



# Three Towers

An Alternative Provision Academy

*Expanding Horizons*

## Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing Policy

Adopted: June 2020

Review: as required by statutory guidance

## 1. Introduction

At Three Towers (TTAPA), we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all learners, their families/carers and other stakeholders including staff and governors. Our open culture allows learners' 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.

## 2. Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff stakeholders outlining our approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

It should be read in conjunction with other relevant TTAPA and Rowan Learning Trust policies.

## 3. Aims

TTAPA aims to:

- promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and learners;
- increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues;
- enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in learners;
- enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues;
- provide the right support to learners with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support;
- develop resilience amongst learners and raise awareness of resilience building techniques;
- raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from leaders and line managers that staff may have mental health issues, so that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing;
- embed a culture of staff and learner welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

## 4. Key Staff members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of learners as well as take responsibility for their own mental wellness. However we recognise that key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Headteacher
- Mental Health Champion – Ms H Parry
- TTAPA Counsellor – Mrs H Guthrie
- Pastoral Managers
- Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)
- Head of Emotional Literacy
- PSHE Co-ordinator
- Trauma Informed Practitioners

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of learner, in the first instance they should speak to the relevant Pastoral Manager.

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

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

## 5. Individual Care Plans

When a learner 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, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the learner, parents/carers, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the learner's situation/condition/diagnosis;
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions;
- Medication and any side effects;
- Who to contact in an emergency;
- The role the school and specific staff.

## 6. Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our learners need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum and our TEL interventions.

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 curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote learners' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of learners' own emotions as well as those of other people.

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

**See Section 14 for Supporting Peers**

## 7. Signposting

We will ensure that staff, learners and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services. Within the school (noticeboards, common rooms, etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, website), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure learners understand:

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

## 8. Sources or support at TTAPA and in the local community

### 8.1 School Based Support

Our offer reflects feedback from all stakeholders which is gathered informally as well as through regular learner and parent/carer surveys and an annual staff wellbeing questionnaires.

This feedback is shared with staff, including the senior leadership team and governors, as well as wider across the trust. We offer a diverse range of in school support including the following:

#### 8.1.1 Early identification

Our induction pathway forms a 360 circle of understanding around the learners' background. This is cascaded to staff via pen portraits and risk assessments and also includes strategies and named staff that specific learners respond well to. Early help meetings take place to support learners identified as having early signs of problems.

#### 8.1.2 Curriculum

We run a Targeted Emotional Literacy programme which the development and support of emotional literacy needs and self-regulation skills, identified through the 360 assessment on entry. Learning, Emotional, Conduct, Health and Social form the five strands of the programme.

Social Skills is a less structured time in the day where learners have the opportunity to participate in activities with peers and staff.

Enrichment trips ensure our learners have the opportunity to visits places they may not usually such as areas of natural beauty, art galleries and residential experiences. Our annual careers fayre promotes aspiration for all learners.

#### 8.1.3 Therapeutic Interventions

We have several trained trauma informed practitioners who deliver interventions for learners that are identified as having past trauma. We also have staff trained to deliver therapeutic art, Lego therapy and Drawing and Talking interventions. Learners are referred via pastoral staff.

#### 8.1.4 Quiet, safe spaces

Recognising that sometimes that people need a chance to have some quiet time to reflect and regulate their emotions we provide safe spaces for this to happen. Learners have a safe space to reflect on behaviours and regulate emotions through use of the zone /chill room areas and sensory quiet rooms. At primary learners 'check in' on their wellbeing during communal breakfast.

Staff have access to a quiet space if needed.

#### 8.1.5 Counselling

We have a full time counsellor accessible to both staff and learners. Learners that access this service are identified on entry or referred via pastoral at times of crisis or through staff concern. In addition, there are a variety of counselling and therapy options available to staff through our employee assistant programme.

#### 8.1.6 Rewards

Our culture of praise and support is demonstrated day through informal conversations and discrete personal praise and acknowledgement. More formally, we have a strong and valued rewards system is in place. Learners accrue points throughout the day in lessons and during lunch and break. Points can be spent on items in an online shop which is stocked based on learner feedback. Weekly subject certificates for "Stars of the Week" are displayed on corridors. Weekly phone calls home are made via form tutors and praise postcards are sent home to send positive messages.

Celebration weeks take place to promote and recognise learner achievements and reinforce positive engagement. Parents and carers are invited in to reflect on the progress of our learners. Our school newsletters further support this.

For staff, half-termly awards take place to recognise those who go above and beyond and we have staff postcards to pass on discreet messages of support and thanks. There is also a wellbeing afternoon at the end of the academic year which gives staff an opportunity to meet up with colleagues who work in different strands of the provision and supports the team work of staff.

#### 8.1.7 Staff Awareness

Emotional-wellbeing sessions also take place during teaching and learning events and staff meetings. This allows staff to develop their general awareness of emotional wellbeing as well as allowing them develop techniques to manage their own wellbeing.

#### 8.2 Local Support

In Wigan, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support, including the **CAMHS partnership**, a group of providers specialising in children and young people's mental health wellbeing. These partners deliver accessible support to children, young people and their families, whilst working with professionals to reduce the range of mental health issues through prevention, intervention, training and participation.

<https://www.nwbb.nhs.uk/camhs-wigan>

## 9. Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a learner 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 (insert name of mental health first aider).

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 and/or sleeping habits;
- increased isolation from family and/or friends – becoming socially withdrawn;
- changes in activity and mood;
- lowering of academic achievement;
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide;
- abusing drugs and/or alcohol;
- expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope;
- changes in clothing eg long sleeves in warm weather;
- secretive behaviours;
- skipping PE or getting changed secretly;
- increase in lateness and/or absenteeism;
- repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause.

## 10. 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 external agencies including school nurses and CAMHS in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of learners 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 the local authority, Wigan CAMHS and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help (EH) Assessment Framework, children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems;
- discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers including agreeing an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach;
- providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs;

- ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including Wigan CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available 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;
- provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it; and
- the identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

## 11. Managing Disclosures

If a learner chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. All disclosures should be regarded as a safeguarding concern and be recorded confidentially on the learner's profile in ClassCharts.

## 12. Confidentiality

As concerns about a learner or disclosure should be treated as a safeguarding concerns. Staff must not promise confidentiality to a learner but should instead be clear that they may need to share the concern/disclosure with the relevant designated safeguarding lead (DSL)/pastoral manager in line with safeguarding protocols.

If the DSL/pastoral manager feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a learner to either someone outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the learner. We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell;
- Why we need to tell them;
- What we are going to tell them;
- When we are going to tell them.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with the DSL/pastoral manager this ensures one single member of staff is not solely responsible for the learner. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

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

## 13. Whole School Approach

### 13.1 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 – some parents are uncomfortable in school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate.
- Who should be present – learners, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent/carer, 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.

Ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agreed are added to the learner's record and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

### 13.2 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/carers 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.);
- offering support to help parents/carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community nurses (such as school nurses and health visitors) or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners; and
- ensuring parents/carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This may include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing help with transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

## 14. Supporting Peers

When a learner is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in one to one or group sessions and will be guided by



conversations by the learner who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- what it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told;
- how friends can best support;
- things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset;
- warning signs that their friend needs help (e.g. signs of relapse);
- additionally, we will want to highlight with peers;
- where and how to access support for themselves;
- safe sources of further information about their friend's condition;
- healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling.

## 15. Training & CPD

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular safeguarding training to enable them to keep learners safe.

A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

We will host relevant information on our website for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more learners.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with Helen Parry and/or Heather Guthrie who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.