

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy – Leeds Trinity University

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1. Guidance notes for staff

Context

The literature on mental health suggests that 1 in 4 people experience mental health difficulties at some point during their life. Within student populations, research has

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shown this figure increases with a higher incidence of mental health problems amongst students compared to the general population.

Within Leeds Trinity University our approach to Student Wellbeing is a pro-active one, where possible identifying students in need and offering them support before escalation occurs. This is in part promotion of support available alongside self-help routes. However, we are aware that negative experiences of mental health issues cannot always be mitigated and this policy exists to detail how we as an organisation prepare and respond to these.

This policy does not exist to replace staff understanding of mental health and we would encourage all staff to complete existing training on supporting students in distress as well as utilizing support from their own Managers and teams as well as staff in Student Support and Wellbeing for advice and guidance.

2. Introduction

Leeds Trinity University (LTU) affirms that mental health has the same importance as physical health (and that there is a clear intersection between the two) but recognises that mental health continues to suffer from stigmatisation, even though difficulties affect significant numbers of the population. The majority of people experiencing mental health difficulties recover when accessing timely and appropriate support and LTU acknowledges its role in supporting students to engage in their academic potential and in progressing towards their recovery goals.

Students entering higher education may experience significant transitions, such as removal of support structures, establishing new social networks, managing their own budgets, 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 worry which is an expected part of change but in some instances these feelings can escalate into anxiety. These transitions may also tie in with increased access to coping mechanisms and actions which can compound poor mental health

For many students, support networks will ensure that these worries do not adversely affect study or general wellbeing. Some students, however, may experience emotional or psychological difficulties which are more persistent which informal support cannot mitigate. These difficulties may take the form of a temporary reaction or a longer-term mental illness/difficulties.

3. Policy statement

Leeds Trinity University's policy is to:

- Promote mental health and well-being through a whole University approach. This means student and staff wellbeing being considered in all of our policies and procedures, through cross institutional initiatives, through aspects of the curriculum delivery, accommodation, our environment and through the Student Support department.

- Mitigate, and remove if possible, circumstances related to student life that undermine mental health and well-being.
- Provide students with access to mental health and well-being support which aims to improve their opportunity for academic engagement and success.
- Support students to access appropriate and timely support for their emotional needs whether this be via LTU support or via local or national services (including but not limited to the NHS or third sector health teams).

4. Purpose of the Policy

This policy seeks to:

- Articulate Leeds Trinity's proactive approach regarding student mental health and wellbeing; raise awareness regarding the range of support available.
- Explain how, when made aware of a student experiencing mental health difficulties, the University makes decisions balanced upon both the student's best interests and of the impact of their mental health difficulties impact upon other members of the Leeds Trinity community.
- As far as is practicable, provide students experiencing mental health difficulties with the opportunity to successfully participate within the Leeds Trinity community.

5. Links with other policies

Related policies include:

- When to Refer guide.
- Fitness to Study Procedure.
- Student Conduct and Discipline Code.
- Suicide Safety Strategy.

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.

6. Support

Leeds Trinity University 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 (2010); these students will be offered the same support as students declaring any non-mental health disability including (but not limited to) discussion of a Learning Support Plan or equivalent, offer of support in applying for Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) if appropriate, referral for academic support and offer of liaison between Student Support and Wellbeing and non-LTU professional services.. The University will make all appropriate endeavors to enable a student to succeed. It is however, a learning organisation and not a substitute for wider social and health services. We therefore recognise the importance of not working in isolation and we will work with students to link them with wider social and health services where appropriate (and with their consent).

Institutional level

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

Student Support and Engagement generic and specialist services are promoted at induction and at appropriate points within the student life cycle including at application and pre-registration level as well as pre-graduation and where appropriate linked with other professional services such as accommodation and placements/graduate teams.

Student Support and Engagement provide guidance to students and to staff via internal mechanisms such as myLTU, Microsoft Teams and Moodle and through in house staff development.

Student Support and Engagement work closely with colleagues in areas of Human Resources, Student Recruitment, Marketing and Learning and Teaching to ensure the role of positive preparation and scaffolding are in place to promote positive wellbeing of students in transitional periods

Specific guidance is provided to 24 hour Security staff regarding appropriate handling of crisis situations. There will be an ongoing relationship between Student Support and Security to ensure that appropriate training is offered and up to date guidance on support with LTU is known.

LTU recognises that good curriculum design mitigates against some forms of poor mental wellbeing (including anxiety, stress and lower moods). The University therefore recognises the Curriculum for Social Justice approach which will draw on the Education for Mental Health toolkit as a design point for our curriculum design in order embed wellbeing across our curriculum as a focus for prevention of poor mental wellbeing.

Individual level

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 academic support being provided by personal tutors, other lecturing staff, the Learning Hub, Student Liaison and Engagement Officers and Peer Learning Champions. Course related issues being supported via Student Support, LTU Money Advice service and the Student Union with wellbeing concerns (including mental health) via the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing team, Student Support, LTU Disability service, the Student Union, Resident Mentors, and Chaplaincy staff.

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.

Student Support intervention may involve offering support through the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Service, Student Support, the Disability Team, Student's Union 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.

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

7. Referrals to the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing service

A student may self-refer to the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing service via a direct link on myLTU, via a drop in on campus or via email. Students will then be offered an assessment (via phone or on campus) within 48 hours and they will be offered a date that falls no longer than two weeks after their referral date. This assessment will be with a member of the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing service and is an opportunity to discuss their difficulties and explore available support.

If people other than the Student experiencing difficulties contact the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing service on their behalf then a member of the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing service will contact the Student to explain that concerns have been raised about them and explain about the services available with an invitation to refer themselves. The individual who originally expressed concern will not be updated on next steps for the Student but will be told our policy of reaching out to Students when concerns are expressed

Students may be referred to other services within Student Support and Engagement (such as to Student Support, Money Advice, Disability or the Learning Hub) and/or to external services (e.g. a GP or specialist mental health service). For any referral, this will first be discussed with the student and the student's consent will be confirmed.

8. Disclosure and Confidentiality

Disclosure

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

Whilst Students may choose to make a disclosure to any member of staff. Students are encouraged to disclose to a member of staff within Student Support in order to maintain academic engagement; The Student Mental Health & Wellbeing service, Student Support, Disability, Money Advice and Resident Mentors (for students in Halls) fall into that category.

Though ultimately it is the student's responsibility to ensure that relevant lecturing staff are informed where mental health difficulties prevent that student meeting academic requirements the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing team will help a student to consider this impact and reasonable adjustments via a Learning Support Plan or equivalent which can be shared with academics via Evision.

When a student chooses to disclose mental health difficulties to a member of staff or department, they may wish to limit the scope of that disclosure. This is understandable but it is important that staff ensure that any Student disclosing sensitive information (or about to) understands that any disclosure to a staff member at Leeds Trinity University is a disclosure to the institution and confidentiality cannot be promised. Staff can explain that they will aim to respect the student's wish but conversations will need to be recorded and where the member of staff judges that maintaining confidentiality poses a risk of harm to that student or to others relevant additional teams will need to be contacted.

Staff will point out the advantages of referral to the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing service such as ensuring appropriate support both academic and emotional is provided.

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 and can contact the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing service for advice.

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 the Head of Student Support & Wellbeing and if unavailable the Director of Student Support and Engagement, the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Service, Student Support or, if unable to reach them to inform Security (if the risk is immediate). At any stage of concern all staff should be aware that they can call emergency services for advice and support.

Confidentiality

At registration, students provide their consent for Leeds Trinity staff to share information regarding them. Additionally, at registration students can provide consent for a "Trusted Other" (a family member, friend or health professional) who can be contacted in the following circumstances:

- When a student is judged to be a risk to themselves or others

- When a student has attempted suicide
- When a student has engaged in repeated and serious self-harm acts which may be increasing in either severity or frequency,
- When a student has a complex mental health condition and where this support is not being managed and/or where there is concern about the student's ability to look after themselves
- When there is evidence that a student has a plan and intent to attempt suicide and there are judged to be insufficient or inadequate protective factors to safeguard the student.

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

Staff should seek to confirm consent to share information even when consent has been previously given in recognition that consent is not a fixed statement but confirmation only of the time when it was given and is subject to change.

Staff should however not promise confidentiality for any discussion but instead a measured approach to information sharing and concerns about confidentiality should never prevent concerns about risk from being shared.

When recording a conversation where mental health difficulties are being reported the following information is useful (and indeed important) should concerns need sharing:

- Date of meeting with the student
- Any details shared by the student relating to risk to self or others
- Any details shared by the student relating to safeguarding issues past or present
- Whether University appears to be creating any contributing factors
- Whether any support is already being provided outside of LTU

9. Crisis situations

On the 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 (Director of Student Support & Engagement, Head of Student Support & Wellbeing, Student Support Duty Managers or Student Support Advice Officer depending on who is available) or 24 hour Security during 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.

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.

24-hour Security staff are supported by written guidance and the facility to contact the Director of Student Support & Engagement

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.

10. Voluntary absence / temporary withdrawal

Where a student considers that they need 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 their case for temporary absence through producing independent evidence from a health professional e.g. GP.

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 support for 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 and Engagement (or nominee) may refer the case to the Fitness to Study Committee.

11. Fitness to study

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.

Illustrative issues that might give rise to concern include serious alcohol / drug abuse or repeated incidents of self-harming.

Supporting fitness to study

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.

If, after an appropriate timescale, these efforts appear to have not effected sufficient improvement, the student may be advised that temporary withdrawal would be the appropriate course of action.

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.

12. Fitness to Study Committee (FSC)

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

The FSC has powers to temporarily withdraw 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. This period of interruption may be maintained until the student is fit to return to study.

Following due process, 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.

13. Return to study

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 engages with a return to study meeting with a member of the Student Support & Wellbeing team to review reasons for the temporary withdrawal and ascertain with the student whether they are ready to return to study. Evidence may be required as a condition of readmission (for example a GP letter or liaison meeting with a Community Mental Health service). 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.