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# TRAINEE THERAPISTS PLACEMENT HANDBOOK

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**December 18**

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**B**

Be the best that we can be to support our people

**E**

Empower and enable members to connect with their communities

**L**

Lead the way in addressing inequality in our communities

**I**

Innovate so that we can be great at what we do

**E**

Empathise with and support those who reach out for help

**V**

Visualise a better future for people with mental health issues

**E**

Expect the best out of our staff, volunteers, trainees & peers

# Stepping Stones Information for Trainees and Volunteers

## **Introduction:**

Welcome to Stepping Stones! This handbook has been designed to give you a succinct overview of the organisation through its history to the current situation and the procedures you need to be mindful about that will ensure you have a smoother induction into the organisation and a successful placement.

## **History:**

Stepping Stones' origins date back to the early 1990s, which saw a group of local people come together in Clydebank to improve services for people with mental health needs in the local area. The people involved were psychiatric patients who were inspired by the de-institutionalisation of psychiatric hospitals and the subsequent hospital closure programme set out as part of the NHS and Community Care Act (Scotland) 1990. The Act ensured that each person's community care needs were assessed and that those needs had to be considered before allocation of resources. Underpinning the Act was the knowledge of the psychiatric survivor's movement which arose out of the civil rights movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly in the USA. It could be argued that the self-help and advocacy movement in the field of mental health services developed in the 1970s following the civil rights movement and it was with this in mind the group involved in developing Stepping Stones established the organisation as 100% user led. Following this, Stepping Stones became a charity in 1991 and later, in 2001, became a company limited by guarantee.

Originally serving the Clydebank area, the organisation received funding from West Dunbartonshire Council through the Mental Health Specific Grant and in 1995 the first staff members were recruited. The charitable objectives of the organisation were mainly reflected in the types of services designed. They were mostly based on group work and peer support fully utilising the skills of the members in the governance of the organisation, providing opportunities for empowerment, self advocacy, employability and education. In March 2016, the organisation held an extraordinary general meeting to propose a change in its Articles of Association. In effect, the change allowed non members to join the board with full voting rights, however, board members who are drawn from Stepping Stones retain the majority helping the organisation retain its user led status. The changes in the Articles were passed unanimously.

In 2006 Stepping Stones commenced providing services across West Dunbartonshire utilising NHS and community premises. Around 2004, Stepping Stones agreed to host a counselling service as part of the Local Health Care Cooperative Stress Network in partnership with public

and third sector organisations, and funded by the NHS. Stepping Stones was tasked to provide a time limited counselling service of thirteen hours of person centred counselling per week.

**Current situation:**

Stepping Stones provides a range of mental health support services to people who have mild to moderate mental health conditions. The services are person centred and collaborative in their approach and are informed by a number of codes of practice and ethics. The people who use our services are called members.

The services include group work; peer support opportunities; 1:1 support (time limited and non time limited); complementary therapies; Person Centred Therapy (PCT) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Occasionally, depending on availability, we will offer the integrative approach.

Since 2010, Stepping Stones has provided volunteer/trainee based PCT and CBT services. Trainees are recruited from a variety of educational establishments. Mainly, these are; Glasgow Caledonian University (D.Psych in Counselling Psychology), Strathclyde University (MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy), Centre of Therapy - Glasgow (Diploma in CBT) University of the West of Scotland (Diploma in CBT), and Persona (Diploma in Psychological Wellbeing, Counselling and Psychotherapy). We will work with other agencies providing they meet our criteria in terms of governance and level of qualifications.

**Current staff at Stepping Stones:**

John White - Operations Director

Samantha Beckett - Counselling Team Leader (Placement Educator)

Jackie Sroka - Team Leader (Support Service)

Elaine McWilliams - Group Development Worker

Coliosa Boyle - Support Worker

Danai Batziou - Person Centred Therapist

Cathie McGrory - Business Admin Team Leader

Tom Brogan - Admin Assistant

Ashlie Smart – Relief Support Worker

Michael McAveety – Relief Support Worker

Paul White - Domestic Technician

Stuart Campbell - Domestic Technician

Sarah Cuthbertson - Admin Modern Apprentice

### **Therapy at Stepping Stones:**

The vast majority of our referrals are either self referral or signposted by GP's in West Dunbartonshire. The feedback has been generally good from those individuals who have received therapy in the past and more recently our attendance rates are at around 75%. Our interventions are relatively short and the aim is to complete the sessions within 8 weeks, although this can be extended to 12 providing there is a review of therapy between the trainee and the member around the 8th session, if not before. What we are asking you to do is to review your work with the member on a regular basis. Further extensions are possible to 16 weeks with the agreement of the Counselling Team Leader.

Our waiting lists historically run at around 12 weeks but the waiting times can increase depending on the level of demand for the service. The current Scottish Government Health, Efficiency and Access to Treatment (HEAT) target for psychological therapies is 18 weeks from referral to appointment. At present Stepping Stones, as a Third Sector Organisation (Charity), is not bound by these, however, good practice dictates that we aim to improve access to psychological therapies by keeping waiting times to a minimum.

Stepping Stones offers a **Support Service (Care at Home)**, which is registered with the Care Inspectorate. A team of support staff help facilitate this service. Should there be an occurrence of a crisis situation, we expect that trainees will link in with the on-site support staff. Some members in therapy will be engaged with the Support Service.

Also, members in therapy have access to Stepping Stones services and these are listed near the front of this handbook. If you feel the members you are supporting in therapy would benefit from any of these services then speak to any of the staff available who will advise you of the process for this.

### **National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE):**

NICE recommends talking therapies for a range of mental health problems including depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, borderline personality disorders and schizophrenia. Talking therapies help people recover from relationship breakdown, loss, bereavement and other situations that cause distress. Some members we support will be on a medication regime supported and managed by an appropriate NHS healthcare professional or GP. Talking therapies in Stepping Stones will vary in terms of length and intensity for each individual who is experiencing the conditions mentioned.

We offer 8 sessions initially, but this can be extended to 12. In some cases this can be extended further to 16. Each case will be considered on its merit and the length of the talking treatment

offered will be down to the severity of the symptoms and the ability of the trainee to undertake the work.

### **Administrative Procedures:**

- Our administration team organise all appointments and manage your bookings. You should notify them immediately of any changes to your schedule. Before leaving the office each week ensure the admin team are aware of your appointments for the following week, including any cancellations given with advanced notice, or appointment slots to be filled with a new member.
- You will be allocated a weekly slot and a room will be available to you for the duration of the placement unless you are advised otherwise.
- You will be allocated a file in the middle drawer of the filing cabinet in the staff office. All relevant paperwork is stored therein and if you run out of copies please advise admin who will replenish supplies.
- In line with data protection and ethical guidelines member's files, in whole or part, should **never** be removed from the office. A copy request procedure is in place should you require copies of any paperwork in your member files. You will be advised of this procedure on starting placement.
- All paperwork within a member's file should be complete and handed to our administration team when the counselling sessions end or discontinue.
- Stepping Stones completes an assessment with members prior to them accessing therapy. This can comprise of a 45 minute face to face, or telephone assessment. A health and safety questionnaire is completed by the assessor based on the information received. Information contained in the assessment, and any case notes, will be passed to the therapist prior to the first appointment.
- In the first therapy session, the therapist will complete a Member Agreement (contract) with the member. This is sent out to members prior to the first session. In all cases please ask the member to sign the form, and any other documentation as instructed, if it has not been completed already.
- Organisational documentation will be available for members who require it i.e. complaints procedure, confidentiality policy. Please advise members of this.
- Our cancellation policy is detailed in the Member's Agreement, and frequent cancellations will lead to service being withdrawn. It is the responsibility of administration staff and the Counselling Team Leader to enforce the cancellation policy, however, you should also be aware of this policy, and you should raise any concerns regarding cancellations with the administration staff or the Counselling Team Leader.

- If members give reasonable notice of cancellation before a scheduled appointment they will be allocated another appointment with you for the same time the following week.
- When a member does not attend (DNA) for their session they are expected to contact the service and re-arrange an appointment within four weeks. If they do not do this their case will be closed. We refer to this scenario as the four week rule.
- If they contact within the four week period they will go into the queue and will be re-allocated their counsellor when a space becomes available.
- When your placement nears an end we expect that you will see through your work with members. Passing on members to other counsellors mid therapy is not acceptable and should be avoided.
- We monitor and evaluate our services using various tools and methodology. **CORE10** is our main evaluation tool and we have prepared a user's guide for trainees which will be made available. Please complete a **Post Therapy Review** sheet when you are nearing endings with members.

#### **Members Expressing Suicidal Ideation or Intent:**

You should notify staff immediately if a member expresses suicidal intent. We have established a protocol in the unlikely occurrence of this event; however, the policy of the organisation is to place the safety of the member at risk first. Training in ASIST, Safetalk, Storm and Suicide talk is available from <http://www.chooselife.net/Training/index.aspx>.

#### **Staff on Duty:**

There is always at least one member of staff in the office when you are in sessions. Mostly, support staff will be available for information and debriefing should this be required. Please ask the staff for support if you need it.

#### **Completing Therapy Session Notes:**

The following guidance applies record keeping across all talking therapies and general support.

Keeping clear, accurate, and up to date session notes when working therapeutically with members is essential. These notes serve as evidence of your work, to show you are following acceptable ethic standards, and utilising appropriate interventions. Session notes can also have legal implications, and can be used as evidence of your practice if, for example, they are required by court. Well kept session notes are also essential as a memory aid for both you and the member you are working with, and allows the therapeutic work to be reviewed easily by yourself or any other profession you are collaborating with to support that particular member.

### Key points to note:

- **No blank spaces** are to be left in between sessions. Blank spaces on the page could be added to later without your knowledge which would result in inaccurate notes. Use a line across the page to fill any blank spaces or empty lines you leave between sessions.
- **Tippex is not to be used.** If mistakes are made or corrections needed these must be scored out and then initialled to indicate who has made the correction.
- Ensure session notes are **neat and legible** so that they can be reviewed, if needed, by the Counselling Team Leader, or any other person(s) requesting access to member's files.
- All content of the session notes should be kept "**relevant**" and "**factual**". Your observations are not facts, and should be noted as such. If the member does not tell you how they are feeling you can only describe your impression and note any physical signs of emotion, for example say "**the member appeared to become emotional in the session and she began crying**" instead of "the member was sad today". If the member tells you they are feeling emotional, and names some emotions, you can state "the member reported feeling emotional, she told me she felt sad and anxious today." **It can be helpful to try and use the same words the member used in session.**
- If a member cancels (CNA) or does not turn up (DNA) to their appointment **this must also be noted** in the session notes.
- Session notes **should not contain any identifying information** such as the member's names, the member's workplace, or names of any other individuals the member discusses. Instead you can use anonymised terms such as 'the member reported...', 'the member reported that her son/friend/neighbour...', 'he/she reported...' or the member's initials.
- The use of **colloquialisms are not appropriate**, for example, using the term "**hot cross bun**" to describe the five factor or five areas model, etc.
- **CBT session notes** should show a clear structure to the session as is expected in CBT. **The mutually agreed agenda** of the session should be made clear, followed by review of agreed practice, session content, goal setting for the following session, and any session feedback. Guidance can be found for session note prompts.
- The use of the term "**homework**" is not recommended in Stepping Stones. This can lead to members feeling patronised and anxious depending on their experience of homework in the past. There is also a risk that you will encourage infantilisation. **As a power imbalance already exists between therapist and member**, we recommend that this situation should not be exacerbated by its use. Instead, we recommend that you should use the term between session work or practice or any other word that is more in keeping with an adult service.

- **All CBT tools used** in your work with the member should be evidenced in the member's file. All worksheets, where possible, should be copied and a copy kept in the member's file. This includes worksheets the member has completed between sessions and any worksheets completed in session. ***If you cannot provide a copy of these state why in the session notes***, for example “the member forgot to bring the worksheet back to session therefore a copy is not available.” It is helpful for members to have copies of their worksheets, so ask to copy these for the file rather than taking the original worksheet from the member.

It is a good idea to ensure that your external supervisor is aware of the expectations Stepping Stones has of you, and that your supervisor is sufficiently trained and experienced to support you with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and keeping appropriate session notes.

### **Recording sessions:**

Recording of therapy sessions is permitted at Stepping Stones with informed consent by the member you wish to record.

Recording of therapy sessions must always be completed using audio recording equipment provided by Stepping Stones, and subsequent audio recordings processed and encrypted by admin staff before leaving the premises. The audio recording process will be explained to you at induction along with a separate agreement to abide by this process. A Member Consent/Agreement Form Requesting ‘Taping’ of Member Work should be completed as part of this process, and kept in the member’s file.

### **Clinical Governance in Stepping Stones:**

Currently, the Counselling Team Leader is recognised by educational establishments as being suitably qualified and/or experienced to facilitate the role of placement educator/mentor for trainees. Regular clinical support is offered to the Counselling Team Leader by the Operations Director. The Counselling Team leader also receives professional supervision by an external contractor. If the Counselling Team Leader is unavailable, the Operations Director will be available to support.

Staff, trainees and volunteers receive full clinical supervision and mentoring support from Stepping Stones and/or an external supervisor. Volunteers are post qualified and have carried out some of their training in Stepping Stones. Clinical responsibility for all work with individuals is the responsibility of suitably qualified and experienced employee(s) of Stepping Stones.

Quarterly and annual reports describe the clinical outcomes achieved with Stepping Stones members utilising the Clinical Outcome in Routine Evaluation (CORE10) for individual work and Warwick- Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale (WEMWBS) for group work.

Risk issues are managed in accordance with Stepping Stones protocol. Assessment and allocation of cases is carried out under the supervision of the Counselling Team Leader and Operations Director. Members who experience complex trauma are signposted to appropriate agencies such as, Challenging and Responding to Abuse (CARA), Sandyford Clinic, Primary Care and Community Mental Health Teams.

Stepping Stones' services are person centred and collaborative in their approach and are informed by; Health and Social Care Standards, the Scottish Social Services Codes of Practice, the Confederation of Scottish Counselling Associations (COSCA), British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP) Code of Ethics.

### **Gifts:**

Our services are free at the point of contact for members. We will accept cash donations should they be offered to the organisation. We discourage members from making personal gifts to staff, trainees or volunteers. Should any personal gift be offered you should politely refuse this and advise the person offering the gift that it is against organisational policy to accept gifts of this nature, however, we recognise that members want to show their appreciation for the support they have received in some way. The Operations Director will use their discretion when reviewing gifts of a personal nature.

Generally though, all gifts will be recorded in the gifts register and will be held by the organisation and used in future fund raising activities or Stepping Stones activities as appropriate.

### **Health and Safety and Lone Working:**

Stepping Stones has a health and safety policy which is reviewed on a regular basis. Good practice identifies that individual responsibility is a key factor in ensuring that people avoid situations in which there may be risk. A **Health and Safety Statement** is available on request.

Stepping Stones operates a lone working policy and this ensures that there is at least one person free, keeping a watchful eye and a listening ear on the activity within the consulting rooms. As the rooms have a degree of sound proofing, personal alarms are available for trainees for the duration of their placement. Please ask admin if you need a personal alarm. You will be asked to sign these out and return them after your placement is completed.

### **Placement Leave Requests:**

In order to submit a request for leave, you should complete the **Placement Leave Request Form** and ensure the placement educator and administration team have sight of the form in good time. The amount of notice required is four weeks if the break is for two weeks. For extended

breaks of more than two weeks, twelve weeks notice is required. All requests, providing they are timeous, will normally be honoured, however, we reserve the right to use discretion when dealing with requests.

### **Sickness Absence:**

You should notify the administration team as soon as possible by telephone or text when you are unfit to meet your commitments due to sickness. Sickness absence will be monitored in accordance with your educational establishment's guidance as described in the appropriate hand books.

### **Practice Requirements:**

Throughout this handbook you will note the level of conduct required to enable you to have a successful placement in Stepping Stones. There are some clear do's and don'ts listed within the handbook. The listed items are not exhaustive and we expect that you will know about and adhere to the various codes of ethics from BACP, BABCP, HCPC and BPS, etc., when you are on placement in Stepping Stones.

We are a learning organisation and recognise mistakes can be made. We expect that when mistakes are made you will acknowledge them, take responsibility for them, reflect on them and move on from them. We will support you in your journey if you follow these rules. However, when they are not followed it may put your placement opportunity at risk. Volunteers have their own Disciplinary and Grievance Policy, whilst trainees will follow the guidance given in their course handbook.

Finally, our reputation has been years in the making. We have good relationships with referrers, members and carers. Please note that when someone receives a poor service, it can have a damaging impact on the good reputation it has taken us years to build. You should notify the Counselling Team Leader (Placement Educator) at the earliest opportunity should relationships with members or staff be causing you concern.

Good luck in your placement!

Any queries can be directed to the Counselling Team Leader @ [sam.beckett@stepstones.org.uk](mailto:sam.beckett@stepstones.org.uk) or 0141 941 2929.



**STAFF/ VOLUNTEER TRAINEE EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Tel No:**

**Mobile No:**

**Email Address:**

**PVG Number:**

**Primary Contact:**

**Address:**

**Tel No:**

**Mobile No:**

**Secondary Contact:**

**Address:**

**Tel No:**

**Mobile No:**

**I hereby give permission to the Stepping Stones Organisation to contact my primary or secondary contact in the event of an emergency.**

**Sign:**

**Date:**