

Student Mental Health, Well-being and Counselling Policy

December 2011

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Student Good Mental Health, Well-being and Counselling Policy

1 Purpose

1.1 Perth College UHI is committed to supporting all its students effectively and appropriately. Providing support to students who are experiencing emotional upset, trauma or crisis, and those with identified mental health difficulties is an essential provision within both the College's overall Guidance and Extended Learning Support (ELS) services and in terms of its Duty of Care towards students. This policy specifies the work that Perth College UHI will undertake to protect and promote good mental health and well-being among its students, the provision that will be made for individual support in this area, and details the parameters within which services will operate.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy relates to all Perth College UHI students.

3 Definitions

Mental Health has been defined as "the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own, and other's dignity and worth" (Health Education Authority 1997).

While mental disorder is defined as "any disorder or disability of the mind" (Mental Health Act 2007).

The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy defines Counselling as:

"When a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or a dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose and can help them to see things more clearly, possibly from a different perspective. Counselling is a way of enabling choice or change or of reducing confusion. It does not involve giving advice or directing a client to take a particular course of action. Counsellors do not judge or exploit their clients in any way.

In counselling sessions, the client can explore various aspects of their life and feelings, talking about them freely and openly in a way that is rarely possible with friends or family. Bottled up feelings such as anger, anxiety, grief and embarrassment can become very intense and counselling offers an opportunity to explore them, with the possibility of making them easier to understand. The counsellor will encourage the expression of feelings and as a result of their training will be able to accept and reflect the client's problems without becoming burdened by them."

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4 Key Principles

- 4.1 Perth College UHI recognises its responsibilities in relation to promoting good mental health, and supporting students with mental health difficulties, and is keen to adopt a pro-active, student-centred approach to work undertaken in this area.
- 4.2 Supporting students who have an on-going mental health difficulty is a key element of both Extended Learning Support (ELS) and Guidance provision within the College.
- 4.3 Supporting students experiencing emotional upset, trauma or crisis also forms an essential part of the student support services on offer within the College.
- 4.4 Promoting good mental-health to all students and offering opportunities for students to learn more about mental-health and well-being will form a core part of the College's work on this issue.
- 4.5 Mental Health, Well-being and Counselling services offered are designed to provide appropriate emotional and mental health support to individual students, and to contribute to the retention and achievement of these students. Therefore, services are designed to promote good mental health among the student body, signpost students to relevant specialist agencies, support students through a period of short-term crisis or trauma; make reasonable adjustments to support students with an on-going mental health difficulty during their studies; and offer students opportunities to work through difficult or problematic issues and to learn to manage them in constructive and creative ways.
- 4.6 Mental Health and Well-being, and Counselling support within the college works to complement statutory psychiatric, mental health and counselling services and not to duplicate or replace them.
- 4.7 Counselling support, where offered, is coordinated and/or delivered by the Student Services Team.
- 4.8 The Student Services Team, where appropriate and in line with confidentiality boundaries, will liaise with staff in other College teams in relation to an individual's circumstances and the impact this may have on their studies.
- 4.9 It is acknowledged that recognising indicators of possible emotional distress or mental ill-health, and making early interventions is important in most fully and effectively supporting students. As such advice and on-going support will be provided to key members of staff to assist them in recognising indicators and taking appropriate action.
- 4.10 Differentiated services are offered to effectively cater for all students:
 - 4.10.1 A scheduled programme of awareness raising and information sharing events will run within the College each year with the aims of: promoting good mental health; providing students with opportunities to both obtain information and talk to an Adviser; and raising awareness of mental health issues and of agencies offering support. This programme will be

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run jointly by the Guidance and Counselling Adviser and the Students' Association and will be made available as far as possible in a range of ways including via the student intranet.

- 4.10.2 Crisis Intervention is offered to students experiencing short-term crisis or trauma and aims to support the student both emotionally and in terms of their being able to maintain their place at College.
- 4.10.3 Support is offered to students with an on-going mental health difficulty through ELS provision and via reasonable adjustments being made to their learning, teaching or assessment arrangements or where appropriate, individualised personal support arrangements.
- 4.10.4 Short-Term Counselling may be offered to students on both a referral, and self-referral basis and after initial assessment. This service generally includes a maximum of 6 Counselling sessions, each of which last for a maximum of one hour. Where possible, Counselling may be offered via telephone if it is not practicable for the student to attend in person.
- 4.10.5 Initial assessment of an individual's suitability for Counselling will always be undertaken in order to establish that this is the most appropriate course of action at that point in time.
- 4.10.6 Sometimes, Counselling may be provided through a professional, external agency. In such cases, the Guidance and Counselling Adviser will arrange this and will advise the student of the arrangements being made.
- 4.10.7 Students who require long term, or specialist mental health, Psychiatric or Counselling support will be assisted through supported and unsupported referrals to external agencies.
- 4.11 Mental Health and Well-being support and Counselling services are offered on a confidential basis. However, in accordance with guidance from both the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland (COSCA), confidentiality may be broken if the member of staff or external professional feels that this is essential for the safety and well-being of the student and/or another person.
- 4.12 Services are offered free to students.
- 4.13 The Guidance and Counselling Adviser will be supported in delivering Counselling services through the provision of monthly professional Supervision sessions.
- 4.14 The Guidance and Counselling Adviser reserves the right to stop providing support as appropriate to therapeutic need, and in line with any statutory service provision.

5 Responsibilities

- 5.1 The Assistant Principal Curriculum and Planning has overall responsibility for this policy.
- 5.2 The Customer and Student Services Manager is responsible for the effective operation, development and update of the policy.
- 5.3 The Guidance and Counselling Adviser is responsible for the delivery of the range of Counselling Services offered, for monitoring on-going effectiveness and for making recommendations for future development.
- 5.4 The Guidance and Counselling Adviser has specific responsibility for the delivery and development of services relevant to Mental Health and Well-being and Counselling. However, work is carried out in conjunction with the Additional Support Coordinator where the service forms part of ELS, and the Students' Association where relevant.
- 5.5 The Additional Support Coordinator has responsibility for the coordination and/or delivery of services provided under ELS and for offering crisis intervention where required.
- 5.6 The Students' Association has responsibility to provide a range of services and activities to students relevant to welfare, and as part of this, mental health and well-being. This work will be carried out in conjunction with the Guidance and Counselling Adviser and other members of the Student Services Team as appropriate.
- 5.7 Quality approval checking of the policy is the responsibility of the Quality Manager who will arrange for the policy to be posted on the intranet.

6 Linked Policies/Related Documents

- 6.1 Perth College UHI Student Mental Health, Well-being and Counselling Procedure
- 6.2 Perth College UHI Guidance Policy
- 6.3 Perth College UHI Extended Learning Support Policy
- 6.4 Perth College UHI Extended Learning Support Procedure

7 Relevant Legislation

- 7.1 Disability Discrimination Act (2005).
- 7.2 Additional Support for Learning Act (2004).
- 7.3 Mental Health Act (2007).
- 7.4 Mental Health (Scotland) Act (2003).
- 7.5 Data Protection Act (1998).
- 7.6 Equality Act (2010).

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