

## South Lanarkshire College

### Student Mental Health Agreement 2018-2019

#### 1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Student Mental Health Agreement is to provide an opportunity for South Lanarkshire College and the SLC Student Association to work together on creating a formal agreement on how best to support the needs of current students experiencing mental health issues; as well as providing a holistic support network to all staff and students who work and study at the College.

#### 2 COMMITMENT

Attending College can be a hugely exciting time for students, but it may also bring its own challenges and worries. As such we are pleased to offer a wide variety of wellbeing support to our diverse student population: from those who are continuing education from high school to mature students returning to education.

This Agreement acknowledges that students may be subject to pressures that might lead to or exacerbate mental health issues. The main stressors identified by students include:

- Assessments and examinations
- Managing time and deadlines
- Applying for and awaiting release of student funding
- Leaving family and friends and moving to a new location, country or culture
- Self-image
- Working whilst studying
- Future career and job prospects

We also recognise that life events outside of college, such as bereavement or relationship difficulties, can impact on an individual's mental health.

One of the aims of this Agreement is to ensure that students can study their chosen course in a safe environment that is free from discrimination or stigma of any kind, including that of mental health. Both the College and Student Association recognise the importance of providing appropriate mental health support in a non-judgemental and discreet setting. As part of the commitment to providing support, both the SA President and Vice-President have received training in Mental Health First Aid, alongside key Student Services and cross-college Faculty staff.

We acknowledge that it can be daunting or upsetting for an individual to disclose or recognise that they are possibly experiencing mental health concerns and therefore the College strives to remove the stigma of discussing poor mental health to encourage students to feel comfortable and confident to discuss their worries or concerns with staff. To this end, support is available from Guidance Tutors, Student Services staff and the Community Pastoral Support & Counselling Team. Designated ASIST trained staff lists are also located throughout the college at key locations, such as the Advice Centre, both Reception areas and alongside First Aid lists. There is also a mental health information point located within the Library to provide students with further information on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing topics.

### 3 BENEFITS

The anticipated benefits of having a Student Mental Health Agreement include:

- Forming a fundamental part of the remit of the College Mental Health Working Group, which features representation from the College and Student Association.
- Identification of issues affecting College staff and students
- Identification of joint priorities, goals and agreed actions
- Stronger links between the College and the Student Association to address challenging issues
- Review of policies and strategies, with a view to identifying areas for development
- Dissemination of information and advice to College staff and students
- Formal and accredited training and development opportunities

### 4 OUTCOMES

This Student Mental Health Agreement will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure that we continually assess and improve upon the mental health support services available within South Lanarkshire College. As part of this review process, College staff and the Student Association will work closely together to ensure that student views are continuously heard and incorporated into this Agreement.

## 5 WORKING AREAS

### 1. Tackling Stigma in relation to Mental Health

Both South Lanarkshire College and the Student Association recognise that there can still be a stigma when talking about and disclosing mental health concerns. We aim to promote an open and non-judgemental approach to talking about mental health by hosting a variety of events on campus. Part of tackling stigma in relation to mental health is also to ensure student's health and wellbeing is catered for and discussed across the College environment.

#### Actions to be taken

- Events will be held throughout the academic session in collaboration between the College and Student Association highlighting awareness of mental health. These events will include Freshers, Refreshers, Mental Health Awareness Week, Healthy Body Healthy Mind, Equality & Choices and many more. The Student Association will attend these events, alongside various external organisations. Promotion of these events will take place via both the College and Student Association social media platforms and internal channels.
- Work towards sector wide awards such as Healthy Body Healthy Mind and the LGBT Bronze Charter Mark. This work will be undertaken collaboratively between Student Services and the Student Association.
- SuicideTALK Training to be provided to students discussing the topic of suicide. All three Faculties to be offered training to class groups.
- Continue to roll out Mental Health training for both College staff and the Student Association, such as ASIST, Mental Health First Aid, SafeTALK and Staff Development Day sessions. This will ensure that students are supported by well trained staff members when they require it most.
- Introduce Student Support sessions to provide a space for students to meet and discuss any concerns they may have. One of the outcomes of this will hopefully involve creating an environment for peer support.
- Maintain focus on student mental health and wellbeing by continuing to investigate new ways of involving students in addressing mental health. For example, Smile Mile helps to promote both good physical and mental health while providing an opportunity for students to chat with the Student Association and members of staff.

## **2. Promotion of Student Services & Student Association Initiatives**

Each year both the College and Student Association review the support services available to students and look for ways to continue promotion of these services to the latest cohort of students. This is an important and ongoing action to help ensure students are aware of the wealth of support services available to them including one-to-one counselling sessions, free weekly Mindfulness classes which students can attend both at lunchtime and in the evening, Community Pastoral Support and drop-in support in the Advice Centre.

### **Actions to be taken**

- New Student Support guide introduced in 18/19 academic session highlighting support services available throughout the College. This booklet is available from Student Services, the Student Association, the Advice Centre and via Faculty staff.
- New posters to be created during the 2018/19 session highlighting some of the support available to students. Posters are to be updated for the Mindfulness sessions and the Community Pastoral Support Team. A new poster highlighting access to free sanitary products and holiday packs is also to be created. Promotion of these services will be shared on social media pages, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, in addition to inclusion on the South Lanarkshire College website. Posters will be disseminated to all staff for distribution to students and they will be advertised via the main video wall in the Ground Floor Atrium of the College, in addition to the smaller video screens located throughout the building.
- The Student Association will host a table at a variety of events throughout the Academic session. The aim of this is twofold in that it will raise the profile of the Student Association, in addition to providing a platform to discuss and highlight the services they can provide, especially in relation to mental health. Examples of the events they will attend include Freshers', Refreshers', Equality & Choices week and Mental Health Awareness week. This will be in addition to their own scheduled events that they will hold such as No Smoking Day and the Healthy Body Healthy Mind initiative. The Student Association will also coordinate the introduction of smoking cessation classes in partnership with the NHS as part of the focus on health and wellbeing.
- Continue to use the Student Association Newsletter as an invaluable source for disseminating information to students about upcoming events and updates that relate to Mental Health.
- Implement and review a new Refresher's event to welcome January start students to the College, as well as helping to re-focus and support continuing students in their studies.

- Continued promotion on accessibility for accessing the free student counselling service via the Student Services Department, including both self-referral and referral by a member of the Student Association or lecturing staff. Highlighting the ease of access for attending both the Mindfulness classes at various times and the Community Pastoral Support, both of which are available on a weekly, drop-in basis with no pre-booking required. Information on these services will be promoted via a variety of channels, in addition to the open-door policy in operation in both the Student Association and Student Services Department.
- A new Student Support designated email address will be created and promoted through different channels to allow students to email Student Services directly with any concerns or queries they may have in relation to the support available within the College. This service will open another channel for students to self-refer, in addition to the open-door policy currently in operation. The new email address will be [Student.Support@slc.ac.uk](mailto:Student.Support@slc.ac.uk).

### **3. Identify and Support Vulnerable Groups**

The student body in South Lanarkshire College is comprised of individuals from a variety of different backgrounds and it is our aim to ensure that all students are well supported throughout their time at college. As part of this process we recognise that there will be some groups that may face additional barriers and that this can have an impact on their mental health. For the purposes of this Agreement we have focused primarily on the support available to the LGBT+ community within the College, however we acknowledge that there are many vulnerable groups in attendance at college and that some students may be members of more than one of these groups at any given time.

#### **Actions to be taken**

- Continue to build on the support already available to LGBT+ students within the College through continual review and feedback from students. This support is available in various ways, such as hosting LGBT+ awareness raising events, promoting the support services available such as in-house student counselling and operating an open-door policy for all students. Feedback is received through various channels such as survey reports during LGBT+ awareness raising events, via social media interaction and also anecdotal feedback from students visiting both the Student Association and Student Services.
- Work towards the LGBT Bronze Charter Mark in association with LGBT Youth Scotland. The Student Association will take the lead in this initiative with support provided by Student Services.

- Create events to highlight awareness of LGBT+ within the College and incorporate this as part of LGBT History Month. Collate feedback from students and Student Officers to investigate ways to continue and build on these events.
- Acknowledge the support provided and initiatives taking place for a range of vulnerable groups within the College:
  - i. Care Experienced students will receive support from the Guidance and Support Advisor as their named staff contact. This 1:1 tailored support will involve discussing the various support services involved such as pastoral support, in-house counselling and an introduction to the Learning Development team, if required. In addition to this, Care Experienced students will be able to apply for the Care Experienced Bursary with their application being fast-tracked to allow as smooth a transition into education as possible.
  - ii. Students with Caring Responsibilities will also receive tailored 1:1 support from their named staff contact, the Guidance and Support Advisor. As above, they will receive detailed information on the support available within the College, in addition to discussing community support available. The College has excellent working relationships with several community support networks, this includes inviting a representative from the South Lanarkshire Carers Network to host a monthly stall in the College Atrium. South Lanarkshire College has also registered for the Going Further for Student Carers Recognition Award in order to review and investigate ways of supporting student carers.
  - iii. Veterans and Early Service Leavers bring a wealth of training and experience from their military service. Veterans will be provided with named staff contact support who will be available to discuss funding applications, discretionary support, as well as the health and wellbeing services available such as student counselling, mindfulness classes and pastoral support.
  - iv. Estranged Students may face additional barriers to their learning without the support of a family network. To help support estranged students South Lanarkshire College has signed up for the Stand Alone Pledge to highlight the support services available to them, with a particular focus on finance, mental health, accommodation and outreach. As with the other vulnerable groups mentioned above, estranged students will have a named staff contact who can provide individual support and advice regarding the various support services available within the College and will work with them throughout their College journey.
- Continue to provide an open-door policy for all students within the Student Association and Student Services department, including the availability of a named contact for all the student groups listed above.
- Creation of 'forever' button on the Student Portal where Care Experienced students, Carers, Veterans and Estranged Students can identify and self-refer

themselves to their named staff contact based in Student Services. This service will result in quicker identification of students from vulnerable backgrounds and allow support to be put in place at the earliest convenience.

- Research statistics from the Scottish Funding Council to highlight the level of support provided for vulnerable groups.

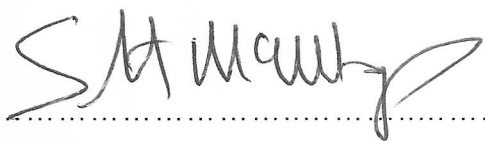
#### **4. Ensure Student Mental Health Needs are addressed as part of College-wide Network**

By creating a Student Mental Health Agreement, we recognise the importance of ensuring student mental health is a continuing focus for both the College and the Student Association. By working in partnership, we expect this is a process that will benefit from continual review by both staff and students.

#### **Actions to be taken**

- Work in partnership between the College and the Student Association on the creation of a Student Mental Health Agreement.
- Include Student Officers in the feedback regarding the Student Mental Health Agreement and use this feedback to shape the Agreement going forward.
- Share the Agreement with the College Mental Health Working Group and take on board any suggestions.
- Through discussions, agree on a date for the launch of the Student Mental Health Agreement and promote it via social media, the College website, the staff & student Portals and email.
- Continue ongoing promotion of the Student Mental Health Agreement via Faculty meetings and the student induction process.
- Review and update the Student Mental Health Agreement as and when required.

**Signed and Agreed by:**



**South Lanarkshire College**



**SLC Student Association**