

## Mental Health and Wellbeing on Placement

### Introduction

Placements are a fantastic opportunity to gain practical experience in your chosen profession. However, they can also feel like a demanding time, bringing new pressures and challenges. This guide is here to help you prioritise your wellbeing throughout your placement.

### Preparing for placement tips

- Put key contact numbers in your phone.
- Take time to understand the organisation and team you are working with. Welcome any policies and information they give you to read.
- Accept that being on placement can be tiring. It takes energy to be in a new workplace and the environment might be completely new to you. If this is the case, give yourself grace as you settle in and consider keeping your first few evenings free to recover.
- Communicate openly with your placement supervisor about your wellbeing — this includes any long-term health conditions, caring responsibilities, and reasonable adjustments you might be entitled to.
- Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, tell the person that you report to — whether that is your mentor, shift supervisor or PEF. If you don't feel able to talk to them, please discuss any concerns with your PAC (Personal Academic Coach).
- Log in at regular intervals to your University email account and respond to any communications from academic or support staff.
- Your placement will provide you with valuable contacts and networking opportunities for future use. Prepare to make use of these.

**It might sound obvious, but the more you get involved,  
the more experience you gain.**



# Wellbeing on placement tips

## Tip 1 — Coping with stress and pressure

A survey by British charity Mind identified work as the number one cause of stress. Stress can manifest itself in several ways, from racing thoughts to a strong sense of dread. To cope with stress, you need to first understand what is causing it. For example, is your workload too heavy? Taking practical steps like identifying your priorities with your onsite supervisor (practice educator) will help. On top of that, focus on nurturing healthy habits. For example, practising mindfulness can help to relieve stress, while cutting out caffeine can help reduce feelings of anxiety.

## Tip 2 — Build bridges

Start by getting to know the people you work with. Don't let company or departmental divisions prevent you from making important connections. The more genuine friends and contacts you make, the more support you will have available should you need it.



## Tip 3 — Don't fear mistakes

Mistakes are a crucial element of the learning process and a natural accompaniment to challenging yourself. Whatever happens, don't berate yourself too much or let it stop you from moving forward and trying new things.



## Tip- 4 — Work-life balance

Set yourself realistic goals and boundaries around work. Prioritise tasks accordingly. Ultimately, what we do in work will only go so far in determining our long-term success and wellbeing. Friends, family, exercise, nutrition, and outside interests are equally important parts of the jigsaw and essential in maintaining a healthy mind and body.

## Tip 5 — Looking after your physical health

Eating healthily, getting enough sleep, and exercising regularly won't just improve your physical health but also your mental health. By regularly eating healthy foods such as wholegrains, nuts or eggs you avoid a drop in your blood sugar levels that could cause feelings of irritability or even depression. Getting enough sleep, around seven to eight hours a night, will also help keep stress hormone levels low. On top of that, you can give your mood a boost through exercising, as this causes the release of feelgood hormones as well as cortisol, which can help manage stress. Take regular breaks during your working day. Move away from your screen/ workplace periodically and make sure you have a proper lunch break. Link up with some work colleagues or take a walk to refresh your batteries.



## Tip 6 — Becoming more resilient

Resilience is about your ability to cope with challenges and change, and to adapt to new circumstances. Building your resilience comes back to some of the things above: understanding your stress responses and learning how to manage them; taking care of your relationships and looking after your health. For example, try to maintain a healthy routine with balanced sleep, nutritious meals, and regular exercise; make sure you stay in touch with your support network, whether that's family, friends, or professionals. It's also about having a positive inner voice, focusing your energy on the things you can change and being committed to your role.

# What to do if you need support

Don't wait until you are struggling. Reach out for support as soon as possible.

Many students find it difficult to talk about their mental health at work or in placement, and sometimes fear that talking about it will impact their career. However, the opposite is true. In order to thrive on placement, it is important that you can talk about anything which might impact your wellbeing as soon as you notice there is an issue — this includes your mental health.

You will have an on-site supervisor and a Personal Academic Coach at the University to talk to, however there are many other services you can reach out to while on placement.

## If you are in a mental health crisis

If you feel unsafe or extremely distressed, please contact NHS 111 (option 2), your GP or a friend or family member for support in the first instance.

If you are injured or at risk of hurting yourself, please call 999 or go to the nearest A&E department.

If you become distressed during placement, it is important that you let your on-site supervisor know where you are and what is happening at all times.

They will want to support you and may be able to contact support services on your behalf.

When the immediate feelings of distress pass, we recommend accessing relevant university support services as outlined in the next section.

## University of Suffolk support services

### Disability and wellbeing advisers

The disability and wellbeing team offer tailored, professional advice and guidance. Please book an appointment if you are worried about personal circumstances or any other health condition which is affecting your studies or placement. Find out more in the [Student Hub](#).

### Disability and mental health advisers

Our mental health advisers have specialist knowledge of how mental health conditions might impact you during placement. They can help you access specialist support or treatment if required and will support you to develop the strategies needed to thrive at university. Please complete our self-referral form if you are struggling with your mental health, or if you have an existing mental health condition which might affect your studies — even if you feel OK at the moment. You can meet us remotely or face to face, and we will do all we can to fit your appointment around placement hours. Find out more and complete our online self-referral form in the [Student Hub](#).

### University counselling service

Our University counsellors can offer up to 12 face to face or remote counselling sessions per academic year. You can self-refer via this [form](#).

### Money advice

There is information on coping with unforeseen or challenging financial situations in the [Student Hub](#).

### International student advice

Life in a new country can be confusing and might add to the stress of starting a placement. Having the right information is vital and we hope you will find answers via the [Student Hub](#).

### **SU (Students' Union) advice**

The **SU Advice Service** gives friendly and non-judgemental advice on a range of issues to help you make the most of your student experience.

Find out more about our **Chaplaincy service**.

### **Student Assistance programme**

Provided by Health Assured, all students studying at our Ipswich campus can access 24/7 telephone counselling support and our health and wellbeing support app via the Student Assistance programme. Please contact Student Life or see below for more information.

- **Stress and anxiety**
- **Debt**
- **Education pressures**
- **Lifestyle addictions**
- **Relationships**
- **Legal**

### **Free 24 hour**

**Confidential helpline**

**0800 028 3766**

**[wisdom.healthassured.org/login](https://wisdom.healthassured.org/login)**

Download the **Wisdom app** now

Unique code: **MHA208122**

## **National support networks**

### ■ **Mind**

A leading mental health charity offering information and support services.

### ■ **NHS — Every Mind Matters**

Provides resources and tools for improving mental wellbeing.

### ■ **Samaritans** or call **116 123** (free)

Confidential emotional support.

### ■ **Student Minds**

A charity specifically supporting student mental health.

### ■ **Student Space**

Information, services, and tools to help you with the challenges of student life.

◆ To start a conversation, text 'STUDENT' to 85258.

◆ Call for free on **0808 189 5260**, seven days a week, from 3.00pm to 12.00am.

### ■ **Papyrus HOPELINE247**

A free and confidential call, text and email service, which is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year (including weekends and bank holidays) for young people aged 35 and under.

◆ Tel: **0800 068 41 41**

◆ Text: 07860 039967