A Guide to Mental Health

Key and current messages

- Mental health is more than just the absence of mental health problems. It is a positive state in which people can enjoy life and have the resilience to deal with its challenges.
- If you are in good mental health, you can make the most of your potential, cope with life, and play a full part in your family, workplace, community, and friendships
- There is a stigma associated with mental health problems. Mental health problems can affect anyone, but the stigma related to experiencing a mental health problem often puts people off asking for help.
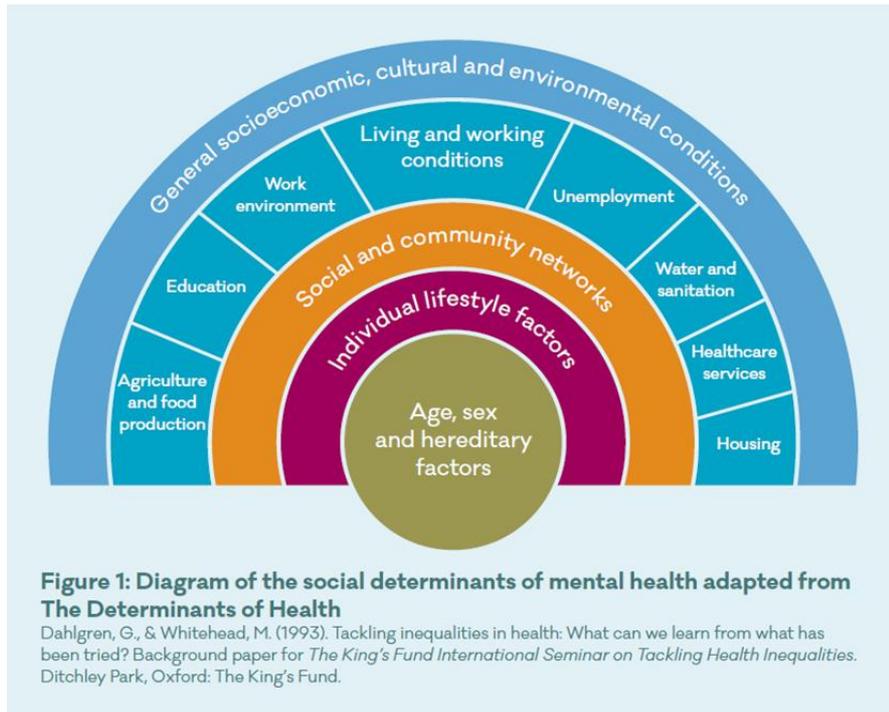
Why is mental health important?

- Mental health is not a fixed state and it can change as circumstances change and as you move through difference stages in your life.
- Certain life events may make it more difficult for us to cope, so we may need extra support for example after bereavement, divorce, redundancy, or becoming a parent.
- Experiencing difficulties with your physical health can increase your risk of developing mental health problems. Likewise, mental health problems can impact negatively on physical health.
- Mental health problems cover a very wide spectrum, from our everyday worries to serious long-term conditions. The majority of people who experience mental health problems can make a full recovery or learn to live with them, especially if they get support early on.
- Wider social determinants can have an impact on mental health throughout life (see Figure 1). Risk factors for mental ill health include particular social, economic, and environmental circumstances.

Key facts

- Every year, about a quarter of the population experiences some kind of mental health problem.
- Women are more likely than men to have a common mental health problem (e.g. depression or anxiety).
- Depression affects 1 in 5 older people.
- 10% of children and young people (aged 5-16 years) have a common mental health problem.
- In the UK, men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women.
- Only 1 in 10 prisoners has no mental health problem.

(Source: Mental Health Foundation, 2016)

Figure 1: Diagram of the social determinants of mental health adapted from **The Determinants of Health**

Dahlgren, G., & Whitehead, M. (1993). Tackling inequalities in health: What can we learn from what has been tried? Background paper for *The King's Fund International Seminar on Tackling Health Inequalities*. Ditchley Park, Oxford: The King's Fund.

Top tips for mental health

It's not always easy to find the time to look after yourself. However, taking small steps to take care of your mental health can help you to feel calmer, boost your mood, and help combat the effects of stress and anxiety.

- **Look after your physical health** – This includes exercising regularly, eating a well-balanced diet, getting a good night's sleep, and cutting down on caffeine, smoking, and alcohol.
- **Talk through a problem** – Sharing a problem with someone you trust can relieve some of the pressure, help you feel more supported and see the problem in a different way.
- **Make a list to help break problems down** – Don't try to deal with everything at once. Ask yourself – what can wait, what's important, and can anyone else help?
- **Try something new** – Doing something different can help you switch off and relax. Give yourself a challenge – try a new activity or learn a new skill.
- **Create time for yourself each day** – Build in some time each day to shut off and do something you enjoy – call a friend, watch your favourite TV programme, or go for a walk.
- Find more tips in the '*How to look after your mental health*' guide - https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-mental-health

Training opportunities in Leeds

- **Community Links** offer a range of mental health training, including **Mental Health First Aid**, **SafeTALK**, and **ASIST**, with some subsided places available. To find out more, visit www.commlinks.co.uk/Sites/Training

- **HeadSpace** is a seven-week course that will help you deal with tough times in life. To find out more, visit: http://woodhousecommunitycentre.com/oblong/courses/headspace
- **Leeds Mind** provide a range of mental health and suicide awareness training. For more information, visit: http://www.leedsmind.org.uk/help-for-employers/training/

Where to go and who to contact?

- Consider going to see you doctor (GP) if you feel low or anxious, or are concerned about your mental health. They can support you and give advice on the best next steps to take.
- **MindWell** provides local mental health information, self-help resources, and information for carers and professionals - http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/
- **MindMate** provides information about mental health for children and young people in Leeds, as well as their parents, carers, and the professionals that support them - https://www.mindmate.org.uk/.
- **Leeds Crisis Cards** have information about local crisis support – http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/CrisisCard.pdf
- **How are you feeling?** is a guide to local mental health services in Leeds – https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/HowAreYouFeeling.pdf

Public Health Resource Centre

The Public Health Resource Centre (PHRC) is a specialist knowledge and resource hub, offering support to anyone in Leeds with a responsibility or professional interest in public health or promoting health and wellbeing. The PHRC holds a large selection of books, DVDS, reports, games, teaching packs, interactive and visual models on a wide variety of public health topics, all of which are available to loan free-of-charge.

To register with the PHRC, or for more information, please visit www.leeds.gov.uk/phrc or visit the PHRC anytime during open hours. You can also follow the PHRC on Twitter and Facebook.

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