

Provider's name: The Sherwood Psychotherapy Training Institute Ltd

Provider's UKPRN: 10023458

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Student protection plan for the period 2018-19

1. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for your students, how those risks may differ based on your students' needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise

The Sherwood Psychotherapy Training Institute Ltd (SPTI Ltd) has been offering psychotherapy and counselling programmes since 1987. Programmes have been accredited by UKCP, BACP since 1995 and 1994 respectively. BSc and MSc degree programmes offer a dual academic and professional qualification with professional body accreditation and university validation of degree programmes since 1995 (MSc) and 2008 (BSc).

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver programmes in this highly specialised field in the next three years is low:

- Risk of not maintaining validation or accreditation: We have a strong history of professional accreditation of BSc and MSc programmes. Since inception of the programmes' accreditation with PSRBs has been maintained, our counselling programmes have been accredited with BACP since 1994 (the BSc since 2008) and Masters programmes have been accredited with UKCP since 1995. We also have a strong history of university validation of our degree programmes. Where a change in validating partner has been necessary for strategic reasons, in all cases existing students have been enabled to complete their training through either teach out arrangements with the former university or full transfer of students to new validating partner. With our excellent reputation and significant experience of providing joint academic and professionally validated programmes, successful transfers have been made to new partners without significant impact on the training provided to existing students. We currently have a strong long-term validation agreement with Staffordshire University commencing in August 2015 and with current agreement for a further 5 years so risks of provider closure are considered very small.
- Closure of an individual programme: The core programmes at SPTI Ltd are the BSc Hons and the two MSc programmes, all of these programmes are long established and successful programmes offering specialised academic and clinical training and qualifications to master's level. They have been successfully recruiting for over 10 years (BSc) and over 20 years (MSc) with increases seen in the levels of recruitment in the last five years. In the past the most significant reasons for student withdrawal have been unforeseen financial difficulties for individual students. With Office for Students registration now leading to tuition fee loans and maintenance loans for the BSc programme and post graduate loans for MSc programmes this has improved accessibility and financial stability for individual students and so it is anticipated improved financial stability for the programmes. The risk of having to close a current programme due to low enrolments is therefore considered to be very low.
- Risk of reduced income: We are a not for profit organisation solely funded by student fees. With recruitment and income maintained at current levels financial forecasts have been prepared and submitted for Office for Students registration purposes which demonstrate that the organisation will remain financially viable. These forecasts estimate turnover continuing to rise from £991,085 to £1,163,100 Hence a profit margin of 2% to be maintained which allows

for reinvestment in the training delivery and also allow for expansion of current senior management team to meet the requirements of increased regulation.

- The risk that we would not be able to deliver material components of our programmes is low. We have a stable tutor team all of whom have specialist areas but who are able to deliver all components of the training if necessary, so mitigating risks from staff absence.
- The risk of strategic decisions to close current programmes is low. Strategic planning is undertaken on annual basis at senior management and director level for both the short term and long term (5 years) there is in place a strong commitment to maintenance of current courses and further development of areas of specialism as a strategic aim for the next five years
- The risk that we not be able to deliver training at our current site in the next three years is very low. We have a long-term lease agreement on the premises and in the event of emergency are able to rent alternative premises in the vicinity with insurance in place to cover any unanticipated costs. In over 30 years of business as a training provider this has occurred only once due to flooding of premises and alternative suitable accommodation was immediately found, risk is therefore considered low.
- Failure to maintain Office for Students registration: The risk of not meeting the regulatory requirements to access student funding support via the Student loans company is considered low as we have experience in ensuring we meet the regulatory requirements for student loans support for the BSc and MSc programmes enabling students to apply for part time tuition fee loans, postgraduate loans and DSA support.

Under the new regulatory requirements, maintenance of Office for Students registration will be an ongoing priority for SPTI at all times, as withdrawal of funding support to students would significantly affect accessibility to the programmes and so impact on recruitment and financial viability. However, in the event that Office for Students registration was withdrawn or suspended existing eligible students should be able to continue to access student loans until completion of their studies. If this were not possible at SPTI Ltd we would endeavour to transfer existing eligible students to an Office for Students approved provider, to enable completion of training.

2. The measures that you have put in place to mitigate those risks that you consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise

- In the event that enrolments into a course were low for any one year and SPTI Ltd was unable to recruit a viable cohort our commitment to students is that this would not affect existing students on a programme. Flexible part time staffing arrangements mean staffing can be adjusted to student numbers so reducing impact on the financial viability of a course. Risk of this situation is however considered to be low.
- If strategic decisions were made to close a programme, for example due to changes in the field of psychotherapy training or changing mission or ethos of training, then closure of a programme would be through no new intake and existing current students being able to continue on a taught-out basis until completion of training. This is incorporated into the validation agreements with Staffordshire University and also the Student Learning agreements signed by students in each year of training.
- In the event of unforeseen events necessitating closure of a programme then APEL into similar programmes would be negotiated directly with other colleges offering similar professional/academic programmes or students would be offered refund if other options not available to them. This is written into the contract with Staffordshire University. Cash reserves are maintained, and tutors are employed on a flexible part time basis to mitigate this risk. We have a tutor training programme and actively assess staffing needs on an annual basis and recruit to the teams in accordance with need. Hence this is considered to be very low risk
- Closure of a specific site: Planned closure of a specific site would not be undertaken during an academic year and would be planned over one year in advance. If it were considered necessary to close a specific site on an unplanned basis, for example on health and safety grounds, alternative venues for training would be sought and hired in the immediate vicinity, ensuring accessibility for all students in training and that all resource needs were provided for. The nature of the training means all courses are offered in weekend blocks of three to four days, in small groups of up to 18 students and in two buildings in Nottingham city centre. There are many other premises in the immediate Nottingham area currently hired on an occasional basis and which offer suitable alternative premises. Hence training would be uninterrupted and accessible to students.
- Failure to maintain Office for Students registration: in this event we would work to ensure that existing eligible students should be able to continue to access student loans until completion of their studies, if this were not granted an appeal would be made or we would endeavour to transfer them to a registered alternate provider should they so wish

3. Information about the policy you have in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to your students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that you are no longer able to preserve continuation of study

A copy of our refund and compensation policy is attached and this is available upon request and on Moodle, our student VLE. As a not for profit organisation solely funded by student fees SPTI Ltd currently only offers refunds where it is unable to offer the training as described and where fundamental changes have to be made to programmes. In cases of withdrawal part way through an academic year all students are fully liable for their tuition fees once they have signed their student learning agreement. This is made clear to students at all stages of admissions and enrolment. It is incorporated in the FAQ document, in advice to students given at information days and in advance of training, in the student learning agreement issued prior to enrolment and in student handbooks issued at induction. An exception to this is where students withdraw due to exceptional circumstances which can be certified by doctors' certificate or other evidence.

This policy has however been discussed at the recent directors strategic meeting and the policy is currently under review to be discussed at the combined programme committee meeting with students in November. It is proposed that with immediate effect that a proportionate refund system be in place for students withdrawing who are in receipt of funding to pay their full tuition fees, i.e. student tuition fee loan from SLC and students with tuition fees paid in full by a sponsor. This would be on the basis of withdrawal or intermission in exceptional circumstances and would ensure that student with genuine reasons for withdrawal and who have funding in place to pay their fees are not disadvantaged. It would also ensure that students for example who may need to withdraw due to illness or disability are not disadvantaged.

To ensure that we can meet the financial implications of our refund policy we now have cash reserves in place which would be sufficient to provide refunds and compensation for those small number of students who we have identified as at risk of non-continuation of study.

4. Information about how you will communicate with students about your student protection plan

This will be accomplished via the student combined programme committee process whereby the document will be circulated to student representatives and students for discussion at the combined programme committee. All future iterations of the student protection plan will be discussed with students via the combined programme committee process as part of the approval process.

We will publish our student protection plan and refund policy on student Moodle, via a link in student handbooks and via information days for prospective students.

The documents will be issued to prospective students with the privacy notice and student learning agreement prior to acceptance of an offer. This will work to ensure transparency for students before enrolment.

We will ensure that staff are fully aware of the implications of our student protection plan via briefing on all tutor days held three times per year, via the tutor information pack and via Programme Leader meetings where strategy and regulations are considered. This will enable dissemination to teams via programme leaders.

Should the student protection plan need to be implemented we will:

- Formally write to all affected students within a two-week period of a decision being formally approved at Directors level.
- Students will be advised of their rights and options in accordance with the protection plan, CMA advice and guidance and referred to the SPTI Ltd refund and compensation policy.
- We will work with students to discuss options and resolution for example transfer to alternative providers, refunds and compensation available under the SPTI refund and compensation policy etc.
- The SPTI Refund and Compensation policy is published and available to students via Moodle, the SPTI student VLE.

