
TRAINEE THERAPISTS PLACEMENT HANDBOOK

December 2020



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BELIEVE – Our Values!

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

Introduction and Service History

Welcome to Stepping Stones!

The purpose of this handbook is:

- To give an overview of Stepping Stones history and development to current situation.
- Explain administrative procedures you will be expected to follow during placement.
- Explain how our service responds to members expressing suicidal ideation or intent, and your role in this procedure.
- Explain service policies relevant to your role as a trainee person centred or CBT trainee.

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.

History

Stepping Stones was established by local people in Clydebank in the early 1990's in response to a desire to improve mental health services in the area following the de-institutionalisation of psychiatric hospitals. The service was established as 100% user led, inspired by self-help and advocacy, and despite change and growth over the years remains a user-led organisation.

To read more about Stepping Stones' history visit <https://www.stepstones.org.uk/about-us/>.

The Service Currently

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

The services include group work; peer support opportunities; 1:1 support with a mental health support worker; Person Centred Therapy (PCT) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Occasionally, depending on availability, we will offer the integrative approach.

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.

Stepping Stones currently offers a blended approach to support delivery, with options for face to face, telephone, or video link appointments. Currently, the majority of the support delivered is via remote options, however face to face appointments can be offered where members are not able to engage with remote delivery options. This will be discussed with members at the referral and assessment stage.

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
Ashley Dougan – Peer Support Worker
Cathie McGrory - Business Admin Team Leader
Tom Brogan - Admin Assistant
Michael McAveety – Relief Support Worker
Marie-Ann Mitchell - Domestic Technician

Therapy at Stepping Stones

Since 2010, Stepping Stones has provided volunteer/trainee based PCT and CBT services. Trainees are recruited from a variety of educational establishments.

A majority of referrals to Stepping Stones are self-referrals. Individuals can refer over the phone or online. Stepping Stones also accepts referrals from several organisations across West Dunbartonshire such as GP's, Primary Care Mental Health Team, Community Mental Health Team, local addictions service, Social Work teams, and more.

All individuals referring to Stepping Stones will complete an assessment appointment, with a member of the staff team before being allocated to PCT, CBT, or other support. Cases are also reviewed by senior staff in an allocations process in order to ensure the service agreed at assessment is appropriate.

During assessment individuals will have an opportunity to explore their current difficulties, goals for support, and complete a health and safety assessment. All of this information will be stored in the member's file and provided to the allocated therapist prior to first therapy session.

Therapy offered is time limited, with an initial limit of 8 sessions, which can be extended to 12 upon review between the therapist and the member at session 8 or earlier. In some cases an extension will be granted to a maximum of 16 sessions. This can only be offered after discussion with the Counselling Team Leader.

Attendance rates for therapy are typically 75-80%, and a cancellation policy exists to try to limit cancellations and non-attendance.

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.

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. The Counselling Team Leader receives regular supervision from the Operations Director and an external clinical supervisor.

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.

You can read more about NICE treatment recommendations for a variety of mental health problems here: <https://pathways.nice.org.uk/>

Members Expressing Suicidal Ideation or Intent

At Stepping Stones we believe in responding quickly and consistently to any report of suicidal ideation or intent, regardless of how many times a member has expressed this. We expect trainees to play a role in assessing this risk, and being open to discussing suicidal thoughts, ideations, intent, or plans with members. However, it is also important that you feel supported in your role as a trainee should you encounter member's experiencing risk.

If a member expresses suicidal plans and/or intent, you should **immediately notify a member of staff** before the member leaves the building. This will allow you, the member, and the staff member to explore options for creating a safety plan. Stepping Stones has established a protocol for staff which enables us to make referral to local CMHT duty team.

If a member is not at immediate risk but you still have concerns about suicidal thoughts or ideations the member is experiencing it is important to speak to the Counselling Team Leader at the earliest availability. This can help manage risk if the member contacts the service in between therapy appointments.

We encourage all trainees and volunteers to take part in suicide awareness training, such as ASIST, Safetalk, and Suicide talk which are available from; <http://www.chooselife.net/Training/index.aspx>.

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.

Administrative Procedures for Trainees and Volunteers

Requesting Leave from Placement

In order to submit a request for leave, you should complete the **Placement Leave Request Form** and ensure the placement educator and admin team have sight of the form in good time as detail on the request form.

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 admin 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 handbooks.

Cancellations and non-attendance procedures

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.

Our cancellation policy is detailed in the Member's Agreement, and frequent cancellations will lead to service being withdrawn. It is the responsibility of admin 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 admin staff or the Counselling Team Leader.

When a member does not attend (DNA) they will be expected to contact the service if they want their support to continue. Member have 4 weeks to contact before their case is closed, and may have to wait for a space to become available again with their therapist.

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.

COVID-19 Health and Safety Measures

Based on current guidance, Stepping Stones has introduced additional measures in response to the COVID-19 outbreak to ensure a high standard of cleanliness in the office. Please be aware of the following measures, many of which you will be asked to participate in.

Touch point cleaning- All staff, trainees, and volunteers must clean teach points in therapy rooms when they have finished using the room. Touch points in therapy rooms include: door handles, lightswitches, power socket switches, window handles, chair arms, desks, laptops, phones, and anything you have touched whilst using the room. Staff will be responsible for cleaning the general office space. Cleaning materials are available in each therapy room and throughout the office space.

If you use the kitchen facilities, you must also clean any touchpoints when you have finished in the room, and ensure no items are left out on the sink draining board. Any items being brought into the

office to be put in the fridge must be cleaned before doing so, for example lunch boxes, packaged food, etc.

Use your own pen- Please come to placement with your own writing equipment. Please use your own pen to sign in when you come in to the office and for completing paperwork and therapy notes. Please note: therapy notes must be completed in blue or black ink only. (Further guidance on completing therapy notes can be found on page 11 - 12)

Hand washing- sanitising hand gel is available in the office and reception, and hand soap and hot water in the kitchen. You **must** sanitize or wash your hands on entry to the office, and it is good practice to do so again throughout the day more regularly than usual.

Face coverings - if you travel to placement using public transport you will be provided with hand gel and a regular supply of disposable and reusable face coverings. Unless you are exempt, please ensure you are wearing a mask or face covering in communal areas of the office where maintaining a 2m distance is not possible, such as corridors. Face shields are available for use in the office. Please ask a member of staff if you would like to use a face shield.

Physical distancing- you must ensure you maintain physical distancing at all times whilst in the office space. Some areas of the office have a number of person limit to ensure this, for example: only one person in the photocopying room and kitchen at any one time. Only 3 persons in the Hope Café for breaks at any one time. To ensure physical distancing trainees and volunteers are asked to use the therapy room assigned to them to complete session notes and upload information to the database after sessions.

There are signs placed throughout the office to remind you of the hygiene measures. If you are unsure or require assistance, please ask any staff member. These measures are mandatory, and failure to follow them may result in your placement being terminated with immediate effect.

Policies

Stepping Stones has produced policy documentation relating to several health and safety and organisational procedures. It is important that you familiarise yourself with these policies in case you encounter any situational to which they pertain. You can access the Trainee and Volunteer Policy Documentation by requesting this information from the Counselling Team Leader.

'A Day on Placement' Walkthrough

Before appointments

When you arrive in the office you **must** use the sanitising hand gel provided to sanitize your hands. If you are not able to use this due to health issues or skin sensitivity, please immediately go to the kitchen to wash your hands with soap and water.

After cleaning your hands, you must sign in using the staff and volunteers fire safety register and your **own pen**.

Please speak to a member of the admin team to check your appointments for the day; they will inform you if there have been any changes or cancellations. The admin team organise all appointments. The admin team will give you a mobile phone to use for your appointments.

You will be allocated a file in the middle drawer of the filing cabinet in the staff office where all relevant documents and paperwork you will require is stored. **It is appreciated if you can inform the admin team when copies of these documents are low so that they can refill copies in good time.** Please collect your member files and take them, the phone you have been given, and all of your belonging to the therapy room you have been assigned.

Your allocated therapy room will mostly remain the same for the duration of your placement; if this changes you will be informed. It is good practice to check the room is comfortable prior to your appointment, turn on/off lights/heaters as needed.

During appointments

Using the phone you have been given, you will contact your member at the agreed appointment time. If the member does not answer please leave a voicemail message and/or send a text informing the member that you are calling for their telephone appointment, and asking them to contact the office on 0141 941 2929. **Do not** offer to call the member back in the voicemail/text as it is their responsibility to contact the office to re-arrange their appointment. If the member does not answer or call back within 15-20 minutes this will be considered a 'Did-not-attend' (DNA) (see the Member's Agreement document).

First session:

Members can choose to engage with telephone support or a video messaging option. Please discuss with them at the first session if they have a preference. If they wish to switch to video messaging you can do so for the remainder of the first session, or agree to do this for the next session.

In the first therapy session you **must** ensure that your member has read the Member's Agreement. A copy is sent to members to read prior to their appointment; however, it is advisable that you cover the key points in the first session. Once this document has been discussed, please ask the member for verbal consent to agree to the terms in this document. You must then make note in the first session notes that the Member's Agreement was discussed, and that the member has given verbal consent.

All sessions:

We ask therapists to ensure a **CORE-10** is completed on a two weekly basis. Please see 'using CORE-10 guide' for guidance.

The admin staff will assist you to email or post any worksheets or documents you would normally give to a member in sessions.

We ask members to complete a therapy review at 4th, 8th, and final session by a Survey Monkey questionnaire. A paper copy of this review can be posted to members if they prefer. Please explore this with members and inform the admin team so that reviews can be emailed or posted accordingly.

Audio recording of therapy sessions is permitted at Stepping Stones. An audio recording consent form must be completed and stored in member's file prior to any session being recorded.

If the call ends abruptly due to signal loss or technical issues you are responsible for getting back in contact with the member. Please see the Member's Agreement document for further details.

After appointments

You must remain in the therapy room to complete all paperwork such as session notes, and upload information to the database. All therapy rooms are equipped with laptops or PC to do this. The therapy room will be booked for an additional hour to allow you to do this.

Therapy session notes must be completed on the same day before leaving the office. **See guidance on page 12 - 13.**

When you have finished using the therapy room please **clean the touch points** in the room as detailed on page 8 - 9.

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 redacted copies of any paperwork in your member files. You must return your member's files to the filing cabinet where they will be stored until you are next back in the office.

If you have completed the last session with a member, all paperwork within a member's file should be completed and handed to a member of the admin team.

Before leaving placement you must inform a member of the admin team if your appointments attended or DNAed, confirm when you will next be in the office (usually the following week), and return the phone you have been given (after cleaning). Please sign out before leaving the office using your own pen.

Completing Therapy Session Notes

Keeping clear, accurate, and up to date session notes 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.

The following points are guidelines, and do not fully detail how you should write session notes. It is expected you will have input from your training course, and/or seek support from supervision to learn more about writing session notes. You can also speak to the Counselling Team Leader if you have any concerns.

Key points to note for all modalities (PCT, CBT, and Integrative)

- **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. As per cancellation policy **cancelled and non-attended sessions count towards total number of sessions offered** and should be noted as such.
- 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 model, etc.
- All session notes should be **dated and signed**. It can be helpful to include session number to help keep track of sessions offered.

For CBT session notes specifically

- **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 online 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. **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', 'between session practice', or any other term 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.

A Final Word

We hope that this handbook helps you to understand the expectations on you as a trainee or volunteer therapist with Stepping Stones. As noted, these guidelines are to be used alongside ethical guidelines produced by a professional body such as from BACP, BABCP, HCPC and BPS, etc.

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.

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 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: