**Student Counselling and Wellbeing (SCW)**

**Accessibility Strategy 17/18**

**Introduction**

The Student Counselling and Wellbeing service fully complies with the University of Leeds Equality and Inclusion Framework, in addition to being aware of legislation relevant to our work. We seek to make our service welcoming and accessible, and regularly provide induction talks, presentations and workshops to students and staff to improve knowledge and understanding of services.

To this end we are in regular consultation with the University’s Equality Policy Unit and Disability Services, Leeds University Union and the International Student Office to ensure that our facilities, information, website, attitudes and awareness are appropriate and accessible. The University of Leeds has students from a wide variety of ethnicities, countries, backgrounds and equality strands. Student Counselling and Wellbeing monitors gender, ethnic origin, age, UK/EU/International, and disability status through our online registration forms. The groups using the Centre map onto the representation of groups within the University:

**Student Counselling and Wellbeing: Anticipation and Preparation**

All students registering for support complete an online Self-Referral Form, which includes questions relating to disability and opportunities to provide information relating to: “medication and dosage, accessibility/mobility difficulties and availability to attend appointments” in addition to an open text box which invites to students to tell us anything else they feel it would be useful for us to know in advance of their first appointment. This information allows Student Counselling and Wellbeing to be aware in advance of any students accessibility needs, and ensure appropriate adjustments have been made *in advance* of a first appointment.

**Student Counselling Centre: Physical Accessibility**

Our building was adapted when we moved in 2004 with access for wheel-chair users and facilities for students with mobility difficulties. The Centre is well positioned offering two entrances, both of which are away from the main student thoroughfares. The Cromer Place entrance offers confidentiality, a disabled car parking space and disabled access via a ramp. The Centre has hearing loops, a ground floor, accessible, disabled toilet and a ground floor consulting room.

To comply with public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 our building is inspected every 5 years to implement works and review previous improvements. Our building was inspected Dec 2013.

***Limitations identified in 2013:***

Improved signs for Fire Exit

More signs to advertise hearing loop

Better sign for disabled toilet

***Action:*** Works completed 2014.

**Student Counselling and Wellbeing: Information Accessibility**

The Student Education Service website meets current standards for web accessibility, including all Counselling and Wellbeing pages.

All SCW materials are available in alternative formats (including braille, tactile diagrams, e-text, large print and diagram, digital audio, alternative paper colours), through the campus based Transcription service. The Transcription service are generally able to respond to requests within two or three days.

***Limitations Identified:***

The design requirements of the Student Education Service website do not allow for the use of images, which results in a text heavy site, which can be difficult for dyslexic students and students whose first language is not English, to fully access. We are in ongoing discussion with the SES about this issue.

***When:*** Ongoing

**Counselling services for Students**

Student Counselling and Wellbeing offers a wide range of services attracting students from all the equality strands within the University. SCW counsellors are experienced in working with a broad range of presenting issues, and proactively engages with CPD and training opportunities to improve practitioner knowledge and skills. A whole team training day in December 2016 considered neurodiversity, particularly working with students with autism. As a result of this day the Student Counselling and Wellbeing appointed a counsellor (Des Reid) to lead on neurodiversity awareness, which to date has included an audit of our building (changes include silent clocks now installed in all rooms).

Part time and medical students are able to attend evening appointments during term-time. All students can access our website self-help materials and downloadable MP3s across the whole of the year, in addition to digital online service Big White Wall. Online counselling using confidential chat-room technology is offered to students who cannot access the service in the usual way.

Specialist ‘Feeling at Home in Leeds’ groups are offered to international students (undergraduates and postgraduates), dealing with the challenges of international students achieving academic and personal success.

***Limitations identified:***

Awareness and therapeutic knowledge in relation to working with diverse groups of students is an ongoing CPD requirement of the team.

***Actions:***

It is planned that one Team Training Day this year will focus on increasing awareness of working with transgender students.

***When:*** July 2018

**Liaison**

Student Counselling and Wellbeing is now an integrated, Multi-Professional team, which has substantially improved co-ordination of support for students between counselling, wellbeing and mental health practitioners. Strong working relationships continue with the Leeds University Union Student Advice Centre team, and Leeds Student Medical Practice. This year we have worked more closely with Leeds IAPT, and are providing Stress Control groups for students on campus, in addition to current discussions about improving referral routes for students into Step Two and Three IAPT, in addition to liaison with psychiatry and Community Mental Health Teams.

We meet regularly with the Leeds Student Medical Practice and work closely with doctors in jointly supporting students with acute, clinical and chronic illnesses.

***Limitations identified:***

Referral into NHS services (IAPT and CMHT) can be complex, lengthy and frustrating for students, resulting in a lack of appropriate treatment and support.

***Actions:*** Exploration of Referral pathways for students into IAPT and CMHT.

***When:*** May/June 2018.

**Staffing**

The SCW has full time, part time, sessional, associate and trainee staff. An adequate range of ethnic background, disability, education, sexual orientation and age is represented in the staff team.

***Limitations Identified:***

The gender and ethnicity balance amongst staff is not representative of the student population. Men, LGBTQ and BME groups are particularly underrepresented. The service will continue to encourage recruitment of counsellors and clerical staff from a range of diverse backgrounds, including advertising vacancies through a wide number of networks.

***Action:***

Promotion of trainee/associate programme to bring through counsellors from a diverse range of backgrounds. Management team to attend ‘Unconscious Bias’ in recruitment training.

***When:*** Ongoing.

**Strategy review date:** February 2019

**Who by:**

Jane Harris (Assistant head of Student Support: Counselling and Wellbeing)

Simon Morris (Assistant head of Student Support: Disability Services)

Chris Warrington (Head of Student Support)

**Ongoing monitoring :** Team Meetings, Review Days

**Published:** On website