Mental Health Policy

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- **INTRODUCTION**

We understand the positive impact that healthy and engaged employees make to the success of our business and that mental health will play a significant role in an employee's state of mind.

We appreciate that individuals can experience periods - sometimes prolonged periods - of poor mental health in the same way as with physical health. We commit to providing support for employees going through mental health problems because we recognise such employees can provide a substantial contribution to the success of this company.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'mental health problem' includes mental health conditions that have been diagnosed by a medical professional as well as signs of stress and anxiety.

- **LEGAL OBLIGATIONS**

We understand that, as a company, we must comply with health and safety legislation. We undertake to create a safe workplace in which we will actively take measures to limit risks to mental health and wellbeing.

We also acknowledge our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in respect of making reasonable adjustments for employees suffering from a disability.

Manager Responsibilities

Where necessary, managers will invite the employee to regular private meetings and ask them to talk openly about their mental health problems. The manager will not make presumptions about how the mental health problem is impacting on the employee personally and professionally. Initial action will include checking how the employee is getting on at work, in the same manner as if the employee was suffering from a known physical health problem.

In a more general sense, managers will strive to create an environment in which employees feel capable of approaching their manager to discuss their mental health.

Employee Responsibilities

Any support required by the employee is likely to be known by the employee themselves. We actively encourage employees to be open and honest about their mental health and to inform their manager of any issues at an early opportunity to allow these to be addressed. There is also an expectation on all employees to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues who have mental health problems.

Behaviour which is deemed by us as being harassing or bullying in nature which is either a contributory factor to an employee's poor mental health, or is in reaction to the employee's current situation, is unacceptable and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

- **WELLBEING PLAN**

- Employee action plan

If a manager identifies a mental health issue, they will work alongside the employee to create a personal action plan that provides for proactive management of their mental health. This will support ongoing open communication between the manager and the employee and will result in mutually agreed steps being set in place that can be monitored on an ongoing basis.

The manager will ask the employee to draft the plan to ensure it meets their requirements, with medical support as necessary, and then it will be set in place with their manager. Any information in the plan, and the plan itself, will be kept confidential and reviewed on an ongoing basis by both the employee and their manager.

Workplace adjustments

We will endeavour to consider all reasonable workplace adjustments for any employee who is experiencing a mental health problem to ensure their situation does not create a barrier to actively contributing to the workplace. Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

Managing absence and return to work

Where the employee is absent by reason of their mental health concerns, their manager will communicate with the employee at regular intervals during their absence as agreed with the employee. Our sickness absence policy will apply to the employee's absence as normal, subject to any reasonable adjustments in place for the employee.

Upon the employee's return from absence, a return-to-work meeting will take place and any return-to-work plan agreed between the manager and the employee to ensure necessary steps can be taken to support the employee to remain in work.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Information concerning an employee's mental health is defined as special category data. This information will be processed in line with current data protection legislation and only disclosed to others where necessary. You may read more about the data we hold on you, why we hold it and the lawful basis that applies in the employee privacy notice.

E)EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

We would like to remind employees that, if you have any worries or concerns about any aspect of your situation, you have access to a confidential 24-hour telephone counselling service on 0800 047 4097.

As part of our Employee Assistance Programme, you also have access to an online wellbeing tool, Wisdom AI, which you can use to find fast answers to any wellbeing questions you have. You can access Wisdom AI at any time via the Health Assured portal. The link in the menu bar will take you directly to the Wisdom AI homepage, where you can ask your question. More details of this service are available from a director.

F) LEARNER MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING (ALTERNATIVE PROVISION)

The preceding sections of this policy apply to SCSE employees. The provisions in this section apply specifically to learners placed with SCSE as part of our Alternative Provision (AP) work. SCSE recognises that learners placed in AP frequently arrive with histories of adversity, exclusion, or unmet mental health need, and that this responsibility is shared with the commissioning school or local authority.

1. Our commitment to learners

SCSE is committed to creating a trauma-informed, psychologically safe environment in which every learner is treated with dignity, listened to, and offered consistent relationships with trusted adults. We acknowledge that learners cannot engage in learning when their basic mental health and emotional needs are unmet, and we adjust our practice accordingly.

2. Recognising mental health concerns in young people

Mental health concerns can present in many ways and indicators may include (but are not limited to):

- Changes in mood, behaviour, presentation or engagement
- Self-harm, expressions of suicidal thought, or talk of being a burden
- Marked changes in eating, sleeping or self-care patterns

- Withdrawal from peers, mentor or trusted adults
- Increased irritability, agitation, hyper-vigilance or dissociative responses
- Substance use as a coping strategy
- New or escalating absence patterns

All staff receive training on recognising these indicators and on responding in a calm, non-judgemental way. Concerns are raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Elizabeth Amos-Milburn) the same day they arise.

3. Working with the commissioning school on a learner's mental health

Where a learner is placed with SCSE by a commissioning school, mental health support is planned and reviewed jointly. The placement agreement records:

- What the commissioning school already knows about the learner's mental health needs;
- What support is in place from CAMHS, school counselling, or other services and how that continues during the AP placement;
- The named contact at the commissioning school for mental health concerns;
- The arrangements for sharing information about any new concern that emerges during the placement.

Where SCSE staff identify a mental health concern that has not previously been recorded, the DSL contacts the commissioning school's DSL the same day so that a joint plan can be agreed.

4. Referral to CAMHS and other services

Where a learner's needs exceed the support SCSE can provide directly, a referral or signposting may be appropriate. Referrals are made in coordination with the commissioning school and with the consent of the parent or carer (and the learner where they have capacity to consent). Routes include:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) – via GP or, in crisis, via the Cumbria CAMHS Crisis Team on 0800 652 2865 (available 24/7).
- The learner's GP – for assessment, medication review, or onward referral.
- School counselling, where commissioned by the placing school.
- Community-based young people's mental health services and charities such as Young Minds (text "YM" to 85258), Papyrus HOPELINE247 (0800 068 4141), and The Mix (0808 808 4994).
- Local authority Early Help services for wider family support.

5. Suicide and self-harm response

SCSE takes any expression of suicidal thought or any act or evidence of self-harm seriously, regardless of how the learner frames it. The following procedure applies.

- **In immediate danger to life.** Call 999. Stay with the learner. Do not leave the learner alone. Notify the DSL and the commissioning school as soon as safely possible. Inform the parent or carer as soon as the immediate situation is secured (and where doing so does not increase risk to the learner).
- **Ongoing risk, not immediately life-threatening.** Notify the DSL the same day. The DSL coordinates with the parent or carer, the commissioning school, the GP and CAMHS as appropriate. A written safety plan is agreed with the learner where they can engage with one, identifying their trusted adults, warning signs, coping strategies, and crisis contacts. Means restriction is considered (removing or making less accessible the means the learner has expressed an intention to use).
- **Self-harm without expressed suicidal intent.** Staff respond calmly and without judgement. Wounds are attended to by the first aider if needed. The DSL is notified and coordinates support including, where appropriate, referral to a specialist self-harm service.
- **Confidentiality limits.** Staff never promise confidentiality where a learner is at risk of significant harm. The learner is told, in age-appropriate language, who will be informed and why.
- **Staff support.** Staff involved in responding to a suicidal crisis or serious self-harm are offered a debrief and access to wellbeing support. No member of staff should manage such a situation in isolation.

6. Eating disorders

Staff who recognise indicators of disordered eating share the concern with the DSL. SCSE will not weigh learners, measure them, or comment on food intake or weight outside the framework of a clinically-led plan.

Support is coordinated with the GP, CAMHS and the parent or carer; the language used with the learner is informed by Beat's clinical guidance.

7. Bereavement and significant loss

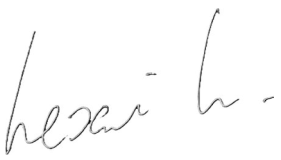
Where a learner is bereaved or experiences another significant loss, SCSE works with the commissioning school and family to provide stable, predictable support. Specialist bereavement support is signposted as appropriate (Winston's Wish: 08088 020 021; Child Bereavement UK: 0800 02 888 40).

8. Confidentiality and information sharing

Information about a learner's mental health is sensitive personal data and is handled in line with the Secure Data Handling and Data Protection Policy. It is shared only with those who need to know to keep the learner safe or to provide support, and always in coordination with the commissioning school's DSL.

Approval & Review

This policy has been approved on behalf of the Directors:

Elizabeth Amos-Milburn *Co-Director*	**Alexandra Gager-Liebhart** *Co-Director*
	

Date of approval: 18th May 2026

Next review: 18th May 2027

Schedule 1 — Record of Changes

Version	Date	Nature of Change
001	18th May 2026	Initial published version included in the Combined Policies and Procedures 2026 edition.