

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Consultation on HEFCW's Well-being and health in higher education policy statement

Date: 12 June 2019
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To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Cc Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
Response by: 12 July 2019
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This consultation seeks views on HEFCW's Well-being and Health in Higher Education Policy Statement.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please email info@hefcw.ac.uk.



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Introduction

1. This consultation seeks views on HEFCW's draft Well-being and Health in Higher Education Policy Statement (the Statement).
2. The Policy Statement is HEFCW's position on well-being and health in higher education. The Statement relates to higher education staff and students, including students where provision is provided on behalf of regulated institutions. The Statement is deliberately high-level and will be underpinned by action plans co-created with partners.
3. We are well-placed, as a funder of higher education provision in Wales, to inform and shape policy developments relevant and appropriate for delivery by higher education providers. We are committed to working collaboratively to challenge, strengthen and promote well-being and health in higher education. Our partners, including higher education providers, students and their representative bodies and other external agencies are better placed to create strategic change at institutional level.
4. The consultation period for the Statement is brief to enable us to take account of consultation responses in finalising the Statement for publication and implementation from academic year 2019/20.

Context

5. We recognise that health is a broad term including positive- to severe ill-health. HEFCW published its first circular on well-being and health, including mental health in higher education in 2013¹. We continue to monitor equalities data annually, including as this relates to mental ill-health. The most recent data analysed for Wales 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%.² In the UK it is estimated that nearly one in four young people will experience suicidal feelings at least once in their lives³.
6. The Welsh Government's remit letter to HEFCW 2019-20 said:
'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

¹ Circular [W13/31HE](#)

² [Equality and diversity statistics](#)

³ [UUK Suicide-Safer Universities](#)

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.⁴

7. The policy statement recognises that a significant number of frameworks and guidance 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 and support well-being and health in higher education in Wales.
8. In addition to our commitment to go beyond compliance with the Equalities Act (2010) and Public Sector Equalities Duties (2011), the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) provides the over-arching framework for our Policy Statement. The Statement:
 - sets out our position to enable alignment with relevant HEFCW policies and those of our partners;
 - articulates our long-term commitment to well-being and health in HE;
 - supports preventative action to remove barriers to students engaging and succeeding in HE; and
 - commits us to work collaboratively and involve partners.
9. The Statement takes account of relevant Welsh Government legislation and frameworks such as Public Health Wales NHS Trust's Healthy and Sustainable Universities and Colleges Framework⁵ and it will take account of key UK and Wales-specific strategies and plans, including but not limited to those set out in the Statement diagram policy diagram (**Annex A**).

HEFCW's Well-being and Health Policy Statement.

10. The Statement is attached as **Annex A**.
11. The Statement contributes to our Corporate Strategy vision of supporting accessible higher education (HE) in Wales for all who could benefit from it or contribute to it.
The Statement sets out 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;

⁴ HEFCW's 2019-20 [remit letter](#).

⁵ Public Health Wales NHS Trust [Healthy and Sustainable Universities and Colleges](#).

- **Catalyse and challenge:** to promote continuous improvement and effective practice in well-being and health in higher education; and
 - **Champion and review:** to promote higher education's contribution to well-being and health.
12. Our high-level actions are set out under each pillar. Key milestones set out deliverables and direction of travel.

Consultation Questions

13. We welcome responses on any aspect of the Statement. In particular, we are seeking responses to the following questions:

Question 1: does the Statement clearly set out what HEFCW's policy position? If not what more could be done to be clearer?

Question 2: are there any gaps or omissions in the Statement that should be addressed? Please explain what these are and how they should be addressed.

Question 3: should more be done to improve the Statement not already identified in the responses given to the questions above? If more should be done, please explain the improvements that might be helpful and why.

Question 4: is there any other information that it would be helpful for HEFCW to consider in developing the Statement further?

14. We will continue to impact assess the implementation of this Statement to ensure we achieve our objectives. To inform impact assessment, in relation to the Future Generations Act, equality and diversity and the Welsh language, we are inviting through this circular, responses to the following questions: To inform our impact assessment please consider:

Question 5: Does the Statement have any positive or negative impacts or unintended consequences in terms of equality and diversity and the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act's sustainable development principle⁶, seven wellbeing goals⁷, and five ways of working⁸?

⁶ The Future Generations Act defines Sustainable Development as: "The process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals."

⁷ Future Generations Act goals: A globally responsible Wales; A prosperous Wales; A resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; A more equal Wales; A Wales of cohesive communities; A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; A globally responsible Wales.

⁸ Future Generations Act ways of working; long term; prevention; integration; collaboration; and involvement

Question 6: What positive or adverse effects will the proposals have on:

- opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language?; and
- treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

Question 7: Could the proposals be changed to increase positive effects, or decrease adverse effects on:

- opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language?; and
- treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

15. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about impact assessments.
16. Please ensure your responses are set out against the questions above.

Responding to the consultation

17. Please respond to this consultation electronically. Responses should be emailed to Sheridan Nott (sheridan.nott@hefcw.ac.uk). The consultation closes on **12 July 2019**. We are unable to accept responses after this time.

Further information / responses to

18. For further information, contact Ryan Stokes (tel: 029 2085 9736 email ryan.stokes@hefcw.ac.uk).