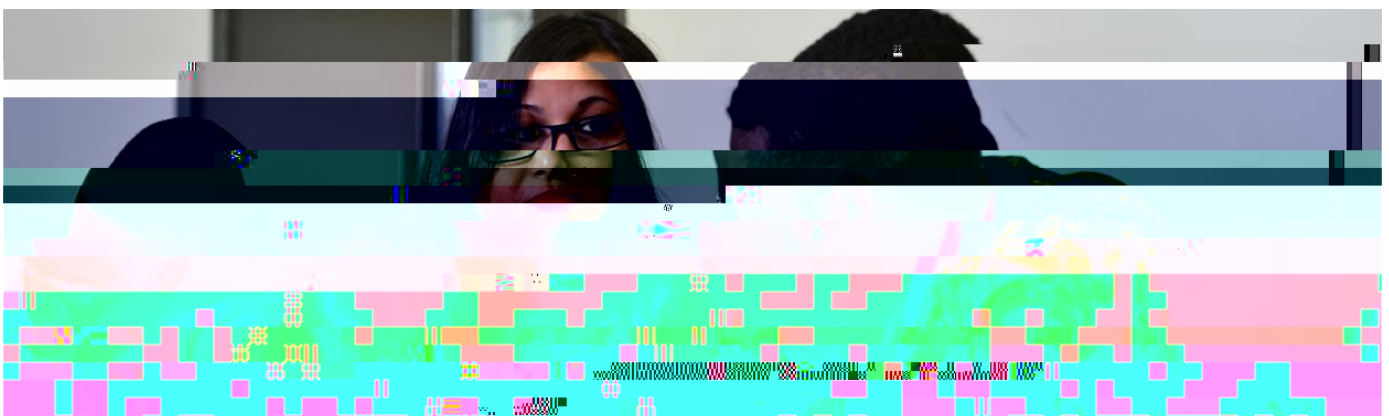




# TRAINING NEEDS IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION SECTOR MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

**A report of survey-based research into the training needs of people who work in post-16 education and training organisations in England with learners who may have mental health issues**

**BMG RESEARCH**





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The specification for this study – an offshoot of a major survey of the training needs of staff in the FE sector – asked:

- What is the extent of the mental health training completed by individuals?
- What is the extent of future mental health training demanded by individuals?
- What kind of mental health issues among learners most require support and what kinds of training would best meet this need?

This report includes a variety of information which bears directly or indirectly on these questions.

## The extent of the mental health training completed by individuals

16% of FE sector staff undertook training and development related to mental health in the last year.

Teaching, learning, or classroom assistants were the group of staff which was most likely to undertake this form of training.

Mental health training was more likely for staff in colleges and Local Authorities.

Most institutions were content with the volume of mental health training, in the sense that only 5% of institutions said they would like to have provided more.

## Demand for future mental health training

However, a fifth of individuals (21%) working in the sector said they would like mental health training in the next year (this average proportion being higher, at 32%, amongst teaching, learning, or class room assistants).

Demand was higher amongst individuals working in Colleges, Local Authorities, and the voluntary sector than amongst those working in private sector training companies.

## What mental health training is required?

The *key driver of demand* for mental health training is the perception that mental health issues amongst learners are becoming more frequent.

There was no clear

Both institutions and individuals saw a wide range of *benefits* from mental health training. Key benefits were increased staff confidence in dealing with learners with mental health difficulties, a better service to learners, and enhanced course completion rates.

Some institutions also noted that this training could promote a safe and secure learning environment.

Key *barriers* to the provision of more mental health training are of lack of funds, the difficulty of finding staff time to train, and doubts about the nature and relevance of available provision.

Institutions' and individuals' views on the *likelihood of necessary mental health training taking place* were mixed. Some thought it likely that it would happen, but others were doubtful or thought it unlikely.

Institutions would welcome *support* to increase the likelihood of their supplying the training. This support could be of various forms but centred on mechanisms for sharing best practice, research findings, information, and resources.

Individual respondents would also value support. In this case, responses focussed on support which would overcome the barriers they perceive to their training increased funding, ways of getting cover whilst in training, and an increase in the availability of relevant and accurately-marketed provision.

Overall, a final discussion section proposes that:

Demand for the mental health training of FE staff is likely to rise in response to increasing numbers of learners with mental health issues.

The sector is in broad agreement on mental health training: as to the benefits of such training; that it does not generally have to lead to qualifications; that provision needs to overcome widespread cost and time barriers; and that external support to overcome these and other barriers would be generally welcome.

However, the research reported here on mental health training does not have sufficient capacity to recommend the particular themes or modes of mental health training which would best match a detailed pattern of demand from the sector. Further, more specific, research and market testing would be required to enable that.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## Purposes of the study

A substantial survey-based research study undertaken on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) has examined the training needs of managers and staff of the post-16 Further Education (FE) sector in England. This study involved 481 structured telephone interviews and 50 in-depth interviews with training providers, and an online survey of 2,366 individuals working in the FE sector. The study has been reported elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

However, as well as examining the training needs of the FE sector workforce in general, the research also allows a particular examination of the training needs of those staff in the sector,

## This report

The remainder of this report is structured according to the three questions which were used to specify the study:

What is the extent of mental health training completed by individuals?

What is the extent of future mental health training demanded by individuals?

What kind of mental health issues among learners most require support and what kinds of training would best meet this need?

## CHAPTER 2: ANALYSIS

### What is the extent of mental health training completed by individuals?

A first figure (Figure 1 following) shows that 16% of FE sector staff undertook training and development related to well-being and mental health in the last year.

This indicates that mental health-related training was, in terms of its frequency of supply, a moderate priority for the sector. In a list of around 20 types of training, 8 other types of training (in leadership and management, teaching and classroom competences, soft skills, administrative procedures, and others) was more frequently supplied.

Figure 1 also shows that the group of staff most likely to receive mental health training was teaching, learning and classroom assistants who were around twice as likely as average to receive this form of training.

#### **Figure 1: Individuals who undertook training and development in the area of well-being or mental health in the past year per job role**



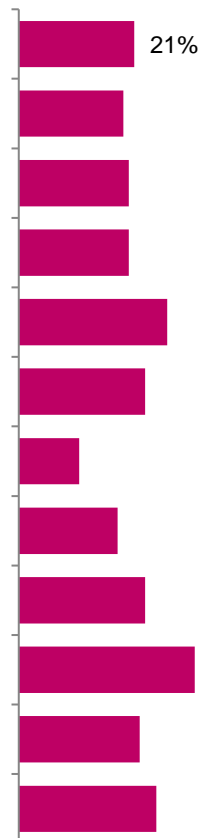




## What is the extent of future mental health training demanded by individuals?

However, looking to the future, a fifth of individuals working in the sector would like to receive more mental health-related training. Demand was again strongest amongst teaching, learning and classroom assistants but was present in all categories of FE sector management and staff (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Individuals who would like more training in the area of well-being or mental health in the next year by job role**



Sample base: Total (1594), Governor/trustee/board member (24), Senior management team (194), Middle and junior manager (346), Advanced practitioner (61), Lecturer, teacher or tutor (525), Specialist assessor or verifier (142), careers guidance specialist (14), Specialist coach, mentor or staff trainer (43), Teaching, learning or classroom assistant (75), Support worker – administrative/clerical (86), Support worker – maintenance, security, catering or cleaning (20).  
Q29. What forms of training or development would that be?

Demand for mental health training in the near future was also present amongst staff in all types of training provider, with this demand being stronger in Colleges, Local Authorities, and voluntary sector providers than in private sector providers (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Individuals who would like more training in the area of well-being or mental health in the next year by the organisation type they work for**

Sample base:

## What mental health training is required?

### Introduction

As above, quantitative surveys of institutions and individuals supplied some statistics on demand for mental health training. Qualitative research, a total of 16 in-depth interviews with individuals and representatives from institutions, supplied more detailed insights into the nature of that demand.

### **Greater frequency of mental health issues amongst learners is the key driver of the need for mental health training for FE staff**

#### *Institutional perspectives on the drivers of mental health training*

Discussions with institutions showed that motivations to supply mental health training are mainly driven by societal change, such that their learners are increasingly affected by mental health issues.<sup>2</sup> This is placing demand on institutions and their members of staff to develop a deeper understanding of the mental health issues that learners are facing and an increased ability to support learners with those issues.

*We have reported more and more mental health issues with our learners, and more and more staff are saying that they need better understanding of how to support those learners with mental health issues. More understanding of the issue themselves - the actual conditions - but also how they might be able to support them, how they might be able to refer them to help (FE College).*

*More and more people are coming out of school suffering from mental health issues. We feel that we are not equipped to deal with it. Over the last few years we have seen a big jump in the number of girls who aren't equipped like they would be before (FE College).*

One organisation, which provided training for emergency response personnel, also observed that the pressure of such work also generated mental stresses on staff:

*All staff are ex-emergency service and so there are some PTSD issues. I suffered from PTSD myself. The training that we do deals with high pressure situations and it's about teaching the learners how to handle these... We work quite closely with them, through training, to help them understand the psychology and to cope with the stresses and the strains of what it is that they're actually being tasked to do (ITP).*

#### *Individual perspectives on the drivers of mental health training*

Individual responde

mental health issues, thus driving the need for mental health-related training:

*A lot of the learners we get on outreach courses have mental health difficulties most of them are job-seekers, there's a lot of anxiety and depression (Learning support officer, Local Authority).*

*Mental health is becoming a bigger issue.*

*to be able to offer support to learners..*

*percentage of learners are suffering from some form of mental health issue (Teaching and learning coach, FE College).*

One respondent reported that he felt unprepared for dealing with young people with varied mental health issues including attention difficulties, disengagement from education, low aspiration and self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. He would like more awareness of the issues that they face, and training in how to deal with these issues.

*Training in how to defuse a difficult situation would be good. I sometimes come away ...About a third of my caseload have anxiety or depression - a condition preventing them from achieving and mixing. I feel significantly unprepared with that, and untrained to deal with that sort of behaviour (Self-employed tutor).*

Another respondent noted that mental health training needed to be guided by evidence as to what forms of training were needed, and that support for mental health needed to incorporate suitable venues and access arrangements, and would need to focus on the wider strategy and the collaboration with other groups supporting these individuals such as the NHS, DWP and Mind rather than simply being about individual staff members' ability to handle certain difficulties:

*We recognise that people with mental health do have barriers just in getting to venues, even in getting into the classroom once they're in the venue. They do need to be in an environment that is quite welcoming and informal, and in quite small groups (Director of Programmes, ITP, prime contractor).*

A further respondent noted a highly practical reason, to enable the release of funding, for more mental health training:

*(Outreach worker, Local Authority).*

## **Formats of preferred training**

### *Institutional preferences for formats of training*

Respondents from institutions had varied views on the way in which mental health training for staff would be best delivered. Some institutions prefer online training due to accessibility, particularly for part-time staff, cost and the issue of releasing staff for the time needed for face-

to-face training.

However, others, while recognising the benefits of online training, suggest



## **The benefits of mental health training**

The perceived benefits of further mental health training, both to the organisation and to the



funding for those learners who may not otherwise complete their course, or through improved reputation of the provider.

*our customers, improved wellbeing for our customers, improved number of contracts we deliver, company reputation, quality of training. It will improve quality but also the sustainability of the work that we're doing (ITP prime contractor).*

*issues. It*

### *Safety and security of the learning environment*

Safety and security of the learning environment was also mentioned by a few respondents, including techniques for de-escalation, safeguarding and effective planning to ensure staff and learner safety.

*cting and safeguarding individuals. A lot of training is delivered 1-to-1, so we must make sure*

*too specific - lots of deta  
authority).*

*(Learning support officer, Local*

*"The biggest barrier I find at the moment is that the training available locally is too much of an introduction and things that I already know so that it doesn't feel very worthwhile going on them. It's usually aimed at people working with young people, and from the local authority, so schools, youth offending teams, youth service and so forth, but it's not specifically aimed at people working in FE" (Welfare co-ordinator, Sixth Form College).*

## **The likelihood of mental health training taking place**

### *Institutional views on the likelihood of training*

Institutions gave mixed responses as to the likelihood of further mental health training taking place. Some thought it unlikely or uncertain because of the inadequacy of courses or funding limitations.

Other institutions were more positive, and are either putting plans in place or hoping that they will be in a position to engage with more training further down the line:

*We hope to be in a position to engage with more training around mental health issues within the next 3-6 months (ITP).*

## Need for support

Finally, institutions and individuals who were interviewed in-depth identified forms of support which they believed would be helpful in increasing the likelihood or volume of the mental health training they undertake in future. Responses differed, with no clear recommendation of support that would meet the needs of all organisations or individuals. For institutions suggestions were generally about greater access to information, either in the form a repository, or individuals that they could call upon for support. For individuals the suggestions were a little more practical and focussed on how to find the right courses, pay for them and find the time to attend them.

### *Institutional views on need for support*

For **institutions**, this included the suggestion of an ETF online course:

*If there was a mental health awareness online course provided free by the Education and Training Foundation that we could offer to staff that would be great, that would be additional training that we would do (FE College).*

Another institution focussed on the availability of good practice and information-sharing:

*Anything to read, case studies looking into how different organisations have coped with*

*If the courses were more relevant, then there would be more attraction towards taking them on (Learning support officer, Local authority).*

Ways of overcoming the lack-of-time barrier, and resolving issues in covering teachers:

*We have a really strong support network at this organisation, actually engage with that support. Training over conference days across the organisation would be the only way we could fit it in (Teaching and learning coach, College).*

Assistance with course costs:

*-employed, so support would simply be financial. I could not afford £600 for a course. If such training were offered by one of the mental health charities, you'd have a queue a mile long (Self-employed tutor).*



mental health training was important for all occupational groups in the FE sector workforce rather than being a need which was focussed just on some specialist occupations (though the depth of necessary training might vary according to particular roles). There was also some recognition, however, that widespread all-workforce training would constitute a considerable challenge

There was no widespread demand that the training should lead to formal accreditation or certification (even though the wider training needs assessment for the sector, of which this mental health report is an offshoot, shows that, in general, FE staff tend to value training rather more if it leads to a qualification). It seems that respondents were mainly focussed on practical assistance in dealing with a day-to-day issue rather than with formal recognition of skills and knowledge in this area

Both institutions and individuals, in expressing their belief that more mental health training was needed, necessarily saw a range of benefits from such training, these