

Board Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 30 January 2023
Paper Title	College mental health provision update
Agenda Item	12
Paper Number	BM3-J
Responsible Officer	Martin Boyle, Executive Director
Status	Disclosable
Action	For noting

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1** Support for student mental health and well-being has long been identified as a high priority for the Glasgow college system, and for the sector as a whole. This support was re-emphasised at the Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board (GCRB) board meeting of October 2022, when it was highlighted as a key priority in the presentation of the colleges' student presidents.
- 1.2** The Mental Health Foundation's Thriving Learners research¹, undertaken with both universities and colleges, and supported by College Scotland, Universities Scotland and The Robertson Trust, has now published its college research report, Thriving Learners: Initial findings from Scottish colleges (2022)².
- 1.3** The report provides important insight into the scale of the challenge, regionally and nationally. This paper is intended to highlight the findings and recommendations of the report, and to propose some activity which will be undertaken within the region.
- 1.4** In addition to the report, verbal updates will be provided as follows:
- Moira Connolly, GCRB Board: Update on progress arranging engagement meetings with key stakeholders in wider health and wellbeing community
 - Jon Vincent, Principal of Glasgow Clyde College and national lead principal for mental health at Colleges Scotland: Update on national college context and funding position

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** Board is invited to **note** this interim update on the regional and national context, proposed next steps, and invite to Christopher Maguire, Senior Research Officer, Thriving Learners to the March board meeting of GCRB.

¹ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/thriving-learners>

² https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/MHF_Thriving_Learners_Report.pdf

3. Report

3.1 Initial meetings, including with Moira Connolly, Jon Vincent, and Glasgow region Student Presidents have explored opportunities for further in-region progress on this agenda, and it is our intention to convene an initial working group. There is an appetite amongst stakeholders including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, GCRSE and partners at Glasgow colleges to explore solutions and to potentially support pilot work in relation to the recommendations of the Thriving Learners report.

3.2 The recommendations from the report are as follows³:

1. **College student support services should strengthen their communication and engagement with students to help increase awareness of mental health and well-being supports.** This should specifically focus on communication and engagement with students with vulnerabilities and those that work with them to ensure more consistent and clear information for these students prior to them starting college and across their journey.
2. **Colleges should undertake consultation and/or research to understand the nature of mental health stigma among students.** This should help inform future activity to challenge stigma including enabling staff to address stigma.
3. **Scottish Government should provide increased investment and sustained funding for mental health and well-being supports in colleges.** This should include well-being interventions that benefit general health.
4. **Colleges should work closely with Student Associations to identify and implement innovative well-being supports.** This could include increased opportunities for peer support and peer mentoring in colleges. As part of any service development, the poorer outcomes of students with increased vulnerabilities and/or who experience discrimination should be noted and additional efforts made in the design and development of any mental health and well-being services to meet the needs of these students.
5. **Colleges Scotland, the college sector and NHS should develop clear mechanisms** to increase regional planning between the sector and NHS to promote better integration of support between the NHS and college sector for students with complex mental health needs.
6. **The NHS and college sector should undertake a process to agree the parameters on the reasonable duty of care of colleges.** This should be supported by agreement on a streamlined referral pathway for students who need more intensive support than can be provided within the college setting. Once agreed, these pathways should be implemented across the sector. This should be done with urgency as some students are currently being failed by both systems.
7. **The college sector, local authorities and schools should work together to develop a standardisation of minimum data-sharing expectations between schools and colleges**

³ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/about-us/news/new-research-college-students-scotland-report-depression>

around mental health and well-being supports of students. This should be done in consultation with young people and those that support them.

8. **Colleges and key funding agencies, including the Scottish Government, need to work together to implement a post-pandemic recovery plan** that recognises and addresses the impact of the pandemic on student learning and social confidence.
9. **Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council should collaborate on a new annual data collection** which measures college student poverty across the academic year and seeks to mitigate poverty in all its forms so that learners can thrive during their time as a college student. Without strong data on college student poverty, it is challenging for colleges to take the right mitigating steps against the context of reducing funding for the college sector and pressures on the National Health Service.

3.3 It is proposed that the GCRB working group identifies key areas of these recommendations which can be supported and taken forward on a collaborative, regional basis. An update on this activity will be provided to the March board meeting of GCRB.

4. Risk and Compliance Analysis

4.1 Mental health and wellbeing support is a key element of student recruitment, retention and attainment, having a profound impact on the ability to study and to transition. It therefore has clear impact on a number of GCRB risks around student achievement, the meeting of targets and the provision of learning.

5. Financial and Resource Analysis

5.1 Specific support for projects or pilots associated with this work could be supported via the GCRB Programme of Action.

6. Equalities Implications

6.1 Effective support for mental health and wellbeing is of key importance in providing educational opportunities which are equitable for all.

7. Learner Implications

7.1 The high priority importance of mental health and wellbeing has been emphasised by the representative Glasgow Student Presidents to the board of GCRB, ensuring that this remains seen as a high-priority area for additional work.