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REGIONAL BOARD REPORT

Subject: Student Mental Health Agreement	**Purpose:** **For Approval** ☒ **For Discussion** ☐ **For Information** ☐
Prepared by: Amy Brydon	**Date:** 17 February 2021

Purpose: To present the Student Mental Health Agreement 2021 for approval

Linked to Strategic Ambition: Proactively engage with our community and stakeholders to ensure our practice reflects their needs

Executive Summary:

The Student Mental Health Agreement outlines the way in which the College and the Students' Association will work together to improve the mental health and wellbeing of students.

The various work streams outlined in the agreement are outlined below;

- We will develop and implement ongoing campaigns to improve mental health and wellbeing
- We will improve the accessibility of support services
- We will focus on preventative aspects of mental health and wellbeing to raise overall awareness of mental health issues and help students self-manage their mental health

Recommendation: To approve the SMHA

Previous Committee Approvals:
Equalities and Inclusion Committee

For publication ☒	**For publication with redactions** ☐	**Not for publication** ☐

Borders College Student Mental Health Agreement 2020-21

Our Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA) sets out three areas the College and Students' Association will work on together to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Borders College students. The SMHA supports the aims outlined in the College's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Student data from 2017-2020 has shown that of all recorded disabilities, mental health conditions have the greatest impact on retention. In 2018-19 the retention of student who had declared a mental health condition dipped as low as 50%. With this in mind, it is important we continue to focus on protecting and improving the mental health and wellbeing of our students.

Our aims for the 2020/21 SMHA are outlined below. They were developed through consultation with student representatives, Student Officers, the SMHA working group and the Equalities and Inclusion Committee;

Aim 1: We will develop and implement ongoing campaigns to improve mental health and wellbeing

Campaigns will encourage students to a) talk more about mental health and b) raise awareness of how to access support services. Campaigns will be coordinated by the Students' Association and delivered in partnership with the college.

Actions:

- Identify issues most likely to have an impact on student mental health and wellbeing
- Run campaigns that address the range of challenges students face
- Raise student awareness of the support services available and how to access them
- Develop and maintain relationships with external support organisations

Measures of Success:

- Issues affecting mental health and wellbeing are identified
- Delivery of events relating to the issues raised
- The college can demonstrate it is working with local support organisations to improve student mental health and wellbeing
- Students tell us that campaigns we run are beneficial to their mental health and wellbeing, and that this work has improved their awareness of the support available

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Aim 2: We will improve the accessibility of support services

Results from Students' Association surveys suggest that accessibility to support services can be challenging for some students.

In a survey of 380 students, 55% of respondents disclosing mental health issues had not engaged with Student Services. Of all respondents disclosing a disability, 31% reported issues contacting the student finding team and 50% of had experienced barriers to contacting the ISLT team. The survey also showed that 43% respondents disclosing a learning disability had not been in touch with the learning support team. Although the survey has a relatively low sample size, the results suggest that there is more work to be done in terms of improving the accessibility of our services.

Student data has shown that disabled students are more likely to withdraw from college and less likely to achieve their qualification than non-disabled students. Of all recorded disabilities, mental health has been shown to have the biggest impact on retention and success.

Based on this evidence, we believe it is important to identify and address the specific challenges disabled students are facing to ensure that as far as possible, we are able to protect the mental health and wellbeing of this group.

Actions:

- Identify student groups who experience additional barriers to accessing support
- Engage with students to explore the ways in which barriers to accessing support can be overcome
- Make the necessary changes to improve the accessibility of our services

Measures of Success:

- Student groups identified
- Evidence that feedback from focus groups and student surveys is used to shape services and support available
- Action plan developed
- Increase in number of students accessing support services
- Students tell us they are more satisfied with the accessibility of support services

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Aim 3: We will focus on preventative aspects of mental health and wellbeing to raise overall awareness of mental health issues and help students self-manage their mental health.[1]

Due to COVID-19, students have been learning online in some capacity since March 2020 with limited or no access to college buildings. With online learning expected to continue, and reduced access to on-campus support, we must consider how we can enable students to manage their own mental health.

By creating opportunities for students to access information, skills and techniques that can prevent or alleviate the impact of poor mental health, we can build a more resilient and independent student community.

Actions:

- Ensure a range of wellbeing support options are available and accessible to students
- Regularly promote self-management resources in a variety of ways
- Develop a student mental health forum to drive improvements to on-campus mental health support

Measures of Success

- Increased engagement with wellbeing support resources
- Students tell us they are aware that self-management resources are available
- A mental health forum is established with evidence of feedback being used to drive service development

Ann Letham
Student President

Angela Cox
Principal

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[1] Links to themes 2, 3 & 5 within the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Action	Measure	Progress	Detail
We will develop and implement ongoing campaigns to improve mental health and wellbeing			
Identify issues most likely to have an impact on student mental health and wellbeing	Issues affecting mental health and wellbeing are identified		
Run campaigns that address the range of challenges students face	Events are delivered Students tell us that campaigns are beneficial to their mental health and wellbeing		
Raise student awareness of the support services available and how to access them	Increase in number of students accessing support services		
Develop and maintain relationships with external support organisations	The college can demonstrate it is working with local support organisations to improve student mental health and wellbeing		
We will improve the accessibility of support services			
Identify student groups who experience additional barriers to accessing support	Student groups identified		
Engage with students to explore the ways in which barriers to accessing support can be overcome	Evidence that feedback from focus groups and student surveys is used to shape services and support available		
Make the necessary changes to improve the accessibility of our services	Action plan developed Increase in number of students accessing support services		

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	Students tell us they are satisfied with the accessibility of support services		
We will focus on preventative aspects of mental health and wellbeing to raise overall awareness of mental health issues and help students self-manage their mental health.			
Ensure a range of wellbeing support options are available and accessible to students	Increased engagement with wellbeing support resources		
Regularly promote self-management resources in various ways	Students tell us they are aware that self-management resources are available		
Develop a student mental health forum to drive improvements in local mental health support	A mental health forum is established with evidence of feedback being used to drive service development		

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