



Southport
Education
Group

Mental Health

Policy & Procedure

2026/28

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Policy Statement

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organisation)

At our College, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and learner body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole College approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable learners.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to poor mental health. In an average classroom, three learners will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for learners affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health. We seek to embed an open and inclusive ethos where those experiencing mental health difficulties are respected.

Scope

This document describes the College's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff, governors and our learners.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and learners
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with learners with mental health issues
- Provide support to learners suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of learners, staff with a specific, relevant responsibility include:

- Karen Marsh- Senior Mental Health Lead (2758)
- Stephen Musa- Designated Safeguarding Lead (2669)
- Katy Robinson- Safeguarding/Mental Health Link Governor (robinsonk@southport.ac.uk)
- Liz Jones- Designated Safeguarding Lead (2759)
- Jodie Marcucci/Anne-Marie O'Donovan/Heather Jamieson-Learner Wellbeing Officers (2886/2713/2602)
- Alison McDowell- Vice Principal People and Culture (2861)
- Vickie Hayes- Director of Learning Support and Inclusion (2872)
- Rachael Brownhill - Assistant Principal Learner Development and Careers (2811)
- Nicola Vernon- Counsellor (2720)
- Joanne Dawson/Emily Driver- Learner Welfare Officers (2746/2774)
- Kim Goodier- Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator (2620)
- Mel Hampton- Health and Safety Lead (2777)

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a learner should speak to the Mental Health Lead or a member of the Learner Wellbeing Team in the first instance. If there is a concern that the learner is in danger of immediate harm then the normal safeguarding procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Learner Wellbeing Team. If the learner presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS or other mental health services is appropriate, this will be led and managed by a Learner Wellbeing Officer.

Risk Assessments/Fitness to Study

It is helpful to draw up an individual risk assessments for learners presenting with risk issues. This should be drawn up involving the learner, the parents (where the child is under 18) and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a learner's condition including any risk issues
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the College can play

Where risks are significant, a Fitness to Study Panel may be convened to review the risk assessment and make a judgement around whether risks can be safely managed in the College setting. Risk assessments will be reviewed on a termly basis or as required.

The College may apply this policy where:-

A learner is unable to attend College or engage fully in their studies due to prolonged or repeated absence related to medical or mental health needs.

A learner's continued enrolment appears to be having a negative impact on their health and wellbeing.

It is clear that the learner is struggling to sustain meaningful engagement with their course despite reasonable adjustments and support.

In such cases, a supportive and structured Fitness to Study process may be initiated in order to-

Assess the learner's current ability to engage with education;

Provide a clear action plan for a potential phased or supported return to study;

Identify whether a temporary or permanent withdrawal may be in the learner's best interests.

Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our learners to keep themselves and others physically, and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our curriculum.

The specific content of sessions will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling learners to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding and resilience available to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others. Mental health stigma will be challenged through curriculum teaching. There will be a focus on self-care. The sessions will encourage maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle.

We teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Awareness Raising

In order to positively promote mental health, there will be a series of awareness raising weeks that are held throughout the year. Themes will link to local and national campaigns, specialist organisations will also deliver and contribute.

Enrichment Activities

It is widely recognised that positive mental health and wellbeing can be promoted by engaging in meaningful activities, learning a new skill, being physically active, and by taking a break or finding ways to relax. In College every learner will have the opportunity to engage in enrichment activities.

Warning Signs and Being Trauma Informed

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a learner is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with the Safeguarding Officer, or our mental health and emotional wellbeing lead.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping practical sports sessions or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from College
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Common ‘adverse childhood experiences’ ACES (such as family breakdown, bereavement and exposure to domestic violence) may also negatively impact learner’s mental health and wellbeing. As a college we seek to embrace trauma informed approaches, leading to our learners feeling supported, listened to and safe.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented disruption in learners' lives, potentially unsettling their emotional, and social development. Many known risk factors for mental health disorders have intensified and access to sources of support has reduced. Research has demonstrated that investing time and resources into improving relationships in colleges leads to positive outcomes around inclusion, engagement, attainment and achievement in the short term and community safety and cohesion in the longer term.

Statistically the following groups may also be more likely to experience difficulties:

- Care Experienced/Cared For
- Young people who have been adopted
- LGBTQ+
- Those whose family have a history of mental health issues
- Young carers/carers
- Offenders

Managing disclosures and Protocols

A learner may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or somebody else to any member of staff, so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a learner chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of somebody else to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. Staff are taught to not over pathologise and recognise that experiencing a range of emotions better equips young people for adulthood, making them more resilient in the long term.

Staff should listen rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the learner's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'.

All disclosures, incidents or conversations should be recorded electronically in and held on the learner's confidential Pro-Monitor area. This record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the Learner Wellbeing Team, who will offer support and advice about next steps. The Safeguarding Policy and Procedures should be followed.

An immediate referral will be required from the member of staff where there are concerns the learner may pose an immediate risk to themselves or others, and may be unable to keep themselves safe, 999 should be called or the learner should be supported to access medical support from A & E. It may also be appropriate to support the learner to access crisis mental health services or support from their GP. Where there are urgent safeguarding concerns staff may present to the Safeguarding Office (Southport- RG 007 or KGV- room 12 Study Hub) or call 2821 which will alert all of the Safeguarding team.

Staff and Learners will have access to a Learner Wellbeing Officer during term time Business hours. There will normally be a presence on site. After 5 pm the Duty Principal should be notified (4pm on a Friday). Learners may self-present or present to raise a concern about somebody else.

Where there is no mental health crisis and more general support is required, a referral can be made internally to offer the learner support around their mental health and wellbeing, and a routine appointment should be offered. This support can be provided in the following ways:

- 1:1 meeting with a Learner Wellbeing Officer, Progress Tutor, or Welfare Officer who can offer ongoing support, make specialist referrals, signpost to other agencies and make recommendations to the Curriculum Team e.g. soft landings, adjustments to timetables, reset time etc.
- Referral to the College Counsellor or provide details on how to access drop in counselling (weekly term time sessions available). Our counsellor will carry out an initial assessment and offer up to six sessions of person-centred counselling/CBT as appropriate.
- Referral to NHS Mental Health Support Team who can offer a bespoke course of therapeutic interventions in college (criteria applies).
- Learners are also able to access the staffed Learning Support Hub if they need to take some time out of class, reset cards are available on request.

Where a potential learner has disclosed a mental health condition prior to them starting at college, potential learners are able to have access to an enhanced transition. Transitional support may be offered from the Learner Wellbeing Team, Learning Support Team or the Curriculum Team themselves. Activities may include taster sessions, tours of the college, familiarisation visits (particular classrooms and key staff), discussions around the learners' individual needs and providing an appropriate level of support once they start.

Confidentiality and Consent

We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a learner on, then we should discuss with the learner:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We shouldn't share information about a learner without first telling them. Ideally we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent. Where there are prevalent risk issues information may need to be shared with parents/carers in order to safeguard the learner. It may also be appropriate to share information with external agencies such as Mental Health/Crisis Services, Children's Social Care, Adult Services or the Emergency Services as appropriate.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with the Learner Wellbeing Team. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the learner, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the learner and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Working with Parents

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues.

We should always highlight further sources of support for the learner, and in addition support aimed specifically at parents, e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions or concerns. With each contact there should be agreed next steps and always keep a record of the content of the discussion or meeting on Pro-Monitor. Our Mental Health Policy and Procedure should be accessible to parents through the College website or upon request.

Supporting Peers

When a learner is experiencing mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. Learners can in this circumstance seek help and support from staff. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the learner who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Support for Staff

There is a programme of staff wellbeing activities and opportunities for staff which drives a supportive culture. Health and Wellbeing days are offered throughout the year, as well as recognition and rewards. Staff views around their own wellbeing and training needs are captured in staff surveys and appraisals. There is an employee benefits programme, plus staff recognition and rewards.

Staff can self-refer if they require specialist counselling support through the Employee Assistance Programme. They can offer a wealth of supportive services to staff including bereavement, medical information, therapeutic support and access to same day GP appointments.

Any member of staff working with a learner who is experiencing mental health difficulties can seek further guidance and support from the colleges Safeguarding and Welfare Team.

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training (normally annually) about recognising and responding to mental health issues, this is delivered by our NHS Mental Health Support Team. In addition, mental health is covered in the annual safeguarding training. Specialist training will also be available throughout the year for key staff who require more in-depth knowledge, for example Mental Health First Aid./Suicide First Aid. There will be a rolling programme of staff development.

The Senior Mental Health Lead has successfully completed DFE funded Senior Mental Health Lead training in conjunction with Leeds Beckett University.

Quality Assurance/Learner Voice

It is important that the mental health and wellbeing support offered to learners is of a good quality and that our learner's voices are heard. This includes all aspects of support and covers both teaching and learning, and more bespoke personal emotional support.

The college conducts regular surveys (induction, end of year, mental health and wellbeing, and happiness surveys), to gather student feedback on their experiences and views, which are analysed and used to make improvements. Each progress group has a student rep who gathers information from peers and relays it during student rep Feedback meetings to cross college manages. This ensures the student's voice is heard and concerns addressed. Themed focus groups are held to explore topics such as enrichment, safeguarding, and mental health etc. These groups provide invaluable insights into students' understanding. Learner's views are sought through an annual Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey where they will have the opportunity to give feedback and make recommendations about drivers of poor mental health, support that helps in college and how their psychoeducation is shaped. Key findings will shape future service provision. The student council has contributed towards updating this Mental Health Policy and Procedure, ensuring the voice of the learner is heard.

We regularly undertake self-assessment which helps us to identify gaps in provision. Southport Education Group has been awarded the prestigious Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools Award by Leeds Beckett University, following a rigorous year-long process. The college achieved the highest grade across all eight key competencies, including leadership, staff and student support, professional development, and collaboration with families and external services. The award recognises our holistic and strategic approach to mental health and wellbeing, highlighting our commitment to nurturing the whole person and fostering a supportive, inclusive environment for both staff and students. In July we also received a commended status from the Association of Colleges (AOC) Mental Health and Wellbeing award reaching the national final. We are also an AOC Mental Health Charter College member.

The number of learner mental health referrals made are monitored and reported on e.g. low mood, anxiety, eating disorder, self-harm, etc and referral outcome. Trends amongst the learner population are monitored year on year and drive themed awareness weeks and the training needs of staff. Recent trends are around low mood, anxiety, risk to self (suicidal ideation) and self-harm.

Our learner counsellor will use the Core 10 Tool to measure psychological distress and risk.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or as required, the next review will be in 2028.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis.

Links to Other Policies

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
Fitness to Study Policy and Procedures
First Aid Policy and Procedures
Sexual Harassment and Violence Policy and Procedures
Counselling Policy and Procedures
Positive Behaviour Policy
Online Safety Policy and Procedures
Criminal Convictions Policy and Procedures Staff
Stress and Mental Wellbeing at Work (staff policy)

Appendix

Local External Support Services - Emergency

Merseycare Crisis Line – 0800 0511508
Sefton Early Intervention in Psychosis Service - 01704 383602
Sefton CAMHS- 0151 282 4527
Sefton and Liverpool Crisis CAMHS- 0151 293 3577
Sefton CHAT- 0151 934 4013 (Children's Social Care)
Sefton Emergency Duty Team (out of hours Children's Social Care) - 0151 934 3555
Sefton Adult Social Care- 0345 140 0845
West Lancashire CAMHS- 01695 684262
West Lancashire Crisis Team- 0800 0130 708
Lancashire Children's Social Care- 0300 123 6720
Lancashire Children's/Adult Social Care out of hours- 0300 123 6722
Lancashire Adult Services- 0300 123 6720

Local External Support Services

Non-Emergency

Name	Service Offer	Telephone Number	Website/Email Contact
SWAN Women's Centre – Litherland & Sefton	Adult Service Young Peoples Service (18 & under)	0151 933 3292	Swanwomenscentre.org
The Venus Centre Bootle & Sefton	Adult Service Young Peoples Service	0151 474 4744	Venuscharity.org
YPAS – Bootle & Sefton	Young Peoples Service Crisis phone line & Drop-in	0151 707 1025	support@ypas.org.uk
Philippi Trust – Southport & St Helens	Adult Service £20 per hr	01704 807660	Philippitrust.com

	Young Peoples Service		
Crisis Café	Weekend Drop-in Service	0300 323 0197	Seftoncvcs.org.uk
Trust House – Preston & Lancashire	Adult Service (rape & sexual abuse, pre-trial)	01772 825288	Support@trusthouse.org
RASA – Merseyside & Liverpool	Adult & Young Peoples Service (rape & sexual abuse, pre-trial)	0151 558 1801	helpline@rasamerseyside.org
Parenting 2000 – Sefton	Young Peoples Service Adult Service Family Support	01704 380047	info@parenting2000.org.uk
Voice 4 change - Sefton	Adult & Family Service Anger Management	0151 345 8499	Voice4change.org.uk
Cedar house - Lancashire	Adult Service	01772 880909	Cedarhouse.co.uk
Inspire – Skelmersdale & Lancashire	Adult & Young People Service & Family Support – Alcohol & Drug Addiction	01254 495 014	Inspireblackburndarwen.org.uk
Lancashire Women – Lancashire	Adult Service	0300 330 1354	Lancashirewomen.org
Listening Ear – Merseyside	Adult & Young Peoples Service	0151 488 6648	enquiries@listening-ear.co.uk
James Place – Liverpool/Sefton	Adult Service for men in suicidal crisis	0151 303 5757	info@jamesplace.org.uk
Recovery Circle - Southport Addiction service Seans Place – Maghull/Sefton	Group Support Counselling Adult Service (Male)	075486079 02 No phone contact Online referral only	Facebook Page & phone contact only Seansplace.org.uk Downloadable referral form
WHISC Women’s Centre Liverpool/Sefton	Adult Service	0151 707 1826	Whisc.org.uk
Love Jasmine – Sefton	Adult/Family & Young Peoples Service (Bereavement)	0151 459 4779	enquiries@loveJasmine.org.uk
The Bereavement Service –	Adult Service (Bereavement)	01695 684177	TheBCS101@btconnect.com

Ormskirk/Lancashire/Sefton			
Liverpool Bereavement Service – Liverpool/Sefton	Adult Service (Bereavement)	0151 236 3932	enquiries@liverpoolbereavement.co.uk
Breathe Therapies – Lancashire	Adult & Young Peoples Service Eating Disorder	01772 915 735	enquiries@breathetherapies.co.uk
Kooth – National Service	Young Peoples Service		Kooth.com

National External Support Services

Young Minds (www.youngminds.org.uk)

Mind (www.mind.org.uk) and for e-learning opportunities — Minded (www.minded.org.uk).

National Self-Harm Network: www.nshn.co.uk

Harmless: www.harmless.org.uk

Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

On the edge: ChildLine spotlight report on suicide:

www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/on-the-edge-childline-suicide-report.pdf

Beat – the eating disorders charity: <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>

Anxiety UK: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

OCD UK: www.ocduk.org/ocd/