

Time to Change Pledge – Creating an Action Plan

Union Council resolves:

To note the draft action plan below and commit to signing the time to change pledge.

Why do we need an action plan?

The action plan is the heart of our Pledge commitment. To achieve lasting change within our institution, it's important to create a plan of tangible activity to break down mental health stigma. The action plan is designed to be a starting point for our plans. We will detail the actions we are committed to delivering within our organisation to tackle stigma and discrimination around mental health. It can also celebrate activity we have already delivered. The action plan should be a living and breathing document that is edited as our plans evolve and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Seven Key Principles

To help us write our action plan Time to Change have developed these seven key principles. We should demonstrate at least one tangible activity against each principle in our action plan.



Demonstrate senior level buy-in

Buy-in from the senior leaders in your organisation is crucial to the success of your action plan. If you have their support, you will find it much easier to change the culture of your workplace. Even better, getting them to be open about their mental health at work can create a seismic shift in how mental health problems are talked about amongst your employees. How will you show that your senior leaders are committed to addressing mental health in the workplace?

- Invite the Union President and the Vice-Chancellor to co-sign the pledge to demonstrate our joint commitment to tackling the stigma of mental health on campus
- Encourage the Sabbatical Officers and senior staff from the university to share their personal experiences of stress, low mood or other mental health problems in the workplace and while studying.
- Ask a senior leader to write a blog or article for the union and staff/student channel to highlight the pledge and their commitment to drive culture change.

Demonstrate accountability and recruit Employee Champions (Student Champions)

Accountability ensures that your action plan is successfully delivered. It is important to find the right team or person for this responsibility to sit with – this will ensure your organisation keeps the momentum going on changing attitudes to mental health. It's also crucial to put in place ways to monitor your progress so you know what's working. Recruiting Employee Champions (Student Champions) is a fantastic way to support your work and help you get the message out to all levels of employees.

- Establish a cross campus group made up of sabbatical officers, union staff and university staff to take forward the mental health agenda on campus
- Decide who will have oversight of implementing the action plan and carefully choose someone who can bring together departments to work collaboratively.
- Consider how to measure current data on mental health within the institution, such as absence and retention rates to measure the impact the action plan has made at a later date.
- Improve the ability to understand students' and staff wellbeing levels by including questions in student/staff surveys.

Raise Awareness about mental health

To create an environment where conversations about mental health are commonplace, you need to make people aware of the issue. Many people have never thought about their mental health before so it's important to make them aware of how important it is. Raising awareness can happen internally through activities in your organisation or externally through being part of wider campaigns such as World Mental Health Day and Time to Talk Day.

- Sign the Time to Change Pledge at a large event in front of an audience of students as well as staff from the university and the Students' Union.
- Make use of Time to Change promotional materials to encourage students and staff to start talking about mental health.

- Encourage Employee Champions (Student Champions) to hold events to ensure the message reaches more students and staff.
- Train prominent student representatives such as course reps and club and society committee members on issues surrounding mental health.
- Share mythbusting information and case studies on our websites
- Encourage students and staff to show their support for the campaign by signing the Time to Change individual pledge.
- Organise high profile activity on campus for World Mental Health Day (10th October 2016), Time to Talk Day (3rd February 2017), University Mental Health Day (2nd March 2017) and any other relevant days.
- Promote mental health services at particular times of the academic year such as loneliness around Welcome period and stress during assessment periods.
- Create and maintain a mental health campaign group in the students' union.

Update and implement policies to address mental health problems in your workplace (on campus).

Whether you choose to have a standalone mental health policy or address mental health within existing policies, it is important that employees (and students) are informed about what they should do when encountering mental ill health. A clear mental health policy establishes a framework for everyone to work within and shows new recruits and current employees (current and prospective students) that your organisation takes their mental wellbeing seriously.

How easy is it for an employee (student) struggling with a mental health problem, or their line manager, to find out how your organisation will treat them? How can you change your policies to encourage those with mental health problems to come forward?

- Review current policies to ensure the students' union and the university, as a workplace and a place of study, is supportive of people experiencing mental health problems. E.g. review sickness absence policy to ensure it supports both those with physical and mental health related illness.
- Consider implementing a standalone mental health policy for staff to highlight our commitment to the issue.
- Review the student journey, from application through to graduation including returning to study after an absence. Look at every interaction where mental health may come up as an issue and review policies to ensure they are positive for students and staff.

Ask Staff to share personal experiences of mental health problems

The majority of employers tell us that getting their employees to share their personal experiences of mental health problems with one another is an incredibly powerful tool. By getting just a few people to open up and tell their story, you signal that it's okay for employees to be open with each other about their mental health. We recommend you do this at an organisation-wide level but also encourage conversations at an individual level.

- Ask senior staff and student representatives with experience of mental health problems to speak out and lead by example.

- Encourage staff and students to write blogs and share their experiences of mental health. These can be anonymous submissions and gradually build up to people putting their name to their story.
- Host a discussion or panel event to examine the impact of mental health on students' experiences at university

Equip line managers to have conversations about mental health

It's critical that all of your line managers feel confident having a conversation about mental health with their line reports. Increasing their capability to spot signs and symptoms in their team, and feel confident in discussing this with those who are struggling will help stop problems before they become more challenging.

- Organise mental health awareness training for line managers to build knowledge around mental health problems and information on spotting signs and symptoms of mental ill health.
- Arrange training for line managers on how to have an important conversation, with a particular focus on mental health.
- Integrate mental health into existing training and induction for new staff.
- Arrange mental health training for student facing staff including student staff and those from halls of residence.

Provide information about mental health and signpost to support services

Once you've got your workforce opening up about mental health, it's important to provide information about the subject and enable employees to easily access support services available to them when in need.

How will you ensure your employees have easy access to information on mental health and where to find help?

- Create a permanent space on the union website as well as staff and student channel for people to access information about mental health
- Signpost to local providers such as peer support groups, NHS services and voluntary sector support.
- Highlight stories of staff and students who have benefitted from using support services
- Consider training mental health first aiders
- Invite local/partner service providers into the workplace to highlight the support package and allay and fears staff may have about accessing services
- Display details of support services in halls of residence and around communal spaces in university buildings.
- Effectively communicate to students about the support services available and the advantages of declaring mental health problems to the university.
- Encourage resilience and self-help as valid steps towards mental health and wellbeing and make necessary resources available.

Example Pledges

MMU Union

MMU Union is committed to challenging mental health stigma and discrimination. We aim to do this in partnership with our members, our staff, our officer team and partner institution. We will ensure that members and staff are properly supported with regards to mental health issues they may face at work and within the university community. We will develop welfare support networks and facilitate open and honest discussion about mental health issues. We will actively campaign and lobby for more education on mental health issues and the impact they can have both in the workplace and the wider university community. We will continue to promote, publicise and fund a broad range of extra-curricular activities as we recognise the therapeutic value and pastoral function that these have. We will continue to provide a high quality Advisory Service that can both support and direct students to appropriate mental health support networks.

University of Leeds and LUU

The University of Leeds and Leeds University Union (LUU) have worked in partnership with student-run society Mind Matters to make a Time to Change Pledge centred on raising awareness, building better welfare networks and providing more support and training for staff and students throughout university life. Mind Matters launched their campaign on Time to Talk Day and they have had hundreds of conversations, with students from all departments posing for pictures holding boards expressing why they think a Time to Change Pledge is such a good idea. They held a student-staff forum in March 2014 attended by representatives from counselling and support services, local mental health charities, the commercial director of LUU and the university's Director of Student Opportunity. Working together, the University and LUU have created an action plan that will mean a new emphasis on mental wellbeing at the heart of university life at Leeds. We are celebrating what are already very good services, looking at ways to integrate our approach to mental health, and planning ways to reach more students and end mental health stigma on campus.

Sheffield Hallam SU

Sheffield Hallam Students Union is thrilled to be signing the Time to Change pledge. We as a Students' Union are ready to make an institutional commitment to combatting the stigma of mental health and ensure that we have a clear vision as to how we can best support our staff and students.

We are also very delighted that we will be signing our pledge on the same day as Sheffield Hallam University, though our pledges are separate, we have included joint activities and will support one another where we can.

Sheffield Hallam University

At Sheffield Hallam University we are committed to ending the stigma and discrimination that surrounds mental health difficulties and to promoting a healthier University environment for all.

By signing the Pledge, working in partnership with the Student Union, we aim to raise awareness of the campaign in order to encourage students to feel more confident to talk about their difficulties and to make information about support within the University and via local support services more accessible to them. We will do this through shared events, promotion of online resources and via the Mental Health policy. We will provide opportunities for staff to increase awareness of their own wellbeing, facilitate opportunities for them to voice their needs and access the appropriate support with the aim of achieving a healthier workforce.