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## Counselling Policy

For the purposes of this policy, students and staff receiving counselling support will be referred to as clients.

### Vision

Loreto College is centred in God, rooted in Christ and animated by the spirit of Mary Ward, the founder of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Our vision is that it will be an educational community where each person has the experience of being loved and valued as a sacred individual created by a loving God; a community where students enjoy an enriching and liberating education that helps them grow into the fullness of life and empowers them to be men and women of courage who are alive to the needs of humanity and committed to making a better world.

### Introduction

The College aims to be an educational community which gives expression to the core values of Mary Ward - freedom, justice, sincerity, truth, joy, excellence and internationality.

Loreto College has the highest expectations of personal, academic and professional excellence. This document sets out the college's policy and guidance on the procedures it will follow relating to Counselling College students. The college will endeavour to act at all times with justice, compassion and respect for the dignity and worth of all members of the college community but in doing so it will act in accordance with its legal responsibilities and its primary duty of care to children and vulnerable adults for whom it is responsible.

### Aims of the Counselling Service

Our aim is to offer a therapeutic service to support in the enhancement of clients' achievement, wellbeing and resilience. We strive to assist in their development of greater self-awareness and personal resources, in order to meet challenges and pursue meaningful goals.

The counsellors adhere to the values and beliefs specified by the BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice:

- Being trustworthy
- Honoring the trust placed in the practitioner
- Autonomy: respect the client's right to be self-governing
- Beneficence: a commitment to promoting the client's wellbeing
- Non-maleficence: a commitment to avoiding harm to the client
- Justice: the fair and impartial treatment of all clients and the provision of adequate services
- Self-respect: fostering the practitioner's self-knowledge and care for self

## THE SERVICE

### A. Counselling procedures/What we offer

#### Referrals

Counselling is offered to both students and staff at college, although priority is given to students. Clients' can self-refer or be referred by a member of staff, an outside agency, or a parent. Referrals can be made directly to the counsellors via email at [counsellor@loreto.ac.uk](mailto:counsellor@loreto.ac.uk) or by attending one of the weekly drop-in sessions. This information is available in student/staff handbooks, in the counselling section on the college intranet and on posters around the campus.

The counsellors will respond to email referrals stating clearly what is on offer and what happens next. On referral, clients are offered an assessment appointment with a counsellor, usually within one week, and added to a waiting list.

A counsellor will email the client when a slot is available for them during their free periods/lunchtimes. Sometimes it may be necessary to offer sessions during lessons, and this is done at the discretion of a senior member of staff.

#### Waiting list

As referrals to the Counselling Service increase a waiting list for appointments develops. Waiting times for counselling can vary throughout the academic year, and at peak times, can sometimes be up to 8 weeks. However, clients waiting for counselling are encouraged to attend drop-in's for regular, brief support if needed until a slot becomes available for them.

#### Assessment appointments

Half hour assessment appointment or the drop-in, are offered to clients at the point of referral to the service so that they can meet with a counsellor within a week of referral. The purpose of the assessments is to assess the needs of the client as soon as possible to ensure that they receive the most appropriate form of support. Sometimes, clients may not require counselling, in which case the counsellor will signpost/refer on to another department within college, or to an outside agency.

If a client does not attend the assessment appointment offered, and does not respond to a follow-up email, it is assumed that the client no longer requires counselling and they are removed from the referral list. The client is informed of this by email and offered the opportunity to contact the service again in the future if they change their mind.

#### Counselling sessions

The core provision is:

- Planned 50 or 30 minute weekly sessions
- Clients are offered an initial 4 sessions during free periods/lunchtimes

Clients can be offered more than 4 Sessions if needed, and this is reviewed periodically and agreed on an individual basis with each client, depending on their level of need.

Staff seeking counselling are given the opportunity to access *after-hours* sessions if required to enhance confidentiality and accommodate their busy schedules.

#### Drop-in's

The counselling service facilitates daily lunchtime drop-in sessions.

The drop-in's offer clients the opportunity to meet briefly with a counsellor, on a one-to-one basis, without a planned appointment. Clients can attend drop-in for a number of reasons, including to have a planned assessment, to find out more about counselling, to self-refer, to seek brief support for an issue they are struggling with, or to seek advice about someone they are concerned about. Drop-in times and frequency are advertised in Loreto Daily/Weekly, outside the counselling rooms and on posters around college.

### Counselling contract

Contracting with a client at the start of counselling is an important part of the counselling process as it defines the boundaries of the counselling relationship. It is a written agreement between counsellor and client containing some basic, personal data ie. name, contact details and presenting issue. The counsellors also make clients aware of the policy of note-taking, storage of sensitive information and how long it is kept (in line with GDPR). The limits to confidentiality are explained clearly during contracting and the client is asked to sign that they understand (see attached contract)

### Counselling notes

The counsellors keep brief notes of each session with a client. This is primarily to record general points and themes of sessions and to charter the counselling process. Clients are made aware of these notes and their right to view them at any time in line with GDPR. Notes for students are kept for 10 years and then shredded and disposed of with other confidential waste at college.

### Record keeping

The counsellors also keep and maintain other records - electronic and hard copies - of referrals, assessments, drop in and group attendance. Client issues data is also collated anonymously to enable the counsellors and the senior management team to recognize trends in order to continue to deliver the most effective and appropriate forms of support (see attached form). All record keeping adheres to the current GDPR guidelines.

### Counsellor availability

There are at least two counsellors in college each day of the week and the service predominately operates during college hours, although some evening sessions are provided. Contact during this time is by a pre-arranged appointment, assessment appointment, via the drop-in or by college email. Counsellors will respond to emails as soon as possible during the college day.

### Emergencies

Counselling is not an emergency service. In an emergency situation counsellors will help to sign post and advise about appropriate support Services but cannot offer emergency appointments.

### Signposting/referring on

Sometimes other mental health and emotional well-being services outside college offer more appropriate forms of support for the client. In these instances, the counsellors will help to signpost and refer on to external agencies. These can include 42 Street, CAMHS, G.P., Emerge, and Eating Disorder Services.

### Information

An important aspect of the Counselling Service is to promote emotional well-being by providing information and resources about different aspects of mental health; e.g. information leaflets about techniques to promote mental health and well-being, information from websites, and Apps to help specifically with relaxation and mindfulness.

### Groups

When demand for support is high, or an emerging need amongst the student body becomes apparent, the counsellors will facilitate weekly group support. The nature of this support is to promote greater understanding and self-awareness of clients' mental health needs, explore and implement effective coping strategies, and build emotional resilience.

### The Counsellors

There are currently four counsellors who are all experienced; professionally qualified and Members of B.A.C.P. They all work within the B.A.C.P. Code of Ethics and this includes regular supervision with a qualified supervisor and continuing C.P.D. They are employed by the college and operate as a Counselling Department which is able to grow and develop dynamically in response to the changing needs of the college community. They are a central part of the college's pastoral and well-being provision. This involves close liaison with the Head of Students Services about service provision issues whilst maintaining professional boundaries of confidentiality about the issues discussed by clients.

The team has recently expanded to facilitate and support two trainee counsellors on placement, adding a new and positive dynamic to the service.

### **B. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is an ethical requirement for counselling and a key aspect of the therapeutic relationship. It is also an essential component in promoting trust between counsellor and client, and is taken very seriously. Confidentiality is explained to clients at their initial meeting with a counsellor. In particular, the limitations to confidentiality which are:

1. When there is a risk of serious harm to themselves, others or the wider community.
2. If the client discloses serious breaches of the law.

The counsellors will always aim to seek the client's consent for disclosure, however, there are certain circumstances which might affect this, including the urgency or seriousness of the situation, and where seeking consent would expose them to greater harm.

The counsellors inform clients when contracting of their obligation to inform the DSL if there is any risk of serious harm.

### **C. Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is a priority for all College staff. The counsellors are committed to the importance of safeguarding but also recognize the complexity of balancing confidentiality and safeguarding. The confidentiality outlined above in **A** adheres to the college's Safeguarding Policy and there is always careful consideration about any sharing of information. When a decision is made to share information about a student it is recorded on the College Safeguarding Log and the student is informed.

A brief factual note is also made on the Safeguarding Log for every student who attends counselling so that there is a comprehensive log of all support offered to each student. No detail is recorded of the session's content unless there is a safeguarding concern which fits within the reasons outlined above to breach confidentiality. The student is informed about this at the contracting stage (see attached contract).

### **D. Data Protection**

The counsellors work within the GDPR and have completed training as part of their C.P.D.