Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/303)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 7 May 2021, reference K/21/303. Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding to your request.

Your request read:

“Information request 1: Does your institution provide students with any structured physical activity programmes that are designed to improve student mental wellbeing?

Information request 2: If not, does your institution direct students who are potentially or actually experiencing mental health difficulties to any structured physical activity programmes that are designed to improve student mental health and wellbeing?

Information request 3: If so, please either provide a description of the programme that contains sufficient information to address the following questions or send me any paper or electronic materials that will allow me to extract this information.

• Name of the programme (if it has one)
• Aim and objectives of the programme
• Who designed the programme?
• Who delivers the programme?
• What procedures are involved in the programme (including activities and/or processes used in the intervention)?
• What materials (either physical or information) are involved in the programme?
• How is the programme delivered (e.g. face-to-face, internet or telephone)?
• Where does it take place?
• How many sessions over which period of time are included in the programme (including their duration and frequency)?
• Is the programme personalised or tailored to the student needs? If so, please describe.
• Has the programme been modified or adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, please describe the changes.
• Has any evaluation been done on the acceptability, practicality, or effectiveness of the programme? If this information is publicly available, where can it be accessed?”

The University of Leeds holds this information.
Name of the programme (if it has one)
Lifestyle and Wellbeing Programme

Aim and objectives of the programme
The Lifestyle and Wellbeing Programme (LWP) is a long-standing collaborative project between Student Counselling and Wellbeing (SCW) and Sport & Physical Activity (SPA), supported by alumni funding. Through a holistic 12-week programme focusing on mental health, physical activity, sleep and nutrition, the programme aims to improve the overall wellbeing of the students accessing it and equip them with the motivation and confidence to continue making positive choices to support their health and wellbeing long after the programme ends. Students accessing this programme are provided with a 12-week free premium gym membership for the university gym, as well as regular contact with their allocated Wellbeing Coordinator.

Who designed the programme?
Sport and Physical Activity and The Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service

Who delivers the programme?
Sport and Physical Activity (Exercise Referral Instructors)

Those delivering the programme have a range of experience and qualifications, however they all have at a minimum their Level 2 Fitness Instructor Qualification as well as a Level 3 GP / Exercise Referral qualification.

What procedures are involved in the programme (including activities and/or processes used in the intervention)?
A student accesses an appointment with Student Counselling and Wellbeing, following this, the practitioner makes a referral to the lead exercise referral instructor to the programme. Their details are added to a spreadsheet. The student is then sent a pre-programme screening form to find out a little bit more about what they are hoping to get out of the programme and what they are experiencing (e.g. stress) They are also sent a pre programme questionnaire to assess their wellbeing, physical activity and other lifestyle factors.

They are then allocated to a wellbeing coordinator and provided with information about the programme and encouraged to contact their wellbeing coordinator to arrange their initial consultation appointment. Their pre-screening form and pre-programme questionnaire information will be shared with the wellbeing coordinator prior to the initial consultation (students are made aware of this).

The wellbeing coordinator will then meet with the student (either virtually or face to face) and go through the initial consultation forms to gain further understanding into how they are feeling in terms of their mood and stress levels, how much physical activity they participate in, what do they like doing, as well as other lifestyle factors such as sleep, nutrition, alcohol and smoking. At this session, the wellbeing coordinator will also complete a personal goals sheet/plan with the student to understand exactly what they want to achieve by the end of the programme and how they are going to do this. Goals are often a combination of physical activity,
academic related and personal/social ones. The wellbeing coordinator and student will then discuss their preference for support and when they will next meet.

Students may participate in a range of activities during their time on the programme including gym sessions with their wellbeing coordinator, exercise classes, or other sport/recreational activities such as swimming or squash. We also have a small team of student volunteer ‘buddies’ who work on the programme and can provide additional peer support to students accessing the programme whom they may participate in activities with such as attending classes together or playing sport.

At the end of the 12-weeks, students will complete the same questionnaire that they completed at the start of the programme to understand how this has impacted their mental and physical wellbeing.

Students have an option of purchasing a heavily discounted 6-month follow on gym membership to ensure long lasting behavioural change in terms of their physical activity habits. Students are also encouraged to complete a post-programme feedback form so we can understand their experience and how we can continue to make improvements to the programme.

There is also an understanding/agreement between Sport and Physical Activity and Student Counselling and Wellbeing that a student can be referred back to Student Counselling and Wellbeing if their mental wellbeing worsens.

**What materials (either physical or information) are involved in the programme?**

- Pre-programme screening form
- Pre-programme questionnaire
- Initial consultation forms
- Goals sheet
- Post-programme questionnaire
- Post-programme feedback form
- Information booklet about the programme

**How is the programme delivered (e.g. face-to-face, internet or telephone)?**

Historically, this has been delivered face to face, often within sport and physical activity facilities, however, since the pandemic, this programme has been delivered virtually. Virtual support via MS Teams will remain a permanent feature of the programme which will now take a blended approach of face to face and/or virtual support depending on the students’ preference.

**Where does it take place?**

The sessions can take place in a range of places on campus including the sport and physical activity facilities such as the gym, an on campus café/coffee shop or outdoors (but still on campus) on a walk or outdoor seating area. As described above, the programme/sessions are now also conducted virtually, meaning students can access support wherever they are.

**How many sessions over which period of time are included in the programme (including their duration and frequency)?**
This is a 12-week programme, within which students have access to up to 5 hours of contact time with their dedicated wellbeing coordinator (exercise referral instructor). This includes three fixed meetings including the initial consultation session, a mid-point programme review, and a final review. The rest of the contact time can be arranged case-by-case so that the programme offers a structured yet flexible approach to meet the varying needs of students. Discretion is made by wellbeing coordinators on allowing some students extra contact time who may need additional support, as other students may not need as much support and therefore not as much contact time. The amount of contact time per students is logged via a spreadsheet so that allowances can be made if needed.

**Is the programme personalised or tailored to the student needs? If so, please describe.**

The programme is completely personalised and tailored to the students' needs in a number of ways. As described above, at the start of the programme, the allocated wellbeing coordinator conducts an initial consultation session with the student and a personal goals sheet. Together, they put a plan in place for the next 12 weeks which is completely bespoke to the student depending on their likes, dislikes, abilities, and other commitments such as work and studies. Furthermore, the type of support offered will vary from student to student, with some preferring to meet to chat about their wellbeing and their progress with the programme in a setting such as a café or via teams, with others preferring to meet for a session in the gym, and others a combination of the two. As part of the feedback we gain from the programme, we ask what they found the most beneficial aspect of the programme, with some saying access to the gym, and others preferring having someone to keep them motivated and encouraged. It is therefore important for wellbeing coordinators to understand the individual needs of the students they are working with, so that they can offer a bespoke programme.

**Has the programme been modified or adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, please describe the changes.**

Yes – as described above, we adapted the programme so that it could continue to be delivered virtually when facilities were closed. Wellbeing Coordinators continued to meet with students via teams, and this support ranged from general check in meetings to find out how they were doing and what activities they had been up to; to facilitating workout sessions with them; or talking to them on the phone whilst out for a walk. We will continue to offer virtual support as a permanent aspect of the programme.

Furthermore, as a result of the pandemic and the exacerbation of in pre-existing health inequalities, for this years’ funding application, we have introduced additional pathways with disability services and students accessing our Plus Programme (e.g., estranged students and care leavers) to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of the programme to meet the needs of our wide student demographic.

**Has any evaluation been done on the acceptability, practicality, or effectiveness of the programme? If this information is publicly available, where can it be accessed?**

Yes - because this programme relies on funding, each year we collate data and insight gathered from the programme and present this back in a report to the funding
providers. Each year we evidence significant improvements in wellbeing when comparing pre and post programme wellbeing scores using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. The document has not been published and as such there is no link at which you can access the information.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions about this email, however, please do not hesitate to contact us on foi@leeds.ac.uk

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can request an Internal Review. Requests for Internal Review should be made in writing using the following contact information:

Post: Mr D Wardle  
Deputy Secretary  
The University of Leeds  
Leeds  
LS2 9JT

Email: foi@leeds.ac.uk

Requests for Internal Review should be submitted within 40 working days of receiving the University’s response to your request. Further information about how the University manages Freedom of Information requests and about our complaints procedure is also available on our website (www.leeds.ac.uk).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review/complaints procedure provided by the University. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Chloe Wilkins  
Freedom of Information Officer

Secretariat  
University of Leeds