



Strategic Partnership Boards

SAFETY SAFEGUARDING WELLBEING

Report title – Mental wellbeing strategy refresh 2023-26

Priority report relates to: [Mental health and wellbeing](#)

Report to: [Health and Wellbeing Board 24/01/2023](#)

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1. Purpose of the paper

To introduce the draft mental wellbeing strategy scope, content and actions, and to request input and feedback on our proposed strategy refresh.

Specifically, the Health and Wellbeing Board are requested to:

- Comment on the engagement process and recommend specific groups and forums for involvement in development and delivery of the strategy.
- Endorse the proposed themes and objectives of the strategy.
- Commit to support development and delivery of an action plan to deliver these objectives, including engaging in the Better Mental Health Steering group.
- Commit to

Three key immediate aims of the work have been identified following the engagement work that informed this strategy. These are:

1. Ensure mental health support is a core component of our response to the cost-of-living crisis over the winter and beyond.
2. Ensure, the evidence of mental health and wellbeing needs in various population groups are considered in all of our work. Particularly note the high level of needs identified during the engagement work for carers and ensure the new carers strategy incorporates this as a priority area of work.
3. Agree a new local approach to promoting healthy workplaces across the borough. This may involve incorporating healthy workplaces into the proposed Waltham Forest Good Work charter.
4. Participate in the OHID Mental Health Prevention Concordat, which is a benchmarking programme that enables local areas to seek assurance from OHID that our plans are fit for purpose and in line with best practice and evidence, and to learn from other local areas in the country. Public Health will lead the submission of a concordat action plan in February 2023.

2. Background

The Waltham Forest Mental Wellbeing strategy was published by the Health and Wellbeing Board in 2018 and expired in 2021. We have worked to engage with residents and stakeholders around refreshing priorities and themes of work for the next three-year period.

The engagement work we have done suggests that the themes from the previous strategy are still relevant and important for Waltham Forest and that there is still work to be done under each of the previous themes.

Better Mental Health for All remains a priority area of work for the Health and Wellbeing Board and this strategy will help to deliver the mental wellbeing and prevention component of that priority.

Next steps involve presenting the proposed strategy themes, priorities and actions to various forums and boards across the borough for their input. A Better Mental Health steering group that takes forward prevention action plans was formed in 2019 and will oversee implementation of the strategy.

Definition of mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is a positive state of mind and body that describes both feeling good and functioning well. It comprises a positive state of holistic health, encompassing a person's sense of happiness, connection with other people, communities, and the wider environment. It involves a subjective component, of self-evaluation of living a meaningful and satisfactory life, and an objective component of whether basic living needs are met.

Improving mental wellbeing is important because it is key to preventing mental health conditions further down the line and it also contributes to the economic success of the borough and quality of life for all our residents.

Strategy scope

The strategy will outline our approach to improving mental wellbeing among the population and preventing the development of mental health problems in the future, particularly among high-risk groups in the population. Many other local plans and strategies will have an impact on mental wellbeing in coming years (e.g., the CAMHS Transformation Plan, 15 Minute Neighbourhoods, Physical Activity and Sport Strategy etc.) and this strategy doesn't seek to replicate any of this work but will identify opportunities to influence existing programmes of work to promote wellbeing and prevent mental health conditions.

Issues related to access to and quality of mental health services, recovery from serious mental health conditions and mental health referral pathways are outside of the scope of this strategy.

Engagement in development of the strategy

In order to inform the approach, we will take over the next three years, a programme of engagement work has been undertaken. A stakeholder workshop was held in January 2022, to explore what has been achieved during the previous strategy and what needs to happen next. This was followed by a large-scale resident survey, which combined mental health and healthy weight and was responded to by over 1,200 residents. A series of focus groups then followed to explore views on mental health and wellbeing promotion and prevention in greater depth. See attachment for full survey report.

3. Summary

Strategy themes and priorities

The aim of this strategy is to promote population mental wellbeing in Waltham Forest and to reduce risk factors for poor mental wellbeing and mental health problems.

Four themes have been identified:

1. Work to reduce stigma and discrimination around mental health in the population.
2. Tackle the root causes, or 'wider determinants' of mental ill-health.
3. Propose evidence-based approaches to promoting self-help for mental wellbeing in the population including the '5 ways to wellbeing' and the promotion of good sleep patterns.
4. Get support to people who are struggling with their mental wellbeing early to prevent the development of more serious conditions further down the line.

Action plans under each of these themes will take a life course approach with activity targeting maternity and early years, school aged children, working age adults and older adults.

THEME ONE: Tackling stigma and discrimination around mental health

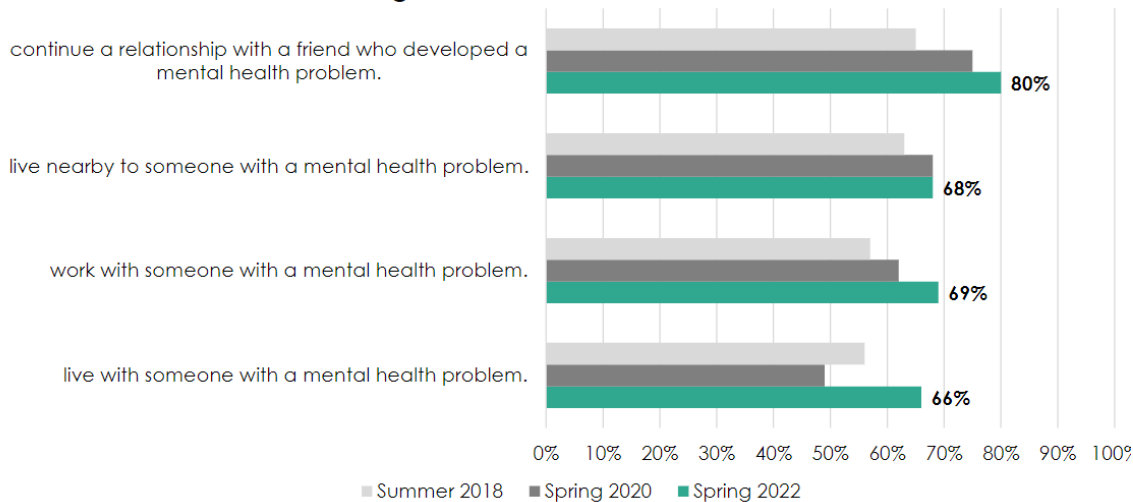
Why this theme is important

The stigma and discrimination around mental health that exists creates a negative mental health cycle where people with mental health problems often report feelings of failure and worthlessness, preventing many people from talking about their issues or seeking help from an appropriate health professional. Stigma impacts on mental health throughout the life course.

Local Insight

Since the strategy was published in 2018, we have included bi-annual assessments of mental health stigma in the population to track progress. This suggests stigma has been improving in the borough as a whole during this time, however, there has been no national or regional data published during this time for comparison.

"In the future, I would be willing to..."



What has been achieved

Waltham Forest have supported the national Time to Change campaign for several years, but this formally ended in November 2022. The campaign aimed to enable people with lived experience of mental health to tell their stories to other members of the community, in order to challenge the stigmatising views people may hold. Over the past 4 years, Public Health have funded CREST Waltham Forest to deliver a local Time to Change campaign including training and support around 100 Time to Change champions to run events and initiatives to deliver their stories of living with mental health conditions. CREST have funding until end of March 2023 to continue this work (now known as Time to Talk Waltham Forest) and we will support them to create a legacy from the work that will continue to change perceptions of mental health.

One of the key approaches to reducing stigma is training frontline staff of all kinds to have better understanding and empathy towards people with mental health conditions. Mental Health First Aid training provides skills and knowledge to spot early signs of mental distress and we have delivered this offer to staff in a variety of settings, with a focus on Children and Family centres and schools. Over 100 school staff have now been trained. A programme of Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training has been commissioned and promoted to all frontline staff in Waltham Forest, with around 260 Staff from across all sectors having taken up the offer so far. This focuses on holding non-judgemental, supportive conversations around mental health and signposting to further support. Funding has been secured for the development of an e-learning offer, which is underway and expected to be launched in early 2023/24. A MECC network consisting of champions from key staff groups has been formed and meets regularly, providing an opportunity to share best practice, develop the training offer and build and maintain momentum in embedding MECC in the everyday work of frontline staff.

A programme of School Mental Health Ambassadors is being rolled out in secondary schools in the borough. A group of 18-25 year old peer mentors have been recruited and trained to work on a voluntary basis in schools, supporting any pupils who may need it. The peer mentors receive support from CAMHS and importantly, have lived experience of mental health, meaning they are able to tackle stigma within children and young people.

What next:

- Continue to tackle stigma through training, mental health awareness campaigns and supporting CVS based activities including the Time to Talk Waltham Forest programme and the Community Health Champions based in Leyton Orient Trust.
- Take a more targeted approach to stigma campaigns to reduce inequalities, aiming to reach groups with deeply entrenched stigma towards mental health, e.g., some Asian groups are known to have particular challenges around mental health stigma.
- Greater focus on tackling stigma of peri-natal mental health through parents sharing their experiences of mental health and ways of managing their own mental wellbeing via Coco East (Lloyd Park's co-production network).
- Increase number of schools involved in the Mental Health Ambassadors programme.
- Achieve more consistent funding for MHFA training at all ages and further increase uptake. Develop an e-learning MECC programme and explore mandating completion for all Council staff. All organisations to commit to working to achieve good take up levels by frontline staff.
- Continue to track progress through inclusion of bi-annual assessments of stigma in our Resident Insight Survey and publish results in our JSNA.

"I think it's well known that there's a lot of stigma amongst Black and Asian people around mental health. It's got better and is less of an issue amongst younger people, but it's still a problem and means that mental health issues can get buried and therefore made worse". Male, aged 18-34, Non-White British-Irish, Centre of borough, Black and Asian group (Focus Group Research in Waltham Forest, January 2022)

"People don't want to talk about it and that is a major problem in preventing people from having a mental health crisis because if they don't spot the issues, no one does, they don't talk about it, they don't seek help and before you know it is too late" Male, aged 18-34, Non-White British-Irish, Centre of the borough, Black and Asian group (Focus Group Research in Waltham Forest, January 2022)

THEME TWO: Wider determinants of mental health and wellbeing

Why this theme is important

Mental health problems can affect anyone, but it is now widely accepted that people's social and economic conditions influence their risk of both mental and physical ill-health. The factors that influence health are distributed unevenly throughout the population leading to inequalities. Waltham Forest currently has some of the highest rates of unemployment in London, particularly among 16-24 year olds, men and some ethnic groups. Record levels of residents are living in temporary accommodation and the borough ranks in the most vulnerable quartile of all London boroughs in terms of Cost-of-living Vulnerability Index (Centre for Progressive Policy).

The recent Health Inequalities report commissioned from the Marmot Institute of Health Equity has highlighted some of the key determinants of health that are unequally distributed throughout the population. Most or all of the factors covered in that report impact on mental health and wellbeing, meaning the response as a whole will contribute to reducing mental health inequalities

in the borough. Building further on that report, this strategy identifies the following as priorities for action to improve mental health:

- Economic wellbeing and poverty, particularly in relation to the cost-of-living crisis
- Employment and workplace conditions
- Housing conditions
- Social isolation and loneliness

Local Insight

The recent health survey of Waltham Forest residents showed that the top issues negatively affecting mental health are as follows:

1. Financial issues (35%)
2. Stress at work (34%)
3. What's happening in the world / what's in the news (30%)
4. Isolation / loneliness (23%)

A mental health and wellbeing JSNA chapter will be published in early 2023 which will help inform this section of the strategy. The Marmot Health Inequalities report will also highlight the key areas of inequality related to the social determinants of health and our action plans will align with the recommendations made in the final report.

What has been achieved

The Waltham Forest social prescribing offer has developed significantly over the past five years. Social prescribers work to support residents who have non-medical needs that are, or are likely to, affect their mental health. They link people into sources of support across the statutory and voluntary sector, such as social groups and befriending to alleviate isolation and loneliness, housing services, debt advice and others.

Social prescribers are now embedded within every Primary Care Network in the borough, as well in three VCS organisations and all of these roles are supported by a 'core' social prescribing team in the Council. This small team handle referrals from Talking Therapies and social care and provide training and development for other social prescribers in the system. An early years social prescribing service is now in place and a Family support service provided by Lloyd Park CFC supports families with housing, debt management, poverty, adult education needs etc.

A recent innovation has been the introduction of wellbeing cafes, to support residents who are experiencing social isolation and low-level mental health problems. A 12-week set of sessions with other residents experiencing similar issues have been found to improve mental wellbeing scores and connect people into other services. These were initially funded from the OHID Better Mental Health grant and will now be funded for a further year from the public health grant.

Befriending services have also been developed over the past few years. There are currently several services commissioned for adults including one specifically for older adults.

For school aged children, a Schools Mental Health Charter was launched pre-pandemic and supports and encourages schools to put in place an effective whole school approach to creating a mentally healthy environment for everyone in the school community.

What next:

- Review the social prescribing offer in Waltham Forest to ensure it is supporting residents with the highest levels of need, i.e., those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Ensure our social prescribing resource is utilised as effectively as possible.
- Evaluate the early years social prescribing offer to ensure it is delivering maximum benefit to families.
- Continue to establish the new wellbeing cafes offer and evaluate it appropriately to inform future commissioning decisions.
- Establish a Good Work Charter for businesses in the borough and explore ways to incorporate mentally healthy workplaces into this approach.
- Review existing befriending offers in the borough to ensure the best model is in place to support isolated residents at all ages.
- Continue roll-out of the Schools Mental Health Charter, including audit of those schools who are already in the scheme and expansion to new schools.

THEME THREE: Self-help approaches to improving mental wellbeing

Why this theme is important

With one in four members of the population expected to experience a mental health problem, there is a strong need for self-help approaches to mental health prevention. There is a long history of promoting self-help approaches for physical health issues, but mental health has lagged behind in this respect. The Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing project recommended promotion of the '5 ways to wellbeing', which are an evidence-based set of ways to improve mental wellbeing, and these have been promoted to residents over the past few years. They are:

Connect with others – social connections support and develop good mental wellbeing.

Be physically active – physical activity is known to be one of the best ways to improve mental wellbeing.

Take notice – this relates to mindfulness and appreciation of the surrounding environment.

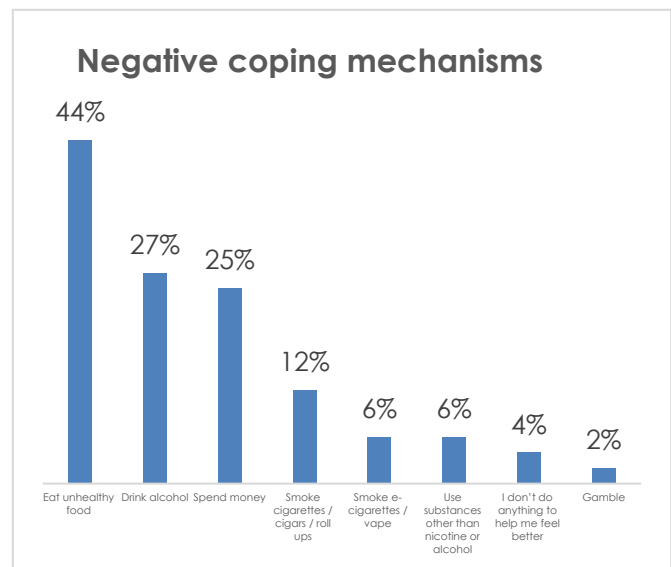
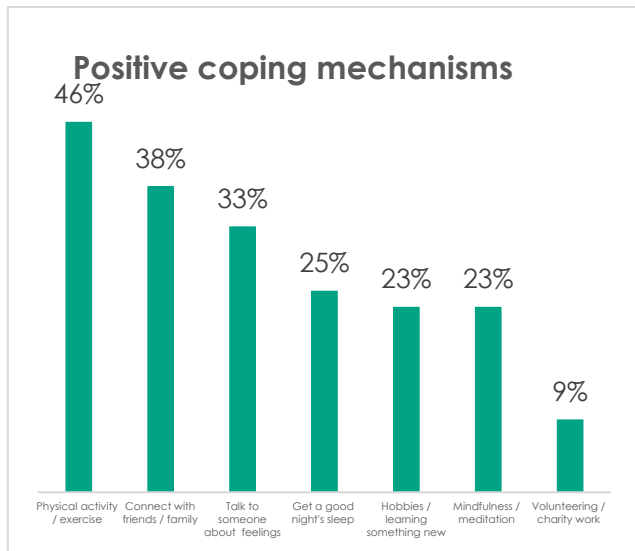
Keep learning – mastering new skills, particularly later in life, improves self-esteem and reduces depression and anxiety.

Give – feelings of being useful to and appreciated by others, can improve happiness and mental wellbeing. Volunteering is a good example of this.

Local insight

The recent resident health survey explored self-help approaches to mental health and wellbeing.

When asked how people cope with a stressful day, there was a mixture of positive and potentially harmful coping mechanisms, with physical activity and eating unhealthily coming out as the top behaviours. The results suggest there is still work to be done in terms of developing a population shift towards healthy behaviours in response to mental health challenges. The results also showed that some groups are more likely to be engaging in positive self-help approaches to mental wellbeing than others. Those that identified as unpaid carers, lower socioeconomic groups and those with long term conditions were all less likely to engage in healthy behaviours and more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviours.



What has been achieved

We have implemented a long-standing 5 ways to wellbeing campaign that has achieved good levels of public recognition. We have used campaigns such as World Mental Health Day and others to promote these behaviours to the general population.

Health visitors discuss mental wellbeing at all new birth appointments and provide information and signposting while a wide range of activities in CFC designed to encourage families and parents to interact, socialise and meet other parents. Family wellbeing groups delivered by HENRY, were piloted in CFCs, although take up of the offer was modest.

A series of projects encouraging participation in mental wellbeing promotion initiatives was commissioned following a successful funding bid to OHID. These included the HENRY wellbeing groups, wellbeing activities for young men and wellbeing cafes which introduced participants to activities based on the 5 ways to wellbeing model.

What next:

- Capitalise on the two pan London mental health promotion offers (Good Thinking and Thrive LDN) and the national NHS backed campaign (Every Mind Matters), promoting them to residents as sources of support and information. Monitor uptake of the Every Mind Matters Mind Plans as an outcome of our campaigns.

- Use the new Good Thinking resources for promoting 5 Ways to Wellbeing for different religions as a way of reaching harder to reach groups and assess impact.
- Promote 5 Ways to Wellbeing during pregnancy / for new parents
- Participate in the new London Great Mental Health Day, championed by the Mayor of London, using it as an opportunity to promote self-help approaches to mental wellbeing.
- All organisations to commit to promoting mental health campaigns and resources circulated by Public Health where appropriate.

THEME FOUR: Early intervention for the prevention of mental health problems

Why this theme is important

Intervening early in the development of many mental health conditions can prevent more serious problems further down the line. While issues related to the quality of, and access to, mental health services are beyond the scope of this strategy, activity to support early intervention is an important theme of the work, particularly for individuals with sub-clinical mental health disorders (i.e., those “languishing”).

What has been achieved

Flourish is a postnatal group support service delivered by LPCCs, for mothers to talk about their worries and anxieties and receive further support as required. There is also a specialist perinatal mental health visitor in the 0-19 service and Health Visitors undertake maternal mood assessments at 6-8 weeks and 1 year review.

A range of interventions have been commissioned in schools to prevent the development of mental health problems that would often end up requiring support from CAMHS professionals. These include Schools Mental Health Advisors, that work to support children with low level mental health problems in order to ease the burden on the Primary Care CAMHS service. A small number of primary and secondary schools have these in place and work is ongoing to increase these numbers. Place2Be were commissioned to provide 1:1 counselling support for primary school children during the pandemic.

Kooth is an online support offer for children and young people who can access support for their mental health at any time. Similarly Good Thinking is a digital mental wellbeing service for adults that Waltham Forest have contributed to the development of over the past 4 years.

Training for frontline staff aims to improve the identification and intervention in early mental health problems. Youth Mental Health First Aid has been commissioned for staff in schools CFCs and other youth facilities in the borough. MECC training has been delivered to frontline staff across the Council, NHS and voluntary sector.

What next:

- Use data to understand and ensure equity of access to Flourish.
- Ensure mental health is a core part of the new Family Hubs programme, ensuring that it delivers an improved and equitable mental health offer for parents:

- one of the core funded workstreams is perinatal mental health - for parents / carers with mild-moderate mental health needs or who would benefit from universal parent-infant support
- Develop adult mental health service offer within Family Hubs e.g., IAPT promoted and delivered in Family Hubs
- Improve understanding of mental health need amongst new parents and who is impacted by poor mental health by undertaking analysis of maternal mood assessment data.
- Improve reach and performance of Kooth online mental health support.
- Expand provision of Schools Mental Health Advisors.
- Refresh plan for commissioning MHFA training for young people and adults. Target training at highest impact workforce area.
- Increase awareness of Good Thinking and engage the Healthy London Partnership in the need for better data on number of users and performance.
- All organisations to commit to promoting mental health and wellbeing services, including digital offers, in their settings and communications.