



CREATE A Whole University Strategy

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Let's introduce ourselves...

Freya
Gray

Michael
Priestley



Before we begin

Timings

The webinar will be approximately 90 minutes. We do not have any scheduled comfort breaks but please feel free to step away from your screen if needed.

Recording

Please note that this webinar will be recorded and published on our website for others to watch on-demand.

Sharing personal experience

Only if you're comfortable doing so, you may be asked to share your own personal experiences during the session to help with education and training.

Safety and openness

Sensitive topics may be discussed during this webinar, please feel free to step away if needed. We want to foster a sense of safety and openness during this webinar where everyone listens to one another and supports each other's perspectives. At the end of the session, we will sign post to organisations to access further support.



About us

Charlie Waller was a strong, funny, popular, good-looking and kind young man, with a close and loving family. To the outside world, he had everything to live for. Yet in 1997, at the age of 28, Charlie died by suicide. He was suffering from depression.

In response to this tragedy, his family founded The Charlie Waller Trust, to open up the conversation around mental health, and to ensure that young people are able to understand and look after their mental health and to spot the signs in others.

Charlie sits at the heart of our story, our vision and our purpose.



Supporting young people's mental health

Our vision

A world in which young people, and families, have the support, the skills and the resilience to be mentally well for life.



Evidence based training



Positive

We take a positive approach to mental health. We focus on prevention and early intervention, and recognise the importance of offering hope.



Proven

Our consultancy, training and resources are all based on sound clinical evidence.



Practical

We give people practical strategies and tools to care for their mental health, and to support others in doing so.



This webinar

- Understand the principles and processes for creating and reviewing a mental health strategy as part of a whole institution approach
- Design an evidence based mental health strategy appropriate to your context
- Embed diverse co-production in the design, delivery, and dissemination of your mental health strategy
- Evaluate the effectiveness of your mental health strategy
- Develop and implement a strategic mental health action plan



What is a whole institution approach and why is it important?





Student Mental Health

- Undergraduate students have been found to report substantially lower levels of subjective wellbeing than the general population aged 16 to 24 [Office for National Statistics, 2021].
- Students report higher levels of psychological distress at university and a greater demand for university support services than previous cohorts [Hughes, Priestley & Spanner, 2025].
- Particular student demographics report disproportionately poor mental health outcomes [Lewis & Stiebahl, 2025].



A Whole University Approach

- A whole university approach aims to promote wellbeing across the whole university experience and for the whole university population.
- 'A whole university approach means not only providing well-resourced mental health services and interventions but taking a multi-stranded approach which recognises that all aspects of university life can support and promote mental health and wellbeing' (Hughes & Spanner, 2024, p.10).
- A whole university approach may be the most effective strategy to improve mental health outcomes for the whole university community (Zile, Priestley & Hughes, 2024).



A Whole University Strategy

- A strategy is necessary in complex organisations to join up the multiple interacting actors, factors and systems that influence mental health outcomes for different members of the university community (Zile, Priestley & Hughes, 2024).
- There remains a lack of clarity regarding how a whole university approach should be strategically implemented and evaluated in practice
- What does this look like from a young person's perspective?



The CREATE Toolkit

The toolkit is designed to help CREATE an evidence-based mental health strategy and associated policies through:

- Coproduction
- Risk Mitigation
- Evaluation
- Accessibility
- Togetherness
- Embeddedness





Why and how should I embed co-production in developing my strategy?





Freya and coproduction

- Youth Ambassador at the trust
- Also a Geography undergraduate
- Sustainability steering group
- Webinars
- Podcast episode
- Staff training



What are the benefits for me and the projects?

Benefits to the Young Person

- Experience developing resources
- Influencing change
- Positives emerge from past challenges



Benefits to the projects

- Authentic lived experience input
- Including new perspectives and ideas
- Challenges power imbalances
- More effective outcomes





How do you facilitate co- production in your setting?

Have you experienced any challenges?





Challenges to co-production and overcoming them

Challenges

- Time
- Expense
- Safeguarding
- Echo chambers

Overcoming them

- Clear expectations of the task at hand and what you want done
- Remember the value of coproduction
- Consider consulting policies around working with those with lived experience
- Diverse recruitment



Barriers to student participation and overcoming them

Challenges

- Time
- Confidence
- Hearing from diverse voices

Overcoming them

- Clear communication of time commitment
- Encourage and value all responses
- Offer compensation
- Consider reaching out to different societies eg cultural or sports to hear from different groups



**How do I know and
show my strategy is
effective?**





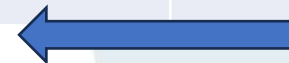
A Theory of Change

-  A theory of change shows the evaluation indicators required to demonstrate your activities have led to the observed outcomes and intended impact
-  It uses a bespoke causal analysis co-produced in your setting and informed by the range of evidence available
-  Gaining agreement on a theory of change from all stakeholders at the outset helps attribute impact to your activities.



A Theory of Change In Practice

Inputs	Processes	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
What resources will you need?	What are the key activities?	How will you measure the initial success of the project?	How will the project be effective in the medium term?	What is the ultimate strategic impact?
<i>Senior leadership commitment Funding</i>	<i>Regular training</i>	<i>Peer support schemes Visibility of services</i>	<i>Increased belonging Reduced stigma</i>	<i>Improved wellbeing, retention and performance</i>



- 1 Identify high level impact
- 2 Identify required interim outcomes and causal mechanisms
- 3 Identify evidence required to show outcomes have been met
- 4 Identify gaps in existing evidence



Evaluation Measures

- Combines multiple evaluation mechanisms and methods
 - Strategic outcomes
 - Experience indicators
 - Wellbeing measures



Types of Evaluation



Formative Evaluation



Process Evaluation



Outcome Evaluation



Impact Evaluation



How do I apply evidence to my context?





**Where do you find
evidence related to
mental health?**





Being Pragmatic about Complexity

-  Evidence is **varied**
-  Evidence is **context-specific**
-  Evidence is **collective**
-  Evidence is **ongoing**
-  Evidence is **practice focused**

(Long, McDermott & Meadows, 2018)



Using Evidence

-  Use existing research to help identify potential approaches
-  Evaluate the context and consider lived experience
-  Implement an action plan
-  Evaluate in your context



How do I get started?





Creating an Action Plan



An action plan records the activities, responsibilities, timelines, and evaluation methods for implementing a whole institution strategy

Strategic Goal	Action	Responsibility	Resource	Timeline	KPI
Promote prevention and early intervention	Embed mental health awareness e-learning in student and staff induction	HR director and Head of Student Services	Staff time to scope and embed resource	Q3	80% of staff trained



**What is one thing
you will now apply
or do differently?**





Action Ideas

- Map existing mental health and wellbeing policies, initiatives, committees and/or evidence sources.
- Establish a strategic working group
- Nominate a mental health strategy champion at senior level
- Conduct a training needs assessment
- Conduct a benchmarking exercise with key stakeholders
- Identify one department to pilot a theory of change approach



Resources

Student Mental Health: The Role and Experiences of Academics

Gareth Hughes, Mehr Panjwani, Priya Tulcidas and Dr Nicola Byrom

Accessible report



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Mental health and wellbeing



Find out what you can do to look after your physical and mental health.

20 resources:

 ARTICLE

Second term blues →

 4 MINUTE READ

If you're finding the second term more challenging than you expected, taking some steps might make it easier to manage.

 ARTICLE

Studying successfully with a mental health diagnosis →

 4 MINUTE READ

If mental health difficulties are affecting your ability to study, these tips can help to put you in a better position to succeed and

 ARTICLE

Managing the impact of global events →

 4 MINUTE READ

Events in the world can take a toll on our emotions. Find out how to adjust your relationship to the news without losing touch with what's happening.



Any questions?





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