

**THINK POSITIVE**

**IMPACT**

**REPORT**

**2024-2025**

**think<sup>+</sup>**  
positive about  
student mental health

**nus** *scotland*  
national union of **students**

**nus** *charity*  
national union of **students**

**thinkpositive.scot**



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# Who we are

**Think Positive is a Scottish Government funded student mental health project at NUS Charity & NUS Scotland.**

Our aim is to ensure student mental health is better supported and promoted in further and higher education. Think Positive brings together a network of colleges, universities and students' associations to share resources, learn from each other, highlight good practice and challenges within the sector.

Together we have oversight of the fantastic mental health work taking place across Scotland's colleges and universities. Collectively, we contribute to the wellbeing of Scotland's students and improve the quality of available mental health support.



## Think Positive project outcomes 2024–2025

1

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

2

**Students' associations, colleges and universities across Scotland will improve their mental health support on offer and create better links with wider services and supports.**

3

**Students' associations, colleges and universities across Scotland will be better equipped to build upon their mental health work.**

# Making a difference

This Impact Report provides a snapshot of the difference Think Positive's work has made during the 2024–2025 academic year. Here are our previous [Impact Reports](#).

This information was gathered through institutions' annual Self Evaluations (submitted by 41% of project participants) and the annual anonymous End of Year Survey (submitted by 75% of project participants).

We promoted the mental health support offer of **100%** of Scotland's colleges & universities throughout the year.



We directly supported and collaborated with

**91%**

of Scotland's colleges, universities & students associations on their mental health work – **6% increase** from previous year.

**71%**

of institutions told us that they have been able to create better links with external organisations as a result of working with Think Positive – **31% increase** from previous year.

## Winners – Outstanding Impact in Education

Scottish Mental Health & Wellbeing Awards 2025



"This rightly recognises the positive impact you are making through your commitment to improving mental health support in the sector, as well as breaking down barriers to discussing mental health openly... I am pleased that all of the excellent work in the further and higher education sectors has been recognised in such a positive way at a national level. This is very well deserved, reflecting the value of the work that NUS Think Positive is doing with Scotland's colleges and universities in supporting student mental health. May I congratulate NUS Think Positive on your achievement. I appreciate the work that you and your colleagues have done, and continue to do, in this area."

– Graeme Dey MSP,  
Minister for Higher and Further Education



**think<sup>+</sup>**  
positive about  
student mental health

Click on the  
map to see the  
full list of **32**  
institutions who  
took part in the  
SMHA project.

“With all the pressures facing students today it is essential that they have access to high quality mental health support services tailored to their needs. By working with colleges, universities and students’ association across Scotland Think Positive helps to ensure that support is available, of a good standard and delivered in a joined up and consistent way for as many students as possible. The value of their projects like The Forum, Think Positive Hub, and the Student Mental Health Agreement cannot be measured in simple economic terms, but they more than pay for themselves.”

– Sai Shraddha S. Viswanathan,  
NUS Scotland President



# Student Mental Health Agreement project

Think Positive's Student Mental Health Agreement project (SMHA) is a partnership between the students' association and college or university. The project sets a clear framework to help promote and develop their mental health support offer, in collaboration with students. It helps them to consider what is working well and where improvements could be made.

As a result of taking part in our Student Mental Health Agreement Project, during the academic year 2024–2025 participants told us the following

**92%**

say that relationships based on trust, respect, equality and proactive communication exist between the students' association and the institution.



**83%**

said that their mental health support has developed as a result of taking part in the SMHA project.

**75%**

of participants have taken forward methods to monitor and evaluate the impact of the SMHA.

**92%**

say that students have been involved in developing & delivering the work within the SMHA.



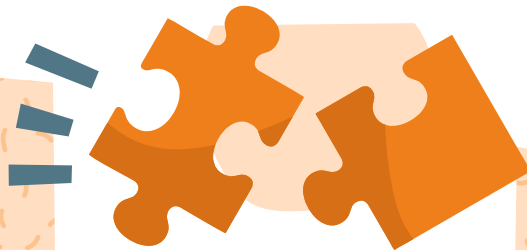
**83%**

have already planned their SMHA working areas and activities to respond to the needs of their students.



Think Positive **27**  
provided

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



**68%**

have a more joined-up  
approach to mental health  
and wellbeing work as a  
result of taking part in the  
SMHA project.



**61%**

said that feedback and  
collaboration with  
students has shaped  
what their support  
offer looks like.

**58%**

shared that SMHAs are  
embedded into other  
frameworks, policies, and  
strategies within the students'  
association & institution.

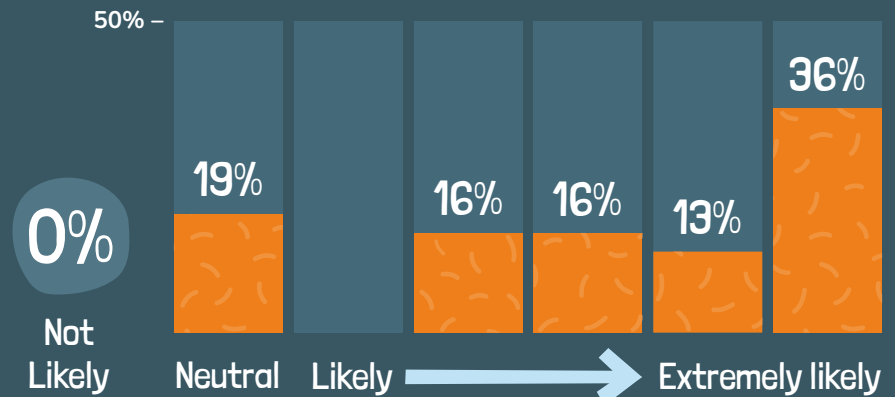


Project Participants  
(2024–2025)

- 75%** SMHA in place
- 19%** updating their current SMHA
- 6%** developing a new SMHA

**58%**

said that taking part in the SMHA  
project had helped them to see  
what is going well and identify  
areas for development.



**81%** of project participants said they would likely  
recommend taking part in the project, with **36%**  
responding extremely likely.

## Project participants told us about their experience working with Think Positive

"The SMHA acts as a tangible and accountable shared document of the commitment to improve health and wellbeing. This vision was agreed throughout the institution and Student Association, aiming to make improvements together, evaluate together, share resource together and create an action plan which would be reported on in the Equalities Mainstreaming committee and Executive Officer meetings."

"It's been good to have a single point of contact that brings different colleges, universities and partner organisations together to share best practice, keep up to date with sector changes and share ideas."

"Having a good mentor through Think Positive has definitely helped. I struggled myself during the year, and they made sure I was okay and supported from within my institution and outwith as well."

"I have found it to be a great experience. Think Positive are very knowledgeable about student mental health across the sector and great at connecting us with resources and other institutions who are working to improve mental health and wellbeing."

"Working with Think Positive has been incredibly beneficial to both our staff teams and our Students' Association. It has allowed us to work collaboratively, not just with each other, and with Think Positive, but also with our colleagues from across the Think Positive network, allowing us to share best practice and learn from each other."

"Think Positive reviewed our SMHA and provided lots of in-depth feedback which was helpful in improving our final agreement."

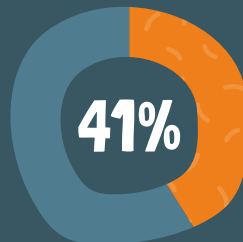
"Students have benefitted from an updated SMHA which directly relates to the support that they want to see, as they were more involved in the process this time around."

## Opportunities for development with the SMHA project

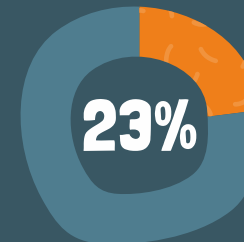
Project participants told us that they experienced the following challenges when taking part in the Student Mental Health Agreement project.



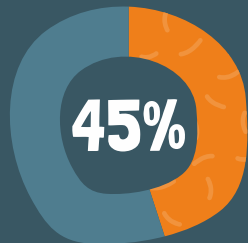
*Lack of internal resources (including time, support, people, structures etc.)*



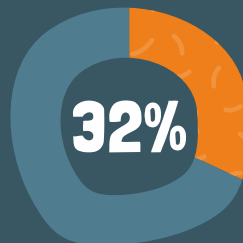
*Keeping engaged in this work during busy periods of the year.*



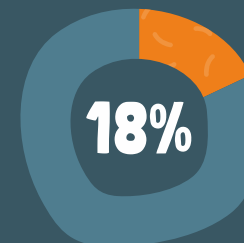
*The students' association and institution working in joint partnership.*



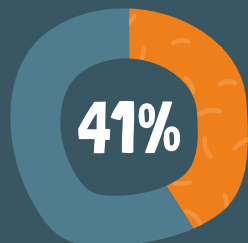
*Getting students involved in SMHA work.*



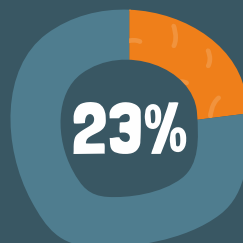
*Changes in people's roles at the students' association/institution.*



*Lack of SMHA handover when SMHA leads change.*



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



*Ensuring we have good monitoring processes and/or success measures.*



*No participants felt there was a lack of resources or information from Think Positive about the SMHA, or there was a lack of support from Think Positive.*



## What else could be better with the SMHA project?

**55%** said the project had improved the partnership between the students' association & institution. This was a lower percentage than last year, with some participants commenting that they already had a good partnership, so were unsure whether the SMHA project itself had been a factor in this or not:

"At my institution we benefit from good partnership approaches and work on many areas of institutional priority (including mental health and wellbeing) already in partnership with our Students' Association, so it is difficult to determine if this partnership approach and the way in which we focus on students shaping MH support and priorities is as a result of the SMHA, or would happen anyway."

"We were already working closely with our students through collaboration with our students' association."

A couple of project participants shared challenges around partnership working between the institution and students' association. This included limitations on the students associations capacity which impacted how they were able to actively engage in the project.

### Mental Health support already established:

"I believe that the Think Positive project was very positive back when the project was launched. Over this time there has been a real shift in the way that universities think about mental health – with most have formal strategies, action plans and clear partnership working (between union and university) sometimes it is unclear where the Think Positive project fits in with this."

### Funding:

"Unfortunately the big issues are mainly around funding (the college has decided to stop delivering the counselling service this year due to lack of funds) so I don't think there's that much that Think Positive can do about this, though it would maybe be useful to see if other colleges have also had to do this. It would be good to perhaps see some wider campaigning from NUS around student mental health – maybe some rallies at Parliament our officers can get involved in?"





# The Forum

Think Positive organises and facilitates The Forum from October to June each year. This is a monthly online space where representatives from colleges, universities and students' associations across Scotland discuss the challenges and opportunities they are facing relating to student mental health in Scotland. It enables those working in the sector to share best practice, learn from each other and share their work.

Between October 2024–June 2025



The Forum meetings facilitated, bringing those involved in mental health work at colleges, universities and students' associations across Scotland together.

**81%**

of SMHA project participants attended more than 4 meetings.

**94%** attended 1 or more.

Attendance ranged from

**11–45**

project participants, per meeting.

## Forum topics

Topics were decided by project participants and included:

- The launch of the Scottish Government's new **Student Mental Health Action Plan**.
- The impact of the **Housing Crisis** on Student Mental Health.
- **Risks in SMHA Delivery**.
- **Tackling Stigma**.
- **Trauma Informed Practice**.
- **Becoming a College of Sanctuary for International Students**.
- **Suicide Prevention**.
- **Co-production with Students**. This included external speakers such as See Me, Suicide Prevention Scotland and Student Minds.

## Project participants reported the following benefits of participating in The Forum



2024–2025



2023–2024

**84%**

**79%**

*Learning from the experiences and approaches of other institutions and students' associations.*

**71%**

**67%**

*Learning from external speakers.*

**71%**

**67%**

*Feel more connected to representatives from other colleges, universities and students' associations.*

**64%**

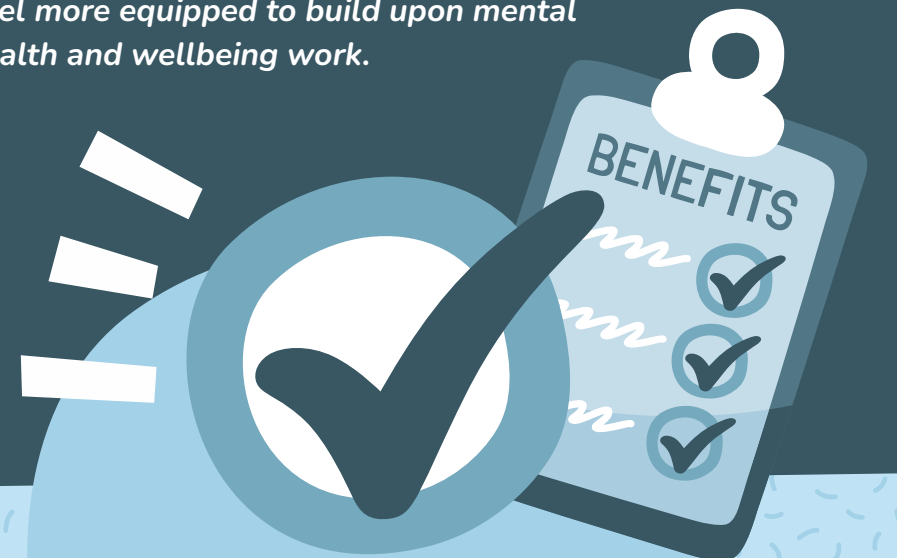
**54%**

*Having a safe space to share the challenges and opportunities we face with our work.*

**58%**

**54%**

*Feel more equipped to build upon mental health and wellbeing work.*



## Project participants' feedback on The Forum

"The Forum provides excellent information and discussion topics that are beneficial for continuous learning that is current and relevant to student issues."

"I have found the speakers at the Forum are very helpful to get us talking about a particular subject and learning what others are doing."

"The Forums have been incredibly beneficial, for allowing connection with colleagues from across Scotland, to come together and discuss issues/concerns and learn from each other."



## What can Think Positive do to improve The Forum?

Project participants shared that The Forum could be improved by:

- Offering a greater variety of days and times for The Forum to take place.
- Recording The Forum for those unable to attend.

"I think it would great to have more speakers from Student Associations and institutions on their work on specific topics around GBV, issues international students face, financial troubles within the sector and how all this links to the importance of projects like this and engaging in topics like mental health linking the topics highlighted there."

# Think Positive Hub

The Think Positive Hub brings together the latest projects, services, resources, training and news relating to student mental health in Scotland in one place, so students and those who support them can easily access it.

The Think Positive Hub also highlights a summary of the mental health support services available at every college and university in Scotland, which are updated by colleges and universities themselves every six months.

A new student area was developed on the Hub in November 2024. It is a dedicated space for students interested in engaging with Think Positive's work. This includes sitting on our Project Advisory Group, submitting a blog to share their experience as a student, getting involved with mental health work at their institution, and raising awareness of Think Positive.

Available **24/7 365** days of the year for students, staff and the wider sector to access for **FREE**.



Between June 2024–June 2025



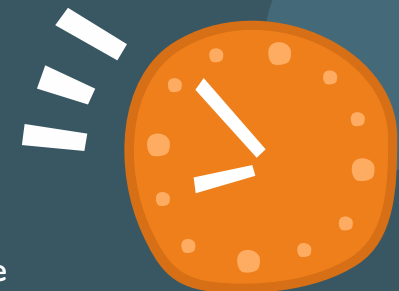
The Think Positive Hub shared the work colleges, universities and students' associations are taking forward through articles and spotlight blogs.

223

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. This a **22%** increase compared to the previous year.

292

hours spent by users accessing student mental health resources and information – **24%** decrease compared to the previous year.





**1,169**

resources have been downloaded – **17%** decrease compared to the previous year.

There have been  
**15,393**  
sessions – **28%** increase compared to the previous year.

The most viewed pages throughout the year related to **seeking mental health support at college/university, finding external mental health support services**, searching through the Think Positive Hub resources and the **SMHA project**.



**51,801**  
pages viewed – **1%** decrease compared to the previous year.

"The resource hub is a fantastic way of reading about blogs and other organisations and how they tackle stigma, improve mental health and develop student communities work with under represented demographics. Reading others' SMHA provide a real resource of learning from each other and celebrating good practice. Having information from third sector partners who focus on specifics is also very important and we have utilised these to reach out for more information and advice."



**173,756**  
impressions through Think Positive social media channels – **95%** increase compared to the previous year.

"The website is very helpful in finding useful resources and looking at what other institutions are working on."

**94**

organisations promote their mental health work on the Think Positive Hub – **16%** increase compared to the previous year.

"The Hub is excellent for promoting support services to our students."

# Impact on students

How have students benefited from your college/university/students' association working with Think Positive?

The work taken forward as part of the SMHA project had the potential to benefit

**469,966+**

students during academic year 2024–2025.



**15,371+**

students gave feedback on their institution's mental health & wellbeing support.

**7,767+**

students provided feedback on their institution's SMHA.

**82%**

of SMHA project participants said that the work within SMHAs is continuing to develop and improve based on students' needs.





## Participants said that students had benefitted from the project in the following ways

"Through increased focus on student feedback, students' voices around mental health support have been amplified, and their suggestions and comments have fed into overall service development. Students have had the opportunity to input into the creation of the commitments underpinning our approach to mental health support delivery."

"This work has been embedded into all that we do. The college and SA have taken student health and wellbeing as a priority. The SMHA has been integral in pulling work together and ensuring evaluation is introduced. The student voice is central to all of this activity and a partnership between the SA and institution is integral to its success."

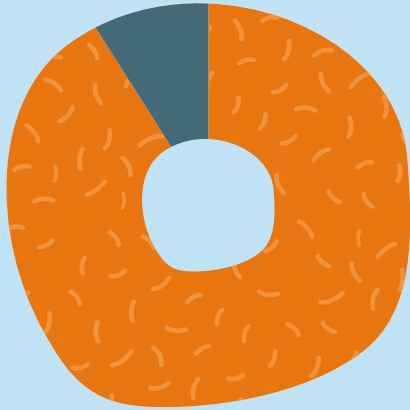
"I think the work done through the SMHA project allowed us to think more objectively and engage with students to feed in their wider view within the SMHA. Our previous SMHA was out of date and with this project it allowed individuals from the University and Students Association to come together and form a working group to get the work under way. It has also brought a closer working relationship between the mental health and counselling team and the students' associations elected officers, and specifically our advice service."

"Student mental health is at the heart of our equality and diversity activities and is embedded at the strategic level. Again, staff and student feedback was used to inform the decision to keep student mental health as a key priority across the college."

"The SMHA benefits the students by creating a commitment to joined up working on identified mental health projects."

"We continuously evaluate our services through feedback from student users and evaluate impact and need. We look at research, data and the Scottish census to understand our students and our community, the demographics and needs. All of our developments have come from student feedback – everything we do is focused on the needs of our students."

# Working with the sector



**91%**

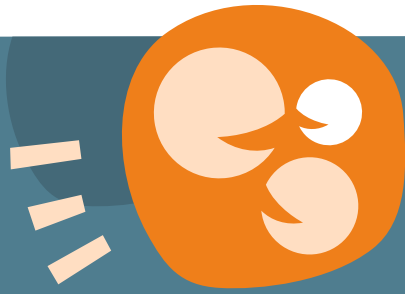
of SMHA project participants now say that the institution and students' association has a well established and sustainable engagement with external mental health organisations and local services throughout the year.

"All these partnerships highlight the support we have in place for students to support their individual journey. We are proud of the work we do and will continue to grow and develop our connections with internal and external partners to meet the needs of our students."

- SMHA project participant



## In the 2024–2025 academic year Think Positive:



Collaborated with See Me on a pilot tackling stigma project.

Took part in the Scottish Governments' Student Mental Health Action Plan Delivery Group, delivering a presentation on Think Positive's work.



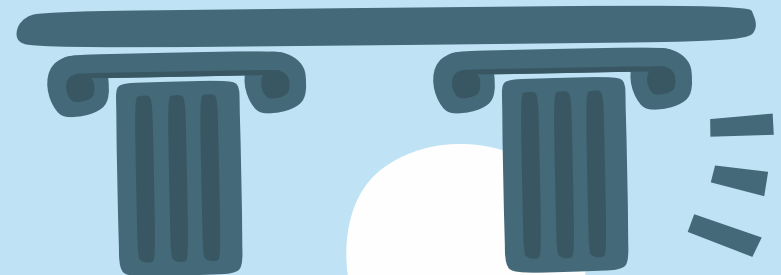
Hosted a range of external speakers at The Forum including Suicide Prevention Scotland, See Me, Student Minds, as well as project participants who offered presentations on their work.



Developed a partnership with Suicide Prevention Scotland and set up a dedicated page on the Think Positive Hub for their resources.

Met with a variety of organisations throughout the year and attended external meetings and events.

Think Positive are supported and influenced by members of Think Positive's Project Advisory Group which included Colleges Scotland, SAMH, Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Government, Scottish Recovery Network, South Lanarkshire College and University of the Highlands and Islands, Universities Scotland and a St Andrews' student member.



**FORUM**

# Thank you

to all of the colleges, universities  
and students' associations who  
collaborated with us and shared  
their experiences.



For more information, contact us:  
[ThinkPositive@nus-scotland.org.uk](mailto:ThinkPositive@nus-scotland.org.uk)

