



# ST. ANDREW'S COLLEGE Cambridge

## Mental Health Policy

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### Introduction

- ✚ It is estimated that one in four adults will experience some form of mental health problem during their life. Mental health problems can occur for a number of reasons, but tend to be exacerbated by stressful situations such as the further education setting, where there is increased pressure to succeed and adapt.
- ✚ Studying at St Andrew's College Cambridge will involve adapting to a new country and culture, developing a new social network, managing a tight budget and being separated from family and friends. This is in addition to the pressures of study and the need to be self-motivated. All of these factors can jeopardise an individual's mental health.
- ✚ Many students experiencing mental health problems will manage them effectively with minimal support, but, for others, the impact of the problem will affect their ability to function and it may adversely impact on their ability to succeed.
- ✚ St Andrew's College Cambridge recognises that there is an increasing prevalence of mental health difficulties and that our approach to supporting students with diverse needs should be supported by developing appropriate policies to reflect this.

### Aims of this policy

- ✚ To provide a clear and practical policy framework relating to student mental health issues for students, potential students and staff.

- ✚ St Andrew's College Cambridge has a duty of care to meet students' educational needs, including pastoral care. This means that students can expect support services to be available and to be of a reasonable standard.

- ✚ The Equality Act 2010 and Further and Higher Education Regulations 2006 aim to reduce inequalities experienced by disabled people in relation to further education. In very brief terms, discrimination can occur in four ways:

**"Direct discrimination"** - where the student is treated less favourably on grounds of their disability.

**"Disability related discrimination"** - where a student is treated less favourably for a reason related to their disability e.g. because of the consequences of their disability rather than the disability per se.

**Failure to make reasonable adjustments** - where such adjustments may ameliorate the effect of the disability on the ability to participate.

**Victimisation** - where unfavourable action is taken in consequence of an allegation that a student has been discriminated against.

- ✚ It is unlawful for St Andrew's College Cambridge to discriminate in the student services it provides, or by excluding the student from the institution (whether permanently or temporarily).

- ✚ It is also unlawful to subject a student to harassment on grounds of disability.

- ✚ The definition of "disabled" under The Equality Act (2010) covers people whose mental health is such that there is a long term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

- ✚ Therefore, a student with a mental health condition which meets the The Equality Act (2010) definition of "disability" must not be treated less favourably than other students as a result.

- ✚ This student is also entitled to reasonable adjustments by St Andrew's College Cambridge ensure they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with other students.

- ✚ Such adjustments and provisions do not extend to providing long-term academic or other support to someone if it is considered that it is not likely that they are able to successfully complete their course of study. In these cases, careful consideration must be given to ensuring full compliance with the provisions of the The Equality Act (2010)

## Definition of 'mental health'

- ✚ The [World Health Organization](#) defines mental health as "a state of well-being" in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, 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"<sup>1</sup>.
- ✚ For the purposes of this policy, the term „mental health difficulties“ refers to:  
  
long term mental illnesses or psychiatric conditions which may be classified as a disability under the The Equality Act (2010), emerging mental health problems which may develop into conditions which require ongoing support or intervention, and temporary debilitating mental health conditions or reactions which impact on a student’s ability to fulfil their academic potential.
- ✚ There are a range of conditions which come under the umbrella term “mental health difficulties“, including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorder, and many more, as diagnosed by a relevant medical practitioner.

## Disclosure, referral and confidentiality

- ✚ It is recognised that the decision to disclose a mental health difficulty can be very difficult and dependent on a number of factors. Students may be reluctant to disclose mental health difficulties as they may be worried that it will affect their academic standing. They may also be reluctant to admit to a problem because of stigmatisation or because they are scared or in denial of the problem themselves. St. Andrew’s College Cambridge encourages students to disclose any difficulties at an early stage so that the help they may need can be discussed and addressed.
- ✚ It is the student’s responsibility to inform us if they are unable to fulfil the requirements of their course for any reason, whether this is done personally or through a third party.
- ✚ Students have the right not to disclose their mental health difficulties . However, if a student decides not to disclose a mental health difficulty, it is likely to make it more difficult for the school to support them appropriately. Therefore, in cases where it is apparent that a student has mental health difficulties, but is unwilling to discuss this further and with appropriate people, the implications for the provision of meaningful support will be discussed

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<sup>1</sup> "[Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response \(Fact sheet N°220\)](#)". World Health Organisation. Retrieved 3 February 2013.

- ✚ Where a student's mental health difficulties are long-term and can be classified as a disability, it is important that David McEwan-Cox is informed to ensure that we can support the student in full compliance with The Equality Act (2010) obligations. Where students have agreed to self-refer, staff are required to follow this up with the student.

## **Referral**

- ✚ At any point during their course, students may speak to David McEwan-Cox for support if they are experiencing mental health difficulties. He can then assist in referring them to a GP or a local support service.

## **Counselling service**

A college counselling service is provided by Nicola White. Students can access this service by e-mailing Nicola on [counselling@standrewscambridge.co.uk](mailto:counselling@standrewscambridge.co.uk). This is a confidential service but if Nicola should have any concerns relating to safeguarding and child protection, she should follow the guidelines in the college safeguarding policy. Students living in the Tenison Road hall of residence are not able to access counselling services from Nicola and will be assisted by David McEwan-Cox or Nicola White in accessing counselling services through Centre 33.

## **Confidentiality**

Any initial disclosure of a mental health difficulty to a member of staff will be treated sensitively. The member of staff concerned will discuss with the student how this information can be passed on in order to get them the most appropriate support from the college and external support services.

We understand that students may feel uncomfortable with information relating to their mental health being shared with other members of staff within the college and with outside agencies. In order to ensure that students feel confident and are willing to seek help, St. Andrew's College Cambridge makes the following assurances about the way in which such sensitive information will be handled:

- ✚ Information relating to a student's mental health will not normally be shared with staff, other schools, parents, other students or outside agencies without express permission from the student.
- ✚ Under all normal circumstances, students will be made aware of who their information is being shared with, and the reason for this.

It is recognised that there may be situations where there is a need to act within a limited time-frame in order ensure that appropriate support can be organised for a student. In such situations, all reasonable steps will be taken to obtain permission from the student, but where this is not possible, and the issue is serious and considered to be in the best interests of the student, communication will take place between David McEwan-Cox, Hanna Claydon and external agencies.

In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to disclose without a student's permission. For example, if it is felt that a student's mental health poses an immediate danger to themselves or to others. In these rare instances, information will have to be disclosed to third parties and outside agencies who are experienced in dealing with such emergencies.

### **Support for staff in helping students with mental health difficulties**

If a student discloses a mental health problem to a member of staff, it is vital that the member of staff takes this disclosure seriously and is able to guide the student towards appropriate support services in a timely manner to reduce the potential impact on a student's studies and general well-being.

Members of staff may at times feel that they do not have the knowledge or expertise to deal with a particular situation and that they require advice from other agencies. It is the responsibility of individual staff members to recognise situations that lie beyond their job role and competence, and to make appropriate referrals.

For further information about common mental health problems, their signs and symptoms, staff are advised to visit <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems>

Staff are advised to talk difficult situations through with colleagues, while still maintaining the student's confidentiality. Staff who require further confidential advice about dealing with a student who has (or who they suspect of having) a mental health difficulty can contact the David McEwan-Cox. Staff do not need to disclose details of a student's identity at this stage.

Contact details for David McEwan-Cox are as follows;

david@standrewscambridge.co.uk  
01223 358073

Staff are advised to keep factual and accurate records of any interactions with students where there have been mental health concerns. It is advisable to make a note of what actions were taken in these situations, and be mindful of guidelines on data protection and confidentiality.

Where students have agreed to self-refer to a GP or outside agency, staff are required to follow this up with the student.

Whenever you make notes about a student, you should bear in mind that the Data Protection Act 1998 may allow the student to see those notes.

**Review: 2014, 2015, 2016**

**Next review: July 2017**