

# Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce

## Taskforce and Student Support Champion – additional priorities set out in the first stage report ministerial foreword

Area of work identified in the first stage report foreword	What is the issue?	How far is this being addressed through the Taskforce and wider work?	Proposed action to address this
Prevention	To prevent mental health needs escalating we need an environment from HEPs that supports wellbeing and identifies students with vulnerabilities early	<p>The University Mental Health Charter sets the principles for a whole university approach to wellbeing and mental health, including around inclusivity, embedding wellbeing and accessibility into university buildings and accommodation, and tackling isolation.</p> <p>In the identifying students at risk workstrand, the Taskforce is looking at methods to spot student vulnerabilities early so they get support before their needs escalate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to pursue Charter Programme target and Taskforce commitments for small / specialist providers to follow University Mental Health Charter principles</li> <li>• Deliver data governance guidance on student analytics to identify students needing support</li> <li>• Produce a student commitment outlining principles of compassionate comms and procedures and examples of good practice</li> </ul>

		The 'student commitment' on compassionate communications/procedures will help prevent students from being harmed by their interactions with academic processes	
Empowering students to manage their wellbeing and mental health (known as 'resilience' or 'mental wealth')	<p>Students having the right tools to be able to build their own 'resilience' to manage low level stresses and challenges, protecting themselves from mental health needs escalating and reducing the need for professional intervention. This needs to be accompanied by an institutional culture that allows individuals to be resilient.</p> <p>TASO has found there is <a href="#">mixed evidence of psychoeducation</a> (ie workshops or programmes on broad themes such as</p>	<p>The Charter talks about psychoeducation being carried out by knowledgeable professionals.</p> <p>Student Space also includes articles on how students can prepare themselves for challenges they face at university.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote research and experience of interventions that enhance resilience in partnership with TASO and other sector groups</li> <li>• Tackle this issue through broader HE Student Support Champion work on transition where initial findings will be published 23/24 academic year (April)</li> </ul>

	resilience or specific issues such as managing exam stress, alcohol/drugs) and some evidence of interventions to build resilience		
Online harms and social media	Social media is believed to be one of the drivers of worsening mental health among young people in recent years	<p>In terms of wider online harms, many universities already use the Ripple service to refer students where they make searches for suicide related content</p> <p>Online harms action from Department for Science, Innovation &amp; Technology (DSIT) should protect adults from illegal content when at home and when using their phones</p> <p>Building on existing Suicide Safer Universities guidance, the sector is working to produce additional guidance to prevent access to means of suicide (including digital access to information)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ask student services professionals (through AMOSSHE) about action being taken to protect students from social media and online harms and seek to promote good practice</li> <li>• Support work on suicide prevention, including restricting access to means (this is already underway with a Steering Group being chaired by the HE Student Support Champion which will report this academic year)</li> </ul>

<p>Exploring greater information sharing between schools, colleges, and HE provide to identify pupils / students at risk before they progress to university</p>	<p>At present limited information is routinely shared by schools/colleges directly on the mental health of prospective students.</p>	<p>The Taskforce’s first stage report commits to exploring ‘extending the UCAS reference process to derive more detail about students from schools and colleges as part of work to identify students at risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue work with UCAS to look at how additional information could be collected directly from schools and colleges and explore action that DfE could take to support this</li> <li>• HE Student Support Champion to publish a report based on initial work on transition to university this academic year</li> </ul>
<p>Setting out the importance of well-trained mental health professionals supporting students in higher education settings</p>	<p>Ensuring that universities have competent staff able to deal with the range of needs of their students and provide effective advice and support</p>	<p>The University Mental Health Charter includes the principle that mental health training should be relevant to the role of individual staff.</p> <p>The Taskforce is looking at training requirements for non-specialist staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While models for support will differ, universities will have in place mental health professionals, including counsellors. DfE provider research published in 2023 showed that 97% of higher education institutions provide in-house psychological support for those experiencing poor mental health.</li> <li>• The Taskforce will also explore a framework for training for non-specialist staff around awareness of mental distress and vulnerability in everyday interactions</li> <li>• The second stage report will set out the Taskforce position on training for staff around mental health.</li> </ul>