

Children's Support Service Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Policy

Updated –

Ratified by the Management Committee –

Review date –

Policy Statement

“Good mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”

(World Health Organisation)

Introduction:

At CSS we all aim to promote positive well-being for every member of staff and student. We pursue this aim using both whole school and targeted approaches. In addition to promoting positive emotional well-being, we aim to recognise and respond when an individual may need additional support. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health procedures and interventions we promote a safe, healthy, caring and positive environment for all.

Scope:

This document outlines CSS's approach to promoting positive emotional well-being. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive emotional wellbeing in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health conditions.
- Alert staff to early warning signs of poor mental health and well-being
- Provide support to staff working with young people who display challenging behaviour
- Provide support to students who are experiencing poor mental health or well-being challenges.

Lead Members of Staff:

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote positive wellbeing, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Jo Barak- Designated Child Protection Lead
- Alison Paveling, Steve Phillips, Rochelle Bone and Kev Bainbridge - Emotional Wellbeing Leads
- Anne Alani – School Counsellor.
- Claire Howell- Head of PSHE
- Staff Wellbeing Champion's in each team and Centre.

Any member of staff who is concerned about the emotional wellbeing of a student or member of staff should speak to their 'Emotional Wellbeing' Lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that a student is in danger of immediate harm then CSS's child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Child Protection Lead or the Head of Centre.

Student Guidance:

Teaching our students about Mental Health and Wellbeing

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

CSS also provides targeted teaching to students identified or signposted as having poor mental health or who are experiencing factors which could lead to negative mental health or wellbeing. This teaching is carried out by engagement mentors, SEN practitioners or trained teaching assistants through specific interventions either in group or one to one sessions.

In addition CSS actively promotes through displays, assemblies, activity days and its website the **5 Ways to Wellbeing** promoted by the Department for Education:

- Connect with others
- Be physically active
- Take notice
- Keep Learning
- Give

Warning Signs of poor Mental Health

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with their Wellbeing Leads.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating/sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Managing Mental Health disclosures

A student may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure. If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. Staff should listen, rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures should be recorded within the CSS My Concerns safeguarding procedure and reported to the appropriate Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Confidentiality

Staff should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality and this should never be promised as it could lead to a safeguarding concern. If staff feel it is necessary for them to pass their concerns about a student on then they should discuss with the student:

- Who they are going to talk to
- What they are going to tell them
- Why they need to tell them
- That their Parents/Carers may be informed.

Informing Parents/Carers

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the student and other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect. We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing.

Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g. parent helplines and forums. We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting within the CSS My Concern safeguarding database.

Supporting Peers

When a student is experiencing mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, staff at CSS will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support; which could be provided by one to one or group settings.

Approaches to consider:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need help (e.g., signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling.

Working with All Parents/Carers:

Parents are usually very welcoming of support and information from CSS about supporting their children's emotional and mental health.

In order to support parents CSS will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website
- Ensure that all parents/carers are aware of who to talk to, and how to get information about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make the mental health and wellbeing policy easily accessible to parents/ carers
- Share ideas about how parents/carers can support positive mental health in their children through our regular contact with CSS staff

- Keep parents/carers informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

Staff Training in relation Student Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

As a minimum, all staff at CSS will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them to keep students safe as well as how to promote positive wellbeing and mental health.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more of our students.

Staff Guidance:

As well as recognising and supporting the warning signs of each other's mental health, and emotional wellbeing, we should also be aware of our own capacity to recognise this within ourselves.

At CSS we promote an open and supportive approach to helping individuals manage their own wellbeing. Management within the service recognise the stresses and pressures of working within this type of environment, and have developed a number of strategies to address these;

- Staff Supervision.
- Out sourced Supervision.
- Employee Assistants programme.
- Counselling.
- CPD addressing a number of Mental Health and Wellbeing topics.
- In house fitness programmes.
- A Staff Wellbeing Portal.
- Staff trained in Coaching.
- Staff Wellbeing Champions in each team and Centre

Staff Wellbeing Champions:

Each Centre or team has one or more representatives that are 'Staff Well Being Champions.' These are identified on the Staff Wellbeing portal on our website.

The Staff Wellbeing Champions main focus is to arrange and oversee both optional and whole service activities, routines and procedures for staff which promote the 5 Ways to Wellbeing:

- Connect with others
- Be physically active
- Take notice
- Keep Learning
- Give

The Staff Wellbeing Champions also facilitate discussion and cascade information between SLT and staff respectively via staff meetings, forums and in house CPD sessions.

The Staff Wellbeing Champions' meet regularly to share staff ideas and facilitate new initiatives across the service.

Staff Supervision:

Staff supervision is available throughout the Service to discuss any significant issues they are experiencing with students, and to enable reflection on their own emotional wellbeing.



CSS

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