



**A response from The Open University to
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
consultation on
*Transforming Your Care***

Contact:

Dr Frances Morton, Policy and Public Affairs Executive

frances.morton@open.ac.uk

02890 245 025

Introduction

1. The Open University welcomes this opportunity to respond to this consultation on *Transforming Your Care*.

2. The flexible, part-time distance learning that we offer plays an important role in increasing social mobility of individuals in the UK and Republic of Ireland. The OU is the largest academic institution in the UK and a world leader in flexible distance learning. Since it began in 1969, the OU has taught more than 1.9 million students. Our most recent figures from 2011/12 show that there are almost 4,500 undergraduate students in Northern Ireland, studying on a part-time basis with the OU.

3. Our mission is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. Our recently launched Widening Participation strategy Access to Success identified five core groups in the UK, two of which align with the proposals of this consultation: disabled students and carers.

4. Given the focus in frontline health and social care to give service-users more independence, choice and control means that there is greater demand for well-trained and multi-skilled people across a range of rewarding employment opportunities. The OU can meet this need in two ways:

- Study and learning opportunities for individuals new to care under the TYC proposals
- Up-skilling or re-skilling for existing professionals to progress their career in a particular area of health and social care as the TYC proposals are implemented.

5. The thrust of our response welcomes the proposals, and demonstrates how the OU can support them through education and skills, with specific attention to carers. We currently offer these educational opportunities in [Health and Social Care](#) (HSC) through the following programmes of study: degree, foundation degree, Certificate, Diploma, OU Certificate (all

available to view here, [Openings](#), short course or standalone modules. All our courses are provided through high quality, flexible and part-time distance learning methods. We also make reference throughout to our free online resources available on [OpenLearn](#) – the UK's largest source of free university materials, with over 19 million unique visitors since 2006. Much of our material is also available on [iTunes U](#).

6. The success of our HSC programme was recently demonstrated by two OU students, Orla Matthews and Barry Magee, who were runners up in the RCN Student Nurse of the Year award 2012, for work in mental health. Further information can be found on our [website](#).

Response

Question 1.

Do you agree that our health and social care services need to change in order to meet the needs of the community and promote health and well-being through prevention and early intervention so that as much acute illness as possible is avoided?

Yes. The Open University places an emphasis on prevention and intervention in its health and social care modules and programmes in Northern Ireland, especially in relation to diabetes and smoking and alcohol related illnesses. The Open University agrees with the framework's context that prevention of ill health, and promoting health and well-being is of benefit to the economy of Northern Ireland, in terms of cutting the costs of otherwise preventable illnesses, and improving the quality of life for all its citizens.

Question 2.

Do you agree that people who need care and support should have control over how their assessed care and support needs should be met?

One of the key themes of TYC is the increased use of individualised budgets and self-directed support. This could take the form of Direct Payments where a person receives a cash payment to arrange their own support, or it could involve the individual deciding how the budget for their care will be spent. In all cases it should ensure the individual has maximum choice and control in planning the services they receive.

Yes. The Open University encourages a holistic and personalised approach to health where individuals are able to take ownership of their health, the services they receive and the care they wish to access. The OU is committed to educating individuals and communities in order to enable informed decisions to be made about personal health care. It also assists professionals to understand the implications of personalisation proposals on delivering care.

Currently, the OU offers a short (non-accredited course) in [Personalisation in Health and Social Care](#) (see Box below). This module espouses the proposals of this consultation in providing information on self-directed care. We also offer a standalone module in [Managing care \(K303\)](#).

Question 3.

Do you feel the provision of individualised budgets and self-directed support should be more widely promoted?

Yes. Core to The Open University's mission is to enable individuals to achieve social mobility through education. The introduction and the development of individualised budgets and self-directed support means that the OU can play a greater role in disseminating information to allow individuals to make decisions about personal health and care options.

The Open University is in the position to support potential carers who will be expected to meet the demand of personalised care options. We currently offer a module of specific interest to carers '[An introduction to health and social care](#)' which is currently the most popular undergraduate module choice in Northern Ireland, with 263 students currently registered on it. A number of students, who were also carers, have reviewed the course positively. Reviews can be read [here](#). Not only does this module provide an example of our current provision, but is exemplary of the type of provision which may be developed in the future in response to carer-demand for education in health and care. Our high quality programmes can be delivered at scale and in partnership.

The Open University also has a wide range of free health and care resources available on OpenLearn. The Body and Mind (Health Sciences) section currently offers a free course [Choose Health: Managing long-term conditions](#) offers people who are considering caring for family members or friends, the chance to explore what this might involve, and the opportunity to learn more about long-term conditions and the implications for home care. The website uses three cases of end-stage renal failure, phenylketonuria and rheumatoid arthritis. Other relevant free introductory courses available are on autism, public health, complementary medicine, diabetes. For a full listing please visit <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/body-mind/health/health-sciences?seeall=1>

Question 4.

Do you agree we should organise our services to enable people to stay at home for as long as possible and / or be cared for at home?

Yes. The Open University believes that enhanced community provision of care will offer increased independence to individuals, carers and family members. If these proposals were implemented, The Open University is uniquely placed to deliver training to carers in their local communities via distance learning. The Open University's flexible, part-time route enables students to manage the intensity of study and to continue to work around their other work, family and financial commitments, from their chosen location. Distance learning is mainly online, and involves reading, watching or listening to material supplied, with regular support from your tutor and the chance to interact with your tutor group for peer advice. In early 2013, the OU will be launching its [OUAnywhere app](#) which enables learners to access their OU course on any mobile device, making learning even more flexible. Carers who may mainly be in the domestic context would particularly benefit from distance learning, as there is no need to physically attend a university campus.

The case study of one carer/student exemplifies our success in this area. **Case study of Aoife Thornton here??**

We also offer an extensive range of support for disabled students, including alternative formats of study materials, assistive equipment and software, and special arrangements for tutorials, residential schools and examinations. Further information can be found [here](#).

Question 5.

Given the choice, who would you like to provide your care and support in your home?

1. Statutory bodies
2. Voluntary and community groups

3. *Independent sector*
4. *A mixture of the above*
5. *You would prefer to receive the money yourself to choose*

The Open University is prepared to work with all service providers as mentioned in the TYC consultation to enable the newly proposed mixed economy of care in Northern Ireland. The OU has a history of providing training to a variety of institutions in the health sector, to increase knowledge and develop skills, which can be strengthened if proposals are implemented.

In Northern Ireland, the OU works with several statutory bodies:

- Our pre-registration nursing programme enables the development of Health Care Assistants (HCAs) in all five Health and Social Care Trusts to progress academically and professionally to become registered mental health or adult nurses, gaining registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and a BSc (Hons) Nursing.
- The OU has also provided development for health care assistants working in the Public Health Agency via the K101 and Y178 Openings modules in Health and Openings modules in Maths Y162. We recently held a short awards ceremony for those who completed their studies in the Public Health Agency (PHA), further information about which can be found on our [website](#).
- We work with NIPEC, Northern Ireland Practice Education Council, to assist in the professional development of registered nurses across NI.
- We work closely with DHSSPSNI on commissioning for pre-registration nurse education, and engaging with the Education Strategy group for Nursing in Northern Ireland informing ongoing post registration education.
- We have work placements arranged with RQIA (Regional quality improvement authority), PHA, Youth Justice Agency, Army Welfare Service and Education and Library Boards.

We also work with voluntary and community groups in Northern Ireland:

- We offer work placements for our students at Include Youth, VOYPIC, Barnardo's and NSPCC
- We also offer staff working with the above groups the opportunity to develop their skills through our modules and short courses.

We currently work with the independent sector, namely Four Seasons Nursing Homes, to provide Openings courses, the 'Introduction to health and social care; module, and potentially our Pre-registration Nursing programme degree. We also provide staff development opportunities working with the Origin Fertility Clinic and The Martin Trust.

Question 6.

Do you agree that Integrated Care Partnerships could make a positive contribution to the delivery of care closer to home rather than in hospitals?

If your response is 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree', do you think there are any alternative ways to deliver care closer to home?

The Open University is supportive of wider support for existing Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) and welcomes any future developments that enable individuals to choose to have care closer to home.

The Open University already has visibility in local communities across Northern Ireland (we held [Open Near You](#) events in every county throughout the province in 2012) and would welcome any opportunity to develop this engagement through health and social care provision.

The OU approach transcends any geographical barriers to learning through its online, distance learning methods, and through a variety of technology. The Open University can therefore provide learning programmes in the proposed ICPs throughout Northern Ireland. In addition to our current provision, our high quality, affordable and relevant higher education programmes can be delivered immediately, at scale and in partnership.

Question 7.

*Do you agree with the proposals set out in respect of older people's services?
Do you believe there are better alternatives?*

The Open University is well-placed to provide education to carers in their support of the wellbeing of older people in the local community, and to all service providers who may operate within this strand of the mixed economy of care. The Open University currently provides a module in [Dementia Care](#) at Level 2. We also offer standalone modules in [Adult health, social care and wellbeing \(K217\)](#) and [Adulthood, ageing and the life course \(K319\)](#)

Question 8.

With regard to Long Term Conditions, would it be helpful to

a) make more information and education available to help those with a long term condition to monitor and manage their own condition?

Yes. The Open University is uniquely placed to provide education to carers in their support of the individuals with long-term conditions and to all service providers who may operate within this strand of the mixed economy of care.

The OU currently provides an introductory course on [Choose Health: Managing long-term conditions](#) on OpenLearn. This course offers people who are considering caring for family members or friends, the chance to explore what this might involve, and the opportunity to learn more about long-term conditions and the implications for home care.

b) enable those with long term conditions to make more use of technology in their home to help problems be identified earlier, and reduce the need for avoidable visits to hospital or the doctor?

The Open University supports the proposals for those with long-term conditions to make more use of technology for medical issues. The OU has expertise in teaching adults via innovative technology, and has produced a range of free taster material on [OpenLearn on how to use ICT](#). This may be of use to adults encountering new technology for the first time.

Question 9.

*Do you agree that the proposals set out in respect of palliative and end of life care would support you to be cared for in a place of your choice?
Do you believe there are better alternatives?*

The Open University welcomes these proposals as a basis for increased opportunities for family care, and we support the opportunity for patients and carers to learn how to manage their conditions at a community and local level. We also acknowledge the demonstrated need for 24 hour community support for people in the last year of life in proposal number 7. The Open University can therefore provide an opportunity to increase the education and training of staff confident and competent in the core principles of palliative and end of life care in all sectors. The Open University currently offers a professional module on end of life care, [Death and Dying](#). The OU also offers a **short course** (non-credit bearing) [Improving end-of-life care](#).

Question 10.

Do you agree with the proposals set out in respect of mental health services?

Do you believe there are better alternatives?

The Open University supports the proposals in respect of mental health services, and especially those for supporting carers of family members and friends with mental health conditions. The Open University has apposite potential to contribute to this development via its courses on mental health. In light of the impending closure of mental health institutions across Northern Ireland, there will be demand for increased education at community and local level. The OU can provide this through its flexible, distance learning opportunities.

The OU currently provides courses [Challenging ideas in mental health](#) and [Diverse perspectives on mental health](#), both at Level 2, summaries of which are provided below. The OU also offers a number of psychology counselling qualifications which can be viewed [here](#).

Question 11.

Do you agree with the proposals set out in respect of learning disability services? Do you believe there are better alternatives?

Question 12.

Do you agree with the proposals set out in respect of physical disability and sensory impairment services?

Do you believe there are better alternatives?

We will respond to Questions 11 and 12 together.

With over 17,000 declared disabled students registered at October 2012, The Open University has the largest community of disabled students of any UK university. Disabled students represent approximately 9.5% of our student body. In Northern Ireland, disabled students constitute 11% of the OU's learner body. A significant proportion of students with disabilities and long term health condition choose the OU because it suits their lifestyle, and because the OU has a central aim to widen participation to higher education for disabled students.

The [Securing Greater Accessibility \(SeGA\) Project](#) is a major initiative launched recently by the OU to create an 'access hub' for the sector, focusing on the development of good practice in teaching and learning for disabled students.

The OU is developing a pan-institutional approach to accessibility and inclusivity, all of which delivers, promotes, reinforces and further influences the disabled student learning experience. Our on-going research and evaluation into the disabled student learning

experience and new assistive technologies is shared with the wider education community to foster good practice. We welcome the opportunity to share this with the health sector.

The Open University supports the proposals to enhance learning disability services in the health and social care sector in Northern Ireland. We welcome the opportunity to support carers working with individuals with learning disabilities and/or physical or sensory impairment, and to support service providers in the mixed economy of care to enable individuals to live at home. This is something we aim to pursue through our participation in the Department of Employment and Learning's Higher Education Strategy Widening Participation Implementation Group.

The OU offers a 60-credit postgraduate module for higher education practitioners teaching disabled students called [Accessible online learning: supporting disabled students](#).

Question 13.

*Do you agree with the proposals set out in respect of Family and Child Care?
Do you believe there are better alternatives?*

The OU covers all aspects of family and child care within HSC course materials and is well placed to provide any training for individuals working within this sector.

With particular reference to proposal 2, the OU currently offers a module focussing on foster care – [K217 Adult health, social care and wellbeing, exploring identity, difference and inequality](#).

Question 14.

*Do you agree with the proposals we have set out in respect of maternity and child health services?
Do you believe there are better alternatives? Please provide details*

The OU is again uniquely placed to provide support and educational training for staff working in family, maternity and child care services. We offer a course in [Childhood and Youth Studies](#), with a Children and Family pathway available. Introduction to Health and Social Care module provides a platform for anyone interested in pursuing maternity and child health.

We also operate several [Openings](#) Courses in [Understanding Children and Young People](#). Openings modules were created in 2000 as the OU's curriculum response to inclusion and widening participation in recognition of the challenges faced by students with no or very low prior education qualifications and/or who lacked confidence in their own ability to study at university level. To date, over 155,000 students have studied an Openings module. In Northern Ireland, the 2011/12 intake for Openings was 432.

Our pre-registration nurses currently undertake work placements within Sure Start, therefore gaining experience in child health services.

Question 15.

*Do you agree with our proposals in respect of acute hospital services?
Do you believe there are better alternatives?*

The OU welcomes the opportunity to strengthen acute hospital services and is in the position to provide specialised modules to assist carers in this area via its opportunities in [Health and Social Care](#) (HSC) through the following programmes of study: degree, foundation degree, Certificate, Diploma, OU Certificate (all available to view here, [Openings](#), short course or stand-alone modules. All our courses are provided through high quality, flexible and part-time distance learning methods. We also make reference throughout to our free online resources available on [OpenLearn](#) – the UK’s largest source of free university materials, with over 19 million unique visitors since 2006. Much of our material is also available on [iTunes U](#).

Question 16.

Do you agree that the criteria set out in Appendix 1 against which acute services have been assessed remain the most appropriate criteria?

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please provide specific details on what you see are more appropriate criteria. Please give reasons for your comments.

N/A

Question 17.

To what extent do you agree we should develop closer working relationships with the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain?

The Open University is the largest institution in the UK, with national offices in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Open University is also the only higher education institution with a cross-border operation on the island of Ireland.

We welcome this proposal to develop closer working relationships with both the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain in order to understand health issues in a wider context, and to share and learn from practice. It is the intention of The Open University to engage more with healthcare providers in the Republic of Ireland to deliver courses aligned with the national healthcare system.

Question 18.

Are the proposals set out in this consultation document likely to have an adverse impact on any of the nine equality groups identified under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998?

If yes, please state the group or groups and provide comment on how these adverse impacts could be reduced or alleviated in the proposals.

Widening participation and achieving social mobility is core to The Open University’s mission and therefore any criteria proposed or adopted should have no adverse impact on the nine equality groups identified under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Question 19.

Are you aware of any indication or evidence – qualitative or quantitative – that the proposals set out in this consultation document may have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity or on good relations? If yes, please give details and comment on what you think should be added or removed to alleviate the adverse impact.

Widening participation and achieving social mobility is core to The Open University’s mission and therefore any criteria proposed or adopted should have no adverse impact on equality of opportunity or good relations.

Question 20.

Is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations? If yes, please give details as to how.

The Open University welcomes any further promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

Question 21.

Are there any aspects of the proposals where potential human rights breaches may occur?

Widening participation and achieving social mobility is core to The Open University's mission and therefore any criteria proposed or adopted should have no adverse impact on human rights.

END.