

# Student Advice and Wellbeing (SAW) Statement of Service

## Introduction

The primary objective of the Student Advice and Wellbeing Service is to ensure that students studying both at LSTM and overseas receive comprehensive, professional and timely support. The purpose of this document is to outline service protocol and the working practices adopted by the team. The key objectives of the Student Advice and Wellbeing Service are;

- To ensure that all students, irrespective of where they are based, receive professional and responsive **Student Advice and Wellbeing** support throughout their duration of study.
- To enhance the student experience and journey by ensuring that students feel valued and integrated into the LSTM community

## SAW Service overview

The Student Experience Officer (Leah Dempsey) and the Student Welfare and Experience Manager (Lesley Bennett) are responsible for providing responsive, timely and equitable support to students who are registered on courses delivered by LSTM. The Student Advice and Wellbeing (SAW) Service was developed to ensure that students studying both at LSTM and based overseas receive comprehensive, professional and timely support.

The SAW team provides a wide range of support mechanisms including;

- Signposting to accommodation advice and guidance provided by partners, Liverpool Student Homes.
- Big White Wall, an online mental health and wellbeing platform, accessible 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week with a valid LSTM email address
- Support for students with disabilities through Individual Learner Plans (ILP's)
- Financial support via the LSTM Hardship Fund and access to other forms of financial support for International students
- Provision of support for students who are experiencing psychological distress and mental health conditions through a range of mediums including face to face support, online self-help material, eBooks, psycho-educational workshops and personal development groupwork sessions.
- Support to students who pose safeguarding concerns

- A range of activities aimed to enhance to student experience such as the Walking for Health Scheme, Meet the PhD event, craft sessions and fitness sessions
- An Exercise Referral Scheme.
- Opportunities to become a LSTM Student Representative and to convey their own, and other students, experiences and raise concerns through focus groups, forums and surveys.

Both the Student Experience Officer and the Student Welfare and Experience Manager are Safeguarding Focal Points at LSTM and report to the designated Safeguarding Officer. Both members of staff work closely on issues relating to student welfare and support and have individual responsibilities which include:

| The Student Welfare and Experience Manager  | Student Experience Officer  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing protocols to enhance student welfare support including LSTM's Student Mental Health Policy and for providing relevant training to staff.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bespoke support to student with disabilities including physical, disability, sensory disability, specific learning difficulty, mental health and medical conditions</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One to one mental health support appointments, brief therapeutic intervention, psycho-educational workshops and personal development groupwork</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that the student voice is heard through a variety of feedback streams such as Student Representatives, focus groups and committee meetings and surveys</li> </ul>     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice and signposting to external and NHS services to both students and staff who have concerns for student welfare</li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signposting to local accommodation partners – Liverpool Student Homes</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Line management for the Student Experience Officer</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing the student experience through a range of professional networking and social events</li> </ul>   |

Both meet regularly to discuss workflow, explore any challenges in relation to individual roles, plan and evaluate social activities and welfare related events, review current systems and working practices and to discuss SAW objectives and priorities. As part of a wider student journey context, the SAW team sits within a team that includes Recruitments and Admissions and report directly to Michael Lurie, Director of Partnerships and Business Development.

SAW drop in sessions are available to students who are based at LSTM and provide same day access to support services. Where appropriate students are offered follow up sessions, booked appointments, professional one to one therapy and therapeutic groupwork sessions. The SAW team are responsible for signposting, and, in some

instances facilitate referrals, to professional, specialist organisations and NHS services.

## **SERVICE PROMOTION**

Both the Student Experience Officer and the Student Welfare and Experience Manager are responsible for ensuring that information relating to the support that SAW provides to both students based at LSTM and overseas is up to date and relevant. The SAW service is currently promoted on Brightspace, the student intranet, via Twitter, student newsletter and regular email updates from the team.

## **STUDENT EXPERIENCE AT LSTM**

The SAW team work closely with colleagues across LSTM to support and improve learning experiences for students across all programmes. The Student Experience Officer is responsible for collating and analysing student feedback from a variety of sources including questionnaires, focus groups and student forums. They are responsible for producing reports and presenting information to appropriate bodies, including recommendations for the improvement of systems and support provision.

The Student Experience Officer is responsible for organising induction and orientation events for students on taught courses and works alongside the Student Welfare and Experience Manager to ensure that online learners are provided with appropriate information at all points of their course and that they are given the opportunity to become embedded in the LSTM community.

The Student Experience Officer is responsible for developing student-led enhancement events such as mentoring and intercultural events. They work in collaboration with the Unit for Early Career Researcher Support team to deliver joint enhancement activities relevant to students on both taught and research programmes.

The Student Experience Officer signposts students who are seeking accommodation to partners at Liverpool Student Homes (LSH). LSH provide professional, accurate and up to date accommodation advice on short and longer-term accommodation. LSH liaise directly with accommodation providers to obtain up-to-date accommodation availability and assist students in finding accommodation, to understand letting agreements and to resolve any disputed that may arise.

## **SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The Student Experience Officer is responsible for supporting students who have disabilities including physical and sensory disabilities; clinically recognised mental health and long-term health conditions; and Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs). The Student Experience Officer offers support pre-arrival and for the duration of a student's programme through the implementation of reasonable adjustments which are documented and disseminated to relevant academic staff via an Individual Learning Plan.

## **COUNSELLING AND WELFARE SUPPORT**

The Student Welfare and Experience Manager is responsible for providing welfare support and counselling to students who are registered with LSTM. The Student Welfare and Experience Manager is an experienced, accredited university counsellor and mental health professional and is bound by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions which includes attending regular clinical supervision sessions. Clinical supervision sessions are supported by LSTM.

## **ACCESSING SUPPORT AT LSTM**

The SAW team has a dedicated email account for students to contact members of the team – [SAW@lstmed.ac.uk](mailto:SAW@lstmed.ac.uk). Members of the SAW and Registry teams are responsible for monitoring emails throughout the working week and ensure that students receive timely, professional response to their enquiry.

The SAW team offer drop-in sessions at set times during the week for students to access same day support. The drop in is operated from the Student Welfare and Support Office, which is located at the front of the Old School adjacent to the Student Information and Support Desk. Drop in times are well advertised around the School and are Tweeted on a regular basis by staff based in the library.

## **SUPPORT FOR ONLINE LEARNERS**

Students who are studying on-line are encouraged to email the SAW team and are offered support accordingly via email, phone or Skype. At the start of the new academic year, and with online students in mind, an out of office message will be introduced advising students of the timeline for expected responses and providing advice and signposting, where possible, to appropriate health and professional services should the student have a welfare or safeguarding issues.

There are a number of useful platforms available via the Student Intranet for online learners:

- SAW induction presentation specifically aimed at online learners
- Big White Wall - the digital mental health and wellbeing platform that can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 364 days a year and can be accessed from any part of the world using a valid LSTM email address
- SAW information pages on Brightspace and LSTM's student intranet which provides a wealth of information relating to disability support, self-help materials and strategies for coping with stress, anxiety, low mood and sleep difficulties
- Downloadable self-help eBooks that can be accessed through Discover Library Resources
- Student HQ, based within Brightspace, offers online learners the opportunity to connect with other LSTM students
- Monthly Seminar Series available for all students to view at leisure.

## SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Not all students require one to one, face to face support. Students who are experiencing challenges or difficulties will be offered a wide range of support mechanisms and interventions including:

- Drop in facility operated from LSTM. Drop in sessions on Monday and Thursday are specifically aimed at MSc students during the lunch hour, in order to fit in around the academic timetable. SAW provide a drop in specifically for PhD student on Fridays.
- The SAW email account is monitor throughout the day, during the working week. This facility is available to all students, regardless of where they are based.
- One to one support appointments where applicable. Students who are temporarily or permanently based overseas will be offered generic welfare appointments by phone, email or Skype.
- Access to Big White Wall for every member of the LSTM community, which is a digital mental health and wellbeing platform that can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 364 days a year.
- Online psycho-education resources including self-help books and eBooks.
- One to one therapeutic sessions and groupwork for students based at LSTM.
- Referral to a local Exercise Referral Scheme.
- An opportunity to take part in LSTM's Walking for Health Scheme, lunchtime craft for wellbeing sessions and a range of other health and fitness sessions aimed to improve physical and psychological wellbeing.
- Provision of social events and an opportunity to participate in off campus excursions and day trips aimed to enhance the student experience.

## BIG WHITE WALL – Digital Mental Health Support

Students and staff who have a valid LSTM email address have to access Big White Wall (BWW), 24 hours and day 7 days a week, wherever they are in the world. In addition to being available and accessible to all members of the LSTM community BWW serves as a valuable resource and out of hours support mechanism. BWW is a leading digital mental health and wellbeing service for people aged over 16, widely commissioned across the NHS, employers, universities and the military.

### Key features

- Support Network – 24/7 professionally moderated online peer support, self-management resources, creative arts and writing therapies and clinical tests.
- Guided Support – structured **online group programmes** on common mental health and wellbeing issues including anxiety and depression, smoking, weight loss and alcohol and other co-morbid conditions.

The site is monitored by mental health professionals know as 'Wall Guides', who ensure that members of the BWW community are accessing the site safely, respectfully and confidentially. Wall Guides are highly qualified, mental health professionals who are trained in online risk management and are commissioned to

detect potential harm or crisis situations and to intervene in a professional and timely manner.

## **DELIVERY OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND THERAPEUTIC SERVICES**

Students are encouraged to initially raise welfare or mental health concerns via email or through the drop-in facility. Following initial contact students who are based at LSTM may be offered an initial assessment session which lasts up to 45 minutes. For students who are not based in Liverpool an initial discussion can be carried out over the phone or Skype. This session provides an opportunity to explore some of the challenges that the student is currently facing and helps to identify ways forward. By the end of the appointment the aim is for both parties to have identified the best next step to take, which may include engaging in self-help strategies, online programmes or registering for community-based support such as Talk Liverpool IAPT service (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) or speaking to a doctor or mental health professional either at home or in the country where the student is currently based.

For many students, this single appointment can be all that is needed to get them back on track and for others brief therapy may be deemed the most appropriate form of support. Following the initial assessment session, students may be offered the opportunity to undertake a further five sessions of counselling. Students are advised that the maximum amount of therapy session that they will be able to attend in any 12-month period is 6 sessions.

In cases where a student needs are evidently greater than LSTM can provide, a referral to a local or an appropriate NHS service will be suggested. The Student Welfare and Experience Manager will review requests to extend therapy beyond 6 sessions in any 12-month period, and where there is justification to extend beyond the 6-session limit this may be waived. Situations that may constitute to an extended period of support may include risk to self or others, deteriorating mental health, sexual assault/harassment, safeguarding concerns, crisis situations, bereavement of a close friend or relative, trauma, unexpected life stress and where there is severe academic risk. In situations where a student is struggling academically and may require support through the Mitigating Circumstances process or wish to explore the possibility of interrupting their studies they are directed to the Academic Registrar.

Each counselling session will last for approximately 45 minutes and will take place weekly or fortnightly, depending upon availability. Counselling sessions will take place in the Student Welfare and Experience Manager's designated office space, or where viable and safe to do so, over phone or Skype. Sessions will take place on an agreed date at the time specified. Should there be any change in arrangements reasonable efforts will be made to contact the student assuming contact details have been provided.

## **OVERSEAS STUDENTS**

Students who are either temporarily or permanently based overseas have access to Big White Wall, which is a 24/7 mental health platform. Students can access peer support, self help resources and take part in online group programmes.

Students are offered psycho-educational information, via the LSTM Student Intranet and Brightspace. These platforms provide details of useful websites that students can access for information. Where appropriate students are encouraged to seek health related and psychological support within the country that they temporarily or permanently reside. LSTM has invested in a range of psycho-educational self-help eBooks to support students who are based overseas.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is an ethical standard that protects those using accessing welfare and counselling support from disclosure of information without their consent. LSTM takes issues relating to confidentiality, disclosure and data protection extremely seriously. Student confidentiality is respected, and the SAW team ensures that any information that is shared is handled in a sensitive and discreet manner. As a counsellor and accredited member of BACP, the Student Welfare and Experience Manager is professionally and ethically bound to confidentiality and will not talk about or discuss a student issues with anyone unless they have clear permission to do so, apart from when the exceptions to confidentiality apply. Students are asked for verbal, or, in some instances, written consent if they wish for the Student Welfare and Experience Manager to discuss their situation with someone else. An example of who a student may consent for information to be shared with; personal tutor, programme director, supervisor, doctor or other health professional. Information that is disclosed, and with a student's consent, will be shared as a means of gaining support is shared on a 'need to know' basis.

It is a professional requirement that all counsellors attend clinical supervision at least once a month. Supervision takes place offsite and with a clinician who is not associated with LSTM. In supervision a therapist discusses their work with a more experienced clinician to ensure that they are working safely and respectfully. Students' names remain anonymous in these supervision sessions.

## **EXCEPTIONS TO CONFIDENTIALITY**

Exceptions to confidentiality are those required by law, such as issues relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, in cases of imminent danger to themselves or to others or in some cases where individuals are/have been involved in criminal activities such as terrorism or drug trafficking. Statistical, administrative data will be collected and maintained.

## **STORAGE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Students who access support via SAW will have a case file created on an external database, CoreNet. The Student Welfare and Experience Manager and the Student Experience Officer write brief, factual case notes that are stored electronically. Access to the database required prior authorisation a unique code which is generation each time access is requested by an authorised user.

Students who have Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) agreed with the Student Experience Officer will have their ILPs and disability information stored on CoreNet.

With the student's permission, the ILPs will be shared with their Directors of Studies and Module Convenors.

Notes are maintained for reflection, process and supervision purposes and are not attached to a student's academic record on SIS. Access to the CoreNet database is limited to members of the SAW team (Lesley Bennett and Leah Dempsey) and the Academic Registrar (Sarah O'Keeffe).

Other than the member of staff who is recording notes, student information will only be viewed by the members of staff referred to above if there was need to notify a student regarding any unexpected changes to their sessions, such as staff sickness, or where there is significant concern for the health, safety and wellbeing of a student.

Students are advised by members of the SAW team who has access to their CoreNet records and for what purpose. Should a student wish to see the content of their CoreNet record they are permitted to do so and should submit a request in writing to LSTM.

## **EVALUATION**

In order to monitor the effectiveness of the support that is offered at LSTM student are asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and end of their interaction with the service. Questionnaires may range between clinical screening and research tools such as CORE-34 or CORE-10 to the SAW feedback and evaluation forms.

## **STUDENT REPRESENTATION AND FEEDBACK**

Student's views, experiences and suggestions are extremely valuable to the SAW team and through various feedback streams; the SAW team can gain an understanding of student's experience of the services that are provided.

Student Representatives are recruited at the start of the academic year and are integral of not only communicating their cohort's feedback to LSTM through the Board's of Studies and Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) but towards to development of student support services.

## **UPHOLDING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

The key objectives of the SAW team are to ensure that all students, irrespective of where they are based, receive professional and responsive support and that the support provided enhances the student experience and journey. If an LSTM student does not feel as though they have received the level of support and care that the SAW team strives to deliver, suggestions, comments and experiences can be fed back through Student Representatives and various other feedback mechanisms. If a student is unhappy with support provision, they can write to the Student Welfare and Advice Manager, Academic Registrar or, alternatively, the Dean of Education.