

## Mental Health Strategy for Students



## Background and Vision

Newbattle Abbey College is Scotland's national adult education residential college, set within an historic 16<sup>th</sup> century building and 125 acres of beautiful parkland. We provide a high standard of education to our local community and the wider communities across Scotland and the UK.

We are committed to achieving the best possible results for our students, staff and stakeholders. Through our focus on continuous improvement, we are confident that we will deliver our vision as ***Scotland's Life-Changing College***.

We have a proven track record of meeting the needs of adults of all ages and young people at points of transition.

Our students experience high quality and transformative learning. We will continue to capitalise on our strength in offering extensive support to ensure that our students achieve their personal ambitions. Our learners often face multiple barriers to learning, including mental health issues.

The college plays a strategic national role in promoting adult learning through extensive collaboration with a wide range of partners to promote inclusion and progression, particularly for marginalised learners in areas of deprivation. We are the national accreditation body for the Adult Achievement Awards and the Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards and have established ourselves as a hub for Gaelic language and culture in south-east Scotland.

We have also developed very productive partnerships with our local community and are active participants in Midlothian Community Planning Partnership (CPP) committees. The impact of these partnerships is reflected in our expanding curriculum.

## **Mental Health Aims**

- to create a supportive environment where good mental health is recognised as essential for our students to flourish and be successful
- to work collaboratively with our local and national partners, including the Student Representative Council, the NUS, the NHS and other third sector organisations, to develop appropriate arrangements and opportunities to support our students

## **Objectives**

- to identify learner needs at interview and ensure that relevant support is in place before learners start their course
- to help learners sustain their studies and successfully complete their course
- to provide initial mental health first aid support
- to refer those who require further support to specialist mental health providers, including an external college counsellor
- to build partnerships with relevant external agencies, including Health in Mind and Deaf Action
- to ensure that relevant staff are fully trained in supporting students with Mental Health conditions
- to support the Student Representative Council to jointly implement a Student Mental Health Agreement in 2019/20 and beyond

## **Key Outcomes**

- to encourage and support all individuals to disclose any mental health issues at application or enrolment
- to provide early identification and intervention for students who disclose a mental health issue or are referred for support
- to ensure students who disclose a mental health issue are treated as a priority group by Support for Learning staff and are supported in the development of a Personal Learning Support Plan, in addition to an Individual Learning Plan, in collaboration with Guidance Tutors
- to develop a range of practical support materials that are easy to access and responsive to the needs of students
- to challenge the stigma of mental health issues and develop shared understanding of mental health
- to provide activities and supports which focus on promoting overall wellbeing, such as Mindfulness activities
- to hold events and activities throughout the year to challenge stigma and discrimination
- to promote physical activity and the link between exercise and wellbeing, including woodland walks
- to promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the college
- to work in partnership to create a multi-agency approach in supporting individuals
- to regularly promote, review and develop our mental health strategy

- to include materials with messages such as 'It's Ok not to feel OK' and other affirmations of mental health
- to organise a range of social activities/events for students to reduce a sense of isolation

#### What Support Do We Offer?

- Free counselling and Mindfulness sessions
- Induction Week, including social events, Lord Ancrum's Wood walk and external visits
- weekly woodland walk led by our Community Woodland Ranger
- monthly bake and book sale, in aid of designated student charity
- college choir - weekly
- Christmas at Newbattle/St Andrew's Night Ceilidh/Christmas Lunch/Burns' Lunch
- Rural Skills tutor has arranged a Bike Club, including bike rides and bike maintenance
- Games Club – board games
- Movie Club
- Opportunity to work in the Community Garden
- Peer support group organised for students who are parents
- Newbattlers' Day – staff/student day of activity to raise money for charity (led by students)
- Liaison with sub-wardens in residence if student needs additional support

#### **Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms**

The strategy will be monitored by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and progress reported quarterly.

Success mechanisms include:

- Performance Indicators on retention and overall attainment
- positive student feedback
- relevant referrals to external agencies