
To: Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5)
Date: 10th April 2019

Subject: Task and Finish Group on Mental Health Support to University Students

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To inform the Members of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) of the outcomes and recommendations from the task and finish group on Mental Health Support to Students.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) recommend:

- 2.2 To all partners:

- 1) That a local mechanism for co-ordination is established between NHS mental health services, universities, voluntary organisations and student unions who are providing different levels of support and care for students which would also include sharing and collection of data.

- 2.3 To the CCG and CWPT:

- 2) That services commissioned should be better tailored to student's needs. This could include ideas such as identifying a link consultant to lead on the work with the universities, GPs, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) and other mental health services. Students should be invited contribute to the design and development of the services.

- 2.4 To Coventry University and the University of Warwick:

- 3) That university services are commissioned with reference to other mental health services across the City to enable pathways to be identified and transition between services smoother.
- 4) That more training is given to academic and pastoral staff at the universities to recognise mental health issues and provide support and signposting to students. This should include a focus on accommodation staff, for example—wardens, life tutors and security staff who are available outside of office hours. This training should also be offered to private accommodation providers.
- 5) That admissions policies should enable the identification of existing mental health issues specifically as part of the admissions process to enable the university to provide any learning, pastoral and health support required. Assurances should be provided that this information will not prejudice the application.

- 6) That there should be additional focus on international students' mental health and wellbeing. There should be a cultural immersion scheme which should reflect different cultural attitudes to mental health and how to access health services.
- 7) That the findings of the task and finish group be reflected in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategies as part of their development, especially with reference to student voice and working alongside students.

2.5 To NHS England:

- 8) To recognise that there is an issue where students move between CCG areas throughout the year, often mirroring the academic terms and that if they are receiving treatment or attending appointments this can be a specific issue. There should be more opportunities for sharing information between CCG areas more effectively.

2.6 For Warwick University GP services:

- 9) That those who commission the service should consider the findings in this report when recommissioning in the future. The current setup is complicated, the building is not fit for purpose, and there are long waiting times to access a service.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 At their meeting on 25th July 2018, following an item on Suicide Prevention, the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) established a task and finish group looking at the mental health support available to student in the city.
- 3.2 Membership of the group consisted of Cllr Gannon (Chair), Cllr Hetherington and Cllr Kershaw. Support to the group was provided by officers from Public Health.
- 3.3 Coventry has two major universities in the city, with a combined population of over 58,000 students¹
- 3.4 Considering the number of students in the city, Members were concerned about a potential gap in mental health provision.
- 3.5 An article in the Daily Telegraph in January 2017² reported on a Freedom of Information request for information on how much universities are spending on mental health services for students. 40 universities responded and Warwick was ranked 33rd with an average spend of £11.92 per student compared to the highest at Oxford with £48.25 per head.
- 3.6 As part of Student Mental Health Day on 7th March 2019, an article in the Huffington Post investigated the increase in the number of students seeking support with mental health between 2012/13 and 2017/18.

“Figures obtained by HuffPost UK through freedom of information requests show the number of students accessing mental health support at top unis increased by 76% on average between 2012-13 and 2017-18.

Underlining the sector's attempts to respond, comparable figures showed budgets for university mental health services rose by an average of 71% over the same time period.”³

¹ Warwick - 26,531, 2017, Coventry - 31,690, 2016/17 (check sources)

² <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/01/04/oxbridge-now-recognises-importance-mental-health-time-rest/>

³ https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/universities-mental-health_uk_5c80053ee4b0e62f69e923a0

- 3.7 Coventry University wasn't included in the data, however the information for Warwick suggests they are in line with other universities included in the research.
- 3.8 The total expenditure of Wellbeing Support Services at the University of Warwick rose from 2012/13 £921,000 to £2,215,000 in 2017/18. The number of students who accessed mental health support at the University of Warwick broken down by academic year in 2012/13 was 382. In 2017/18 it was 1,970.
- 3.9 This suggests that there is a growing issue of student mental well-being, and with Coventry having two major universities in the city, this was of concern to Members of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board.

4 Key lines of enquiry

- 4.1 Members invited representatives from partner agencies, including Coventry University, the University of Warwick, Coventry and Warwick Students Unions, the Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group (CRCCG), Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust (CWPT), GP provision at Warwick University and Public Health. Adult Social Care were not included in the task and finish group.
- 4.2 The Members of the task and finish group identified the key lines of enquiry which guided discussions with witnesses:
- What do student presentations to mental health services look like?
 - What does the 18 to 25 presentations to mental health services look like? Please include demographic data.
 - What are issues are the 18 to 25 population are presenting with?
 - What services are the Clinical Commissioning Group commissioning? Are there any services specifically for University Students or the 18 to 25 age group?
 - Are there any performance gaps in the services commissioned and those provided?
 - What do the CCG commission regarding primary care and mental health, including the support delivered by GPs and the service pathways?
 - Could the CCG outline the work being undertake on reviewing the mental health strategy for the City? Please include information on the mapping exercise showing prevalence and need.
 - What are the CCG's commissioning intentions for Mental Health Services?
 - Both Universities have a significant population of Overseas Students. How do the CCG and CWPT respond to the needs of this group? Does this create additional pressures on services and how are these managed?
 - Could CWPT briefly outline to the panel the assessment process for students who are:
 - In crisis
 - Not in crisis
 - Could the commissioner and provider outline what happens to Coventry young people who go to university out of the City who return home, perhaps just over the holiday period, and require access to mental health support. If they are on the waiting list for services in the location of their university, what happens to
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their position in the queue there? What are the barriers? Are they able to access support from CWPT?

5 Student experience

- 5.1 The task and finish group met with a group of students from Warwick University, arranged through the Students Union. Five students attended the meeting which was held at the campus. Appendix A contains a summary of the main points that came from the group.
- 5.2 Coventry University were contacted but did not respond within the timescales of the task and finish group.

6 Current Provision

- 6.1 Currently the provider of mental health services is CWPT, who are commissioned by the CCG. There is no service specifically commissioned for students, however students will have the same access to services as the general population.
- 6.2 Services are commissioned on a block contract and include a range of services from low level mental well-being to psychosis and self-harm. There are also specific services, for example, for eating disorders and personality disorders. IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapy) is also available for people aged 16+. They also provide a street triage service along-side the police. CWPT also provide mental health crisis support, a preventative service, which has access to crisis bed and in-patient beds, with out of city provision if these are full.
- 6.3 There is recognition that demand for services outstrips supply and that waiting times for some services can be long. There is also recognition that there are some commissioning gaps for specialist services, such as the Eating Disorder specialist services which are not yet available locally. Both the commissioner and the provider (CCG and CWPT) are aware of issues with provision and have plans in place to support service development improvements, but commissioners have limited resources available to uplift services. To compound this issue, there are significant workforce gaps and even if additional resource was available, there is a shortage of trained and qualified mental health staff.
- 6.4 There is a Health Centre on Warwick campus with two practices, which students are encouraged to register with.
- 6.5 Coventry University have a Medical Centre in the city centre at The Hub, as well as access to another surgery in Radford.
- 6.6 Each of the universities also offer well-being and mental health support services to their students.

<https://warwick.ac.uk/students/supportservices/#healthwellbeing>

<https://www.coventry.ac.uk/study-at-coventry/student-support/health-and-wellbeing/>

7 Key Themes identified

- 7.1 Following consideration of evidence provided Members identified the following themes:
 - There are no specific mental health services for students from commissioners and providers. Within a generic 18-25 NHS cohort it is difficult to identify students. Students do have specific needs, often being away from home, their support networks and being under stress to perform well on their course.

- Individual universities provide support, but this is not necessarily joined up with mainstream provision
- Pathways are not clear and need seamless service to help people access the right service faster
- Need for better co-ordination of stakeholders - an app to signpost or a one stop shop for example.
- There is no data set specifically for students. There needs to be an agreement by organisations that student presentations to services are collected. Public Health analysis of this data could be offered to support a future needs assessment and develop the evidence base.
- Crisis intervention generally and definitions of crisis by different partners. Also use of crisis when other services are full, puts additional pressure on these services.
- Issues of continuity of service between home and Coventry, where treatment has started before coming to university.

7.2 The evidence from the students as users of the service support these key themes (Appendix A). Additional themes from the students were:

- Lack of “student voice” in mental health services
- Pastoral support is inconsistent, patchy and not always appropriate
- Waiting times for all services are too long.

8 Universities Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

- 8.1 Both Universities are in the process of developing Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategies. The findings and recommendations from the task and finish group should be considered as part of the development of these strategies.
- 8.2 Officers from Coventry City Council Public Health are supporting the universities with the development of these strategies.
- 8.3 Coventry University has applied for funding from the Office for Students to establish a physical and digital mental health hub to improve mental health outcomes for students. This is a partnership bid with CWMind and the It Takes Balls to Talk campaign, Unite students and Valley House. If successful funding will start from April 2019, activities must commence by September 2019 and span two full academic years, 2019-20 and 2020-21, with time in autumn 2021 for final evaluation and reporting.

9 Recommendations

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