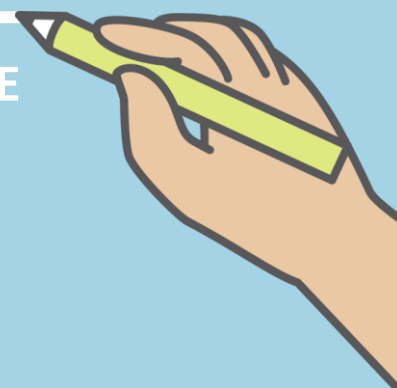


GREATER MANCHESTER MENTALLY HEALTHY COLLEGES

School to college transition

ST JOHN RIGBY SIXTH FORM COLLEGE
JANUARY 2020



St John Rigby College is an inclusive Roman Catholic sixth-form college under the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The college is situated in the west of Wigan.

The vast majority of students attending the college are from the Wigan area.

Levels of worklessness in Wigan are higher than the national average.

School leavers' achievement of English and mathematics at grades A*–C is just below the national average.

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.

Our project ran from June 2019 to September 2019. Our main aim was to create a culture and community in which mental health was openly discussed and addressed without shame and stigma. We also wanted the student body to have ownership and take the lead especially as we know how effective peer to peer support can be. This is why our first part of the project was to train up Student Ambassadors, so that they could help drive the college's mental health strategy.

The second part of our project was to identify new applicants who had applied to join the college in September 2019 and on their application had disclosed as struggling with their mental health. It was felt that it was this cohort of students who inevitably struggled with the transition from high school to college and often either did not complete their programme or under achieved. We very much wanted to welcome the students to the college community and familiarise themselves with key staff as well as the physical environment of the college. It was also key that whilst they attended our two-day transition programme that we helped them to develop key skills such as:

- Resilience
- Mindfulness techniques
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Study skills required for the Level 3 study

The aim of the all above was to remove the stigma around mental health and to improve self esteem and by doing so ensure that each student was equipped with the skills needed to ensure that they made a successful transition.

Mental health first aid ambassadors

We trained 10 of our Y12 student volunteers as mental health first aid ambassadors through the teachers of tomorrow programme. These students had been identified as students who wanted to pursue a teaching career and would be able to utilise the mental health first aid training in their chosen career path. We now plan to embed this group of students as peer support within the college community and to sign post students who may be struggling with their mental health.

Supporting transition

Identifying students

- Through course discussion meetings we identified prospective college applicants who had disclosed that they were struggling with their mental health/wellbeing. We identified 86 students who had a range of issues from anxiety, eating disorders and behaviour issues.

- We then contacted their school to see if they felt that the students would benefit from taking part in a transition project.
- 67 students from the 86 were considered by their schools to be suitable for the project. Despite this only 15 students signed up for the project. We believe this is mainly due to the very short turnaround time from securing the bid money to finalising and promoting the project. Not all students who signed up could attend all elements of the project - this included the event that took place during the summer holidays.

What we did

Two day transition workshop

This workshop took place before the summer break. For the first day only Year 12 were on site and the second day the College was closed for summer to all students. This meant the setting was less intimidating to the transition project students as campus wasn't overly busy. The workshop included:

- Mindfulness sessions
- Psychological theory
- 5 ways to wellbeing
- Transition from GCSE to A Level study
- Team building exercises
- A guest speaker who shared their personal journey with regards to their own wellbeing and mental health.



Summer holiday activity

We ran this activity to keep students 'warm' and to help manage their anxieties over the long summer break. This was delivered by a guest speaker and Commando Joe's

New students' day

New students' day is a day when all applicants are invited to college to experience college life and their chosen subjects. Key staff were made aware of the students who had been on the project during the day and discreetly kept an eye on them. The transition days ahead of new students' day was very successful as the students were able to attend the day without any issues arising



Outcomes and next steps

- Of the students that did attend the transition project 12 of them decided to attend St John Rigby College and all of them have settled into college life extremely well.
- We got the students more involved in college life by becoming Student Ambassadors during our student mental health week which ran in October 2019.
- We have equipped specific cohorts of students who are following a career pathways in education with mental health first aid skills so they will be able to continue to develop and use these skills to support more young people through their career choice.
- We plan to meet with these students and see how we can move forward with a similar transition project next year.

GET IN TOUCH

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