

## **MANAGING MENTAL DISTRESS OUT OF HOURS -**

### **Guidelines from The Oxford Student Mental Health Network**

***NB: Numbers and headings correspond to boxes in the flowchart***

#### **1. IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM**

##### **Action**

- Remember that the caller is probably stressed
- Identify yourself and your role
- Get as much background information as possible while in a safe setting
- **Dial 999 if there is a clear emergency.** Tell the story briefly and clearly, including your exact location. If there is an immediate risk to “life and limb”, state that clearly. Ask the operator when the service(s) will arrive at the scene.
- **Alert Security / Porter’s Lodge so that they can direct the emergency services to you**
- **Emergency services should be called if someone is unconscious or acutely physically ill (ambulance) or if someone is being violent or threatening harm to themselves or others (police) or someone needs rescuing from a dangerous situation like a roof or ledge (fire brigade)**
- **Students with physical injuries resulting from self-harm should present at Accident and Emergency, John Radcliffe Hospital where they will be assessed by the Emergency Department Psychiatric Assessment (formerly ‘the Barnes Unit’, see page 11)**

##### **Other issues**

- *In terms of seeking help from the Out of Hours GP through the NHS 111 Service or Emergency Services, the guest of a student is entitled to the same response as an enrolled student. If the student is under 18 but over 16, no special conditions apply.*
- *If the person is under 16, Child Protection (Safe Guarding Children) issues need to be considered.*

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### **GATHER INFORMATION**

#### **Questions and Prompts**

#### **Gather as much information as possible**

##### **The caller:**

- Who is the caller (the student, other third party)?
- What do they see as the problem?
- What do they need/expect from you at this point?
- Is the caller the key person likely to know most about the situation? If not, can you speak to that person?

**Note:** if the caller is with the person who requires help, it may be difficult for them to talk to you openly. Ask the caller if they can talk freely or if they would prefer you to ask closed questions to which they can answer “yes” or “no”. Remember that the caller is likely to be stressed or anxious.

##### **The situation:**

- Where is the situation taking place?
- Is anyone at risk/in danger? If so, in what way?
- Is the student threatening harm to themselves or others and do they have access to anything that could be used as a weapon?
- Is the student alone? If not, who are they with?
- Is the situation in a locked room and is a master key needed?
- Does the caller think that drugs or alcohol are involved?
- Is the student responding to offers of help or not?

##### **Background:**

- Does the caller know anything about the past history or medical background of the student? (e.g. physical health condition; medication; current use of services)
- Is the student known to Mental Health Services? If so, which team?
- Is the current behaviour unusual for the student? Has it suddenly happened or has there been a gradual change/deterioration (e.g. lack of sleep, poor personal care)

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#### **2. 3. & 4. COULD YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY BE AT RISK?**

##### **YES/NO?**

- **YOUR SAFETY IS YOUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY – KEEP YOURSELF SAFE- DO NOT PLACE YOURSELF IN A VULNERABLE SITUATION.**
- **If there is an imminent risk call the Police on 999.**
- Before attending the scene, notify the relevant worker in your university/college (e.g. Security Services, the Porter's Lodge, Duty Residence Manager, Facilities etc.) to let them know that you are going to a student's room, the exact location, that you may need them as back up or for them to call emergency services. Make sure that Security Services have your mobile phone number. Also dial in the emergency number i.e. 999 so that you can make the call quickly if required.
- **If there is a potential risk ask security staff to accompany you and to wait outside when you see the person. Keep the door open.**

#### **5. REACT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BY GOING IN PERSON TO ASSESS THE SITUATION**

- Talk to all parties
- Try to keep the situation calm
- Avoid making physical contact with the person
- If you need advice, identify who to call either within your Institution (as above) or outside the Institution (Out of Hours GP accessed through NHS 111, Police, Ambulance, Fire Service etc.)
- **If you need immediate help from the police, fire brigade or ambulance, dial 999 and give the facts as briefly as possible including your location. If there is an immediate risk to "life and limb", state this clearly**
- **Emergency services should be called if someone is unconscious or acutely physically ill (ambulance) or if someone is being violent or threatening harm to themselves or others (police) or someone needs rescuing from a dangerous situation like a roof or ledge (fire brigade).**

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- People under stress may find it easier to communicate in their first language. One-to-one interpreters are available via the police.

#### **6. NO FURTHER ACTION NEEDED NOW**

- After your assessment, you may decide to take no further action immediately
- It can be helpful to leave the distressed student and others involved with the student with telephone numbers of help lines and the reassurance that they can ring you again if the situation deteriorates [See Background Information- Other Mental Health Services]
- You may wish to make an appointment to see the student(s) the following day to review the situation
- Record details of the incident and action taken

#### **7. IS THE STUDENT WILLING TO ACCEPT HELP? YES/NO**

- If the student is willing to accept help, refer to guidance points 8a, 8b, 8c and 8d.
- **If a student does not give permission for you to contact services but clearly needs it you need to weigh up the risks to the individual, yourself and others.**
- **Breaching confidentiality or going against the student's wishes may in your considered judgement be the only way to prevent harm to self and others.**
- **Do not promise the student something that limits your actions e.g. a student asking you to keep something secret and asking you to promise not to tell anyone.**
- **Explain to the student who you will inform and why and that you will pass on information on a need to know basis and in the interests of their Health and Safety.**
- **If you have concerns about risk/safety ALWAYS err on the side of caution. It is always fine for you to call one of the services outlined**

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below to ask for advice and support and you can do this in the first instance without mentioning the student's name.

- Call NHS 111 or 999 or 101 for further advice and assistance

## **8. CALLING SERVICES:**

### **8a. CALLING THE NHS 111 SERVICE TO ACCESS THE OUT OF HOURS GP: RING 111**

- You should use the NHS 111 Service if a student needs urgent medical help or advice but it is not a life threatening situation (in which case you should call 999).
- **111 is the only route for referral to the Out Of Hours GP**
- 111 uses a triage tool to assess the problem, the appropriate response and referral to the correct service as quickly as possible e.g. Police, Ambulance and Approved Mental Health Professionals
- The Triage tool / 111 will ask you a number of questions for example:  
**In the case of an overdose and self-harm:**
  - Is the person breathing? Are they conscious?
  - What medication has the person taken?
  - How many tablets were taken?
  - Do you think this is a suicide attempt or an incident of self-harm? You may not know this.
  - Does the person have a known mental health diagnosis and if so, what is it?
  - Are they on any regular medication and if so, what?
  - Are they receiving any treatment/support i.e. known to a Mental Health Team, University Counselling Service or Disability Advice Service?
  - In the case of self-harm are they bleeding heavily?
  - **In the case of an overdose of paracetamol in particular but any drug the person may appear fine but they need immediate medical**

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**intervention as the liver may be damaged long term so they need to go to hospital immediately and present at A&E**

- The Out of Hours GP who calls you back will try to speak to the student on the phone if possible; they may make an appointment for the student to be seen by a GP at Manzil Way<sup>1</sup> (off the Cowley Road) or arrange a home visit. (Give precise directions of student's hall / block). The GP will assess whether the student needs hospital admission or a Mental Health Act Assessment etc.
- **Note: NHS 111 Service and the Out of Hours GP Service do not have patient notes such as medical history, diagnosis and whether they are known to a mental health team so information gathering is very important.**
- All students and their guests, regardless of their age, nationality or enrolment status, are eligible for emergency treatment by an Out of Hours GP through the NHS 111 Service even if not registered with a GP.

#### **8b. POLICE**

- Ring 999 for an emergency
- Ring 101 if less urgent
- If you need help urgently, give brief and clear information
- Response times: **Emergency** responded to within approximately 20 minutes; **Urgent** responded to within 1 hour and if **non urgent**, the call out will be made by arrangement

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<sup>1</sup> On very rare occasions, if a member of hall or college staff has a relationship of trust with a resident, it may be helpful if they accompany them to a medical appointment. **However, this should only be done after consultation with a line manager or appropriate alternative and the member of staff should not accompany the student alone wherever possible. Public transport or a taxi should always be used; never use your own vehicle.** When you arrive for the appointment, identify yourself and your role. Make it clear that you cannot be expected to be responsible for restraining the student or containing them in the waiting area. If the student attempts to leave do not attempt to restrain them other than by persuasion.

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- Police can intervene if someone is posing a risk to others (e.g. committing an offence such as an act of violence); causing damage to property; at risk or thought to be a risk to themselves, behaving in a threatening manner or exhibiting unusual i.e. possibly psychotic behaviour regardless of the location. The police will intervene in a college or hall of residence in the above situations irrespective of this not being a public place<sup>2</sup>.
- The police will want to hear a description from a witness about what is happening.
- They will want to clarify whether offences have been committed. If a person is in need of immediate care or control and where this is also a health issue, police will work in partnership with the relevant professionals i.e. Community Psychiatric Nurse to see if a Mental Health Act Assessment needs to be set up or other safe alternatives<sup>3</sup>.
- The police can force entry if necessary.
- The Police can take a person who appears to be suffering from a mental disorder and is in immediate need of care and control to a Place of Safety under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act<sup>4</sup> where they will be held before being assessed by a mental health professional.

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<sup>2</sup> A public place is somewhere that the public have access to by payment or not. For example, if a stately home opens their grounds for a fête for free or charges £5 entry fee, this then is a public place. If however, members are the only people allowed to be there, then it is not a public place. In terms of a hall of residence/college, if it is residents only and their guests, it is not a public place. If a college allows any members of the public to freely come into their foyer for example, then this would be a public place.

<sup>3</sup> The (Trial) Mental Health Street Triage Scheme works in partnership with a Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) who works between 6.00pm - 2.00am every day. The CPN is available for advice, assistance and consultation in police custody or can make home visits with the police if necessary. The CPN will be able to assess whether Section 136 of the Mental Health Act is absolutely necessary i.e. taking a person to a place of safety; whether a Mental Health Act Assessment can be avoided and look at proportionate alternatives to ensure that the right service is given at the right time

<sup>4</sup> Police stations should be used only in exceptional circumstances as a Place of Safety. Currently there are two hospital Places of Safety at the Runis Unit and Phoenix Ward, Littlemore hospital.

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- If you notify the police that they may be needed, they will take down the details and assign a URN (unique customer reference number) so that if you need help later, you won't need to repeat the story.

#### **8c. AMBULANCE SERVICE**

- Phone 999 for an emergency - calling an ambulance is appropriate if the person is physically ill, unconscious or there is evidence of an overdose or serious self-harm.
- Phone 111 if non life-threatening as the Ambulance Service also receives referrals through 111 Service.
- Response times/targets: **Red** within 8 minutes (life threatening); Amber within 19 minutes target (e.g. overdose but still conscious).
- **Ambulance service can assess under the Mental Capacity Act** that is, if a person may be suffering from a mental illness and is unable to think for themselves or act in their best interests, the ambulance can transport the patient or police can enforce transport to hospital or a Place of Safety (as above) on their behalf.

#### **8d. CALLING THE FIRE SERVICE**

- Calling the fire service through 999 is appropriate if someone needs rescuing from a dangerous situation such as a roof or window

### **9. WAITING FOR SERVICE TO ARRIVE**

- Ask when the service will arrive
- Try to contain the situation until the services arrive
- Make sure someone is available to direct the services to where you are
- Continue to take care of your own safety, e.g. sit or stand near the door and make sure someone is within shouting distance outside the door

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#### **10. RECORD ALL DETAILS AND FOLLOW-UP AFTER THE CRISIS**

- Record the situation and action taken
- Hand over important information to day-time staff and any action that needs to be taken by day staff e.g. referral to Student Counselling Service or Disability Advisory Service
- Remember you can always phone internal/external services for advice without mentioning the student's name in the first instance
- Think about ongoing support for the student in crisis, other students and members of staff and yourself. Oxford University, Brookes, Ruskin College and City of Oxford College have Counselling Services that can provide very useful support for students following a crisis and can also advise on support for staff members.
- **Debriefing:** witnessing a mental health crisis can be very upsetting and anxiety provoking and this can be true however experienced you are. It is important that you have the opportunity to talk through the incident and the emotional effect it has had on you with an appropriate person such as, line manager, Occupational Health or Counselling Service to get advice on how to access support for yourself. Getting support for yourself is not a sign of being unable to cope.

#### **11. BACKGROUND INFORMATION - OTHER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

##### **11a. APPROVED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL (AMHP)**

- ***Please note: You will NOT be required to contact the Approved Mental Health Professional Service directly. The services that are most likely to call on an AMHP<sup>5</sup> are 111, the Out of Hours GP, Police and Ambulance Services so this is for information only.***
- Previously called Approved Social Worker (ASW). The role was carried out by Social Workers only.

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<sup>5</sup> The Crisis Team has now closed and has been combined into the new Adult Mental Health Teams. Please refer to guidance information on Adult Mental Health Teams.

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- Approved Mental Health Professionals can now be Social Workers, Psychiatric Nurses, Occupational Therapists and Psychologists
- The AMHP service runs a 24 hours service 7 days per week
- AMHP can admit a person under a compulsory section of the Mental Health Act and this requires an AMHP and usually 2 doctors
- There is one AMHP covering the whole county out of hours between 10.00pm – 8.30am and two AMHPs during the day
- **AMHP is accessed through 111 or the Out of Hours GP calls the Coordinator of the AMHP Service who will arrange a Mental Health Act Assessment.**

#### **11b. ADULT MENTAL HEALTH TEAMS (AMHTS)**

- ***Referral to the Adult Mental Health Team is primarily through the GP although other mental health services can make referral. The AMHT can be contacted directly ONLY if the student is receiving support from them.***
- Each Adult Mental Health Team is split into two distinct functions. The first of these is an **assessment function** (where all new referrals will be received and triaged) and will provide up to 4 appointments offering intensive support and advice. Following this they will either then transfer the patient into the treatment function for the continuation of their care or discharge them back to primary care or a suitable, alternative service.
- The teams offer **extended hours of operation so members of staff working in the assessment function will be available from 7.00am – 9.00pm, 7 days/week.**
- From 9.00pm until 7.00am there will be a **night assessment team** based at the Warneford Hospital. For urgent calls between 9.00pm and 7.00am **please contact the Out of Hours Coordination Centre on 01865 741717** and you will be transferred to a member of the night assessment team.

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- Staff working in the treatment function will be available from 9.00am – 5.00pm 7 days/week and will be running at least two late night clinics a week in each AMHT until 8.00pm.

#### **11c. EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT PSYCHIATRIC SERVICE (FORMERLY THE BARNES UNIT)**

- The Emergency Department Psychiatric Service is a team of doctors, nurses and social workers who assess any patient with psychiatric issues attending the Emergency Departments at the John Radcliffe or Horton hospitals.
- Day staff are present from 7:30am to 9.00 pm and after-hours the on-call duty junior doctor covers the service. There are two full-time consultant psychiatrists in the team.
- The team provide full psychosocial assessments to patients who have self-harmed, as well as other presentations (acute anxiety, some drug and alcohol issues, psychosis, medically unexplained symptoms etc.) and signpost patients into mental health services, to counselling/psychological services, to voluntary support agencies or with advice back to their GP. They work closely with University colleges and halls of residence, where appropriate, regarding safety planning.

#### **11d. OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS**

### **THE SAMARITANS**

The Samaritans are volunteers who befriend people who are feeling desperate, despairing or suicidal. They provide sympathetic, caring and non-judgemental support. They can be reached by telephone, visited in person, or emailed. The national number ensures no caller gets an engaged tone day or night (call charges are at local rates). There is no need for an appointment. The service is free and confidential.

- 01865 722122 (Branch)
- National telephone: 08457 909090 (UK)
- Email Samaritans: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

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- Samaritans Oxford 60 Magdalen Road Oxford Oxfordshire OX4 1RB

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**THE WARNEFORD HOSPITAL**

- 01865 741717
- The switchboard will have the contact numbers of all Oxfordshire Adult Mental Health Teams etc.

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY COUNSELLING SERVICE**

- Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm
- Tel: 01865 270300
- [counselling@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@admin.ox.ac.uk)
- The Counselling Service is available for all registered Oxford University students and operates a link counsellor scheme with Oxford University Colleges.

**SAFE! Supporting Young People Affected by Crime.**

- SAFE! is an Oxfordshire charity which supports young people who have been harmed and want support to recover their confidence and sense of safety.
- [www.safeproject.org.uk](http://www.safeproject.org.uk)
- SAFE! Tel: 01865 815 926.

- Revised by Gill Shreir (Coordinator of OSMHN) November 2014
- Revised by Student Welfare & Support Services March 2015

*Please note that this information was accurate at the time of circulation but that mental health services are subject to change*