**UK Student Wellbeing - Symposium 2021 session .mp4**

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:01:13] Good afternoon, everyone. Good evening. Good morning, wherever you are. And I'm talking to you today from Sydney, Australia, where we are in our ninth week of shutdown. I know that my English colleagues are very familiar with shutdown and what a timely webinar we're having today talking about wellbeing. I also want to acknowledge that I'm hosting this online conversation from the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia. Over 141 people have registered for our webinar today. Our experience of covid over the last 18 months has certainly brought out the best and the worst in us. Universities as communities have responsibility for wellbeing of everyone associated with them. It's no easy task to manage the various challenges required to ensure staff and students are safe physically, emotionally and socially. Today's webinar brings together a panel of experts from a diverse set of institutions and organisations. I'm confident that all of us will take away many messages and insights to help us in or at work as educators and supporters of students. So, this morning's webinar is organised: an introduction, then I'll ask each member of the panel questions that relate to their expertise and experience; and then questions will be taken from the audience and I'll attempt to bring it together. The webinar is an 1hr15 minutes long, so please don't stop on the hour, it goes 15 minutes after the hour. The symposium will be recorded for others to listen to later. But before we get to the questions, can each of you provide us with some background on your experience regarding student and staff wellbeing in higher education? And I invite Jon Baldwin to speak first, then Alison Golden, Kerry Kallaway, and finally, Christina Hughes. So, Jon.

**Jon Baldwin** [00:03:24] Judyth, thank you and good morning. Good evening, everyone. it's a pleasure to be with you. I'm Jisc's Managing Director of Higher Education. Jisc is the national research and education network in the UK. We provide the infrastructure for all universities, the Janet network. We offer cyber security and so on. But we also work in a very strong thought leadership sense, helping our members to navigate these challenging times. The main input here, Judyth, over six months, last year, we ran a Learning and Teaching Reimagined project which engaged with well over 1,000 stakeholders in HE, students, professional staff, academics steered by a group of 14 Vice Chancellors. It left the sector with seven challenges for the long haul in terms of what learning and teaching might look like in 2030, as well as offering advice and guidance in the short run. As part of that wellbeing was a key strand of the engagement with students. We had 22,000 students respond to various questionnaires and I'll draw on that as we go through the discussion this morning. I've also got experience in institutions having worked at Warwick and Manchester in the UK, at Murdoch University in Perth.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:04:45] OK, excellent. Alison, I invite you to speak to introduce yourself.

**Alison Golden** [00:04:52] Hello, everyone. My name's Alison Golden. I'm currently the Director of Student Health and Inclusion at the University of Bristol, I've got several specialist services within my portfolios; in the counselling service and our mental health advisory service; our student health service and our student inclusion service, which includes the disability support. I've worked in education for about 18 years in different roles, some of them a bit more directly working with students. I came to the University of Bristol nearly three years ago to take on this role. So, yeah, a long experience of working with students and staff who are delivering different types of services to students, but mostly involved in the kind of mental health and wellbeing side of things. And now at Bristol, I'm one of the leads for our mental health and wellbeing strategy, which is a big piece of work that the University of Bristol has really focussed on in the last four years. And that's a continuing commitment that we've got to that piece of work. I also one of the safeguarding leads - and I mean, safeguarding with a big 'S' but also with a small 's' and another big part of the work I've been focussing on in since moving to Bristol is looking at the use of drugs, including alcohol, amongst our students and how we can best support them. So that's just three of the kind of main things that I focus on and continue to kind of see is my significant remit. So, I hopefully I can be helpful

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:06:31] I'm sure you will. Kerry?

**Kerry Kellaway** [00:06:35] Good morning everybody and thank you for inviting me along today. I'm Kerry Kellaway and I am Head of Library at Plymouth Marjon University, we're a small university in the southwest of England with a big heart. That is our motto. And I've been asked along here today, I suppose, because my interest in wellbeing and my responsibilities for wellbeing come from an academic skills perspective. So, my experience is sort of in the academic skills arena. So, developing skills and confidence and combating imposter syndrome amongst students who come from slightly underprivileged backgrounds, that kind of thing, as well as having a keen interest in libraries, how they work and how they can support and improve individual wellbeing.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:07:26] Thank you. And finally, Christina?

**Prof Christina Hughes** [00:07:30] Hi, everyone. It's really great to be here. I'm Christina Hughes. I'm a Professor of Women and Gender and I've held senior roles in three universities in the UK. Warwick when Jon was there as well, Sheffield, Hallam and Kent. In all of those roles, my responsibilities have been for student experience and their welfare. And indeed, when I was at Kent, latterly I led student’s services, which was a brilliant opportunity actually for me to see some of the issues that Alison will be so familiar with day to day. I'm currently very excited because I'm setting up a new enterprise called Women's Space. It's designed to support women who work in universities to flourish in their careers and their leadership. And I guess my experience tells me we need to put more care into universities. And that's where I come from, you know, care and compassion and how we can build certainly on some of the good stuff that we've seen through the pandemic so far.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:08:51] So let me start off with a question that I want everybody to respond to, and it comes from an article that I read in Forbes magazine last year. And let me quote this extract to you, because I think it's actually quite - it captures some of the things that we need to think about in the universities. So, it starts with "We don't know how long this pandemic will last or what its full effects will be, but we do know that it has forced us to grow in ways that may otherwise have taken us years. It's allowed us to create new flexibilities to support our employees and new tools to help us optimise. This situation presents an opportunity to accelerate cultural change and transformation and create resilience for the future, for us as individuals and as universities. The challenge has been in learning how to survive through this uncertainty. The opportunity is to learn how to thrive." Can you comment on this statement from the perspective of students and academics and professional staff in your institution? Jon, can I start with you?

**Jon Baldwin** [00:10:00] I'll offer a few general comments, Judyth, given I'm not in an institution right now. I think that the sort of commentary that you rehearse there is is very powerful, actually and I chaired a podcast a few weeks ago with four UK. Vice Chancellors, and one of them said something quite simple, but something I felt was quite profound and that was 'Jon', they said, 'we thought we knew our students. It turns out we're going to have to get to know them a whole lot better'. And I say that because my sense is that there's been a little bit of a pivot here and that there is suddenly more power in the mind of the students. The student seems to want more choice, certainly as the research we undertook with the student body showed that there was a lot about the blended approach to learning that they really did like and that once the pandemic is done, returning to normal is going to be fraught with challenge and difficulty. Reading an article in The Guardian a few weeks ago, the VC of Sheffield Hallam, one of Christina's former institutions, said, I've got a lot of letters from students that say I don't want to come back. I've also got a lot of letters from students saying I want to come back a lot. The problem we've got, he said, was how do we deal with that? How can we reflect that sense of choice? So, you know, I think, Judyth, we've all changed as the paragraph, the commentary from Forbes attests. Some of us might not know we've changed, but we've changed. And I think that pressure to revert to normal could and should be resisted, although not everybody will agree with that. So, it's a really challenging space.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:12:05] And just before I ask the others, what advice did you give the Vice Chancellors?

**Jon Baldwin** [00:12:13] Look we said, look at what you've done. You know, I speak primarily with a UK hat on here, but the same thing I know has happened in Australia. The pivot from the physical to the digital in the midst of a crisis was extraordinary. And the students were so grateful for that. They were so grateful that they were able to continue learning that they were able to be assessed, they were able to graduate. You know, it was a remarkable effort. Then as it moved into the academic year that's now concluding in the UK, there was a bit more pressure. There was lots of noise. You know, those around the sector were wondering about value, wondering about, you know, whether online was was was worth the money, let's be blunt about it. But again, so the pressure to produce better quality in a more business as usual sense grew. And again, universities responded. So, we're saying don't put that away, don't put that in a cupboard and, you know, leave it as a record of the 19/20 crisis, use it. Continue to share it with your students, work with them in a sort of co-creation way to see what's best and what they need. There's so much about the flexibility that students with family or employment commitments, you know, enjoyed. It gave them more of an anytime, anyplace way. But clearly, the design of the curriculum has got to reflect all sorts of other challenges, accessibility, you know, bandwidth, you know, how students live, who they share accommodation with and all those questions, I'm sure Judyth will come up later. Our main advice has been please, just don't revert to whatever was the case in 2019. But in large universities, as we all know, power resides in strange places and making those things stick will be quite tricky for Alison, Kerry, Christina and anyone else working directly in an institution.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:14:22] So, Kerry, can you then give me your response to that quote?

**Kerry Kellaway** [00:14:29] Yes, of course, I actually - I don't know if you saw I was just nodding my head to everything that Jon said, because that just really captures the experience here at Marjon - we have students who have been resistant to change and just want things to go back to normal, whatever normal is. But by and large, that new flexibility of blending the physical with the digital has opened up doors that people previously never had before. So, we have a huge cohort of students from backgrounds where they don't have a parent in higher education, for instance, or they have significant responsibilities outside of university. So being able to have that blended approach to academic skills or to library services speaking from my own career, has been essential and is something that they don't want to lose because it's almost in closing the library doors and closing the doors to the physical academic and library services, we've opened the online doors wider than ever. And students have appreciated that and now are in a position where they can tell us what they want. And I agree with everything that Jon has said. We should not be losing that; we should be assimilating. We should be taking that on board and making sure that the hybrid style of delivery and response to services remains, for as long as we possibly can. It's an opportunity, not a threat.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:16:04] Alison?

**Alison Golden** [00:16:09] The two main things for me are, I think, in terms of inclusive teaching and inclusive assessment, I think the great thing has been that it's accelerated that. I think universities strive towards having a sort of better inclusive practise and I think moving into the digital space, the way that people have adapted and brought new practise in has been great. And I think a lot of that is more inclusive for students. So that's one thing. The other part for me is about service delivery and what we found is that some of our services students have adapted really quickly and really appreciated the remote delivery of service. So, things like disability services, our failed to attend rate, has improved significantly because they don't have to find a funny building in a bit of Bristol. They don't have to go anywhere and actually it's made it much more accessible for those students, so that's great. We find things like counselling groups are more accessible because if you're nervous or a bit unsure, you can turn your camera off, but you can participate. So, what we want to do is we want to keep the bits that have worked and offer those. And for me, it's about trying to have, exactly as Jon and Kerry said, it's about trying to make it an offer you can choose, you can have some choice in this, and we can maintain that a bit with service delivery. We can say you know, because we've got a lot of students with a really packed timetables who might struggle to go to a counselling appointment if they've got get even out of the city to attend, well they can now engage in that whereas perhaps they were limited. So, we want to keep it, but we want to make it an offer, if they want to come and see somebody face to face and that's important to them, we want to be able to provide that. So, for me, it's about trying to cherry pick the best bits and keep that sort of student choice and demand bit going. And I think that's the other thing that we've learnt is that actually with that flexibility, we have had a lot of increased demand. But some of that flexibility has allowed us to keep a pace with that demand, whereas perhaps our sort of old practises that we were a bit wedded to wouldn't have wouldn't have allowed us to to keep up with demand in the same way.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:18:46] And Christina?

**Prof Christina Hughes** [00:18:49] Absolutely, I would love to see cultural change I have to say, and to take the best of what happened and has been happening. In that first, you know, first lock down for us, that first wave when we were kind of all sent home in March, the speed of change in universities was phenomenal, absolutely phenomenal. Because in part, we had no choice, and we were all facing the same concerns and the same issues which were how do we deliver the best education and support to our students? And I just want to talk a little bit about the impact on staff, because many staff go the extra mile. And so, we had international students who couldn't get home, who were concerned because their parents were facing similar situations. They had financial difficulties and the institution geared up to expand the food bank and food vouchers, all the ways that it can do that. We had colleagues who were, certainly in the early days of isolation when you had one or two students, taking students who are in isolation they're suppers. I mean, what people did actually was amazing, absolutely amazing. But I think we can't rely on individuals all the time just to do that extra. We have to think about this systemically. And for me, we have to think about student wellbeing and staff wellbeing as a whole thing. And too often in universities they're separate. So Student Services sits here and H.R. sits there. Yes? And we're all human and we all need to understand that we're facing these challenges in different ways. We've got different challenges, all of us. But actually, we are facing those. And what has been best about that must be built on. And so that's my kind of plea, you know, to see the opportunity in what has been honestly a really tough time for everybody.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:21:12] Look, before I just follow up on something, can I invite people that are listening to the webinar to pose questions to the panel and throughout the presentations, I will then bring it together so that your questions can be answered rather than the ones that I've put together. In that quote, the word that stood out for me is 'thrive'. What are the conditions? And you talked about the social conditions, the cultural conditions and the structural conditions, but what are the conditions that will enable staff and students to thrive from the things that we've learnt? Because, in fact, I don't think anybody is thriving at the moment. So how can we create that discourse of possibility and optimism so people can thrive? So, Jon, can I throw it back to you, given that I'm just I'm just going around the tiles!

**Jon Baldwin** [00:22:13] Look, I just to sort of link the comments that colleagues were making there, to your question. I think in the UK, and I sense in Australia too, there's also a narrative in the media that sort of, online blended is kind of bad/not value for money. And in person, you know on campus is somehow good and value. And until that narrative is somewhat, you know, altered, considerably altered, it's very difficult to get across what will make students and staff thrive because the starting point in the minds of the policy makers, the policy influencers, is somehow that going back to normal is as it should be. That was their university experience, therefore, it should be everybody else's. You know, and that that's kind of interesting. Conditions I mean, to the question, as well as all the good things about online learning that our surveys through up, they also threw some negative points. So, you know, there was clearly the whole issue of accessing material come back to that. Often timeliness, scheduling, timetabling in these early days suited the academics, the university, more than it suited the students. And this is the point that I wanted to make, really, that there's a sense that, you know, online learning, it is hard, it's difficult, it can feel overwhelming. Students told us they were receiving what they felt to be too much work. There was a larger volume of independent work expected than usual, but without the benefit of timely support. And that as you were concentrating, focussing on screen, you know, it felt too long, there were insufficient breaks, that caused fatigue, it caused one or two mental health concerns. And at its worst, it could lead to isolation and loneliness. Now, I think all of that is kind of, sort of understandable given the case Christina articulates very well - the way in which staff responded was was indeed remarkable. But to let everyone thrive we've got to get the basics right, got to get Wi-Fi right on and off campus, access to hardware and software. We've got to create more interactivity in the learning that's done online, whether that's quizzes, games, tests, small group work. We've got to make better use of recordings so that they can be watched again and again and at a pace that helps the learner. There's a staff development issue around, you know, the academy being able to use the online tools in pedagogically sound and inclusive ways; create opportunities for engagement to try and build in those informalities into the learning environment. If we can do that Judyth, then thriving becomes, you know, the norm, not the exception. I'm sure others have got plenty to add to that.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:25:42] Kerry?

**Kerry Kellaway** [00:25:46] Thank you Judyth. I think the bit that I would like to add to that is around confidence. I think to thrive you need confidence and that comes from encouragement and having the right people saying the right things at the right time. So I think Alison said that students being able to access services on their terms led to an increase in service uptake. And we definitely saw that here at Plymouth Marjon. For instance, our study skills programme; we have a programme of information, digital and study skills that we put together and it's branded 'Aim for Plymouth Marjon'. And these are sessions that people can self-elect to attend. Our attendance was incredible during lockdown, we had sessions with 30, sometimes 40 people in them. And that's considering we have such a small student number that was actually phenomenal. And what was really great was that by participating in these sessions, it was nice to see that the people who were sitting the cameras off by the end of their course were actually switching them on and engaging. So I think this is one of the huge things we need to tackle if we're expecting students to thrive is this issue of confidence. What does confidence mean? What does that look like for our students? How are we instilling that and making sure that they feel confident to succeed and thrive and cope with conditions? I think that's one of the biggest issues.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:27:17] OK, Alison?

**Alison Golden** [00:27:22] I guess a lot of people said, well, we're all in the same boat, we're not all in the same boat, we've all been in the same storm but in really different boats, or rafts, or hanging on to life belts or whatever. So I think what people need to thrive out of this situation is going to be really different. It's definitely not a one size fits all. So I think for me, it's about trying to offer, you know, something that is inclusive, that does recognise the different experience people will have had and the different starting points people are coming from and even more than we have. So I guess, as Christina was saying, is that cultural change really that is more recognises that, that point. And I think talking to students, what they've really missed in terms of their experience, and I think is probably impacting on their ability to thrive, is the feeling connected and the sense of belonging and having a community. They've had a very limited opportunity to meet like-minded people and to develop those friendships and relationships which are really important if you're going to thrive in any situation. And if they haven't found that in that small group of people, their opportunities to do that have been really affected. So I think it's about trying to really build in those opportunities for students to make connections with other students, with staff, with the community where they live, you know all of those things, because I know that from my perspective, human interaction really is part of my wellbeing. If I don't have that, and the screen is great, but it's very different. And I think we have to acknowledge that, and we have to accept its limitations around that and look at how we can help people connect in in other ways, as well as keeping the best bits of the online opportunities.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:29:34] And how do we help staff thrive? Because staff are at the other end of this.

**Alison Golden** [00:29:39] Yeah, we've tried, we have tried a lot to try and do that and I think we have mental health champions and we've had senior staff talking about this stuff and trying to say, look, you know, we've all had challenges within this and trying to provide people with those opportunities as well. And I don't know that I've got the answer, Judyth, because I think it's really difficult. I would say that I personally have really struggled with the length of the lockdown and what that's meant, the changes that's made to my working life. You know, I'm somebody who quite likes my water cooler moment or whatever, my getting a cup of tea and having a chat with somebody. Those opportunities are really lost. You don't get those, you go straight into a meeting, meeting ends, you haven't got that walk to and from where you chat with somebody, maybe have a bit of a moan. We've lost a lot of that. So it's about trying to find ways around that. I think a lot of us will want to, again, have a bit of a hybrid approach to it. I used to love a day working from home, because it was because it was an exception. Now, I think we're all going to have to try and be flexible, look at creative ways to support people with what suits them and what they need. But the other challenge for me as somebody who's got to deliver services to students, is I want to support staff, but also I've got certain things that I think need to happen to appropriately deliver a service to students. So it's that it's that constant balance.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:31:27] OK, Christina?

**Prof Christina Hughes** [00:31:31] So I absolutely echo everything Alison said about building community. I think it is unbelievably important that people feel connected and feel they have their place and their friends and they feel part of something. And it is more difficult online to do that. But I want to go back to something Jon said, which was those Vice Chancellors who said they need to get to know their students better. Because I think what covid showed us was actually how poor some of our students are and what their lives are like, their daily lives. And, you know, I can only speak for myself, but I have a default position about a student, which is an 18-year-old full-time goes to university. And actually, you know, our students are dealing with caring responsibilities, with work, you know having to earn a living with serious concerns about their own health. You know - everything. And actually, what covid did in many ways was uncover some of this because we were having to reach out to all students and make sure they were OK. And I think as someone at that time sitting in the centre of an institution and, you know, you could see then the larger pattern of what was happening to students more than if you meet them in your own department and you know, you have a kind of more localised view. So I think there is something about getting to understand the stresses on both students and staff. And if you came back to the staff issue, so one of the issues is we're working enormously long hours and we're not switching off. It's very hard to switch off. And many people have had family care, worries about parents in care homes or in hospital or other ends of the country, children, home schooling, the whole rest of it, right. You've got students who have got lots going on in their house trying to learn online. Understanding the stressors and how you can adapt and be flexible is really important, really important to enable people to be able to thrive. And there was something in The Guardian yesterday, I think it was, about the right to switch off. And of course, in some sectors of the economy you know, we live a privileged life of staff. You know, we can switch off if we like. Yes, of course in some sectors, you know, if you switch off, there are questions asked. But actually, staff don't switch off and students don't. We know what time students are emailing us, you know? So I think there's much more work to be done about understanding those stresses and seeing that flexibility is brilliant, you know, absolutely brilliant as Alison has said, it's made it much easier for lots of students, but it brings its own other challenges and demands, and that needs better understanding for me.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:35:05] It's a question that has come up from Hilary Carlisle from Norwich University of the Arts, and she says "At Norwich University of the Arts, we find that although our students express their need for extra support with wellbeing, they are quite resistant to attending anything that is badged as a wellbeing session. We're developing a programme of sessions that include wellbeing, studentship and life skills that will be embedded in the curriculum. Is anyone else working in this area and do you have thoughts on how this might work?" I'll open that up to anybody who wants to make a comment.

**Prof Christina Hughes** [00:35:39] Can I just give a shout out to some of my colleagues at Sheffield Hallam in Humanities who actually did build in to one of their programmes wellbeing, and they were a bit sneaky at first because they were running a dissertation planning day and they didn't tell the students that they were bringing someone along who was going to do a well-being session. But they, you know, this person came. And because the outcome of that session, one of the outcomes of that session was that students heard other people and heard that others were actually having these same similar issues. It actually did create some level of cultural change amongst students and amongst staff. And it enabled, you know, enabled those conversations to continue and of course, the success of that meant that we were then able to try and start embedding and piloting that across the institution. I can't honestly say if anybody's on at the minute from Hallam who, you know, knows where they are with all of that kind of stuff, they might say. But honestly, you know, it was a bit sneaky at first I have to say, but it worked! And I think you only need to do that once and then students understand how valuable it is.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:37:09] Sorry. Jon?

**Jon Baldwin** [00:37:11] Thanks, Judyth, and hello, Hilary nice to see you on here. Only to build on what Christina said, we published a report, I think it was January this year, Student and Staff Wellbeing in Higher Education. And that document sort of embraced four principles, that it was everybody's kind of business, that it was a lifelong sort of project and importantly here, that it needed to be embedded in a sort of whole curriculum approach. It was a collective endeavour. So, Hilary, it might be worth you digging that report out. If I was technically more skilled, I'd put the link in the chat, but I'm not sure I'll be able to do that. Just reflecting too quickly, it's another example of that confidence thing that Kerry spoke about articulately a few minutes ago, which I'm sure we'll come back to thanks.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:38:11] Alison?

**Alison Golden** [00:38:14] I think it's always a challenge to get students to attend things, I think that the way they are marketed is incredibly important. With academic colleagues at the University of Bristol had amazing success with, The Science of Happiness. Because it was so successful in its first couple of iterations, it's now an accredited course module that that students can take. They have great uptake across the board and students really love it and they come away with great wellbeing skills. And there's homework, it's a proper unit that they can take, so I think, and I love the marketing of that. Not to trivialise it, but the Science of happiness it for me is better than talking about, you know, building resilience or wellbeing. It's positive, but it also appeals to that sort of academic nature of our students. So I think there is yeah, if people have really cracked that marketing bit let me know, because I'm really happy to learn how we can improve uptake. But I would say that's a really good example that academics have led on so I think there's a lot to be said for that approach - that sort of embedded approach.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:39:36] Kerry, have you got some suggestions?

**Kerry Kellaway** [00:39:40] Yes, just building on something that I think Jon said about it being everybody's business. So that's certainly the stance we take here at Marjon, is that wellbeing doesn't need to be kind of a two hour session that students need to opt to attend. It can be as simple as a quick five minute at the beginning of a study session saying, how are you doing? How's the last week been for you? And making it everybody's business, and that's going both ways. So one of the most striking things to me during lockdown was the amount of students that I was reaching out to and saying, we have this, we have that to offer you, we're here, we're ready to help. The amount of people and students in particular who were coming back and saying, how are you? You know, as a member of staff it was just so refreshing and lovely. I really do think it brought out the best of people, but it also made it so easy - not to reduce the whole wellbeing thing to just a just a word, because it's not it's complicated, complex it comes from multiple backgrounds. But asking somebody how they're doing as standard is something that should be integrated into most services, regardless of what you're doing. Because there will always be a wellbeing slant, whether that's financial, or digital wellbeing, academic wellbeing. And just starting those conversations is so important for us working in HE.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:41:07] Well, I agree, and in Australia, we've got this programme called 'Are You OK?' And it's the same sort of intent. And it's amazing that, that sort of connectedness, and I guess in universities it's part of our duty of care. We've got a question from Anonymous, and Anonymous makes this statement, but you might like to respond to it "Don't we also have to take into account factors such as being in debt because you pay fees for students and ridiculous workloads for staff? Unless we address these underlying issues, everything we do is tinkering around the edges". Am I going to have to use that Canadian word? I'm going to voluntold - I'm going to volunteer you to!

**Alison Golden** [00:42:02] I'm happy to start with that. I think the nature of higher education has changed. I think the marketisation in the UK, that is true and I think it has had an impact, but I think it would be disingenuous of me to to suggest otherwise, really. I think the the idea was when I did my degree, if somebody said to me, are you going to take on this much debt at this point, I'm not sure how I would have felt about it. So I think we have to recognise that is absolutely had an impact. So we have to recognise that acknowledge it and try and support our students with that the best that we can. And I think it's unhelpful in the UK the way that it's been badged. I would much prefer if we talked about graduate tax. And I know that perhaps massively change it, but I think it's more accurate language, to be honest and I think that, that helps. But I think you have to recognise the impact and we have to recognise the economic situation our students are in, we have to acknowledge it. But not wanting to quote Donald Trump, I think I'm going to inadvertently, we are where we are. And that is the reality that we are in. And we have to whilst we might want to challenge those systemic issues if we can, and we've got mechanisms to do that, we have to deal with the realities and we have to help people as much as much as we can in their position and the environment that they're in. You know, I guess it's yeah, for me, it's acknowledging that that has had an impact and trying to do what we can within that space.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:44:00] Others want to make a comment or an observation?

**Jon Baldwin** [00:44:04] And look, I think the question, you know, raises something that is fundamental and whether this is controversial or not, I don't know, but, you know, we've had tuition fees for a long time now. The Brown Review in the UK, in England was was 2010. Just maybe there's been a bit of complacency in the sector about students will come, they will always come, you know, and it's not about price. It's about value. And I think the pandemic has shaken that complacency. It's the point I was trying to make at the top of the session that I think there's been a little bit of a pivot. Maybe it's more than a little bit of a pivot towards student power, you know, and student as a consumer - I know these are terms that the sector doesn't like, customer and consumer and all of that, but when you're paying or the perception is you're paying, you want to demand a better, stronger, more available set of services. And of course, HEs not transactional. You don't go and buy it and take it away and that's it, it's a shared endeavour. So the engagement of the student with the academic community, with the professional community to be, you know, not just passive recipients of learning, but active participants in it and even, dare I say co-creators of it, starts to generate the value that takes the negative narrative about fees away. But there are some big, big questions in there I think that the questioner deliberately, I think, wants us to to try and get at.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:45:48] Yes, I'm sure you're right. Just a question for all of you, and some of you alluded to it in passing, but what did you learn about your own resilience and that of your colleagues across the university or whatever institution you work in over this last 18 to 20 months? And Kerry, can I ask you?

**Kerry Kellaway** [00:46:15] Of course, I think for me, I learnt that I'm a lot more resilient than I initially thought, which was a pleasant surprise. I think I'm one of the lucky ones, but I also learnt that I'm only resilient as the people who back me up. So I think we've already spoken about the importance of human connection, and that's what made me resilient throughout the pandemic and the lockdowns, was knowing that I had colleagues and students and the community, the learning community behind me and to work with, and work on things with. But that's definitely fortunate circumstance for me. So for instance in terms of kind of how did we create those connections to maintain resilience. We ran some online study groups, which were quite successful, but also making sure that the community stayed connected by just having regular check-ins with colleagues and students. So as as I mentioned before, just asking that question, how are you doing that kind of thing. And I think I've been surprised by just how much I need my team and how much I need my colleagues and how much I need, I think Alison and Christina you alluded to those watercooler conversations, those incidental conversations where you take them for granted, but, they're actually where the real work gets done. And that's where the real ideas come from. And I really did take those things for granted before. But now being back on site and sort of working between from home and working on site, I love, I love the jaunts around campus where you can just quickly discuss something on the fly. That's where I feel most productive and that then inspires me to go ahead. And if I can just say one more thing, just picking up on what Jon said about the students as consumers, we've seen this an awful lot at Marjon. And I think, because the fees are high they are definitely seeing, sort of every step as you like, around the campus as 'how much of my fee is coming is coming off at that point'. But I think that's why it's really important to integrate students into your service delivery and service design so they can be collaborators. You know, as stakeholders, their knowledge and their experience is so important for the service delivery. And that in turn creates resilience for your service and for your staff and puts us all on an equal pegging. We don't exist without students, students don't exist without us. So I think that's my key take home from.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:49:07] Thank you, Christina?

**Prof Christina Hughes** [00:49:12] Well, I led the first wave of covid at Kent and I have to say for me, it was one of my best professional experiences and it might seem a bit weird because we were doing 18 hour days, seven days a week. You know what made it? The people I was working with. Just seriously honestly, I couldn't have wished for a better bunch of people. And that made all the difference because we were all working crazy hours that is true. But because we, you know, half the time didn't know what was going to hit us next, because government advice kept changing and changing and changing and changing. You know, actually, it did create an environment in which we could come together and really pull together. And it's, for me, a lasting, joyous memory when I talk to colleagues there now, of course, how long has it been? 18 months now - people are absolutely worn out, absolutely worn out, and I think in that first wave, you know, you kind of just got to get up and get on with it. Thinking oh, it will be sorted by Autumn, it will be be sorted by spring. And now we're wondering is this, you know, are we in for five years for example, or something like that, so that was my experience. I have to say, and the value of, the value of the people you work with count for more than anything and I include the students in that because our students were just fabulous as well.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:50:58] Alison?

**Alison Golden** [00:51:01] I completely agree, I think I've been amazed by the the way that our staff and students have kind of managed what's been incredible, because the speed at which things were changing and u-turning and, you know, we had to completely keep responding, has been phenomenal. I think, as well I've really learnt more about the people that I work with than I think I probably would have done with more years in a short amount of time. I know their strengths and their vulnerabilities, and they know probably know mine, better than we would normally. So I think it's been really, it's been emotional, the whole experience. But I think as well, we are all pretty exhausted. And the idea that we we've got this far, it's tantalisingly close, but the sense that we might be back into lockdown in October, I think the impact on people's, particularly thinking about - well everybody - but students, our first years, for example, who've had the two most extraordinary years in their education. I'm so worried for them that we will go back into some sort of autumn lockdown. And the impact then the disappointment and the heartache for them I think that will be you know, for me, that's not a test of resilience I mean, I just think, you know, it will just be heart-breaking for everybody. So, yeah, it's been, it's been a very emotional 18 months and people have really come together to get through it. And that's been remarkable. And the students positivity I think, despite everything, has been remarkable as well. They've got, you know, most of them got through their studies and they've progressed and that's you know, that's an amazing testament to them and the staff. But I'm not sure how much longer we can keep going. Probably we will just carry on because we haven't we won't have much choice. But it will be a difficult, difficult thing because I think a lot of people have they've had enough of it now. We're over it now!

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:53:24] Jon: did I hear a little foot stamping there as well?

**Jon Baldwin** [00:53:28] I mean, I'm getting on a bit Judyth, you know, and it's been a real challenge for me on the personal front. You know, I've worked forty years going to work and suddenly not to be able to go to work was kind of, just downright odd really. And, you know, I'd spent the six years pre Jisc as Managing Director for the Tribal Group's higher education business. And I'd been, you know, all over the world. I'd been in hotels 200 plus nights in 2018. And then all of a sudden, I joined Jisc in March 2020. So, you know, as the pandemic was just beginning. So not only that, I have the challenge of not be able to go out, but I've never met any of my colleagues who I was just working with, you know, as I joined Jisc. That was weird, as you can imagine, you know, getting to know people through mediums like this. And what's surprised me about my own resilience was despite getting on a bit, my own flexibility. I was able to adapt. I was able to focus. I joined an organisation that I think, you know, was first class in terms of how it approached the management of its people in Jisc, in the pandemic and also how it approached the relationship with our members as well, created very quickly a covid task force drawn from all corners of the organisation, starting to put together materials that we thought would be helpful to members. And just doing that, you know, in addition to everything else and on a pro bono basis. It was a fantastic team effort. And to the point that Kerry, Alison and Christina have all made it. I did feel a curious and rapid bond with people I've never met, which was, is something to reflect on. You know, I need to think more about that in an intellectual sense. It really was quite interesting. As things opened up in the UK or in England, I did start to to get out. Every time I could get out, I got out. So i'm in a London office now, but I used to be in the London office, you know, once the rules loosened a little bit. Just the psychology of going to work and coming home, even if I was the only person in the office, I think helped my own personal mental wellbeing. And I met people who work with me and for me in cafes in Penrith, in the north west of England or in Shrewsbury on the edge of Wales, you know. So I took the opportunity to reconnect, to get some of that human empathy that is so missing from the screen. I think everyone else has said everything else really about how we need to emerge from this in the best possible shape. Let's hope Alison we don't go back into some kind of, you know, national or local lockdown regime, because I do think if it happens again, that will be more difficult, I do.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:56:49] In the state of Victoria, they've had two hundred days now of lockdown since the beginning of the pandemic and they've had six lockdowns and people are really on the edge now. And it's just, you know, it's we feel great sympathy for our colleagues in Victoria, but now in New South Wales, we're in a much worse state. So, you know, it's brought the best of people and the worst of people because the politicians are just sort of blame shifting and finger pointing and saying, well it's your fault or you didn't do this. And that's just not helpful. But we've got a comment from Vanessa Steenkamp and she says, "We need intervention as no one can carry on. Any suggestions?" What suggestion would you give to your Vice Chancellors or to your Board in your case, Jon? So what suggestion, Alison, would you give to your Vice Chancellor at Bristol in terms of what we need to do to just remember those - films in the 1950s, the carry on films?

**Alison Golden** [00:57:57] I don't know that I've got the answer to that Judyth. I don't know - I guess I always appreciate when people acknowledge how rubbish something has been. I'm not a fan of the of the putting too much spin on it because I just think actually recognising that and, again, recognising the work that the staff have put in which has been extraordinary. And saying how difficult it has been is always a good start for me. Whereas if it's it's too positive I'm too cynical and they lose me straightaway. But, so I think acknowledging how difficult it is. And I think it is about, as I said before, about trying to have this flexible for staff, flexible for students, whilst doing what we have to do as much as we can. So it's going to be trying to find this quite delicate position where we're not asking staff to overpromise, but we're meeting what students need and want, but also thinking about what can staff manage now because they have had, you know, and I think when I've hit low points and my staff have hit low points is when you see things which is very critical. You know, I've seen headlines 'universities are shut - people need to get back to work' as thought just being in the office is the only demonstration that you're that you're back in work. I think as well, although there is some economic uncertainty around at the moment, if I was the Vice Chancellor at the moment, I'd be saying don't see this as a time to try and save money. This is a time to invest. Invest in resources, because we are going to need them, because I think the students coming through are going to need more support. So this isn't - you might be looking at a sort of a slightly insecure economic picture, but this is not a time to be looking at saving money. This is the time to be investing in the resources you've got. And the most important resource you've got is your staff. And then in turn, you're investing in your student experience. So I would say commit to that.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [01:00:35] Great.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [01:00:37] Hopefully he'll listen.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [01:00:39] Kerry?

**Kerry Kellaway** [01:00:41] I think coming from a smaller university, investments all well and good, but obviously sometimes you're just constrained by budget and it doesn't matter what you need, what the students need, sometimes the cost is just too high. So that's always one of the things that I struggle with, is trying to maintain access, trying to maintain some sense of provision whilst managing the purse strings. So that's a really tricky one. And I'm not sure, again, I'm not sure that I have the answer on that one. I think if you can look after your team's wellbeing and the people around you wellbeing, so just - I know I sound like a broken record - but those check-ins are so important and acknowledging, like Alison has just said, when something is really, really rubbish and giving people the space to deal with that and offering your support in terms of that, is really important. I don't necessarily think that's an intervention, but that might help quell some of the exhaustion and burnout that staff are feeling. It's that support, and I think just being able to talk freely about your own wellbeing, the impact that the pandemic has had on you and the workload, those conversations are so important and should be happening on a weekly basis. So find that time to check-in with your teams or your students to make sure that they are handling life, handling work. I think the fact that we are now using digital means that we've effectively brought work into our homes, we've put work into our bedrooms, spare rooms or wherever you're working from. So I don't think it's a question that's taboo to ask anymore, just to say, you know, how are you doing? How's life been for you? We were all kind of in each other's spaces so often that we need to acknowledge that. Wellbeing is important, but we also need to demonstrate as well the behaviour that we would expect our staff to take. So for me, it's really important to demonstrate to my team when I'm switching off. And saying I expect you guys to switch off too. You know, reinforcing these things. I know it's not always possible. And some people have to work outside of hours, but it's so important to give yourself that, that space that what Jon just said about going to the office and leaving the office is so important. I really did take that for granted before. But now it's a thing of beauty. My walk home is my time to kind of disconnect and just think, I've left work in that building. So now when I get home, that's my time. And I can do things. Whereas when you're working from home, it's always in the back of your mind because it's on the kitchen table or you know, you've got a call scheduled. It's so important to maintain those boundaries for your own well-being and professional wellbeing as well and modelling that behaviour. So your colleagues.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [01:03:59] So the message that you'd give to your Vice Chancellor as a headline would be?

**Kerry Kellaway** [01:04:04] The headline would be perhaps model the behaviour that you expect your staff to take. So if you are saying wellbeing is important that make sure you're looking after your own and demonstrating the ways that wellbeing can be achieved.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [01:04:20] Fantastic. Christina?

**Prof Christina Hughes** [01:04:25] So I would absolutely echo that, that we and I'm the worst person in the world for this, but role modelling work life balance is one of the signal stressors people experience. I would also say I was struck by a statistic from the US it's around 75% of the US workforce have caring responsibilities. And although I know as sort of Mary's got children and Bills got elder care and, you know, I've never actually sat and countered, actually never counted how many people I work with, actually do have care responsibilities. And I think a little census of staff and students of what they're dealing with outside of the kind of formal relationship is really salutary to do. I'd say start to a 'say no club'. And I go back to going the extra mile and going, yes, it's wonderful, yes, you feel good. They feel good. It makes the world go round. But actually, you cannot rely on lots of people burning themselves out or getting compassion fatigue because they are feeling they have to keep just pushing themselves through. So actually, you know, and it's the hardest thing most of us can say is actually no. And the other thing, and I know some colleagues at Lancaster have done this and they it's simple, it's an email policy, and you don't send emails, say, before 9:00 in the morning and you don't send them after 5:00pm. And, you know, one of the things we talk about is students emailing us all the time, but actually if you have a policy which is for students and for staff that is so simple to put in place. it's hard to get people to stick to it, I agree. But it's a very simple and very effective thing because it does mean you're allowed to switch off or do something else out of those hours. And finally, I'd say plan at least a couple of weeks a year where there are no meetings whatsoever. Because the meeting culture in universities is bonkers, absolutely bonkers. And I've always, always been, I'm old enough to remember works fortnights when the factories closed down and everybody went off. And everything stopped. And actually, we do need periods of time in our life, the only time I experience that now is around Christmas. You know, so we need periods of time when actually the world stops because it's pointless, you send me loads of emails, you know, the Friday before you go on leave saying, I want to reply by the day you come back on leave. And then I go on leave and I come back and I've got - that's what we're doing to each other. We're unloading our desks and then we go, oh, that's tidy. But other people are the recipients of this. And I think a lot of those micro behaviours, but I'm the worst at this I absolutely acknowledge it, we just need to watch ourselves a bit more, think what we're actually passing on to other people. So those are my hints and tips.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [01:08:06] OK, Jon?

**Jon Baldwin** [01:08:10] Oh, listen, there's some powerful stuff there from everyone, and handy hints and tips as well, frankly so thank you. And just listening to Kerry when she was reflecting on working at home, I remember early in the pandemic I was present when somebody said (I wish had been me) 'we're not working from home, we're sleeping at work'. I thought that was the kind of nice way of putting it, really. And it has been a bit like that. I know we're short of time, Judyth, I mean, I think Vanessa's question is simple, but really, a really good one. And what from a Jisc perspective. It was it was very hard to have anything amounting to a strategic conversation with any of our members until about March this year, because every time you were turning around, you were putting a fire out and as you put it, another one started to burn. It was moving from one moment, one crisis to another. So not surprising, as Vanessa says, that people are tired, they're exhausted. Everybody had stepped up and stepped in and done everything they could. So to have a strategic conversation about how do we get the right interventions, it wasn't happening. I think it's beginning to happen now. Better in some universities than others. We get approached about, I speak generally, 'can you help us understand digital leadership, digital strategy?' 'How does our strategy become a digital one?' You know, university management teams, university leadership teams are used to managing in the physical world not in the digital world. We have some numbers given to us that suggested, I haven't empirically proven them, but suggested that you know, pre-pandemic for every pound invested in the digital estate, 10 pounds was invested in the physical estate and those ratios have got to alter. You know, it's easier to build a building. The processes and procedures are well understood. You know, you have a budget, you have a plan, you have a time scale. It's less easy to know how much you should invest in improving your VLE or ramping up your cybersecurity or whatever it might be. So my intervention would be, you know, invest. I think Alison said that and yes, for the short term, but think long, think about where we're going to be in 2030, what the learning and teaching the pedagogical landscape is going to look like in 2030 and, you know, act and think strategically in your own context to give you the best chance of achieving that.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [01:11:10] And in fact, as you say that, I'm reminded of a webinar that I listened to the other day and one of the participants made this this comment, she suggested that you think big, act small, and move quickly. And to me, that captured, that really captured the way that we need to respond to the pandemic, think big, act small and move quickly. And our time is up. And can I thank the four of you for this wide ranging and very animated discussion. I I've enjoyed it. And I hope members of the the audience have also enjoyed it. And the only thing I'm disappointed with is when we do it in Australia that are about 150 questions that I have to try to manage. But the audience made my job a little bit easier. But I hope that they're also happy in terms of how today has progressed. So thank you and even though it sounds a little bit glib now, keep safe, but also keep sane. Thanks a lot.

**Alison Golden** [01:12:14] Thank you.

**Jon Baldwin** [01:12:15] Thanks, everybody. Thank you. Bye bye.

**Prof Christina Hughes** [01:12:17] Thanksgiving, everyone.

**Kerry Kellaway** [01:12:20] Thank you.