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ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

Public Mental Health
Implementation Centre

List of terminology

Supplement to Public Mental Health Leadership Certification course

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The following list has been developed following a scoping review of the literature on terminology in public mental health (unpublished) and in consultation with experts in public mental health.

Term	Definition
Behavioural health	A broader term relating to health that '…refers to both mental health and substance use issues'[1] or the 'behaviours that affect physical and mental health'.[2] For example, good behavioural health leads to a 'state of mind characterised by emotional well-being, good behavioural adjustment, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms, and a capacity to establish constructive relationships and cope with the ordinary demands and stress of life'.[2,3]
Community mental healthcare	This is where mental health services are provided within the community and can include community outreach, peer support and supported living.[4] Four principles and practices have been defined to 'promote mental health for a local population'[5] including: 1. Addressing population needs in ways that are accessible and acceptable 2. Building on the goals and strengths of people who experience mental health conditions 3. Promoting a wide network of supports, services and resources of adequate capacity 4. Emphasising services that are both evidence-based and recovery-oriented
Context	The context for understanding health inequalities includes '…all social and political mechanisms that generate, configure and maintain social hierarchies, including: the labour market; the educational system, political institutions and other cultural and societal values.'[6]
Determinants of health	This term relates to 'factors that can enhance or threaten an individual's or a community's health status.'[7] For example, this may be social, cultural, economic and environmental conditions.

	Examples of **intermediary determinants** include material circumstances (see definition), psychosocial circumstances, behavioural and/or biological factors and the health system.[6] *Related term:* ***Social determinants***
Global mental health	Global mental health is 'an area of study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving [mental] health and achieving equity in [mental] health for all people worldwide.'[8,9][1] This includes the development of cost-effective interventions to meet recognised needs.
Global psychiatry	Global psychiatry 'broadly refers to the application of global health concepts and practices to the area of mental health.'[8] *Related term:* ***Global mental health***
Health equity	Health equity can be considered to be 'the absence of unfair and avoidable or remediable differences in health among population groups defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically.'[6,12] Health inequities are 'health differences that are socially produced, systematic in their distribution across the population, and unfair.'[6,13] They are systematic and avoidable differences in the health status of different population groups.[14] Principles and actions for health equity include proportionate universalism; action across sectors; life course approach; early intervention; healthy mind and healthy body.[15]
Health inequalities	Health inequalities are defined as '…measurable differences in health across population subgroups, defined by social, economic, demographic or geographic characteristics.'[11] This may include differences relating to ethnicity. Equality relates to an even distribution whereas equity relates to fairness or distribution according to requirement. *Related term:* ***Health equity***
Health promotion	Health promotion refers to 'action and advocacy to address the full range of potentially modifiable determinants of

[1] Taken from Patel and Prince (2010).[10]

	health (WHO 1998)'[72] and is based on a **salutogenic model of health**.[17,18] In other words, health promotion focuses on 'achieving positive mental health and well-being at an individual, community and population level.'[19] This may include[17,20]: • Building healthy public policies • Creating supportive environments (e.g., nutritious foods in school canteens) • Strengthening community action (e.g., opportunities for physical exercise in accessible locations) • Developing personal skills • Reorienting health services • Being carried out in different settings (e.g., schools, workplaces) • Dealing with complexity *Related terms:* ***Mental health promotion*** *and* ***Salutogenic model of health***
Life course approach	This approach to health focuses on the health of people across all ages (for example, from preconception to older people). A life course approach considers how life events and wider determinants (for example, socioeconomic conditions) affect individuals and their families across the life span and across different generations.[21]
Material circumstances/factors	These are 'linked to conditions of economic hardship, as well as to health damaging conditions in the physical environment.'[6] Examples include housing and neighbourhood quality (e.g., air pollution, amenities, access to green/blue spaces, crime levels), consumption potential (e.g., financial means to buy warm clothing) and physical work environment.[6]
Mental capital	This is considered at an individual level and relates to "…a person's cognitive and emotional resources. It includes their cognitive ability, how flexible and efficient they are at learning, and their 'emotional intelligence', such as their social skills and resilience in the face of stress. It therefore conditions how well an individual is able to contribute

[2] This is taken from the WHO 1998 glossary.[16]

	effectively to society, and also to experience a high personal quality of life."[22] The term also considers 'the extent of an individual's resources reflects his/her basic endowment (genes and early biological programming), and their experiences and education, which take place throughout the **life course**.'[22]
Mental disorder[3]	Mental disorder has a legal definition in the Mental Health Act (1983) of 'any disorder or disability of the mind.'[23] This includes diagnoses of mental illnesses (e.g., anxiety, depression, schizophrenia) as well as personality disorders, eating disorders and alcohol/drug dependency.[24–26] A full list can be found in the International Classification of Diseases Eleventh Revision (ICD-11).[27] *Feedback from experts with lived experience indicated that their preferred terminology (and which is used in the course) is **mental health problems and/or mental health conditions** (where diagnosed). These terms also encompass conditions that do not meet the diagnostic threshold to be counted as an illness. Additionally, the term 'condition' encompasses a diagnosis such as neurodivergence from a strengths-based approach.* *Related term: **Mental illness***
Mental health	This is defined to be '… a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.'[74] The concept of mental health and well-being can also be thought of as a 'combination of feeling good and functioning effectively' linked to both positive emotions and in a psychological sense.[24]
Mental health policy	This is an 'organized set of values, principles, and objectives for improving mental health and reducing the burden of mental disorders in a population. When well-formulated, mental health policy identifies and facilitates agreements for action among different stakeholders, designating clear roles

[3] Please note, the term 'mental health condition' is used the Public Mental Health Leadership course rather than 'mental disorder' with reasoning stated in the table.
[4] This is taken from the WHO 2021 factsheet.[28]

	and responsibilities. If mental health policy is developed as part of broader social policy (rather than as a stand-alone policy or subsumed within a general health policy) the emphasis on mental health promotion is likely to be more substantial. Mental health promotion needs to be integrated as a part of policy in order to give it the status and strategic direction required for its successful implementation.'[7]
Mental health promotion	Mental health promotion looks to achieve positive mental health and well-being beyond the absence of mental illness across the individual, community, and population/societal level.[1,19,29] Tamminen *et al*[30] determined the most common attributes to be: • Mental well-being, well-being • Positive mental health • Empowerment • Participation • Multi-sectoral/intersectoral/partnerships
Mental illness	Often used in a psychiatric context and defined by 'a group of signs and symptoms that represent a change in an individual's prior mental state and lead to the experience of distress and/or a decline in function'[85] Specifically, this may refer to depression and anxiety (common mental disorder) or schizophrenia and bipolar disorder (severe mental illness).[24,25] *Preferred terminology (and which is used in the course) is* ***mental health problems and/or mental health conditions*** *(where diagnosed) and reasons for this preference outlined above.*
Mental wellbeing	The term can be defined as 'a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society.'[22]

[5] Taken from Kendell (1986)[31] and the American Psychiatric Association[32]

	It has also been defined as 'a relatively new concept in public health. It is more than the absence of mental illness, and it seems likely that it is also more than the opposite end of a single continuum from mental illness or disorder as defined by psychiatric diagnosis.'[33]
Population mental health	This is a 'measure of the proportion of the population with different levels of mental health [conditions] at any one time. The spectrum ranges from mentally ill [or active mental health or conditions] and languishing through to moderately mentally healthy and flourishing.'[34]
Population-based approaches to mental health	This is closely related to population mental health and public mental health and has been defined as 'non-clinical interventions and activities intended to improve mental health outcomes, and the determinants of these outcomes among a group of individuals that are defined by shared geography, sociodemographic characteristics, or source of clinical services utilisation.'[1]
Positive mental health	This can be considered as a "state of 'mental flourishing', which is a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively most of the time" and is closely related to good mental health **well-being**.[22] Similarly, it has been described to be 'sense of well-being, capacity to enjoy life, and the ability to deal with challenges—not only the absence of a mental health illness or condition.'[1] Therefore, positive mental health encompasses emotions, cognition, social functioning, and coherence.[35]
Prevention	This can be thought of as 'helping people stay healthy, happy and independent for as long as possible. This means reducing the chances of problems from arising in the first place and, when they do, supporting people to manage them as effectively as possible.'[36]
Prevention of mental health conditions	Prevention in mental health 'aims to reduce the incidence, prevalence, and recurrence of mental health disorders and their associated disability'[37] such as time spent with symptoms, delaying recurrences and the impact on those affected, their families and society. This can include[38]:

	• **Primary prevention** interventions 'address risk factors to prevent mental disorders from arising and promote protective factors associated with mental wellbeing and resilience.' • **Secondary prevention** interventions 'involve early intervention for mental disorders and poor mental wellbeing to minimise impact.' • **Tertiary prevention** interventions are 'for people with established mental disorders and/or poor mental wellbeing to promote recovery, prevent associated inequalities and minimise disability.' For example, tertiary prevention may aim to prevent relapse.[39] Other types of prevention[40,41] include: • **Indicated prevention**: targeted interventions for people who are at high-risk (display minimum but detectable signs/symptoms or biological pre-disposition) • **Selective prevention**: targeted interventions for people who are at a much higher risk than average due to 'biological, psychological or social risk factors.' • **Universal prevention**: targeted interventions for the general public/whole population not identified due to risk
Psychiatric epidemiology	This is the 'study of the incidence, prevalence, distribution, causes, and consequences of mental health conditions across people, space, and time.'[1]
Psychosocial	Psychosocial 'connects the social environment to psychological states that constitute aspects of mental wellbeing' and psychosocial factors are those which encompass the connection between 'social conditions and experiences and psychological states'.[42–44]
Public health	This discipline can be defined as 'an applied science that combines the framework of population demography with health science and practice for the purpose of preventing disorder, promoting health, and prolonging life among the population as a whole'.[20] Therefore, public health relates to disease prevention and health promotion but also considers an individual's social context using a more holistic approach.[45] Public health in the UK focuses on health promotion, disease prevention, health protection and healthcare quality.[17]

Public mental health	Public mental health can be thought of as 'a public health or population health science approach to mental health and the mental health variations exhibited by populations.'[46–48] Public mental health includes promotion, mental illness prevention and treatment and rehabilitation.[46,48,49] This also aligns with the WHO Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020.[50] Other definitions include '…the art and science of improving mental health and wellbeing and preventing mental illness through the organised efforts and informed choices of society, organisations, public and private, communities and individuals.'[336] Similarly, '…the science and art of promoting mental health and well-being and preventing mental health problems through organised efforts of society' was a definition first given by Acheson at a lecture in 1988.[51] Both these definitions are adapted from an earlier version by the Department of Health and Social Care[34] which described: '…the art and science of promoting wellbeing and equality and preventing mental ill health through population-based interventions to: reduce risk and promote protective, evidence-based interventions to improve physical and mental wellbeing; and create flourishing, connected individuals, families and communities.' Friedli (2009)[35] broadens this definition to also include the 'politics of creating a mentally health society.' The core components of public mental health[52,53] have been defined to focus on the: • Experience, occurrence, distribution and trajectories of positive mental health and mental health problems and their determinants • Mental health promotion • Prevention of mental disorders • Mental health system policies, governance and organisation[7] Public mental health is moving towards being 'multi- and inter-disciplinary based on team working and partnerships not least with the public, its associations and institutions.'[55]

[6] This definition is used in the Public Mental Health Leadership certificate.
[7] Later published by the authors in another journal article.[54]

	This may include supported housing and vocational support. Other key topics include mental health literacy, quality of care and costs of mental disorders.[56] Psychiatrists can adopt a population approach to mental health in public mental health by estimating the level and impact of unmet need[39,57,58] for: • Diagnosis and treatment of mental disorder • Prevention of associated impacts • Prevention of mental disorder • Promotion of mental well-being particularly in higher-risk groups including people recovering from a mental disorder This may also include facilitating the implementation and evaluation of public mental health interventions.[25] Interventions and practices may include 'changes in psychosocial arrangements, mass communications and cultural interventions.'[20]
Resilience	'…an individual's successful adaptation and functioning in the face of stress or trauma. Psychological resilience is that feature of personality that allows an individual to bounce back from stress or adversity.'[22]
Salutogenic model of health	This theory and model of health was developed by the medical sociologist, Aron Antonovsky in the 1970s.[18] It is an assets approach to positive health and includes concepts such as resilience, flourishing and coping. The emphasis of the model is on distinguishing health as a positive state, rather than defining health as an illness or as pathogenic. *Related terms:* ***Resilience*** *and* ***Health promotion***
Social determinants	The most versed definition is one which refers to the 'circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness. These circumstances are in turn shaped by a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, and politics.'[59] This is often linked to the **WHO Commission for Social Determinants of Health framework**.[6] *Related term:* ***Social determinants of mental health***

Social determinants of mental health	Related to social determinants as these are 'conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play that affect mental health outcomes'[1] which may include 'social and economic conditions that have a direct influence on the prevalence and severity of mental disorders in men and women across the life course.'[60] This may include modifiable factors such as income inequality and poor education which if addressed 'could lead to improvements in the mental health of our society and could even contribute to the prevention of mental illnesses and substance use disorders.'[61] *Related term:* ***Social determinants***
Social epidemiology	This discipline 'involves the use of social concepts to explain patterns of health in the population. Such patterns are established by applying demographic and social constructs that themselves commonly arise form sociology.'[62]
Social medicine	This branch of medicine is 'defined by its intentions: to understand how social and economic conditions influence health, disease and the practice of medicine, and to promote conditions whereby this understanding can improve public health.'[62]
Social psychiatry	Social psychiatry does not have a precise definition but can be thought of as a 'topic and a set of techniques of investigation (…) primarily epidemiological, but include methods of evaluating social processes in relation to psychiatric disorders.'[62] For example, social processes may include economic circumstances, local environments, culture and subcultures including online activities.
Structural determinants	These are non-medical factors that influence health (like social determinants). They include the wider set of forces and systems that shape the conditions of daily life. This may include factors such as class, power, prestige and discrimination as well as the wider socioeconomic and political context.[6] *Related term:* ***Social determinants***
Structural mechanisms	These are mechanisms which 'generate stratification and social class divisions in the society and that define individual socioeconomic position within hierarchies of power, prestige

	and access to resources.'[6] Examples include income, social class and race/ethnicity.

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