

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. NCAD is a diverse and inclusive community. We are committed to providing a welcoming, safe and supportive environment for students and staff. We promote an environment that encourages mental health and wellbeing for everyone and we provide extra support where it is reasonable and appropriate to.
- 1.2. For many students, coming to College is a big transition. It is an enjoyable experience for most students. For some, especially if they already have a mental health condition, it is more difficult. Living away from home for the first time or having a long commute to college, along with meeting the academic demands of the College, can be challenging for students.
- 1.3. NCAD has a duty to respect students' rights, needs and privacy. We have a responsibility to provide a supportive environment that helps students with mental health issues to realise their full potential and to complete their course. However, NCAD must also balance the rights of students who are experiencing mental health issues with the duty it has towards all students and staff. NCAD will also raise awareness of the services provided in the community and by the HSE.

2. Aim

- 2.1. NCAD aims to promote, protect and support mental health and wellbeing among students and staff. This policy is to explain NCAD's approach to supporting student mental health and wellbeing:
 - College policies that relate to student mental health;
 - Procedures to care for and support students who experience or report a mental health concern;
 - NCAD policies about information handling, confidentiality and disclosure of mental health concerns or issues.
- 2.2. The Fitness to Continue in Study Policy deals with academic issues related to mental health issues.
- 2.3. Students who are enrolled on education programmes are primarily supported by the educational establishments where they work.

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2.4. This policy also aims to:

- Make sure that there is a consistent and supportive approach for students who experience or report a mental health issue and to help them achieve their full potential.
- Give guidance to NCAD staff to allow them to identify and support students who are experiencing mental health issues.
- Help to create a culture where people feel safe to disclose mental health conditions or issues.

3. Overview of Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures

- 3.1. The policies and practices at NCAD seek to support mental health and wellbeing. They work to create a College community and campus environment that is supportive and inclusive. It encourages students to engage and connect with one another.
- 3.2. There are resources available for students about the importance of mental health and how to maintain their mental health and wellbeing. There are services to help students to regain mental wellbeing. Some members of staff have received SafeTalk training, which allows them to identify students who might need extra support. SafeTalk trained staff members can offer and give initial help and refer students to the relevant resources and services.
- 3.3. All staff have access to training on how to recognise and support At Risk students.
- 3.4. There are clear guidelines for students on how to apply for academic supports, including information on who to contact in the NCAD Access Policy and the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

4. Terminology

- 4.1. The definitions of *mental health*, *mental health conditions* and *wellbeing* used in this policy come from the World Health Organisation.
- 4.2. Mental Health is a state of mental wellbeing that allows people to cope with the stresses of life, to realise their abilities, to learn and work well and to contribute to their community. It underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, to build relationships and to shape the world that we live in. Mental Health is an important component of our overall health and wellbeing.
- 4.3. Mental health and wellbeing management is an aspect of each and every person's life.
- 4.4. A Mental Health Condition is characterised by a clinically significant disturbance in a person's cognition, emotional regulation or behaviour. It is usually associated with distress or impairment in important areas of function.
- 4.5. The term 'Mental health issue' describes mental distress that may be related to a diagnosable mental health condition.
- 4.6. The term 'mental health issue' refers to a range of experiences that can limit a person's ability to cope with everyday living. Mental health issues, often following major life events such as the end of a relationship, bereavement or leaving home, can have a big impact on

how students feel about themselves and how they deal with the transitions of student life. Symptoms may affect a person at any time.

- 4.7. Wellbeing is a resource for everyday life. Similar to health, it includes quality of life and people's ability to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose. It is possible to have a good sense of wellbeing and still be living with a diagnosed mental health condition.
- 4.8. There is a wide spectrum of mental health issues ranging from severe to general emotional issues. We recognise that there are other ways to describe these experiences apart from the ways they are described in this document. Students may choose to define their experiences differently.

5. Responsibilities

- 5.1. Every member of the NCAD community shares responsibility for creating a safe and welcoming environment.

Role of staff

- 5.2. Staff are often the first person a student discloses a mental health issue to. Staff may also be the first person to notice that a student may have a mental health issue. Staff have a duty to ensure that they are familiar with this policy and the procedures that are related to it.

Role of students

- 5.3. Any student with a mental health condition or disability is entitled to reasonable accommodations to ensure that they are not at any disadvantage in comparison to other students in academic assessments.
- 5.4. We encourage students to register with the NCAD Access Office if they have a mental or physical health condition or disability that may have an impact on their ability to fully take part in student life. The NCAD Access Policy has information on how students can register with the Access Office.
- 5.5. The Access Office invites students to take part in a needs assessment where they will agree on a support plan. Support may include alternative assessment arrangements, academic skills support and assistive technology tools.
- 5.6. The NCAD Student Code applies to every student. Behaviour that has a negative impact on others, or behaviour that breaks policies for maintaining good academic and behavioural discipline is subject to the NCAD Student Code and the NCAD Dignity and Respect Policy.
- 5.7. If you are worried about another student's mental wellbeing, and if it feels right for you, we encourage you to share the resources that are available and encourage them to ask for help. You can refer them to the NCAD Counselling Service or to the NCAD Students' Union Welfare Officer.
- 5.8. Remember your personal limitations. If someone is in immediate danger or is a danger to others, you should call emergency services (telephone 999 or 112) and if you are on campus, you should inform the Attendant's Office.

- 5.9. If you have witnessed or been involved in a distressing situation, we encourage you to seek the support of the College (NCAD Students' Union, NCAD Counselling service or your tutor).

Students on Placement

- 5.10. NCAD is responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing of enrolled students who are on placement with an employer or an external organisation.
- 5.11. Employers and external organisations have a duty of care to students on placement. They should respond to incidents that relate to a mental health issue or concern that happens on their premises.
- 5.12. Employers and external organisations may have their own processes but they should also be aware of NCAD processes.
- 5.13. NCAD will take appropriate steps during the recruitment and admissions process to make sure that students who report a mental health condition are aware of the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing policy.

Erasmus Students

- 5.14. Each higher education institution, by signing the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, commits to ensuring equal access and opportunities to participants from all backgrounds. Students with physical, mental or health related conditions can benefit from the support services that the host institution offers to its local students.
- 5.15. NCAD is responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing of enrolled students who are on Erasmus mobility.
- 5.16. Erasmus host institutions have a duty of care to students on placement. They will respond to incidents that relate to a mental health issue or concern that happens on their premises.

Procedures and Appendices

- I. Appendix 1: Additional Options
- II. Appendix 2: Confidentiality
- III. Appendix 3: Supporting students reporting or experiencing a mental health difficulty during the course of study
- IV. Appendix 4: Suicide Prevention and Response Policy
- V. Appendix 5: Further information on Mental Health problems
- VI. Appendix 6: Responding to students in distress

● Appendix 1: Additional Options

If a member of the College community (staff or student) is showing signs of distress and there is no immediate danger but you think they would benefit from some help, here are the supports available in the College.

Staff are invited to seek advice from:

- Colleagues
- Line Manager
- NCAD Counselling Service

If the student has disclosed information to you, you should protect their confidentiality by talking in general terms.

You can refer the student to the following options:

TogetherAll

TogetherAll is a safe online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health and wellbeing. All students at publicly funded higher education institutions in Ireland can access it for free, 24 hours a day.

Students can access TogetherAll online to connect with peers, use self-help resources, take courses or speak to clinicians. Students can join at www.togetherall.com using their NCAD email address.

Internet Resources

The website www.pleasetalk.ie provides information on available resources.

The HSE provides advice through www.yourmentalhealth.ie and the #LittleThingsMatter campaign. Search for the Little Things hub on Facebook and Twitter.

The Hearing Voices Network provides advice and support for people who hear voices, see visions or have similar sensory experiences www.hearing-voices.org

St. Patrick's Mental Health Services has a mental health support and information service www.stpatricks.ie/mental-health

Turn2me is a free, high-quality, safe, anonymous and confidential space for people to gain support for their mental health online. All Irish residents are entitled to 6 free counselling sessions through Turn2me at www.turn2me.ie

Dublin North, North East Recovery College provides recovery-based education for Mental Health recovery. It is open to everyone with an interest in mental health recovery and courses are available in Dublin North, Louth and Meath www.recoverycollege.ie

Appendix 2: Confidentiality

- 1.1. NCAD respects every student's right to confidentiality. Any information that students disclose relating to a person's mental health will be treated as confidential. Confidential information will only be disclosed with the person's consent. It will only be accessed by people who need to know so that they can give access to services.
- 1.2. The principle that confidential information will not be available to third parties without the written consent of the student applies unless (a) there is a serious concern that there may be a threat to the safety or the life of the student or somebody else or (b) a crime is being investigated or the information is needed by law.
- 1.3. Information held by NCAD complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act and relevant College policies. College staff must take all necessary precautions to ensure the safe-keeping and accuracy of all records containing personal information about students.
- 1.4. If information is recorded or shared, the words used must respect the student and should focus on their needs.
- 1.5. If a student doesn't consent to their information being shared, it should not be shared unless the law requires it, or as detailed below. You should make students aware that if they do not consent to their information being shared with relevant staff, it might not be possible to make reasonable accommodations or to put supports in place.
- 1.6. You should only give information to external third parties, such as parents, if the student gives consent in writing. Occasionally, staff may receive calls from worried third parties such as parents or friends. It is appropriate to listen to their concerns and to act on them if you think there is a risk. However, it is not usually appropriate to give them any information.
- 1.7. In very exceptional circumstances, such as a risk to life or a criminal investigation, you may share information with appropriate third parties without the student's consent. You must consult the Head of Academic Affairs and the Student Counsellor before sharing any information. If it is possible, let the student know what you intend to do. However, protecting the student's safety or the safety of others must take priority.
- 1.8. If a third party asks for information for the purposes of an investigation, you must confirm that they have a legal basis for asking for this information, such as a search warrant. Some professionals, such as counsellors, have their own professional codes relating to confidentiality that apply when they are acting in a clinical capacity. If you are unsure how you should act in a situation like this, consult your line manager or the Head of Academic Affairs.

Appendix 3: Supporting students reporting or experiencing a mental health issue during the course of study.

1. Overview

- 1.1. For many students, coming to college is a big transition. This transition can be exciting, and managing it successfully is an important part of the college experience.
- 1.2. Many students find dealing with change to be stressful and it may contribute to feelings of anxiety. In these circumstances, we encourage students to ask for advice and support from their tutors.
- 1.3. We ask tutors to identify students who may need additional advice, guidance and support. This is especially relevant for students who may not have formally disclosed a disability, but who are experiencing difficulties.

2. Suspension of studies due to mental health issues

- 2.1. Sometimes a student finds a mental health difficulty has an impact on their academic progress or their ability to engage with their studies. In this circumstance, their tutors may encourage them to consider interrupting their studies (take Time Out) to regain their health or to become more able to manage their mental health.
- 2.2. Students should make sure to ask for advice from the Fees and Grants team about the financial implications before they apply to take a Time Out.
- 2.3. International students should make sure to ask for advice on how suspending their studies may affect their immigration status.
- 2.4. If a student decides to suspend their study, the College will work with the student to negotiate an appropriate period of withdrawal. The College may need to see medical evidence to confirm that the student is able to cope with the academic demands of their course before the student returns.

3. Extenuating Circumstances

- 3.1. A student may experience a mental health issue or have a condition that affects their academic performance. In this circumstance, the NCAD Extenuating Circumstances policy should be followed.
- 3.2. Schools that receive an application for extenuating circumstances on the grounds of mental health issues from a student who had not previously reported them will discuss these concerns with the student. If needed, the student will be referred to the NCAD Access Office to enable us to make appropriate support arrangements.

4. Suspension of studies due to disruptive behaviour: Disciplinary procedures

- 4.1. Any student who behaves inappropriately may be in breach of the NCAD Student Code. This may include students with mental health difficulties. Cases of student mental ill health should not normally be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- 4.2. The NCAD Fitness to Continue in Study policy is non-disciplinary and may be used in cases where a student's behaviour constitutes a clear danger to themselves and others.

- 4.3. Most concerns about a student's behaviour can be raised informally. Staff dealing with the informal stages of a disciplinary procedure should ask for advice from their line manager where they know the student has a disability or mental health condition that contributes to the issue as the more appropriate guidance for addressing the behaviour in such instances may be the Fitness to Continue in Study Policy.
- 4.4. If a breach of discipline is being considered through formal disciplinary procedures, staff must make sure that the Head of Academic Affairs is aware of any relevant information. This might be information about disabilities or mental health conditions that have contributed to the issue. In such instances the Fitness to Continue in Study Policy may be the more appropriate policy and procedure through which to address the issue.
- 4.5. The procedures relating to disciplinary action arising from misconduct are described in the NCAD Student Code.
- 4.6. NCAD may ask students who have been suspended or excluded to agree to certain conditions before the student is reinstated. If the offending conduct relates to the effects of a mental health condition, NCAD may ask for professional evidence that allows the college to decide if the student's conduct is likely to be acceptable if they return.

Appendix 4: NCAD Suicide Prevention and Response Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Suicides are not like other sudden deaths. As well as being devastating for family and friends, suicides at college profoundly affect the student and staff community.
- 1.2. NCAD aims to adopt the best possible awareness of suicide prevention and to take all reasonable steps relating to the safety and welfare of the College community.
- 1.3. This policy applies to all members of the College community. It is specifically aimed at staff and students who may encounter a person who is experiencing suicidal thoughts. This may be through teaching, research, professional services or outreach activities. It may be on campus, off campus or in one of our placement providers.

2. Aims

- 2.1. This policy is to explain NCAD's approach to suicide prevention and to direct people to relevant guidance.
- 2.2. The policy aims to:
 - Help to prevent and de-stigmatise suicide by providing tools and putting into action strategies that help prevent suicide.
 - Provide guidance to allow people to intervene, to identify and to support anyone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts.
 - Provide guidance to make sure that anyone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts is directed to help.
 - Create a culture where people feel safe to disclose difficulties or distress.
- 2.3. NCAD aims to create a culture where vulnerable people are noticed and supported. Anyone who discloses suicidal feelings will be responded to quickly, sensitively and appropriately.
- 2.4. This policy is aligned with the NCAD Critical Incident Procedures and Business Continuity Planning Policy.¹

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1. Everyone at NCAD should make sure that they have read the policy. They should make sure that they understand their responsibilities relating to suicide prevention and response.
- 3.2. NCAD has made training and support materials available to staff on Workvivo. All staff should familiarise themselves with the training materials on supporting student wellbeing and identifying and responding to distressed or at-risk students.

¹ The NCAD Suicide Prevention and Response Policy contains some parallel information to the NCAD Critical Incident Procedures and Business Continuity Planning policy. The two policies must be reviewed in tandem to ensure that information is accurate and current in both.

- 3.3. Everyone at NCAD has a responsibility to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of the other members of the NCAD community. Staff must make sure that concerns about suspected, attempted or completed suicide in the College community are taken seriously and responded to quickly and appropriately.
- 3.4. The College has designated suicide prevention and response roles, with specific responsibilities as follows:
- 3.5. The members of the College Management Team with overall responsibility for suicide prevention and response at an institutional level are the Director, the Head of Academic Affairs and the Registrar and Head of Corporate Services.
- 3.6. The Director is responsible for the running of the College. In the event of an incident, the Director has overall responsibility.
- 3.7. The Head of Academic Affairs leads and coordinates the response in the event of an incident involving students.
- 3.8. The Registrar/Head of Corporate Services leads and coordinates the response in the event of an incident involving students.
- 3.9. The HR manager is the primary contact from the College with families of staff members.
- 3.10. The Head of Academic Affairs is the primary contact from the College with the families of students. This responsibility may be delegated or shared if it is appropriate.
- 3.11. The Director, Head of Academic Affairs and Registrar/Head of Corporate Services are responsible for overseeing suicide prevention and response concerns in NCAD. They are also responsible for reviewing the policy regularly, making sure it is fit for purpose.
- 3.12. You should report concerns about the attempted, suspected or completed suicide of a student to the Student Experience Manager and the Head Counsellor.
- 3.13. You should report concerns about the attempted, suspected or completed suicide of a staff member to the Registrar and to Human Resources.
- 3.14. The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for monitoring this policy from a risk assessment perspective. They are responsible for recommending changes to make sure it meets regulatory requirements.

In the event of an incident, only designated personnel may communicate with the media on behalf of the College. This will usually be the Director or the Marketing Officer. They are responsible for monitoring posts on social media about an attempted, suspected or completed suicide, to clarify false information and to monitor responses generally. This responsibility may be shared if it is appropriate.

The Student Experience Manager, Head Counsellor and NCAD Students' Union, reporting to the College Management Team, will manage the following:

- **Suicide Prevention:** Arranging training in suicide awareness, how to have conversations and how to intervene.
- **Suicide Intervention:** Co-ordinating an immediate response during a crisis situation, supporting people who are in distress or experiencing suicidal thoughts.

- **Suicide Postvention:** Supporting people following an incident of suicide. They will make sure that an individual approach is taken for anyone identified as being at risk of contagion, including referring them for mental health support if needed.

4. Training

- 4.1. All NCAD staff should complete training around suicide awareness, suicide prevention, early intervention and suicide postvention.
- 4.2. NCAD will offer specific training to anyone who is likely to be in contact with 'high risk' people, for example Attendants and Faculty staff (both academic and professional services).
- 4.3. NCAD will offer optional extra training in suicide awareness to Students' Union officers, Class Representatives, Student Mentors and other interested students to raise awareness of how to have conversations with someone experiencing suicidal thoughts and how to intervene.

5. Procedures: Interventions

5.1. Early Intervention

- 5.1.1. NCAD will take appropriate steps during the recruitment and admissions process to make sure that students are aware of the Suicide Prevention and Response policy.
- 5.1.2. Everyone at NCAD should make sure that they understand this policy. Everyone is responsible for creating a supportive culture that supports people who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts.

5.2. Early Intervention – High Risk Groups

- 5.2.1. NCAD recognises that some groups are at a greater risk in terms of suicide and suicidal thoughts. The following are potentially in a high-risk group:
 - Men
 - People with a history of self-harm
 - People experiencing/with experience of victimisation, abuse or trauma including bereavement, bullying
 - Asylum seekers and refugees
 - LGBTQIA+ people
 - People struggling with their sexuality identity or appearance
 - People transitioning from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to Community Mental Health teams with diagnosed depression.

6. Procedures: Dealing with incidents in relation to suicide on or off campus

- 6.1. You should treat an attempted, suspected or completed suicide as an emergency health and safety concern. If you find a person who is seriously injured either on or off campus, you should immediately contact the emergency services by calling 999 or 112.
- 6.2. If you receive information about an attempted, suspected or completed suicide, you should contact the appropriate member of the College Management Team and the Attendants once you have contacted emergency services. See Appendix 1 of this policy for contact details.
- 6.3. A person who is experiencing suicidal thoughts might express this in a variety of ways or in a range of settings. For example, a person may:
 - Verbally express or display signs of suicidal thoughts;
 - Witness or hear about someone else expressing suicidal thoughts;
 - Show signs of serious self-harm.
- 6.4. If a person expresses suicidal thoughts, it is important that they are able to talk to someone and ask for help.
- 6.5. It is always essential to act quickly, sensitively and professionally. You should treat a concern of this nature like any other health emergency.
- 6.6. A person who is experiencing suicidal thoughts should not be left alone. You should not promise confidentiality in cases where someone's life is at risk. In situations like this, confidentiality can be waived.

7. Procedures: Dealing with an immediate emergency

- 7.1. If you suspect a person is in immediate danger of harming themselves or attempting suicide, you should call an ambulance by phoning 999 or 112.
- 7.2. If it is not possible to call an ambulance, you can arrange to escort the person to the nearest emergency department. You can use the HSE website to find the nearest emergency department: <https://www2.hse.ie/services/emergency-departments/>
- 7.3. If the person you are concerned about is on campus, you should inform the Attendants. They will make sure that the ambulance is directed to the specific location when it arrives.

8. Procedures: Dealing with individuals who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts – intervention and support

- 8.1. One of the best things you can do if you think someone may be experiencing suicidal thoughts is to encourage them to talk about their feeling and to listen to what they say. We recommend you:
 - Reassure the person that they are not alone;
 - Explain to the person that you are there to listen;
 - Encourage the person to talk;
 - Ask the person questions about how they are feeling;

- Explain to the person that you are alerting a trained member of staff to help provide professional support with how they are feeling.

8.2. A person may be at risk if they are feeling suicidal and they:

- Have made a plan about how they will kill themselves;
- Have access to a method to kill themselves;
- Are impulsive, or act impulsively;
- Have previously attempted suicide;
- Have close contact with someone who attempted or who died by suicide;
- No longer fear death;
- Are visualising dying or after their death.

8.3. If you are concerned about a student, contact the Head of Academic Affairs and the Head Counsellor. Let the student know you are doing this.

8.4. If you are concerned about a member of staff, contact the Registrar and Human Resources. Let the staff member know that you are doing this.

8.5. If possible, the person you are concerned about should be involved in all discussions, decision-making and any communications relating to the issue.

8.6. If there is an immediate emergency, follow the guidance in Section 7.

8.7. If there is a concern related to suicide, NCAD has a duty of care to both the person concerned and to the person who is made aware of the attempted or suspected suicide. It can be difficult to understand feelings and thoughts of suicide. Hearing about a suicide or another person's suicidal thoughts can be upsetting and overwhelming.

8.8. If you are a student and you need more advice and support, you should contact the NCAD counselling service.

8.9. If you are a staff member and you need more advice and support, you should contact the Employee Assistance Programme.

9. Procedures: Responding to a suicide in the College setting – Postvention

9.1. The term postvention refers to actions taken following a suicide that aim to support the people who are bereaved. Postvention aims to reduce the risk of further suicides by making sure lessons are learnt to reduce risk in future.

9.2. This section is a brief overview of Postvention procedures. A fuller description may be found in the NCAD Critical Incident Procedures and Business Continuity Planning policy.

10. Procedures: Post-incident review

10.1. The College Management Team will determine the nature of a post-incident review following a completed suicide or an attempt of suicide. This review will be managed by the Student Experience Manager.

- 10.2. A review allows the College to assess if the policy and the College's response to an incident was effective. The Registrar and Head of Corporate Services will consider any recommendations that come out of the review.
- 10.3. The family of the person who has completed suicide will be offered the opportunity to help the College learn lessons from the loss of a loved one.
- 10.4. The Student Experience Manager and Head Counsellor will identify members of the College community who have been involved with a person who has completed suicide and offer them appropriate support.

11. Managing the press and social media

- 11.1. Research shows that media reporting can have a negative impact on communities that have been affected by suicide. It can encourage imitative behaviour or cause a higher occurrence of suicidal thoughts in vulnerable groups. Press intrusion can worsen people's grief at a very difficult time in their lives. It is important for media reporting to be sensitively managed and for the families to be supported.
- 11.2. The Director's Office or nominated person will lead all communication with the local and national press. They will monitor the reporting of an attempted, suspected or completed suicide on widely used social media platforms and risk assess if a response is required.
- 11.3. Best practice guidelines, i.e. [Samaritans Media Guidelines for the Reporting of Suicide](#), will be applied when communicating with the local and national press.
- 11.4. The College will work with the local public health authorities to provide support and direction when dealing with concerns relating to local media and press.

Appendix 1:

Contact details for staff members to inform NCAD that an incident has occurred on or off campus

| Office | Name | Email address | Phone number |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Director | Sarah Glennie | director@ncad.ie | 086 811 9377 |
| Head of Academic Affairs | Siun Hanrahan | hanrahans@ncad.ie | 087 608 3006 |
| Head of Corporate Services | Gerry McCoy | mccoyp@ncad.ie | 087 271 2777 |

Appendix 5: Further information on Mental Health Problems

Depression and Anxiety

Depression and anxiety are the most common forms of mental health problems. **Depression** most commonly presents as a low mood, poor concentration, failing grades, loss of outside interests and withdrawing from work, academic or social activity. Sometimes it is accompanied by a risk of suicide and self-harm. People who become depressed might not recognise what is happening and only ask for help when they are prompted by others. Depression can be treated by therapy and/or medication.

Anxiety is a feeling of unease. Everyone experiences it from time to time when they are faced with a stressful situation, such as before an exam or during a worrying time such as illness.

However, for around 1 in 9 people in Ireland, anxiety interferes with normal life. Excessive anxiety is often associated with other conditions, such as depression. Anxiety is considered abnormal when:

- It is very severe or goes on for a long time;
- It happens without any stressful events;
- It interferes with activities such as going to lectures, work or socialising

Anxiety is best treated by therapies such as anxiety management, graded exposure and education. Medication may also be needed.

Severe and Enduring Mental Health problems

Most severe and enduring mental health problems such as bipolar affective disorder and schizophrenic illnesses are treatable and would not in themselves mean that a person would not be able to engage in everyday life.

Alcohol and drugs

Excessive alcohol use is likely to have an impact on a person's mental health whether it is being used as a way to cope with underlying mental health problems or whether it is having an adverse effect on the person's mood. Recent research has shown that excessive drug use (e.g. cannabis, alcohol) can cause mental health problems.

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia or binge eating are often first noticed by family, friends or colleagues. There are many potential causes of eating disorders but they can be linked to low self-esteem. Psychological treatment can often help. A medical referral may be needed.

Self-harming behaviour

Self-harm can include cutting, burning, bruising and hitting. The reasons for self-harm are complex and can seem difficult to understand. For some people it is a way of trying to manage difficult feelings or experiences.

