



Follow up information for the Public Audit Committee

21st November 2023

1. Thriving Learners studies

Thriving Learners is one of the largest and most significant studies of student mental health that has ever taken place in the UK. Over the two years of this project, we engaged with more than 17,000 college and university students and staff across Scotland.

In the first survey, which was of students in universities, 15,128 students participated. Three validated scales were used: the 10-point ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Scale, the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) and the short, 7-point Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. The survey was undertaken in the first quarter of 2021.

Key findings from the universities study were that:

- Nearly three-quarters of respondents reported low well-being (74%)
- More than one-third (36%) of respondents reported either moderately severe or severe symptoms of depression
- Almost half of the respondents (45%) reported experiencing a serious psychological issue that they felt needed professional help
- More than half of respondents (57%) reported concealing a mental health problem for fear of stigmatisation
- In the past 12 months, over a fifth of respondents (22%) worried about running out of food
- In the past 12 months, almost one quarter (24%) ate less due to a lack of resources or money

In the second survey, which was of college students, more than 2,000 students participated. The survey used the same three validated questionnaires as in the universities study. The survey was undertaken between March and May 2022.

Key findings from the colleges study were that:

- 64% of college students in Scotland had low mental well-being
- Among the college students who said they had low well-being, three-quarters said they experienced food insecurity or had a long-term health condition, and half had a disability
- 37% experienced food insecurity in the previous 12 months while 31% of students worried about running out of food; 30% ate less due to a lack of resources or money; and 17% lived in households that had run out of food
- 54% reported having moderate, moderately severe, or severe symptoms of depression. Among students who have experienced food insecurity, 25% had severe symptoms of depression
- 55% of students said they had concealed a mental health problem due to fear of stigma

Further details on both studies is available at: [Thriving Learners | Mental Health Foundation](#)

2. Together to Thrive project in Dundee

Together to Thrive is a collaborative approach to improving the mental health and wellbeing of children with neuro-developmental needs. It is based on a 'task sharing' model of delivery. This approach was first developed in low to middle income countries in response to the significant gap between the need for mental health support and the availability of specialist services, including counselling. The model was later adopted and adapted by Thrive NYC as part of their multi-million-pound investment into public mental health.

Task sharing builds on community organisations and mental health providers' strengths and helps both to take on important new roles so they can meet the needs of the community, build the skills and confidence of community-based staff to deliver evidence informed interventions and develop and strengthen new referral pathways.

This project is overseen by the Mental Health Foundation, in collaboration with the Dundee Flexible Child & Family support Cross-Sector Alliance (with funding from The Promise) and NHS Tayside CAMHS.

The overarching goal of Together to Thrive is 'to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children (aged 5-11) with neuro developmental needs, by adapting and redirecting support from specialist mental services to community-based settings (Task-Sharing)'. In response to CAMHS and Dundee City Education ASN data, the project will run for 18 months in three Dundee locality wards with the following aims:

- To enhance collaboration between CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs)
- To improve accessibility to specialist support (more easily and more quickly)
- To enable families to feel more supported
- To increase confidence of community-based organisations in supporting families with their children needs
- To create a Dundee Framework for Task Sharing Approach

CBOs working in partnership are: Aberlour, Barnardo's, Dundee Carers Centre, Includem, One-Parent Families Scotland, Includem, Relationships Scotland, Action For Children, Parent to Parent, Dundee City Council Adoption and Fostering Service.

Training and implementation support will be provided to CBO staff on the following areas: poor sleep, sensory awareness, difficult family relationships, recognising the difference between trauma and neurodiversity, and reflective parenting.

The Mental Health Foundation, The Alliance, and NHS Tayside are funders of the project.

For information contact Julie Cameron, Associate Director.