

# Student Mental Health Policy



## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Leeds Trinity affirms that mental health has the same importance as physical health but recognises that mental health continues to suffer from stigmatisation, even though difficulties affect one in four people. The majority of people experiencing mental health difficulties recover and Leeds Trinity acknowledges its obligation to provide support to students in achieving their academic potential and in progressing to recovery.
- 1.2 Students entering higher education for the first time may experience significant changes, such as moving, separation from family and friends, establishing a new social network, managing a tight budget, combining academic study with family and paid work commitments and, for international students, living in a new country and a different culture. For many, these changes are exciting. However, they can cause anxiety.
- 1.3 For many students, support from family, peers and staff will ensure that anxiety does not adversely affect study or general well being. Some students may experience emotional or psychological difficulties which are more persistent. These difficulties may take the form of a temporary reaction or a long term mental illness.

## 2 Policy statement

- 2.1 Leeds Trinity policy is to:
  - promote mental health and well-being through its policies and procedures, through cross institutional initiatives, through aspects of curriculum delivery and through the Student Support department;
  - mitigate, and remove if possible, circumstances that undermine mental health and well-being;
  - provide support that allows students with mental health difficulties the opportunity to fulfil their academic potential.

## 3 Purpose of the Policy

- 3.1 This policy seeks to:
  - articulate Leeds Trinity's supportive approach regarding student mental health and well being;

- raise awareness and provide reassurance regarding the range of support available;
- take account of the best interests of a student experiencing mental health difficulties and of the impact of mental health difficulties upon other members of the Leeds Trinity community;
- provide, as far as is practicable, students experiencing mental health difficulties with the opportunity to successfully participate within the Leeds Trinity community.

#### **4 Links with other policies**

##### 4.1 Related policies include:

- Student Mental Health Guidelines (for students)
- Student Mental Health Guidelines (for staff)
- Fitness to Study Procedure
- Student Conduct and Discipline Code

4.2 In particular, where there are grounds to consider that mental health difficulties may have played a part in behaviour contravening the Student Conduct and Discipline Code, attempts will be made to identify appropriate support to provide an opportunity for the student to moderate that behaviour.

4.3 This policy focuses primarily upon those students experiencing mental health difficulties of shorter duration to ensure that support is made available to them.

4.4 Leeds Trinity recognises that some students will enter the University with long-term mental health problems. In some cases, these will constitute a disability within the terms of the Equality Act and consideration of such cases will almost certainly involve the Dyslexia and Disability Service. The University will make all appropriate endeavours to enable a student to succeed. It is however a learning organisation and not a substitute for wider social and health services.

#### **5 Support**

##### **5.1 *Institutional level***

5.1.1 Cross institutional promotion of good mental health and well being takes place to proactively advise and work towards removal of stigma.

5.1.2 Student Support generic and specialist services are promoted at induction and at appropriate points within the student life cycle.

5.1.3 Student Support provides guidance to students and to staff via the Intranet and through in house staff development.

5.1.4 Specific guidance is provided to 24 hour Security staff regarding appropriate handling of crisis situations.

## **5.2 Individual level**

5.2.1 Students are supported as individuals who may wish to choose from a variety of different support avenues. Therefore, students are offered a wide choice of routes through which they may bring a concern or make a declaration. These include progress tutors, other lecturing staff, the Chaplaincy, resident mentors in halls, 24 hour security staff and other Student Support staff.

5.2.2 Where a student's behaviour gives cause for concern, staff and students are encouraged to contact the Student Support department to have dialogue regarding their concern and investigate the options available. Careful consideration is given to the situation of the peer or colleague raising the concern and to the student who is the subject of that concern. Consideration is given to the context of the person raising the concern in determining any actions.

5.2.3 Student Support intervention may involve offering support through the Counselling Service, the Health Centre, Dyslexia & Disability Support Services, the Student Adviser, Student Support Administrators, resident mentors and external services. Where appropriate, students are proactively advised of the advantages of integrated support involving more than one service. Where more than one Student Support service is involved, systems are in place for co-ordination and review across services.

5.2.4 Where appropriate, an individual support agreement between Student Support and the student will be negotiated, with appropriate timescales for review.

## **5.3 Referrals to and from Student Support**

5.3.1 A student may self refer to Student Support. Where this happens, Student Support's approach is to offer a range of options to facilitate the student's weighing of perceived advantages and disadvantages. The right of the student to make choices is respected.

5.3.2 A student may be referred to Student Support by a peer, a member of staff or from an external source (e.g. landlord/lady). Where appropriate, Student Support proactively intervene with appropriate sensitivity. Interventions reflect an approach which does not make presumptions from accounts provided by others and which seeks to ensure that the student is not categorised or pressurised into disclosures or actions that s/he would regard as unhelpful.

5.3.3 Students may be referred to other services within Student Support and/or to external services (e.g. GP). For referral to an external service, the student's agreement is sought.

## **6 Confidentiality and disclosure**

### **6.1 Disclosure**

6.1.1 Leeds Trinity facilitates appropriate support where students disclose mental health difficulties.

6.1.2 Students are entitled to make a disclosure to any member of staff. Students are encouraged to choose to disclose to a member of staff involved in their ongoing support most directly and with whom they feel most comfortable. Progress tutors, senior residents (for students in Halls) and Student Support staff fall into that category

6.1.3 It is the student's responsibility to ensure that relevant lecturing staff are informed where mental health difficulties prevent that student meeting academic requirements. To ease communication with lecturing staff, the student is welcome to access information, advice and help from the Student Support department.

6.1.4 Where a student chooses to disclose to a member of staff or department but wishes to limit the scope of that disclosure, the student's decision will be respected, except where the member of staff judges that maintaining confidentiality poses a risk of harm to that student or to others (see point 7.1). Staff will point out the advantages of wider disclosure, in particular the researching of potential funding and other support through informing Dyslexia and Disability Support Services. Staff will make clear that a student's insistence upon limited disclosure may have an adverse impact upon support provided. Staff will keep a written record of the discussion with the student.

6.1.5 Where a student's mental health difficulties appear to pose a risk of harm to that student or to others the member of staff should contact Student Support or, if out of office hours, inform Security.

### **6.2 Confidentiality**

6.2.1 At registration, students provide their consent for Leeds Trinity staff to share information regarding them. Additionally, at registration students provide consent for their next of kin to be informed where there are serious safety, welfare or health concerns that involve them.

6.2.2 However, the Counselling Service and Student Health are **excluded** from student consent provided at registration as these services comply with BACP and NHS confidentiality guidelines respectively. The Counselling Service and the Health Centre share information with other staff or external services only with the explicit permission of the student

concerned or where they consider there an immediate risk to that student and/or other people.

- 6.2.3 Nevertheless, it is recognised that it is good practice to enter dialogue with students regarding the sharing of information regarding them so that they can be positively engaged in the process. Therefore, staff seek to confirm the student's consent to share information with colleagues, where appropriate and feasible.

## **7 Rare crisis situations**

- 7.1 On the very rare occasions where staff judge there to be an immediate risk to a student or to other people, these concerns should be communicated to designated Student Support staff (or 24 hour Security out of office hours). Guidelines request staff seek to speak directly with a designated member of Student Support or Security staff, rather than to rely on collection of email or other messages.
- 7.2 Student Support or Security staff will make a judgement regarding appropriate response. Where possible, the student concerned would be included in dialogue leading to decisions or actions. Staff will communicate internally and with external agencies, as appropriate.
- 7.3 24 hour Security staff are supported by written guidance and the facility to contact members of the Student Incident Group where further advice and/or action is required.
- 7.4 In extreme cases, Leeds Trinity has powers under the Student Conduct and Discipline Code to exclude and/or suspend a student to seek to prevent immediate danger to that student and/or others. Such actions are not intended to be punitive. Measures to mitigate the impact of such actions upon the student's academic progress are implemented, as far as is practicable. Such exclusion/suspension is subject to regular review. A Fitness to Study Committee hearing would be convened as soon as appropriate.

## **8 Voluntary absence / temporary withdrawal**

- 8.1 Where a student considers s/he needs a short period (i.e. normally up to 2 weeks) away from studies on health grounds, the student should inform Leeds Trinity by contacting course tutor/s and/or progress tutor directly or through contacting Student Support. Where a student contacts Student Support, staff will seek to arrange for the information to be circulated to relevant staff as sensitively as possible. Where absence exceeds one week, the student should support his/her case for temporary absence through producing independent evidence from a health professional e.g. GP.
- 8.2 Where extended absence appears appropriate, the student may apply to take 'temporary withdrawal'. Student Support offers information and

advice to students regarding this procedure. Leeds Trinity requires that the student provides to Leeds Trinity satisfactory medical reports as a condition of readmission. Leeds Trinity may require the student's permission to contact the student's medical doctor or other health professionals to obtain further information in order to inform its decision regarding readmission. Leeds Trinity will also need to satisfy itself that there is appropriate educational and pastoral provision to support the student prior to making a decision to offer readmission. Where Leeds Trinity considers that a student's fitness to return to study remains in doubt, the Director of Student Support (or nominee) may refer the case to the Fitness to Study Committee.

- 8.3 If a taught student is absent from sessions for a prolonged period of time without explanation or prior arrangement and has not replied satisfactorily to correspondence from Leeds Trinity, s/he may be presumed to have withdrawn.

## **9 Fitness to study**

- 9.1 In rare cases it may appear that health factors are affecting a student's behaviour and causing significant disturbance or distress to self and/or others, raising a concern that health reasons are currently preventing appropriate participation in the academic community.
- 9.2 Illustrative issues that might give rise to concern include serious alcohol / drug abuse or repeated incidents of self harming.

### **9.3 Supporting fitness to study**

- 9.3.1 Support will be offered to help alleviate or resolve such issues. Where appropriate, specialist services within Student Support and/or external to Leeds Trinity will be offered to the student. All reasonable adjustments will be made. Where appropriate, an individual Student Support plan will be devised and implemented in consultation with the student.
- 9.3.2 If, after an appropriate timescale, these efforts appear to have not effected sufficient improvement, the student may be advised that temporarily withdrawal would be the appropriate course of action.
- 9.3.3 On the very rare occasions where the student elects to reject temporary withdrawal advice, the case may be referred to the Fitness to Study Committee.

## **10 Fitness to Study Committee (FSC)**

- 10.1 The Director of Student Support (or nominee) may refer cases to the Fitness to Study Committee (FSC).

- 10.2 The FSC has powers to exclude, suspend or expel a student in light of the nature or extent of the impact of the student's ill-health (including mental ill-health) upon the student and/or others.
- 10.3 Following due process (Fitness to Study Procedure points 4.3-4.5), the FSC may exclude, suspend or expel a student in circumstances where the FSC knows or reasonably believes that the student is suffering from ill-health and reasonably considers that, by reason of that ill-health, the student's continued status as a student of Leeds Trinity or continued presence on Leeds Trinity premises poses a risk to the welfare, health or safety of the student, other students, staff or visitors or a serious risk of damage to Leeds Trinity property.

## **11 Return to study**

- 11.1 Following a student's decision to temporarily withdraw voluntarily or a decision by Leeds Trinity's FSC to exclude or suspend a student, Leeds Trinity requires that the student provides to Leeds Trinity satisfactory medical reports as a condition of readmission. Leeds Trinity may require the student's permission to contact the student's GP to obtain further information in order to inform its decision regarding readmission. Leeds Trinity will also need to satisfy itself that there is appropriate educational and pastoral provision to support the student prior to making a decision to offer re-admission.