

GREATER MANCHESTER MENTAL HEALTH IN COLLEGES

Supervision pilot project

INTERIM REPORT
FEBRUARY 2021



The supervision activities

Strand B of the Association of Colleges Greater Manchester mentally healthy colleges programme (2019-20) focuses on supportive supervision of people in pastoral and student support roles.

Three supervision 'activities' have been identified and are being piloted during the academic year 2019-20.

This report describes these activities, who is being invited to take part in them, the inter-connection between the activities and the 'pilot' principles of this programme.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy is the professional association for members of the counselling professions in the UK.

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This is part of the Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education 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 programme is 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) has been awarded funding for Year Three of this programme to deliver a wide-ranging programme across Greater Manchester to raise awareness and support development of the mental health agenda within individual colleges.

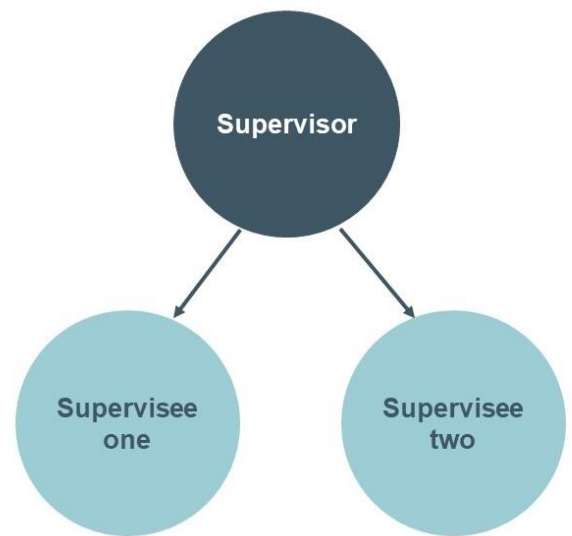
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The supervision activities

Strand B of the Association of Colleges Greater Manchester Mental Health Project (2019-20) focuses on supportive supervision of people in pastoral and student support roles. Three supervision 'activities' have been identified and are being piloted during the academic year 2019-20. Below is a description of these activities, who was invited to take part in them, the inter-connection between the activities and the 'pilot' principles of this programme.

Activity One

Colleges were invited to nominate two members of staff, who were willing and able to attend the training in supervision skills in either October or January 2019. Participating staff may work in any role, provided they have suitable skills and aptitudes to offer supportive supervision. Once they completed the initial two-day training these staff supervised two people with pastoral or student support roles, either in their own college or another partner college. There was a third training day, three months after the initial two days.



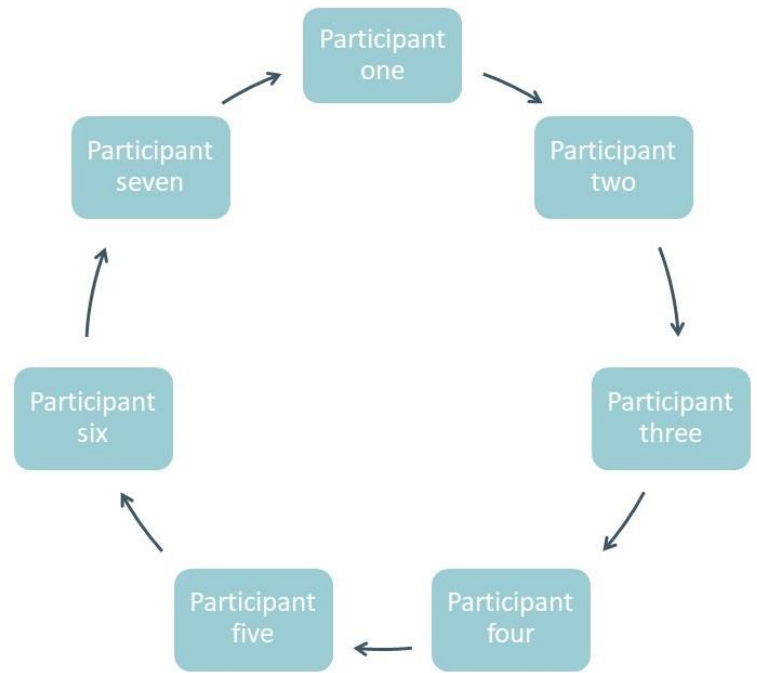
This supervision took place once every half-term until the end of the current academic year. Each participating college decided whether to continue with this supervision activity in future academic years.

During the training the trainee supervisors were encouraged to 'buddy' with someone else who has undertaken the training to support one another in their supervising.

Activity Two

Four colleges nominated seven student support staff to take part in Activity Two and attended one of two initial two-day trainings in November 2019. The training was to prepare the participants to give and receive peer supervision.

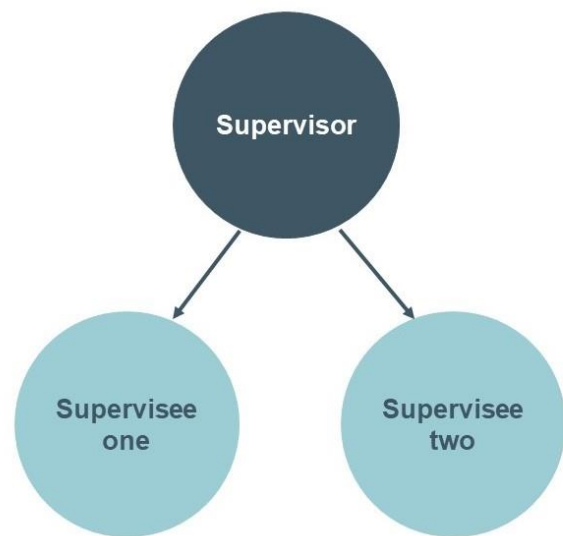
Following both initial trainings the participants were allocated a supervisor and a supervisee. So, for example, in figure two participant two will be supervised by participant one and will supervise participant three. There was a half-day follow up session with participants, organised at their college, in March 2020, but due to COVID-19 pandemic these didn't take place until November 2020



Activity Three

Experienced counsellors who are undertaking clinical supervision training at the University of Salford were matched with a member of staff from six colleges to offer supervision to pastoral and student support staff.

It was anticipated that this supervision would take place monthly, running from January to December 2020, however, due to COVID-19 only two college staff were able to continue. As part of Project 2, this work will be continued, with new University of Salford graduates and seven volunteer college staff being matched in February 2021, and again run monthly sessions to December 2021.



Key issues

In each activity the supervision is planned to be between the same supervisor and supervisee throughout the academic year as developing a good working relationship is very important to effective supervision. In each college there's an identified manager who will co-ordinate the supervision.

It's important to avoid any cross-over of people involved in Activity One and Activity Two, or people involved in Activity Two and Activity Three. Those who become supervisors in Activity One may be supervised through Activity Three.

This pilot programme is being evaluated by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and its intended that the results will be shared across all colleges in the Greater Manchester area (possibly beyond) in order to give colleges information to help in planning future supervision support for staff with pastoral and student support roles. All data in the evaluation will be anonymised prior to distribution.

Mid-term review – Peer Supervision

A mid-term review took place in March 2020, involving Jo Holmes and Steve Page visiting three colleges (The Manchester College, Trafford and Wigan and Leigh), the Hopwood Hall visit being postponed to the end of the month due to availability of staff, and then again postponed until December 2020, due to COVID-19.

The colleges were all at different stages within the pilot, there was a general consensus across all establishments that workers were committed to the supervision programme but available time and resources remained an issue. One college fed back that whilst there appeared to be commitment at Vice Principal level re the different activities within the pilot, this had become slightly diluted at times further down the management structure. All colleges fed back that any communication from the Association of Colleges to managers, to further stress the importance of 'buy-in' to the process, would be helpful.



The training is one of the best courses I've completed since being in this new pastoral role. It's given me some great tools to work with students, particularly around boundaries, thank you so much to both trainers and to the Association of Colleges for funding it.

Member of staff from Trafford College.

The Manchester College

Seven members of staff took part in the peer supervision training, six of whom had pastoral roles, alongside one member of teaching staff, who couldn't attend the review day as he was unable to get cover. All staff involved in the project worked over a range of five campuses and had a mixture of roles including specialist SEND support workers and student experience safeguarding mentors.

Five of the pastoral staff had either contracted for the first session or had received supervision themselves. The group feedback that they were still very much in the early stages of embedding the peer supervision process into their work and although they experienced some restrictions due to time restraints, they did feel supported by management, though there still was confusion about the different activities.

In December, 2019, the cohort had led on delivering workshops to the wider staff team over a number of CPD days re the content of the training, so as to cascade what they had learned to colleagues, thus further cementing, in their view, the buy-in from the colleagues.

The team themselves were committed to continuing with the project and feedback that they just needed 'to get on with setting dates in diaries'. One worker felt the training was crucial to pastoral worker's skillset as many of them informally supervised others prior to the training, the content of the two days both strengthening and formalising this. Another worker feedback that she now had a better awareness of how to establish boundaries and reported that she felt she could say to students that she wasn't able to help at that precise moment but could give them five minutes later in the day, or at a more suitable time, enabling her to feel more in control and less likely to burn out.

The group agreed that the boundary work had been helpful and that students were accepting of this, taking away the preconceived pressure that everyone had to be helped 'then and there'.



Many of us get to the point where our heads feel they are about to explode. Even on a good week, lots of students are hitting crisis point and there's always an incident. It can feel like everyone wants a bit of you and there's not enough to go around. Sometimes I feel burnt out. I really believe the more structured supervision I have the less likely I am to burn out. It just makes you feel lighter.

Following the catch-up session, the group felt that they had all they needed in place to carry on with the pilot, and agreed they needed to focus on maintaining the peer supervision process as opposed to offering supervision to other members of staff, an option they explored within the session. The consensus was to get it right with each other first before thinking about cascading support to the wider staff team, which could be a CPD option in the future.

Trafford College

The Trafford College cohort of pastoral workers, seven in all, had all provided and received two sets of supervision each and reported back that the system was working well. Following a round robin, staff had decided to pull names out of a hat, and the group presented as exceptionally comfortable with each other with collaborative work and transparency clearly at the heart of how they worked together. The group feedback highlights of the project to date.

“**My supervision has included getting good advice from a colleague, in a structured, clear way, providing clarity and confirming that I’m on the right track.**

“**When it’s not your direct line manager the barriers are removed, the conversation is easier, you don’t feel judged, you can really say what you want to say. It feels incredibly safe.**

“**I thought supervision might turn into a moaning and groaning session, it’s been far from that, it’s been constructive and really positive.**

“**I decided to take a celebration of success to my session, it felt good to talk about something positive. In our line of work, lots of our conversations about students can leave you feeling sad, we need to shine a light on the good news stories too, it helps re-balance the focus of the work and recognises what a great impact we can sometimes have on improving young people’s lives.**

“**The training is one of the best courses I’ve completed since being in this new pastoral role. It’s given me some great tools to work with students, particularly around boundaries, thank you so much to both trainers and to the Association of Colleges for funding it.**

The general consensus of the mid-term review was that the peer supervision arrangements were working exceptionally well, there was a spirit of collaboration and sharing good practice between the two sites (Stockport and Trafford sharing a similar demographic of student learners), and that it was something that the cohort were committed to (all those who attended the initial training also attended the catch up session).

Finding the space and time to carry out the sessions had resulted in some challenges due to busy workloads but they did feel it was something that needed to be prioritised. One of their direct line managers was also receiving his own supervision as part of the wider Association of Colleges' funded supervision project via a trainee clinical supervisor from the University of Salford offering monthly supervision, which they were aware was going 'really well' with the manager talking highly of the benefits. Coincidentally, during the visit, we met the University of Salford supervisor and supervisee who spoke positively of the arrangement, feeding back separately:

“
I've met with XXX twice. I was sceptical about supervision and wondered how useful it would be, I can honestly say it's been fantastic. I can't thank XXX enough for listening to me, it's been so helpful.

This feedback will be included within the evaluation of the wider project but does interlink with the Trafford experience.

The group felt this additional support for one of the line managers complimented the commitment from leadership teams, though they did report back that although they felt middle management were mostly supportive of how the project was running felt that further clarification from the project would be helpful.

The group did note that not all campuses had bought into the pilot and felt there was some resistance from one of the colleges. This led to a debate about different cultures or ethos embedded in the learning environment, with Steve Page commenting:

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Where the culture is driven by learning, supervision arrangements will be welcomed. Where it is driven by control, it may be perceived as a threat.

The group agreed to meet again in the summer post exams as part of the wider evaluation process.

Wigan and Leigh College

Both the peer supervision trainees and the 'supervising others' (Activity One) trainees attended the review session with the staff joining forces as one larger group, fully supported by the Assistant Principal, the visible driving force behind the well-being and welfare of both staff and students.

There was some resistance and tension to some of the allocated roles which was picked up upon during the review session. It is perhaps worth noting that there was a range of diverse experience within the room, with some members of staff having worked in pastoral support roles for longer and some being relatively new, some of the tensions felt down to experience and wider CPD. The trainers addressed this by sharing their belief that all staff who'd participated in the training had everything they needed to supervise others and do it well. We also stressed our experience of working with newly trained practitioners as bringing added value and something new and fresh to support roles.

One member of staff, who had worked in social care in the past, fed back:

“ I welcome this training and the programme we now have in place. I was shocked when I first started working in FE and discovered there was no formal supervision, dealing with the level of safe-guarding we do on a day-to-day basis we need a safe space to process and self-reflect to ultimately improve our practice...and keep us well.

Another member of staff commented:

“ Fundamentally, supervision comes back to reassuring yourself that you are doing your job effectively, you can sometime feel the jack of all trades, jumping from role to role. We offer so many different levels of both academic and emotional support, well-being is at the heart of what we do, supervision helps guarantee that we can look after each other too.

The group concluded that the next step was to focus on establishing supervision sessions and to prioritise being both supervisors and supervisees. It was agreed that a follow up meeting in June would be welcomed, as part of the wider evaluation process.

COVID-19 halted some of the plans and these have been addressed within this report. All outstanding training sessions from Project 1 were delivered by the end of 2020.

Next Steps

- Project 2 will continue the Supervision Strand of its work by the development of a Network of Trainers, supported in the first instance by BACP and this project, with website, administration and ready-made training sessions funded to help initiate and settle a new network into Greater Manchester. The expectation is for this network to become self-sustainable post July 2021 and for its catchment to be extended outside Greater Manchester, as well as capturing other educational institutions such as schools and training providers.
- Training for potential trainers by BACP took place in January 2021 and it's expected that the first sessions will be delivered in April 2021. These will be the two-day sessions as delivered directly by BACP into colleges as part of Project 1. Due to COVID-19 these may commence as on-line training sessions, but its hoped that these will return to face-to-face sessions, once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.
- Project 2 will continue with the work with University of Salford with six graduates volunteering to take part. They will be matched with seven college staff and introductions commenced in February 2021. This will run for ten months to December 2021.

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