

EVIDENCE REVIEW OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE UK: PLAIN ENGLISH SUMMARY

Poor mental health of further and higher education students is a growing public policy concern. It is common for mental health problems to first become apparent whilst students are getting used to their new college environment. Experiences such as forming new friendships, managing money, perhaps living away from home for the first time, and adjusting to a different type of independent learning can all affect the mental wellbeing of students. Recent evidence suggests that the number of mental health problems (including self-harm and suicide) amongst university students is increasing.

This research study aims to explore student experiences of moving into higher education settings. We aim to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms that lead to poor mental health amongst students, and what might help to avoid problems occurring. This includes help seeking behaviour, the availability of mental health resources, and the roles of families and peers.

We have been asked to carry out a review of existing research in this area to establish what is known, where there are clear gaps in the evidence base, and to provide national and local policy makers with the best available evidence on factors affecting the mental health of students.

In the work we will be finding and bringing together existing research findings, rather than collecting data ourselves. A public involvement group which has current and former students and also family members of students, is providing input and advice as we carry out the work. This includes letting us know about their experiences of higher education, helping us understand and interpret what we have found out, and helping with getting the findings known about.

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