

Eating Disorder Policy

2023-2024

1. Introduction

College staff can play an important role in preventing eating disorders and also in supporting students, peers and parents of students currently suffering from or recovering from eating disorders.

2. Scope

This document describes the college's approach to eating disorders. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

3. Aims

- To increase understanding and awareness of eating disorders
- To alert staff to warning signs and risk factors
- To provide support to staff dealing with students suffering from eating disorders
- To provide support to students currently suffering from or recovering from eating disorders and their peers and parents/carers

4. Risk Factors

The following risk factors, particularly in combination, may make a young person particularly vulnerable to developing an eating disorder:

Individual Factors:

- Difficulty expressing feelings and emotions
- A tendency to comply with other's demands
- Very high expectations of achievement

Family Factors

- A home environment where food, eating, weight or appearance have a disproportionate significance
- An over-protective or over-controlling home environment
- Poor parental relationships and arguments
- Neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Overly high family expectations of achievement Social Factor
- Being bullied, teased or ridiculed due to weight or appearance
- Pressure to maintain a high level of fitness/low body weight for e.g. sport or dancing.

5. Warning Signs

College staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing difficulties. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should seek further advice from one of the designated teachers for safeguarding young people.

Physical Signs

- Weight loss
- Dizziness, tiredness, fainting
- Feeling Cold
- Hair becomes dull or lifeless
- Swollen cheeks
- Callused knuckles
- Tension headaches
- Sore throats/mouth ulcers
- Tooth decay

Behavioural Signs

- Restricted eating
- Skipping meals
- Scheduling activities during lunch
- Strange behaviour around food
- Wearing baggy clothes
- Wearing several layers of clothing
- Excessive chewing of gum/drinking of water
- Increased conscientiousness
- Increasing isolation/loss of friends
- Believes s/he is fat when s/he is not
- Secretive behaviour
- Visits the toilet immediately after meals

Psychological Signs

- Preoccupation with food
- Sensitivity about eating
- Denial of hunger despite lack of food
- Feeling distressed or guilty after eating
- Self dislike
- Fear of gaining weight
- Moodiness
- Excessive perfectionism

6. Staff Roles

The most important role college staff can play is to familiarise themselves with the risk factors and warning signs outlined above and to make the designated teacher for safeguarding young people, Head of Year, if not available Head of Student Support / Vice-Principal (Students).

Following the report, the designated member of staff will decide on the appropriate course of action. This may include:

- Signpost to suitable professionals
- Contact Parent/Guardian of student if under 18

Students may choose to confide in a member of university staff if they are concerned about their own welfare, or that of a peer. Students need to be made aware that it may not be possible for staff to offer complete confidentiality if they are at risk. If you consider a student is at serious risk of causing themselves harm confidentiality cannot be kept. It is important not to make promises of confidentiality that cannot be kept even if a student puts pressure on you to do so.

7. Students Undergoing Treatment for/Recovering from Eating Disorders

The decision about how, or if, to proceed with a student's course while they are suffering from an eating disorder should be made on a case-by-case basis. Input for this decision should come from discussion with the student, university staff and members of the multi-disciplinary team treating the student. The reintegration of a student into university following a period of absence should be handled sensitively and carefully and again, the student, university staff and members of the multi-disciplinary team treating the student should be consulted during both the planning and reintegration phase.

8. Further Considerations

Any meetings with a student regarding eating disorders should be recorded in writing including:

- Dates and times
- An action plan
- Concerns raised
- Details of anyone else who has been informed

This information should be stored in the student's file.