#BeeWell
Progress Report 11

Oct 2026



#BeeWell is a collaboration between The University of Manchester, The Gregson Family Foundation and Anna Freud who, together with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), launched the programme in 2019. Building on the success of #BeeWell in Greater Manchester, the programme expanded into Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton in 2023. Since 2023, #BeeWell has also operated through locally adapted programmes in Havering, Milton Keynes, and North Devon and Torridge.

Using a co-designed survey, #BeeWell listens to the voices of as many young people as possible; publishes the results privately to schools and publicly by neighbourhood; and drives action across society to improve young people's wellbeing. #BeeWell's mission is to see this approach implemented nationally by 2030.

Thanks to National Lottery players, #BeeWell has received more than £5.5 million of life-changing funding over four years from The National Lottery Community Fund. The funding will be used to expand #BeeWell's proven approach to improving awareness of, and driving action to improve, young people's wellbeing across England. The investment will help more local areas work directly with young people to understand the challenges affecting their wellbeing and take coordinated action across schools, services and communities.

#BeeWell's three main principles are to:

- Listen to young people's voices
- Act together for change, and
- Celebrate young people's wellbeing

This is the 11th #BeeWell Progress Report. Previous reports covering periods up to April 2026 can be found here.

This report is divided into the following sections:

1. **School engagement & survey**
2. **Research**
3. **Young people**
4. **Coalition of partners**
5. **National developments**
6. **Communications & engagement**
7. **Upcoming milestones**

1. School engagement & survey

GM

In the summer term of 2025/26, 33 schools booked one-to-one consultations with members of the team to explore their school data. School staff shared the range of actions they had been taking to act upon the data, including:

- Improving their universal mental health offer
- Developing 'You said, we did' posters with their student leadership teams
- Promoting school extra-curricular activities and liaising with external partners to promote their activities.

We also supported five school workshops focused on their survey data, involving young people from the schools. For the first time, two workshops were also held with parents and carers, with members of the Anna Freud team supporting school staff to share the data and explore next steps.

Over the past six months, we have also reviewed the short #BeeWell survey delivered in special schools, alternative provisions and pupil referral units. As a result, we have added questions to this survey on: school belonging, staff relationships, psychological wellbeing, and hope and optimism for the future. We look forward to continuing engagement on the short survey content as we review all our GM survey and programme content before our 2027-2030 phase.

We were delighted to open this year's #BeeWell survey window on 12 October 2026, with 195 schools signed up to take part. This built on Autumn 2025, when 161 of the 184 schools signed up delivered the survey. Across the city region, 84% of mainstream schools were signed up to the programme. While specialist settings typically have smaller pupil numbers than mainstream secondary schools, their inclusion is integral to #BeeWell's principles and our commitment to ensuring all young people have the opportunity to participate.

HIPS

Alongside engaging schools in the #BeeWell survey, we're supporting them to turn their findings into learning and action through programmes such as NxtGen. Schools across HIPS took part in the LifeLab NxtGen Train the Trainer event**,** delivered by the University of Southampton's LifeLab team.

The training equips school staff with the knowledge and resources needed to deliver the NxtGen programme within their own schools. Through the 16-session programme, participants develop research skills and learn how to analyse and interpret their school's #BeeWell data.

The programme supports schools to:

- Translate wellbeing data into practical, student-led action.
- Strengthen student voice, participation and engagement.
- Build staff confidence in using and interpreting wellbeing data.
- Support a whole-school approach to wellbeing improvement.
- Develop solutions that are shaped with young people, not for them

NxtGen Researchers from participating schools will present their findings and recommendations, helping us explore the "why" behind the #BeeWell results and identify meaningful opportunities to improve wellbeing for young people.

As we completed the first three-year cycle of the #BeeWell programme and prepared for the next phase, we undertook a comprehensive review of the survey questions. The review process brought together the perspectives of young people, schools, practitioners, and researchers through a range of engagement activities, including:

- Reviewing questions against relevant national guidance and policy updates, including updated RSHE guidance and guidance relating to gender-questioning children.
- Collating feedback from schools, including comments received through previous survey delivery and evaluation processes.
- Delivering stakeholder workshops with representatives from Children's Services, Education, Public Health, Healthcare, and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.
- Facilitating two focus groups with Year 7 and Year 8 pupils, with particular attention given to questions relating to gender and sexual orientation.
- Gathering feedback and recommendations from the #BeeWell Youth Steering Group.
- Working closely with The University of Manchester research team to review findings and consider evidence-informed improvements.

Young people's feedback confirmed the ongoing relevance of the survey and informed refinements to existing questions and the addition of new ones where appropriate. These changes ensure the survey remains relevant while providing high-quality data to inform action across HIPS.





2. Research

Since the last progress report, the #BeeWell research team has published a series of valuable insights into young people's wellbeing. These include:

- A paper exploring the perspectives of young people with special educational needs in non-mainstream schools on completing mental health and wellbeing surveys (available here).
- A paper examining how young people's, school experiences, and attendance influence one another over time (available here).
- A paper documenting the design and implementation of the #BeeWell school provision survey (available here).
- A paper focusing on influences on adolescent vaping, smoking, alcohol consumption, and illicit drug use (available here).

For the fifth year of the #BeeWell Young Researchers Programme, the research team brought Year 10 pupils together with researchers at The University of Manchester. Young people helped shape analysis of #BeeWell data, exploring the relationship between friendships and social support, behavioural difficulties and gender, with their work culminating in a published report.



"This was a fabulous experience, and I felt very fortunate to be able to take part. I have learnt lots of things about graphs and data, including the different types of data, correlation co-efficient, chance and bias, and so much more. This gives us a lot of insight into what the data and results of the survey are being used for and also have some knowledge about the wellbeing of teenagers in #BeeWell areas."

Curtis (a pupil from one of the participating schools)

The research team have also partnered with the UK Longitudinal Linkage Collaboration (UK LLC) to power new insights into young people's wellbeing. We will place a de-identified copy of our #BeeWell survey data in the UK LLC's trusted research environment. Approved researchers will be able to analyse these de-identified data alongside other information such as health, education, employment and/or place-based data. By linking these together, researchers can produce major new insights for the public good. Recognising that young people's lives do not fit neatly into individual areas such as school or health, this will enable a more holistic understanding to inform policy and practice.

Finally, the research team have also been active in seeking funds for further research using the #BeeWell dataset. Since the last progress report, bids were submitted to Wellcome for a study assessing the impact of the upcoming social media ban on young people, and to Nuffield for a study assessing the impact of trusted adult relationships in schools.

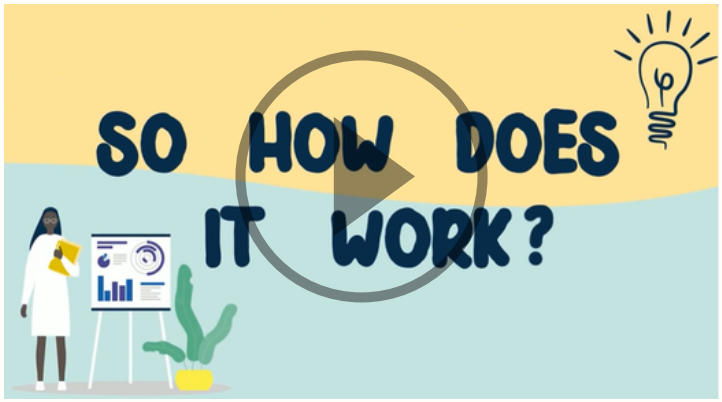
3. Young people

Across both GMCA and HIPS, co-creation with young people is a core #BeeWell principle, extending beyond survey design to interpreting the data and shaping the actions that follow.

GM

Our #BeeWell Youth Steering Group (YSG) in Greater Manchester have continued to be involved in shaping key projects and aspects of the programme, meeting regularly online and in-person. We have worked on:

- Shaping and influencing the latest #BeeWell Youth-Led Action Fund, aiming to support youth-led responses to the data in Greater Manchester. Funded by the Gregson Family Foundation, this fund will aim to bring together partners in GM to support youth-led responses to the data. Over the coming months, the YSG will play a key role in decision-making for the successful recipients of funding.
- Exploring how we should encourage responses to their headline findings selected in March 2026, particularly focused on community support for wellbeing.
- Contributing to a new video to introduce the #BeeWell survey to young people taking part in school, covering the logistics of the survey and also the impact of the programme so far.
- Working with other youth voice groups in health across Greater Manchester at the Bee Loud: Youth Voice in Health event. Young people worked with professionals working in health to explore key priorities outlined by young people, and a member of the #BeeWell Youth Steering Group opened the event to emphasise the importance of prevention and community in mental health and wellbeing.



The Youth Steering Group also played a significant role in deciding the organisation that will run the group moving forward. A tender invitation was publicised in summer 2026, and members of the group helped to assess the applications received. The successful bidder was Youth Focus North West, who have now taken on coordination of the group.

> **“We’re passionate about creating spaces where young people can share their experiences, have their say and lead conversations about what matters to them. We're really looking forward to working alongside the group and supporting them to continue shaping and leading #BeeWell’s work.”**

Hannah McMullan, Youth Voice Manager Youth Focus North West (YFNW)

HIPS

Our Youth Matters Steering Group awarded just over £30,000 through a youth commissioning grant to six local organisations delivering against #BeeWell priorities, as introduced in the previous report. These include:

- Working with young people to **write and record original music** to support **creative self-expression, self-esteem** and positive mental health in Havant and East Hants.
- Creating a **Sensory Room** at Cowes Enterprise College, **co-designed by young people through artist-led workshops.**
- **Co-creating drama workshops with SEND young people**. Using a **neurodiversity-affirming approach** to empower young people to explore and express their lived experiences, develop agency over their own stories, and recognise their strengths, creativity.
- Creating specialist workshops in Hampshire using **music therapy, art therapy and animal-assisted activities** as well as a residential break for **young people with SEND and who are military connected**.
- **Co-creating 10 creative workshops** delivered by a professional lyrical artist and youth worker. Sessions will explore belonging and identity, self-worth and confidence, place and community, difference, assumptions and discrimination in Millbrook and Lordshill.
- Expanding opportunities for **LGBTQIA young people in Leigh Park** through podcasts, outreach workshops, and community events. The **hub will provide a safe, inclusive space** where young people from this community can be themselves, build confidence, and connect with others without fear of bullying, rejection or loneliness.

4. Coalition of Partners

GM

Our #BeeWell partners continue to take action in response to their local data. Following the publication of our latest headline findings in March/April 2026, we have embarked on our #BeeWell data roadshow to promote the headline findings selected by the Youth Steering Group. This year, we have supported workshops in Oldham, Rochdale and Salford to explore the local data with partners across schools, local authorities, health and voluntary sector partners. Read about our first Salford workshop, exploring the latest #BeeWell data and how it can support local action.

> **“This session was genuinely valuable — it’s helped galvanise partners across Salford around what the #BeeWell data is telling us, and what we need to do differently as a system. We’re strengthening our collective focus on young people’s wellbeing and supporting our ambition to be a Child Friendly Salford.”**
>
> **– Cathy Starbuck, Director of Education and Inclusion at Salford Council.**

We were also delighted to publish a new report in partnership with 42nd Street, giving you the chance to hear directly from young people as they reflect on the #BeeWell data. 42nd Street supported several of their identity-based groups to study and analyse the findings of the recent #BeeWell survey. We will soon be publishing more on recent work with 42nd Street, on their work to support a creative drop-in space within two schools for young people, to explore how this could support their wellbeing.





HIPS

Over the past six months, we have been considering how to maximise use of the #BeeWell data in HIPS. Over recent months, the team has presented the Headline Findings to a wide range of stakeholders, including the Portsmouth Youth Alliance, Isle of Wight Children Together Conference, Pompey in the Community, and the National Literacy Trust.

- Presentations to seven Local Children's Partnerships (LCPs) and bespoke district-level data cuts have generated strong interest and valuable opportunities for local partners to share feedback and reflections on the findings.
- In July, Anna Freud delivered a #BeeWell School Webinar on Attendance, Belonging and Student Mental Health. There was great interest to explore how the findings can be strengthened through existing initiatives, including the Anna Freud support offer and ongoing work to improve school belonging.
- Following the presentation and discussion of the findings from the school suspensions research across Hampshire and Southampton at the Research Oversight Group, there is interest to explore the findings in more detail with wider partners, children's services and education colleagues, which will be progressed this autumn.
- For the first time, we have been able to offer schools, communities and local authorities an opportunity to review their data with a place-based lens. Working with Anna Freud, Portsmouth City Council have organised their senior leaders across health, education and other partners to review their young people's #BeeWell data at a system level.

5. National developments

In September 2026, Laura Clayton and Marie-Elise Howells took up their new roles as National Co-Directors. Bringing experience from central government and the voluntary sector, they will lead the next phase of #BeeWell's growth as the programme works towards expanding into up to five new areas across England by 2030. They succeed James Robertson, who has served as National Director since autumn 2023 and is relocating to Japan for family reasons. Laura and Marie said:

> **"We're beyond thrilled to join #BeeWell at a crucial moment for young people across the country. We've been inspired by the rigour, commitment, passion and collaboration shown by the team and by partners. We've been delighted to stuck into work alongside staff, partners, and young people – from the Isle of Wight to Rochdale and beyond – to make sure every child gets what they need to thrive in their local area."**

In June, we published the 2026 National Headline Findings Report, drawing on the experiences of almost 200,000 young people who have taken part in the #BeeWell survey over the last five years. This year's report has a particular focus on school inclusion, highlighting the importance of school belonging, positive relationships with staff and peers, and supportive and inclusive school environments for young people's wellbeing. The findings also highlight continued inequalities in young people's experiences of school inclusion.



COMMUNITY FUND



In July, we hosted our second National Coalition of Partners event of the year, bringing together partners from across sectors and #BeeWell regions to share progress and learning. We highlighted how our partnership with The National Lottery Community Fund is enabling #BeeWell to expand into new areas, shared findings from our collaboration with Factory International exploring the impact of a year-long arts intervention on young people's wellbeing, and showcased regional responses to #BeeWell 2025/6 data and the impact of this work, with examples highlighted throughout this report.

6. Communications & engagement

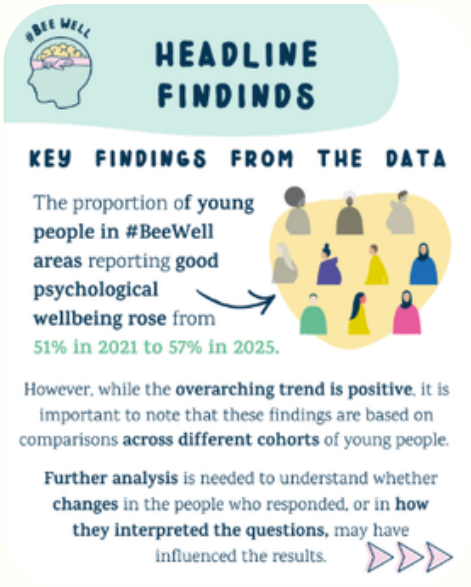
‘Spotlight On’ series

The #BeeWell Spotlight On series provides a thematic hook to draw together youth voice, school and partner storytelling, research highlights and thought leadership around key topics.

The theme for April to June was headline findings. Previously all comms around the three headline findings reports (GM, HIPS and national) have been separate to the Spotlight On series. However, given the volume of work and the breadth of these reports, we dedicated our Q2 Spotlight On to sharing more of the findings from these reports. Highlights including:

- The national headline findings report focused on inclusion
- Sharing key findings from the first three years of HIPS surveys
- Sharing the key messages from this year’s GM data which were selected by our Youth Steering Group





The theme for July to September was on young people’s digital lives.

This theme followed the Government’s announcement of a social media ban and curfew for young people, and there was considerable interest in this topic during this period. Highlights for this Spotlight On include:

- Sharing our response to the Government’s call for evidence on screen use by children aged 5 to 16
- Highlighting young people’s voices and opinions on the forthcoming social media ban on The Wellbeing Club podcast



Press releases and media coverage

May: Feeling connected at school aids pupil mental health and attendance, study finds
June: Teen wellbeing improving after years of post-pandemic concern, major study finds, including coverage in About Manchester: Teen substance use linked to peer pressure and wellbeing, study finds
September: Study reveals pupils most at risk of school suspension - and what may help them

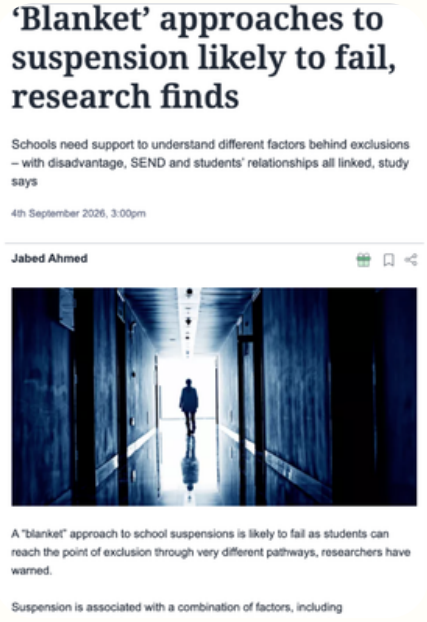

Young people's wellbeing is improving in Greater Manchester, major survey finds

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A major survey of tens of thousands of school pupils has revealed a welcome boost in wellbeing among young people across Greater Manchester.

The latest findings from pupils in years 7, 8 and 10 show that more young people now report good levels of wellbeing than in previous years, continuing a positive trend that has developed steadily over the past five years of the programme.


'Blanket' approaches to suspension likely to fail, research finds

Schools need support to understand different factors behind exclusions – with disadvantage, SEND and students' relationships all linked, study says

4th September 2026, 3:00pm

Jabed Ahmed

A "blanket" approach to school suspensions is likely to fail as students can reach the point of exclusion through very different pathways, researchers have warned.

Suspension is associated with a combination of factors, including

New strategic comms plan

In June, we presented our updated strategic comms plan which runs from July 2026 – June 2027. We will continue our focus on supporting the following strategic priorities: listening to young people, facilitating impact, and creating evidence to inform policy.

We also shared out latest metrics report which covered the period February to May:

- Peak engagement and reach in March–April (regional Headline Findings launch)
- LinkedIn remains the most impactful channel - #BeeWell is positioned as a trusted, professional voice, reaching key stakeholders effectively
- Instagram engagement is improving, with engagement rate increasing over time
- Website traffic significantly increased following March tracking implementation
- Newsletter performance remains strong and stable, with high open rates (approx. 25–32%) and very low unsubscribe rates
- Newsletter engagement peaked in March, with the highest number of link clicks driven by 215 views of the #BeeWell response to the DfE Every Child Acheiving and Thriving white paper

7. Upcoming Milestones

- Welcoming new #BeeWell locations
- 2026/27 survey window
- GM and HIPS headline findings March / April
- National headline findings
- Action from youth commissioning in both HIPS & GM
- Upcoming Spotlight On themes: Community (Q4 2026), Futures (Q1 2027) and headline findings (Q2 2027).



COMMUNITY FUND

All this is made possible thanks to National Lottery players.

Want to get in touch?

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