

Clinical level risk of mental health disorders in our young

The disappearance of classroom teaching, social interaction, access to equipment, and part-time retail and hospitality jobs has damaged learners' mental health.

[A recent Association of Colleges survey](#) found 83 per cent of colleges had seen mental health referrals increase in September 2020, compared to September 2019. And 94 per cent of colleges reported they had had to deal with attempted suicides in the twelve months before the survey.

In order to head off problems in transitioning learners to college, providers have run summer programmes for those who may need more support in the move from their previous setting - and Association of Colleges (AoC) chief executive David Hughes recommends that government introduce a national fund to support the transition and retention of 16-year-old students into colleges in September 2021.

Apprentices have particular concerns, including meeting their off-the-job-training requirement, worrying about whether their training provider and employer would survive the pandemic, and how their assessments will be completed.

AoC want extra investment to equip those who support apprentices with skills to identify early signs and build programmes with wellbeing at their core. They want to enhance face-to-face mental health support for apprentices and to provide equitable access for all apprentices of every age.