

# Student Mental Health Policy

## Introduction

1. The University of Bolton is committed to taking positive steps to eliminate discrimination in its policies, practices and procedures by creating an inclusive environment for all students, promoting mental well being and to support students who experience mental health difficulties. These difficulties may be a long term mental illness, an emerging mental health problem or temporary emotional difficulties which are impacting on a student's ability to study.
2. The University of Bolton aims to create an environment where students feel at ease to disclose past or current mental health difficulties. The University respects people's rights to privacy and will treat all information concerning an individual's mental health with appropriate confidentiality, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Disability Service's Confidentiality Policy.
3. Widening participation, increasing student numbers and in particular, changes to disability legislation have all led to a greater awareness notable increase in the numbers of students with mental health and emotional difficulties entering higher education.
4. The purpose of this policy is to set out a framework for working with students experiencing mental health difficulties.

## Context and Legal Framework

5. In 2011 the Royal College of Psychiatrists published a critical report on the mental health of students in higher education.<sup>1</sup> This report made clear that students were a disadvantaged population when it came to access to mental health services in the community.
6. The Disability Discrimination Act(s) (DDA) 1995 and 2005, and the Special Educational Needs Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 as amended by the Equality Act 2010 places a duty to make "reasonable adjustments" for the individual with a "mental impairment" and to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the student is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to other students.
7. The DDA 2005 placed a duty on the University to publish a Disability Equality Scheme (DES). Among its actions, the DES proposed to make staff disability awareness training mandatory, as well as improve facilities and services for disabled students and staff. This duty has

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<sup>1</sup> Royal College of Psychiatrists (2011). *The Mental Health of Students in Higher Education*. (Council Report CR166). London: Royal College of Psychiatrists

been amended by the Equality Act 2010 and the University will incorporate these actions into the University's Single Equality Scheme equality objectives.

8. This policy has been reviewed in response to and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

### **Terminology**

9. Under the Equality Act, a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a "substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". "Substantial" means more than minor or trivial. "Impairment" covers long term medical conditions and fluctuating or progressive conditions. A mental impairment includes mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder or depression. Other examples of mental impairment are included in Appendix 2.

### **Roles and responsibilities of staff**

10. Staff should be ready to offer support to students within the professional limitation of their role but are not expected to assume responsibility outside the parameters of their professional role for resolving a student's mental health difficulties. They will be well informed about appropriate University services for students experiencing mental health difficulties.
11. Staff must be sensitive to the use of the language of mental health. Negative stereotypical language promotes a climate in which people with mental health difficulties are stigmatised.

### **Roles and responsibility of students**

12. Students need to take responsibility for communicating their needs and accessing services support within the University to enable the University to offer support.
13. Students are encouraged to take care of their own mental health, for example ensuring that they get adequate rest, take prescribed medication and access appropriate support.
14. Students should be aware that any behaviour which impacts negatively on fellow students or staff, or is in any way disruptive or offensive, is not acceptable within the University community and may be subject to University Student Disciplinary Procedure.
15. Students concerned about a fellow student's mental well-being should be aware of their personal limitations and should encourage their fellow student to seek specialist support at the earliest opportunity. If this is difficult they themselves should seek advice in confidence from a Student Advisor or Student Liaison Officer. They can also contact the University's Counsellor (see Appendix 1).

### **Policy Statement**

16. The aims of this policy are to provide:

- A clear, transparent and practical policy framework relating to mental health issues for students, potential students and staff supporting these students at the University of Bolton
- A basis for a consistent approach throughout the University to the way we respond to the needs of students experiencing mental health difficulties.

17. This policy applies to all current and prospective students.

### **Admissions and Entry**

18. The University welcomes enquiries and applications from prospective students who have a history of mental health difficulties. All applicants will be assessed on their academic merits, with no discrimination on the grounds of mental wellbeing.

19. At application, prospective students living with mental health difficulties are encouraged to disclose this information. Admissions staff will inform the Disability Service and a Disability Advisor will contact the student to discuss the student's support requirements and inform them of the support and services available.

20. Students should be given specific advice about the support available to them, including advice about the Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA), if appropriate. Any information disclosed will be kept confidential and only disseminated with the student's written consent in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Disability Service's Confidentiality agreement. With consent, a notification will be sent to the student's School and other relevant staff alerting them to the student's particular support requirements.

21. Mental Health problems should not be a barrier to full participation in student life. All necessary adjustments, where reasonable, will be made to enable students living with mental health difficulties to access all aspects of their course and to ensure that they are not at a disadvantage compared to other students.

### **During the course of study**

22. If a student experiences mental health difficulties during their course of study:

- (i) Where the course is based at the University: advice and support are available from the Disability Service or Counselling Service.
- (ii) Where the course is based off site i.e. not at the University of Bolton premises e.g. partner colleges, they should contact the partner college's appropriate support networks for advice and support.

23. If a student experiences mental health difficulties out of University (or partner college) hours, they should contact their GP.
24. Student Liaison Officers located within Faculties provide pastoral care, practical advice and guidance for all students who experience barriers to study.
25. Students can use the Multi Faith Chaplaincy for a wide range of welfare issues, the majority of which are not related at all to faith or belief.
26. The University has a Counselling Service staffed by a professional counsellor. This service offers free and confidential counselling to all students. Counselling can be short or long-term depending on the needs of the individual. Students are encouraged to self-refer.
27. The Disability Service provides staff with advice and guidelines on supporting students with mental health difficulties. It will liaise with students' Faculties as appropriate to ensure that an individual student has all the support necessary to participate fully in the student experience and fulfil their potential.
28. Other support networks information is provided in Appendix 1.

### **Examination Arrangements**

29. The University will put in place appropriate individual exam arrangements for students who provide medical evidence that they have a mental health difficulty, to ensure that such students are not placed at a disadvantage to fellow students when undertaking examinations. Please refer to the Procedure for Individual Exam Arrangements which is downloadable from <http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/PoliciesProceduresRegulations/Home.aspx>

### **Mitigating Circumstances**

30. If a student is unable to complete a piece of work or feels that their performance in a piece of work or an examination has been adversely affected by a mental health difficulty, where the medical evidence requires such an adjustment to be made, they are entitled to submit an application concerning mitigating circumstances. This will be considered by the student's appropriate examination board. Student Services staff may provide supporting statements for students making a case for mitigating circumstances. Further details on the Mitigating Circumstances Procedure are available from the Student Advisors located in Student Services or on [studentadvisors@bolton.ac.uk](mailto:studentadvisors@bolton.ac.uk) or on x3733.

### **Fitness to Practice**

31. A student's performance could be compromised by mental health difficulties, thus impacting upon fitness to practice. Where a student is studying on a programme of study which leads to a vocational qualification and which is subject to a fitness to practice or termination

of training procedure, any serious mental health concerns should be referred to the appropriate person in the Faculty.

### **Interruption of Studies**

32. The University will respond flexibly to any request to suspend studies on the grounds of mental health and it is usually possible for a student to make a request to suspend his or her course of study to enable a period of rest and recovery. An appropriate period of recovery can be negotiated, after which the University might require medical evidence to confirm that the student is fit and able to cope with the academic demands that will be placed upon them.
33. If a student feels that a suspension of study may help them they should discuss this option with an appropriate member of staff, such as their Personal Tutor, Programme Leader or contact the Disability Service.
34. If a student's performance is being adversely affected by a mental health difficulty, the tutor may encourage the student to consider requesting some time out to recover. A student will not be disadvantaged on the resumption of his/her studies by reason of agreed suspension due to mental health difficulties.
35. It is important that before making the decision to make a request to suspend the student seeks advice about the financial implications of so doing from Student Services.
36. There may be instances in which a student's mental health causes them to behave in a disruptive manner. If University staff who come into contact with this student believe that the student's mental health may have been a contributory factor in the behaviour, or if the student themselves or their peers disclose this information, careful consideration should be given to the way in which the incident or behaviour is treated. The University may consider recourse to the University Student Disciplinary Procedure to be inappropriate in the first instance. If so the following procedure will be adopted:
37. (i) Initially the student should be referred to the Disability Service or the Counselling Service, who working in conjunction within the relevant Faculty and the student, will:
  - identify the issues
  - devise an action plan in conjunction with external agencies if appropriate
  - put additional support in place if required
  - confirm this in writing to the student
  - monitor progress.
38. In the cases where the above procedure does not work and the student's behaviour continues to give cause for concern it may be necessary to recommend that the student suspends their studies. When such circumstances arise the University endeavours to balance the needs and rights of the student concerned against the need to

protect the well being of fellow students and staff. In some circumstances, if a student refuses to accept a recommendation that they suspend their studies or refuses offers of support there may be implications for that student's progress.

39. The procedure that will be adopted is as follows:

(i) Only the Vice Chancellor, or in exceptional circumstances, Vice Chancellor's nominee acting on behalf of the Vice Chancellor can suspend a student's studies at the University. In these circumstances a case conference will be called, chaired by the Head of Student Services (or his or her nominee). This group will make recommendations to the Vice Chancellor.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

40. The University of Bolton is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of plain English, the promotion of the positive duty in relation to the protected characteristics of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.

41. All University policies are subject to periodic review under the equality impact assessment process.

### **Monitoring and Review**

42. This policy will be monitored annually to judge its effectiveness and updated in accordance with changes in the law by the Disability Advisory Group who report to the Equality and Diversity Committee.

### **Related Policies**

[Equal Opportunities Policy](#)

[Staff Development Policy](#)

[Disability Service's Confidentiality Policy](#)

[Disability Statement](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)

[Disability Equality Scheme](#)

[Arrangements for notifying Faculties of Reasonable Adjustments](#)

[Individual Examination Arrangements for Disabled Students](#)

Exam Regulations and Procedures

[Admissions Policy](#)

[Student Complaints Policy](#)

[Student Harassment and Bullying Policy](#)

Fitness to Study Policy

**Dissemination of and Access to the Policy**

43. This policy will be published on the University of Bolton's website to be available to all staff, students, visitors and contractors on [www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/PoliciesProceduresRegulations](http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/PoliciesProceduresRegulations)

44. The University will ensure that all appropriate staff including academic staff, professional services staff and those staff who provide a service to or support students are trained on this policy and any associated guidance.

45. This document can be produced in alternative formats upon request.

46. Further details and guidance for this policy are available on [www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/AdviceAndSupport/ServicesForDisabledStudents](http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/AdviceAndSupport/ServicesForDisabledStudents), by email at [disabilityinfo@bolton.ac.uk](mailto:disabilityinfo@bolton.ac.uk), by telephone on 01204 903478 or SMS on 07799 657 035.

<b>Student Mental Health Policy</b>	
Policy Ref	
Version Number	6
Version Date	<i>October 2011</i>
Name of Developer/Reviewer	Katie Morris – Senior Disability Advisor
Policy Owner (School/Centre/Unit)	Student Services
Person responsible for implementation (postholder)	Head of Student Services
Approving Committee/Board	Executive Board
Date approved	
Effective from	
Dissemination method (e.g. website)	Web pages
Review Frequency	Annually
Reviewing Committee	Equality and Diversity Committee
Consultation History (individuals/groups consulted with dates)	Disability Advisory Group
Document History (e.g. rationale for and dates of previous amendments)	Equality Act 2010

## Sources of support for staff in assisting students with mental health difficulties:

People seek counselling with a range of concerns varying from short term personal, social, family or academic worries to longer term more complex psychological problems. Some may attend only once or twice, others may use counselling for regular meetings over a period of several months.

The Counselling Service offers a confidential, professional service to students. Students can make an appointment to see the University Counsellors by calling into Student Services or by ringing ext. 3733.

The Student Liaison Officers based in each School of Study are available to provide confidential advice and support, offer opportunities to develop student study skills and coordinate a Peer Mentoring scheme.

<b>University of Bolton contacts:</b>	
Disability Team Student Centre Chancellor's Mall Tel: 01204 903478 SMS: 07799 657 035 Email: <a href="mailto:disabilityinfo@bolton.ac.uk">disabilityinfo@bolton.ac.uk</a>	Student Counsellor Student Centre <b>Tel:</b> contact student advisors to book an appointment on 01204 903733 Email: <a href="mailto:studentadvisors@bolton.ac.uk">studentadvisors@bolton.ac.uk</a>
Chaplaincy Chancellor's Mall Tel: 01204 903415 Mob: 07958 692 454 Email: <a href="mailto:chaplain@bolton.ac.uk">chaplain@bolton.ac.uk</a> <a href="http://www.bolton.ac.uk/chaplaincy">www.bolton.ac.uk/chaplaincy</a>	Nurse Advisor Clinic Student Centre Chancellor's Mall Wednesdays - 10 am to 12.30 pm No appointment required
Student Liaison Officers <a href="http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/AdviceAndSupport/StudentLiaisonOfficers">www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/AdviceAndSupport/StudentLiaisonOfficers</a>	Immigration and Welfare Officers Student Centre Chancellors Mall Tel: 01204 903437 or 903496
<b>Organisations external to the University that may provide a source of support:</b>	
<b>Alcohol Abuse</b> Bolton Alcohol and Drug Services 20 Wood Street Bolton BL1 1DY Tel: 01204 382230 or 01204 393660	<b>Alcoholics Anonymous</b> 5 Newton Street Manchester M1 1HL Tel: 0161 236 6569
<b>Beacon Bolton Counselling Services</b> (General Counselling) 124 Newport Street Bolton BL3 6AB Tel: 01204 532605	<b>Bolton Citizen's Advice Bureau</b> 26 – 28 Mawdsley Street Bolton BL1 1LF Email: <a href="mailto:office@boltoncab.co.uk">office@boltoncab.co.uk</a> 24 hour advice line: 0870 126 4038
<b>Bolton Community Drug Team</b>	<b>Bolton Community Transport</b>

24 – 26a Higher Bridge Street Bolton BL1 2HA Tel: 01204 397129	Unit 3 Kay Works Moor Lane Bolton BL1 4TH (Will accept furniture, appliances and supply those in need) Tel: 01204 364777
<b>Bolton Council for Volunteer Service (Bolton CVS)</b> Bridge House Pool Street South Bolton BL1 2BA Tel: 01204 396011	<b>Bolton Primary Care Trust</b> (Information and Health Authority Watchdog) St Peter's House Silverwell Street Bolton BL1 1PP Tel: 01204 377000
<b>Bolton Welfare Rights Service</b> Le Mans Crescent Bolton BL1 1SA Tel: 01204 380460 <a href="mailto:www.welfare.rights@bolton.gov.uk">www.welfare.rights@bolton.gov.uk</a>	<b>Bolton Women's Aid – Fortalice</b> 43 Bradford Street Bolton BL2 1HT Email: <a href="mailto:bwa@fortalice2001.worldonline.co.uk">bwa@fortalice2001.worldonline.co.uk</a> Tel: 01204 523476 (For single women with children, married women who need help, no men allowed)
<b>BPAS Pregnancy Advisory Service</b> Merseyside Clinic 32 Parkfield Road Liverpool L17 8UJ Actionline: 08457 304030 Clinic: 0151 709 0663 <a href="http://www.bpas.org.uk">www.bpas.org.uk</a>	<b>Bury Fellowship</b> Manna House Irwell Street Bury BL9 0HE Tel: 0161 764 8131 (Christian Group providing a drop-in service, practical assistance and counselling)
<b>BYPASS</b> Trinity House Brightmet Street Bolton BL2 1BR Tel: 01204 362002 (Help and advice for up to 21 year olds, regarding accommodation, job shop, etc)	<b>Community Care Options</b> New Horizons Centre Knowsley Street Bolton BL1 2BJ Tel: 01024 373316
<b>Depression Alliance</b> 20 Great Dover Street London SE1 4LX Tel: 0845 12 32 320 Email: <a href="mailto:information@depressionalliance.org">information@depressionalliance.org</a> <a href="http://www.depressionalliance.org">www.depressionalliance.org</a>	<b>Equality &amp; Human Rights Commission</b> Arndale House The Arndale Centre Manchester M4 3AQ Tel: 0845 604 6610 <a href="http://www.equalityhumanrights.com">www.equalityhumanrights.com</a>
<b>Family Support Office Bolton</b>	<b>FSIDS</b>

<p>(Greater Manchester Police) Brightmet House Bury Road Brightmet Bolton BL2 6JA Tel: 0161 856 5787</p>	<p>(Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Cot Death support group) 24 hour helpline:0870 7870554 (Mon-Fri 9am – 11 pm, Sat-Sun 6am – 11 pm) <a href="http://www.sids.org.uk">www.sids.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Gamblers Anonymous Bolton</b> Unitarian Chapel Bank Street Off Deansgate Bolton (Access: at rear in Crown Street next to Pepper Alley Hotel facing multi-storey car park. Meetings: Friday at 7.30 pm) Tel: 08700 508880</p>	<p><b>Guild of Help</b> 27 Silverwell Street Bolton BL1 1PP Tel: 01204 524858 (Financial Help for those in need)</p>
<p><b>Harbour Project</b> 65 Corson Street Bolton BL3 2QA Tel: 01204 62274</p>	<p><b>Housing Options</b> Tel: 01993 776318 Email: <a href="mailto:enquiries@housingoptions.org.uk">enquiries@housingoptions.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Immigration Aid Unit (Manchester)</b> Tel: 0161 740 7720</p>	<p><b>Manchester Rape Crisis</b> Tel: 0161 273 4500 (Rape and sexual abuse counselling service)</p>
<p><b>Mental Health Foundation</b> 9<sup>th</sup> Floor Sea Containers House 20 Upper Ground London SE1 9QB Tel: 020 7803 1100 Email: <a href="mailto:mhf@mhf.org.uk">mhf@mhf.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk">www.mentalhealth.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.connects.org.uk">www.connects.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Mental Health Independent Support Team</b> Deajon House 30 Chorley New Road Bolton BL1 4AP Tel: 01204 527200</p>
<p><b>Mother and Baby Unit</b> (For single mothers) Tel: 01204 332397</p>	<p><b>National Mental Health Development Unit</b> Wellington House 135 - 155 Waterloo Road London SE1 8UG <a href="http://www.nmhdu.org.uk">www.nmhdu.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Pierpoint House</b> 385 Clifton Drive St. Annes-on-Sea Lytham St. Annes Lancashire FY8 2NW Tel: 01253 723144 (Private rehab clinic for drug and alcohol abuse)</p>	<p><b>Rainbow Pregnancy Advice Centre</b> Bolton Pentecostal Church Bury New Road Bolton BL2 2BD Tel: 01204 522002</p>
<p><b>RASAC</b> Women's Helpline: 01962 848024 *Calls answered by women only</p>	<p><b>RASAC</b> Men's Helpline: 01962 848027 *Calls answered by men and women</p>

Mon 11.30 am – 1.30pm Tue & Thu Evenings 7pm – 9.30pm (For rape, incest and sexual abuse counselling)	Mon 11.30 am – 1.30pm Tue & Thu Evenings 7pm – 9.30pm (For rape, incest and sexual abuse counselling)
<b>Rethink</b> Various local locations Tel: 0845 456 0455 Email: <a href="mailto:info@rethink.org">info@rethink.org</a> <a href="http://www.rethink.org">www.rethink.org</a>	<b>SAVS</b> Tel: 01204 364743 (Sexual Abuse Victim Support)
<b>Simeon Centre Counselling Service</b> Victoria Hall Knowsley Street Bolton BL1 2AS Tel: 01204 522569	<b>Tacade</b> Exchange Buildings 6 St. Anns Passage King Street Manchester M2 6AD Tel: 0161 836 6850 (For drug education, help, leaflets, training, etc)
<b>The Salvation Army Hostel</b> Social Service Centre Duke Street Bolton BL1 2LU Tel: 01204 394499	<b>Turning Point Smithfield Project</b> Smithfield Centre Thompson Street Manchester M4 5FY Tel: 0161 839 8829 Email: <a href="mailto:info@turning-point.co.uk">info@turning-point.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.turning-point.co.uk">www.turning-point.co.uk</a> (Helps people with drink, drug and mental health problems)
<b>Victim Support</b> Bridge House Pool Street South Bolton BL1 2BA Tel: 01204 399736 Email: <a href="mailto:victim@victimsupport-bolton.co.uk">victim@victimsupport-bolton.co.uk</a>	<b>Women's Refuge for Asians (Manchester)</b> Tel: 0161 945 4187
<b>Other Useful Links:</b>	
<b>Relief Series &amp; Beating the Blues</b> <a href="http://www.ultrasis.com">www.ultrasis.com</a>	<b>Royal College of Psychiatry</b> <a href="http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk">www.rcpsych.ac.uk</a>
<b>Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health</b> 134 Borough High Street London SE1 1LB Tel: 020 7403 8790 Fax: 020 7403 9482 Email: <a href="mailto:contact@centreformentalhealth.org.uk">contact@centreformentalhealth.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk">www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk</a>	<b>Samaritans</b> Tel: 08457 90 90 90 <a href="http://www.samaritans.org.uk">www.samaritans.org.uk</a>
<b>Sane</b>	<b>Shift – anti-stigma campaign</b>

1 <sup>st</sup> Floor Cityside House 40 Adler Street London E1 1EE Tel: 020 7375 1002 Helpline: 0845 767 8000 <a href="http://www.sane.org.uk">www.sane.org.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.shift.org.uk">www.shift.org.uk</a>
<b>Social Anxiety</b> <a href="http://www.social-anxiety.org.uk">www.social-anxiety.org.uk</a>	<b>Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)</b> <a href="http://www.mentalhealthrecovery.com">www.mentalhealthrecovery.com</a>

### Guidelines on Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide basic guidance on identifying warning signs, symptoms and behaviour, with a view to informing or advising students on possible sources of appropriate support across the University.

It is a guide to help staff to understand some common mental health difficulties. **Staff are not expected to become diagnosticians, as this is a specialist task.** However it is hoped that these notes will assist in making decisions about referring a student for further support.

Knowing that a student carries this or that particular mental illness label is usually unhelpful, and conveys little or nothing about the person's difficulties or experiences. Information about the typical symptoms of illnesses is readily available from a range of sources. This section avoids a condition-by-condition approach, and concentrates instead on behaviours which staff may encounter, and the responses which are likely to be helpful.

It is important to remember no two people experience mental health difficulties in exactly the same way. Mental health difficulties are likely to be temporary and are often treated effectively by counsellors, psychologists and/or medication. They may be caused by the need to cope with sudden change, e.g. bereavement, or the break up of a relationship. They can be the result of chronic stress or can also stem from emotional difficulties which people have experienced in their childhood, adolescence or as adults.

Staff in a pastoral role such as Personal Tutors, counsellors, postgraduate supervisors and accommodation services staff can have an important role in the early detection of these disabling but eminently treatable conditions. People who are experiencing symptoms may not recognise what is happening and only seek help when prompted by friends, flatmates, family or university staff.

A change in behaviour can be associated with some medical conditions. Behaviour which is out of character for an individual may be associated with being run down, very tired and overexcited or under stress. Alternatively it may result from the use of drugs (legal and illegal), medication etc. Mental illness is different. Mental illness can have a deeply incapacitating effect, and may require hospital admission. Its diagnosis is unlikely to depend on isolated symptoms and are usually associated with the observation of a persistent cluster of symptoms over a period of time. By contrast with mental health difficulties, which affect approximately one in four of the general population, mental illness is experienced by approximately one in fifty.

Feeling worried is a healthy response in many situations, and an important aspect of successful achievement. We all develop ways of coping with our anxieties when we feel under pressure. However, between 7 – 10% of the population is likely to be worried about many aspects of living and when anxiety becomes too great and significantly impairs the ability to function, we need to encourage students to seek help. Sessions with a counsellor or psychologist can be helpful ways of exploring the causes of stress and implementing ways forward.

In rare cases of severe anxiety and panic attacks, or severe mental illness, a GP referral, medication and the use of psychological or cognitive therapies may be beneficial.

Depression is one of the most common forms of mental health distress. We all go through difficult times in our lives, but for people who are depressed life can be a real struggle. They may feel bad about their lives and themselves in many ways. At times they may feel despairing. Counselling can provide a powerful way of safely exploring how the depression began and of assisting the student to mobilise those centres of resilience that still remain, GP referral is recommended and the careful use of anti-depressant medication can prove helpful.

If you are aware of a student experiencing some of the symptoms listed below it may be appropriate to make them aware of resources which are available to them. For students who experience a cluster of symptoms over a period of time, it is important that they are encouraged to seek professional help.

### **Recognising warning signs, symptoms and behaviours**

It should be reiterated that there is no expectation that University staff will become diagnosticians, and the following list of symptoms is in no way intended to be a diagnostic tool. It is, rather, guidance to staff in advising or informing a student about possible sources of help.

Examples of a range of symptoms:

#### **Behaviour**

- Change in study patterns e.g. doing considerably more or less work than usual
- Change in attendance patterns at university
- Falling grades
- Agitation
- Over-intense interaction/withdrawal
- Uninhibited/disruptive/disturbing behaviour
- Disrupted eating pattern
- Disrupted sleeping pattern
- Reduced concentration
- Changes in motivation
- Self harm
- Suicidal thoughts and activity
- Avoidance of everyday activity

#### **Appearance**

- Lack of attention to appearance and poor personal hygiene
- Marked weight loss or increase
- Particularly drawn/tired looking
- Noticeable smell of alcohol, cannabis
- Bizarre, unusual and out of character dress

#### **Mood**

- Loss of interest in most things/exaggerated interest
- Significant mood swings
- Excitable/restless/fidgety
- Extremely angry
- Extremely sad
- Feeling flat
- Isolated and withdrawn
- Feeling of disorientation
- Altered states of perception
- Persecutory ideas
- Feelings of acute loneliness

### **Other indicators**

- Something what the student is saying or doing makes you feel very concerned or uneasy
- History of mental health difficulties
- Recent disruptive/traumatic events
- Significant loss in their lives (past/present)
- Debt/financial worries
- Lack of other supports/isolated
- Significant academic pressure
- Difficulties in the home environment (family/flatmates)

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