

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

November 2014

BACKGROUND

- The Scottish government, in its 2012-15 Mental Health Strategy for Scotland, recognises mental illness as one of the top public health challenges in Europe.
- The University is committed to developing a working environment and working practices which help maintain and improve the emotional and physical health of staff.
- The percentage of students at UK HEI's declaring a mental health disability almost doubled from 2001 (4.48%) to 2011 (8.39%)
- A 2003 report by the Royal College of Psychiatrists into the mental health of students found not only that the number of higher education students presenting with symptoms of mental ill health has increased, but the number of students presenting with more severe mental health problems was also increasing. An update to this report in 2011 found that "the concerns highlighted there have shown no sign of abating and in many respects have become more pressing."
- Mental health problems can be severely disruptive to a student's capacity to study and learn. Supporting students with mental health issues can be a source of stress and sometimes distress for University staff in a range of positions.

There is an argument for a holistic approach here, through the development of a campus wide mental health strategy encompassing students and staff. However there are particularly pressing concerns around student mental health issues, which have been raised by staff involved in supporting students with complex mental health needs, and also by EUSA in terms of student access to mental health services. Hence the proposed focus of this group will be to oversee the development of a Student Mental Health Strategy, recognising that the next logical step from this would be the development of a similar strategy for staff.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the strategy group is to oversee the development of a Student Mental Health Strategy for the University of Edinburgh which will ultimately set out how we:

- Promote mental well-being in the student community
- Deliver appropriate, high quality, accessible and equitable support services for students with mental health in order to support them with their academic goals.
- Train, develop and support staff (in particular non-specialist staff) who in turn support students with mental health issues
- Gather and use data on student mental health issues to inform future service development
- Respond appropriately to student mental health crisis situations
- Maintain an appropriate range of policies in this area, considering in particular the need for a Support for Study policy, and ensure these policies are overseen through an appropriate governance framework

The Strategy, once developed, will be presented to the University Equality & Diversity Committee, the Mental Health Sub-Group and the Student Disability Committee for consideration and approval. Some recommendations of the report (eg any significant policy developments) may in addition need to go to committees of Senate for discussion and approval.

RESPONSIBILITY OF MEMBERS

The role of members of the strategy group is to:

- Agree the proposed scope of the strategy as set out in this document.
- Agree the proposed approach to delivering on the different elements of the strategy.
- Act as a source of expert advice by commenting, advising and providing feedback on:
 - the outputs as and when they are produced by the groups / individuals tasked with different elements of the work.
 - the final draft strategy that is developed.
- Share the ongoing work of the group in their own departments and report back on comments, queries, concerns and suggestions received as a result.
- Act as supporters and advocates for formal approval of the final strategy document through the groups listed above.

COMPOSITION

Convenor: Prof Helen Cameron, Director, Centre for Medical Education, MVM

Members:

- Adam Bunni, (EUSA Representation and Student Support Manager)
- Alex Baker (CHSS)
- Dr Anne Payne (Biological Sciences)
- Dr Sharon Young, Representative (GP) of the University Health Centre
- Dr Steven Henderson (CSE)
- Eve Livingstone, (EUSA VP Societies and Activities)
- Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary, Student Experience (Secretary)
- Helen Hamer (Physics)
- Lynn Duff, Head of Residence Life (Accommodation Services)
- Neil Willett, SPS
- Professor Alan Cumming (MVM)
- Professor Richard Coyne (HSS)
- Rev Dr Harriet Harris, The University Chaplain
- Ronnie Millar, (Director of University Counselling Service)
- Sheila Williams, Director of Student Disability Service
- The Rector (in his role as Mental Health Champion.)

In attendance: Tam Mitchell, Mental Health Co-ordinator

In receipt of papers Tom Ward, (Academic Services); Shelagh Green (Director, Careers Service)

MEETINGS

The task group will convene in November 2014 and should aim to complete its initial work by June 2015, noting that some strands of activity (eg promotion of mental health and wellbeing) may need further consideration in future years.

The group will convene at least 3 times during the period Nov 2014 to July 2015, and more often if needed in the view of the Convenor or majority of members.

REMIT

Within the development of a Mental Health Strategy, it is envisaged that the following strands will need to be addressed:

Training and information: recognising that training and support is already available through services such as Counselling and Student Disability, A) consider the training needs of key staff stakeholders and the most effective ways in which these needs could be met. B) Review the effectiveness / accessibility of information available to students and propose ways in which information could be improved.

Key staff stakeholders include Student Support Offices in Schools and Personal Tutors. As well as identifying the precise training needs for these groups, it will be important to consider the constraints on time availability for some staff (especially PT's) and how they would wish to access further training or support in order to ensure greater take-up of important training.

Lead: Tam Mitchell, Mental Health Co-ordinator, supported by Jacquie Nicholson, Mental Health Mentor

Timescales: tbc

Data: ensure that we have sufficient data to measure the need for support and support planning for the required resources.

What data is gathered on / about / from students with mental health issues. Review the quality and value of the data collected / available including the recent EUSA survey on mental health. Identify alternative or improved data collection activities where needed. Consideration to be given to the RCP findings that there is a need in addition for systematic, longitudinal research into the changing prevalence over time of mental disorders in students.

Lead: Tam Mitchell, Mental Health Co-ordinator, supported by the Surveys Unit of the Student Experience Project as required.

Timescales: tbc

Crisis procedures: ensure clear and transparent processes are in place for supporting students (and their supporters) who experience mental health crisis.

What procedures are currently in place? Could these be improved? How well understood are these processes by key stakeholders?

Lead: Mark Wilkinson, Student Experience Project Manager, supported by Tam Mitchell, Mental Health Co-ordinator. Note that this is part of a larger piece of work looking at all crisis situations, not just mental health.

Timescales: early 2015

Policies: review the effectiveness / adequacy of the policies that are in place

What policies are in place at University or other level that affect the provision of support to students with mental health issues? Do these policies, taken together, provide an effective framework for the delivery of mental health services to students? Is there a need for further policy development such as a Support for / Fitness to Study Policy?

Lead: Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary and Ronnie Millar, Director of Counselling Service.

Timescales: recommendations to go to committees spring 2015.

Governance: review the effectiveness of the governance structures that are in place

There is a Mental Health Sub-group which reports in to the Student Disability Committee and from there to Equality & Diversity Committee. Do the current governance arrangements in this area work? How might arrangements be improved? Is there sufficient oversight of student mental health issues? Should there be closer links to the Equality and Diversity Committee and to the VP for Equality & Diversity?

Lead: Lynn Duff, Assistant Director, Residence Life

Timescales: Recommendations by Easter 2015

Strategy: write a strategy that encompasses the above and present to the Committees and groups for consideration / information

Draft the strategy including any resource requirements. Identify the formal groups that need to endorse the strategy. Identify how best to communicate the strategy (once endorsed) to key stakeholders.

Lead: Ronnie Millar, Director of Counselling Services and Sheila Williams, Director of Student Disability Services

Timescales: Apr – Jun 2015

Other

For a further phase of strategy development (2015/16) :

- Developing wider campus awareness and understanding of mental health issues, including awareness raising across the University population and support for longer-term culture change to address the negative attitudes and behaviours which disadvantage people with mental health problems.

- Access to services: consider whether our current models provide effective, timeous and equitable support for students with mental health issues. Particular attention to be given to a) the dispersed nature of the student population b) the benefits that a more integrated approach may offer c) the issue of co-ordination between University and NHS Services .
- Promoting good mental health and developing resilience in the University (potentially linking in to the Healthy University project)
- Supporting staff with mental health issues