

## **THE NATIONAL CONFIDENTIAL INQUIRY INTO SUICIDE AND SAFETY IN MENTAL HEALTH (NCISH)**

### **NATIONAL REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT SUICIDES**

#### **Information Sheet**

##### **Who will conduct the review?**

Experts in suicide and self-harm prevention from the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health (NCISH) will independently conduct the review. NCISH is part of the Centre for Mental Health and Safety at the University of Manchester. The review is funded by the Department for Education.

##### **What is the purpose of the review?**

There have been growing concerns about mental ill-health and suicide risk in university students in the UK and other countries. The unique risks and challenges associated with higher education highlight a need to improve mental health support and suicide prevention for students.

We are conducting an independent national review of suspected suicides (and non-fatal incidents of self-harm) in higher education (HE) students in England. We will examine serious incident (SI) reports of suspected suicide by HE students, conducted by HE providers (HEPs) – these reports can be in line with guidance published by Universities UK or by other relevant guidance or frameworks. This will identify factors around mental ill-health and suicide in HE students, with the aim of improving safety for HE students and preventing future deaths. The focus of this review is incidents occurring during the 2023/24 academic year, but we will also consider some earlier reports and keep this time period under review. Specifically, we will:

- Assess the quality of the SI reports;
- Identify the common themes in suspected suicide deaths in HE students;
- Identify areas needing improvement within the HE sector and examples of good practice;
- Assess the quality, validity and effectiveness of the guidance published by Universities UK.

##### **What do we need you to do?**

We will request that anonymous SI reports are submitted to us via our secure [ncish@nhs.net](mailto:ncish@nhs.net) email address, without waiting for the coroner investigation or inquest. We will ask that it is clear in the subject heading that the email is in relation to the “national review of HE student suicides”. Please also note that should you return an anonymised SI report to NCISH, you are hereby confirming that (1) you are the data owner or have permission from the data owner of this anonymised report and (2) you permit this to be sent to NCISH for the purpose of the national review.

To help us with this, we aim to establish a contact person within each HEP. We would be grateful if you could assist us by telling us who the primary contact(s) to help implement this independent national review should be. Once a contact is established, we will clarify how they will work with us, including notifying us if they have

completed or are planning to complete an investigation into a suspected suicide by a HE student within the 2023/24 academic year.

### **What information will be collected?**

We will collect information from SI reports of suspected suicide deaths and incidents of non-fatal serious self-harm occurring during the 2023/24 academic year, from HE providers in England. We will assess submitted SI reports for information on factors such as pre-existing mental ill-health, the content and availability of mental health promotion within HEPs, the role of academic and non-academic factors, and access to means of suicide.

While we recognise not all participating HEPs in the review will be Universities UK (UUK) members and that using the postvention guidance produced by UUK and Papyrus is not mandatory, it is used as a reference point for many in the sector. We will therefore review whether this guidance is able to detect individual risk factors for suicide in HE students. We will also consider alternative approaches taken by providers. We will independently read the submitted SI reports and extract relevant issues and common themes based on:

- The UUK and Papyrus postvention guidance for carrying out a serious incident investigation.
- The [NCISH 10 standards](#) for investigating serious incidents in the NHS, modified for the HE sector;
- Any other areas of focus agreed with our specifically convened expert advisory group.

### **What will happen to the information we obtain?**

Submitted SI reports will be collated and stored in accordance with established data protection principles. Only authorised members of the NCISH research team will have access to information from the SI reports. This information will be stored on a secure research site - electronic records can only be accessed via encrypted and password protected computers on a network that is not connected to the internet.

### **How will we use this information?**

The findings of the study will be published as a report – with any details of cases anonymised. We will also provide independent, individual feedback in the form of a summary report to each HEP that submits SI reports to us as part of the national review. We propose feedback will consist of our evaluation of the quality of the SI reports, comments on the key issues relating to how the student was supported during their time at the HE institute, and we will highlight recommendations based on both the findings of the HEP's review and what we draw out of the SI reports in terms of good practice and how to further improve HE support and care delivery within that HEP.

### **How do I let you know who our lead contact is and find out more about the study?**

We would like each HEP to let us know who their lead is for the review. To inform us of the contact person within your HEP or if you would like to find out more about NCISH's independent national review of suspected suicides in HE students, please contact the Principal Investigator Dr Cathryn Rodway

([cathryn.a.rodway@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:cathryn.a.rodway@manchester.ac.uk)). Please do not send SI reports to this address. Submitted SI reports must be sent to our secure email address at [ncish@nhs.net](mailto:ncish@nhs.net).