



NiteLine

Strategic Plan

2021-2025

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**INSTANT
MESSAGING
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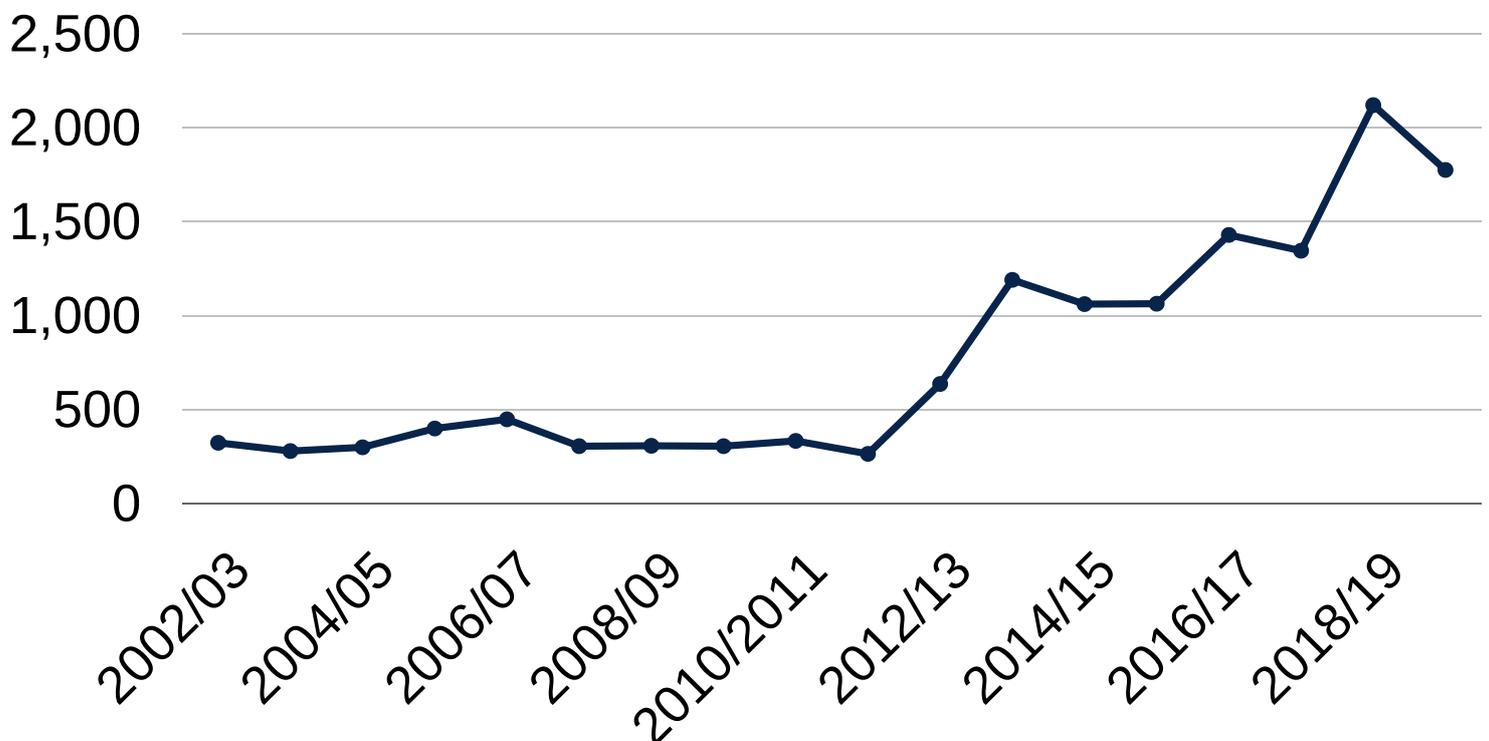
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The Story So Far

NiteLine Dublin was established in 1993 by the Students' Unions of Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin. Inspired by similar student-run services in the UK, they aimed to set up a late night listening service to provide free and anonymous peer support to students over the phone.

Over the last 27 years, we have expanded to 6 colleges in Dublin and the surrounding areas. We now offer our services to more than 70,000 students. Since the introduction of our instant messaging service in 2012, our annual contact volume has shot up from just over 600 contacts in the academic year 2012/2013 to just over 2 thousand contacts in the year 2018/2019. 75% of our contacts now come in via instant messaging, with 25% of our contacts coming in via phone.

Contacts (Phone & Instant Messaging) Per Year 2002-2020



*In the academic year 2019/20, NiteLine was forced to close at the end of March due to the closures of all colleges as a result of Covid-19. As we were unable to take calls for April and May, our contact volume for the year was lower than expected.

In 2013, Ireland's second NiteLine was established in University College Cork, and NiteLine Dublin has since supported the establishment of two more NiteLines in Queen's University Belfast and, in 2019, in NUI Galway. Together, the four NiteLines in Ireland cover approximately one third of all third level students in Ireland.

In 2017 NiteLine Dublin launched our first strategic plan which outlined our values, our mission and our goals for the years 2018 - 2020. We committed to increasing the number of contacts we received each year, supporting the establishment of at least one new NiteLine in Ireland and applying for Charity Status. To support the achievement of these goals, we recruited an External Advisory Board with expertise in areas such as law, accounting, strategy and marketing. As we come to the end of that three year plan, we now feel the need for a longer-term vision.

As levels of stress, loneliness and mental illness continue to rise among third level students, peer support services such as NiteLine are more important than ever (Price et al 2019; IPPR 2017; McLafferty et al 2017). We recognise that in order to meet the growing and changing needs of third level students, NiteLine must adapt and expand our capacity to support students.

Our 5 Year Strategic Plan for the years 2021-2025 has been developed after consultation with our volunteers, representatives of our affiliated colleges, our External Advisory Board and, most importantly, third level students themselves. This plan will be reviewed and updated annually. The core ambition of this strategic plan is to expand the availability of our service to more students than ever before. This will require significant change from within NiteLine, and significant additional funding and expertise.

Introduction

What is NiteLine?

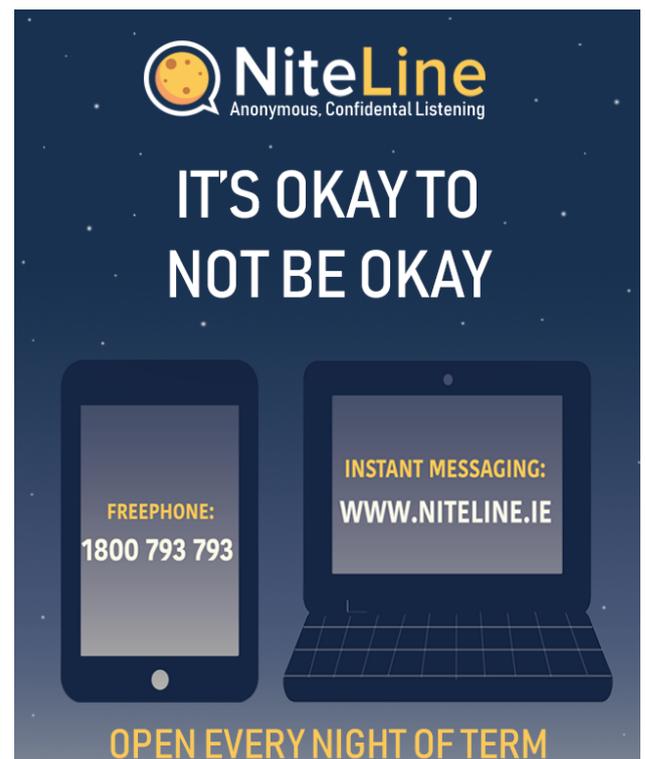
NiteLine is an out-of-hours peer support service for third level students. We offer a listening and information service run by and for third level students every night of the week during term-time. We provide a service that is anonymous, confidential, non-judgemental and non-directive.

Our Vision

NiteLine's vision is for all third level students to have access to an empathetic peer listener.

Our Mission

NiteLine's mission is to support student mental health through a confidential, late-night listening and information service.



Our Values

1. Compassion

We are motivated by compassion. Our service is founded on empathy and respect for our callers and fellow volunteers.

2. Student Empowerment

We empower our callers to speak openly and make their own decisions through our pillars of anonymity, confidentiality, non-judgmental listening, and non-directive support. We empower our student volunteers to support their peers and grow as leaders of our service.

3. Excellence

We are committed to providing a professional and quality service to our callers and stakeholders alongside high quality training and support for our volunteers.

4. Peer Support

As students themselves, our volunteers are in the unique position of being able to empathise with our callers. We recognize that student support comes from the inside out and pride ourselves on our support structures for our volunteers.

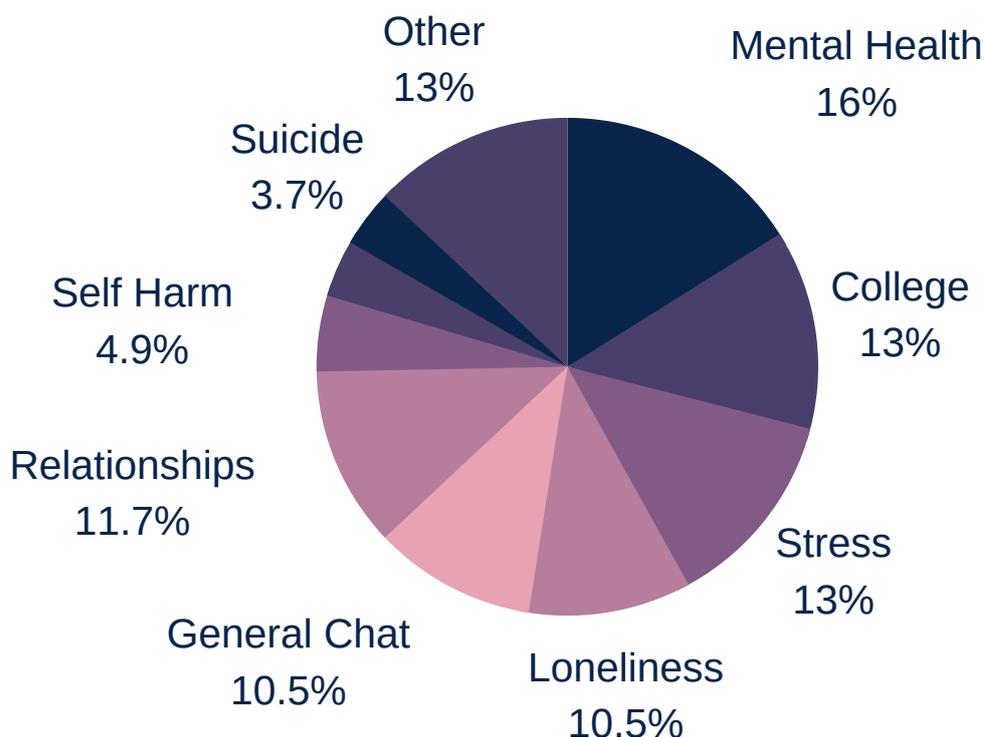
5. Inclusivity

We believe our service must be freely accessible to any of our students that need us. We strive to have a welcoming volunteer base that is representative of the wider student body.

What makes NiteLine different?

- We are a tailored support service for student mental health.
- We are open at night when other services are closed.
- As peers, we do not tell our callers what to do. We listen, give information if the caller wishes, and support them to make their own decisions.
- Our affiliated colleges can tailor the information we give out to reflect the support services available in their specific college.
- We actively recruit students from our affiliated colleges, creating a population of individuals who are highly trained and capable of supporting their peers.
- We take calls about everything from suicide, to how someone's day went, to how a student can contact their college counselling service.

Most Common Call Topics



*As reported by respondents to our 2020 student survey

Organisational Overview

The Board of Trustees

Shanna works in EY's Strategy and Transaction team and has over 9 years' experience in the provision of audit, accounting and advisory services across public and private sector clients. Shanna trained in PwC's Asset and Wealth Management Assurance practice and has extensive knowledge on the preparation of financial statements, technical accounting and internal controls.



Shanna Collins
Chair of the Board of Trustees



Adam McNally
Secretary to the
Board of Trustees

Adam has been involved with NiteLine Dublin since his first year of college and has held the positions of Public Face, Training Officer, Head of Training and Irish Regional Coordinator. Adam has gained a myriad of experience in project-management, team-work, leadership and collaboration. He works in the legal aid department of a regulatory body and has previously worked in international law firms and educational development with LGBTQ+ youth. Adam is also studying at The Honourable Society of King's Inn and is a law graduate from Maynooth University.

Doireann has been involved with NiteLine for the past 7 years and has held positions ranging from the Research & Development Officer, Treasurer, Coordinator, and Secretary to the Advisory Board. Doireann has worked for the Health Products Regulatory Authority, PwC, and most recently at the UN Refugee Agency. This varied professional experience has cultivated high-level project management, administration, and communication skills.



Doireann Crosson
Company Secretary and Trustee

Catherine has over 6 years experience in developing and executing brand plans and long-term brand strategy. Now based in Ireland working for a global pharmaceutical company, she leads the development of brand strategy and campaigns across multiple categories. Catherine recently completed a Mini MBA in Marketing, has a professional diploma in Digital Marketing and graduated from Trinity College Dublin with a Bachelor's degree in Business Studies and French.



Catherine O'Connor
Treasurer of the Board of Trustees



Helen Keeley
Trustee

Helen is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist in the North Cork Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Helen is co-chair of the Youth Mental Health Health Special Interest Group at the Irish College of Psychiatrists and was Chair of the Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2015 to 2017). Helen has a Certificate in Systemic Theory and Practice from the University of East London and an MD in Suicidology. Helen was a board member of the Irish Reach Out youth mental health website and the National Suicide Research Foundation.

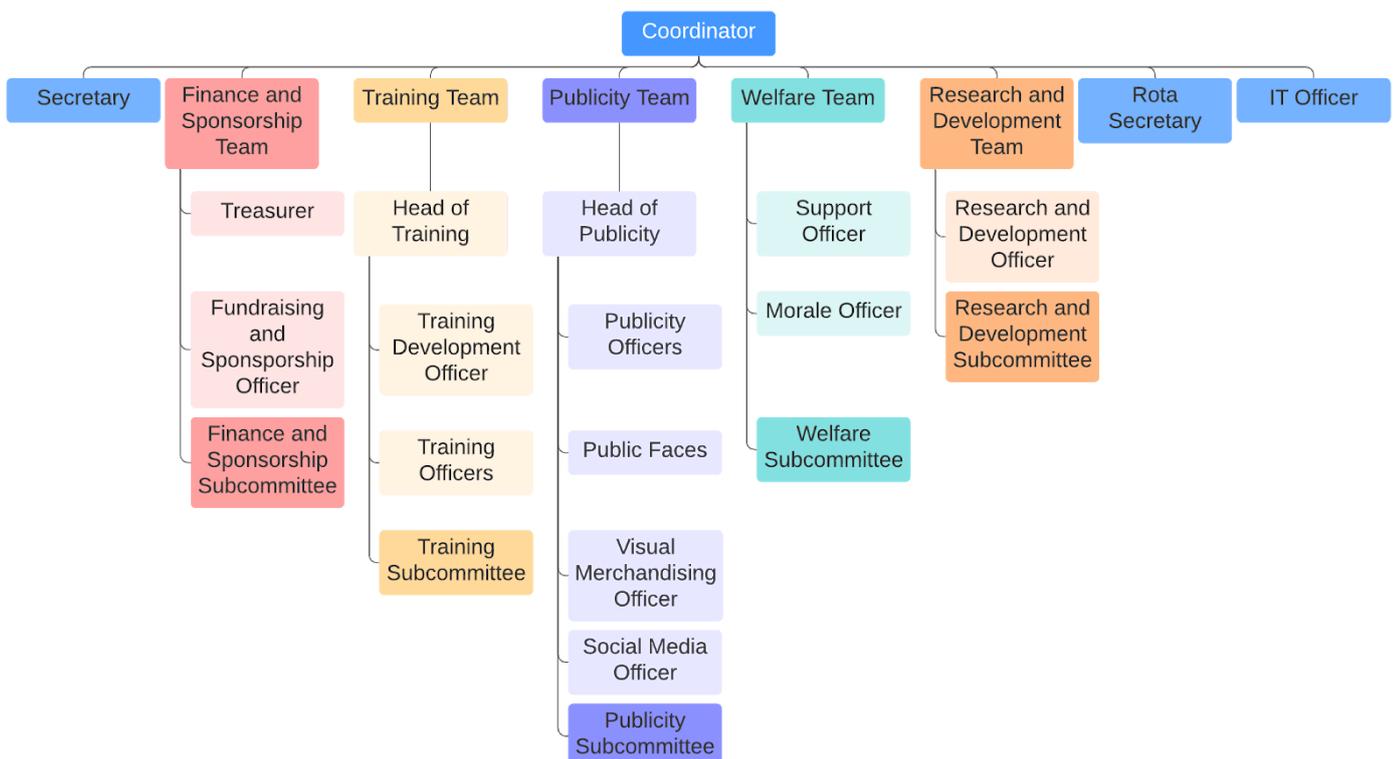
A law graduate of UCD and TCD, Bláthín has qualified as both a solicitor and barrister and has over 9 years' experience across the Irish courts, the public sector and the private sector. Currently, she is employed as a solicitor with a large utility provider where she specialises in data protection, consumer law, commercial contracting and litigation. Bláthín has a keen interest in the issues of corporate responsibility, and diversity and inclusiveness. She previously volunteered as a counsellor with the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre.



Bláthín Peirce
Trustee

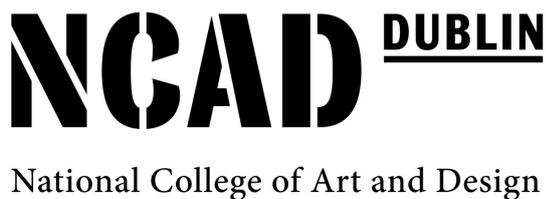
The Committee

- NiteLine Dublin has almost 100 call-taking volunteers, all of whom are third level students or recent graduates.
- Each year, this volunteer base elects the committee which will run the organisation, with support from counsellors and other key staff members in our affiliated colleges.
- The committee consists of five departments: Training, Publicity, Finance & Sponsorship, Research & Development and Volunteer Welfare.
- This committee is chaired by the Coordinator, who is also a student or recent graduate elected to the role by the volunteers.
- There is a designated Publicity Officer for each affiliated college to manage relations and coordinate advertisement for that college.
- The committee presents on NiteLine's operations, developments, needs and upcoming plans to stakeholders from each affiliated college bi-annually.



Our Stakeholders

- NiteLine Dublin's stakeholders are its volunteers, as well as the students, Student Services department, and Students' Unions of its affiliated colleges.
- NiteLine Dublin derives its funding from its affiliated colleges: Dublin Business School, Maynooth University, National College of Art Dublin, Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, Trinity College Dublin, and University College Dublin.



Volunteer Training

- Our 24 hour initial training program covers key topics such as active listening, signposting to other services, self-care and dealing with issues such as suicide, self harm and sexual violence.
- Initial training was developed in collaboration with volunteers themselves, college counselling services and external organisations such as Samaritans Ireland.
- Trainees practice calls with each other and with senior volunteers throughout training.
- At the end of their training, trainees are tested on a number of key skills across both phone and instant messaging.
- Volunteers receive ongoing training from the training team and external organisations throughout their time with NiteLine.

Volunteer Support

- Our bi-weekly Support Meetings are facilitated by a counsellor from one of our affiliated colleges, and provide an opportunity to reflect on difficult calls and learn from one another. Volunteers must attend at least one Support Meeting per month.
- NiteLine volunteers never work alone. They are trained to debrief each other after calls and at the end of each shift without breaching a caller's confidentiality.
- NiteLine has a dedicated Support Officer who checks in with any volunteers who have taken a difficult call.
- Our affiliated counsellors provide counselling to any volunteers who have taken a difficult call and would like additional support.

NiteLine's Strategic Objectives

After a process of consultation with students, our volunteers, our stakeholders and our Advisory Board, we have identified five key areas to focus on for the next five years.

1. Best Practice

2. Efficiency

3. Expansion of Services

Our Strategic Objectives

4. Recognition & Trust

5. Funding & Partnership

Objective 1: Best Practise

We will continually review and improve the service we offer to students to ensure we provide the best possible support.

Why?

- Just as the issues affecting the student population of Ireland change over time, we must innovate and adapt to meet the changing needs of students.
- As a student-run organisation, it is vital that we work with appropriate guidance and support to provide a high quality service.

How?

- Create a quality assurance protocol.
- Implement a new system for presenting call-taking policies to our volunteers which clearly demonstrates the evidence base behind each policy.
- Collate and implement feedback from our volunteers on our training and internal support.
- Collaborate with other helplines to exchange best practice.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant additional standards of the Charities Governance Code.

Thank you to the following organisations who came to talk to our volunteers in 2020



Objective 2: Efficiency

We will restructure our organisation to meet increasing demand for our services.

Why?

- Our current organisational structure is not scale-ready as it was designed when we were much smaller.
- We will need to recruit additional expertise to achieve our strategic objectives.

How?

- Ensure we recruit both volunteers and trustees with the necessary skills to achieve our strategic objectives.
- Refine the relationship between our student-run committee and our board of trustees.
- Restructure our committee for more effective communication as we expand.
- Introduce full-time pay for NiteLine's Coordinator.
- Develop an IT strategy to support our strategic objectives.

Objective 3: Expansion of Services

We will increase access to NiteLine services by expanding to more colleges, reviewing our opening hours and exploring new platforms we can use to offer support.

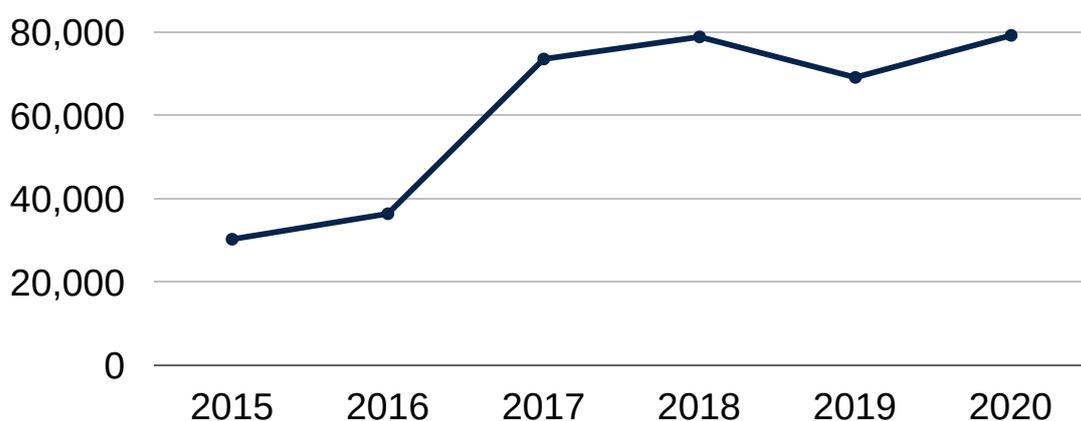
Why?

- All students should have access to a peer support service.
- We need to innovate and adapt our service to meet changing student needs.
- Students need to be listened to and supported outside of our current opening hours and outside of term-time.

How?

- Increase the number of students covered by NiteLine by at least 20%.
- Increase our annual contacts by at least 50%.
- Explore options for new, innovative and effective platforms to offer peer support.
- Review our opening hours.
- Support the establishment of at least one more NiteLine in Ireland.

Number of students covered by NiteLine 2015-2020



Objective 4: Recognition & Trust

We will ensure NiteLine is a well-known and trusted brand among third level students.

Why?

- NiteLine must build a well-known brand if we are to properly support the student community.
- The nature of NiteLine's services must be well-understood by third level students if they are to be encouraged to use the service when needed.



NiteLine's Public Faces for 2020

How?

- Develop our physical on-campus presence at our affiliated colleges.
- Increase our social media followers by 100%.
- Develop a public engagement strategy to support our expansion over the next 5 years.

Objective 5: Funding & Partnership

We will diversify our income and establish partnerships to ensure we are financially sustainable.

Why?

- We cannot develop our service and meet our strategic goals without increasing our funding.
- There is substantial scope for mutually beneficial partnerships between NiteLine and organisations with an interest in Corporate Social Responsibility.
- A college's ability to pay an affiliation fee should not be a barrier to their students accessing our service.

How?

- Review our existing affiliation fee to ensure it is both fair and affordable for colleges.
- Design a revenue development plan to diversify our income, focusing on fundraising and grant opportunities.
- Establish partnerships to cover at least 25% of our costs.



NiteLine

Strategic Plan

2021-2025

References

1. Price, A. Smith, H.A. And Kavalidou, K. (2019). USI National Report on Student Mental Health in Third Level Education, Dublin: Union of Students in Ireland.
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