Wellbeing Policy

Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility

At Next Steps Education Ltd, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all students, their families and members of staff, including our sub - contractors. Our open culture allows students' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff / tutors and mentors – including non-teaching – outlining Next Steps Education Ltd approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies.

Policy Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and students.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff / mentors / tutors to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to students with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.

- Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from the Directors (Sarah Logan and Liz Fancourt) that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and student welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare throughout the business.

Key staff members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of students, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead: Liz Fancourt
- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Ellen Sanders
- Mental Health First Aid Champion: Sarah Logan

If a tutor is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of student, in the first instance they should speak to Sarah Logan.

If there is a concern that the student is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, Next Steps Education's child protection procedures should be followed.

If the child presents a high risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

Individual Care Plans

When a pupil has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation, Next Steps Education Ltd will work with other relevant professionals, the pupil and parents to follow an Individual Care Plan.

Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our students need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our wellbeing provision when required.

We will follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively.

https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and emotional wellbeing

Incorporating this into our tutoring at all stages is a good opportunity to promote students' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of students' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use the guidance as a vehicle for providing students who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting students to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

The aim of this is to ensure students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why should they access it
- What is likely to happen next

Sources or support at school and in the local community

Tutor Based Support

We encourage our tutors to access courses such as Place2Be Mental Health Champions.

Local Support

Next Steps Education Ltd will work with appropriate local councils to signpost parents to support for children's and young people's mental health wellbeing, including Inclusion Teams, CAMHS Services and Social Services.

Warning Signs

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 alert Liz Fancourt.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of 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
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Targeted support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with appropriate local authorities and their teams in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children.

We aim to support these services in identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems;
- working closely with agencies and services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers.
- signposting a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective,
- providing young people with clear and consistent opportunities for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality,
- providing young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it.

Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a student to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the student.

We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them
- When we're going to tell them

Ideally, consent should be gained from the student first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as students up to the age of 16 who are in danger of harm.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with the DSL (Liz Fancourt) or DDSL (Ellen Sanders) this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the student. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents must always be informed, but students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, a timescale of 24 hours will be given to share this information before the agency makes contact with the parents/carers.

If a student gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

Working with parents/carers

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents there are questions to consider first:

Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?

Where should the meeting take place?

Who should be present – students, staff, parents etc.?

What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns.

Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage. We will ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to the pupil's record and referred to the appropriate local authority teams if appropriate.

Supporting parents

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters etc.).

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe. A nominated member of staff (Sarah Logan) will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

Next Steps will signpost staff to training providers and our own in house training for those who wish to learn more about mental health. Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole organisation CPD should be discussed with Sarah Logan who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is 01/11/2027

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes. This is the responsibility of Sarah Logan, Director with Next Steps Education Ltd.

Any personnel changes will be implemented immediately.

Last review: 13/03/26 by Sarah Marvin

Next review: March 2028