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Weathering the storm: supporting students through co-producing a resilience toolkit in Higher Education.

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2023

Weathering the Storm: supporting students through co-producing a resilience toolkit in Higher Education

Dr Sarah Henderson and Dr Fiona Work

Email: s.e.henderson@rgu.ac.uk f.work@rgu.ac.uk

RGU Institutional Resilience Project Group:

DOWNIE, M., WADDELL, J., DAVIDSON, A., ZARB, M., MCGREGOR, T.,
HENDERSON, L., JUMAILY, A, A., ABOLLE-OKOYEAGU, J., BEVAN, W., LAWRIE,
A., SMITH, F., STOREY, L., STEWART, V. and CULLEN, A.



ROBERT GORDON
UNIVERSITY ABERDEEN

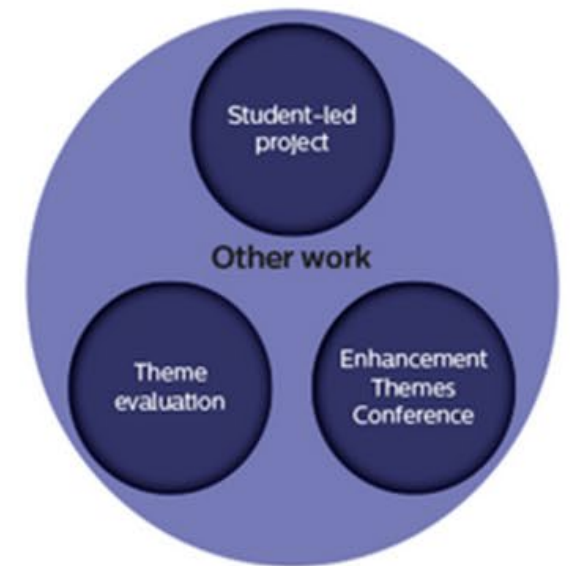
CO-PRODUCING A RESILIENCE TOOLKIT

Background

- Generally recognised that student wellbeing and mental health issues are key issues in Higher Education (Universities UK, 2015; Auerbach et al., 2018; HESA, 2022)
- COVID and the lockdown led to unprecedented challenges and increased wellbeing concerns (Neves & Brown, 2022; Sahu, 2020; Kafka, 2020)
- Resilience can increase well-being and could potentially improve student progression and experience (McAllister & McKinnon, 2009; Martin & Marsh, 2006)
- Yet students often do not access support for mental health issues (Rosenthal & Wilson, 2008)
- Co-produced initiatives promote buy in and demonstrate the importance students place on mental health and wellbeing (Campbell et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2021).

QAA SCOTLAND'S ENHANCEMENT THEME:

SCOTLAND'S ENHANCEMENT THEME: RESILIENT LEARNING COMMUNITIES



CO-PRODUCING A RESILIENCE TOOLKIT

- Various types and definitions of resilience
- Resilience is
 - not a trait, it is dynamic, and is multisystemic (Miller-Gaff 2022).
- “Resilience may be defined as a skill set to develop the capacity to successfully adapt by supporting the maintenance of mental agility involving flexibility and adjustment to challenges and change.”

Aims

- To investigate if students are aware of the support resources available
- Identify barriers to (i) facilitating student resilience and (ii) preventing student access of support
- To co-produce an interactive, online resilience toolkit

CO-PRODUCING A RESILIENCE TOOLKIT

Method

- An online survey was distributed across a modern Scottish University
- **Sample:** 23 staff members from a range of School and Departments, with direct inclusion/support responsibilities.
- 56 students from eight Schools, encompassing a range of health, social care, life sciences, business, engineering and computing subjects
- Limitations: small sample size, not all Schools were represented, further demographics unknown.



STUDENT AWARENESS OF SUPPORT RESOURCES



- Facilitating Resilient Students: What supporting materials or processes do you know about which are in place to facilitate /support/ promote resilience for you?
- 51 (91%) were aware of resources, 5 (9%) were not
- There did appear to be some confusion between academic support (i.e. library services) and resilience promotion

RESULTS

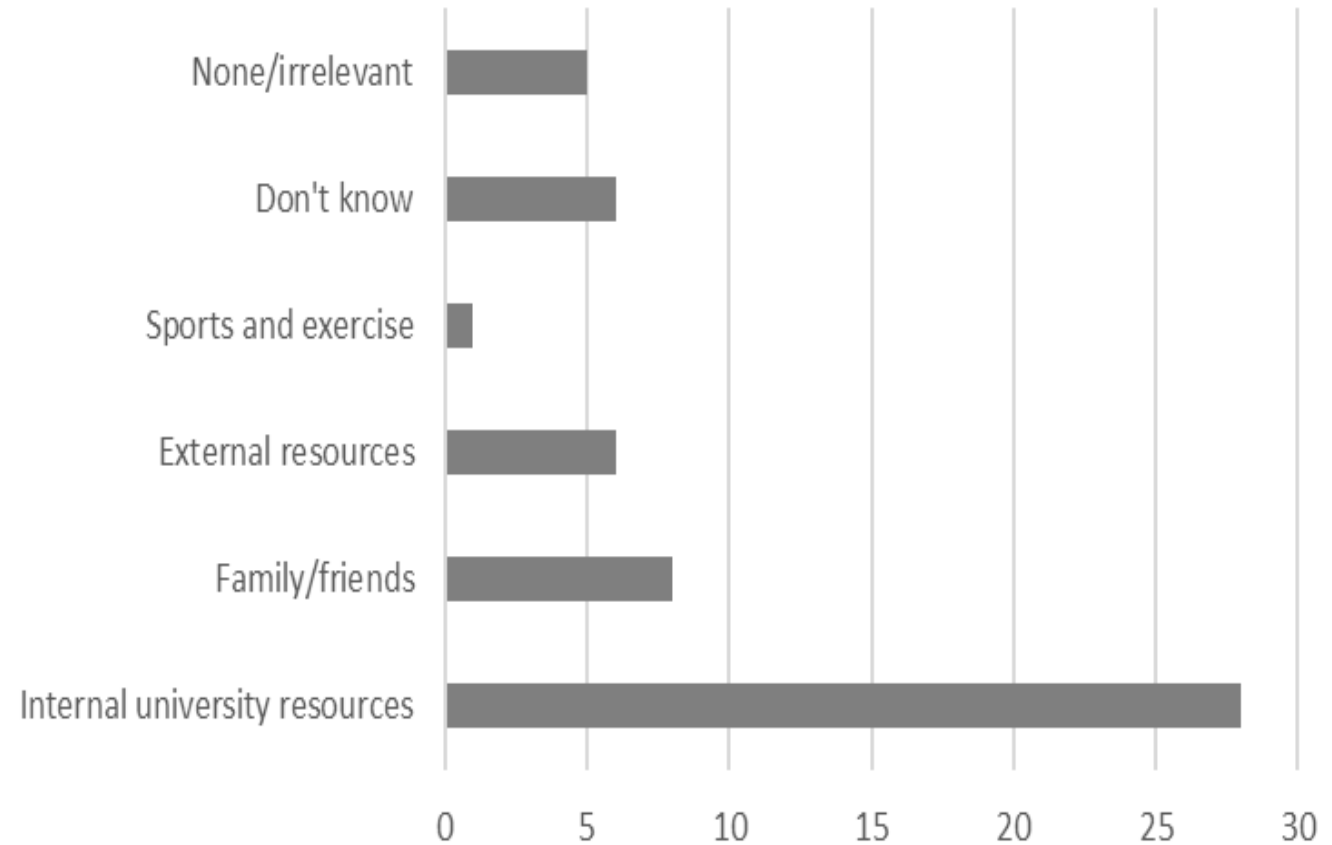
Top resources known about

Pastoral support (personal tutor, supervisors)

Online support and wellbeing services

Counselling service

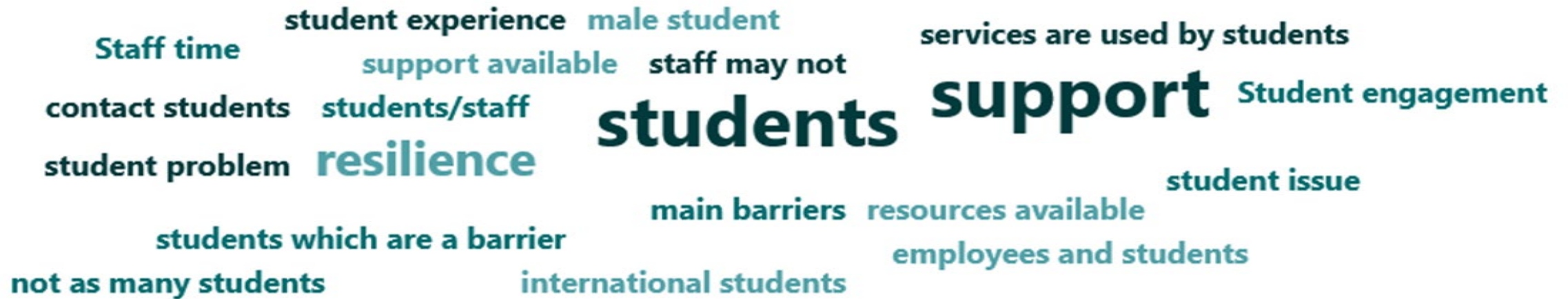
What support resources have you used?



UNAWARENESS OF RESOURCES

- “Never knew I had a personal tutor until last week when xxx told me I had one... I really never knew I had one, although my friend told me I should have had one on day one of my studies. No one at [university] contacted me to tell me this. Never had a support service until last month, first I heard of this too.”

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO (I) FACILITATING STUDENT RESILIENCE



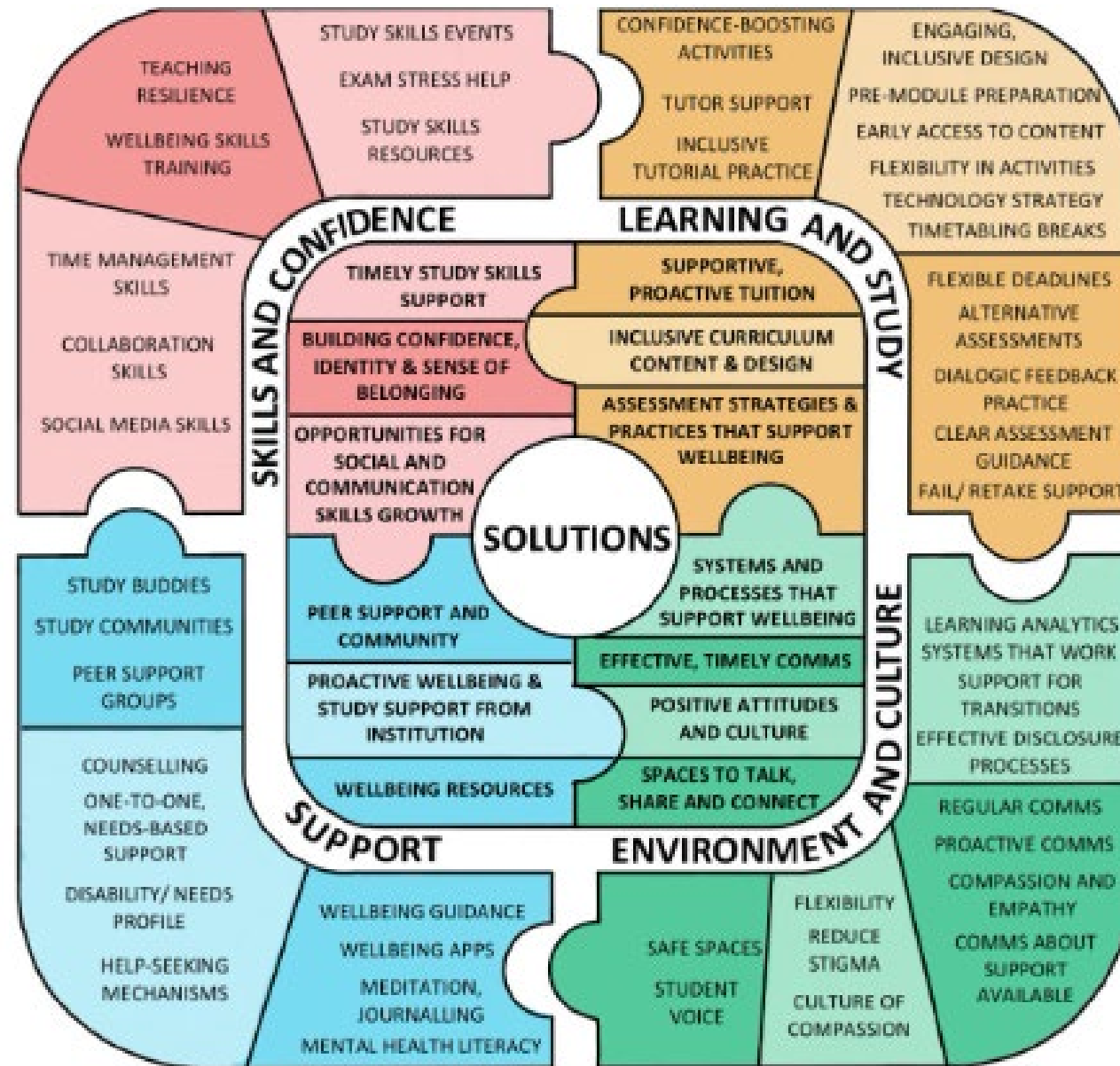
Key barriers identified by staff were time, support and staffing constraints. Clear concern about the challenging nature of discussing resilience and well-being.

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO (II) PREVENTING STUDENT ACCESS OF SUPPORT



The student barriers included being unaware of the support available and feeling ashamed or guilty about asking for help.

RESILIENCE TOOLKIT



RESILIENCE TOOLKIT

- From the results an interactive, self-directed toolkit was designed
- Allowing students to identify relevant resources in four key areas:
 - skills and confidence, learning and study, support and environment and culture
- Increasing resilience in four solution domains, improving self-efficacy, familiarising students with the resources available and improving the student experience.

NEXT STEPS

- The Resilience Toolkit has been embedded in the student induction area
- The Institutional Resilience Project Group will be reviewing student engagement with this toolkit
- Resources will be revised as necessary
- Students will be surveyed again to determine if awareness of resources has improved, and barriers to accessing support have changed.



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