Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education Evaluation

Interim Report

Jo Gibson, Ruth Lambley & Nick Rowe
Converge Evaluation & Research Team
York St John University
November 2021

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CERT

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GMCA GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

NHS in Greater Manchester

ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES

Executive Summary

This evaluation was commissioned by the **Association of Colleges** to consider the impacts of the **Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education** project on the experience of students, staff and strategic working.

The evaluation consists of **2 phases** and was conducted by **York St John University's Converge Evaluation and Research Team**. It uses a primarily qualitative approach to gather narratives of the project's impact and distance travelled from the perspective of those involved.

This report shares findings from **phase 1** and includes **1)** analysis of existing data, and **2)** qualitative interviews with mental health leads and senior leadership staff at participating colleges. The findings from **phase 1** will inform **phase 2**.

ABOUT THE GREATER MANCHESTER MENTAL HEALTH IN FURTHER EDUCATION PROJECT:

Funding for **Greater Manchester colleges** to trial innovative approaches to support the mental health of their learners:

- Developed in response to the 2017 DHSC & DFE Green Paper: *Transforming Children and Young People's mental health provision.*
- Supporting readiness to learn through prevention, early intervention, and resilience for positive mental health.
- A *'test and learn'* process – testing new ideas and new ways of working to be shared with others.
- For learners aged 16-19 years.
- The project took place across 3 years from April 2019 with a total of 22 colleges receiving support.

INTERIM FINDINGS:

- The number of students in need of mental health support at FE is increasing.
- Through the project's test and learn process, colleges developed diverse, innovative and effective ways of supporting student mental health.
- All participating colleges reported that the project had a beneficial impact.
- Project activity seems to have had a positive impact on:
  - the mental health and wellbeing of learners involved in the activity,
  - the challenges associated with transition from school to college,
  - the professional development of staff.
- Developing productive and supportive relationships appears to constitute a significant impact of the project.
- The project opened pathways to positive peer relationships, student and staff relationships, and FE partnership working with schools and external agencies and services.
- The project increased the capacity and sustainability of colleges to support student mental health and wellbeing. It enabled them to afford additional staff and resource.
- There are preliminary indications that the project supported an early help model for action before escalation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Evaluation Phase 2

Young people should be involved in the planning, dissemination of findings and recommendations for deeper consideration of the significant impacts identified through **phase 1**.

Sharing Best Practice

Methods for sharing the richness of approaches colleges developed to support student mental health – including examples of best practice – should be developed through **phase 2** and future working.

Funding and Resource

From initial analysis, it appears that the project offers a much-needed resource. With increasing numbers of students in need of mental health support to continue their studies, additional or ring-fenced funding should be sought to continue to support young people to be well in order to thrive at college.

WHAT THE COLLEGES DID:

Each college developed & delivered activity bespoke to the needs of their learners and context. This included:

- Tailored programmes for students including transition, mentoring, workshops & events.
- New resources such as online modules, applications & software, wellbeing rooms and devices.
- Staff professional development including Mental Health First Aid, Train the Trainer, supervision and trauma-informed approaches.
- Strategic and policy development.

Activity was developed primarily for vulnerable learners including those identified as being at risk of becoming NEET and high-risk groups including, students from the LGBTQ+ community; students with special needs; young people at risk of involvement in crime; Looked After Children; and young people with autism and ADHD. However, some colleges described an open-to-all approach, endeavouring to welcome all students requiring mental health support.

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We would also like to thank **Roisin Blackburn** for administrative support, **Pat Harrison** for sharing her insight and project knowledge and **Mark Gowland** for report design.

Photo Credits: **Bridge College** (pp. 18, 19), **Mauro DiVito** of **Pottery Corner, The Trafford College Group** (pp. 14, 15, back cover), **Oldham Sixth Form College** (pp. 8, 10, 13, 21, 22, 23, front & back cover), **Reshma Kaur, Xaverian College** (back cover), **Rebecca Cross, Salford City College** (pp. 3, 5, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, front & back cover).

About the project

Poor mental health is highly detrimental to the ability of a young person to succeed at college, particularly affecting factors such as attainment and retention (***Buchanan & Warwick, 2020***). It can impact their readiness to learn – to learn, and to thrive at college, a student must first be well. However, ***"In the last three years, the likelihood of young people having a mental health problem has increased by 50%"*** (*The Children's Society,* 2021). The problem is perhaps starker for Further Education as it falls between the gap of initiatives targeted at schools and Higher Education. To address this, the **Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education project** was designed to support a ***whole system approach*** (*The British Psychological Society,* 2019; *Gov.UK,* 2021). It seeks to develop the capacity of colleges in **Greater Manchester** to collaborate and support the mental health and wellbeing of their students and staff.

In March 2019, the **Association of Colleges**[1] (**AoC**) secured £300,000 from the **Greater Manchester Mental Health in Education Programme**, commissioned by **Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership** (**GM C&YPP**[2]), to deliver the project across a 12-month period. In June 2020 (Year 2), the **AoC** secured £300,000 for a further 12 months (delayed due to pandemic), and in March 2021 (Year 3) secured another £300,000 plus an additional £185,000, to be spent by March 2022. **BACP** are acknowledged as a key provider within the Project, particularly in the development and delivery of supervision training to **Greater Manchester colleges** over the 3 years. It is important to note this report does not cover Year 3 as it is still in progress.

[1] The AoC (The Association of Colleges) is the national voice for colleges and exists to promote and support their interests. The majority of the GM colleges are members of the Association of Colleges (AoC).

[2] Children and Young People Partnership Plan

Through the funding, colleges were supported to develop and deliver activity to support their learner's mental health for study. They undertook a test and learn approach to develop activity bespoke to their learners and context.

It is important to note here that this project does not replace **CAMHS**[3] services for young people with more severe difficulties. The intention was to identify new and effective ways of keeping young people in education and to help them succeed in their studies by looking after their mental health. It was expected that good practice would be shared across the system.

The role of the Converge Evaluation and Research Team

The **Converge Evaluation and Research Team (CERT)** is a group of researchers with lived experience of mental health difficulties based at **York St John University**. In July 2021, **CERT** was approached by **Richard Caulfield**, **AoC Director** and **National Lead for Mental Health for the AoC** – and leader of this project – to coproduce an evaluation of the **Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education Project** which had been running since 2019.

[3] Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Methods

CERT was commissioned by the **AoC** to evaluate the impact of the **Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education Project**. The evaluation uses a primarily qualitative approach to gather narratives of the project's impact and distance travelled from the perspective of those involved. The evaluation consists of **2 phases**:

PHASE 1: TAKING STOCK (SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2021)

This initial phase includes analysis of existing data to ascertain what has taken place and to inform **phase 2**. Existing data included: **questionnaires** (produced by **AoC** and completed by mental health leads at participating colleges), **case studies** (largely consisting of written reports by college staff responsible for project delivery), available **online reports** and **numerical data** relating to numbers involved in years 1 & 2 of the project.

Alongside analysis of existing data, **semi-structured interviews** were conducted with **Mental Health Leads** at participating colleges. At the time of writing this interim report, 13 out of 17 colleges took part in an interview, with interviews pending for 2 further colleges. Given that each college undertook processes bespoke to their learners and context through a ***'test and learn'*** approach, we understand interviewing all participating colleges to be important. We seek to interview the remaining colleges in **phase 2**.

See appendix 2 for more information about how VR headsets and the QT robot were used at Bridge College.

****See appendix 3 for more information about working towards being a trauma-informed college at Bolton College.***

PHASE 2: UNDERSTANDING IMPACTS (NOVEMBER 2021 – MAY 2022)

Following on from **phase 1**, we propose to conduct:

- **Interviews with mental health leads at colleges that did not participate in phase 1** to support inclusion of all colleges to articulate their bespoke approach, should they wish to participate.
- **Interviews with college staff responsible for project delivery** to take a closer look at the ways in which staff worked with young people, and to gather narratives of training/activity they participated in, alongside how it has impacted their work and interactions with students.
- **Interviews with non-teaching/non-pastoral college staff** will be included where colleges reported a holistic approach - in particular, those working towards being trauma-informed or trauma-responsive and subsequently trained their entire staff. Here, we will seek to hear from employees across a range of college departments, including cleaning, security, canteen staff and human resources.
- **An online survey for staff** designed in collaboration with college students to consider staff perceptions of mental health at their college and the impacts of the **Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education** Project.
- **Workshops with college students** including arts-based workshops to explore ways in which the project impacted participating students and listening workshops whereby students will be invited to respond to excerpts of actor-voiced staff interviews.

A Note On 'Youth Voice'

At the heart of this **AoC** project is an ambition to find ways to support young people to thrive at college. Therefore, in **phase 2** we propose to involve young people in the planning and dissemination of the findings and recommendations. Within the scope of the evaluation we propose to do this by asking young people to:

1. contribute to survey design,
2. comment on recorded staff interviews,
3. share their thoughts and experiences of the project (note that this is possible for year 2 only as year 1 project participants would have moved on from college),
4. make artwork as a way to express their perspectives, where appropriate.

A Note About The Coronavirus Pandemic Lockdowns

The beginning of Year 2 of this project directly coincided with the first of three national lockdowns, coming into force on the 28th of March 2020. This created a uniquely challenging situation for both young people and colleges and therefore had an impact on the project which must be fully acknowledged. Unable to open properly, colleges were forced to move both teaching and student support online. This created a multitude of problems – in particular, resource and time were noted as more young people required support (*Young Minds*, 2021), whilst simultaneously social distancing requirements presented challenges to delivery. Mental health leads and senior staff interviewed for this evaluation reported challenges including substantially increased staff workloads and considerable uncertainty for young people. It is also important to note that in areas of deprivation, the pandemic served to make pre-existing inequalities even starker. For example, where young people didn't have equipment such as laptops, couldn't afford data, or who lacked somewhere quiet to study at home, remote learning was difficult and could cause them to fall behind their better-off peers.

It's been an incredible experience. And we're really proud of the success of it.
(The Trafford College Group, 2021)

Positive Response

The response to the project from college mental health leads and senior staff has been highly positive. All colleges that completed an **AoC Year 2 Transition Strand Questionnaire** reported:

1. An improvement in the mental health and wellbeing of learners involved in the activity.
2. The activity supported challenges associated with transition from school to college (including challenges introduced or exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19).
3. They intend to repeat the activity next year.
4. They intend to develop the activity further with follow on projects.
5. The activity was a success.
6. The activity will become part of their mainstream enrolment process in future years.

Student responses to the project shared by the colleges:

I have become more confident in myself

It's made me think more positively now and has given me techniques that I can use in my life

I think the course was great. I have realised that it is good to talk about your feelings and I am going to seek more therapy

I have developed ways to deal with how I am feeling or what I am struggling with

The booklets and online links to other resources have been really useful and particularly the wellbeing diary

It helped me understand that anxiety impacts many areas of our lives and many students also feel anxious about college and exams. Therefore, providing understanding in my life

Phase 2 of this evaluation will consider statements 1-6 with FE students and wider staff. We are particularly keen to hear from those that directly participated in the project.

This report will now discuss themes emerging from **phase 1** initial analysis including:
1. Developing Relationships
2. Increasing Capacity and Sustainability, and
3. Initiating an Early Help Model.

1. Developing Relationships

Early indications from **phase 1** show relationship to be of key significance to the project. Mental health leads and senior members at the colleges talked about ways in which their participation in the project developed relationships between:

- Student and student
- Student and staff
- Colleges and schools
- Colleges and colleges
- Colleges and parent/carers
- Colleges and external services

1 (a) Supporting student relationships

Supporting students to build positive relationships with peers and college staff was discussed as being a significant impact of the project. Through the transition strand for example, students were supported to develop relationships with peers via the provision of dedicated wellbeing spaces, buddy schemes and pre-enrolment activities such arts and crafts workshops and go-karting.

Since many students transition from small secondary schools to large colleges, and since colleges enrol students from large numbers of institutions, it is unlikely that young people will go on to study with peers they already know at FE. Some colleges noted that impacts of Covid-19 have compounded the challenges that young people can face in forming peer relationships.

> *Being directed to a safe space [a dedicated wellbeing room], for those who were particularly anxious meant that they met others in a similar situation and some new supportive friendships emerged.*
>
> *(Salford City College Mental Health Lead, 2021)*

A big part of it is being lost in a crowd, isn't it? You can be standing there thinking, I need to know this, but I don't know who to ask.

(The Trafford College Group Student Engagement and Student Voice Lead, 2021)

As a connected example, **The Trafford College Group** talked about the importance of supporting young people ***"to have somebody that they could go to, that wasn't necessarily a member of staff, [since] you have to be even more brave to go to a staff member"*** (*Student Engagement and Student Voice Lead*, 2021). They discussed the success of their buddy scheme, whereby students are buddied up with a peer to *"check-in"* with. This was developed as part of the transition strand. Moving forward, peer mentors will include students that participated in the programme the previous year. In this way, they can draw on their insight and experience through project participation to support new participants; ***"That's how it will grow year on year"*** (Ibid).

Alongside supporting student peer relationships, several of the colleges noted that the project positively impacted student relationships with staff. Project activity that supported this includes, assigning students a staff member as a dedicated point of contact and working with a trauma-informed approach. Senior staff at **Bolton College** described how a trauma-informed approach changed their interactions with students.

Genuine concern

For example, when asking a student 'why are you late?', instead of asking that question from an administrative perspective alone, staff at Bolton College ask the question along of the lines of 'what's happening for you'? In doing so they offer genuine concern for what might be causing the student to be late – what challenges they may have to being punctual, for example caring responsibilities – which not only opens pathways to positive relationships but can offer a better understanding of any support needed to help students succeed at college.

Given the extensive evidence that having good-quality relationships can help our physical and mental health and wellbeing (*Mental Health Foundation*, 2016), supporting students to build positive relationships constitutes a significant impact of the project that will be explored further in **phase 2**.

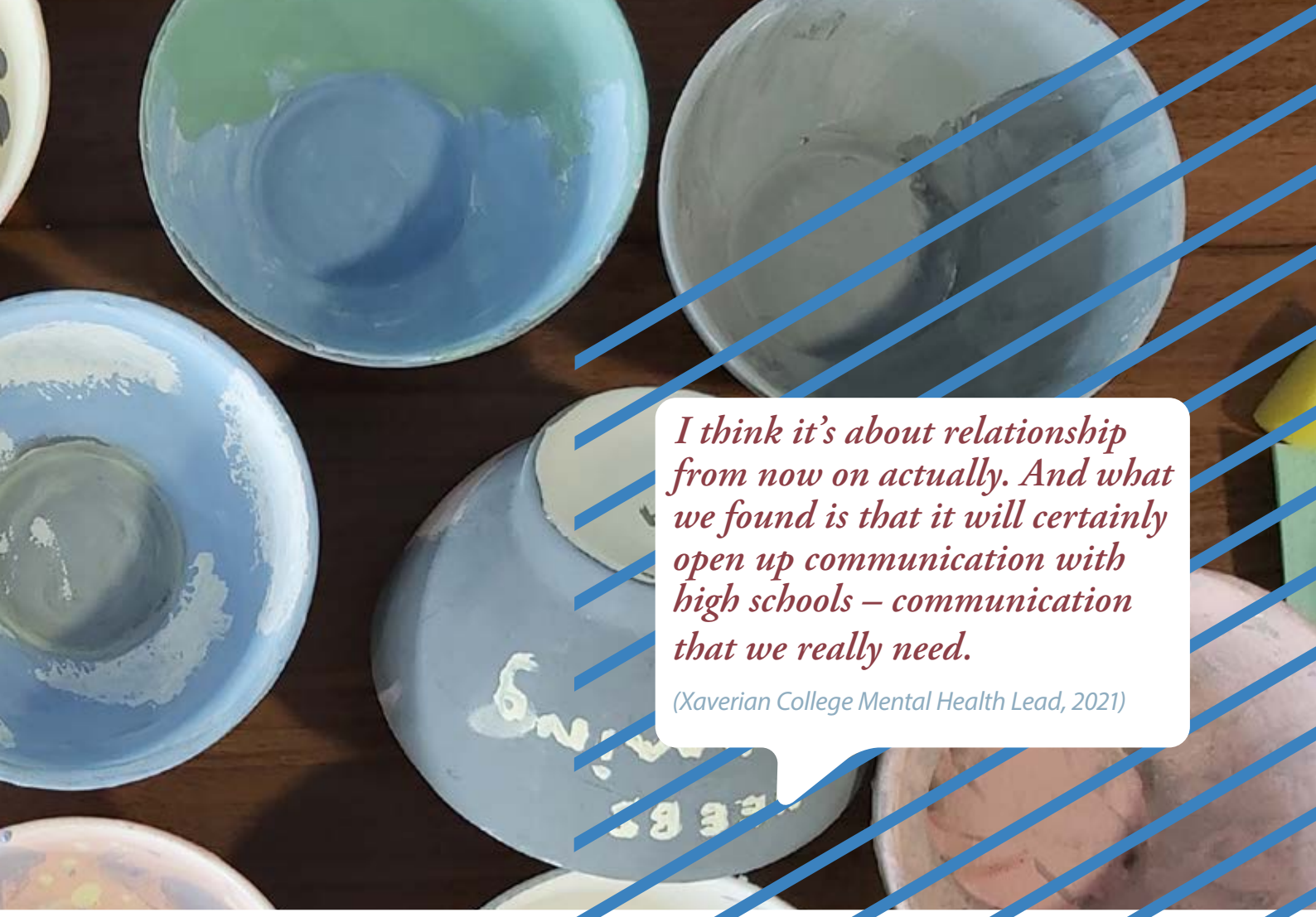
1 (b) Partnership and collaborative working

Nearly all colleges that participated in the project reported working with external services and agencies to enhance their offer. This included working with schools, educational psychologists, Greater Manchester Police and specialist mental health providers. The list below shows names of the services and agencies that colleges worked with or referred students to*:

- Achieve
- Beat
- Beyond Psychology
- Charlie Waller Trust
- Early Break
- Early Help
- Greater Manchester Police Violence Reduction Unit
- Harbour project
- Kooth
- Loudspeaker
- Pottery Corner – Mindfulness through Creativity
- Salford Royal Crisis Team
- Samaritans
- Streetwise
- Talk Shop
- Youth Justice Team
- 42nd Street
- 84 Youth

(NB This list represents services and agencies discussed in **phase 1** of the evaluation. As we consider partnership working further in **phase 2**, we anticipate that more will be included).

See appendix 1 for a directory of services and agencies engaged with including a description of their work and contact information.



> *I think it's about relationship from now on actually. And what we found is that it will certainly open up communication with high schools – communication that we really need.*
>
> *(Xaverian College Mental Health Lead, 2021)*

Many colleges said that working with external partners allowed them to access specialist expertise be that for training, audit, workshops or other purposes. Senior staff at **Hopwood Hall College** explain, *"As education staff we are 'laymen' […] in terms of mental health we probably didn't have that language …"* (2021). *'That language'* refers to specialist mental health terminology. Senior staff at **Hopwood Hall** reported that partnership working with a mental health practitioner assisted them to make better connections with mental health services, whereby the specialist practitioner offered a point of *'translation'* between education staff and health services.

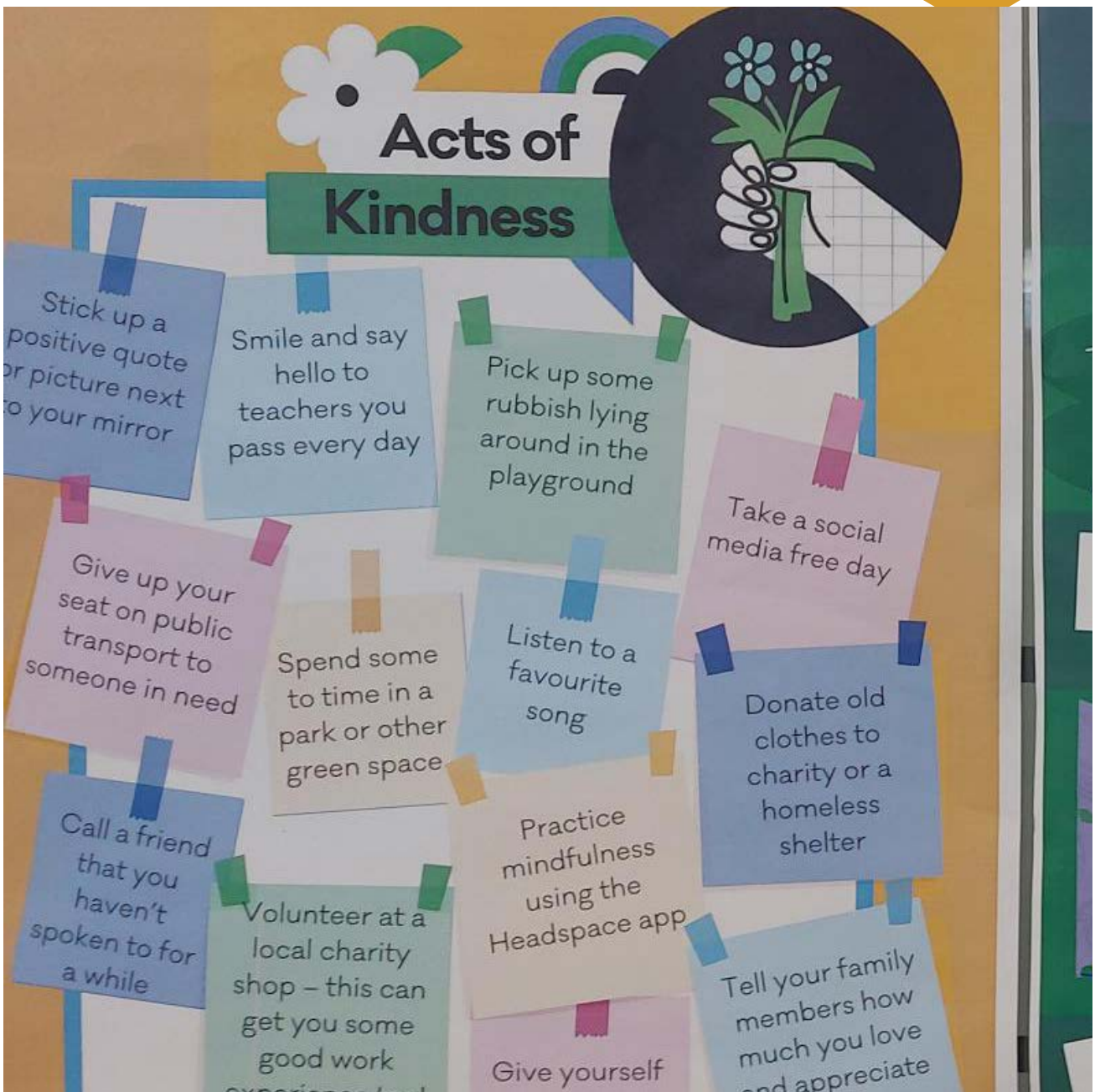
In addition to partnership working with external services, colleges reported better partnership working with schools as part of the project. During interviews with mental health leads at participating colleges, several mentioned that poor communication with schools – in particular, the sharing of student information – hindered the transition process.

For some colleges, the project transition strand supported them to build positive relationships with schools. **Xaverian College** for example said that through their project participation they were invited to student support meetings at schools. Attending the support meetings – which included the student, their parent/carers, school staff and support workers such as social workers or educational psychologists – allowed them to better understand the young person and their needs and to support them more fully in their transition to college.

Other aspects of partnership working and collaborative working that was reported included, colleges working as critical friends in their journey to become trauma-informed and greater student awareness regarding what services can be accessed to support their mental health. From our initial analysis, partnership and collaborative working have been identified as aspects of the project that hold considerable impacts for student mental health and college success. **Phase 2** will go on to consider this.

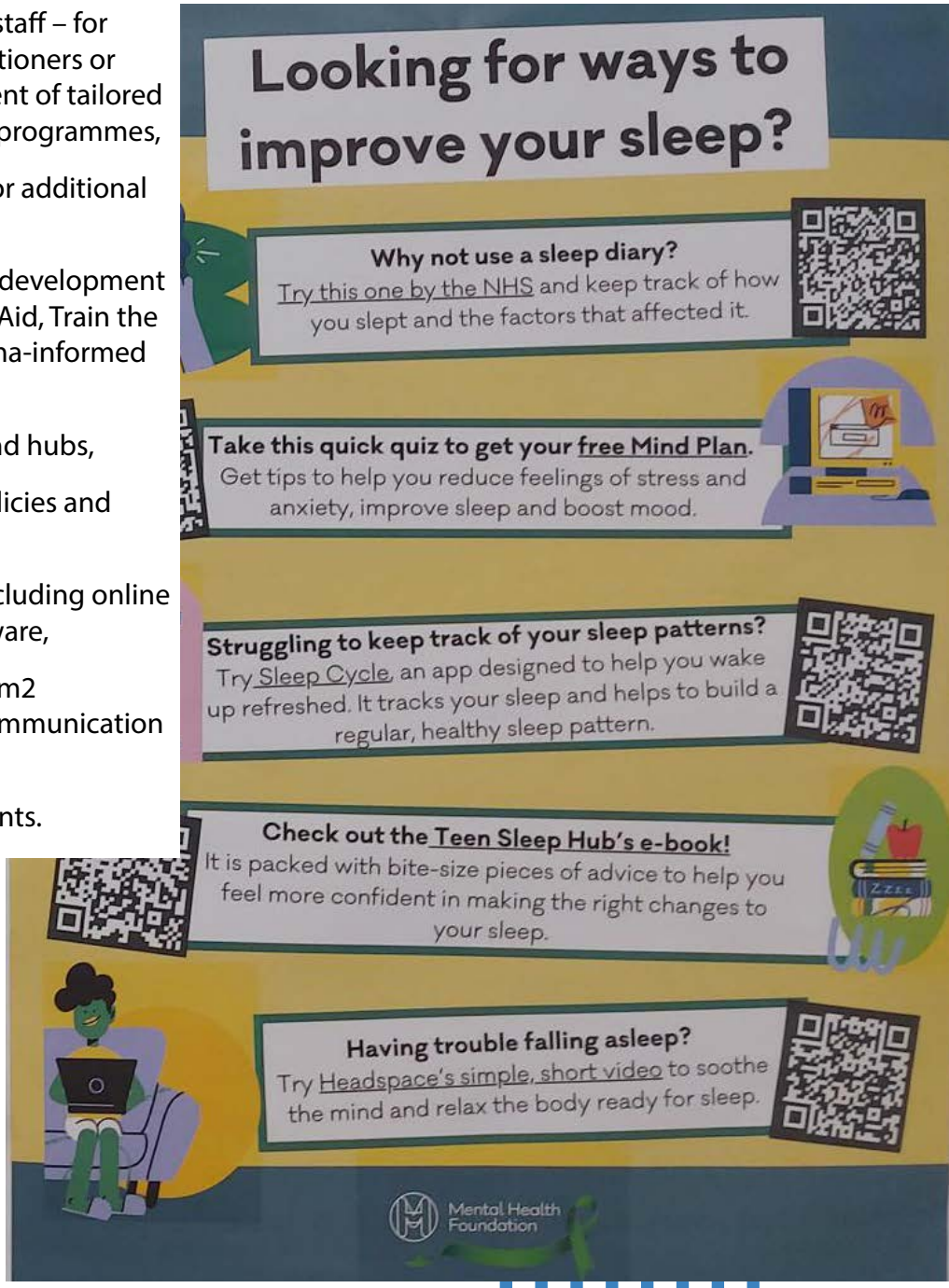
2. Increasing Capacity and Sustainability

The second year of the project began as COVID-19 restrictions were first enforced in the UK. This was the year that led the **NHS Confederation Mental Health Network** to report the mental health system for children and young people in England as *'reaching tipping point'* (2021). As the report identifies, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges, including mental health inequalities. Waiting lists for **CAMHS** continue to increase, meaning young people can face waiting for support across a significant proportion of their FE study – for some the wait may be for almost the entire duration. Whilst this project is for young people with low and moderate levels of mental health difficulties, this adds to the pressure pastoral teams face. Colleges interviewed for this evaluation also reported increased numbers of students in need of mental health support. As **Hopwood Hall College** explained, identifying students that need support is not the issue. The issue is with so many needing support, how do we prioritise? Given students can only learn and thrive if they are well, increasing capacity and sustainability in terms of student mental health support is a vital issue for FE.



Colleges reported that the project afforded additional capacity with regards to staff and resource. This included:

- Buying in or appointing new staff – for example mental health practitioners or staff to lead in the development of tailored mental health and wellbeing programmes,
- Remunerating existing staff for additional duties such as mentoring,
- Supporting staff professional development including Mental Health First Aid, Train the Trainer, supervision and trauma-informed approaches.
- Providing wellbeing rooms and hubs,
- Developing mental health policies and strategies,
- Developing new resources including online modules, applications & software,
- Purchasing devices such as iom2 biofeedback devices and a communication robot,
- Providing workshops and events.



2 (a) Sustaining and Sustainable Approaches

Whilst some of this activity took place for the duration of the project only – such as buying in specialist staff – much of it can be considered as sustaining and sustainable. For example,

2 (a) i Staff professional development:

Many of the colleges used the project to upskill their staff through training, workshops and broadening their remit to include mentoring. Colleges working towards being trauma-informed reported that they trained the entire college workforce including teaching staff, pastoral staff and *'back office'* staff such as human resources and cleaners. This supported a college-wide approach whereby staff can identify needs and better support learners. As **Xaverian College** noted this was further supported by staff member personal input and dedication:

> *Staff did a lot of research and preparation for their support sessions, which meant they informed themselves about relevant practice and knowledge in supporting vulnerable young people. It enabled the college to widen our support mechanisms for our most vulnerable students.*
>
> *(Xaverian College Mental Health Lead, 2021)*

2 (a) ii Generating frameworks, policy and strategy:

Colleges reported that the project activity provided frameworks that could be repeated and adapted to roll out to wider and future cohorts. Some colleges developed mental health and wellbeing strategies as part of their participation supported by external consultation with specialist mental health services such as **The Charlie Waller Trust**. The Manchester College for example, worked closely with The Charlie Waller Trust in developing their strategies, policies and procedures.

We've had training, we've had investment, we've got Mental Health First Aiders. We've got policies, procedures, we've got strategies developed with external community support. So it [...] is a real positive for the college and our students.

(The Manchester College Mental Health Lead, 2021)

The [online] resources have been accessed tens of thousands of times, suggesting that students are accessing these resources on multiple occasions.

(Bury College Mental Health Lead, 2021)

2 (a) iii Developing new resources:

Through the project several different resources were developed to support students including;

- Online resources such as modules, videos, information and activities that can be 1) accessed by students independently at times they want to access them and 2) shared with others through regional and national rollouts where appropriate.
- Virtual Reality Headsets* displaying 360° tours of the college for open days
- QT Humanoid Social Robot* to supplement and enhance social interactions, communications skills and levels of engagement and mental wellbeing of learners' with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Iom2 Biofeedback devices which students can use at school or loan for interactive meditation to aid relaxation and stress management.
- Increasing pastoral provisions through new mentoring programmes or engaging external counsellors or mental health practitioners.
- Developing policies and procedures that draw on learning from the project such as trauma-informed**, trauma-responsive and adverse childhood experience approaches to practice.
- Wellbeing rooms and hubs - dedicated safe spaces for students to access on college campus.

See appendix 2 for more information about how VR headsets and the QT robot were used at Bridge College.

****See appendix 3 for more information about working towards being a trauma-informed college at Bolton College.***

The resources have a shelf life beyond the project. Whilst content may require updating in the years to come to respond to changing student needs and situations, the resources extend capacity by offering models for future use and adaptation. Many of the resources developed have the advantage that they can be accessed multiple times independently by students at the times they want to access them.

2 (a) iv Building relationships:

The relationships developed as part of this project could be considered as capacity building. By working together, sharing resource and best practice, and by connecting with external services, colleges have additional resource.

For **Bridge College**, a non-residential specialist further education provider, the relationship between staff and student wellbeing was highlighted as significant for sustainably supporting mental health. They used the project to also support staff wellbeing since well staff support well students in a virtuous circle.

> *We were absolutely aligned and worked in collaboration to support each other I guess more as critical friends really in terms of our strategy.*
>
> *(Bolton College Mental Health Lead with reference to their work with Hopwood Hall College, 2021)*

2 (b) Challenges to sustainability

Challenges to sustaining the work of the project discussed in **phase 1** include:

Staff turnover: some colleges described difficulties encountered as staff – particularly those with coordinating roles and those that received training as part of the project – left the college. This suggests that training teams, through train-the-trainer and college-wide approaches may by significant models to explore further.

Increased need for mental health support: As described at the top of this section, the impacts of COVID-19 and increased waiting lists for **CAMHS** have led to more young people turning to college for support. This necessitates the need for increased capacity.

It's about preventative work […] that early help model of recognising those early signs when someone might be disengaged.

(*Oldham College Safeguarding Lead*, 2021)

Funding: With increasing numbers of students in need of mental health support to continue their studies, colleges identified a need for additional funding. Across **phase 1** colleges described the benefits of the project for their learner's college success. Ring-fenced funding for mental health in further education could continue this much-needed work.

In **phase 2** of the evaluation, we will work with FE students and staff to further consider the emerging themes connected to capacity and sustainability.

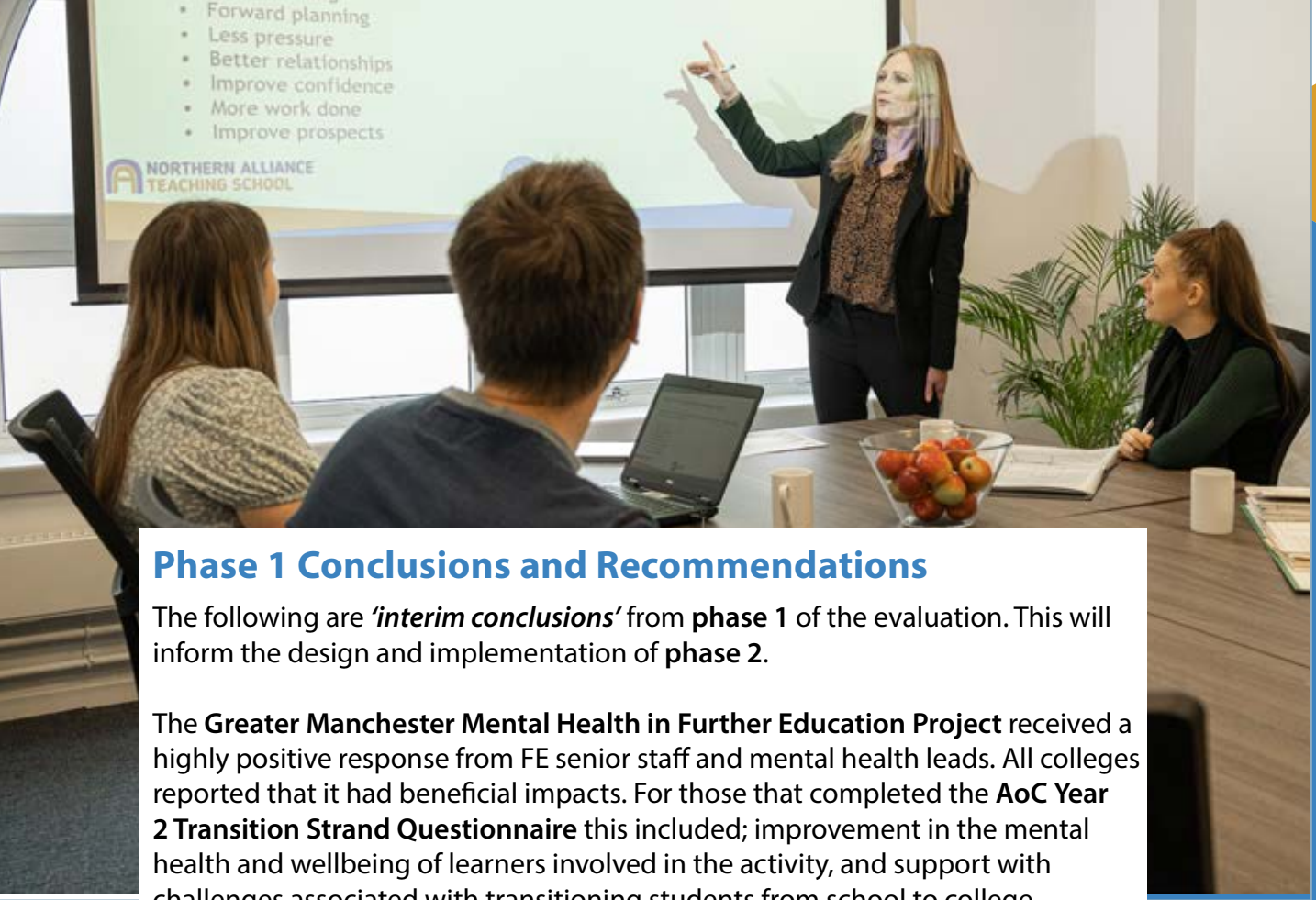
3. Initiating An Early Help Model

As a final theme emerging from **Phase 1**, college staff talked about the project affording a proactive rather than reactive approach to supporting student mental health for study. Integral to this was raising staff awareness and understanding of mental health through training, workshops, and for some colleges, through a shift in culture afforded by developing trauma-informed and trauma-responsive working. Proactive approaches included preparing student caseloads in advance of students joining college through secondary school information sharing, offering workshops and online resources to pre-presenting students, and working with high achieving students to consider perfectionist tendencies and how they might work as one of many high achievers when they transition to higher education.

It's great to have a system where you can respond to particular challenges. But to try to avoid those things happening [is better].

(*The Trafford College Group Student Engagement and Student Voice Lead*, 2021)

During **phase 1** interviews, mental health leads and senior staff described feeling better prepared and less on the back foot in supporting vulnerable young people as a result of the project. It is in this sense that staff professional development and developing a culture of working for positive mental health, is an enacting of an early help model that feeds effective programme design and delivery. Action before the point of crisis through an early help model connects to the project's aim of supporting readiness to learn through prevention, early intervention, and resilience for positive mental health. **Phase 2** of this evaluation will consider the ways in which the project supported early intervention more closely including impacts on student's college experience alongside attendance, attainment and retention.



Phase 1 Conclusions and Recommendations

The following are ***'interim conclusions'*** from **phase 1** of the evaluation. This will inform the design and implementation of **phase 2**.

The **Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education Project** received a highly positive response from FE senior staff and mental health leads. All colleges reported that it had beneficial impacts. For those that completed the **AoC Year 2 Transition Strand Questionnaire** this included; improvement in the mental health and wellbeing of learners involved in the activity, and support with challenges associated with transitioning students from school to college.

Early indications from **phase 1** show developing productive and supportive relationships to be of key significance to the project. The project opened pathways to positive peer relationships, student and staff relationships, and FE partnership working with schools and external agencies and services. **Xaverian College** for example said that through their project participation they were invited to student support meetings at schools. This was invaluable to their holistic understanding of the student's needs. **Hopwood Hall College** reported that partnership working with a mental health practitioner assisted them to make better connections with mental health services. Developing productive and supportive relationships constitutes a significant impact of the project that will be explored further in **phase 2**.

The project increased the capacity and sustainability of colleges to support student mental health and wellbeing. It afforded additional staff and resource. Whilst some activity took place for the duration of the project only – such as buying in specialist staff – much of it can be considered as sustaining and sustainable. For example; the development of frameworks that can be repeated and adapted to roll out to wider and future cohorts, the purchase of resources that have a shelf life beyond the project, and staff professional development through training, workshops and broadening their remit.

Challenges to sustainability include staff turnover, increased need for mental health support and the need for additional funding. Given the context of increasing mental health needs amongst young people, alongside the impacts of COVID-19, increased capacity and sustainability are much needed.

Finally, the project supported an early help model fed by the development of productive and supportive relationships and the increased capacity and sustainability afforded by the project. Raising staff awareness and understanding of mental health through training, workshops, and for some colleges, through a shift in culture, underpinned this. An early help model supports action before escalation and connects to the project's aim of supporting readiness to learn through prevention, early intervention, and resilience for positive mental health.

Through **phase 1** of the evaluation several significant impacts have been identified, which **phase 2** will go on to consider more closely. The project appears to offer a valuable and much needed resource, particularly in the context of increasing numbers of young people experiencing mental health difficulties, increasing waiting lists for **CAMHS**, COVID-19 exacerbating existing challenges, and FE falling between the gap of mental health initiatives targeted at schools and Higher Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Phase 2

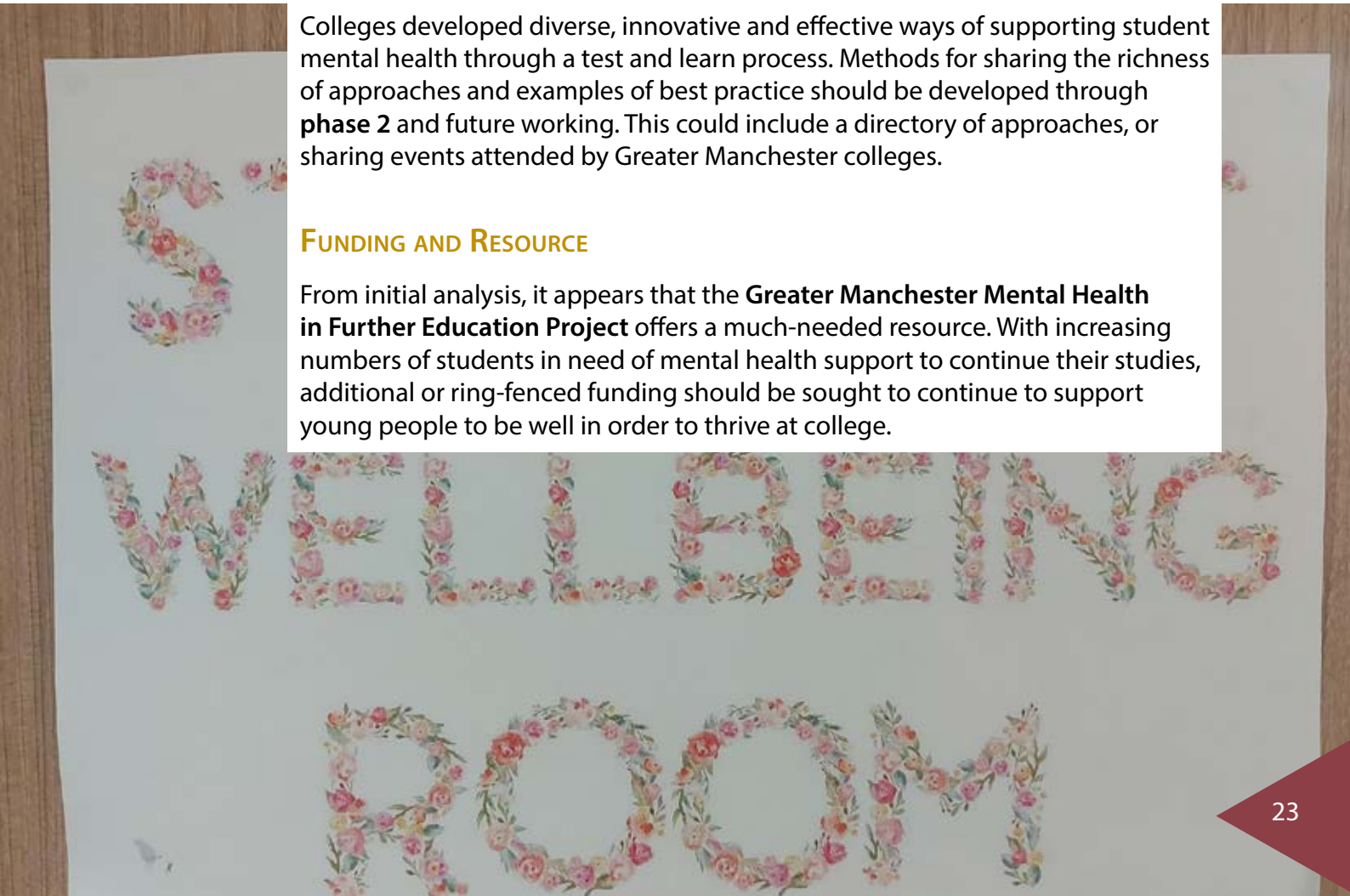
The second phase of this evaluation should consider the significant impacts identified through **phase 1** by involving young people in the planning, dissemination of findings and recommendations.

Sharing Best Practice

Colleges developed diverse, innovative and effective ways of supporting student mental health through a test and learn process. Methods for sharing the richness of approaches and examples of best practice should be developed through **phase 2** and future working. This could include a directory of approaches, or sharing events attended by Greater Manchester colleges.

Funding and Resource

From initial analysis, it appears that the **Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education Project** offers a much-needed resource. With increasing numbers of students in need of mental health support to continue their studies, additional or ring-fenced funding should be sought to continue to support young people to be well in order to thrive at college.



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[Appendix 1]

Directory of services and agencies Colleges engaged with as part of the project.

42nd Street

W: www.42ndstreet.org.uk
E: **theteam@42ndstreet.org.uk**
T: **01612287321**
A: **42nd Street, The Space, 87-91 Great Ancoats Street, Manchester, M4 5AG**

Support and advice for young people's emotional wellbeing by offering a choice of creative, young-person-centred, free, and confidential services. There is a strong focus on accessibility for young people who often feel disempowered; thus, the service does all it can to make young people feel listened to, safe and valued.

Achieve

W: thebiglifegroup.com/service/achieve
E: **achieve.referrals@gmmh.nhs.uk**
T: **01618712623**
A: **The Zion Centre, 339 Stretford Road, Hulme, Manchester, M15 4ZY**

Achieve is a partnership of trusts targeted at anyone in Bolton, Salford or Trafford experiencing problems with drugs, alcohol, or substance misuse.

Beat Eating Disorders

W: www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk
E: **help@beateatingdisorders.org.uk**
T: **0300 123 3355**
A: **Beat, Unit 1 Chalk Hill House, 19 Rosary Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 1SZ**

The organisation runs a 365-day national helpline to empower individuals to seek aid quickly, to aid the better chance of recovery from eating disorders. Family and friends are also supported with skills, advice, and support for their own mental health, to help their loved ones recover.

Beyond Psychology

W: http://www.beyond-psychology.co.uk/
E: **office@beyond-psychology.co.uk**
T: **07715 218 975**
A: **Suite 5, No.2 Esplanade, Rochdale, OL16 1AQ**

A not-for-profit organisation led by Chartered Clinical Psychologists, who use their expertise to improve the mental health of children and families, particularly regarding trauma and attachment.

Charlie Waller Trust

W: https://charliewaller.org/
E: **training@charliewaller.org**
T: **+44(0)1635869754**
A: **First Floor, Rear Office, 32 High Street, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG19 3JD**

An organisation aimed to support and educate young people in looking after their mental health through delivering practical tools and strategies to young people, educators, parents, and employers.

Early Break

W: earlybreak.co.uk
E: **info@earlybreak.co.uk**
T: **01617233880**
A: **Annara House, 7-9 Bury Road, Radcliffe, Manchester, M26 2UG**

Rooted in person-centred theory, the organisation offers specialist sexual and substance use support to young people. The organisation has also developed its array of services which include providing bereavement counselling and anti-bullying support.

Early Help Practitioner's Zone

W: https://hsm.manchester.gov.uk/kb5/manchester/directory/directory.page?directorychannel=1-12
E: **earlyhelpnorth@manchester.gov.uk; earlyhelpcentral@manchester.gov.uk; earlyhelpsouth@manchester.gov.uk**
T: **(North)0161 234 1973; (Central) 0161 234 1975; (South) 0161 234 1977**

The aim of the service is to build up positive communities that prevent crime, support education, and keep children, young people, and their families safe through working with other agencies and people from local communities.

GM Police Violence Reduction Unit

W: https://gmvru.co.uk
E: **GMVRU@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk**
T: **0161 778 7000**
A: **Tootal / Broadhurst Building, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6EU**

A team of subject leads and experts from Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Combined Authority (GMCA), Greater Manchester National Probation Service, Public Health, NHS, Education, Community Voluntary Sector, Victim's Voice, Youth Justice and Local Authorities, recognising and preventing the underlying causes of violence through working together in the community.

Harbour project

W: www.uk-rehab.com/rehab-locations/manchester/bolton/harbour-project/
T: **0120462274**
A: **St Lukes Drop-in, Chorley, Old Road, BL1 3BE**

A service providing support, information, practical advice, and encouragement via twice monthly meetings and a 7-day telephone helpline to families and carers of individuals with alcohol and or drug problems.

Kooth – MH strategies

W: https://hub.gmhsc.org.uk/mental-health/kooth
E: **tboroughs@kooth.com**
T: **07538395528**

A free, safe, anonymous platform for young people in Manchester aged 11 to 18 years old aimed to provide effective interventions and treatment for those struggling with mental ill health. The platform includes a live chat function to a qualified counsellor, crisis information and topic-focused forums.

Loudspeaker

W: www.loudspeaker.org.uk
E: **info@loudspeaker.org.uk**
T: **(+44)7988189431**

Founded based upon the belief that a young person's ability to speak and their confidence to strive for opportunities can be a large factor in social mobility. The service provides workshop activities that encourage team-building and learning about body language, voice, impact and performance mentality.

Pottery Corner – Mindfulness through Creativity

W: https://www.potterycorner.co.uk/
E: **potterycorner@hotmail.co.uk**
T: **01618820010**
A: **34 Beech Road, Chorlton, Manchester, M21 9EL**

Pottery corner is a unique creative studio and gallery in the heart of Chorlton providing outreach mindfulness sessions whereby individuals conduct ceramic painting to achieve mindfulness.

Salford Royal Crisis Team

W: www.gmmh.nhs.uk/crisis-care

A 24/7 helpline coordinated by Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust to provide mental health support and signposting to other relevant crisis care teams.

Samaritans

W: http://www.samaritans.org/
E: **admin@samaritans.org**
T: **+44(0)2083948300**
A: **Samaritans, The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 2AF**

Providing telephone crisis support for individuals who are struggling to cope or in need of someone to listen without judgement. The service's vision is that fewer people die by suicide.

Trafford Talkshop

W: https://www.trafforddirectory.co.uk/kb5/trafford/fsd/service.page?id=axGZQC-KNbQ
E: **talkshop@trafford.gov.uk**
T: **01619122453**
A: **Sale Waterside, Ground Floor, Waterside Plaza, Sale, Manchester, M33 7ZF**

Talkshop is a confidential information, advice, and support service for young people in Trafford aged 11 to 19. The service involves drop-ins, sexual health support, young parenthood advice and a youth forum.

Youth Justice Team

W:https://hsm.manchester.gov.uk/kb5/manchester/directory/service.page?id=e1Vmwlu9L5Q
T: **01612196330**
A: **(North Team) Commercial Wharf, Ground Floor, 6 Commercial Street, Manchester, M15 4PZ (South & Central Team) 521 Stockport Road, Longsight, M12 4NE**

Previously called Manchester Youth Offending Service, the service is a multi-agency organisation targeted at preventing offending and re-offending rates in children and young people through offering tailored intervention plans to address the risks associated with offending.

[Appendix 2]

Bridge College: Supporting young people with additional needs

Bridge College is a specialist college for young people with additional needs such as autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties. The college explains that their goal is to prepare their young people for adult life, building a programme around the needs, aspirations and interests of their individual learners. For young people with additional needs, transition from school to college can be particularly challenging. Before COVID-19, students had several visits to the college before starting. To enhance the transition process, through the **Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education Project Bridge College** initiated a virtual reality project. This involved creating 360° footage of the college site viewable using a headset. This was given to young people in feeder schools for them to view as much as they wished.

A second activity involved using a QT Robot (humanoid social robot) which students interact with. The project funded by the **AoC**, focused on the development of social communication and emotional skills to reduce student levels of anxiety and to enhance their mental health, wellbeing and social skills. **Bridge College** also engaged in trauma-informed development work as part of their project participation. This included external training for staff addressing how trauma can exhibit in students' behaviour, and how staff deal with their own distress. It was commented that *"we've got to support the staff in order to be able to inform the practice that goes on with students."* The trauma-informed way of working led to changes in therapy and policy guidelines.

[Appendix 3]

Bolton College: Working towards being a trauma-informed college

Bolton College is a large vocational college of 5,000 students (50% 16-18 year olds; 50% adult) with a catchment area which includes some deprived wards. As part of their participation in the **Greater Manchester Mental Health in Further Education Project**, their main activity relates to their efforts to become trauma-informed and adverse childhood experience (**ACE**) aware. They used a train the trainer approach in collaboration with **Hopwood Hall College** (also participating in the project). 18 staff members were trained initially, and they went on to train the entire college staff, (including cleaners, security and canteen staff) in trauma and the impact of **ACEs**. Twenty-five staff were additionally trained in Mental Health First Aid. A college-wide approach to training meant that any staff member, regardless of position, could respond to a student in need should they be approached. **Bolton College** commented that students may not necessarily report safeguarding concerns or mental health difficulties to designated leads. Training all staff meant that anyone approached had some understanding and awareness to support students. The goal of taking a trauma-informed and **ACEs** aware approach is to stop problems before they arise by *'looking at things through a different lens'* – a trauma-informed lens – to enhance understanding with and relationship to students.