Research Report

Catalyst Fund:
Supporting mental health and wellbeing for postgraduate research students (Peer Support for PGR students)

Project code:
P8

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The Peer Support Programme

Research England

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Postgraduate Research Students and Mental Health

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The experience of higher education can span across a wide age-range, incorporating several milestones in the development of young adults happening against a backdrop of varying expectations and responsibilities from the individual. Thus, it follows that undergraduate and postgraduate students have very different experiences within the same institution, implying that their mental health needs are equally as varied.

Specific needs

For undergraduate students in higher education, most mental health needs orient around their developmental process in their adaptation into adulthood from adolescence, with the influence of possible lack of previous experience of such settings (Towbes & Cohen, 1996). Wyatt and Oswalt (2013) are among the authors who distinguish the mental health needs of postgraduate students from undergraduates, based on the context of their studies as well as their life stage and possible additional responsibilities.

Di Pierro (2017) warns higher education institutions against a strict and exclusive focus on academic integrity and excellence at the expense of a more well-rounded appreciation of postgraduate students' overall wellbeing. Di Pierro (2017) suggests that the main impact of the challenges of research for postgraduate students is the experience of isolation. This isolation is understood as being a reflection of the unique roles and positions that postgraduate students hold within higher education institutions.

Furthermore, specific to the changing roles of postgraduate students and the pressure this causes, it is important to distinguish between the students involved in professional courses and those who are researchers (Grody, La Touche, Oslawski-Lopez, Powers, & Simacek, 2014). This variation is relevant to the strain experienced by postgraduate research students, as the researcher role involves facing significant ambiguity in the timeline of their course, often without a clear end date in sight. This, in addition to the teaching and supervisory roles the postgraduate students hold in relation to undergraduates, may in turn cause role strain due to a lack of clarity between the boundaries of being a student and a member of staff (Grody et al., 2014) over a prolonged period of time.

Caple (1995) who wrote about his experiences of offering counselling within a university counselling service, suggested that at the time of his report, only 13% of the overall student population that accessed the service were postgraduates and that 60% of these postgraduate students were female. He elaborated that postgraduate students are likely to wait longer before seeking professional help, due to a concern that their difficulties may reflect negatively on their suitability for advancement in their chosen career. Caple (1995) at the time described the postgraduate experience as being very specific and less common, suggesting a unique experience that may mean the student may find the personal and relational toll of such a career path mentally taxing without adequate support. He described that the balance of autonomy in both a personal and professional context becomes complicated by the prolonged student status of the postgraduate, who may be juggling significant familial and financial responsibilities that compete for their attention alongside their academic commitments.

One study that focuses on women postgraduate research students highlight the several pressures of the higher education life specific to this group, having to balance role changes and often reporting that they feel unable to keep up with their academic commitments alongside their day-to-day home-keeping activities (Kenty, 2000). The author emphasises the need to build a support structure that encompasses home and academic life, which involves good communication within personal and professional relationships (Kenty, 2000).

For international postgraduate students, the process of establishing such relationships may take longer given the possible transition into a new culture, potentially causing further vulnerability for anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues in the process (Di Pierro, 2017).

Research has explored whether there are differences in mental health needs across different academic disciplines, finding significant differences among different areas of academic study (Lipson, Zhou, Wagner, Beck, & Eisenberg, 2016). The study found that the highest rate of mental health disorders in postgraduate students were present among master's students studying art and design, while humanities students were most likely to screen positive for depression and suicidal ideation (Lipson et al. 2016).

Other research that supports this interest in the departmental differences in the mental distress experienced by postgraduate students, proposes that in fact, the difference between departments are not based on the characteristics of each discipline, but more so the structural differences of practices relevant to researchers (La Touche, 2018). Specifically, the structural and functional variations that influence experiences such as isolation, the dynamics of typical funding allocation practices, as well as overall departmental transparency, influence the potential distress in postgraduate researchers (La Touche, 2018).

A synopsis of various factors impacting postgraduate research students' mental wellbeing is outlined as the functional, structural, and relational challenges of these roles (Metcalfe, Wilson, & Levecque, 2018). Specifically, the pressures of research, the challenges of balancing

workload and control, relational issues including harassment have been identified as the top contributors for distress in postgraduate researchers. Additionally, based on these difficulties, the groups who are most vulnerable to developing poor mental health have been identified as postgraduates who are international or part-time students, those who may be more isolated than others, or those who also balance familial responsibilities (Metcalfe, Wilson, & Levecque, 2018).

A Physics specific toolkit, offering an overview of the challenges of research positions and suggestions for the development of resilience, proposed that there are some common themes among postgraduate researchers that endure beyond their educational experience, if not attended to during postgraduate years (Shinton, 2017). Shinton (2017) emphasises the necessity of establishing resilience as a component for improved and sustained mental health over the course of the career of the researcher, most effectively done by acknowledging the challenges in the early stages of the postgraduate study. Shinton (2017) collated quotes from researchers, both in the postgraduate study stage and beyond, identifying themes of uncertainty for the future, insecurity about being good enough, funding concerns, lack of concrete feedback, lack of clarity on stages and tasks to be undertaken, fear of mistakes impacting future career, a lack of boundaries as a consequence of self-directed study/work, and most significantly continuous isolation. This document also impresses that in the context of postgraduate study, individuals express a difficulty in seeking support, due to a heightened fear of failure.

Seeking support

As mentioned in the literature above, the mental health needs of postgraduate research students are specific and unique. In addition to this, evidence suggests that their support seeking behaviour also reflects their distinctive position within higher education.

Hyun, Quinn, Madon, and Lustig (2006) investigated access to formalised mental health services across the overall postgraduate student population and later the same pattern for international postgraduate students (Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2007). In both populations, the authors found that postgraduate research students who are able to develop good communication and positive relationships with their supervisors or advisors are more likely to seek support from formalised mental health support from the university, such as attending the university counselling services. This may reflect the earlier literature by Kenty (2000) on the necessity of developing supportive personal and professional relationships in order to manage the challenges of postgraduate studies. One conclusion based on these two assertions may infer that for postgraduate students who may be vulnerable to distress arising from postgraduate studies, a protective factor may be the development of a supportive community. This, in turn may serve a preventative function for any potential mental health difficulties as noted by Di Piero (2017), through the increased possibility of seeking formalised support early on in the challenges (Hyun et al., 2007). Overall, evidence suggests that postgraduate students who are able to build good relationships with their advisors or

supervisors are more likely to access mental health support, possibly indicating a positive relationship with the institution they feel they are a part of (Hyun, et al., 2006; 2007).

In contrast, this raises the question of the use of support structures accessed by the postgraduate students who may feel less connected with their institution, given the earlier literature emphasising the role of isolation in mental health difficulties among this population. Research suggests that a quarter of postgraduate students may not be aware of the counselling provision available to university students as part of the institutional welfare structure (Moffitt, Garcia-Williams, Berg, Calderon, Haas, & Kaslow, 2014). When considered together with the same authors' findings that 45% of postgraduate students had reported significant emotional distress over the past year and 58% stating they knew a similarly distressed peer (Moffitt et al., 2014), the issue of awareness of support services becomes significant. In addition to this, these authors found that the majority of postgraduate students expressed a reluctance to travel to centralised university services to seek help, even if they were aware of the provision.

The studies that looked across different disciplines to identify variation in help-seeking behaviour identified that postgraduate students in business and engineering departments are less likely to seek professional mental health support, compared to their peers in different disciplines (Lipson et al. 2016).

University and Departmental Responsibilities for Postgraduate Research Students' Mental Health

A practical guide was designed by the Counselling Service at the University of Edinburgh (2017), to support academic staff to consider their roles and responsibilities in promoting mental well-being and health. This guide suggests that a well-supported environment is necessary for the students to maintain motivation and success in their studies. In addition to this, they propose that the current legislation identifies an institutional duty to promote the equality of disabled people, including students with mental health issues. This institutional duty also implies that risks to health (including mental health) must be identified and mitigated.

Such risks to postgraduate students' mental health can be mitigated through the promotion of a safe working environment that has been established from the top-down and reflects a commitment to developing strategies to encourage wellbeing and prevent mental health issues (Metcalfe, Wilson, & Levecque, 2018). According to this document, the support and interventions proposed and offered need to be focused specifically on the needs of postgraduate research students as a population with particular requirements. Two specific points are cited in this document, as "Recommendations for Institutions" that outline the responsibilities of the institution:

- "Recommendation 2: HEIs should develop institutional strategies to support the wellbeing and mental health of PGRs based on the UUK Mental Health framework." (Metcalfe, Wilson, & Levecque, 2018, p.30).

- "Recommendation 9: HEIs need to consider how they resource their student support services and other relevant departments to support the wellbeing and mental health of PGRs, particularly activities aimed at prevention and early intervention." (Metcalfe, Wilson, & Levecque, 2018, p.33).

Recommendations in literature

In the institution-specific recommendations made by Metcalfe, Wilson, and Levecque (2018), the emphasis is on prevention and early intervention. A preventative strategy calls to attention the literature outlined previously, specifically advocating for support systems that would reduce isolation for postgraduate research students (Di Pierro, 2017; Kenty, 2000; Metcalfe, Wilson, & Levecque, 2018; Shinton, 2017).

Building such support systems to reduce isolation would involve peer-to-peer connections, as social support has been noted to buffer the impact of stress during adjustment periods (Cohen & Wills, 1985). A specific example of support seeking trends among postgraduate students identified that when dealing with adjustment to new responsibilities in their role, students chose to approach their peers (59%) over faculty (21%) (Lawson & Fuehrer, 2001). This is particularly important when considered together with the same research with findings that students sought emotional, affirmational, and social support from their peers, while in contrast seeking direct advice and occasional appraisal from faculty. In addition, the emotional support these students sought in relation to separation from close others and loneliness, which was most likely found in non-intimate friends and peers (59%). Finally, postgraduate students also identified they would turn to their peers for help with managing unclear expectations in their role, feeling underqualified, and insecurity in academic performance (70% to 80%). These trends identified by Lawson and Fuehrer (2001) reflect the natural tendency of students to seek support among their peers. Based on their findings, the recommendation made by these authors are specifically on the development of peer-based welfare support that allows for a preventative approach to mental health (Lawson & Fuehrer, 2001). This suggestion also aligns with the consideration of cultural differences in support seeking behaviour, in that a formalised welfare provision that may be focused on the professional treatment of mental health may not be suitable for all cultures. Thus, the development of formalised social support appears to also cover the needs of individuals who may be less likely to seek professional support based on their cultural backgrounds (Leong, Mallinckrodt, Kralj, 1990).

Conversely, the potential shortcomings and negative influences of a peer oriented social support structure must be considered for cautionary measure. Boren (2013, p.253) suggests that students' use of peers and other similar social support networks to mediate burnout, may result in "co-rumination", which is shared negative talk. That is, students within a shared context may be more likely to over sympathise with each-other's difficulties, leading to co-rumination, which in turn may have a negative impact on the mental health of both parties. Therefore, Boren (2013) recommends further investigation into ways to manage co-rumination, to perhaps optimise social peer-to-peer support in a structural manner. In this

respect, it appears that the recommendation is for a well-established and carefully considered welfare approach that utilises the benefits of peer-to-peer contact without the potential effects of co-rumination.

Stecker (2004) outlined the mutual benefits of peer-to-peer support, by considering the peer-focused value of preventative therapy groups. According to Stecker (2004)'s research, the high rates of depression, stress, and substance use observed among postgraduate students could be mitigated through groups that allow students to share their experiences with one-another, effectively reducing loneliness and increasing the possibility of mutual support.

Based on the recommendations of UUK and Metcalfe, Wilson, and Levecque (2018) on prevention and early intervention, the natural need (Cohen & Wills, 1985) and tendency for seeking social support among peers (Lawson & Fuehrer, 2001), the cultural variations in support needs (Leong, Mallinckrodt, Kralj, 1990), and the evidence for the mutual benefit in peer-to-peer support (Stecker, 2004), a well-established form of social support is needed for the safety (Boren, 2013) and mental health of postgraduate research students.

Peer Support

The history of the use of formalised support structures that rely on the collaboration of peers has been noted as early as 1935, with the formation of the AA peer-to-peer approach (Repper & Carter, 2011). The benefits of the support of peers who understand first-hand the contextual experience of one-another were identified and formalised in a training manual in 1969, by Barbara Varenhorst (Ford, 2017). Since then, similar models that offer the benefits of peer-to-peer support with a formalised structure have been adopted by other organisations, such as the Hearing Voices Network and Bipolar UK (Student Minds, 2014).

Developing from a relatively informal version of support in the early 20th century, peer support now has its place as a version of formalised mental health support recognised by the Mental Health Foundation (2012, p.1). The Mental Health Foundation describe this form of support as "The help and support that people with lived experience of a mental illness are able to give one another. It may be social, emotional or practical support, but importantly this support is mutually offered and reciprocal, allowing peers to benefit from the support whether they are giving or receiving".

Given the evidence in literature on individuals seeking their peers for support before approaching professionals (Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Ford, 2001; 2002), a similar trend in postgraduate research students as identified in literature above (Lawson & Fuehrer, 2001; Leong, Mallinckrodt, Kralj, 1990) is unsurprising. Ford (2002) suggests that this is likely due to feeling understood through shared relevant contextual experiences between peers. Furthermore, Ford (2002) describes this type of support seeking to be a natural first step for students, who may then feel better able to seek professional help through the support of their peers if needed.

While students may be naturally leaning towards approaching their peers as a first point of contact for support, this comes with some difficulties if the student feels unequipped to offer this support (Student Minds, 2014) or may co-ruminate (Boren, 2013). In line with this, Ford (2015b) makes the point that without adequate support for themselves or the backing of a robust training programme, students supporting their peers may engage in unsafe behaviour, such as keeping confidence for longer than is appropriate before a referral is made. Citing De Rosenroll, Ford (De Rosenroll, 1992 as cited in Ford, 2002) also makes the suggestion that a robust structure of training and support is needed for students, in order for them to more effectively and securely offer what they already do. Based on these principles and a 1991 Oxford welfare report that demonstrated students' tendencies to seek support from their peers first and foremost (Ford, 2017), Anne Ford developed the Peer Support Programme in Oxford in 1991. Since then, Ford has regularly reported on the development and benefit of Peer Support for the student body (Ford, 2002; 2015a; 2015b; 2017) through the lens of its impact on the Oxford welfare system.

In addition to the benefits on the welfare structure of the university, Ford (2015a) outlines the benefits of peer support on the individual students. According to Ford (2015a), decades of welfare reports and anecdotal evidence indicates that peer support is likely to contribute to the development of the emotional intelligence of the Peer Supporters. By providing a safe setting in which each Peer Supporter is able to explore the possibility of caring and being cared for, the Peer Support Programme training offers an opportunity for each student to grow as a person (Ford, 2015a). This growth, according to Ford (2015b, p.169) may mean an "ability to use emotions to better understand the link between feelings and their impact on our thoughts and behaviour; and understanding on a deeper level the meaning of our emotions, including where they come from", which she cites as a form of empowerment that can contribute to the mental well-being of the peer supporter.

A report by Student Minds (2014) that looks at the use and benefits of Peer Support within Higher Education Institutions, cites the twelve core principles of Peer Support as identified by Basset and colleagues (Basset, et al. 2010, as cited in Student Minds, 2014 p.2), which are "mutuality, solidarity, synergy, sharing with safety and trust, companionship, hopefulness, a focus on strengths and potential, equality and empowerment, being able to be yourself, independence, reduction of stigma, and respect and inclusiveness." The empowerment of the students through peer support is likely to nurture a relationship between the student and the educational institution (Ford, 2015b). This is important to consider together with literature that suggests the most likely postgraduate students who access professional support are those who develop good communication and a relationship with their supervisors and their institution (Di Piero, 2017; Hyun, et al., 2006; 2007). Together, these findings suggest that the possibility of empowerment through peer support is likely to increase students' access to professional support services.

Ford (2002) and the Student Minds (2014) report outline three particular ways in which a formal Peer Support structure contributes to the functioning of the overall welfare in universities. They separate the benefits of peer support to those receiving the support of their

peers, the Peer Supporters, and the society/context. The benefits to those receiving and offering the peer support appear to emphasise personal growth and accessibility, therefore also suggesting a consequent reduction in isolation. On the other hand, the societal and contextual benefits of peer support include this type of support being a preventative measure and early intervention. The below table, offers an adapted version of this information, adding the student specific context of the postgraduate student use of Peer Support:

To those receiving PS	To PSers	To society	Student Specific
Empowerment: realising the possibility of overcoming stigma and feeling deserving of support	Empowerment and self-esteem: volunteers report an increased sense of confidence and benefit from feeling appreciated, emotional growth	Reducing MH costs: as a preventative/first-step/early intervention structure for mild MH needs	Shared context: experience of very specific student context allows for mutual support with an "insider understanding"
Social support: reducing social isolation by engaging with others AND increasing confidence to do so within social circles	Turning difficult experiences into a positive: developing reciprocal relationships allow for mutual support through challenges, developing an understanding of own limits and capabilities	Less hospital admission and access to expensive services: was demonstrated to reduce readmission to hospitals	Access: making it possible to access support within the day-to-day structure of university life
Empathy and acceptance: feeling accepted by others through shared empathy	Personal development and employability: PS offers comprehensive training and tangible experience in a support role	Encouraging reintegration into society: for those who may have experienced MH issues, making it possible to have a role within day-to-day societal structures	Reducing pressure on university welfare services: PS being an integrative component of welfare, as a first-step/early intervention structure that deals with mild MH needs, creating more space for more complex cases to be seen by professional services
Reducing stigma: many students unlikely to seek support in fear of stigma, makes conversation about MH more accessible		Reducing MH stigma: makes it possible for MH needs to be normalised and a part of day-to-day life	

Hope and motivation: being able to witness others' journey in MH can keep person engaged and motivated to pursue recovery			

Table created with adapted information from Ford (2002) and "Peer Support for Student Mental Health" by Student Minds (2014).

Specifically, for postgraduate research students, who have specific needs based on their position within the educational institution (Wyatt & Oswalt, 2013), combined with external pressures such as familial, financial, or relational responsibilities (Caple, 1995; Kenty, 2000), peer support can offer a dedicated form of support. With the natural tendency of postgraduate students seeking support from their peers (Lawson & Fuehrer, 2001), the Peer Support Programme enables the development of a community (Ford, 2002). As highlighted in the recommendations in the recent Vitae report looking at postgraduate students' mental health needs (Metcalfe, Wilson, & Levecque, 2018), universities have been encouraged to offer dedicated forms of support that acts as a preventative measure in the management of mental health. Through a thorough and ongoing form of training and supervision, postgraduate students may feel more equipped to offer support to colleagues and peers in a safe manner (Ford, 2015b; Student Minds, 2014). Furthermore, the development of a community through peer support, contributes to the reduction of isolation, thus also serves as a preventative measure (Ford, 2002) and enables early intervention in relatively serious mental health concerns (Student Minds, 2014).

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Part 2: Research Project

The setting and the challenge

The University of Oxford is a large collegiate university comprising of 39 colleges and six permanent private halls originally established in around the 12th Century. Our 24,500 students are split 50:50 between undergraduate and postgraduate with a significant proportion of international students (43%). The individual colleges (which are separate legal entities) provide immediate welfare (pastoral) provision, with specialist welfare services provided centrally by the university working in close collaboration with colleges. This includes Student Welfare and Support Services which comprises of The Peer Support Programme, The University Counselling Service, The Disability Advisory Service and Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service.

The university consists of 4 divisions, which include:
- Humanities
- Medical Sciences (MedSci)
- Maths, Physics and Life Sciences (MPLS)
- Social Sciences (SocSci)

Within the divisions sit about 50 main departments which further divide into many sub-departments.

The Oxford PGR community is made up of over 5,900 researchers and is identified as a key priority group in the University Strategic Plan 2013-2018. PGRs, by nature of their studies, are engaged with their departments more than with their college, and therefore tend to access initial welfare support less than undergraduates. Over the past 5 years, demand for the university counselling service has increased by 47.4% amongst the university PGR community.

With findings from the literature review and information regarding clinical presentations from the Counselling Service, we are aware that the wellbeing needs of PGRs are very different to other student groups. Key issues around the student's ability to work and integrate into the university are prominent. PGRs report mental health concerns that include (among other themes and presentations):
- Stress
- Lack of motivation or overwork
- Isolation and loneliness
- Challenging relationships with supervisors
- Difficulty with balancing work with personal life
- Perfectionism
- Imposter syndrome
- Financial concerns

PGRs in STEM subjects are particularly vulnerable as they exhibit lower engagement with support services and welfare provision compared to their humanity and social science peers.

Peer support at Oxford

The Peer Support Programme was developed within colleges, predominantly for the undergraduate community in the 1990s. It is nationally and internationally replicated. The aim of Peer Support is to provide collaborative support that is grounded in wellbeing and resilience. In other words it is about creating a community of peers that are able to listen, to validate and then to refer appropriately and when needed. Many welfare reports have shown that students are more likely to seek support from a peer, hence why peer support is a popular aspect of collegiate and university welfare provision, as it removes the hierarchical nature of support networks which can create barriers towards access.

Currently, the Programme operates in 34 colleges and 2 departments (Said Business School and Nuffield Department of Population Health). In an academic year, 22 training groups provide 6,336 hours of training in total at minimum capacity to 264 students. The training consists of 8 weeks of 3 hourly sessions in term time, 24 hours in total. The commitment to the Peer Support Programme extends to attending one-hour regular supervision sessions for two terms post-training as a minimum commitment. This monitors Peer Supporter wellbeing and ensures the Programme is running smoothly and safely for those involved (including students being supported, Peer Supporters, College/ Department and the Programme generally). The student should attend 4 supervision sessions per term.

Session 1 Introductions Expectations Confidentiality Group boundaries Name exercise Back-to-back listening exercise	**Session 4** Advantages/ Disadvantages of sharing a concern Advice-giving vs. active listening Decision-making Values clarification	**Session 6** Influence of family Listening exercise Family concerns Agony Aunt exercise
Session 2 Getting to know a stranger Effective questioning Listening exercise Welcoming/ non-welcoming behaviours	**Session 5** Assertive communication Listening exercise	**Session 7** Cultural Awareness Assumptions and Stereotypes Crisis awareness Listening exercise
Session 3 Non-verbal communication Identifying and labelling feelings Listening skills review Listening exercise		**Session 8** Suicide prevention education Referrals Confidentiality re-visited Limit-setting Closure of the course

Table shows the content of Peer Support Training

Delays to deadline and delivery

Initial delays to the project were caused by increasing clinical demand for the counselling service and Peer Support Programme training sessions, which originally sat within the counselling service. This eroded time available for the project. Redistributing time spent on the project by initiating staffing changes had redressed the issue.

The training was originally going to be carried in Michaelmas Term (October Term 2018), however, due to delays and other training sessions, this had to be postponed. From feedback provided by students that participated in the Focus Group Lunches (see below), it was deemed helpful to move the training to Trinity Term (final term). The feedback from participants indicated this would fit better with the PG-R life-cycle and would impinge less on research and teaching.

Departmental Visits

In Michaelmas Term 2018, the project lead, Dr Tim Knowlson, visited the three initial pilot departments. This included Computer Science, Mathematics and Physics. In the departments, he spoke to key departmental head administrators about:
- PG-R welfare needs and challenges
- Departmental welfare activities and welfare committees
- Dynamics of sub-departments and research groups
- Dynamics of welfare within the departments
- Benefits and challenges of Peer Support training in their departments
- Recruitment to the project events such as Focus Group Lunches and upcoming training

During the departmental visits, it became clear how much the departments differed in welfare provision and focus. These differences were reflected to the level of research groups and sub-departments. For example, in physics, it was reported that some sub-departments were more social, integrated and approachable than others, and some sub-departments highly active in wellbeing talks such as 'Owning A Successful DPhil'. There were variations in gender representation within sub-departments and how lead investigators socialised with their research teams and encouraged their teams to socialise with each other and other research teams.

A recurrent theme was that departments appeared interested and concerned in providing and improving PG-R welfare and wellbeing. Often, events would be organised which resulted in poor attendance/ or no attendance and would then have to be cancelled. During visits, an interesting disparity emerged that many students often vocalised dissatisfaction with welfare/ wellbeing provision and yet did little to initiate or attend events or projects. In other words, there was high levels of criticism or even blame, and yet responsibility taking and ownership of welfare or wellbeing seemed low.

What seemed to work particularly well with regards to welfare and wellbeing events were recurrent departmental events that were almost 'as-if' compulsory in nature, if not, highly encouraged. A top-down structure seemed to work and offer students the knowledge of an event being available even if they choose not to attend. For example, in Mathematics, there was 'Fridays at 4' which included talks and seminars for all research students. This was then followed by 'Fridays at 5' which was a Happy Hour in the departmental common room for all students except undergraduates. It included staff and post-docs (the first Happy Hour of the year provided free alcohol). Another Mathematics initiative which was not alcohol related included free tea and biscuits in the common room every day at 11:00AM and 3:00PM. Such planned events seemed to percolate into the unconscious of the department.

The lay-out of the building seemed to have an impact on welfare and wellbeing also. Research groups were more likely to meet if they were in a corridor and common room spaces seemed integral to facilitating a space for people to meet. A theme that came up in conversation were issues around fragmentation and feeling split off from other research groups. A whole department in one building was commented as "it helps unify people".

Focus Group Lunches

Two Focus Group Lunches were organised in Michaelmas Term 2018. Despite being advertised to all PG-Rs and staff at the three departments, turn out and interest levels were very low. Plenty of notice was given and food was included to tempt people to attend. Nine people signed up and attended the lunches. 1 was a member of staff who was an academic, supervisor and worked on a departmental equality and diversity committee. The lunches included a semi-structured interview to help understand PGR needs in relation to mental health/ wellbeing and the Peer Support Training. Participants were notified of the intention to record and asked if this was okay. I explained how I would handle their data. Only 1 session was recorded and transcribed (see Appendix A, for the full transcript), due to technical issues. Below is a brief summary of responses.

Question 1 - What does welfare mean to you?
- Good Health
- Being in a good place
- Helping to stay in a good place
- Stress-free
- Need good conditions to work – not just work
  - Friendly atmosphere
  - Ego free – people want to help each other as a group, do best as a group
  - That you have support if you reach out
  - Community feel
  - Being valued
  - Time for breaks, to meet people, not crazy work hours, respecting yourself
  - Acknowledging individual limits and differences

- You do what you can, and that is trusted
- Getting positive feedback – it should be given more from supervisors
- Compliments
- Lack of positive feedback is in the culture, at all levels from students, postdocs to staff – people are expected to be the best, so why would you need telling
- This can lead to insecurity, stress
- Imposter syndrome.
- Induction at maths – if you don't trust yourself to be here, trust us, we know what we are doing, you deserve to be here, and we will help you get there.
- Finding a niche – from being the best to being the 'perceived' worst every now and then
- PG-Rs don't get marks, lack of grounding in research, by yourself, it's hard to get out of mind set, not finding anything, failing experiments, relying on this for validation.

Question 2 - As a PG-R, how do your welfare needs differ now to when you were an U/G?
- Different needs
- U/G it has a clear goal, you know what's the path, you know the strategies, you know what you have to do.
- For a PhD you don't know what the road is like, what is it going to be? No stepping stoned, a bit out there.
- Everyone is doing different things and on different rhythms
- With U/G you have an average mark
- Comparing self to others
- Manage own time – how much you should work, guilty, not feeling like working enough, how many holidays can I take?,
- Feeling separate to usual term times
- PG-R is a completely different skill-set, some people struggle to adapt, they might not be cut out for research but you don't know it till you get there. Helping people to recognise this early on.
- Some people find the transition very difficult, some people hit the ground running.
- You don't really know what you signed up for. You don't really know if you can do it.
- Sometimes, people who get the best grades at U/G level make the worst researchers, and sometimes those who scrape by at U/G make good researchers
- Resilience – get hit and get hit again and keep getting up. Failing every day. Rewards are long term and infrequent. Go through patches where you might not see any positive ending.
- Hard not to personalise it – issues, challenges.
- Loneliness. Relationship with college or department. As U/G, hang out with people from that year, social structure, it's lacking at a PhD level.
- Challenges to mixing with other research groups.
- Departments organising events where all students have to go to, or reinforced to go to.

- Socialness of research groups or sub-departments – different cultures and history of being social.
- Barriers – not knowing people, competing events or projects, so many emails, showing up to events alone can be scary, culture, no time, everyone else is working, wasting time, permission to have time off, exhaustion.
- Most lonely wouldn't go to these events because they maybe wouldn't dare to.
- If faculty attend events, maybe more students would attend
- Having events which are almost compulsory could be really helpful.
- Social competition and comparing.
- Institutions doing more to overcome the fear:
  - Free food and wine can help.
  - Making events into traditions.
  - People need to know it is okay to turn up alone.
  - Activity based events such as puzzles.
  - Discussion group – having a purpose.
  - Randomly mixing people.
  - Supervisor's dinners and lunches.
  - College support and working in college.

Question 3 - What does Peer Support mean to you?
- Identifiable levels.
- Shared experiences.
- Give each other advice on things.
- People of the same age that talk the same language to have a support network.
- Age differences, times are different, situations are different.
- Different ages and lifespan could mean different rhythms.

Question 4 - What areas are important to include in the Peer Support training? What themes and topics should Peer Supporters hold in mind and learn?
- Protecting students not taking on too much pressure away from the PhD.

Question 5 - How do you think the training should be organised? Condensed, extended, when, length of days etc.
- Have time to think about training.
- Go home and process what you feel about them.
- Spaced out training.
- Guilt being away from the work.
- Sharing own experiences over the course of eight weeks, you trust the people around you, so you share more things, so you feel more comfortable and you are actually more engaged.
- More happens to you if spaced out training.
- In 3 days you can't really develop that much, trust to share meaningful things.
- It's way better to do it (extended) then cram it all into 3 days.

- Training in Trinity Term.
- Topics
  - Supervisory relationship
  - Boundaries and assertiveness
  - Time management
  - Failure
  - Expectation management
  - Self-confidence and guilt
  - Anxiety of the future (continue, do a post-doc)
  - Career and next steps

Learning from Focus Group Lunches

Some changes were made to training materials and training content. This included adjustments to exercises to include PGR specific content. When discussing assertiveness for example, we explored situations with supervisors where assertiveness could be used such as managing feedback and the content of a meeting. Although most of the skills learned during the training were generic enough to cover any situation.

Additions to PGR specific content was especially pertinent with regards to supervisions.

It became clear that the training should not be condensed but run over 8 weeks as per usual. This would also support learning research where bunched-up learning or cramming isn't processed or retained as well as longer term learning.

Encouraging recruitment and promotion

As well as meeting with departments, email shots were used as the main way to recruit students. See Appendix B as an example of the poster. Initially, posters were a bland black and white, several versions were made which became more colourful and eye-catching as the design progressed. Wording on the posters was carefully considered to be as neutral as possible so as not to scare people away from the training. For example, the words 'mental health' were not used, instead 'wellbeing' was deemed more appropriate wording. Posters were printed and placed in public areas such as kitchens and common rooms in various departments as well used in global mails shots. Posters were sent to conveners of committees and student groups.

Dr Knowlson went to student committee events such as Mathematrix to discuss the project in person and attempt to recruit more people for the training. Word of mouth is powerful in student communities, and Dr Knowlson wanted to capitalise on this.

Recruitment through the initial 3 departments was slow. To improve recruitment, Dr Knowlson emailed his contacts within colleges, especially targeting those who were graduate-

only colleges. Dr Knowlson also established connections with Divisional leads to recruit from a Divisional top-down perspective and reach more departments and sub-departments below. He successfully recruited through the Division of Medical Sciences, this will now become an annual project between the Division and the Peer Support Programme.

A supervisor guide was created to increase departmental/ supervisory buy-in by Dr Knowlson. This explained the training contents and commitments, including the benefits from the Project such as transferrable skills and testimonials. See Appendix C for a copy of this guide. It was produced in a long and short version and sent with the posters and recruitment emails.

The training

There were 7 training rounds:
- Pilot 1 – Michaelmas Term (October) 2018
- Pilot 2 – Michaelmas Term (October) 2018
- Trinity Term 2019
- Summer 2019 A
- Summer 2019 B
- Michaelmas Term (October) 2019
- Christmas 2019

The total number of students trained are as follows.

Row Labels	Count of Gender
Female	52
Male	36
Grand Total	88

The project was successful in recruiting 51 students from Medical Sciences and MPLS.

Row Labels	Count of Division
Humanities	18
MedSci	26
MPLS	25
SocSci	19
Grand Total	88

The project recruited more females in every division with the exception of Social Sciences. The difference for MPLS was only 3 more females.

Row Labels	Count of Division
Humanities	**18**
Female	11
Male	7
MedSci	**26**
Female	18
Male	8
MPLS	**25**
Female	14
Male	11
SocSci	**19**
Female	9
Male	10
Grand Total	**88**

It was heartening to recruit many medical students (6) and students from Population Health (4) from the Medical Sciences Division. In terms of MPLS, it was good to see a large number of engineers (6) and computer scientists (5) train.

Row Labels	Count of Division
Humanities	**18**
African Studies	1
Archaeology	1
English	1
History	7
History of Art	1
Oriental Studies	2
Philosophy	1
Refugee and Forced Migration	1
Theology and Religion	3
MedSci	**26**
Biosciences	1
Clinical Neurosciences	2
Experimental Psychology	2
Medicine	6
Pathology	1
Pharmacology	2
Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics	3
Population Health	4
Psychiatry	1
Rheumatology	1
Surgical Sciences	1
Vaccine Research	1
Women's and Reproductive Health	1
MPLS	**25**
CDT Cyber Security	2

Chemistry	3
Computer Science	5
Doctoral Training Centre	2
Engineering	6
Materials	2
Mathematics	3
Physics	1
Statistics	1
SocSci	**19**
Education	3
Geography	3
Global and Area Studies	1
International Development	2
Law	1
Politics and International Relations	2
Social and Cultural Anthropology	4
Social Policy and Intervention	1
Sociology	2
Grand Total	**88**

Those recruited were either DPhil students or doing a research masters that could transfer into a DPhil.

Row Labels	Count of Level
DPhil	**77**
Female	44
Male	33
Masters	**11**
Female	8
Male	3
Grand Total	**88**

The summer training was the most popular and well attended, followed by the Trinity Term (as mentioned by students in the Focus Group Lunches as being a good time to run the training).

Row Labels	Count of Time of training
Christmas 2019	**6**
Female	3
Male	3
MT19	**12**
Female	8
Male	4
Pilot 1	**7**
Female	6
Male	1
Pilot 2	**14**
Female	8

Male	6
Summer 19 A	**23**
Female	12
Male	11
Summer 19 B	**12**
Female	7
Male	5
TT19	**14**
Female	8
Male	6
Grand Total	**88**

Supervisions

After training, the students attend 4 supervision sessions per term or they would be removed from The Programme. Each supervision is one hour. The Programme monitors attendance and sends an email if too many supervisions are missed. So far, attendance has been good and no one has been removed. Sessions have covered various topics including dealing with tricky supervisors, loneliness in PGRs, and work life balance with family, negotiating pay as post docs, the interview process and procrastination. A particularly poignant supervision was dedicated to sexual violence and harassment and misogyny in lab-based culture. Supervisions consist of group discussions and role plays as well as listening exercises. Mostly the PGR students would bring themes or topics they wished to discuss. Occasionally a termly thematic schedule was created so people could prepare and bring material in to discuss.

Official Feedback

PS Training Final Evaluations Feedback Analysis

Each Peer Support trainee completed a final evaluation form relating to the content and their development at the end of the training. The evaluation forms asked students four questions that relate to their professional and personal development through the training. Final evaluation questions are:

- Write three things from Peer Support training that were most helpful to you.
- What did you gain from the training that was unexpected?
- What will you take from the training that will be of value to you as a Peer Supporter?
- What will you take from the training that will be of value to you in everyday life?

A total of 70 students completed the final evaluation form at the end of training. Using their responses, a Thematic Analysis was conducted to gain an overview of the overall evaluation of the training. This was done to answer the question, "how do the students experience Peer Support training?" and the analysis was gathered under four themes. The themes were established through the coding of responses and grouped based on the commonalities across the codes. Samples of quotes from the trainees are included under the themes (*italicised*) to illustrate the way these points were commented on.

Theme 1: Value of experiential group learning

This theme refers to the value that trainees found in the experiential element of the group learning. Trainees commented on the importance of the in-person, face-to-face nature of the training, the

opportunity to hear from others and learn from one-another, while also developing positive relationships that helped them feel a part of a community and a network of others in this role. Trainees commented on the benefit of having a safe and welcoming group environment in which they felt able to discuss sensitive issues in small or large groups. Trainees also noted the positive impact of the facilitator in the development of positive group dynamics, noting that this allowed their sense of community to better develop. Feedback on the facilitator included the value of their knowledge base as well as supportive attitude.

The development of personal relationships with the trainer and the other fellow trainees shed light on the best multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary peer learning experience and let me see how such relationships could be cultivated.

I didn't expect to gain a deeper understanding of myself and to feel more self-aware. By using personal experiences to form the basis of our discussions, it helped me to understand the different levels of support people might want in a Peer Support situation. I just expected to be told how to handle different potential scenarios, but this method of training made it so much easier to grasp and apply.

The Peer Support training was an educational experience and I feel that it being a face-to-face training added great value and is a crucial aspect of the training. All of us were open and welcoming with our thoughts and experiences, which made me comfortable expressing my opinions and experiences without fear of judgement. And I truly believe now in the significance of being welcoming, and as a Peer Supporter I will do my best to convey the message that I am here if anybody needs me, by creating a comfortable environment for others.

Peer Support training not only taught me how to effectively be there for others, but also how I could change/improve my ways to make things easier for myself. And the fact that I'm joining a big community of Peer Supporters makes me feel empowered and I'm very grateful to have received the training, and I hope the Peer Support programme will continue to grow.

Friendship and felt closeness to other peer support trainees and the trainer was unexpected. As I first imagined it to be more work-like relationships with everyone, which is not unusual for me in my previous experiences, then I was surprised how personal it developed to be and how comfortable we feel around each other.

Theme 2: Personal development through training

Feedback from a large number of trainees included comments on finding the unexpected personal benefit of the training. Many spoke about an increased self-awareness, a better ability to relate to their own position as a supporter. Trainees referred to the experiential nature of the training here as well, stating that the first-hand experience of sharing personal matters allowed them to better appreciate the therapeutic value of sharing, while feeling better able to empathise with the other whom they intend to support. This increased self-awareness also allowed students to engage with the necessity of self-care within a support role, which was also frequently categorised as personal development.

The interpersonal skills, for example, how to be more approachable and be able to show understanding and empathy to others. These soft skills are particularly crucial in social and workplace settings where opened and good communication are conducive to effective exchange of information and ideas.

I will continue to be aware of my body language and make sure that it remains welcoming do people feel comfortable coming to me for help.

I have realised I have a tendency to catastrophise things or perceive things in a negative manner when dealing with my own problems, but not so much when listening to others problems (which is common I have learnt) and so I am going to try and see issues as manageable rather than "lets avoid them completely because they suck so much".

Self-awareness is probably the most unexpected skill I gained from the Peer Support training. Not only I learned to be self-aware of how I communicate what I am feeling/thinking but also of how the message I am conveying may be received by others or how it would make them feel. Now I am able to consciously make decisions on how I express my thoughts in order to communicate effectively.

Personal development and self-awareness gained through training was unexpected. At first, I thought I am here to receive training in order to help others, but through the sessions I realised more and more how helpful the activities are for myself (as the training influenced me).

The training made me think a lot about myself, my relations with family, friends, bosses, and how we all think and behave differently, it made me really think more about the fact that we should all embrace our uniqueness and respect each other for that.

The session on assertiveness will be invaluable in my academic, personal, and professional life. I also benefitted from learning how to label my feelings and understanding where they might be coming from.

Theme 3: Peer Support skills gained through training

In their feedback forms, trainees frequently referred to the practical PS skills that they felt they gained through the training. Each of the skills mentioned by the students form an important component of the training that is explicitly emphasised through the practical exercises. Students have highlighted which of these skills they found most helpful either in their PS role or personal day-to-day life and spoke about the value of having had enough practice of these throughout training.

Reflective skills involved in active listening, making assertive statements, understanding conflicting feelings and the role of context in comprehending emotions.

Discussing the different types of questions and how each would work in a peer support context. The people I tend to interact with are extraverted and talkative so a closed question would still result in an open answer so it was important to remember that some people would respond with only a yes/no.

Understanding the dangerous nature of advice giving, allow people to come to their own conclusions and offer support in the form of active listening.

Although it's important to get the facts right, what could be more powerful is feeling like you're being heard, and that you do not need to come up with solutions to the problems being presented.

I learnt that it is possible to be assertive without being aggressive, and that by being passive, it might lead to more problems even if I think it's the optimal solution.

In the past, I have always been the person people would come for advice or to be listened to. Very often, I felt inadequate in how to support my friends and family when they sought advice. After undertaking the Peer Support training, I feel I have gained the necessary skills to listen and offer guidance.

Learning the value of assertive communication and its place within self-care. Also, learning the importance of body language and non-verbal communication.

Initially I did not like making summaries at the end of conversation and thought of them as unnecessary. But by the end, I found myself making summaries with ease and integrating them into conversation quite naturally, so I'm very happy with being given enough practice.

Theme 4: Additional support skills gained through group discussions in training

The PS trainees outlined several support skills that they have gained through training. These skills are gathered under a separate theme to that of the skills emphasised in training (Theme 3), as they are not necessarily specific themes included in the training plan but are frequently covered in group discussions throughout training. These include an increased awareness of perspective taking within supportive conversations, including the ability to exercise self-reflection to understand own needs and/or agenda within the interaction. This also links to a better understanding of own assumptions and/or judgements the PSer may hold, to be able to offer a more accepting and non-judgemental space for the individual to be heard. The ability to listen without an agenda has been noted as a skill that offers a possibility to better 'hear' the other without a necessity to 'fix' the problem. Students have noted the relevance of personal history in every-day interactions and have referred to a better understanding of feelings (own and other) and enhanced interpersonal skills through this. Students have noted an increased understanding of the concept of mental 'health' as a consequence of the discussions in training. Most students referred to the clarification of their role and a better understanding of what is expected of them to be one of the main gains from the training. Several commented on feeling more confident in their skills over time in the duration of the training.

The intense group discussions and the role play sessions allowed us to explore our perceptions of things and see things differently (not making an assumption and embrace our vulnerability as strengths for being open to reach out to others and understand others).

The approaches of active listening, the types of follow-up questions to ask that follow the agenda of the speaker rather than myself, how to be assertive within reason, how to understand the limits and strengths of our roles and understand that we are not here to fix problems but to connect with their feeling which is important to the role of Peer Support.

While working as a group to come up with ideas on various topics, I realised how different our understandings of concepts were. I was aware of this before the training, but it helped me see and visualise the individual differences in experiences and that there is no one right answer.

I feel that I have gained a much broader emotional vocabulary and better understanding of how to talk about emotions both my own and for others. (…) The ability to articulate my own emotions, given that I now feel better equipped to understand and respond to the emotions of other people.

When we discussed setting boundaries as a group, one statement really resonated with me. We were told by the trainer to think of Peer Support sessions as having one foot in someone else's world and one foot firmly planted in our own, understand it is a great privilege to be let into someone's inner thoughts. This really helped me and inspired me.

I gained the confidence and courage to deal with sensitive issues such as self-harm and suicidal thoughts/attempts and sexual assault. We now know, instead of being nervous about the severity of their issues, we could help with our listening skills and refer them to the right people to handle and support them better.

I feel as though I have learnt a lot about myself and how past experiences have shaped my personality and mannerism. The time we got to reflect on the discussions we have during the sessions really helped consolidate he key points and apply them to my everyday life. Even If I don't get to use the Peer Supporter skills I have learnt in a formal manner, I can still apply them to my day to day experiences, e.g. being more assertive, not being too quick to give advice, how non-verbal communications can say more than your words. I think a lot of people would benefit from taking/going through a Peer Support-like programme. It has made me more aware of how I can make small changes that will really have a positive impact.

Summary

Overall from the four themes gathered through the Thematic Analysis of the evaluation forms, students established the most helpful components of the training relating to the in-person group learning, which offered opportunities for self-development while also learning specific support skills to perform their role. Based on the students' perspective of the training, another benefit of this training also appears to be the additional support skills that are gained through the opportunity for group discussions over the 24 hours of training. Specifically, students have identified learning to listen by offering a non-judgemental space without an agenda, knowing when to refer on and how to utilise their role for the development of a welfare community, and an increased understanding of themselves to be the central components of their experience of the Peer Support training. A final aspect of training that appears to be valuable to students has been the role of assertiveness and boundary setting in self-care, as well as the ability to rely on a community of Peer Supporters and the programme to perform well in their role.

Unofficial Feedback

Below are some unofficial feedback quotes from people. The students have given explicit permission to use their comments and names.

Wanted to send a quick thank you/appreciation email as we come to the end of term. Thanks for your ongoing support of peer support and for running our supervision sessions. Not only are they incredibly helpful, they're also a nice respite from our daily grind. I assume that PS evaluation/impact efforts often value reach/effectiveness of the programme...but I know for many of us, it's about so much more – including the friends we've made within the network and our own abilities to recognise and vocalise injustices in the system.
Best,

Jess
Centre on Population Approaches for Non-Communicable Disease Prevention
Nuffield Department of Population Health

The Peer Support Training was definitely one of the most valuable experiences I have had in Oxford. Many times before, I could see the struggles of students around me and still feel paralysed, not really knowing how to help. The Peer Support Training gave me the skills and the confidence to be there for people going through a tough time. Discussing issues students go through and in which ways we can support one another, made me more aware of the people around me and of the options we have to deal with such difficulties. These skills have not only being valuable when supporting other students, but also on proposing activities and actions in my department to deal with common issues and make a better environment for everyone. The Peer Support Training was also important on a much more personal level, helping me understanding my own struggles and processes. It allowed me to break the first barrier of admitting that it's okay to have struggles and seek for help. Also, the programme fully acknowledges that we are students and that being a Peer Supporter should not interfere with our own research, so we spent a lot of time discussing how to put boundaries and to make sure that we are able to help others without interfering with our own studies. The Peer Support Training has helped me understand more the struggles we students face, giving me confidence and the information needed to help dealing with them.
Luci
Mathematics

I would recommend peer support training to everyone. It was very useful for me to spend time thinking about challenges some people around me may be facing. After my peer support training, I now feel more confident to offer my help. I believe that every problem seems easier if you are not alone for it, and that sometimes as little as being listened to can make a big difference. Moreover, I am now familiar with the forms of welfare support available, so it's easier for me to guide people searching for help to resources that may be useful to them.
Best wishes,
Zuzana
Physics

Conclusions

1. There was a greater vocalisation around PGR welfare and wellbeing than a willingness to participate and become involved in the project, this caused issues with recruitment initially. This may reflect a discrepancy between individual transitory experiences and more macro societal issues/ concerns.

2. A greater clarity by what is meant by welfare and wellbeing for individuals, departments, institutions and societally is needed as such words have different meanings for different people and are used interchangeably without any real working definition.

3. Targeting STEM subjects was very successful, which included 6 PGRs from The Department of Engineering, 4 females and 2 males for example. In total 51 students came from the Medical Sciences Division and MPLS Division out 88 students.

4. Incorporating and establishing this project in departments was challenging, as University welfare has traditionally been present and embedded in colleges for a longer period of time. It seems that welfare is more fragmented and less defined in departments and departmental roles. The project was able to bypass any issues by recruiting through colleges rather than departments. This was a work-around and didn't fix the issue of welfare and wellbeing in departments which remains underdeveloped.

5. To enhance departmental buy-in, the project created a guide for supervisors regarding the training content and demands, including total time commitments. This seemed to help those wanting to sign-up to the training and increase permissions to train from their supervisors. Wellbeing and welfare needs whole departmental support, starting with supervisors and modelling good self-care practice in their teams. Perceived time issues are often cited as barriers to wellbeing and yet are a major cause of work-related stress.

6. A success was getting Divisional buy-in rather than that from Departments. The Division of Medical Sciences has agreed to train 6 Peer Supporters across the division and promote them centrally. Recruiting and training through divisions rather than individual departments is a more sustainable and successful model of rolling out the project. This is partly due to how Peer Support Training is structured at the university as adoption by too many departments would cause an increased administrative burden.

7. Targeting men in STEM subjects remains imperative, as they may be least likely to access support and are at times a vulnerable group around issues relating to welfare and wellbeing. More females were recruited across 3 divisions which the exception of the Social Sciences Division where there was a greater number of males participating in the project (but only by one individual).

8. This project has raised further questions around the Peer Support Training process and content at the University of Oxford. To help PGR access the training, the time of day, length of training and timing within term/ academic year are important issues to consider, in addition to the content. The training in the summer was particularly

popular with positive feedback and was also well attended. The project has highlighted the need to explore whether to reduce the amount of training and provide more choice with time-slots and training timing, especially around vacations.

9. It was found that training content and materials were suitable for both undergraduates and postgraduates as the skills are generic active listening skills. However, some minor changes were made to the context of exercises and content of supervision sessions. It would seem there are differences and similarities between the two communities, however, the specialness of being seen as having separate needs could be a barrier to seeking and receiving support as wellbeing support becomes ever more niche.

10. The training highlights the need for supportive listening communities, however, the training can help and hinder this process. Training could formalise or medicalise the simple process of listening to others and having a courageous conversation. The training must give students the courage to test their skills in the real world and not fear getting things right or wrong or see themselves as pseudo-counsellors. It is important to reinforce that the training is to facilitate conversation and connection in individuals and community. The issue of promotion and being used by other students remains something to monitor. Promotion is important with continual investment in posters, events and clothing with logos on.

11. As students increase their usage of medical terms to communicate their distress, perhaps the need for Peer Support is challenged, as most issues become escalated or encouraged to be shared with 'mental health professionals' rather than friendship groups alone. Is there a way that Peer Support can help normalise some mental health distress and appropriately reduce over-referral to other services?

Appendix A: Transcript of Focus Group Lunch

INT: **This looks like it's working so… I might put this in the middle of the floor, and we can sort of dance around it like a club, it's like a bag in the middle. So, just feed yourselves, it's recording now but I won't transcribe these bits.**

[Laughter]

M1: … munching.

INT: **That's alright, munch away. So, I have my little list of questions and we'll just make it as brief… as brief as you want. But I suppose I'm curious, my opening question… are you ready… is what does welfare mean to you? I have no idea… I don't know what it is.**

M2: Health.

M1: Good health.

INT: **As opposed to bad health, good…Yes.**

M2: Helping people stay in a good place, whatever you want to define that good place as.

INT: **Yes. So, there is a kind of… something to attempt, which is good health, I guess, as opposed to bad health. But also, you want to help people to sustain it so, there is like a big preventative element to it or a kind of…? Yes?**

F1: Stress-free thing.

INT: **Yes.**

M3: Acknowledgement that there is you need good conditions to work in that department or whatever structure can help that environment. It's not just like work.

INT: **What, for you, are good conditions do you think?**

M1: A friendly atmosphere where everyone… there's no ego, people actually just want to help each other and do the best as a group rather than individuals.

F1: I think the feeling that you have support if you're going through a struggle, you can reach out to someone.

F2: Yes, I think some kind of community feel…

F2: Also being valued...

INT: **If you think about being valued, how can the department make you feel valued, what would that look like if I were to make you feel valued, how could we do that; what would that look like for you?**

F2: I think that incentivising… if you have an atmosphere where you have to work like twenty-four-seven, that's what expected of you, you shouldn't have breaks too much because people will think you're lazy and they're saying, "You have to work more, you have to do more." And you have to put your work in front of your life and your mental health. And if you do the other way around it's like, "No, there is a time for breaks and there is a time to meet people, you shouldn't be doing like crazy work hours, you should respect yourself." Then you're saying, "Well, it's enough to do what is only as much as you are respecting yourself" that would be it.

M3: Individual limits, like each individual, in particular when there are differences, when people struggle with certain things, then you can still tell them, "That's fine, you do what you can and I trust that, you do your best."

M2: I think getting positive feedback is something that is lacking and should be given more.

INT: Sorry, is that from supervisors or is that just from…?

F1: In general.

M1: I'm one of the supervisors so, yes.

[Laughter]

INT: Excellent, thank you.

F1: I was going to say the same thing, I think. I think it is quite uncommon that people in Oxford say… like give compliments to each other. I think this could be really something that could be improved upon. A lot of people feel like they are not doing well whereas, actually, everyone is doing really well.

M2: This happens at all levels, right. This is a fundamental culture I think that the students aren't given positive feedback, the postdocs aren't, the staff aren't, and it goes it all the way up and it is very much in the culture I think where you are expected to be but that's because you're at Oxford. So, why would people need telling?

INT: Yes, which makes it feel quite kind of punitive or not knowing, or competitive, I guess?

M2: At least there are a lot of the other issues, I think.

F2: The need to… insecurity I guess.

F1: Stress as well.

F3: I think there is also a lot of insecurity for being in Oxford, there is a lot of imposter syndrome going on and not getting any reassurance of that can feel quite stressful.

INT: Yes, absolutely. Even just the architecture is engineered to make us feel insecure, high ceilings, large…

M1: Well, apart from where I work which is…

INT: Dark, low ceilings, low lighting… I don't know… I've lived within that building, but the architecture can have an impact, I suppose, yes, low ceilings, high ceilings, portraits, no portraits. But you mentioned also imposter syndrome, "Do I belong here, am I good enough, can I survive? I got in but do I stay on the course or will I get a career?" All that sort of stuff.

F1: And I should say that an induction in maths, for instance, the principal, he gave the first speech and one of the first things he said was, "I know some of you don't trust yourselves to be good enough to be here but if you don't trust yourselves, yet, trust us, we know what we're doing. You deserve to be here and now we'll just help you get there." And literally it is here… that is so nice to hear. It was really good to hear this acknowledgement that it's okay to feel like this but trust us.

F2: I think it is really good that they did that right at the start because I think a lot of people…

INT: So, that doubt can set in or come in and then maybe there are challenges on that doubt might get even stronger maybe?

F: I think also that a lot of students might have been used to being one of the better students in their course and you sort weigh yourself to different skills and then it is sometimes a bit of adjustment when you are in Oxford that you are just going to be one of the worst in something every now and then as well. They'll not really be used to these things.

M1:   It's one of those things where the average is automatically quite high here, so, even if you are below average, you feel really bad even though you're way above the vast majority of people out there.

M3:   It is probably especially a problem for PhDs, where you're up there without a lot of… you can't get a lot of feedback because you don't have marks or you don't have like… there is a lot of lack of… grounding in the PhD where you're sort of, by yourself and if you start with the idea that you're not good enough then… it's difficult to get out of it.

INT: **I suppose if that doubt comes from within us and we're by ourselves, it's hard to ground…?**

M3:   And probably PhD is spending a lot of time not finding anything and…

INT: **Yes, or failing experiments?**

M3:   Yes, and I see that around me, people who have like, for example, failing experiments and have been failing for two years and they're not well… all of their… they rely on this for validation in some way.

INT: **Do you think with that, if I rip off what you just said, that as you are just, through your academic career, the parameters do change so undergrad is much more structured, there is much more reinforcement I guess. Maybe it depends on the course, the department but generally, there is a sort of structure, then Masters, then I do feel it is much more open. Is that a kind of…? Most graduate research needs are different to undergrads?**

M1:   They definitely are.

INT: **In what way do you think they're different?**

F1:   I think for undergrad you have a clear goal; you know what you're going to get, you know what it's about and you know the strategies… you have to do all these exercise sheets, you have to study for the exam. And then if you do that it's very unlikely that you'll fail because you've prepared the best you could. But for the PhD, you don't really know what is the end… how this will grow, if you're taking the right road and you don't have stepping stones to say, "Oh, I did this whole problem sheet, so, I'm good." And you're just a bit out there and it's very hard.

M3:   You can't compare yourself to anyone or to… ground that… because everyone is doing different things and they have different rhythms so, tend to only pick out the other people that are doing well [unclear 00:09:24]. Undergrad's at least you have like an average mark.

F2:   I think also another point that is difficult as a PhD student is that you completely have to manage your own time. Which I guess, it's good to learn this but then the problem is that nobody really knows how much you should work. I see this in a lot of people that they end up feeling guilty for not working enough even though they are already working a lot of hours. Nobody really knows how much holidays we are supposed to be having so, everyone just kind of… doesn't really take much holidays.

INT: **So, there's no annual leave built into it?**

F2:   No.

M3:   There is no term-time, we don't have any rhythm…

INT: So, weeks are kind of… it doesn't mean anything really, it's just Christmas, or Easter or…?

M3:   Some of us will entirely synchronise with term-time, there is nothing in the PhD that changes…

M1:   Going back to your earlier point, I think going from the undergrad to a PhD is recognising that doing a PhD is a completely different skillset to doing exams and passing your undergraduate. Some people struggle to adapt to even… they may not be cut out for it, but you don't know it until to get there. So, it's recognising and basically helping them to get to that point early on, is a lot of the issue. Some people just go away, hit the ground running and their fine, other people find that transition very difficult and it's from a whole load of different reasons so, there's not one size fits all for every PhD student either.

F3:   Yes, and I think related to that, I think in other areas like, I see people in undergrad or Master's, already publishing papers, doing research, and that is something that in pure maths is really rare. Because it's really far, you just start doing research on your PhD, so, you don't really know what you're signing up to, you're still a bit scared, you've never tried this before. You don't really know if you can do it but yes, there is this thing of like, you haven't properly done research before you start doing it.

M2:   Speaking from a supervisor… one of the things I've noticed, very strongly is, people that often get the top in their year as an undergraduate, sometimes make the worst researchers and the people that just scrape through on their undergraduate sometimes make the best researchers. It's how people deal with that going from one end to another and how other people around them react to that in the knowledge that, "Well, I was better than him at undergraduate why are they doing all this now…?"

INT: Yes. So, there might be, from what you're saying a bit of also undergrad nostalgia, you know, the golden…

M1:   Well, I can't remember now.

INT: Well, you did well, and you think, "Why am I not doing well now, if that was the template?" What do you think is the… and it's really hard to say I know that people struggle with DPhil's for different reasons but what do you think are the adapted skills that help people get through it?

F1:   Resilience.

INT: Carla, what is that… tell me, I've never heard this word before? Tell me, what is resilience, what is it, break it down?

F1:   Being able to get hit and get hit and getting up again

        [Laughter]

INT: We don't condone violence but okay, yes. So, getting hit and then coming back up, like bouncing back… bounce-back-ability? Alright.

F1:   Failing every day…

INT: Oh, it sounds tough, I'm certainly not going to do any research. Okay, so, it's taking those hits and then bouncing back, is that…?

F1:   Yes, also, I think it's sort of… I think you are failing most of the time, so you need to be able to work through even though you are sure of your positive rewards, let's say, are very much long-term and very infrequent. You still need to be able to go through patches where you don't really see any positive ending.

INT: Yes, so, there is something also about sitting with the not knowing or the chaos or the lack of progress, I guess. Is that partly what you're saying? Because if your mind goes into this and you go, "Right, this is the plan" and then it doesn't go to plan, it's how do you deal with that, and not personalise it too much… is that something of what you were saying?

F1:   Yes, that's at least one element of the… struggle.

F1:   And I think it's really hard not to personalise it with like… maths, this is just in your head, there is nothing you can do, you can't do an experiment, you can't make progress if you don't understand something. And it's you studying it over and over again trying to understand it and you're not getting it so, yes, you can't blame it on anything else, so, it's really hard to just keep doing it.

M3:   Loneliness is also a thing. Because structurally, at least what I've observed in Oxford is that structurally PhDs are not… there is nothing meant… very little done for them to have… reports… like, it depends on each other because we're adults I guess, but for each of us to actually go out and find either a group of friends in the department or the college. The college usually at least might try to have something but very few PhD students go to any events or hang out with us.

INT: So, is that in social stuff or…?

M3:   I don't know exactly why, at least compared undergrad where you have a year and then you hang out with people in your year and you start forming… You have some sort of support, social structure, I feel it's completely lacking as a PhD student. I don't know why it could be just my department because CS people are not really sociable, but I mean physics and maths is not…

      [Laughter]

INT: You're all here and you're eating food, so, that's pretty sociable.

M1:   We're the sociable ones.

      [Laughter]

F2:   I think the Maths Department is a bit better because they have… every day at eleven and three they have some kind of organised coffee and tea break. I think this is really good because it sort of reinforces people to go and have a break and also you see some people. So, it doesn't really mix that well so usually people stay within their own groups which I think, in the undergraduate level, you do meet undergrads much more because you have all these lectures where you automatically meet people. And as DPhil students, yes, you are all just sitting in your office so, you wouldn't naturally go and talk to each other, there is not really… I think it is good that department organises events sometimes where just all the students have to go to or are least are really sort of reinforced to go to so that they go and meet each other.

INT: Have tea and coffee?

M1:   I think it's one of the… I think in my sub-department of astro-physics, we have a very sociable… there is a social list, email list and always going to the pub and whatever. I know there are certain departments of physics where they don't have that, any of that at all, it seems to me it's one of those things that someone did it at some point and it carried through. If that one person at some point in the past never did it, it never got going.

INT: **Because there is something about institutional memory, isn't there? I went to… so, Lou… Lou Sumner was showing me around and she was telling me that the different sub-department have very different ethos's so, that the PPs are very different to the laser particle… it's all very different I guess.**

M2:   I was just saying earlier I was just explaining the gender difference between the sub-departments is absolutely incredible.

INT: **Is that right?**

M2:   Just in physics, if you go to Astro, it's forty percent, if you go to atomic and laser it's zero. So, obviously, the courses are different.

INT: **Yes, I can imagine, and entry records would be quite different… maybe different too.**

M2:   Exactly.

INT: **So, how do you overcome loneliness then, because some, like maths, organise events, I guess people attend?**

F1:   Yes, it's really popular I think.

INT: **An organised event though [unclear 00:18:07].**

M1:   In those events, very few people attend.

INT: **What do you think happens… I'm just curious what happens in between that… an event is organised and then people not showing up, what do you think gets in the way?**

F2:   I think if you don't know people, yes, you're not going to go because as a PhD student you always have twenty different things to do. So, you're not automatically going to go to some random event, you also get spammed with so many emails, and showing up to an event alone is…

M1:   Including mine?

        [Laughter]

F2:   Showing up to an event alone, it can be scary for people anyway I think. Especially the people maybe who feel most lonely wouldn't go to these events because they maybe wouldn't really dare to.

M3:   That happens to professors and researchers as well. I was talking with some staff of the CS Department and she was telling me, "It is so sad, every time you organise events, a lot of staff come but there are very few research or professors and like one or two students." They try to do things, but she doesn't really know why it tends to not work. It could be cultural it could be they just don't know each other.

M2:   Is part of it that thing you were saying that you always think you have more… essentially, a million things to do so you don't think you have the time to go to these things. And if all the people in the faculty went to them would that be more encouraging?

F2:   I think so. If you see that other people are making the time for it, it also appears more important whereas if you are only one showing up, you're kind of like, "Well, the other people are still working here, why am I not working?"

M: So, that's part of the whole culture of working and feeling like you are allowed to have a break, I guess.

F2:   I think that usually… it's nice if it's from the very beginning some things are organised where maybe in the beginning some of the things are maybe even like almost compulsory. I think other people might be really much against this, but I think this would be really nice to just have people go and do something together and meet some people. Then afterwards, they can decide whether they like it or need it or not but at least they tried it automatically a few times.

M3:   I'm pretty sure they tried that in the CS Department, in the first week of induction… the students to have a few things like stupid games to sort of get… force you to talk to other people and still… it doesn't quite work.

M1:   We just give free wine.

M2:   That's pretty good.

        [Laughter]

        [Overtalking 00:20:44]

M1:   Everyone goes, everyone turns up.

INT: You get the wine glasses and you find yourself in this common room.

M2:   Free food is a good thing. Because the faculty here as well, it's the end of the day, Oh, I'll take wine as well.

F2:   I think at maths they sometimes do talks from four to five and then afterwards free drinks and sometimes also free pizza. I always see a lot of people standing around at those…

M2:   That's good.

INT: Friday nights are sorted in the maths department.

M2:   You know where to go.

INT: I guess… free drinks.

F2:   One hour of talk about maths and then…

INT: Well, you know…

M2:   If you time it just right…

INT: Sort of go on screensaver mode and… [unclear 00:21:26] Okay, so, I'm kind of curious… it's interesting because you mentioned loneliness and I suppose I'm struck as a psychologist is, that to overcome loneliness we have to feel alone, especially in a roomful of people. Some of them have to get through that awkward phase, getting to know people and realise that it's not a room, a block of people, that actually, they're individuals and they might just be as lonely and scared as we are and then we kind of bond, I guess. It is trying to get people into that phase, I guess or mixing and maybe if it's tinged with sort of discomfort or fear or doubt, then the other things that you have to do will… might seem more appealing maybe, especially if your time is precious. Because I suppose time and

space are the two most precious commodities almost because then you're going to do things that are more demanding or less scary maybe, I don't know.

What do you think your departments could do to improve the situation… you mentioned compulsory?

M1:   Free pizza.

INT: Free pizza, yes.

M3:   If you do turn up… [unclear 00:22:36] that quite a good point.

INT: Something regular I guess.

F2:   I think especially traditions like things which start early on where you just need to get something going where people show up to because as soon as some people show up more people start showing up as well, I think.   People need to know that it's okay to show up on their own in some way, but I don't really know how you can…

M3:   Activity-based events can be really good especially for people who are not socially very comfortable, they have something to do, I don't know, a puzzle or any kind of thing…

F1:   The discussion group we've been doing, a lot of people have been coming and it's okay to come along because they're going to discuss something, so you have a purpose. And then you meet people and then you have lunch together so, yes.

F2:   I was also thinking things for which you sign up to a group but then everyone is sort of… nobody is really supposed to come with other people, that makes it a lot easier to come by yourself if you know that there is going to be group that you are automatically going to be placed in and it's not going to be a group of people who are already tightly knit and know each other well.

INT: Yes. So, there are other solitary people may be going or there's not a clique?

F2:   Yes, I think if you just randomise, just randomly pick the people who sign up to the thing and put them in groups that would make sure that people get to know people from different groups. I feel like in maths, it doesn't mix well at all, everyone stays within their own research group whereas, for maths, I think for any kind of science, it's good to meet people from different areas as well to mix ideas and so on. But because the groups are quite big it's always easiest to just go and sit next to the person you know and I think that, at least, I would be a lot less scared going to somewhere if I know that everyone is going to be placed in a random group, so nobody is really going to know anyone.

M3:   It's still kind of scary… if you were scared of meeting new people then it still can be a bit scary.

F2:   Yes.

INT: Maybe having a purpose helps? So, it's a bit like the snow effect, isn't it? When there's snow… everyone starts talking to each other, "Oh, watch out for the snow, it's going to snow… oh, the traffic's terrible." People start talking, they're more social, aren't they? So, maybe having a purpose like going for a talk?

F2:   Yes, you would want to have some activity you are doing, or you need some kind of discussion you are having with each other. It could even be a topic about people supporting each other with how they're doing or just being able to… everyone is being able to just ask

any maths question they want to the rest of the group. Maybe someone has a crazy idea… I don't know.

M2:   One thing that happens… our PhDs, they organise their own sort of… all the Ph students can invite others to their own talk which in fact, you effectively know nothing about, and they get pizza in. And they don't have to talk about their research, they can talk about anything, well, they give a talk and then they just all chat.

M2:   That's really good because it still is kind of work so, you don't feel too bad.

M1:   Although some people talk about football or something, so I've heard. But if they've just published a paper they'll talk about that but if they haven't then they'll talk about something they're interested in.

INT: Open the crisps if you want them. Okay. So, there is something about having these talks, eating food, and it can free, but it can also be connected about subjects?

F1:   I think also, okay, it's important to do things outside of the research group but the people in your research group will be the ones you see more often and it's really weird when you don't feel close to them at all and you have never socialised with them. So, I think when someone just comes in incentivising at least the PhD students, get together for lunch or something and then you get to know the people in your group and feel more comfortable around them.

F2:   What I really liked in my college was when they had some kind of supervisors dinner and all the students… they sort of grouped them all together, people from the same college, because there were actually a lot of people from my college in maths that I never saw, except that time. So, I think sometimes maybe, in the beginning, having an organised group lunch or something. These kinds of things I was thinking about, compulsory things, more like… just like some kind of get-together from all the people in the research group, then all have lunch together in week 2 or 3 or something like that.

INT: And who… help me to understand how that works? So, would that be like a PI, who would be kind of like…?

F2:   It is usually… at least in the Master's, like clear groups … on the website at least, you have all the various groups and then there is a lot of different professors sometimes in one group, but it is usually like twenty-five people, it's less than twenty-five, I think.

M3:   There are also colleges that do a lot of stuff, and I don't know why, few PhD students turn up to those things. Is it because they don't feel it's for them, is it because it's not advertised correctly or… I feel that the NCOs do a good job and that's how I… solved loneliness for me, it's a directive in my MCR. But I feel there is a discrepancy between the number of PhD students we have in our college and very little… very small numbers of people who do show up to things… I don't know why.

F1:   I think one of the reasons for that… at least for me, I'm much more active in the maths department than my college and it's like… we're sort of expected to be there from nine till five a bit and a lot of people put them with… themselves as well, you have a routine and that is when your friends are there, and your supervisor is there usually. And then you're just exhausted… to commit to running something else or being very much engaged somewhere else, sometimes it is really pretty exhausting.

M3: I'm quite the opposite when routine is going to college, studying there and so, the events sort fit naturally.

F1: Can I ask, do you have a nice space to work in for computer science?

M3: I have an office, but I don't it like it because I don't know the people there, I don't… So, I work in like…my college library, or MCR.

INT: So, you feel at home in your college?

M3: I do, I feel at home in my college.

INT: That's a safe space for you to work and you belong there, a sense of belonging?

M3: Yes, whereas, in the department, I don't have that, because I don't know the people. I've been put in an office with people who are doing completely different things [unclear 00:29:35] research.

INT: I have a question now which is seamlessly going to lead on... well, it's not so seamless because I've just flagged it up to you, but anyway, what does peer support mean to you? So, we've been talking about welfare, we've been talking about post-graduate welfare needs which differ, I guess, what does peer support mean to you; we've heard of that term but, what is it?

F2: Peer support?. So, people from the… peers mean that they are somewhat on identifiable levels I guess.

M3: Shared experiences.

F2: Yes, maybe give each other advice on things to come and any shared experiences.

INT: Yes. Any other thoughts about this… I can then steal and plagiarise… claim as my own?

M1: I think from again… from an older person's… I think it's important that people of the same age that talk the same language to have a support network. Even though I'm one of the younger members of staff, I still feel quite old. And there is an age difference, right? And as much as some faculty like to think they're still in their twenties, we're not, so, times are different, and situations are different to what it was twenty years' ago.

INT: What do you think interferes between different ages then, because you mentioned when things change, things move on; can you say a bit more about that, Matt?

M1: I think the pressures are different. They barely had the internet when I was doing my PhD so… Fundamentally, the outside pressure, the pressure to publish wasn't so intense as it is now. The pressure to… the pressure of being in Oxford, I think, is possibly… has become increased, if anything over those years. I think there is more pressure on those PhD students now than there was fifteen or twenty years ago. The job market is different, it's more competitive generally. Everything is more competitive and more pressurised.

M3: The rhythms are different as well, depending on the people who live… who live on their own, who live outside of college or department, have families… that's a huge difference to me talking to a member of staff, I can feel like they have completely different perspectives on [unclear 00:32:13].

M1: You earn more money which makes my life easier because I earn more money, right? Fundamentally, whereas earning a PhD stipend, living in Oxford is… it's always been ridiculous but…

M3: Belonging is different as well. Proper adults have a home in Oxford and that's where they live. Most post-graduate students, even undergrads, just come here to study. So, it takes some time to feel at home and it is always a temporary thing and that changes completely the outlook you have on like… the decisions you make and where you live and… how at home you feel. Especially if you're an international student that makes it worse.

INT: Yes. I suppose for peer support then something about creating community that's kind of peer to peer, but it tries to reduce as much as we can, the hierarchy, or differences, I guess where possible. So, the funding for this would be for student to student I guess, I suppose that would be… post-docs feel a bit aggrieved about that and I can completely understand that. So, I'm curious about that.

M3: Post-docs always get the short end… in Oxford, it seems.

M2: Yes, I think post-docs have quite a lot to offer in this respect because they have the experience and they're closer… in experience as well.

INT: What do you think… so, we do the training, it's a twenty-four hour training, we've covered certain topics already, so, for example, if you could act surprised at this… we do active listening, so, how do you listen? How do we also risk management, we look at suicide prevention, we look at assertiveness of boundaries. What other themes or topics do you think we should include particularly to target PGRs for your respective departments… if any?

F2: How would the peer support system work, would you be a general peer supporter for an entire department; what kind of vocations would you…?

INT: Well, I suppose in a way… so, how it runs traditionally in the colleges is you would be trained through that college and then stay in that college, do you know what I mean? So, let's say GTC, GT trains you then you stay as a GTC peer supporter. However, we're now trying to figure out how you can both be in college but also part of the department, right? But because I think these three departments are training together, they would probably… we could create a system where peer supporters could go to different departments or stay in the same department, it could be pretty flexible I'd say. So, a maths student could go to computer science and vice versa… for it to be interchangeable really.

Then you would have events in your department that you would organise and there might also be drop-in sessions… not long, but just you know… they're not often used, these drop-ins but much more peer support seems to be informal. So, at tea-time or at the bar or… it depends what each department wants and what peer supporters want.

M2: Going back to what we said earlier about PhD students generally feeling that they don't have time to do lots of things they want to be doing. I was wondering… I'm not against… don't get me wrong, is could there be an issue with people volunteering to do this to feel under more pressure themselves because they're devoting time away from their PhD research?

INT: Absolutely, of course, that's a concern and I think that is why there is also… there will be supervisions with me so, I monitor the care of the students. Part of the students is that they learn to create good and clear boundaries so, if they're feeling overwhelmed or burnt out, that we pick those flags up soon. What I would say is peer support is not overly formerly used but it is there in the background, offering kind of… pardon the Freudian jargon, a little bit of unconscious kind of processes for the department.

So, I think it is about protecting the students, but they can also regulate themselves I would say and how we could empower them to do that really. But certainly, with the training, that's a consideration that I'm having, and I've got, I suppose very specific questions because if it's like a twenty-four hour training, I could do… we could it over three days, so, they would be eight-hour days, condense it all into three days. It could be four days but that would be six hours, it could be consecutive, or it could be over a week, like…I'm trying to figure out what would be the best for PGRs to… just like a plaster, rip it off quickly and just get through the training or, just space it out and practice their skills. Lucy, I'm right in saying… is also training at the moment, we do it three hours weekly, and obviously, that can't happen now because it goes over a whole term. But how are you finding?

F1:   Yes, I think we have a lot of time to think about what we're working on and process it and we work with lots of different topics. Even in one session, we have like two, or three sometimes and it's good to go home and process how you feel about them. I think if we see a lot of them in one day and maybe this process is a bit shorter because it's a lot of things, but yes, I also agree that… I feel like if people in maths would like to go over the training as quickly as possible it may…

F2:   I think I might prefer to have it three hours a week kind of thing because I think… especially with maths research, three days sounds like a whole lot of time but three hours a week, there is always… If I do maths, I can only do it a couple of hours a day anyway. So, if it takes up three whole days and I can't do anything else those days then you need to be available those whole days. Whereas if it's three hours a week there just has to be three hours in the week… usually your weeks are stable, usually, you have the same hours free each week. I just can't really imagine myself having three consecutive days free I guess, is the main issue.

F1:   Yes, I guess there is a difference between term time or not.

M1:   Yes, that's true.

INT: The training will be kind of tenth, eleventh week in Easter, sort of around in that time. So, we're trying to hope that might minimise some impact.

F2:   I think the disadvantage I guess outside of term-time is that some people might be away at home or at conferences. Whereas three hours a week during term-time they will be there.

F1:   I much prefer to spread out over eight weeks, but I should say that I always feel a bit guilty of leaving the work for three hours when I feel I should be working during term-time…

F2:   Yes, that is true as well.

F1:   So, I enjoy it anyway but yes, that could be a concern.

F2:   Does it need to be twenty-four hours?

INT: It doesn't need to be but what I would say is… originally, it was thirty hours training and I with my small axe wielded and cut various bits off it because it's a developmental programme. Because a lot of Oxford students intellectually get the skills, but it takes them a while to practice because there is a lag between us understanding something and actually physically practising it, do you know what I mean?

F2:   If that's the case then I think just doing it in three days… usually, it's came out of a lot of psychological research that doing things over a longer period of time helps a lot more.

M1:   Yes, I feel like doing it over three or four days I would just forget what we did at the beginning by the third day…

F2:   You can practice it over the week as well if you have…

INT: Yes, that's the logic of it. I put that to the departments, and they were unhappy with that so, it's kind of…

M2:   Can I ask, who in the department… who in physics was unhappy if you're happy to say that… where did it come from I guess?

INT: Well, I suppose it came from the administration side of it.

M2:   I can't think of any of my colleagues who would be unhappy with that as supervisors.

INT: Okay. So, could it parallel what we currently have which is over eight weeks, three hours a week, for example?

M2:   From the physics… I don't see why not, I don't understand why the admin would say that wouldn't work because I think that would work way better than what you were saying, having three days fully on. And if there is more benefit to the people doing it?

INT: I would say it would be because having run it and seen Lucy, for example, developing it, it just takes us a long time to embody what we learn, I guess, and make sense of it on different levels.

F1:   And also, a lot of the training comes from sharing your own experiences and over the course of eight weeks, you trust the people around you, so you share more things, so you feel more comfortable and you're actually more engaged.

M3:   And more happens to you because of it.

F1:   Yes. I think in three days you can't really develop that much trust to share meaningful things.

INT: Yes, I suppose when we started this project, to get the department's buy-in, it was like a skills training. But peer support is much more, it's about trust, it's about sharing and if you do the training it creates a community that supports each other because obviously, it's peer to peer and that happens in the supervisions after the training. Because you might deal with a topic that is really painful or overwhelming, then you will peer support each other and also, you'll have more self-reflection abilities.

So, that is the logic behind why it's just three hours and there's a coffee break… with free tea and coffee and some food. But it's spaced out and it's just amazing the difference between eighth week and first week, it's incredible. But I think the department… Generally, they were really reticent about that, there was a lot of push-back.

M2:   I'm happy to bring it up in my department.

INT: That's great.

M2:   I should say, I am the Chair of the Equality and Diversity Committee in physics, that is partly why I'm here.

INT: Well, if you want to… please…

M2:   I'm happy to push-back on that. I think it's… way better to do it the way you're suggesting than just cram it all into three days. Because it just seems like you're not going to get the

most out of the course, that you're doing the course for and the people doing it probably don't want to do it like that.

INT: **Yes. I suppose I wanted to make sure that I wasn't excluding any PGRs from the layer and we might need to think about whether it's an afternoon or an evening, try and get the timing right at least.**

M3: Yes, it would be more difficult to find time… three hours in the week if they don't match up with what you can do then you can't do any other things. Whereas if it's just three days then you can maybe skip one meeting or something. It is probably easier to fit three days in your schedule but… if there is only a few of us we can surely find something…

M1: Maths has various subjects and supervisor dependent.

INT: **It is, it is.**

M1: It's one of those things, the supervisor is just going to go, "No, I don't want to do it, go away for three days." A similar supervisor would go, "Yes, that's fine."

INT: **The benefit is, it does… it does enrich communities and it brings consciousness into teams… You know the benefits.**

F1: I think if it's known well in advance when the hours are, I think you can generally plan things around. The trouble for maths students, it is mainly the teaching which is sort of fixed and maybe your book seminars. But the teaching you can plan yourself usually so if you know well in advance when the hours are then…

INT: **My aim was… I'm having another focus group on Monday and then to be inspired by what you guys have said and then I will report back to the department saying, if they wanted space then I would do it next term maybe or the term after so there would be a lot of time to prepare.**

F2: I think the Trinity term might even be best for PhD students because then it's the least teaching and… Like the last term…

M1: Trinity.

F2: I think then the least things are going on, there are no more lectures going on or at least, less lectures going on as well.

INT: **Yes, so… so, Trinity term kind of eight weeks, yes?**

F2: Yes.

INT: **Yes, potentially.**

F1: I think I would go for evening; I don't know what other people would prefer.

INT: **Yes, it's trying to be, I suppose… try and be flexible with the departments but there is a reason why it's spaced out. Is there anything that you think the training needs to cover for PGRs? Anything like welfare or any… that it would be helpful? The skills are generic, do you what I mean? So, ideally, whatever the training covers is generic enough to cover any scenario because I think there is a fear in welfare that… to be able to speak to someone they need to understand my problem, right? They need to know what it's like for me, and there is… I can see that, but there is also then the problem of overidentification which is actually having a sort of neutral eyes on the problem can also be helpful too, I guess. So,**

it's kind about balance. But is there anything that you think these students should be trained in, PGR wise?

F2: I think the main thing… maybe the main things that people might come to you for… so maybe like… if people are feeling very lonely or depressed or something… at least… I sometimes have this, that I also don't really know how far… like, where the boundaries are. Because you want to help someone but you… also don't want to spend all your time then talking to this person because you have your own life…

M1: That would be part of your training.

F1: Yeah.

M: You know where you want to put your values.

F2: Yeah, but… yeah, I guess like… especially like how you react, what is the best way to react to… maybe some role-play with the most common things that people might…

INT: There is a lot of role-playing, absolutely. And we build it up. So, we build it by topic, by severity, and by personal material and also, by length of time. So, it's not just… it's a really experiential learning. So, we do absolutely lots of role-plays. And there might be topics that are scary to talk about, for example, self-harm, or suicidality is very high. So, that is something to think and explore and be curious about, but also, then to have a confidentiality agreement… when do you extend?

Because that's the other thing… you must never be responsible for someone, you're there to help where you can but you have limits and you need to know what is beyond your remit as peer supporters. So, you need to figure out, in the departments, who holds that risk. Because in colleges, it's what we call a DLP, it's usually a welfare officer. So, that's something to think about.

F3: And I really need to leave…

INT: Okay, it's a pleasure… that's alright, goodbye…

F3: Thank you.

INT: Rowing… is it rowing you're doing?

F3: Yeah, my race is starting soon.

INT: Well, I hope you win.

F3: Thank you.

M1: I hope your fingers don't fall off.

F3: Yeah, that will be [unclear 00:48:40].

INT: Just put it on the table and I'll sort it out. Thanks very much, bye. Any other topic that you…?

M1: Could you remind me again what is in the course, sorry?

INT: Yes, so, Lucy…

F1: So, you get a thing like this…

M3: So, is that… have you been doing [unclear 00:49:07] training for graduates?

F1: For my college, yes.

INT: **Yes, so, I look after all the graduates. So, Lucy is one of twenty-five students so, I do two trainings and Lucy is on one… do you want to read… I'll do it Jackanory-style, read it to you. So, it's quite thorough, I guess but it's not PGR specific.**

F1: Yes.

M1: This seems very general like you were saying. I'm wondering if there is room for specific things that graduate students come across in their departments rather than in their [unclear 00:49:49]. So, things to do with how to handle their supervisor if their supervisor is being an idiot.

INT: **Yes. So, the supervision relationship?**

M1: Yes.

INT: **That could also be tied into the assertiveness, maybe a bit as well… yes.**

M3: It could come into play in just changing what type of role-play we do, the same kind of background but more… about supervisor boundaries and time management… I don't know… are the two big ones.

F1: I think failure as well, right?

M3: Failure, yes.

M1: Expectation management.

INT: **Yes. Yes, so, that would… so, we could look at kind of relationships, like relationships within the department, let's say between staff but also other students. We could look at maybe time management, procrastination, that kind of stuff. Maybe also the theme of failure, that is linked to imposter syndrome a bit but also, expectations to…**

M3: Self-confidence. How not to link self-confidence with guilt and so on.

INT: **Yes, so… yes, so that performance-based self-esteem, that's an interesting topic where a lot of our self-esteem is linked to external… [unclear 00:51:07] education set up for us, okay, yes.**

F1: I think also, anxiety about the future because now, will I get a post-doc, should I continue in academia? I think…

INT: **Career, next steps, yes.**

M2: Yes, I think part of that problem… the problem, experience and also the things… students tend to ask their supervisor about what they should do in their career and their supervisor, essentially… more often than not have one area of experience and that is in academia. And there tends to be a view that going outside of academia means you're a failure.

F1: Hm-hmm.

M2: But that becomes from the perspective of an academic who has got to an academic position and only knows that one thing so, he can "Well, I didn't… I did this." It's just that… where to search for a balanced view about career, I think is important.

INT: **Yes. Beyond the DPhil, I guess beyond academia because there are lots of applied elements, there are lots of career options, I guess, academia is one of many around but like you say, if you don't belong in the fold or you leave, that could be seen as a bit of a rejection or… I don't know…**

M1: All the people that left when I did my PhD are earning way more than I do now and basically, have had happy lives so…

INT: I'm going to put that in… a happy life.

M3: Outside of academia.

INT: Academia, question mark…

M1: Don't do it, be happy.

INT: What are you doing it for? Is there anything else you want me to know from today… a chat, not just about the quality of the sandwiches but you know…?

M2: I guess from my perspective and speaking from my position here, how are you approaching the students to take part in this and how do we encourage them to take part in it?

INT: Well, at the moment it's been pretty passive so, I've just been creating posters and they've been probably stuck on notice boards. I think physics have zhoosed mine up. So, they've basically pimped out my poster to make it look…

M2: Right, that's unusual for physics.

INT: Yes, well, they've gone wild on it and I'm like, "Do them all." I think maths and comps, I have… my slightly more boring poster, which are black and white kind of home-made thing. But I suppose, yes, it would be maybe to come in, talk about it, or you know, to target certain kinds of social groups or societies, like Women in Physics or something like that, I suppose. I just need to really figure out how best to lay out the training because I think that's what the departments are waiting for and they're hoping it's going to be three days condensed, but I might… now, you've given me a lot to think about. You've kind of reminded me not only that I need to please the departments but also my ethos on doing peer support training is that it does have clinical reasons for laying it out that way.

M3: And probably also it may please the people who are doing it and their supervisors?

INT: Yes.

M2: Who are… more like probably in these cases are… I'd put way more emphasis on what the students would prefer it to be rather than what their supervisors want it to be.

INT: Okay.

M2: There will be enough supervisors who are happy with it that there will be enough… it may not be everyone that you want but that's never going to be the case. But I think there will be enough supervisors that are happy for it be in the way that the students want it to be for it to work.

INT: What I might do then is create a little blurbette about this, what it is, and how it could benefit departments and research groups. Maybe that could be also for supervisors and PIs and you know… just to sort of… maybe that might help.

F1: You mentioned [unclear 00:55:02] maths [unclear 00:55:05] as well, they would be very much open to it… like [unclear 00:55:09] training, and then if you have the support of the committee then I think people will be more open to it.

INT: Yes.

M2:   The positive thing is that these committees now have power in the department because everyone is worried. Fundamentally, that's why changes happen, people get scared they're going to get sued or people are going to go…

INT: Well, welfare is really important and has been… it has, as we all know, historically, under-supported and underfunded really. So, it's the Good Practice Committee in maths, it's…?

M2:   Equality and Diversity.

INT: EDU Committee?

M2:   Yes, it's… just email me if you want.

F1:   And I'm the student representative for that committee as well so…

INT: Okay, thank you… that's Good Practice Committee… I guess all these committees, there are three thousand out there and that is one department… and what do you have at comps…?

M3:   We have… mental health champions. I don't remember but there are quite a lot of things that have been done recently and we have a contract with [unclear 00:56:10] provides support and on-demand type of support. Curiously, probably because we've had two suicides in the department.

INT: Yes.

M3:   … in recent years so, they've put a lot of money into it how do we handle things.

INT: Is there a…?

M3:   I don't really know who is in charge… If you go in the department and you go in any of the bathrooms… there are posters about this.

        [Laughter]

        There are posters about the mental health champions and like…

        [Overtalking 00:56:52]

M1:   It's a bit like the [unclear 00:56:54] you go in the door and it says, "Here's how you use a toilet" I mean seriously, do not stand on the toilet.

        [Laughter]

INT: People might have been standing on it and fallen in it.

M1:   I don't know where it came from, but someone's put… they're official signs, right? Do, not stand on the toilet.

INT: Yeah.

        [Laughter]

INT: We have those too. Yes, I think people fell off the toilet and hurt themselves. Alright, thank you. Anything else you want to say before we finish before we bring it to a close?

M3:   I have a question which is what kind of ties does the training come with, like what are we supposed to do if we get trainers and peer support?

INT: You know, just be fabulous really. But then I guess, also to create events, they don't always work but create events in the department, to have maybe a couple of one to one

sessions over several weeks. To be, I guess, more visible as a peer supporter, so, I'll be giving you peer support hoodies and tee-shirts and various other apparel if you wish. And just to create that sense of community and, I don't know… just go to certain current events and wear your hoodie… just promote yourself really, and that's kind of it. It can be anything you really want it to be.

The only other more formal commitment is that you would have to my supervisions and I make them really flexible for PGRs, but I would want to make sure that you're safe and feel secure and looked after and if there is anything that you're dealing with that is risky and I immediately know about that and would help you to manage it appropriately. Because I wouldn't want anyone to be left holding too much at all and I'm quite clear in that… we're supposed to act responsibly but not be responsible for someone.

Some people care a lot and they want to rescue and then they're burning out and being overwhelmed and that's… we don't want that, we want you to care but to have boundaries, boundary caring… you know, boundary compassion, is all. How does that sound?

M3:   Well, the question is that, in my case where I am mostly looking after my college it's probably not appropriate for me to do the training for the department because I could not be there, I can go to a few events, but I won't be there that often. Whereas I am very active in my college and I'm probably really [unclear 00:59:30] in my college.

INT: **Okay, well, that would make sense. But you could always… whichever route you choose you could always bring that to the department. So, even if don't go through the formal PGR route of training, you could still do something… there will be a little group of [unclear 00:59:49] peer supporters, for you to join. So, you could still have an input in that community if you wanted. You could help to choose the college training group perhaps…**

M3:   It's just that the college training is happening now so it's…

INT: **What college are you?**

M3:   St Anne's.

INT: **Oh, yes, St Anne's yes.**

M3:   St Anne's… failed to actually ask for anyone to be peer supporters.

INT: **That is shocking.**

M3:   Because mainly they didn't go to any supervisions and…

INT: **Okay, so, yes, I…**

M3:   It has been a failure…

INT: **I'm aware of St Anne, and St Hilda's. So, yes… well, even if you miss that training… I do two trainings a term, you'd be training with different colleges, but you could always join mine if you wanted so, there is flexibility.**

M1:   Do you plan to run this annually?

INT: **Yes, so, we're going to run the PGR stuff as a one-off and then we're going to have a pilot and then it's just going keep on snowballing because maybe over a year more peer supporters might want to join, others will leave. But we'll just see how it goes, it might not stick at all. It has stuck in other departments, like NDPH, it's really blossomed there**

and actually, medical sciences are now wanting to run it into more sub-departments. So, it just depends if it's like Velcro or Teflon really. Is it going to stick or is it going to slide on off?

Is that alright?

M1:   Yes.

INT: Alright, well thank you very much, I look at iPad, oh, it's recorded, yay…

M2:   We're not going through it all again.

INT: Could you repeat the last several hours?

Audio ends:01:01:35

Appendix B: A recruitment poster

Appendix C: A guide for supervisors

<u>Information Sheet for Academic Staff</u>

Short Version

Permission to participate

Your student might be giving you this information because they must have your permission to participate in a Peer Support Training and subsequent supervision sessions. The time commitment is in the table below.

	Term Time	Summer
Training	24 hours in total per term Weeks 1-8 3 hours per session	24 hours in total Over two weeks Monday and Wednesday 6 hours per all day session
Supervision	4 hours in total per term Fortnightly 1 hour per session	None

Your permission indicates that you are happy for the student to engage in this training and supervision. The student should be able to disclose, in an email exchange, your permission if requested by the trainer. The rest of this document contains more information about the project.

Long Version

About the project
Project title
PGR Peer Support

Funding providers
This is a project funded by HEFCE (now Office for Students and Research England) and the Van Houten Fund. The total amount is £60,000.

Aims
- To build a network of PGR Peer Supporters to improve the welfare provision in departments and colleges.
- To help improve the PGR student community and invest in building a supportive and collaborative atmosphere.
- To teach key interpersonal skills including active listening, referral pathways and signposting and using wellbeing resources.

Why PGR Mental Health?
Over 5 years, demand for the university counselling service has increased by 47.4% amongst the university PGR community. The Oxford PGR community is made up of over 5,900 researchers and is identified as a key priority group by the Student Wellbeing Sub-Committee and this is noted in the

University Strategic Plan 2013-2018. PGRs may exhibit mental health problems around PGR specific concerns and issues and this in turn can impact the student's ability to work and integrate into the university.

PGRs report mental health concerns that include (among other themes and presentations):

- Stress
- Lack of motivation
- Isolation and loneliness
- Overwork
- Challenging relationships with supervisors
- Difficulty with balancing work with personal life
- Perfectionism
- Issues with funding and financial concerns

Of particular vulnerability are STEM PGRs, who exhibit lower engagement with support services and welfare provision more generally.

In 2015, the collegiate University developed and adapted a new Student Mental Health Policy. This proposed provision to include:

- Promotion of positive mental health among the whole student population.
- Raise awareness of mental health issues and provision and reduce stigma.
- Provide consistent and effective support to students experiencing mental health difficulties, with coordinated approach across colleges, academic departments and central student support services.

With these challenges in mind, it remains imperative to invest in projects that support, promote and improve PGR mental health, wellbeing and resilience.

Why Peer Support?

Evidence has shown that students are more likely to approach a peer for support than a more senior individual or those further up in a hierarchy in the first instance. Oxford is an inherently hierarchical and fragmented institution which can make seeking welfare support challenging and confusing. Seeking support from senior staff might also bring feelings of shame, guilt, doubt or fear around perceptions of competency/ performance/ ability. Seeking support from peers can lower these barriers. Students are likely to look to each other first for help in thinking through issues and for emotional support, but there are times when this can leave friends feeling out of their depth, unsure how best to help, but anxious about seeking advice for fear of betraying trust.

The Peer Support Programme

The Peer Support Programme was developed in the early 1990s in recognition of the essential role students play in supporting and encouraging one another on a day-to-day basis throughout their time at university. The Programme seeks to better equip students for this role, enabling them to feel more confident in supporting their peers and more aware of the professional support networks available to them. Peer Support is about training and supervising Oxford students in mental health, active listening and creating a resilient wellbeing community that is non-hierarchical and based on a relationship that is peer to peer.

Since its launch, it has been embraced by University of Oxford reviews as an integral part of its welfare provision.

Currently, the Programme trains over 264 students per year. It runs 22 training groups per academic year, providing 528 hours of training across all training groups. 6,336 total hours of training are provided per academic year at minimum capacity (12 people per training group

receiving 24 hours of training). The Programme provides 80 hours of supervision per term, 240 hours of supervision per academic year in total.

34 Colleges and 5 Departments are part of the Programme, including the Said Business School, The Said Executive MBA, Nuffield Department of Population Health and The Medical School. More departments and societies are coming on-board every year including the Medical Sciences Division, LGBTQ+ Society, Physics, Computer Science and Mathematics. The Peer Support Programme runs two additional groups; one called Rainbow Peers for students who identify as LGBTQ+ and Peers of Colour for students who identify as BAME.

The Peer Support Training - Commitment

Peer Support Training is an extensive course of 24 hours of training, provided by the Student Welfare and Support Services (SWSS). It is imperative that the student attends every session. Training is experiential (including the use of self-reflection and personal experiences) and practice-orientated and cannot be caught up on, as the sessions link together. This is not a didactic training, rather it involves peer to peer learning that is generated from within the training group. Also, regular attendance is essential for group consistency, to build group trust and to help establish confidentiality.

The commitment to the Peer Support Programme extends to attending one-hour regular supervision sessions for two terms post-training as a minimum commitment. This monitors Peer Supporter wellbeing and ensures the Programme is running smoothly and safely for those involved (including students being supported, Peer Supporters, College/ Department and the Programme generally).

The Peer Support Training - Content

Peer Support Training covers topics such as:
- Active listening
- Assertiveness
- Crisis management and prevention
- Suicide prevention
- Communication styles including verbal and non-verbal communication
- Boundary setting and management
- Noticing, exploring and reducing assumptions including stereotypes, especially around seeking support
- Signposting and referral pathways including wellbeing resources
- The pros and cons of giving advice

Testimonials

Hi Tim,

Wanted to send a quick thank you/appreciation email as we come to the end of term. Thanks for your ongoing support of peer support and for running our supervision sessions. Not only are they incredibly helpful, they're also a nice respite from our daily grind. I assume that PS evaluation/impact efforts often value reach/effectiveness of the programme...but I know for many of us, it's about so much more – including the friends we've made within the network and our own abilities to recognise and vocalise injustices in the system.

Best,

Jess

Jessica Renzella

DPhil Student
Centre on Population Approaches for Non-Communicable Disease Prevention
Nuffield Department of Population Health

The Peer Support Training was definitely one of the most valuable experiences I have had in Oxford.

Many times before, I could see the struggles of students around me and still feel paralysed, not really knowing how to help. The Peer Support Training gave me the skills and the confidence to be there for people going through a tough time. Discussing issues students go through and in which ways we can support one another, made me more aware of the people around me and of the options we have to deal with such difficulties. These skills have not only being valuable when supporting other students, but also on proposing activities and actions in my department to deal with common issues and make a better environment for everyone.

The Peer Support Training was also important on a much more personal level, helping me understanding my own struggles and processes. It allowed me to break the first barrier of admitting that it's okay to have struggles and seek for help. Also, the programme fully acknowledges that we are students and that being a Peer Supporter should not interfere with our own research, so we spent a lot of time discussing how to put boundaries and to make sure that we are able to help others without interfering with our own studies.

The Peer Support Training has helped me understand more the struggles we students face, giving me confidence and the information needed to help dealing with them.
Luci
DPhil in Mathematics

I would recommend peer support training to everyone. It was very useful for me to spend time thinking about challenges some people around me may be facing. After my peer support training, I now feel more confident to offer my help. I believe that every problem seems easier if you are not alone for it, and that sometimes as little as being listened to can make a big difference. Moreover, I am now familiar with the forms of welfare support available, so it's easier for me to guide people searching for help to resources that may be useful to them.
Best wishes,
Zuzana
DPhil in Physics

For more information regarding this project, please contact

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