

# Peer Support Programme Annual Report

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# Introduction

The Peer Support Programme was developed in 1991, in recognition of the essential role students play in supporting and encouraging one another on a day-to-day basis throughout their time at university. The Programme seeks to better equip students for this role, enabling them to feel more confident in supporting their peers, work closely with College/ Departmental/ Divisional welfare and become more aware of other professional support networks/ services available to them. Evidence shows the vital role of peer support networks as well as the increased engagement with those networks in the first instance, as opposed to more formal sources of support.<sup>1</sup>

Welfare Support at Oxford comprises of many interconnected services including the Peer Support Programme. As students pick routes for support, from the very informal (friends) to the more formal, Peer Support falls somewhere in between and is an important addition to College/ Departmental/ Divisional welfare structures.

Since its launch, the Programme has been embraced by University of Oxford reviews as an integral part of its welfare provision and provides a complimentary level of support to holistic welfare support at Oxford. The Peer Support Programme fits in with the Universities United Kingdom (UUK) and Student Minds 'whole institution approach to mental health'.

## Executive summary

The report covers the period of 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023. 142 students completed the peer support training, with 360 hours of training delivered. More than 400 students were actively working as peer supporters across the collegiate University during the year, and 159 hours of supervision were provided. In addition, 40 new Junior Deans accessed our specialist welfare training and 36 hours of supervision were offered to the 121 Junior Deans actively working during the year.

## Key deliverables

The Programme delivers the following services:

1. Peer Support Training and Supervision Groups, including one to ones.
2. Junior Dean Training and Supervision Groups, including one to ones.
3. Welfare Rep Training to common room reps/ officers.
4. Supplying volunteers to the Coffee Ambassadors initiative.

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to our Literature Review on Postgraduate Research Students and Mental Health as published in association with OfS, Research England and Vitae.  
<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/673b0171-835c-4ebe-a322-c3ac4f3b9249/oxford-research-report-pg-r-hefce.pdf> and <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/student-mental-health/catalyst-fund-supporting-mental-health-and-wellbeing-for-pgr-students/>

5. Bespoke clinical supervision and consultancy to senior welfare members.
6. Research engagement that promotes peer to peer welfare initiatives.
7. Attendance and consultancy to Welfare Forum.

All training and supervision groups returned to full in-person provision, except for one Junior Dean supervision group, which was kept virtual to increase accessibility and choice for attendees.

## Core service delivery headlines

### Peer Supporters referring to the Counselling Service.

22-23	21-22	20-21	19-20
<b>5.3 %</b>	<b>6.3 %</b>	<b>5.1 %</b>	<b>4.3 %</b>
165 forms out of 3108	193 forms out of 3067		

Of pre-intake forms received, students indicated a Peer Supporter as a referrer.

### Total active and paused Peer Supporters (as of 23 October 2023).

<i>Active</i>	<i>Paused</i>
<b>410</b>	<b>47</b>

### Total students successfully trained.

	22-23	21-22
September and Michaelmas Term	60	89
Hilary Term	46	72
Trinity Term	36	29
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>190</b>

Students can cancel/ drop out last minute or not complete the training by missing certain numbers of sessions or by missing the 1st or 8th session.

### Total hours of training delivered.

	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Hours</i>
September and Michaelmas Term	7	168
Hilary Term	5	120

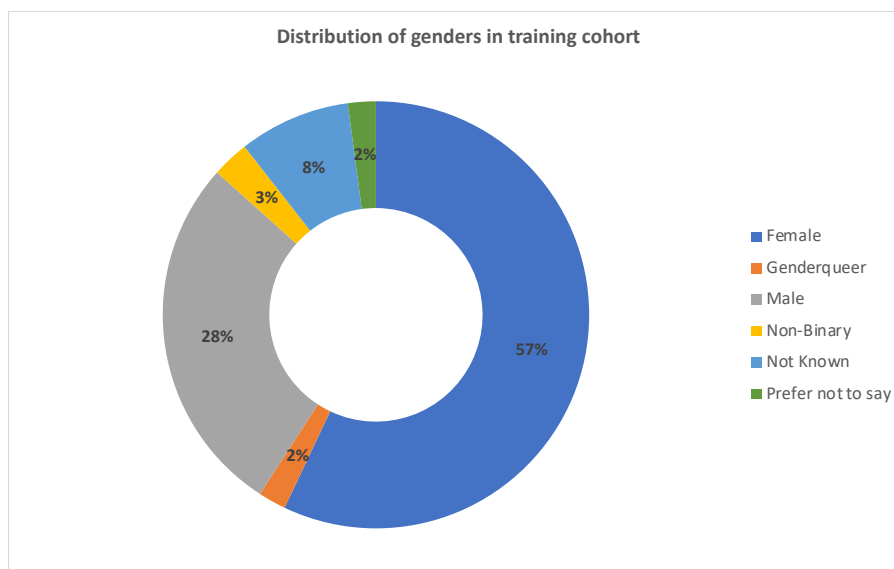
Trinity Term	3	72
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>360</b>

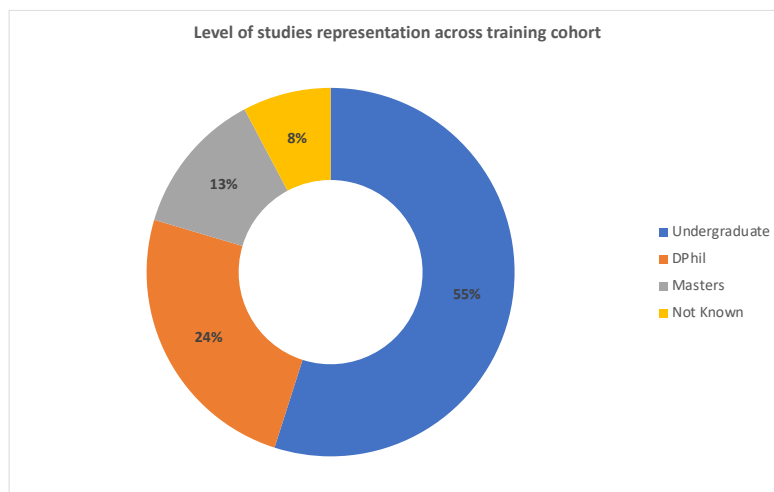
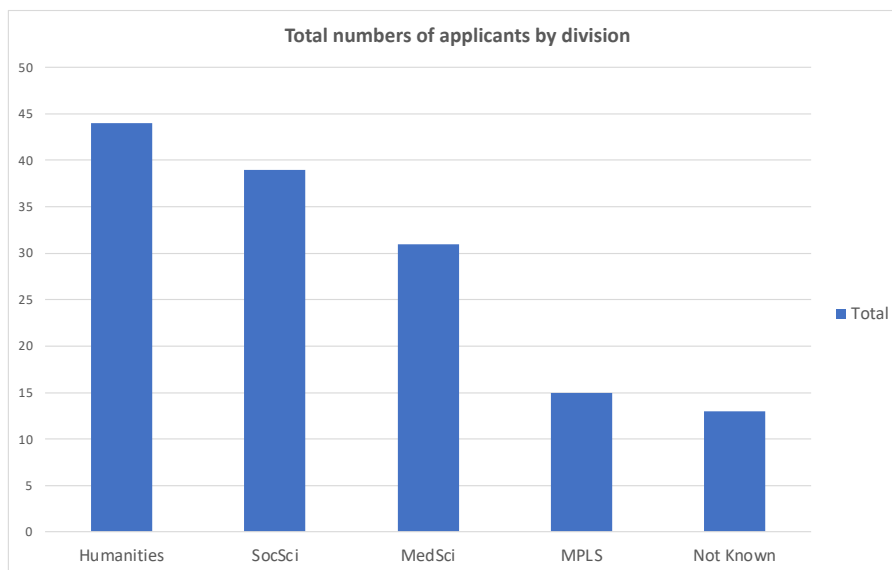
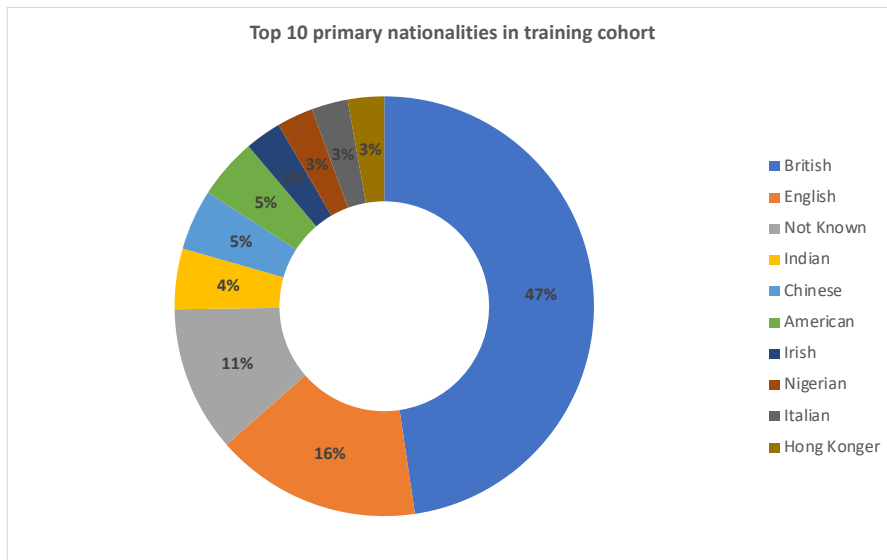
### Total hours of supervisions delivered.

	<i>Standard Supervision Hours</i>	<i>Additional Supervision Hours</i>
Michaelmas Term	70	4
Hilary Term	41	4
Trinity Term	37	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>	<b>159</b>	

Additional supervisions include Peers of Colour, Rainbow Peers, Peers of Faiths, and Disability Diversity Peers.

### Demographic data of the training cohort.





## Institutional members.

<i>Colleges and PPHs</i>	<i>Departments</i>	<i>Divisions</i>
<b>37</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>

Please refer to the website for more details<sup>2</sup>.

## Student feedback

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I have absolutely adored being a Peer Supporter and I know the skills I have gained will stick with me for a long time. Thank you for your wonderful supervisions and support.

*Mansfield Student.*

It has been an absolute pleasure being trained by you, and I have learned a ton and benefitted personally - thank you very much for this! I wish the programme all the very best for the future.

*St Antony's Student.*

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## Junior Deans

The Junior Dean training and supervision provision is different to that of the peer support output, reflecting the vitally different roles of Junior Deans. These are postgraduate students with significant collegiate welfare responsibilities that are on the front line during nightly shifts when senior welfare contacts are off-site. Training started in 1995.

The 24-hour training covers topics such as GDPR and note keeping, active listening, mental health presentations, suicide education, risk management, crisis management, communication within teams, boundaries and assertiveness, contracts and job descriptions and also information regarding university services and referrals to other student-facing support structures. Please see the website for more information<sup>3</sup>.

Students become members of the junior dean community and attend fortnightly supervisions to discuss welfare issues and self-care themes. This gives them a chance to learn from one another and across the collegiate structure. Themes covered included sexual harassment and violence, self-harm, suicide attempts, death by suicide, severe mental health presentations, drug and alcohol misuse, de-escalation techniques, dealing with violence and being 'covid police'. Supervisions are co-created spaces that also discuss policy and processes, such as fitness to study.

### Total active Junior Deans (October 2023).

121
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### Total Junior Deans trained.

	22-23	21-22	20-21
<i>Summer</i>	21	35	24
<i>Christmas</i>	19	12	21

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/peersupport/finding-peer-supporter/term-card>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/peersupport/junior-dean-training>

TOTALS	40	47	45
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## Total hours of supervisions delivered.

Michaelmas Term	12
Hilary Term	12
Trinity Term	12
TOTALS	36

## Student feedback

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I just wanted to thank you for all your help and kindness over the past two years. From the initial training to offering advice and support in more challenging circumstances, your input has been so appreciated. Wishing you all the best, the university is lucky to have you!

*St Hilda's Junior Dean.*

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## Welfare Reps

The training goes from strength to strength with repeat bookings. Vital connections were built with The Oxford Union again and UNIQ+ Summer School for the first time. Training was amended for different roles. For more information, please refer to the website.<sup>4</sup>

## Student feedback

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Thank you so much for your training session today! I found it really helpful as I was a bit worried about how to approach/deal with some of the topics we covered today. It was especially helpful as I think it matched really closely with what we're taught about talking to patients in my course, so thank you for such great life skills. And thank you for your slides and handouts!

*A Univ student.*

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## Other areas of service delivery

### In the student news.

Junior Deans were mentioned in AAD Comms

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/news/2023-02-06-student-stories-providing-student-support-junior-dean>

### Koç University Research Centre for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED) student blog entry.

<https://anamedblog.com/post/686303056838721536/dont-forget-to-play-well-being-and-self-care>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/peersupport/welfare-rep-training>

## **Peer Support Programme and Purrble research study with KCL.**

The Programme actively helped recruit around 600 participants for an RCT study using Purrbles which resulted in quantitative and qualitative data using Peer Supporters and other members of the student community. Consultancy on cCBT interventions as part of the studies was also provided.

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/purrble-at-london-design-biennale>

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/london-design-biennale-empowering-young-people-to-take-control-of-their-emotions>

## **Consultancy and input with Welfare Forum, Conference of Colleges.**

The Peer Support programme team provided input into the document “Guidance for Colleges on Students and Alcohol” from the welfare and Junior Dean perspective. Presented to Welfare Forum on the Junior Dean training and supervision provision, including assumptions around the role. Provided input into a collaborative document on Junior Dean recruitment and management.

## **Conclusions and looking ahead.**

A continuing challenge remains how the Peer Support programme is run by institutional members (college/ departments and divisions), particularly since the role of the Designated Link Person (DLP) can significantly impact the organisation and motivation of Peer Supporters. The role of DLP can very much help keep Peer Support in mind as students come and go – acting as a transitional and legacy memory in a space of constant transitions. DLPs remain vital in helping Peer Supporters feel part of the welfare team and create bridges that can foster sound working relationships based on trust, mutuality, respect, and honest communication. The role of the DLP also remains a vital interface between the institutional member and the Programme itself. Promoting Peer Support locally and across the institution is a continuing theme and frequently raised with Peer Supporters and DLPs. Some senior welfare staff have left their roles, and this has had repercussions for legacy and handover which may or may not include the Peer Support Programme with new starters.

Maintaining a sensitive, nuanced and open dialogue remains vital, to ensure that welfare teams, Junior Deans and Peer Supporters work well together.

### **Staffing**

The Peer Support Programme is led and managed by a senior Counselling Psychologist (0.8 FTE), supported by two part-time trainers and supervisors (0.6 FTE).