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Minister for Education and Welsh Language

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Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jayne Bryant MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee

20 December 2023

Dear Jayne

Thank you for the letter which seeks to follow up on recommendation 11 of the Mental Health support in Higher education CYPE report and relates to an update on the Advisory Group for Mental Health in FE and HE.

The Group was established in February 2023 for an initial 6-month period and brought together professionals across both tertiary and health sectors to ensure a more integrated approach to providing mental health support to post-16 learners.

The group's terms of reference, provided as part of the [Welsh Government](#) CYPE report response and included in this letter at Annex A, stated that its purpose was to:

- identify and support implementation of ways which improve access to mental health services by post-16 students and
- ensure institutions have consistent and accessible resources to support prevention and/or early intervention.

A review of the group is now underway to consider the effectiveness of the approach and advise on next steps.

The Advisory Group has provided an opportunity for the education and health sectors to come together, to share best practice and identify opportunities for close partnership working. A significant outcome has been the commissioning of a feasibility study on the roll-out of a Mental Health liaison service across Wales, as outlined in our response to recommendation 25.

Funded through HEFCW, the feasibility study will build on the initial pilot which was conducted with one local health board, and begin to scope the potential of a Welsh-wide model that takes account of the diverse needs of higher education including as this relates to rural contexts and the Welsh language. Stakeholders from NHS workforce, tertiary education sector, local health boards and Mental Health officials have been engaged from

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

the outset. Funding has also been allocated to a parallel feasibility study in FE, which will provide baseline information to help assess whether the approach could be extended to include FE in future. The outcomes of these studies will be considered by the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, which will take over responsibility for funding mental health support in HE and FE once fully operational.

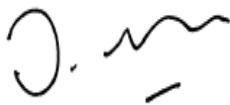
In addition to the progression of the mental health pilot, the Advisory Group has also fulfilled its aim to contribute to and inform the development of the new Together for Mental Health strategy. Facilitated by Welsh Government mental health officials, group members took part in a stakeholder workshop, where they discussed the vision statements and identify areas of difference and similarity in their approaches and challenges with mental health provision.

This collective, qualitative response is supported by the individual response to the pre consultation survey which took place over the summer. The work of the Advisory Group and the responses to the consultation have informed the draft mental health strategy which will be published for consultation early next year. This includes removing barriers to accessing mental health services and to ensuring easy access to information about support for students.

Student mental health and well-being is a key ministerial priority and as the Commission is established in the new year and its strategic priorities considered we expect it to continue this cross-policy work with the health sector to deliver mental health support at the right level at the right time.

We thank you for your continued interested in this topic.

Yours sincerely,



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**(National) Mental Health Advisory Group for
Further and Higher Education
Terms of Reference**

Key Deliverables

- Provide a set of advice and actions to inform the development of the new Mental Health strategy for Wales
- Establish a national approach to improve primary care access to mental health support for post-16 education students across Wales.
- Establish a consistent approach to mental health referrals and support across the post-16 education sectors and NHS.
- Identify the gaps or barriers in training and resources to equip students to self manage their mental health and wellbeing.

Purpose and Scope of the Group

The group's purpose is to address the following questions:

- What barriers exist to post-16 students to access the correct mental health services and support services and how can they be overcome?
- What (more) can FE and HE institutions do to support prevention and / or early Intervention?

To achieve this, the Group will:

- Review and agree which of the recommendations as set out in the Post-16 mental health policy proposals should be prioritised
- identify any immediate actions that could be taken to address any urgent needs identified
- Interface between health and further / higher education sectors – with a focus on identifying barriers and ensuring equitable access to support where needed.
- Bring sector specific knowledge, providing up to date insight on research and activities in the Mental Health and Education space.
- Advise on the use of routinely collected data across the sectors and how it can inform evidence-based decision making.

Consider what the Welsh Government can do to support the delivery of a national approach

NB This is not a decision group. The Group's role is to provide advice to inform decisions by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language and the Deputy Minister for Health and Well-being.

Frequency and Management of the Meetings

The Group will meet initially on 6 February 2023 followed by subsequent bi-monthly meetings.

All meetings will be scheduled in advance and will be conducted via Teams or in person if members would prefer. Meetings will last no longer than two hours.

Duration: The group will be established for a period of 6 months where it will be reviewed to consider the effectiveness of the approach.

Papers for the meeting (along with updates to actions from the previous meeting) will be issued three working days before the meeting.

The secretariat of the meetings will be undertaken by Welsh Government.

Chairing of the Meeting

The meeting will be chaired by Deputy Minister for Health and Wellbeing.

Group Membership

The membership will consist of a maximum of ten members. Members have been selected based on their expertise in the field of mental health and well-being, further and higher education sectors and include representatives from student associations.

The membership of the Group, will include:

Chair –Lynne Neagle MS, Deputy Minister for Health and Well-being

Orla Tarn, President NUS Wales

Ben Lewis, AMOSSHE, Direct of Student Life Cardiff University

Professor Ann John - Professor, Health Data Science

Amanda Wilkinson - Director Universities Wales

David Hagendyk – Chief Executive Colegau Cymru

Jane Johns, Head of Widening Access and Inclusion, HEFCW

Angela Jones – Public Health Wales

Welsh Government Officials

Alex Slade - Director of Primary Care and Mental Health

Sinead Gallagher – Deputy Director Higher Education

Karron Williams - Senior Quality & Effectiveness Policy Manager

Matt Downton - Head of Mental Health & Vulnerable Groups

If members cannot attend meetings, they are welcome to send a deputy or provide comments in advance by email.

Reporting Arrangements

Members tasked with completing activities to support the work of the Group are asked to provide updates to the Secretariat according to an agreed timescale.

The Group will report on its deliverables at the 6 months end date.