

## DEPRESSION & ANXIETY

### Developing a Policy for Depression

#### Guidelines include:

#### 1. A statement of intent

**Explain why the policy has been written and what it should be used for.**

EXAMPLE: This policy outlines the schools response to managing a student presenting with depression whilst the student is in school and is for students, their parents/carers and staff.

#### 2. A definition of clinical depression

**A brief description of depression.**

EXAMPLE: Depression is a common mental disorder that presents with depressed mood, loss of interest, feelings of guilt or low self worth, disturbed sleep and/or changes of appetite, low energy and poor concentration

#### 3. Policy Objectives

**Who the policy is for and why.**

EXAMPLE: This policy is intended for students, parents / guardians and staff.

**How the school will help support pupils with depression**

EXAMPLE: Developing a common understanding through training such as use of **stem4/depression** website; named staff for support; listening to concerns from friends; chain of action:

#### **Illness is suspected or confirmed**

- Parents/guardians are informed (and also referred to school nurse).
- Parents/guardians are recommended to seek consultation with family GP and to get back to the school with the outcome in a recommended period of time.
- School is given permission by parents to have feedback from the GP.
- If no follow up occurs with the GP and the school remains concerned, the school may arrange an appointment with the school doctor. In situations of extreme concern the school is also able to refer directly to CAMHS.
- Based on medical feedback, the suitability of the pupil attending school will be assessed.

**4. Named Core Team**

This team should be based on appropriate experience and training.  
Pupils will then be clear as to whom to approach.

## 5. School Policy on confidentiality

EXAMPLE: Our school policy is to inform parents / guardians if they feel the pupil is at a risk to themselves or to others. We will inform the pupil that the information will be passed on and also to the content of the information. The school may, in the first instance, encourage the pupil to tell their parents / guardian themselves or with the support of a member of the core team.

The school may also need to pass on the information to some of the staff. The pupil and their parents / guardians will be informed of whom these members are and why they would need to know. Information exchanged between staff should only include what is necessary.

If concerns about a pupil have been raised by a friend(s), it should be decided with the pupil on what feedback is given to the friends about the action the school will be taking on their behalf. The school will also make sure that any friends presenting needs will also be addressed either through recommendation of **stem4/depression** website or resources, or referral on to the school nurse

## 6. Management of other relevant circumstances

**Schools policy on steps taken to help someone returning to school after they have been on an in-patient treatment programme for depression.**

Friends will need information, especially as early progress may not always be visible. Nominated staff should check on confidentiality then report on progress. All information should be agreed beforehand and be consistent. Typically, it should be delivered by the same person, in the same format. Preparation for the return of their friend – a discussion group can offer opportunities to express concerns, being clear about responsibility eg. should they talk/not talk about the depression, who should they report concerns to, etc.

An agreement should be made between the returning student, their family, their medical team and the school on how the return to school will be changed and who will be in charge of monitoring the well being and safety of the returning student. This should be reviewed at agreed intervals

**Managing a friend's suicide attempt or a complete suicide – school's role.**

An attempted or completed suicide can have a powerful effect on staff and on other students. Some research studies have indicated an

increased incidence of major depression and post traumatic stress disorder 1½–3 years after a suicide.

The school should have plans in place to deal with an attempted or completed suicide. The designated staff member should try and get as much information as possible through liaison with the student's family or medical team, agree with them on what will be said, and meet with colleagues in the first instance to inform them.

It can be then be decided on who informs each class and exactly what they will be told. It is important that all students hear the same thing. After they have been informed they should have an opportunity to talk about it. Students who appear the most affected will need parental notification and access to mental health referrals.

Rumour control is important. If the media are involved, one person should be designated to speak to them and what is said agreed beforehand. The media should be reminded of responsible reporting to avoid contagion. They should be requested to keep details about 'how to' unpublished and not to glorify the individual or present the suicidal behaviour as a legitimate strategy for coping with difficult situations.

#### **What to say – some guidelines**

1. Be succinct and don't shrink from using the words 'attempted suicide' or completed suicide
2. It is unnecessary to say 'how' or 'what' the person did.
3. If it is an attempted suicide, focus on the positive of the person being in a safe environment, of things being managed effectively
4. To avoid contagion it is important to stress that attempted or completed suicide results from an illness, clinical depression, and that it is a rare outcome of this condition.
5. If it is an attempted suicide, then agree on how best to support each other and their friend
6. Stress the difference between their friend with and without the illness and encourage friendships to resume
7. Encourage friends to resume their own lives and that it is unnecessary to put anything on hold including feeling happy
8. Discuss a plan of action for when the friend returns to school
9. Explain who is available to support the students and also the importance of reporting concerns and how these will be dealt with

#### **7. Documentation**

The school will always document steps taken in the care of a pupil who presents with this condition and any further management details.

**8. Related Policies**

Attach other relevant policies such as Safeguarding and Child Protection,  
Data Protection