

£2m to improve mental health and well-being at Welsh universities

The funding has been provided to improve support for students and staff in higher education providers. Institution-wide initiatives such as training staff in well-being and mental health awareness and promoting health information on campus should benefit from the funding, in addition to safeguarding students at risk of harm.

The funding will be allocated through the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

The Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, said:

“For most students, university is a joyous experience where new friendships are forged, careers paths are chosen and lessons are learned, both inside and outside the lecture theatre. But it is also a time of transition which can bring its own challenges, such as living away from home for the first time, managing finances or coping with exam pressures.

“This funding will boost the care and support universities provide students, by intervening or offering support if or when they need it, helping them achieve their goals unhindered and getting the most from their university experience.”

Gwyneth Sweatman, NUS Wales President, said:

“Student mental health has been a priority for me as NUS Wales President, and for our member students’ unions across Wales, this year. I very much welcome the Welsh Government’s £2 million investment in improving student mental health and well-being.

“I hope that universities will be able to use this funding to improve the support and services they offer students, such as bilingual and online support. It’s also important that students are able to access support and services across different campuses.

“I am keen to see more frontline academic and non-academic staff given training on mental health, and local public services working in closer partnership with universities.

“Wales is the perfect size for universities, students, and the mental health sector to work together to make sure that every student in Wales, no matter where or how they study, is able to access the services and support they need to stay in education.

“I am looking forward to continuing to work on this important agenda alongside the Welsh Government, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), universities, and our member students’ unions.”

Dr David Blaney, Chief Executive of the HEFCW, said:

“In the same way schools can help pupils, and employers provide services for staff, it is only right that universities are well-equipped to support their large and diverse student populations. This is part of a suite of targeted support from HEFCW, recognising the unique position universities play in the daily lives of students. From early personal and academic interventions to support following any challenges they might have faced, this funding can make a real difference to lives.”

Amanda Wilkinson, Director of Universities Wales, said:

“Universities Wales are very impressed by all the excellent work being done by student support and welfare services across Welsh Universities, particularly in a challenging environment where the proportion of people disclosing mental health issues has significantly increased across the UK.

“This year universities in Wales have been working with HEFCW to develop a Wales-wide approach to promoting good mental health and well-being. Today’s announcement is very welcome and will help Welsh universities tackle the complex challenges in these areas.”