No student should be held back by their mental health.

Our ten-year strategy

student minds

Foreword

At Student Minds, we are a charity improving university communities, so that no student is held back by their mental health.

Academic pressure, money worries, loneliness. It's easy to feel overwhelmed at university. Around one in four students report having a diagnosed mental health issue while at university.

Navigating identity, discrimination and global concerns can all make student life even tougher.

World events in recent years have put a great strain on everyone's mental health. We're still feeling the after-effects of the pandemic, which led to huge shifts in the way we work, study, and come together. We're reaching an irreversible threshold of damage in the climate emergency. Injustice and discrimination felt by minoritized groups are gaining much-needed focus. And with the sharpest rise in inflation rates in 30 years, there is a cost-of-living crisis causing ripple effects across the country.

It's no surprise that the NHS is struggling to meet demand for mental health support, and we know many universities feel they need more resources and training to respond to students in distress.

> **We want every student to have the mental health support they need to reach their goals. We know this is a bold ambition, that's why we've put a bold strategy in place to achieve it.**

On the following pages, we lay out our strategic commitments, with a real focus on creating sustainable change for all students.

We've already made great strides in improving university communities and we're immensely proud of our team and achievements to date. But there's more to do and we're energised to do it. We hope you'll support us on this journey.

Rosie Tressler,
OBE, CEO

Sue Rigby,
Chair of Trustees

Shivali Raichura,
Trustee, and
Student advisor

1

What we've achieved so far

We've got a lot to be proud of.

Having started out in 2009 as a student-led support group, we now deliver a wide range of support with and for students.

We improve university communities.
We challenge the higher education sector, health sector, and government to make student mental health a priority.

We empower students to build their own mental health toolkit to support themselves and their peers through university life and beyond.

Over the past 10 years, we've:

✔ **Created our University Mental Health Charter.** Over 60 universities have signed up to the programme, each committing to create a university community that fully supports mental health and wellbeing.

✔ **Shaped a solid research and policy programme.** We publish our insights (through consultation, impact data, and sector research) on student mental health to improve our work and challenge the government to do better.

✔ **Developed our 20-strong Student Advisory Committee.** They meet quarterly and feed into every aspect of our work. This includes collaborating with us on government consultations, and co-producing projects for international students, curriculum design and NHS service provision.

✔ **Provided support to students' unions** to help them navigate and respond to the needs of students.

✔ **Developed training for accommodation providers,** supporting them to promote positive wellbeing within student living spaces.

✔ **Delivered training and workshop programmes** that support students with their mental health. Our trainers have delivered our programmes to over 600 staff and 7,000 students across 126 universities since 2019.

✔ **Launched Student Space,** our online platform to support students through the uncertainty of university life. It has been accessed by over 400,000 people since the start of the pandemic.

✔ **Empowered and inspired students to share their stories on our blog.** It's now the largest student mental health blog in the UK and has had over 750 contributions from students.

✔ **Developed University Mental Health Day,** which reached 21 million people online in 2023, inspiring students to take the first steps in finding the support they need to look after their own mental health.

We've also strengthened the core operations of our charity:

✔ The pandemic prompted a much-welcomed focus on digitising our operations. We've since invested in a new CRM system and begun an ambitious digital roadmap which includes consolidating our website. During the pandemic we successfully moved our training programme delivery online and supported our team to transition to work from home.

✔ Despite the challenging financial climate, we met our short-term fundraising targets during the pandemic, strengthened our team and functions, and have created a robust and ambitious strategy for growth to support the plans we've laid out on the following pages.

✔ We've invested in our team too, making sure their mental health was taken care of during the pandemic and beyond. We've established a range of equality, diversity and inclusion monitoring practices too, with a real commitment to moving from amateur to proficient as an anti-racist organisation in the years ahead.

Our strategy

Our commitments

> **Our vision is of a world where no student is held back by their mental health.**
>
> **Our mission is to improve university communities so that every student gets the mental health support they need to reach their goals.**

We're proud of the progress we've made over the last decade, and the thousands of students and professionals, leaders, funders, and policymakers involved in improving student wellbeing. But we also recognise there is a long way to go to achieve our mission. We're just getting started!

Over the next ten years, we commit to:

💬 **Continue driving positive change for students.**
We'll keep working with students, the higher education sector, health sector, and government to make student mental health a priority, and we'll continue empowering students to look after their own mental health.

💬 **Ensuring that positive change lasts.**
We'll focus on preventative, sustainable, long-term changes that will benefit future generations, as well as the students of today.

We'll do this by focusing on:

Amplifying students' voices

✅ Empowering and inspiring students to share their stories and advocate for themselves.

✅ Building and sharing our insights, evidence, and research. This is all informed by students, especially those who are often marginalised.

✅ Amplifying students' voices to government, by building relationships with policy makers and proposing preventative solutions to the challenges and barriers to student wellbeing.

Facilitating learning and improvement

✅ Creating the spaces (physical and digital) for conversations, connection and learning about student wellbeing to take place.

✅ Developing toolkits, campaigns, and partnerships with organisations on projects that assist and complement higher education student services teams.

✅ Resourcing, nurturing and supporting 'big visionary ideas' that move us towards an inclusive, sustainable and intersectional approach to mental health.

How we plan to deliver

Our focus areas

We know that our core strengths are our diverse network of health and higher education leaders, our engaged and loyal student supporters, and our team's unparalleled knowledge of student mental health.

These strengths will stand us in good stead for the coming years, but we also know there are areas we need to continually invest in more if we're to achieve our bold ambitions for students.

We'll aim to:

Working together and team culture

✔ Continue to create the conditions for a 'high support, high challenge' team, cultivating a caring, flexible, and candid culture where we can all thrive as our whole selves, and enjoy a good quality of life inside and outside of the workplace.

✔ Support the learning, creative expression, and development of our people – staff, student volunteers, clinical advisors and trustee board – with a proactive focus on communities impacted by oppression and power dynamics in society.

Our social responsibility

✔ Whilst we believe we should play to our strengths and expertise with our delivery in the UK only, we are global citizens with an 'open access' ethos and will support partnerships that serve future generations and share our learning with the world.

✔ Connect with the global activism in student communities that has grown in recent years and movements to tackle racial injustice and the climate crisis.

✔ Become a carbon-neutral organisation, recognising that we cannot separate the planet and its people in this crucial decade ahead.

Insight and research

✔ Further understand and share the long-term impacts of global events on students' lives, including the pandemic, racial injustice, Brexit, the cost-of-living crisis, and the climate crisis.

✔ Engage students before they begin their studies, during their time at university, and as they enter the graduate workforce.

Partnerships and funding

✔ We've shaped a diverse funding mix across donations, grants, earned income and provision of services. In the years ahead, we'll diversify our funding further by building more partnerships with organisations and funders that share our ethical funding principles, strategic ambition, and support sustainable delivery models.

Digital channels

✔ Make the most of our face-to-face and digital tools to benefit from working, learning and socialising changes following the pandemic. Create digital platforms and infrastructure that are better suited to our teams, programmes and students.

What success looks like in ten years

We'll know we've succeeded in our mission if, in ten years:

✓ Every university, students' union, and higher education organisation commits to create university communities that support students' mental health and wellbeing.

✓ All students experiencing mental health conditions, whatever their postcode, have rapid access to effective support, both at their institutions and through the NHS so the whole health system works for students.

✓ All members of the university community, including its leaders, are health literate and health-promoting. They are equipped with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to look after and talk about the fundamentals of their own wellbeing, to support others and sustain a positive culture.

✓ The factors that create inequalities, challenges and barriers for student wellbeing and contribute to students developing mental health conditions or experiencing acute distress become better understood and challenged within university communities. Such as discrimination, harassment, sexual violence, climate change and financial and housing issues.

✓ Health and life outcomes for students improve, with fewer students having to leave education due to gaps in understanding or health provision.

Support us

Please help us get every student the mental health support they need to reach their goals.

To **donate**, partner with us or volunteer, reach out to our team:

@StudentMindsOrg

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