

Mental Health and Wellbeing briefing for Communities

Spring 2019

What is mental health and wellbeing?

Mental health and wellbeing is how we feel and think as well as how fit we are in body and mind. Happiness and satisfaction, ability to cope when things get hard and feeling optimistic about the future are features of positive mental health and wellbeing. If we have a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose in life, good physical health and can look after ourselves and control what happens to us, we are more likely to have good mental health and wellbeing.

Mental health and wellbeing is complex. Having close friends and family can promote positive wellbeing and protect us when things go wrong; however, someone with good mental wellbeing may find it easier to be sociable and connect with others than a person who has poor mental health. Equally, unemployment, poverty, disability or being a carer can lead to poor mental health, but can also make it difficult for a person to find or hold down a job that could improve their life circumstances and impact positively on their wellbeing.

The connections and differences between mental wellbeing and mental illness are debatable. Health professionals may see mental illness as disease, which requires medical treatment and intervention. Others see mental illness as a natural reaction to life circumstances best treated by dealing with the root causes of the person's distress, for example bereavement, trauma, relationship breakdown or chronic pain. The issue is further complicated by the fact that being mentally unwell does not always result in clinical diagnosis of mental illness and that people living with mental illness can and do often experience positive wellbeing.

Why mental wellbeing matters

Poor mental health and wellbeing are linked to a wide range of negative factors such as unhealthy lifestyles, poor physical health, unemployment and deprivation. On the other hand, good mental health and wellbeing have been shown to lead to better health and social outcomes. The impact of poor mental health, and mental ill health, are significant and have implications for a range of public services

such as the NHS, Criminal Justice and local authorities. In recognition of this, mental health and wellbeing is a priority for the Scottish Government and locally for Dundee Partnership and the Health and Social Care Partnership. Tackling poor mental health involves improving mental wellbeing for the whole population as well as preventing and reducing mental illness.

Mental health inequalities

In working together to improve mental health, we recognise that mental ill health affects some people more than others. A range of local and national statistics show that people on low incomes are more likely to become mentally unwell than those who are better off and that those living in the most deprived communities are three times more likely to complete suicide compared to those from the most affluent areas. Preventative measures and dealing with problems when they first arise are much more effective than waiting until mental ill health occurs, although people can and do recover successfully from mental ill health.

What's happening in Dundee?

Mental health and wellbeing is widely recognised as an important local priority. It is one of the top three priorities for health and wellbeing in Dundee's City Plan. Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership has a Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategic Planning Group involving a wide range of people with an interest in and experience of delivering or receiving mental health services. The Group has produced a strategy for 2019-24 to tackle many of the most important mental health challenges facing Dundee's people. The strategy is based on the following 4 themes:

- **Reducing health inequalities**
- **Getting the right help at the right time**
- **Prevention and early intervention**
- **Approaches that focus on recovery**

The Strategic Planning Group has listened carefully to what people said about how things could be improved. As a result plans are in place to increase support for people experiencing distress and to improve the patient journey between community, primary care and acute services. This will mean that in future people can access a “safe place”, 24 hour telephone support, and drop-in hubs for mental health support. Mental health services will be remodelled and waiting times reduced so that people are seen more quickly and in a more streamlined manner.

Although these plans are at an early stage there is lots happening already that can help protect and improve wellbeing.

The Strategic Planning Group seeks to build on, enhance and complement this work using a partnership approach. Here are some examples of existing provision:

Penumbra hosts Wellbeing Points in a range of settings to provide 1 to 1 support, information and signposting to other services and activities; to access the timetable go to:

<http://carersofdundee.org/events-and-whats-on>

Dundee Voluntary Action has a range of initiatives that support people with mental health challenges.

For further information go to:

<https://dva.scot/our-work/healthcare-and-wellbeing/mental-health/>

The Community Health Team offers a wide range of activities to promote positive physical, mental and social wellbeing. For a timetable go to:

<http://www.dundeehealth.com/content/all-areas>

People experiencing mental health challenges and their carers living in Dundee can be eligible for a short break. For more information go to:

<http://shortbreaksforcarers.org.uk/>

For information on a wider range of activities and services that can help improve life circumstances and mental health and wellbeing, go to:

<https://www.dundee.gov.uk/my-wellbeing> or
<https://dundee.mylifeportal.co.uk/Search/SearchResults?new=True&query=-xxxx&TagCategory=247>

There are a range of organisation that can help people in a mental health crisis; for further information go to:

<https://www.dundee.gov.uk/my-wellbeing/information-and-helpline-numbers>

What you say matters

The Strategic Planning Group is committed to listening to local people. We developed the 2019-24 strategy jointly with people who struggle to gain the kind of supports they need to stay mentally well, those with lived experience of mental illness and mental health services, and families and carers. There are many ways you can be involved. For further information contact lynseymccallum@dva.scot or ruthbrown@dva.scot or phone (01382) 305722.

If you do not have personal access to the internet or need support to follow the links above please drop into your local library, which has public internet access free of charge. Libraries also provide a wide range on health and wellbeing resources in paper and electronic form.