



AoC survey on students with mental health conditions in Further Education

January 2017

Background

Since AoC's 2015 survey on college students with mental health difficulties there have been significant discussions at national level about the mental health of young people and adults. In the past 18 months AoC has been working at both national and regional levels with several government departments and a range of health agencies who are now beginning to recognise the important part further education colleges play in addressing the mental health of young people and adults.

AoC conducted this survey in November 2016 to get an up to date evidence base to inform these discussions as well as AoC's conference on mental health.

Response rate

105 colleges responded to this survey, which represents 32% of colleges in England. As shown in the tables below there was a wide variation in regional response rates.

Response rate by type and region

Type	Number of responses	Number of Colleges in England	Percent within type
General Further Education College	72	208	35%
Sixth Form College	22	90	24%
Specialist College	10	26	38%
Total*	105	324	32%

(* anonymous response from 1 college)



Region	Number of responses	Number of Colleges in England	Percent within region
Eastern region	6	33	18%
East Midlands	9	20	45%
Greater London	13	47	28%
North East	7	19	37%
North West	18	55	33%
South East	19	58	33%
South West	15	24	63%
West Midlands	8	35	23%
Yorkshire and the Humber	9	33	27%
Total*	105	324	32%

(* anonymous response from 1 college)

Students with mental health conditions

The survey showed that the average college has 185 students with disclosed mental health conditions (125 aged 16-18 and 57 adult).

85% of colleges that responded to the survey reported an increase in students with disclosed mental health issues in the past three years - 54% of respondents said that the total number of students of all ages with mental health difficulties had 'significantly increased' in the past three years with a further 31% saying they had 'slightly increased'. In the 16-18 age group the figures were 69% and 20% respectively and for adults 49% and 36% respectively.

Has the proportion of students with disclosed mental health conditions changed year on year over the past three years?

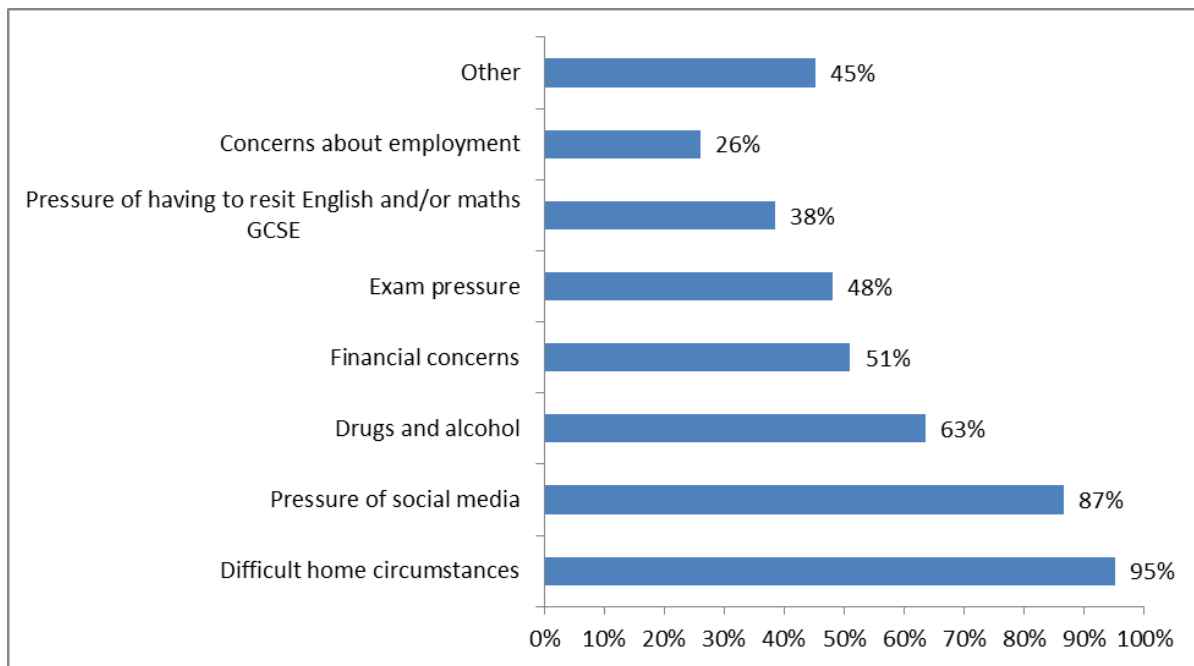
	Significantly increased	Slightly increased	About the same	Slightly decreased	Significantly decreased
14-15	26%	28%	44%	3%	0%
16-18	69%	20%	9%	1%	1%
19+	49%	36%	11%	2%	1%
All age students	54%	31%	13%	1%	0%

81% of colleges also reported having 'significant numbers' of students who had undisclosed mental health difficulties.



95% of colleges felt that difficult home circumstances were having an impact on students' mental health. Other reasons given by colleges for the possible increase in the number of students with mental health conditions were 'Pressure of social media' (87%) and 'Drugs and alcohol' (63%).

If there has been an increase in the number of students with mental health difficulties, what, in your opinion, has influenced this?



All respondents reported having students diagnosed with depression. 99% reported having students diagnosed with severe anxiety, 97% diagnosed with bipolar disorder and 90% diagnosed with psychosis. One condition which we had not included but several respondents mentioned in the comments section was personality disorder/borderline personality disorder.

All colleges reported having students with the following manifestations of mental health issues: self harming, eating disorders, attempted suicide and suicidal ideation/thoughts.

Staffing and funding

40% of the colleges surveyed said they have full-time counsellors or mental health support workers and 77% said they have part-time counsellors or mental health support workers.



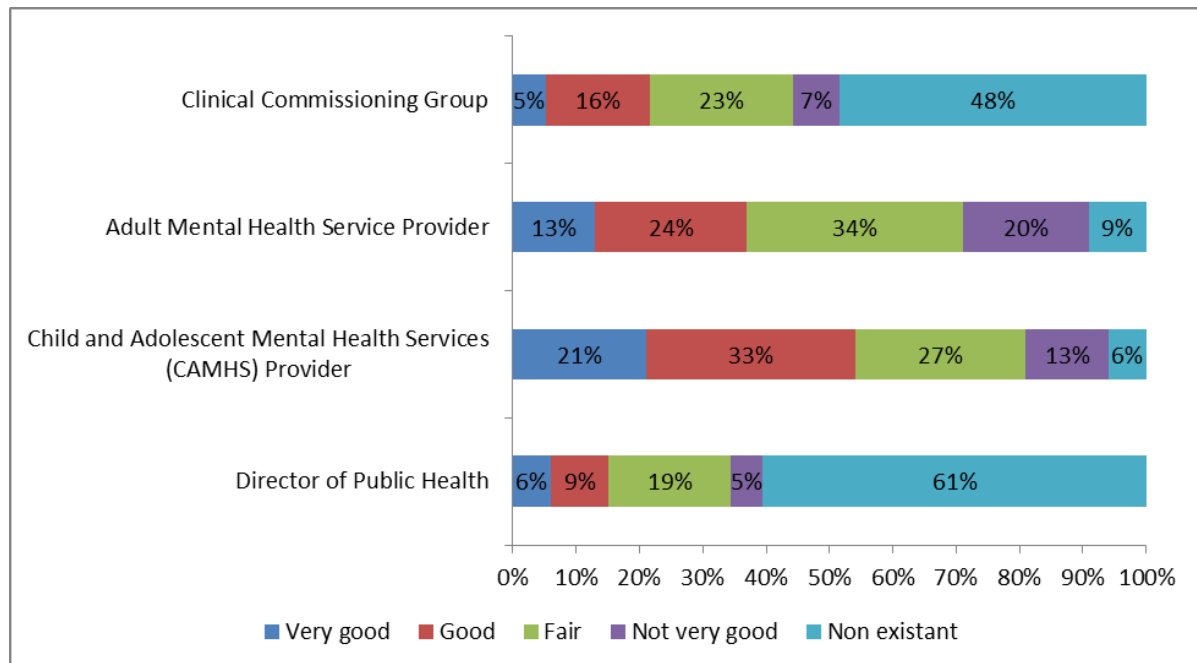
56% of respondents said their college's internal resources to support mental health issues had increased in the last three years with another 31% reporting no change.

It was a mixed picture in terms of their external resources to support mental health issues with 38% of colleges reporting an increase, 27% no change and 36% a decrease in the last three years.

Links with health authorities

Colleges generally have a good relationship with their local child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and adult mental health services, but nearly half (48%) said their relationship with local clinical commissioning groups is 'non-existent'. 61% also said their relationship with the director for public health is 'non-existent'.

How is your college's relationship with each of the following:



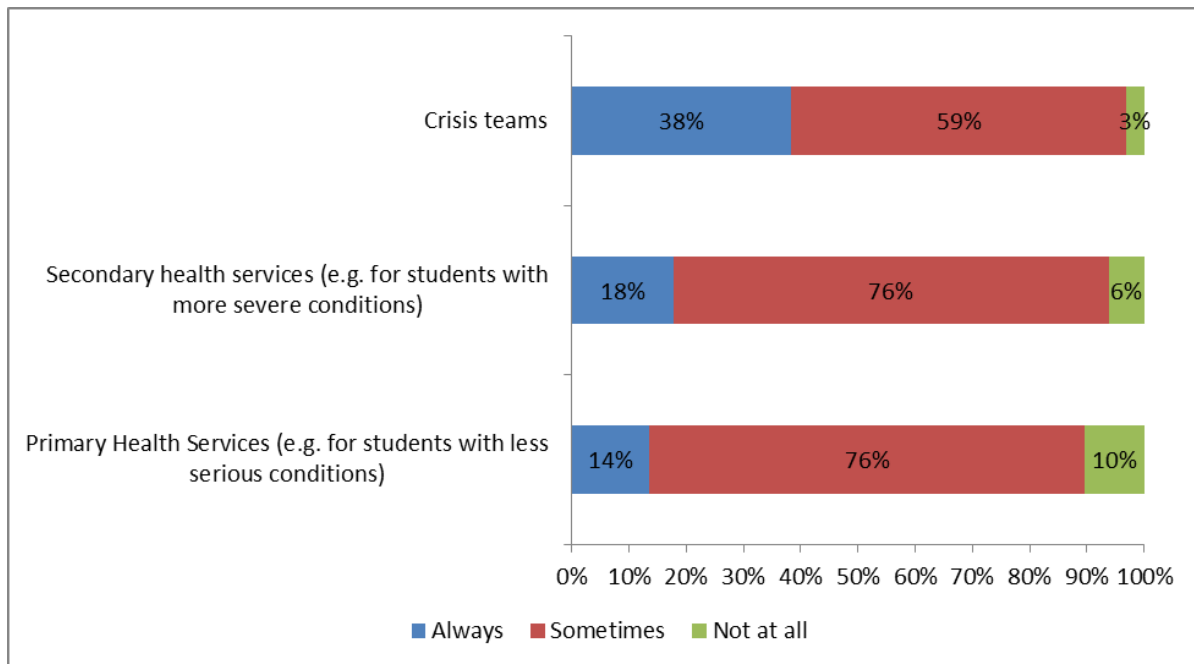
41% of colleges reported having joint provision with their local health authority / health providers / other local providers.

Only 20% of colleges said they were involved in CCG mental health transformation plans.



Colleges reported that referrals to primary and secondary health services were not always responded to in a timely manner.

Are responses to the following services responded to in a timely manner?



Referrals to Accident and Emergency

Three-quarters (74%) of colleges reported having to refer students with mental health issues to Accident and Emergency (A&E) in the past academic year (2015/16). There was an average of 6.6 referrals per college with the number ranging from 1-30.

Links with other mental health providers

81% of colleges said they worked with various other mental health providers. These include: local Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services and also a variety of voluntary organisations especially local MIND groups.

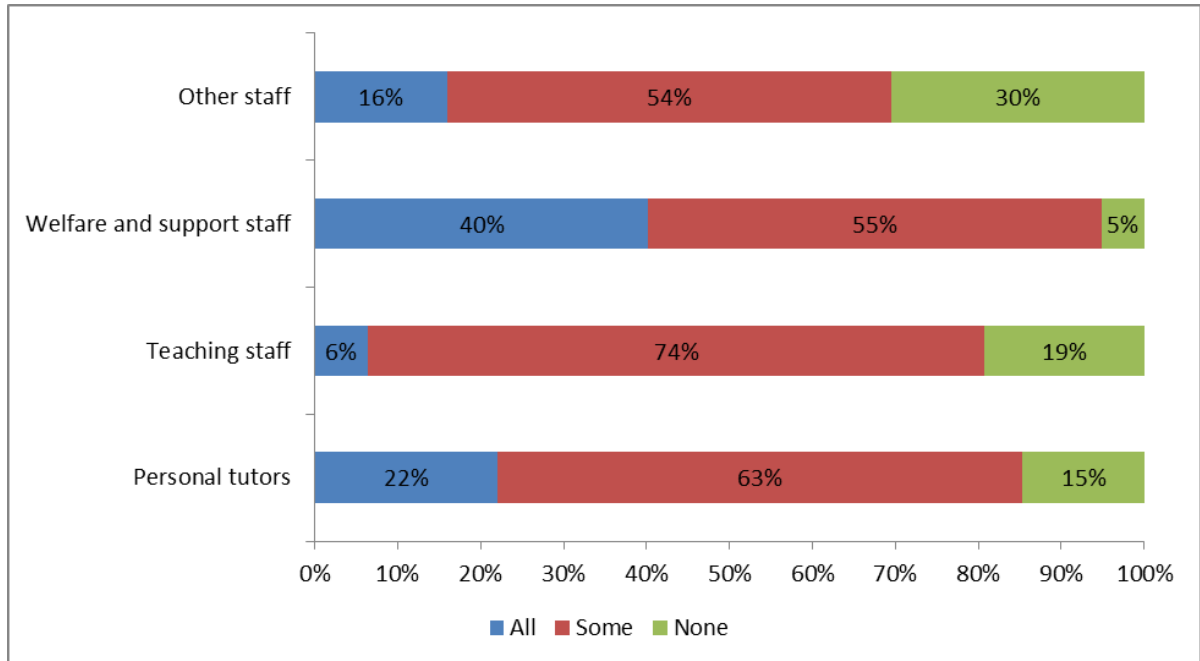
Training

46% of colleges said they have been able to carry out mental health awareness training for all staff and 77% of colleges said they have staff trained in mental health first aid.



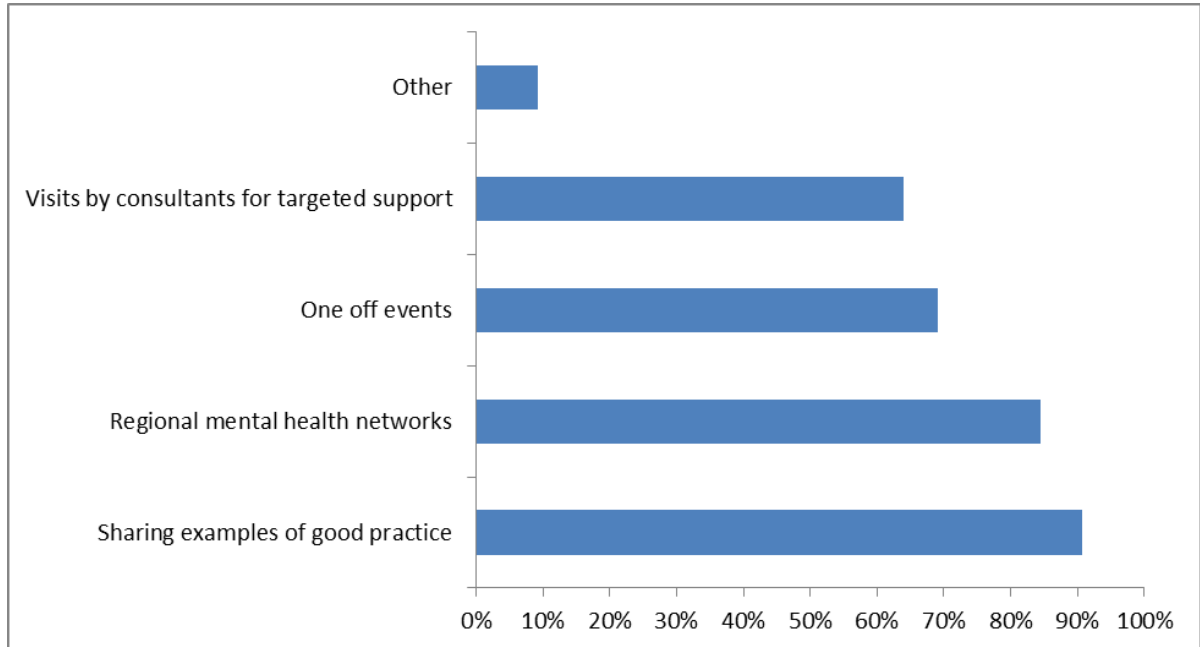
Some colleges also reported that they had been able to carry out additional mental health training for some staff in various categories. This has generally taken the form of face to face training with some colleges reporting using online training.

Has your college been able to carry out additional mental health training for the following categories of staff?





What kind of mental health training/support would your college most appreciate?



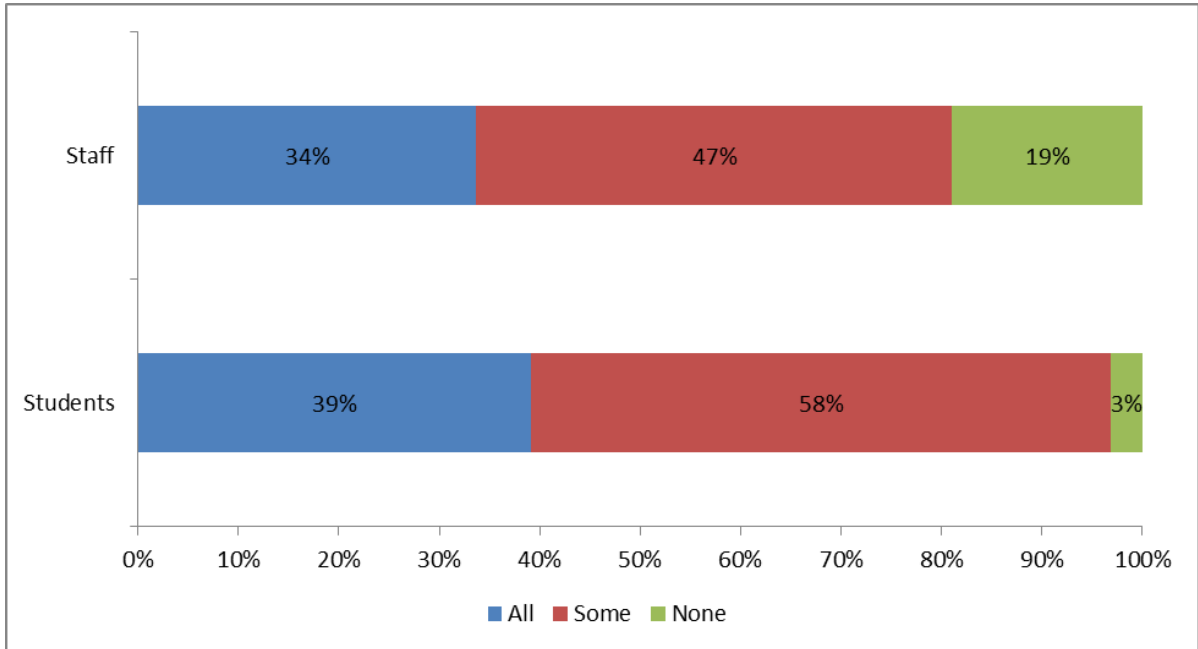
Health and wellbeing

92% of colleges that responded reported having structures in place to support the mental health and wellbeing of all their staff.

97% of college reported running health and wellbeing sessions for all or some of their student. 81% reported running such sessions for all or some of their staff.



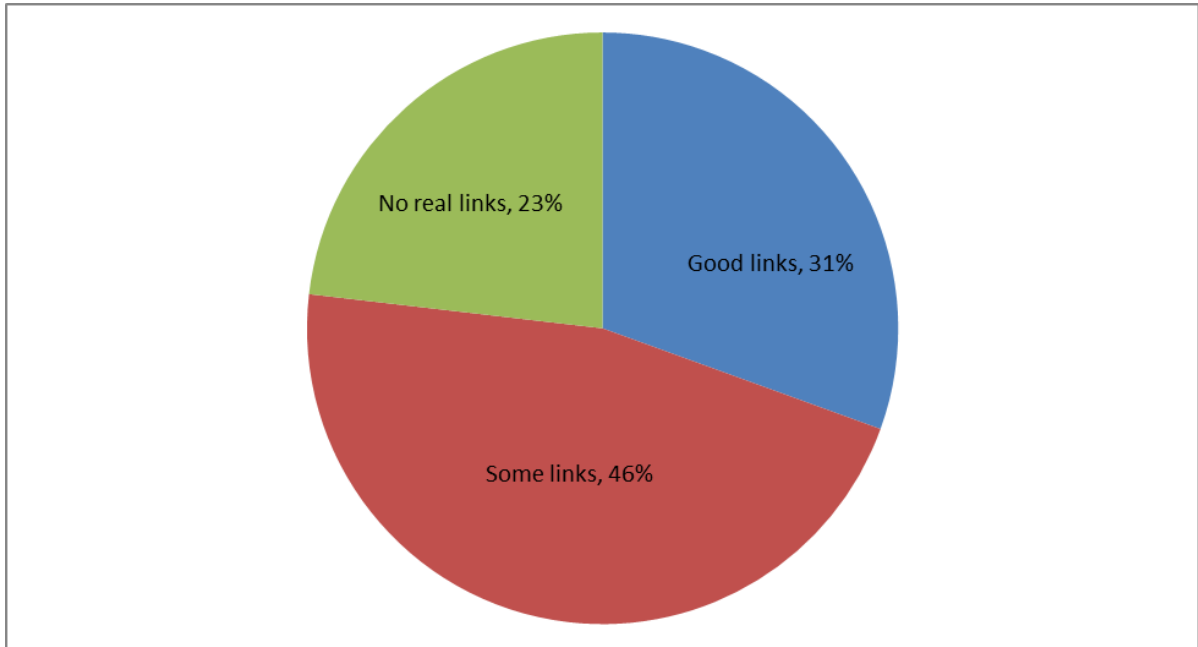
Does your college run health and wellbeing sessions for (a) students and (b) staff:



81% of colleges said that a focus on student mental wellbeing is built in to all their tutorial work.

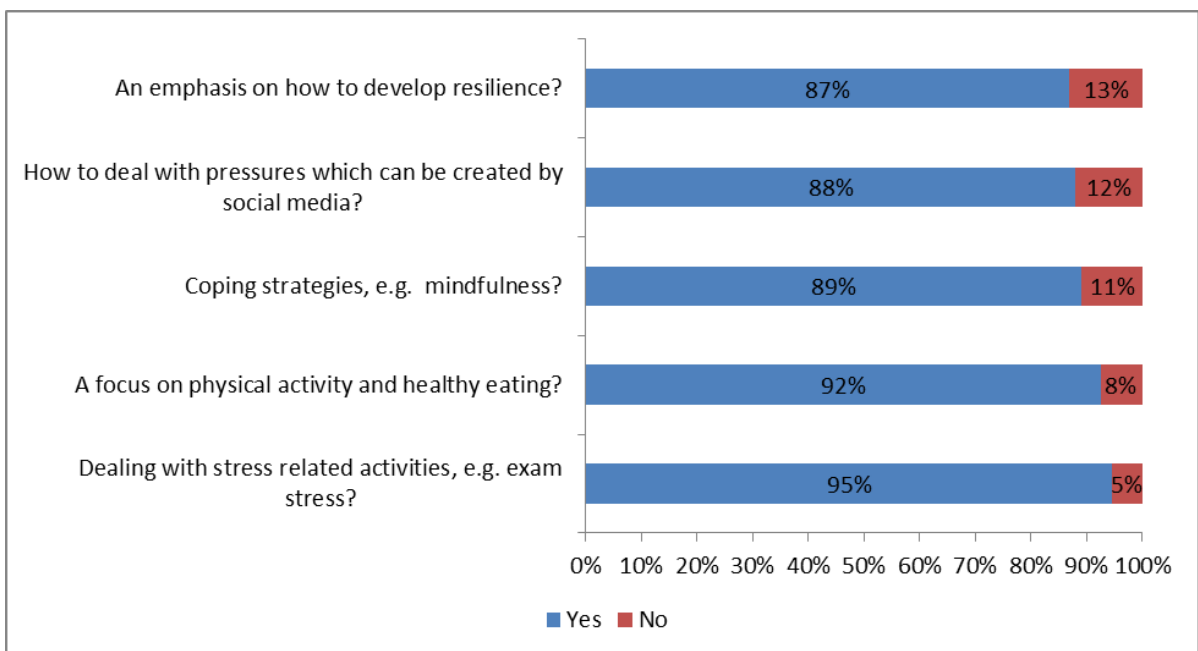
Just under one-third of colleges reported good links between mental health support workers and staff responsible for physical activity and sport.

Are there good links between mental health support workers and staff responsible for physical activity and sport?



95% of colleges reported that their wellbeing sessions included ways to deal with stress-related situations such as exams and 92% said they included a focus on physical activity and healthy eating.

Do your wellbeing sessions include:

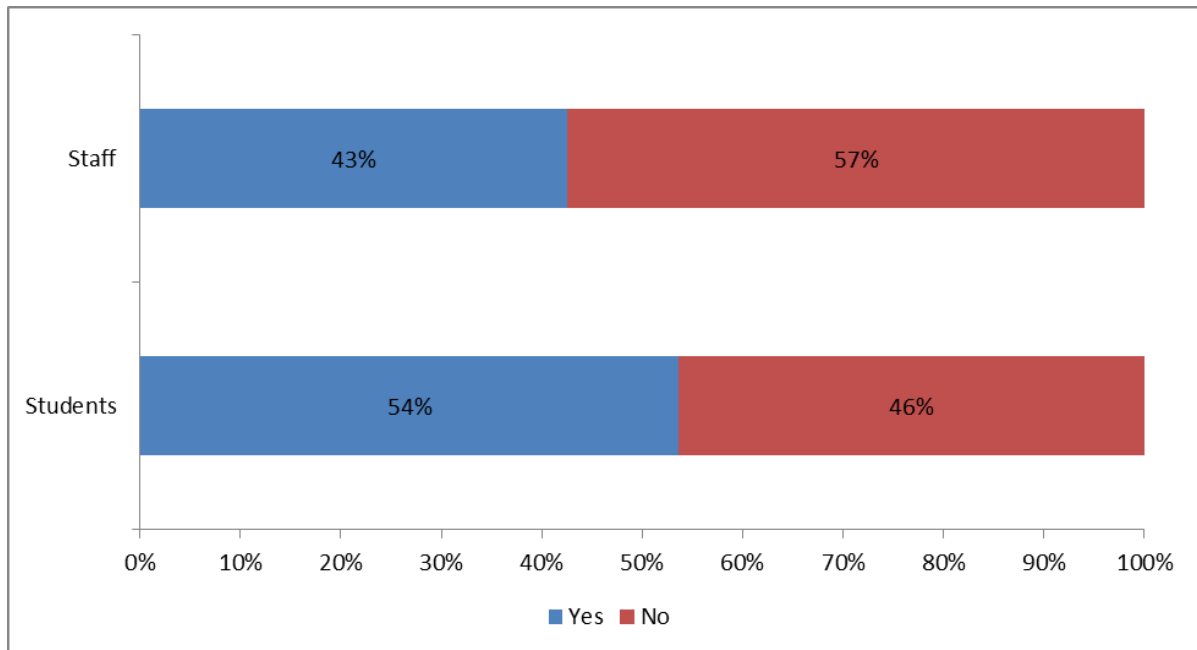




College policies

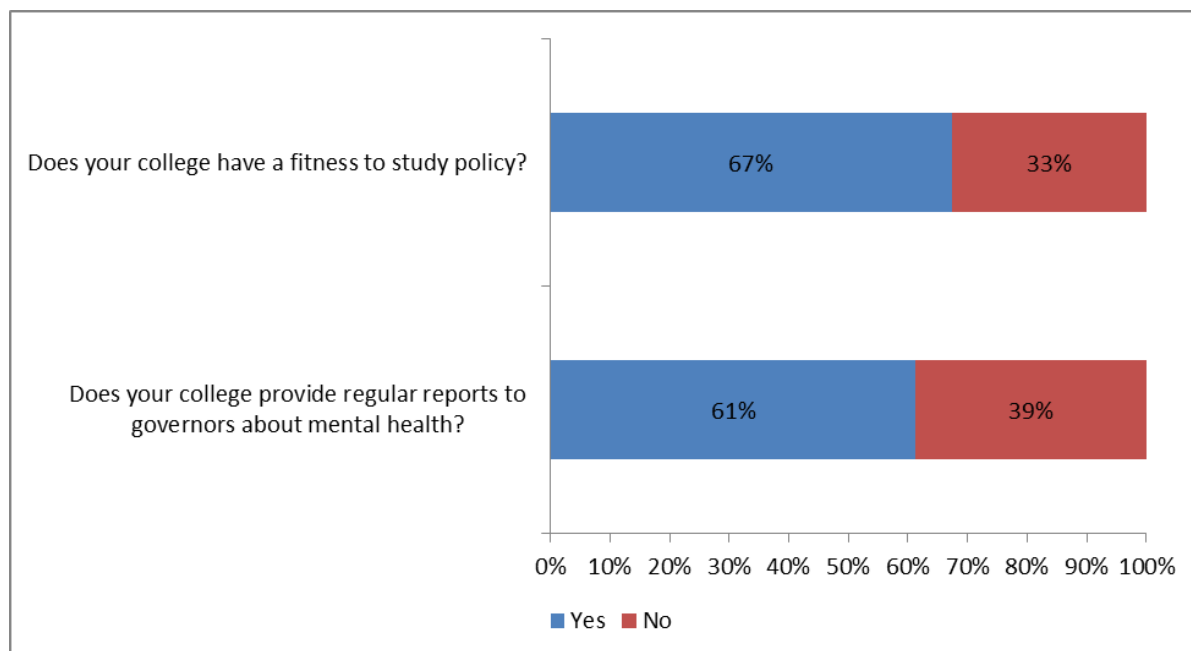
54% of colleges said they have a mental health policy/strategy for students and 43% of colleges have a mental health policy/strategy for staff.

Does your college have a mental health policy/strategy for students and staff?



61% of colleges provide regular reports to governors about mental health and 67% of colleges have a fitness to study policy

Regular reports to governors about mental health and fitness to study policies



AoC response

AoC is currently creating a Wellbeing and Mental Health self assessment tool for all colleges accompanied by a package of resources.

In response to the main requests from colleges who took part in the survey:

- **Sharing good practice:** Events and briefings have already been held across the North West Region and in the North East and East Midlands. Further events are planned in London, the South East and Yorkshire and Humberside. We are in the process of identifying and writing up good practice case studies which will form part of the resources package. AoC members have also contributed to an ACER (Association of Eastern Region Colleges) guide to mental health in FE which can be found in the ACER Resources section at www.acer.ac.uk
- **One off events:** AoC will be holding a wellbeing and mental health conference later in the year to launch the self assessment tool and resource package.
- **Visits by consultants for targeted support:** We have submitted a bid to Esme Fairbairn organisation which includes the development of a team of consultants who can support individual colleges.



- **Regional mental health networks:** These are already in place in several regions. We plan to ensure that a mental health network is established in every region.

At a national level AoC is now represented on several national mental health groups, including the Department of Health Children and Young Peoples' Stakeholder Forum. The Public Affairs Team has also had discussion with MPs, responded to consultations and raised Parliamentary questions in relation to the importance of including Further Education in any discussion of young people's and adult's mental health.

AoC has also started its own national Mental Health group, chaired by Richard Caulfield, which, as well as principals and practitioners, also includes representatives from DfE; DoH; NHS England; CCGs; Health Education England; NAMSS and NUS. This enables the voice of further education to be clearly heard across all these agencies to ensure that any new initiatives are inclusive of further education.