

Mental Health Policy and Procedure

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Person Responsible	Vice Principal - Curriculum
Approval/ review body	SLT (Senior Leadership Team)
Frequency of Review*	12 months

** Policies will be reviewed more frequently if legal changes or good practice require*

Review History:		
Date:	Review by	Reason for review
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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 This policy applies to the entirety of North Kent College group (henceforth referred to as “the College”) and includes all campuses and satellite sites.
- 1.2 This policy relates to students and prospective students. Staff with mental ill health are managed through Human Resource policies and procedures, including those relating to sickness and stress.
- 1.3 The College is committed to widening participation and equality of opportunities for all, which includes support for people with disabilities, including those with mental ill health needs. This policy aims to safeguard and promote the welfare of students with mental ill health as well as ensuring the health and safety of all who learn, work or visit the College.
- 1.4 A symptom of mental ill health is depression and withdrawal. A very small minority of people may exhibit violence or anti-social behaviour such as physical aggression or self-harm. Care must be taken in attributing behaviour to illness. Diagnosis is a matter for mental health professionals outside of the College and is based on a range of symptoms observed and verified over a period of time.
- 1.5 Many students who are dealing with mental ill health manage this in a way that does not affect their studies or ability to live independently in onsite residential accommodation. The College has effective procedures to assist and support students whose engagement in College (education and living) are affected by their mental ill health. These students may require some adaptation to their attendance, course work, and independent living.
- 1.6 The College aims, through its marketing materials and interview processes, that prospective students feel confident to declare their mental health needs when choosing a course and living in onsite residential accommodation.
- 1.7 The College will assess the needs of students, where necessary seeking advice from mental health professionals outside College, to ensure that College is a suitable environment for the prospective student to study and live.
- 1.8 The College will provide resources needed and make reasonable adjustments to support students with mental ill health.
- 1.9 The College recognises that some students may choose not to disclose their mental ill health or may not wish the College to contact their professional carers outside the College. In these cases, we respect their right to confidentiality but where health and safety cannot be assured, the offer of a College place or onsite residential may not be possible. Where serious mental ill health comes to light only after the applicant has started College, the student may need to have “**time out**” while the student seeks professional advice about whether or not the College environment is suitable at that particular time.

2. Students who give some cause for concern

- 2.1 Any member of staff may encounter behaviour in a student that gives cause for concern. Sometimes this happens because the student tells the member of staff something; in other cases the staff member observes something. It is not possible to provide a checklist of behavioural indicators as taken in isolation they can be misleading. However, where staff feel concerned, and particularly where they note other staff or students have a similar reaction to behaviour observed, staff need to take concerns seriously.
- 2.2 Staff must raise concern through the student's eTrackr (even retrospectively), also checking the student's eTrackr to see if concerns were raised at any other stage. The student's Tutor and Student Support must be included in any comment to be able to offer any further support or advice.
- 2.3 If a student requires a Counselling appointment this can be arranged either through the Tutor or a member of the Student Support Team.

3. How and When Should the Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure be used?

Any physical or mental ill health concern about a student should be acted upon promptly. Evidence indicates that early intervention and support can result in better outcomes for the student and may avoid the situation becoming more complex.

The Policy should be implemented when:

- 3.1. There is a concern that a student's progress is being negatively impacted on by their physical or mental ill health.
- 3.2. Evidence submitted by the student to support this may include (not exhaustive):
 - 3.2.1. GP/Doctor letter confirming physical or mental ill health and nature of impact;
 - 3.2.2. Educational Psychologist Report detailing diagnosis and nature of impact;
 - 3.2.3. Psychiatrist / Psychologist / Psychotherapist / Counsellor's Report detailing diagnosis and nature of impact;
 - 3.2.4. Occupational Health Therapist's detailing diagnosis and nature of impact; and/or
 - 3.2.5. Specialist Teacher Assessment detailing diagnosis and nature of impact.

The student is responsible for the provision of documentary evidence as detailed above to support and inform the Fitness to Study Support Action Plan.

4. Responding to a serious incident or crisis situation

- 4.1. If a student's behaviour suggests that they present a danger to themselves or others, or are experiencing a mental health crisis, the Head of Faculty,

should be contacted and if necessary, call on the support of other staff to contain the situation. Personal safety of all concerned must be paramount.

- 4.2. Initially it may be unclear whether or not this is a situation related to the mental ill health of the student. It may be, or appear to be, a breach of discipline at the gross misconduct level, and will be supported by either the Fitness to Study Policy and procedures or the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.
- 4.3. It is sometimes difficult to separate disciplinary and mental ill health concerns during a crisis situation and whether suspension or “**time out**” (see below) is the appropriate procedure to follow. This can be decided in the first instance by the Head of Faculty (or nominated person). After investigation and reflection it may be that the original decision needs to be revised.
- 4.4. If it becomes clear that an incident is causing immediate serious danger to someone, then a member of staff should call the police and notify SLT. The police work with Community Mental Health teams to ensure everyone’s safety.
- 4.5. Where the danger recedes substantially, and the student is cooperative, the member of staff may not need to call the police, but can make arrangements for family or a responsible person to take the student home or to hospital. In the meantime the tutor or member of staff dealing with the situation needs to ensure that the student is accompanied and is in a safe place in College. The safe location and accompanying person will vary depending on what has happened and who is available.
- 4.6. A Comment/ Confidential Comment and or CfC (Cause for Concern) should be completed on the students eTrackr, and copied to the Tutor and Head of Curriculum who will agree a plan of further action including arrangements for continuation of study, and consultation with the relevant Head of Curriculum, if “**time out**” needs to be arranged.
- 4.7. Staff dealing with students with mental ill health, or who have been affected by an incident, may wish to talk this over with a Counsellor in or out of College. The Head of Human Resources can arrange this.
- 4.8. In all crisis situations, assuring your safety and that of others, including the person involved, is paramount. These guidance notes may help you:
 - 4.8.1 Take threats of suicide seriously - do not ignore them, seek advice from a member of Student Support and complete an electronic Safeguarding Referral Form.
 - 4.8.2 If the situation does not settle quickly, ensure the Head of Curriculum is contacted.
 - 4.8.3 In the event of a student experiencing a mental health crisis staff should stay calm. If possible, move the student to a quiet place or remove other students and staff from the area. The College has qualified First Aiders. Please ensure your area of the College has an up-to-date list (available from H&S) so

that they can be called in an emergency. If a First Aider is not available staff need to feel confident to manage the situation themselves or to contact external support e.g. emergency services.

4.8.4 In any mental health crisis the emergency services should be called if necessary i.e. if the student is at risk of harming themselves or others. Paramedics will deal with some situations, but the police may also be involved. If the student is experiencing a mental health crisis there are helplines, they can call themselves for immediate help if they are able to:

4.8.4.1 The Samaritans: 116 123 free & confidential support 24 hours a day (National service)

4.8.4.2 Mental Health Matters: 0800 107 0160 free and confidential support 24 hours a day (Kent and Medway based service)

The student themselves or a member of staff on their behalf can call 111 (NHS Direct) for immediate support and advice. If there is immediate danger to the student or other students or staff 999 should be called. 111 and 999 will offer help to students experiencing a mental health crisis including severe panic attacks, suicidal thoughts etc.

4.8.5 If the emergency services are called and decide to attend a member of SLT needs to be informed as soon as possible.

4.8.6 Following a crisis the Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure can be followed, to support a student to return to their academic studies and or residential accommodation as soon as they are fit to do so.

4.8.7 Other students who have supported a student in crisis may need support themselves and can be referred to Student Support Services where necessary.

5. Returning to Study

5.1 If a student wishes to return to academic studies and/or residential accommodation following a serious incident or a series of incidents which raised concern, such return requires the positive assessment by the student's GP, Psychiatrist or other relevant medical professional.

5.2 The Tutor, Student Support Officer and or RSO will write/email or telephone the student and or parents and will make it clear that the student is NOT being suspended for disciplinary reasons, but that a **"time out"** period is necessary in order to make sure that adequate support can be provided in College for the student to continue the course, as part of the Fitness to Study process.

- 5.3 **“Time out”** should be thought of as a negotiated period of time away from course attendance and/or residential accommodation, to allow students to regain their physical and mental energy and return to College when their coping strategies are suitable to meet the demands of College study.
- 5.4 During **“time out”** the student’s Tutor will arrange for appropriate work to be sent so that the student does not fall behind in their studies if appropriate.
- 5.5 When the student returns, the Personal Tutor should arrange a Fitness to Study Assessment Meeting, to ensure an appropriate Support Action Plan is put in place. There should be regular monitoring and review meetings involving: student, Tutor, parent/carer/guardian (if under 18) and residential representative if appropriate. All Fitness to Study meetings must be recorded on the e-ILP under ‘manage learner reviews and meetings’.

Appendix 1: Flow Diagram

Flow Diagram

