

Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce

NHS/HE Partnerships – Project Proposal

Introduction

In its first stage report, the Taskforce has proposed that the relationship between HEPs and NHS secondary care specialist mental health services should be explored further. This has been agreed by the Minister. This note should be read alongside the relevant section of that first stage report.

Project Summary

In its consultation, the Taskforce heard that greater strategic collaboration between HEPs and NHS mental health services is widely recognised as a key priority, whilst identifying several obstacles to enhanced cooperation. Despite this, a number of innovative partnerships are demonstrating evidence of positive outcomes. To date, however, the wider adoption of these models across England has been limited.

The Taskforce notes that a number of publications exist already which outline challenges and solutions to HE-NHS collaboration in the support and treatment of students with serious mental health problems¹. However, there may be greater impact gained through a joint statement from the Taskforce and NHS England (and potentially UUK) which translates these documents into streamlined guidance which addresses these current problems and sets out examples of good practice that are overcoming them. The intention is that this guidance would be used in a local context, to enable conversations between senior leaders on enhanced joined-up services for students, and to encourage more consistent adoption of those models which are deemed to be good practice.

Brief

- Define overall scope of the guidance (audience, timelines, purpose, structure, etc.).
- Reach consensus on what the prescribed models of good practice might satisfy, for example:
 - Deliver benefits to students, HEPs, and the wider health system (with evidence);
 - Do not seek to replicate existing services found elsewhere (e.g. crisis care);

¹ For examples of these documents, please see [NHS-University Partnerships: Working Together for Student Mental Health – Universities UK \(2022\)](#) and [Working Better Together to Support Student Mental Health – Nous Group \(2023\)](#).

- Are recognisable to the NHS in its approach to service design and delivery (e.g. modelled after CMHT or Liaison service);
 - Are flexible and adaptable to different local contexts and requirements (including small and specialist HEPs); and
 - Address or mitigate the recurring challenges faced by HEPs in the delivery of mental health support or in the join-up with NHS services (see Appendix 1 for examples).
- Identify the models of good practice to be explored and interrogated further and collect and collate additional insight and evidence working in collaboration with stakeholders.
 - Summarise existing literature (recommendations, solutions, and good practice) and map this against agreed scope of the guidance.
 - Translate into something that is short, apposite, and constructive for use by local senior leaders from the NHS and HEPs.

Outputs

- Guidance which summarises common challenges to HE-NHS collaboration, suggests solutions, and explores case studies of emerging models of good practice.
- The publication should be used in the context of initiating strategic conversations between senior leadership across the health and higher education sectors.
- Particular attention should be given to how the guidance will be understood and interpreted by those working in the NHS delivering mental health services.

Proposed Timelines

February:

- Agree scope of project with Taskforce meeting on **2 February**.
- Define scope of the guidance (structure, audience, purpose, etc.).
- Collate existing literature and map against proposed guidance.
- Agree the criteria for the models of good practice to satisfy.
- Engage the models of good practice with the case study data collection template.

March-April:

- Finalise data collection from the models of good practice.
- Share draft guidance with selected stakeholders.
- Share draft with Taskforce on **19 April** for further comment.

May:

- Finalise guidance – share with stakeholders and with Taskforce for **31 May**.

Proposed Working Group

The work will be led by Ben McCarthy and supported by Peter Fonagy and Prathiba Chitsabesan. It will be guided by a Working Group comprising:

- Taskforce members (self-selected)
- AMOSSHE (and a selection of their members)
- UUK, GuildHE, Independent HE and AoC
- HEPs and Health partners delivering joint services (e.g. Manchester, Liverpool, North London)
- Other stakeholders invited following initial consultation