

Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Policy

1 Introduction

The Sixth Form College, Colchester is committed to promoting the wellbeing and positive mental health of all members of the College community. The College will strive to improve the mental health environment and culture of the College and to promote, establish and maintain processes, practices and provision that enhance positive mental health and wellbeing.

We are committed to a “whole College” approach. This means that wellbeing and mental health are not just “pastoral” issues. An understanding of positive mental health should be evident throughout the work of the College, including teaching and learning activities, staff development and communications with our wider community, including parents and carers.

We recognise that individuals’ mental health can be affected by environmental factors. Poor mental health is exacerbated by inequality, discrimination and isolation. Good mental health is associated with a strong sense of community.

Mental health and wellbeing can also be affected by specific factors relating to protected characteristics. For example, neurodiversity, gender dysphoria and menopause have been associated with a higher incidence of difficulties with mental health and wellbeing. Physical ill health and economic disadvantage may also impact on mental wellbeing. The College will endeavour to understand what may be complex circumstances, and will endeavour to offer appropriate support.

We recognise that many members of our community will encounter difficulties with their wellbeing or mental health at some time. Levels of wellbeing and severity of difficulties will fluctuate, so the support which is offered needs to be flexible.

2 Aims

The College aims to

- foster a strong sense of community, providing opportunities for students and staff to “get involved” in multiple different ways
- reduce mental health discrimination and stigma by increasing awareness and understanding of mental health issues
- educate all students and staff about mental wellbeing and promote strategies for positive mental health
- provide opportunities for both students and staff to actively manage their mental wellbeing, e.g. through physical activity and stress reducing activities
- provide training opportunities for staff to ensure they can offer appropriate guidance to students relating to mental health
- work with staff and students, usually through relevant representatives and forums, to ensure working hours and workloads are reasonable and to enable positive and sustainable levels of mental health/wellbeing
- encourage family friendly and flexible working practices for staff where appropriate and as far as resources and context allow
- tackle any bullying, harassment or discrimination and manage conflict effectively

- provide support as needed, and within the capabilities and resources of the College, either directly or indirectly, via signposting and/or referral to external agencies
- ensure College wellbeing services are easily accessible
- liaise closely with external agencies to provide “joined up” support for students
- advocate for students who are finding it difficult to access the help they need

3 Promoting understanding of mental health

All students will learn about mental health as part of the Tutorial Programme. Further resources are available to all via Teams (with sites specific to staff and students). Many students study subjects which directly address mental health (for example Psychology, Criminology, Sociology, English). Students will also have the opportunity to extend their knowledge of mental health issues by, for example, engaging with visiting speakers from external organisations or enrolling on a wellbeing-related Additional Studies course.

All teaching staff will receive training to help them respond appropriately to students experiencing difficulties with their wellbeing or mental health.

All managers will be able to access training/support to help them respond appropriately to colleagues experiencing difficulties with their wellbeing or mental health. All staff will be able to access advice and guidance as to how to support colleagues.

Discussion about wellbeing is integral to the PDR (Professional Development Review) process for staff.

4 Accessing help with wellbeing and mental health

Students can seek help in a number of different ways, depending on the route they are most comfortable with. For many students, their Personal Tutor will be the first point of contact. However, students can also see their Senior Tutor or drop into the Wellbeing Hub. Students can also self-refer to the Wellbeing Coordinator or the College counsellor via email. Details of how to access help will be publicised to students on Teams, during initial Tutorials and via posters around College.

The Wellbeing Hub provides a focal point in College, where students can seek help, either on a one-off basis, or for more regular support. The Wellbeing Coordinator will triage referrals and provide guidance on the most appropriate sources of support, either within College or from external agencies.

Staff can seek help in a number of different ways, depending on the route they are most comfortable with. For many staff Human Resources could be the first point of contact however there are other options i.e. by self-referral to the Employee Assistance Programme. Support that is available to staff and how to access this is outlined in the wellbeing section on Moodle, including signposting information to external agencies.

5 Student applicants

Applicants to College who have a mental health condition which is likely to impact their College experience should make the College aware on application, so that appropriate support can be anticipated and put in place where possible. (See *Admissions Policy* and *SEND Policy*)

6 Mental health and attendance

Most students experiencing mental health difficulties will benefit from continuing to attend College as normal. Attending lessons and other timetabled activities allows students to access help, keep up with their studies and be part of a supportive community. When students do not attend College, it is more difficult for us to help them and they risk becoming detached and isolated. Clinicians and therapists almost always advise that the structure of regular College attendance is beneficial, even when students are finding things difficult.

It is not an option for students to attend College but not attend lessons. We can provide support to return to class, for example where a student suffering from anxiety is struggling to attend a particular lesson, but we will not allow independent working and socialising at College, without attendance at lessons.

The College will work closely with staff whose attendance could be impacted by poor mental health. We will give non-judgemental and pro-active support to employees that experience poor mental health such as facilitating appointments for counselling, CBT etc. Reasonable adjustments that could be made to support staff at work, either on return from sickness absence or in order to support them to stay at work will be discussed and considered and the college aims to ensure that colleagues are treated fairly and consistently and in line with College policies.

7 Serious difficulties and managing risk

Most students who experience difficulties with their wellbeing or mental health are able to take a full part in College life and succeed on their programmes of study, with support from the College and/or external agencies. However, a minority of students will experience difficulties which have a bigger impact on their ability to maintain good attendance, engage with their study or, in some cases, keep themselves safe whilst at College. (See also *Fitness to Study* protocol)

Sometimes, a risk assessment will conclude that particular College activities cannot be undertaken safely, in which case there may be some limits imposed on a student's participation. For example, a student may be able to attend lessons at College safely but may pose a risk to themselves or others on a College trip.

These situations will be dealt with on a case by case basis, usually by the student's Senior Tutor, under the direction of the Safeguarding Lead and/or Assistant Principal (pastoral) where necessary.

Wherever possible, the aim will be to support the student to successfully complete their programme of study at College. In some cases, reasonable adjustments will need to be made (for example a reduced programme or an agreed short period of absence).

We ask students and their parents/carers to keep us informed of the situation and of any changes, for example any self-harm incident or any change in medication.

The Senior Tutor and/or Safeguarding Lead will work with the student, and with parents/carers and external agencies whenever possible, to ascertain the level of risk to the student or others in the College community and draw up a risk management plan, taking into account the open access site and the levels of independence required in a “young adult” community. We are not able to provide a fully secure environment for young people who cannot keep themselves safe.

The College cannot provide long-term distance learning and it will not be possible for a student to continue with their programme of study if their absence is prolonged, or if there is little prospect of a successful return. Very occasionally, after consultation with all those involved, the College may conclude that it is necessary for a student to withdraw, either permanently, or with a view to re-enrolling the following academic year. In these cases, we will work with the student and with parents/carers and external agencies where applicable, to advise on securing ongoing support and advise on alternative progression routes

8 Confidentiality and communication

Our students are assumed to have “Gillick competency” and can seek professional or medical help without their parents’/carers’ knowledge or consent.

We encourage students to communicate with their parents/carers about any difficulties they may be having, but we do not inform parents/carers of mental health issues that have been disclosed to us without the student’s consent, except in the case of an immediate or substantial safeguarding concern.

Information relating to any person’s mental health is assumed to be confidential. However, it may be useful for College staff to be aware of difficulties that students are facing, so that, for example, a teacher can modify their approach in a particular lesson. We will therefore discuss with the student what information should be shared, and with whom. The Senior Tutor will then inform teaching staff, sharing only the minimum necessary to ensure that staff can support the student.

The Senior Tutor will usually be kept informed of any important information regarding a student, including whether help is being accessed by specialist teams in College, and whether there have been any referrals to external agencies. Students and/or parents/carers are requested to inform the Senior Tutor (or the Personal Tutor or Safeguarding Lead if preferred) of any relevant information concerning a student’s mental health.

Information relating to staff mental health will be confidential, unless the staff member has given consent for information to be shared, for example with the line manager, to ensure that appropriate support can be put in place. However, staff should understand that on occasions it may be necessary to share information with appropriate managers and other agencies in the best interests of the individual concerned and in order to provide appropriate support.

In an emergency, information may be shared without consent to keep staff or students safe.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Safeguarding Policy

Child Protection Policy

Equality and Diversity Policy

Student Charter and handbook (Behaviour Policy)

SEND Policy

Admissions Policy

Fitness to Study Protocol

College Employment Manual

Equality Statement

This policy has been reviewed to ensure that it creates no barriers or impacts in relation to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Approved by College Senior Management, Executive	May 2026
Review date	Summer 2029
Author/Responsibility	Assistant Principal (Pastoral)

Appendix A: College Provision for Students

See following page for College Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing provision for students, divided into 3 levels:

Universal = available to all, with the aims of encouraging positive mental health and wellbeing, and raising awareness of mental health

(Self)-selected = interventions and further learning, for which students may self-refer, or be referred by a member of staff, including one-off one to one help and programmes of group sessions

Targeted= a range of mental health interventions, mainly planned one to one support, and help to access external mental health services

Students may be accessing help at several levels simultaneously.

TARGETED

- Senior Tutor and/or DSL involvement with pastoral/welfare issue
- Wellbeing Coordinator triage to assess mental health need and allocate worker and/or complete referral
- MHST programme (10 weeks 1:1 CBT based therapy with MHST)
- Weekly 1:1 sessions with Wellbeing Assistant/Coordinator, including specialisms eg disordered eating. Wellbeing coordinator holds more complex cases, while students on waiting lists for external support
- Weekly 1:1 sessions with College Counsellor
- Mentoring from Learning Support
- Referral to External Agencies
- TAF/multi-agency/pastoral support planning/risk assessment planning
- Liaison with providers of intensive, in-patient care to ensure continuity of education/manage reintegration
- intensive pre-induction programme for the most anxious applicants

(SELF) SELECTED

- Wellbeing Hub drop-in support for emotional health and wellbeing
- Mental health/wellbeing focused support, through Togetherall (online support) on exam stress, anxiety, OCD, addiction, depression and many more.
- Learning Support Dept workshops: eg revision, managing your time in exams, touch typing, ESOL (all target elements of learning, whilst also raising self-esteem and confidence)
- short term 1:1 help with an aspect of learning - self-referral or subject tutor referral
- Pre-induction visits for applicants identified as/self-identifying as anxious

UNIVERSAL

- holistic support, guidance and monitoring from Personal Tutor , overseen by Senior Tutor
- Personal Tutor liaison with parents and carers
- Regular one to one review with Subject Tutors
- Tutorial Programme covers mental health, healthy relationships, staying safe, healthy lifestyle, dealing with exam stress, equality and diversity, communities and connectedness, progression
- Additional Studies programme and enrichment
- Student Mentor meetings and buddying
- Awareness raising visits from external agencies
- Moodle and website information and links, for students and parents