

# 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 client 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 Service adheres 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 and in the event of ethical dilemmas.

The Student Wellbeing Service aims to provide a safe, non-judgemental 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

- To provide a high quality, free at point of access, professional and confidential pastoral care & counselling service to students on Higher Education & Foundation courses at RADA.
- To provide informal Pastoral Care on a drop-in basis, or by appointment.
- To provide one to one counselling sessions to students
- To ensure accessibility to the service for students.
- 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 ensure adherence to BACP Ethical Framework.
- To monitor and evaluate the 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 pastoral care to students; managing counselling team; 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 pastoral care and assessment sessions, monitoring & evaluating the service, service development implementation, liaising with teaching and non-teaching staff, undertaking administration tasks as required.

**Team of 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 service manager 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 service manager 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 pastoral care or counselling sessions, the nature of work being carried out, nor the fact that a client is attending counselling to anyone within or outside the Academy.

In exceptional circumstances the Service Manager would inform a member of the Senior Management 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 clients 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](http://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 client to such an extent that even the client would not be able to recognise themselves. Alternatively, a counsellor may wish to gain specific written permission from their client to write about the work. *This permission may only be sought with the express agreement of the clinical supervisor, and service manager.* Clients have the right to withdraw their permission at a later stage.

**Recording sessions** – Similarly as part of their professional development, or for the purposes of supervision, counsellors may wish to record sessions with a client. This may be arranged with the written permission of the client, and the agreement of the service manager. 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. Clients 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.

### **Access to the service**

Counselling and pastoral care services are available to all current H.E. 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. Clients 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. Pastoral care sessions are offered during the students' lunchtimes, 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 service manager. Students may be offered support in advance of the commencement of their course to prepare them to access the curriculum.

### **Limits of Service Provision**

The 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, pastoral care 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.

RADA safeguarding procedures apply equally to online and face to face sessions, any concerns about risk 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 trainings and inductions.
- 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, phoning or texting the service manager. 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 service manager 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 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 pastoral care or counselling referral 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 client 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 service manager and supervisor.
- The duration of each session - 50 minutes.
- Arrangements about contacting the counsellor between sessions.
- Arrangements about cancelling or rearranging a session.
- What happens if the client does not attend a session (DNA).

### **Pastoral Care**

Students may attend informal pastoral care sessions with the service manager 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 clients 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 clients of the service in line with GDPR requirements.

**Administrative records** – this information is stored digitally and comprises the client's name, date of initial assessment, dates and number of pastoral care sessions, dates and number of counselling sessions attended, cancelled or DNA'd; other internal support accessed by the client, and details of external referrals. These records are password protected and only accessible by the service manager. 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 client 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 client's file in a locked cabinet in the service manager's office. These notes are kept for five years and destroyed confidentially. Under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, clients have the right to read notes kept about them. If a client wishes to see their notes they must make this request in writing to the service manager. 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, and paying for them. The BACP recommend that all practicing 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 service manager to discuss any concerns around a client'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 clients 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 client 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 service manager that they had agreed to work with the student in private practice. The counsellor would not be required to inform the service manager of any safeguarding issues that emerged in the course of the work.

*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 clients. If any client 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 client 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 service manager.

If their complaint is about the service manager, 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 client may wish to make a formal complaint. Their complaint should be made in writing to the service manager and include a clear and concise explanation of what they found unsatisfactory, and any relevant dates, and names of people involved.

The service manager will investigate the facts of the complaint and speak to any staff members concerned. The client 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 service manager 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 client 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 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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