

GREATER MANCHESTER MENTALLY HEALTHY COLLEGES

School to college transition

XAVERIAN COLLEGE
JANUARY 2020



Xaverian College is an open access, inner-city 6th form college situated in an area of high social and economic deprivation.

Over half the students attracted additional funding for the college, based on their multiple deprivation score.

Significant numbers of students enter the college with a lower than average points score.

<http://www.xaverian.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 wanted to find out how 6th form students felt about:

- the current level of support for their mental health problems both inside college and outside college - usefulness and effectiveness
- the support levels they would have over the summer holidays and if they felt they needed any additional help
- the impact the level of support at their next step (university, apprenticeship, etc) would have on their mental health
- what support services they would like to see in place in the future from the NHS, college, universities/workplaces for their mental health needs



What we did

We interviewed 14 students (10 female, 1 non-binary and 3 males) aged between 17 and 19. They came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and the vast majority had home issues (ranging from child abuse, domestic abuse). 2 were in the process of gender identity transition. alcoholism in parents, insecure housing, poverty, parents with disabilities).

All students had:

- completed or were completing level three qualifications (A-levels or Btec) at the college
- mental health issues including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, PTSD, OCD, etc
- been supported to varying extents by the college's pastoral system

What we found

Existing support

- Many expressed that their parent/carer(s) offered little support to them for their health problems and that their friends were an excellent support network for them
- Support from the college that was praised included: college counselling, teachers listening and talking to them, being encouraged and given moral support, staff chasing up external bodies for support, and temporary adjustments being made when necessary
- Support from outside the college that was praised included: counselling, CBT, specialist support (eg Survivors Manchester and 42nd Street's LGBTQ+ group)
- Students who had accessed specialist support praised it very highly
- Most students had support in place for over their summer holidays (GP, therapy) and were happy with this

Access to services

- The main complaint they shared was their frustration at the extensive waiting times for external mental health services such as CAMHS, Emerge, 42nd Street and CBT
- Mental health services in Manchester are perceived by young people as slow to access and difficult to get a referral to
- In college, most of the students were able to easily access the pastoral team easily but some wanted quicker access
- Online mental health support was universally criticised by the participants within the study. They were described as anonymous, disengaging, unsuitable, faceless and unengaging. They said online counselling could never replace face to face counselling and they disliked the fact that online counsellors changed all the time so they never had continuity of support from one person
- The participants all said that they wanted shorter waiting times for mental health services. They all wanted easier access to a diversity of different services. They wanted more funding in these services
- They wanted the NHS services to replicate private and charity services
- They also wanted A+E services to be more appropriate for young people in crisis

Support needed at the next stage

- Nearly all participants wanted to progress to university after college. They were excited but nervous about this next step and there were a lot of concerns about how they would cope
- The participants overall had done very little research on what support there is on university campuses for mental health issues although all said there would be counselling available to them
- Students were very keen that there should be support available to them at university such as welfare support, a pastoral team, counselling and additional learning support teams aware of their additional support needs
- All said support at university would improve their mental health, help them settle in, help them make friends, make them feel valued
- The participants said that without support at university they would struggle and underachieve. It would negatively impact on their mental and emotional health.

Next steps

- We've shared the findings of this research with local universities in Manchester and with Emerge in Manchester
- We've changed our pastoral team provision so that more pastoral managers are available at all times to speak with student.
- We've provided more written resources for students to access in the pastoral support area



GET IN TOUCH

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

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