



THEME 5

Mental well-being

Theme introduction

Background

In any year, one-in-four of us will experience mental ill-health. Campaigning organisation Time to Change point out that the shame and silence we feel the need to maintain about mental health issues in the face of continuing discrimination and stigmatisation, can be as bad as the mental health problem itself.¹

Mind's major survey of almost 44,000 employees (May 2018), has found that almost half had experienced poor mental health, such as stress, low mood, and anxiety, while working at their current organisation. Of those respondents, only half chose to tell their employer about their difficulties.²

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as:

'a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'

WHO further defines health as:

'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.'³

The Health Survey for England's latest report (2017)⁴ examines the prevalence of subjective well-being and mental ill-health in England in 2016. It compares well-being and mental ill-health in different population groups by age, sex, region, household income and area deprivation as well as lifestyle factors, BMI and physical activity. Key findings were:

- Average well-being scores for men and women in England have declined slightly from 2015.
- Men and women living in more deprived areas had lower well-being scores, on average, than those living in less deprived areas.
- Women were more likely than men to report probable mental ill health (21% of women and 16% of men).
- The prevalence of probable mental ill health was greatest among men and women in the lowest income households, with 24% of men and 27% of women reporting probable mental ill-health, compared with 13% of men and 17% of women in the highest income households.
- The proportion of adults reporting probable mental ill health has increased since 2012, from 15% to 19%. This increase is particularly apparent among young men aged between 16 and 34, and young women aged between 16 and 24.

1. <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/about-mental-health>

2. <https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/news/mind-finds-employees-are-staying-silent-on-poor-mental-health/#.VWwUpS3ovzIU>

3. http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/

4. <http://healthsurvey.hscic.gov.uk/support-guidance/public-health/health-survey-for-england-2016/well-being-and-mental-health.aspx>

National targets/policies

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) was commissioned by the Government's Foresight project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing to develop a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing. Drawing on a wealth of psychological and economic literature, NEF came up with five actions. They cover a broad spectrum from physical activity to mindfulness to social aspects as all of these are linked.

"The 2008 Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project aims to analyse the most important drivers of mental capital and wellbeing to develop a long-term vision for maximising mental capital and wellbeing in the UK for the benefits of society and the individual."

"The concept of wellbeing comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement are characteristic of someone who has a positive experience of their life. Equally important for wellbeing is our functioning in the world. Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes of wellbeing."⁵

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are:

- connect
- keep learning
- be active
- give
- take notice

Evidence suggests that a small improvement in wellbeing can help to decrease some mental health problems, maintain a sense of wellbeing and help people to flourish. The UK government advocates these five actions to improve personal wellbeing:⁶

Mind, the mental health charity, has suggestions on how people can use the Five Ways to Wellbeing to improve and maintain their mental health.⁷

This theme

This theme was developed as a result of working with a group of people with mental health problems who were ready to live independently. The topics in the theme illustrate issues such as lack of confidence, and help learners to think positively, get out of bed in the morning and ask for advice. The materials will also be useful for people who have not had a mental illness but who may struggle with these issues at certain times of their lives. Many people experience problems with money and debts which can be a significant stressor. It is a particular issue for people with mental health issues who may make impulse purchases in order to feel better. This can lead to pressure on the weekly budget and debt which then makes them feel anxious and so a vicious cycle is created. Money management is therefore an over-arching topic in this theme. The topics in this theme are:

- What are you like?
- Positive thinking
- What gets you up in the morning?
- Getting involved with things
- Managing your time
- Managing in the community
- Getting help and support
- Avoiding debt

5. <http://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-evidence/>

6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/five-ways-to-mental-wellbeing>

7. <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

Mapping to Functional Skills/Core Curriculum

| Topic | Functional Skills | | Core Curriculum | |
|------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|--|
| | English | Maths | Literacy/Language (L) | Numeracy (N) |
| 1 What are you like? | E3.1 E3.2 E3.6 E2.5 E3.7 | | SLc/E3.2 SLc/E3.4 SLd/E3.2 SLlr/E2.5 SLlr/E3.5 | |
| 2 Positive thinking | E3.3 L1.23 | | SLc/E3.3 Wt/L1.2 | |
| 3 What gets you up in the morning? | E3.6 E3.7 | | SLd/E3.2 SLlr/E3.5 | |
| 4 Getting involved with things | E1.4 E3.12 E3.9 E2.2 E3.2 E1.3 E2.1 E3.1 | E2.22 | SLc/E1.3 Rt/E3.5 Rt/E3.7 SLc/E2.2 SLc/E3.4 SLlr/E1.3 SLlr/E2.3 SLlr/E3.3 | HD1/E2.1 |
| 5 Managing your time | E2.17 E3.12 E3.18 | E3.12 E2.13 | Wt/E2.1 Rt/E3.5 Wt/E3.1 | MSS1/E3.3 MSS1/E2.4 |
| 6 Managing in the community | E3.3 E3.7 E3.4 | | SLc/E3.1 SLlr/E3.5 SLlr/E3.6 | |
| 7 Getting help and support | E3.12 E3.9 E3.6 E3.4 L1.23 | | Rt/E3.5 Rt/E3.7 SLd/E3.2 SLlr/E3.6 Wt/L1.5 | |
| 8 Avoiding debt | | E3.10 E3.10 L1.11 E3.10 | | MSS1/E3.1 MSS1/E3.2 MSS1/L1.1 N2/E3.4 |