

Staff and Volunteer Wellbeing and Support

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Background

Our services are open to anyone and many of our service users are vulnerable clients. We recognise that staff and volunteers may be supporting vulnerable clients in any of our services including:

- a) Advisers and Caseworkers who are providing advice at the first point of contact. These clients may be experiencing distress, trauma, abuse or they may be expressing self-harm or other concerning thoughts or behaviours
- b) Advisers and Caseworkers linked to Open Mental Health. These caseworkers are supporting clients who are living independently in the community or who are receiving acute in-patient support and experiencing mental ill health
- c) Advisers and Caseworkers providing advice to clients and families who are affected by cancer or other life changing health conditions including those receiving end of life care
- d) Advisers and Caseworkers providing advice to single people or families fleeing abuse, people who have experienced a hate crime and those experiencing homelessness or financial distress

Staff and Volunteer Wellbeing

We understand that staff and volunteers working in client facing roles will sometimes encounter difficult situations that may affect their wellbeing. We want to make sure that we support every member of our Team to look after their wellbeing.

Staff and volunteers at Citizens Advice Somerset have access to the National or Somerset Citizens Advice mental health and wellbeing service, Togetherall. The service offers anonymous, confidential support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, on any device with an internet connection. This service is available to all paid staff and volunteers.

Togetherall has a range of features designed to support your mental health. More details including an introductory video can be found on the National Citizens Advice intranet:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/intranet/local/pages/mental-health-support-from-togetherall/

External Reflective Practice for staff. This is a recognised and widely accepted form of support for individual staff where their work with clients can trigger vicarious trauma or negatively impact on the member of staff's wellbeing. Please see more detailed description of reflective practice compared to advice supervision (page 4 – 5 below).

The Trustees of Citizens Advice Somerset have agreed to provide a one year programme of external reflective practice for qualifying staff for the annual year 2024/25. This support offers staff a safe, confidential and trauma-informed space for reflection which is sensitive to the impact of clients' distress or circumstances on the individual member of staff. The support provides staff with an opportunity to increase their own wellbeing and resilience.

Citizens Advice Somerset's external reflective practice is provided using External Reflective Practice specialists who are qualified as Counselling Supervisors.

Eligibility

Advisers and caseworkers who are regularly working with vulnerable clients may request access to external reflective practice. The support provides regular sessions with the practitioner for an agreed period and up to a maximum of 12 months. The Board will review this provision ahead of decisions about continuation in future years.

External reflective practice does not replace the organisation's other support and advice supervision and these will continue as usual.

How to Apply

Staff from Citizens Advice Somerset that would like to take up the offer of external reflective practice may do so by emailing Angela Kerr, CEO. Angela will send an introductory email to the practitioner and from that point forward the relationship is managed without input from Angela or other staff at Citizens Advice Somerset.

The time for the session will be available as part of your work time although we will ask you to ensure that you liaise with colleagues so that they are aware that you have a meeting booked.

Confidentiality

The reflective practice sessions will be confidential between the member of staff and the practitioner. During these sessions staff are not permitted to disclose identifying details of individual clients.

The reflective practice sessions will be focused on the individual staff member and his/her/their reflections on the impact of their client work on their wellbeing. Staff will

receive support on how they feel/felt as a result of their client work including any triggers (vicarious trauma) that challenged their own health and wellbeing.

The work undertaken in the session is confidential between the individual member of staff and the practitioner. Citizens Advice Somerset merely holds a register of staff using the support for financial administration purposes. The reflective practice lead professional (practitioner) does have a duty of care for all those she supports as does Citizens Advice Somerset. If they were concerned about a member of staff using her support she would discuss this with that individual and raise a duty of care concern directly with Angela Kerr, the CEO

Review

The CEO will appoint the Reflective Practice professional and induct them to ensure we have an agreed understanding of protocol and confidentiality. Staff will be invited to engage with the support. The CEO will meet review the service towards the end of the 2024/25 year to evaluate the provision.

The Role of Organisational Policy and Practice

Staff will not use the reflective practice session for problem solving that relates to their day to day work or our organisation's systems or procedures. These will remain within the organisation and in these matters staff will use existing policy and practice (Team meetings, individual supervision, grievance, appraisal) to raise work related issues.

Volunteers

We recognise that our volunteers may also require support where their work with a client may have triggered vicarious trauma or negatively impacted on their wellbeing. Initially our supervisors and operations managers will provide support to the volunteer.

Volunteers' access to reflective practice will be considered on a case by case basis where the volunteer is regularly working with vulnerable clients and will be approved by the CEO, a role held by Angela Kerr

Wellness Action Plans

All staff and volunteers are encouraged to take a proactive approach to planning for and supporting their own wellbeing.

Creating an individual Wellness Action Plan (WAP) reminds us as individuals what we need to do to stay well at work and details what our managers can do to better support us. Creating your own WAP is very strongly encouraged and would be one of the ways in which you and your manager can work together to maintain a supportive and wellness focused working environment.

[Link to the WAP template](#)

Reflective practice v advice supervision

	One to one Reflective Practice – individual staff member focused	Advice Supervision and Client Case Management – quality of advice, staff and client focused
Purpose	Reflective working ● <u>professional growth</u>: reflective supervision focuses on the professional	Operational working ● <u>client-centred support</u>: advice supervision and case management is

	development of the individual. It provides a structured, confidential and supportive safe space for staff to explore their feelings, thoughts and reactions to their work with clients. ● <u>processing emotions</u>: the primary goal is to help staff process their emotions and experiences related to their work, fostering self-awareness and insight.	primarily quality of advice focused, providing access to specialist advice and practical assistance/support to advisers and caseworkers enabling them to progress their client work. ● <u>resource co-ordination</u>: involves co-ordinating resources, services, and interventions to ensure that clients receive the appropriate and necessary advice in a timely manner.
Key features	● <u>working with emotion</u>: The external Reflective Practice professional works with the member of staff to explore the impact of the staff member's emotion on clients and the impact of working with clients' emotion on self. ● gain insights into the emotional and psychological aspects of client work rather than relying on tacit practice. ● encourages reflective practice, which involves thinking critically about one's own assumptions, values, and reactions to enhance staff skills. ● fosters a supportive environment for personal growth and self-awareness. ● encourages staff to develop greater self-awareness and self-caring practice to enable staff to manage wellbeing at work.	● <u>Advice need assessment and planning</u>: provide oversight and guidance to advisers and caseworkers ensuring that they are assessing the client's advice needs and capability, developing a next step plan and delivering a standardised advice intervention. ● <u>quality of advice</u>: input is given to ensure that appropriate and accurate advice is provided and client boundaries are managed and maintained. Guidance and support given in relation to managing client relationships or behavioural challenges that arise during the advice process. ● <u>advocate for clients</u>: ensuring they have access to appropriate services, resources, and support. ● <u>goal-oriented</u>: focuses on achieving specific advice goals outlined in the client's plan and maximising support to client ie signposting, referral, etc.
Outcome	Staff focused ● refine staff skills, enhance their knowledge base, and navigate intricate ethical dilemmas ● preventing recourse to defence mechanisms/self-protection behaviours ● reduces staff isolation and anxiety ● <u>improve self-awareness</u>: reflective supervision aims to enhance the practitioner's self-awareness, which can lead to improve staff skills, empathy, understanding and boundaries. ● aids staff to identify important moments, challenges, and impacts	Client service focused ● regularly monitor the client's case progress toward established goals and adjust the advice/next step plan as needed. ● financial and wellbeing outcomes recorded and custom questions completed. ● evaluate the effectiveness of advice interventions to ensure they align with the client's evolving needs. ● Support the adviser or caseworker with developmental coaching and skills training.

	• reduces burnout and empathy fatigue by addressing the emotional challenges of the work, • increases safe, ethical practice and efficacy • improves client experience and outcome	• Improves client experience and outcome • Supports staff to achieve wellbeing at work
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