



The All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
SW1H 0EU

26 August 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing in our capacity as chairs of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group (APPUG) regarding your plans for the student community within the newly formed National Institute for Health Protection (NIHP).

With the decision to close Public Health England and transfer responsibility for public health protection and resilience to the NIHP, comes an opportunity to identify the specific needs of the student population and ensure they are addressed by both the NIHP and regional health structures.

We also wanted to take this opportunity to emphasise that, ahead of the start of term, universities are working in partnership with their local authorities, public health bodies and others to ensure that effective and rapid outbreak response plans are in place and clearly understood.

Half of all school leavers now go on to study at university, so university students now constitute a significant health population. However, as outlined in Universities UK's 2018 publication 'Minding our Future', their health needs as a population remain largely unrecognised. This publication makes the case for better join-up between university mental health support and local NHS services, which can be facilitated by cooperative and responsive CCGs, however it is important that the wider health needs of the student population are also integrated into local health plans.

It is important for Clinical Commissioning Groups to fully cooperate and liaise with universities. Ensuring clear, efficient pathways between institutional support and local health services, designed with the increasing diversity of the student population in mind, will ensure students do not slip through the gaps to the detriment of their health, education and wellbeing. This is will be increasingly important as we emerge from the pandemic given that the longer term physical effects of Covid-19 are not yet fully understood, nor is the likely impact of a prolonged period of lockdown on young people's mental health.

The focus on improving children and young people's mental health in the NHS Long Term Plan is welcome, however we would now like to see further action taken to address the specific health needs of the student population. Examples of the ways in which the current system does not adequately support the needs of students as a health population include: issues sharing patient data between GP services and universities services and funding being allocated to GPs via a formula weighted by deprivation and age, which does not take into account the growing mental health needs of the student body.

We would welcome a meeting with a minister from your department in the near future to discuss how the Department for Health and Social Care and new NIHP should best consider and address the wider health needs of the student population both in terms of response to Covid-19 and within longer term planning.

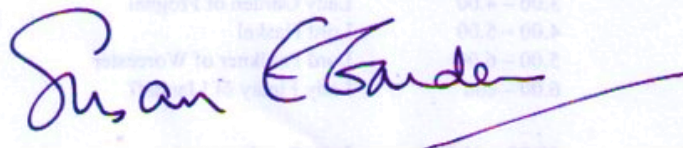
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Zeichner', with a long, sweeping underline.

Daniel Zeichner MP
Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris', with a long, sweeping underline.

Chris Skidmore MP
Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Susan E Garden', with a long, sweeping underline.

Baroness Garden of Frognal
Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group