



Original citation: Campbell, Emma and George, Madalene (2019) *The Hive Mind: supporting community wellbeing in an integrated public and university library*. ALISS Quarterly, 15 (1). ISSN 1747-9258

Permanent WRaP URL: <https://eprints.worc.ac.uk/id/eprint/6295>

Copyright and reuse:

The Worcester Research and Publications (WRaP) makes this work available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRaP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement: This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by ALISS in ALISS Quarterly, available online: <https://alissnet.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/aliss-vol-15-no1-oct-2019.-pdf.pdf>

A note on versions:

The version presented here may differ from the published version or, version of record, if you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the 'permanent WRaP URL' above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information, please contact wrapteam@worc.ac.uk

The Hive Mind: supporting community wellbeing in an integrated public and university library

Madalene George: Student Engagement Coordinator, Study Happy Coordinator & Senior Library Services Advisor, University of Worcester Library Services

Emma Campbell: Library Customer Advisor, The Hive, Worcester

Introduction

Over the last decade, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of wellbeing for students in all levels of education. (Universities UK, 2015; Young Minds, 2017) Increasingly, both public and academic libraries are involved in delivering events designed to support the wellbeing of our student users.

University of Worcester Library Services are based at The Hive which, as Europe's first fully integrated university and public library, provides a unique environment in which to engage a range of audiences in wellbeing focused events and initiatives. This article is adapted from a presentation delivered at the ALISS Summer event 2019 and will explore Library Services' Study Happy programme. It will offer insight into the steps taken to design and deliver Study Happy wellbeing events and share what we have learnt in the process.

Study Happy

Inspired by successful schemes developed at other university libraries including the innovative Study Happy scheme at University of Warwick, (Brewerton and Woolley, 2016) our Study Happy scheme offers a year-round programme of wellbeing events and initiatives delivered by University of Worcester Library Services and our partners.

Since its launch in September 2016, Study Happy has developed to reflect our inclusive library model. In 2018-19 we worked in partnership with local schools and colleges to target GCSE, sixth form and further and higher education students from University of Worcester and beyond; the year's programme comprised a total of 40 events delivered across six university and non-university sites and attracted almost 1300 attendees.

Designing and delivering a wellbeing event

Step 1: Define your aims

Study Happy is delivered in partnership across a shared service and this is reflected in the stated aims of the project. Promotional materials advertise Study Happy as 'helping students in Worcester study healthier, happier, smarter', demonstrating our aim to support physical, mental and academic wellbeing.

The project also has a set of strategic goals aligned with the values of our various stakeholders. These include the aims:

- To maximise the academic potential and achievement of all students, through practical academic support, alongside activities to support emotional and psychological wellbeing

- To have a positive impact on student retention through a holistic approach to student wellbeing
- To encourage more students to use the wide range of facilities and services at The Hive, creating a buzz and 'feel good' factor

Clear project aims inform the design of the Study Happy programme, direct the selection of events and provide a framework for evaluation and improvement, enabling us to measure the impact of events and understand the value of the wider project.

Step 2: Identify your audiences' needs

Students at University of Worcester already have access to a wealth of wellbeing support through Student Services, the Students' Union and wider university teams. The role of Study Happy is not to compete with existing initiatives but to identify how we can use our skills to fill gaps in the current provision.

The Hive has some of the longest fully staffed opening hours of anywhere on campus. The building is also a popular study and social space for GCSE and A level students or those in further education or at university elsewhere and, as a result, our team frequently encounter students outside of office hours when more traditional wellbeing services are unavailable. Identifying this gap in provision has informed the delivery of initiatives such as *Study Happy Hour* offering free late-night tea, coffee and fruit, and out-of-hours stress-relieving breakout spaces.

Our commitment to non-university students also involves working in partnership with local schools and colleges to ensure we provide accurate and appropriate support for their students. We recognise that we are not the experts, particularly regarding the wellbeing of younger students, but that we can support the schools' or colleges' wellbeing offer by reinforcing their core messages, signposting students to appropriate services and by demonstrating the support that will be available at university-level for students considering a progression into higher education.

Step 3: Use what you already have

When creating the Study Happy programme, we recognised that Library Services and The Hive already had a strong wellbeing focus, including a successful *Find your Space* initiative, designed to help students identify study spaces to suit their needs, alongside a commitment to national schemes such as *Books on Prescription* and *Shelf Help*. These existing projects formed a framework for a wider wellbeing programme.

In addition to events that could be easily 'badged up' to reflect the Study Happy brand, we adapted elements of our existing provision to enhance the programme. Our *askalibrarian* enquiry service, for example, provided a focal point for support within the library but, with the incentive of the Study Happy programme, was easily adapted to include *askalibrarian on tour* sessions which are held across university and non-university sites.

Recognising students' skills can also provide inspiration for wellbeing events delivered by students for students. Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy students, for example, have delivered popular wellbeing events to a mixed university and community audience at The Hive and have visited local schools and sixth forms to share their expertise. These sessions enable students to engage with new

audiences but also highlight their learnt skills and showcase the value of the university to the wider community.

Step 4: Know your audiences' schedules

In the first year of Study Happy, we scheduled several events to coincide with national awareness days including Stress Awareness Day in early November. However thoroughly planned and promoted, these events were often poorly attended as they did not occur at times when students felt they needed most support.

We now plan a Study Happy timetable in line with the academic year and in response to attendance at previous events. The number of scheduled events peaks around student assessment periods and regular activities such as *askalibrarian on tour* are themed to correspond with students' schedules; for example, we may run a feedback-focused session in February or a last-minute dissertation drop-in in early May. Student feedback also informed a successful move to introduce Study Happy sessions over weekends or after school hours for university, GCSE, A level or further education students with less flexible timetables.

Some golden rules

Budget isn't everything

A tight budget can make planning and delivering exciting wellbeing initiatives more challenging but, in the case of Study Happy, it has also made us more creative.

Branded giveaways can be an effective way to promote an event, but they don't always have to be expensive. We found that Study Happy branded balloons could be purchased cheaply and used for a *Do it yourself stress ball* activity to offer students a useful takeaway and a fun opportunity to engage in conversation and take their mind off their studies. Less can be more: in the 2018-19 academic year, our light-touch events, including *Study Happy Hour* and *askalibrarian on tour*, were delivered at little or no expense but were amongst our best attended sessions and received exceptional feedback.

Learn from your failures

Over three years of delivery, many Study Happy events have failed to attract the expected engagement, either as a result of insufficient marketing, poor timing or for reasons entirely unknown. These occasions have been disheartening for the team but have ultimately been used to our advantage. By reviewing events honestly and taking a critical approach to evaluation, we have learnt from the failures and adapted and improved the programme to focus on events that will deliver maximum impact for our audiences.

Communicate the impact in an engaging way

Impact is considered at every stage of the Study Happy process from planning to delivery and evaluation. Individual events are evaluated using quantitative measures such as overall attendance, engagement from different student groups or the geographical reach of the event. We also provide attendees with a short feedback form comprising just five questions and a space for more qualitative free text feedback. The questions on the form target the strategic aims of the Study Happy programme, including those of The Hive's key stakeholders, the University of Worcester and

Worcestershire County Council. Aligning impact measures with our aims from the outset results in a straightforward evaluation process, whilst free text comments from attendees help to provide a narrative to the project's impact.

At the end of the year, we use infographic software, including Piktochart and Canva, to communicate impact in a more visual and engaging way to a range of audiences, including stakeholders, partners and students. The resulting images can be used in reports, on social media and blog posts and to create promotional materials such as postcards, posters and plasma screens, further demonstrating the value of supporting wellbeing in a library setting.



Figure 1: An extract from the 2018-19 Study Happy impact infographic showing free-text feedback

Useful Links

[Library.worc.ac.uk/study-happy](http://library.worc.ac.uk/study-happy)

<https://piktochart.com/>

<https://www.canva.com/>

References

Brewerton, A. and Woolley, R. (2016). Study Happy: Library wellbeing initiatives from the University of Warwick. *Sconul Focus*, 68, 15-25.

Universities UK (2015). *Student mental wellbeing in higher education good practice guide*. Retrieved from: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2015/student-mental-wellbeing-in-he.pdf#search=mental%20wellbeing>

Young Minds (2017). *Wise up: prioritising wellbeing in schools*. Retrieved from: <https://youngminds.org.uk/media/1428/wise-up-prioritising-wellbeing-in-schools.pdf>