



Supporting students experiencing mental wellbeing difficulties

Guidelines for staff



Contents

Introduction	3
Recognising Mental Wellbeing Difficulties	3
Guidelines for Action: Staff with Concerns about a Student's Wellbeing	4-5
Guidelines for Action: Dealing with Urgent Situations	5
Guidelines for Action: Emergency Situations on Campus	6
Confidentiality	6
Support Services at Staffordshire University	7
Quick Guide: Actions Advised in Helping a Student in Distress or Crisis	8

Introduction

Staffordshire University is committed to promoting a culture of positive mental wellbeing for its students, in the hope that students will be able to fulfil their potential in their academic studies as well as in their lives beyond university. These guidelines aim to enhance staff awareness of mental wellbeing issues and to provide some guidance for staff when responding to students experiencing mental wellbeing difficulties.

Mental 'illness' and 'disorder' have specific meanings within the medical profession and have many complex elements; the term 'mental wellbeing difficulties' would seem more useful as a general term applicable to someone who seems to be experiencing problems in relation to their own state of mental health. For this reason, the terms 'mental wellbeing' and 'mental wellbeing difficulties' will be used throughout this document

Recognising mental wellbeing difficulties

Any member of staff and particularly those in regular contact with students may notice factors which can point to difficulties and can include:

Changes in mood

- Withdrawn, erratic, irritable or elated mood which is noticeably different from how the student has presented previously
- Tearfulness

Changes in appearance

- Weight change
- Decline in self-care
- Sad or miserable aspect
- Strong and/or repeated smell of alcohol or cannabis

Changes in behaviour

- Missing classes
- Social isolation
- Overworking
- Repeatedly failing to complete coursework or sudden change in quality of academic work
- Sounds different (e.g. very loud/quiet, rapid and/or incoherent speech).
- Unusual/disturbed thinking patterns expressed
- Difficulties with expression of appropriate emotions
- Difficulties in keeping still
- Reduced ability to focus/concentrate
- Forgetful/poor decision making
- Repeated instances of conflict or aggressive behaviour

In addition to these changes in behaviour:

Others expressing concerns for the student (e.g. friends, relatives, housemates)

Guidelines for Action: Staff with Concerns about a Student's Wellbeing

The appropriate course of action to be taken by a staff member who has become concerned about the mental wellbeing of a student depends on the urgency of the situation. The course of action may also need to be reviewed if the situation alters.

Non-urgent/Non-emergency situations

Members of staff who become concerned about a student who appears withdrawn, low in mood, tearful or unduly anxious, or who has deterioration in academic performance or who is failing to meet deadlines for submission of assignments should consider the following general guidelines:

DO talk to the student about your concern and the basis for that concern. You may find that they are already seeing their GP, a counsellor, psychotherapist or psychiatrist. You may be able to allay your concerns and your interest may prove reassuring to the student

DO speak calmly and listen empathetically

DO reflect on, and explain the limitations of your role and what support you are able to provide

DO talk to the student about helping them access specialist support and refer on as appropriate.

DO advise the student on the support services available and tell the student a little about the service you are suggesting. Encourage them to contact the service themselves, **but....**

DO be more active in referring a student if they are very distressed or severely depressed and likely to find it hard to initiate contact themselves.

DO ask for the student's consent to liaise with other colleagues/services and explain your actions. If consent to talk to a colleague is not agreed, then discuss the situation only without sharing names.

DO continue to monitor the situation and seek further advice from the AccessAbility team as needed.

What if a student does not want your help?

If the student does not wish to talk, offer an open invitation to the student to come back and talk with you in the future and in all cases ensure that the student is made aware of the support available as they might change their minds at a later date.

If there is no imminent danger and the student denies there is a difficulty or refuses offers of help, there may be little you can do other than ensure they have information on sources of support and help.

It is advisable however to make a note of your concerns, and to notify senior staff in the department in order that others are aware of the situation. In order to respect confidentiality written details should be kept to the minimum.

Remember, you are not solely responsible for a student's emotional state and if you would like some advice please contact the AccessAbility Mental Wellbeing Advisors or Counselling team who should be able to help.

The AccessAbility team also offer a range of training to support you in your pastoral role and for more information contact the AccessAbility team.

Guidelines for Action: Dealing with Urgent Situations

If you are seriously concerned about a student's well-being it is important to assess what action is needed to be taken. Please consult with the AccessAbility Mental Wellbeing team, or if it is out of hours other professional, such as doctor or nurse, is important to assess what action is needed.

Urgent situations

Where a student is distressed to the point of needing urgent same-day or next-day support and may be exhibiting severe emotional disturbance but is not needing immediate medical attention or emergency intervention:

1. Contact the AccessAbility Mental Wellbeing Advisors or Counselling team on 01782 294977 for guidance and/or referral.
2. If possible, arrange for someone to remain with the student until support can be identified.
3. Make a note of the incident/concerns and notify your manager and/or senior staff member in the department.

After hours and weekends

1. Refer to the out of hours support services on Staffordshire University's Counselling webpages http://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/counselling/emergency/ and encourage and support the student to access care from the out of hours healthcare services.
2. Record the incident and notify your manager and/or senior staff member the next working day.
3. Provide information on the university support services and encourage/support the student to make contact with the AccessAbility Mental Wellbeing and Counselling team the next working day.

Guidelines for Action: Emergency Situations on Campus

A mental health emergency is where there is a life threatening situation in which an individual is **IMMINENTLY** threatening harm to self or others, or is severely disorientated/out of touch with reality that indicates very unpredictable behaviour.

In such circumstances:

1. Contact Emergency Services 999

Accident and Emergency Departments have duty psychiatrists and Crisis Teams who can make initial assessments of a person's mental state. They can also liaise with the student's GP.

2. If the student is on campus also alert Security *44 internal/01782 294444, to inform them so that Emergency Services are called.
3. Record the incident and discuss it with your line manager/senior staff member.
4. Make contact with the AccessAbility Wellbeing and Counselling team to make a joint decision on what further steps may be required and appropriate follow up can be offered.

If you are in doubt about how to respond to a student, you may wish to consult the University Counselling webpages on Emergency and 24 Hour Support
http://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/counselling/emergency/

Confidentiality

Due to the sensitive nature of information relating to the mental wellbeing of any student, it is important that where disclosures are made, or staff have concerns about a student's mental wellbeing, staff maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality.

Students need to feel confident that any information they give will only be made available to others if they have specifically consented to such disclosure, or if there are exceptional circumstances that override confidentiality. Certain exceptional circumstances may require the sharing of sensitive personal information e.g. if there was concern about immediate or imminent serious harm to the student or to others.

For information and guidance on data protection contact the Information Protection and Security Manager and refer to the University's web pages
http://www.staffs.ac.uk/legal/privacy/10_rules/

Support Services at Staffordshire University

AccessAbility Services

Mental Wellbeing Advisors

Trent Building

Tel: 01782 294977

(Answerphone available out of hours)

Opening Hours: 8.45am – 5pm Monday – Friday

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/study/disabled/index.jsp>

Counsellors

Tel: 01782 294976

E mail: counselling@staffs.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the mental wellbeing of a student, you can contact the AccessAbility team and one of the Mental Wellbeing Advisors or Counsellors will be able to offer advice and/or signpost you appropriately.

The University Counselling Webpages also provide information on other sources of mental wellbeing support http://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/counselling/emergency/

Multi-Faith Chaplaincy

Chaplaincy Centre

Coalport Accommodation Office

Leek Road

Tel: 07887 655487

E mail: m.williams@staffs.ac.uk

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/chaplaincy/index.jsp

Student Guidance Advisors

For education/course related advice & support

E mail: support@staffs.ac.uk

Opening hours/service information:

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/studentguidance/index.jsp

Student Advice Centre Students' Union

Above the Ember Lounge

Tel: 01782 294629

E mail: sac@staffs.ac.uk

<https://www.staffsunion.com/advice/contactus/>

University Police Liaison Officer

PC Simon Stone

Copshop, Coalport Hall, Leek Road

Tel: 01782 294311 Mob: 07818 296050

E mail: simon.stone@staffs.ac.uk

Security

Ext: *44 internal

Tel: 01782 294444

Opening Hours: 24 Hour emergency line

Inform security if emergency services are required on campus

Quick Guide: Actions Advised in Helping a Student in Distress or Crisis

