

Activating a whole-university approach to mental health

Lessons from the University Mental Health Charter

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#UniMentalHealthCharter

An initiative by
**student
minds**



University
Mental Health
Charter



Today's session

- Introduction to the University Mental Health Charter
- What do we mean by a whole-university approach to mental health?
- Exploring the enablers and barriers to creating a whole-university approach
- Lessons from the University Mental Health Charter Award
- Identifying actions you can take to activate a whole-university approach

Why a Charter?

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- The number of students declaring a pre-existing mental illness to their university has **more than doubled** since 2014/15¹
- Increasing numbers of students experiencing **suicidal ideation, self-harm and episodes of psychosis** ²
- Students experiencing mental illness are more likely to withdraw from university, to underperform and are less likely to secure higher level employment or go on to postgraduate study ³
- In 2017/18, **95 students took their own lives** ⁴
- Significant rises in the number of staff accessing counselling and occupational health services ^{5,6}

What can we do?

Understandably, much of the focus in national discussions has been on avoiding and responding to mental illness

Our view is that the absence of illness, while important, **is not enough**

Universities can be places that are **good for the mental health of our communities**

Our vision

Our vision is for all universities to adopt a **whole–university approach** to mental health, and become places that **promote the mental health and wellbeing of all members of the university community**.

We will achieve this through:

- **An evidence-informed framework** to provide a reference point for universities to adopt a whole–university approach to mental health
- **A programme** to support universities to share practice and improve their approach
- **A voluntary accreditation** to encourage ongoing improvement by recognising and building an evidence base of excellent practice

The Charter – an evidence informed framework

Development of the Charter

2019 - UK-wide research and consultation

2019 - Published the Charter framework

2020 - Developed and piloted the Charter Award at 3 UK universities

Jan-March 2021 - Developed the Charter Programme

2021– Charter Programme Opens



Today

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60 Charter Programme
Member Universities

5 University Mental
Health Charter Awards

Introducing the University Mental Health Charter Programme members

- ◆ Anglia Ruskin University
- ◆ Arts University Bournemouth
- ◆ Aston University
- ◆ Bath Spa University
- ◆ Birmingham City University
- ◆ Bishop Grosseteste University
- ◆ Buckinghamshire New University
- ◆ Canterbury Christ Church University
- ◆ City, University of London
- ◆ Durham University
- ◆ Falmouth University
- ◆ Glasgow Caledonian University
- ◆ Harper Adams University
- ◆ Hartpury University
- ◆ King's College London
- ◆ Kingston University
- ◆ Leeds Beckett University
- ◆ Liverpool John Moores University
- ◆ London Metropolitan University
- ◆ London South Bank University
- ◆ Manchester Metropolitan University
- ◆ Middlesex University
- ◆ Newcastle University
- ◆ Norland College
- ◆ Northeastern University London
- ◆ Northumbria University
- ◆ Nottingham Trent University
- ◆ Plymouth Marjon University
- ◆ Richmond American University London
- ◆ Sheffield Hallam University
- ◆ Solent University
- ◆ Teeside University
- ◆ The University of East London
- ◆ The University of Huddersfield
- ◆ The University of Law
- ◆ The University of Manchester
- ◆ University Centre Leeds
- ◆ University College London
- ◆ University of Bath
- ◆ University of Bedfordshire
- ◆ University of Bristol
- ◆ University of Central Lancashire
- ◆ University of Chester
- ◆ University of East Anglia
- ◆ University of Essex
- ◆ University of Gloucestershire
- ◆ University of Greenwich
- ◆ University of Hull
- ◆ University of Kent
- ◆ University of Leicester
- ◆ University of Lincoln
- ◆ University of Liverpool
- ◆ University of Nottingham
- ◆ University of Reading
- ◆ University of Sheffield
- ◆ University of Southampton
- ◆ University of Sunderland
- ◆ University of West of England
- ◆ University of Westminster

**What does a
whole-university approach to
mental health and wellbeing
mean to you?**

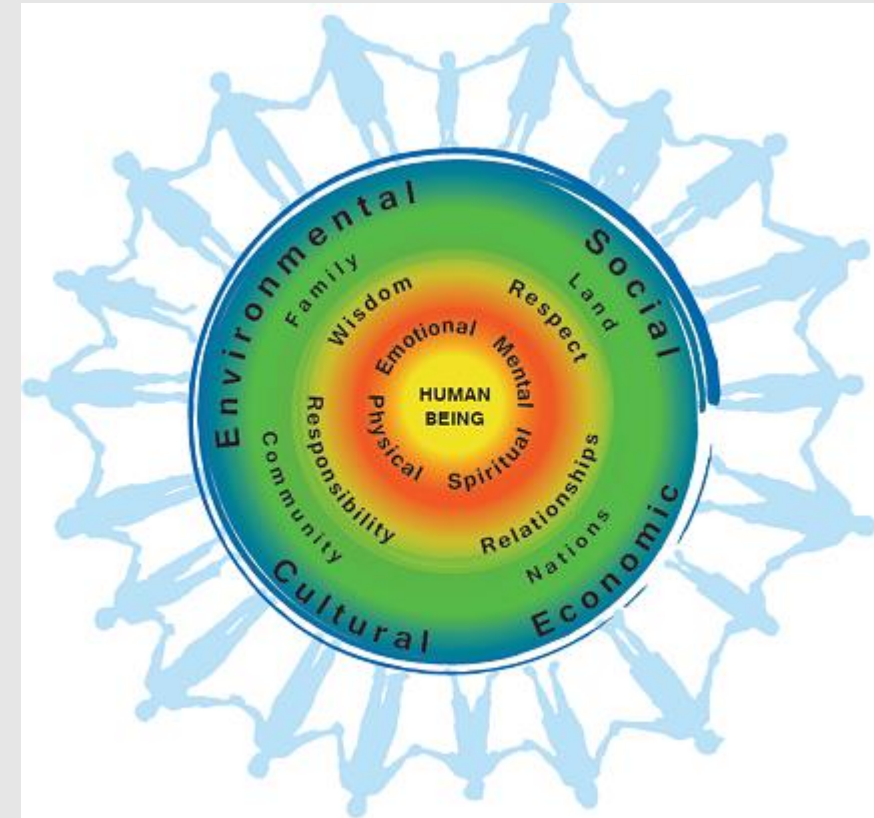
A Whole-University Approach

Whole university approach

The Charter sets out a whole university approach to the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff

The evidence clearly shows that our environment is a key determinant of mental health— **physical, cultural, social, personal**

All universities already have a whole university impact on mental health – we must do this consciously



First Nations Health Authority
<https://www.fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-for-first-nations/first-nations-perspective-on-health-and-wellness>

Whole university approach

“A whole university approach must include both adequately resourced, effective and accessible mental health services and proactive interventions. It must provide an environment and culture that reduces poor mental health, as well as supporting good mental health and facilitating staff and students to develop insight, understanding and skills to manage and maintain their own wellbeing.”

Mapped onto Mentally Healthy Universities (refreshed #StepChange)



+ Enabling Themes

**How far has your university
adopted a whole-university
approach?**

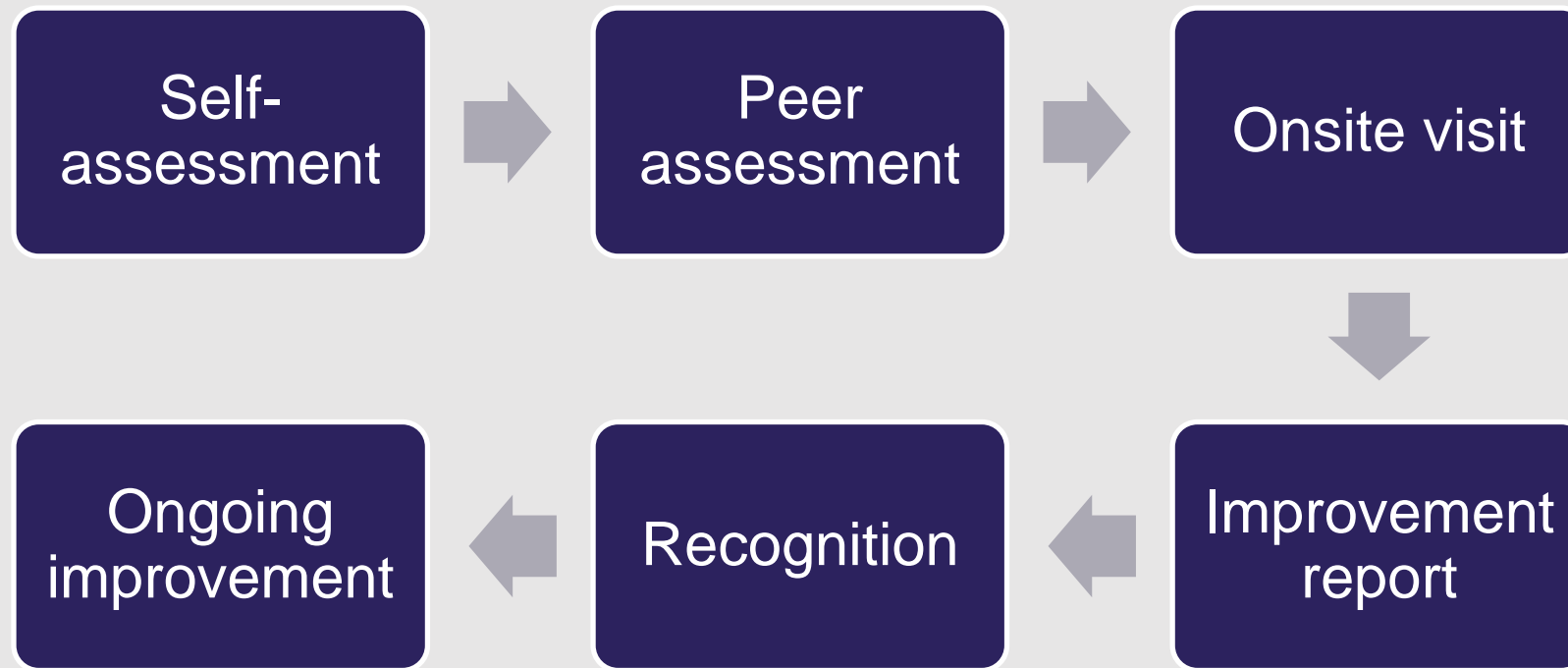
**What are some of the challenges
in adopting this approach?**

**Is there anything that has
worked well?**

The University Mental Health Charter Award

Our approach

- **Collaborative** - bringing together university communities to identify and share practice as part of a respectful, supportive and inclusive community
- **Courageous** - creating spaces to acknowledge weaknesses, challenge practice and push boundaries
- **Empowering** - universities to improve and listen to student and staff voices
- **Innovative** - using evidence and expertise to facilitate collective learning, exploration and sharing good practice across the sector



Lessons from the Charter



Next Steps

- **Collaboration** with people in a different area of the university (e.g. wellbeing teams, equity and inclusion, teaching faculty)
- **Empowerment** getting leadership to provide the time and resources for people to commit to this work
- **Courageous** creating spaces where everyone feels able to speak openly and honestly about strengths and weaknesses
- **Innovation** having evidence that our work is helping and not causing harm and is relevant to the needs of our specific population

Pick one above and discuss:

- How have you approached this in your context?
- What opportunities are there for improving your approach?

Thank you

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