

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

At our vocational centre, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our learners and staff. Our culture is supportive, caring, and respectful. We encourage learners to be open, and we want each learner to have their voice heard. At our centre, we know that everyone experiences different life challenges, and that each of us may need help to cope with them sometimes. We understand that anyone and everyone may need additional emotional support. At our centre, positive mental health is everybody's responsibility. We all have a role to play.

## **POLICY SCOPE**

This policy is a guide to all staff, including tutors, assessors, and non-teaching staff. It outlines our approach to promoting learner's mental health and wellbeing. It should be read and understood alongside our other relevant centre policies.

## **POLICY AIMS**

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our staff and learners.

### **At our centre, we will always:**

- Help young people to try and understand their emotions and experiences better.
- Ensure our learners feel comfortable sharing any concerns and worries.
- Encourage young people to form and maintain positive and safe relationships.
- Encourage young people to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem.
- Encourage young people to develop resilience and ways of coping with setbacks

### **We will always promote a healthy environment by:**

- Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all learners, staff, and volunteers.
- Celebrating both academic and non-academic achievements.
- Promoting our centre values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect.
- Promoting our learners' voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making.
- Celebrating each learner for who they are and making every learner feel valued and respected.
- Adopting a whole centre approach to mental health and providing support to any learner that needs it.
- Raising awareness amongst staff and learners about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms.
- Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental-ill health in learners.
- Supporting staff who are struggling with their mental health.

## **KEY STAFF MEMBERS**

All staff members have a responsibility to promote the mental health of learners and each other. However, certain staff members have a specific role in the process.

These are:

- Our Designated Safeguarding Officers: Toni Rowlands – Kimberly Rowlands
- Pastoral Staff: Toni Rowlands – Maxine Hesketh – Sarah Harrington Ball

## TEACHING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Our curriculum is developed to give students the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need to keep themselves mentally healthy. This includes resilience techniques and training. We will regularly review our curriculum and lesson content to ensure that they are meeting the aims outlined in this policy. We will also implement this into our curriculum at all stages to provide learners with strategies to help keep them mentally well.

## SUPPORT AT BDS TRAINING CENTRE AND IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We have a range of support available in the centre for any learners struggling, as listed below:

- **Open Door Policy** – Learners are encouraged to speak to Toni at any time, when they are feeling vulnerable, either mentally or physically. The door to her office is always open for learners to get rid of pent-up energy or strong emotion.
- **Access to 'time out'** - at times of vulnerability, frustration, or stress. This can be given at any time a learner requires. A space has been provided for these situations where reflection is needed, or time in the canteen to have a hot or cold drink can be accessed.
- **Relaxation room** – can be accessed if a learner needs time as they are upset, suffering from sleep deprivation, feeling poorly or just need 'time out'.
- **Meditation Sessions** as a group
- **Stress Management** sessions as an individual or group

Support in the Community, this includes places such as:

- **CAMHS** – Child and Young person's Mental Health services. CAMHS offer assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and support for young people experiencing problems with their emotions, behaviour, or mental health. **Call 01926 680153.**
- **Birchwood Centre** – offer a range of services for adults and young people, to prevent homelessness, reduce social-isolation and improve health and well-being. **Call 01695 728391.**
- **Lancashire Mind** – supporting young people to understand their mental health and build resilience. **Call 01257 231660.**
- **Childline** – Help for Young People – **Call 0800 1111**
- **Own GP**
- **SIGNPOSTING**

We will ensure that all staff, learners, and parents are aware of the support that we provide in our centre for mental health if their child requires support. This includes how to access further support, both inside and outside of centre hours.

## IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND WARNING SIGNS

All our staff are trained in how to recognise warning signs of common mental health problems. This means that they will be able to offer help and support to learners who need it, when they need it. These warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these signs will communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer as appropriate. Staff will be able to identify a range of behaviour and physical changes, including:

- Physical signs of harm.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Increased isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in mood.
- Talking and/or joking about self-harm and/or suicide.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope
- Secretive behaviour.
- Clothing unsuitable for the time of year, e.g., a large winter coat in summer.
- Negative behaviour patterns, e.g., disruption.

Staff will also be able to identify a range of issues, including:

- Attendance and absenteeism.
- Punctuality and lateness.
- Changes in educational attainment and attitude towards education.
- Family and relationship problems

Finally, staff will be well placed to identify any additional needs arising from difficulties that may impact a child's mental health and wellbeing, such as bereavement and health difficulties.

## **MANAGING DISCLOSURES**

If a learner discloses concerns about themselves or a friend, to any member of staff, then all staff will respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgemental manner. All disclosures will be recorded confidentially and only shared with the appropriate authorities if it is necessary to keep the child safe, in line with our Safeguarding Policy. The disclosure record will contain:

- The date of the disclosure.

- The name of the staff member to whom the disclosure was made.
- The nature of the disclosure and the main points from the conversation.
- Agreed next steps.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

If a member of staff thinks it is necessary to pass on concerns about a learner, either to somebody inside the centre or somebody outside it, then this will first be discussed with the learner. They will be told:

- Who the staff member is going to tell.
- What the staff member is going to disclose.
- Why it is necessary for somebody else to be told.
- When the contact will be. However, it may not be possible to gain the learners consent first, such as in the case of learners who are at immediate risk. Protecting a learner's safety is our main priority so we would share disclosures if we judged a young person to be at risk.

## **WHOLE CENTRE APPROACH**

We take a whole centre approach towards the mental health of our learners. This means working with parents, carers and with other agencies and partners, where necessary.

## **WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS**

We aim to support parents as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and always offering our support.

### **To support parents, we will:**

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our centre.
- Share and allow parents to access further support.
- Ensure that parents are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child.
- Give parents guidance about how they can support their child's/children's positive mental health. • Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health training our centre staff receive and how mental health is covered in our centre.

## **WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND PARTNERS**

As part of our whole centre approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our learner's emotional health and wellbeing. This might include liaising with:

- The school nurses.
- CAMHS.
- Counselling services.
- Therapists.

- Family support workers.
- Behavioural support workers.

## **SUPPORTING PEERS**

We understand that, when a learner is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers. In response to this, we will consider, on a case-by-case basis, any peers that may need additional support. We will provide support in a one-on-one or group setting. These sessions will be guided by the learner, but they will discuss how peers can help, how peers can access support themselves, and healthy ways of coping with any emotions they might be feeling.

## **TRAINING**

All staff will receive regular training in child mental health so that they can recognise and respond to mental health issues. This will form part of their regular safeguarding training and is a requirement to keep children safe. Training records will be held in staff files. We will consider additional training opportunities for staff, and we will support additional CPD throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with learners.

## **POLICY REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every year. This is so that it remains up to date, useful, and relevant. We will also regularly review it in accordance with local and national policy changes.

**Reviewed by** Toni Rowlands

*Centre Manager/safeguarding Officer*

**Signature:** T Rowlands

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> July 2025