Bord Oideachais & Oiliúna
LUIMNIGH & AN CHLÁIR
LIMERICK & CLARE
Education & Training Board

COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING

Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and Action Plan

January 2022

Contents

01 Introduction 3

02 Purpose 4
- Objectives 4
- Scope 4

03 Defining Mental Health and Wellbeing 5
- Mental Health Definition (from World Health Organisation) 5
- Wellbeing Definition (from Mental Health Ireland) 5
- The Mental Health Continuum 6

04 Policy Environment Supporting Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Irish Education System 7
- Schools Education 7
- Higher Education 8
- Further Education and Training 9

05 Universal Design for Learning (UDL) 10
- UDL and its relevance to Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing 11

06 Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's FET Division 13
- Unemployment Blackspots 13
- Learner Support 14

07 Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Self-assessment 16

08 Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 18
- Level 1: FET Division 19
- Level 2: FET Campus 20
- Level 3: Enhanced Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness 21
- Level 4: Additional Support Requirement 22
- Level 5: Supplemental Provision 23
- Level 6: One-to-One Supports 24
- Level 7: Critical Incidents 25

09 References 26

APPENDIX 1: FET Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Self-Assessment 28

APPENDIX 2: Self-Assessment Results - Emerging Themes 33

01 | Introduction

Minister Simon Harris TD, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science highlighted the role Further Education and Training plays as a valuable enabler of social cohesion in the Minister's Foreword of the SOLAS FET Strategy Future FET: Transforming Learning.

Ireland is a diverse and vibrant society, and the Programme for Government commits to encouraging and enabling full inclusion and equality for all. FET now has a vital role in enabling this equality and cohesion to flourish in communities throughout the country, working with the Government to create a fair, inclusive, and equitable Ireland for all. (SOLAS, 2020)[1].

According to the EU, good mental health and wellbeing are the building blocks of inclusion and integration.[2] Good Mental Health and Wellbeing are critical enablers if Further Education and Training (FET) learners are to take active steps towards getting involved in education and training, local activities, finding work, and building a social network.

[1] https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

[2] Better mental wellbeing encourages social inclusion | European Social Fund Plus (europa.eu)

02 | Purpose

The purpose of the FET Division's Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework is to outline how Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board will promote and support Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing in a consistent, structured and planned way. This Framework will support the ETB's FET Division in providing leadership and resources to promote and support Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing. It will do this through engagement with stakeholders, nurturing effective partnerships and promotion of initiatives to promote and support the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the FET Community.

Objectives

The objectives of the Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework are to:

- Define what is meant by Mental Health and Wellbeing in order to generate a common understanding across our FET Community;
- Provide a brief summary of the policy environment which supports Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing across the Irish Education System;
- Explore the potential of Universal Design to support the Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework;
- Provide an appraisal of the current structures and activities in place across our FET provision and Support Services, which support Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing;
- Develop an action plan which will outline the next steps including structures, priorities, responsibilities and the sharing of best practice.

Scope

Learners attending provision and support services provided by Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's Further Education and Training Division.

03 Defining Mental Health and Wellbeing

One of the Strategic Objectives for our FET Division, as set out in our Strategic Framework 2021 to 2025, is that of *"Building learners' social, personal and resilience skills to adapt to new challenges, become active citizens and bring balance and wellbeing in their personal and professional lives.*

It is important that our FET community of staff and learners have a common understanding of what we mean when we speak about Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Mental Health Definition (from World Health Organisation)

Mental Health is an integral and essential component of health. The World Health Organisation (WHO) constitution states: *"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."*[3] An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities. When we speak about Mental Health in our Framework, we are defining it as follows:

Mental Health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. (WHO 2013)

Mental Health is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life. On this basis, the promotion, protection and restoration of mental health can be regarded as a vital concern of individuals, communities and societies throughout the world. World Health Organisation[4]

Wellbeing Definition (from Mental Health Ireland)

Wellbeing is personal and subjective, but also universally relevant which creates a challenge when trying to agree a definition. *Wellbeing encompasses the environmental factors that affect us, and the experiences we have throughout our lives. These can fall into traditional policy areas of economy, health, education and so on. But wellbeing also crucially recognises the aspects of our lives that we determine ourselves: through our own capabilities as individuals; how we feel about ourselves; the quality of the relationships that we have with other people; and our sense of purpose.*[5] *(What Work Wellbeing)*[6]

When we speak about Wellbeing in our Framework, we are using the definition from Mental Health Ireland. *Wellbeing is feeling good about yourself, the world around you and functioning*

[3] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response

[4] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response

[5] https://whatworkswellbeing.org/about-wellbeing/what-is-wellbeing/

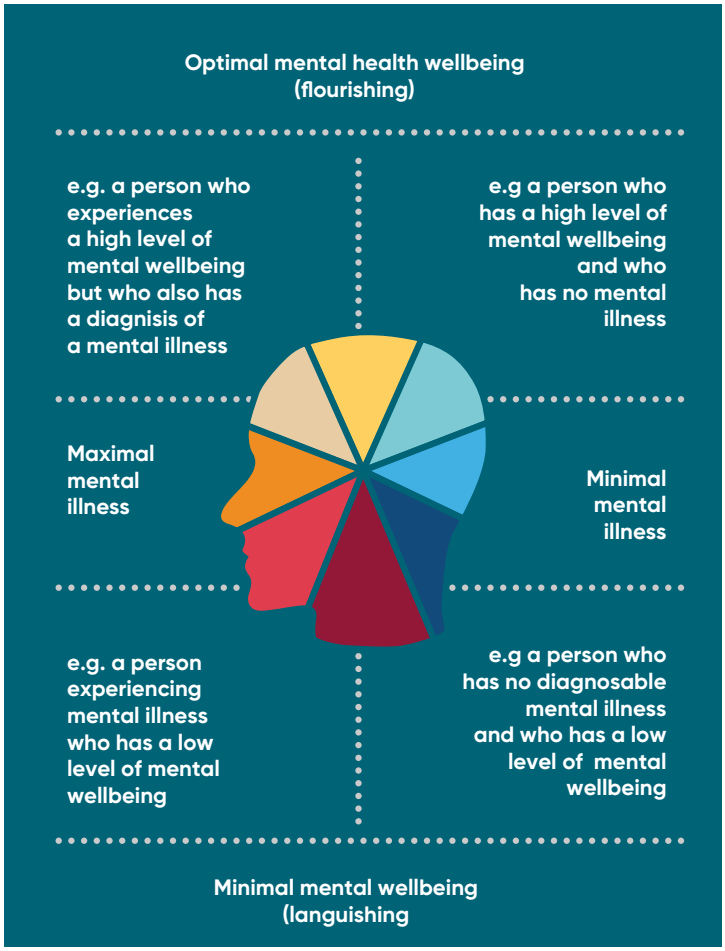
[6] https://whatworkswellbeing.org/about-wellbeing/what-is-wellbeing/

well in everyday life, most of the time. Being resilient and coping with the normal stresses of life is an important attribute of wellbeing. There are many things that can influence your wellbeing. These include exercise, diet, sense of belonging, relationships, career, self-care, spirituality, money, where we live, and sense of purpose. Wellbeing is much broader than simply how happy you are. It also includes how satisfied you are with your life, your sense of purpose, and how in control you feel.[7]

Part of the value of wellbeing as a concept for us as a FET Division is that irrespective of both our own and our learner's cultural backgrounds and personal circumstances, we all understand the value of wellbeing and happiness.

The Mental Health Continuum

The Mental Health Continuum[8] provides a contemporary view of mental health and wellbeing, showing that mental health and mental illness are separate and distinct concepts. In this model, mental health is conceptualised as positive feelings and positive functioning. Mental health and wellbeing is an asset that can be cultivated and developed.[9]



[7] https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/five-ways-to-wellbeing/

[8] Tudor K (1996). Mental Health Promotion: Paradigms and practice. London, New York: Routledge.

[9] Manwell, L. A., Barbic, S. P., Roberts, K., Durisko, Z., Lee, C., Ware, E., et al. (2015). What is mental health? Evidence towards a new definition from a mixed methods multidisciplinary international survey. BMJ Open 5, 1–11. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2014-007079

04 Policy Environment Supporting Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Irish Education System

Ireland has one of the highest rates of mental illness in Europe, with 18.5% of the population recorded as having a mental health condition such as anxiety, bipolar, schizophrenia, depression, or alcohol or drug misuse (OECD, 2018). This issue is of particular relevance to the Further Education and Training Division as concern around increasing levels of learner mental ill-health, mental distress and low wellbeing have been highlighted across a number of recent studies. The *My World-2: National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland [MWS-2]* found that 58% of the 8,290 18-25-year-old respondents surveyed in Ireland were classified as outside the normal range for both depression and anxiety (Dooley, et al., 2019).

Research undertaken by sparqS (student partnerships in quality Scotland), demonstrated an explicit link between mental health and learning[10]. It highlighted the need to acknowledge that pedagogy, assessment and learning spaces all impact on mental wellbeing and as providers we need to understand that curriculum plays a key role in promoting, and enhancing, a learners' wellbeing from first point of contact.

Almost 75% of all serious mental health conditions first emerge between the ages of 15 and 25 (Kessler et al., 2007) while some groups of learners are at higher risk of experiencing mental health difficulties. These include those who identify as LGBTQ+; international students; asylum seekers and refugees; those who have experienced trauma; online/remote students; first generation students; mature students; those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, and those from ethnic minorities.

Legislation in Ireland provides for equal access to and participation in education and protection against discrimination. The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the Public Sector Duty) is set out in section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. It is a statutory obligation on public bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights of staff and service users. Some of the relevant laws are the Equality Act (2004), the Equal Status Act (2000) and the Disability Act (2005). Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone, National Mental Health Policy and Services for Ireland 2020-2030, focuses on 'promotion, prevention and early intervention, service access, coordination and continuity of care, social inclusion and accountability and continuous improvement'.

Schools Education

The Department of Education originally published the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* in 2018. Refreshed in 2019[11], the framework provides an overarching structure encompassing the existing, ongoing and developing work in the area of wellbeing in education. Schools are asked to include wellbeing promotion as a focus

[10] https://eua.eu/component/attachments/attachments.html?task=attachment&id=2610

[11] gov.ie - Wellbeing in education (www.gov.ie)

for their School Self Evaluation (SSE) involving the development, implementation and review of wellbeing promotion in schools, which includes tracking impact. Significant resources have been developed to support schools in this work across the primary and post primary sectors while the Department of Education National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologists continually develop a range of resources and supports targeting parents, students and school staff.

Higher Education

The Higher Education Authority launched the National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework in 2020[12]. This document outlines a national framework within which Ireland's higher education system can address the issues of student mental health and suicide prevention in a structured and planned way.

The companion document to the HEA National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework, the Implementation guide[13] presents a set of good practice actions across 9 headings, namely.

1 Lead:	Build and support national and institutional strategies for student mental health. Improvements in student mental health and suicide prevention will only be effective if prioritised at a national, sectoral, and institutional levels - through policy and strategy, being student-centred and championed by strong leadership.
2 Collaborate:	Develop partnerships on campus and in the community with health services to support student mental health.
3 Educate:	Build campus knowledge and skills on student mental health and suicide prevention.
4 Engage:	Create campus communities that are connected, safe, nurturing, inclusive and compassionate.
5 Identify:	Establish a culture of mental health awareness, recognition, and compassion.
6 Support:	Provide students with safe, accessible and well-resourced mental health support.
7 Respond:	Institutions need critical incident protocols for varying levels of student mental health crisis.
8 Transition:	Establish student supports throughout the higher education journey.
9 Improve:	Frequent data collection and analysis to ensure an effective improvement in student mental health.

[12] https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/publications/student-mental-health-framework.pdf

[13] https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2020/10/HEA-NSMHS-Framework-Implementation-Guide.pdf

Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD and Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD jointly launched Healthy Ireland's National Healthy Campus Framework in July 2021. The purpose of the framework is a guide to inspire and encourage all Higher Education Institutions in Ireland to work towards a whole campus approach to health and wellbeing.

Further Education and Training

An essential focus of the SOLAS FET Strategy 2020 – 2024 is to ensure that we develop a system that is both learner-centred and performance-centred (SOLAS 2020). *The Further Education and Training (FET) learner base is incredibly diverse, and FET must encourage and reflect this diversity in the way in which it supports learners and offers them clear pathways and outcomes over the next five years. (SOLAS 2020).* The strategy also commits to "setting relevant inclusion-related funding parameters and guidelines, which reflect national and EU inclusion and equality policy and legislation" (SOLAS 2020).

SOLAS has highlighted an increasingly prevalent characteristic across the FET population where a high proportion of learners cite mental health issues, particularly around learning at Levels 1 to 3. One of the national priorities in the SOLAS strategy states that *FET must ensure it has robust and consistent support mechanisms in place to help this cohort transition through FET, drawing on national and international good practice. It is also important that all FET staff and all learners have an understanding of mental health and wellbeing, and this will be embedded within professional development for the former and within the FET curriculum for the latter.*[14]

This National Priority is reflected in the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's FET Division Strategic Framework 2021-2025. One of our ETB's objectives under the theme of building skills commits to *Building learners' social, personal and resilience skills to adapt to new challenges, become active citizens and bring balance and wellbeing in their personal and professional lives.*

[14] https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

05 Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

In June 2021, SOLAS published Universal Design for Learning, Guidance for Further Education and Training, which aims to reduce the barriers to learning for all learners across the entire Further Education and Training sector, rather than mitigating against them. UDL is a set of principles and guidelines that aim to support all learners by using a variety of teaching methods to reduce barriers to learning. This means that inclusive teaching and learning approaches are built-in at design stage so that all learners' needs are addressed where possible (SOLAS, 2021).

Universal Design for Learning Principles[15]

Affective networks: THE WHY OF LEARNING

Multiple means of Engagement

Stimulate motivation and sustained enthusiasm for learning by promoting various ways of engaging with material

Recognition of networks: THE WHAT OF LEARNING

Multiple means of Representation

Present information and content in a variety of ways to support understanding by learners with different learning styles/abilities

Strategic networks: THE HOW OF LEARNING

Multiple means of Action/Expression

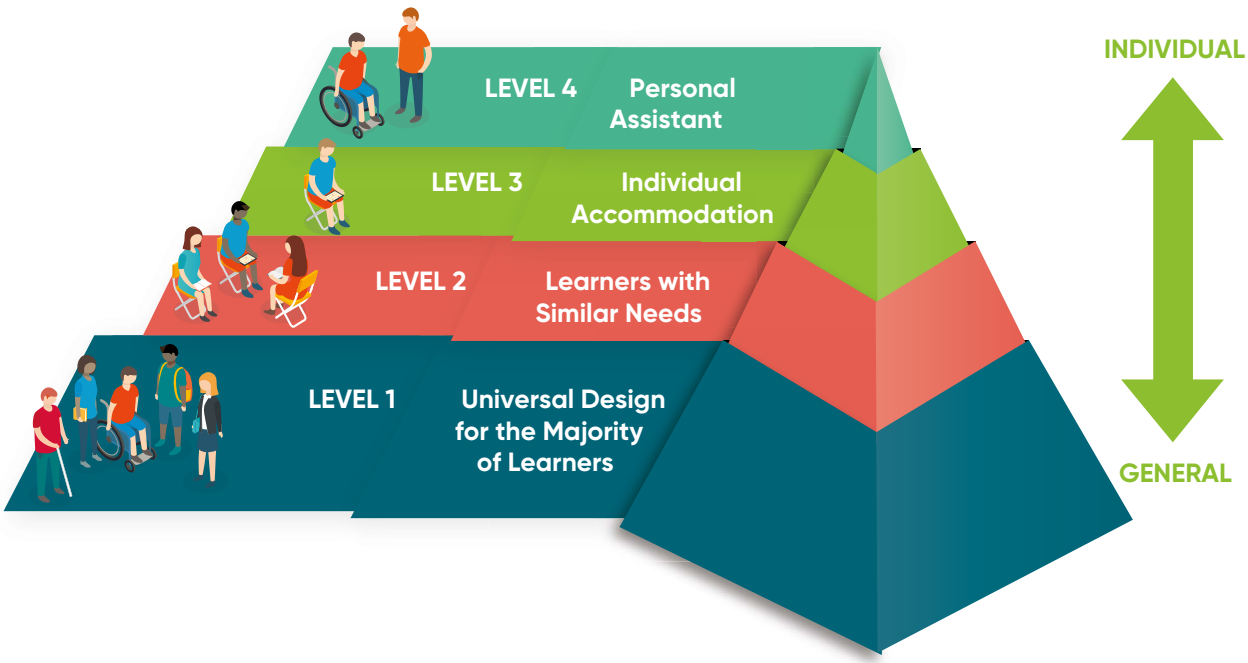
Offer options for learners to demonstrate their learning in various ways (e.g. allow choice of assessment type)

The inclusive teaching and learning approaches promoted by UDL focus on the specific needs of individual learners and groups of learners. UDL approaches recognise that the learning environment can provide a range of challenges and potential barriers to learning for many learners. It challenges us as an ETB FET Division to review all aspects of our learning environments. Responding to the diverse needs of our FET learner community is complicated by the fact that the learning environment itself is adapting and changing. During Covid, we have seen an increasing reliance on technology enhanced learning while practical skills demonstrations and a focus on work-based learning including work experience placements and work practice have always been a feature of our sector.

[15] Adapted from https://www.ahead.ie/udl-framework

UDL and its relevance to Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing

A paper entitled "Exploring the Potential of Universal Design for Learning with Regards to Mental Health Issues in Higher Education", delivered by Professor Frederic Fovet at the Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability & Diversity in 2020, observed that *"The first striking observation is that Mental Health is generally altogether absent from the UDL literature (Al-Azawei, Serenelli, & Lundqvist, 2016)*. The paucity of literature is surprising since there is no reason UDL principles would not be just as efficient and powerful in addressing Mental Health issues, as they are in addressing barriers created in relation to other impairments" (Fovet, 2020).[16] The Inclusive Education Pyramid[17] shown below demonstrates the varying levels of support required with universal design meeting the needs of the majority of learners while those with more complex requirements are able to access additional resources and supports.



[16] https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fscholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu%2Fbitstream%2F10125%2F69333%2F3%2FExploring_the_Potential_of_Universal_Design_for_Learning_with_Regards_to_Mental_Health_Issues_in_Higher_Education_Fovet.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

[17] Adapted from UDL & the Continuum of Supports - AHEAD

Designing with diversity in mind means we reduce the amount of friction between our expectations and the learners' desire to demonstrate skills and knowledge. With 'design thinking', we avoid exacerbating mental health issues, but perhaps also avoid creating anxiety and decreasing well-being[18]. As an ETB FET Division, our aim should be to make the widest possible number of mental health and wellbeing supports and interventions available to all learners.

The previously referenced research by sparqs (student partnerships in quality Scotland), concluded, *that to actually make a difference, we need to adopt a **whole institutional approach**. We need to create an environment and culture not to only reduce **poor mental wellbeing** but also promote positive wellbeing and **enhance students' wellbeing**.*[19] The World Health Organisation[20] defines mental health promotion as actions to create living conditions and environments that support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles.

It is clear that the way we design our learning environments has the capacity to include or exclude, to enable or disable our learners. This is as true of the processes we put in place to support learner Mental Health and Wellbeing as it is of the processes we put in place to support our curriculum, instructional or building design.

[18] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323737189_Beyond_Accommodations_Using_of_Universal_Design_Learning_UDL_as_a_lens_when_designing_instruction_and_evaluation_methods_that_do_not_exacerbate_mental_health_issues

[19] Student Mental Wellbeing: A Learning & Teaching Perspective (eua.eu)

[20] (The) World Health Organisation (WHO) (2016) Mental health: strengthening our response. http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs220/en/.

06 Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's FET Division

The Vision for Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (Strategy Statement 2021-2025) is to play a *leading role in the provision of high-quality lifelong education, training and enterprise skills needs. We achieve this by providing caring, effective, innovative, flexible and inclusive pathways for all our students and learners which are reflective of the diverse needs of our community.*

The Further Education and Training Division works in partnership with communities and learners from a diverse range of target groups including community groups, employers, youth initiatives, prison education, special education, homeless services, and specific disadvantaged groups including the unemployed. While the majority of our learners cope well in Further Education, as noted earlier, certain groups are at higher risk in relation to mental health difficulties. As part of our Assessment under the Public Sector Duty[21], the ETB has undertaken an assessment of equality and human rights issues impacting the situation, experience, and identity of the identified groups for the Duty, to establish the key equality and human rights issues experienced by these groups. In addition, other factors can influence learner health and wellbeing including academic pressures; exam and assignment stress; transitions in and out of education; financial burdens; managing jobs and academic work; social and cultural pressures that include family, friends and intimate relationships; social media; and broader geopolitical concerns. (National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework in 2020)[22].

Unemployment Blackspots

There are twenty-one Unemployment Blackspots[23] located within Limerick and Clare. This represents 27% of the national unemployment blackspots with eight of the top ten national unemployment blackspots in Limerick City. Research published by the ESRI and Pobal in July 2018[24] examined who is most likely to experience at least one of five barriers to social inclusion. The barriers examined include:

- **belonging to a jobless household,**
- **being a lone parent,**
- **having a disability,**
- **being homeless or affected by housing exclusion and**
- **belonging to an ethnic minority.**

[21] https://lcetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/LCETB_PSD_Assessment_Report.pdf

[22] https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/publications/student-mental-health-framework.pdf

[23] A black-spot refers to an area with at least 200 people in the labour force where the unemployment rate is 27% or higher.

[24] https://www.esri.ie/publications/profiling-barriers-to-social-inclusion-in-ireland-the-relative-roles-of-individual

Of particular relevance to the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's FET Division is the evidence in the above ESRI/POBAL research that people in urban areas were more likely than their rural equivalents to report experiencing all barriers (except having a disability). This was true even after accounting for other factors, suggesting that urban environments increase an individual's likelihood of experiencing barriers irrespective of the population density and deprivation level of an area.

The study found that people with low levels of educational attainment are more likely to face all five barriers. People educated to above Leaving Certificate level are 10 per cent less likely to belong to a jobless household, be a lone parent, or have a disability. Across the FET Division, we recognise that many of the barriers experienced by our learners and those who don't engage with us arise from a complex interplay of barriers, personal and family circumstances and individual aspects of the education system itself.

Learner Support

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's FET Division aims to ensure that, as far as is reasonably possible, all learners are provided with the individualised supports required to allow them to fully participate and benefit from the educational opportunities available to them. This is particularly important for learners attending from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds or those who may require additional supports in respect of a disability or other issue. A dedicated network of staffed Learning Hubs has been established in the following locations to facilitate access to individualised supports:

- **O'Connell Avenue Campus, Limerick City**
- **LCFE Mulgrave Street Campus, Limerick City**
- **Kilmallock Road Campus, Limerick City**
- **Raheen Campus, Limerick City**
- **Kilmallock Town Campus, Limerick County**
- **Ennis Campus, Clare County**
- **Shannon Campus, Clare County**
- **Kilrush Campus, Clare County**

Learners can register for individual supports when they:

- **require learning support or reasonable examination accommodations due to a diagnosed disability, an on-going physical or mental health condition, or a learning difficulty;**
- **need access to computers or technology to help participate on their provision;**
- **need help with reading, writing, maths, study skills, computer skills or in improving their English language skills;**
- **would like to access career or educational advice and information;**
- **would like to access the learner counselling service.**

The location of the Learning Hubs and the range of individual supports available through them has been based geographically on the unemployment blackspot/ deprivation information available and the complex needs of our diverse learning group. (During 2020, over 1,100 learners accessed a range of supports facilitated by the Learning Hubs).

07 Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Self-assessment

Within Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's FET Division, the active inclusion of our learners means supporting educational equality and promoting the inclusion, participation and resilience of individuals and communities. Accepting the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013) definition of mental health as *a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential* places Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing at the core of our work as an ETB FET Division.

Across the FET Division, we recognise that all our campuses and provision have been engaged in significant work in the area of Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing. It was important for us to undertake a self-assessment to establish the themes emerging and enable the sharing of best practice. This provided the FET Steering Group with an appraisal of the current position in order to develop next steps for improvement, enabling us to respond to Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing at a service wide, strategic level. In developing the Self-Assessment tool we drew heavily from research and resources made available through the Association of Colleges, UK[25] , specifically their publication "Supporting Student Mental Health and Wellbeing in Colleges: A Resource Pack"[26]. A subgroup of the FET Steering Group including the Director of FET developed a Self-Assessment Questionnaire, (See Appendix 1 for Self-Assessment Questionnaire) which was circulated to all FET staff in October 2021.

In total, 131 co-ordinators and provision staff responded to the questionnaire, providing a self-assessment of the processes and activities currently in place to support Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing across the FET division. Respondents shared best practice models and provided ideas on what should be included in any future policy framework and action plan. A summary of the themes and actions emerging from this self-assessment have informed our approach to this Framework and Action Plan and these are outlined in Appendix 2 under the following headings:

- **Management of Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing at Provision Level**
- **Learning Environment**
- **Curriculum Supports**
- **Supporting the Learner Voice**
- **Staff Development and Support**
- **Local Best Practice Examples**

[25] https://www.aoc.co.uk/general-further-education-colleges

[26] https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/Supporting%20Student%20Mental%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20in%20Colleges%20-%20A%20Resource%20Pack_0.pdf

The audit captured a range of processes and structures in place across provision to support Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing. However, FET practitioners on the ground also highlighted the increasing number of FET learners who are presenting with mental health challenges. This has exacerbated during Covid. The creation of an overarching framework and action plan is a priority for respondents and access to centralised resources, training, curriculum and supports are critical to this.

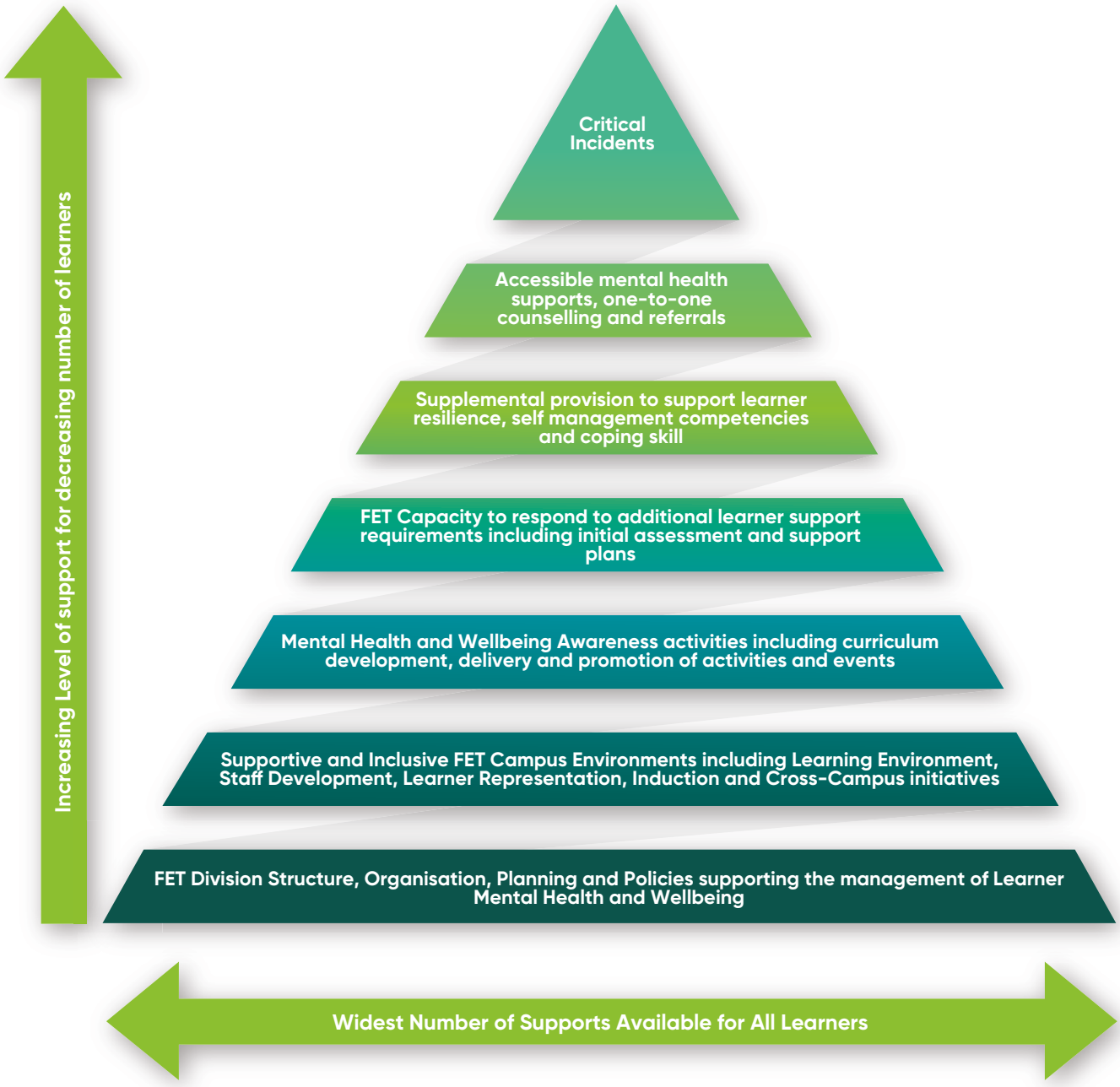
A draft Framework and Action Plan was developed and circulated to staff in November 2021 and this was further developed and modified in response to feedback with a second draft widely circulated on MS Teams and by email in January 2022.

Universal Design Concepts provide a framework for the development of supportive and inclusive FET Campus environments. In providing feedback on the draft action plan, one FET practitioner highlighted that, *"the significance of the Universal Design for Learning Framework cannot ever be overstated. Not only does it help in reducing barriers but it does so in a way that does not single out people. It does so without prejudice promoting an appreciation of the fact that we all learn in different ways"*. (Feedback from Version 2 of the Action Plan, January 2022).

Feedback on the idea of having a campus-specific MHW designated person or team is very positive while including learners in the co-creation of responses is critical. One FET practitioner's feedback provided the following insight *"as each cohort of learners have different tolerances of what is difficult, what is manageable and what they accept in their daily activities their feedback is valuable. It may guide events or programmes. Some of the questions I was asked ranged from how to live a happy life, how do I manage my teenage son that won't leave his room. How do I get rid of anxiety? (all possible interventions-programs-links with NGO's).* (Feedback from Version 2 of the Action Plan, January 2022).

As part of the research, 45 respondents from across provision have indicated a willingness to become involved in the development and rollout of initiatives, in effect "Mental Health and Wellbeing Champions". This reflects the very strong value placed on the Mental Health, Wellbeing and happiness of our learners by our staff team.

08 Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan



Level 1:
FET Division

The FET Division will ensure that appropriate Structures, Plans, Resources and Policies are in place to Support Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing

What	Who Leads	When
Establish a FET-wide Mental Health and Wellbeing Implementation team	AISS/Provision	Q2 2022
Establish Mental Health and Wellbeing Teams in each Campus	AISS/Provision	Q2 2022
Develop a list of resources to be provided for each campus including – Noticeboards, Calendar of Events, funding for campus-wide activities	FET MHW Team	Q2 2022
Develop a suite of online resources to support Mental Health and Wellbeing to be promoted ser-vice-wide through the Learning Hubs and the Virtual Learning Hub	FET MHW Team TEL Officer	Q2 2022
Develop a quarterly newsletter on Learner Initiatives which support Mental Health and Wellbeing	FET MHW Team	Q2 2022
Establish good linkages with National and Local Agencies, Higher Education Institutions and Groups established to promote good Mental Health and Wellbeing	FET MHW Team	Q2 2022
Review policies and procedures in respect of Child Protection, Adult Safeguarding, Critical Incidents, Anti-Bullying, Learner Charter, etc. to ensure they are resourced, impactful and teams are trained and in place.	FET MHW Team	Q2 2022
Work with the PLD Co-ordinator to build staff capacity and capability to engage and support our learners. Topics include knowing boundaries, supportive listening skills, and knowing when and where to refer learners who need additional external supports	FET MHW Team PLD Co-ordina-tor	Q3 2022
Explore how compassionate consideration and alternative forms of assessment can be facilitated to support learners experiencing stress and mental health difficulties associated with their learning and assessment while maintaining the integrity of the curriculum.	FET MHW Team QA Officer	Q3 2020

Level 2:
FET Campus

The FET Division will ensure that all our FET Campuses are inclusive and support the development of good Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing. This will stimulate campus-wide cultural change that de-stigmatises mental health issues, promotes wellbeing and encourages learners to seek help when they need it.

What	Who Leads	When
Establish Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHW) Teams in each Campus which include learner representatives who are supported in this role	AISS/Provision	Q2 2022
Ensure ongoing development of high quality physical learning environments, ensuring, where possible, that learners have a space for self-directed learning and collaboration.	Director of FET Managers	Ongoing
At Campus level, ensure that mental health, disability and learner support statements are promoted on all communication/pamphlets. It is particularly important this semester to also articulate support for learner wellbeing and flexibility with respect to COVID-related absences.	Campus MHW Team	Q3 2022
Ensure each campus has a wellbeing noticeboard and uses ETB Smart Monitors to provide learners with information on wellbeing, resources, careers, H&S notices etc.	Campus MHW Team/AISS	Q2 2022
At Campus level, ensure that designated people are trained and in place to support, where appropriate, policies and procedures in respect of Child Protection, Adult Safeguarding, Critical Incident Teams etc.	Campus MHW Team/AISS	Q2 2022
Develop partnerships on campus and in the community with health services to support learner mental health and encourage information workshops and events and establish and promote referral pathway information for both internal and external support services.	FET MHW Team Campus MHW Team/AISS	Q2 2022

Level 3: Enhanced Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

Education and Training are key to an improved understanding of and attitudes to Mental Health and Wellbeing. The FET Division will ensure that Mental Health and Wellbeing is embedded into the curriculum and that both learner and staff have access to information and training.

What	Who Leads	When
Establish a range of training for learners and staff to support wellbeing and mental health.	Campus MHW Team/AISS PLD Co-ordinator	Q2 2022 Q3 2022
Survey learners on how they would like to contribute to the FET Campus' wellbeing in general, and their own wellbeing in particular. Learners should be included on the specific information, skills and strategies they would like to learn in class and out of class that would support their wellbeing.	AISS/Provision	Q2 2022 and ongoing
Develop induction resources and materials which provide early signposts to the supports available to learners including access to counselling, reasonable accommodation, compassionate consideration etc.	Campus MHW Team/AISS	Q3 2022 and ongoing
Ensure that all learners have access to group Information, Recruitment and Guidance Sessions as part of their curriculum.	Campus MHW Team/IRGSS	Q3 2022 and ongoing
List activities, initiatives and programmes already established on campus which foster personal growth. Prepare an infographic connecting these programs, outlining specific aspects of personal growth, and promote it to learners, especially among those struggling with mental health concerns.	Campus MHW Team ETB Comms Team	Q3 2022 and ongoing
Embed mental health awareness in the certified and uncertified curriculum in an integrated manner. Example life skills, resilience, Bystander Training, management of challenges/adversity and adaptability, inter culturalism, mental health literacy.	Campus MHW Team/AISS/QA	Q3 2022 and ongoing
Establish a service-wide calendar of highly promoted Mental Health and Wellbeing awareness raising interventions.	AISS/Provision	Q3 2022 and ongoing
Establish transition supports for learners throughout the further education journey: pre-entry, induction, progression.	AISS/Provision	Q2 2022 and ongoing

Level 4:
Additional Support Requirement

Promote FET Capacity to respond to additional learner support requirements including initial assessment and support plans.

What	Who Leads	When
Under the Learner Mentoring Initiative, (Youthreach only), key staff will ensure learners have access to their specific learner support plans, individual mentor and mentoring structure and their Individual Education Plan.	Youthreach management LMI Co-ordinators	Q2 2022
Learners with additional support requirement will be encouraged to register for supports through the Active Inclusion Support Service. Individual supports are available to all learners under the following areas: • Supports with Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Skills • Educational Guidance and Information support • Psychological counselling support • Support in getting access to a laptop/device • Diagnosed Disability Supports for Learning • Diagnosed Disability requiring Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment/ Examinations	AISS/Provision	Q2 2022 and ongoing
Core Skills/AISS are available to provide support on initial assessment in respect of Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Skills.	AISS/Provision	Q2 2022

Level 5: Supplemental Provision

Supplemental provision to support learner resilience, self-management competencies and coping skills.

What	Who Leads	When
Learners with additional support requirement will be encouraged to register for supports through the Active Inclusion Support Service. Individual supports are available to all learners under the following areas: • Supports with Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Skills • Educational Guidance and Information support • Psychological counselling support • Support in getting access to a laptop/ device • Diagnosed Disability Supports for Learning • Diagnosed Disability requiring Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment/ Examinations	AISS/Provision	Q2 2022 and ongoing
AISS Learning Hub Team will link with the Campus MHW Teams to develop a range of supplemental programmes to be delivered on site to support learners. These may include Study skills/ managing exam stress/ learning support classes/ disability awareness/ building resilience etc.	AISS/Provision Campus MHW Team	Q2 2022 and ongoing

Level 6:
One-to-One Supports

Accessible mental health supports, 121 counselling and referrals.

What	Who Leads	When
Ensure learners are aware of opportunities to access the information, recruitment and guidance services through the promotion of these services at induction, on course and at pre-exit/progression points in the learning journey.	IRGSS/Campus MHW Team Provision	Q2 2022 and ongoing
Ensure learners are encouraged and supported to avail of flexible counselling options available through the Active Inclusion Support Service, including online mental health support services, varied appointment scheduling options, walk-in, crisis intervention, embedded counselling, consultations and evening availability.	AISS/Campus MHW Team Provision	Q2 2022 and ongoing
Offer Mentoring and Counselling as part of Youthreach Provision under the Learner Mentoring Initiative.	Youthreach	Q1 2022 and ongoing
Develop partnerships on campus and in the community with health services to support learner mental health and establish and promote referral pathway information for both internal and external support services.	FET MHW Campus MHW Team/ Provision	Q2 2022 and ongoing

Level 7: Critical Incidents

The FET Division aims to ensure that critical incidents can be dealt with effectively and promptly, and that appropriate systems and responsibilities are in place to do so.

What	Who Leads	When
All Campus MHW Teams will review the Critical Incident Protocol annually to ensure familiarity with the roles and processes.	FET MHW Campus MHW Team/ Provision	Q2 2022 and ongoing
All Campus MHW Teams will ensure that a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has been established within each Campus and contains named individuals in the following roles: Manager, Co-ordinator, Staff Liaison, Learner Liaison, Parent/ Guardian Liaison, Network/Media/Community Liaison and Administration.	FET MHW Campus MHW Team/ Provision	Q2 2022 and ongoing
Appropriate support and training will be provided for the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT), and clearly accessible directions and information will be available for all members of the FET community.	FET MHW Campus MHW Team/ Provision	Q2 2022 and ongoing
All critical incidents will be recorded in the 'Critical Incident Form' and, where appropriate, Head Office will ensure any incidents are reported to the national Health and Safety Authority.	FET MHW Campus MHW Team/ Provision	Ongoing

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APPENDIX 1 | FET Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Self-Assessment

As a FET Division, we recognise that we have a responsibility to create an environment that promotes learner and staff wellbeing and proactively supports good mental health for learners and staff. The Active Inclusion Support Service is currently planning a FET Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework to support the work at provision level.

To be impactful, the FET Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework will be accompanied by a clear implementation plan which will be resourced and supported by the Active Inclusion Support Service. As a first step, we need to audit what processes and activities are currently in place to support Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and we really appreciate your reflections and ideas on what needs to be included in the FET Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework.

Provision Details

1. Name of FET Campus
2. Area of Provision/ Service
3. Your Name
4. Your Role
5. Your email address

Leadership and Management

6. Leadership and Management - Within your provision - how are we doing:

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Learner wellbeing and mental health (MH) issues feature prominently in management concerns	○	○	○	○	○
Strategies and actions are in place at provision level to promote wellbeing for all learners	○	○	○	○	○
We have strategies and an action plan in place to address the needs of learners with mental health (MH) issues	○	○	○	○	○

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
There is a designated person within my provision leading activity in respect of wellbeing and mental health.	○	○	○	○	○

7. Any comments in relation to the management of Learner Wellbeing and Mental Health at Provision Level

8. Any suggestions for future ideas and priorities in relation to the management of Learner Wellbeing and Mental Health at Provision Level

Learning Environment

9. Learning Environment - within your provision - how are we doing:

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Behaviour management policies and learner codes of conduct which address and minimise bullying are impactful.	○	○	○	○	○
Learners feel safe to discuss wellbeing and MH concerns with staff.	○	○	○	○	○
Induction materials, posters, websites, displays etc. promote where support on wellbeing issues can be accessed.	○	○	○	○	○
Our provision takes opportunities to publicise prevalence of MH issues e.g. World MH Day.	○	○	○	○	○

10. Any suggestions or ideas in relation to how the learning environment can support good learner wellbeing and positive mental health at provision level

Curriculum Supports

11. Curriculum Supports - Within your provision - how are we doing:

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Strategies for wellbeing, promoting resilience and MH feature prominently in key strategic curriculum documents.	○	○	○	○	○
Learners get support to consider their own wellbeing and its importance at induction.	○	○	○	○	○
Learners get the opportunity to identify and build on their strengths and identify individual development targets.	○	○	○	○	○
There are resources available to support staff in covering wellbeing, including developing resilience, and good MH.	○	○	○	○	○
Learners get additional support where needed to consider their wellbeing in the context of examination periods and transition out of FET.	○	○	○	○	○

12. Any suggestions for future ideas and priorities in relation to Curriculum Supports to promote Learner Wellbeing and Mental Health at Provision Level.

Learner Voice

13. Learner Voice - Within your provision - how are we doing:

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
We use the learner voice, including surveys, class representatives etc. to help inform and shape teaching on and services for wellbeing.	○	○	○	○	○

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
We have a structure in place which helps learner representatives raise wellbeing issues and concerns.	○	○	○	○	○
Learner evaluations include and address wellbeing issues.	○	○	○	○	○
There are resources available to support staff in covering wellbeing, including developing resilience, and good MH.	○	○	○	○	○

14. Any suggestions for future ideas and priorities in relation to supporting the learner voice to promote Learner Wellbeing and Mental Health at Provision Level.

Staff Development and Support

15. Staff Development and Support - Within your provision - how are we doing:

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Staff have been trained to understand the importance of wellbeing and to recognise the signs of anxiety, poor MH and know to whom they need to make a referral, as part of safeguarding procedures & training.	○	○	○	○	○
Staff in your provision have been trained in the delivery of wellbeing in the curriculum, including assessing opportunities to address wellbeing with learners.	○	○	○	○	○
Teaching staff covering MH in specialist subjects (e.g. health and care) have been trained in delivery of MH in their curriculum.	○	○	○	○	○
Staff who regularly undertake one-to-one work with learners have training in supportive listening and in helping students self-support/ manage minor MH issues.	○	○	○	○	○

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Staff recognise basic warning signs and know how to deal with a safeguarding disclosure and correctly follow safeguarding procedures.	○	○	○	○	○
There are designated internal resources to support learners needing additional support with MH needs e.g. guidance, learner support.	○	○	○	○	○
Staff are clear on Child Protection and Adult Safeguarding procedures including clarity on their role.	○	○	○	○	○

16. Any comments in relation to how staff development and support contributes to promoting learner wellbeing and positive mental health at provision level.

17. Any suggestions for future ideas and priorities in relation to Staff Development and Support to promote Learner Wellbeing and Mental Health at Provision Level.

Final Thoughts

18. Please share any examples of local best practice which you feel have a positive impact on Learner Wellbeing and promotion of good Mental Health.

19. Please provide suggestions for ideas and priorities not covered.

20. Would you like to be involved in a service-wide working group overseeing the development of the Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and Action Plan.

○ Yes

○ No

APPENDIX 2 | Self-Assessment Results - Emerging Themes

In October 2021, 131 co-ordinators and provision staff participated in a self-assessment of the processes and activities currently in place to support Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing across the FET Division. Respondents were invited to share best practice models and provide ideas on what needs to be included in any future policy framework and action plan. The audit looked at supports across a number of headings and a summary of the themes and actions emerging from this self-assessment are summarised below. These have been reflected in our Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.

Management of Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing at Provision Level:

- Each campus should have a designated person responsible for service-wide MH and wellbeing initiatives.
- Including MH and Wellbeing in Induction materials is important – signposting to the relevant supports both on campus and externally.
- Providing access to information to both learners and their families – noticeboards/flyers.
- Impact of Covid is evident in the campuses.
- Adding MH and Wellbeing to the agenda for staff meetings.
- Having access to counselling (where required) is important.

Future ideas / priorities in relation to the management of Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing at Provision Level:

- The development of a Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework is a priority for the FET Division. It's imperative that we strive to create an environment that promotes learner and staff wellbeing and proactively supports good mental health for learners and staff.
- Development of Green spaces / recreation facilities where possible. Use of both OETCs for promotion of learner wellbeing e.g. wellbeing on the water programmes etc.
- Music/ Arts Events.
- Promote access to counselling.
- Centralised campaign across the entire sector (during the first few weeks especially).
- Pieta House's Amber Flag initiative aims to create healthy, inclusive environments that support mental wellbeing.

- Designated mental health co-ordinator on site.
- Quarterly Newsletter on Mental Health Issues.
- Set up a Learner Wellbeing task group with representation from staff areas involved.

Learning Environment

Suggestions on how the Learning Environment can support good learner wellbeing and positive mental health at provision level

- Creating a positive feeling on campus is central to this. Staff must have an awareness of how they are perceived by learners and actively work to promote a culture of fun, safety and support within the staff team and in the classroom.
- High quality physical learning environments to include recreational and outdoor spaces, use of ETB TV display points in all campuses with learner information on wellbeing, resources, careers, H&S notices etc.
- Increasing awareness of the benefits of maintaining good mental health by conducting regular workshops, introducing/developing ongoing programmes (e.g. music fests, literature fests, sporting events, etc.) that address this need, etc.
- a bigger role for the students union across the sector.

Curriculum Supports

Priorities in relation to Curriculum Supports which promote Learner Wellbeing and Mental Health at Provision Level

- Induction materials and clear signposting.
- Mental health awareness and practice should be an integral part of curriculum design. For example, the principals of UDL can be applied to partially achieve this goal. Other measures include expanding/modifying the curriculum to include activity-based learning, using innovative technologies, innovative teaching methods, etc.
- SPHE have good resources to aid with mental health.
- Transitioning can be a difficult time for learners. It is a time of excitement as well as anxiety. We need to provide more support during this time.
- SPHE and LMI provide good models which may have elements which could be extended across the wider FET community.

Supporting the Learner Voice

Future ideas and priorities in relation to Learner Voice supporting Learner Wellbeing and Mental Health at Provision Level

- Support the development of Learner Representatives/ Learner Council/Student Union model

- More Leadership Roles for Learners across the ETB.
- Having comfortable couches or chairs for a space for learners to relax.
- A representative from NYCI or similar would be very useful to introduce learners to the reasons having a voice is necessary, the impact having representatives can have for them, and how they can direct it positively to promote their wellbeing and MH.

Staff Development and Support

How Staff Development and Support can contribute to promoting learner wellbeing and positive mental health at provision level

- Training can only promote knowledge about mental health and wellbeing. The actual practice of this knowledge requires readily available resources, support from management, and a culture of valuing wellbeing and positive mental health within campuses/provisions and the wider organisation.
- Staff development and support is really important in helping staff recognise the signs of poor mental health in learners.
- CPD help to build staff capacity and capability to engage and support our learners. Topics include knowing boundaries, supportive listening skills, and knowing when/where to refer learners who need additional external supports.
- While staff have received all relevant information it would be good to offer refresher training on Child Protection and Adult Safeguarding procedures and training in supportive listening.

Staff Development and Support Priorities

Suggestions for future ideas and priorities in relation to Staff Development and Support:

- An ETB online video resource around learner and staff wellbeing, supports available and positive actions to promote wellbeing would be good.
- It is difficult to organize training for evening instructors because many of them have alternative employment during the day unless we had an online course they could follow in their own time.
- Mental Health First Aid Training for all Staff.
- Training from a representative like Pieta House or Jigsaw could run a day training to show different strategies to ensure we are using all the right signposting for learners in difficulty with MH.
- Some physical activities for staff i.e. desk mobility stretching 10 min sessions weekly or twice a month to teach staff the benefits of stretching. Outdoor stretching class is 10 min sessions throughout the term.

- Staff who regularly undertake one-to-one work with learners have training in supportive listening and in helping learners self-support/manage minor MH issues; this is an area that we could improve.

Best Practice Examples

Local Best Practice Examples which have had a positive impact on Learner Wellbeing and the promotion of good Mental Health:

- Good induction resources around mental health and wellbeing.
- Ending the class whatever topic it is with a few minutes of mindfulness.
- Health and Wellbeing Week held every year before the October Break.
- Having a Class Rep in every class for SU.
- Promoting Wellbeing and MH on designated days throughout the calendar year, for example National Health & Wellbeing Day, Positive Mental Health Week etc.
- Mental health modules as part of the SPHE programme.
- The Amber Flag Initiative organises events throughout the year. Examples of activities which have been very positive for staff and learners include a Positivity Board with positive and inspirational quotes, wellness events online on mindfulness, staff donate unwanted Christmas gifts which are raffled on Valentine's Day and food provided for the event, online cookery and craft-making videos and many more.
- Outdoor Education activities and time in nature combined with a positive learning environment can help to promote wellbeing. OETC Kilfinane provides 'Wellbeing on the water - Kayak sessions' and a Wellbeing programme for post-primary students which focuses on developing wellbeing, in particular resilience. (This could be adapted for FET learners)
- Promotion of national wellbeing activities at local level, Mentoring programme, in-house courses for learners e.g. Fuse Cyberbullying course, Wellbeing course, Bodywhys Webinars, involvement in Limerick Mental Health activities, SHARE programme.
- Provision of a positive and safe learning environment/Promotion of wellbeing and positive mental health/ Promotion of supports available to learners who have mental health issues/ Promotion of Learner Union and Learner Union clubs and societies/ Promotion of Learner Voice through learner feedback and class representatives/ Promotion of digital wellbeing course and health and wellbeing week.

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