

## 1. Purpose

This policy sets out how Heartwood supports the welfare, wellbeing, and fitness of our students to train. It clarifies how concerns about a student's wellbeing are identified, responded to, and managed in a way that is ethical, proportionate, and respectful of autonomy.

This policy is welfare-led. Safeguarding procedures are referenced where relevant but are governed in detail by the Safeguarding Policy.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students and candidates
- Tutors, assessors and staff
- All learning activities (in-person, online, or blended)

## 3. Core Principles

Heartwood recognises that students may, at times, experience personal, emotional, relational, physical or situational difficulties that affect their capacity to engage safely and effectively in training.

Our approach to learner welfare is:

- Preventative and supportive
- Respectful of autonomy and choice, when appropriate
- Proportionate to the level of concern
- Grounded in reflective and ethical practice

Welfare decisions are not diagnostic and are not intended to be punitive in nature.

## 4. What We Mean by Student Welfare

Student welfare refers to the conditions that enable a student to participate safely, meaningfully, and ethically in training.

This includes consideration of:

- Emotional and psychological wellbeing
- Capacity to engage with course material and relational learning
- Impact of personal circumstances or group dynamics on learning
- Professional suitability and boundaries within a counselling training context
- The wellbeing of the wider student community

## **5. Early Support and Reasonable Adjustments**

Where concerns about a student's wellbeing arise, Heartwood will seek, wherever reasonably possible, to respond early and supportively.

This may include but is not limited to:

- Meetings or supportive conversations
- Adjustments to learning expectations or deadlines where possible
- Facilitated conversations or mediation where appropriate
- Signposting to appropriate external support
- Encouraging use of personal therapy or supervision (where relevant)

Not all difficulties require formal action, and many concerns can be resolved through timely support.

## **6. Relationship to Safeguarding**

Most student welfare concerns do not constitute safeguarding matters.

However, where a concern indicates:

- Risk of serious harm to the student or others, or
- A concern involving a child or vulnerable adult at risk

Safeguarding procedures will apply in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Confidentiality may be limited in such circumstances, and information may need to be shared appropriately.

## **7. Temporary or Permanent Withdrawal, on Welfare Grounds**

Concerns must be reported without delay. Staff should listen, avoid promises of confidentiality, record factual information, and refer concerns to the DSL promptly.

In some circumstances, continued attendance on a course may not be in a student's best interests, or may raise concerns about safety, capacity, or professional boundaries.

Heartwood may require a student to temporarily pause their training where:

- The student is experiencing significant distress or instability
- Engagement with training appears to exacerbate difficulties
- The student is unable, at that time, to engage safely in relational or experiential learning
- There is concern about impact on the student, other students or the wider community

Any decision to suspend training:

- Is welfare-led and non-disciplinary
- Is based on observed impact and capacity, not diagnosis
- Involves consultation with senior staff
- Is communicated clearly, compassionately, and in writing

## **8. Communication During Withdrawal**

Heartwood recognises that periods of withdrawal can feel unsettling for students.

During a period of agreed withdrawal:

- A named contact will be identified for the student
- Communication will focus on support, clarity, and boundaries

Contact may include:

- Clarification of any agreed conditions for return
- Signposting to appropriate external support where relevant

It is not Heartwood's responsibility to provide therapeutic support.

## **9. Voluntary Non-Attendance and Attendance Requirements**

Heartwood recognises that there may be times when a student feels unable to attend a particular training day or session. This may arise from welfare concerns, relational difficulties, or issues within the learning environment (for example, difficulties with a tutor or another group member).

Students are encouraged to raise such concerns with Heartwood as early as possible so that support, mediation, or alternative arrangements can be considered.

Heartwood is under no obligation to make alternative arrangements. Such arrangements will be decided by Heartwood acting reasonably.

The provision of alternative arrangements is not guaranteed and is decided by Heartwood at its discretion, on a case-by-case basis.

However, students should be aware that:

- The course has a minimum attendance requirement (normally 90%)
- Choosing not to attend, even for understandable personal or welfare reasons, will normally count as non-attendance
- Non-attendance may affect progression, assessment eligibility, or qualification outcomes

Where a student believes that non-attendance is necessary for their wellbeing, they must inform Heartwood in advance, or as soon as reasonably possible.

Any agreement to waive, offset, or make alternative arrangements in relation to attendance:

- Must be discussed with Heartwood
- Will be considered on a case-by-case basis
- Must be approved and confirmed by Heartwood

Unless such agreement has been explicitly given in writing, periods of non-attendance will be recorded as absence and will count towards attendance calculations.

This approach is intended to balance respect for student autonomy and welfare with the professional, regulatory, and training requirements of the course.

### **10. Returning to Training**

Where a student has experienced an arranged period of non-attendance for welfare reasons, return will be considered carefully.

This may involve:

- A review conversation to discuss readiness to return
- Clarification of expectations and boundaries
- Agreement of any adjustments or support

The aim of this process is to support a sustainable and safe return to training where possible.

### **11. Record-Keeping**

- Welfare-related decisions and communications are recorded factually and sensitively
- Records are kept securely and confidentially
- Information is shared on a need-to-know basis in line with data protection requirements

### **12. Related Policies**

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding Policy (Adults)
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection & Privacy Policy
- Complaints Policy

### **13. Review**

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation or professional standards.

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Reviewed Annually, Next review August 2026