



The BUCS Perspective on Mental Health

October 2019

The mental health of everyone involved in sport in the HE sector – on or off the field of play is a key area within the BUCS strategy and given focus through the work of the BUCS Inclusion Board as a part of our duty of care (along with equality, inclusion and disability sport).

BUCS recognises that sport and activity in both HE and broader society has a multiple relationship with good and bad mental health, including:

- Proactive / Preventative – taking part in sport and physical activity is proven as an important contributor to wellbeing
- Reactive – sport and physical activity can through “social prescription” help people recover from poor mental health
- Cause – in some environments – including BUCS sport in the wider HE context – the pressure of performing in sport can make people vulnerable to poor mental health

BUCS’ standpoint on mental health is to create an environment where people feel empowered and supported to look after the mental health of themselves and others – this includes BUCS staff, university staff, students and the wider paid of voluntary workforce in the HE environment.

Most notably, BUCS will look to collaborate with member institutions to do the same and support universities to develop a holistic approach to mental health. BUCS will proactively encourage universities to consider how they make a positive impact to the mental health of the individuals they work with and those that they provide for - including those participating, volunteering or working within student sport.

BUCS will not be a delivery organisation within the field of mental health. BUCS will act as an informed enabler and facilitator to compliment the work of member institutions to ensure they have access to a wide range of support, training and guidance and include sport and activity in their offer to those for whom they have a duty of care.

BUCS will explore and develop mutually beneficial partnerships with key stakeholders and expert partners within mental health. All of these partnerships will provide increased guidance and opportunities for members to support and develop staff and student mental health in sport and physical activity. BUCS’ intent is for members to be fully prepared for any situation where sport or physical activity impacts, whether positively or negatively, upon student and staff mental health.

Acknowledging that sport can potentially have a detrimental effect on the mental health of staff and students in the performance environment, BUCS will aim to increase the support that is available to universities within this area. This is to empower the workforce and performance athletes to address mental health in university performance sport.

Through this position statement on mental health BUCS wants to make sure that university sport and physical activity:

- Makes a meaningful contribution to overall student experience and maximises its contribution to student university life
- Is valued by university leadership as a key contributor to positive student mental health and wellbeing
- Is a high-quality experience for all students
- Is managed and delivered by a workforce that is educated, informed and trained in mental health, with an understanding on the impact they have on the people they work with
- Supports and develops the workforce that provides and delivers opportunities and programmes
- Empowers students and staff to support and develop the mental health of each other

To bring this to life, BUCS will co-opt and recruit a group of members and stakeholders within this area that will lead to the formation of a BUCS mental health committee.