Student Support Initiative Award 2018  
PAWS against stress (Inverness College UHI and Canine Concern Trust Scotland)

1. **Outline the project or initiative and what makes it innovative and inspiring (max 300 words).**

This pilot project was to offer a fresh intervention for the wellbeing service to trial opening up wellbeing experiences and information to the wider student population, including students who might not necessarily need/come to face to face appointments.

By making it a partnership with Canine Concern Trust Scotland (CCST) we could use their almost 30 years’ experience to ensure the event was a success from the beginning. They have already put their dogs and handlers through an extensive screening process, had their own insurances and had vast prior experience of therapet events although this was the first HE event for our dogs and handlers.

Animal assisted therapy includes animals in the therapy process and this has been extended to animal assisted intervention (AAI). During the past few years, AAIs have emerged in various forms as a growing trend across campuses of leading universities and colleges in the US and Canada. Specially selected canines have been brought onto campuses to offer students a unique break from the stress and pressures of academic life. It was the success of these by our colleagues at the University of Edinburgh Student Counselling Service (SCS) coupled with the increase in service demand that has prompted the wellbeing team to pilot PAWS Against Stress on campus. This has provided students and staff with access to therapeutic canines, offering both a fun break from revision, workload and an intervention to help manage stress levels.

**Quotes from the event**

|  |
| --- |
| “what I found really lovely is how the environment helped students chat, and all the therapet handlers were very lovely to speak to. |
| a calming contact with a little companion really reduced stress |
| friendly atmosphere |
| it was nice to be with other members of staff and students, and also very informative |
| it was lovely being in a small groups and getting to speak to the handlers about their experience |
| fantastic experience, enjoyed by staff and students |
| the dogs were nice and calm and didn’t jump on me or lick me or bark, things I usually dislike about dogs |
| visiting and petting the dog |
| I always feel relaxed when I am around pets |
| calm environment, lovely people to talk to, very calm dogs, good class activity |
| wonderful, thank you so much. I had a stressful start to the day and this has been so relaxing |
| the stress reduction effect, shows the University cares |
| meeting the dogs in a calm environment, despite being college |
| chatting to the volunteers |
| friendly volunteer, friendly dog |
| relaxed and informal, no pressure |
| I loved every minute of it and would like to see them more often |
| learning about the dog, the people the dog works with and petting the dog |
| ALL OF IT!!” |

**Unexpected outcomes**

This project was set up as a trial for semester one with two dates but we have added a third date in March and going forward it will be a bi-annual event. Another partner college also used the concept and the contacts to run a PAWS event at their campus that proved very successful too.

1. **Detail how the project or initiative was delivered, from the planning stage through to its successful conclusion (max 300 words). Include details of timing\* and funding.**

We had a contact from CCST who is the area co-ordinator for Highland, and they sent through information about event requirements from the host partner. Then the CCST area co-ordinator came to visit and access the campus for suitability and we agreed on four dogs for two separate events.

The events last from 12 – 3 with 15 minute slots for up to 30 students or staff at a time, it was staffed by student ambassadors and the wellbeing officer. There were minimal costs involved the CCST paid the volunteers for their travel and ICUHI provided everyone with lunch.

Students/staff could book tickets through the student services centre or by emailing the wellbeing team, and tutors were allowed to book for full class groups.

During the 15 minute slot students and staff were invited to move around the room and spend time with all the therapets.

There is a suitable room in the campus and it is deep cleaned afterwards to prevent risk of allergic reactions from students and staff.

Both events so far have been a relaxed environment for all involved and we even set aside special sessions for students with anxiety issues and similar conditions.

All students/staff were given a stress pack at the end of their session with college, local and national information regarding improving wellbeing through self-support and also signposting towards support.

This is a low cost event that showed high rewards and will be integrated into our wellbeing timetable of annual events.

**Outline the project or initiative’s outcome(s) within the university and beyond with relevant supporting evidence, metrics or testimony where appropriate (max 400 words).**

**PAWS AGAINST STRESS FEEDBACK**

**GRAND TOTALS - 2017/18 = events so far**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ATTENDED** |  |  | | | |  | |
| Numbers Attending (logged by clicker) | 234 |  | | | |  | |
| Returned Evaluations | 160 | % Return Rate | | | | 68% | |
| **GENDER (User defined input)** |  |  | | | | |  |
| Female  Male  Left Blank | 98  57 5 | 61%  36%  3% | | | | |  |
| **160** |
| **100%** |
| **YEAR (user defined input)** |  |  | | | | |  |
| Further Education | 63 | 39% | | | | |  |
| Higher Education | 71 | 44% | | | | |  |
| Staff | 22 | 14% | | | | |  |
| Left blank | 4 | 3%  0%  0% | | | | |  |
| **160** |
|  |
| **STRESS LEVEL MEASURES** |  | |  | | | |  |
| **Student Rated Stress Before and After Even** | **t (stress** | | **rated on scale rated 1-** | | | | **5)** |
| Felt Less Stress | 123 | | 77% | | | |  |
| Felt the Same Level of Stress  Felt more Stress  Unknown | 36 1  0 | | 23%  1%  0% | | | |  |
| **160** |
| **100%** |
| **STATEMENTS (Likkert scale choice)** |  | |  |  | | | |
| **Acted as a Useful Break from Study** |  | |  | **Results as Combined %s** | | | |
| Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither D or A  Agree  Strongly Agree  Blank | 9  8  8  16  113 6 | | 6%  5%  5%  10%  71%  4% | 17 11% | | | |
| **160** | 129 81% | | |
| **100%** |
| **Is Something I Would Do Again** |  | |  | **Results as Combined %s** | | | |
| Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither D or A  Agree  Strongly Agree  Blank | 11 7  5  16  121 0 | | 7%  4%  3%  10%  76%  0% | 18 11% | | | |
| **160** | 137 86% | | |
| **100%** |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Is Something I Would Recommend** |  |  |  | **Results as Combined %s** |
| Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither D or A  Agree  Strongly Agree  Blank | 11  3  10  12  124 0 | 7%  2%  6%  8%  78%  0% |  | 14 9%  136 85% |
| **160** |
| **100%** |
| **Ever used any other Services to Support Their MH&W? (multiple choice + user defined)**  **(User could select as many services as applied - below = number of times mentioned)** | | | | |
| Prefer Not to Say 24  Wellbeing Team 21  Additional Support Needs Team 15  Academic Staff 4  Guidance Team 32 | | | | |
| **Narrative** | | | | |
| see earlier pages for good quotes | | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **WHAT ASPECTS OF TODAY’S 'PAWS AGAINST STRESS' EVENT HAVE YOU PARTICULARLY ENJOYED?** | | |  |
| Blank | 13 | 8% |  |
| Focus on interacting with the dogs | 75 | 47% |  |
| Interaction with both dog and handler | 28 | 18% |  |
| Focus on handlers | 9 | 6% |  |
| Being with fellow students | 8 | 5% |  |
| Break from study/fun:  Everything:  Other  Relaxed/friendly atmosphere: | 5  16 5  6 | 3%  10%  2%  4% |  |
| **160** |
|  |
| **100%** |

“nice dogs and the ladies, I could improve my English during little chat with them.

The relaxed atmosphere and different types of dog.

A break in a long stressful day that doesn’t have to do with College.

Liked all the dogs and the volunteers were helpful.

It makes me feel relaxed at the time, it made me feel not mad.

Animals make me relaxed no matter what, so getting to cuddles one before a 2 hour VC makes me more relaxed about going in

All of it thanks for organising :-)”

EXTRA INFO -



**Photograph/interview opportunity:** Wednesday 15th November, 12.30pm. Reporters and photographers are invited to meet Therapets’ Bella, Barney, Buddy and Scotty, who are helping students at Inverness College, part of the University of the Highlands and Islands, de-stress.

**Draft Press Release**

Man’s best friend has been invited in to Inverness College, part of the University of the Highlands and Islands, to help its students de-stress.

Students will be encouraged to ‘Paws Against Stress’ with Therapets’ Bella, Barney, Buddy and Scotty on Wednesday 15th November and Wednesday 13th December as part of a joint initiative between the Inverness College UHI Guidance Team and the Canine Concern Scotland Trust.

Dogs are known for their therapeutic qualities and it’s scientifically proven that stroking a an animal slows down your heartbeat, reduces blood pressure and helps you relax.

Students have registered to spend up to 15-minutes each with the dogs as part of the health and wellbeing initiative.

Inverness College UHI wellbeing officer Claire Kilburn-Young hopes it will become an annual event around exam time if successful.

“It has been something we’ve wanted to do for some time and the interest from students has just been phenomenal,” she said. “You only have to look at the way people’s faces light up at the sight of a dog to know animal assisted therapy works. We do a lot at Inverness College UHI to promote health and wellbeing but students do get stressed and that can be for a variety of reasons. Most people struggle with finding a work/life balance but for students it’s finding that work/life/study balance. Add to that the stress of sitting exams and assessments as well as the financial climate – with many students relying on their student loans – it can be hard. This kind of therapy is something that happens in hospitals, nursing homes and schools all the time and we’re delighted to welcome Therapets to Inverness College UHI.”

As well as providing practical information, support and advice to students about courses, funding and careers/employability, the Guidance Team at Inverness College UHI also offers one-to-one counselling, wellbeing and personal support to students and promotes initiatives throughout the year to make sure their physical, mental and social needs are met.

About Canine Concern Scotland Trust

**ENDS**

For more information, please contact Helen Aird, Marketing and PR Officer, Inverness College UHI at [Helen.Aird.ic@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:Helen.Aird.ic@uhi.ac.uk) or telephone 01463 273315/07584616252.



