



Wychwood School
OXFORD

Independent Listener Policy
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NMS 2
B14

Wychwood, Oxford has a system whereby any child who wishes to talk to an independent adult can do so as a possible 'safety valve' for pupils with concerns or problems, as required by The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Standards (NMS). At Wychwood the Independent Listener is also the School Counsellor. We believe it is important that the Independent Listener has appropriate training to enable them to assess whether a girl is in danger from herself or others when talking to the independent listener.

The independent listener system is confidential and the Independent Listener is under no obligation to inform the School of any calls unless there is a child protection or wider safeguarding issue. If the girl is in need of counselling within school then the Independent Listener (School Counsellor) will advise the Head and the normal procedure of writing to parents to request payment will then take place. The Head will monitor the frequency of self-referrals by the Independent Listener (School Counsellor) in view of the potential conflict of interest. If the girl is in need of other forms of counselling or therapy, then the Independent Listener will advise the Head accordingly. In most cases where possible, the parents of the girl receiving counselling will then be charged, after they have been agreed in writing. Payment is then claimed via the bursary. If, in the School Counsellor's professional opinion, this would be counter-productive, then the School will bear the cost of the counselling.

Notes on Independent Listeners

The following procedure applies to any appointment:

- Appointment procedures will follow the normal Wychwood, Oxford staff recruitment procedures.
- The Independent Listener must complete the usual Wychwood Safeguarding Information for New Staff.
- The Independent Listener will have an appropriate job description and briefing / induction.
- The Independent Listener will be required to undertake safeguarding training with the Wychwood, Oxford DSL.

- The Independent Listener role is independent of the main lines of school management, but still subject to the School's rules, policies and organisation. The Independent Listener will be required to read the School's staff handbook and all policies and sign to say they have done so in order to ensure that s/he has appropriate knowledge of 'school norms and expectations'.
- There needs to be an awareness or perception of the Independent Listener's other roles (e.g. policewoman, governor, doctor, vicar, counsellor, local dignitary).
- There must be clear rules on confidentiality – the Independent Listener will maintain confidentiality unless there is a higher duty to breach if informed of a child protection or safeguarding risk to the pupil or other pupils. There must be no absolute guarantees of secrecy.
- The Independent Listener must discuss and clarify the relationship or any issues with his / her own other professional expectations and codes such as religious, medical. This should be done with the DSL.
- Wychwood, Oxford will aim to make pupils aware of the Independent Listener, who s/he is, their role, the rules and access to them by placing the telephone number of the Independent Listener on notice boards in the boarding houses and in the form rooms and by discussion with form staff, pastoral staff and house staff;
- The Independent Listener will be encouraged to make regular visits into the school, with opportunities provided to speak at Assembly and informally with pupils.
- Individual meetings will take place in a private but observable location.
- The Independent Listener will inform the School when s/he is in the School.