**Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Program Evaluation – September 2024**

**What Has Worked Well:**

* **Voucher Reallocation:** Flexibility in reallocating MHFA vouchers between disciplines has ensured better use of resources.
* **Student Feedback:** Positive responses from students, with many reporting increased confidence in recognising and addressing mental health issues among peers. Over 80% of participants reported improved confidence in starting mental health conversations.
* **Fortnightly Review Meetings:** Regular meetings between the three Councils have allowed for the quick identification and resolution of issues, fostering a collaborative approach.
* **Future Rollout:** The planned rollout in late January/early February 2025 will provide schools with more time to promote the program, which should help increase voucher use and student engagement.
* **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Meetings with MHFA International (MHFAI) and the Department of Health & Aged Care are planned for 2025 to align priorities and ensure consistent communication and feedback on the program's progress.

**What Has Not Worked Well:**

* **Teething Problems:** As this is the first year of the MHFA program, various initial challenges in procedures and communication were encountered. These issues have been addressed and continue to be improved upon.
* **Underutilisation of Vouchers:** Approximately 50% of the allocated vouchers for ACDHS in 2024 have not been utilised, which will be carried forward. This highlights the need for better promotion and student engagement.
* **Limited Voucher Availability:** The inability to offer enough vouchers for entire cohorts made the program a "first-come, first-served" benefit. This voluntary participation has limited the overall impact and voucher utilisation.

**Looking Ahead:**

* **Opt-In Form for 2025:** A 2025 Opt-In form will be sent out to universities and schools in late October 2024 to gather information on requirements and cohort sizes. This proactive approach is intended to better meet the needs of schools, allowing them to consider making the program a mandatory part of their courses, which would significantly boost voucher utilisation.
* **Program Rollout in 2025:** The earlier rollout planned for late January/early February 2025 aims to give schools more time to promote the program, potentially increasing participation and engagement.
* **Ongoing Collaboration:** Regular meetings between the three Councils and future discussions with MHFAI and the Department of Health & Aged Care will ensure that the program continues to evolve and meet its objectives effectively.
* **Additional Support:** I the key areas of ACDHS institutional member support and the back end data/records there will be additional resource allocated to support members and students with the program.