

## **Confidentiality Agreement:**

### **Virtual Contacting of Students During School Closures 2019/20**

#### **Preface**

The information below is intended to set out the benefits, limitations and boundaries to virtual pastoral care for students specifically during school closures. The following is an informed confidentiality agreement form and students interested in accessing online virtual pastoral care are asked to read and accept the directions before commencing any contact with the Pastoral Care Team to Terenure College, Dublin 6W.

**For the purposes of this form, the Pastoral Care Team members which you can contact for counselling purposes are Ms. Aherne, Mr. Farrell, Fr. James, Ms. Deffely and Ms. Ryan.**

#### **Platform: Microsoft Teams**

In the event that a student is seeking virtual contact from the Pastoral Care Team, the prescribed platform for all student contact is Microsoft Teams. Every student will have access to Microsoft Teams facilities, which is free to download and set up with a college user-name. Microsoft Team conversations are end to end encrypted, which means that chats and conversations are both secure and private to the individual student and Pastoral Care Team members.

#### **Making Contact**

If a student needs to talk to a member of the Pastoral Care Team about day to day difficulties or current concerns, the student must adhere to the following simple steps:

1. Request contact with the Pastoral Care Team member of choice using assigned college email via Microsoft Teams. The request and all subsequent contact must be made within the regular school hours. The chosen contact person will ideally respond within 24 hours.
2. After initial contact with chosen Pastoral Care Team member, the student will then be invited to either send a written outline of their current concerns / situation or to write their thoughts over a short period of time. Some students might prefer to begin working this way as they may find it easier to write their thoughts down and they can also keep responses to re-read and use as a prompt. Students will also have the future option of checking in via instant messaging (chat feature through Microsoft Teams), telephone calls through Microsoft Teams (VoIP) or video (face to face virtual chat).
3. Having decided which form of communication best suits the student, a time will be scheduled to be online and either interact via instant chat, telephone call or video call through Microsoft Teams. The student will need to be ready to connect at the agreed time and it is advised that the student finds a private and appropriate space to make

the online connection. In the case of a video call, it is imperative that students dress appropriately.

4. The chosen Pastoral Care Team member will make contact with the student at the start of each check-in session either via the chosen method of instant chat, telephone call or video call through Microsoft Teams. Sessions can last for the duration of 10 – 20 minutes, whereupon the session will come to a close and a future check-in will be scheduled (if necessary).

### **Limitations and Exceptions to Confidentiality**

At times the student will be challenged, although the student will always decide what pace to work at and which area they are comfortable in exploring. The Pastoral Care Team member you are in touch with will not discuss any information with anyone unless in circumstances where there is a fear for your safety or the safety of others i.e. situations where the student risks hurting themselves or others. These limitations to confidentiality come under the code of ethical guidelines for counsellors and psychotherapists as set by both the Pastoral Care Policy and the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP). Any actions taken will be discussed with the student beforehand. Otherwise, any conversations between the student and Pastoral Care Team member will be in confidence for the sole purpose of self-reflection and guidance through current issues.

In the event that a student might benefit from a referral to an external assistance body such as G.P or Counsellor / Psychotherapist or if you feel you are in crisis or are in danger of harming yourself then it is imperative that you contact someone in confidence within your home, via the college, close friends, the emergency services or your nearest A&E department.

Finally, it is worth noting that if you have access to a shared computer then it is important you have your own personal password that other people do not have access to.

### **Boundaries**

The Pastoral Care Team always strive to work with all students in a professional and ethical manner and all school policies must be adhered to regardless of school closures. School Policies and further information may be found on the Terenure College Online Home Page.

It is worth noting that it would not be appropriate to post/share onto social networks/forums any written correspondence from exchanges with your chosen Pastoral Care Team contact. Working as the Pastoral Care Team, we aim to develop a trusting and friendly working relationship with all students. To maintain the confidentiality and the boundaries of any work it is not appropriate to engage on any social network, social or professional forums about correspondence with your chosen

therapy contact. We will respect your confidentiality and we expect student to do the same!

### **Late or Missed Online Appointments**

All sessions are organised for an agreed date and time. If students are late attending the online instant chat, telephone or video call, their staff contact will stay online for 10 minutes to allow for any eventualities. If students do not make contact within this time then the session will be considered missed and will be cancelled. Students will then be required to message their staff contact within 24 hours to either re-arrange or to cancel any future check-ins.

### **Self-Care**

In terms of student self-care, it is also important to be able to give yourself a bit of time and space before and after each connection session with your chosen Pastoral Care Team member. Counselling and reflection on personal issues can use enormous energy and can bring up a host of emotions for each person. Ensuring you have some time after a connection session is an example of healthy self-care. Try to make sure you do not have to rush off for an appointment or engage in a stressful situation straight away. Having a cup of tea or a glass of water and resting / reflecting for 5 – 10 mins afterwards can help boost your mental health.

### **The Ending Session**

Part of the therapy process involves regular reviews between student and their chosen Pastoral Care Team contact. This is to ensure that work is progressing and that students are still getting what they need from the online sessions. All therapy comes to an end at some point and the end point of the virtual contacting of students during school closures is **Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020** at this time of writing. Regular reviews can help with appropriately planned endings as this is an important part of the online therapy process. Keeping this date in mind, students can get used to the idea that when it is safe for schools to resume, the online support will immediately transfer to regular face to face support during regular school time.

When students and the Pastoral Care Team have completed personal work, all material such as email exchanges etc. are requested to be removed from the Microsoft Teams platform, personal computers, phones and electrical devices and safely stored on a password protected memory stick. Please do not post extracts or copies of our communication on social forums or third parties.