

# Student Space Insights

May 2021

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the insights gathered through the [Student Space programme](#) across May 2021.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact [studentspace@studentminds.org.uk](mailto:studentspace@studentminds.org.uk).

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# What is Student Space?

Student Minds launched Student Space in August 2020 to help students find the support that they need during coronavirus.

The platform works to support students in three ways:

1. [Dedicated support services](#)
2. [Information, tools](#) and [stories](#)
3. [Signposting to university support](#)

The screenshot shows the Student Space website interface. At the top right, there is a search bar with the text "Search our site" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links for "Support services", "Advice and Information", "Student stories", "Support at your university", and "About Student Space". The main header features the text "Find the support you need during coronavirus" in white on a teal background, accompanied by an illustration of a laptop and a plant. Below this is a dark blue banner with the text "If you need support now, text STUDENT to 85258" and a link "Other ways you can get in touch". The main content area is titled "Advice and information" and includes a sub-header "Expert information and advice to help you through the challenges of coronavirus." Below this are three columns of content, each with an illustration and a title: "Studying during coronavirus" (10 resources), "Lockdown and self-isolation" (6 resources), and "Mental health and wellbeing" (12 resources). Each column also contains a brief description of the resources.

# The Student Space Support Package

## Universal support services

Dedicated support for whatever challenge a student is facing. Whether it's mental health, studies, money, housing or relationships.

Current services:

- Text support
- Phone support
- Email support
- Webchat support



## Tailored support services

Tailored support for some of the student groups most impacted by the pandemic.

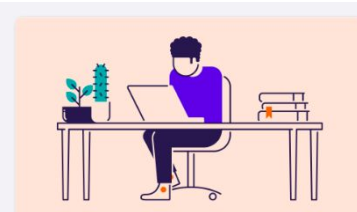
This includes support for:

- Black students
- Punjabi students
- Muslim students
- Trans students
- Working-class students
- Students with OCD and BDD
- Students who hear voices
- Students with disordered eating

## Information, tools and stories

Expert information and advice shaped and written by students and clinicians.

Video-based stories about how students have responded to the challenges created by coronavirus.



**Studying during coronavirus** →

## University support directory

A directory for students to find the mental health support available at their university.

Search by university

## Delivered in partnership

### Funders



Cyngor Cyllido Addysg  
Uwch Cymru  
Higher Education Funding  
Council for Wales



### Support service providers



# Insights: Website Content

1st May 2021 - 31st May 2021

## Top 5 most viewed psycho-education pages

1. [Feeling lonely](#)
2. [Assessments and exams from home](#)
3. [The role of sunlight in your wellbeing](#)
4. [Feel more confident about learning online](#)
5. [Healthy habits can help your mental health](#)

The most viewed pages on Student Space will be heavily influenced by our comms and marketing approach.



# Insights: The Support Services

1st May 2021 - 31st May 2021

# Key issues raised by students through the universal support services



## Text service

Issue*	% of convos
Anxiety / Stress	50.80%
Depression / Sadness	31.00%
Relationship	22.50%
Isolation / Loneliness	19.30%
Suicide	13.90%
COVID-19	6.40%

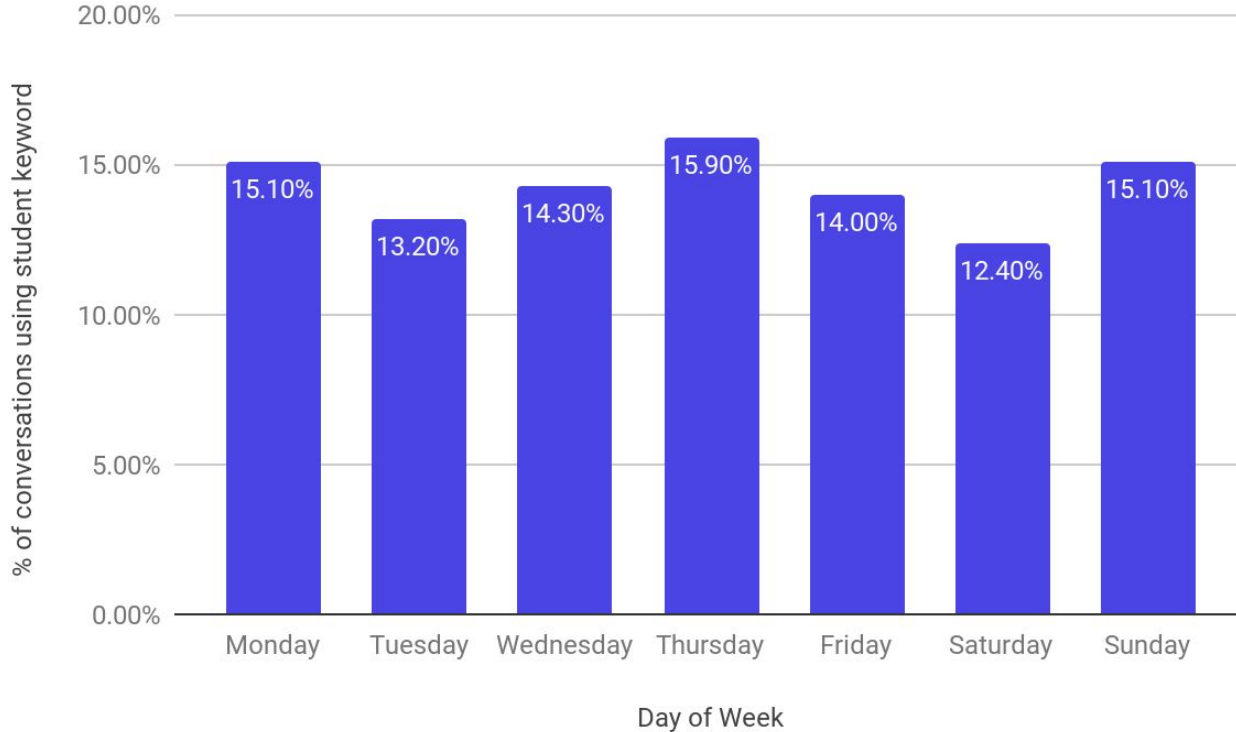
\*The two service providers track the frequency of issues using different categories and methodologies.



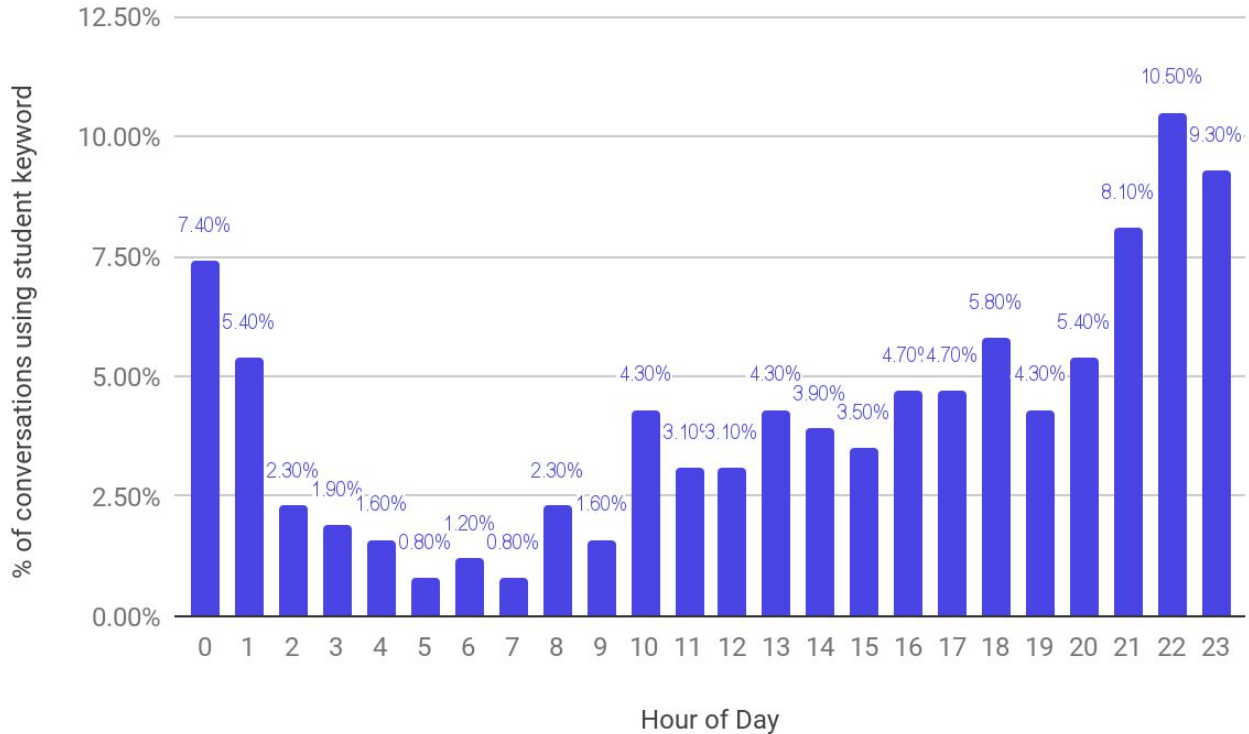
## Phone, email and webchat services

Issue*	% of convos
Anxiety	20.70%
Exam stress	16.10%
School and education	12.65%
Mental health and wellbeing	11.50%
Relationships / friendships	8.05%
Depression / low mood	8.05%
Stress	6.90%
Loneliness / isolation	5.75%
Feelings and emotions	5.75%

## Day of access: Text service



# Hour of access: Text service



## Repeat users: Text service

**52.5% of students** who contacted the text service across May 2021 **had previously contacted the service** since it launched in August 2020.

Helplines provided by Mermaids and Muslim Youth Helpline are also experiencing high levels of repeat users.

# Issues facing Black students

## The support service

Online peer support workshops for Black (i.e. Black African, Black Caribbean, Mixed with Black heritage, African Diaspora) students.

Delivered by:



## The most common issues raised by Black students in the workshops

- The pressure to fit in and measure up to a certain standard whilst at university.
- The desire to just be Black and a student without the need/expectation to constantly have to explain themselves or prove themselves to people around them.
- Experiencing anxiety and depression.
- Navigating various forms of trauma whilst at university.

# Issues facing Muslim students

## The support service

A helpline service for young Muslims, offering support and signposting seven days a week by phone, Whatsapp, webchat and email.

Delivered by: **myh** muslim  
YOUTH  
helpline

## The most common issues raised by Muslim students contacting the helpline

Relationships (18.7%), anxiety (12%), faith/spirituality (13.3%), depression (9.3%) and family issues (9.3%) were the most common issues raised by Muslim students.

The number of students struggling with anxiety and depression were higher than normal, with the following being raised frequently:

- Students being worried they were afflicted with an '[evil eye](#)'.
- Anxiety about changes and upcoming events like exams.
- Not wanting to or being able to access mainstream services.

Many Muslim students are feeling anxious about the future. Some of the future concerns being raised included:

- being afraid about telling their parents about converting to Islam for fear of being judged
- feeling worried about upcoming exams and deadlines
- feeling concerned about moving out of their family home for the first time later in the year, now that they are receiving offers from universities

# Issues facing Punjabi students

## The support service

An online support group for Punjabi students.

Delivered by:



## The most common issues raised by Punjabi students in the online support group

- Common feelings of self-doubt, imposter syndrome and anxiety.
- The difficulties of living back at home and the resultant feelings of isolation.
- A general feeling of eagerness to move back into university accommodation in September.
- The stigma around medication for mental health conditions amongst family and friends, and the difficulties of speaking about it.



# Issues facing students with disordered eating

## The support service

A service for students with eating disorders that provides counselling and online befriending.

**Delivered by:**



## The most common issues raised by students with disordered eating who have used the service

- Exam Stress
- Body image and the idea of socialising out in public with others
- Traumatic experiences
- Interpersonal conflicts with friends and family
- Concerns for the future, including coming out of lockdown, exam results / career prospects and the potential for personal recovery

# Issues facing students with OCD

## The support service

Online sessions for students living with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), and related conditions such as body focused repetitive behaviours (BFRBs).

Delivered by: **ocdaction**  
*it's time to act*

## The most common issues raised by students with OCD who have joined the online sessions

- Students are spending more time cleaning facilities and cleaning themselves after returning home which has taken up more of their time.
- The pandemic has caused some students to experience more intense OCD symptoms (e.g. intrusive thoughts) due to the increased time alone. Students being social with each other had helped them cope pre-pandemic and with the increased isolation the anxiety has got worse.
- The pandemic has caused relationship breakdowns between friends and family due to the lack of respect for government guidelines around social distancing.
- A noticeable trend is that those with OCD have been following the government guidelines quite strictly and they cannot differentiate their OCD anxieties to the pandemic reality. This has been exacerbated for many by the inability to continue exposure therapy under lockdown.

## Issues facing students who hear voices and have other sensory experiences

### The support service

An online peer support group and forum for students who hear voices and have other sensory experiences.

Delivered by:



### The most common issues raised by students in the peer support group

- The lack of understanding of, and stigma associated with, voice hearing and related experiences, including from universities and support services.
- Feelings of isolation and the difficulties of having few spaces available to talk about voice hearing and related experiences with others.
- Voices and sensory experiences, or related distress, interfering with their studies and ability to complete their work.
- Struggling with the transition phases of being a student, including starting university and moving to post-graduate study.
- Worries for the future, including fears about finishing their degrees, whether they will always be struggling with voices/sensory experiences, and whether universities and other support services will be able to support them adequately.

## Gender breakdown

Most of the service providers that track the gender of their users had a majority of women engaging with their services in May. This is particularly true of the service delivered by First Steps ED for students experiencing eating disorders. This is consistent with the Student Space website where an estimated 62.5% of users were female.

The two exceptions to this trend are the service for working-class students and the service for trans students.

The first webinar delivered by RECLAIM on the topic of 'mental health for black working-class students' had more men than women attend.

Nearly half of the users accessing the service for trans students, delivered by Mermaids, were assigned female at birth but now identify as male. Nearly a quarter were assigned male at birth but now identify as female, and less than a fifth of users identified as non-binary.

The logo for 'THE MIX' features the words 'THE MIX' in a bold, sans-serif font. Each letter is a different color: 'T' is yellow, 'H' is red, 'E' is blue, 'M' is red, 'I' is yellow, and 'X' is blue.The logo for 'VOICE COLLECTIVE' consists of the words 'VOICE COLLECTIVE' in a bold, black, sans-serif font, enclosed within a black rectangular border. Above the text, there are three curved lines resembling sound waves.The logo for 'myh muslim YOUTH helpline' features the lowercase letters 'myh' in a teal, lowercase, sans-serif font. To the right, the words 'muslim YOUTH helpline' are stacked in a smaller, teal, lowercase, sans-serif font.The logo for 'First Steps' features the words 'First Steps' in a teal, cursive font. Above the text is a teal line drawing of a hand holding a pen, with the words 'First Steps' written in the air.The logo for 'RECLAIM' features the word 'RECLAIM' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, set against a black rectangular background.The logo for 'Mermaids' features a large, teal, stylized letter 'M' with a white mermaid tail shape cut out of its center. Above the 'M' is a small teal star. Below the 'M' is the word 'Mermaids' in a teal, cursive font.

# Insights: Comms and Marketing

1st May 2021 - 31st May 2021

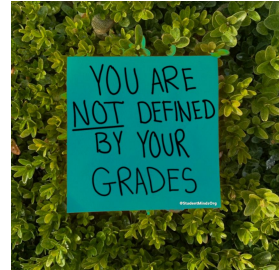
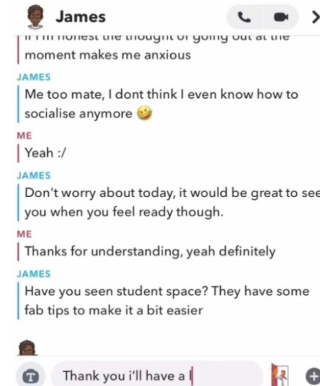
# Digital marketing testing insights

## Our most successful posts were:

- Based on feelings e.g. "I feel lonely..." on the creative asset
- Videos, especially a snapchat style conversation between two students
- Post it notes that incorporated positive messages with links to specific website content
- Simple

## Our least successful posts were:

- Heavily branded
- Had too much information on the creative asset



# Other Insights

1st May 2021 - 31st May 2021

## User testing findings

As part of the ongoing development of Student Space, user testing of the website with students is held regularly. The most recent round in May focused on the launch of the new tailored services.

The following are some findings that may be useful for other support services:

- Some students may interpret use of the word “package” when describing a service as meaning that it is paid for and not free to access.
- Inclusion of a clear mission statement for workshop-based sessions / peer support group sessions is helpful for students who may be interested in the service.
- Students expect to see clear information about the times and dates that sessions are being held, and may become frustrated or lose interest if they can't find it.



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