



**Richard Huish College**

**Mental Health Strategy**

**2024- 2027**



## **Introduction**

We are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to students, their families, staff members and governors. Our educational provision seeks to inform understanding around mental health, to develop self-management skills to allow students to achieve their potential and thereby improve their quality of life.

We want to help students move towards and maintain good mental health and wellbeing. We recognise good mental health and wellbeing as “having the emotional resilience to cope with everyday pressures, enjoy life and undertake productive work while having a belief in one’s own and others’ worth” (Brown, 2016).

We are aware that the mental health and wellbeing of our students is fundamental in enabling them to engage and achieve academically. However, at times their wellbeing is impacted by several influences, including those beyond our college community.

Alongside our vision of striving to provide an exceptional, student-centred education, through a broad and wide-ranging curriculum, we hope to build on the existing mental health and wellbeing provision and work towards instilling a whole college approach. The approach will enable us to provide support that is equitable, inclusive and help our students develop resilience in an environment that is caring and compassionate. In evaluating the delivery of our strategy, we will be mindful of the changing environment and its influence on mental health locally, nationally and internationally.

## **Context and the Local Landscape**

In 2023, 1 in 5 children and young people aged 8-25 years had a probable mental health disorder; this equates to 20.3% of 8 to 16 year olds, 23.3% of 17 to 19 year olds. Among the age groups the rates of mental health disorders for young women were twice as high compared with young men (NHS England, 2023).

Looking at the current picture locally, Somerset is a rural county that is vast in geographical size. Students have identified positive elements of living in Somerset including: strong sense of safety, lack of pollution, peace and tranquillity but these also create challenges for our students. These include: poor digital connectivity, limited job prospects, cultural and geographical isolation, poor public transport and reduced aspirations and ambitions. In line with the national picture of mental health in young people, statistics show that 1 in 9 children and young people will have a diagnosable mental health condition (Somerset NHS, 2021).

As the NHS comes under more strain to provide specialist support, education establishments are being asked to provide the support. Schools and colleges are supported to do so through a whole-college approach. Public Health England believe

if schools and colleges can deliver an evidence-based approach to mental health and wellbeing, it can help foster an increased resilience and a readiness to learn.

### **What are we doing?**

We deliver many services and support mechanisms to students and staff. Providing this in line with a whole-college approach will enable us consistently and comprehensively contribute towards protecting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of students at Richard Huish College.

The whole-college approach is based upon the 8 principles to promote mental health and wellbeing. Using these principles will enable us to embed a culture of openness around mental health and build stronger links between education and health to ensure our students receive the appropriate support.

*See figure 1. Whole-school/college approach to Mental Health & Wellbeing.*



To ensure we embed an evidence-informed approach we have developed 4 objectives using the 8 principles above that will drive our mental health & wellbeing strategy.

### What we hope to achieve

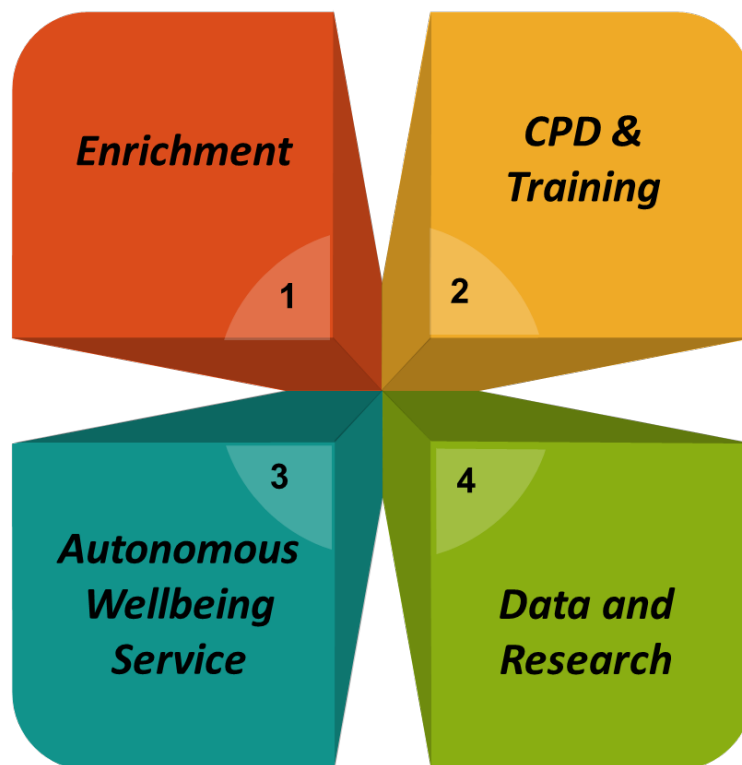


Figure 2. Strategy Objectives.

#### **Objective 1: To create more enrichment opportunities for students to develop their social, emotional and mental skills.**

We strive to provide an exceptional, student-centred education through a broad and wide-ranging curriculum. We want to add value to our student's education by providing them with a range of enrichment opportunities to develop their social and emotional skills. By providing students with opportunities to develop their resilience, mental capacity, communication and problem-solving skills, we will provide them with the fundamental experiences to live a healthy and fulfilling life. Through working with local organisations such as Calway House Residential Home, The Open Door Homeless Community Centre as well as Trust Primary Schools, we hope to give our students a breadth of opportunities.

**Objective 2: To offer all college staff a range of training opportunities to increase knowledge, skills and experiences to support students in maintaining positive mental health and wellbeing.**

Continuing professional development is paramount to supporting our students. Keeping up to date with new policies, procedures, information and agencies enables us to provide a high quality and effective service to our students. Having appropriate and timely support will increase a student's sense of community and reduce the stigma of reaching out for help. Creating a culture where staff and students recognise poor mental health in themselves will enable preventative measures to be implemented. Giving staff resources, offering workshops, Q&A sessions and access to external training providers will better equip our staff to deal with the ever-changing picture of mental health and the impact in the classroom.

**Objective 3: Deliver a mental health and wellbeing service that gives students autonomy and oracy to access support.**

Through designing and delivering a campaign that reduces the stigma around mental health, the tools and resources on offer to students will be well publicised to both students and their parents/carers as well as information around signposting and simplified pathways to support. Staff will be well informed of the service and will encourage students to self-refer where possible. This will give students independence and autonomy over their support, tailoring the level of support to meet their needs. Creating a new self-referral process, more consistent updates on the new services through a newsletter and the student and parent/carer padlet will promote independence and positive wellbeing.

**Objective 4: Use data and research to inform the development and evaluation of the mental health and wellbeing service.**

Evaluating our interventions will require consistency across the service. Finding a tool that is purposeful will enable us to gain a more reliable evaluation of the work we are doing and the impact not only on a student's personal development but also their academic performance. Using the Wellbeing Action Group to inform and lead our evaluations will create a more reliable analysis. We have not been able to utilise our measuring tools effectively over the past years and now need to work with the wider school community to gather a more accurate evaluation. We will also use our action research projects and partnerships with the NHS and universities to conduct and participate in research to equip us as a team for the ever-changing challenges that mental health and wellbeing presents within education.

## **Delivering and the strategy and Measuring Success**

The strategy is a long-term document to improve and develop a service that meets the demands of our students and the ever-changing landscape of education. It is important to recognise that whilst some aspects of improved mental health and wellbeing can be measured in the short term, the long-term pictures remain the utmost importance.

Using data and research alongside targeted initiatives, changes will be introduced through our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy with further actions following as we take our strategy forward. We will closely monitor the activity to ensure that it is having the desired impact and delivers for our students.

Governors, the Principal, Senior Leadership Team, Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead and Mental Health and Wellbeing Officers will be key people in instilling the objectives in this strategy. We will also involve students, our Wellbeing Action Group, parents/carers to help measure the success of our students. In 2022 we gathered students understanding and feedback on the wellbeing service using this as a benchmark to begin writing our strategy.

Additionally, we will use the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy to develop our Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). This will create yearly objectives which will fall in line with our whole college priorities and enable us to continually monitor and evaluate our wellbeing initiatives to ensure they are fit for purpose and meeting the needs of our student population. This document is evaluated termly to assess progress.

We will use a range of measuring tools to measure the impact of our strategy:

- Triage and transition data
- Student enrichment surveys
- Audits
- Focus groups
- Case studies
- Clinical measuring tools – SWEMWBS
- Annual student and staff questionnaires

## **References**

Brown, P. (2016). *The invisible problem? Improving students' mental health Poppy Brown With a Foreword by the Rt Hon. Norman Lamb MP HEPI Report 88*. [online] Available at: <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/STRICTLY-EMBARGOED-UNTIL-22-SEPT-Hepi-Report-88-FINAL.pdf>.

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