

HEFCW's Well-being and Health in Higher Education Policy Statement

2019 (draft version)

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Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Government

Introduction

HEFCW's Well-being and Health in Higher Education (HE) Policy Statement (the Statement) reaffirms our commitment to meeting and going beyond statutory compliance and delivering the Welsh Government's well-being policy expectations and our own policy priorities. The diagram in **Annex A** sets out how the Statement contributes to key UK and national policies and legislation in Wales. The Statement is informed by UK-wide research.

We published our first [circular](#) on mental health in higher education in 2013. We continue to monitor equalities data annually, including as this relates to mental ill-health. Recent [data](#) indicates that between 2015/16 and 2017/18 the number of students declaring a mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder rose from 2,535 to 3,715, a rise of 47%. In the UK it is estimated that nearly [one in four young people](#) will experience suicidal feelings at least once in their lives.

[HEFCW's remit letter](#) says:

'The rising incidence of mental ill-health amongst our young people is troubling and I am pleased to see the steps being taken by the sector, the Council, Universities Wales and NUS Wales, working with leading health charities and other agencies, to improve the assistance and support provided to students during their time at university. Wales' 'whole system' approach to mental health and well-being through the healthy universities framework is UK sector leading. I would like the Council to continue to prioritise safeguarding and wellbeing activity for students and staff and to keep in touch with my officials as this work progresses. I look forward to seeing the Council's strategic approach to well-being and mental health and the underpinning action plans, the first being on supporting students with mental health. Additionally, I would like the Council to develop in partnership with stakeholders an approach to suicide-safer universities.'

The Policy Statement sits beneath our [Corporate Strategy](#) and alongside our [Well-being Statement](#), [Strategic Equality Plan](#) and Widening Access Programme of Action, and it should be read in conjunction with these documents. This Policy Statement should be understood in the context of existing and emerging strategic documents, including our annual Fee and Access Plan Guidance circulars.

The purpose of the Policy Statement is to provide a clear picture of our strategic intentions and a full understanding of well-being and health policy and practice in Wales, as we recognise inconsistencies in meaning and messages are unhelpful for the sector, our partners and for students. Our intentions in publishing the Statement are to be challenging in our aspirations, clear on our agenda for action and realistic in managing expectations.

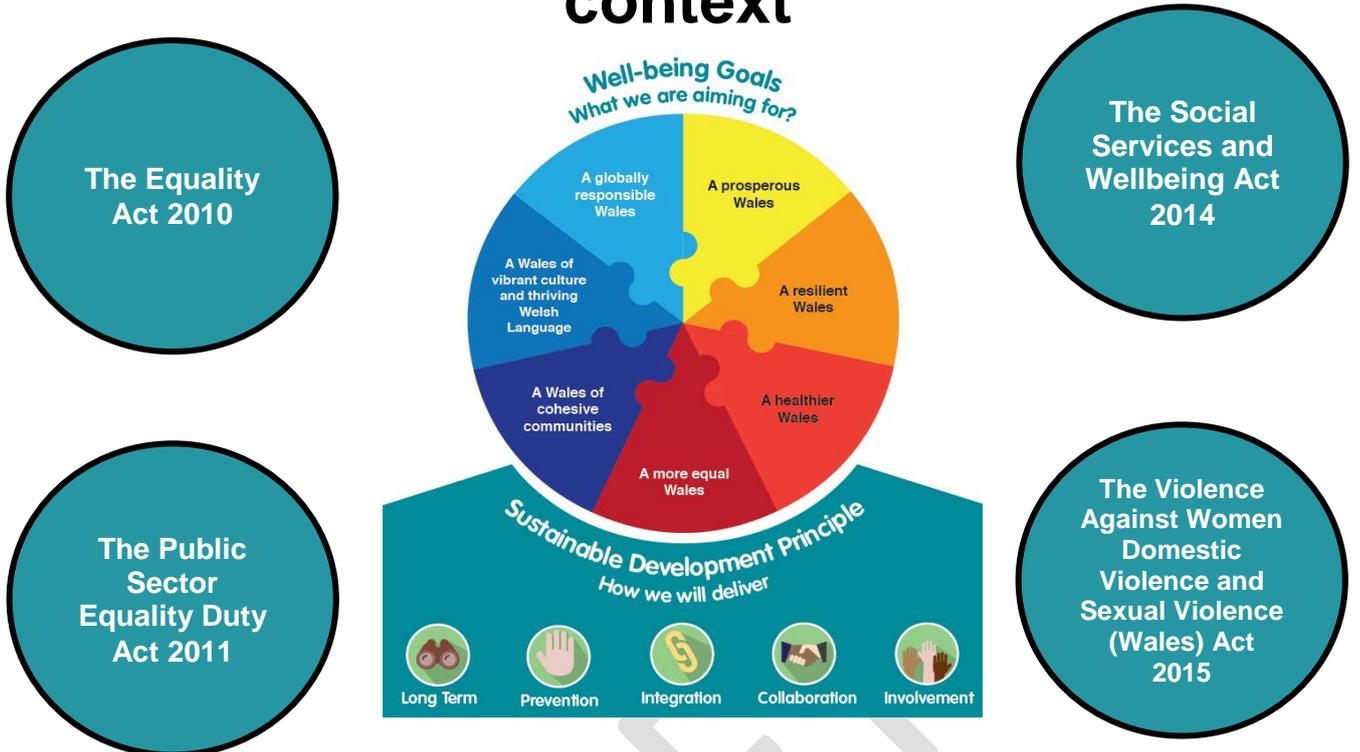
The Policy Statement recognises that a significant number of frameworks and guidance documents for well-being and health, including higher education-specific material, have been published in Wales and more widely. The purpose of this Statement is not to duplicate existing frameworks, but to set out how HEFCW, working with partners, will strengthen support for well-being and health in higher education in Wales.

The Statement includes high-level actions to support well-being and health, including supporting good mental health as well as mental ill-health. Separate, co-created action plans will be published separately. The action plans will contribute to the delivery of the Policy Statement.

This Policy Statement takes full account of the Well-being of Future Generations Act's five ways of working, including 'prevention' and 'involvement'. The Statement requires higher education to take further action to improve well-being and health to ensure that preventable obstacles to positive learning experiences for people with mental health are removed. HEFCW's Policy Statement can only be delivered by working with higher education providers, students, representative bodies and other partner organisations.

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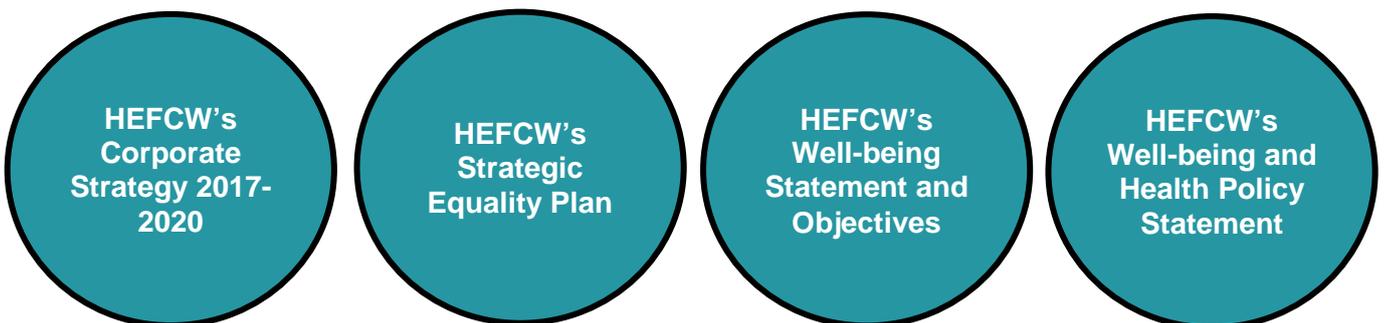
Legislative and policy context



Welsh Government Strategies and Plans



HEFCW's key policies



Well-being and health in higher education

Well-being and health in higher education

- HEFCW's vision for education in Wales is 'to support sustainable, accessible, internationally excellent higher education in Wales.'
- Our Policy Statement on Well-being and Health in Higher Education contributes to our vision of supporting accessible higher education (HE) in Wales for all who could benefit from it or contribute to it.
- The Policy Statement contributes to our Well-being of Future Generations well-being objectives, which are to:
 - i. ensure that higher education in Wales is relevant and accessible to all who could benefit from it, or contribute to it.
 - ii. champion internationally excellent higher education that also works to support global well-being and sustainable development.
 - iii. promote a system of higher education that is financially, economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable.
 - iv. ensure that HEFCW is an exemplar organisation where equality, partnership and sustainability are fundamental to delivery of our mission.

This Policy Statement is built upon four principles:

- **Long-term and sustainable:** to ensure a long-term commitment to sustaining well-being and health in higher education.
- **Inform and involve:** to inform higher education's progress and performance with evidence-based advice and strong partnership working.
- **Catalyse and challenge:** to promote continuous improvement and effective practice in well-being and health in higher education.
- **Champion and review:** to promote higher education's contribution to well-being and health.

Well-being and health in higher education: the four principles

Long-term and sustainable

- Ensure a long-term commitment to sustaining well-being and health in higher education

We will:

1. Support higher education to advance equality of opportunity for staff, students and applicants, including going beyond their statutory duties.
2. Meet our remit letter requirements from Welsh Government, as they relate to well-being and health.
3. Work with Public Health Wales NHS Trust to support higher education and further education to implement the Healthy and Sustainable Higher Education/Further Education Framework which incorporates health and well-being.
4. Work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and other partners to address challenges relating to supporting well-being and health in higher education.
5. Support partners to develop whole-system approaches to well-being and health in HE.
6. Co-ordinate co-created action plans in key areas of interest to support well-being and health.
7. Embed the well-being and health action plans in our equality planning and Well-being of Future Generations Act reporting.
8. Support Advance HE to promote equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education institutions across the UK.
9. Encourage higher education providers' engagement with the UK Healthy University Network and other groups.
10. Deliver and review our well-being objectives as set out in our Well-being Statement.
11. Assess the well-being action plans' contribution to supporting well-being and health in HE.

Involve and inform

- Inform higher education's progress and performance with evidence-based advice and strong partnership working

We will:

1. Undertake research, where appropriate, to inform future actions.
2. Meet our responsibilities as the monitoring authority for relevant higher education bodies' implementation of the statutory Prevent duty.
3. Work with higher education providers and students to ensure well-being and health is embedded in Student Charters.
4. Work with higher education providers and students to ensure well-being and health services and support are available and accessible in Welsh.
5. Work with higher education providers to deliver the [Go Wales Achieve Through Work Experience Programme](#).
6. Monitor and advise on the well-being and health implications for higher education in Wales of developments in other UK administrations.
7. Evaluate universities' well-being and health strategies.
8. Monitor equality data and higher education equality plans.
9. Assess fee and access plans' support of well-being and health in groups under-represented in HE, including individuals with protected characteristics.
10. Support, with Universities Wales, Advance HE (equalities).

Catalyse and challenge

- Promote continuous improvement and effective practice in well-being and health in higher education

We will:

1. Work with UK and other organisations to inform policy and practice in Wales.
2. Encourage universities to adopt UUK's #stepchange and [Suicide-Safer Universities frameworks](#) from 2019/20.
3. Encourage regional, multi-agency, collaborative working to avoid duplication and secure accessible, sustainable provision and support for well-being and health.
4. Promote and catalyse collaboration and sharing good practice between providers and with other stakeholders to best address well-being and health in higher education.
5. Work with higher education providers and other interested parties to develop co-created action plan.
6. Work with higher education providers to strengthen approaches to enhancing safeguarding practices and resilience.
7. Encourage providers to respond to the diversity of the student experience.
8. Publish guidance on tackling violence against women, domestic violence and sexual violence.
9. Support Advance HE to co-ordinate and provide expertise to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Welsh Liaison Group.
10. Facilitate partnership working to identify innovative approaches to supporting well-being and health in higher education.
11. Encourage awareness-raising, including through information and training to support safeguarding, well-being and health in HE.

Champion and review

- promote higher education's contribution to well-being and health.

We will:

1. Publish our Well-being and Health Policy Statement.
2. Publish our Strategic Equality Plan and annual equality reports.
3. Promote nationally and UK-wide, as appropriate, the contribution to well-being and health of higher education in Wales;
4. Publish well-being and health case studies and other resources.
5. Share effective practice through the Advance HE Welsh Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Welsh Liaison Group.
6. Disseminate approaches to tackling violence against women, domestic violence, sexual violence, and identity-based violence.
7. Promote research into well-being and health.

Well-being and health in HE: milestones

Short-term milestones

With partners, we will:

- deliver our well-being remit letter requirements
- consult on and publish our Well-being and Health in HE Policy Statement (2019/20 and 2020/21)
- develop a co-create a well-being and health action plan on student mental health (2019/20)
- fund collaborative proposals to improve and support student well-being and health in higher education (2019/20)
- launch *Higher Education for a Healthy Nation: student well-being and health* case study publication (2019/20)
- embed well-being and health in Student Charters (from 2019/20)
- encourage the adoption of #stepchange and Suicide-Safer Universities frameworks (from 2019/20)
- invite universities to submit well-being and health strategies (2020-21)
- publish our Strategic Equality Plan to include well-being and health commitments from 2020-21.

Medium term milestones 3+ years

With partners, we will:

- secure 'whole-system approaches' to well-being and health in HE
- support well-being and health in HE by investment from, and alignment with, fee and access plans and strategic equality plans
- review HEFCW's Well-being and Health Policy Statement
- invite universities to submit new well-being and health strategies
- share evidence-informed effective practice
- review Student Charters
- take advantage of UK opportunities.

Long term milestones 5+ years

With partners we will:

- ensure that inconsistencies in opportunity, as they relate to well-being and health, are addressed fully
- ensure HE is an inclusive community for staff and students
- ensure HE is accessible for all who could benefit from it or contribute to it
- ensure that the student experience in HE, as it relates to well-being and health, is continuously enhanced for diverse student populations
- review the Well-Being and Health Policy Statement.