

Are you OK? - Sheffield: A community of learning for PGR supervisors on mental health

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What we will cover today

1. Recap on AYOK2019 research project
(2 mins)
2. Findings from 2021 community of learning
(2 mins)
3. Design your own learning community and
Discussion (25 mins)

1. AYOK2019

- Team from Universities of Sheffield, Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian and Heriot-Watt
- UKCISA-funded
- Interviews with 15 PhD supervisors from UK with experience of supervising at least 2 international PhD students
- <https://areyouokinternational.wordpress.com/>

1. AYOK2019

Findings

1. There is lack of training and support provided to supervisors (informal support from peers)
2. Supervising PGRs (international or home) with mental health problems has a huge impact on supervisors' own psychological well-being

1. AYOK2019

Recommendations

1. Increase training & support for supervisors:
 - Training needed in how to respond to psychological well-being needs of PGRs (home and international)
 - PGRs designing staff training
 - Promoting greater peer support or networking
 - Appointing a Mental Health Lead / Champion
1. Understand impact on supervisors' own psychological well-being:
 - Psycho-education for academics (& PGRs) on mental health
 - Setting personal and professional boundaries

2. Community of learning

- A Learning Community is a high impact educational practice where a group of people, who share common learning goals, engage collaboratively to achieve them. Participants become both teacher and learner
- Counteract isolation by connecting learners, allowing them to be deeply involved in mutually searching for understanding, meaning and solutions
- Organised around a common theme, question or career goal. Learning focuses on the practical and is shared from both successful and unsuccessful experiences to create collective knowledge

<https://learningcommunitiesnetwork.com/what-is-a-learning-community/>

2. Community of learning

- A community of learning called “Are you OK - Sheffield” was formed at the University of Sheffield in early 2022 to expand on the project "Are you OK?"
- Focus on the mental health of PGRs and supervisors
- Give staff more opportunities to engage in peer support and discussion around these issues
- Thirty PhD supervisors were recruited to the community (they did not have to be supervising international students)
- Participants met online in January and May 2022, with interim catch-up meetings and email dialogue in between

2. Community of learning

Evaluation

- 3 participants interviewed; AYOK2019 data also analysed
- Good anecdotal support for effectiveness of CoL (but small amounts of data)
- Increased self-efficacy through peer support
- Concern around boundaries of supervisor responsibilities
- Need for more training highlighted
- Ppts did not report their own MH being impacted by supervisory work
- Hybrid seemed to be best approach - accessibility v intimacy

3. Design your own CoL



3. Design your own CoL

1. What are the aims of the community?
2. Who should be involved?
3. What are the timings - when would your community start and end?
4. Would your community run online, face-to-face, or hybrid?
5. What resources are needed and who will provide them?
6. What needs to happen next? Be SMART (specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-related)

are you
ok? —

3. Discussion

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