



AMLÉ

Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn
Ireland's Student Movement



**OPEN
UP**



**FAOI
MHEABHAIR-
SHLÁINTE
ABOUT
MENTAL
HEALTH**

Mental Health Strategy

**Aontas na Mac
Léinn in Éirinn**



2026



About Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn (AMLÉ) is the sole representative body for students in Ireland and represents over 400,000 students in over thirty member colleges across Ireland, North and South. Throughout its history AMLÉ has worked relentlessly in the pursuit of students right in all areas of the student experience.



Objectives of Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn:



- An education and training system open to all, irrespective of any consideration, including consideration of national origin, ethnic background, age, ability, sex, sexuality, creed, political beliefs or economic circumstances, so that each individual can realise their full potential



- An education and training system which truly serves the interest of the people of Ireland



- The right of students to a decent standard of living including the right to adequate financial support, proper housing and future prospects of employment in Ireland



- The defense and promotion of all democratic and human rights



- The provision of student services for the benefit of the membership on the principle that control of student service should lie with the membership



- To represent the interests of the students of Ireland at international level



www.mentalhealth.amle.ie





AMLÉ Mental Health Strategy

Our Vision

This strategy aims to provide a framework for good practice for the support of students, the promotion of mental wellbeing and prevention of mental health difficulties, to be implemented by both Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn and local Students' Unions with the support of the AMLÉ Mental Health Programme Manager.

The AMLÉ Vice President for Welfare should follow the AMLÉ Mental Health Strategy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations by disseminating the strategy at the beginning of each year.

"Taken together, prevention and early treatment of mental health problems in college students is a key public health priority, not only because of the impact on the lives of students and public health, but also on the investment society makes in college students and the importance of college students to the future social capital of society" (Cuijpers et al, 2019)*.

*Cuijpers, P., Auerbach, R. P., Benjet, C., Bruffaerts, R., Ebert, D., Karyotaki, E., & Kessler, R. C. (2019). The world health organization world mental health international college student initiative: an overview. International journal of methods in psychiatric research, 28(2), e1761.



www.mentalhealth.amle.ie





Collaborations & Partnerships

AMLÉ acknowledges the importance of collaboration and partnership when it comes to mental health organisations. AMLÉ recognises the need to work with others in the mental health sector to further our aims and ambitions.

In this instance, collaboration and partnership can be considered in three groupings: political, such as AMLÉ's membership of Mental Health Reform, apolitical, such as AMLÉ's support of Shine's Green Ribbon campaign to break down stigma, and policy, such as AMLÉ's membership of the HEA Staff and Student Mental Health and Wellbeing working group.

Objectives:



Develop new initiatives through collaborations with students' unions and external organisations



Build support for the work that AMLÉ does in the area of mental health, and to support the work, and enable the work that other organisations do to have direct impact on students



Build and maintain a network of partners, stakeholders and external organisations across third levels institutions in Ireland



www.mentalhealth.amle.ie





Collaborations & Partnerships

Actions:

- ✓ Continue to build and maintain our relationships with external organisations to strengthen campaigns
- ✓ Collaborate and consult with students' unions, student groups, and external organisations to support and develop campaigns, research and training, and to map local supports

Actions for AMLÉ:

- ✓ Provide Information and resources on organisations and campaigns to MOs at national and local levels.
- ✓ Make links and introductions as appropriate between organisations and MOs
- ✓ Organise a mental health event to bring students, students' unions, researchers, organisations, and policy makers together

Relevant Motions/Mandates:

- 2024 WEL 5 Movember
- 2024 WEL 2 Student Mental Health Funding Policy
- 2024 WEL 7 Problem gambling in students

Suggested actions for students' unions:

- ✓ Aim, where possible, to establish links with local organisations and resources, and promote local supports to students in campus community
- ✓ Support the development of local coalitions and committees that aim to promote mental health supports and resources





Training & Support

We believe, through knowledge gained by working as student leaders and through our lived experience as students, that Students' Union Officers are uniquely positive to work for the better mental health of our student populations.

We believe our college and universities are communities, and to ensure the relationships within these institutions are strong and healthy, all members must be safeguarded, cherished and protected. We recognise that the lack of resources in Students' Union contributes to stress and pressure upon officers, and their ability to support others in difficulty. It is important that Students' Union Officers are trained and supported throughout their terms.

Objectives:



For Students' Unions to be equipped with the skills and information necessary to develop and review campus policy and to seek representation on relevant committees and working groups



For Students' Unions to be equipped with the skills and information necessary to partake in lobbying efforts



Support officers through their term in dealing with casework in relation to mental health



Equip officers with the skills and tools necessary to promote understanding a positive approach to mental health and help seeking on campus



For Students' Union officers to be aware of self care best practice and promote the importance of self care to officers in their line of work



Support officers to develop new initiatives to improve the mental health of their student population



www.mentalhealth.camle.ie





Training & Support

Actions:

- ✓ Provide training to relevant officers during the summer term in mental health promotion and other mental health topics
- ✓ Provide training to relevant officers during the summer term in dealing with casework and referral
- ✓ Provide an online mental health resource and contact hub for students' unions through the AMLE mental health website
- ✓ Support officers in establishing links with local, community-based support services to establish referral pathways and to support their work in promoting positive mental health, coping skills, and therapies

Relevant Motions/ Mandates:

- 2023 UO 13 Enhancement of Students' Union Training (SUT)
- 2022 UO 2 AMLE Mandated Training
- EM 21 2 Suicide Intervention Training Promotion

Actions for AMLE:

- ✓ Provide workbooks to allow for reflection, planning and self-care to officers at SUT and at the beginning of semester two
- ✓ Enact a protocol for reaching out to Students' Unions when there is a critical incident on campus
- ✓ Optional check-in meetings with officers during campus visits and regular drop-in/debrief/ office hours online session with Mental Health Programme Manager and Vice-President for Welfare for officers
- ✓ Vice-President for Welfare to support MOs in organising lobbying for local representatives with the support of regional officers
- ✓ Maintain online officers' hub on AMLE mental health website





Training & Support

Actions for AMLÉ (cont.):

- ✓ Maintain regular contact with Student Union presidents/welfare officers
- ✓ Develop a whitepaper on best practice guidelines for Students' Unions in the event of a critical incident
- ✓ Develop and distribute posters for Students' Union offices on officer mental health/ self-care
- ✓ Distribute welfare office starter packs and handbooks at the start of each new academic year
- ✓ Provide safeTALK and other relevant trainings to officers throughout the academic year
- ✓ Provide an overview of relevant policies and framework
- ✓ Develop resources to equip officers with skills and knowledge to be successful in their roles





Training & Support

Suggested actions for students' unions:

- ✓ Seek, where possible, representation on campus decision-making boards/committees in relation to mental health
- ✓ Aim to review existing campus mental health policies with reference to national frameworks and lobby HEI to follow own policies in instances where this is not the case
- ✓ Where possible, attend training events promoted or organised by AMLÉ or locally by relevant organisations and support services
- ✓ Utilise personal support from Vice-President for Welfare and Mental Health Programme Manager
- ✓ Follow best practice for self-care during and outside of officer terms





Stigma Reduction & Awareness Campaigns

It is vitally important for AMLÉ to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues in the student population and encourage an open attitude towards the discussion and treatment of mental ill-health. The experience of mental ill-health and its associated stigma can mean real personal suffering and distress for some students. Stigma is a barrier that deters students from accessing mental health supports. Approximately 1/3 of participants in the 2019 AMLÉ Student Mental Health study who had not sought any help on or off campus for their mental health had severe to extremely severe depression, anxiety and stress levels.

In this instance, campaigns can be considered in four groupings: internal or external, and local or national.

Objectives:



Support and develop initiatives that will reduce stigma of mental ill health among 3rd level students



Promote stigma reduction in national campaigns



Encourage and support campus events to promote positive mental health, promote acceptance of mental ill-health and encourage help seeking, and to break down stigma



Provide information around mental health, mental ill health and stigma to students



Enact a continual outreach campaign to reduce stigma



www.mentalhealth.amle.ie





Stigma Reduction & Awareness Campaigns

Actions:

- ✓ Collaborate with welfare officers to include stigma reduction material in national campaigns
- ✓ Maintain relationships with organisations that promote stigma reduction such as Shine

Actions for AMLÉ:

- ✓ Develop resource on understanding stigma and what contributes to it
- ✓ Promote Shine Green Ribbon Campaign
- ✓ Continual roll-out of Open Up campaign and focus on other outreach days such as suicide prevention day, movember, etc
- ✓ Continue to roll out resources via online mechanisms such as newsletter, blog, website, podcast & social media
- ✓ To equip officers in developing campaigns and initiatives on campus to reduce stigma associated with mental ill-health via training, advice and partnership with external organisations
- ✓ To promote material from those who have lived experience as a means to reduce stigma and encourage open discussion of mental health, in particular through the Shine Ambassador Program

Relevant Motions/ Mandates:

- 2023 WEL (NC) 6 Operation Transformation
- 2024 WEL 7 Problem gambling in students
- 2023 WEL 10 National Student Mental Health Survey
- 20 WEL 9 Mental Health Awareness Days





Stigma Reduction & Awareness Campaigns

Actions for AMLÉ (cont.):

- ✓ Develop a secondary mental health hub for students and provide a resource to log positive mental health

Suggested actions for students' unions:

- ✓ Where possible, aim to promote campaigns and initiatives that reduce stigma and encourage an open attitude towards the treatment of mental ill-health





Suicide Prevention & Postvention: therapy & help seeking promotion

In the past few years there has been an evident shift in the way that third level institutions view their role with respect to the health and specifically the mental health of students. The recent HEA Review of the Irish National Framework for Student Success in Higher Education states that 'mental health is emerging as a cornerstone of student success'. Initiatives such as the Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework and the Healthy Campus Charter have been created to improve upon campus community health and wellbeing.

College communities need to be safe, suicide aware spaces for all students, with targeted approaches to reduce suicidal behaviour and improve mental health among students.

Creating ongoing awareness of services and supports on campus is a challenging task. Students may not seek help for mental health issues due to lack of awareness of support services or misconceptions about those services. The 2019 AMLÉ student mental health study found that almost 25% thought that a referral from a GP was needed to get a counselling appointment, for example.

Objectives:



Enhance communication and awareness of support services among students



Promote and facilitate suicide prevention training appropriate for students



Ensure relevant frameworks such as the student mental health and suicide prevention framework are enacted fully



www.mentalhealth.amle.ie





Suicide Prevention & Postvention: therapy & help seeking promotion

Actions:

- ✓ Research and collaborate to review existing training and where necessary develop new training to equip students in suicide prevention skills and general mental health skills
- ✓ Develop an online promotion plan for helplines or support services, to facilitate help seeking promotion on social media platforms
- ✓ Include promotions of various therapies and coping skills in national mental health campaigns
- ✓ Promote physical activity and other forms of healthy living (e.g. nutrition, sleep etc) as protective factors in national campaigns
- ✓ Promote help-seeking as part of academic and career success
- ✓ Create awareness of post-trauma resources, providing support where necessary for students' unions to develop a protocol for responding to a traumatic event on campus

Actions for AMLÉ:

- ✓ Develop a whitepaper on best practice for students' unions in the event of a critical incident on campus
- ✓ Develop information resources of relevant frameworks and policies
- ✓ Create new posters for campuses highlighting sources of help





Suicide Prevention & Postvention: therapy & help seeking promotion

Actions for AMLÉ (contd):

- ✓ Continue to develop online resources signposting to help
- ✓ Create a list or map of services available on each campus for students to access
- ✓ Develop resources on coping skills
- ✓ Collaborate with Student Sport Ireland on the intersection of physical and mental health
- ✓ Collaborate with HUGG on postvention supports
- ✓ Develop resources on help-seeking and preventative factors for mental health
- ✓ Facilitate training in suicide prevention, and promote in particular the 'Let's Talk About Suicide' training to students in general
- ✓ Maintain a protocol for supporting students' unions in the event of a critical incident





Suicide Prevention & Postvention: therapy & help seeking promotion

Suggested actions for students' unions:

- ✓ Ensure that sources of help and support are well publicised on campus
- ✓ Attend where possible training provided or promoted by AMLÉ to equip officers with the skills and tools needed to support fellow students
- ✓ Promote campus based therapies and programmes that encourage coping skills among students
- ✓ Find out what the campus incident protocol is and where the students' union fits currently in it; decide if this is appropriate
- ✓ Lobby for PG students who teach to have access to all staff trainings around mental health supports for students as other academic staff





Funding and Services

The Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland (PCHEI) report that in the academic year 2024-25, their on-campus counsellors saw 14,505 student clients, which is about 6% of the overall student population. They also report that nationally there were 2118 crisis appointments in the same time period, and that approximately 17% of students are at risk of or experiencing suicidal ideation. The importance of promoting mental health help and support among students cannot be underestimated.

The number of mature students, international students, students with disabilities and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds has also grown steadily. Yet the provision of counselling services to meet the growing numbers and diverse needs of students has not kept pace. The international best practice guideline states that there should be one FTE professional staff member to every 1000-1500 students, depending on services offered and other campus mental health agencies. For 2024-25, this stood at 1:1947. Recently the Clinical Load Index has been used to get a better picture of whether student need is being met on campuses.

While recent efforts have been made to introduce more upstream services such as peer support, infusing or embedding wellbeing into the curriculum and online supports, stronger bonds are also needed between on and off campus services such as HSE adult mental health services in order to meet the often diverse and sometimes complex needs of students, as well as the development of targeted interventions for particular at-risk groups (such as those screening as likely having ADHD).

Funding for mental health needs to be clarified at national level, as the existence of multiple frameworks related to broader health and welfare with only a singular identified funding amount creates a risk of dilution and de-prioritisation of mental health specific supports.





Funding and Services

Objectives:

Protect and improve funding for mental health services within college

To build support through the production of reports and research

To work to ensure that whatever mental health issue a student faces, there is an appropriate pathway to the correct level of support, and that every student is supported to access that support

Relevant Motions/ Mandates:

- 2024 WEL 2 Student Mental Health Funding Policy

Actions:

- ✓ Lobby for allocation of additional funding for other mental health interventions and preventative actions
- ✓ Lobby for the introduction of community-based 24/7 crisis intervention services
- ✓ Retain membership of Mental Health Reform and actively partake in the coalition of organisations campaigning to transform mental health and wellbeing supports in Ireland
- ✓ Maintain working relationship with relevant organisations such as PCHEI and ISHA



www.mentalhealth.amle.ie





Funding and Services

Actions for AMLÉ:

- ✓ Lobby for better referral pathways to off-campus services
- ✓ Lobby for better supports of international students who may not have e.g. a GP or an understanding of mental health treatment provision in Ireland, or who may have diagnoses that are not accepted in Ireland (e.g. ADHD diagnosed abroad)
- ✓ Conduct research study to provide information on student mental health post-Covid
- ✓ Conduct pilot study on peer support/social prescribing in student population
- ✓ Gather and provide information on funding issues to students' unions to enable them to lobby at local level as necessary

Suggested actions for students' unions:

- ✓ Aim to partake, where possible, in lobbying opportunities with support from regional officers locally and the VP welfare on a national basis
- ✓ Lobby at local level to ensure adequate funding is provided for mental health services and to ensure the most effective and appropriate use of mental health funding
- ✓ Support AMLÉ research efforts in mental health
- ✓ Work with AMLÉ on peer support/ social prescribing work on campuses





Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation

It is vital for AMLÉ to review progress under the mental health strategy on an annual basis. By providing basic annual progress reports on the action points outlined in the strategy, progress and effect can be tracked and updates or changes can be made if necessary.

Objectives:



Continue to collaborate and partner with organisations to collect research and data to guide AMLÉ's work in mental health



Evaluate and review each section of the strategy yearly and to update the strategy accordingly

Relevant Motions/ Mandates:

- 2023 WEL 10 National Student Mental Health Survey

Actions:



Map progress of the strategy and produce a yearly progress update document



www.mentalhealth.amle.ie





Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Actions for AMLÉ:

- ✓ Conduct own research study on current student mental health and related issues
- ✓ Support relevant research being conducted by other relevant organisations on student mental health and related issues

Suggested actions for students' unions:

- ✓ Where possible, review local campaigns on campus level to ensure messaging is effective, appropriate and relevant to students
- ✓ Support AMLÉ in research and evaluation work at local and national level





Relationship to Other Strategies

Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide and Self-harm, Connecting for Life 2026–2035

AMLÉ are funded by NOSP under this strategy for our Mental Health Programme

The strategy consists of five domains, and AMLÉ will have particular focus on preventing suicide and self-harm, reducing stigma and addressing social determinants, implementing effective responses for people in suicidal distress or with experience of self-harm, and ensuring compassionate, coordinated and accessible postvention support

The 2024 NOSP annual report states that 'Of note is [AMLÉ]'s central role in the development and implementation of the National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework (2020).'

The National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework 2020

This framework is the first of its kind in Ireland and was published in October 2020. Its creation was guided by the members of the Connecting for Life working group which included two representatives from AMLÉ. As a result it is a broad framework that centres students throughout. The framework is divided into nine themes, and has a focus on a whole-of-campus approach to student mental health.

The framework is currently under review.



www.mentalhealth.amle.ie





Relationship to Other Strategies

The Healthy Campus Framework 2021

This is an overarching framework that brings together all aspects of student and staff health and wellbeing, including mental health. It is a subsection of the International Health Promoting Campuses Okanagan Charter, as well as the Healthy Ireland Framework under which HEIs are considered a priority focus area.

AMLÉ is a member of the working group under this framework.

HEA Strategy for Student and Staff Wellbeing 2025

This strategy outlines how the Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework and the Healthy Campus Framework both operate together.

Review of the Irish National Framework for Student Success in Higher Education 2025

While not a framework or strategy itself per se, this review centres student mental health as a 'cornerstone of student success' and any resultant changes to the Framework for Student Success in Higher Education may be relevant as a result.



www.mentalhealth.amle.ie

