

An orange speech bubble with a white outline, containing the text "Working with Student Minds".

**Working with
Student
Minds**

We encourage students to have the confidence to talk and to listen, to find inspiration and motivation in each other's stories.

Student Minds is a national charity supporting peer interventions for student mental health. We know that the mental health of students is a growing concern. With around 25% of students estimated to face some form of psychological distress while at university, traditional, professional-led services are struggling. The rise in the prevalence of mental health problems among students has coincided with increasing problems to arrange referrals to suitable services within the National Health Service, within a time-frame that is meaningful in the context of the academic year.

Research into student's attitudes to mental health has shaped our perspective on this challenge;

- Students are more likely to talk to friends and peers about their problems than anyone else.
- Students identify that they do not know what steps they can take to be pro-active and look after their mental health.
- Students recognise that lacking the personal resilience necessary to cope with life at university, contributes to the challenge of maintaining good mental health.

We believe that supporting students to support each other enables early intervention. This is fundamental to stop mental health problems from developing.

Keeping conversations safe

We know that students are often the first source of support for their peers. Many students are keen to be there, to help and to support peers in distress. This should be celebrated and supported, within a framework that ensures that students are not acting as a frontline crisis service. Student volunteers need the skills to deliver suitable and effective support with appropriate boundaries. Whether students are campaigning to break the stigma around mental health or organising peer support programmes, we believe that it is vital that they have suitable training and support.

We bring people together to share strategies for managing mental health, to talk honestly, in a safe and pro-recovery environment.

We are kindly supported by Comic Relief, The Welton Foundation, UnLtd, The Matthew Elvidge Trust, The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, The James Wentworth-Stanley Memorial Trust and Student Hubs.

Student Minds is a charitable company registered with Companies house, no. 7493445 and the Charities Commission, no. 1142783

How can we support you?

We provide training, support and supervision to enable student volunteers to be pro-active about mental health on their campus.

Join the Student Minds Network.

We work with students in over 30 universities around the country, connecting volunteers, championing their work and sharing best practice.

Volunteer Training

We have over four years of experience developing and delivering training tailor made for students.

For peer-support programmes

For workshops and discussion groups

For effective campaigning

Volunteer Support

We have carefully constructed support systems in place that work for students.

Supervision and Mentoring

Project Management

Ready to use resources

For more information, please contact;
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The Student Minds Network

We work with universities across the country to provide training, support and supervision to students. We connect students and provide a platform for them to share ideas and advice.

- We promote the events and activities of members of the Student Minds network;
- Members have access to our e-learning resources, supporting professional and well-researched campaigns and awareness raising activities.
- Members receive the weekly volunteer update with ideas and suggestions for developing their project.
- Members have access to our mentoring programme.

What would you have to do in order to become and remain a member of Student Minds?

- All volunteers need to;
 - Complete a 6 monthly review;
 - Advertise our feedback and complaints procedure at events and actives;
 - Have a named staff contact on campus;
 - Complete a feedback report on each event they run.

There is an annual membership fee of £100.

Volunteer Training

We provide training tailor made for students. We have worked with students, academics and clinicians to develop comprehensive training programmes, focused on giving students the skills and confidence to deliver peer-support programmes and campaign events safely and effectively. Students tell us that they find our training engaging and useful.

We believe that it is important for students to have the right training before they start engaging in volunteer activities around the area of mental health. There are many difficult points to address when dealing with mental health and, whether campaigning, running one off events or facilitating support programmes, students need to skills and confidence to engage with these points responsibly.

'What I like best about Student Minds is the community that comes with it. From the day-to-day contact with the other group facilitators, to regular supervision sessions, and larger conference events.'

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Training for Peer-Support Programmes

We train students to facilitate informal and non-judgemental groups to give their peers the opportunity to listen and share experiences. Our groups support students to explore what positive mental health means for them and how they can get there. We train students to;

- Facilitate informal and unstructured groups for students with eating disorders.
- Facilitate a structured 6 part Positive Minds workbook based course for students with mild depression.

We run a two day programme for students preparing to facilitate our peer support programme. Our training covers;

- Listening skills and phrasing.
- Confidentiality
- How to manage difficult situations, including talking about suicide and enforcing ground rules.
- The importance of maintaining boundaries.
- The practicalities of running a student led project.

We facilitate engaging and informative discussion to help students understand the specifics of Eating Disorders and Depression.

We run group peer-support training as a weekend residential programme in Oxford. These weekends run throughout the year and we will usually train between 14 and 18 students over a weekend. If you would prefer us to deliver training at your university, this can be arranged.

A place on the programme costs £160 per student, including accommodation in Oxford. We do not cover student travel expenses

Delivering training at your university would typically cost £1,500.

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How do our peer support programmes work?

Groups provide **time** for students to talk about life and challenges they feel are relevant. Group sessions are run by at least two Group Facilitators who are present to help keep conversation **safe**. Group Facilitators make sure that every individual attending the session feels they have been able to have their voice heard. Group sessions are **user-led**, meaning that we train group facilitators take a **backseat** and let attendees do the talking. Group facilitators are not trained counsellors, and will not provide advice. They offer support, **understanding** and empathy.

Group sessions run for around an hour and a half. The Group Facilitators open up the session and ask attendees to introduce themselves. They explain how their group works and discuss the **ground rules** that the group follows. The group facilitators will either suggest a topic of conversation (for eating disorder groups) or lead a discussion following the Positive Minds workbook. Throughout the session the group facilitators ensure that ground rules are followed and the session **stays safe**.

Students experiencing mental health problems turn to their peers for support, but value **confidentiality** and **professionalism**. The opportunity to **share** experiences helps break down isolation and the format of a group can **boost motivation**. Eight out of ten students think that, when experiencing a mental health problem, it would be helpful to talk to peers facing a **similar situation**. This indicates that support programmes structured around shared experience are attractive. Peer-led support groups lack waiting lists and students can **self-refer**, giving **flexibility** to use the support as and when they feel they need it. Peer-led programmes do not keep records of attendance, removing the concern that accessing help will reflect negatively on a student's university record.

Peer support programmes give **control** to the students they support. Our support programmes are specifically for students, allowing a **focus** on topics of conversation that are always **relevant**. Students usually **self-refer** to peer-programmes, and groups are **open** to anyone who feels they may benefit. Our support programmes always maintain a **pro-recovery** atmosphere. Attention to **ground rules**, **boundaries** and the **confidentiality** policy helps to ensure that groups offer a safe and **supportive** environment to talk.

Peer programmes are not a suitable platform for providing support to individuals with acute or severe mental health problems.

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Training for workshops and discussion groups.

Students are often facilitating conversations about mental health. Frequently they are doing this as part of a campaign to raise awareness of mental health problems or challenge stigma. This work is fundamental to changing attitudes about mental health. To do this safely, students need a strong understanding of the importance of boundaries. They need to have considered how to talk about mental health sensitively without triggering vulnerable individuals. We run one day training programmes throughout the year to support students to talk about mental health safely.

101 for mental health campaigning;

This one-day workshop prepares students to campaign safely and effectively, covering;

- The importance of boundaries,
- A strong grounding in the challenges facing student mental health,
- Listening skills,
- How to find the right word for talking about mental health,
- Dealing with difficult situations,
- Strategies to build networks of support for the campaign.

Supporting supporters;

This one-day workshop prepares students to facilitate conversations among students supporting friends with mental health problems. We have developed a two part workbook led workshop to be delivered by student volunteers. The workshop is designed for students supporting friends with mental health problems, helping them understand more about their friend's mental health problem and covering basic listening and motivational interviewing skills. This one day training programme prepares student volunteers to deliver these workshops safely and effectively, covering;

- Listening skills and phrasing.
- Confidentiality.
- The importance of maintaining boundaries.

A place on this programme costs £40 per student. We do not cover student travel expenses.

Delivering training at your university would typically cost £500.

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Training for effective campaigning.

A recent survey we conducted highlights a range of worrying trends about student mental health. Among students and university staff;

- Over 90% believe that the fear of being judged is a major challenge for student mental health.
- Over 80% believe
 - That there is a general reluctance to disclose mental health problems.
 - Mental health problems are seen as a weakness.
- Over 60% think that there is a lack of information about where to turn for support.

There is considerable work to be done in changing attitudes about mental health on the university campus and students should be at the heart of these activities. We run half day training to support students to campaign effectively, covering;

- Identifying your allies and developing relationships,
- The theory of change for campaigning,
- Planning and executing an effective event,
- Managing a student led project and working as a team,
- Communicating your message.

Delivering training at your university will typically cost £300.

'Working with Student Minds has been one of the best parts of my time at university. Not only have running the session themselves been rewarding, but I have also made some great friends within Student Minds. I feel like I've been part of something important, experienced an increase in confidence and gained heaps of valuable experiences.'

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Volunteer Support

We believe that student volunteers should have sufficient support to feel confident in the activities that they run. Dealing with mental health, it is important that student volunteers have the opportunity to reflect on how their work is affecting them. If students are running a peer-support programme as part of the Student Minds network they must have access to suitable supervision and support.

There is tremendous value in supporting students to lead their own projects effectively. It not only means that they are supported in delivering success, but on-going support enables students to develop their own personal skills and employability. Through the support and mentoring that we offer volunteers, we help them build the confidence and skills they need to manage projects and take on leadership roles in their community.

Supervision

We run a national programme of supervision, enabling students to speak to a supervisor after every event that they run, whether this is a peer support session or a campaign event. Supervision is a vital aspect of running a safe and effective group. Supervision helps students reflect on what is working and what could be improved.

Regular supervision allows problems to be identified early. Providing a framework for volunteers to attend supervision ensures that it is easy for volunteers to talk about problems and challenges, ensuring that these are discussed and addressed before the volunteer reaches a point where they are struggling to cope.

Our supervision takes place over Skype and conversation are usually around 15 minutes. Our supervision is usually run one-on-one but at times volunteers find it helpful to attend supervision with the individuals they are working with.

It costs £380 a year to provide supervision for a Student Minds member group.

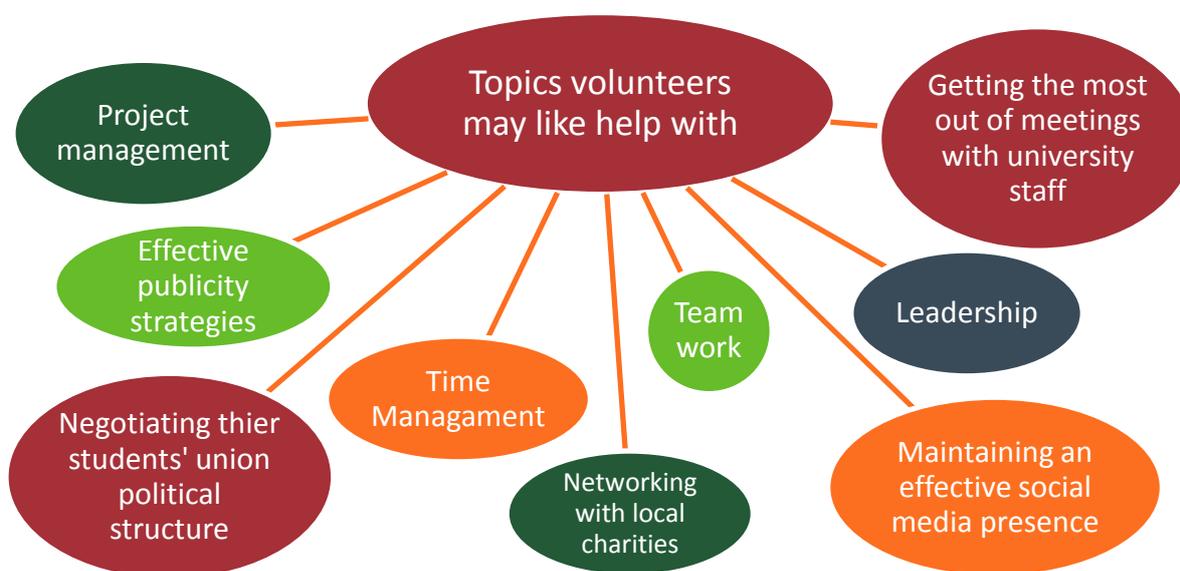
'After finishing my degree I am hoping to pursue a career as a Clinical Psychologist. I believe that my volunteering experience with Student Minds provides me with some of the necessary skills and insights for that path.'

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Mentoring

We offer all volunteers across the Student Minds network the opportunity to use our mentoring scheme. The volunteers have access to a pool of mentors, each with different areas of expertise. Many of our mentors have previously run student minds peer-support groups. Volunteers have the opportunity to contact a mentor as and when they feel necessary and are able to ask for specific advice on issues that they feel they would like extra support with. Below is a diagram of the various topics we can offer specified support for through our mentoring programme.



Once volunteers have contacted a mentor, the mentor will arrange an initial meeting (face to face, or via Skype or telephone) to discuss an outline of the support they can offer including a discussion around expectations and time commitment. The outline will then be implemented with a follow up meeting at the end.

'I'm a second year psychology student and have been volunteering for Student Minds for two years. It has been an extremely rewarding experience. I started volunteering because I had known several girls with eating disorders and I wanted to stop being a helpless observer but rather help those who wanted to be helped. As a team of group facilitators we offered the opportunity for girls as well as boys with eating disorders to talk about their daily experiences and emotions within a safe environment.'

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Project Management

On-going project management support is recommended when students are running peer-support programmes. To enable peer-support programmes to be sustainable there needs to be a continual process of volunteer recruitment, training and supervision. We can assist with each of these steps, supporting volunteers and university staff to advertise recruitment, managing the recruitment and selection process of new volunteers, coordinating training for new volunteers and ensuring that newly trained volunteers are well integrated into their project. Project management support can also be used to deliver follow up training and support if specific challenges arise for student volunteers.

Supporting the lifecycle of a peer-support group, we can;

- Support recruitment by collecting and scoring applications, creating a short list and facilitating the process of interviewing shortlisted candidates.
- Provide support and advice to help volunteers launch their group.
 - We are able to provide start up publicity packs to help the volunteers their awareness campaign off the ground.
 - We can provide groups with email accounts and web-space to aid with publicity for the group and fielding enquiries about the group.
- Organise training to follow up specific challenges faced by group facilitators.
- Provide on-going support for students to ensure that from year to year the project keeps running.

It costs £700 a year to provide Project Management for a Student Minds member group.

Ready to use resources

We believe that student campaigners should spend their time campaigning and we hate it when we see students reinventing the wheel. Each year we work to develop new campaigns that students can deliver straight out of the box. Compiling resources for students helps ensure that they spend their time delivering effective campaigns. All volunteers in the Student Minds network have access to these online resources.

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