

NORTH EAST  
SCOTLAND  
COLLEGE



# WELLBEING PLAN

2024-2027



WELLBEING  
MATTERS



**4 LOCATIONS**



**20,000  
STUDENTS**



**500+  
COURSES**

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# INTRODUCTION

North East Scotland College's (NESCol) Wellbeing Plan sets out our strategic direction across the next three years. NESCol understands the challenges faced by people living with mental, physical and social health issues and the impact this can have on their personal, working and academic lives.

Here at NESCol we want to create an environment where there is no stigma and discrimination related to mental, physical or social health, and awareness and understanding is raised through education, advice, information and training. Furthermore, it is our intention to provide an environment where peoples' wellbeing is considered in all that we do and, where practicable, opportunities are available for the enhancement of personal wellbeing.

We believe this is best achieved by working collaboratively with the Students' Association, People Services (HR), Student Support Team, Trade Unions, NUS Scotland, Local Authorities, schools and third sector organisations.

# CONTEXT

In 2017 the Scottish government published the national **Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027** with the guiding ambition that mental health problems should be treated with the same commitment, passion and drive as physical health problems.

Poor mental health is one of the most challenging public health issues and around one in four people are estimated to be affected by mental health problems in Scotland in any one year. (**Scottish Health Survey 2021**)

NESCol notes that the proportion of full time students with a declared mental health condition has remained fairly static since AY2020-21, with only a slight decrease of 0.48% by AY2022-23. For the last two years, 33% of full time students have declared a disability, and a mental health condition represented 45% of those declarations.

Between October 2021 and November 2022 the Mental Health Foundation Scotland conducted a study of 26 colleges with over 2000 students. The Thriving Learners Report highlights that core groups such as estranged students, LGBT+ students, other genders and students who had suffered from any form of food insecurity had worse outcomes than their respective counterparts. (**Thriving Learners Report**).

Amongst the recommendations was the need for close partnership working with Student Associations and regional planning with NHS, the importance of student voice as well as strong communication and engagement to increase awareness amongst students of mental health and wellbeing supports.

Counselling Services for students at NESCol were launched in September 2020 and service provision has grown in response to increased demand. In addition, Student Wellbeing Advisers posts were created to complement the Student Advice and Support Team to offer specialist support as wellbeing referrals represent 35%-40% of all student support referrals.

Overall, 4,379.5 working days were lost due to sickness absence in 2022. Reasons for absence vary with common reasons being due to minor illnesses such as stomach upsets, cold and flu. Mental health was the cause of 29% of working days lost which is much higher than the UK public sector rate of 12.9%. (Office for National Statistics)

# VISION AND MISSION

NESCol is committed to making a positive difference to the lives of all staff and students so they are able to experience positive mental, physical and social health and achieve their full potential as successful and confident individuals. Through collaborative partnerships and ongoing evaluation, we aim to create a positive and resilient community that values wellbeing as a fundamental pillar of success and growth.

To promote holistic student and staff wellbeing, our aim is to implement a comprehensive and inclusive wellbeing approach by prioritising mental, physical and social health, fostering a supportive and nurturing environment, and offering accessible resources and programmes. NESCol aspires to empower individuals to thrive academically, professionally, and personally.

To achieve this NESCol is committed to investment in preventative measures such as building resilience, promotion of self-management strategies and providing an environment that promotes a healthy lifestyle and is free of stigma and discrimination. The wrap-around support services will continue to cover support for staff and student wellbeing from prevention to the treatment end of the scale.

## SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

NESCol has worked well to address the issues posed by the high proportion of mental health condition declarations and wellbeing needs presenting in staff and students. A true partnership approach with the Students' Association and activities delivered through the Wellbeing Matters initiative has placed wellbeing of staff and students at the core.

Through the successful implementation of the whole-college approach to student support, all students are provided with more integrated, targeted and impactful support services that has improved communication and partnership working between the student and curriculum and student support teams. It should be noted, however, that there are limits to the type and extent of support that the College provides and there is no intention to attempt to replicate specialist NHS services.

The Scottish Funding Council has provided dedicated funding over the last four years to support implementation of counselling services and mental health and wellbeing support. That funding ceases after AY2023-24 with the expectation that the College transitions to a sustainable support model which meets student needs and integrate with local services.

A variety of support is available for staff health and wellbeing. Preventative support such as health surveillance, lifestyle checks and workstation assessments are provided via an occupational health provider. Where staff are experiencing health problems which impact upon their work, referrals can be made so that expert advice can be sought. Staff also have access to a 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme which provides information and wellbeing support as well as access to a confidential counselling service.

In addition to the above a wealth of wellbeing information, advice, activities and training is available with a view to promoting a culture of wellbeing at NESCol.

Whilst the aim is to provide support and opportunities for staff and students to maintain their personal wellbeing, ultimately, wellbeing is an individual responsibility, and individuals are encouraged to engage in services and opportunities provided for them.

# AIM

1

## **Aim: 1**

**Leadership:** Deliver a whole-College approach to wellbeing which supports both staff and students

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2

## **Aim: 2**

**Promotion:** Challenge stigma and discrimination by raising awareness and educating about the impacts of mental, physical and social health and wellbeing

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3

## **Aim: 3**

**Partnership:** Explore and strengthen links with external organisations

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4

## **Aim: 4**

**People:** Develop awareness, knowledge and skills of staff throughout the organisation, equipping them to support students as well as to develop self-management and self-care strategies as appropriate

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5

## **Aim: 5**

**Review:** Monitor and evaluate progress

# 1

## Aim: 1

**Leadership: Deliver a whole-College approach to wellbeing which supports both staff and students.**

To achieve this we will:

- Establish safe and confidential spaces where individuals can share their concerns, seek advice, or access professional support for mental health, physical wellbeing and social issues.
- Work collectively to steer the active campus vision for our staff and student community.
- Continue to embed the whole-College support model, in particular the role of Academic Tutor, to support positive student experience and outcomes.
- Seek opportunities for co-creation of services working in partnership with the Students' Association and regional partners.

# 2

## Aim: 2

**Promotion: Challenge stigma and discrimination by raising awareness and educating about the impacts of mental, physical and social health and wellbeing.**

To achieve this we will:

- Introduce a range of wellbeing programmes and activities, including workshops, seminars, and physical activity initiatives, that encourage individuals to take care of their overall health and wellbeing.
- Provide information and resources to foster understanding and empathy towards individuals facing mental health challenges, physical disabilities or social struggles to promote a culture of support and understanding within the College.
- Develop and implement educational campaigns and workshops to raise awareness about mental, physical and social wellbeing, aiming to eradicate misconceptions and stigmas associated with these aspects of health.
- Promote the work of the Equalities and Wellbeing Committee, the College's commitment to providing an inclusive and equitable environment for all and how the College meets the needs detailed in the Public Sector Equality Duty.

# 3

## Aim: 3

**Partnership: Explore and strengthen links with external organisations**

To achieve this we will:

- Partner with local health organisations and/or professionals to offer accessible mental health services and physical wellness programmes.
- Collaborate and share good practice with local educational providers on support and services provided to staff and students.
- Work in partnership with the Students' Association and NUS Scotland on campaigns and initiatives which support student mental health and wellbeing.
- Create and deliver an Active Campus Plan to support wellbeing of staff and students.

## Aim: 4

4

**People: Develop the awareness, knowledge and skills of staff throughout the organisation, equipping them to support students as well as to develop self-management and self-care strategies as appropriate**

To achieve this we will:

- Deliver a programme of continuous mandatory and refresher mental health training for key staff with specific responsibility for providing specialist support to staff and/or students.
- Facilitate staff and student training opportunities and information sessions to build resilience and promote self-management and self-care strategies.
- Provide mandatory mental health awareness and safeguarding training sessions to all staff.
- Establish a training delivery programme to support NESCol to become a Trauma Informed organisation.

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## Aim: 5

**Review: Monitor and evaluate progress**

To achieve this we will:

- Review and revise existing policies to ensure they are inclusive and consider the wellbeing of all individuals, regardless of their mental, physical or social background.
- Establish a culture of reflection and challenge, embedding Equality Impact Assessments as a standing item on meeting agendas, giving due consideration to Trauma Informed Practice.
- Continuously refine approaches based on data-driven insights to ensure the ongoing successful delivery of this strategy to create a stigma-free and wellbeing-centric environment.
- Regularly evaluate the impact of these efforts, gathering feedback from staff, students and stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and celebrate successes.



# DELIVERY, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The following documents will support the delivery of the plan:

1. Student Mental Health Agreement
2. Student Wellbeing Framework
3. Staff Wellbeing Framework
4. Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Delivery of the plan will be managed by the Equalities and Wellbeing Committee. The Wellbeing Plan will be reviewed every three years and as appropriate on an ad hoc basis with the aim to expand, update and improve its plan priorities. NESCol encourages all of its staff and students to engage with this plan and suggest areas for improvement, enhancement and development.

