Student Psychological Health Project

Student Survey Results: Careers Issues

Report of findings from research conducted in 2001 and 1998

This report is one of the outcomes of a HEFCE funded Student Psychological Health Project, based in the Educational Development and Support Centre at the University of Leicester.

The project aimed to improve provision for students experiencing psychological and mental health difficulties.

Further information can be obtained by viewing the project's web-site www.le.ac.uk/edsc/sphp

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RESEARCH

Results from the Student Psychological Health Project

1.   Introduction

The University of Leicester was awarded funding from HEFCE under its "Special Initiative to Encourage High Quality Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities" 1996-1999, for a project which aimed to develop and further improve provision for students with psychological or mental health difficulties.

Its objectives were to raise the awareness, knowledge and skills of the whole University community and, through the production of training and study support guidelines and materials, to enhance the provision across the HE sector.

One of the objectives of the project was to work with the Careers Service at the University of Leicester to explore possible strategies to support the transition to work for graduates with mental health difficulties. The work undertaken is contributing to an enhanced understanding of the needs of students with mental health difficulties at all stages of their university careers.The results and outcomes are being disseminated across the HE sector and to careers organisations.

As a result of other projects funded by HEFCE Special Initiatives and through the work of Skill and AGCAS, careers resources have been developed for students with disabilities.   Research was conducted by Farrar and Waddelove[1] (1998) into the post HE experiences of graduates with disabilities and the effectiveness of guidance in the transition; a small cohort of the graduates surveyed had mental health difficulties. Their report challenged some of the commonly held pre-conceptions about the difficulties experienced by some disabled students. For example only a minority of students with disabilities perceived their disability or learning difficulty as a major factor in assessing career goals.

However, there is little information relating to the specific needs of students and graduates with mental health difficulties. MIND's 1996 report, 'Not Just Sticks and Stones: a survey of the stigma, taboos and discrimination experienced by people with mental health problems' [2], showed a high level of discrimination with 69% of people being put off applying for jobs for fear of unfair treatment. It is clear that employers need greater awareness, knowledge and understanding to calm their fears about employing graduates with mental health difficulties.

Many university careers services are aware of the need to improve services for this group of students in order to provide equality of opportunity. It is recognised that advisers will have their own concerns and anxieties about supporting students who they feel may be experiencing mental health difficulties. University careers services also need to address issues of how to support graduates with mental health difficulties, some of whom will not have declared their difficulties at university or may have developed a mental health problem during the transition period.

This report looks at the results of research into some of these issues in order to promote awareness and further discussion. At the University of Leicester, the development work has been informed by key pieces of research which include: surveys of the concerns and help-seeking behaviour of undergraduate students (conducted in 1998 & 2001), and a survey of the post-university experiences of graduates with mental health difficulties (conducted in 1999).

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1. "Research report on the experiences of graduates with disabilities and/or learning difficulties after leaving higher education and the effectiveness of guidance in the transition", Val Farrar and Chris Waddelove, Skill Journal, December 1998.

2. "Not just sticks and stones: a survey of the stigma, taboos and discrimination experienced by people with mental health problems", Jim Read and Sue Baker, MIND, November 1996.

2.   Survey of undergraduate students

Two major surveys were conducted at the University of Leicester in 1998 and 2001, which aimed to identify the extent of students' psychological health problems, the impact of problems on students' ability to study and to understand students' help-seeking behaviour. This report presents the findings obtained from analysing the second year undergraduate students' responses, the major group of students surveyed. Response rates of 77% and 93% were achieved.

2.1   The profile of the sample of students

DEMOGRAPHIC	1998 SAMPLE	2001 SAMPLE
Number of 2nd yrs	1156	1073
Full-time students	99%	99%
Gender	52% were female	53% were female
Age	86% were aged 18-21	90% were aged 18-21
Marital Status	93% single	94% single
Residence	41% were living in university accommodation	26% living in university accommodation
Nationality	87% British	91% British
Ethnic Group	79% of the students were white 17% were of Asian or Indian origin	80% of the students were white 16% were of Asian or Indian origin
Educational Background	84% came straight from full-time secondary education	83% came straight from full-time secondary education
Social Class	72% came from social classes 1 or 2 by parental occupation	71% came from social classes 1 or 2 by parental occupation
Working students	Question not asked	26% of the students reported engaging in paid work
Family history of HE	Question not asked	57% reported family experience of HE

2.2   Students' concerns

Students were presented with sixty-one items in 1998 and sixty-four items in 2001 which covered a range of potentially stress provoking issues in their lives.

Students were asked to indicate how much each issue impacted on them personally in terms of making them feel stressed and distracted by ticking one of four boxes - crucially, very, fairly or not important. "Crucially important" meant that the issue made them feel highly stressed and distracted. The following shows the results for issues specifically relating to careers and other concerns that may impact on students' abilities to plan their careers. The percentages reflect the number of students who felt that the issue was either "crucially" or "very important".

2.2.1 Overall sample

Careers issues	% crucially or very concerned	
	1998	**2001**
Dealing with concerns about preparing for a career	62	55
Overcoming specific fears about finding a job/career	56	54

Study issues	% crucially or very concerned	
Dealing with concerns regarding:	**1998**	**2001**
managing and completing course work	61	60
managing time and setting priorities	60	56
meeting academic/career goals	66	61

Psychosocial health	% crucially or very concerned	
	1998	**2001**
Managing vague anxieties, phobias or panic attacks	23	20
Coping with sadness, depression and/or mood changes	39	35

Personal development	% crucially or very concerned	
	1998	**2001**
Being assertive	50	40
Improving my self-esteem and confidence	49	41
Handling of competition	31	29
Speaking in groups	41	40

The levels of concern about finding a job and preparing for a career were compared with levels for other issues. The results suggest that students who have high levels of concerns about careers may also have concerns about issues such as meeting academic and career goals, and study issues. It is important to note that many of the respondents, second year under-graduates, appear to have already begun to consider careers issues, at least in a general way.

2.2.2 Group differences

Gender differences

The results for female and male students were compared and are shown in the table below. They indicate that female students reported significantly more stress on all of the issues shown.

Issue	Sample	% crucially or very concerned	
		Females	Males
Dealing with concerns about preparing for a career	2001	54	47
	1998	53	53
Overcoming specific fears about finding a job/career	2001	61	46
	1998	57	54
Dealing with concerns about meeting academic/career goals	2001	68	53
	1998	68	64
Dealing with concerns about improving self-esteem and confidence	2001	48	33
	1998	55	42
Dealing with concerns about time management and setting priorities	2001	65	54
	1998	64	59

Nationality and Ethnicity Differences

International Students

The results for international and home students were compared and are shown in the table below. They indicate that international students reported significantly more stress on all of the issues shown.

Issue	Sample	% crucially or very concerned	
		Intl	Home
Dealing with concerns about preparing for a career	2001	71	54
	1998	77	59
Overcoming specific fears about finding a job/career	2001	67	53
	1998	67	53
Dealing with concerns about meeting academic/career goals	2001	83	60
	1998	80	64
Dealing with concerns about improving self-esteem and confidence	2001	64	40
	1998	59	47
Dealing with concerns about time management and setting priorities	2001	76	58
	1998	78	59

Ethnic Minority Students

The results for British white students and British students from minority ethnic communities were also compared. The table below shows that home students from ethnic minorities reported more stress on all of the issues shown.

Issue	Sample	% crucially or very concerned	
		Home Ethnic Minority	Home White
Dealing with concerns about preparing for a career	2001	72	51
	1998	74	56
Overcoming specific fears about finding a job/career	2001	64	51
	1998	63	51
Dealing with concerns about meeting academic/career goals	2001	77	57
	1998	80	61
Dealing with concerns about improving self-esteem and confidence	2001	49	37
	1998	59	45
Dealing with concerns about time management and setting priorities	2001	74	55
	1998	70	57

The results raise issues for consideration when looking at service development or quality issues.

2.3   Help seeking behaviour

Students were asked: Have you sought help or advice from any of the following services?

The percentages indicate the proportion of the total number of students using each of the services.

Service	1998 %	2001 %
Friends and family	63	69
Personal Tutor	52	59
Student Health Service	41	40
Other academic staff	36	34
Careers Service	24	26

Approximately a quarter of the respondents, had already used the Careers Service at the time of the survey. Students were asked to tick boxes to indicate their reasons for seeking help from the different services, people or groups. Of students who used the Careers Service, 92% in 1998 and 94% in 2001 had used the Service for help with careers issues, 20% in 1998 and 19% in 2001 had used the Service to discuss study/course issues, 2% in both 1998 and 2001 used the service for personal problems and 1% in 1998 used the service for psychological reasons.

The service use varied by gender with approximately 10% more females in both samples using the service. The reported use of the Careers Service by international students was less than by home students. In 1998 there was a 15% difference in the two groups, but by 2001 this had dropped to 6%, largely due to an increase in targeted publicity for international students and the further development of specialised resources. The use of the service by UK students from ethnic minority groups was also less than home white students; 2% less in 1998 and 5% less in 2001. It is unclear at this time why this might be and this finding requires further investigation.

The Careers Service was not the only source of help for careers issues. 11% of the 1998 sample and 18% of the 2001 sample sought help from their personal tutor, 25% of the 1998 sample and 33% of the 2001 sample sought help from their friends and family and 6% of both samples sought help from other academic staff.

Reasons for not using Careers Service

Students were asked to tick as many boxes as applicable to indicate why they had not used services. The table shows the percentage of students who provided a reason for not using the Careers Service (students could tick more than one box).

Reason for not using the Careers Service	1998 %	2001 %
Unaware of support available	7	8
Lack of confidence in support	3.5	5
Did not feel able to ask	6	6
Prefer to seek help elsewhere	9	9
No support required	78	74

Although the vast majority of students seemed to be aware of the Careers Service there were still some who stated that they did not know about the help available despite the considerable efforts to publicise the services on offer. The data did not really identify any common factor shared by those whom the message was not reaching, making it difficult to use the information to adapt publicity strategies.

2.4   Conclusion

The concerns and help-seeking behaviours are those of students at the University of Leicester who are mainly full-time students, between the ages of 19-21. It is recognised that a different picture may be drawn for institutions with a different student profile.

Even second year students are clearly very concerned about their career preparation and have fears about finding a job. Many other issues, such as self-esteem and handling of competition, will impact on students' abilities to plan their careers. Students will also be experiencing stress as a result of a whole range of concerns about their studies, personal relationships, finances and so on. All these pressures may have an impact on a student's psychological well-being.

Whilst not wanting to promote stereotypes, or to make general assumptions, the results of the survey do show clear differences for different groups of students. For example, women show a higher level of concern about career preparation, as do international students and those from ethnic minority groups. These results should be used to increase our awareness and inform the development of services. The data suggests that students who are most concerned about their career preparation and finding a job are more likely to have used the Careers Service. This demonstrates that having concern about an issue can lead to productive help-seeking behaviour. It should also be noted that students go to the Careers Service for other reasons than solely for careers advice, and conversely will use other services and people for help with their careers. This illustrates the need for collaborative working between services and departments.

3.   Survey of the transition to work for graduates who have experienced mental health difficulties

A survey of all graduates is conducted annually by all university careers services to find out about their first destinations (i.e. what they are doing six months after graduation). The following statement was included at the end of the questionnaire sent to 1999 graduates:

"The Student Psychological Health Project would like to find out more about the transition to work of graduates who have experienced mental health difficulties. Please tick the box if you would be happy for us to write to you."

A questionnaire was sent to 152 graduates (from a graduating population of over 2000) who had ticked the box. A covering letter outlined that the purpose of the survey was to use their comments about the advice and support they had received whilst a student, and since graduation, to develop our services and to give better informed advice to students to prepare them for the transition to work. They were asked to complete the questionnaire whatever the nature of their problems, but to skip questions that were not applicable or which they considered too sensitive.

On receiving the completed questionnaires it was clear that some of the graduates who responded had not experienced mental health difficulties. The data for this group have not been considered for all of the questions, but, where appropriate, the results for this group have been included alongside the results for those with mental health difficulties. The sample size is small, making it difficult to draw out significant results, but the results and comments provide an insight into the experiences of some graduates with mental health difficulties that can be used to inform the development of services.

Total number of respondents	**47**
Respondents with mental health difficulties	26
Respondents without mental health difficulties	21

3.1   Present job or course

3.1.1   Graduate destinations

The destinations of graduates with mental health difficulties from this survey have been compared to all known undergraduate destinations. Due to the small sample size, it is not possible to draw out significant results, but the unemployment rate for graduates with mental health difficulties is not higher than for the overall population of graduates. It would however, appear that they are less likely to go on to further training or study.

The disability field on the UCAS forms was examined for the whole graduating population, but no conclusions were drawn as the numbers declaring mental health difficulties were too small. However it should be noted that UK-wide HESA data for 1995 suggested very high unemployment rates amongst those declaring mental health difficulties (26.7%).

Destination	Graduates with mental health difficulties (N=26)	All known 1999 graduates (N=1636)
In employment	85%	63%
Further training/study	11%	26%
Unemployed	4%	6%
Not available for work	Nil	5%

3.1.2   Job satisfaction

When asked if they were satisfied with what they were doing now, 60% with mental health difficulties indicated that they were satisfied, compared to 70% without mental health difficulties. The reasons given for not being satisfied mainly related to wanting work with more opportunities for development.

3.1.3   Main points

- The transition to work survey found no evidence that unemployment is higher for graduates who have experienced mental health difficulties, although the sample size was very small.

- Further research is needed to confirm the initial indication that graduates with mental health difficulties may be less likely to continue their training or study in comparison to graduates without mental health difficulties, to identify possible reasons (e.g. stress relating to study or exams) and to suggest strategies to help this client group continue their studies.

- Many graduates are dissatisfied with their jobs, not only those who have experienced mental health difficulties.

3.2   Careers advice

3.2.1   Use of University Careers Service

92% of the graduates with mental health difficulties had used the Careers Service (compared to 76% of those without mental health difficulties). The full range of services was used, but analysis of results showed that they were more likely to use 'Drop-in Consultations' (short interviews with careers advisers where no booking is necessary) and Workshops.

3.2.2   Satisfaction with careers advice

The questionnaire asked how helpful they found the advice or service they had received. Analysis showed that the group with mental health difficulties found the Careers Service less helpful than the group without mental health difficulties. Comments indicated that the workshops, particularly relating to completing application forms, were useful and the information resources were appreciated, yet others commented: "*It's hard to know what to look for"* and *"Does not prepare you for the job hunting experience*".

Further research is needed to identify the reasons for the higher levels of dissatisfaction amongst students with mental health difficulties. There are many factors which may impact on the students' satisfaction (e.g. their expectations, their career plans, their service use and the actual service provision) and this requires further investigation to ensure that the provision offered is meeting their needs where reasonable and appropriate.

3.2.3 Improvements to the Careers Service

Respondents were asked how the Careers Service could be improved, in particular for students with mental health difficulties. Suggestions from their responses included:

- *Private consultations;*
- *Specific advice on job search and mental health;*
- *Support groups;*
- *Dedicated special needs adviser;*
- *Better follow up after graduation;*
- *Be encouraging rather than discouraging;*
- *More positive and resourceful attitudes.*

3.2.4 Careers advice since leaving University

The table shows the numbers seeking advice from different sources after leaving University.

Source of Advice	Graduates with mental health difficulties	Graduates without mental health difficulties
University of Leicester Careers Service	4	5
Other university careers services	4	2
Other careers services/adult guidance	4	2
Jobcentre	7	5
Friends/family	16	7
None	6	6

Graduates report using a range of sources including other careers services and the local DEA and Jobcentres. Those with mental health difficulties seem to depend heavily on friends and family for advice and support, however.

3.2.5 Main points

- Students and graduates who have experienced mental health difficulties may use the university careers service to a greater extent than clients without mental health difficulties.
- Graduates with mental health difficulties expressed lower levels of satisfaction with the Careers Service.
- The needs of students with mental health difficulties should be considered, for example, by providing facilities for private consultations or by publicising these more widely where they already exist.
- Students expect advisers to be encouraging and positive.
- The role of a dedicated special needs adviser should be considered.
- Friends and family are an important source of help and support after graduating.

3.3 Other survey findings

3.3.1 Use of other services at University

> Graduates were asked to identify which other University services they had approached for help with mental health difficulties. Out of the 26 with mental health difficulties, 12 had used the Counselling Service and three the Student Health Centre. Other services, such as the Welfare Service and the AccessAbility Centre for students with disabilities, had not been used. All the comments received were positive about the support received, and there were no suggestions for improvements to services. Some students had also received help from external agencies.

3.3.2 Timing of onset of illness or difficulties

> Ten reported the onset as being prior to University, ten whilst at University and four after graduation.

3.3.3 Nature of difficulties

> Respondents were asked to describe briefly the nature of their difficulties and the problems they have experienced. Some gave very brief details, others outlined in full the nature of their difficulties and several clearly described more than one. Whilst trying to avoid making diagnoses, where possible the responses have been put into broad categories.

Nature of difficulty	Number
Depression	7
Stress	4
Anxiety/panic attacks	2
Eating disorder	1
Abuse and related difficulties	2
Psychotic disorder	2
Depression and other difficulty	5
3 or more of above	1
Other	2

Respondents described problems experienced as a student including pressures of coursework, relationships, exam stress, loneliness and depression.

Many respondents had experienced periods of unemployment after graduation and had found this had affected their mental health through loss of self-esteem and lack of mental stimulation. Other issues were loss of friends, financial concerns, change in lifestyle, returning to the parental home, relationship break-ups, and drug use.

3.3.4 Main points

- Mental health difficulties may be first experienced prior to university, whilst at university or after graduation and the needs of all these groups should be considered in the development of services.
- The wide variety in the nature of difficulties makes it hard to draw general conclusions; each individual has their own specific needs.
- Unemployment and change in circumstances may impact on mental health.

- Some students with mental health difficulties will not use services at university and, consequently, their problems may not be known to anyone.
- Students will seek help from agencies outside the university.

3.4   Applying for jobs or courses

3.4.1   Recruitment and selection procedures

In response to the question, "Have you met with difficulties in selection and recruitment procedures due to mental health difficulties?", eight answered yes, eighteen no. Of those answering yes, five had particular problems with application forms or CVs, one with aptitude tests and one with interviews. The following were comments made about problems with particular questions on application forms or at interview:

- *Competencies on application forms;*
- *Questions about serious illness or poor grades;*
- *Not sure what details to include;*
- *Difficult to talk about perceived weaknesses and strengths;*
- *Nerves in interviews;*
- *Lost cool in aptitude test;*
- *Found rejection hard to cope with.*

3.4.2   Declaring mental health difficulties

The table shows the range of responses when graduates were asked if they chose to declare mental health difficulties during the application process.

Response	Number	Destination
Yes	5	3 employed, 2 further training
No	8	7 employed, 1 further training
Didn't think it relevant	11	

Of those who had declared mental health difficulties, one had done so at the application form stage, three at first interview and one through the reference from their personal tutor. Respondents were asked how the recruiters had responded and the limited number of responses was positive. One employer had given a positive response, one tutor had offered a place on a course, and another graduate had been asked about their current status.

When asked for additional comments, those who had not considered it relevant stated that having to declare would only put extra pressure on themselves and cause embarrassment. One respondent said, "*I would not dream of telling an employer*".

3.4.3   Health records

Seven out of the 26 respondents said that they had been asked by an employer or course tutor to surrender health records. One thought this was due to their having a physical condition and another accepted it as fair in view of the nature of the post they were applying for, but said that it had made them feel awkward at interview. One clearly stated, "*I object to it*". Another graduate had told no-one about her difficulties so that there would be nothing on record.

3.4.4 Discrimination

The question was asked, "In your opinion, have you experienced discrimination because of mental health difficulties in applying for jobs or courses?" One graduate ticked the yes box, twenty-four responded no. No further details were given.

3.4.5 Main points

- Application forms and interviews present problems for students who have experienced mental health difficulties. Questions about health, and explanations for poor grades pose specific problems. Lack of confidence and low self-esteem make it difficult to express strengths and weaknesses.
- Most graduates believed that disclosing mental health difficulties was not relevant to their application and were concerned about the response they would receive.
- Most of those who had declared mental health difficulties had had positive experiences, with only one graduate experiencing discrimination.
- Some professions demand the surrender of health records and this is a cause for concern for graduates who have experienced mental health difficulties. It could result in students not seeking professional help for their difficulties.

3.5 Transition from university

3.5.1 Preparation for the transition

The table shows the response to the question, "Were you prepared for the transition from University to your present situation?"

Response	Graduates with mental health difficulties	Graduates without mental health difficulties
Yes	14	13
No	12	8

From this small sample it is apparent that many graduates feel unprepared for the transition period and this may be an even more difficult time for those with mental health difficulties.

3.5.2 Preparation at university

Respondents were asked to suggest ways that the University could help to prepare students with mental health difficulties for life after graduation. Many graduates felt they had not been prepared for the realities of life and comments included:

- *Workshops on time management for a 9 – 5 day;*
- *More information on what the changes will be like;*
- *Realistic outlook about highs and lows;*
- *Preparation for rejection;*
- *That it is hard work and restrictive;*
- *Preparation for loss of network of friends;*
- *Ongoing support in first year after graduation;*
- *Follow-up for those who have sought help whilst at university;*
- *Awareness of support structures available, eg Community Psychiatric Services, employment agencies;*
- *Leaflet in graduation pack with useful support contact numbers and common difficulties experienced by students.*

3.5.3 Main points

- Lack of preparation for the transition period after university is an issue for all graduates.
- The realities of the job search process after leaving university can be hard for many graduates to cope with.
- There are positive steps that universities could consider, in particular, providing information about support available.

3.6 Career plans

3.6.1 Effect of mental health difficulties on career progression

Respondents were asked if they felt a history of mental health difficulties was likely to affect their career progression. The results were looked at according to the nature of their difficulty, as declared in section 3.3.3.

Nature of difficulty	Yes	No
Depression	2	5
Stress	2	1
Anxiety/panic attacks	-	1
Eating disorder	-	1
Abuse and related difficulties	-	2
Psychotic disorder	1	1
Depression and other difficulty	2	3
3 or more of above	1	-
Other	-	2
Total	8	16

We have not been able to assess the severity of the mental health difficulty, nor the history. The table shows the perceptions that graduates may have about the effect on their career in relation to the nature of their difficulty. Numbers are too small to see if certain types of difficulty affect this perception more than others, but if the pattern shown here for stress and depression is correct, then it would have implications for the type of approach advisers should take. Concerns were expressed about the submission of personal health records. Some respondents, who answered no, felt their mental health difficulty would only affect their career if they disclosed it.

One graduate who had responded yes, said "*There's always a fear of future relapse, which can be a daunting prospect. If it occurs at a vital career transition stage, it could damage a person's chances of advancing in the chosen jobs forever."* Another commented "*Mainly because of stigma*".

3.6.2 Career choice

Only four respondents felt that they were unable to pursue the career of their choice due to mental health difficulties; three out of the four indicated severe mental health difficulties. One said, "*I have a lot to offer when helping other people, but when I'm depressed I am ill-equipped to look after myself."*

A graduate presently working in Higher Education, indicated that they were happy with their career choice, but wouldn't take a city or management position due to their difficulties.

One graduate commented that, "*More stress and pressure occurs at high-level jobs, so sufferers may choose to stick to easier, less challenging jobs than they truly want or are capable of.*"

3.6.3   Main points

- Some graduates do not think that their mental health difficulties necessarily affect their capacity to pursue the career of their choice.
- However for others mental health may affect decisions about the nature and level of work, with some graduates not being able to work to their full potential.
- Concerns about stigma and perceived lack of awareness amongst employers may make students and graduates reluctant to be honest and open about their difficulties.

3.7   Conclusion

Graduates taking part in the survey had experienced a range of problems, which had started at different points in their careers. The small number of responses has made it hard to draw conclusions about the destinations of graduates with mental health difficulties, but there is no evidence that they are more likely to struggle to find work.

Only a minority reported discrimination by employers, although fears about the stigma attached to mental health difficulties and lack of awareness amongst employers and course tutors were expressed. MIND and other mental health organisations are campaigning to tackle myths and misunderstandings about mental health and universities should be supporting these efforts.

Questions about disclosure will always be an issue for discussion, as for students with disabilities. The survey showed no evidence that declaring mental health difficulties leads to discrimination but the sample surveyed was small; graduates, nevertheless, expressed fears and concerns about doing so.

Students with mental health difficulties will seek help and support from university careers services, in particular seeking out one-to-one advice and attending practical workshops. Careers services need to address the reason why they might leave less satisfied than other students. Time and effort will be needed to help students to build up their confidence and to present their strengths. The graduates have made recommendations for careers services to consider, including making available special provision such as private consultations and specialist advisers.

Careers advisers may need to help students to think carefully about their choice of career, taking into consideration the demands of some professions and the need to work at a level that is not going to adversely affect their mental health. There is a fine line to tread here, however, because at the same time, careers advisers should seek to encourage and help students to find creative solutions to overcoming barriers.

After leaving university, many graduates, including those with mental health difficulties, use other agencies, local careers services and university careers services near their homes. The issue of support for this group is an area for development.

Many graduates experience problems after leaving university, but an awareness is needed of specific issues facing graduates with mental health difficulties. Universities should consider how they prepare all students for life after graduating and the support that they offer.

This survey has expressed the experiences of a small group of graduates with a range of mental health difficulties. Further research is needed to expand and validate the findings, and to perhaps also consider exploring the employer's view-points.