**University of Worcester Staff Counselling - Policy and Operating Procedure**

**Policy**

The University staff counselling service is provided through Soma Health Ltd, the university’s occupational health provider, and is separate to the service provided to students.

The staff counselling service is managed by the HR Department.

Short-term counselling support (normally a maximum of six sessions) is available for staff that are experiencing substantial stress or personal problems which are affecting or may affect their work. This service is offered to all University staff on an equal basis, irrespective of position within the organisation or contractual status.

The counselling service for staff will be operated on a confidential and ethical basis and will be consistent with the Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy, established by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

**System of Referral**

Staff may be encouraged to refer through the HR Department by their Head of Institute or School or Head of Department or another Senior Manager. In some cases a referral may be the outcome of a meeting with an Occupational Health Doctor or Nurse.

No referral will be made without the member of staff's agreement.

**Counselling Procedure**

The counsellor will normally deal with referrals on a first come first serve basis and there may be a waiting list for appointments with staff. Discretion will be exercised to arrange crisis intervention at short notice, if appropriate.

Once a referral has been made the counsellor will contact the member of staff normally by telephone, to identify the nature of any problem and to determine what future counselling needs may be. Following this diagnostic session, the member of staff may be offered a short programme of counselling at the discretion of the counsellor, normally between 3 and 6 sessions. Where a need for longer term counselling is identified, the member of staff will be advised of external agencies that may be approached.

All counselling is confidential between the counsellor and the member of staff. Information remains confidential unless the member of staff agrees otherwise.

**Relationship with Other University Procedures**

If the counsellor has concern about the state of an employee's mental health, they may encourage a member of staff to see their doctor. They will only be involved in assisting referral to medical opinion with the member of staff's agreement.

Information derived from the counselling process about employees who are currently the subject of formal disciplinary or poor performance procedures will, in no circumstances, be made available to or considered by University managers, even with the agreement of the member of staff concerned.

The University takes very seriously its commitment to staff in relation to stress. The provision of a staff counselling service is part of that commitment.