Our University-wide model of pastoral care

Being at University is an exciting and rewarding time – a chance to learn new skills, challenge yourself academically and make new friends for life. We also know for some there may be times when you struggle with the demands of studying or life in general.

Nationally, and indeed globally, there is increasing concern about student mental health, and the increasing pressures young people face living, studying and working in today’s world.

Here at Bristol, feedback in our Strategy consultation in 2015/16 made clear that our students wanted to see enhanced wellbeing and mental health support across the University – in Student Services, in academic schools and in our residences.

We are taking a whole-institution approach to pastoral care and support, which includes major new investments in wellbeing in our academic schools, and in central services such as our student counselling and health services.

We are already investing an additional £1m annually in a new Student Wellbeing Service. This will see full-time staff embedded in academic schools and faculties who are well placed to identify and assist students at an early stage, so they can be offered support before any issues start to escalate.

We are also providing additional resources for our specialist Students’ Health and Counselling Services, to ensure they can meet the increasing demand from our students for mental health and wellbeing support.

Thirdly, we plan to create a sector-leading support model for our students living in University residences, in response to increasing student numbers, greater diversity in the student body, and more complex student wellbeing issues.

We have consulted widely with staff, students, alumni and other stakeholders on our original model proposed before Christmas, and I’m delighted they have engaged so passionately on the issue of student wellbeing. We have listened to this feedback and are confident our revised model answers the key issues raised.

We recognise that there are some concerns about a hub-based model, but there has also been considerable feedback about the need for greater consistency and parity of support across all residences. On balance, we believe that coordination of residences in Villages, based around centrally located Student Support Centres is the right approach, but we recognise the need to maintain distinctive communities in each hall.

Almost all feedback stressed the value of Senior Residents as a very important and highly visible source of support for students. In response, we will retain the title Senior Resident in the new model, more than double their number from the original proposal, and introduce at least one Chief Resident in each hall community. We believe that this change, plus continued support for student-led Junior Common Rooms (JCRs) in each residence, will provide high-quality peer support and ensure the identity of individual residences remains as strong as ever.

Feedback also emphasised the importance of visible leadership in residences, of academic engagement, and of staff responsible for supporting student activities and events. In response to this, we have increased the capacity and seniority of the Residential Life management team to ensure there is accessible, live-in leadership for each Village. We have added more Residential Life Advisers to ensure appropriate staffing levels during the day and night. We will also appoint a Senior Academic Tutor in each Village as well as Residential Experience Coordinators to provide a focus for community building, working with Senior Residents and JCRs.

Our priority when reviewing pastoral provision in residences was always to provide consistent, high-quality, 24/7/365 support for inclusive community building and student wellbeing, rather than to reduce costs and rent levels. Feedback has confirmed this is the right approach and our revised model will see us spending more on the service than we do currently.

This brochure gives further details of our proposed model, the roles of staff and students within it, and how it will play a key part in our seamless whole-institution approach.

Over the coming weeks, I will be convening an Expert Advisory Group of regional and national experts in student support, wellbeing and resilience to advise on implementation and monitoring of our new University-wide model.

It is through this integrated approach we can ensure we create an outstanding model of support that provides the best possible experience for all our students.

Professor Hugh Brady
Vice-Chancellor and President
Student support in residences

Our current support teams go beyond the call of duty to help our students and build residence communities. But it’s vital we adapt to growing student numbers, greater student diversity, and more complex student wellbeing issues. Here’s our new approach.

Each student residence will sit in one of three Residential Villages in Clifton, Stoke Bishop and the City Centre (with a fourth planned for the Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus).

Each Village will be led by two live-in senior staff – the Head and Deputy Head of Residential Life. They will be supported by a team of full-time staff, including a Residential Experience Coordinator, who will provide a focus for community activities and support.

Each team will be based in a Student Support Centre, centrally located in each Village. Teams will get out and about across all residences in their Village to provide a 24/7 visible and approachable source of help, 365 days a year.

Teams will provide expert help on a wide range of issues (including mental health concerns), as well as focusing on building vibrant, welcoming and inclusive communities.

A team of Chief and Senior Residents will live in each residence, to provide a familiar face and support for fellow students, as well as playing a key role in community building.

Each Village will have a Senior Academic Tutor, who will work with the Team and support students with academic issues and mentoring in liaison with Schools.

Each Hall of Residence will continue to have a student-led JCR to represent student views and contribute to the life of the community.

Alumni Committees and Associations will continue to be supported.
Your Residential Life Team

Our new service will be delivered by Student Services rather than Residential and Hospitality Services.

Head of Residential Life
Deputy Head of Residential Life (one of each per Village)
Live-in senior members of the Team who will provide leadership for each Residential Village. Will manage high-quality, 24/7/365 support for inclusive community building, events and activities, as well as general student wellbeing across each Village and its residences.

Senior Academic Tutor (one per Village)
Will support the Residential Life Team with academic mentoring and complex academic support issues in liaison with Schools. Will also contribute to community building through engagement with academic activities and events, and membership of the Residential Life Advisory Committee. Will have regular office hours in the early evening, and occasionally at weekends. The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students will lead a further consultation on the scope and salary of this role.

Residential Experience Coordinator (one per Village)
Will forge stronger links between JCRs and Residential Life Teams, Bristol SU and Sport, Exercise and Health to contribute to community building, social activities and healthy living in the residences.

Residential Life Advisers (seven to eight per Village)
Will report to the Deputy Head of Residential Life. Responsible for delivery of high quality 24/7/365 support for inclusive community building, events and activities, as well as responding to general concerns about student wellbeing. Will be trained in a range of key support areas, including mental health and wellbeing.

Chief Residents (at least one per residence)
Will normally be an experienced senior postgraduate student who will serve as the senior peer mentor within each residence. Will oversee and coordinate a team of approximately four live-in Senior Residents, to deliver community building events and activities. Will liaise with the Senior Academic Tutor and other Team members on pastoral and academic issues facing students.

Senior Residents (numbers depend on size of residence)
Live-in postgraduate or undergraduate students who will serve as peer mentors within each residence. Will provide advice and peer support to individual students and contribute to inclusive community-building events and activities in partnership with JCRs. Will proactively identify vulnerable students at an early stage so they can get support from full-time members of the Residential Life Team. Will cover evening work rota and receive support from Chief Residents and Residential Life Advisers.

Residential Life Advisory Committee (one per Village)
Will advise on community building and student wellbeing and encourage links with other parts of the University community.

Junior Common Room (one per residence)
Each residence will have a student-led Junior Common Room (JCR) to represent student views and contribute to the life of the community.
The Bristol Model: student support across the University

**University-wide**
- Student Counselling
- Student Health
- Sport, Exercise and Health
- Disability Services
- Students’ Union

**Partnerships**
- Public Health
- NHS
- National mental health and wellbeing charities

**Faculties and Schools**
- Personal Development Planning as part of Bristol Futures Curriculum
- Personal Tutors and Academic Development
- 24 Student Wellbeing Advisers - individual pastoral support and community building.

**Residences**
- 22 Residential Life Advisers – community building and individual support 24/7
- 120 Chief and Senior Residents
- One Senior Academic Tutor per Village
- JCRs and Residential Experience Coordinators – student representation and activities

For more information, visit: bristol.ac.uk/residence-review

Information correct at time of print, 16 February 2018