

**HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL**

**9 JULY 2008**

**EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH IN  
MIDDLESBROUGH: A SCOPING PAPER**

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To highlight to the Health Scrutiny Panel possible issues to explore, sources of evidence to pursue and possible terms of reference to adopt in considering the topic of Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health in Middlesbrough.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. That the Panel considers this scoping paper and following any amendments felt necessary, approves the suggested lines of enquiry for the review into Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health.

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORT**

3. At its meeting on 29 May 2008, the Health Scrutiny Panel considered its work programme for 2008/9. Following consideration of previous topics covered by the Health Scrutiny Panel, professional advice from local experts and issues that are high on the national agenda, the Panel felt that a review into Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health would be timely and appropriate.
4. Following that decision, the Panel asked that the topic be researched and consideration be given as to how a review may be structured. As a result of this and in line with the Panel's wishes, this document has been prepared.

**KEY FACTS AND A DEFINITION**

5. It is perhaps useful, at this juncture, to raise some key facts and explore what 'emotional wellbeing' or 'mental health' means. The Mental Health Foundation report that mental health problems are among the most common of all health conditions, directly affecting about a quarter of the population in any one year. Depression and anxiety are the most widespread conditions.

6. In so far as a definition is concerned, the Mental Health Foundation argues that good mental health is not simply the absence of diagnosable mental health problems, although good mental health is likely to protect against the development of many such problems. Good mental health is characterised by a person's ability to fulfil a number of key functions and activities, including
  - The ability to learn
  - The ability to feel, express and manage a range of positive and negative emotions
  - The ability to form and maintain good relationships with others
  - The ability to cope with and manage change and uncertainty

## **POSSIBLE AREAS OF INVESTIGATION & SOURCES OF EVIDENCE**

7. The topic of Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health is a topic where the study could be as wide ranging as the Panel wanted it to be. There are very few elements of modern life that could be argued to have no impact upon people's emotional wellbeing and mental health. Nonetheless, for the Panel's work to be meaningful and have a focus, it is prudent to consider subject areas that the Panel would specifically like to focus upon.
8. It is advised that the Panel may wish to commence the review by receiving information around the regional strategy for Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health. The North East Strategic Health Authority has recently launched two documents<sup>1</sup>, which outlined the strategic aims for approaches to a number of areas of NHS activity, with Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health being a crucial part of that. The regional Director of Public Health, who is a joint appointment between Government Office North East and NHS North East, may be a good source of information for the Panel in relation to the regional strategic vision.
9. Following consideration of what the regional vision is, the Panel may find it useful to receive information from representatives of the local NHS about the range of services, which are currently provided to promote Emotional Wellbeing and good Mental Health. Firstly, the Panel could hear about the range of services available in primary care, which people can access directly. Middlesbrough PCT or General Practice representatives may be a good source of information for this. It would probably also be prudent for the Panel to receive a briefing paper on the range of services available from the specialist Mental Health Trust, which is Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Trust.
10. From consideration of what services are currently provided, the Panel may be able to begin to develop a view on where gaps in service provision may exist.

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1. (a) Better Health, Fairer Health – A Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Health & Wellbeing in the North East of England.  
(b) Our vision, Our future, Our North East NHS – A Strategic Vision for transforming health and healthcare services within the North East of England

11. To some extent, the information gathering activity described in the paragraphs above will necessitate the Panel receiving a quantity of information about the current service aims and current service standards, in a relatively passive manner. Following the gathering of such information, the Panel may then wish to proceed rather more proactively and begin discussing wider themes around Emotional Wellbeing and receiving the opinions of a range of experts.
12. Particular areas of enquiry that the Panel may wish to explore could centre on such themes as the following.
  - 12.1 Do services currently look to intervene in addressing people's mental health on a preventative and proactive footing or do they tend to react once a certain threshold has been reached? This could be explored with local health professionals.
  - 12.2 Whether there is any evidence to indicate those proactive or preventative services can make a difference to people's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health.
13. The Panel may also wish to explore wider societal impacts upon Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health, such as the prevalence of problematic debt in the local community and what could be done about it. The Panel could receive advice upon from organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.
14. There are other societal issues, which the Panel may like to explore and take a view on. Specifically, the Panel may wish to focus upon such themes as the prevalence of isolation and reasons for that isolation including long term conditions, people who are carers and whether there are community safety related issues affecting Emotional Wellbeing. The Panel may find that local and national Mental Health charities and advocacy groups may be a useful source of evidence around these themes. Further, the Panel may also wish to engage with regeneration professionals around the themes of worklessness and aspiration in the town. The Panel is also asked to consider whether it would like to pay specific attention to emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people, with a focus on the services provided for them.
15. The Panel may also wish to bear in mind that Mental Health charities and advocacy groups would also be able to provide their views on how services should develop. Specifically, what service models could be implemented, in a bid to address emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns in a proactive fashion.
16. It is suggested to the Panel that when a body of evidence has been collated, the Panel would wish to engage with the Commissioning element of PCT. The purpose of that would be to investigate the extent to which emotional wellbeing and mental health issues, influence the commissioning plans of the PCT.

## **POSSIBLE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

17. To investigate the extent to which emotional wellbeing is an integral part of the local health and social care economy's planning?
- 17.1 To investigate the level of services currently available to promote emotional wellbeing in the primary and secondary sectors.
- 17.2 To establish whether gaps in local services exist, in relation to Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health.
- 17.3 To investigate whether local services approach the topic of emotional wellbeing in a proactive or reactive manner
- 17.4 To investigate the wider determinants of emotional wellbeing
- 17.5 To receive advice and gather evidence from sources the Panel thinks appropriate

### **NEXT STEPS**

18. It is suggested to the Panel that consideration be given to the themes highlighted above, and the possible avenues the Panel could pursue to gather evidence. Following any amendments felt necessary, the Panel is invited to approve the review outline and suggested terms of reference. It is suggested that the first evidence gathering session involve hearing about the recently launched regional vision for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

19. No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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