

# Student Mental Health, Well-being and Counselling Procedure

August 2010

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# Student Mental Health, Well-being and Counselling Procedure

## 1 Purpose

- 1.1 This procedure supports the Perth College UHI Student Mental Health, Well-being and Counselling Policy and details how its Key Principles will be achieved. The procedure details how Mental Health and Well-being and Counselling provision within the College will operate and staff responsibilities in ensuring provision is effective.

## 2 Scope

- 2.1 The procedure 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 within the draft 2004 Mental Health Bill as "an impairment of, or a disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain resulting from any disability or disorder of the mind or brain".

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 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."

## 4 Responsibilities

- 4.1 The Assistant Principal Curriculum and Planning has overall responsibility for the implementation and development of this policy.
- 4.2 The Customer and Student Services Manager is responsible for the effective operation and development of the policy.

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- 4.3 The Guidance and Counselling Adviser is responsible for the delivery of the range of Student Mental-Health, Well-being and Counselling Services offered, for monitoring the on-going effectiveness of these services and for making recommendations for future development on an annual basis.
- 4.4 The Additional Support Coordinator is responsible for arranging and in some cases, delivering support to students who are in receipt of Extended Learning Support (ELS), and for liaising with the Guidance and Counselling Adviser where required.
- 4.5 The Additional Support Coordinator also has responsibility for offering crisis intervention support where required.
- 4.6 The Students' Association is responsible for organising a range of activities and services to students that are relevant to welfare and specifically, mental health and well-being. As part of this, the Students' Association team is expected to work in partnership with the Guidance and Counselling Adviser to offer a joint approach to student welfare within the College.
- 4.7 Quality approval checking of the procedure is the responsibility of the Quality Manager, who will also arrange for the procedure to be posted on the intranet.

## 5 Procedure

- 5.1 In cases where a student or applicant discloses a mental health difficulty or this is identified by a member of staff, this will be followed up in the same way as other additional support need disclosures, either by the Guidance and Counselling Adviser or the Additional Support Coordinator.
- 5.2 Therefore, a phone call to the person will initially be made to begin discussing support and to arrange for further discussion to take place as appropriate.
- 5.3 If the person indicates on the phone that they do not wish to access support, a letter will be sent to them asking them to confirm this in writing.
- 5.4 If contact cannot be made by phone, a standard letter will be sent to the person asking them to either confirm that they do not wish to access support or to contact the Additional Support Coordinator to discuss the types of support that may be beneficial.
- 5.5 In cases where confirmation is not received after letters being sent as per points 5.3 and 5.4, a further attempt to obtain confirmation of the student's wishes will be made via the relevant Student Adviser. As such a sealed letter that is the same as the one previously sent will be handed to the Student Adviser and they will be asked to hand it to the student.
- 5.6 If no confirmation is obtained after this attempt, a final letter will be sent to the student explaining that we will accept their lack of contact as confirmation that they do not wish to access additional support.
- 5.7 In cases where contact is made as per point 5.2, a preliminary meeting or discussion will be arranged with either the Additional Support Coordinator or the

Guidance and Counselling Adviser. During this discussion, a range of information will be gathered to inform further action. This will include some or all of the following:

whether or not the person is currently receiving any support or input from a mental health professional; whether or not the person will agree to contact being made between the College and this professional; whether or not they are currently taking any medication; if documentation is available that confirms and details their condition and suggests specific areas in which the person may benefit from support; and what support the person themselves feels would be useful.

- 5.8 During this discussion, the range of mental health adjustments that are often made within the College will be discussed in order to clearly establish where the student's specific need lies, and the kinds of support that may be available through the College. This discussion will not limit the range of adjustments that may be made for a student, but will help to structure and guide further action.
- 5.9 If it is established that the person requires specific exam/assessment arrangements to be made, it will be discussed that documentary confirmation of their mental health difficulty may be necessary.
- 5.10 When support is agreed, a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP) will be set up as per the Extended Learning Support Policy and Procedure.
- 5.11 The Guidance and Counselling Adviser will retain responsibility for PLSPs set up in relation to a mental health difficulty and will monitor and review support arrangements regularly. In cases where there is no need for on-going regular contact with a student with one such PLSP, the Guidance and Counselling Adviser will still monitor the student's progress by making contact with the Student Adviser at least 2 or 3 times per semester and discussing the student's progress and general well-being. The student will be advised of this when the PLSP is set up and agreed.
- 5.12 In cases of crisis or trauma, the Guidance and Counselling Adviser will meet with the student and make arrangements for appropriate support. This might include support within the College provision, encouraging the student to self-refer for medical advice, or referral to outside agencies.
- 5.14 If a student is referred to the Student Services Team for Counselling or self refers, an initial assessment will be carried out by the Guidance and Counselling Adviser in order to determine whether the student can be appropriately supported within the College provision or they should be referred to an outside agency.
- 5.15 If initial assessment concludes that counselling would be a useful next step for the student, the short-term nature of the provision will be discussed and sessions arranged as appropriate.
- 5.16 If the conclusion is that accessing counselling through Perth College UHI provision would not be the most appropriate course of action at that point, the Guidance and Counselling Adviser will either provide the student with a supported referral to

an external Counselling agency, or provide advice and assistance to contact other agencies themselves as appropriate.

- 5.17 The Guidance and Counselling Adviser will maintain a stock of relevant and appropriate paper and electronic resources relevant to promoting positive mental-health and well-being among students and will coordinate regular information sharing/awareness raising events throughout each academic session.

## 6 **Linked Policies/Related Documents**

- 6.1 Perth College UHI Student Mental Health, Well-being and Counselling Policy.
- 6.2 Perth College UHI Extended Learning Support Policy.
- 6.3 Perth College UHI Extended Learning Support Procedure.
- 6.4 Perth College UHI Learning Support Policy.
- 6.5 Student Adviser Referral Form.

## 7 **Relevant Legislation**

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