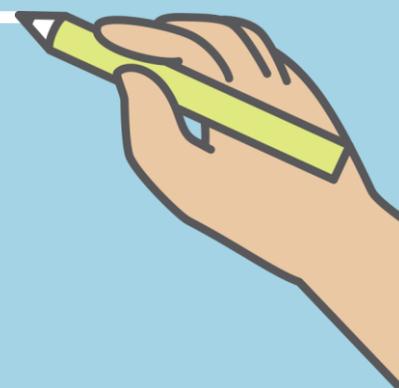


GREATER MANCHESTER MENTALLY HEALTHY COLLEGES

School to college transition

BOLTON COLLEGE
JANUARY 2020



Bolton College is a medium sized college located in the town centre.

Bolton is a large, diverse borough with a population of 281,600.

Of this population, 21% consider themselves part of one of the non-White ethnic minorities.

Around 43% of the borough's population live in areas that are among the 25% most deprived in England and Wales.

The proportion of people unemployed in Bolton is 11.4%, which is higher than the rate for the North West (10.6%).

<https://www.boltoncollege.ac.uk/>

School to college transition

This is part of the Greater Manchester Mentally Healthy Schools and Colleges programme. Due to the concentration of student numbers in a relatively small number of education settings and the short timeframes involved we recognised that a more bespoke approach to further Education colleges would be needed.

The aim of this project was to:

- Develop the capacity of further education and sixth form colleges in Greater Manchester to collaborate in support of the mental health and wellbeing of their staff and students
- Identify good practice that can be shared across the system.

There are 21 colleges in Greater Manchester (9 general further education colleges and 12 sixth form Colleges) and approximately 90% of 16 to 18yr olds in Greater Manchester are in colleges. During an academic year approximately 51,000 out of 56,000 16-18-year olds will study at these further education and sixth-form colleges.

The Association of Colleges (North) was awarded funding for 12 months in March 2019 to deliver a project to raise awareness and support development of the mental health agenda within individual colleges. Two main providers are supporting the project, Charlie Waller Memorial Trust and British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapists.

We know that transition into adulthood can be a challenging time for young people where leaving school is an important milestone.

We implemented our summer project to target new students - young people transitioning from school (Year 11) to college, who had self-declared mental health issues, diagnosis and or had confirmed they received support from other professional agencies and organisations.

Our aim was to reduce stress, reduce anxiety surrounding transition and improve wellbeing and resilience.

What we did

We worked with special educational needs coordinators from our feeder schools to identify 25 students with mental health issues to take part in a new learner day in July.

What we offered

- Attendance at a new learner day to offer additional transition support to college.
- Students were able to 'opt in' to have support from the mental health in college at enrolment
- Weekly 1-1s with their mentors
- Resilience building drop-ins that ran every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. These included head and hand massage, reflexology, meditation, aromatherapy, reiki, mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation.
- Wellbeing day

All the students we identified came into college to enrol and all attended the new learner day.



What we found

- Half of the group opted to be met and have wrap around support
- All students from the original project are still on course
- All students are still linking with and engaging with the mental health team. Some are seeking regular support on several days a week. Some are electing to meet with the mental health team once a weeks and others are liaising with them as and when they feel they need additional support



Next steps

- The mental health drop in support services and the resilience drop in sessions will continue to be offered to all students until June 2020. These will be arranged to suit the requirements of individual students and their individual desires for ongoing contact and support.
- The resilience drop-ins will continue to with sessions focusing on different aspects of mental and physical wellbeing and building resilience.

Case study - Student X

Student X was assessed in June 2019 with a view to starting College and completing a Business and IT qualification. Student X experienced mental health issues which included tactile and visual hallucinations and panic attacks. Student X had a history of self-harm in the form of lacerations. The self-harm was used as a way of releasing anger, however student X had previously exhibited violent behaviour in the past. Student X also expressed suicidal ideation and had previously overdosed, which resulted in hospital admissions. He spent most of his last 3 years at school not attending and had large gaps in his learning.

As part of the mental health transition project learner X was able to meet with other learners prior to starting the course and to subsequently develop a support plan to ensure that he would be able to have high levels of wrap around support. It was agreed that student X could sit by the door in class and have five minutes out to reduce his stress levels once he began his course. Student X's consultant advised that he has trust issues and if anything appeared to threaten him he needed to be prompted to remember what was going on in real terms. Student X wanted to be reassured that no-one would do him harm.

The mental health team agreed to meet student X on a weekly basis to discuss issues and help with confidence issues, however due to changeable circumstances student X is now seen by the mental health team at least three times a week. On occasions members of the mental health team have accompanied Student X to the hospital during crisis situations. Often these situations have been induced by excessive cannabis use. The mental health team help Student X to manage his addiction to cannabis. Student X has a 1:1 Learning Support Worker to aid concentration and to help mediate at all times between learner and peers.

Student X has aspirations to go to university to study Psychology, specifically in the area of mental health provision. Student X is working well in their first term at Bolton College and feels settled. He is attending regularly and has already gained a Merit with the submission of his first piece of work. This is a huge step forward in terms of his capacity to retain on a course, to develop resilience and to feel able to continue to participate in education despite very enduring issues relating to his mental health and wellbeing.

Case study - Student A

Student A to be stated as SA in this case study was identified from her application form for academic year 2019 – 2020, to participate in New Student Transition Project. Though transitioning from another FE college and not Year 11, it was assessed that SA may benefit from the supported transition programme. SA's application form declared ADHD, 1:1 support received previous and Dyslexia which a Learner Support Baseline Profile was completed thereafter.

LG, a staff member made contact with SA who was at first was reluctant to engage, suspicious as to why she was chosen and that she felt that that she wasn't going to enrol at college anyway. LG allowed time for SA to think about engaging, to encourage SA's autonomy. SA later agreed to meet LG but was clear that building trust was important to her and not to expect anything from her.

After one meeting and a telephone call, SA disclosed that she experiences feelings of anxiety and panic during:

- Times of change as she does not adapt to change well.
- Change of environment, large crowds, new people and loud noises. SA had been bullied throughout secondary school and within her locality. Often feels that potential threat is present.
- Speaking in front of people.
- Times when she does not understand information that she has been given and or, what is being asked of her. SA additionally explained that she will not speak up to ask for clarification.
- At times when SA feels that they have been put on the spot.

SA attended the Wellbeing Transition Day on 04 September 2019, prior to the start of the new academic year. The aim of the day was to provide SA the opportunity to explore the college, establish new connections with students and staff and identify areas of where she feels she needs support. SA immediately isolated herself away from the

group at the beginning of the day. Through encouragement; SA joined a small group of young people and began to interact and participate, eventually leading the group on tasks set. At the end of the day, SA was keen to share contact details with a small number of her peers to which she was widely received. During the feedback task, which focused the young people to reflect upon their experience and how they could use some of the tools when commencing college. SA explained that she was shocked that she did not have a panic attack and couldn't believe what a good day she had.

SA's safe space to manage her feelings was to withdraw, not ask for help preferring to be 'invisible' so not to stand out and to self-harm. SA explained that she did not have a good relationship with her mum and so felt she had no one to speak to. SA did not engage with CAMHS when previously referred, explaining that the experience was stressful and, in the end, pointless. SA was often self-deprecating, having a status quo mind-set regarding of how life was then and going to be in the future. SA's life was set.

SA's enrolled on Food Preparation and Cooking NVQ Level 1, English and Maths GCSE. SA was not keen to be met by member of the Mental Health Team on her first day as she did not wish to be singled out. LG and SA prior explored positive, safe coping strategies that SA could use. SA struggled on her first day, unwilling to enter classes feeling overwhelmed and anxious. LG provided support in the morning and a packet of playing cards which LG knew that SA had used previously as a tool to focus and remain calm. SA agreed to meet LG during Term one.

LG agreed with SA boundaries, expectations and the areas of work that both would explore if SA agreed to continue to meet. LG recognised that small steps were needed. These agreed areas were;

- LG to build a trusting environment for SA to express self and check understanding.
- LG and SA to meet Term One; September 2019
- LG and SA to work together to identify potential SA's support needs, potential strategies in terms of recognising/ managing feelings, building confidence and access to enrichment opportunities (lunch time clubs), support networks/ organisations within college/ externally.
- SA to engage with group support when present in class.
- SA to inform teaching staff so that they are aware of SA's needs to be able to make adjustments where practicable.

LG and SA continued to meet regularly; discussing SA's highs and lows with a focus on the work that they agreed previously stated; to enable SA to maintain attendance, participate in class and build relationship with peers. During Term one; SA had a short period of where she was self-harming, which SA required first aid treatment for injuries on one particular day. Both LG and SA (her designated safeguarding officer) worked

together in exploring other ways to de-escalate to reduce SA's probability of self-harming. SA identified writing and drawing where LG and RC provided materials for SA to take home. LG also supported SA to speak with one of her main tutors to explain in her own voice what was happening in her life at that time. SA explained later, that she would have never spoken to her tutor as the thought of it was scary.

LG during this process referred SA to Bolton College Counselling Service with SA's consent to explore deeper events that had occurred in SA's past. Additionally, SA disclosed that she was gender questioning and preferred a male name and gender-neutral pronouns. SA explained that they felt relief in terms of how LG and new friends had responded.

Up to present day; SA has 100% attendance, regularly attends counselling appointments and has overcome fear of working in Bolton College Signature restaurant, providing a food service for members of the public and staff. LG has ceased regularly meetings SA which was an original goal. SA however, can re-engage at any time when they feel that they need support.

Case study - Student CM

CM has been attending Bolton College since September 2019 and is doing Performing & Production Arts Diploma Level 1 and GCSE Maths. CM was one of a handful of students that took part in our transition event in August before starting at Bolton College in 2019.

CM was diagnosed with autism late in her life and says that she now knows why she has always felt the way she does. Before her diagnosis, CM thought that it was normal to feel anxious, depressed and angry. She does not understand sarcasm, does not like the way she looks and can have emotional break downs if she feels someone has criticised her.

CM has attended counselling and has worked with CAHMS but has a very negative opinion of all who have tried to help her in the past. CM stopped attending school in her final year and only returned to school shortly before her exams. Even though she missed out on many lessons, CM was able to achieve a three in Maths just missing out on a four.

One of CM's biggest issues is large class sizes. Unfortunately, all classes are very large with sometimes up to 20 students in each class. This has meant that CM has had several breakdowns over the first few months at college when attending Maths.

When I and LG first met CM she was very withdrawn, didn't smile and told us that she would not make any friends. CM has a very negative opinion of herself and openly discussed her dislike for past school staff, mentors and counsellors.

When she attended our transition event, CM became more relaxed as the day went on and started conversations with other students at the event. By the end of the day we asked students for feedback and CM said she had enjoyed the event and left a smiley face and nice message on a sticky note.

Since CM started college in September 2019 I have worked with CM as her mental health mentor at Bolton College. We meet every week and every time CM has a crisis incident' in college I also liaise with her mum.

One of CM's biggest issues has been her Maths GCSE classes, causing her to have an emotional break down every session. Unfortunately, there are no small classes at Bolton College. This being the case after several meetings and discussions, we now have a special arrangement in place for CM where she can attend 1-1 Math GCSE sessions once a week instead of attending class. This will allow her to take her GCSE exam, if and when she feels she is ready. This has been a big relief for her and allowed her to relax more and concentrate on her performing arts course.

When I first met CM she told me she would never be accepted and make friends at college. Quite the opposite has happened now! CM has been arranging out of college activities for her new friends including ice skating in the evenings.

This is a very new and big step for CM. This was something we have encouraged her to do during our mentoring sessions and will continue to do so.

It's a joy to see CM socialising, smiling and laughing with her peers. She still has emotional breakdowns and needs our support during her studies. She is aware that she can access my support and other support staff in my absence including her mentor, the mental health team and her learning and development mentor.

It's a pleasure to continue to support CM through her journey at Bolton College!

GET IN TOUCH

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<https://hub.gmhsc.org.uk/mental-health>

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