

Well-Being Matters

A research and policy briefing as part of the national evaluation of the Well-being and Changing Spaces programmes

Well-Being is becoming an ever more important element of Government thinking. Here is your opportunity to shape how Government thinks about well-being, and its relationships with mental health and public service delivery. The Department of Health is consulting on a new strategy *New Horizons: Towards a shared vision for mental health*.ⁱ This issue of *Well-Being Matters* summarises the strategy and how it relates to the Well-Being and Changing Spaces programmes.

New Horizons: Towards a shared vision of mental health

New Horizons is a major new strategy for mental health in England. The Department of Health are currently consulting on a strategy outlining their blueprint for the new programme. The consultation period closes on 15th October 2009.

New Horizons is intended to move beyond the 1999 National Service Framework for Mental Health (NSF). The Department of Health is keen to link the future development of mental health services with the personalisation agenda, earlier intervention, and more innovation and collaboration, whilst getting maximum value for individuals and communities from the resources available. They intend to build a cross-government, multi-agency alliance that 'can tackle the root causes of poor mental health and get support to people where and when they most need it.'ⁱⁱ This strategy links the future development of mental health services in England from 2010 with well-being more broadly and is therefore very relevant to many projects and portfolios working within the Big Lottery Fund Well-Being and Changing Spaces Programmes. It also brings in aspects of the role of community and society in shaping health outcomes in a way that is relatively new to public health thinking. As well as providing an indication of how the Department of Health approach towards mental health and well-being is evolving, you may wish to respond to the consultation with views, insights and examples based on your experience in this field.

The strategy is based on the findings from a series of meetings held with various stakeholders including people who use mental health services, carers, commissioners, and clinicians. This input has been combined with the growing evidence base on well-being and resilience.

What it says

The main document is divided into sections based on age group: children, young people, adults, and older adults. Here are some of the key themes it brings out.

*Prevention and early intervention*ⁱⁱⁱ

Prevention and early intervention of mental health problems is perhaps *the* key theme of *New Horizons*. As well as avoiding unnecessary suffering, this is identified as more cost-effective than dealing with those problems after they have already been manifested.^{iv} The strategy draws on the Department of Health's public health framework which identifies three areas of preventative action:

- Informing and supporting people to make healthier and more responsive choices
- Creating an environment in which the healthier and more responsible choice is the easier choice
- Identifying, advising and treating those at risk

Greater public understanding

The *New Horizons* strategy begins with a vision for 2020 which hopes that ‘most adults will understand the importance of mental well-being to their full and productive functioning in society, to their physical health, and to their healthy lifestyle choices,’ and that ‘children will increasingly be taught in school about the importance of mental well-being and how to nurture and preserve it’^{iv}

Specifically highlighted are the five ways to well-being – connect, be active, take notice, keep learning, give – identified by **nef** in work for the Foresight Commission last year.^{vi}

Wider social context

The strategy recognises that poverty and inequality are important determinants of mental health, and identifies a desire to gain a better understanding of these relationships. It sees the reduction of social inequalities as an integral part of improving mental health. Housing, a rewarding job and the natural environment are all cited as having relevance.^{vii} More broadly, it calls for a more holistic multi-agency approach whereby ‘local and national government will take into account the impact of all policies and programmes on the mental health of individuals and communities’.^{viii} It is ‘everyone’s business’ to support well-being and mental health, including local authorities, employers, education and criminal justice agencies. Within the voluntary and community sector, organisations engaged in all sorts of activities have relevance to well-being including the environment, healthy eating, ageing or housing. We should not, it says, ‘see mental health as the responsibility solely of the Department of Health or mental health services’.^{ix}

Well-being and mental health

Investing in well-being is seen as an integral part of preventing mental health problems. **nef** and CLES welcome the distinction the strategy makes between mental health and well-being: ‘good mental health is more than the absence or management of mental health problems; it is the foundation for well-being’. Well-being is defined as the ‘ability to cope with life’s problems and make the most of life’s opportunities; it is about feeling good and functioning well, as individuals and collectively.’^x

Impacts of mental health

The strategy identifies many negative impacts of poor mental health, including reduced physical health, longevity, productivity and resilience to further stress and adversity.

Personalisation

The strategy’s vision sees mental health care being personalised to meet individual needs and wishes.

Stigma

Stigmas regarding people with mental health care were identified as a key problem, and the strategy sets out the intention to normalise mental health problems, so that perceptions towards them are no different from those towards physical health problems.

Links to other documents

The NHS has already expressed some desire to adopt a more preventative and well-being focused approach. For example, promoting mental well-being is put at the heart of the NHS Constitution.^{xi} The aims of *New Horizons* include fleshing this ambition out, as well as implementing delivery of the NHS Next Stage Review, also known as the Darzi report.^{xii} This review set out a vision of local commissioners working with providers, the public and service users to devise local approaches to mental health and mental health care. The Darzi report recommended that every primary care trust needs to commission comprehensive well-being and prevention services, in partnership with local authorities, with services personalised to meet the specific needs of their local populations in six

key areas. *New Horizons* complements the Darzi report by also emphasising the need for local solutions and the co-production of services to promote whole population well-being.^{xiii}

What it means for you

Overall, *New Horizons* is good news for the projects and portfolios involved in the Well-Being and Changing Spaces Programmes, and their target groups and beneficiaries. For those working in mental health, it indicates that the Department of Health is taking the issue seriously and recognising its wider social and economic costs. It shows that the Department is keen to invest in catching these problems further upstream, rather than dealing with them after they have arisen. It further indicates that the Department intends to attempt to draw in support in improving mental health from other statutory bodies.

For those focussed on other strands of the Well-Being Programme, and for those working in the Changing Spaces Programme, *New Horizons* could also be significant. Many of the issues your projects seek to address are explicitly identified by the strategy as being relevant.^{xiv} The hope is that this will help to provide a more supportive policy environment for this work in the future. However, both statutory and third sector organisations will need to be able to demonstrate their effectiveness in terms of improving well-being. The tools developed for the Well-Being Programme evaluation that some of you are using are some of the first that have been rolled out that will be able to provide such information.

Furthermore, the commitment to engage in more partnership work should provide more opportunities for the voluntary and community sector to engage with the NHS and other statutory bodies in sharing their expertise and delivering services designed to prevent mental health problems, and improve well-being.

How you can contribute

The consultation is open until **Thursday 15th October**.

The full strategy is available at:

www.dh.gov.uk/en/healthcare/mentalhealth/NewHorizons/index.htm

Consultation questions can also be accessed via an electronic survey at:

www.info.doh.gov.uk/questionnaire/newhorizons.nsf

The consultation specifically asks for ideas on:

- How service improvements can be maintained and developed further in a new era of devolved systems, World Class Commissioning,^{xv} and the current economic climate;
- How the new emphasis on personalisation, choice, quality and empowerment can be used to improve access to services and reduce inequalities in outcomes;
- How the experience of partnership working and multi-disciplinary approaches can be used to extend the work of tackling the causes of mental health problems still higher upstream, at primary prevention level;
- Where the opportunities for innovation are;
- And how good mental health and well-being can become a priority across government.

As organisations at the cutting edge of improving well-being in a wide range of communities, no doubt you have lots of useful experience that can be shared with the Department of Health in terms of what you have found has worked and what hasn't worked so well.

Further questions that you might want to address include:

- Are there opportunities for specific interventions that might improve well-being and reduce mental health problems that they have not identified?
- Are you satisfied with their definition and framing of what they mean by well-being (see pg. 10)?
- Has the strategy got it right in terms of the partnership working and commissioning it intends to engage in (see pgs. 100-105)?
- The strategy identifies several factors in the wider social context that lead to mental health problems (e.g. inequality, debt, poor parenting). Given the intention to engage with other government bodies beyond the Department of Health, what paths might *New Horizons* want to take to encourage action to alleviate these causal factors?

Further information

For further information about any of the issues raised in this briefing, or for any general queries regarding the national Well-being evaluation please contact:

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Endnotes

ⁱ Department of Health (2009) *New Horizons: Towards a shared vision of mental health: Consultation*. Available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Mentalhealth/NewHorizons/index.htm

ⁱⁱ *ibid*, pg. 2

ⁱⁱⁱ For more on the case for prevention, specifically related to children's services, see Aked J, Steuer N, Lawlor E and Spratt S (2009) *Backing the Future: Why investing in children is good for us all* (London: **nef** and Action for Children). Available at www.neweconomics.org/gen/z_sys_PublicationDetail.aspx?PID=293

^{iv} Department of Health (2009) *op cit*, pg. 62

^v *ibid*, pg. 4

^{vi} *ibid*, pg. 48; Aked J, Marks N, Cordon C and Thompson S (2008) *Five ways to well-being*

^{vii} Department of Health (2009) *op cit*, pg. 22

^{viii} *ibid*, pg. 5

^{ix} *ibid*, pg. 10

^x *ibid*, pg. 9. Also see Michaelson J, Abdallah S, Steuer N, Thompson S and Marks N (2009) *National Accounts of Well-being: bringing real wealth onto the balance sheet* (London: **nef**). Available at www.nationalaccountsofwellbeing.org. Also, Thompson S and Marks N (2008) *Measuring well-being in policy: issues and applications* (London: **nef** and the Foresight Commission). Available at www.neweconomics.org/gen/z_sys_PublicationDetail.aspx?PID=266

^{xi} Available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/healthcare/NHSConstitution/index.htm

^{xii} Darzi (2008) *High Quality Care for All: NHS Next Stage Review Final Report*. Available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/PublicationsandStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyandGuidance/DH_085825

^{xiii} See also Stephens L, Ryan-Collins J and Boyle D (2008) *Co-production: A manifesto for growing the core economy* (London: **nef**). Available at www.neweconomics.org/gen/z_sys_PublicationDetail.aspx?PID=257

^{xiv} Department of Health (2009) *op cit*: e.g. natural environment – page 37; physical health – pages 48, 83; healthy eating – page 53.

^{xv} Department of Health (2007) *World Class Commissioning: Vision*. Available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/PublicationsandStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyandGuidance/DH_080956

