Mental health roles

Young People's Advocate

You are the head of a local secondary school. You are concerned at several problems in the school, including disruptive behaviour, bullying and exam nerves.

You have worked hard to improve exam results and the OFSTED rating of the school. You feel that further improvement is limited by mental health problems within the school. You want something done about this. Time within the school day is already difficult to find, to meet national curriculum requirements.

Results from the Tellus 4 survey show positive results for Kingston compared with the rest of the country, with 19.3% of children reporting they had experienced bullying against a national average of 28.8%. From the same survey, 57% children and young people in Kingston reported that they enjoyed good relationships with their family and friends which is in line with the national results.

Older People's Advocate

You work for Age Concern. You are worried that older people are not being considered in health improvement work. You have seen an increase in the number of socially isolated elderly people locally. You are keen to highlight mental wellbeing in the elderly.

Older people can live in a way that protects and promotes their mental health in the context of social and personal wellbeing, just like other age groups.

Retirement is high on the scale of stressful life events, along with divorce and bereavement. Even those who look forward to retirement can experience mixed feelings, including feeling numb, sad, rejected or depressed. Those who have been made redundant or pressured into early retirement may feel shocked, hurt and angry, as well as afraid of what the future may hold. Society's attitudes to older people can contribute to low morale.

Most older people, no less than younger adults, find that it is important to keep or develop interests, to stay (or become more) physically active, and to develop a regular structure to their day.

Bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of life. However, older people are more likely to experience the loss of people close to them, such as a partner, family members or friends.

The most common mental health problems in older people are depression and dementia. There is a widespread belief that these problems are a natural part of the ageing process, but this not the case: only 20 per cent of people over 85, and 5 per cent over 65, have dementia; 10-15 per cent of people over 65 have depression. It is important to remember that the majority of older people remain in good mental health.
(Ref:http://www.mind.org.uk/help/people_groups_and_communities/older_people_and_mental_health)

Local councillor 1

You are an independent local councillor. You stood for the local council from a desire to improve services and lives for local people.

You are very concerned about improving life for those who are worst off and least able to help themselves.

You are aware that people with mental health problems are some of the most socially excluded, isolated, and disadvantaged people in society, facing higher levels of stigma and discrimination. Compared with people with a physical illness, people with a diagnosed mental health condition are less likely to have a job or to be re-employed after experiencing an episode of mental distress.

People experiencing mental distress frequently use physical activities such as walking, gardening and exercise to help lift their mood, reduce stress, provide purpose and meaning, and reduce vulnerability to depression. These simple activities can develop motivation and raise self-esteem, while contact with other people can reduce isolation, provide support and help improve social skills.

Those individuals and communities who could benefit most from contact with nature and green exercise are often least able to access it. There is also a marked relationship between lack of green space in urban areas and levels of stress. Designing for mental wellbeing should be recognised as good practice for architecture and town and country planning
(Ref:http://www.mind.org.uk/help/ecominds/ecominds/mental_health_and_the_environment)

Local councillor 2

You are an independent local councillor. You stood for the local council from a desire to improve services and lives for local people.

You are keen to improve profits for local businesses, which in turn will improve tax revenues and local amenities. You are also worried about the lack of responsibility taken by people for their own lives.
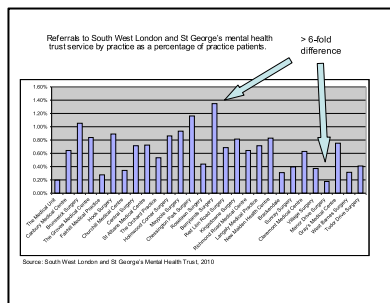
You are keen to see health service improved for people with severe mental illnesses.   You feel that this is the top priority for improving mental health and wellbeing locally. You are aware of some difficulties accessing services and

concern that local services are closing and facilities for local people are being lost.

It is estimated that there are approximately 770 people with psychotic disorders living in Kingston, of which 460 will have schizophrenia. In addition 760 people within Kingston are estimated to have bipolar affective disorder. Anxiety (with an estimated 6,150 people affected), depression (3,640) and mixed anxiety and depression (12,310) are more common mental health disorders.

Public Health

You work in the local public health department. You have been asked to develop a mental wellbeing policy to improve health locally.

Referrals to South West London and St George's mental health trust service by practice as a percentage of practice patients.   > 6-fold difference

Source: South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust, 2010

You have been unable to find local information on levels of wellbeing locally, and are concerned that the policy will become dominated by treatment of mental illness and by health services rather than focusing on wellbeing.

Areas for potential intervention to improve mental wellbeing include:
1. early identification and intervention as soon as mental health problems emerge;
2. the promotion of positive mental health and prevention of mental health problems in childhood and adolescence;
3. the promotion of positive mental health and prevention of mental health problems in adults;
4. addressing the social determinants and consequences of mental health problems; and
5. improving the quality and efficiency of current services.