

Developing your school or college targeted mental wellbeing support



Anna Freud
building the mental
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Department
for Education

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Developing your school or college targeted mental wellbeing support

A guide to help schools and colleges to review, refresh and embed effective targeted support for mental wellbeing.

Targeted support in schools and colleges

Providing effective school or college-based targeted support for children and young people with mental wellbeing needs can help to improve their attendance and behaviour, their engagement and progress in education, and enable them to fulfil their potential.

This step-by-step guidance, alongside the [targeted support hub](#), helps schools and colleges to review, plan and embed effective targeted mental wellbeing support within their setting. It is designed for education staff responsible for supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

It is for use by anyone with responsibility for supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in a school or college.

Please note: This is a PDF version of the online guide. While this PDF may be updated, please see the online guide for the most up to date version.



Introduction to targeted support in schools and colleges

What is 'targeted support'?

'Targeted support' (sometimes referred to as a 'targeted support programme' or 'targeted intervention') in this context refers to mental wellbeing support in schools and colleges aimed at specific individuals or groups of students.

It can provide early or preventative support for mental wellbeing needs and forms an important part of a school or college's graduated response to supporting students to make progress with their learning and wider development.

Reasons for offering targeted mental wellbeing support are wide-ranging. They might include, for example, supporting students to attend or engage in learning, to improve behaviour or wider social or emotional development, or respond to events that may be temporary but can lead to mental health issues, such as bullying or bereavement. Targeted support may help any student, including those identified as having special educational needs.

Targeted support is additional to and distinct from universal support which aims to promote and support the mental wellbeing of all students in a school or college. This includes providing a safe, calm, and inclusive learning environment for all, with a balanced curriculum including RSHE, as well as relevant enrichment activities.

Targeted and universal support for mental wellbeing are both key parts of an effective [whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing](#), supported by a broad evidence-base summarised recently by both the [NICE](#) evidence reviews and the [Education Endowment Fund](#).

NHS specialist services are not covered in this guidance. If you suspect a student's needs are complex and/or severe and need specialist support, you should follow your setting's graduated response procedures, including liaising with your Mental Health Support Team (where available), and the relevant NHS specialist services and any other appropriate external support to make a referral.

What is the targeted support hub?

The [targeted support hub](#) is an interactive library of targeted support options that schools and colleges might offer, filterable by relevant categories (e.g., educational phase, age, outcomes, delivery method). It is designed to help you to identify forms of evidence-based targeted support to meet the needs of your students that other schools and/or colleges have demonstrated can be effective.

The hub outlines forms of targeted support and associated evidence using the most recent evidence published by [NICE](#).

How is targeted support delivered?

While some forms of targeted support may be facilitated by education staff with relevant training and expertise, other programmes will need to be delivered by fully trained and qualified providers.

Some options are free of charge for a school or college to offer students, while others may be funded through core budgets, pupil premiums, or the flexibilities in the 16-19 additional hours funding.

You may wish to engage your school or college senior leadership team early to confirm support and available resources for reviewing your setting's approach to targeted support, including funding for any paid programmes.

Education staff are not expected to deliver support that is beyond their expertise and remit and must not diagnose or deliver specialist mental health treatment for students.

Targeted support as part of a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing

It's important to consider targeted support as part of your setting's broader pastoral offer and whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing, including as part of broader support through the SEND system for children and young people with special educational needs.

Targeted wellbeing support is most effective when delivered in coordination with other support and activity that wraps around a student, including universal support in school or college and support at home. This may involve working in partnership with parents and carers, encouraging access to wider extracurricular and community activities and, where appropriate, working with health professionals or other local services.

1. Understanding your setting

This section outlines:

- how to identify the mental wellbeing needs of your students
- key considerations when reviewing your setting's current provision
- how to identify priority areas to refresh and develop.

Understanding students' mental wellbeing needs

There are various types of information that can help to build up a picture of the mental health and wellbeing needs in your school or college.

It can be helpful to consider three types of information:

1. Direct information
2. Indirect indicators
3. Risk factors and systemic issues

1. Direct information about mental wellbeing

There are a range of ways of collecting direct information about students' mental wellbeing. While this information may be collected by relevant education staff, you may also wish to consider how you gather and use information from external sources.

- **Using standardised questionnaires and surveys** to measure self-reported levels of wellbeing and identify signs of mental health difficulties. This can happen at an individual or group level. Please see 'Measuring mental wellbeing' in the appendix 1 for more information.
- **Information collected by staff:**
 1. Captured in one-to-one conversations or check-ins.
 2. Captured for referrals to internal supports (e.g., school nurse, school counsellor) or to external specialist mental health support (e.g., NHS services).
- **Gathering student voice** about the mental health challenges they experience (e.g., in the context of discussions in PSHE, with peer mental health champions, or in school or college council meetings).
- Feedback from parents and carers about the mental health challenges students experience.
- Feedback from professionals in partner services and organisations about the challenges they are seeing - e.g., educational psychologists, Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) or CAMHS professionals.

2. Indirect indicators

Indirect (or 'proxy') indicators of mental health and wellbeing issues can also help to build up a picture of needs in your school or college. Often, it is indirect indicators which first come to light and indicate a need for further exploration and support.

Indirect indicators include things like:

- low attendance or poor engagement in school or college e.g., issues with concentration and attention
- difficult behaviours, e.g., being disruptive or uncooperative in class, outbursts of anger or aggression
- signs of low mood, being withdrawn, or self-harm
- relationship difficulties with peers or staff.

3. Risk factors and systemic issues

As well as direct and indirect information, it can be helpful to consider [risk factors](#) and systemic issues that may make certain students more vulnerable to mental health difficulties.

This might include risk factors associated with specific groups, including children and young people who have experienced trauma, looked-after and previously looked after children, young carers and those identified as having other special educational needs (see statutory definition reproduced in the SEND Code of Practice).

You should also consider the potential impact of factors such as race and ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, socio-economic factors, as well as any specific challenges in your local area.

Any consideration of these factors should also take account of student voice. Settings should ensure that there are opportunities for students to be listened to, such as student councils, dedicated tutor time and assemblies, and suggestion boxes.

For resources to support you to enable student voice in your setting, please see [here](#).

Reviewing your setting's current provision

Having collected information about the range of challenges students face in your setting, it's important to review your setting's current provision and consider whether it is effectively meeting your students' needs.

This can help you to identify any potential gaps or shortfalls. You may also identify elements of your current support that you wish to learn from or develop.

This review should cover the targeted and universal support already in place in your setting. You may also wish to consider:

- the number and age range of individuals and groups of students in need of further support with their social, emotional, mental health and wellbeing
- your setting's policies, ethos and culture
- involvement of specialist staff, as well as staff training and support
- current processes for identifying students' needs
- local support services that your setting currently works with and signposts to.

It's also crucial to consider what evidence there is about the impact of the existing support you have in place, and whether the mix of support is effectively meeting the various needs of your students.

Identifying priorities for change

Once the key needs and the support that is already in place in your setting have been understood, you can use this information to identify priority areas for refreshing and developing your targeted support provision.

You may wish to consider what key factors have changed since your current offer was first established. This can help to identify areas of need where individuals and groups of students may benefit from further or different support. For example, you may identify a cohort of students where there is insufficient support or whose needs are not currently being met, or a current targeted support programme that has not had the intended positive effect.

As well as speaking with students, it is important to liaise with school leadership and other relevant staff, such as SENCOs, college SEND leads, school nurses, and counsellors etc.

This will ensure that your targeted support offer is aligned with your setting's overall approach to mental health and wellbeing, and has early support across your school or college.

You may wish to use a logic model to help support you to identify priority areas for change.

Please see the 'Creating a logic model' and 'Logic model' resources in the appendix 2 for support with this.

Key actions

- Understand the mental wellbeing challenges in your school or college
- Map the support already available in your setting
- Identify gaps and key areas for development as part of your setting's broader pastoral offer

Reflections



2. Identifying appropriate targeted support

This section outlines:

- how to identify appropriate targeted support in consultation with relevant professionals and school or college staff
- key considerations such as suitability, delivery method and working with external providers
- using the [targeted support hub](#) to identify appropriate types of targeted support.

Identifying appropriate targeted support for your school or college

Once you have identified priority areas for change as part of your setting's broader offer, you can use this information to scope and identify forms of targeted support that are appropriate for your setting.

Alongside reviewing the available options in the [targeted support hub](#), you may wish to speak with other professionals about what is available locally to help you to identify appropriate targeted support options.

For example, you may wish to consult with local authority and NHS contacts (including your Mental Health Support Team where in place) to understand what support is available locally. Many local authorities provide resources and promote their local offers on their websites.

It can also be helpful to consult with relevant staff in your school or college, such as educational psychologists, SENCOs and Designated Safeguarding Leads, in-school or college counsellors, nurses, and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants.

Considerations when identifying appropriate targeted support

There are some considerations that settings should bear in mind when identifying appropriate targeted support options:

- a programme's suitability to your setting
- the delivery method (e.g., group-based or individual)
- who will deliver the programme
- where it will take place.

The suitability of targeted support programmes

There are several factors to consider when assessing the suitability of a type of support or specific targeted support programme to your setting.

It can be helpful to ensure that:

- the support meets the identified needs of your students
- the chosen programme(s) align with your school or college's values, ethos and existing policies
- it is delivered by suitably trained individuals
- any content delivered as part of the support is relevant, engaging and accessible
- any resource or funding implications are understood.

The delivery method – group-based and individual support

While you may wish to introduce both individual and group-based targeted support to meet the needs of different students in your setting, it's important to bear in mind the differences, benefits and challenges that come with each.

It can be helpful to reflect on:

- the logistical challenges of delivering group support (e.g., finding a time when you can get all the students together)
- where support is paid for, the cost-effectiveness of different individual and group support programmes
- whether group support will effectively meet individual students needs
- group dynamics and confidentiality – particularly when there are existing friendship groups within delivery groups.

When deciding on the type of support provided, it is also important to be sensitive to students' perspectives and preferences, which may differ across settings.

For example, some students may find it difficult to share their experiences in groups, while others may benefit from hearing from others.

Who will deliver the support

Depending on the nature of the programmes you choose, they may be delivered by internal or external staff. Some things to consider include:

1. The role of education staff

School and college staff must not diagnose mental health conditions or carry out mental health interventions.

Some forms of targeted pastoral support may be facilitated by school or college staff (and sometimes with the support of students, e.g., peer mentoring). This will depend on the nature of the targeted support, and the expertise and capacity of your setting's staff.

For example, some targeted support that may be appropriate for a whole class may be delivered or supported by relevant staff (e.g., a mindfulness programme delivered in tutor time).

Relevant school or college staff who might provide support include mental health leads, mental health first aiders, SENCOs, SEND leads, school or college nurses, educational psychologists, learning mentors, Emotional Literacy Support Assistants, and other relevant trained staff.

2. Working with external providers

Some forms of targeted support will require working with external specialists e.g., suitably qualified counsellors, or [Mental Health Support Teams](#). This may be the case when a targeted support programme requires specialist training and expertise to deliver, is of a sustained duration or intensity, or is outside the remit and expertise of the staff in your setting.

Working with external providers can help to reduce the burden on internal staff and ensure that staff are not carrying out duties beyond their role, training and expertise.

The capacity of internal staff to work with and liaise with external providers should also be considered, alongside consideration of the potential costs likely to be incurred over the duration of any programme.

3. Working with the right external provider(s)

If you do work with an external provider, it's important to ensure that they are properly qualified and experienced to provide their services, and to follow your school or college's safeguarding procedures at all times.

You should ask non-NHS service providers to share their credentials, explain their experience, the evidence base for their methods, explain how the programme would be delivered and accessed, and be clear on the standards of service and level of quality assurance offered.

The Department for Education provides [guidance on working with counsellors in schools and colleges](#).

Where the targeted support will take place

There should be a 'safe space' available for the delivery of any targeted support (either for groups or individuals). It's important to ensure that:

- there is a space within your setting which is private and confidential
- the space is separate from the classroom
- it feels like a safe environment for young people to be able to speak freely.

Some targeted support programmes may also be delivered online. Settings should ensure that there is a separate space available for this to be delivered.

Using the targeted support hub

You can use the [targeted support hub](#) to review and identify types of targeted support that may be appropriate to your setting.

Some options also contain information on specific programmes that have been evaluated as part of the [NICE](#) evidence reviews, and that you may wish to explore further to see if they are appropriate for your setting.

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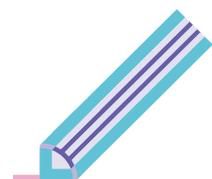
[The Early Intervention Foundation's EIF Guidebook](#) catalogues a range of other intervention programmes that have separately been evaluated and shown to improve outcomes for children and young people.

You may wish to explore one or several types of targeted support programme to meet the different needs of individuals and groups of students in your setting and to complement any support already in place.

Key actions

- Consider the suitability and logistics of targeted support programmes – including how and where they will be delivered
- Identify if targeted support will be delivered by an external provider and consider what this would entail
- Review the targeted support options on the targeted support hub and identify programmes and interventions that meet the needs of your setting.

Reflections



3. Introducing targeted support

This section outlines:

- how to introduce and encourage students to take part in a targeted support programme
- key considerations such as working with parents and carers, and the importance of closely following a targeted support model
- the importance of monitoring and evaluating targeted support.

Introducing targeted support in your setting

Once you have identified and confirmed the targeted support options that are right for your school or college, you should work with relevant leaders and other colleagues in your setting to plan how you will embed them alongside other provision and enable students access to the support.

It's important to ensure that all staff are aware of any upcoming changes and available programmes and that these are properly signposted to in your setting.

Teaching staff should also be made aware of when students may need to be absent from class to attend a specific programme.

Introducing targeted support to students

How targeted support programmes are introduced to students will play a crucial role in whether they want to take part.

It can be helpful for a member of school or college staff to introduce students to the support programme, regardless of whether it will be delivered by an external specialist.

If an external specialist will be delivering the support, it can be helpful to emphasise the expertise of the specialist to students.

It can also be helpful to:

- explain the programme, why they are taking part and what it entails.
- explain concepts relating to confidentiality.
- use clear language to explain the programme to students (e.g., explaining what counselling is by presenting it as 'talking and listening').
- address concerns that students might have about judgment or lack of understanding from their peers.

Encouraging students to participate in targeted support programmes

It is best to ensure that students themselves are motivated to engage with the programme, rather than participating because someone else (e.g., a teacher, parent or carer) told them that they should. In cases where participation isn't optional, settings should make this clear to students at the outset. It may also be appropriate for students to self-refer. For instance, self-referral may be appropriate for older students (post-16).

Working with parents and carers

It is important to inform parents and carers of any targeted support programmes in your setting. Working with parents and carers can also help you to develop a more holistic picture of your students' wellbeing, and to inform your setting's wellbeing strategy and offer.

It can be helpful to provide an explanation of how the targeted support works, its intended aims, and how their child may participate. It can also be helpful for a relevant staff member to be available to respond to any questions or concerns that parents and carers have about the support programmes.

Sticking to the evidence for what works

When introducing targeted support programmes in your setting, it's important that the evidence-based targeted support model of each programme is followed as closely as possible.

This is because the research only demonstrates effectiveness within certain parameters. Some support can also be harmful or ineffective if used inappropriately. Parameters may include:

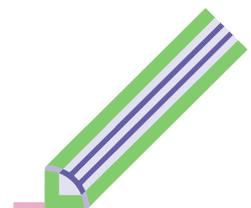
- the age or characteristics of young people in the intervention group (e.g., year nines who are experiencing low mood)
- the number of sessions which were found to be effective
- the need for a private space within the school or college
- who delivers the support (e.g., an external specialist).

Following the delivery model correctly can also ensure that programmes can be effectively monitored and evaluated.

Key actions

- Checklist of actions to support your reviewing and planning:
- Develop plans to embed programmes alongside other provision and ensure staff and students are aware of support options
- Introduce targeted support programmes to students and encourage relevant individuals and cohorts to participate
- Ensure that the evidence-based models are followed for each individual programme

Reflections



4. Evaluating, sustaining and adapting targeted support

This section outlines:

- the importance of monitoring and evaluating targeted support
- methods of evaluating the impact of targeted support
- the importance of using feedback to adapt and iterate your offer to ensure that it is effective and sustainable.

The importance of monitoring and evaluating targeted support

It is important that targeted support programmes are monitored and evaluated as part of your broader mental health and wellbeing offer. This can help you to understand whether they are working and meeting the needs of students, and to ensure that they are not counterproductive.

Evaluating targeted support can also help to:

- identify if there are some students for whom the targeted support is more or less effective
- justify ongoing costs associated with the programme
- identify further changes or adaptations to be made to your broader offer and strategy, as part of an iterative process of refinement.

It is important to establish from the outset how a targeted support programme will be monitored and evaluated.

Monitoring and evaluating targeted support programmes

There are different ways of evaluating the success of targeted support programmes.

Commonly, young people will be asked to complete a survey or 'outcome measures' at the start of the programme (e.g., which measures levels of anxiety or depression), and at the end. This allows those evaluating the programme to discern if there has been an improvement.

External providers should provide monitoring and evaluation as part of their offer. When purchasing a targeted support programme from an external provider, you should confirm how they plan to monitor and evaluate the targeted support, and how they will communicate this information to you.

Targeted support programmes designed to be facilitated by relevant internal staff should provide guidance and tools for how to do this.

For further information about evaluation methods and tools, you may wish to consult the following resources from Anna Freud:

- [Mental health toolkit for schools](#)
- [Wellbeing Measurement Framework for schools](#)
- [Using measurement tools to understand pupils' needs](#)

Sustaining and adapting your targeted support offer

While specific targeted support programmes should be monitored and evaluated, this should be within the context of continuously reviewing and refining your setting's broader pastoral offer.

For example, evaluation may reveal that a universal support programme is improving outcomes for one specific cohort, which might be best served via specific targeted support; or that a targeted support programme may only be effective for students within a certain age range.

Settings should draw on this feedback to iterate and refine their offer to ensure that it is effectively meeting evolving need. This may include regular check-ins and review milestones with senior leadership teams, as well as engaging with parents, carers, and local services.

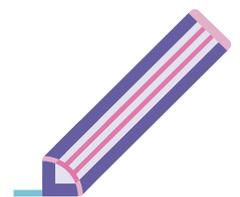
With an expanding range of evidence-based targeted support options available, settings are encouraged to revisit this guidance on an ongoing basis.

This can ensure that settings are able to update and tailor their offer and provide the best support possible as part of a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Key actions

- Establish how targeted support programmes will be monitored and evaluated
- If working with an external provider, confirm how they will monitor and evaluate their service, and how they will communicate this to you
- Ensure there are checkpoints to review evaluation data, and a strategy in place to refine your offer in response to this feedback

Reflections



Appendix

1. Measuring mental wellbeing

Students' wellbeing can be measured robustly using researched or well-established questionnaires which have a valid and reliable evidence base.

These questionnaires are widely used in research and mental health settings to measure many areas of mental wellbeing, including (but not limited to): peer relationships, protective factors, emotional and social skills, wellbeing, life satisfaction and feelings towards school or college.

A range of questionnaires are available which are suitable for different purposes, and groups of young people. You can find many of these on the [CORC website](#) and in the [Spectrum Database](#). The [Wellbeing Measurement Framework](#) also provides sets of validated questionnaires in booklets tailored to primary school, secondary school and college settings.

Wellbeing measurement tools can be used at different levels:

Universal	Targeted group	Individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using an anonymous questionnaire that covers a range of domains across a whole school population or year group can help in understanding areas of need, and strengths.• If individual responses are identifiable (rather than anonymous), it can indicate where they may be a mental health concern and allow for a follow-up conversation with particular pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choosing to use questionnaires with a specific sub-set or cohort of pupils - for example, where there may be increased risk of mental health difficulties (e.g. those with SEN) or at a key point (e.g. transition). As for the universal group, this can be done on an anonymous or identifiable basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you are concerned about an individual pupil, using a questionnaire can offer a supplementary source of information, and help to identify the nature and level of their need.• These questionnaires are widely used by mental health services to understand need and measure change

Measuring and monitoring children and young people’s mental wellbeing:

A toolkit for schools and colleges, was developed by Anna Freud with the support of Public Health England and provides expert guidance to support the use of questionnaires.

A further, briefer introduction to implementation considerations, Using measurement tools to understand pupils’ mental health needs: a guide for schools and colleges has also been developed by Anna Freud and CORC.

There are a range of questions to be worked through including:

- What is the purpose - what aspect(s) of mental health do you want to measure?
- What are the practical implementation and good practice (e.g., issues of consent and communication; timing; collecting, collating and analysing the data; data management)?
- What are the risks?
- How will your school or college respond to the findings?



2. Creating a logic model

What is a logic model?

A logic model is a graphic which shows how a targeted support programme or intervention will work. It covers both 'why' targeted support may be needed, as well as the expected short and long-term outcomes.

Why is it useful?

Creating a logic model can be helpful for thinking through all the steps of a mental health and wellbeing targeted support programme. It allows you to test out the coherence of your thinking and planning.

- A logic model also offers a basis on which to monitor and review targeted support. You can plan this upfront by considering how you will be able to measure whether short, medium or long-term outcomes are achieved. Monitoring will allow you to:
- keep under review whether you are successful in recruiting and engaging the intended target group
- understand whether the resources and approach you planned are delivered as originally intended
- assess where risks are posed to the planned model.

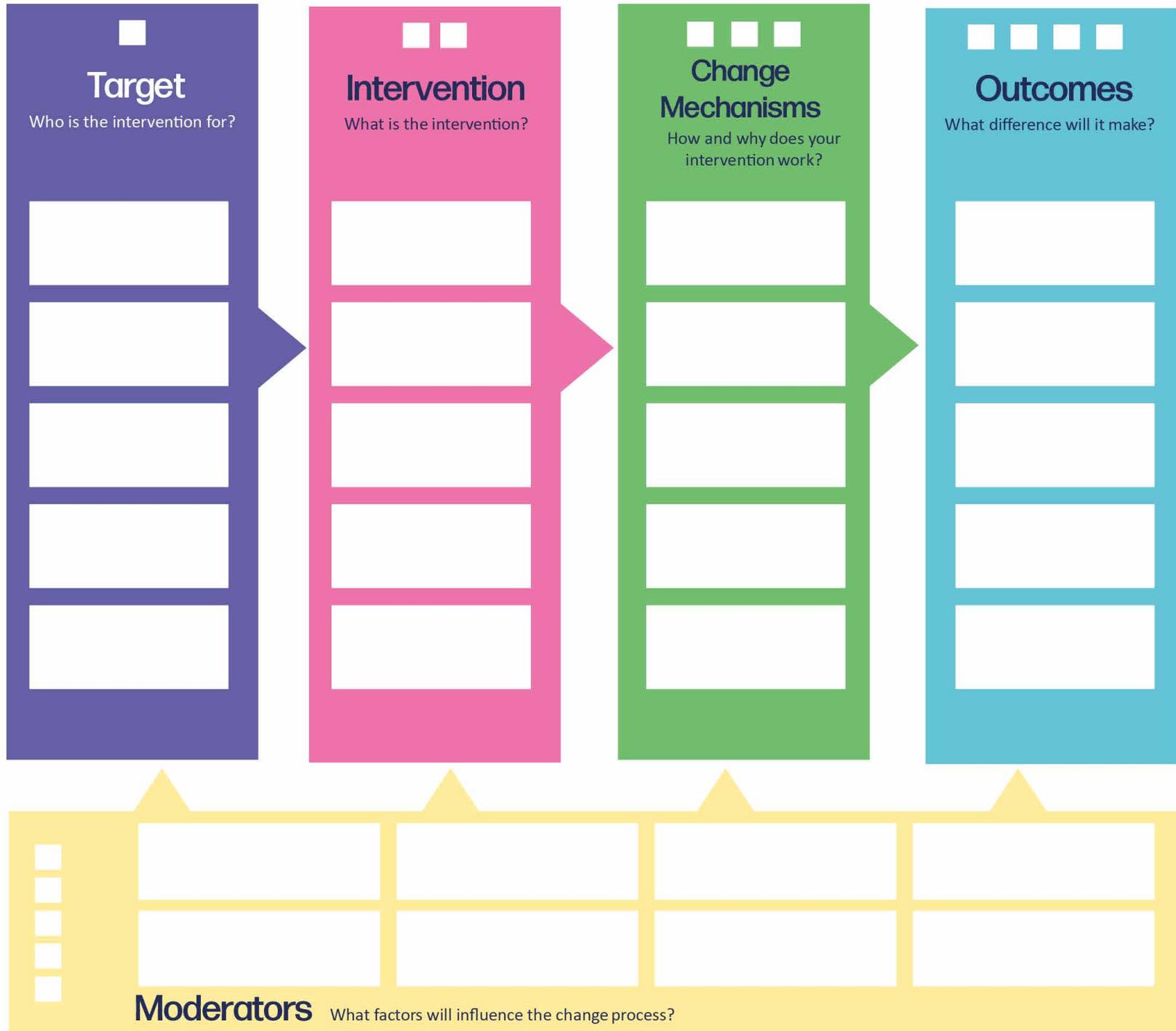


How do I make a logic model?

It can be helpful to complete the different sections in the logic model in this order:

- **Why:** Summarising the situation in the school or college that calls for action – this will be based on an understanding of the needs and strengths of young people, and the gaps and opportunities for improving or adding to the support structures currently in place.
- **Who:** Arising from your ‘why’, which group do you want to support change for? If there is more than one group, you may find it helpful to have more than one logic model. Set out the specific characteristics you would use to identify them (e.g., age, gender, nature or level of difficulty, particular life experiences or personal or family circumstances)
- **How:** This is the approach you will adopt. Set out here the practical restraints or requirements influencing this, for example the financial or human resources available.
- **Outcomes and impact:** What is the ultimate change that you want to see (the primary or long-term outcome?) Can your target group be helped on the way to that change through some short- or medium-term changes? For example, these might be changes to behaviours, skills, knowledge, attitudes or awareness that you hypothesise (based on evidence or professional knowledge and experience) are likely to lead to the primary outcome. Moderators and assumptions: Consider in advance what might facilitate or change you delivering the intervention as planned, and achieving the outcome you intend. Make explicit any assumptions that underpin your plan.

Logic Model





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