

# Mindful(I): Mental Health @ FIE London

In keeping with FIE's mission to promote inclusivity we present this informational document to assist those with mental health issues.

Participation in a study abroad programme is generally a brand new and exciting experience that requires you to prepare for the unknown. When it comes to mental health issues, it may be something that you have dealt with in the past, something that you are still in treatment for or something that you have never faced before. This document provides information for you should you find yourself in any of these categories.

## *Some Differences in Psychological Treatment: USA vs. UK*

There are several significant differences between psychological support provided in the USA and the UK. In America 'psychotherapists' are sometimes called 'psychologists'. The term 'psychologist' in the UK is usually reserved for educational psychologists who work with schools, specializing in conditions such as ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia. Schools in the UK schools often also employ part-time 'counsellors' who offer emotional support and behaviour modification.

In America, 'psychiatrists' often provide counselling and psychotherapy. In the UK, psychiatrists are medically trained and orientated, and work primarily with conditions such as schizophrenia and serious mental health conditions that may require hospitalization. Their training in counselling or psychotherapy is generally limited.

Another significant difference between the US and the UK is related to **how prescriptions are written**. Psychotherapists and counsellors in the UK, while trained to work with any number of complex psychological issues, cannot prescribe medications. Prescriptions in the UK can only be written by a 'General Practitioner (GP), or Psychiatrist. Psychiatrists in the UK are also much more expensive than in America, with an average assessment costing approximately £300.00 (\$490.00 at this writing).

Both GPs and Psychiatrists in the UK may be reluctant to prescribe new medications, or renew existing prescriptions to study abroad students who are unknown to them, medically, and who are only here for a relatively short time. It is therefore extremely important, if you need medication(s) to manage a mental health condition whilst in the UK, to secure sufficient quantities of medication(s) prior to your arrival in the UK.

- **Medication.** We recommend that you come to London with at least **3 months' supply** of all prescribed medications. If any of your medications cannot be supplied ahead of time, please consider the following:
  - Speak to your doctor about how to proceed – Ask if they have recommendations for suppliers in London and how to go about getting prescriptions filled. Ask them if they are willing to ship the medication to you in London through the relevant legal channels.
  - Research to check if your medication is readily available here in the UK – Some medications may be under a different name, so do check the chemical composition name. Speak to your doctor and get documentation about your prescription including the condition for which you are taking it, your dosage, any special instructions etc. Bring this to London so that you can visit a doctor here and show them all details of your treatment regime.
  - Another option is for your parents to get the prescription and have them ship the medication to you in London. You must check with the [MHRA](#) (who are in charge of regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK) if your medication is legal to import. If so, then use a reputable shipping company who can help with documentation and have appropriate tracking facilities to stop your medication from going missing or being stopped at customs.

### *Additional Pre-Departure Preparations*

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FIE would like to ensure that your study abroad experience is as positive as possible. If you have any mental health concerns, **you** will be the best person to understand what barriers to daily life you struggle with.

- **Communication.** Sharing your mental health concerns with your Study Abroad Advisor or the FIE Team, including the [Student Life Team](#) or [Disabilities Coordinator](#), makes it easier for us to be able to help you. **Help us to help you by letting us know what you need!**
- **Your Mental Health Practitioner.** If you are currently seeing a counsellor, psychotherapist, psychologist or psychiatrist, speak with your mental health practitioner about your plans to study abroad, and discuss any concerns you may have, including a review of any medication(s) you are taking. Your practitioner might be able to provide recommendations for on-going treatment in London, including referrals to local practitioners.
- **Insurance.** FIE's Endsleigh insurance policy is mainly used for emergency medical matters. It will therefore not cover you for private treatment in London and it **does not cover pre-existing conditions. It is therefore vitally important that you speak with your home or further travel insurer to check that they will cover you whilst abroad.** If your home insurer will not cover you, we advise that you seek a travel insurance policy that will cover pre-existing mental health conditions including the provision of a therapist, prescriptions etc.

If your insurer will cover you whilst in London, please check with them as to whether they have a preferred medical partner in London with whom they have a pre-approved relationship.

- **Research, Research, Research!** You should look into what [mental health facilities are like in the UK](#). Check our Mobility International's page on [Mental Health Considerations](#); it will give you some idea of what to prepare for and how to manage your own mental health whilst abroad. [FIE's website](#) offers more details on your semester in London, and the facilities you will have whilst studying abroad.

### *Dr. Deborah Hill, Psychotherapist*

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Although FIE does not provide a full counselling service, we do have an outsourced psychotherapist, Dr. Deborah Hill, who can usually see students at short notice, and for initial assessment, without cost. Dr. Hill has a great deal of experience working with university students. In addition to formerly working as a study abroad director and university lecturer, she is also a qualified and accredited counsellor and psychotherapist. We have opted to out-source the counselling at FIE so that students can travel to Dr Hill's London Bridge office in private, making appointments with Dr Hill personally, as required.

Access to an appointment with Dr. Hill is via FIE's [Student Life Team](#) or [Disabilities Coordinator](#). In one or two sessions with Dr Hill, she will assess the student and advise about on-going support and counselling services. These initial assessment sessions are free of charge. Should more serious concerns arise while you are in London or should on-going counselling be required during the programme; Dr Hill can discuss on-going support with you. These ongoing referral services will be at cost to the student. More details on the areas of expertise that Dr. Hill can assist with can be seen on [this website](#).