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Mental Health

A 2019 poll of 38,000 UK students suggests rates of psychological distress and illness is rising in universities. 87% of students admitted to being impacted by anxiety and 50% admitted to thinking about self-harm, doubling since 2017.

Although student mental health has moved up the political agenda, change isn't happening fast enough. The surge of people seeking support means facilities are at maximum capacity and often have long waiting lists.

How to improve mental health support:

- Lobby for greater university funding towards mental health initiatives.
- Produce a database of all facilities in York, in order to provide alternative options for students struggling with mental health.
- Work with Student Minds to provide training to students and staff. Those in trusted roles often face wellbeing issues and simply don't have the tools or knowledge to support them.
- Provide regular workshops regarding Mitigating & Exceptional Circumstances and Leave of Absence, to make the process more accessible to students, should they ever need these systems.

Accommodation

Student housing is a finite resource in high demand. Students are often left vulnerable to poor quality and unaffordable accommodation. 50% of students in the UK struggle to meet rent demands, negatively impacting their studies. Average weekly rent is £125, increasing each year. These prices are supported by the university, who provides no competition, often charging more than private landlords. The high price is not correlated to property quality, with reports of mould, damp and other household issues not being responded to in adequate time.

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How to make accommodation affordable:

- Push for competitive housing prices, both on and off campus.
- Run public campaigns to hold landlords accountable to poor quality housing.
- Work with the council with regard to housing issues.

Financial Support

63% of students in a 2019 survey stated that financial struggles adversely affected mental health, of which 37% said it negatively impacted their studies.

Students are often unaware of financial support opportunities such as bursaries, due to a lack of clear information.

The university has a strategy in place to increase diversity among students, by supporting minority groups and students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

However, the university is currently below average in supporting these students compared to other academic institutions.

How to increase financial support:

- Ensure bursary and hardship fund spending is prioritised by the university.
- Work with departments of the university to reduce hidden costs for students.
- Create a portal regarding bursaries and funding beyond the university.

Other Priorities

- Properly representing York students in the council, focusing on key issues such as transportation.
- Improving accessibility by pushing the use of accessible venues for events.