Think Positive

IMPACT REPORT

2022-2023

think+
positive about
student mental health

Who we are

Think Positive is a Scottish Government funded student mental health project at NUS Charity. We want to ensure that student mental health needs are better supported and promoted in further and higher education.

"Think Positive is an invaluable service that works with 86% of universities, colleges and students' associations across Scotland to develop truly student–centred mental health support. I know first hand how essential Think Positive is to our member students' associations, as well as to the students we represent. Think Positive is so important because they ensure institutions are coproducing work with students, meaning that their work is tailored to student–specific mental health needs rather than more generic, society–wide trends."

– Ellie Gomersall, NUS Scotland President

Think Positive project outcomes 2022–2023

1 Students' associations, colleges and universities across Scotland will have a more joined up approach when supporting students' mental health.

2 Students' associations, colleges and universities across Scotland will improve their mental health support offer.
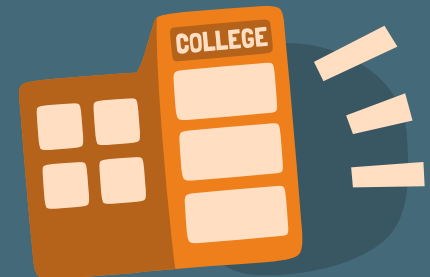
3 Students' associations, colleges and universities across Scotland will be better equipped to support students' mental health.

We provided **25** 1:1 video consultancy support sessions to colleges, universities and students' associations across Scotland for FREE.

We directly worked with **86%** of all colleges, universities and students' associations in Scotland.

Student Mental Health Agreement project

Think Positive's **Student Mental Health Agreement project** (SMHA) is a collaboration project between the students' association and college or university. The project sets a clear framework to help promote and develop their mental health support offer for students.
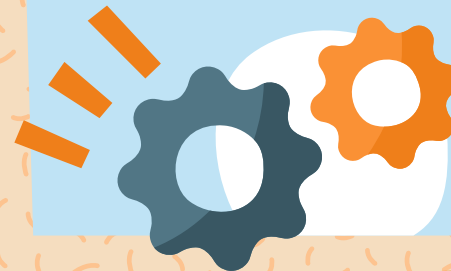
August 2022–June 2023

As a result of taking part in our Student Mental Health Agreement Project participants told us:

72% said they felt more connected to representatives from other colleges, universities and students' associations.

Extremely unlikely – not likely   Likely ⟶ Extremely likely
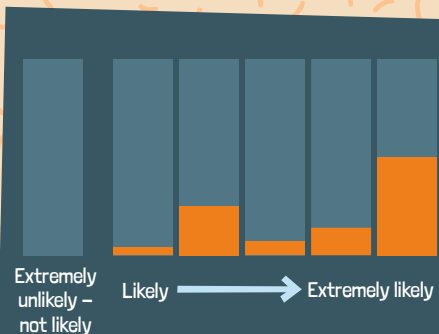
100% said they would recommend the project, with **50%** 'extremely likely'.

83% said they have more of a joined-up approach on mental health work as a result of taking part.

69% said it enabled them to see what they are doing well as well as areas for further development.

83% said taking part ensured that mental health work is still a key priority for the institution and students' association.

66% said it improved the partnership between the students' association and institution.

67% of project participants have a Student Mental Health Agreement in place and the remaining 33% are currently developing theirs.

730+ students across Scotland developed and delivered the work within SMHAs.

SMHA

The SMHA project has had the potential to benefit **499,370+** students during 2022-2023.

2,602+ students across Scotland provided feedback on their institution's SMHA.

Project participants engaged with **142+** external organisations throughout the year on their mental health work.

Click on the map to see the full list of **30** participating institutions across Scotland.

"The experience of taking part in the Student Mental Health Agreement has been invaluable."
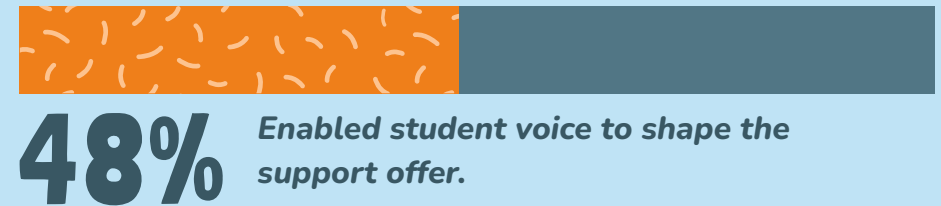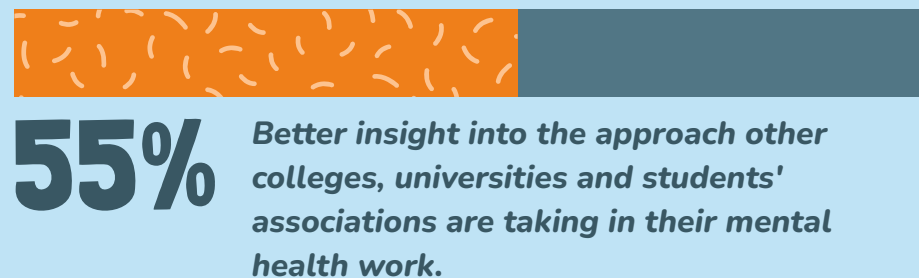
"I think it is really beneficial for all HEIs and FEIs to be involved in this project."

student mental health agreement

Project benefits

Project participants told us that they also experienced these additional benefits as a result of taking part in the Student Mental Health Agreement project.

62% *Brought multiple people together from departments across the institution.*

59% *The mental health support offer to their students has developed as a result of taking part in the SMHA project.*

55% *Better insight into the approach other colleges, universities and students' associations are taking in their mental health work.*

48% *Gained a better understanding of what their students want.*

48% *Enabled student voice to shape the support offer.*

45% *Improved how their mental health and wellbeing work is monitored and evaluated.*

BENEFITS

Participants' feedback

"The Think Positive Team have been instrumental in offering a structure to our association and college student mental health work. Think Positive adds a legitimacy to the SA being instrumental in the Mental Health work of the college. The SMHA Agreement itself brings the college and SA together in a way which the college wouldn't do if the project didn't exist."

"We have seen the responsiveness at Think Positive in terms of feedback from ourselves, feedback from the PAG and also feedback from students. As the project has built momentum so has the networks of support, the collaborative work and shared learning, enhancing our own institutional approach as well as the sector wide approach."

"As a newly appointed Mental Health Coordinator, this gave easy to follow steps to map out the current provision, network with key internal partnerships, creating a student working group, gathering feedback, co–producing actions and working areas. This work has been essential in establishing a culture that prioritises student mental health and wellbeing."

"We have taken part in the SMHA for the last few years and the support from Think Positive has always been excellent. They help to create a space for engagement and co–creation with other institutions, as well as providing opportunities for reflection on how to improve on the offer of student mental health support available at the college. This service is invaluable at any time with regards to mental health support but even more so as a result of the challenges over the last few years."

"This is one of the projects I've really enjoyed working on. Our Steering Group meetings are always positive and the relationships between the University and SA have strengthened. We always find that SMHA priorities link into other areas, including the EmilyTest Charter objectives, and the manifestos of our new officers. This gives us an added push to make these things happen, and good leverage when we need it to get other colleagues to see the value in the areas of work we are trying to bring together."

"The Think Positive team have been fantastic in supporting, answering questions and setting up good practice events."

"The support provided is already excellent with quick responses to queries and helpful insight into work being undertaken."

"We have been part of the project for many years. The project has really taken on feedback and adapted to the needs of the participants and the institutions. Really well organised! Thank you."

"It's been wonderful getting feedback from our students and seeing how engaged they have been – there is a lot of interest to collaborate and see their input create better mental health support strategies in our university."

"We have been involved with the project and have had a SMHA since 2016 – this has been crucial in the development of what is now a very strong partnership between the SA and the university on MH."

Opportunities for improvement

Project participants told us that they experienced the following challenges when taking part in the Student Mental Health Agreement project.

65% *Keeping engaged in this work during busy periods of the year.*

55% *Getting student involvement on the SMHA.*

45% *Lack of internal resources.*

38% *Changes in peoples roles at the students' association/institution.*

34% *Finding the time to go through the steps and deliver the work.*

31% *Ensuring they have good success measures.*

28% *Lack of SMHA handover when changes in roles.*

21% *Recruitment challenges.*

What else could be better?

"When there is a change in lead contact, it would be great to have an 'induction' into the SMHA by Think Positive outlining clear aims of this role."

"The SMHA runs in parallel to our internal Student Partnership Agreement, so there are times when the duplication feels clunky, and time is spent on accounting for what we do rather than being able to get on and do it!"

"I think it would be really beneficial if Think Positive got to come to each college or university to discuss with the Students' Association and the Institution what needs to be done for creating a better SMHA. This would also remove any misunderstandings that might occur with information passing from Think Positive to the Students' Association to the rest of the institution."

"We're enjoying being a part of this project, however, lack of time and staff resources on our end have made the first year of the project lengthier than desired. We're looking forward to catching up and making good progress next year."

"The support from Think Positive has been excellent, it has been a lack of engagement from the University and a lack of time to dedicate towards the project from myself and the wider Union that has caused this project to stall."

"As the years have progressed the emphasis on MH and ensuring this informs everything at the SA and university has grown beyond the SMHA. As the SA, we have mental health and wellbeing embedded in our strategic plan as a key theme that works across everything we do. SMHA has been instrumental in getting to this point, but sometimes it feels like there is so much else going on with this area that having the agreement and following all the steps each cycle is repeating work that is at times going on elsewhere and is not really required anymore."

"Most of the barriers are within the college itself, e.g. working group changing constantly due to people leaving/changing roles."

"A challenge for us has been SA capacity. I believe SA's are underfunded in terms of staff and, as a lone staff member I personally have found my portfolio of work very difficult to manage, this includes helping to lead on the SMHA work. It would be helpful for SA's if NUS continued their lobbying of the Scottish Government to improve support to SA's to allow us to meet the challenges and expectations of an increasing workload."

"Internally we have had changes in both University and Union staff which had made it difficult to keep a momentum going with the SMHA and the student group . Also the student group this year has not been as motivated / able to attend groups etc which has not helped with trying to keep this year moving."

"I think more of a structured layout of what the Think Positive Team would like to see from our remits."

"It has been difficult for us recently but this is due to internal factors we have had to deal with rather than Think Positive. Resourcing and funding can make it hard to live up to what you want your partnership to be."
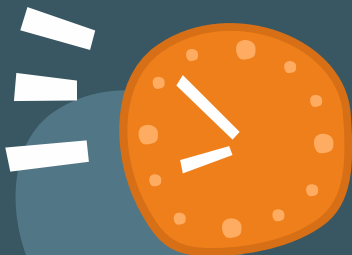
Think Positive Hub

A summary of the mental health support offer available at every college and university in Scotland is available on the **Think Positive Hub**, including launched Student Mental Health Agreements. This is updated by institutions themselves every six months. Available 24/7 365 days of the year for students, staff and the wider sector to access for FREE.

August 2022–June 2023

413 hours spent by users accessing student mental health resources and information. (If this was a person providing this information this would have cost £4,502!)

52,081 pages viewed

THE HUB

166,877 impressions through Think Positive social media channels.

128 pieces of student mental health related content is available on the Think Positive Hub. This includes mental health services, resources, projects, events, news, blogs and research in Scotland.
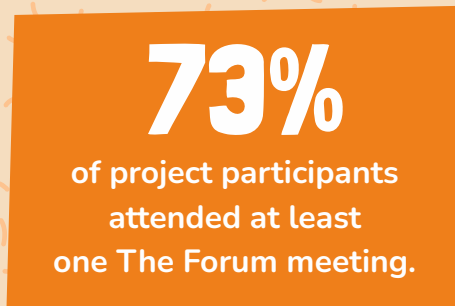
15,470 total sessions

67 organisations promote their mental health work on the Think Positive Hub.

The Forum

Think Positive organises and facilitates <u>The Forum</u>.
A space for representatives from colleges, universities and students' associations across Scotland to meet to discuss the challenges and opportunities they are facing around topics relating to student mental health in Scotland. It provides an opportunity for them to connect, learn from each other and share best practice.

August 2022–June 2023

22

Scottish colleges, universities and students' associations represented.

7

The Forum meetings facilitated.

73%

of project participants attended at least one The Forum meeting.

"The monthly meetings keep the SMHA at the forefront of our thinking in the college."

"Well run, and great to be able to hear from other colleagues about their experiences. I enjoy the Forum sessions, I often come out feeling empowered, especially knowing that colleagues are facing similar challenges."

"Following a forum meeting whereby New College Lanarkshire discussed their SMHA, we evaluated our own practice in training our societies on mental health signposting, which is a new training programme that will be rolled out in the new academic year."

"Think Positive team have been very helpful, making it very clear of what is expected, and regular check in and providing the Forum – giving people from other organisations a platform to share best practice."

Student Mental Health Coproduction webinars

26 representatives from **19** students' associations, colleges and universities from across Scotland attended Student Mental Health Coproduction webinars. Project participants learnt what meaningful coproduction looks like, with real examples of ways other institutions have cocreated their mental health work with students. **48%** of attendees completed the webinar feedback form.

100% agreed that having this coproduction knowledge will improve the future mental health support offer available to their students.

33% *Said they were 'moderately knowledgeable or 'very knowledgeable' on how to coproduce mental health work with students before the webinar.*

91% *Said they are 'moderately knowledgeable' or 'very knowledgeable' on how to coproduce mental health work with students since attending the webinar.*

100% agreed that as a result of attending the webinar, they feel better equipped to cocreate mental health work with students.

100% agreed that as a result of attending the webinar, they will be able to work better with colleagues across the institution on coproduction work.

#HelpingStudentsThrive Campaign

The **#HelpingStudentsThrive** Campaign was coproduced alongside students with lived experience of mental ill health. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the challenges students face due to managing mental ill health whilst studying, as well as how we can better support them.

Colleges an~~d~~ have a res~~ponsibility to~~ suppo~~rt~~

Being a student can be tough

During April–June 2023

#HelpingStudentsThrive

campaign communications pack was sent to

100%

of all colleges, universities and students' associations in Scotland as well as an additional 69 organisations.

On launch day traffic to the Think Positive Hub increased by

128%

The campaign animation was viewed

7,580

times.

Through our social media channels the campaign has reached

19,168

people.

15

colleges, universities and students' associations promoted the

#HelpingStudentsThrive

campaign with their students via social media.