

Building Wellbeing Across Wales: Testing and Scaling Evidence-Based Wellbeing Interventions

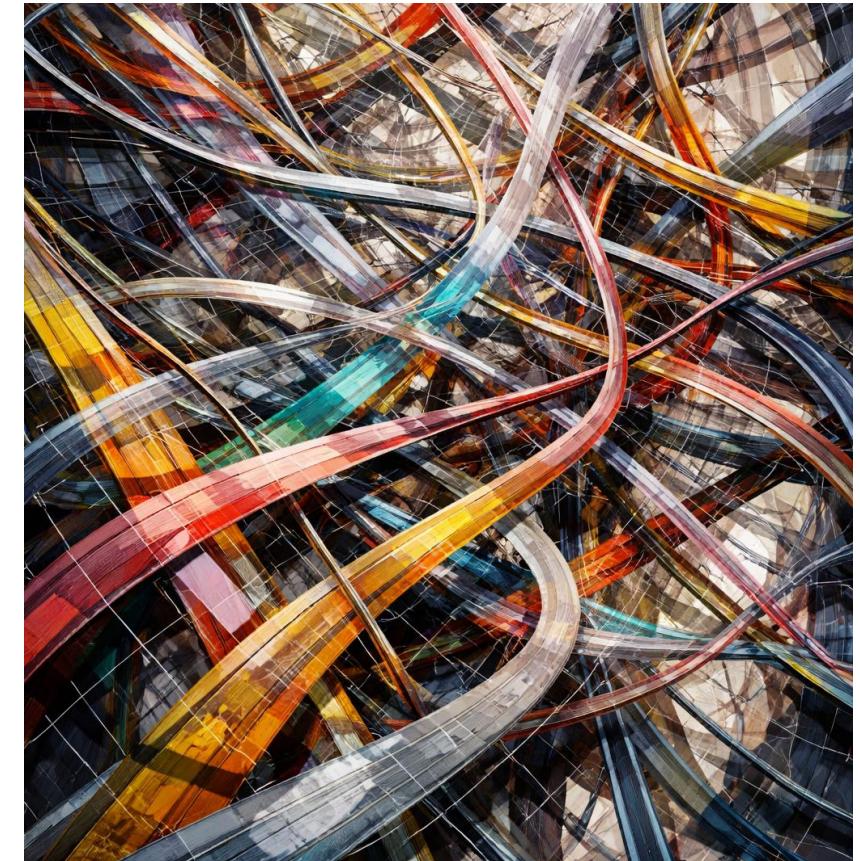
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Rationale

The problem: Health and education systems are NOT designed to address long term conditions and rising mental health needs. Support remains reactive, under resourced, and focused on ameliorating symptoms.

Why ABI and students? Both groups expose the same weaknesses in current mental health support: services are reactive and crisis driven, and – typically – do not support psychological adjustment or sustained wellbeing.

- Rising demands → deficit models of care are unsustainable.
- We need to shift approaches to build wellbeing, support capacity for self care, and promote long term resilience.
- This does not require new investment! It requires better use of existing resources and need for shared responsibility across systems.
- Health and social care must also move beyond symptom reduction and deliver proactive, evidence-based models that support wellbeing and flourishing.



The Intervention



The Evidence

Building on strong foundations

Theory Development

Fisher, Z., Gallogly, E., Boglo, E., Gracey, F. & Kemp, A. Emotion, Wellbeing and the Neurological Disorders. in *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Neuroscience*, 2nd edition (Elsevier, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-819641-0.00013-x>.

Kemp, A. H., Arias, J. A. & Fisher, Z. Neuroscience and Social Science, The Missing Link. in *Neuroscience and Social Science, The Missing Link* vol. 59 397–427 (Springer International Publishing, Cham, 2017). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68421-5_17

Kemp, A. H. & Fisher, Z. Wellbeing, Whole Health and Societal Transformation: Theoretical Insights and Practical Applications. *Global Adv Heal Medicine* 11, 21649561211073076 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21649561211073077>

Wilkie, L. et al. A systematic review and network meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials of well-being-focused interventions. *Nature Human Behaviour* (2026) <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-025-02369-1>.

Service Evaluation Brain Injury

Fisher, Z. et al. Group-based positive psychotherapy for people living with acquired brain injury: a protocol for a feasibility study. *Pilot Feasibility Stud.* 10, 38 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40814-024-01459-7>

Tulip, C. et al. Building Wellbeing in People With Chronic Conditions: A Qualitative Evaluation of an 8-Week Positive Psychotherapy Intervention for People Living With an Acquired Brain Injury. *Front Psychol* 11, 66 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00066>

Student population

Kemp, A. H., Mead, J. & Fisher, Z. Improving Student Wellbeing: Evidence From a Mixed Effects Design and Comparison to Normative Data. *Teach. Psychol.* 009862832211124 (2022) <https://doi.org/10.1177/00986283221112428>.

Sanders, L., Fisher, Z., Gray, S., Isham, A., & Kemp, A. H. (2025, July 22). Reimagining Student Wellbeing: A Preregistered, Quasi-Experimental, Mixed Effects Analysis on the Impacts of a Third-Wave Positive Psychology Course for Undergraduate Students. *Preprint available at:* https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/3t97d_v1

Our Overarching Aim: To embed wellbeing science into practice by developing sustainable, co-produced interventions interventions that empower people to live well with chronic conditions, improve student wellbeing, and support system-wide change towards resilience and prevention

Our Four Objectives

1. Promote wellbeing in undergraduate psychology students

To strengthen the evidence base for embedding wellbeing within undergraduate psychology education through analysis of outcomes from a credit-bearing wellbeing science module.

2. Pilot positive psychology interventions across Welsh health boards

To build on an intervention already developed, tested, refined, and published within our own health board by embedding it across neuro-rehabilitation services in health boards across Wales.

3. Scale Wellbeing Interventions across university and Welsh health boards

To test whether the core principles could be adapted across conditions, professional groups, and academic disciplines without loss of theoretical integrity.

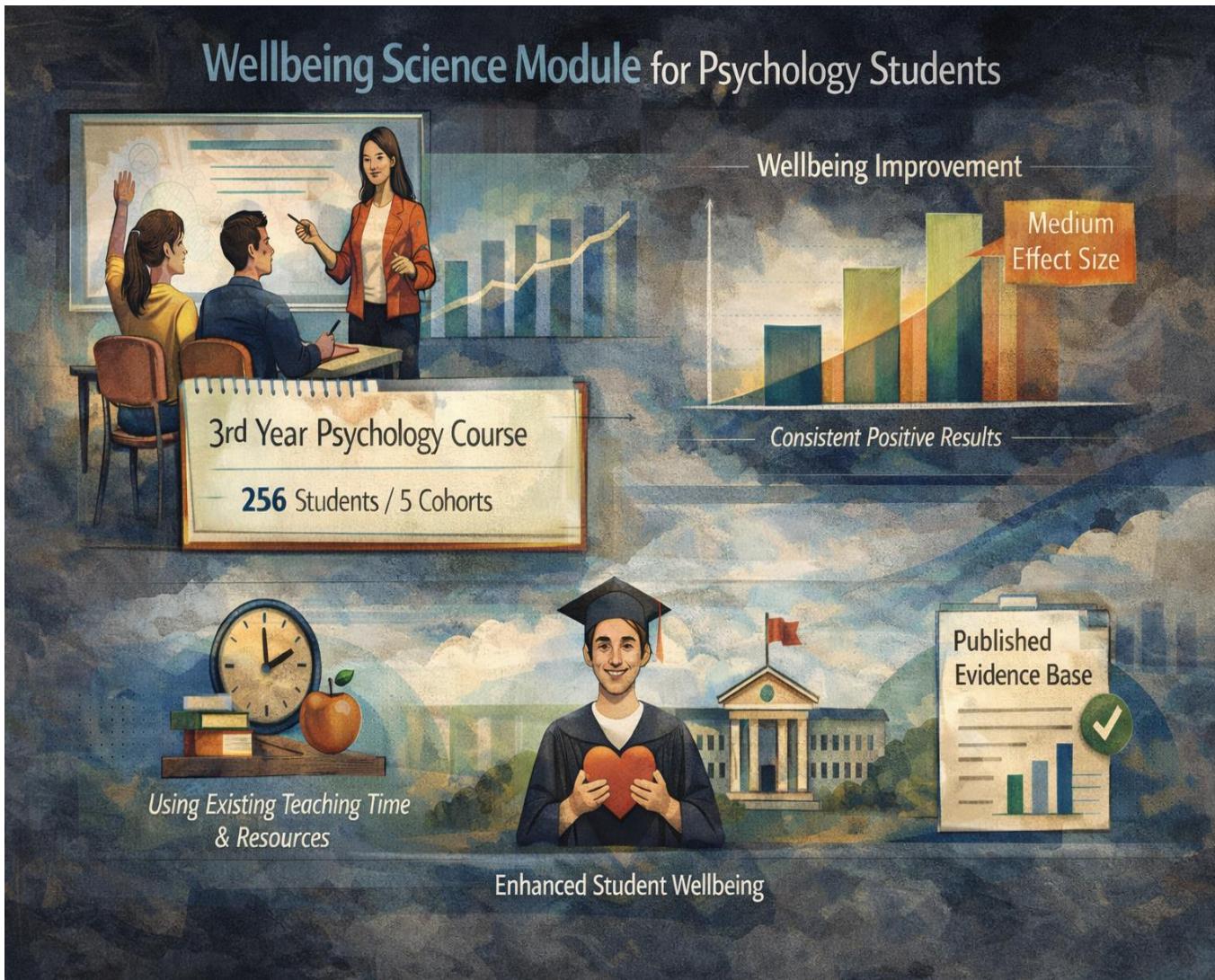
4. Disseminate digital and written resources to enhance international & reach

To develop the digital and written infrastructure needed to support sustainability and spread to an international audience beyond the life of the project

Our Four Objectives

Routine Delivery Without Compromising Integrity

Objective 1: Promoting Wellbeing in undergraduate Psychology Students



- Our module was already embedded within the undergraduate psychology curriculum prior to the Bevan Exemplar.
- The Bevan Commission Award allowed us to examine the impact on five different cohorts of students ($n = 256$).
- Findings were synthesised and prepared for academic publication to support transferability and future spread.

What we found: -

Wellbeing gains were consistent and replicable across cohorts.

Meaningful real-world impact with medium effect size improvements.

Provided a publishable evidence base to support scaling beyond psychology and Swansea.

Provided a benchmark against which other non-credit approaches could be tested.

Objective 2: Pilot Positive psychology interventions across Welsh Health Boards



“Being with people who understood what it’s like made me feel less alone” . “This was the first place I didn’t have to explain myself.”

“Learning the science helped me trust the techniques and actually use them.”
“It wasn’t just being told what to do, it was understanding why it worked”

“I’m not fixed, but I feel more confident handling things.”
“I leave knowing I’ve got ways to deal with whatever comes up.”

“It’s given me the tools on how to live the rest of my life”.

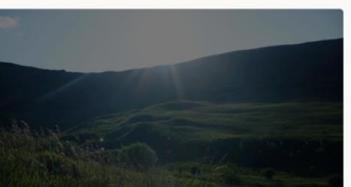
Objective 3: Scaling Wellbeing Interventions across Swansea University and other chronic conditions within Swansea Bay University Health Board

The third objective tested adaptability in practice.



Objective 4: Disseminating digital & written resources to enhance international reach



Nature Meditation Video (Forest)	Expanding exercise for Difficult Emotions	Loving Kindness Meditation
		
Watch Nature Meditation Video	Watch Expanding Exercise	Watch Loving Kindness Meditation
Mindfulness Breathing	Nature Meditation (Beach)	Character Strengths
		
Watch Mindfulness Breathing	Watch Nature Meditation	Watch Character Strengths



<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/snakes-ladders-well-being/id6745128367>



Impact Across Four Levels

**Bevan
Commission**



Individual Level

Patients and students develop transferable skills for sustained wellbeing, improved self-management, and psychological adaptation to ongoing health challenges.



Practice Level

Clinicians and educators trained to deliver evidence-based interventions with fidelity, translating wellbeing science into routine practice within real-world constraints.



Service & Institutional

Intervention embedded across multiple health boards and university curricula, with dedicated roles supporting cross-sector collaboration and sustainability.



System Level

Built on GENIAL framework with published evaluation, aligning with Welsh Government Mental Health Strategy (2025–2035) and scalable through structured training.



The group has been like the Japanese art form of Kintsugi, where they patch up and repair broken pottery using gold. Instead of hiding the cracks they make it more beautiful, stronger and just as useful.”

(Service users & mentor, SBUHB)



The OECD PaRIS survey shows that **only 59 percent** of people in Wales living with chronic conditions report good wellbeing.

This is **below the international average**, and Wales is the lowest performing country on this measure.

That is not a marginal gap. It **reflects how our systems are designed**.

The question is no longer whether we can afford to focus on wellbeing. It is whether we can afford not to.

Our work shows there is a practical, evidence-based way of responding, one that builds wellbeing alongside care rather than waiting for crisis, and that is why this work matters now.

Thank You!

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