

**Title:**                   **Bridging the Gap: supporting students with mental health difficulties/distress**

**Presenters:**       **Anthony Brand and Jaki Lilly**  
Anglia Ruskin University

## **Abstract:**

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Reflect on how they might develop their identification and support of students with (emerging) mental health difficulties/distress (MHD/D).
- Consider how the staff development needs identified through our project, and the model for embedding activity within individual roles, might be relevant within their own context.

### **Session Outline**

Anthony Brand (Director of Learning and Teaching Development) and Jaki Lilly (Associate Director of Learning and Teaching Development) of Anglia Ruskin University will host a discussion session to share their experiences of auditing, benchmarking, developing and embedding institution-wide support for students with mental health difficulties/distress (MHD/D). Participants in the session will be introduced to our work, and will view a video of a case study identifying the perspectives of a student with emerging MHD/D and her tutors. A discussion will consider how our experience gained through this project, might be transferred to facilitate progress in other institutions in the identification and support of students with MHD/D.

Our research experience of working with people whose learning abilities are affected by mental health difficulties and/or distress (MHD/D) has identified that despite recent legislation to improve access to the curriculum for people with disabilities, there remain particular problems for people with MHD/D.

One is the issue of stigma and discrimination. In order to provide support, universities need to know what support is required; yet many people with MHD/D are not prepared to disclose their difficulties due to the continuing stigma surrounding these issues in society. Whilst there is no doubt that stigma and discrimination are experienced by people with MHD/D, facilitating student disclosure is key to enabling them to access the support they need for success whilst at university.

Secondly, universities may have cohorts of students who are particularly vulnerable to the emergence of MHD/D during their studies. For example, international students, students abusing substances, and those experiencing financial hardship are known to be at risk of developing MHD/D. The capacity to identify students displaying symptoms of MHD/D, react to unexpected disclosure and deal with crises may be necessary skills for staff in any student facing capacity.

### **Relevant Literature:**

The Mind the Gap Team in INSPIRE (2007), Mind The Gap 2 Final Report,  
<http://www.inspire.anglia.ac.uk/download.php?list.2>

INSPIRE (2007), Supporting Our Students' Wellbeing – a guide for staff, <http://www.inspire.anglia.ac.uk/download.php?list.5>

Turner, AP; Hammond CL; Gilchrist M; Barlow JH; (2007), Coventry University Students' experience of mental health problems, *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 20:3, 247 – 252 (ethnic)

Royal College of Psychiatrists (2003), *The mental health of students in higher education*, Royal College of Psychiatrists, London

Stanley N and Manthorpe J (Eds) (2002), *Students' mental health needs: problems and responses*, Jessica Kingsley Publications, London

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

- 10 minutes: Introduction to our work
- 10 minutes: 'Hearing the Student Voice: Supporting our Students' Mental Wellbeing', Video of a role-played case study
- 25 minutes: Discussion
  - 'How does this case study reflect your own experience?'
  - 'How might we develop staff to identify and support students with MHD/D in your institution?'

### **References**

N/A