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| “The Neurodiverse group gave me the opportunity to socialise in small groups. This year I have realised I have selective mutism where I can't talk because I am too anxious. Having Nicola there to talk to really helped too.”  “Since starting college I've grown to understand more about myself on a deeper level, the help and support that the neurodiverse group at Perth college has provided has played a key role in this due to my tendency to isolate and not vocalise when struggling.”  “From the first time of visiting the group I was welcomed in, which I felt encouraged me to feel a part of it already.” Neurodiverse GroupUHI Perth W | **Goal:** To offer a safe space for students and promote socialisation and mutual respect, to help overcome social anxiety. Consistency in staff will ensure students can develop relationships with supportive individuals to accompany them on their educational journey.  **Submitted by:** Alexander Weir and Nicola Menzies **Project:** To foster unity among students by embracing their unique qualities in a relaxed environment. The Group supports students facing communication, social, sensory, organisational, and learning challenges. **Benefit to:** Students with a diagnosed (or potential diagnosis) of a neurodiverse condition.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | ****Key message: Support and improved retention**** | | | Relaxed environment offering the chance to unwind and engage in activities | | | Addresses overwhelming nature of unstructured lunch hours for this group of students | | | Provides consistency | | | Supports students with any challenges they face | | | Helps overcome social anxiety and to develop relationships | | | **Project delivery** |  | | Initial scoping exercise included meetings with autism initiatives to gather insight and collaborate on effective strategies | | | Class talks were held to reach out to individual students and the Group was promoted via lecturers and with posters around campus | | | The Group is student-led, ensuring active participation and creating an atmosphere of fun and inclusivity | | | The Group meets every Wednesday from 12pm-2pm, in the same room | | | Attendance at the Group helps students who are struggling and at risk of dropping out due to social barriers | |   **Impact:**  Since inception, the Group has maintained a consistent attendance of 5-10 students per week, with approx. 36 sessions over the year. Students who would typically keep difficulties to themselves were observed growing comfortable discussing challenges, gaining perspective and alleviating stress. |

Recognises the challenges faced by students with ND conditions | Provides a safe space for students to socialise | Builds peer relationships | Engages with external partners | Improves retention for ND students | Fosters a sense of belonging and empowers individuals