



Sunderland Recovery College Evaluation

2018-2019 Academic Year

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Sunderland Recovery College

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Kim Dobson, Team Leader

Healthwatch England

Katie Johnson, Development Officer
Research Helpdesk

Sunderland CCG

Rachel McDonald, Joint Commissioning Manager

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust

Alane Bould, Head of Patient and Carer Involvement
Wendy Spratt, Volunteer Co-ordinator
Sarah Barnard, Clinical Lead, Sunderland West CTT

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Executive summary

Sunderland Recovery College had its first community consultation in July of 2014 and started running courses shortly after. All courses offered are free with a mental health recovery focus aimed at helping students, their carers, family and friends to improve their understanding and experience of day to day living.

This evaluation covers the 2018-2019 academic year and the views of some of the students enrolled on the College courses during this time frame. During this year it enrolled 585 students.

The core evaluation for this report is based upon two sets of collected data. The first set of data was collected using a survey specifically designed by Healthwatch Sunderland (HWS) and the other set was the data collected and provided by the College using the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) tool.

59 students completed HWS individual surveys and 283 students completed the (SWEMWBS) tool which is collected pre and post course as part of the Sunderland Recovery College ongoing evaluations.

The students attended courses which are held at three different venues across the City including, Houghton, Washington and Sunderland.

Key themes/findings

Overall students reported high levels of satisfaction with the College, stating that it has or is supporting their recovery journey in many areas:

- 74% of students have seen positive effects on their relationships
- 99% of students feel supported on the courses
- 100% plan to book themselves onto more courses
- 99% of students reported only high points of attending the College
- 58% of students have used NHS services less since joining the College
- 27% of those who have identified as having a physical health condition reported that this has improved since joining the College

Students identified four areas for improvement, these are;

- Greater choice of course subject
- Greater amount of courses
- Additional one to one support for students
- Further and wider promotion of the College

Contents

- 1. Executive summary..... 3
- 2. Introduction 5
- 3. Methodology..... 8
- 4. Findings..... 8
- 5. What’s working well.....20
- 6. Areas for improvement.....21
- 7. Acknowledgements.....22
- 8. Appendices..... 23

Background and overview of the service

Recovery Colleges offer educational courses about mental health and recovery, all of which are designed to increase the students' knowledge and skills and to help them feel more confident in the self-management of their own mental health and well-being.

For a person with lived experience of mental ill health, this may help them to take control and become an expert in their own well-being and recovery and move on with their life despite their mental health challenges. This will hopefully help them to achieve, or work towards whatever is meaningful in their lives.

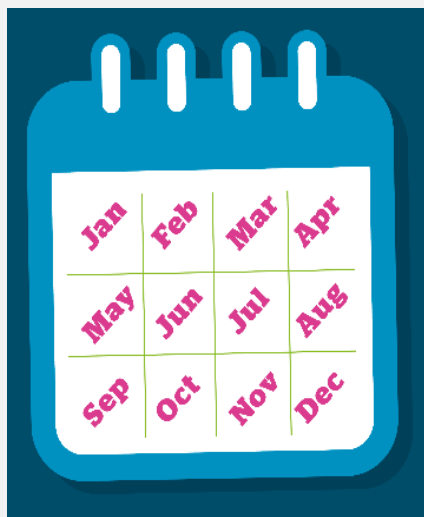
People may use the College as an alternative to mental health services,

alongside support offered from mental health services or to help them move out of mainstream mental health services.

Sunderland Recovery College

Funded by Sunderland Council and Cumbria, Northumbria Tyne & Wear (CNTW) NHS Foundation Trust joint Commissioners, Sunderland Recovery College first opened its doors to students in 2015.

The college is supported by three full time Sunderland Care and Support staff, one part time and six CNTW NHS Peer Support Workers equivalent to one full time member of staff The College also has 23 volunteers who have been students at the College.



The College has three terms throughout the year:

Term 1 - September - December

Term 2 - January - March

Term 3 - April - July

Sunderland Recovery College aims

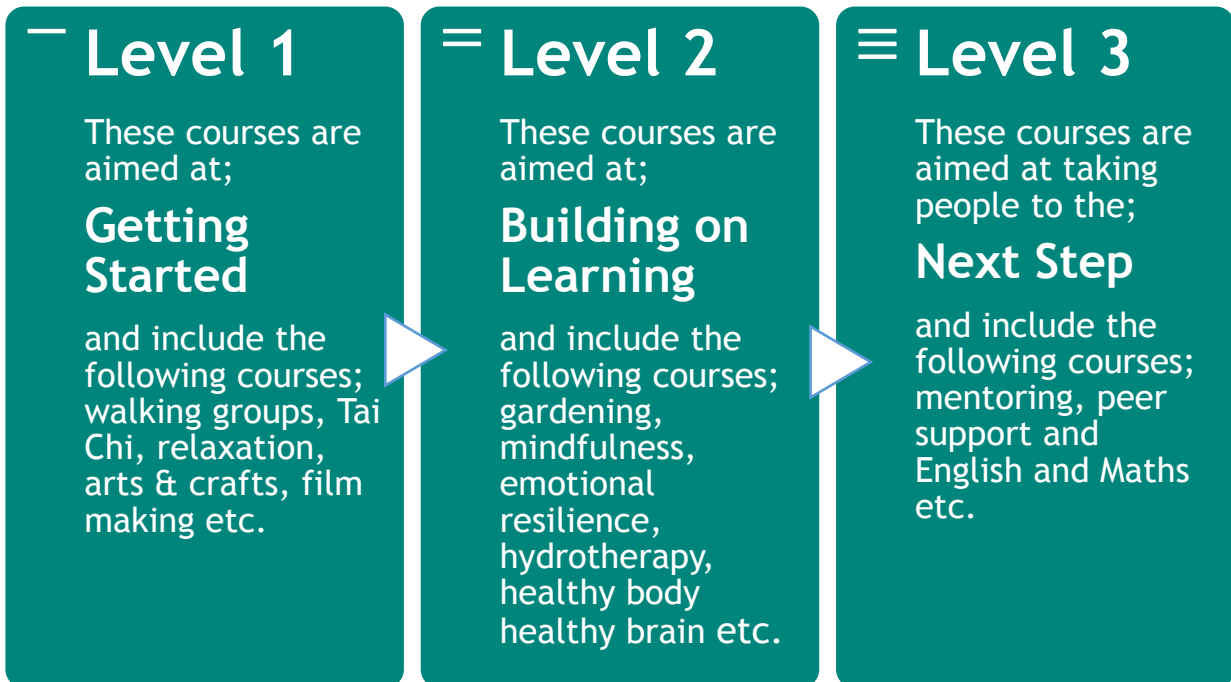
The College has five main aims, these are;

- **Education** - courses are aimed at improving students understanding of their day-to-day living, helping to contribute to their well-being and recovery. Courses are either directly related to mental health or can have a more social/skills based focus.
- **Recovery and well-being** - it aims to enable students to maximise their well-being through developing courses with a mental health recovery focus. These courses are produced using the expertise of mental health professionals and aim to help students make informed choices regarding their recovery and to become experts in their own self-management.
- **Co-production** - all courses offered are free and have been co-developed and are co-facilitated by somebody who has lived experience of mental health either in a personal or caring capacity. In addition all courses are produced by professionals within that field, ensuring that courses are accurate and up to date.
- **Development of students** - the College aims to support students to reach their goals, increase their sense of achievement and fully recognise their potential. It encourages students to fully participate in the 'journey' that the College offers and encourages them to become volunteers (the College currently has 23 volunteers), to assist in the development and delivery of courses and help them move towards employment and community based educational opportunities.
- **Student and carer involvement** - the College believes in shared decision making and shared development as key principles of operating the College and widening its potential in the Sunderland community. An operational group exists involving partner organisations who meet to discuss ways to move the College forward. Student and mental health service user representatives attend these meetings to ensure student voices are heard.

Courses

The College offers a range of courses to students, these are at three different levels.

Courses can be directly related to mental health or can have more of a social/skill based focus.



“The new Healthy Mind Healthy Body course I’m doing is wonderful and a new high in my life.”

“I found the courses very interactive and the College is a safe space.”

“I learnt some new skills in the Mindfulness course which I now apply.”

An initial meeting was held with the Sunderland Recovery College Team Leader, Kim Dobson to establish the data already collected by the College and what additional data would be needed to form a comprehensive evaluation.

As the College already collected personal data on each registered student and used a specialist outcome tool SWEMWBS, it was decided that Healthwatch would design a feedback survey to complement the data already gathered.



Student feedback surveys

Students were invited to complete surveys which were designed to collect feedback on those who had engaged and completed courses during the 2018-2019 academic year. The surveys were designed to capture people's general experiences of the College and the impact it has had on the recovery of their overall health and wellbeing and were to complement the data already collected and collated by Sunderland Recovery College.

Surveys were completed during the September 2019 enrolments, held at Fulwell Resource Centre and during five of the College's coffee mornings held across the City during the months

of August and September 2019.

Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)

A specialist outcomes tool, Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) is the tool which is utilised by the College. Students will complete this at the beginning and end session of each course enrolled on and forms part of students Individual Student Learning Plan booklet, (see appendix 1).

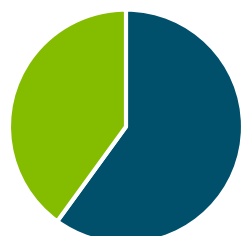
The Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Health Wellbeing Scale, is Rasch compatible (The **Rasch** model is used to measure latent traits like attitude or ability; it shows the probability of an individual getting a correct response on a test item), meaning the seven items included have undergone a more vigorous test for internal consistency and have superior scaling properties. The seven items relate more to functioning than to feeling and therefore offer a slightly different perspective on mental well-being.

To determine the student's recovery, the tool would normally be used to assign a number between five and thirty five to indicate overall levels of recovery, however, in this instance the data gathered was used by Sunderland Recovery College to graph students progress against each of the seven items.

Demographics

The demographic breakdown of students enrolled during the 2018-2019 academic year is given below;

Gender

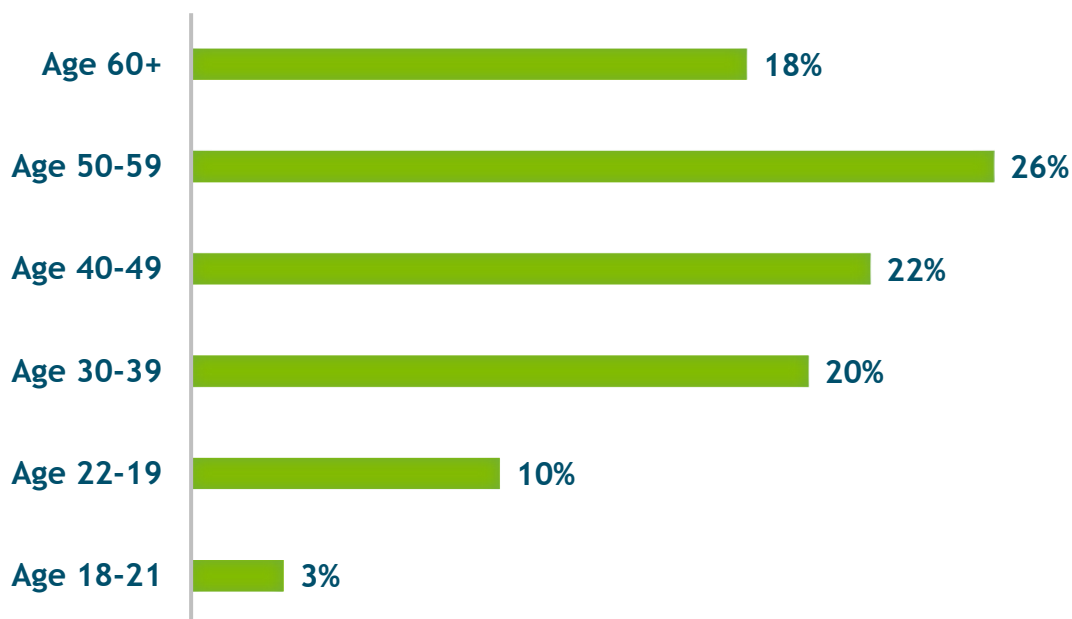


Females 61%
 Males 39%

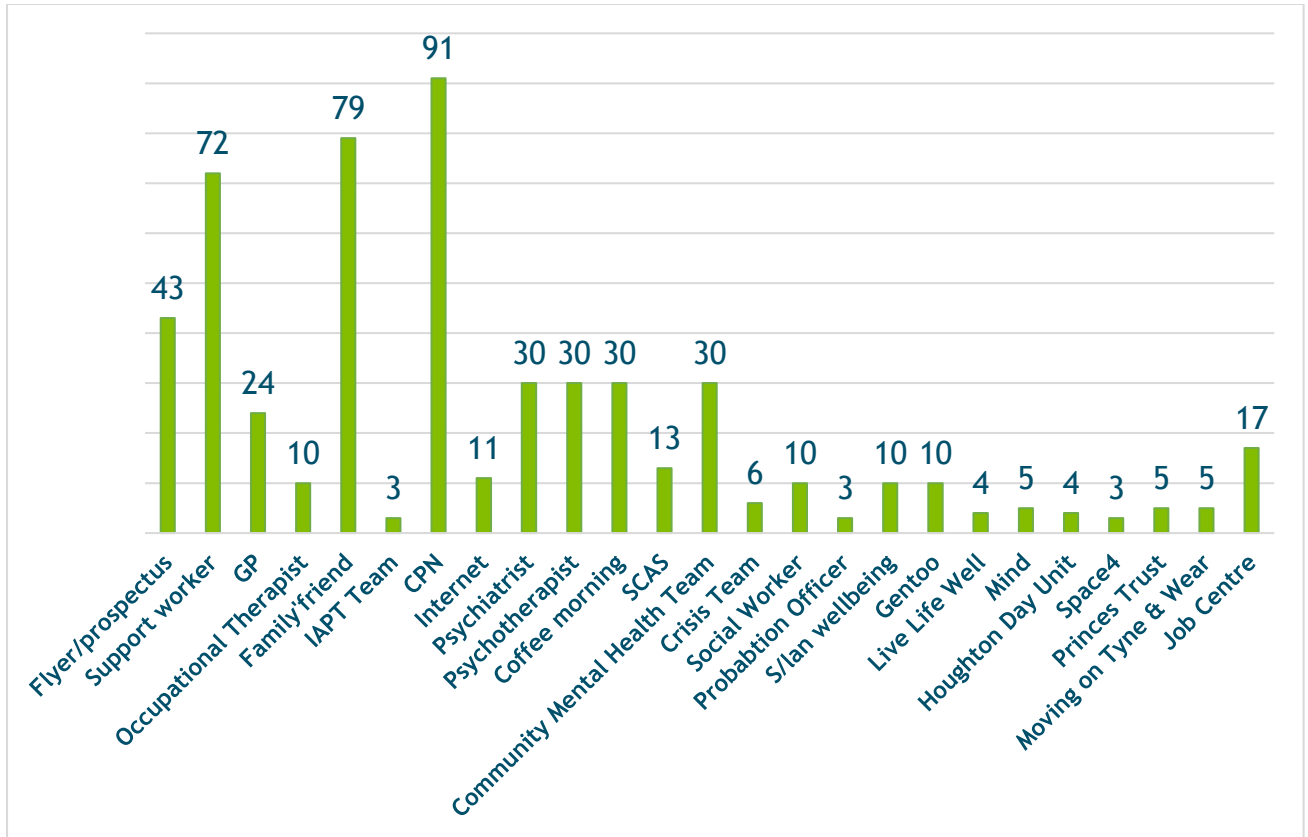


585 students enrolled over 2018-2019 academic year

Age range



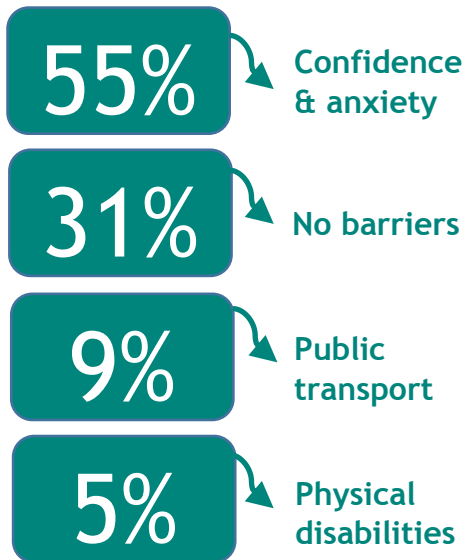
Where students heard about Sunderland Recovery College



Survey findings

Students were asked a series of questions, the findings from these surveys are given below. In total **59** students took part in the survey.

Barriers to joining - Three main themes were identified;



“I was anxious about coming, but I was made welcome so I felt less anxious.”

“My self-confidence was a barrier, my husband had to come along with me on several occasions.”

“Travelling was a problem on the bus. I had to come with someone as I would not have managed on my own as I have mental health problems.”

Students were looking forward to.....



“Being somewhere else other than my house and hopefully a change in attitude and outlook.”

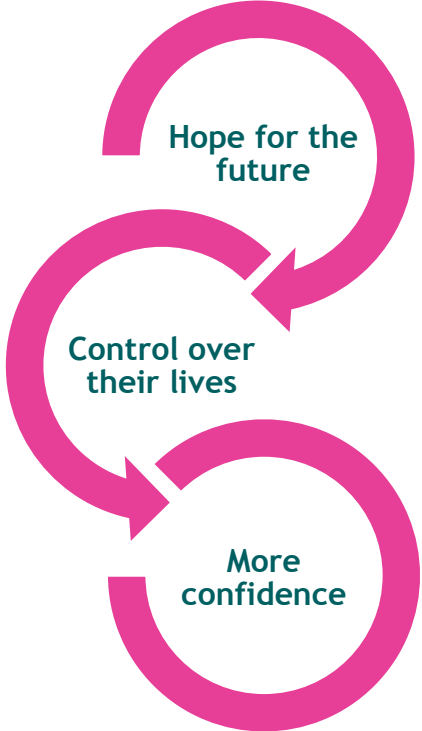
“To build upon my mental health.”

“To try and understand myself. I wanted to improve my mental health.”

“Meeting new people in a safe and comfortable environment.”

“Meeting people with similar problems and knowing I wasn't alone.”

Students reported on how the College has supported their recovery journey



“Yes definitely, as it gave me hope for the future.”

“Yes it helped me a lot, I feel like I have more control over my life.”

“Definitely. All the staff are approachable and friendly. They understand, everyone here is in the same boat. My family don’t always understand.”

“Yes. I have gone from staying in bed 24/7 with agoraphobia to joining the College and now volunteering to support on the courses, which I started to do five months after joining.”



74% of students agreed their relationships have been positively affected since joining the college

“I was isolated for a long time (approximately 3 years), so I’m learning to be around people again and building relationships.”

“I was holding back from my family but starting the College has given me my confidence back. It’s been a lifeline.”

“I love coming here, it has had a positive effect on my relationship with my parents who are encouraging me to attend.”

“Yes I’m in a much better place now and engaged in the community and contributing again.”

100%

Of students plan
to book
themselves onto
more courses

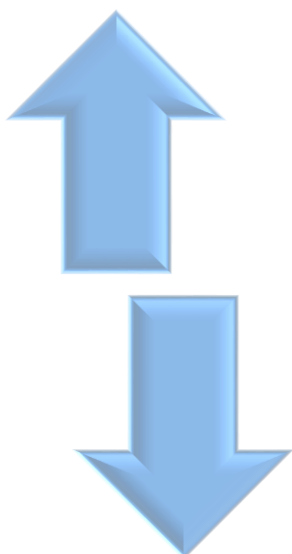
“I have become an official volunteer at the College, so my next step is to co-facilitate a course which will help me with my job search in peer support roles.”

“More courses and as many as possible. They keep me busy, give me something to do and they give me the motivation to leave the house.”

“Since taking the initial course I have now progressed to become a volunteer. I watched other people doing it and thought, I can do that. I plan to do as much as I can for the Recovery College and build my confidence to help me in the outside world.”

Many students also stated they want to help support others and give back to the college, by becoming a volunteer

99% of students reported only high points of attending the college



“Attending the Botany course, it stimulated my brain.”

“Meeting lots of new people, they are like family.”

“The Mindfulness course. I still practice it at home and it helps me.”

The only low points mentioned were linked to student illnesses, which they stated occasionally prevented them from attending the College

99% of students felt supported on their course

Those students who didn't always feel supported stated that on occasion they felt that they could have benefited from someone to check on them.

“100% by the tutors, the other attendees were very friendly. I was not afraid to ask any questions.”

“Sometimes. I could have done with more support at times and it wasn't there. I could have done with talking to someone.”

“Yes feel really supported by tutors and class mates.”

“Yes definitely, the facilitators are great, this is because they have been there themselves.”

100%

of students would recommend the College to others

“Yes! Everyone is approachable, friendly and down to earth. You can talk about your problems if you need to - you don't have to put a face on.”

“Yes it helps people to overcome social isolation by offering them connections to others and offers people a structure to their day.”

“Yes I have done so this morning. I recommended it to my neighbour who is going through a difficult time.”

45% of students have used NHS services less since joining the college

“I am no longer dependent upon Primary Care support.”

“I was offered a Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) if I wanted one, but as long as I have the Recovery College I don't need one, I can speak to people here.”

“I had a yearly review a few months ago and my tablets were reduced and I was discharged from seeing my CPN.”

“I used to call the Crisis Team, 111 and go along to the Primary Care Centre a lot 2-3 years ago, but I don't use any of them now.”

Of the remaining 55% of students, 30% were continuing to access NHS services and 25% hadn't ever accessed services.

27% of those who identified as having a physical health condition reported this has improved since joining the College

“High blood pressure, which has improved since coming here.”

“I am a Diabetic which has improved as I am not sitting around at home eating.”

“Yes I have Diabetes and Osteoarthritis. I feel I can deal with my physical issues better due to improvements in my mental health.”

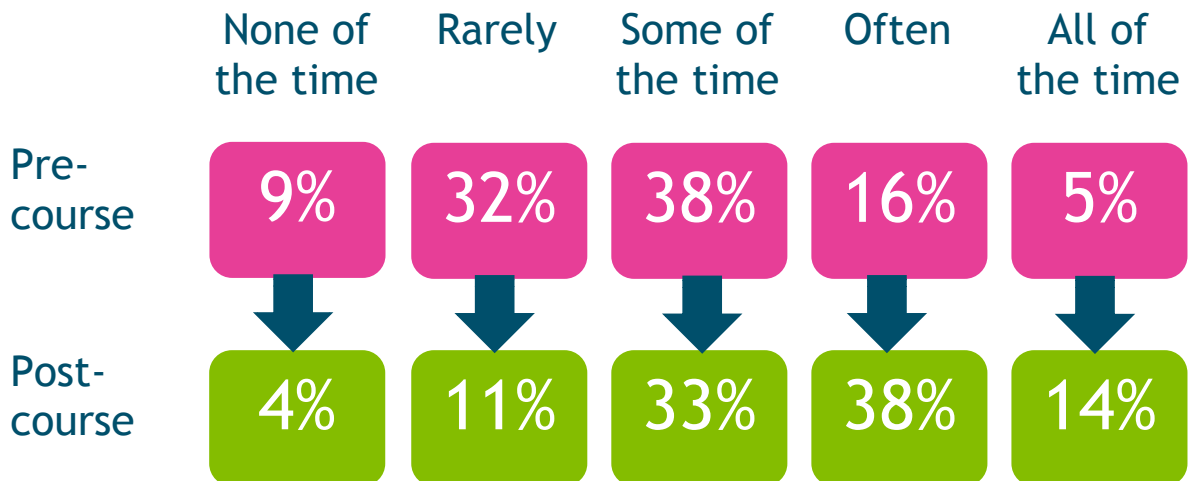
The remaining 73% of students reported no impact on their physical health conditions since joining the College.



SWEMWBS findings

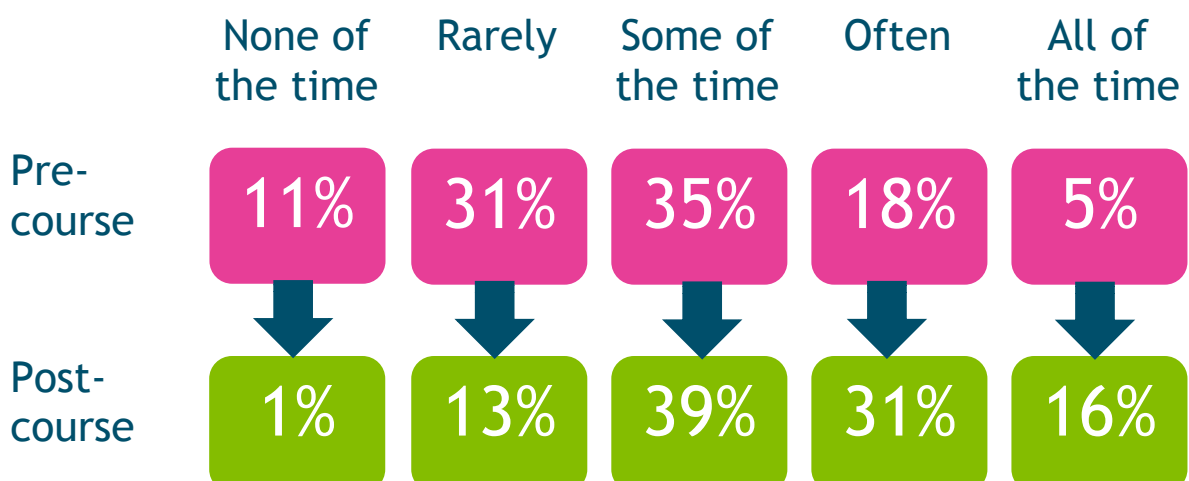
Students were asked to complete the tool at the beginning of their course and again on completion. The tool comprises of 7 statements, students were asked to rate each one against a scale which ranges from none of the time to all of the time. See below;

I've been optimistic about the future



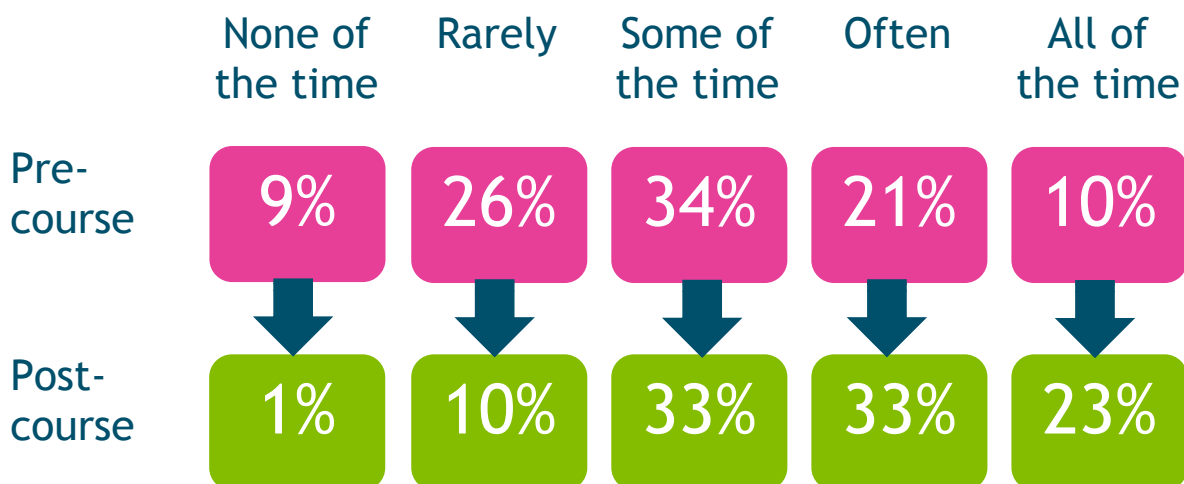
Before joining the college 21% of students were optimistic about the future often or all of the time compared with 52% of students after taking part in courses.

I've been feeling useful



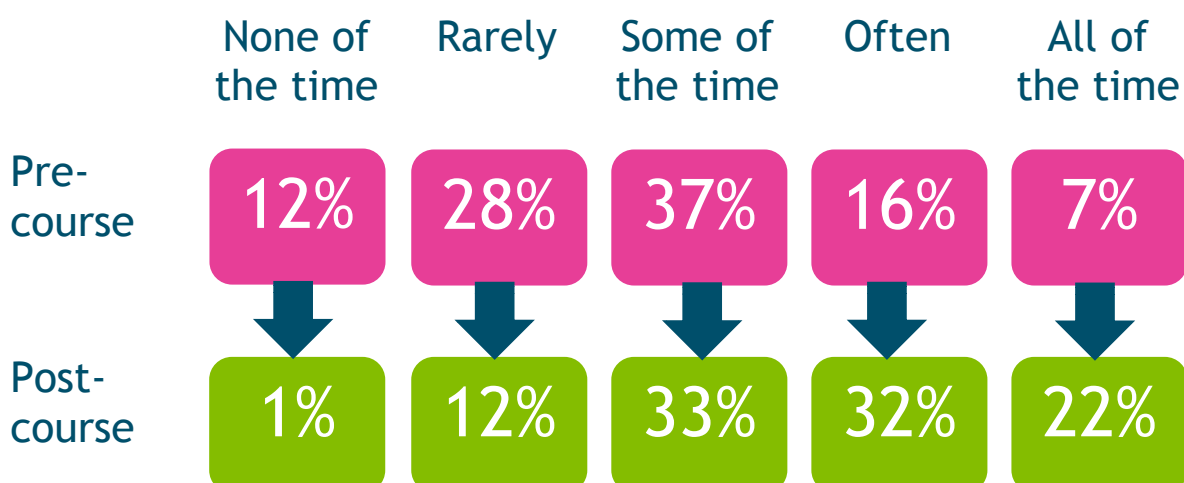
Before joining the college 23% of students were feeling useful often or all of the time compared with 47% of students after taking part in courses.

I've been able to make up my own mind



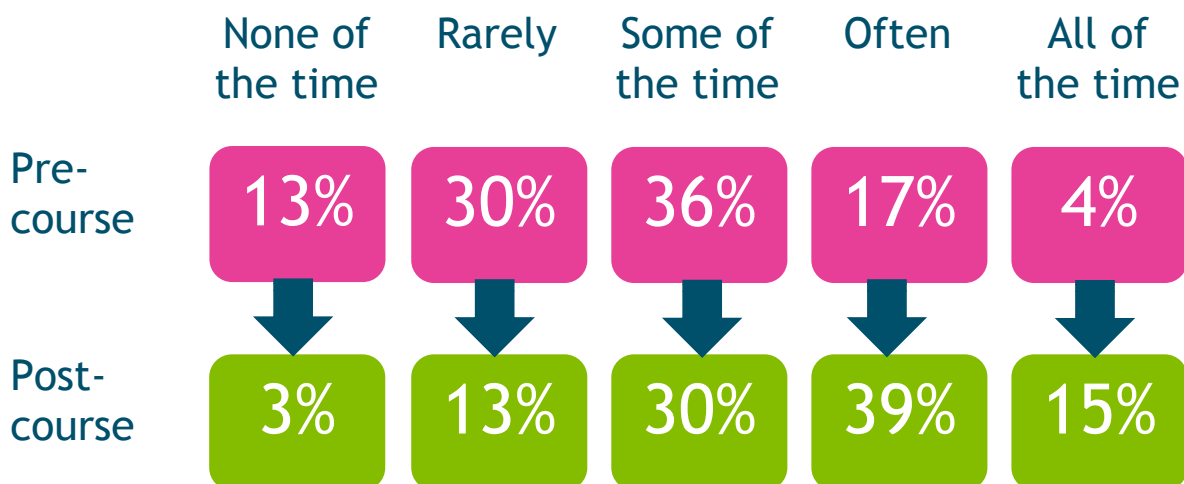
Before joining the college 31% of students were able to make up their mind often or all of the time compared with 56% of students after taking part in courses.

I've be feeling close to other people



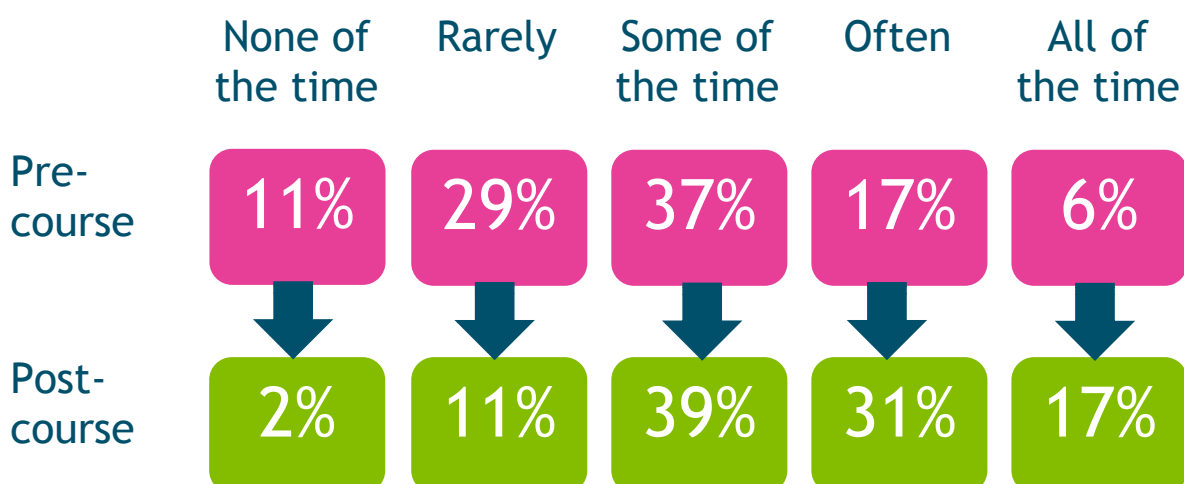
Before joining the college 23% of students were feeling close to other people often or all of the time compared with 54% of students after taking part in courses.

I've been feeling relaxed



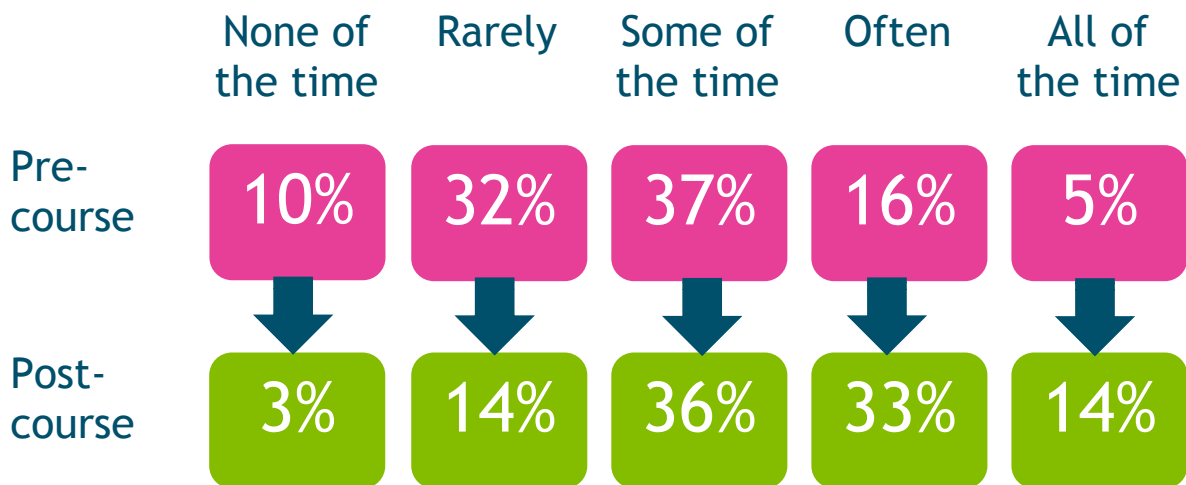
Before joining the college 21% of students were feeling relaxed often or all of the time compared with 54% of students after taking part in courses.

I've been thinking clearly



Before joining the college 23% of students were thinking clearly often or all of the time compared with 48% of students after taking part in courses.

I've been dealing with my problems well



Before joining the college 21% of students were dealing with their problems well often or all of the time compared with 47% of students after taking part in courses.

Overall the majority of the feedback received from students on their experiences with the College was positive.

They reported the differences it had made to them in several areas including;

- Improved relationships
- Reduced usage of NHS services
- Improvements in physical health
- Improved confidence
- Hope for the future
- Control over their lives

“It’s the best thing I have done recently. I can feel a difference in myself, it has given me a bit of a boost.”

“I am much more confident now and made some very good friends.”

“The College is forward thinking in helping people and saving the NHS thousands in saved appointments and service delivery.”



When asked some of the students provided information on areas for improvement. The four main areas suggested were;

Greater choice of courses

Most of the students were happy with the range and variety of courses, however some did mention other courses that they would like to see including courses on the following subjects; memory, Bi-polar, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, anger management, panic attacks and anxiety and depression.



One student also mentioned he thought it would be a good idea to set up a Sunderland Recovery College football team.

Greater amount of courses

Many students who attended the enrolment sessions commented that they had been unable to get booked on to some of the courses they wished to attend due to them being fully booked. As a result students suggested that the College would benefit from having greater amount of popular courses available.

Additional one to one support for students

A few students commented that they could have done with some more support on a one to one basis and a more proactive approach from some of the tutors and/or volunteer supporters.

It was suggested by one student that the College looks to adopt an approach where all students are allocated a Mentor, who would support them on a one to one basis and regularly touch base with them. This would replicate similar provision in further education colleges.



Further and wider promotion of the College

Some students due to their positive experience of being a student at the College suggested that the college be promoted further and wider so more local people can benefit from it.



Healthwatch Sunderland would like to acknowledge the support of the students of Sunderland Recovery College who talked openly and honestly with the team. We would also like to thank those staff members who supported us and made us feel welcome when carrying out the evaluation.

The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS)

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

"Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (SWEMWBS)
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Healthwatch Sunderland
Hope Street Xchange
Sunderland
SR1 3QD



Tele: 0191 514 7145
Email: healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net
Web: www.healthwatchesunderland.com