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Mental health wellbeing at university

Submission date	Recruitment status	[ ] Prospectively registered
20/02/2023	No longer recruiting	[X] Protocol
Registration date	**Overall study status**	[ ] Statistical analysis plan
20/03/2023	Ongoing	[ ] Results
Last Edited	**Condition category**	[ ] Individual participant data
21/01/2026	Mental and Behavioural Disorders	[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
There has been a marked increase of 12-20% in the rates of students experiencing mental health conditions reported over the past few years. According to a 2012 report student mental health rates in that year equalled that of the general population. This study aims to explore the reasons behind undergraduate and postgraduate students' difficulties with mental health across the years of their study to allow for a greater understanding of difficulties and protective factors to inform targeted approaches.

Who can participate?
Undergraduate and postgraduate students at participating Higher Education institutions

What does the study involve?
An online questionnaire survey will be distributed every year for 5 years. The survey will collect demographic information as well as access to student wellbeing services and usage of mental health resources, mental health information, the association of this with loneliness and perceived social support, and experience and satisfaction with university wellbeing services in supporting their mental health wellbeing.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The findings will inform current initiatives and identify key themes for prioritising in further developing robust approaches to support student mental health wellbeing.

Where is the study run from?
The University of Southampton and Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
September 2019 to December 2026

Who is funding the study?
Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Kathryn Elliot, kathryn.elliot@nhs.net

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator, Scientific, Public

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Miss Kathryn Elliot

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Additional identifiers

Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
274776

Central Portfolio Management System (CPMS)
44624

Study information

Scientific Title
Mental health wellbeing at university: student survey exploring mental health wellbeing and access to support in UK universities

Study objectives
This study aims to explore the reasons behind undergraduate and postgraduate student's difficulties with mental health across the years of their study to allow for greater understanding of difficulties and protective factors to inform targeted approaches.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 14/02/2020, Health and Care Research Wales/HRA) (Health Research Authority, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, London, E20 1JQ, United Kingdom; +44 (0)207 104 8000; hra.approval@nhs.net), ref: 20/HRA/0090

Primary study design
Observational

Study design

Longitudinal quantitative online self-report survey

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Mental health and wellbeing in university students in the UK

Interventions
This study is a longitudinal quantitative online self-report survey. Quantitative data will be collected via an online University of Southampton Qualtrics XM platform yearly for 5 years. The survey link will be distributed to students via their respective university student offices. Qualitative data will be collected from a small number of optional open-ended questions within the survey that invite the participant to recount a recent encounter accessing support for their mental health wellbeing at campus.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
Mental health problems measured using self-reporting at baseline

Key secondary outcome(s)
The following measures are assessed at baseline:
1. Loneliness measured using the Three-Item Loneliness Scale
2. Social support measured using the 12-item Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)
3. Mental wellbeing measured using the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)
4. Patient experience of support services measured using the Patient experience questionnaire (PEQ, IAPT)
5. Depression measured using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)
6. Anxiety measured using the Generalised Anxiety Disorder Assessment (GAD-7)

Completion date
31/12/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
All students enrolled at University in undergraduate years 1-6 and postgraduate students, including all full-time, part-time and distance learning postgraduate taught students (including but not limited to MA, MSc, PGCE, PGCert, PGDip courses, or credits at PGT level)

Participant type(s)
Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Other

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
6560

Key exclusion criteria
Participants who do not consent to the study

Date of first enrolment
12/03/2020

Date of final enrolment
31/12/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Northern Ireland

Scotland

Wales

Study participating centre
Moorgreen Hospital
Botley Road
West End
Southampton
England
SO30 3JB

Sponsor information

Organisation
Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

ROR

https://ror.org/03qesm017

Funder(s)

Funder type
Hospital/treatment centre

Funder Name
Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
Current IPD sharing plan as of 21/01/2026:

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are/will be available upon request from Dr Peter Phiri (p.phiri@soton.ac.uk) or Kathryn Elliot (kathryn.elliot@nhs.net). Contact the Governance office at hiowh.research.governance@nhs.net for data access.

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Previous IPD sharing plan:

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are/will be available upon request from Dr Peter Phiri (peter.phiri@southernhealth.nhs.uk) or Ayaat Al-Sudani (ayaat.al-sudani@southernhealth.nhs.uk). Contact the Governance office at research.governance@southernhealth.nhs.uk for data access.

IPD sharing plan summary
Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Participant information sheet	Student Mental Health Questionnaire version 1.4	07/02/2023	01/03/2023	No	Yes
Protocol file	version 1.8	07/02/2023	22/02/2023	No	No