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Sharing Practice: How Specialist Colleges can contribute to improving wellbeing and mental health

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Contents

- Introduction
- Mental Health issues and concerns in colleges: feedback from the AoC survey
- A model for developing wellbeing & mental health in colleges
- Good practice in leadership curriculum, staff development and targeted support
- Good practice in partnerships with health and mental health services
- Tools and resources to support colleges
- Action to support improvements by AoC

Mental Health – A Growing Concern

- In 2017 the AoC surveyed members about the incidence of mental health issues for students
- Incidence increased for second survey running
 - 55% of respondents said that the number of students with mental health difficulties had 'significantly increased' in the past three years
 - A further 20% said they had 'slightly increased'
 - Colleges had an average of 185 students with disclosed mental health conditions
 - 81% felt that their college had 'significant numbers' of students with undisclosed mental health difficulties

Diagnosed mental health conditions

- The proportion of colleges with students with the following diagnosed conditions:
 - Depression – 100%
 - Severe Anxiety – 99%
 - Bipolar disorder – 97%
 - Psychosis – 90%
- All colleges reported students with the following manifestations of mental health issues:
 - Self harm
 - Eating disorders
 - Suicidal ideation/thoughts
 - Attempted suicide



Reasons for increase in students with mental health difficulties

8. If there has been an increase in the number of students with mental health difficulties, what, in your opinion, has influenced this? (Please tick all that apply)	Number of responses	Percent
Difficult home circumstances	99	95%
Pressure of social media	90	87%
Drugs and alcohol	66	63%
Financial concerns	53	51%
Exam pressure	50	48%
Pressure of having to resit English and/or maths GCSE	40	38%
Concerns about employment	27	26%
Other	47	45%
Total	104	

Students and Mental Health Issues

- Colleges report mental health issues fall into four broad and overlapping categories:
 - Younger students arriving with known, disclosed needs for support, e.g. specified in an EHCP
 - Students with issues that emerge during their time in college, from disclosures or diagnosis by college staff, or external agencies
 - Students with undiagnosed mental health issues
 - Existing Mental Health service users (often adults) - with whom the college may be engaging as part of a programme of support

Students with Mental Health Issues

- The survey showed that particular types of students are much more likely to have mental health issues, including:
 - 16-18's (20% higher than for 19+)
 - Care leavers
 - Carers
 - Students with learning difficulties and disabilities
 - Students with trauma e.g. some recent arrivals

Challenges in Mental Health Support

- The key challenges facing colleges in supporting students with MH issues include:
 - Lack of staff awareness of issues/symptoms
 - Lack of information from earlier stages of education
 - Declining student services support in colleges, as a result of major reductions in college budgets
 - The high proportion of referrals for support rejected (over 30% for CAMHS but unknown for adults)
 - Students who have had CAMHS support but 'fall through the gap' when they reach 19; as adult services have different systems and fewer resources
 - Lack of engagement with colleges by 'the MH system'



Framework for Developing Wellbeing & Mental Health Support in Colleges



College Leadership and Strategy

- Approaching wellbeing and MH support across the whole college requires clear leadership & strategy:
 - Support for the wellbeing agenda is led from the top
 - There is clarity about how wellbeing fits with mission/character
 - And clarity that supporting is everyone's responsibility across the whole organisation
 - Strategy for wellbeing and mental health support is included within all key documents and processes including strategic plan, budget/forecast, SAR / QIP, curriculum plan, student services plan
 - At college wide and at departmental levels

Good Practice in the Curriculum

- The AoC work suggests that the following are features of a strong approach to wellbeing and mental health within college curricula:
 - Running wellbeing sessions for all students, including MH awareness, as a part of induction
 - Students are taught social and emotional skills
 - Topped up in a timely way e.g. dealing with stress and examinations in May
 - Staff are ready to ready to address wellbeing across the curriculum, as opportunities arise

Good Practice in Staff Development

- Features of a strong approach to wellbeing and mental health in colleges, in staff development:
 - College prioritises work with staff and their wellbeing
 - All staff are trained in understanding wellbeing
 - All staff have undertaken mental health awareness training (face to face or on-line)
 - There are sufficient staff trained in MH First Aid, so there is always Mental Health First Aid on site
- Our survey showed that 97% of colleges covered wellbeing with students but only 48% did with staff

Good practice in Targeted Support

- The AoC work suggests that the following are features of a strong approach to mental health within colleges, in targeted support:
 - Having dedicated staff for mental health support or a councillor with specific training, who can provide one to one / group support
 - Having a clear system so referral to specialist support doesn't become a 'default position' for any student with emotional issues
 - Having a strong programme of physical activity as a part of enrichment and good links between welfare /sports staff
 - Parents are supported to manage issues, where relevant
 - Having good links with external agencies

Good Practice in External Partnerships

- Support agencies for mental health issues, which who colleges can partner include:
 - Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) - for young people from 0 to 18
 - Adult Social Services - helping those aged 19+
 - Local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) - responsible for buying local services
 - Local Health and Wellbeing Boards (H&WB) – the leadership fora to improve local health services
 - Acute Mental Health Trusts – providing clinical services for adults with more severe issues
 - General Practitioners
 - Charities, such as Mind

Partnerships are not always strong...

- 54% of colleges reported working well with CAMHS
- 41% of colleges have joint provision with their local health authority / health providers / other providers
- But 48% reported a non existent relationship with CCGs
- And only 20% said they were involved in transformation plans

Q18. How is your college's relationship with each of the following:	Very good	Good	Fair	Not very good	Non existent
Director of Public Health	6%	9%	19%	5%	61%
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Provider	21%	33%	27%	13%	6%
Adult Mental Health Service Provider	13%	24%	34%	20%	9%
Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	5%	16%	23%	7%	48%

- Lack of awareness of colleges is a key issue - many colleges report a good response when they make contact

MH Support: College Case Studies (1)

- Great Yarmouth College – mindfulness programme:
- “Mindfulness is the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience. It is open to receiving the present moment, just as it is, without clinging to it or rejecting it” - Sylvia Boorstein
- “We see students hanging onto negative emotions long after the moment has passed. These emotions get in the way of present feelings, the present moment and present decisions”
- “By teaching staff and students mindfulness we can give them power to choose their response, improving decision making ” – Stuart Rimmer, Principal
- Queen Alexandra College is also developing emotional wellbeing work

MH Support: College Case Studies (2)

- Examples of colleges with good health links include:
 - Liverpool City College, where the CCG have funded two mental health adviser posts within the college
 - Highbury College Portsmouth, which has secured a place on the CCG Board, with subsequent improvements in support
 - Birmingham Colleges lobbying together to encourage CCGs to commission for 16-25 year olds
 - In Hackney Community College the MH Acute Trust funds a post to refer and support service users in the college
- In all cases the health partner recognises the value of the return on their investment

Next Steps on Mental Health for AoC

- The AoC is focussing on mental health as one of its key policy issues for this year
- We have secured funds to document case studies
- We are producing a self-assessment tool, to support colleges in identifying strengths, weaknesses and support action planning – available by May
- We will have a web-page with links to resources available for each aspect of the tool
- Create is running in-college MH courses in MH 1st aid
- We are seeking funds for a joint project on good practice in college/MH system engagement, to share with colleges, CCGs, CAMHS etc

Tackling Challenges in External Support

- AoC is working nationally and regionally to address the lack of links with health agencies:
 - Raising the issues with Ministers and Officials in both the DoH and the DfE
 - Sitting on the DoH reference and advisory group
 - Encouraging Departments to ensure services available to schools are available to college students
 - Ensuring their guidance is 'college inclusive'
 - Encouraging Health and Wellbeing Boards / CCGs to remember colleges when planning / commissioning
 - Regional activity to make connections

Examples of Mental Health Resources

- Lots of on-line resources to support professionals (and student, parents etc.) e.g:
 - <http://mhfe.org.uk/>
 - <http://www.youngminds.org.uk/>
 - <http://www.minded.org.uk/>
(mind-ed has an on-line staff mental health awareness course)
- Specific guidance for staff wanting to teach students about mental health issues:
 - www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and



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**Thank you for
listening**