

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymchwiliad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg i gymorth iechyd meddwl mewn addysg uwch](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) inquiry into [Mental Health support in Higher Education](#)

MHHE 33

Ymateb gan: Stonewall Cymru

Response from: Stonewall Cymru

Nodwch eich barn mewn perthynas â chylch gorchwyl yr ymchwiliad. | Record your views against the inquiry's terms of reference.

1. Maint yr angen | Extent of need

- While there has always been a broad need for mental health support in higher education which is cohesive and cognizant of the needs of different groups of students, the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated this. Research from Student Minds conducted during 2020-2021 found that 74% of students reported that Covid-19 had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing at university, whilst only 19% of those who required additional support reported getting the help they needed. Additionally, 49% of students reported that the Covid-19 pandemic had negatively affected their financial situation. More recently, NUS reported that 91% of students surveyed found the cost of living crisis to have affected their mental health. While these are UK-wide figures as opposed to Wales-specific, it is reasonable to expect that the pressures facing students across the entire UK are reflective of the pressures facing students in Wales.
- The fallout from Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis will affect all students, but some will face disproportionate hardship. It is vital when determining the extent of need that we account for students who may face unique challenges due to facets of their identity and experience, and the ways in which these identities intersect.
- LGBTQ+ students are already recognised as facing unique challenges throughout the higher education experience. [Research conducted by UCAS and Stonewall](#) found that LGBTQ+ university applicants are more likely to declare a disability or mental health condition and more likely to come from a disadvantaged area.

- Compounding this, LGBTQ+ students may struggle with feelings of isolation from peers. Issues around familial conflict or estrangement may mean that LGBTQ+ students face difficulties with housing, particularly with securing affordable housing outside of term-time.
- Trouble accessing physical and mental healthcare can increase stress, particularly if a student is travelling to Wales from the wider UK or the world for study and needs to change GP surgery, NHS Trust or Health Board regularly – however this can be especially difficult when accessing trans or gender affirming healthcare where referrals can be hard to come by, waiting lists can be long, and specialist services can be geographically distant.
- Another [report from UCAS](#) also notes that people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to experience ill mental health, but less likely to access support – while data from UCAS suggests that Black and minority ethnic applicants are less likely to declare a mental health condition. This may suggest that Black and minority ethnic applicants could be underreporting experiences of mental ill health, meaning they experience added barriers in accessing accommodations or support.
- When some or all of these identities intersect in a student's experience, care must be taken to ensure the support available is appropriate for their needs and adequately signposted.

2. Adnabod a darpariaeth | Identification and provision

- It is crucial that measures to embed mental health support in the student experience take place across all faculties of higher education institutions in Wales.
- Outside of increasing mental health service capacity and ensuring a broad range of support is available, lecturers, professors, teaching and support staff must also be encouraged to have an understanding of student mental health and the impact that life experiences and intersecting identities can have. Opportunities should also be created for peer support where possible.
- Whilst appreciating a need for safety and caution when it comes to data-sharing, it is important that higher education support services and NHS services find efficient ways to work together when necessary so that students can receive fitting and timely support.

3. Polisiau, deddfwriaeth a chyllid Llywodraeth Cymru | Welsh Government policy, legislation and funding

- The importance of long-term funding to support mental health services for students in higher education cannot be overstated.
- We encourage any approaches taken to further improve the mental health support available to students in higher education to work in tandem with the LGBTQ+ Action Plan, Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan.

4. Argymhellion ar gyfer newid | Recommendations for change

5. Arall | Other