

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School

Mental Health Policy

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Introduction

A mental health problem is defined as: 'a disturbance of function in one area of relationships, mood, behaviour or development of sufficient severity to require professional intervention' (Dept. of Health 1995).

A mental health disorder is defined as: 'a severe problem (commonly persistent) or the cooccurrence of a number of problems, usually in the presence of several risk factors' (Dept. of Health 1995).

Mentally healthy pupils have the ability to develop emotionally within the normal range. Some pupils develop behavioural problems that are outside this normal range and these pupils could be described as experiencing mental health problems or disorders. These disorders can seriously impair academic performance.

Schools are uniquely placed to influence the mental health of children and young people. As well as being in a position to recognise the symptoms of mental health difficulties at an early stage, they can enhance the social and emotional development of children and foster their mental wellbeing through their daily responses to pupils.

The School has specific legal responsibilities towards students whose mental condition falls within the definition of disability under the Equality Act. This requires us to ensure that students with a well-recognised mental illness are not discriminated against and that reasonable adjustments are put in place to support their learning.

The school aims to provide a supportive environment that will help students with mental health difficulties to realise their full academic potential and to successfully complete their course. It also aims to facilitate and promote positive mental health and well-being by:

- Encouraging students with mental health difficulties to seek support.
- Having in place effective procedures for the disclosure of information in respect of students with mental health difficulties.
- Ensuring that the sources of support are clearly communicated to both prospective and current students.
- Promoting understanding and recognition of mental health difficulties through Life Skills, the PSHCEE programme, pastoral care and other opportunities such as assemblies.
- Providing guidance and training to staff involved in the support and care of those with mental health difficulties through INSET
- Providing clear guidance on the confidentiality of personal information provided by students.

However, whilst the school is committed to providing a supportive environment, it is important to recognise that;

- It is not a mental health facility nor is it a therapeutic community. There are, of necessity, limits to the extent of the support which can be provided and it is not the responsibility of the school to replicate services that already exist in the community and the NHS. The school

also has its own procedures for the maintenance of good order and for safeguarding

academic and pastoral standards which will apply to all students irrespective of their medical condition or specific needs (subject to the school's reasonable adjustments duty).

Risk Factors influencing the mental health of children

There is no easy way of telling whether children will develop mental health problems or not. Some children maintain good mental health despite traumatic experiences, whilst others develop mental health problems even though they live in a safe, secure and caring environment. There are, however, some common risk factors that increase the probability that children will develop mental health problems. These include individual factors, such as:

- Having a long-term physical illness or learning disability
- Family factors, such as parental conflict and inconsistent discipline
- Having parents who separate or divorce
- Having a parent who has had mental health problems, problems with alcohol or has been in trouble with the law
- Having been bullied
- Child abuse and neglect (physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, emotional abuse)
- Experiencing the death of someone close to them /bereavement (grief, aggression, regression and adjustment difficulties)
- Experiencing discrimination, perhaps because of their race, sexuality or religion
- Acting as a carer for a relative, taking on adult responsibilities
- Having long-standing educational difficulties
- Post-traumatic stress (caused by an event involving intense fear, helplessness or horror)
- Environmental factors such as socio-economic disadvantages – living in poverty or homelessness (Mental Health Foundation, 1999)
- Taking prescribed drugs such as Roaccutane (generic name, isotretinoin) where there have been recorded side effects including bad headaches, blurred vision, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, seizures, stroke, diarrhoea, and muscle weakness. Additionally, serious mental health problems, such as depression and suicide, have been reported with isotretinoin use. all pupils treated with isotretinoin will be observed closely for symptoms of depression or suicidal thoughts, such as sad mood, irritability, acting on dangerous impulses, anger, loss of pleasure or interest in social or sports activities, sleeping too much or too little, changes in weight or appetite, school or work performance going down, or trouble concentrating, or for mood disturbance, psychosis, or aggression.
- Childhood and adolescent mental health disorders. These may include:
- Conduct disorder (e.g. aggression, destroying or losing of property, deceitfulness or theft, truanting or running away etc.)
- ADHD (inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity)
- Deliberate self-harm (suicidal ideation – suicide is very unusual)
- Eating disorders (e.g. anorexia, bulimia, binge eating or EDNOS – eating disorders not otherwise specified)
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (obsessions, compulsions and personality characteristics verging on the panic threshold all the time)
- Anxiety disorders (e.g. anxiety, phobias, panic, and school-phobia)
- Soiling and wetting
- Autism (social deficits, communication difficulties, restrictive and repetitive interests and

- behaviours)
- Substance abuse (abuse and dependence)
- Depression and bi-polar disorder
- Schizophrenia (abnormal perceptions, delusional thinking, thought disorders)

Prevention

Elmfield has the following in place to help pupils to cope with school life with the aim of helping to prevent problems from developing. These systems also enable staff to recognise and help pupils with mental health problems.

- Whole-school organisation: policies, curriculum, tutorial system, pastoral care, management of behaviour, home-school liaison, anti-bullying and learning support provision.
- Pastoral provision: organisation of PSHCEE, pastoral care system, ability for early intervention, support and training for staff, support for vulnerable pupils and liaison with external agencies.
- Classroom practice: facilitative teaching, guidance and PSHCEE.

Procedures for identification of disorders

Recognising when a child is suffering from mental health problems is not always easy but staff are often the 'front line' of identification. As an integral part of their pastoral role, staff should be alert to the signs of possible mental health difficulties and bring to the attention of the pupil's Class Teacher or Class Guardian, and/or Education Manager any cases that they feel may be a cause for concern. Many young people exhibit occasional episodes of disruptive or withdrawn behaviour these are not necessarily cause for mental health concern.

Responsibilities:

All staff with a concern about a pupil should complete this on MyConcern; if they feel it is a Child Protection issue they should contact the following Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead below as soon as possible and within 24 hours.

These designated staff will decide

- Who information needs to be fed on to (other staff, parents, multi-agency)
- The next steps to be taken
- Actions will be set in place to arrange appropriate support
- Each case will have to be discussed and evaluated and an appropriate course of action chosen and drawn up onto a care/welfare plan, with re-evaluations carried out frequently

Further reading/useful links

Young Minds: <http://www.youngminds.org.uk>

b-eat: <http://www.b-eat.co.uk/>

Childline: <http://www.childline.org.uk>

Mind: <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

NHS: <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx>

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Mental Health Foundation: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>

Stem4: <http://www.stem4.org.uk/>

Royal College of Psychiatrists:

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/youthinfo/parentscarers.aspx>

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>