

# **Mental Wellbeing Policy**

## **Introduction**

Staffordshire University is committed to promoting a culture of mental wellbeing for its students. It is hoped that by creating such a culture, students will be able to fulfil their potential in their academic studies and in their lives beyond university. The University's commitment begins at the application stage and continues throughout the period the student is studying at the University. In trying to establish and maintain this culture, the University recognises that student mental wellbeing is the responsibility of the whole institution and not just that of the support services, as demonstrated by the University's Equality and Diversity commitment statement and policies/schemes. It will endeavour, therefore, to provide staff with training, support, and information, in order that awareness of the issues involved in mental wellbeing permeates all aspects and levels of the University.

## **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this policy (in conjunction with the guidelines for staff) is to promote mental wellbeing amongst the students of Staffordshire University by enhancing staff awareness and understanding of mental wellbeing issues. In order to achieve this purpose, the objectives are to:

- increase awareness and understanding of what is meant by mental wellbeing
- provide staff with information about how they can respond to students experiencing mental wellbeing difficulties
- clarify what support is available to students experiencing mental wellbeing difficulties, both within the University and externally
- increase awareness and understanding of the issue of confidentiality in relation to a student's mental wellbeing.

## **Mental health, mental illness and mental wellbeing: what do we mean?**

In today's society there is still much confusion over what is meant when words and statements are used in conjunction with the issue of mental wellbeing. Everyone has a state of mental health just as everyone has a state of physical health; the term 'mental health' does not, in itself, indicate any illness or difficulty. Mental wellbeing, however, suggests a state of psychological and emotional health that is positive – that a person is able to function cognitively and emotionally in a manner that is productive and fulfilling. Mental 'illness' and 'disorder' have specific meanings within the medical profession and it is not appropriate for these terms to be defined within this document. Mental illness and disorder, as medically diagnosed, have many complex elements that are not easily distinguished or understood by the layperson; the term mental wellbeing difficulties would

seem more useful as a general term applicable to someone who seems to be experiencing problems in relation to their own state of mental health. For this reason the phrase 'mental wellbeing difficulties' will be used in this respect throughout this document.

A high degree of stigma still surrounds the issue of mental wellbeing difficulties despite the fact that many people experience such difficulties. The World Health Report, published by the World Health Organisation in 2001, states that 'One in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives', indicating that this is not simply a matter for an insignificant minority. In addition, there have been a number of studies and reports written specifically about the mental wellbeing of students (see Appendix), which would suggest that this is an issue of significance for the student population.

Furthermore, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was updated in 2005 and removed the necessity of a formal diagnosis regarding mental wellbeing difficulties. Mental wellbeing difficulties are therefore considered to be a disability under the Act in the same manner as any other impairments: "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [a person's] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." It states that under the duty to promote disability equality, an institution must "take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons." Thus, it is important that all staff within the University have an awareness of the law.

It is clear that many students are likely to be affected by mental wellbeing difficulties at some point during their time as a student at Staffordshire University. It is hoped that this policy and the accompanying guidelines, along with the work of the Student Enabling Centre, Equality and Diversity Team and other University staff, will help create an environment in which the stigma surrounding mental wellbeing can be reduced. Hopefully, as a result of this, students experiencing mental wellbeing difficulties will feel able to access appropriate support.

## **Student disclosure of information**

A student may choose to disclose that they are experiencing (or have experienced) mental wellbeing difficulties at any time during their involvement with the University, from application through to the completion of their course of study. Students are encouraged to disclose on the basis that hopefully this will lead to positive outcomes, such as specialist support being made available. However, students may choose not to disclose their difficulties at any stage or to expressly limit who knows about their disclosure, and it is entirely their right to make such a choice. Wherever possible, though, staff should sensitively clarify with students that nondisclosure or limiting who can be informed may mean that the University may not be able to respond to their needs. But staff should bear in mind that once a student has disclosed a mental wellbeing

difficulty that would be considered a disability under the current legislation (Equality Act 2010), and has not asked for this information to remain confidential, the University is deemed to have been made aware of this and therefore would be required to make reasonable adjustments in supporting the student with their studies.

## **Confidentiality**

Due to the sensitive nature of information relating to the mental wellbeing of any student, it is imperative that where disclosures are made, staff maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality; indeed, there are laws to protect the rights of individuals in this respect, such as the Data Protection Act 1998. Thus staff must work with students in accordance with the law and within existing professional guidelines laid down by the University and by any professional body to which an employee may belong and be accountable. Students need to feel confident that any information they give will be treated with respect and only made available to others if they have specifically consented to such disclosure or if there are exceptional circumstances that override confidentiality. Staff are, therefore, responsible for ensuring that personal information about any student is never inappropriately disclosed.

For further information and guidance about data protection contact Sue Howlett, Information Protection and Security Manager and/or see the University's website. The following web page is a good starting point: [http://www.staffs.ac.uk/legal/privacy/10\\_rules/](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/legal/privacy/10_rules/)

## Publications

**The mental health of students in higher education.** Council Report CR112. January 2003. Royal College of Psychiatrists. London.

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/publications/collegereports/cr/cr166.aspx>

**Guidelines on student mental health policies and procedures for higher education.** April 2000. Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom.

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/>

**Reducing the risk of student suicide: issues and responsibilities for higher education institutions.** December 2002. Universities UK.

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/>

**Responding to student mental health issues: 'Duty of Care' responsibilities for student services in higher education.** December 2001. AMOSSHE.

<http://www.amosshe.org.uk/>

**The Equality Act.** (2010) Crown copyright.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

**Pull Yourself Together!** (2000) The Mental Health Foundation.

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>

**Students' Mental Health Needs.** (2002) Nicky Stanley and Jill Manthorpe (eds). Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia.

This is a selection of relevant publications.

# Mental Wellbeing Procedure

## Guidelines for helping distressed students

Guidelines for University Staff .....	7
How do you know there is a problem? .....	7
What to do if the situation is urgent .....	9
What to do if the situation does NOT require immediate action .....	10
Who can support the student? .....	11
Guidelines for Students .....	13
Supporting fellow students in difficulty .....	13
Key Contact lists:.....	14
University Key Contacts: Monday – Friday 0900-1700.....	14
External Support Services - Sources of Local Support .....	15
External Support Nationwide .....	16
Help lines and websites for student support .....	16

## Guidelines for University Staff

### How do you know there is a problem?

Trusting your own judgment Check the Following:

<b>Is student behaviour a concern?</b>	<b>How does the student seem?</b>	<b>Is there other information available?</b>
<p>Is the student telling you of a problem?</p> <p>Is there anything unusual or predictable about their behaviour?</p> <p>Is the student having difficulty with academic work?</p> <p>Is the student requiring a lot of your time?</p> <p>Is the student absent from lectures/seminars?</p>	<p>Tense/Irritable</p> <p>Sad/miserable/tearful</p> <p>Changing mood or behaviour</p> <p>Panicky/feeling overwhelmed</p> <p>Withdrawn or quiet</p> <p>Difficulty concentrating</p> <p>Smelling of alcohol or cannabis</p> <p>Loud and disinhibited</p> <p>Incoherent</p> <p>Lethargic and tired</p> <p>Physically unwell</p>	<p>Has the student declared a mental health problem?</p> <p>Are friends/parent/family member or staff members telling you something about the student that indicates a problem?</p> <p>A significant change in appearance (e.g. weight or personal hygiene) or behaviour different from that you have previously experienced (e.g. staying in bed all day, work handed in late, not attending classes, avoiding going out)</p>

## Do you need more information?

From the **student**:

- Do they perceive that there is a problem?
- Has something triggered their behaviour
- Have they had a similar experience in the past? How did they cope then?

From other **Staff**:

- Has anyone else noticed a problem?
- How is the student functioning academically?

Would it be helpful to **consult** with anyone else?

- Your colleagues, line manager or senior colleague
- Student Enabling Centre, Counselling, Guidance Advisor, Chaplaincy

## You need to decide if the situation is URGENT or not urgent

The situation is **urgent** if the student may be at risk of harm to themselves or others:

They may have expressed suicidal thoughts or at risk of self harm

They may appear seriously physically ill

They may have stopped functioning, seem disorientated and out of touch with reality

They may be violent or threatening violence to people or property

The situation is **not urgent** if there is no immediate risk to the student or others (although the student may be depressed, anxious or stressed; homesick or lonely; bereaved; experiencing relationship problems; having study or money problems)



## What to do if the situation is urgent

- Try to stay calm
- Engage with the student if possible but put your safety and the safety of others first
- Remember confidentiality guidelines but whenever possible try to inform a colleague about the situation
- Debrief with an appropriate person and keep a written record

<b>If the student WILL accept help</b> Agree with the student a course of action	<b>If the student WILL NOT accept help</b> If possible let the student know you are required to inform other staff about their wellbeing
<b>In office hours</b> Check if they are in contact with GP, specialist advisor or Counsellor If so encourage them to contact them and make an appointment asap – you may liaise on their behalf Seek advice/support from the Specialist and inform the Head of the Student Enabling Centre and Academic Registrar & Director of Student Experience (contact list)	<b>In office hours</b> If they need immediate assistance or are at risk call the <b>Emergency Services on 999</b> and call <b>Security on (*44 or 4444)</b> Make contact with the <b>Specialist Student Advisor</b> or <b>Counsellors</b> asap (if unavailable contact the <b>Head of Student Enabling Centre</b> and or the <b>Academic Registrar and Director of Student Experience</b> ) In extreme & exceptional circumstances you may want to contact the students GP. You may also contact the Single Point of Access staff for advice (contact list)
<b>Out of hours</b> Support and encourage the student to contact GP or NHS direct(084554647) If immediate medical assistance is needed, contact Emergency Services and Security (4444) Provide additional contacts as appropriate (Samaritans, Mental Health helpline etc)	<b>Out of hours</b> If immediate medical assistance is needed, contact Emergency Services and Security (4444) Call the out of hours GP Service or NHS Direct (08454647) Next day – inform your line manager and Academic Registrar & Director of Student Experience.

## What to do if the situation does NOT require immediate action

<b>Will the student accept help?</b> If so who is the best person to help?	<b>Will the student not accept help?</b>
<p><b>If you can help then ensure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That you have the time and the skills</li> <li>• There is no conflict with your role</li> <li>• You are clear about your boundaries</li> <li>• You have access to support and advice</li> <li>• You are able to provide advice, reassurance and show concern by <b>following up your conversation</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Should someone else help?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform the student about support available</li> <li>• Help the student to access support and check that they have accessed it</li> <li>• If unsure seek advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make it clear that you are available to support if they change their mind</li> <li>• Ensure that the student understands the implications of not accessing help eg no access to reasonable adjustments such as special exam concessions</li> <li>• Explain issues of confidentiality</li> <li>• Seek advice from Specialist Student Advisors or Counselling</li> <li>• Monitor the situation</li> <li>• If concerns become more serious refer to the guidelines for URGENT situations</li> </ul>

**In all situations:** Debrief with a manager or colleague. Do not use the students name, unless they have given consent. Make a record of the conversation, inform appropriate staff and ensure that you are familiar with the Universities Data Protection Act 1998: Guide for staff

## Who can support the student?

### Internal contacts for staff:

WHO CAN SUPPORT	WHAT IS THE NEED?
<p><b>Relevant academic staff/Personal Tutor</b></p> <p><b>Faculty Guidance advisors</b></p> <p>Stoke x2768    Stafford x3749</p> <p><b>Study Skills</b> x3500</p>	<p>Is the student worried about academic matters or struggling with their studies?</p>
<p><b>GP or Student Health Centre</b></p> <p>Stoke 01782 747174</p> <p>Stafford 01785 353570</p> <p><b>Counselling Service</b></p> <p>Stoke x4977</p> <p>Stafford x3302</p> <p><b>Specialist Student Advisors</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:e.c.heffernan@staffs.ac.uk">e.c.heffernan@staffs.ac.uk</a> x4517</p> <p><a href="mailto:heather.brown@staffs.ac.uk">heather.brown@staffs.ac.uk</a> x3615</p>	<p>Is there a health problem (physical or mental health)</p> <p>Is the student concerned about a particular difficulty – anxiety, panic attacks, depression, substance misuse, fatigue</p> <p>Is the student experiencing emotional or personal difficulties, problems with loss of confidence or engaging with others or the course</p> <p>Are there academic and support issues arising from a mental health difficulty?</p>
<p><b>Student Enabling Centre</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:disability@staffs.ac.uk">disability@staffs.ac.uk</a></p> <p>Stoke x4977</p> <p>Stafford x3302</p>	<p>Is there a health problem?</p> <p>Does the student have a physical disability that they need support with?</p> <p>Is there a persistent study difficulty? Eg dyslexia, dyspraxia</p>
<p><b>Students Union Advice Centre</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:sac@staffs.ac.uk">sac@staffs.ac.uk</a></p> <p>Stoke x4469</p> <p>Stafford x3425</p> <p><b>Multi-Faith Chaplaincy</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:chaplains@staffs.ac.uk">chaplains@staffs.ac.uk</a></p>	<p>Is there a problem of discrimination, harassment or a complaint?</p> <p>Does the student need support, advice and guidance on a range of student related issues?</p> <p>Does the student need spiritual support</p>

Stoke x4974 Stafford x3382	
<b>Accommodation Office</b> Stoke x4217 Stafford x3563	Is the problem related to accommodation?
<b>International Student Centre</b> <a href="mailto:isc@staffs.ac.uk">isc@staffs.ac.uk</a> x4639	Might the issue be related to the student being from overseas?

# Guidelines for Students

## Supporting fellow students in difficulty

Helpful things to do:

### **Try not to avoid the situation**

Try to talk with your friend and tell them you are concerned. If they don't want to talk, respect their privacy.

### **Be prepared to listen sympathetically**

Listening can be very effective and may be all that is needed. You don't have to come up with solutions.

### **Try not to take responsibility for your friend's problems**

Be aware of what you can cope with. Being with someone in a personal or emotional crisis is exhausting and time consuming.

### **Involve others**

Encourage your friend to seek support from others. Others may include the specialist student advisor, counsellor, personal tutors, faculty guidance advisor and/or accommodation staff. You could offer to go with your friend which may help if they are feeling scared.

### **Decide in your own mind how much you are able to give to your friend in this situation.**

Setting limits on the time you are prepared to give can be helpful and may reassure your friend that they are not over burdening you. Taking on too much, usually not sustainable, is unlikely to help you, your friend, or your friendship in the long run.

### **Look after yourself**

Which means, giving time to your own needs and priorities, including study. Don't forget your other friends and accept support for yourself.

### **Accept that you will have mixed feelings about the situation and your friend.**

It is common to feel frustrated and angry as well as sympathetic.

**If your friend refuses help** and you're still worried and feel you need to tell someone, try to get your friend's consent. If you don't have this you can still get advice and help for yourself by talking to a personal tutor, specialist student advisor, a counsellor or someone you trust without revealing your friend's name.

**If you are seriously worried about your friend's safety or that of others you may need to talk to someone or act without their consent. Do look after yourself and get appropriate help and support from others.**

**For a list of internal & external sources of help go to**

**[www.staffs.ac.uk/courses\\_and\\_study/student\\_services/counselling/](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/courses_and_study/student_services/counselling/)**

**Don't hesitate to use them.**

# Key Contact lists:

## University Key Contacts: Monday – Friday 0900-1700

Please see the contacts below. If the first person is not available, try the next person down. Initially, discussion **should not** involve the student's name, although this may become necessary.

### Specialist Student Advisors

Elsa Heffernan in Stoke 01782 294517 / 07920806517 [e.c.heffernan@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:e.c.heffernan@staffs.ac.uk)

Heather Brown in Stafford 01785 353615 / 07899077656 [heather.brown@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:heather.brown@staffs.ac.uk)

### Counsellors

Stoke 01782 294977 or Stafford 01785 353302 [counsellingreception@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:counsellingreception@staffs.ac.uk)

### Head of Student Enabling Centre

Dave Allman 01782 294977 or 01785 353302

### Academic Registrar and Director of Student Experience

The Academic Registrar and Direction of Student Experience may be aware of a student's situation and so may be able to advise you as to whether the student is being appropriately supported.

Dr Noel Morrison 01782 294960

### If a medical opinion is required

If you consider it to be an exceptional and extreme circumstance and are unable to contact any of those listed above, the GP may know of the student and may feel it appropriate to respond to the situation, either directly or by liaising with appropriate NHS mental health services. In this instance the student name can be given.

**Student GP** Student Health Centre (Stoke) 01782 747174

Beaconside Health Centre (Stafford) 01785 353370

Available only if the student is registered with the University Health Centre

**NHS Direct** 0845 46 47 (24 hour service)

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

If you are unsure where to go for help, or need help assessing how urgently treatment is needed.

## External Support Services - Sources of Local Support

<b>The Samaritans</b>  You can telephone or see a Samaritan at the local branch during normal working hours	<b>Stoke on Trent</b> 01782 213555  3 Shelton New Road, Shelton, ST1 4PF <b>Stafford</b> 01785 243333 / 01889567878  Garden Street, Stafford, ST17 4DD
<b>Mental Health Information</b>  Provides information and details of a range of mental wellbeing services and local projects	<a href="http://www.stokementalhealth.info/">www.stokementalhealth.info/</a>  <a href="http://www.staffordshirementalhealth.info">www.staffordshirementalhealth.info</a>
<b>Mental Health Helpline</b>  The helpline will offer information, advice and support to anyone in Staffordshire experiencing mental wellbeing difficulties	<b>Helpline</b> 08088002234 FREEPHONE  1900-0200 weekdays  1400-0200 weekends  <a href="http://www.staffordshirehelpline.co.uk">www.staffordshirehelpline.co.uk</a>

For a more detailed list of internal and external sources of help go to

[www.staffs.ac.uk/courses\\_and\\_study/student\\_services/counselling/](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/courses_and_study/student_services/counselling/)

## External Support Nationwide

Help lines and websites for student support

External Crisis Support organisations	External Support - various
<p><b>Befrienders Worldwide</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.befrienders.org">www.befrienders.org</a></p> <p>Provides emotional support and reduces suicide by listening to people in distress. Offers helpline support an information in languages, other than English. A site supported by the Samaritans</p>	<p><b>ANXIETY UK</b></p> <p>08444775774</p> <p><a href="http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk">www.anxietyuk.org.uk</a></p> <p>Monday-Friday 0930-1730</p> <p>Provides a confidential helpline, information and support for anyone with an anxiety condition, including specific phobias.</p>
<p><b>Papyrus HOPEline</b></p> <p>0800 068 4141</p> <p>Monday – Friday 1000-1700</p> <p>Sat &amp; Sun 1400-1700</p> <p>Advice and support for any young person contemplating suicide or those concerned about someone they know.</p>	<p><b>Students Against Depression</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.studentdepression.org">www.studentdepression.org</a></p> <p>A site developed by students who have been affected by low mood, depression and suicidal thoughts.</p>
<p><b>The Samaritans – 24 hours</b></p> <p>08457 909090</p> <p><a href="http://www.samaritans.org.uk">www.samaritans.org.uk</a></p> <p>e: <a href="mailto:jo@samaritans.org">jo@samaritans.org</a></p> <p>the provision of confidential, non-judgemental emotional support, for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide.</p>	<p><b>Mental Health Foundation</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk">www.mentalhealth.org.uk</a></p> <p>The Mental Health Foundation website is an excellent resource for information on a broad range of mental health issues, fee fact sheets, self-help guides and free to download guided relaxation podcasts.</p>



<p><b>SANEline</b></p> <p>0845767800</p> <p>1200-0200 NOT free phone</p> <p><a href="http://www.sane.org.uk">www.sane.org.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:sanemail@sane.org.uk">sanemail@sane.org.uk</a></p> <p>An out of hours telephone helpline offering crisis care, emotional support and practical information to anyone affected by mental health problems, including those supporting individuals in crisis.</p> <p>Interpreters are available</p>	<p><b>MIND</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.mind.org.uk">www.mind.org.uk</a></p> <p>MIND mental health charity provides a range of helpful leaflets that can be read online. Topics include panic attacks, self-esteem, anger etc</p>
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For a more detailed list of internal and external sources of help go to

[www.staffs.ac.uk/courses\\_and\\_study/student\\_services/counselling/](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/courses_and_study/student_services/counselling/)