



NEW COLLEGE LANARKSHIRE

Student Mental Health Agreement 2024- 2025

Led by students for students



**NEW
COLLEGE
LANARKSHIRE**
Bringing Education Closer

Introduction

New College Lanarkshire (NCL) responded to the recommendations highlighted in the [Thriving Learners Report](#) by launching a focused Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA), a partnership between the College and all students. In Scotland 64% of students reported low mental health and wellbeing and 14.67% of NCL students in academic year 2023–2024 withdrew from their course due to health issues, including mental health. There needs to be a simple, targeted approach with a clear and consistent message framed around; raising awareness of stigma and discrimination associated with mental health; identification of factors and triggers that may impact on a student's mental health and wellbeing and coping strategies to improve personal resilience.

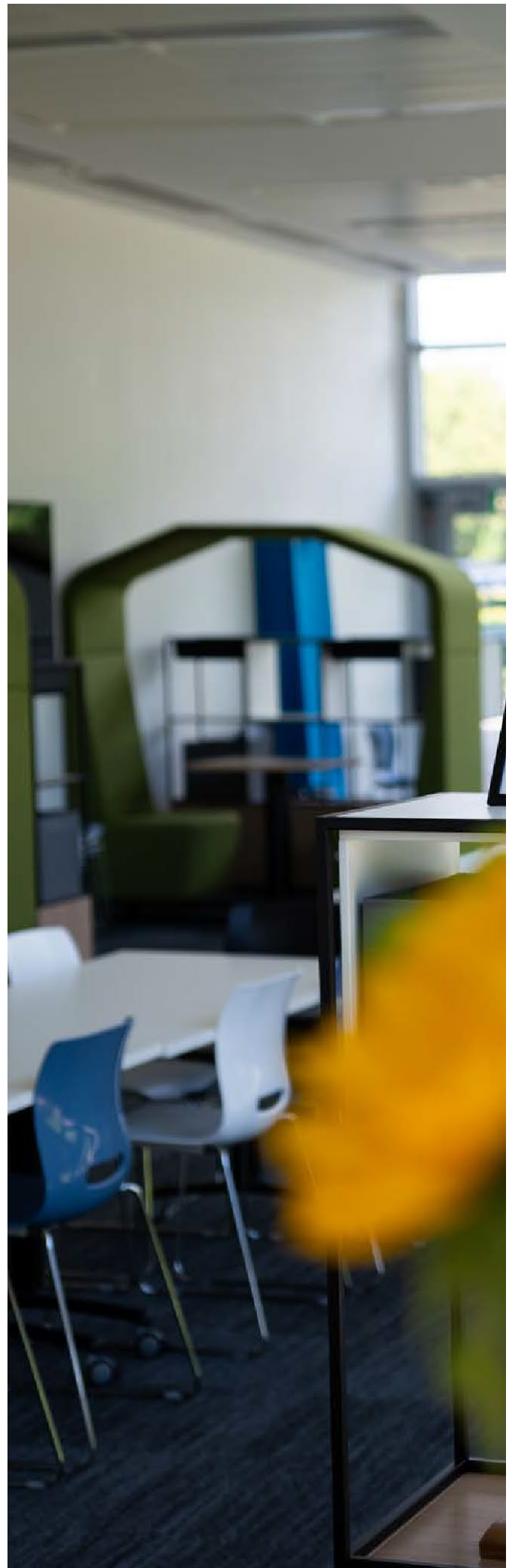
To that end, NCL's approach is to keep it simple framed around three stages: –

- Raising awareness
- Identification of factors and triggers
- Coping strategies

Stage 1 Raising awareness

To raise awareness of the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health students will access NCL's SCQF levelled Being Resilient units at levels 5 and 7. These units will be accessible for all students and staff at commencement of academic year 2024/2025. The purpose of the unit is to examine correlation between stigma, discrimination and mental health and wellbeing by: –

- Analysing reasons why mental health and wellbeing stereotyping and the media impact on an individual's mental health and wellbeing;
- Exploring reasons why people with mental health problems are discriminated against;
- Challenging mental health and wellbeing stigma and discrimination;
- Identifying ways in which an individual is discriminated against–direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Raising Awareness via NCL's Campaigns





Be Well to Do Well

At NCL the correlation between wellbeing and student withdrawal is significant. It is noted that students who struggle with wellbeing issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, or physical health are challenged by the demands of their programme of study and, therefore, are likely to withdraw from their course. To support students to improve their wellbeing and remain on their programme of study, NCL has invested in three Wellbeing Academies (WA) situated in each of our main campus sites, Coatbridge, Cumbernauld, and Motherwell. The Academies are a pioneering initiative designed to prioritise wellbeing at the core of the student experience. Recognising the critical link between student wellbeing and academic success, the WA aim to provide holistic support services and programmes that cater to the physical, emotional, and social wellbeing needs of our students.

Being Financially Fit

Financial instability is intrinsically linked to poor mental health causing stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and poor academic performance. NCL acknowledges that financial challenges are a key reason for student withdrawal. To mitigate against this, NCL introduced a flexible approach to learning, offering an adaptive curriculum to support students with work demands and family responsibilities. Whilst this was well received, it was recognised that students also require knowledge, skills, and support to take control of their finances and improve their overall financial well-being.

The Be Financially Fit (BFF) Campaign is framed around four broad themes:

1. Providing financial support and guidance at pre-entry, application and completion stages;
2. Development of financial literacy;
3. Securing financial partnerships to enhance financial support and resources for NCL students;
4. Providing coping mechanisms and signposting students for support to improve mental health and wellbeing associated with financial challenge.

The BFF Campaign is designed to empower students with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to manage their finances effectively and alleviate financial stress. By fostering financial wellness, the campaign aims to equip students with the tools to make informed financial decisions and provides support to mitigate financial difficulties. The campaign endeavours to enhance the wellbeing and resilience of our students by addressing the correlation between mental health and financial challenges.

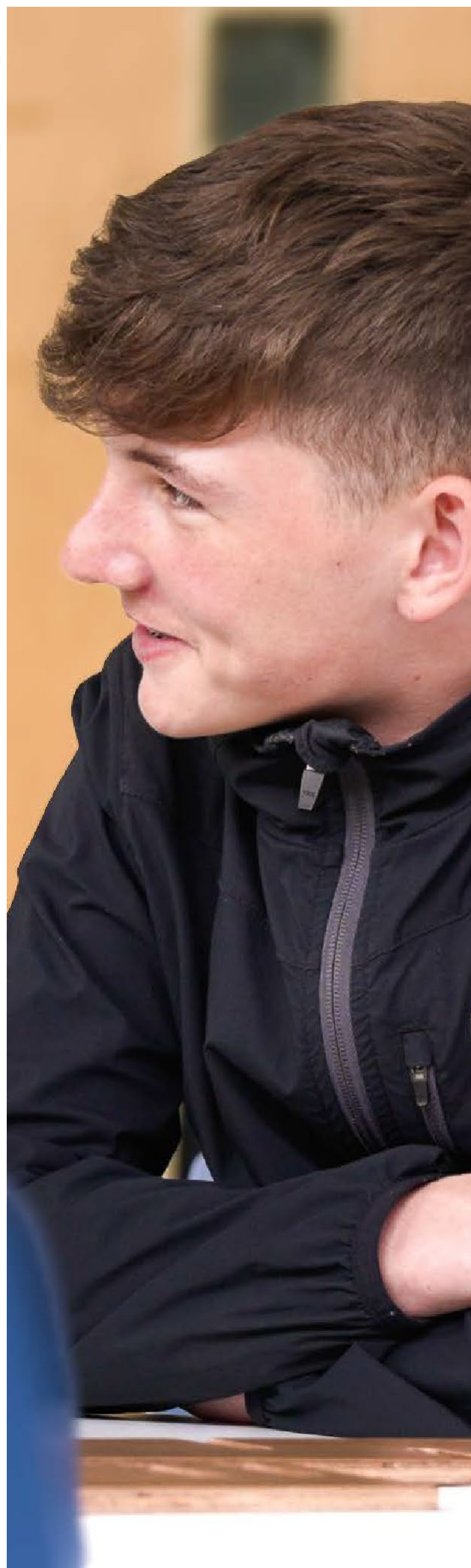
Getting to Know You Campaign

NCL will support current and prospective students to address and overcome various obstacles that might hinder their ability to pursue and succeed in their academic journey. Acknowledging that factors such as financial difficulties, academic readiness, social barriers, caregiving responsibilities, lack of access to digital resources, and issues related to mental and physical health can influence a student's decision to enrol and stay in a programme of study. By addressing these concerns and providing necessary support, the goal is to empower students to navigate these challenges and successfully complete their studies.

NCL aims to better understand the needs of both current and prospective students by examining their behaviours and interactions through initiatives through this campaign. This approach allows NCL to gain insights into students' motivations and mindsets. By employing customer segmentation techniques, NCL can make more informed decisions to support its diverse student body.

Enhancing social connectivity and belonging extends beyond the classroom, enriching lives through connections, experiences, and personal growth opportunities. NCL plans to broaden social connections with students and between students to provide a sense of belonging and identity. To achieve this NCL will: –

- Identify common social interest through adopted customer profiling techniques and connecting students to communities of social interest.
- Promote a calendar of social events to build community connections and foster inclusion to enhance organisation visibility and wellbeing.
- Ensure that students accessing digital, blended or hybrid learning have access to social activities and events.





Stage 2 Identification of Factors and Triggers

NCL recognises that there are multiple factors and triggers that may impact on a student's mental health and wellbeing. Stage 2 aims to raise awareness amongst staff and students of the main triggers to support interventions and effective signposting. This includes: –

- Finance, food poverty and mental health;
- Academic pressure: stress and anxiety associated with assessment;
- Social isolation: relationships and mental health and wellbeing;
- Physical health, chronic illnesses, disabilities, or physical limitations on mental health and wellbeing;
- Trauma and abuse on mental health and wellbeing;
- Nutrition and sleep and the relationship between mental health and wellbeing;
- Family dynamics: family conflicts, parental expectations, divorce, or financial strain and life transitions;
- Neuroscience: family history of mental illness, depression, imbalances in brain chemistry, or hormonal changes;
- Social media: cyberbullying, and comparisons with others online contributing to feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, or anxiety;
- Lack of support: insufficient access to mental health resources, stigma surrounding mental illness, or a lack of understanding from peers;
- Cultural and societal expectations: cultural norms, gender roles, and societal pressures to succeed academically or professionally.

Stage 3 Coping Strategies

NCL's student Wellbeing Academies will offer a dedicated space on each of NCL's main campus sites to provide comprehensive support for students' mental and physical health and overall wellbeing. This will include; mental health support; wellness workshops; health promotion and education events, prevention and intervention workshops; counselling services; a quiet space; crisis support and a referral service.

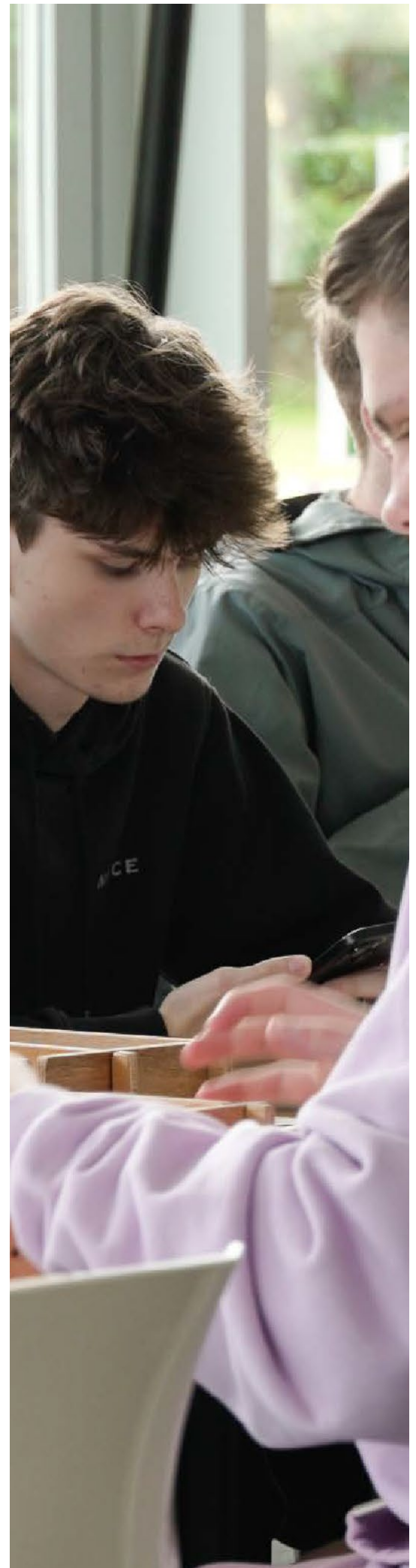
NCL will work in partnership with Citizens Advice, HSBC and Scotwest Credit Union to offer tailored financial support and guidance to NCL students throughout their academic Journey.

NCL is committed to ensure all students have access to a free breakfast acknowledging that this offers several benefits including improved academic performance, better attendance and overall well-being.

NCL has developed a one credit SCQF unit Fundamental Financial Concepts around income, expenses, assets, liabilities, interest rates, inflation, and making sound financial decisions to raise awareness of financial stability.

Through NCL's Be Well to Do Well Campaign supported by NCL's Wellbeing Academies, students will be able to appraise coping mechanisms and strategies to improve personal resilience by: –

- Developing a growth mindset: embrace challenges as opportunities for growth;
- Practice self-compassion: kindness and understanding;
- Engaging in regular exercise, good nutrition and sleep;
- Maintaining a supportive network: friends, family, and mentors who provide emotional support and encouragement;
- Practicing gratitude;
- Practicing mindfulness and stress management techniques;
- Accepting professional help–Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, SAMH, Mind etc;
- Setting personal goals and priorities.



THE AGREEMENT

This partnership agreement communicates our commitment to continue to work in partnership to enhance and improve NCL for all students. To ensure currency in the dynamic landscape of tertiary education the partnership agreement will be annually reviewed to ensure currency.

Signed on behalf of New College Lanarkshire

Professor Christopher Moore
Principal and CEO

Signed on behalf of the Student President

Julie Webster