Knowing Works®

My Health, Our Future

The impact in schools, colleges, and other education providers



Updated March 2026

Introduction

Throughout their education, children and young people spend thousands of hours in schools and colleges. With a captive audience, ready to learn, providers of education are well placed to promote positive emotional wellbeing amongst young people.

This brief report describes the impact of the Knowing Works CIC My Health, Our Future (MhoF) programme as reported to us by schools and colleges participating in the programme.

How does MHoF work?

MHoF is Suffolk's biggest survey of young people's physical and mental wellbeing.

Schools, colleges, and other education providers support MHoF by sharing our survey with their pupils and students. Every participating school receives a free bespoke report from us about the wellbeing of their students.

Our reports help them to compare the wellbeing of their students against county and national data sets. Ultimately, they help them to consider their whole-school approach to improving the wellbeing of their school or college community.

Each year, we ask schools, colleges, and other providers of education, to tell us more about how they have used their MHoF reports to make a difference. In this report, you can read about what they have told us and learn more about the value of our programme.

There are so many reasons why getting the right support in place for students matters. From improving attainment to building emotional resilience – tackling wellbeing challenges in early life can prevent people from needing mental health support in their future.

"We have taken part in this survey for several years now. We find the well-structured analysis of the results invaluable. We have used them to examine specific needs within our colleges measure this against the region.

"We can target additional support in areas it is most needed. We also find students benefit from the survey process. They ask questions and it can provoke good discussions amongst groups, whilst getting them to think seriously about issues affecting them. We are happy to take part and will continue to do so."

Cathy Durrant (Group Head of Pastoral Support - Eastern Education Group)

Impact examples

MHoF in action - at the Eastern Education Group

The Eastern Education Group represents a collection of education providers in the east region, including West Suffolk College and Abbeygate Sixth Form in Bury St Edmunds.

The group has extensively supported the MHoF programme, and has distributed the survey to thousands of its students.

We met with Cathy Durrant (Group Head of Pastoral Support) and Laura Newell (Head of Pastoral Support, West Suffolk College), together with Harry (a student) to explore how MHoF reports are supporting them to make decisions about support for students across the group.

Click here to watch our video about MHoF at the Eastern Education Group now.



Watch:
Cathy, Laura, and Harry talk to us about the impact of MHoF across the Eastern Education Group.

> **"it supports us when we are looking at our operational planning and where we're going to put the funding in for next year... it gives you an immense amount of information, and someone else is doing it for you, so why would you not take part?"**

Cathy Durrant (Group Head of Pastoral Support - Eastern Education Group)

Re-writing lesson content

Some schools have completely re-written their PSHE curriculum to meet the wellbeing needs of their pupils and students.

Others have embedded changes across the whole curriculum, for example by incorporating learning about internet safety and online bullying into their IT lessons.

> ***"It is an important part of our student voice for Skills for Life (PSHE)."*** *– Mildenhall College*

Importantly, a number of schools subsequently checked student learning on new lesson content and reported positive responses.

Here's what schools and colleges have told us about this across the programme.

> *"The most powerful thing that we have done is to rewrite our entire PSHE programme as a result of what our students have said. Every lesson in every year group has been rewritten and now includes much more support, discussion and signposting on areas that were brought up in our report by the students. We have since re-surveyed the students on how they have found these lessons and the response was super." –* ***Stowmarket High School***

> *"This is such a useful document for us. I can't tell you how grateful we are. We analysed our report and looked at which areas we felt we need to enhance in our PSHE curriculum and what we are in the process of doing is re-writing our entire scheme to work to reflect what our children are saying through the survey that they need." –* ***Churchill Special Free School***

Evidence for regulation and awards

Ofsted inspectors routinely assess and report on pupils' mental health and wellbeing. They focus on how settings foster resilience, confidence, and mental health. Inspectors evaluate school culture, curriculum, and support systems.

MHoF can help schools and colleges to demonstrated a proactive approach to tackling the wellbeing challenges their students can face. It can help them to demonstrate how listening to students can convert into meaningful action and a positive culture.

When it was inspected by Ofsted, the Westbourne Academy in Ipswich told us it had been rated as 'Good' on all measures. The Headteacher said Ofsted were interested in the school's MHoF report and it had formed a useful part of their inspection evidence.

Schools and colleges have also used their reports as evidence within an application for wellbeing related awards or accreditations.

For example, our work supported the Churchill Special Free School in Haverhill to apply successfully for National Autistic Accreditation and for the Wellbeing Award for Schools developed by the National Children's Bureau and Optimus Education.

Establishing peer support

Some settings have provided the means for young people to offer support to each other.

Sir John Leman High School told us it had involved its students to reflect on its report:

> ***"We introduced student mental health champions who had training and utilised the report in their discussions."*** *– Sir John Leman High School*

Thurston Community College established an LGBTQ*+ support group and allocated a member of staff to offer support and guidance.

> *"We were able to identify areas of need. For example, we gave students the opportunity to set up an LGBTQ*+ group for those students to have each other as peer support. We also allocated a member of staff to support the group." –* ***Thurston Community College***

Farlingaye High School established a 'Student Hub' for its Sixth Form students to talk about their wellbeing. The school also arranged for students to be trained in mental health first aid to increase their knowledge and so that they could better support each other.

> *"The report highlighted that our sixth form students would benefit from additional support, so we created a student Hub and arranged for Student Life to train our sixth form ambassadors in mental health first aid. They now have a mental health first aid qualification which will help them to identify other students in need of support and enable them to support each other." -* ***Farlingaye High School***



In 2020, we visited Castle Manor Academy and Churchill Special Free School in Haverhill to explore how these settings were using our MHoF reports to tackle and improve student wellbeing issues.

"It told us so much more about our students we didn't already know.

"We put on a parent workshop about how to improve teenage sleep and wellbeing... and we put work from our Psychology in Schools project into action in the right places.

"We also identified issues with self-esteem and resilience. So, we've been working hard on a whole-school level to include resilience within our curriculum."

Starting conversations

The work has enabled schools to engage their staff and students in whole-school conversations about mental health and wellbeing.

> **"The survey opened up conversation between staff and students as well as between the students themselves. The data has been invaluable to us in terms of meeting the specific needs of students, and developing our school mental health strategy."**

Eastern Education Group use the survey as an opportunity to encourage meaningful reflection about wellbeing within groups of students.

> *"We deliver the survey in sessions and student groups. The fact the survey is confidential means young people open up. It enables group discussions and encourages young people to talk to those around them - their peers and their tutors in the class. It opens up meaningful discussions about their access to wellbeing services, what they would like to see in college, and the guidance they would like from us. In the weeks following the survey, young people start talking to our pastoral support team. They talk about things that have come up in the survey, what's going on in their lives, and the support they might need." - **Eastern Education Group***

Here are some more examples:

- Guided by their report, Castle Manor Academy in Haverhill ran parent workshops on teenage sleep and emotional wellbeing to raise awareness.
- Several schools and colleges have dedicated time for their senior leadership teams to reflect on things their students have said.
- Some invited us to present on their findings and to consider the implications of the data. For example, Copleston High School hosted an interactive continued personal development session with staff that included a thorough consideration of the schools MHoF data.
- Some schools, like East Bergholt High School and Churchill Special Free School in Haverhill, sent specific information to parents and students about their participation in the research and key findings.
- Some schools used their reports as the motivation to organise wellbeing weeks or wellbeing days. This includes the opportunity for students to participate in activities and conversations that promote positive wellbeing inside and outside of school.
- Schools and colleges have dedicated physical space to display information and signposting materials related to student wellbeing (e.g. a 'Wellbeing Corner'). They have also added digital content about emotional wellbeing support on school websites.
- A college invited us to run an interactive presentation about its results with health and social care students and covered the event on social media so that others could benefit from the conversations.
- Stowmarket High School recruited a member of non-teaching staff to oversee wellbeing in the school and incorporated learning into whole school personal development discussions between students and staff.

Targeting support

Schools and colleges have been using their data to understand the different needs of their students and their preferences for learning about wellbeing.

> *"We have used the reports to examine the specific needs within our colleges and to measure this against the region. We can target additional support in the areas where it is most needed."* – ***Eastern Education Group***

> *"The MHoF programme enables our school to benchmark how our students are doing compared with others in Suffolk. It enables the Leadership Team to understand what our strengths are and our areas for focus. It also enables the Designated Mental Health Leader to know where to best to deploy our limited resources."* – ***King Edward VI High School***

Our countywide report offers a benchmark for young people's wellbeing in the county across many different factors. Schools and colleges can use this to understand how the experience of their students and pupils might differ from this and to consider targeted support.

> *"It has allowed us to identify new trends and areas that students want support with. This has helped with planning our targeted approach to student wellbeing to enable students to receive more of the support they need in the way they would like it. It offers an insight into the challenges affecting young people in a way which enables schools to tailor approaches and work out what has been successful and what needs changing to support young people".* - ***Claydon High School***

> *"Suffolk's My Health, Our Future survey not only provides us a detailed report on the issues and concerns our students have but via this report we are able to ascertain our students needs, what information they need and how they would like to receive information."* – ***Suffolk One***

Some schools have also used their report to identify more vulnerable year groups and subsequently put in additional support for them.

> **"We have used the results of the survey to inform changes to the structure of our school day (adding in movement time between lessons). We have used the results to inform our annual assemblies and provide students with information and learning requested directly through the survey.**

> *"We have used the survey to inform interventions held by our pastoral support team. We have used the survey to evidence impact through Trust Safeguarding reviews."*

Targeted support has included tailored education, such as guest speakers and organisations coming in to talk to the students. For example, Westbourne Academy used our data to identify that tailored education was needed to address pupil concerns about drug abuse and knife crime.

Vision and Voice, which was a partnership of six local voluntary and community organisations, used our data to inform its offer of support to students attending Farlingaye High School in Woodbridge, Northgate High School in Ipswich, Alde Valley Academy in Leiston and Stowupland High School as well as their feeder primary schools.

> *"I have found the Healthwatch Suffolk*

research to be very helpful, particularly in objectively shining a light on what young people are saying. It formed part of the audit that shaped the menu of activities we have offered in each of our schools." – ***Vision and Voice***

Dedicated staff time

Some schools and colleges have considered how they can dedicate the staff time to addressing wellbeing issues.

Some examples of this include:

- A pastoral lead at one school took part in Mental Health Champion training to learn more about anxiety and depression. This was as a result of their students saying they would like to learn more about these areas.
- Stowmarket High School recruited a member of non-teaching staff to oversee wellbeing in the school and incorporated learning into whole school personal development discussions between students and staff.
- Thurston Community College dedicated staff time to supporting a peer group for LGBTQ*+ students.

In other schools, teachers have allocated time to supporting wellbeing activities during an awareness week or supported student led networks or initiatives focussed on wellbeing.

"It enables the Designated Mental Health Leader to know where to best to deploy our limited resources." – King Edward VI High School

"We have shared our bespoke report with staff and school committees previously. The report has been useful in raising awareness and arguing that we need more support."

Sir John Leman High School

A chance to communicate with communities



By participating in our research, schools have an opportunity to communicate with their community about the steps they are taking to involve young people in a conversation about improving their mental health and wellbeing.

Each year, we launch the countywide results and promote this with the media. This has led to specific opportunities for schools

to achieve coverage on BBC Look East, ITV Anglia, BBC Radio Suffolk and within the East Anglian Daily Times (and other local media).

"We were honoured to be asked to participate in this work. As a result of the survey, lessons have been re-designed to tackle the issues specific to this academy so that students get the right information they need to be happy and successful.

"We have also been fortunate to get some positive media attention with the BBC, for which we are grateful. We would welcome any future work being done by Healthwatch Suffolk." – ***Mildenhall College Academy***

More to watch



In 2018, Dr. Beth Moseley (Clinical Psychologist) talks to us about why My Health, Our Future is important and how our report was used to shape support at Thurston Community College.

Click to watch



In 2018, we asked the Head Teacher at Northgate High School in Ipswich to tell us how his school had used its report to improve the emotional wellbeing of pupils and students.

Click to watch

My Health, Our Future

Suffolk's biggest survey of young people

My Health, Our Future (MHoF) is a longstanding programme of r
and mental wellbeing of young people across Suffolk. It has ach
providing reliable insights people can use to shape support for

Awareness

Data raises awareness of challenges young people face. It is included in training programmes (e.g., for professionals working with young people), key events, and strategic forums.

Strategy & policy

MHoF informs strategies developed by organisations and services working for young people. This has included public health strategies (such as those tackling obesity as well as local Needs Assessments). The strategies inform and support the commissioning of services.

My Health, Our Future

75,000+ resp
80% of schoo

Data from MHoF supports NHS commissioners to make decisions about services for young people.

For example, an online counselling service was commissioned in Suffolk as a direct response to MHoF data and insights.

Commissioning

MHoF provides an evidence base to inform bids regarding funding for services. A number of local voluntary and community organisations have told us MHoF data has helped them to secure funding for vital services they provided to young people.

Attracting funding

Knowing Works®

research exploring the physical
hieved significant impact by
all young people in the county.

Intiatives in schools

Schools and colleges develop ways to respond to key findings in their bespoke report. This has included staff-led student peer groups, parent workshops, wellbeing days and displays, student wellbeing champions, training for staff, and much more.

MHoF enables schools to shape PSHE curriculums based on things students want to learn. Survey participation in education settings offers teaching opportunities and enables students to discuss wellbeing amongst peers.

Learning to be well

onses across
ls and colleges

Schools/colleges note increased contacts with pastoral teams providing support. In addition, reports assist school nursing and mental health teams to target help. Every young person taking part receives information about services they can contact for wellbeing help.

Routes to support

Regulation

MHoF helps schools and colleges to demonstrate a commitment to supporting the wellbeing of students and staff to Ofsted and other bodies - as well as their whole school community.

Knowing Works®

Because guessing is an expensive waste

This report has been created by Knowing Works CIC to shape and influence standards of services and care, and to support delivery of the Healthwatch service in Suffolk.

For more information about Knowing Works CIC, our services, or to make an enquiry of our team, please visit **www.knowingworks.co.uk**, call **0800 448 8234**, or email **info@knowingworks.co.uk**.

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