

Comprehensive mental health study published

By Elliott Banks, News Editor (2016/17)

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Image: Anna Gutermuth

A comprehensive report into mental health services at the University of York has been published. The report, produced by Mind Your Head York, was compiled from a student service and found some alarming statistics.

Four out of five students who responded had some form of mental health difficulty, while a further 50 per cent stated that they had been diagnosed with a mental illness. Approximately 30 per cent of respondents stated that they have experienced thoughts of self-harm or suicide while studying.

For University bosses the report found that only a small proportion of respondents thought that they were fully supported by the University. The report indicated that students felt uncomfortable with speaking to supervisors and staff about their mental health.

This is now the second report in two years, highlighting mental health as a continuing issue.

There has already been a £500 000 investment put into the services available. When asked about how the money was being used University Registrar David Duncan provided this update to Nouse: “we have appointed three additional practitioners, one of whom will work in close collaboration with the GP’s practice on campus. In addition, we have devoted additional resources to information and awareness raising, much of which is designed to prevent mental ill health rather than deal with its consequences.”

He continued, “at the same time, with the support of Evans (our partner in the three colleges on the East

Campus), we are building a new GP's practice and pharmacy at Field Lane. This will have more space than the old surgery and should improve access to doctors and mental health nurses. This project is in addition to the £500k of funding allocated by the University Executive Board."

This is in keeping with the recommendations of the report which strongly encouraged the University to tackle student mental health problems by initiating conversations with the NHS Vale of York CCG and other available support services.

More prominent was the increased importance given to staff and supervisors in aiding students. A review into their understanding and relevant training and protocols was suggested, as well as a direct appeal to staff to reflect on their roles as ones of support, extending past their one of academic care and duty to looking into any accidental impressions that might be given to students.

Their responsibility therefore is to collaborate with students to actively raise awareness about the support groups and services available. Including those not directly affiliated with the university.

Dom Smithies, YUSU community and well-being officer, stated: "YUSU is still absolutely committed to both holding the University to account in delivering the recommendations set out in the 2016 Mental Ill-Health Report, as well working with the University to push for more and better mental health clinical provision and services off campus. The closure of Bootham Park Hospital, combined with chronic underfunding of services for too long, has left a concerning gap for support provision that the University can't be expected to solely mitigate."



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