



# STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN - 2021 - 2024

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## ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

Salford City College Group has already taken significant steps to respond to the challenges to student mental health and wellbeing and the support requirements of students diagnosed with mental health conditions.

The purpose of this strategy is to help us to build on existing support and provision and to be prepared to respond to new challenges to student mental health as they emerge. As such, this strategy is a live document subject to review and consultation. In order to remain relevant, it is proposed that this strategy is communicated and promoted to staff and student groups with opportunities to elicit feedback from its users.

A mental health and wellbeing working group should be established to ensure management of the key actions and delivery of the objectives as defined within. This strategy should therefore remain accessible to students, staff and those responsible for ensuring the mental health and wellbeing of students at all of the Colleges within Salford City College Group.

## STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING IN FURTHER EDUCATION

The mental health of our students is of paramount importance and we are committed to providing an excellent level of support to all. In the past three years there has been a significant increase in the numbers of students reporting languished mental wellbeing during their studies and an increased number of mental health diagnosis made prior to and whilst enrolled at the College (Source: College data). Research published by the Association of Colleges (AoC) supports this pattern at a national level with 85% of Colleges reporting a significant increase in the number of students with mental health difficulties since 2015. With this comes an unprecedented demand on the support services provided by the College and the local community.

Alongside the provision of academic and technical training, Further Education (FE) Colleges have a duty of care to help students to develop skills in resilience in order that they might be equipped to manage the challenges faced throughout their lives. We also have a responsibility to offer specialist support to those students who face specific difficulties. An effective mental health strategy should not only seek to provide a blueprint for improved responses to those requiring mental health support but also in implementing effective measures to stabilise and reverse the current trends in order for students to thrive in College and beyond.

One in five young people aged 16 to 24 has experienced depression or anxiety and as such, in a recent publication, the British Psychological Society put a call to action for all FE and Higher Education (HE) providers to make mental health and wellbeing a strategic and whole College priority (mental health and wellbeing in higher and further education). The Department for Education has supported this assertion and this is reflected in the



most recent Ofsted Education Inspection Framework. As an institution, due regard must also be paid to the Children Act 2004 which requires the promotion of the wellbeing of children and young people.

The impact that poor mental health has on students is an issue that requires an immediate response with a greater, College-wide understanding of:

- The causes and signs of poor mental health and wellbeing
- Access and appropriate referral to therapeutic and non-therapeutic intervention within the College and beyond
- The effectiveness of treatment – both therapeutic and non-therapeutic
- Measures for suicide prevention

In recent years, Salford City College Group has stayed at the forefront of student support through actions including collaboration with the GM Colleges Mental Health and Wellbeing Group and a successful bid and collaboration with the Association of Colleges and the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust. The College continues to be represented at a range of multi-agency forums, partnerships and consultation groups to ensure that knowledge is current and the breadth of available and appropriate referral points is understood.

In the context of the recent global pandemic, the potential for endemic trauma must not be underestimated. Young people will be significantly impacted by trauma and this, along with the potential for further significant traumatic events, must be addressed within the strategy and reflected upon as part of the evolution and growth of this plan.

Whilst there are many challenges to face and barriers to overcome, student mental health has developed a higher profile and focus on a local, regional and national level. For FE Colleges, this acknowledgement of the scale of the challenge gives rise to the opportunity to develop a robust support structure and strategy that will work in tandem with professional and third-party intervention providers to improve outcomes for the young people in our care.



## OUR STRATEGIC VISION

- *To be an institution capable of supporting students to build resilience and preserve and practice good mental wellbeing to reduce mental health illness in the immediate and longer term lives of the students we serve.*
- *To become a community of staff and students who understands that experiencing periods of low mental wellbeing is not unusual and should not be a barrier to academic or social success.*
- *To provide a high-quality support service that meets the individual needs of students and staff and is set in comprehensive, current understanding of mental health and wellbeing trends and emerging pedagogy and best practice.*
- *To be a fully inclusive institution in both intention and design.*



# PRINCIPLES

- We will educate and support all of our students to take an active role in gaining an understanding of mental health in order that they may develop the confidence to manage their own wellbeing throughout their academic journey and career beyond.
- We will offer high quality training to staff at the College to enable them to confidently identify and respond to students requiring mental wellbeing support and to help them to build the resilience to face challenges ahead.
- We will work to improve access to on-site support for students with specific needs and build a greater network of referral points for third party therapeutic interventions.
- We will consider the requirements of suicide prevention in action planning and intervention.

# OBJECTIVES

1. Create the conditions for cultural change to enable wellbeing as a community through a whole institution approach.
2. Plan for a broad a diverse programme of wellbeing study for all students to encourage personal growth and resilience.
3. Evaluate support services and plan for a more comprehensive and varied support offer including the referral to a broad range of third-party providers.
4. Create an inclusive environment for all and actively identify and address barriers to learning and participation for those students with mental ill health.



# OBJECTIVE 1 AND KEY ACTIONS

Create the conditions for cultural change to enable wellbeing as a community through a whole institution approach.

Key Action: Raise awareness, dispel stigma and prejudice associated with mental health and encourage meaningful and effective wellbeing conversations that are effective and compassionate at all levels of the institution.

In order to create the conditions for cultural change in our College it is necessary to create an environment within which people can speak openly about and hear about experiences of mental wellbeing and mental ill health without fear of judgement or discrimination.

What we do already:

- Deliver Wellbeing days for both staff and students providing staff and students with time and resources for personal reflection, investment and opportunities to learn about mental health and wellbeing
- Provide Wellbeing zones in some of the Colleges that are well equipped with materials for wellbeing and mindfulness activities. The zones are supervised by a member of the pastoral team and also provide a safe space for students in crisis
- Run campaigns, events and activities around key dates such as world mental health day
- Implement a number of enrichment activities and festivals throughout the academic year with a focus on the holistic wellbeing of staff and students
- Share wellbeing materials and resources in vibrant and visible wall displays throughout centres including appropriate signposting and a QR code link the College wellbeing triage service
- Offer regular CPD sessions to staff to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing and to support staff to feel able to confidently foster open, inclusive conversations.
- Deliver a carefully planned tutorial package including sessions dedicated to developing character, improving wellbeing and building resilience
- Engage with external partners such as 42nd Street and the YMCA to offer opportunities for students to learn about mental health, access support and learn how to support others

What we will do:

- Talk about wellbeing during College induction and promote in-College services and support
- Identify and coach a team of student wellbeing ambassadors to ensure students have access to more support and for the College to hear and better respond to student voice
- Develop and manage appropriate wellbeing zones in all of the Colleges
- Offer and advertise regular group therapy sessions delivered by an in-College therapist that address any current concerns/themes



- Standardise and improve out of office replies and email signatures to include appropriate links to support
- Further develop the tutorial package
- Mandate mental health and wellbeing awareness training for all existing staff and include in the induction package for new staff. Provide access to mental health and wellbeing training for College governors

## OBJECTIVE 2 AND KEY ACTIONS

Plan for a broad and diverse programme of wellbeing study for all students to encourage personal growth and resilience.

**Key Action:** As an educational institution committed to preparing students for their next steps, we will provide resources and opportunities for students to develop skills and strategies for wellbeing and resilience beyond College. We will help students to identify a wide range of services that are available to them and help them to develop the confidence to access services as soon as a need is identified.

What we do already:

- Offer a detailed pastoral transition services with local schools to identify need early and begin a plan for effective support with partner agencies
- Provide a broad ranging tutorial package that includes Growth Mindset theory and strategies for self-development
- Invite partner agencies into the Colleges to discuss and promote services
- Provide a regularly updated online resource that can be accessed by students via CANVAS comprising general wellbeing advice and guidance, training modules, opportunities to engage with in-College support services and signposting to external organisations
- Access to pre-recorded hypnosis courses
- A broad enrichment programme that encourages students to maintain overall health and wellbeing, develop new skills and meet new people

What we will do:

- Implement a mental fitness course for all staff and students (Fika)
- Further develop the enrichment programme to ensure a fully inclusive and varied programme of activity that encompasses all aspects of wellbeing
- Develop a series of mindfulness and positivity podcasts for the College commute
- Implement a mental health and wellbeing information area for parents on the College website providing valuable updates, suggestions for supporting their child and signposting for individual and family interventions

## OBJECTIVE 3 AND KEY ACTIONS

Evaluate support services and plan for a more comprehensive and varied support offer including the referral to a broad range of third-party providers.

**Key Action:** Through meaningful regard to the student voice, the College aims to provide appropriate and comprehensive support services for students that is responsive to their needs and fully accessible. We will demonstrate a sound understanding of the services that we offer and promote to students in order that referrals are timely and appropriate and should ensure their accessibility throughout the academic year. We will identify actual and potential risks to wellbeing and dedicate resource to mitigate these risks.

What we do already:

- Employ a therapeutic practitioner to support students across all Colleges
- Provide occasional external agency drop-in sessions at some centres
- Offer a range of courses at entry level and level 1 that are dedicated to the mental preparation to study and becoming an active and resilient citizen to which students can enrol/transfer throughout the academic year
- Provide Early Break one-to-one support for students with specific needs
- Distribute College holiday safety resources to students at the close of each academic term with the details for accessing support during College closure
- Operate a student council at all sites
- Identify significant pastoral and wellbeing needs prior to the commencement of study through a school transition arrangement

What we will do:

- Recruit additional therapeutic practitioners to meet the growing demand for support across SCC Group
- Formalise regular agency drop-in support to offer greater consistency for users
- Develop the chaplaincy offer across College
- Improve and implement a cross-College fitness to study policy
- Develop plans for supporting students in the event of a student death
- Engage a working group to evaluate the support offer regularly
- Establish a team of student mental health champions/ambassadors and identify mental health mentors and/or first aiders at each College site
- Explore a LAC coordinator role to address the specific wellbeing needs of the looked after cohort across College
- Further develop the triage system for wellbeing



# OBJECTIVE 4 AND KEY ACTIONS

Create an inclusive environment for all and actively identify and address barriers to learning and participation for those students with mental ill health.

**Key Action:** By providing services and opportunities to students and staff at relevant times and in appropriate and accessible spaces, we will encourage them to integrate healthy behaviours into their daily college life. We will consider mental health and wellbeing in the design of college timetables and enrichment activities to minimize barriers and should seek to assess and challenge barriers as we are alerted to them.

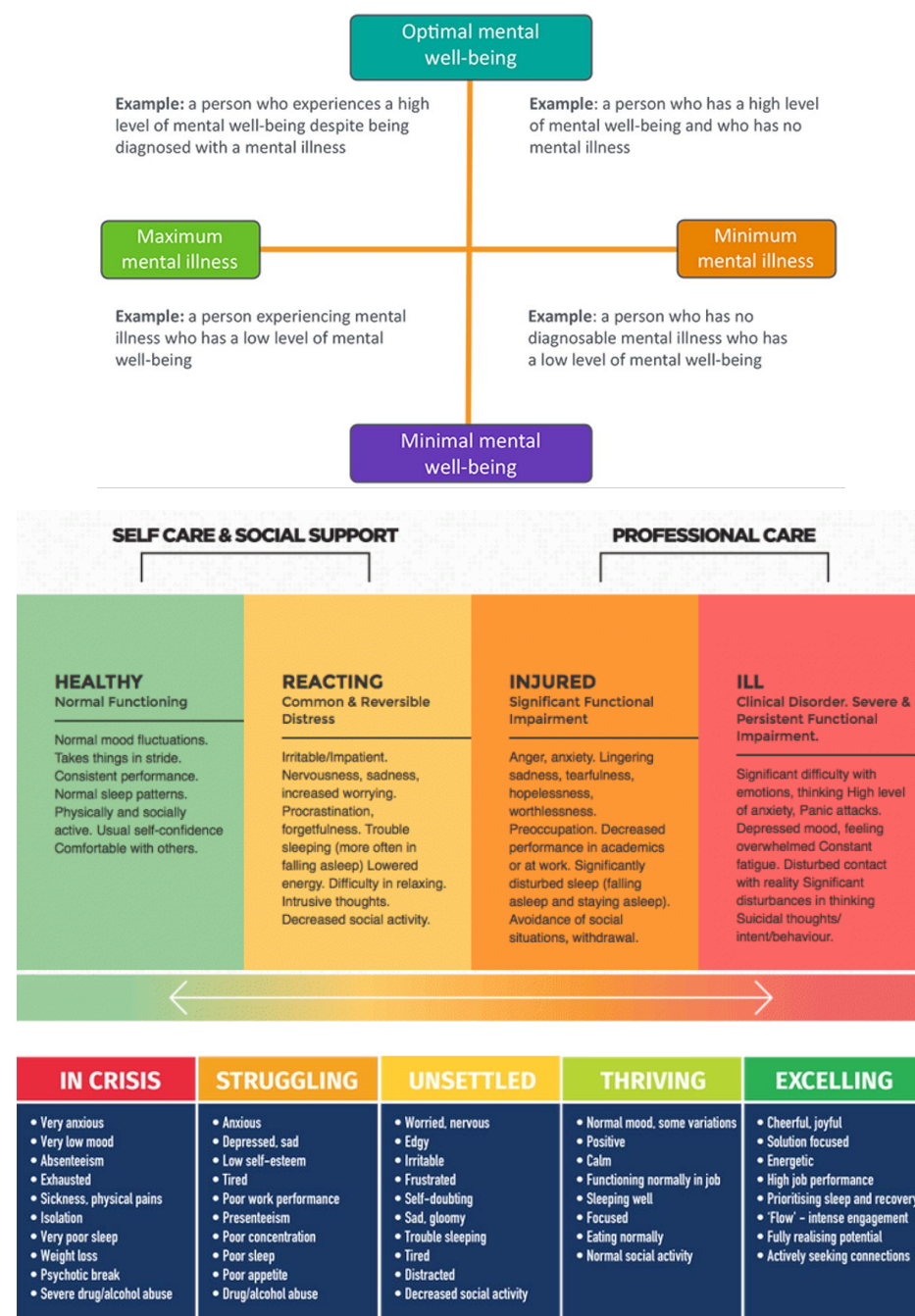
What we do already:

- Provide a wide range of social spaces for students and staff at each centre ranging in size/capacity and type
- Offer a full and sensitively devised calendar of activities and events to promote inclusivity, diversity and equality including student and staff development days.
- Opportunities to contribute to student voice and the student council led activities and events
- Offer bespoke learning support to all students with an identified need including mental health and wellbeing
- Hold weekly pastoral and curriculum leader meetings to raise concerns and ensure individual needs are being met
- Liaise routinely with parents/carers (as appropriate) to establish wrap around support and care for students and to generate a transparent system of communication to ensure individual needs are being met
- Generate individually tailored timetables where students are temporarily unable to meet the demands of a full course of study due to languished wellbeing or health
- Encourage students to set a SMART target pertaining to their wellbeing as part of their individual learning plan

What we will do:

- Assess the current social spaces and seek opportunities to vary and improve them
- Further develop the enrichment offer
- Work collaboratively across departments to ensure even and manageable pressure points throughout the academic year
- Formalise the induction parent/carer and student questionnaire system to inform student profiles and ILP
- Better improve links with the local Connexions and career advice teams

# DEFINITIONS & CONCEPT





SCC Group  
Head Office: Pendleton Sixth Form College  
Dronfield Road  
Salford  
M6 7FR

0161 631 5000

[enquiries@salfordcc.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@salfordcc.ac.uk)

[www.salfordcc.ac.uk](http://www.salfordcc.ac.uk)