



Introducing the Public Mental Health Implementation Centre



A new centre and
new opportunities

Briefing paper:
Short version.
May 2022

What is the Public Mental Health Implementation Centre?

The Public Mental Health Implementation Centre is a team of psychiatrists, researchers and mental health experts with an interest in public mental health.

Our role is to make sure that interventions that have been proven to prevent and treat mental disorder (mental health conditions or illnesses) are put into practice.

We will provide training, carry out research, give advice and develop recommendations, to make sure that public mental health interventions are carried out successfully.

What is public mental health?

Public mental health is the mental health of the public, which is everyone in the country. Public mental health aims to improve people's mental health and wellbeing by making changes in society that affect large groups of people at the same time.

What are public mental health interventions?

Public mental health interventions are plans, activities and organised changes in society that aim to improve people's mental health. Public mental health interventions can work at primary, secondary or tertiary level:

- Primary interventions prevent mental health problems from starting.
- Secondary interventions treat mental health problems as early as possible to stop problems developing.
- Tertiary interventions help people with mental health problems get well and be able to live better lives.

Public mental health interventions can target the whole population or groups of people who are more likely to have a mental disorder.

Public mental health interventions can be done in different kinds of places. They can be done in schools, community centres, workplaces, healthcare settings, charities, prisons, housing services, in local authorities and government and in other places. People working in all these different places need to work together to carry out interventions. People doing public mental health interventions and working together might include:

- doctors and other people working in health care
- economists
- employers
- policymakers
- social workers
- charity workers
- teachers and people working in education.

It is important that people who have experienced mental health problems themselves are involved in designing, developing and carrying out public mental health interventions.

How do public mental health interventions help?

Many factors increase the risk of having mental health problems, some of which we can't control. Genetics, being born male or female, and age are some of these factors.

There are other factors that we can do something about. These include:

- poverty
- poor housing conditions
- lack of support from family
- people's ability to manage their emotions
- discrimination, for example because of ethnicity or sexuality
- trauma and violence
- being bullied
- poor physical health
- drinking too much alcohol
- smoking
- being in debt or unable to pay bills
- being unemployed
- being affected by war and conflict
- the decisions made by government

Public mental health interventions can try to stop these factors happening, or they can help people who are affected by these problems. Reducing these problems reduces the likelihood of mental health problems developing.

Public mental health interventions can help people who already have mental health problems. For example, by giving them better access to mental health services and treatment, preventing suicide and reducing stigma in society about mental health problems.

Some public mental health interventions work by increasing people's wellbeing. Wellbeing may mean different things for different people, but in general it means having satisfaction in life, having relationships (with friends, family and partners), feeling connected and engaged with life and society, and finding pleasure, meaning and a sense of achievement in life.

Interventions to improve wellbeing include encouraging and supporting people to exercise, creating space and opportunities for arts and creativity, giving more people access to green spaces, and helping people spend meaningful time with others.

Case Study: Reducing alcohol consumption in Scotland

[Evaluation of minimum unit pricing \(MUP\) - Alcohol - Health topics - Public Health Scotland](#)

In May 2018, Scotland became the first country in the European Union to introduce **minimum unit pricing** for alcohol, at 50p per unit of alcohol. Minimum unit pricing aims to stop strong drinks being sold for low prices, because they are often bought by drinkers who are at most risk of harm. The introduction of minimum unit pricing in Scotland has resulted in a decrease in the purchase of alcohol. In 2020, compared with English households, Scottish households had a purchase decrease of 7g of alcohol per adult per day when an alcohol purchase was made.

Case Study: Early Child Development in Greater Manchester

[Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On - The Health Foundation](#)

In the past decade, significant effort has been made by schools and children's services in Greater Manchester to **improve early child development and wellbeing**. This has involved workforce development, delivery of parenting and child development programmes, and setting up Early Years Pathways to provide health, social and wellbeing support to parents and children. The percentage of children achieving a good level of development in Greater Manchester increased by 20% over 5 years, showing a faster rate of improvement than England as a whole.

Why is public mental health important?

Mental health problems are very common: one out of every four people experience mental health problems each year.

Mental health problems often start in childhood, and, if they are not treated, they can affect the person all their life.

Mental health problems have a big effect on the population, because they cause distress to the people experiencing them and make their lives more difficult. Compared with people who don't have mental health problems, people with mental health problems are more likely to:

- be unemployed, earn less money or take time off work because of illness
- be treated unfairly or differently (because of their mental health problems)
- have more physical illness and die at a younger age
- have problems in their relationships, with partners, family and friends
- do less well at school and get less qualifications
- smoke more, drink more alcohol and use more drugs.

Many people with mental disorder do not receive help. Public mental health interventions can help prevent mental health problems from starting, and improve outcomes for people who do experience them.