

## Student Counselling Initiative

### 1) Outline the project or initiative and what makes it innovative and inspiring (max 300 words).

As the success of our Adventure Tourism Management degree grows, more and more students from outside the immediate area apply and are accepted. Many of these students are young males living away from home for the first time. Once the euphoria of family restrictions passes many of these young students find life very difficult to cope with; having to balance the pressures of living away from home for the first time and the daily routine of cooking, laundry etc; balancing a limited budget and the requirement of having to find a job to supplement their loan; meeting and mixing with new people; undertaking a more intensive level of study and in the case of the Outdoor students a high level of physical fitness.

Several students have been referred to the Student Services Team suffering from low self-esteem, depression and evidence of self abuse such as overindulgence in alcohol. Whilst we can empathise and advise in some cases, our team are not trained counsellors and as such our level of support can fall short of what is required. Although UHI operates an online Counselling service West Highland College UHI was not part of the pilot.

The Department of Health statistics for 2013 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health>) indicates that there are five times more suicides for young males in the age range of 20 -24 than there are female.

Our project is innovative and inspiring in that we are seeking alternatives method of supporting young students in crisis and sourcing services available locally and resourcing this support through a grant from the Big Lottery Awards for All scheme.

### 2) Detail how the project or initiative was delivered, from the planning stage through to its successful conclusion (max 300 words). Include details of timing\* and funding.

When the seriousness of some students' situations was brought to our attention (one young man was voicing suicidal thoughts) the Student Services Manager contacted a local organisation, Lochaber Hope, offering counselling and mentoring services. This organisation already works with Lochaber High School to offer Talk Therapy to school pupils who have mental health issues. Providing a counselling and mentoring service which provides confidential assistance alongside rapid response to mental health issues has proved to be a successful combination which pupils are recognising as a clear option for assistance and it is this service we would look to provide for our students.

In common with many academic institutions West Highland College UHI is not in a position to resource this service indefinitely and thereby a pilot project has been submitted to Awards for All for consideration to begin in May 2015 and run for 12 months. If we are successful in obtaining an award the amount will be match funded by Lochaber Hope themselves to provide an initial six session crisis counselling service to students. Further sessions will be assessed at the end of the initial period.

For students in our outlying centres, the service will be delivered either by telephone or VC or if a student is in crisis we have included a cost for the counsellor to travel to the centre.

Funding has been requested as follows:

20 students x 6 sessions x £30	£3600
Travel 220 miles x 40p x 6 sessions x 2 students	£1056
Administration (paid by WHC)	£1000

**3) Outline the project or initiative's outcome(s) within the university and beyond with relevant supporting evidence, metrics or testimony where appropriate (max 400 words).**

By being able to supply a crisis management service to students in desperate need we will ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people entrusted to our care. This will have an impact on the student community as well as the communities of Lochaber and Skye and Wester Ross and will enhance the reputation of UHI as an organisation which goes beyond the norm to look after its young students.

The project is dependent on the successful outcome of the Awards for All application. However, if successful we will be happy to share the knowledge we acquire and the application process with our partners within UHI.