

**Title: Student Mental Health Policy**

**Type:** Policy

---

**Purpose:** To inform staff, students, parents/ guardians and all other service users of the policy Solihull College & University Centre and Stratford upon Avon College has in place to ensure that the mental health of students receiving education and training is safeguarded and promoted.

---

**Scope:** This policy applies to all students

---

**Responsibility:** The Vice Principal HR & Student Services is responsible for this policy. The Director Student Services is responsible for the monitoring of the policy.

---

**Legal Context:** The Mental Health Act (2007); The Equality Act (2010); The Data Protection Act (2018); The Mental Capacity Act (2005)

## 1 Introduction

Studying at college can offer a very positive experience by increasing a person's confidence, self-esteem, motivation, organisational skills, academic and life skills. However, coming to College can also be a stressful experience, for example becoming independent, financial difficulties, making new friends, being responsible for your own study and academic success and working to deadlines are all factors which can introduce increased stress. The majority of students find ways of dealing with these issues but for some it can have an adverse effect on their mental health and wellbeing and impact on their studies.

Over the past 10 years there has been a fivefold increase in the proportion of students disclosing a mental health condition to their institution (Not by Degrees 2017.1). This has led to several reports recommending what Colleges need to do to tackle this growing issue. It is recognised that these difficulties can be experienced by all students, regardless of the type or level of qualification they are studying. Therefore, this policy applies to all students at the college including further and higher education students.

## 2 Purpose

The College has a responsibility towards all of its students, staff and visitors and acknowledges the increasing necessity for a robust mental health policy and procedures which accommodates the needs of students who are experiencing mental health issues which directly affect their studies.

This document has been written in accordance with current equality legislation and is based on the college's commitment to promoting equality for students, staff and visitors, and to pro-actively work to eliminate all forms of discrimination so that students are able to participate fully in College life. The policy aims to provide a clear, transparent and practical policy framework

relating to student mental health issues and a basis for a consistent approach throughout the College to the way that these students' needs are responded to.

### **3 Context**

This policy is based on several government initiatives in the field of mental health (e.g. National Service Framework for Mental Health) which apply to the whole of society, of which the student body and staff at Solihull College form a part. It takes account of recommendations found in the 2016 HEPI Report and the 2017 'Not by degrees' Report. There are also a number of specific regulatory and legal requirements which apply in the context of students with mental health difficulties, notably:

#### **3.1 The Mental Health Act (2007)**

This Act describes how an individual who is experiencing mental health difficulties should be treated, when a person is detained in hospital and their rights. It recognises that unless a person has been sectioned under the Mental Health Act, those experiencing difficulties have the same rights and responsibilities as other people.

#### **3.2 The Equality Act (2010)**

This Act replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 2005) and the SENDA Act (2001). The Equality Act includes on-going mental health difficulties within its definition of disability and as such places a duty on Employers and Education providers: not to discriminate, and to make reasonable adjustments for people with mental health difficulties. It also places on institutions an 'Anticipatory Duty' which requires that general support systems are in place for all students with a mental health difficulty.

#### **3.3 Data Protection Act (2018)**

This identifies how student information is gathered, used and shared in response to the concerns of the student's mental health.

#### **3.4 The Mental Capacity Act (2005)**

Founded on the principle that every adult has the right to make his or her own decisions and must be assumed to have capacity to make those decisions unless it is proved otherwise and that any decisions made on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be made in their best interests.

#### **3.5 The Human Rights Act (2000)**

The Duty and Standards of Care as defined by AMOSSHE (2001:4-6): The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000: and The Health and Safety legislation.

### **4 Definitions**

The term 'mental health' describes a sense of well-being; the capacity to live in a resourceful and fulfilling manner and having the resilience to deal with the obstacles that life presents.

For the purpose of these procedures the term 'mental health difficulties' refers to:

- Temporary debilitating mental health conditions or reactions which impact on a student's ability to fulfil their academic potential.

- Emerging mental health problems which may develop into conditions which require on-going support or intervention.
- Severe or enduring mental ill health, which may be classified as a disability under Disability Legislation.

There are a range of conditions which come under the umbrella term 'mental health difficulties', including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, self-harm, bipolar mood disorder, psychosis, obsessive compulsive disorder and others as diagnosed by a relevant medical practitioner.

## **5 Statement of Intent**

The College seeks to provide holistic support to all our students in a way which reflects our values. In order to help support the mental health of its students the College is committed to providing:

- A supportive and non-discriminatory environment for all students
- A co-ordinated approach to training and raising awareness
- Effective and continuous liaison with external agencies
- Continuing development of policy and provision
- Effective and collaborative working with students and staff
- A co-ordinated approach to the support of students in the management of their studies throughout their time at college, from admission, during their course to the time they leave. This includes the development of procedures for the effective management of problems which may arise.

## **6 Responsibilities**

### **6.1 Overall responsibility for the policy**

Overall responsibility for this policy and for ensuring that the College complies with relevant legislation lies with the Vice Principal HR & Student Services who will ensure that this policy is kept under review and updated as necessary and that appropriate training is made available to staff on recognising and dealing with students experiencing mental health difficulties.

### **6.2 The Mental Health Lead and Director of Student Services will:**

Take a leadership role in ensuring compliance with the policy within their operational areas and ensure that all staff are made aware of the terms of this policy and their responsibilities arising under it.

### **6.3 Mental Health Champions**

The college has selected and trained 16 Mental Health Champions from various departments across Blossomfield Campus with a view to upskill staff at other campuses in subsequent years.

The Mental Health Champion's role is to tend to students with mental health issues who are in immediate crisis and/or experiencing low mood. Their duty will be to assess the situation and signpost to internal student support services and/or external support services.

The Mental Health Champion's role is designed to create a whole college approach to helping vulnerable students. It also gives staff the opportunity for professional development.

## **6.4 Responsibilities of Staff**

The College expects staff to:

- Uphold confidentiality and to make appropriate decisions about disclosure where necessary. If information is provided that suggests that the individual or someone else is at serious and imminent risk of harm, then staff members should follow the College's Safeguarding procedures.
- Develop the skills and knowledge necessary to recognise where professional boundaries lie and to make appropriate referrals.
- Review their own practice, and where applicable, those that report to them, to actively promote equality and to eliminate any form of discrimination against people experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Where an inclusive approach is not possible, to make reasonable adjustments to minimise barriers to participation and academic success.
- Treat each student as an individual.
- Support students managing mental health difficulties to enable them to participate fully and successfully by adhering to Fitness To Study policies and procedures.
- Work towards the maintenance of an open, inclusive and a non-stigmatising community.
- Use internal and external relevant support services.

## **6.5 Responsibilities of Students**

We encourage students to:

- Take reasonable steps to maintain their physical and mental health. However, if they are feeling concerned about their mental health we would encourage them to discuss this with student support staff as soon as possible.
- Work towards the maintenance of an open, inclusive and non-stigmatising community within the College.
- Treat each other as an individual.
- Make suggestions on College procedures through the Student Voice process.
- Use the Suggestions Box and the Feeling Unsafe dashboard, which can be found on the Student Hub.

## **7 Student Support Staff**

Student Support staff and Mental Health Champions will usually take the lead role in initially co-ordinating the Colleges support of students with mental health difficulties. The Student Support Staff will work closely with the Mental Health Lead, Counsellors, colleagues and external services as necessary and as agreed with the student.

The Mental Health Lead can:

- Offer advice and guidance on study related difficulties to students or prospective students declaring on-going mental health difficulties

- Offer advice to College staff on supporting students with long-term mental health difficulties and inclusive approaches or making reasonable adjustments within the academic environment where appropriate.
- Work towards improving the provision of support for students with on-going mental health difficulties.
- Offer advice about appropriate external services available.
- Work together with Caring Services Team as part of the Triage process to develop appropriate procedures and infrastructure to enhance support for students experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Work together with Human Resources to ensure effective support for staff who are impacted by others with mental health difficulties.
- Manage and evaluate the Mental Health Champions and offer relevant professional development.
- Develop the College and University Mental Health Action Plan and to work towards the targets agreed.
- Co-ordinate the review of the mental health policy on a regular basis.
- Work with external agencies and wider NHS services to develop effective services for students with mental health difficulties.

Whilst the Mental Health Lead, Counsellors and other members of Student Support staff may have a key role in supporting students with mental health difficulties, the College recognises that external agencies such as the NHS services have a duty to carry out assessment and treatment of serious mental health difficulties or emergencies.

## **8 Fitness to Study**

The College seeks to provide a safe and comfortable learning environment where students are able to study and perform to the best of their ability and reach their full potential. The College will support students and make reasonable adjustments to help them reach the appropriate standards for success in their studies and on their placements.

However, the College also needs to respond appropriately to situations where signs of ill health (including mental health difficulties, psychological, physical, personality or emotional disorders) are having a serious impact on the functioning of individual students or the wellbeing of others around them. If you perceive there may be a risk when speaking to a student please consider the following:

- Will this person be at increased risk of harm to themselves or others if they engage in or continue a programme of academic activity?
- Will this person be at increased risk of harm to themselves or others if they intend to start or complete a placement for their course?

Where these circumstances arise, the question of fitness to study or practice will be considered in line with the Fitness to Study Policy. This can be found on the Intranet:

<https://studentssolihullac.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/intranet/Shared%20Documents/Staff/Forms,%20Files,%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/Student%20Services/Fitness%20To%20Study%20Policy%20and%20Procedures.docx?d=wb9f7156d5e464b1b9b669110ea7613fd&csf=1&e=tfW3s>

## **9 Promotion and Awareness**

The College will seek to promote mental wellbeing and mental health awareness through a range of activities, which may include:

- The availability of self-help guides on a variety of mental health issues available to all students and staff.
- The promotion of wellbeing issues such as healthy eating, exercise and lifestyle.
- Using of a wide range of media to publicise information about mental health, external services, student regulations, websites and targeted campaigns.
- Displays and information on mental health awareness and services that are available throughout the College and on internationally recognised mental health days such as Mental Health Awareness week and World Mental Health Day.
- Developing awareness of mental health support services at the College to external agencies such as G.P's, Mental Health Teams and Social Services.

## **10 Training & Awareness**

The 2016 HEPI Report on mental health recommended that educational institutions should provide materials and training on student mental health. College staff has the opportunity to attend Online Mental Health Awareness Training offered by EduCare.

The college will be selecting and training another cohort of Mental Health Champions at Woodlands and Stratford-Upon-Avon Campus in subsequent years.

Frontline staff at Blossomfield and Woodlands Campus have been offered training on Suicide Prevention delivered by Papyrus. Staff supporting students at Stratford-Upon-Avon Campus have also engaged in training on student mental health issues such as Self-Harm and Eating Disorders via Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust.

Students have been encouraged to attend various workshops on student mental health and emotional wellbeing delivered in collaboration with external partnership organisations including Kooth, Solihull Samaritans and Springfield Mind.

Documents on the awareness and management of student mental health for staff and students has been developed and uploaded onto the relevant hubs. These resources act as a guide for staff and students and includes information on understanding mental health difficulties, recognising vulnerable students and provides advice on assessment and triage.

Information on the remits of the Mental Health and Counselling Service have been outlined in the form of an easy to read booklet. This resource helps staff and students understand access to the services as well as the service's limitations.

The Mental Health Lead can offer more bespoke training on request to staff for students. The Mental Health Lead also offers wellbeing workshops and sessions to students via the curriculum on request from course lecturers and programme leaders.

## **11 Data Protection and Confidentiality**

The College acknowledges that as a result of implementing this policy it will receive personal data of a confidential and sensitive nature and shall ensure that all such data is handled, processed and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Sensitive personal data and confidential information will only be disclosed to third parties with the express, informed consent of the student. However, there may be occasions where The College is obliged to

disclose and/or request information, notwithstanding that the student has refused consent, these include:

- Where the student's behaviour threatens their safety or the safety of others; and / or
- Where a member of staff of The College would be liable to civil or criminal penalty for failure to disclose.

## 12 Safeguarding

The majority of students experiencing mental health difficulties will not need to be safeguarded and can be more suitably supported through other internal or external services. This includes students who may present as a risk to themselves by expressing suicidal or self-harm ideation but all members of staff have a duty of care towards such vulnerable students and they should make a safeguarding referral. The College operates a triage system which is used to assess referrals into the Caring Services and Safeguarding teams. The triage process is used to identify the most suitable form of support.

The College will ensure that the processes supporting student's mental health promotes the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults.

Author	Date Created	Approved By	Last Reviewed	Next Review Date
Fathima Ashraf-Ali/Adam Thomas	July 2019	EMT	July 2019	July 2021

### Publication:

**Staff Hub/Intranet:** Y  
**Website:** Y  
**Student Hub:** Y