

Student Mental Health: Improving Joint Working meeting

Wednesday 6th July, 12.00pm – 2.00pm
Room 5.004, 5th Floor Crawford House Building
The University of Manchester

Represented: Bodey Medical Centre, The Vallance Centre, The Docs, Counselling Service, Student Experience Directorate, DSO, Access Summit, Accommodation Office, Student Support Services, Security, Wardens, Medical School, Occupational Health, Moodswings, SAFE team, Manchester Early Intervention Service, Primary Care Mental Health Team, Hope Citadel NHS Trust, Manchester Community Alcohol Team, Safire Mental Health Team, Eating Disorder Service

Minutes

Introduction

Sarah Littlejohn, Head of Counselling Service, welcomed those present to the meeting, and provided an overview of the context and purpose of the meeting.

That within such a large University, with approximately 40,000 students, there will be a number of students with mental health difficulties. Some students will come to University with such difficulties, whilst others may appear whilst at University.

There are also additional challenges, such as the mobile and transitional nature of student life, not being registered with a local GP, and turning to high cost ways of coping, such as drug and alcohol use.

And, whilst there are a number of support services available to students both within and external to the University, such as; the Counselling Service, DSO, Occupational Health, Tutors, Wardens, Security, NHS Services and the Voluntary Sector, navigating these services can be difficult.

The timing of the meeting is also pertinent, with an increased focus on student mental health, reflected in the students union campaign to raise awareness of this issue, the re-launch of the University's student mental health policy (scheduled for November 2011), and the provision of training by local NHS colleagues through the Counselling Service on dealing with mental health issues and managing risk (scheduled for October 2011).

The aim of the meeting is to therefore build on the important and valuable existing partnerships between the University, local GPs and mental health services, and to better understand the support available and eligibility of referrals. It is also hoped, that a forum will be provided where information can be shared and improved links can be developed.

Those present then broke into smaller, multidisciplinary groups, to discuss what works well, any questions, issues of concern, ideas for how to capitalise on existing partnerships.

Small Group Feedback

There was a great deal of cross over on the issues raised and discussed, with specific points below:

- What happens once someone has been referred to a service outside the University, gaining updates
- Would it be beneficial for students to come to University with a care plan
- How to raise awareness of the self help services available, such as SAFE
- How can we improve communication between services to improve cohesion
- Where does the Counselling Service stop, and the NHS start
- How to better collaborate where risk is a concern
- Improve information for security, so that they don't go into situations 'blind'
- Improve access to training, on a rolling basis, for security and other front line staff
- How to manage student expectations around care previously experienced and available at University
- Clarity of confidentiality, how to maintain this and yet work together collaboratively
- Example of support not being able to physically reach students in halls of residence
- Clarity of who information can be disclosed to for students with mental health difficulties
- Better understanding of the support each service can provide
- Targeted training to meet the needs of individual groups
- How can we encourage students to access help before it becomes a crisis
- Would an eating disorder clinic on site be beneficial to improve efficient referrals, and therefore be more in line with the student academic cycle
- Who and how do we contact various support services
- Possibility of making more use of telephone consultations to be more accessible
- How do we approach students where it is believed support may be needed
- How do we deal with difficult or unusual behaviour
- The University is developing a fitness to study policy which will help support students access the help needed and support those working with students in clarifying issues of concern
- Improve cross communication within University services and departments
- How to deal with concerns for others
- Training and sharing knowledge on practical issues such as having to take a student to A&E
- Disseminate useful information, such as the potential availability at A&E of a psychiatric assessment room
- Information about mental health legislation, and possible training focusing on legislation
- Possibility of mental health advisors being located within Schools, working alongside DSO advisors who are already based in Schools
- Working with the network of school support officers
- Awareness of the different levels of confidentiality across the different services
- Ownership, to reduce students feeling they are being pushed between services
- Case conferences provide a more joined up approach, where relevant parties involved in supporting student is more coherent
- Meetings such as this to build support and links
- Improve communication between services, such as follow up phone call or letter
- Difficulty of students not being registered with a local GP
- Developing a strategy for students with mental health difficulties resulting from drug/alcohol use

The common themes raised from these points were therefore around;

- Clarifying issues of sharing information and confidentiality
- The need for a rolling programme of training on mental health issues
- The need for a source of information about support services available and how to navigate these
- Improving joint working and communication between services

Student Mental Health Forum Website

It is proposed to create a Student Mental Health Forum (SMHF) website, with contributions from those present today. The aim of the SMHF will be to provide a forum to exchange ideas and to debate relevant issues via a discussion board (for Members only), and to use this to develop links with other services. Information on how to access support from the University, local GPs and the voluntary sectors will be provided – with input from each service.

The proposal was well received, and those present were encouraged to submit ideas and suggestions for content, and information for the site to Wendy Spruce within the Counselling Service at (wendy.spruce@manchester.ac.uk)

It is hoped this website will be launched by October 2011.

Going forward

1. It was agreed that similar meetings would be held three times per year.
2. The next meeting will be held in November 2011, which will be coordinated by the Counselling Service, meeting details will be sent out shortly.
3. It is hoped the following meeting will be held at the Bodey Medical Centre
4. Each meeting will have a focus topic or issue
5. Key issues from today's meeting will be selected to be taken forward as a focus for future meetings
6. An email distribution list will be compiled by Wendy Spruce