



Department
for Education

Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce

Notes of meeting 18 July 2023

Held 12:30-14:45, virtually via MS Teams.

Chair

Higher Education Student Support Champion, Professor Edward Peck.

Members present

- Mia Brady, Student representative - Student Minds Student Advisory Committee
- Dr Nicola Byram - Network Leader, SMaRteN
- Prathiba Chitsabesan - National Clinical Director for Children and Young People's Mental Health, NHS England
- Ben Elger - Chief Executive - The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA),
- Lee Fryatt, Co-founder - LEARN Network
- Angela Halston - Policy and Engagement Officer, Independent HE (IHE)
- Jane Harris - Chair, Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education Expert Group (MWBHE)
- Gordon McKenzie – CEO, GuildHE
- Amy Norton - Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Office for Students (OfS)
- Mark Shanahan - Co-founder of LEARN Network
- Jill Stevenson – Chair, Association Of Managers Of Student Services In Higher Education (AMOSSHE)
- Rosie Tressler, CEO - Student Minds
- Steve West - President - UUK

Apologies

- Stuart Rimmer - Chief Executive at East Coast College, representing Association of Colleges (AoC)

- Dr Dominique Thompson - Clinical Advisor, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Student Minds

In attendance

- Sandra Binns - Student Support Champion's team
- Minister Robert Halfon, Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (In attendance for item 1 & 2 only)
- Jen Hope - AoC, representing Stuart Rimmer
- Department for Education (DfE) officials
- Ben McCarthy - Student Support Champion's team
- Jenny Shaw - Student Support Champion's team

1. Introductions

The Chair opened the taskforce meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance.

2. Setting the context for the taskforce

Minister Robert Halfon welcomed all those present to the meeting and thanked members for agreeing to join the taskforce. He outlined government's approach to supporting student mental health as well as reiterating the remit of the taskforce as set out in the terms of reference.

3. Ways of working and terms of reference

The Chair outlined that taskforce members should always remember that they share a commitment to enhancing the support for students experiencing mental health challenges in HEPs.

He reminded members that the initial role of the taskforce was to focus on the four core issues set out in the terms of reference. Other issues that come up outside of these will be recorded and reflected in the development of item [4e: Areas for further improvement](#), and thus could be raised with the minister in due course. He reminded members that the focus of the taskforce is on achieving systemic changes of approach in HE and not on the nature of individual clinical interventions.

The taskforce will be a transparent forum, with a publicly available website where minutes and relevant papers will be published. The taskforce will operate normally under Chatham House rules, i.e., points of view made during meetings can be shared but without attribution to named individuals.

Action: Student representation. A number of members argued there should be more representation in the taskforce from current students. The Chair was open to this suggestion, in particular identifying students from panels. He undertook to take this forward with the Secretariat.

4a. Areas of focus in the plan for improvement: Identification of students/wellbeing analytics

This taskforce will develop a plan for the use of data analytics in the identification of at-risk students - and other potential methods - in the identification of at-risk students.

Action: All taskforce members will be invited to the October roundtable event on the Identification of at-risk students, including the use of wellbeing analytics.

4b. Areas of focus in the plan for improvement: Supporting adoption of good practice

The taskforce will look at how far good practice has been implemented and ensure that it is implemented more widely where necessary. The Chair said that it should seek to ensure that all HE students are covered by a relevant mental health charter which articulates and allows for assessment of such good practice appropriate to distinct parts of the sector.

Action: The emerging approaches of AoC, IHE, and GuildHE would be explored at the next meeting.

4c. Areas of focus in the plan for improvement: Student commitment

HE providers need to consider the design of their policies and procedures, and related communication around academic processes, such as module failure, poor exam results and drop-outs with students.

Action: Members would be invited to a roundtable on this topic in October which would examine and review emerging good practice

4d. Areas of focus in the plan for improvement: National Review of HE Suicides

UUK and Papyrus provided a template for providers to review instances of student suicide as part of postvention guidance. The taskforce is asked to develop this work so that, as well as HEPs completing these templates and learning from local suicides, they will be audited independently so that the wider sector can learn from them and third parties can gain an insight into progress in adoption of good practice.

Procurement for this review is about to begin. The outcome will be shared with the taskforce once that commercial process has been completed.

Action: Once commercial process has been completed, a subgroup of members would be invited to meet with the selected provider to discuss the implementation of the process; for instance, there are issues relating to the time period for the first tranche of reviews and meaningful family involvement.

4e. Areas of focus in the plan for improvement: Areas for further improvement

The taskforce will aim to identify up to five additional areas of focus for improvement based on feedback from this taskforce, as well as further sector conversations. This process will create a longlist from which we will choose these additional areas.

Action: Work to begin on NHS/HE relationship as part of the 'areas for further improvement' work strand.

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