



Policy Name: RuTC Student Mental Health Policy

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Policy Responsibility: Head of Student Experience

Approved By: CMT

For Action By: All College staff and students

For Information to: All College staff, students and parents/carers

1. Scope and purpose

Richmond Upon Thames College takes the health, safety and wellbeing of all students seriously, and recognises this as being fundamental to their progress and success. The College is committed to promoting a culture of positive mental wellbeing for its students, with the aim that by creating such a culture, all students will be able to fulfil their potential in their academic studies and in their lives beyond College. Such a culture should create a supportive, non-stigmatising and well-informed environment in which to live and study. In order to do so, it will:

- Encourage and support the whole college community to be positive in its approach to mental health and wellbeing
- Promote a culture which encourages and supports self-disclosure
- Provide a framework for responding appropriately to mental health concerns
- Take seriously its legal responsibilities in connection with the wellbeing of its students, including those relating to equality and non-discrimination.
- Recognise and respond to the mental health needs of diverse and minority groups, taking into account characteristics such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and culture, disability and age.
- Work with students and staff continually to update knowledge, skills and experience of students and their mental health
- Promote understanding and awareness of both internal and external support services
- Recognise that staff with roles involving teaching and the support and welfare of students have additional responsibilities to be alert to indicators of mental health causing concern, and to take appropriate action when necessary
- Provide guidance and information to staff and students to help them to develop confidence in their approach to mental health wellbeing

2. Definitions

- 2.1 Mental Health: The College is committed to supporting good mental health in all students. “Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (World Health Organisation, 2014). This means students *‘feeling good, feeling that their life is going well and feeling able to get on with their daily lives.’* (Public Health England, ND).
- 2.2 Where mental health difficulties arise, the College recognises this occurs on a spectrum, from temporary and mild-moderate wellbeing issues, to persistent and debilitating conditions. Students may recognise and disclose difficulties relating to their thoughts, feelings or behaviour, or may appear to have difficulties but are unable or unwilling to recognise these. Students may seek or hold diagnosis of specific mental health conditions, common ones including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, PTSD, psychosis and personality disorders. These symptoms themselves range in severity and complexity: “Mental disorders comprise a broad range of problems with different symptoms. However,

they are generally characterised by some combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behavior and relationships with others.” (World Health Organisation, 2017).

3. Fitness to Study

The Fitness to Study Procedure works in conjunction with this policy. It is important to be clear about what is reasonable in an educational setting and the limits to the individual support that can be provided within the College. Our staff provide outstanding care for all students, but there will be times when a student’s physical or mental health or personal circumstances are so affected that they are not able, despite support both internal to the College and externally, to maintain satisfactory progress. Fitness to study therefore relates to an individual’s capacity to participate fully, satisfactorily and appropriately in relation to their studies at College. This includes participation in their study programme, as well as physical activities, practical assessments or mandatory competencies in practice associated with their study programme that lead them towards a final qualification.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Staff

All staff should:

- Contribute towards building a non-stigmatising culture, including treating students with dignity and respect, and encouraging them to seek help if they have mental health issues
- Be aware of the policy, procedures, services available and referral processes for responding to mental health issues
- Be aware of the boundaries of their own roles
- Be aware of the principles of confidentiality and disclosure

4.2 Students

All students should:

- Contribute towards building a non-stigmatising culture, including treating fellow students with dignity and respect
- Seek help from internal or external services if they have a mental health issue
- Inform relevant staff if they are unable to fulfill academic commitments to enable support processes to be put in place
- Be aware of their own limitations if supporting a fellow student experiencing a mental health issue, and use the referral processes available internally

5. Strategies to Promote Positive Mental Health

Richmond upon Thames College is committed to supporting students, widening participation, improving attendance and increasing retention and achievement and supporting progression for all students. The college also recognises the importance of a student’s health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progress and works through the

tutorial system and enrichment programme to promote positive mental health and support students who may have mental ill-health.

To promote student Mental Health, the college undertakes to:

- Provide a supportive culture, ethos and environment where it is acceptable and normal to talk about mental health and that can serve as a buffer to difficult circumstances.
- Have a variety of pathways to the identification of need, such as admission applications, additional forms at enrolment, tutorial system, counselling and Student Services, so that students aren't missed.
- Have an Open door policy in Student Services (Advice Hub).
- Ensure that key staff have Mental Health First Aid (Youth) training.
- Support the development of skills and characters traits such as self-management, compassion and team work.
- Provide teaching and learning and tutorials that helps students to build important life skills helping them to realise that their abilities are not fixed and that they can influence their future through their own action e.g. planning and goal-setting activities, reflection, self-monitoring.
- Provide a pastoral system with an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and the wider community including other agencies.
- Have clear policies on equality and diversity, bullying and behaviour and challenge any incidents relating to these.
- Have a positive climate to enhance belonging and connectedness.
- Raise awareness of mental health issues and sources of support through a variety of communications methods such as the Virtual Learning Environment, posters, leaflets, displays, visiting agencies and the tutorial Scheme of Work.
- Have clear referral procedures for students, parents and staff where there are concerns about Mental Health
- Provide access to Counselling services
- Work with agencies such as Off the Record and MIND to provide targeted enrichment sessions.
- Provide staff development events that contribute to a greater understanding of student mental health amongst staff

6. Mental Health Difficulties and Diagnosed Mental Ill-Health

Students may choose to disclose concerns about having Mental Health Difficulties or Mental Ill Health at any time during their interactions with staff at Richmond Upon Thames College, so all need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

6.1 Disclosures of Mental Health Difficulties

Disclosures may be made prior to enrolment at either application or at interview. If this occurs the procedures in **Appendix 2** should be followed.

6.2 Identification of mental health difficulties after admission to College

Disclosures may also be made following enrolment to any member of staff. If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and Level 1 confidential comment added to Pro-monitor, including:

- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the Safeguarding Team who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps. Where the student is expressing suicidal intent or is actively suicidal the Student Suicide Safety Procedure should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Duty Officer. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Designated Safeguarding Leads or College Counsellor.

6.3 Warning signs of emerging mental health difficulties

College staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with the Safeguarding Team as stated in the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

6.4 Diagnosed/Undiagnosed Mental Ill-health

If possible it should be identified whether the student has already sought help for their mental health difficulties and if so which professionals/agencies they are under the care of. It is also helpful to know whether they have received a diagnosis in relation to the Mental Health difficulties. If they have, the external agency may be contacted, with the student's consent, so that support can be co-ordinated.

7. Support for Students

Richmond Upon Thames College is committed to supporting both students with existing mental health difficulties and those whose mental health issues emerge during their time studying at the College. All students have access to a range of support services that are available to offer appropriate information, advice and guidance with the aim to support students who have problems, issues or disabilities that might interfere with their ability to achieve academically or to get the most out of their time in College.

Detailed Support for Students can be found on Appendix 1.

8. Disciplinary Issues

All students are subject to the rules and disciplinary procedures of the College. However, where a student is known to have mental health difficulties or where the student is exhibiting behaviour giving cause for concern, the student's case must be referred to the Head of School. In conjunction with the Head of Student Experience and/Head of Inclusive Learning and the Assistant Principal Quality and Curriculum, the Head of School will decide whether the student needs support rather than using the disciplinary procedures. Disciplinary action may need to be taken where it is vital to stop serious disruption to others or if there is a threat to the health and safety of students or staff. For further guidance please refer to the Student Support and Disciplinary Policy.

9. Crisis/Emergency

Fortunately, the occurrence of emergency situations in College involving students with mental health problems is rare. However, such situations can be disturbing. Examples might be: where a student is exhibiting behaviour that is alarming to other people or a student is threatening to harm others.

If these situations arise the Duty Manager and/or Student Liaison Assistants may be called. In the first instance they will ensure the student and other students or staff are kept safe. Student Liaison Assistants are trained to use appropriate restraint measures if required to keep the student and others safe.

If the student is threatening to harm themselves the Student Suicide Safety Policy should be followed.

One of the College Safeguarding team will then be called to help support the student and make appropriate referrals by following the Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy. If the student is under 18 then they will contact the student's parents or carers.

10. Returning to College

Following an absence from College for mental health recuperation, a student will need to attend an interview to gauge their fitness to study. This meeting should be led by the Assistant Principal, Head of Student Experience or other nominated Student Services Officer where relevant, and may include other members of staff as required such as, the Head of School, Inclusive Learning Team Leader, College Counsellor or a Safeguarding Officer. The aim is to establish that the student is well enough to return and to agree what reasonable adjustments might be made by both the student and the College to support a return to study.

11. Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, the College will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support and actions that may need to be taken to safeguard their wellbeing. Support may be provided either in one to one or group settings and sharing of information will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering.

Discussion may involve:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, the College will highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

12. Staff Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular safeguarding training to enable them to keep students safe.

The [MindEd learning portal](#)¹ provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD including Mental Health First Aid (Youth) training will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, Student Services will organise training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with HR, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

13. Related Policies

- Admissions Policy
- Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
- Student Support and Disciplinary Policy
- Partnership Agreement
- Health and Safety Policy
- Tutoring Policy
- Fitness to Study Procedure
- Student Suicide Safety Procedure
- Educational Visits Policy

14. Acknowledgements

- Charlie Waller Memorial Trust – www.cwmt.or.uk
- Papyrus – Prevention of Young Suicide
- Public Health England, Toolkit for colleges
- Public Health England – The Mental Health of Children and Young People in London
- MHFA

Internal Support Roles and Responsibilities

Post Held	Name	Telephone/ Contact
Principal/CEO	Jason Jones	
Head of Student Experience	Rachel Scarborough	
Safeguarding Team Lead	Cait Orton	
Welfare & Engagement Advisor STEM & Creative Industries	Nichole Anthony	245
Welfare & Engagement Advisor Business and Service Industries & Health and Social Care	Lorna Edwards	110
Student Engagement & Equalities Lead	Beth Pattison	
Attendance & Engagement Outreach Lead	Tina Ball	
Student Liaison Manager	Michael Clifford	161
Student Liaison Assistant	Debbie Beadle	
College Counsellor	Melanie Fox	226
Inclusive Learning Team Leader (where there is an EHCP)	Paul Smyth	173
Head of Inclusive Learning	Rekha Patel	424

Safeguarding and Welfare Support

Where a student has been referred to the Safeguarding Team after a disclosure or due to concerns, an assessment will be made. The following members of staff may be of particular help:

The Counsellors

The College counselling service provides confidential counselling for students who ask for such support. The student can self-refer or be referred by a member of staff with the student's consent. It is appropriate for those who have mental health difficulties. The counselling service offers once a week therapeutic sessions during term time and in addition may liaise with other internal or external professionals as appropriate.

The Welfare and Engagement Advisers

The Welfare and Engagement Advisers will support students with Mental Health difficulties from their designated curriculum areas, providing additional pastoral support to that offered by tutors and the teaching team. They are located in **G14 and Q7** provides a safe space for students when distressed.

The Safeguarding Team Lead; Student Liaison Manager; Student Engagement and Equalities Lead; Attendance Engagement and Outreach Lead are Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, act as a point of contact for referral and will also support students where relevant. They will also liaise with external agencies where appropriate.

Education Wellbeing Practitioners (EWPs)

The Education Wellbeing Practitioners are part of the NHS but work with students when they are experiencing low mood, mild-moderate anxiety, sleeping difficulties and low motivation. They also run group sessions on building confidence, understanding and managing worry, exam stress and improving sleep. Students can self-refer to work with the EWPs.

Mental Health Practitioner

The Mental Health Practitioner is part of the NHS but work as part of the wider Student Services team to support students with moderate anxiety, low mood, panic attacks, intrusive thoughts. They also run group sessions and workshops with their EWP colleagues. Students can self refer to work with the Mental Health Practitioner.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Community Health Services, Social Services and Other Relevant Agencies

Counsellors, the Welfare and Engagement Advisors and the Safeguarding Team Lead; Student Liaison Manager; Student Engagement and Equalities Lead; Attendance Engagement and Outreach Lead make links with local community health services, e.g. CAMHS and local adult mental health services and any other appropriate agencies.

Additional Learning Support

Any member of staff who is made aware that any student has a mental health difficulty may refer them for additional support to the head of Inclusive Learning and/or Head of Student Experience. An assessment of their learning support and other needs will then be undertaken and appropriate support put in place. If required, a **Risk Assessment** will be completed in consultation with the Head of Estates.

Inclusive Learning Team Leader

In consultation with the Head of Inclusive Learning, s/he will arrange additional learning support appropriate to each individual (this may include in-class or one-to-one support) and liaise with the examinations section to support application for exam concessions. S/he may also offer advice and support to students and staff regarding reasonable adjustments to be made and may be included in cases conferences and liaison with outside agencies where appropriate.

Individual Learning Plan

An individual learning plan will be drawn up for students causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health, where there is not an Educational, Health and Care Plan in place. The process will involve the student, the parents where appropriate and follow advice from relevant health professionals where available. It can include:

- Details of the student's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the College can play
- Any appropriate reasonable adjustments

This will be revisited throughout the year by the tutor and student. The ILP will include SMART targets and progress reviews to help the student and teachers monitor progress and make referrals when necessary.

Subject teachers and Tutors will be able to support students with additional learning support needs and will have a general oversight of every student's progress.

Liaison with Exams

The Head of Inclusive Learning may need to be in liaison with the Examinations section to gain exam concessions or agreement on suitable examination conditions. Students need to be aware that the decision of the exam board is final and they are encouraged to make an early application through discussion with the ALS team.

Liaison with Parents/Carers and Other Agencies

Each case will be considered on its own merits, but the following general guidelines will apply:

- If a student is under 16 the school is expected to disclose any needs with the College and the College will inform the school of any concerns, the school will then undertake to liaise with the parents/carer.
- If a student is under 18 and is open about their situation, then the College will keep the parents/carer informed of any concerns.
- If a student is over 18 they may give consent for the College to discuss any concerns with an appropriate adult.

The Head of Student Experience, SENCo and ALS Manager and Designated Safeguarding Leads will undertake liaison with any other agencies.

Educational Visits and Trips

Please consult the College's guidelines and policy on visits. As part of preparation for any visit or placement it is important that the student's parent/guardian is aware of the importance of disclosing any medical issues, including mental health, that could possibly arise on the trip or placement.

Careers Advice

Careers advisors are available to discuss future career paths and applications to higher education. Such help could include advice on types of organisations and the particular requirements of a job as well as choice of higher education courses or institutions, completion of the UCAS form and student personal statements.

There is a section on the UCAS application form which relates to disability or special needs. This enables higher education institutions to take the individual needs of students into consideration. In order to ensure full support at a student's chosen higher education institution, a brief outline of a mental health problem might be helpfully included in a UCAS reference, where the student is in full agreement.

Applications, Interview and Enrolment Procedure for Students with Mental Health Concerns

Richmond Upon Thames College is committed to offering an appropriate programme of study, with support, to students with mental health concerns. This support will be designed to meet individual requirements within resource constraints. However, care will be taken to ensure that we are not setting a student up to fail as we are aware that this may compound any existing mental health problem. We aim to ensure that a student is able to meet the demands of the course, has the potential to succeed and adhere to the Student Partnership Agreement.

Disclosure of Mental Health difficulties during the admissions process:

Every applicant at Richmond upon Thames College has the entitlement to disclose additional learning support needs and have an assessment of these needs in relation to their educational programme.

Students will be encouraged to discuss their needs prior to admission. This can be done on the student's own initiative or someone else may do this on the student's behalf (with her/his permission). Information about a mental health difficulty may be made on the application form and/or may be discussed at interview. At all times it will be made clear that any information imparted will only be used in the student's interests and with her/his full knowledge. It is our aim to make anticipatory arrangements for a student's support needs. Students who disclose at this stage will also be offered a transition session facilitated by Student Services and specialist external providers, i.e., NHS Trailblaze partners.

Students are encouraged to complete a Welfare and Support form as part of Induction and Tutorial sessions. This will be made available online and can ensure that the relevant teams can contact the students to discuss the support options.

Full-time students

At the College interview, applicants who have identified themselves as having a mental health difficulty *as part of an educational health and care plan (EHCP)* will be seen by a member of academic staff and a member of the Additional Learning Support team at which point a suitable programme of study is discussed. It may be necessary for the College to contact the appropriate mental health worker e.g. a psychiatrist or community psychiatric nurse (CPN). This would be in order to look into the care plan and medication as well as establish any factors the College needs to be aware of. If there were any doubt about the student's mental health in terms of coping with the demands of the chosen course, the College would ask the applicant's permission to write to their mental health worker for her/his view.

Where the student does not have an EHCP that states the support needed in relation to a mental health difficulty, but the student declared this to the College, contact will be made by one of the Student Services team to discuss their needs. They will then liaise with other members of staff as relevant.

If there is no previous information and an interviewer has concerns during the interview, they will not make a course offer at the time but consult with the Head of Inclusive Learning and/or Head of Student Experience after the interview. A second interview can then be offered. An admission decision will then be made and a written record kept of the facts and the outcome. This information will be kept confidential.

Once a programme has been agreed, the ALS team will undertake an assessment of support needs. If required, a Risk Assessment will be completed in consultation with the Health and Safety Manager.

Part-time students

If an applicant identifies as having a mental health difficulty, the Inclusive Learning team will contact the applicant but will not be present at the interview stage. An assessment will be undertaken of the suitability of the programme and any special support needs the student may have. The process would follow the same pattern as for full-time students in that an admission decision would be made and a written record kept of the facts and the outcome. This information will be kept confidential.

If a student with a mental health difficulty enrolls onto a programme that does not require an interview and discloses their condition, then the ALS team will contact the teacher/applicant to arrange any support that may be needed to ensure successful completion of the course.

Appeals Procedure

There is an admissions appeals procedure that can be used by any applicant. Normally a decision on an appeal is made by the Assistant Principal Student Experience in consultation with the Head of Student Services and/or Head of Inclusive Learning along with other relevant support staff.

Assessment and Disclosure of Information

Students are encouraged to make disclosures about mental health difficulties and give as much information as possible to ensure that we meet our obligations under the **Equality Act 2010**.

The Inclusive Learning team will undertake an assessment of support needs and plan any reasonable adjustments that are to be made. This may include:

- 1:1 Support
- In class support
- Additional tutorial support
- Examination concessions
- Guidelines on time management and classroom behaviour
- Additional educational resources

Once the learning support needs of the student have been assessed, the College will put in place other necessary measures, which could include:

- Access to counselling
- Financial support
- Co-ordination with external agencies

The Head of Student Experience and Head of Inclusive Learning will have access to relevant information about all students with mental health difficulties. In addition, for full-time students, the Tutor will have access to information about their support provision. For part-time students, a named person who will usually be the Head of School would have access to this information. If a student has made a disclosure, this information will be placed on the College management information system which is managed in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 including General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).