

GREATER MANCHESTER MENTALLY HEALTHY COLLEGES

School to college transition

STOCKPORT COLLEGE
(TRAFFORD COLLEGE GROUP)
FEBRUARY 2020



Stockport College is based in the centre of Stockport. Approximately 290,600 people live in the local authority of Stockport.

Just over two fifths of the working-age population have qualifications at level 4 or above. This is higher than regional and national averages. The proportion of students in the local authority who achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C or grades 9 to 4, including English and mathematics, is higher than regional and national averages.

Levels of unemployment in the local authority of Stockport are below regional and national averages and currently stand at 4.1%.

<https://stockport.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.



**STOCKPORT
COLLEGE**

Stockport College is a General Further Education College that serves high numbers of young people with low prior attainment, low self-esteem and from disadvantaged post code areas. Over 50% of young people have not successfully achieved maths or English GCSEs at school, more than one in ten have an Educational Health Care Plan, and more than one in ten declare a mental health support need at enrolment. To address these challenges, we have commenced a transformational project called “Unlocking Potential, Fostering Success at Stockport College”. A key strand of this project is about supporting young people and adult learners with mental health needs and focusing on integrating wellbeing within the curriculum. The development of a “school to college” transition programme was an action for the College under this strand.

We ran a targeted transition programme from June 2019 to October 2019. The programme aimed to improve transition support for our most vulnerable students who had applied to Stockport College from the two Stockport Pupil Referral Units:

- [Pendlebury Centre](#) (a pupil referral unit for students with social, emotional and mental health needs)
- [Highfield Inclusion Partnership](#) (a pupil referral unit for students with behavioural issues)

Our students

6 students took part in the project. These students were the most vulnerable and had significant barriers to learning due to severe mental health issues and/or behavioural concerns.

Transition from school to college for the most vulnerable students has always been an extremely challenging and difficult process. The change from school to college, especially for students who are studying in a pupil referral unit, can present a considerable challenge. For many students, transition proves too difficult for them to be able to cope with. Historically, students within this group haven’t been successful during the induction period at college and, in the majority of cases, have dropped out within the first term.

Attendance and engagement for this particular cohort of students at Stockport has always been extremely low.

What we did

We put together a programme of targeted activities that were carried out in the lead up to enrolment and then followed on throughout the 6-week induction period at college:

- Meet your Mentors: The transition mentors arranged to visit the two schools to introduce themselves in the lead up to the summer. This gave the students an opportunity to meet key support staff and ask any questions they may have before attending enrolment in August.
- Get to know your college: Students were invited in to take part in a tour and welcome from the mentor and learner services team before the main enrolment started
- Getting to know the team: Students had additional support workshops available to them throughout college induction. This was to ensure they had the opportunity to ask questions and meet all key staff in order to build relationships early.

Another phase to the project involved arranging specific training for the mentors which was delivered in conjunction with the staff at the Pendlebury Centre. This gave staff at the college the opportunity to develop their skills and expertise in order to better support the students during transition.

The impact

- Being able to build positive relationships with the staff at both centres throughout this project
- Improved retention compared to 18/19 for this specific cohort of students.
- Significantly improved attendance for students who took part in the project. One of the students is currently on 97% attendance
- Staff and students are already working together to co-produce support materials for students transitioning into college next year
- The Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training has really given staff more confidence to be able to have difficult conversations and support the most vulnerable students when they are at crisis point
- The Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training and Mental Health Training the staff took part in was so successful the college have invested in further training for all the designated safeguarding leads



Next steps

We plan to:

- Start transition much earlier in the year and are already organising transition assemblies to be held earlier in Term 2 & Term 3
- Deliver a *Transition Carousel* of activities – in different curriculum areas to be offered to all schools in the area of Stockport.
- Involve the parents more in the transition process this year, so they are also familiar with the college much earlier in the year.

We're in the process of introducing a Trafford College Group transition offer for 19/20 and this will include building on the foundations of what we have delivered within the project.

We will continue to build relationships with the local schools to ensure that transition starts early in 2020/21.

Case Study – NG

NG was really anxious and due to his anxiety levels he really did worry over the summer holidays about starting at Stockport College. The transition programme allowed the transition mentor to offer extensive support and guidance for NG prior to the main enrolment period. NG has worked extremely well since accessing the support offered by his mentor throughout the whole of the induction period. He has also really benefitted from the support of his school teacher throughout the first few weeks. This has been a great support as it meant he always had a familiar face to speak to if needed.



By being given the opportunity to meet his mentor at both school and then at college it has really helped to him to feel more confident and in turn this has significantly reduced his stress levels. This additional level of transition support from the mentors has meant he has settled in really well.

As part of the transition project the college has agreed to pay for him to finish his Duke of Edinburgh Award which he really appreciates.

“ NG is enjoying college and the responsibilities that come with it; he also like making his own decisions and being more independent. He feels more at ease here and like the familiarity with his teachers which he thinks makes them more approachable. NG is hopefully looking at undertaking an apprenticeship within a family business next year. He has built really positive relationship with the other learners in the group. His attendance is currently at 95% which is fantastic and he always puts 100% effort in order to produce good work.

One of NG’s teachers

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training for Transition Mentors and our Designated Safeguarding Officers



“Thank you so much, it's made a huge difference to how I believe I can deal with suicide. It's a game changer”

“I feel 100% more confident starting the conversation. Well delivered training. I enjoyed how interactive the sessions were.”

GET IN TOUCH

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

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