

RADA

Royal Academy of Dramatic Art

Student Wellbeing Service Policy

Student Wellbeing Service Mission

The RADA Student Wellbeing Service exists to support student wellbeing and positive mental health and to support students in completing and succeeding in their courses. Through a strategy of preventative care, early intervention and variable student contracts, it aims to equip students to realise their potential in the training and their personal lives.

The Student Wellbeing Service sits within the Student and Academic Services department (SAS). The Head of Student Wellbeing reports directly to the RADA Registrar.

The Wellbeing Team consists of the Counselling Service and the Disability Team.

Counselling Service

The Counselling Service provides both short-term (up to six sessions) counselling as well as informal 30-minute drop-in sessions.

The Counsellors adhere to the key principles laid out in the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's (BACP) Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions. We consult with the BACP and other experts to create policy in the event of ethical dilemmas.

Disability Service

The Disability Service supports students with a range of neurodiversity, physical and emotional mental health problems who are eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

The support is managed by the Disability Coordinator. The Disability Team consists of Non-Medical Helpers (NMHs) with specialist skills offering a range of supports including; study skills, mental health mentoring and any other medical or other disability issues.

The NMHs are registered with RADA as internal providers of DSA, and the Disability Coordinator has been key in changing students' external DSA support to internal RADA NMHs. The Disability Coordinator has changed the DSA support from an external offer to an internal offer through the NMHs, who are now registered with RADA as internal providers of DSA. This has meant providing greater flexibility for meeting with students and a greater awareness of the specific Acting and TISM training they undertake.

The Student Wellbeing Service aims to provide a safe, non-judgmental space where individuals can discuss their difficulties with trained professionals, engage with and understand their psychological needs better and develop their own psychological resilience. It also provides a resource of information and advice on a range of common psychological difficulties.

Service Objectives

Counselling Team

- To provide high quality, free at point of access, professional and confidential drop-in sessions and counselling services to students on Higher Education & Foundation courses at RADA
- To provide drop-in sessions on an informal drop-in basis, or by appointment
- To provide one-to-one counselling sessions to students
- To ensure accessibility to the service for students
- To ensure adherence to BACP Ethical Framework

Disability Service Team

- To provide support to students who are eligible for DSA and may require specialist support services
- To liaise in the delivery of individual student Learning Agreements
- To help raise awareness and improve accessibility for students

Overall objectives

- To maintain the efficacy of the Student Wellbeing service
- To provide an up-to-date referral network, within the Academy and external to the Academy
- To ensure effective liaison across the Academy
- To monitor and evaluate the Student Wellbeing service in order to demonstrate continuous improvement in meeting the needs of students

Service values and ethics

- All counsellors operate within the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy's (BACP) Ethical Framework for The Counselling Professions
- The Student Wellbeing Service adheres to RADA's Respect at RADA Policy, RADA's Safeguarding Policy, Equality Act, General Data Protection Regulation, and other relevant legislation
- The Student Wellbeing Service works to facilitate, enhance and complement the aims and values of the Academy
- The service keeps abreast of research and changes which impact on counselling within the sector
- All counsellors maintain the currency of their skills and knowledge by undertaking regular CPD

Structure of the service

Head of Student Wellbeing – responsible for co-ordinating the service and holds clinical responsibility for the therapeutic work; providing informal drop-in sessions to students; managing counselling team; managing the Disability Coordinator and having oversight for the team of specialist Non-Medical Helpers and interpreters; conducting student assessments &

referrals; safeguarding policy development, implementation & training; service policy development & implementation; monitoring & evaluating the service; recruiting counsellors; liaising with RADA course directors and senior management.

Student Wellbeing Advisor – responsible for conducting drop-ins and assessment sessions, monitoring & evaluating the service, service development implementation, liaising with teaching and non-teaching staff, and undertaking administration tasks as required.

Sessional & Placement Counsellors – responsible for conducting sessions with students; attending clinical supervision; liaising around safeguarding issues; maintaining monitoring & evaluation information; maintaining confidential records.

Clinical Supervisor – responsible for conducting group supervision sessions with placement counsellors; liaising with the Head of Student Wellbeing around safeguarding issues.

Specialist support - Drug & Alcohol support, and Eating Disorder support provided by members of the counselling team with specialist training and experience.

Dietician – conducting sessions with students around nutrition, liaising with the specialist Eating Disorder counsellor, liaising with the Head of Student Wellbeing around safeguarding issues.

Consulting Psychiatrist – students referred for mental health assessments when required.

Confidentiality

The Student Wellbeing Service works within a strict code of confidentiality, and adheres to the BACP Ethical Framework. Confidentiality is held by the clinical team within the service, rather than with an individual counsellor. Clinical information may be shared by counsellors within the service on a need-to-know basis, primarily to protect students presenting with safeguarding concerns.

All placement counsellors are required to attend regular in-house clinical supervision, during the course of which the content and process of counselling sessions will be discussed with the clinical supervisor, who will in turn be bound by this policy. Sessional counsellors are required to have their own external supervision arrangements in place, and to attend supervision in line with BACP requirements.

The Wellbeing Service would not ordinarily disclose the content of drop-ins or counselling sessions, the nature of work being carried out, nor the fact that a student is attending counselling to anyone within or outside the Academy.

In exceptional circumstances, the Head of Student Wellbeing would inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team, or an appropriate external agency if they had reason to believe that a student or other individual was at serious risk of harm, or a danger to others. In such cases, all attempts would be made to inform the student of any decision to disclose, and, wherever possible to empower the student to make a disclosure themselves.

No counselling service can offer complete confidentiality to its student as this is restricted by the law. In particular, the following laws limit the extent to which confidentiality can be offered or maintained:

- The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005.

- Proceeds of Crime Act 2002
- Children Act 2007

Further information about these legal restrictions can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk

Case studies – From time to time, as part of their professional development, counsellors may wish to write up case studies or publish articles about their work. Where a counsellor writes about a specific piece of work, it would be expected that they would disguise the identity of the student to such an extent that even the student would not be able to recognise themselves. Alternatively, a counsellor may wish to gain specific written permission from their student to write about the work.

This permission may only be sought with the express agreement of the clinical supervisor, the Head of Student Wellbeing and the Principal of RADA.

Students have the right to withdraw their permission at any stage.

Recording sessions – Similarly, as part of their professional development, or for the purposes of supervision, counsellors may wish to record sessions with a student. This may be arranged with the written permission of the student, and the agreement of the Head of Student Wellbeing. Counsellors are required to use the Wellbeing Service ‘Consent to record counselling sessions’ form for this purpose. This form will be retained by the counsellor, stored securely and destroyed as appropriate. This form contains details regarding the secure storage and disposal of any recording. Students may withdraw their permission to record sessions at any time, and have the right to request the destruction of any recordings made.

Communication with external agencies

When required, the service will communicate with external agencies on a student’s behalf with the permission, and written consent of the student. The service will clarify with the student, that once their information has been shared with an external agency, the service cannot be held responsible for how that information may be used or interpreted.

The service would only communicate with an external agency without the student’s consent in exceptional circumstances where the student or others were considered to be at serious risk of harm.

Specifically, while the Wellbeing Service provides general mental health support, the service may at times refer students with more complex needs like addictions, severe mental health issues, or complex eating disorders to specialist services. This ensures students access the most appropriate, targeted support for their specific condition.

Access to the service

Counselling and drop-in sessions are available to all current Higher Education and Foundation students of the Academy, including those on work placements. Students on short courses do not have access to the service.

Students will be offered an appointment with a specialist if their need can be met within the parameters, knowledge and expertise of the service. For queries outside the remit of the Service, staff will provide information about alternative sources of help wherever possible. The service endeavours to be as accessible as possible to students by offering a flexible

appointment system. Students will be offered the option of attending sessions on a weekday evening or Saturday morning. The day and time they attend can vary to accommodate the changes in their timetables, and the demands of their schedules. Drop-in sessions are offered during the students' lunch times, and in the evenings.

GP Registration

Students are required to register with a London GP in order to access Student Wellbeing support. During their initial appointment students will be asked about GP registration and offered support with the registration process if needed. Students are not required to share GP details unless there is a serious concern about their safety.

Prospective students

Counselling may be offered to prospective students where a need has been identified by the Course Director and agreed with the Head of Student Wellbeing. Students may be offered support in advance of the commencement of their course to prepare them to access the curriculum.

Limits of Service Provision

Student Wellbeing offers early intervention short-term support to students with mild to moderate mental health difficulties. The service is not equipped to provide interventions for students who may be experiencing severe and/or enduring psychiatric issues.

Remote Sessions

Assessments, drop-ins and counselling sessions may be conducted online as required. When taking part in remote sessions, students are asked to ensure that they are in a private space where they cannot be overheard and won't be interrupted. Students are also asked to be aware of what may be visible in the background.

Please note: Students are expected to turn their cameras on during these sessions.

RADA safeguarding procedures apply equally to online and face-to-face sessions, any concerns about will be managed in the usual way.

Promotion of the Student Wellbeing Service

The service informs students about the support available and how to access it in the following ways:

- Attending and participating in Student Induction Week, including the Student Fair.
- Providing and displaying promotional materials during Student Induction Week and Fair.
- Comprehensive information about the Student Wellbeing Service included in a dedicated area on RADA's SharePoint.
- Information regarding the Student Wellbeing Service included in the Student Handbook.
- Service information displayed on all student noticeboards around the Academy.
- Service information leaflet placed around both buildings.
- Posters and leaflets regarding general wellbeing and mental health displayed on student noticeboards.
- Student Wellbeing information included on the RADA website.
- Regularly featuring the service in the Student Newsletter.

- Liaising and consulting with Course Directors.
- Disseminating service information and contacts during staff training and inductions sessions.
- Consultation for teaching and support staff around their pastoral role with students.

Contacting the service

Students may self-refer to the service, or be referred with their permission by their Course Director. Students can contact the service by emailing the Head of Student Wellbeing. Contact details are included in all promotional materials. Initial student communications to the service will be responded to within one working day.

Assessment sessions

Having received a request from a student for pastoral support or counselling, the Head of Student Wellbeing will offer the student an assessment session within one week. The assessment session will include:

- A discussion around confidentiality and the limits thereof
- Assessment of risk and consideration of any safeguarding issues
- Checking if the student is registered with a GP in London, offer of support to register if needed
- The student's presenting issue
- The student's history and previous counselling or mental health interventions
- A discussion around any medication the student is taking
- The student's family and support network
- A discussion around the student's use of alcohol and drugs
- The type of support the student is seeking and whether the service is equipped to accommodate this
- An agreement on drop-ins or counselling referrals and next steps

Counselling Agreements

Having attended the assessment session, if the student wishes to have counselling they will be referred to a counsellor within the service. During their initial session the counsellor and student will agree and sign a written counselling agreement. This includes:

- Information about the level of confidentiality the counsellor can offer, and limits around confidentiality.
- The number of sessions on offer: the service offers an initial contract of six sessions, with the possibility to extend in consultation with the Head of Student Wellbeing and supervisor.
- It must be made clear to students at the contracting stage that counselling sessions are brief and finite.
- When ongoing support is required, this can either be through signposting to low-cost private therapy services, referral to the Disability Team (where appropriate) or other pathways to be decided in discussions with the Head of Student Wellbeing and relevant RADA course tutors. The duration of each session - 50 minutes. The Wellbeing Service is confidential, but in exceptional circumstances, the Service may need to break confidentiality if a student or someone else is in immediate danger.

- Arrangements about contacting the counsellor between sessions.
- Arrangements about cancelling or rearranging a session.
- What happens if the student does not attend a session (DNA).

Drop-in Sessions

Students may attend informal drop-in sessions with the Head of Student Wellbeing or Student Wellbeing Advisor. These sessions usually last for 30 minutes and are an opportunity for students to access support around less complex personal or course-related issues. Students are offered relevant practical support, information, advice and guidance.

Monitoring Evaluation & Feedback

The service continually monitors standards and quality of provision and reflects on areas for improvement and development. We do this by:

- Inviting all students to return anonymous feedback questionnaires to the service at the end of their counselling contract
- Inviting verbal feedback from students during their counselling contract about their experience of the service
- Inviting regular feedback about the service from Course Directors, teaching and support staff across the Academy
- Use of CORE - Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation, a self-rated questionnaire which measures psychological problems and distress.
- Benchmarking for making comparisons with counselling services in other educational settings by attending networking meetings (PAC; HUCS) and BACP conferences.

Record Keeping and Data Protection

The service maintains administrative and clinical records of all contacts with students of the service in line with GDPR requirements.

UNITI Counselling Software

UNITI Counselling Software is the software used to record interactions with Wellbeing staff and students.

There are three separate user profiles within UNITI.

- 1) Administrators – who can view all files. These three roles are able to help manage the administration of student records within UNITI. The three UNITI Administrators are the Head of Student Wellbeing, the Student Wellbeing Advisor and the Disability Coordinator.
- 2) Counsellors - users with this setting are able to create drop-in and counselling session notes viewable only by other users with the counsellor (or Administrator) profile.
- 3) Disability Advisors - are the Non-Medical Helpers who can input student session notes, but cannot view counselling session notes.

More about UNITI can be read on their website: <https://www.uniticms.com/>

Administrative records – this information is stored digitally and comprises the student's name, date of initial assessment, dates and number of drop-ins sessions, dates and number of counselling sessions attended, cancelled or DNA'd; other internal support accessed by the student, and details of external referrals. These records are password protected and only accessible by the Head of Student Wellbeing. This information is made anonymous before being used for statistical reports and service development issues. The service adheres to GDPR requirements.

Clinical records – these are brief notes kept by the counsellors to record the content of the counselling sessions. No name or identifying information is included in these notes, the student is identified by a student code. These notes are retained by the counsellors until the end of the counselling contract when they are stored in the student's file in a locked cabinet in the Head of Student Wellbeing's office. These notes are kept for five years and destroyed confidentially. Under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, students have the right to read notes kept about them. If a student wishes to see their notes they must make this request in writing to the Head of Student Wellbeing. If the session notes contain references to a third party this information will be withheld as protection is also granted to third parties.

Clinical Supervision

In accordance with the BACP's Ethical Framework, all members of the Student Wellbeing team are required to be in regular clinical supervision. Clinical supervision is described by the BACP as '*a specialised form of professional mentoring provided for practitioners responsible for undertaking challenging work with people. Supervision is provided to: ensure standards; enhance quality and creativity; and enable the sustainability and resilience of the work being undertaken.*' (BACP 2015b).

Sessional counsellors are responsible for making their own external supervision arrangements. Fortnightly one-hour supervision is paid for by the Wellbeing Service. The BACP recommend that all practising counsellors attend one and a half hours of supervision every month.

The service provides in-house clinical supervision to placement counsellors. This supervision is provided in twice-monthly groups of two hours duration. Where a placement counsellor is still in training, they are also required to have additional supervision arrangements in place.

The clinical supervisor meets regularly with the Head of Student Wellbeing to discuss any concerns around a student's safety, or any issues concerning a placement counsellor's practice.

Graduates

The service provides limited services to students once they have graduated. Counsellors will work with students towards an agreed ending at or before graduation. Where this is not possible, limited provision is extended to ensure a smooth transition into external sources of support and to facilitate appropriate referrals. This will not normally extend beyond one or two sessions.

A graduate may on request arrange to work with their counsellor as a private client once their course has come to an end. A period of at least six weeks is advised between the graduate finishing their course at RADA and starting work with the counsellor in private practice. Any

such arrangement would be a private one between the graduate and the counsellor, and would not be covered by this policy, or by RADA's indemnity insurance.

No current student at RADA may work with a current member of the Wellbeing Service counselling team as a private client.

Counsellors in private practice

If a counsellor has completed their placement at the service, and has set up a private practice, they can be permitted to continue work with a former student privately. Such a contract would be independent of RADA's Student Wellbeing Service, and the service would not hold clinical responsibility for the work. The counsellor would be required to inform the Head of Student Wellbeing that they had agreed to work with the student in private practice. The counsellor would not be required to inform the Head of Student Wellbeing of any safeguarding issues that emerged in the course of the work. The Head of Student Wellbeing would need to ensure that there were any potential safeguarding issues involved with the former student who wishes to become a client were being addressed.

No current student at RADA may work with a current member of the Wellbeing Service counselling team as a private client.

Complaints

The service aims to provide a high-quality and professional service to all students. If any student is unhappy with any aspect of the service they have received, they have the right to complain. There are three stages to the complaints procedure.

Step 1 – informal resolution

If a student is unhappy with any member of the service, they are encouraged to speak to them directly if they feel able to do so, or write to them by email. Alternatively they can speak confidentially to the Head of Student Wellbeing.

If their complaint is about the Head of Student Wellbeing, they may prefer to move straight to step 3 below.

Step 2 – Formal complaint

If it has not been possible to resolve the issue informally, the student may wish to make a formal complaint. Their complaint should be made in writing to the Head of Student Wellbeing and include a clear and concise explanation of what they found unsatisfactory, and any relevant dates, and names of people involved.

The Head of Student Wellbeing will investigate the facts of the complaint and speak to any staff members concerned. The student will receive a written response to their complaint within two weeks including details of any action taken, and information about how to take the complaint further if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

The Head of Student Wellbeing will keep a record of the details of the complaint, any action taken, and copies of all correspondence.

Step 3 – Formal complaint to the Academy

If the student is not satisfied with the response from the Counselling & Wellbeing Service they may complain to RADA's Registrar under the Student Complaints Policy.

All Student Wellbeing service team members are made aware of this complaints procedure during their induction. Regular team meetings ensure that awareness of this procedure is maintained.

Data on formal complaints under this Student Wellbeing Service policy will be published in the service's Annual Report. All data will be anonymous.

Awareness and policy review

All counselling staff are made aware of this policy during their induction.

Regular team meetings ensure that awareness of this policy is maintained, and enable discussion on policy and service improvements and developments.

Students are made aware of this policy via:

- Reference in the Counselling Agreement.
- Inclusion in the RADA Student Handbook published by Student and Academic Services.
- Published on RADA's SharePoint.
- Reference in the Student Wellbeing Service leaflet.

This policy is reviewed annually in consultation with Wellbeing Service team members.

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