

EDC14D004

Title: Time to Change Initiative
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Date: November 2014
Circulation: Equality and Diversity Committee – 10 November 2014
Agenda: EDC14A001
Version: Draft v1
Status: Open

Issue

The Union of UEA Students has recently committed to the Time to Change Pledge, a framework for tackling the stigma surrounding mental health issues and for proactively promoting support available for students and staff.

Recommendation

The Equality and Diversity Committee are asked to consider what is involved in the Time to Change initiative and whether the University should also commit to the Pledge.

Resource Implications

The Committee will need to consider time/staff resource which would be involved in committing to Time to Change.

Risk Implications

Joining the Pledge will involve an on-going commitment in developing practice in support of students and staff with mental health issues, but is off-set by the positive impact of drawing out the considerable body of good practice already taking place and raising awareness of services and signposting.

Equality and Diversity

The paper focusses on one particular aspect of the current range of protected characteristics

Timing of decisions

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Further Information

This is the first paper to the Committee on this issue.

Background

The Union of UEA Students committed to the Time to Change Pledge in May 2014.

Discussion

The Union of UEA Students has initiated this paper to ask the University to make a commitment to the Time to Change Pledge. After signing the pledge in May 2014, the Union is actively working to support this initiative and feels a matching commitment from the University would help promote activity and raise awareness around this important issue across campus for both students and staff. The University's student statistics reveal this has been an increasingly self-declared area within disability in recent years (225 students/1.4% in 2014).

What is Time to Change?

Time to Change is England's biggest programme to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems. The programme is run by the charities Mind (whose CEO is Stephen Fry) and Rethink Mental Illness, and funded by the Department of Health, Comic Relief and the Big Lottery Fund.

Current stats from Time To Change show that 70,000 people have signed personal pledges, and 400 organisations have signed the Organisational Pledge. These include Oxford University and the Universities of Warwick, Manchester, Newcastle and Derby, respectively.

What is the Time to Change pledge?

Signing the Time to Change organisational Pledge is a way for an organisation to show its commitment to tackling stigma and discrimination around mental health. Every organisation signing the Pledge has an agreed Action Plan, detailing clear, tangible anti stigma activity. Every Students' Union and institution is different, so there are various ways that this commitment can be put into action.

Union of UEA and Time To Change

The Union of UEA Students signed the Time to Change pledge in May 2014, showing its public commitment to challenging mental health discrimination. Since then, the Union has trained its team in Mental Health First Aid, hosted a Hi, Anxiety! Standup comedy with Debs Gatenby attended by 85 students, and celebrated Mental Health Awareness Day with the Time to Change 'pop up village' where 150 conversations with students and staff around mental health took place.

Why should UEA sign the pledge?

- It's a public commitment to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination.
- It demonstrates that you are leading the way in creating an environment for students and staff where mental health discrimination has no place, and where work to actively challenge stigma can flourish.
- It provides visible support from the top.
- It can encourage individual staff and students to feel safe conversing about mental health.
- there's a growing movement of hundreds of organisations and many thousands of individuals who are tackling this issue, one of the last great taboos.

What could UEA do for the Action Plan?

- UEA could carry out a 'mental health check' of the organisation for both staff and students. This is usually a mix of quantitative and qualitative information (statistics and interviews) which combine to provide an evidence-based report to the organisation, benchmark against the UK 'norms' and is a chance to gather suggestions of improvement.

The report compares how the organisation believes it performs with regards to supporting mental health in the workplace and the actual employee experience and culture.

- Look at some key areas which might include:
 - Recruitment
 - Induction (students and staff)
 - Work/life or study/life/(work) balance:
 - Clear communication
 - Supporting staff or students in returning to work or study after an absence

- Launch a strong, visible campaign through HR for staff, and through Dean of Students/Students Union for the student body, highlighting support available for staff and students with mental health issues
- Take part in Time To Talk Day, 5th February 2015 – with a high impact campaign, engaging Heads in every School. Info@ and social media communication on that day could be for the purpose to highlight the issues around mental health <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/talkday>

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to consider this proposal and recommend the University commits to the Time to Change Pledge.