

# Big White Wall - FAQs

## General

### What is Big White Wall?

Big White Wall is a digital mental health support service which is available online, 24/7, and is completely anonymous so users can express themselves freely and openly. All University of Manchester students and staff will have access to this service from Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019 – World Mental Health day.

Wall Guides, who are professionally trained clinicians, monitor the community to ensure the safety and anonymity of all members.

In addition to Big White Wall's online community, users have access to a wealth of useful information and can work through tailored self-help programmes covering topics such as anxiety, sleep, alcohol and drug issues, depression and many more.

The service is being provided through Student Experience Programme, initially for a 12-month trial period, with a view to extending should there be enough demand. The trial is being overseen by Sarah Littlejohn and the Division of Campus Life, part of the Directorate for the Student Experience.

### What can people do on Big White Wall?

Big White Wall offers a range of activities that allow users to work through what's troubling them. Users can:

- **Be anonymous:** access an anonymous community of support available from members 24/7.
- **Share their thoughts:** join a 'Talkabout' alongside fellow members to share and discuss what's on their mind, gain support and advice. They can do this with the whole community or form their own groups or one to one chats.
- **Self-assessment:** take assessments to help them understand more about themselves.
- **Take a course:** join Guided Support courses with others to learn how to manage everything from depression and anxiety to weight-management and stopping smoking.
- **Self-improvement:** find lots of information to help them understand more about how they are feeling, set goals and track their progress.
- **Creative expression:** make a 'Brick' to express themselves and their feelings creatively through drawing or by uploading their own images.
- **Make friends:** make friends anonymously so they can give and receive support from likeminded users/

### Who can access Big White Wall?

All University of Manchester students staff and researchers can access Big White Wall by going to [www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com) and signing up with their University of Manchester email address.

### What are the common issues that bring people to Big White Wall?

Anything that is causing people emotional distress. This can include anxiety, stress, feeling low, depression, feeling out of control and trauma to name a few.

All of these may be triggered by life events such as the loss of a loved one, relationship breakdowns, employment related issues, financial crisis, sexuality, isolation, alcohol or drug related problems.

### **Is Big White Wall separate from the University?**

Yes – we have partnered with them as we feel what they offer complements in-house University support services. Big White Wall was founded in 2007, in response to the lack of safe spaces to talk about mental health online. The service is now commissioned by the NHS, local authorities, employers and many universities. Big White Wall also works with the Ministry of Defence and Help for Heroes to provide free support for all UK serving personnel, veterans and their family members. To date, Big White Wall has helped over 70,000 people to manage their wellbeing.

### **How does Big White Wall work alongside other University support services?**

Big White Wall operates alongside our pre-existing University support services. It is not a replacement for any existing services or resources. Rather, we hope that Big White Wall's friendly online community and self-help resources will be useful additional tools to help students and staff manage their mental health and wellbeing.

Big White Wall staff are fully briefed on University support services and resources and will advise students and staff about them where necessary. They cannot make direct referrals as all users are anonymous.

## **Safety**

### **How safe is Big White Wall?**

Big White Wall has strict rules to ensure users' safety. There are [House Rules](#) and [Privacy Guidelines](#) that guide users on how to keep safe on the site. Big White Wall advocate a policy of non-exchange of personal information or private contacts.

All new content generated by members on the site, including Talkabouts and Bricks, are monitored 24/7. Specific behaviour on the website will trigger a response by Big White Wall staff and an escalation process will be implemented.

While it happens infrequently, Big White Wall will remove any content from the website and bar members who are not working within the [House Rules](#) and [Privacy Guidelines](#).

### **What does Big White Wall do to keep the community safe?**

Big White Wall takes the safety of its users very seriously:

- Trained Wall Guides are present 24/7 to respond to any worries or concerns at all about members being at immediate risk of causing harm to themselves or others
- All content on Big White Wall is read by Wall Guides
- Wall Guides send users a message if they think they have used a real name or other identifying information without realising
- There is an immediate alert system for members using words like suicide, cutting, help or abuse that will get a high priority response from a Wall Guide
- There is an immediate alert system for members scoring themselves as suicidal on a test that will get a high priority response from a Wall Guide

- Wall Guides follow clear policies and procedures for members at risk of harming self or others on Big White Wall and for inappropriate behaviour
- Wall Guides do not have access to users' email addresses or registration data, which is kept separate from their user name
- Wall Guides and other members of Big White Wall staff are advanced checked for criminal records
- Wall Guides and other Big White staff will never ask users for any personal details including users' name, address, email, telephone number, where you live/work/study or bank details unless this is required.

### **Why is Big White Wall anonymous?**

Research has demonstrated that people tend to avoid sharing their troubles with friends, family or healthcare professionals. For example, 50% never go to a doctor for fear of stigma. Men in particular are afraid to reveal how they feel or what's troubling them. Big White Wall provides an environment in which members feel safe and supported while remaining anonymous.

Through Big White Wall's anonymity feature users are free to talk about the things that matter to them without the fear of being judged or someone they know finding out.