



Catalyst Fund Programme

**Supporting mental health
and wellbeing for postgraduate
research students**

October 2020

Programme Evaluation Appendices

**Vitae in partnership with
Universities UK**



Contents

These appendices provide further background to the programme evaluation of the Catalyst Fund Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of postgraduate research students. They include the activities undertaken institutions (Appendix 1) and the resulting resources that are available to the sector (Appendix 2). Each project was also given the opportunity to provide a case study describing a specific aspect of their project, highlighting lessons learned (Appendix 3). The impact framework, evaluation indicators (Appendix 4) and a summary of how projects mapped themselves against the impact levels are presented (Appendix 5).

The main report can be accessed at <https://re.ukri.org/research/postgraduate-researchers/>

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Appendix 1. Activities by lead institution

Institution	Activity	Type of activity
Bournemouth University	Online surveys of PGRs	Surveys
	Focus groups with PGRs	Focus groups/interviews
	Focus groups with supervisors and research administrators	Focus groups/interviews
	Staff event on PGR Mental Health & Wellbeing	Mental health literacy
	PGR Induction package	Transitions/inductions
University of Bradford	Produced support materials for relevant stress points (Me@BU)	Other (support resources)
	Updated supervisor training	Supervisor training
	Collected data using Warwick Edinburgh wellbeing scale	Surveys
	Developed promotional material for PGRs to build awareness of PGR Connect www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXZKTa9LLVg&feature=youtu.be	Signposting
	Inducted new cohort of PGRs to the Connect model	Transitions/inductions
University of Derby	Open access psycho-educational website for PGRs, using a range of media. Insight of impact of site for PGRs who have used at project conclusion. The Wellbeing Thesis	Online resources/apps
	Academic papers based on survey of researchers' mental health – key issues that impact wellbeing	Survey Research report/literature review
Durham University	Supervisors and student workshops/focus groups	Focus groups/interviews
	Online training modules for supervisors and PGRs https://www.dur.ac.uk/counselling.service/catalystproject/	Training courses Supervisor training
	Presenting at induction conferences on mental health	Transitions/inductions
	Focus groups of PGRs and supervisors (to pilot online modules)	Focus groups/interviews
University of East Anglia (UEA) Project website	Reports from six placements, who have each designed, planned and implemented a pilot project that contributes to the development of research culture and community within a faculty. Silent space project	Other – culture and community
	Evaluated PGR resilience training (placement lead)	Training courses
	PGR Blog – Lakeside view www.uea.su/blogs/blog/lakesideview/	Other – blog
	Evaluated PGR lead peer support	Communities/peer networks

	Dissemination from National mental health summit	PGR mental health strategy
	Evaluated programme of wellbeing activities	Wellbeing activities
	Developed and evaluated supervisor training module	Supervisor training
	Piloted health impact assessment	PGR mental health strategy
University of Liverpool Project website	Two online mental health and wellbeing training modules	Training courses
	Wellbeing of PGRs survey	Surveys
	Wellbeing workshops (with PGRs, technicians and post-doctoral researchers)	Mental health literacy
	Feeding into the development of the university mental health strategy	PGR mental health strategy
	A sector-wide survey exploring the pastoral support technicians provide to PGRs Technicians: Providing frontline and vital support for mental health and wellbeing	Surveys Research report
	Peer wellbeing ambassadors providing peer to peer support provision to PGRs Peer Ambassador promotional video	Communities/peer networks
	Campus wellbeing map	Signposting
	Training peer supporters	Mental health literacy
	'Wellbeing Walk'	Wellbeing activities
	Updated induction to include information on mental health and wellbeing Videos for pre-application students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Student • International Student • Supervisor • Welcome to the institute 	Transitions/induction
	Three focus groups with supervisors, postdoctoral researchers and technicians	Survey
University of Manchester Project website	Data from online survey of prevalence of mental health and wellbeing issues among PGR population	Survey
	Results of interviews with supervisors	Survey
	Report from PGR survey identifying triggers and barriers	Report
	Wellbeing check tool	Other – personal wellbeing audit
	Reviewing existing apps for PGR use	Online resources/apps
	PGR-specific communication plan for accessing mental health NHS services (the Greater Manchester Universities Student Mental Health Service)	Signposting
	Gap analysis of wellbeing provision	Other – gap analysis

	Feasibility study of peer to peer mentoring system	Communities/peer networks
	Resilience training – Look After Your Mate	Training courses
	Decision trees for PGRs and supervisors www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/wellbeing-and-mental-health/wellbeing-and-mental-health-signposts-for-supervisors/view www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/wellbeing-and-mental-health/wellbeing-and-mental-health-for-doctoral-candidates/view	Signposting
	PGR Blog https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/pgrwellbeing/blog/	Other – blog
	Online resource for Professional Services Staff https://bit.ly/2Fyg0b2	Training course
	Transitions resource https://www.welcome.manchester.ac.uk/startin-g-pgr	Transitions/induction
	Dissemination report https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/pgrwellbeing/wp-content/uploads/sites/98/2020/07/OfS-PGR-Wellbeing-Project-Dissemination-Report-June-2020-compressed.pdf	Other (dissemination)
	Mindfulness training	Training course
Newcastle University	Research report on PGR EDI data	Research report/literature review
	Supervisor training	Supervisor training
	PhD community events #PGRCommUNITY	Communities/peer networks
	Toolkit of workshops and resources designed to provide positive impacts on PGR wellbeing	Mental health literacy
	Student interviews	Focus groups/interviews
	Inclusion of PGRs in new Employee Assistance Programme	Other (support)
	Mindfulness-based stress-reduction training	Training courses
University of Oxford	Focus groups with PGRs and staff	Focus groups/interviews
	Literature review on doctoral researcher mental health	Research report/literature review
	Research report	Research report/literature review
	Training material for PGRs	Training courses
	Peer supporters	Communities/peer networks
	Promotional material to raise awareness of PGR Peer Support Scheme	Signposting

University of Plymouth	PGR workshop leaders trained	Training courses
	Workshops using The Researcher Toolkit	Communities/peer networks
	Recruited PGR peer supporters (workshop leaders)	Communities/peer networks
	Focus groups and feedback collection	Focus groups/interviews
University of Portsmouth Project website	Survey data (pre- and post-intervention) evaluating success of various interventions	Surveys
	Supervisory training workshop, online modules and Mental Health First Aid training for staff	Supervisor training
	Co-produced interventions, e.g. peer support linked to RDF and action learning sets and PhD Support and Connections Group	Communities/peer networks Online resources/apps
	International conference on PGR mental health and wellbeing (with University of Sussex)	Other (conference)
	Development of university PGR wellbeing strategy	PGR mental health strategy
	Enhanced induction sessions	Transitions/inductions
	Enhanced Graduate School Development Programme	Mental health literacy
Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)	'Survive and Thrive' workshop programme for PGRs	Mental health literacy
	Trained eight QMUL staff involved in the training and support of PGRs in partnership with The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust	Training courses
	A weekly support group for PGRs, facilitated by a counsellor and a research developer	Other (support group)
	Series of PGR wellbeing events	Wellbeing activities
	PhD supervisor event	Supervisor training
University of Sussex Project website	Results of National survey and focus groups – Understanding the mental health of doctoral researchers	Survey
	Literature review on doctoral researcher mental health	Research report/literature review
	Supervisors and staff training materials developed and evaluated, face to face and online	Supervisor training
	PGR-led wellbeing activity scheme evaluated	Wellbeing activities
	Conferences for dissemination of project findings www.sussex.ac.uk/internal/doctoralschool/wellbeing/mentalhealth https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Aascds%3AUS%3A22097b29-f446-4c14-a205-76ec971d401c	Other (conference)
	Workshops for professional services staff on PGR mental health	Mental health literacy

	Redesign of PGR induction	Transitions/inductions
	Podcast on mental health during the doctorate https://www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-nixge-af80fb	Other – podcast
	Revised Researcher Development Programme	Mental health literacy
University College London Project website	ADAPT to Grow online courses – evaluation (using CBT)	Other – coaching
	ADAPT to thrive event series	Training courses
	Adapt Together Peer mentoring scheme evaluation and trained peer mentors	Communities/peer networks
University of Warwick Project website	Data on PGRs and wellbeing activities – what works for whom, supervisors’ expectations, etc. (research project)	Surveys
University of West of England Project website	Existing SAM app for anxiety developed further for PGRs	Online resources/apps
University of Westminster	Communications to PGRs and staff about wellbeing activities	Signposting
	Baseline survey	Surveys
	Supervisors’ forum on PGR mental health	Supervisor training
	Wellbeing activities – breathing and movement workshop	Wellbeing activities
	20 writing workshops and 4 writing retreats https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/wellbeing-and-mental-health/wellbeing-when-writing-facilitators-manual	Other (support writing related issues)

Appendix 2. Resources available to the sector

This is the latest list of resources available to the sector at the time of publication. The most current list can be accessed on the OfS website.

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/mental-health/resources-for-higher-education-providers/>

Institution	Resource
Bournemouth University	Information on signposting for supervisors Contact institution
University of Bradford	Awareness Case Study Video featuring Connect participants discussing the benefits of being part of a peer-support network on their mental wellbeing www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXZKta9LLVg&feature=youtu.be
University of Derby	The Wellbeing Thesis A national, online, multi-media resource for PGR students to support their wellbeing, learning and research https://thewellbeingthesis.org.uk/
Durham University	Package of four online training modules Fundamentals of mental health for postgraduate researchers and supervisors PGR mental health: Evidence and experience Mental Health First Aid in the context of PGR study and supervision PGR supervision in the context of mental health difficulties https://www.dur.ac.uk/counselling.service/catalystproject/
University of East Anglia Project website	PGR Blog – Lakeside View A platform to focus on the lives, experiences and concerns of PGRs www.uea.su/blogs/blog/lakesideview/ Reports on placements A series of PGR training workshops Wellbeing navigational guide for PGR supervisors Adapted wellness action plans for PGRs and supervisors Workshop wellbeing-supportive communication for supervisors Tool to assess potential impacts on MHWB of university policy/practices Public Statement on priorities around PGR wellbeing and mental health Scoping literature review Tool for assessing barriers and enablers to successful MHWB interventions Contact institution
University of Liverpool Project website	Technicians: Providing frontline and vital support for student mental health and wellbeing report Sector-wide report detailing the survey results and recommendations to individual technicians, institutions and membership bodies.

	<p>www.technicians.org.uk/technician-commitment/resources/technicians-student-well-being</p> <p>Training programme package Online e-learning supervisory module</p> <p>Campus wellbeing map A campus PDF wellbeing map that highlights all the facilities open to staff, PGR student and UG students on campus</p> <p>Contact institution</p> <p>YouTube Video Series</p> <p>Peer Ambassadors promotional video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tqe3ODFXNX4&t=22s</p> <p>Pre-application – home student https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4f-DLi8tQw</p> <p>Pre-application – international student https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWlpmqsp9lY</p> <p>Pre application – supervisor https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOuokonVdfg</p> <p>Pre-application – welcome to the institute https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JefbB9RuCmk</p>
University of Manchester Project website	<p>Website https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/pgrwellbeing/</p> <p>Apps</p> <p>Pin It or Bin It Designed to help users to move forward, by encouraging them to hold on to positive experiences and learn to let go of things that may be holding them back https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.ac.liverpool.pinitorbinit</p> <p>MUSE Headbands Guided meditation via the Muse app and brain-sensing headband https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.interaxon.muse&hl=en_GB</p> <p>Catch It Prompts the user to reflect on their feelings and experiences with a fresh perspective https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.ac.liv.catchit&hl=en_GB</p> <p>Podcast Series Six episodes linked to six ways of wellbeing https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/pgrwellbeing/podcasts/</p> <p>Blog https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/pgrwellbeing/blog/</p> <p>Mindfulness for PGRs Online resource to guide users through mindfulness, specifically aimed at PGRs. This will be available from September 2020.</p> <p>Transition Resource – online resource for new PGRs to work through before starting their programme. https://www.welcome.manchester.ac.uk/starting-pgr</p> <p>Online resource for Professional Services colleagues</p>

	<p>To raise awareness of the distinct nature of postgraduate research and how that may impact on wellbeing and mental health</p> <p>https://bit.ly/2Fyg0b2</p> <p>Decision trees for supervisors A flowchart to guide supervisors through different levels of support that PGRs may need, questions to ask and signposting to training and resources</p> <p>https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/wellbeing-and-mental-health/wellbeing-and-mental-health-signposts-for-supervisors/view</p> <p>Decision trees for PGRs A flowchart to guide PGRs through different levels of support, including signposting to training and resources</p> <p>https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/wellbeing-and-mental-health/wellbeing-and-mental-health-for-doctoral-candidates/view</p> <p>Dissemination Report https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/pgrwellbeing/wp-content/uploads/sites/98/2020/07/OfS-PGR-Wellbeing-Project-Dissemination-Report-June-2020-compressed.pdf</p>
Newcastle University	<p>#PGRCommUNITY Web Presence Social media feeds that continue to log and help orchestrate membership and events to this NUSU Society</p> <p>#PGRWellbeing4All Recommendations Report Qualitative summary of key findings and recommendations stemming from the Project to be shared with senior figures within Newcastle University. Pending publication.</p>
University of Oxford	<p>Report Contact institution</p>
University of Plymouth	<p>Training programme package Project framework, including the training package and the workshop package, for face to face and webinar delivery. Available to any other university. www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/research-degrees/toolkit</p> <p>Advertising Ideas of how to pitch/advertise the toolkit sessions effectively to PGRs via blurb and a video with testimonials from workshop leaders and previous attendees, turned workshop leaders www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/research-degrees/toolkit</p> <p>Academic Paper To be published Spring 2021</p>
University of Portsmouth Project website	<p>Website https://www.port.ac.uk/research/research-projects/postgraduate-wellbeing</p> <p>PGR Wellbeing Moodle Hub Online quiz and resources to support Action Learning Sets – based on Vitae RDF. Available on University of Portsmouth Moodle site.</p> <p>Resources for supervisor training</p> <p>PGR Wellbeing strategy</p> <p>Slides from supervisor/PGR training sessions</p> <p>Contact institution</p>

<p>Queen Mary University of London</p>	<p>Cohort Day and supervisor training sessions Developed by The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust. Resources include slides, detailed notes for trainers and handouts.</p> <p>Resource to be publicly available: date not confirmed.</p>
<p>University of Sussex</p> <p>Project website</p>	<p>Supervisor Training Materials This training helps supervisors to support their student by developing basic knowledge of mental health issues and how they impact on the PhD experience.</p> <p>Professional Services Staff training “De-mystifying the doctorate and understanding PGR mental health and wellbeing” aimed at providing guidance, sharing ideas, and starting an ongoing dialogue about PGR mental health and wellbeing for staff supporting PGRs.</p> <p>PGR workshop: Look Out for One Another in the PhD Community (Developed in collaboration with Student Minds from their training “Looking After Your Mate”) Final versions pending.</p> <p>Podcast on mental health during the doctorate (made by PGRs) www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-nixge-af80fb</p> <p>Implementation Guide for video call support groups for PGRs. www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=guidelines-for-monthly-video-call-final.pdf&site=46</p> <p>Researcher-Led Initiatives for PGR Mental Health and Wellbeing www.sussex.ac.uk/internal/doctoralschool/wellbeing/mentalhealth/researcherled</p> <p>Dissemination event Recordings from presentations available on the doctoral school website. www.sussex.ac.uk/internal/doctoralschool/wellbeing/mentalhealth</p> <p>Graphic illustration of event https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Aascds%3AUS%3A22097b29-f446-4c14-a205-76ec971d401c</p> <p>Supervisory Relationship Policy and Code of Practice for PGRs www.sussex.ac.uk/rsao/</p> <p>Berry C, Valeix, S, Niven, JE, Chapman, L, Roberts, PE & Hazell, CM 2020, 'Hanging in the balance: Conceptualising doctoral researcher mental health as a dynamic balance across key tensions characterising the PhD experience', International Journal of Educational Research, vol. 102, published 3 June 2020.</p>
<p>University College London</p> <p>Project website</p>	<p>ADAPT to Thrive website www.adapptothrive.co.uk/</p> <p>Video stories https://www.adapptothrive.co.uk/our-stories/</p>
<p>University of Warwick</p> <p>Project website</p>	<p>Website https://warwick.ac.uk/services/dc/support/wellbeing/potentialadvantage/moreinfo/</p> <p>Research Report - awaiting publication</p>

<p>University of West of England</p> <p>SAM overview</p>	<p>SAM Self Help App for Anxiety Management adapted for PGRs</p> <p>Will be available to other universities on a subscription model.</p> <p>The app will be available after launch on the app stores as a UWE app:</p> <p>https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=University+of+the+West+of+England</p> <p>https://apps.apple.com/us/developer/university-of-the-west-of-england/id548085225</p>
<p>University of Westminster</p>	<p>Resource pack for running writing retreats</p> <p>https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/wellbeing-and-mental-health/wellbeing-when-writing-facilitators-manual</p>

Appendix 3. Project case studies

These case studies have been supplied by the individual projects and are part of the evidence base we have drawn on in our evaluation. All projects were given the opportunity to provide case studies. They have not been properly edited.

Bournemouth University: Improving transitions and support for PGR students

Setting the Scene

This was a joint project between Bournemouth University (BU) and the Arts University Bournemouth (AUB). The institutions are very different – BU is a large post 1992 university whilst AUB is a small specialist arts institution. BU validates its own research degrees whilst AUB research degrees are validated by the University of the Arts London (UAL). BU is independently responsible for all student recruitment, induction and support, whilst UAL plays a part in this for AUB research degree students.

AUBs student population is predominantly UG (96%), Full-time (98%) and female (70%). 15% of students come from outside the UK.

BU has a larger postgraduate population (17% including both PGR and PGT), 20% of students are part-time and 56% are female. 13% come from outside the UK.

Both institutions have invested a lot of resource in student support however we wanted to understand if the needs of PGR students differed from that of the rest of the student population. We also wanted to understand if and how support needs to be changed throughout the duration of their postgraduate research studies and what issues specifically impacted on PGR students' mental health.

Activities

We surveyed PGR students at both institutions and had 98 respondents (6 AUB and 92 BU). This was then followed up with 6 focus groups – 3 for PGR students, 1 for Postgraduate Research Administrators, 2 for PGR supervisors. We also carried out 17 semi-structured interviews. This research was carried out by the academic lead for the project, with some additional support for focus groups and transcription.

We then took the key findings of our research to a working group of professional and support staff from across BU to agree additional support measures that could be put in place. It was clear that the main issue for PGR students was not a lack of available support but a lack of understanding of what support is available and how to access it. We therefore added in additional sessions to our Induction for New PGR students, created a new Re-Orientation session for PGR students at different stages in their research degrees and added additional training about student support into our PGR supervisor development sessions.

During the project period, the University created a new transitions tool for UG students (me@BU). We have identified that, with a little adaptation, this could also be useful for PGR students and so we are currently working on a PGR student version, to be launched over the next few months.

In addition, the University is launching a wellbeing referral pathway in the spring 2020 and this will be made available to PGR students.

BU has updated the pre-arrivals information for PGR students and created a PGR student roadmap.

We have also created a roles and responsibilities leaflet for PGR supervisors explaining their role in providing pastoral as well as academic support and providing information of where to signpost students

Key impacts and outcomes

The key outcome is the acknowledgement that while some of what a PGR student needs in the way of pastoral support is the same that any other student needs, there does have to be some bespoke support. This has prompted us to provide better information for PGR students and their supervisors. This knowledge may well be useful to other universities who may wish to consider how they promote their support services.

We have also identified that setting expectations about the pressure of PGR study pre-arrival is important, and for the PGR student to have a clear understanding of what their journey may look like so they can prepare appropriately. The update of our pre-arrival information should hopefully help with this as well as certain additional information – e.g. how to prepare for your *viva voce* examination – which we have created for key points of the PhD journey.

Supervisors often felt ill-equipped to support PGR students and so the provision of an awareness session about what support the University offers, as well as printed information on their role, should help them to feel more confident in supporting their PGR students. Again this is something that other HEIs may want to consider.

We do not keep detailed information of those who access our student support services as they are often informal chats and drop-ins. Therefore, it is not possible to know if use of these services has increased by PGR students and if so, if it was as a direct result of our interventions. However, we will continue to monitor student feedback and satisfaction through our normal channels.

University of Bradford: PGR Connect

Setting the Scene



The thematic foundation of the PGR Connect initiative is the belief that researchers benefit from strong peer support networks which create a 'space' for them to engage with and support each other. The 2018 Vitae Report on PGR Mental Health emphasised the importance of facilitating a sense of belonging when cultivating an environment of positive mental health.¹

PGR Connect was designed to respond to internal data collected through the Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey (PRES) in 2016 and 2017 that indicated that PGRs at the University of Bradford felt low levels of satisfaction with research culture (63% 2017) and the broader community and social experience (65% 2017). In this survey, around 18% reported low levels of personal outlook which could be classed

as wellbeing, including dissatisfaction with their work life balance during this academic year. The focus on mental health within this project was also cemented due to the numbers of PGR referrals to counselling which was 7.9% of the overall student population referrals in 2017.

In the project design process, the project objectives were aligned with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, which promotes peer integration and support through the PAL model, and placed an emphasis on developing an embedded preventative, sustainable approach to mental health and wellbeing. Pivotal to this approach, was ensuring a collaborative ethos with strong buy-in and support from key academic and professional staff across the organisation.

Activities



The initial design of the project included a one-day immersive wellbeing event to 'launch' the peer network model. This was timed to take place shortly after the induction period in October 2018 and target all newly enrolled PGRs. Researchers experienced the impact of generating positive emotions through wellbeing workshops and activities and were introduced to the peer support aspect of the project through the structure of the event which enabled them opportunities to develop group dynamics and to beginning sharing their experiences as part of a PGR community.

There was a structured approach to the launch of the peer support 'Connect groups', as they became known, and training had already taken place in the weeks prior to the event to prepare the second- and third-year researchers acting as group facilitators. During the launch event, an inaugural connect group meeting was held by each group facilitator and the PGRs shaped their own plans as to how and when future meetings would take place. A second intake of PGRs in February 2019 enabled the trialling of an alternative launch model in which wellbeing and peer support workshops were included as part of the general PGR induction programme. This had the benefit of increasing engagement; however, it simultaneously meant the loss of the unique opportunity that the one-day event had given for the social interaction and group dynamic to form beyond the initial induction period. To ensure the ongoing prioritisation of developing a supportive community for PGRs, the project

developed close links with the Student Union to support their social events (such as 'Pizza with Peers'). Likewise, partnerships were forged with Faculty leads to trial additional social networking events with the aim of increasing the number of social activities on campus for researchers and thereby to develop the researcher community through regular engagement.

Key impacts and outcomes



The peer support groups were successful with five established during the first 6 months of the project involving around 40 researchers across the Connect network. A major contributor to the success of the network was the peer led aspect. This was underpinned by robust quality training and support enabling the groups to then develop organically: *'With the group facilitation and coaching skills training I was able to provide a safe and comfortable environment for students to share their experiences without having to compromise their confidentiality'* (PGR Connect Facilitator, 2018).



The Connect networks enabled PGRs to forge relationships across the community and provide support to one another, describing them as: *'helping to reduce the isolation and feelings that everyone is coping but you'*. With clear benefits being *'realising and recognising the value of sharing experience to help normalise the ups and downs of the research experience'* (PGR Connect

Participant, 2018).

By running 'Wellbeing Workshops' as part of the induction programme the project attracted newly enrolled researchers who were able to engage with a strong preventative wellness message and access innovative techniques and strategies to support them nurture their mental wellbeing right from the beginning of their research journey. The feedback was consistently 100% positive for these interventions, and they generated a strong ethos of open dialogue on mental wellbeing for those who attended.

It is also possible to trace broader impact through the results of the PRES. While in 2016 the Research Culture score was 58% and the Professional Networks and Contacts 65%, by PRES 2019 the scores were 65% and 78% respectively. Similarly, institutional level data in relation to PGR withdrawal and suspension of studies evidences an improving trend over the last three years, with a decrease from 128 to 85 PGR withdrawals or suspensions from the 2016-17 to the 2018-19 academic year. While it is not possible to directly correlate these improvements solely with the PGR Connect project, it is reasonable to view the project and its focus on peer networks as part of a PGR community and the emphasis placed on maintaining mental wellness during studies as a contributing factor to this shifting outcome.

Conclusions

Overall several themes emerged from the project that are useful for consideration in all university contexts:

Ownership: Ensuring a balance of mental wellbeing ownership between the individual student and the institution. Students need to take responsibility for their wellbeing but the institution needs to provide the 'space' in which they can do this, culturally, academically and environmentally.

Engagement: The need to ensure that the wellbeing experience sits with the student and is not being done 'to them'. The currency of wellbeing is crucial and recognition that everyone's needs are different is key to engagement and success. Dialogue at faculty/school level is essential to promote engagement and involvement in the wellbeing experience for all.

Accessible: The need to provide an accessible range of activities is essential, it is important to take a broad approach, so interventions are meaningful and viewed as such rather than 'just another workshop'. Truly embracing the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' and integrating these principles across the community and institution will support this objective.²

Wellness: Mental wellbeing intervention needs to 'start upstream'. Preventative approaches are essential to promote a proactive mental wellness model rather than a reactive model that only works on mental illness. This requires institutional commitment to support students to create a 'wellbeing space' in the broadest sense and by prioritising wellness activities to prevent illness.

University of Derby: The Wellbeing Thesis

The resource

The Wellbeing Thesis is an online resource that supports PGR student wellbeing, learning and research. It was co-created between PGR students and staff at the University of Derby, King's College London (KCL) and Student Minds.

Co-creating and building the evidence to inform the resource

The initial direction of the project was informed by a broad literature review that identified a number of areas for exploration and helped to shape initial discussions within our co-creation panels.

We recruited two co-creation panels of PGR students, one at Derby and one at KCL. Given the diverse nature of these two universities and their student cohorts, we believed that they would provide a range of voices that would maximise the relevance of the final resource for the national PGR student population. Recruitment of the panels was facilitated by the relevant Research Offices and by emails to all PGR students at both universities. The final panels were weighted by demographics and subject disciplines to ensure a diversity of voices were included.

We held three panels at each university, each panel lasting up to three hours. The discussions were recorded and transcripts were produced and subsequently analysed after each meeting. The themes produced at each panel were summarised and brought back to subsequent panels to check that we had properly understood what students had said.

The panels built over time towards the creation of the resource

Panel 1 – focused on the experiences of PGR students in relation to their mental health and wellbeing

Panel 2 – began to explore how students had managed their wellbeing, what lessons we might learn from this and what the students believed may be useful to include in the final resource

Panel 3 – the project team used students' previous ideas and feedback to construct test interventions, which the students then evaluated and developed. At the end of panel 3 the students and project team agreed the general content and structure of the resource.

Building the resource

The project team worked with our psycho-education team to refine the ideas and address the issues raised by our student panelists. Through this process we built and wrote the sections of the resource. Alongside this, following the advice of panelists we filmed students, at various stages of PGR study, discussing their experiences of managing their mental health and of how they had overcome any challenges they had faced.

Using our literature review, we also identified and contacted international experts, in key areas, to ask them to contribute advice and guidance through videos for the website.

Design was undertaken by the Student Minds team, following the outlines identified by our students.

At each stage students were consulted for feedback and to contribute further ideas or help us resolve questions – such as what to call the site.

Initial tests

Having created a pilot site, we then asked our panelists to review it and provide feedback. Overall feedback was positive but suggested some further additions – such as the inclusion

of animations. The project team recruited University of Derby animation students to provide these.

Following a further update, the Student Minds Clinical Advisory Group reviewed the site to ensure it was a reliable, safe and potentially effective tool.

Launch

The site was formally launched on the 16th January 2020 at an event hosted at the University of Derby.

Evaluation

Formal evaluation is now underway, led by KCL, using pre-post measures to understand whether using the site can improve the wellbeing of PGR students. We will also continue to collect user feedback to further refine the site.

University of East Anglia: Mental Health Impact Assessment

Setting the Scene

Many policies, processes, regulations and projects are proposed each year at universities. The aim was to pilot a method for assessing – *before final decisions are made* – the potential impacts of these on mental health and wellbeing (MHWB) of PGRs and staff. The intention was the results of the analysis influence the development, design and implementation of policy. The pilot was developed in consultation with a small group of UEA academics and managers and was tested with UEA's PGR Executive from 1 November 2018 to 31 October 2019, covering five meetings.

Activities

Each paper presented at UEA's PGR Executive has a cover sheet with a section to assess impacts on 'Equality and Diversity', alongside sections on resource and risk implications. The cover sheet remained the same, but for the addition of a section on 'Mental Health and Wellbeing Impact'. Proposers considered how the proposal impacted the six management standards set out by the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE), including demands, control and support on staff and PGRs: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm>

Impacts and outcomes

The system has senior level approval (*Vitae Indicator 0.1*): the PGR Executive is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation. Use of the system is mandatory for members of the Executive, which includes Associate Deans for PGR, Academic Director of UEA Doctoral College and senior professional services staff (*Indicator 0.14 Involvement of other institutional staff*).

The PGR Executive (now named Doctoral College Executive) will continue to use and be influenced by this assessment system, and further work is continuing with specific Faculties (e.g. Arts & Humanities) to use the system for specific large projects such as module reviews. Further work with HR and senior staff at UEA will explore the potential for use in other executive committees, and informing further development of both staff and student wellbeing plans.

Interviews with paper writers, and feedback from the Arts & Humanities Faculty Executive and Courage Festival workshop, revealed that the system was generally liked, and staff and PGRs want it to continue. It made users think about what they wanted to achieve and who may be affected (*Indicators 1.1 and 2.2: Participants find this useful / have greater knowledge*).

The system has achieved a change in behaviour – both on individual policies and more generally in the sense that MHWB is a 'legitimate' topic to discuss, with a structured way to do it that is recognisable to existing policy processes (*Indicators 3.6 and 4.6 More open discussion; 4.7 Healthier Research Environment; 4.11 Better system infrastructure*).

The assessment had a useful role in agenda-setting. It helped review all potential ideas and examined what could be done as priorities. It particularly laid out actions systematically which may not otherwise be obvious. In one example on role descriptors and workload allocation for PGR academic work, the assessment prompted discussion about whether to make more specific person specifications, and where gaps may be in training and support from staff's Schools. It led to wider discussion too about the allocation of workload and who the gatekeepers are for this. The lead on this case study is available to lead workshops on the assessment system at different universities as required.

On a more critical note, an assessment is not a panacea; value judgement is still needed to decide priorities. And any assessment can be a site for political argument revealing things

that some would rather gloss over. It is important also to consider who monitors the adequacy of assessments, and what happens if they are not adequate.

Recommendations

- Assessment ought to be applied to how policies are working *in practice* as well as to the policy intention – i.e. the full life cycle of the initiatives
- The system could be useful for change management generally, for example structuring discussions with staff on main issues they face. This may complement work at senior policy level, which requires identifying key senior leaders and those likely to be sympathetic
- Emphasise how it can make decision-making more efficient, with wellbeing as important for good operation of an institution as well as for its own sake
- Consider going beyond individual universities, for example to Doctoral Training Partnership management boards. These venues may be receptive and freer to innovate than universities themselves

University of Liverpool: PGR Peer Wellbeing Ambassador support network

Setting the scene

University of Liverpool (UoL) is a city centre campus university and the project inclusive of the peer-support scheme has taken place in an institute within the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. This has then rolled out to other areas of all three Faculties with the support of centralised student support services and the Liverpool Doctoral College. The PGR population is 2525 identified 'on-campus' students, 85% of which are full-time, 15% part-time. 59% of the population identify as 'Home' students, 12% EU and 29% international.

Activities

The intervention was introduced to provide a peer support network to encourage PGR students to seek support from a PGR Peer Wellbeing Ambassador. The role was designed to offer signposting information to university support services and promote positive and healthy wellbeing. This was driven by the lack of PGRs seeking help and support for difficulties they faced during their PhD and to open up a new route for PGRs to access support. We know from previous research completed by the sector, our own wellbeing survey (41 students, 50% reporting they would talk to a peer if they were experiencing a mental health problem) and also anecdotal within our own institute that PGRs talk and seek support from each other on a regular basis. Our aim was to create a scheme that encompassed this good support mechanism and make it visible to those PGRs who may not have this peer network present in their immediate researcher environment.

Consultation took place at the project's first steering group meeting, discussing the detail with both staff and student representatives from across the university on how we would implement the ambassador scheme. It was concluded that the ambassadors would be provided with a £500 personal award that could be spent towards their studies. The project team then developed a programme that consisted of a recruitment strategy, a 2-day bespoke training programme inclusive of Mental Health First Aid training and detail on the day-to-day management of the scheme. The team sourced assistance with both training and ongoing support from university internal services and staff members.

Timeline of activity

July 2018: Consultation with the project steering group to provide governance of how the scheme should be implemented, from both staff and student representatives.

August 2018: PGR job description finalised after receiving approval from university HR services. Only one expression of interest, PGRs suggest job description appears overwhelming, revised recruitment strategy consists of posters and email sent with only key points and dates for drop-in sessions.

September 2018: Five PGRs take on a role: two-day training programme (2nd day of training was stream captured for flexibility). The students have ongoing support for their own wellbeing and an opportunity for debrief with the Project Manager, access to the Employee Assistance Programme and opportunity if required to have a group reflective practice session with a member of the student counselling team.

October 2018: Launch of ambassador scheme at institute PGR induction. Ambassadors promote the scheme at research groups and with posters.

January 2019: Ambassadors launch fortnightly wellbeing walk event.

February - July 2019: Ambassadors continue with wellbeing activities and promoting positive wellbeing. 25 direct approaches are made to the ambassadors discussing a range of issues from questions about how to gain access to a lab, to an ambassador referring a student to the university counselling service.

September 2019 4 schemes created for the academic year 2019–20 with a total of 19 ambassadors and 4 staff scheme leads.

Key impacts and outcomes

We continuously assess the impact of the intervention through:

- an optional ambassador feedback form for students, feedback forms after ambassador events, ambassadors are a support option included in both the PGR wellbeing survey and the IIB project impact survey.
- The scheme received high level of interest from other institutes and schools across the university early on. This led to the expansion of the scheme.
- The training programme provided received very good feedback from the ambassadors and we were praised for the level of detail of the training sessions.
- Finally, the pro-activeness and engagement from the students was excellent and was pivotal to the success of the pilot.

Challenges

The promotion and visibility of the scheme was a challenge and took at least 6 months to become well-known in the institute. The 3 new schemes are also finding it difficult to gain visibility amongst both staff and students. With the ambassador network set to continue to expand, we would work to create a clear communications plan for new-starting schemes to help eradicate this issue which should have been in place from the start of the scheme.

Conclusions

- The ambassador network, both the singular pilot and wider network, has received a positive response, both through individual support and promoting a positive approach to looking after your wellbeing in the researcher environment.
- The scheme offers an additional and distinct referral point for PGRs. Although PGRs are classed as a student they have very different regulatory, training and support requirements and this has been reflected in the approach of the ambassador scheme.
- The training and approach was specific to PGRs, led by PGRs, and supported by experts. This is key for sustainability. The scheme is being embedded into a more holistic and tailored University approach to PGR mental health and wellbeing.
- The distinct approach, structure and good practice developed could easily be transferred to other student cohorts such as carers, international groups and mature students who would benefit (for a number of reasons) from a different approach to support. These are groups that are often identified as outside the 'mainstream' UG student population.

'The peer wellbeing ambassador role...has broadened my own knowledge landscape on mental health and wellbeing issues which PGR students (and also non-PGR students) suffer with both short and long term. I feel quite privileged to have been given a high level of training throughout my position which has supported these insights. Although quite emotionally challenging, these training sessions have been beyond invaluable in equipping me with the knowledge and skills required to help signpost and provide initial support to someone in need...'

Peer Ambassador

University of Manchester: The PGR Consultative Forum

Setting the scene

The key theme of our case study is engagement. The overarching aim of the project was to improve the University's understanding of wellbeing and mental health issues within the

PGR community. The creation of a PGR consultative forum facilitated this by enabling the project to discuss and develop ideas, pilot new initiatives and test new resources, ultimately informing and strengthening the outcomes of our project.

The University has two main campuses, approximately a mile apart within the city centre of Manchester. The total number of PGRs at the university (2018–19) is 3,924: of these 2,124 are female and 1,800 are male; 3,472 are on full time courses while 452 are part time; 2,500 are home/EU students while 1,424 are international; and 3,857 study on site and 67 are distance learners.

The invitation to join the consultative forum was open to any PGR interested in contributing to the OfS and RE Catalyst funded PGR wellbeing project. The seven strands of work within the project collectively aimed to improve understanding, awareness and provision of support and resources in relation to PGR wellbeing and mental health. The aim of the forum was efficiently and effectively to co-ordinate PGR input into all aspects of the project, facilitating evaluation of existing resources and co-creation of new initiatives in order to ensure our provision of support is relevant and appropriate for our PGR community. The forum was successful in ensuring meaningful PGR involvement in the project.

The forum comprised 145 PGRs, of which 93 were female, 45 were male, and seven were of unspecified gender. All areas of the University were represented as 39% of members were from the Faculty of Biology Medicine and Health, 28% from the Faculty of Science and Engineering and 21% from the Faculty of Humanities.

Activities

Outlined below are some of the objectives of the project and a brief description of how these were achieved through contribution from the consultative forum:

- To gain a better understanding of the challenges to the mental health and wellbeing of our postgraduate researchers; this was addressed through an online survey was sent to all PGRs, which was trialled by members of the consultative forum before it went live. Members also promoted the survey and encouraged their peers to complete the survey.
- To enhance PGR engagement with the University's Six Ways to Wellbeing framework; consultative forum members attended a workshop to identify the barriers and solutions to PGRs engaging with the Six Ways framework. Participants suggested adopting the Wellbeing Champion role used with the University's undergraduate population as an effective way to communicate and promote the Six Ways to PGRs and therefore the role of PGR Wellbeing Champion was piloted. Three PGRs from the consultative forum (one/Faculty) took part in the pilot, which involved delivering events and activities based on the Six Ways. Overall, feedback from PGRs who took part was that the scheme did help to boost wellbeing and awareness of the Six Ways.
- To develop training with and for PGR reps; consultative forum members attended a training session on effective peer to peer support based on Student Minds' 'Look After Your Mate' framework, with a view to rolling this out to more PGRs.
- To improve the visibility of existing wellbeing resources and training; feedback from the consultative forum led to the development of dedicated zone within the University's web pages for PGR wellbeing resources. Forum members have also contributed to the development of content for a new resource on managing the transition into PGR life.
- To test and promote the use of wellbeing apps; a group of PGRs from the consultative forum trialled the usability of a series of wellbeing apps and made recommendations on which they thought would be the most helpful to other PGRs. Consultative forum members also commented on the appropriateness of language used to describe the apps in promotional materials.

The project coordinator was key in ensuring the consultative forum members maintained their engagement with the project. This was facilitated by the creation of a project twitter account and a quarterly newsletter was sent to all forum members.



Challenges

The idea of a PGR consultative forum is transferrable to other universities, particularly where engagement with, and feedback from, PGRs is crucial. Three challenges had to be addressed.

The first challenge relates to reward and recognition for forum members who had made contributions to the project. An 'Open Badge' on Badgr (an online badge accreditation site) was created, enabling the project team to award badges to those who had made contributions, which could be included by PGRs on their email signature and web profiles such as LinkedIn.

A second challenge was for the project team to ensure that the forum was not exclusive; by limiting contact to only those who were already members there was a risk of the project missing input from PGRs who would be interested but not aware of how to contribute. To overcome this, opportunities to join the forum were continually offered to all PGRs, for example, at all induction events throughout the year.

A third challenge was the low and disproportionate number of males PGRs expressing an interest in joining the forum. This was addressed by ensuring that PGRs in the Faculty of Science and Engineering (which is male-dominated) were encouraged to participate, for example a second launch event was held on the North Campus where many of the discipline areas within science and engineering are physically located.

Key impacts and outcomes

The main outcome of the creation of the consultative forum was input into the various aspects of the project from those who have lived experience of being a PGR. It also allowed for the generation of further ideas for ways in which the project could achieve its outcomes.

One unexpected outcome was the podcast series 'All Being Well'. Forum members provided ideas for podcast episodes and the format of podcast for best engaging PGRs, for example, short five minute episodes, and for there to be an entertaining element to the show but with an underlying message of the importance of wellbeing.

A second unexpected impact was that forum members highlighted that professional services colleagues were not always aware of the ways in which the PGR experience differs from taught students. An online resource was co-created with forum members to highlight the distinct nature of postgraduate research and to increase awareness amongst non-academic colleagues of how the PGR journey can impact on wellbeing and mental health. This is one

of the key messages to emerge from the project; whilst the University already has a broad range of resources and sources of support for wellbeing and mental health, the PGR experience is unique and what is helpful for taught students will not necessarily apply to PGRs. The need for tailored provision will be included amongst the project team's recommendations to the University's Senior Leadership Team.

Newcastle University: #PGRCommUNITY

Setting the Scene



Isolation, loneliness and a lack of social support are just some of the most common issues faced by Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs). Alongside academic pressures and maintaining a strong relationship with supervisors, PGRs can experience additional challenges owing to the particularities of also being an international student, BAME, LGBTQ+, part-time, a parent or person with a disability. Levecque, et. al. (2017) report that 32% of PGRs 'are at risk of having or developing a

common psychiatric disorder'¹.

Activities

To counter these stressors, a group of PGRs initiated #PGRCommUNITY in February 2019 with the support of all three Faculties and the #PGRWellbeing4All project. The goal is to create a peer to peer support group, particularly for PGRs of diverse backgrounds. The slogan 'connect, learn, enjoy' captures the community's ethos and numerous social events and convenient communications channels for exchange amongst PGRs help the group to achieve this. Helping PGRs to take a break and have fun outside of their work is central. Like any other new initiative, the launch of #PGRCommUNITY was challenging due to the busy schedules of PGRs and difficulty in recruiting members given the widespread perceptions among PGRs of Student Union Societies as catering primarily to undergraduates. After nine months of communicating the need for the group to other PGRs and academics, #PGRCommUNITY was formally ratified as a registered NUSU society in November 2019.

Key impacts and outcomes

#PGRCommUNITY caters to all PGRs enrolled at Newcastle University and is intended to have diverse appeal. As of January 2020, the society has 25 registered members and 125 unofficial members who regularly engage through its WhatsApp group, through Facebook (234 followers), Instagram (118) or Twitter (67). In less than a year, 10 events have been organised, hosting over 300 PGR and PGT students: two welcome parties, a fieldtrip to York, barbeque, two art workshops and a series of more regular activities including movie nights, coffee and tea mornings and a games night.



#PGRCommUNITY is directly connected to the Mental Health Wellbeing Office, Doctoral College, Careers Service and other NUSU Societies. Now embedded in NUSU for the longer-term as a student society, this #PGRWellbeing4All intervention has begun informing other student-facing activities of the University, including development of the Student Wellbeing Programme and Doctoral College; a 'one-stop online portal' for PGRs.

University of Oxford: PGR peer support

Setting the scene

The University of Oxford is a large collegiate university comprising 39 colleges and six permanent private halls originally established in the 12th Century. Our 24,500 students are split 50:50 between undergraduate and postgraduate with a significant proportion of international students (43%). The individual colleges (which are separate legal entities) provide immediate welfare (pastoral) provision, with specialist welfare services provided centrally by the university working in close collaboration with colleges. The Oxford PGR community is made up of over 5,900 researchers and is identified as a key priority group in the University Strategic Plan 2013-2018. PGRs, by nature of their studies, are engaged with their departments rather than their College, and therefore tend to access initial welfare support less than undergraduates.

Over past 5 years, demand for the university counselling service has increased by 47.4% amongst the university PGR community. We are aware that the wellbeing needs of PGRs are very different to other student groups, with key issues around the student's ability to work and integrate into the university. PGRs in STEM subjects are particularly vulnerable as they exhibit lower engagement with support services and welfare provision compared to their humanity and social science peers. PGRs report mental health concerns that include (among other themes and presentations):

- Stress
- Lack of motivation or overwork
- Isolation and loneliness
- Challenging relationships with supervisors
- Difficulty with balancing work with personal life
- Perfectionism.

Activities

The Peer Support Programme was developed in the 1990s and is nationally and internationally replicated. The aim of Peer Support is to provide collaborative support that is grounded in wellbeing and resilience. Many welfare reports have shown that students are more likely to seek support from a peer hence why peer support is a popular aspect of collegiate and university welfare provision as it removes the hierarchical nature of support networks. The programme is operated within 34 colleges and 2 departments.

Students are provided 24 hours of training in:

- Active listening
- Making referrals and signposting
- Confidentiality
- Crisis management
- Suicide prevention
- Utilising resources
- Making effective boundaries and using assertiveness
- Being curious about stereotypes
- The pitfalls of giving advice

Students subsequently attend compulsory fortnightly clinical supervision in term time, as a place to bring any issues or themes. 4 sessions are attended per term.

The aim was to see if the established Peer Support Programme focussed on undergraduates and delivered in Colleges could be amended for PGRs and delivered in academic departments.

Pilot 1: Working with Physics, Mathematics and Computer Science

- Up to 16 students are recruited and trained to become PGR Peer Supporters

Research

- Phase 1: A literature review of PGR mental health concerns and peer support literature
- Phase 2: Focus group lunches with STEM PGRs and departmental visits to gauge PGR training/ supervision content needs and priorities
- Phase 3: Analysis of research findings to identify changes to training/ supervision content and training/ supervision provision

Implementation

- Phase 4: Making changes to training/ supervision content and provision
- Phase 5: Advertise training and recruitment process
- Phase 6: Delivery of training
- Phase 7: Create register of newly trained Peer Supporters
- Phase 8: Peer Supporters attend supervision

Pilot 2: Work with a further 10 departments which are both STEM and non-STEM

- Up to 60 students are recruited and trained to become PGR Peer Supporters

Key impacts and outcomes

- In total 88 PGRs were trained over 7 training rounds (52 females and 36 males). There was a greater vocalisation around PGR welfare and wellbeing than a willingness to participate and become involved in the project, this caused issues with recruitment initially. We believe this reflects a discrepancy between individual transitory experiences and more macro societal issues/ concerns. We need greater clarity by what is meant by welfare and wellbeing for individuals, departments, institutions and societally.
- Targeting STEM subjects was very successful, which included 6 PGRs from The Department of Engineering (4 females and 2 males). 51 of 88 PGRs came from the Medical Sciences Division and MPLS Division.
- Incorporating and establishing this project in departments was challenging, as welfare has traditionally been present and embedded in colleges for a longer period of time. To enhance departmental buy-in, we created a guide for supervisors regarding the training content and demands, including total time commitments. This seemed to help those wanting to sign up to the training and increase permissions to train from their supervisors.
- A success was getting Divisional buy-in rather than that from Departments. The Division of Medical Sciences has agreed to train 6 Peer Supporters across the division and promote them centrally. We feel recruiting and training through divisions rather than individual departments is a more sustainable and successful model of rolling out the project.
- Targeting men in STEM subjects remains imperative, as they may be least likely to access support and are at times a vulnerable group around issues relating to welfare and wellbeing. More females were recruited across 3 divisions with the exception of the Social Sciences Division where there was a greater number of males participating in the project.
- This project has raised further questions around the Peer Support Training process and content. To help PGR access to the training, we feel the time of day, length of training and timing within term/ academic year are important issues to consider. The training in the summer was particularly popular with positive feedback and was also well attended. We are contemplating whether to reduce the amount of training and provide more choice with time-slots and training within terms and vacations.

University of Plymouth: The Researcher Toolkit

Setting the scene

The University of Plymouth (UoP) hosts a large and diverse Postgraduate Research Student (PGR) community. We have around 1100 PGRs across three faculties spanning Health, Science, and Arts and Humanities. Almost one third of our PGRs (27%) study part-time and almost half (46%) are international students. In 2016-17, only 27 PGRs used our wellbeing services. As the incidence of mental health problems among PGRs is thought to be much higher than this (Levecque et al., 2017), many went unsupported. This reflects a national issue: PGRs are reluctant to access support because they are concerned it may hamper their career prospects, or they believe that services are aimed at undergraduate students.

At UoP, we tackled this issue in a positive and proactive way. We wanted to give our PGRs a more positive and productive PhD experience, focused not just on avoiding mental health problems, but on flourishing and thriving. We developed 'The Researcher Toolkit': a series of five workshops designed for new PhD students. Workshops cover key PGR issues such as productivity, the supervisory relationship, and time management, but embedded within are skills to improve wellbeing such as self-reflection and self-care. They are delivered by trained and experienced PhD students in at least their second year of study. We aimed to:

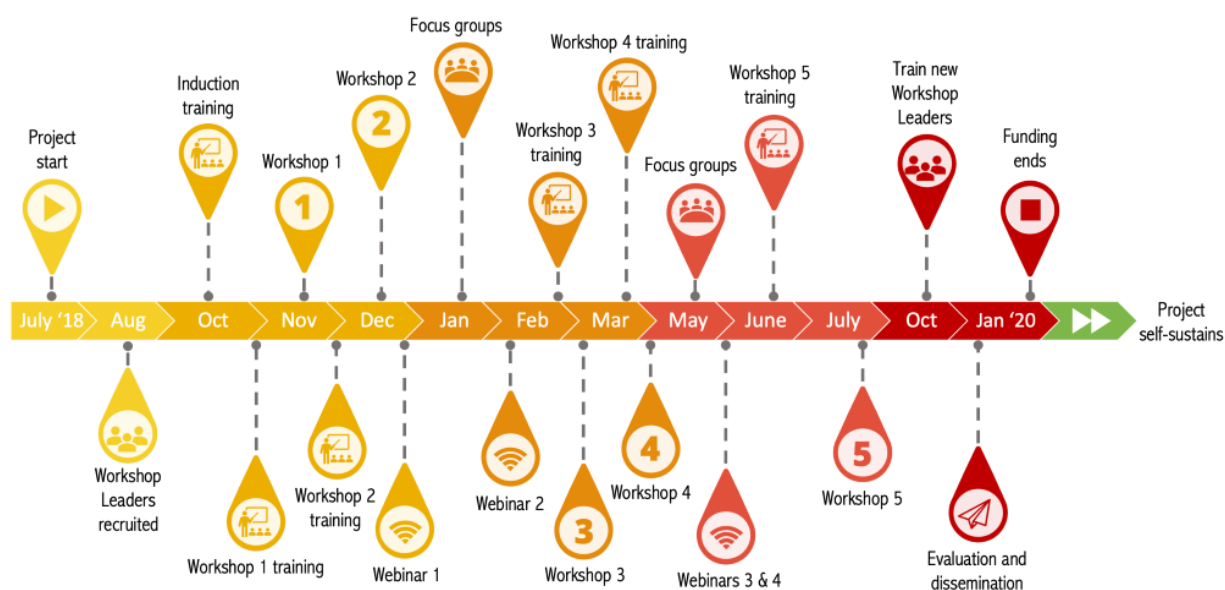
- Promote mental health literacy by increasing students' self-awareness, self-reflection, understanding of wellbeing
- Prevent escalation of mental-health issues by promoting good working practice, increasing students' resilience, and reducing negative thinking styles
- Reduce stigma by promoting a cultural change towards accepting wellbeing as part of researcher development and initiating dialogue around wellbeing right from the start of study
- Increase social support by facilitating the development of networks of support among new PGRs and more experienced peers

Activities

We recruited twenty PGRs to become Researcher Toolkit Workshop Leaders and trained them in mental health awareness, communication skills, and self-awareness. Workshops were developed by Dr Sophie Homer (Project Lead) and were piloted on Workshop Leaders and revised according to feedback from both Workshop Leaders and workshop attendees. Workshop and training session materials are available for other institutions to use at <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/research-degrees/toolkit>

Peer delivery was key: PGRs reported that the workshops would not have been as impactful had they been delivered by staff. Badging workshops as the 'Researcher Toolkit' removed any stigma around attending, and our workshops were better attended (they averaged 30 students per workshop) than previous sessions on 'Coping with stress' or 'Managing anxiety during study' (which averaged 2–3 students per workshop). The project is now sustaining itself: our original Workshop Leaders have trained a new cohort of PGR Workshop Leaders who have already begun delivering workshops.

A key challenge was to engage and represent a diverse study body. We did this by co-creating with a large and diverse group of Workshop Leaders, and by delivering the Toolkit as interactive webinars as well as classroom workshops. The way we communicated our aims to our Workshop Leaders proved to be particularly important as, initially, some struggled with the idea that the programme was a wellbeing intervention but was not marketed as such. This problem was solved when we clearly communicated that the Researcher Toolkit is what it claims to be – a series of Workshops on Researcher Development – and that improved wellbeing will result from the skills and knowledge gained during the sessions.



Key impacts and outcomes

All Workshop Leaders (100%) enjoyed their training (80% 'loved' it). The majority felt that their training had prepared them to deliver workshops (90%) and was extremely important (80%). Unexpectedly, Workshop Leaders emphasised that their roles, far from being a burden, were having a profound effect on their own wellbeing. Most of the PGRs who attended our workshops found them helpful (81%), and most would recommend the sessions to others (84%). An institution-wide PGR survey revealed that 87% of students who had attended at least one Researcher Toolkit session were aware of the university's wellbeing services, had used them, or planned to use them in the future. Qualitative feedback from Workshop Leaders and attendees was extremely positive.



University of Portsmouth: Supervisor training for early intervention and prevention of poor PGR mental health and wellbeing

Setting the scene

The University of Portsmouth is a modern post-1992 university situated on the south coast of England comprising five Faculties. The University is a single-site campus with some distance learning provision sitting across all five Faculties but mostly the University delivers on-campus taught courses from Foundation Degree level to Postgraduate Research Degree level.

832 PGRs had registered for study (total n female = 391; total n male = 441) across three registration periods in 2019 – February, June and October.

The intervention was entitled: '*Supervisor Training to enhance PGR mental health and wellbeing*'. The intervention was targeted at members of University of Portsmouth academic staff who have received training for and are currently involved in supervising postgraduate research students either as First, Second or Third Supervisor.

PGRs are at high risk of experiencing symptoms of psychological distress and developing a psychiatric disorder. University of Portsmouth PGR supervisors are integral to addressing mental health and wellbeing issues amongst this particular student cohort given the long-term, intensive and reliant nature of the PGR supervisory experience lasting typically between 3-6 years. The level of PGR pastoral support provided by supervisors may be patchy - although there is excellent practice in some places, this is by no means consistently delivered across the Faculties. One of the reasons underpinning the inconsistent quality of supervisors' pastoral support to PGRs may lie in reluctance by some supervisors to venture into conversations about PGRs mental health and wellbeing for fear of exacerbating symptoms or crossing boundaries into issues that require professional experience in dealing with mental health.

As a result of the challenge outlined above, this intervention aimed to raise awareness amongst supervisors of a range of ways in which they may impact upon and positively influence the mental health and wellbeing of their PGRs. Specifically, the supervisor training sessions aimed to help supervisors identify indicators of mental health problems; outline resources available to support staff and students; and provide guidance on when referral to specialist help and support is required. The sessions also briefed supervisors on new initiatives (including specialist online resources and action learning sets) being trialled as part of the University of Portsmouth PGR Mental Health and Wellbeing project and included wider discussion of PGR students' transition to doctoral study and mental health issues in academia.

The rationale behind these session aims rested on the perceived key role of supervisors in enhancing PGR mental health and wellbeing. Supervisors are the main point of contact for PGRs and may therefore be the first to identify/respond to mental health difficulties. Also, the supervisory relationship is a key factor in student mental health and wellbeing because supervisors are in a prime position to be able to suggest (and model) healthy and productive working practices for students that promote wellbeing. Nevertheless, this intervention cannot work in isolation from other initiatives that tackle poor mental health and wellbeing and therefore supervisors; supervisor training is just one element and an integrated, institutional approach is required.

Activities

Two pilot workshops were held on Monday 5th November 2018 and Tuesday 12th February 2019 at the University of Portsmouth's Graduate School. Topics included:

1. Introduction and context
2. PGR Mental Health and Wellbeing
3. The Role(s) of the Supervisors(s)
4. Identification of MH problems, guidance and referral
5. The Supervisory Relationship
6. Supervisory Pedagogies
7. Outline of the University of Portsmouth PGR Wellbeing Project

A co-creation workshop was held with 18 PGRs in December 2018 which engaged students in discussions about the nature, form and content of any future additional supervisor training. All PGRs were invited to attend to contribute to the design of a range of interventions for the project. A draft programme for the pilot was developed on the basis of the information gathered from students, a review of programmes offered at other institutions, and a review of the relevant academic literature on the role of the supervisor in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

The programme was piloted at two workshops offered as part of the existing Graduate School Programme for supervisors. Feedback was obtained from the 18 supervisors who attended through the standard workshop questionnaire and followed up by a more detailed project-specific survey.

The average session satisfaction rating was overall 4.76/5. Two key issues emerged from an analysis of the qualitative feedback. Several supervisors emphasised that they wanted more information on what to do, for example, the *'role of student wellbeing service for PGRs/supervisors...'*; *'practical sources of support for PGRs and for supervisors'* and *'how to address students showing signs of mental health and identity issues'*. Some examples of *'what to do in this situation'* were also requested. Several supervisors additionally emphasised their wish for case studies – *'perhaps real-life examples? And 'students' feedback/narratives'; 'maybe some case studies'; 'consider covering some case studies'*.

In response to this feedback, the project team sought volunteers from the PGR community to work on the development of case studies relating to mental health and wellbeing that could be used in supervisor training and to develop a video which would communicate the key messages that students wanted to give to supervisors about supporting their mental health and wellbeing.

Key impacts and outcomes

Supervisors were sent an online anonymous mixed methods survey in October-November 2019 which was aimed at assessing the impact of the intervention. The survey included eight questions (yes/no), followed by an open-text response box and was delivered using Qualtrics.

Five supervisors responded to the survey. Of those that completed the survey, four said that having participated in supervisor training; they were more likely to discuss wellbeing with their PGR supervisee(s); had more understanding of PGR mental health issues and sources of support and felt more able to signpost to the right service/source of support. Three said that there had been more open discussion of mental health within the PGR community. Two said that they had more confidence to intervene early if they were concerned about a PGR and that since October 2018 the PGR research environment was healthier. However, none of the supervisors thought that there had been a reduction in levels of supervisory issues previously experienced (if any).

The survey indicated there was an impact at individual supervisor level, as a result of the training. The training received positive feedback, as well as supervisors indicating changes in their behaviours and also generated reflections in their own practice. The training facilitated an improvement in mental health literacy for those motivated to take part in the survey (e.g., knowledge of support services for PGRs, confidence). There was also a desire for supervisors to receive further practical advice and supervisor support (e.g., case studies, guidance, sign-posting) to effectively support PGRs.

Although not necessarily surprising in and of themselves, we were intrigued about two significant themes which tended to emerge from the informal Q&A within the two pilot sessions. Firstly, the extent to which members of staff felt that they did not have information about sources of support or referral routes when concerned about students. Secondly, the extent to which supervisors were concerned about their own mental health and wellbeing.

Although the standalone workshops received very positive feedback, they can only reach a small percentage of the total University-wide supervisor population. Following the evaluation and discussion at the Graduate School Management Board, it was agreed that the key messages from these sessions needed to be embedded in the mandatory training programme for all new and experienced supervisors and in other relevant training sessions (e.g. supervising part time and professional doctorate students, supervising international students) offered as part of the University's annual rolling programme of supervisor training. One standalone session will continue to be included in the programme for supervisors with a particular interest in mental health and wellbeing and will be shared with Faculties for Faculty /departmental training sessions.

Supervisors are integral to any PGR mental health and wellbeing enhancement work. Given the potentially isolating nature of the PGR experience, the whole supervisory team more broadly, but especially the First Supervisor, is the main point of contact for PGs and are therefore key to early identification and response to mental health difficulties. Also, given the supervisory relationship is a key factor in student mental health and wellbeing supervisors are in a prime position to suggest and model healthy and productive working practices for students that promote wellbeing.

In addition, this intervention has highlighted the importance of engaging students in the co-creation of programmes and resources so that any additional support offered by Universities is relevant and meaningful to the cohorts of students intended to be reached via this project. The intervention has also brought to the fore the importance of hearing directly from PGRs (in person or through video) about what the actual issues are that they face and how they would like to be supported to resolve these.

These outcomes are likely to be transferable to other university contexts, although the nature and structure of supervisor training may require consideration according to each institutional setting. The project has generated a number of resources that can be shared (case studies, video, slides from the supervisor training) and adapted as required. This has already been done with Leeds Beckett University, as part of the project partnership.

Queen Mary University of London: PhD Support Group

Setting the scene

During the Catalyst Fund project at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) we introduced a Support Group for PhD students. The main aim of the group was to combat isolation amongst PGRs and provide a safe space for peer support regarding emotional and academic issues arising from the PhD experience. We expected to see an increase in the wellbeing of participants over the 8 weeks of participation and their confidence in completing their PhD within the expected timeframe.

Queen Mary has a population of approximately 1800 PGRs; 90% are full-time. Our PGR population is split between the faculties of Science & Engineering (46%), Humanities & Social Science (28%), and Medicine & Dentistry (26%). More than half come from abroad (20% EU, 37% Overseas) and the gender split among the PGR population is 49% female and 51% male.

Activities

The aim of the group to support PGRs both emotionally and academically led to a collaboration in facilitation between a Researcher Developer and a Counsellor from the Advice and Counselling Service. The facilitators were both at 0.8 FTE prior to Catalyst funding and resourcing for the group required an additional 0.1 FTE for each of the facilitators. The facilitators also received monthly mentoring from an experienced group therapist from the Advice and Counselling Service.

During the first year of the project we offered three 8-week groups of up to 12 participants each. Promotion was through an internal all-PGR mailing list, fliers and posters. PGRs across all disciplines and years of study who would perhaps benefit from peer support or sharing issues could apply for any of the scheduled groups. The application form asked for contact details, reasons for wanting to join the group, and to optionally disclose any previously diagnosed mental health condition.

All applicants were invited to attend a 15-minute appointment with the two facilitators. We shared information with the applicants about confidentiality, the format of the group – emphasising that it was not a therapy group – and gave them the opportunity to discuss what they were hoping to get out of the group, how they were doing in their PhD, and any mental health or emotional concerns.

By the end of the appointment, some applicants felt that the group was not a good fit for them and were signposted to more appropriate support services instead. Others were offered a place to join the group, but gave up their place before the start of the group, either because they interrupted their studies or because they thought they would benefit from individual therapy sessions. Out of 70 applicants, 48 participated in the group, with two thirds being female. Out of all participants, 58% came from Science & Engineering, 31% from Humanities & Social Sciences, and only 11% from Medicine & Dentistry.

Challenges

Following inconsistent attendance in the second group, we changed the way we spoke about the group in preliminary meetings with individual students and in our introduction during the first session, making it clearer that participants must commit to attending every session in order to create a close-knit group. Feedback from the second group showed that the large size of the group also had an impact on the ability to share and support each other. For the second year of the project we decreased the participant number from 12 to 10 and increased the number of groups to four.

After the first group we introduced a weekly check in at the beginning of each session so that everyone spoke at some point every week and participants could pick up on issues

mentioned during check-in. Pairing students up in the very first session to discuss themes and to 'warm them up' for group discussion was also useful.

We noticed participants sometimes focused solely on systemic issues rather than individual change. To tackle this, we introduced a question at the start of the group process: 'What would you like to change about your PhD experience? – focusing on things you can actually change yourself'.

Key impacts and outcomes

Participants completed a survey at the start and end of each group. The survey included questions from PRES 2017 on personal outlook and confidence in timely completion, and measured the wellbeing of participants on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS). The outcomes show that the main aim of decreasing isolation and improving wellbeing was well met using the provision of a weekly support group, even over a period of 8 weeks.

WEMWBS mean score across all groups started at 41.1, a score associated with higher risk of psychological distress and increased risk of depression. Following the intervention, the mean score increased to 48.1 (England population benchmark: 49.9 - Health Survey for England, 2016).

Participants also showed a significant increase in:

- a) confidence in completing their degree in the expected timescale (start: 64%, end: 90%; Sector PRES 2017: 82%);
- b) satisfaction with their life (start: 41%, end: 71%; Sector PRES 2017: 74%);
- c) satisfaction with work-life balance (start: 31%, end: 58%; Sector PRES 2017: 61%);
- d) feeling they have someone they can talk to about day-to-day problems (start: 49%, end: 87%; Sector PRES 2017: 69%).

Qualitative participant feedback showed that PGRs felt supported and less isolated through sharing and hearing from peers experiencing similar problems. Participants gave strong support for continuing this initiative and offering more than eight sessions to future groups. A further consequence of the group was that participants' awareness of what support services are available to PGRs increased, with wider engagement with Researcher Development activities.

Our evaluation results show that support groups are very effective in increasing PGR wellbeing and improving the overall PhD experience. Other universities could adopt the above format and expect similar results.

University of Sussex: Understanding the mental health of doctoral researchers

Setting the scene

In April 2018 the University of Sussex was awarded funding through the Research England/Office for Students Catalyst Fund: Supporting mental health and wellbeing for postgraduate researchers (PGRs). Currently, the university has ~18,500 students of which ~900 are PGRs forming a small but significant cohort within the university community. Of these students, 33% are international students and 16% part-time. Within our PGR community, 61% identify as White; 32% as BAME, whilst 15% consider themselves to have a known disability.

The project was a collaboration between the University's Doctoral School, academics from the Schools of Life Sciences and Psychology, the University's Counselling Service, and PGRs. The project sought to develop interventions that would be beneficial for PGRs that were based on a rigorous evidence base. To this end, the project incorporated evidence gathering through a systematic review of published literature [1], a national survey of PGRs and local PGR focus groups [2], alongside intervention development, delivery and evaluation.

A key part of any PGRs experience and university environment is their supervisor. Even before the project began, we had anecdotal evidence that the relationship between PGRs and their supervisors was a crucial part of the PGR mental health and wellbeing landscape. This was reinforced by evidence from our national survey and from the focus groups, which emphasised that supervisors can have both beneficial and detrimental effects: Supportive supervisors/positive supervisory relationships can scaffold PGR mental health and wellbeing whereas unsupportive supervisors/problematic supervisory relationships can undermine it. PGRs tended to view their supervisors as their primary contacts within the university and expressed that, were they to seek help for issues with their mental health and wellbeing, they would be most likely to talk to their supervisors. This view was expressed despite the presence of counselling services within the university. Consequently, optimising the supervisory relationship and improving supervisor attitudes around PGR mental health seemed a key route to improving PGR mental health and wellbeing.

The challenge, then, was to develop an intervention that would optimise the supervisory relationship and improve supervisor attitudes around PGR mental health and wellbeing. To this end, we decided to develop training for the supervisors of PGR students in mental health and wellbeing. Our primary aim, based upon our evidence (see above), was to provide basic psychoeducation to PGR supervisors so that they felt better able to engage with and support PGR students facing mental health difficulties.

Activities: Developing face to face and online supervisor training

Initially, we developed online training materials for the supervisors of PGR students in mental health and wellbeing in *Canvas* [3], followed by development of a *PowerPoint* [4] presentation for a three-hour face to face training session, which incorporated information from our research (see above) and included direct quotes from PGRs to illustrate specific points and reflect their lived experience. This was led by the U-DOC team with some early draft input from an experienced external consultant. The content closely matched our original intention, covering issues of PGR mental health and wellbeing as well as the supervisory relationship itself. We piloted the training with experienced PGR supervisors. Numerous aspects of the face to face training were altered in response to supervisor feedback. In particular, we gained a much greater appreciation for the difficulties and concerns supervisors had with regard to talking to students about their mental health and wellbeing. In subsequent iterations of the training, we reduced the content and focussed more on the core themes. We remain committed to a process of delivery, feedback and

revision to ensure our materials are both informed by PGR views and effective in training supervisors. This is especially important because the training has had considerable support from the university and has been made compulsory for all academic faculty that want to be eligible to supervise PGRs.

Key impacts and outcomes

We delivered the training (online or face to face) to a total of 51 PGR supervisors of mixed experience. We assessed both the training through pre-post evaluation questionnaires that some participants completed online in *Canvas*. Following training, participants felt that they had greater knowledge and skills, and better able to talk to PGRs about their mental health. Moreover, participants showed major improvements in their ability to signpost student support services and awareness of those services. However, after training participants were more likely to feel it was not their place to talk to PGRs about mental health. This may be partly explained by an increased awareness of student support services and the value counsellors provide but also a greater awareness of personal boundaries.

Several training attendees have requested that the training contains more information about how to talk with PGRs about mental health and some have requested time to practice scenarios within the training session. Other participants have requested more time to discuss issues that are raised within the sessions. The addition of these may necessitate multiple sessions to retain all content. It is also essential that the two forms of training – online and face to face – match as closely as possible and are updated with feedback at the same time.

Importance for PGR mental health and wellbeing:

The development and delivery of our supervisor training has provided some important general insights into interventions aimed at improving PGR mental health and wellbeing:

- a solid evidence base underpinning an intervention ensures that its aims and contents are appropriately targeted;
- the inclusion of lived experience (videos or direct quotations) provides authenticity that humanises statistics and more general statements;
- the production of interventions must be produced with those they are aimed at through co-creation, consultation and/or feedback to be effective; and
- systematic evaluation of interventions is essential to ensure both that they achieve the desired outcome and become aware of any unintended consequences.

This training also forms the basis for a similar training session we have developed for professional services staff. In many cases, these professional services staff have extensive contact with PGRs and would benefit from greater familiarity with PGR mental health and wellbeing. Indeed, we have already delivered a pilot of this workshop.

1. Hazell, C. M., Chapman, L., Valeix, S., Roberts, P., Niven, J.E., & Berry, C. (under review). A mixed methods systematic review with meta-analysis and meta-synthesis on the mental health of Doctoral Researchers (DRs). *Educational Research Review*.

2. Berry, C., Valeix, S., Niven, J.E., Chapman, L., Roberts, P., & Hazell, C. M. 2020. Hanging in the balance: Conceptualising doctoral researcher mental health as a dynamic balance across key tensions enacted in the self, task, supervisory relationship and wider system. *International Journal of Educational Research*, vol.102, 101575

3. *Canvas*. Instructure: Salt Lake City, UT, USA.

4. Powerpoint. Microsoft: Seattle, WA, USA.

University College London: ADAPT to Grow

In 2016 the UCL launched the ADAPT portfolio of personal and career schemes for postgraduate researchers (PGRs) that focuses on building resilience. The programme was originally developed by the UCL Academic Careers Office (ACO) to support the clinical academic community in the UCL School of Life and Medical. ADAPT has since been expanded to include non-clinical graduate students in related disciplines (life and physical sciences) and other partner institutions the NIHR Academy and the University of Nottingham under the OfS/RE award. The ADAPT programme has benefited from meaningful input from PGRs throughout its development and implementation. PGRs were engaged through one-on-one conversations, focus groups, surveys and in a structured fashion at conferences.

As part of the portfolio of schemes, ADAPT to Grow is an innovative online coaching course based on cognitive behavioural therapy, coaching and mentoring techniques. Following an application and selection process, individuals take part in four one-hour, one to one Skype sessions with a cognitive behavioural coach. The course is flexible as individuals can use their sessions however they like over a six month period. A skilled coach helps the individual students to address common concerns about navigating working relationships, recovering from setbacks and planning a career path.

Why should PGRs join the ADAPT to Grow scheme? ADAPT to Grow is not therapy. It's a programme of preventative mental wellbeing support that focuses on building resilience. The programme is based around cognitive behavioural therapy but you can think of it more as structured coaching to develop resilience - the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. We all encounter difficulties and setbacks as our careers progress, and building resilience will help participants reach their potential more quickly. This is especially helpful for PGRs who are in a transition stage of their careers.

How can PGRs join? Applicants have to complete a short form with their details and what they want to get out of the scheme. After the deadline the ACO is in touch directly with all applicants to confirm whether they got a place. A random selection of participants per category (e.g. clinical and non-clinical PGRs) is carried out to assure that all applicants have a chance to get a place in the scheme and that no bias is in place during the selection. The scheme is oversubscribed and unsuccessful applicants are encouraged to re-apply in future rounds and explore other recourses available at UCL. Selected participants are put in touch with a coach trained in proactive cognitive behavioural coaching.

How does the coaching work? Selected participants are allocated four one-hour Skype sessions with their coach. They have six months to complete their four sessions and they can space them out however they wish. There are two rounds per year; from January to June and from July to December. Participants can participate in a session anywhere that they have a computer and access to the internet. We also recommend that they find a private space for the sessions where they will not be disturbed.

How is a participant's privacy maintained? All of the discussions between participants and their coach are confidential and are not shared in any form with UCL. UCL conducts surveys and interviews to evaluate the impact of the programme and allow us to make improvements to the scheme. Only randomised information from participants is used for the evaluation.

How to schedule appointments? Participants are asked to arrange the dates of their appointments by email directly with their coach once they are put in touch via email. If they need to reschedule or cancel their appointment, they are asked to give the coach at least 48 hours' notice. All rescheduled sessions must be arranged before the end of the six months period. If something comes up unexpectedly and participants miss an appointment without giving proper notice, they still can get the sessions rescheduled but are asked to contact their coach promptly. A missed session for reasonable explanation is deducted from their total number of sessions.

Who does the coaching? We were originally working with a single coach but have expanded to a group of 6 coaches who have a lot of experience with cognitive behavioural therapy, coaching and other support for early career researchers and students. The groups meet every six months with the scheme management team to discuss the ongoing development of the scheme. The group of coaches is in touch with each other to discuss challenges and best practice during their coaching sessions.

How is the scheme evaluated? We are undertaking a research evaluation of the scheme. All participants in ADAPT to Grow were surveyed using standard, validated measures for self-efficacy, resilience and career satisfaction before, immediately after and six months after the intervention. We are also conducting interviews with selected participants to collect qualitative data. The research will be published in a peer-reviewed journal later in 2020. By focusing on publishing our findings in a peer-reviewed journal we will add significant depth to the existing body of evidence and raise the standard of mental wellbeing support for PGRs. The ACO will use the evidence from published papers and evaluations to highlight the potential impact of ADAPT to other institutions.

What do previous participants say about the scheme?

'This was invaluable. There were lots of aspects of my work in clinical practice and research I took as 'that is the way it is'. However this course taught me techniques to identify and improve things in practical ways. The coach was very good at tailoring the sessions to a jointly identified agenda and working through in a clear and non-clichéd way. The emphasis on principles and tools that one could use long term is particularly helpful.'

'Really excellent program. Such a great learning experience for me and I would highly recommend to others.'

'I have been taught principles of self-coaching, time management, self-ownership and stress management which I will aim to use on an everyday basis in my work as a clinician and researcher.'

'The sessions has equipped me with a useful framework to think through challenges and setbacks – which being an academic, there are many.'

What if further support is needed? If participants and their coaches decide that they would benefit from additional support other than the coaching that the ADAPT to Grow scheme provides, this is something that will be organised outside of the scheme. The coach can signpost participants to a range of NHS services that might be appropriate for them. The respective coach will only contact NHS services on participants' behalf if they feel their safety and wellbeing are in danger, which is not a situation we have encountered in the scheme.

ADAPT to Grow <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/school-life-medical-sciences/about-slms/office-vice-provost-health/academic-careers-office/career-schemes/adapt/adapt-grow>

Woolnough H. & Fielden S. (2014). The impact of a career development programme on female mental health nurses. *Gender in Management: An international Journal*, 29(2), 108-122.

University of West England: SAM Self Help App for Anxiety Management

Setting the scene

This project aims to address PGRs mental health related issues through the further development and adaptation of a mobile app to be used in tandem with face to face support. The app incorporates a range of self-help activities designed specifically for PGRs. It provides access to a 'Social Cloud' where PGR students can interact with one another in a virtual peer support network. In addition, the app provides functions to connect PGRs with trusted academic and wellbeing contacts for monitoring and to enable earlier intervention.

UWE's Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs). During 2017/18:

- UWE had 591 PGRs including 61 who completed, 34 who submitted their thesis and are in the examination process, and 9 who withdrew.
- This included 362 PT and 229 FT PGRs (436 FTEs based on 4/7 for PT)
- 373 PGRs were on PhD, 205 on Professional Doctorates, 8 on DPhil and 5 on MPhil.
- 58 % of PGRs identified as female and 41% as male.
- 36 % of female PGRs were FT and 44% of male PGRs were FT.

The main target audience is PGRs. However, the PGR-specific content is overlaid on general support for anxiety, depression, loneliness and coping.

We wanted to work in line with UWE's step-change strategy for mental health 'Mental Wealth First', a 'whole institution' approach whereby the community of staff and students take responsibility for building a healthy work and study environment (supported both digitally and physically). More specifically, the project sought to address challenges commonly encountered by PGRs including but not limited to stress, anxiety, isolation and imposter syndrome.

To provide blended support by adding digital self-help and peer support capabilities to the intuitional support already provided and to establish better links between online and offline provisions. We recognised that many of our PGR base are studying part-time and are geographically distributed. Also, that we could make more use of self-help and support from peers who were perhaps further ahead in their research journey and able to provide support and advice.

Activities

As part of the app development process we have conducted in depth interviews and online survey to identify PGRs issues and challenges and to assess their mental health and wellbeing status. The data collected fed into the design of the app and the development of the content.

The development of the new version of the SAM app was also informed by clinical evidence-based research and a user-centred design process whereby the PGR students tested and gave feedback on early iterations of the new app.

We have also involved stakeholders from UWE's support service in design consultation and solicited ideas relating to how online and offline support can be connected.

In terms of app functionality, we have:

- Provided an institution-specific registration process to access self-help modules specifically for PGRs and an institutionally specific social cloud discussion space;
- Enabled the internationalisation of the app's interface to better support international students and enable them to interact in their own language;
- Embedded monitoring in the app through the application of periodic survey instruments based on clinical best practice;

- Designed and developed an opt-in analytics portal for support services to help identification of PGRs at-risk and to facilitate one-to-one communication with users;
- Developed guidelines for usage and for the development of digitally-enabled peer/mentor/counsellor support structures.

The project team is an interdisciplinary one from the Department of Psychology and the Department of Computer Science and Creative Technologies who worked with MyOxygen, a Bristol-based application developer and codeWest, a digital student-led enterprise studio. We also worked in partnership with the Graduate School, the university's Wellbeing Service, the PGR student body, DocSoc, SU and selected PhD supervisors across the university. This wider steering group acknowledged the unaddressed problem of PGR mental health and was keen to support the initiative.

We collected qualitative and quantitative data to better understand the PGRs issues and also engaged with UWE's support services and representative academic supervisors. We then developed the self-help structure and components of the app using this evidence in consultation with therapeutic practitioners. During the app development we were able to review content and usability with PGR students and fed back their comments into further improvements.

App development is expensive and we needed to be very careful in prioritising features having started with a long wish list! We have attempted to create a very flexible product where we have the ability to tune and refresh content and add further useful associated data analyses and visualisations on an ongoing basis. These should help the user base and also the trusted support services working with them.

Key challenges going forward are (1) ensuring app sustainability and uptake, which will require ongoing fund raising and internal / external marketing effort and (2) assessing longer term impact of the app on PGR mental health.

Key Impacts and outcomes

During the project lifetime we have gathered qualitative feedback on the app from participating PGRs. We have also carried out a quantitative baseline study of the PGR population. As development has continued until the end of the project, we have not yet been in a position to conduct systematic evaluation of the app's impact, but we have created all the necessary mechanisms to enable this in future.

As above, it is largely too early to say what the impact is. Our baseline confirmed that there are significant mental health issues to address. Our work with PGRs confirmed their enthusiasm for our blended approach and the potential for them to act as advocates going forward.

Overall, the support from the different groups we have worked with has been unexpectedly high. Rather than being defensive, colleagues have appreciated the need for better support and been keen and enthusiastic in supporting us.

One technical challenge has been our aspiration for students to work on the app together with the external agency. This has been mostly productive but also sometimes led to delays due to certain parts not yet being ready. Certainly, improving communication and personal relationships has helped with this and could have been better developed at an earlier stage.

Our research has shown the clear relation that exists between milestones in the PGR journey and associated wellbeing issues. We have therefore looked to ensure that our support addresses the practical aspects and meeting academic requirements as much as how to deal with adverse reactions, in an attempt to proactively address potential causes.

We expect to be in a position to offer the app to other universities on a subscription basis and have been working on making it ready for this. We anticipate a phase of 'alpha testing' with development partners in the near future.

University of Westminster: Wellbeing When Writing

Setting the scene

An Intervention Programme for Tackling Mental Health and Wellbeing Issues Arising from the Doctoral Writing Process.

The university has around 450 doctoral students who join their programmes at two points in the year, January and September. Around a third of students are part-time, and around a third are international students. While our numbers of official distance-learning students are small, many students are 'off campus' in that they do not live in London. The intervention was targeted at all PGR students.

The overall aim of this project has been to support students in proactively tackling writing-related anxiety and stress and thus to improve confidence, resilience and a sense of wellbeing. The Graduate School had begun to identify an increase in applications for suspension and mitigating circumstances just before annual progress review deadlines (all of which involve the submission of substantial pieces of writing), and a high proportion of the applications suggested that the demands of writing were leading to stress and anxiety. The project was designed in response to this. The project aimed to equip students with focused reflexive learning and practical skills (adapted from the pedagogies of Creative Writing) to increase their positive experience of doctoral writing and to improve their strategies for coping with negative experiences.

Activities

The project aimed to do this through: 20 workshops tailored to cohorts from each year of study for all doctoral students in the university; three 'masterclasses' delivered by invited academic writers who successfully use the practices of creative writing in their writing processes; engaging supervisors through three events.

The project was led by the Director of the Graduate School with PM support from the Post Awards Funding Team. The workshops were led by three visiting lecturers, all with PhDs and all experienced teachers of creative writing. The retreats were led by two members of the academic staff with training in leading writing retreats. The original plan had been to draw on permanent staff in CW at the University to lead the workshops, but this wasn't possible because of other demands on their time. Recruiting the VLs was difficult for similar reasons and more planning on recruiting workshop facilitators would be built into any future use of the workshop model.

We ran a focus group early in the project to hear from students about their experiences of and attitude to writing, and to try out a number of activities with them. Feedback from the focus group was then used in the design of the workshops.

Over the 20 workshops, 71 students registered to attend and 32 attended. This was disappointing. Feedback from those who attended was, however, positive. 75% of the 20 respondents who attended one of the workshops said they would recommend it to other researchers. In response to the low take up of the workshops, it was decided not to run the masterclasses but to offer writing retreats instead. Four were run – two on campus and two 3-day residential retreats. The latter also included optional yoga session. The take up these was very good. The residential retreats were full (with waiting lists). 27 students attended the two on-campus retreats. 100% of the 15 respondents who attended one of the writing retreats would recommend it to other researchers (not all feedback from the retreats has been analysed yet).

Key impacts and outcomes

A baseline survey was conducted in October 2018, before the workshops began. Surveys were carried out after each workshop and each retreat. A final survey was conducted in

January 2020. Results for the latter are not available yet. An adaptation of the WEMWBS was used in the baseline survey, and results showed that overall the respondents' score was lower than that for the general population (47.5 against 51). The qualitative data from the feedback surveys done after the workshops and retreats gave some indications that respondents struggled to see the link between writing and wellbeing, or felt that more attention needed to be given to one or other of these two aspects of the project (from the quantitative feedback, 68.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that intervention activity was as they expected). The take up of the writing retreats suggested that a focus on providing time and space for writing is key in meeting students' needs, but a more detailed sense of this will be available once the results of the final survey have been analysed. However, the quantitative data showed positive experience of both the workshops and retreats: 91.4% of respondents (n=35) agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed the intervention activity; 82.4% of respondents (n=34) agreed or strongly agreed that they found the intervention activity useful; and 88.6% of respondents (n=35) agreed or strongly agreed that they learnt something new at the intervention activity.

The biggest obstacle faced during the project was the low attendance at the workshops. If we offered these kinds of workshops again, we would offer them to all students (rather than using a cohort-based model), and we would think carefully about how to name and describe the workshops. It is the case, however, that those who did attend were positive about the experience, and valuable materials have been created by those who led the workshops. These will be made available to other institutions in the spring.

Appendix 4. Evaluation indicators

Introduction

To assess the value and impact of the Catalyst Fund programme, a series of evaluation indicators were developed. These were used to assess the overall impact of the programme to inform the evaluation processes of the individual projects.

At the first workshop in July 2018, initial discussions were held collectively with the project leads on the expected outcomes from their projects and how they will evaluate their progress and achievement. Participants at the workshop were asked to consider the potential outcomes from their projects for PGRs, institutions and the wider HE sector. These discussions were used to inform the development of draft qualitative and quantitative indicators to evaluate the impact of the overall programme.

These draft indicators were developed within the structure of Stepchange¹, the UUK Framework for Mental Health and using the Vitae Impact and Evaluation Framework (IEF)² to define the impact levels. The IEF was developed with the sector to encourage more evaluation of researcher development programmes and activities and is also an effective approach for any people-based interventions or ‘services’. It is based on the well-established Kirkpatrick³ approach to evaluating training and development activities and takes a systematic approach to evaluation through considering inputs, throughputs, outputs and subsequent levels of outcomes/impact (Figure 1).

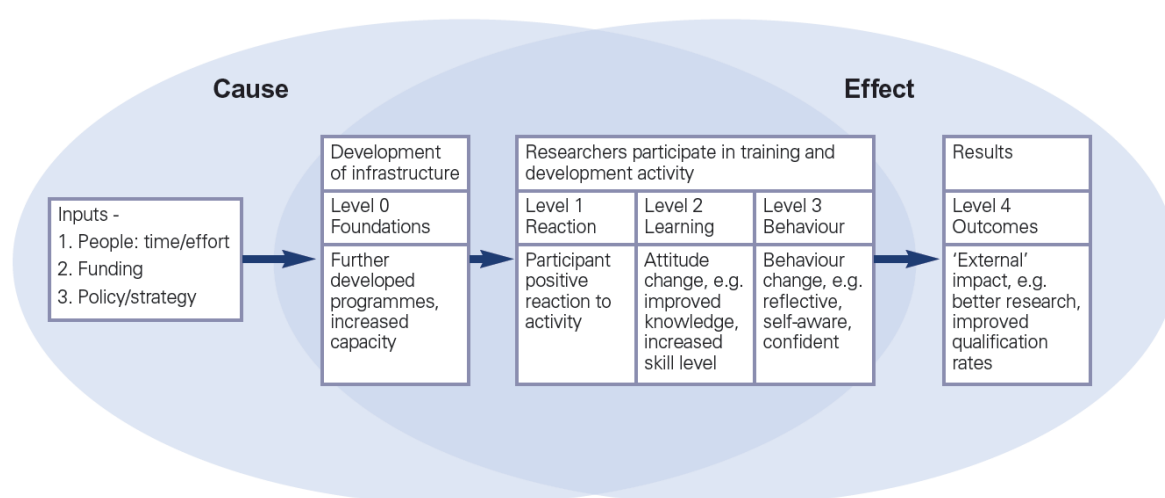


Figure 1: Schematic representation of illustrative benefits at different impact levels (Levels 0-4)
See text for explanation of levels.

¹ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Stepchange>

² <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/reports/ieg-report-2012.pdf>

³ Kirkpatrick, D. L., and Kirkpatrick, J. D., 'Evaluating Training Programmes', Third Edition, Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc (2006) ISBN-10: 1-57675-384-4; ISBN-13: 978-1-57675-384-4

Level 0: Foundations (development of infrastructure)

Level 0 refers to the development of infrastructure for PGR mental health and the use of resources and services. The Stepchange Mental Health Framework (Figure 2, now superseded) provided the framework for the Level 0 (foundations) 'infrastructure' being considered and developed through the HEI projects and the overall programme. As part of the process of mapping the projects this was adapted for the PGR environment.



Framework elements

- Leadership
- Data
- Staff
- Prevention
- Early intervention
- Support
- Transitions
- Partnership

Figure 2 UUK Framework for Mental Health: whole-university approach (superseded in March 2020)

At this level we also measured the participation and profile of postgraduate researchers, supervisors and institutional staff in the projects through surveys, focus groups, training courses and other activities. By their nature, Level 0 indicators tend to be summative.

Level 0 indicators (foundations)

Development of infrastructure

0.1 Senior commitment to PGR mental health
0.2 Strategy for PGR mental health
0.3 Data collection on and monitoring of PGR mental health
0.4 Increased resource or staff for PGR wellbeing and mental health
0.5 Increased mental health literacy training
0.6 Increased signposting for support services
0.7 Additional wellbeing and mental health resources, networks
0.8 Improved wellbeing activities
0.9 Support for PGR wellbeing and mental health built into supervisor responsibilities/workload models (and other staff)
0.10 Better linkages with NHS services

Participation measures

0.11 PGRs involved in the project by type of activity
0.12 Breakdown of PGR engagement
0.13 Supervisors involved in the project by type of activity
0.14 Involvement of other institutional staff
0.15 Wider engagement of PGR community both internally, and externally

Level 1: Reaction

This level indicates the reaction of participants to interventions, for example their views of the experience and how they feel. Indicators at this level are predominately subjective, but provide useful information on perceptions and attitudes.

Level 1 indicators (reaction)

1.1 PGR participants find specific interventions useful
1.2 PGR participants more likely to pay attention to their wellbeing and mental health
1.3 PGRs more likely to agree institution is supportive of their wellbeing and mental health
1.4 PGRs more likely to seek help if they have an issue with their mental health
1.5 Supervisors more likely to talk about wellbeing with their PGRs

Level 2: Learning

This level reflects the extent to which there is improved knowledge, increase in competency and/or change of attitude as a result of an intervention. To measure these changes ideally includes baseline measurement.

Level 2 indicators (learning)

2.1 PGRs more aware of how to improve their wellbeing and mental health
2.2 PGRs have greater knowledge of institutional provision/services/support structures
2.3 PGRs more confident about seeking help
2.4 Supervisors have more understanding of PGR wellbeing issues/institutional support services
2.5 Supervisors more confident in early intervention
2.6 Supervisors more able to signpost to the right service via the appropriate channels

Level 3: Behaviour

This level reflects whether any changes in behaviour have occurred as a result of an intervention. Benchmark measures are very helpful in measuring changes in behaviour. If these changes can be associated with the learning from an intervention, then the link to causality is stronger.

Level 3 indicators (behaviour)

3.1 Increased PGR attention to wellbeing and mental health/healthier behaviours
3.2 Increased PGR participation in wellbeing activities
3.3 Increased engagement in PGR networks
3.4 Increased PGR disclosure of mental health issues
3.5 Increased PGR use of support services/seeking help
3.6 More open discussion and less stigma attached to mental health

Level 4: Outcomes

This level measures the final results of any interventions, i.e. have the changes in behaviour resulted in different or improved outcomes? These can be measured for individuals, organisations or 'society'. At this level it is difficult to prove causality and many of these outcomes may not be visible or measureable within the timescale of the Catalyst Fund programme. However, it may be possible to identify some initial evidence of potential outcomes. Project leads were encouraged to consider the relevance of these indicators within their own projects and to set up evaluation processes that extend beyond the period of funding to measure these outcomes.

Level 4 indicators (outcomes)

For research degree programmes

4.1 Improved PGR wellbeing and mental health
4.2 Reduction in PGR suspensions due to mental health issues
4.3 Increased retention/completion rates
4.4 Reduced levels of supervisory issues

For institutions

4.5 Increased institutional reputation for PGR wellbeing
4.6 More open discussion of mental health
4.7 Healthier research environment
4.8 Better relations with NHS services

For the sector

4.9 High-quality PGR-specific wellbeing resources available and used by the sector
4.10 Active community of practice in PGR mental health
4.11 Better system infrastructure

Following agreement with the Advisory Group, Research England and the OfS, we shared the evaluation indicators with the projects. In our individual discussions with the project leads, we explored further how the individual projects would measure their success and used this information in the evaluation of the overall programme. As part of the identification of good practice within the Catalyst Fund programme, we encouraged projects to share examples of evaluation methods that worked well.

Appendix 5. Data on engagement and impact

As part of the evaluation process, projects supplied data on the numbers of postgraduate researchers, supervisors and other staff who were involved across the programme overall and the types of activity they engaged with. They also reported on the quantitative and qualitative evidence they had gathered on the impact of these interactions mapped against the programme evaluation indicators.

Postgraduate researcher engagement

In total, the projects reported almost 11,500 engagements of PGRs across the 17 projects. It is important to note that the nature of these engagements differed greatly, with some being through direct activity while others were more around awareness raising and community. Almost half of these total engagements (5554) were through communications campaigns / direct mailing by the projects at institutional or departmental level, although there is no information on how many actively engaged with these campaigns, i.e. whether they opened emails or clicked through to any links. There were 4085 responses to the various surveys that were undertaken by nine of the projects. This includes the approximately 2300 PGRs from across the UK who responded to the UK-wide survey conducted by the University of Sussex. There was good evidence of direct involvement of PGRs, with 11 projects reporting 171 involved in co-creation activities. Table 1 provides a summary of the engagements by activity within the PGR population.

Table 1 Postgraduate researcher engagements

Activity	Postgraduate researchers
Co-creation	171
Advisory groups	33
Networks	113
Focus groups	343
One-to-one interviews	113
Workshops	757
Induction	394
Mentoring activities	52
Video interviews	16
Survey responses	4085
Other activity (e.g. communication campaigns)	5554
Total (instances of engagement)	11,492

Supervisor engagement

The engagement of supervisors across the projects overall was high, with more than 5200 supervisor engagements recorded (Table 2). This was primarily through receiving information about their institutional project or signposting institutional mental health and wellbeing support, or through participation in the supervisor training or workshops that were delivered by nine of the projects. Eighty-six supervisors were actively involved in the implementation of projects or sat on advisory groups. As noted previously, these numbers may include some double-counting, for example, a supervisor could have attended a training course and participated in a focus group.

Table 2 Supervisor engagement

Activity	Supervisors
Project team	36

Advisory groups	50
Focus groups	91
Supervisor training	414
Workshops	129
Project communications	4171
Other activity	528
Total supervisors (instances of engagement)	5209

Professional support staff engagement

A wide range of professional staff were involved in the projects (Table 3). Although we do not have the data on how they participated in the projects (or the degree of duplication), through conversations with projects, we determined the majority were involved in delivering the project activities. The 'other' category includes 735 technicians from 49 institutions and 200 professional staff who responded to the University of Liverpool's two UK-wide surveys.

Table 3 Professional support staff engagement

Type of professional staff	Numbers
Student support services	84
Graduate school	77
Students' union staff	41
Counselling services	28
Senior professional support staff	29
Other	1646
Total professional support staff (instances of engagement)	1905

Engagement of institutional senior leaders

Across the projects, 219 interventions were identified by institutional senior managers, almost half of these were through direct engagement in the project team (17) or as a member of an advisory group (89) (Table 4). It is important to recognise that these may not be 219 individuals as they may have been involved in a number of project activities, e.g. communications and part of the project teams,

Table 4 Senior manager engagement

Activity	Senior managers
Project team	17
Advisory groups	89
Focus groups	1
Workshops	2
Project communications	79
Other	5
Total senior leaders (instances of engagement)	219

Impact

In the final evaluation reporting, projects were asked to report on a selection of key evaluation indicators based on the IEF to assess the extent to which they had evidence of the impact of their project activities. These included impact on both PGRs and supervisors. We also asked projects to provide qualitative and quantitative evidence against the evaluation indicators. The evaluation indicators, described in Table 5, covered three of the four IEF levels (described in section 1.6 above):

- Level 1: 'Did participants find the activity useful?'
- Level 2: 'Did they learn anything?'
- Level 3: 'Did they change their behaviour?'

Given that the projects were reporting immediately at the end of their projects, we anticipated that projects would not have any evidence at Level 4 of the IEF, for example whether participants' changes in behaviours had resulted in different outcomes for their PhD experience, such as lower suspensions of study due to mental health issues. In nine of the projects, processes have been set in place or are planned to measure some of these Level 4 indicators in the future.

Some projects provided statistics to support their responses, while others provided qualitative data gathered through interviews or focus groups. Projects' overall responses for each of the indicators are outlined in Table 5 and discussed in more detail below.

Table 5 Projects reporting evidence of the impact of their activities on postgraduate researchers and supervisors (number of projects)

Outcomes	Yes	Neutral	No	Too early to say	Not applicable	N
PGRs found the various interventions within this project useful for helping them to manage their mental health and wellbeing (Levels 1 and Level 2) (see section 3.3)	12	1	0	2	0	15
PGRs have a different awareness of their mental health and wellbeing as a result of this project (Level 1 and Level 2) (see section 3.4)	13	0	0	3	1	17
PGRs are more aware of how to improve their mental health and wellbeing as a result of this project (Levels 1 and Level 2) (see section 3.4)	11	1	0	4	1	17
PGRs are more aware of where to go to get support as a result of this project (Level 1 and Level 2) (see section 3.4)	10	1	0	4	2	17
Postgraduate researchers feel that their institution is more supportive of their mental health and wellbeing as a result of this project (Level 1 and Level 2) (see section 3.4)	7	0	0	2	8	17
PGRs are more likely to seek help and support with their mental health and wellbeing as a result of this project (Level 2 and Level 3) (see section 3.4)	7	2	1	6	0	16
Supervisors you engaged with in this project are now more knowledgeable in how to signpost PGRs to appropriate support services (Level 1 and Level 2) (see section 3.5)	8	1	0	0	7	16
Supervisors who engaged with this project are more confident in having conversations about mental health and wellbeing (Level 2) (see section 3.5)	6	2	0	1	7	16
Supervisors are more likely to discuss mental health and wellbeing with their PGRs as a result of this project (Level 2 and Level 3) (see section 3.5)	6	1	0	2	7	16

Usefulness of different types of intervention (Level 1 and Level 2)

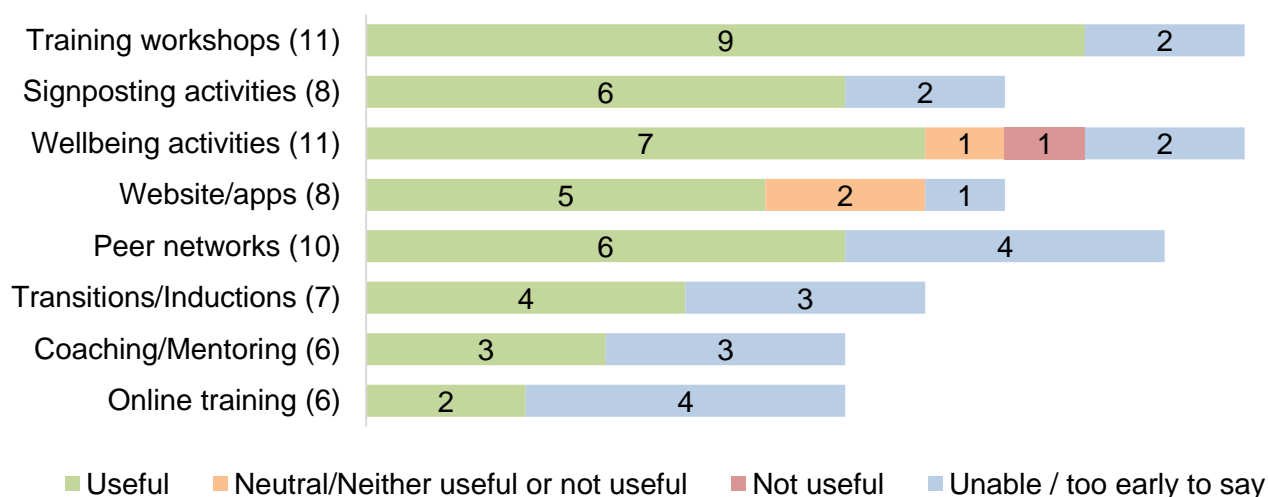
Projects were asked to comment on the usefulness of the different types of intervention that they had delivered for PGRs through their projects and whether they had evidence to support this (Figure 3). Twelve of the fifteen projects who responded to this question reported that their interventions were useful in helping PGRs manage their mental health and wellbeing and generally reported they were able to evidence this through quantitative and qualitative feedback. For example, the University of Sussex's 'Looking After Yourself during the PhD' course was rated as either very good (57%) or good (29%) by post-evaluation respondents. Queen Mary University of London reported that for their 'Building Willpower and Motivation' course 91% of postgraduate researchers found it useful for managing their mental health. The University of Bradford reported that their qualitative evaluation of their 'Connect' activities provided strong evidence of reducing isolation.

Face to face training workshops were reported as having most evidence of their usefulness. Signposting of information was also considered to be a useful activity, with only two projects saying it was too early to judge the impact. Projects were more mixed about the value of specific wellbeing activities and the use of apps. While the majority of projects found these activities useful, the University of Warwick reported that the findings from their research showed limited long term impact of various wellbeing activities. They used a range of online personality, wellbeing and mental health tests to measure the impact of a range of wellbeing activities over academic term. The University of Derby is still collecting pre and post quantitative data on the use of its Wellbeing Thesis website. The University of Durham and the University of Plymouth reported that they had evidence that their online training had been useful.

For activities that are delivered over time, such as peer networks and coaching programmes, or those embedded in existing activities, such as induction processes, there was less evidence of the value of these activities. Around half of the projects that delivered these activities reported that they had been useful interventions, while the balance reported that they were unable to judge this or it was too early to say whether these were useful interventions.

Project's level of self-evaluation differed considerably, along with the level to which this was embedded through their work and the level of detail offered. It may be useful to highlight some of the approaches that worked well. The University of East Anglia had evaluation methodology built into each strand of the Courage project from the outset. One of the objectives of their programme was to consider which areas of their activity they would recommend that the institution pursue in the future. This allowed for honest evaluation that did not necessarily seek to prove that all activity was useful. The University of Manchester underwent a Theory of Change process during their project, and this ensured clear outputs, outcomes and evaluation. This has also resulted in a clear project legacy website and dissemination report.

Figure 3: Projects reporting the usefulness of specific interventions



The figures in brackets show how many projects responded.

Evidence of the impact on postgraduate researchers

In the final evaluation reporting, projects were asked whether, as a result of the project, PGRs:

- had a different awareness of their mental health and wellbeing (Level 1 and Level 2)
- were more aware of how to improve their mental health and wellbeing (Levels 1 and Level 2)

- were more aware of where to go to get support (Level 1 and Level 2)
- felt that their institution was more supportive of their mental health and wellbeing (Level 1 and Level 2)
- were more likely to seek help and support with their mental health and wellbeing (Level 2 and Level 3).

Projects were also asked to provide the evidence to support their responses. In total, 13 of the 17 projects reported that their project had had positive impacts on their PGRs and were able to provide some examples of quantitative or qualitative evidence, particularly on levels of awareness of their mental health and wellbeing and some extent on how to improve their mental health and where to get support.

Awareness of their mental health and wellbeing (Level 1 and Level 2)

Thirteen of the 17 projects reported evidence that their PGRs had a different awareness of their mental health and wellbeing as a result of their institutional project. For example, post-activity evaluation of the University of Portsmouth's induction programme revealed that they had raised awareness of mental health and wellbeing with all participants. In their event feedback 88% of attendees at the University of Sussex's mental health day agreed it was helpful in raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing. The University of Newcastle was able to compare post-activity evaluation with baseline data that evidenced increased awareness of mental health and wellbeing among PGRs and supervisors following their #PGRCommUNITY programme and supervisor training.

Other projects reported either that it was too early to say, for example both the University of Derby's The Wellbeing Thesis and the app developed by University of the West of England were only launched at the end of their projects, or that raising awareness of participants' mental health was not a specific objective for the project. For example, the University of Warwick's project focussed on research into the impact of activities on various aspects of mental health and wellbeing and did not aim to raise awareness.

Awareness of how to improve their mental health and wellbeing (Level 1 and Level 2)

Eleven projects felt that their PGRs were more aware of how to improve their own mental health and wellbeing, supported by both quantitative and qualitative data. For example, Newcastle University reported that feedback from their mindfulness training sessions clearly indicated that participants were more aware of how to improve their own mental health and wellbeing and more aware of the benefits that mindfulness could offer to their peers. A participant on the University of Portsmouth's induction programme reported:

'I am much more aware of stress triggers and the need for study / life balance.'

University of Portsmouth participant

The University of Manchester highlighted evidence of increased awareness for those that had attended training sessions, but did not yet have evidence that their institutional-level activities had raised increased awareness among the broader PGR population. Other projects were still in the early stages of monitoring levels of awareness.

Awareness of support for their mental health (Level 1 and Level 2)

Ten projects reported that their PGRs were now more aware of where to seek support for their mental health and wellbeing as a result of their project. They had evidenced this in a variety of ways, including feedback forms, institution surveys, focus groups and less structured qualitative feedback.

The University of Plymouth reported that an institution-wide survey revealed that 87% of PGRs who had attended at least one Researcher Toolkit session were aware of the university's wellbeing services, had used them, or planned to use them in the future. Queen

Mary University of London reported that 57% of all their PGRs now had better knowledge of where to seek support for their mental health.

Institution support of mental health and wellbeing (Level 1 and Level 2)

Seven projects reported that their PGRs now felt that their institution was more supportive of their mental health and wellbeing. This was informed to some extent by both survey data and anecdotal evidence. For example, In the University of Liverpool's PGR wellbeing survey they observed an increase from 52% in 2018 to 77% in 2019 of respondents mostly/definitely agreeing that their 'institution cares about the mental health of postgraduate researchers'.

Likelihood to seek help for mental health and wellbeing (Level 2 and Level 3)

Seven projects reported that as a result of their work, PGRs were now more likely to seek help for their mental health and wellbeing. However, there was insufficient evidence that this was happening in practice (Level 4). Several projects reported that while signposting for PGRs was now in place, they were not able to measure at this stage whether this has had, or will have, significant impact.

The University of East Anglia reported modest increases in PGRs accessing student services during their project, alongside small numbers (approximately 20) directly contacting the lead for the student services strand within the project for guidance. Additionally, the number of PGRs who had sought support from 'Advice (SU),' the Student Union's independent advice team, had increased by 61% over the academic year. Conversely, the University of Bradford's data showed a small reduction in PGRs accessing their counselling service over a similar period. While neither project claimed they could attribute these changes directly to their project activities, they both felt that these changes were signs of positive impact.

Evidence of the impact on supervisors

Nine of the projects specifically targeted supervisors in their activities. In the final evaluation reporting, projects were asked whether, as a result of engaging in the project, supervisors:

- were more knowledgeable in how to signpost PGRs to appropriate support services (Level 1 and Level 2)
- were more confident in having conversations about mental health and wellbeing (Level 2)
- were more likely to discuss mental health and wellbeing with their PGRs (Level 2 and Level 3).

Supervisors' knowledge of support services (Level 1 and Level 2)

Eight projects were able to evidence some improvement in supervisors' knowledge of how to signpost PGRs to appropriate support services from their post-activity evaluation data and feedback comments. For example, the University of Sussex reported that supervisors' awareness of various support services improved from baseline awareness levels of 50% to 100% (fully aware) for participants on their face to face supervisor training.

Supervisors' confidence in having conversations about mental health and wellbeing (Level 2)

Six projects reported being able to demonstrate impact on supervisors' confidence levels in having conversations with PGRs about their mental health. For example, the University of East Anglia reported that all but one of the [17] supervisors who took part in their training pilots reported some increase in their confidence levels about having these conversations. Eighty per cent of supervisors who responded to the post-supervisor training evaluation

agreed that they were more confident in having conversations with their PGRs: however, participation in the evaluation was low.

The University of Manchester reported positive qualitative feedback from supervisors who attended their 'Managing challenging interactions' session and comments included:

'I will try to be more aware what responses I am manifesting when I emotionally react to a student in distress and how I could take the middle ground between alienating and mothering'

'I will also be more likely to refer to the counselling service if I think it's appropriate.'

University of Manchester respondents

Supervisors' likelihood to discuss mental health and wellbeing (Level 2 and Level 3)

Six projects felt that their supervisors were now more likely to discuss mental health and wellbeing with their PGRs, evidenced largely through quantitative data.

Queen Mary University of London reported that of those that attended their supervisor workshop, 79% stated that they probably or definitely will use what they had learned in the workshop (which included starting a conversation on mental health and wellbeing issues) in their conversations with PGRs. Data from Newcastle University's pre- and post-activity questionnaires demonstrated an increased likelihood of supervisors discussing mental health and wellbeing with their PGRs, which was supported by anecdotal evidence.

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