

LEARNER MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY STATEMENT

Rotunda is committed to providing a learning environment which actively promotes the positive mental health and wellbeing for all our learners, this policy supports learners who may experience emotional or psychological difficulties that may affect their ability to participate fully in higher education.

For many of our learners they may be experience various barrier's which we need to help them deal with prior to them even starting one of our courses, such as debt management, benefits advice, family issues, nursery placements or even counselling. Once these issues have been addressed to the learners benefit they can then commence their course, knowing that they have continual support from the staff enabling them to succeed in their ambitions.

The reality of combining academic study with family commitments, can cause also give rise to anxiety and stress. Our staff work with each learner to ensure that the courses are manageable and that learning takes place at a pace set by them. For many learners this might be the first course they have signed on to since leaving school and we want to make sure that the experience they have with Rotunda is a positive and successful experience.

In order to achieve meeting the learner needs and goals Rotunda:

- encouraging learners with mental health difficulties to seek help
- supporting a culture in which mental health problems are accepted, not stigmatised
- meet the support and study needs of learners with mental health disabilities making reasonable adjustments to policies and procedures which might otherwise unlawfully discriminate against learners with mental health difficulties
- ensuring that the availability of support is accurately and widely publicised to both prospective and current learners
- providing guidance and awareness training to our staff team involved in the support and care of learners; and
- respect the confidentiality of personal information provided by learners with mental health difficulties

Respecting confidentiality

A learner with mental health difficulties is extremely unlikely to seek help unless he or she knows the information they provide will be treated as confidential and that it will not harm the chance of them completing their course. All of our staff are required to observe confidentiality in accordance with strict ethical codes.

Whilst emphasising the responsibility to respect privacy, we also acknowledge that there are times when on those extremely rare circumstances, it would be appropriate to share information with third parties who have a clear need to know that there are specific concerns about a learner e.g. where there is a significant danger of a learner harming themselves or others.

Helping learners in crisis

The best way to manage a crisis is to avoid it developing. This means recognising the early manifestations of mental illness and encouraging the learner to seek help. However, even the most experienced professionals can be caught unawares, and it would be both wrong and impractical to treat every example of unusual behaviour as if it might be a manifestation of mental illness.

Either the learner will be known to have a mental illness or there will be a history of gradually changing behaviour that has caused concern. The most common manifestations are increased self-neglect, deteriorating coursework, disruptive behaviour and isolation. Occasionally, however, abnormal behaviour can develop suddenly. An example this is when a learner suffers a severe panic attack just before, or during, an examination. This can be extremely frightening for those who observe it as well as for the learner, who will behave completely irrationally and be obviously terrified. When it is sufficiently severe the only way to manage the immediate situation is to allow the learner to leave and to arrange for them to receive specialist help in order to prevent a recurrence. We can refer the learner in to our Counselling service.

We try to ensure that our staff are able to recognise the warning signs of a mental health problem and to know when it is sufficiently serious to require a referral to a professional. It is important that those involved in learner welfare do not try to deal with problems that require expert assessment and management, although they may still have an important role to play in supporting the learner in their studies or other issues impacting their mental health. Early recognition and intervention will help to prevent problems escalating.

Training in skills relevant to mental health is on offer throughout the year to our staff team. This policy statement should be read in conjunction with other organisational Health, Work and Wellbeing policies.

Rotunda Policy Review Record

Reviewed by:	Approval date:	Review frequency:	Review date:	Signed:
Maxine Ennis	11 th May 2024	Annual	12 th May 2025	