

## Case Study

# Strategic Review of Mental Health Provision and Services

### Who We Worked With

University of Cambridge

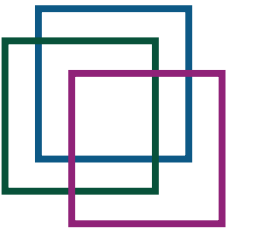
### The Situation

Multiple changes and trends are evident across the higher education sector, and society more generally, which are affecting both demand for and provision of mental health and wellbeing services by universities. In common with the whole sector, the University of Cambridge was experiencing increased demand for student mental health and wellbeing support services. The collegiate University was spending increasing amounts of staff time and both college and University funds on supporting student mental health, particularly due to the rising student expectations of and demand for providing counselling support. Cambridge was aware of its distributed

approach to the provision of mental health and wellbeing support across the central University, colleges, schools and departments. The University also wanted to work in a more ore integrated way with NHS services to better support students. As a result, the collegiate University decided to redefine its role in relation to the mental health and wellbeing of its students and to better structure and deliver future support.

### What Happened

SUMS consultants Helen Baird and Dr Alison Oldam worked with the University in a two-phased approach. The first phase involved extensive consultations with the senior leadership, academic and professional and support staff and also with students across the collegiate University over an 8-month period. The SUMS team



SUMS group



*“Our SUMS consultants really understood us and the aspects that make our collegiate University unique. They worked closely with us as a true partner and took the time for a broad, consultative approach. The resulting recommendations were tailored to our specific situation rather than being an off-the-shelf solution. We believe this will strengthen both our preventative work and responsive interventions to supporting our students’ mental health and wellbeing.”*

**ALICE BENTON,**  
HEAD OF EDUCATION SERVICES, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



Specialists in Higher Education



began by assessing existing student mental health provision and services, demand and costs, then making the case for change in specific areas. In the second phase, SUMS engaged iteratively with senior leaders, staff and students to help create the blueprint for a more holistic, effective and sustainable approach for mental health and wellbeing provision and services.

Our subsequent recommendations were designed to help transform Cambridge’s student mental health and wellbeing support, covering both preventative work and responsive interventions across the collegiate University. The aim is to create well-coordinated, efficient and flexible mental health and wellbeing support, which provides care and support at the right level and at the right time to ensure that

students can meet their academic potential.

**The Difference It Made**

Implementing the changes at Cambridge will provide clear, fair and consistent access to support services. This will be underpinned by a stepped care approach with a clear emphasis on prevention as well as multidisciplinary wellbeing teams, and more integrated working with NHS services.

The University recognises that significant change is required across the current operating model and has committed to the initial investment in systems, processes and people to deliver this new model. They are adopting a three-year, co-ordinated programme of transformational change that is suited to the collegiate University. Ultimately, the new approach will improve support for students and provide the best environment for them to thrive academically and personally.