

Information Sheet: Peer Wellbeing Support

Mission Statement

To provide University-wide, a confidential listening and signposting service where students can support their peers with emotional and practical support.

Peer wellbeing support is a **student led support programme** that encompasses three interrelated strands:

- 1. Peer wellbeing support for students**
- 2. Peer wellbeing supporter: training**
- 3. Peer wellbeing supporter: supervision.**

1. Peer wellbeing support is run by fellow U of G students known as ‘peer wellbeing supporters’ who provide friendly, professional and **confidential support to students.** Specially trained students provide their peers with **a listening ear in a confidential setting.** Support is provided face to face via individual appointment bookings and drop in service. Supporters provide a space for students to talk about anything that is on their mind for example: exams, university life, loneliness, living away from home, relationships and financial worries. Peer wellbeing supporters will also help signpost to university services. Supporters are trained to escalate risk if this were to arise.

Who are our peer wellbeing supporters? Peer wellbeing supporters are students who are interested in volunteering to provide a listening ear to their peers, as well as providing both emotional and practical support.

2. Training to be a peer wellbeing supporter

Peer wellbeing trainers are part of the ‘Student Life’ team and have been rigorously vetted based on qualifications, professional registration and clinical experience. Trainers are professionally BACP/COSCA/BABCP/HPC registered Counsellors/Psychotherapists/Psychologist’s.

The 30-hour training programme encourages students to learn a wide range of transferable skills i.e. listening, communication, reflection and empathy. Training aims to help students think about independence and interdependence, time management, boundary setting, assertiveness and self-awareness. Supporters are trained to support other fellow students but to also sign post and refer to university services. Peer wellbeing supporters are **not counsellors** and are trained to recognise their own limitations and boundaries. Peer wellbeing supporters will learn to manage crisis situations within the confines of the confidentiality agreement. This process will be supervised by their training supervisors. The training emphasises boundaries, an awareness of limits and where best to signpost to when necessary.

After completion of training students attend an awards ceremony where they receive a training certificate with HEAR recognition and hoodie. Supporters commit to one academic year and attend fortnightly group supervision.

Diagram 1: Training topics



3. Peer wellbeing supporter (Supervision)

Peer wellbeing supporters are required to attend fortnightly supervision with a qualified and registered Counsellor/Psychotherapist/Psychologist. Attendance is necessary in

order to be an active supporter. Supervision provides supporters with a space to talk, learn and reflect with their teams. If a difficult situation arises in between sessions supporters can contact their supervisor via a specific email address for advice. Supporters are trained to follow the university processes in emergency/crisis situation however, supervision can be used as a safe space to confidentially be supported after the crisis.

Peer wellbeing support Events/Activities

In 2016-19 there were approximately 71 trained Peer wellbeing supporters in the University, and we are working hard to create a 'Peer wellbeing support community'. Our team organised the 'University of Glasgow's': 2nd Annual Peer wellbeing support Symposium' with attendance from many of our trained peer wellbeing supporters and staff. Guest speakers included Fatemeh Nokhbatolfoghahai, SRC Student Mental Health Officer who discussed 'Resilience' and students enjoyed the chance to mix and meet peer supporters from other schools.

To date our peer wellbeing supporters have held many successful events in their Schools to raise awareness of their service and highlight mental health/wellbeing for example: 'Feel Good February', 'Throwback Thursday', guest lectures from alumni on 'Mental Health and Challenging Professions' and are regularly involved in Induction activities for new students. Peer wellbeing supporters have invited 'Therapets' and 'PAWS for Thought' to visit students on the campus during exam time and have recently discussed Peer wellbeing support at 'The 1st Adam Smith Gala' which showcased student-led activities within the School of Business.

Student's experience of Peer Support 19/20 (training)

- "All the training in Peer Support has been really valuable in helping me become a better listener and communicator."
- "Everyone was really friendly and open, and the atmosphere was so relaxed."
- "Honestly this has prepared me so well for the world of work, it's been invaluable!"
- "We learned to listen without being judgemental and understand that people have different backgrounds and views."
- "The content was beyond valuable. It has helped me grow exponentially and I have recognised many things about myself. I am excited to move forward and apply my skills."

- “Fantastic! I have grown a lot and learned a tonne about myself.”
- “A strong trust quickly developed between everyone in the group, between each other and our trainer “
- “Volunteering for this has been the best thing I’ve done; I’ve learned so much about my own mental health and how to support others! “

How many Schools/College are involved in Peer Wellbeing Support?

1. School of SPS (2018)
2. School of Business (2017)
3. School of Medicine (2015)
4. School of Vet Medicine (2014)
5. School of Life Sciences (Feb 2020)
6. School of Education (Sept 2020)
7. School of Computing Science (Feb 2020)
8. College of Science & Engineering (Feb2020)
9. College of Arts (four schools) (Feb 2020)

By March 2020, we will have approx.100 trained peer wellbeing supporters on campus to support their peers in schools and colleges.

What research is taking place in this area?

Peer wellbeing support (University of Glasgow) is working in conjunction with Dr Maria Gardani, Professor Stephany Biello and several post graduate students (Psychology). The aim is to conduct a pilot study into the impact of peer support on service users and positive effects when training as peer supporters. The pilot study is currently in phase 2. Phase 1 results indicated most service users report positive effects on mental health and an increased sense of social support. Peer supporters reported developing in-depth understanding of their own mental health, increased sense of self-esteem, more developed communication and reflective skills and insight into key support services within the university. The research also reported some possible unquantified positive outcomes on wellbeing of those close to peer supporters and increased in resilience for peer supports who are experiencing care giver burden through learned skills such as boundary setting. Phase 2 of research aims develop deeper understanding of some of the key findings.

How much time do I need to commit to the role?

Peer wellbeing supporters commit to the role term time, on average 2 hours per week. However, there is flexibility in the role and shared responsibility ensures that no one person takes on too much.

Peer wellbeing supporters are encouraged to put academic studies first and to discuss any change in situation with their supervisor. We may advise that a supporter steps back from their role and returns if/when they feel able do so.

How to I signpost to the service? We are in the process of developing peer wellbeing support in several schools and colleges to be in place for September 2020. More details on how to signpost or contact your college/school peer wellbeing support service will follow via college/school specific communication.

Any general questions on peer wellbeing support please contact the team on:

studentpeersupport@glasgow.ac.uk