkits, evaluation techniques and more to help widen participation and improve equality within the sector.

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> I think that part of the challenge is actually establishing practices that nurture that rather than feeling like a burden on everyone.

Practitioner 23

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Overview of session

1. Background of the Student Mental Health Project
2. Overview of the Evidence Hub
3. Using the Evidence Hub
4. Future TASO projects

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Background

1 in 6 students now report mental health difficulties.

Significant gaps in evaluating mental health interventions.

Identify the gaps in the evidence on student mental health

Ensure the sector is equipped to evaluate interventions to provide better evidence overall

AMOSSHE The Student Services Organisation

King's College London

SMaRteN

student minds

what works wellbeing

Office for Students OfS

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Who is it for?

A range of HE professionals:

- Practitioners in student support services
- Policy makers
- Evaluators
- Researchers

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Main features

What are the key elements?

- An evidence-based toolkit
- Examples of current practice
- Evaluation guidance

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Additional features

About:

- Toolkit explainers
- Glossary of terms
- FAQ

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Additional features

- Student Mental Health Evidence Toolkit →
- Evaluation guidance →
- Examples of practice →
- Student perspectives →
- About the Hub →
- Further resources →

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Additional features

Further resources:

- Evidence review and methodology
- Gaps in the evidence
- Other external resources
- Qualitative research report

Student Mental Health Evidence Hub

A free online resource to strengthen the effectiveness of your student mental health support.

Student Mental Health Evidence Toolkit

An overview of existing research measuring the impact of student mental health interventions.

Access the toolkit →

Student Mental Health Evidence Toolkit

The toolkit summarises existing research measuring the impact of student mental health interventions. The evidence is presented by types of interventions.

- Use the filters to search by the Mental Health Charter domains, student life cycle and intervention approach.
- Click through for detail on the efficacy and evidence of interventions.
- Find out how we developed this toolkit on our **explainer page.**

Filter interventions

Mental Health Charter Domain: All Mental Health Charter Domains

Student life cycle: All levels

Intervention approach: All approaches

Search by keyword: e.g. Collaboration

Student mental health intervention	Impact on mental health	Impact on student outcomes	Strength of evidence
Active Psychoeducation Active psychoeducation refers to interventions in which a trained professional teaches students about mental health and wellbeing as well as helpful strategies that improve mental health. Enabling themes · Inclusivity and Intersectional Mental Health · Live · Proactive interventions and a mentally healthy environment · Social integration and belonging · Support · Support Services · Undergraduate · Targeted · Universal	-/+	NA	★★☆☆

Toolkit explainers

Learn how we have rated the evidence outlined in our toolkit pages.

Our toolkit summarises the existing evidence for different interventions designed to support student mental health. The advice is presented for different types of intervention (e.g. psychological interventions, recreation).

For each intervention, we provide a rating for:

- Strength of evidence
- Impact on mental health
- Impact on student outcomes (e.g. retention on course, degree outcomes)

Because the ratings are provided at the level of interventions, they are based on a range of different evidence sources, including published research and reports by practitioners.

The ratings do not relate to the individual evidence sources. For example, although the evidence strength rating for a particular intervention may be low, some of the individual evidence sources included as references provide very high-quality evidence. Similarly, a low impact rating overall does not mean that the same applies to individual evidence sources.

The ratings are intended to provide a snapshot of the average impact of different approaches and are accompanied by more detailed advice and references as part of the toolkit.

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- Evaluation guidance
- Examples of practice
- Student perspectives
- Student Mental Health Evidence Toolkit
- Project resources
- About the Hub
  - Toolkit explainers
  - Other Resources
  - Glossary of Terms

Filter interventions

Mental Health Charter Domain:

All Mental Health Charter Domains

- All Mental Health Charter Domains
- Enabling themes
- Learn
- Live
- Support
- Work

Student life cycle:

All levels

Intervention approach:

All approaches

Peer Support

Peer support and peer mentoring interventions bring students with shared experiences together to help each other emotionally or academically.

Enabling themes | Inclusivity and Intersectional Mental Health | Learn | Transition Into University | Live | Social integration and belonging | Undergraduate | Universal

NA

Psychological

Psychological interventions are a variety of talking therapies and mindfulness practices that help a student to explore difficult feelings, thoughts and behaviours, typically with a trained professional.

Enabling themes | Research, Innovation and Dissemination | Live | Proactive interventions and a mentally healthy environment | Support | External Partnerships and Pathways | Risk | Support Services | Undergraduate | Targeted | Universal

Impact on mental health	Impact on student outcomes	Strength of evidence
⊕ Small positive impact	NA More evidence needed	★★★★ Strong evidence

All Student Mental Health Evidence Toolkit

What is it? Psychological interventions are a variety of talking therapies and mindfulness practices that help a student to explore difficult feelings, thoughts and behaviours, typically with a trained professional.

Evidence? There is robust research on the impact of certain types of psychological interventions on student mental health outcomes, including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and mindfulness. However, more research is needed on other types of psychological interventions, and from a UK context, that measures both mental health and student outcomes.

What is this intervention?

Interventions under this category are typically therapies that provide a safe and confidential space for a person to explore their feelings, thoughts and behaviours with a trained professional. A psychological intervention can include talking therapies and counselling, of which there are many kinds such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) or psychotherapy. A psychological intervention may also take

Jump to:

- What is this intervention?
- How effective is it?
- How secure is the evidence?
- How do I evaluate this intervention?
- Where can I find more information and guidance?
- Where does the evidence come from?

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Examples of Practice

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Living Well, Social Prescribing Programme

Examples of Practice, The Student Mental Health Evidence Hub

The Student Mental Health Project is an Office for Students (OfS) funded project that aims to help higher education providers develop their student mental health interventions. The project has developed a Student Mental Health Evidence Hub, a free resource consisting of an evidence-based toolkit, evaluation guidance, examples of practice and the results of our sector engagement and student panel work. The project was led by The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) as part of a consortium with What Works Wellbeing, SMaRteN, Student Minds and AMOSSHE, the Student Services Organisation.

This document contains an example of practice to support student mental health in higher education. This is one of a number of examples which have been collated as a result of calls to the sector issued by TASO. Please note that the information contained in these examples is not endorsed by TASO, and TASO has not been involved at any stage of intervention development, delivery or evaluation. We are grateful to the participating higher education providers for sharing information to facilitate the development of these examples.

Contents

Brief overview of the intervention	2
Intervention approach	3
Resources required	3
Intervention evaluation	4
Recommendations	5
Next steps	5

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King's College London - Peer Support Development Programme

University of Portsmouth - Learning and Leading to Make a Difference

Ulster University - Student-led Peer Support Wellbeing Programme

University of Oxford - Groups and Workshops in Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM)

University of East Anglia - Increasing mental health and wellbeing awareness

University of Sheffield - ADHD Workshops and Support Groups

University of the West of England - Living Well, Social Prescribing Programme

University of Worcester - Flourish-HE

University of Plymouth - The Researcher Toolkit

Adapting practice to your context

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Guidance on adapting practice to your context

Adapting practice to your context

Here you can find guidance on adapting practice on student mental health support.

Introduction

Sharing practice is a vital part of developing effective support for mental health and wellbeing in higher education. Practical examples can illuminate new ways of working or increase understanding of specific challenges. However, there are risks in uncritically adopting practice from one context to another – universities and colleges vary significantly, with different populations, culture, environment, resource and mission. This can affect the outcome of a specific intervention. What works in one setting may not work in another. Indeed, what works in one context may do harm when delivered in different circumstances.

What evidence informed the development?

How was it evaluated?

Were there any unintended consequences?

Why do you want to adapt this to your institution?

Does your context differ?

How will you avoid harm?

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Evaluation guidance

1. Diagnose →
2. Plan →
3. Measure →
4. Reflect →

1. Diagnose

The first step when designing your evaluation should be to map the components of your intervention and describe how you will achieve the desired outcomes.

Developing a Theory of Change

The first step when designing your evaluation should be to map the components of your intervention and describe how you will achieve the desired outcomes. This is known as a Theory of Change – your theory for predicting how the intervention will bring about the desired change.

What is a Theory of Change?

For the purposes of this framework, a Theory of Change is defined as:

> "a visual representation of a programme's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and underlying causal mechanisms."

Core Theory of Change examples

Leeds Beckett University Core ToC

Enhanced Theory of Change examples

University of East London EToC

University of Sheffield Core EToC

University Mentoring Organisation (UMO) EToC diagram only

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Guidance on outcome measures in a non-clinical context

The measures address:

- Sleep
- Social support
- Self-esteem
- Wellbeing
- Loneliness
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Alcohol use

Scales

These scales are freely available. Below are the shortest versions.

PHQ-2

Over the last 2 weeks how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

	Not at all (1)	Several days (2)	More than half the days (3)	Nearly every day (4)
Little interest or pleasure in doing things (1)	O	O	O	O

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Feeling down, depressed or hopeless (2)	O	O	O	O

GAD-2

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

	Not at all (1)	Several days (2)	More than half the days (3)	Nearly every day (4)
Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge (1)	O	O	O	O
Not being able to stop or control worrying (2)	O	O	O	O

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Using the Evidence Hub

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Examples of practice

On this page you will find some examples of practice that showcase a variety of approaches to student mental health support in higher education. These examples have been collated as a result of calls to the sector issued by TASO.

In selecting the examples we are particularly interested in interventions that are innovative, and help to fill the gaps in evidence that exists. Our collection of examples of practice will be growing over the coming months so do come back to see more examples. Please see below how you can get involved.

Selecting the examples of practice

We have sought to find a range of examples of practice, addressing different interventions, target groups and being implemented by a range of higher education providers. Some of the interventions are very new, others have been running for a number of years; some of the interventions have robust evaluations, and others have just begun their journey to develop more robust evaluation. All the submissions of examples of practice were subject to an internal assessment by TASO.

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Guidance for evaluating initiatives to improve student mental health and wellbeing within a non-clinical context

October 2023

This guidance stems from the Student Mental Health Project.

The Student Mental Health Project is an Office for Students (OfS) funded project that aims to help higher education providers develop their student mental health interventions. The project has developed a Student Mental Health Evidence Hub, a free resource consisting of an evidence-based toolkit, evaluation guidance, examples of practice and the results of our sector engagement and student panel work.

The project was led by The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) as part of a consortium with What Works Wellbeing, SMaRteN, Student Minds and AMOSSHE, the Student Services Organisation.

The guidance has been developed by Dr Nicola Byrom, Dr Alyson Dodd, Dr Emma Broglia and Dr Dean McMillan.[1]

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How it fits together

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Future Projects

Three new projects on student mental health:

- RCT on interventions based on learning analytics
- QED project
- Small-n work

Get involved

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Thank you

tatjana.damjanovic@taso.org.uk

https://taso.org.uk/student-mental-health-hub/