

INDEPENDENT LISTENER POLICY

The School believes that the house system at Tonbridge provides equality of opportunity through a caring environment in which each individual, with support, mutual respect and encouragement of members of staff and of other boys, is valued and is allowed to develop his own personality and talents while learning to live as part of a community. We aim to ensure that this community is one in which there is no place for harassment, discrimination or bullying.

Each boy has a number of different adults to whom he may turn for advice and support including his Housemaster, Tutor or Matron in the House, or the Senior Chaplain or a trusted teacher. Further, all boys are made aware that the School Counsellor is available to see in confidence and is in School for 4 ½ days a week. The Medical Centre staff are available 24 hours a day during term-time and a School doctor is on duty every weekday morning. Boys may make confidential appointments with a School doctor or with any other doctor at the local practice (Warders Medical Centre).

We place great emphasis on Pastoral care and feel that the systems in place to support the welfare of the boys are robust. However, we also recognise that there may be occasions when a boy wishes to speak with someone who is not part of the School. Further, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (April 2015) states that a school must: *“identify at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff, and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school”*. Tonbridge School has a volunteer Independent Listener who acts in this capacity.

Tonbridge School’s Current Independent Listener is:

Mrs Patricia Bridgland

Contact details:

Mobile telephone: 07941 007527

Home telephone: 01892 824671

Email: bridglandpatricia@gmail.com

These contact details are displayed on House noticeboards alongside those of the Children’s Commissioner, Childline and ISI.

Mrs Bridgland is a qualified psychodynamic psychotherapist and is BACP registered and accredited but it is important to note that, in her role as Independent Listener, she will not be actively counselling boys nor offering psychotherapy. Rather, she will act as a supportive adult and active listener who may, in appropriate circumstances, suggest to a boy next steps he may wish to consider.

ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT LISTENER:

- I. The Independent Listener will act as a confidential (see I. a) for qualification) and supportive adult to boys in the School who wish to discuss concerns or worries.
 - a. In a similar way to any member of staff, including the School Counsellor, confidentiality cannot be maintained in a case where there is concern for the welfare or safety of the boy (or others) as a consequence of any discussion with the Independent Listener. In these situations the Independent Listener should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (the

Deputy Head Pastoral) or, in specific situations as detailed in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the KCC LADO team or the Police.

2. Other than as set out in 1.a. above, there is no requirement for the Independent Listener to report to the School any of the conversations they have with boys. However:
 - a. The Independent Listener, with explicit agreement from/at the request of a boy, may contact the School to share specific details or raise particular concerns.
 - b. At their discretion, the Independent Listener can report to the Deputy Head Pastoral generic information such as the number of calls they receive.
3. The Independent Listener will visit the School on occasion, have lunch with the boys in their Houses and familiarise themselves with the School on an informal basis.
4. There will be no expectation that the Independent Listener make themselves available in person for face-face meetings with the boys.

APPOINTMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT LISTENER

The following procedure is to be followed in appointing the Independent Listener:

- The School will follow the normal recruitment policy in line with current legislation, National Minimum Standards for Boarding, ISI regulations and KCSIE guidance, including appropriate checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- The Independent Listener will be included in the Single Central Register.
- The Independent Listener will be subject to the School's policies on Safeguarding and Child Protection, and Whistleblowing.
- This document will be provided to the Independent Listener as a job description.
- The Independent Listener will be provided with an induction which will include safeguarding and child protection training as well as a discussion of the ethos, aims and pastoral care of the School.
- The School will make it clear that the position, which is an unpaid and voluntary role, is to support the boarding boys, in particular, and lies outside the School management structure.
- The School will be aware of the Independent Listener's other roles and experience (e.g. police officer, governor, doctor, vicar, counsellor, local dignitary).
- The School will be aware of the Independent Listener's own other professional expectations and codes (e.g. religious, medical, counselling).
- The School will make clear to the Independent Listener the rules on confidentiality – especially their duty to breach confidentiality if informed of a safeguarding risk to a boy or boys.
- The School will ensure that, alongside their understanding of the supportive pastoral structures in place within the School, boys are aware of the role of Independent Listener including the rules on confidentiality.