

# Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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This Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy will be reviewed annually by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC). Any amendments will be subject to approval by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

# 1. Introduction

We recognise that whilst engaging in higher education can impact positively on the wellbeing of students and staff alike, it can also create or contribute to stress levels that may prove hard to control or manage. Whilst in the majority of cases, these stress levels will be natural and not give cause for undue concern, in some extreme cases, they may give rise to self-harm, suicidal talk or persistent suicidal thoughts. We are committed, therefore, to promoting the mental health and wellbeing of our academic community by creating and sustaining a positive and mutually supportive environment that is driven by a culture that rewards kindness and care of the individual. This is one of the guiding principles that underpins our ethical behaviour and is articulated through our institutional values. In addition, the wellbeing and development of our students and staff is further guided by our [Strategic Framework](https://www.bil.ac.uk/strategic-framework/)<sup>1</sup> which places at the heart of the education we offer, a relationship that cares and nurtures the student as they work towards their goals. It is the welfare of the student and the wider community that guides us in the interventions that we make.

This policy draws upon Universities UK's [Step Change Framework](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/stepchange),<sup>2</sup> the principles of good practice set out within the [University Mental Health Charter](https://www.studentminds.org.uk/charter.html)<sup>3</sup> drawn up by Student Minds, and [Guidance for Universities on Preventing Student Suicides](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/guidance-for-universities-on-preventing-student-suicides.aspx)<sup>4</sup> produced by Papyrus (a national charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide) and Universities UK.

Accompanying this policy document is a [Student Guide to Mental Health and Wellbeing](https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem)<sup>5</sup> which includes detailed information on the support available to them.

# 2. Definition of mental health

The World Health Organisation (WHO)<sup>6</sup> has provided the following definition of mental health:

“Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder<sup>7</sup>. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

The WHO has also acknowledged that:

- Mental health and wellbeing are fundamental to quality of life, enabling people to experience life as meaningful and to be creative and active citizens. Mental health is an essential component of social cohesion, productivity and peace and stability in the living environment, contributing to social capital and economic development in societies. Public mental health and lifestyles conducive to mental well-being are crucial to achieving this aim. Mental health promotion increases the quality of life and mental well-being of the whole population, including people with mental health problems and their carers. The development and implementation of effective plans to promote mental health will enhance mental wellbeing for all.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/strategic-framework/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/stepchange>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/charter.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/guidance-for-universities-on-preventing-student-suicides.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem>

<sup>6</sup> Mental health: facing the challenges, building solutions, Report from the WHO European Ministerial Conference 2005.

<sup>7</sup> These might include anxiety disorders, mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, attention-deficit / hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders.

- The primary aim of mental health activity is to enhance people's wellbeing and functioning by focusing on their strengths and resources, reinforcing resilience and enhancing protective external factors.

Mental health therefore provides us with the emotional strength that enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness, and also an underlying belief in our own, and others' dignity and worth. As is the case with our physical health, our mental health and wellbeing can fluctuate.

### 3. Legal framework

Mental ill-health, or more precisely "mental impairment", is captured within the Equality Act 2010 under the protected characteristic relating to disability. Under the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability 'if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

'Substantial' is defined by the Act as 'more than minor or trivial'.

An impairment is considered to have a long-term effect if:

- it has lasted for at least 12 months
- it is likely to last for at least 12 months, or
- it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person

Normal day-to-day activities are not defined in the Act, but they can include mobility, manual dexterity, lifting, hearing, eyesight, speech, memory, and the ability to concentrate, learn or understand.

The Equality Act 2010 explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Equality Act 2010 also provides protection against discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of disability be it current or historic. This is particularly relevant for people with fluctuating and/or recurring impairments e.g. those suffering from cycles of severe depression.

Under the Equality Act 2010, we are required to make reasonable adjustments where a person with a disability is placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a person without a disability. The measure of what is a reasonable adjustment will depend on an institution's circumstances in relation to the:

- resources available
- cost of the adjustment
- practicality of the changes
- potential benefit to other staff, students and visitors

## 4. Responsibilities

The health and wellbeing of our academic community is the responsibility of all, and so Appendix A sets out some potential signs that might indicate that a member of our academic community has or is experiencing a mental health difficulty. However, there are designated individuals with particular responsibilities.

### 4.1 Students

Primary frontline responsibility for student welfare or pastoral support lies with our Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success (SEWS) in the form of our Success Champions, and our Disability Office. In addition, the Director of SEWS is the point of contact for any safeguarding referrals raised by the SEWS team or other third parties (including both staff and students). However, all staff have a role to play in the wellbeing of our students and so we have made our [Safeguarding Policy](#)<sup>8</sup> one of the key company documents that all staff are required to read and re-read upon annual updates to the document. This policy includes useful examples of signs or indicators of causes for concern, and information on safeguarding referral processes. By familiarising themselves with this policy, staff can better prepare themselves to identify students who are, or who may become, vulnerable for any number of reasons, and thereby provide the student with the support needed.

### 4.2 Staff

Managers play a crucial role in the everyday wellbeing of their staff, and it is their responsibility with advice and support from our People, Talent and Culture Manager and our Estates and Facilities Manager (where appropriate) to create and maintain a positive and healthy working environment for their teams and colleagues across the institution. Managers also have a key role in identifying and addressing any signs of mental ill-health. [ACAS](#)<sup>9</sup> provide very useful information and advice on:

- identifying signs of mental ill-health
- having sensitive conversations around mental ill-health
- supporting and managing staff who are experiencing mental ill-health.

## 5. Confidentiality and disclosure

Although prospective and current students and staff are not required to declare any disability or specific learning difficulty they might have, we do encourage them to do so in order for us to be able to inform them of the support that we have available to assist them to achieve their potential at Bloomsbury Institute, and any possible entitlements. Any such information is treated as confidential and is managed in accordance with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 both of which have informed our own [Data Protection Policy](#).<sup>10</sup> Consequently, access to disability-related information will be provided on a need-to-know basis only, in order for support to be provided such as the implementation of reasonable adjustments.

Further information or advice can be obtained from our Data Protection Officer [dpo@bil.ac.uk](mailto:dpo@bil.ac.uk).

### 5.1 Students

Our [Privacy Notice](#)<sup>11</sup> explains in detail how we collect and use a student's personal data, the circumstances in which we would share that data, and the rights students have under data protection

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.acas.org.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem>

legislation in relation to the personal data we hold. It also explains that subject to any other notices that we may provide, we may retain a student's personal data for a period of six years after they have completed their course with us.<sup>12</sup> In addition, our [Data Protection Policy](#)<sup>13</sup> states that we will provide:

- Mechanisms to ensure that where disability data is provided for a stated purpose, such as to ensure adequate service provision, it is not misused for other purposes, such as to make a decision about whether or not to admit a student to a course of study.
- A system whereby when there is a need to disclose disability data to external organisations, prior consent of the student should be obtained for each disclosure. This would involve the student being informed of the nature of the information to be disclosed, the intended recipient, and the purpose of disclosure.

## 6. Our Approach

Our approach to mental health and wellbeing reflects, in part, the guidance provided by Universities UK and Papyrus in their [Suicide – Safer Universities](#) report<sup>14</sup> in that we:

- take a whole-institution approach in terms of the development and review of our policies and procedures.
- aim to build a sense of community to create and bolster resilience.
- aim to encourage disclosure of difficulties and distress they may be experiencing by
  - creating compassionate communities among staff and students.
  - raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing issues and thereby remove any sense of stigma.
- signpost support available both internally and externally.
- ensure that students experiencing problems or difficulties are identified, signposted to help, and followed up.
- prevent and act against bullying and all types of discrimination and harassment.

Whilst we recognise that suicide is not an inevitable scenario for anyone experiencing a mental health condition, there is clearly overlap between suicide prevention and good practice for mental health.

Central to our approach is awareness. By actively supporting awareness raising initiatives (developed and led primarily by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee), we are able to develop a culture of understanding in which staff and students feel able to be open about any disability, long-term health condition or Specific Learning Difficulty they might have.

### 6.1 Our policy framework

Our student admissions and staff recruitment policies evidence our commitment to welcoming applications from anyone with a disability, long-term health condition or specific learning difficulty. We have also developed additional policies and procedures to provide support and prevent discrimination upon joining our academic community.

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<sup>12</sup> Some information (such as name, student ID, grades, financial history) may be retained indefinitely by us in order to maintain academic records for archiving purposes.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/gem>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/guidance-for-sector-practitioners-on-preventing-student-suicides>

### 6.1.1 Students

Our [Admissions Policy](#)<sup>15</sup> evidences our commitment to welcoming applications from people with a disability, long-term health condition or specific learning difficulty and, as such, is fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. Our policy states that applicants are not required to declare any disability or specific learning difficulty either upon application or at any later stage. However, we do encourage them to notify us of any particular needs they might have so that we can then advise them on the support that we have available. In doing so, we make it clear to applicants that disability does not impact on academic decisions regarding offers of places.

Detailed information on the support available to students upon joining Bloomsbury Institute can be found in our [Disability Policy](#).<sup>16</sup> All staff are expected be aware of this policy and the related legislation, and to treat people with a disability in accordance with this policy.

### 6.1.2 Staff

In terms of staff recruitment, we actively welcome applications from individuals with a disability and operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for any applicant with a disability who meets the essential criteria for the job. Details of the scheme can be found in our [Staff Recruitment and Development Policy](#).<sup>17</sup>

### 6.1.3 Students and Staff

Guiding our approach to the wellbeing of our academic community are our [Dignity and Respect Policy](#) our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#), and our [Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).<sup>18</sup>

Our [Dignity and Respect Policy](#) and our [Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) are designed to ensure an environment that promotes a culture of respect in which harassment and bullying are recognised as totally unacceptable behaviours. Our commitment to creating a climate of dignity and respect as a means of sustaining the mental health and wellbeing of our academic community is also at the heart of our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).<sup>19</sup> The latter recognises that equality, diversity and inclusion are essential factors that contribute to the academic and economic strengths of our institution. It also sets out how we strive to look beyond our legal obligations, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, in order to embed equality, diversity and inclusion within our organisational culture for the benefit of staff, students and applicants irrespective of whether or not they share any of the characteristics protected under the Act<sup>20</sup>.

All three policies are key corporate documents that all staff are required to read upon joining our institution. In addition, all staff are also required to complete the following compulsory training courses both within 1 month of joining Bloomsbury Institute and every other year thereafter:

- Equality and Diversity
- Bullying and Harassment
- Unconscious Bias

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies/>

<sup>20</sup> The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.



## 7. Factors that may impact negatively on mental health

Mental health difficulties can affect anyone at any time although it is recognised that many of the transition points in life (such as leaving home, new peer groups, the end of a relationship, and close bereavement) can be particularly challenging. For our students, equally challenging is an unfamiliar higher education environment with unfamiliar modes of learning, teaching and assessment and unfamiliar professional requirements. In addition, some of our students might also be from overseas or trying to balance their studies with being a parent or carer, or part-time or full-time employment whilst also worrying about the growing cost of living and how to manage their student loans. Staff working at Bloomsbury Institute might also be faced with similar competing challenges.

We recognise the above challenges and difficulties and have not only ensured that our admissions processes for students and recruitment processes for staff remove any barriers to those whose mental health and wellbeing might be under pressure, but have also designed support systems and initiatives to support all members of our academic community. See section 8.

The above difficulties might be temporary in nature or long-term and having such a significant effect on an individual's ability to function that these difficulties can be classified as a mental illness.

## 8. Support

Further evidence of our commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of our academic community can be found in the support systems and processes we have put in place to enable both students and staff with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, specific learning difficulties, special psychological needs and medical conditions (which may have an impact on day-to-day activities) to take part in all aspects of Bloomsbury Institute's academic and social programmes. As a result, students and staff:

- are provided with support through our Disability Office<sup>21</sup>. Our Disability and Wellbeing Manager is a First Aid Mental Health Champion.
- have access to our team of Mental Health First Aiders for initial advice on support options. Information on our Mental Health First Aiders can be found on our [Disability and Wellbeing Support](#)<sup>22</sup> page.
- have access to Self-help and Online Resources which include a list of organisations that offer support and advice across a range of areas including mental health and wellbeing, eating disorders, substance abuse, domestic violence, self-harm etc. Students can access these resources on [Canvas](#)<sup>23</sup> and staff on [SharePoint](#).
- have free access to a digital mental health support service called [Togetherall](#)<sup>24</sup> to which we have subscribed. This service is available online, 24/7, and is completely anonymous to enable everyone to express themselves openly in a safe environment. Professionally trained Wall Guides monitor the community to ensure the safety and anonymity of all members. In addition to Togetherall's online community, students have access to a wealth of useful resources and can work through tailored self-help courses covering topics such as anxiety, sleep, weight management, depression and many more.

In addition, students can seek confidential help and advice from one of our Success Champions (based within our Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success). As for staff, they can also speak in confidence to their Line Manager or the People, Talent and Culture Manager.

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<sup>21</sup> The Disability Office can be contacted via email [disability@bil.ac.uk](mailto:disability@bil.ac.uk)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/disability-and-wellbeing-support/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://canvas.bil.ac.uk/courses/777>

<sup>24</sup> Available at: <https://account.v2.togetherall.com/log-in>

## 8.1 For students

### 8.1.1 Wellbeing programme

Our Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success offers students a [wellbeing programme](#)<sup>25</sup> that provides them with an opportunity to take time out and reflect on how their life could be enhanced by finding that sense of calm and centredness which lies at the heart of a balanced, fulfilling life.

### 8.1.2 Reasonable adjustments

We ensure that wherever possible reasonable adjustments are put in place when a student with a disability, long-term health condition or specific learning difficulty may be placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a person who does not experience any of these particular challenges. These adjustments might be in relation to activities such as teaching (including lectures, seminars, and workshops) and examinations and assessments.

Our [Disability Policy](#)<sup>26</sup> (Appendix A in particular) sets out in detail the support mechanisms available to students with a disability, long-term medical condition or Specific Learning Difficulty providing a framework to contribute to the ongoing development of an enabling and inclusive environment for students and service users of the institution. However, students are advised to contact staff in our Disability Office to discuss and agree any appropriate reasonable adjustments and support arrangements. Staff in our Disability Office can be contacted at [disability@bil.ac.uk](mailto:disability@bil.ac.uk)

Students are responsible for requesting any review of implemented reasonable adjustments, if such adjustments are not proving to be effective in meeting their entitlements.

### 8.1.3 Extension Requests

In the event of a student not being able to submit their work on time due to circumstances beyond their control, it may be possible for them to request an extension. Whether or not the extension request will be granted will depend upon factors such as the nature of the difficulty the student is experiencing, whether the difficulty could and should have been anticipated, and the extent to which the circumstances were outside of their control. For example, serious health difficulties that prevent a student from studying for a number of days during a period when they are expected to be working on an assignment would usually provide legitimate grounds for an extension; a crashed computer would not.

Please note that extension cannot be granted for TCAs, exams or presentations and do not apply to sub-components, but to the whole item of assessment only.

For further information and advice on Extension Requests, please refer to your [Student Handbook](#)<sup>27</sup> and get in touch with our Academic Administration team [academic.admin@bil.ac.uk](mailto:academic.admin@bil.ac.uk).

### 8.1.4 Mitigating/Extenuating Circumstances

If a student experiences a serious or acute problem, or an event beyond their control or ability to foresee (e.g. serious illness or severe disruption of their personal life) which are likely to prevent completion of assignment/s or attendance at examination/s, they may be able to claim mitigating/extenuating circumstances. If granted mitigating/extenuating circumstances, students would be allowed to complete the assessment at a later date (which ordinarily would be the next opportunity to submit).

Further information on mitigating/extenuating circumstances can be found in the relevant awarding body's mitigating/extenuating circumstances policy. Advice is also available from our Academic Administration team [academic.admin@bil.ac.uk](mailto:academic.admin@bil.ac.uk).

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/disability-and-wellbeing-support/wellbeing-programme/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/student-services/handbooks/>

### 8.1.5 Withdrawal, Study Break/Suspension of Studies and Deferral

Should a student feel unable to continue their studies as a result of their disability or long-term health condition, there are a number of options that may be available to them. These options include the following:

- Withdrawal – this is where a student decides to **stop** their studies **completely**.
- Study break/Suspension of Studies – this is where a student decides to **stop** their studies **temporarily**. A study break normally has to be either for one semester (minimum) or one academic year (maximum).
- Deferral – this is where a student decides to **postpone** their studies, but **temporarily** only. A deferral is when your start date is postponed (up to a maximum of 12 months).

Information on the above (including processes and deadlines) can be found in our [Withdrawal, Study Break/Suspension of Studies and Deferral Policy](#).<sup>28</sup> However, any student considering either a withdrawal, study break or deferral is strongly advised to contact a Success Champion in our Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success to be sure that they are aware of the broader implications and can make as informed a decision as possible.

If a student is an International student sponsored by us, then they must discuss any plans they might have to withdraw from their course with a member of our [Compliance team](#)<sup>29</sup> as withdrawal from a course automatically results in withdrawal of their visa sponsorship.

### 8.1.6 Fitness to Study

In some cases, it may be necessary for us to consider whether a student is well or fit enough to study. In such cases, we would be guided by the relevant awarding body's fitness to study policies. These policies are designed to ensure that students whose health is causing concern to staff and/or other students are promptly and effectively removed from their study environment until they are well enough to return.

Examples of where we might need to apply the above policies include:

- the student's behaviour, resulting from an illness or disability, is negatively affecting the experience of other students and/or staff and/or presents a risk to self and/or others and this is not being addressed through academic assessment;
- an existing declared condition may substantially change;
- a student may develop a condition during the period of their registration;
- a student may declare a previously undeclared condition or an undeclared condition may manifest itself.

## 8.2 For staff

We are committed to providing a working environment that is inclusive and accessible for staff. As a [Disability Confident Employer](#)<sup>30</sup> as well as a [Mindful Employer](#),<sup>31</sup> we are very much aware of our responsibilities in terms of making reasonable adjustments in support of disability equality. Adjustments might involve changes to working patterns, adaptations to premises or equipment and provision of support packages etc.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem>

<sup>29</sup> Our Compliance team can be contacted at [visa.compliance@bil.ac.uk](mailto:visa.compliance@bil.ac.uk)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.mindfulemployer.dpt.nhs.uk/>

Should a staff member acquire a disability whilst employed with us, or should an existing disability or health condition worsen, we will make every effort to enable them to continue in their current job or, where possible, an alternative one.

All staff members (excluding casual staff) have free access via their Perkbox account to Health-Assured's Employee Support Hub. The Hub is staffed by a team of qualified therapists who are on hand to offer support with a range of emotional, legal, and financial issues. Health-Assured are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for free confidential counselling and support. Also available via Perkbox is a Wellness Hub which provides a curated library of wellbeing focused content, including guided meditations, sleep stories, home workouts, yoga / pilates videos, etc. For further information about these two Hubs and for any help you might need to access them, please contact the People, Talent and Culture Manager – Antony Charles at [antony.charles@bil.ac.uk](mailto:antony.charles@bil.ac.uk).

## 9. Related regulations, policies and procedures

### **Bloomsbury Institute**

- Admissions Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Dignity and Respect Policy
- Disability Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Privacy Notice
- Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Recruitment and Development Policy
- Student Guide to Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Withdrawal, Study Break and Deferral Policy

### **Wrexham University**

- Extenuating Circumstances Guidance for Students
- Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure

### **University of Northampton**

- Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Policy
- Mitigating Circumstances Policy

## 10. Review

This Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy will be reviewed annually by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC). Any amendments will be subject to approval by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

## 11. Appendix A: Recognising signs of mental health problems

Anyone could experience one or more of the following symptoms at any time of their life and so they do not of themselves indicate a mental health problem. However, they can indicate a possible underlying issue where support might be needed even if the individual concerned has not asked for help. These symptoms could be used to initiate a dialogue with the individual concerned and to signpost support options available.

Physical symptoms	Mental Symptoms	Behavioural symptoms
Agitation/Restlessness	Lack of concentration	Lateness/Absenteeism
Panic attacks	Noticeable increased or decreased emotion	Acting out of character
Palpitations/Sweating	Inability to complete simple tasks	Alcohol/Drug misuse gambling etc
Headaches	Hallucinations	Inappropriate responses to normal situations
Marked weight loss or gain	Hearing voices	Aggression/volatility
Stomach or bowel problems	Apathy	Withdrawal/social isolation
Feelings of tiredness and exhaustion	Irritability	Self-neglect e.g. decline in personal hygiene
Lack of energy	Loss of confidence/Low self-esteem	Sleep disturbance
General aches and pains	Difference in mood/Mood swings	Decline in performance
Excessive tearfulness	Anxiety/Fearfulness	