

Briefing Note

Title: Better Mental Health 2021-2022: Outcome Summary and Case Studies

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Intended Audience:

Internal

Partner organisation

Public

Confidential

1. Purpose and recommendation

This briefing note provides Health and Wellbeing Together (HWT) partnership with an update on outcomes from mental health promotion and prevention interventions delivered to over 1600 people in the City of Wolverhampton as part of the Better Mental Health programme 2021-2022.

The HWT partnership are asked to consider endorsing a proposal for the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) to explore the potential benefits of signing up to the national **Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health** which provides a framework for local authorities and system partners to map and assess further progress against strategic ambitions to promote good mental health and wellbeing and prevent mental health problems in the City.

2. Background and Context

The Prevention and Promotion Programme for Better Mental Health 2021-2022 was a single year initiative overseen by the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) designed to incentivise investment in prevention and promotion interventions for better mental health in the most deprived local authorities. Specifically, to mitigate mental health impacts arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and reduce widening mental health inequalities by targeting at risk and vulnerable groups.

Local authorities were encouraged to consider signing up to the Prevention Concordat for Mental Health if they were not already a signatory as part of their expression of interest to the Better Mental Health 2021-2022 programme initiative to ensure sustainability of system wide mental health promotion and prevention approaches.

3. Overview of Better Mental Health Programme 2021-2022 and Outcomes

The Wolverhampton Mental Health Stakeholder Forum, Wolverhampton Suicide Prevention Stakeholder Forum, and One Wolverhampton Adult Mental Health Sub-Group were engaged on CWC Better Mental Health 2021-2022 proposals and received updates on the progress of mental health promotion and prevention interventions across the City during the life cycle of the programme initiative.

Projects in the CWC application to the Better Mental Health Programme 2021-2022 were approved as part of the OHID grant allocation of £357,468.

Projects included:

- A City-wide survey of mental health and wellbeing for adults 16+
- Evidence reviews on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon different population groups
- Engagement activities with groups disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 pandemic to improve wellbeing and understand experiences, as well as risk, and protective factors
- Pilot a series of eight-week wellbeing promotion, one to one counselling, and physical activity programmes for people facing a range of complex life challenges and vulnerabilities
- Pilot six-week employment support programmes for people affected by domestic violence and substance misuse, young adults 18-25, and adults with long term conditions
- Co-ordinate delivery of a City-wide suicide prevention awareness campaign
- Deliver suicide prevention training to primary care staff, City-wide workforce, and barbers and hairdressers to build a network of support for people experiencing suicidal ideation across the City
- Tackle loneliness across the City through one to one engagement events as part of Mental Health Awareness week campaign 2022
- Review the accessibility and inclusivity of existing mental health and wellbeing promotion resources
- Train local people to become mental health first aid (MHFA) champions who can help promote mental health and wellbeing of others using evidence-based frameworks

The OHID grant allocation contained a series of stringent periodic reporting requirements in respect of finance, demographics of project beneficiaries and (where appropriate) findings from the use of evidence-based mental wellbeing measurement tools to assess project impact on participants mental health and wellbeing.

A Project Team was established by CWC Public Health and Wellbeing department which worked alongside system partners to oversee the discharge of programme resources in line with OHID grant terms and conditions with regular updates provided to the corporate Project Assurance Group (PAG) and OHID.

Over 1600 people who live in the City of Wolverhampton are estimated to have benefited from interventions delivered as part of the OHID Better Mental Health 2021-2022 programme. Of these, 73% lived in the 30% most deprived lower super output areas (LSOAs) in England, 18% disclosed having a disability, and 39% of people were from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Evidence-based measurement tools showed significant improvements in mental wellbeing compared to pre-programme levels for participant groups who took part in the Head4Health wellbeing project and in co-creation projects with groups at elevated risk of mental health problems. Wellbeing improvements were also observed in some employment support cohorts, and amongst participants engaging in creative arts and martial arts projects led by people working in community settings who had trained as mental health first aid (MHFA) champions.

All Better Mental Health project findings and evaluation reports will be made available at the project microsite <http://www.bettermentalhealthwolves.co.uk/>

4. Mental Health Promotion and Prevention Case Studies

The following three case studies offer a snapshot of activities undertaken in the Better Mental Health 2021-2022 programme to engage with people across the City to better understand mental health needs and assets, support those facing complex life issues to improve wellbeing, and develop a network of people able to support anyone experiencing suicidal ideation.

Case Study One: Understanding mental health - views, needs, and assets

The #WolvesWellbeingandMe survey of personal wellbeing attracted over 1400 responses from adults (16+) in the City. Following data cleansing, 996 complete responses were available for analysis.

- Key aspects of what people felt '**being mentally well**' meant for them included feeling emotionally balanced, resilient and able to bounce back or cope with life challenges. Feeling optimistic about the future, having good social connections and being able to access support when needed were also features of responses.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and its associated protective restrictions were reported as negatively affecting the health, lifestyles, education, finances, employment, and relationships of many people.
- In response to the question of '**what would support wellbeing**' within the City moving forward; being able to get out and do more things was the most frequent choice among respondents. In addition, having time for oneself, more money, and someone to talk to were also factors highlighted as important in improving wellbeing. Better physical and mental healthcare support, and better working environments also featured as factors likely to positively impact on future wellbeing.

Building on learning from the #WolvesWellbeingandMe survey, a review was completed of available evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon different population groups to identify those likely to be exposed to factors which meant they were at a greater risk of developing mental health problems. The review confirmed that people experiencing disadvantage prior to the COVID-19 pandemic were subject to further challenges. These groups included but were not limited to ethnic minorities; people living with disabilities; and refugees and migrants. Economic and social factors related to COVID-19 lockdowns placed additional pressure on these groups. Children and young people (0-25), those living in poverty, women, and critical workers also faced significant additional stressors because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Key data specific to Wolverhampton and the West Midlands region enabled researchers to recommend a focus on the following nine groups.

- **Children**
- **Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their parents/carers**
- **Young, unemployed people**
- **Refugees and migrants**
- **Ethnic minorities**
- **Women**
- **Critical workers**
- **Older people with long-term physical health conditions or disabilities**
- **Older people with a pre-existing mental health condition**

A series of structured co-creation engagement activities engaged representatives from the above groups empowering them the skills, knowledge, and confidence to collect stories about their members' unique experiences of the pandemic; artwork and other visual mediums revealed the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental wellbeing, but also what has and will help people be well and how can they secure more of these capacity building resources in the future (see Appendix 1).

A total of **141 people took part in the co-creation activities** over several weeks which resulted in significant improvements in the mental wellbeing of project participant groups. The co-creation engagement framework developed with groups during activities will be translated into a useable guide for others to utilise with a focus on the use of evidenced-based measures to assess the mental wellbeing impact of future community-based interventions to support population groups. Findings of all interventions described in **case study one** will be showcased at a future Wolverhampton Mental Health Stakeholder Forum meeting event and contribute towards a wider Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for public mental health and wellbeing in the City.

Case Study Two: Pilot 'Head4Health' programme from Wolves Foundation with people with more complex life issues and vulnerabilities

Head4Health launched in January 2019 focused on supporting males 18+ to improve mental and physical health and wellbeing by providing informational wellbeing workshops and a gentle introduction to physical activity with sessions hosted at Molineux stadium using the power of the football club badge.

OHID funding enabled a pilot to expand and grow the provision of Head4Health to all adults 18+ focusing on delivering eight-weeks of structured tailored support to those facing more complex life issues and vulnerabilities, including the addition of private one to one counselling sessions for those with more intense needs. Funding also supported development of promotion and marketing campaigns to assist participant recruitment as well as creation of a participant workbook developed with the Mental Health Foundation (MHF), and greater staff training opportunities with representatives from organisations including Wolverhampton LGBT+.

Over 600 hours of programme delivery were provided to 35 groups including people who are victims of domestic violence, people engaged in substance use support, parents and carers of young people with special educational needs (SEND), refugees and migrants, asylum seekers, and people who were homeless or living in supported accommodation. Walk and talk sessions at West Park provided people with a chance to talk to others about their on-going life experiences. Over 400 one to one counselling sessions were provided to people needing additional support. For those exiting the eight-week programme, 'Extra Time' sessions provided an open door to return for further support if needed.

A total of **205 adults** took part in the Head4Health pilot. Significant increases in cohort wellbeing scores were observed for participant groups along with reduced perceived stress scores. Pilot initiatives have now been adopted into the universal model of Head4Health.

Case Study Three: Suicide Prevention Awareness and Training

Over 350 people from primary care settings, City-wide workforce, and barbers and hairdressers across the City were trained in suicide prevention helping to reduce suicide stigma and provide a better initial response to people exhibiting suicidal ideation.

Historically, talking about suicide has been a taboo and the training delivered will help reduce this by enabling people to feel comfortable with talking about the subject and broaching the conversation with members of the public they support and serve in various forms. Members of the public will also sense it is acceptable to talk about suicide and may seek help for themselves or loved ones. The trained professionals are now better equipped to respond empathetically and are more knowledgeable on how and where to refer people for further support.

These outcomes tie into the strategic objectives of the Wolverhampton Suicide Prevention Stakeholder Forum which oversees the City-wide Suicide Prevention Strategy. The various training providers will be offering those who attended any of the suicide prevention training ongoing support including a regular forum overseen by a Trust Counselling Psychologist.

The '**Look out for Wolverhampton**' suicide awareness and prevention campaign ran across the City from 23 May to 5 June 2022. The campaign was spearheaded by the Wolverhampton Suicide Prevention Stakeholder Forum which is made up of a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations in the City. The digital platform [Look Out For Wolverhampton](#) hosted campaign resources which were also cascaded across notice boards and on highway routes across the City. Messages encouraged people to play their part in keeping others safe and well signposting to support services locally and nationally. The campaign was augmented through radio interviews and two City centre events where residents were engaged to help them learn more about the campaign and where they can seek support for suicide.

5. OHID Reporting and Evaluation

The Better Mental Health 2021-2022 programme in Wolverhampton was successfully delivered, exceeding its original estimate of reach. City-wide efforts to promote mental health and wellbeing and prevent mental health problems during the programme were celebrated at a national OHID programme evaluation event as an example of good practice amongst other local authorities.

6. Next Steps: Sustaining system wide focus on prevention across the life course

System-wide action is required to consider how approaches that focus on promoting mental health and wellbeing and preventing mental health problems can be mobilised sustainably and at the scale required for the City. Mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention can improve the lives of people within the City, as well as reduce pressures on NHS services, social care, education, criminal justice, and employers, resulting in economic benefits even in the short term. One potential route to sustain the momentum galvanised towards prevention approaches during the Better Mental Health 2021-2022 programme and support our existing public mental health commitments is through adopting the ambitions outlined in the [Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

7. Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health: Further Information

The Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health is a commitment from system leaders to develop actions which aim to:

- ✓ **Prevent** mental health problems
- ✓ **Promote** good mental health and wellbeing

The above ambitions can be achieved by **strengthening protective factors, reducing risk factors and reducing mental health inequalities** across the City.

Signing the prevention consensus statement and committing to a plan to address the prevention and promotion of better mental health is a cost-effective, evidence-based approach to reducing health inequalities and preventing future harm. By committing to the Prevention Concordat, system leaders are required to pledge to:

- ✓ focus on **prevention and the wider determinants** of mental health
- ✓ work in partnership and across organisations to deliver an increased focus on the prevention of mental health problems and the promotion of good mental health at local level
- ✓ promote a prevention-focused approach towards improving the public's mental health, as all organisations have a role to play
- ✓ work collaboratively across organisational boundaries and disciplines to secure place-based improvements that are tailored to local needs and assets, in turn increasing sustainability and the effective use of limited resources
- ✓ build the capacity and capability across workforces to prevent mental health problems and promote good mental health and wellbeing.

To be recognised as a signatory, a local authority in conjunction with wider system leaders agree to the above Prevention Concordat consensus statement pledges and agree to produce a prevention-focussed action plan which understands local needs and assets, strengthens partnership approaches, provides leadership and direction, and acts for mental health promotion and mental ill health prevention, including reducing health inequalities, defining success, and measuring progress. The above commitments are likely to complement workstreams already underway in the City to support public mental health ambitions to ensure every resident in the City of Wolverhampton has the best mental health that they can at every stage of their life.

8. Proposal

The HWT partnership are asked to consider endorsing a proposal for the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) to explore the potential benefits of signing up to the national **Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health** which would provide a framework to map, and assess, further progress against strategic ambitions to promote good mental health and wellbeing and prevent mental health problems in the City. Should the partnership decide to support this course of action, further progress updates will be provided at a future date.

Community Stories of COVID-19

Summary of findings from co-creation activities: Protective factors for wellbeing, challenges faced during COVID-19, and resources which groups felt would help improve their wellbeing moving forwards.

Group	Protective Factors	Challenges Faced	Want/need more
Youth Council <i>(children and young people)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends Technology Art Mental health days organised by schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of proper connection with friends Online learning at home less productive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible counselling Wellbeing sessions in schools Physical/art activities Cheaper public transport
Voice4Parents <i>(SEND families)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal support from neighbours, employers and groups such as Voice4Parents (i.e., providing activity packs and laptops) Personal strength 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School closures & loss of specialist support led to lack of routine for children and no respite for parents Felt abandoned by services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities & inclusive play spaces for SEND children & families Earlier prevention/ access to services An inclusive & understanding society Support for parents of SEN children
Access2Business <i>(young unemployed & unemployed with pre-existing mental health conditions)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing time in interests/hobbies Technology to stay in touch with family Pets provided a focus beyond the self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdrawal of 'lifeline' activities Loss of identity & purpose from unemployment Decline in access to public services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health needs to be talked about more openly Easier access to mental health support/shorter waiting times to avoid problems getting worse

Group	Protective Factors	Challenges Faced	Want/need more
Wolves Foundation Head 4 Health <i>(women)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time to spend with family & children Technology Hobbies Time for self-care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of support networks & familiar activities Lack of privacy at home in lockdown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support groups to meet and socialise with others
The Crafty Gardener <i>(older adults with learning disabilities)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends Technology to keep in touch with people Occupy time with activities i.e., Baking/gardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about safety in the city Unreliability of public transport Mask wearing made communication harder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive spaces & activities for those with learning disabilities Awareness raising with the general population of LD
TLC College <i>(older unemployed adults & ethnic minorities)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal support Family connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lockdowns and pressure of home-schooling – isolation, loneliness Problems accessing services e.g., GPs & housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity of PH messaging Support for language translation Frontline staff with lived experience

Group	Protective Factors	Challenges Faced	Want/need more
Refugee & Migrant Centre <i>(refugee & migrants)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends & neighbours • Faith & churches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor housing quality • No access to legal employment • Lack of awareness of service options & language barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better awareness of service availability and what they can expect • Better quality housing
Aspiring Futures <i>(ethnic minorities & women)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New hobbies (i.e., baking) • Volunteering to help others • Spending more time with family & children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology & digital exclusion • Limited access to garden/outdoors • Fear of getting COVID • Closing of ESOL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor activities for children • IT classes for women to be able to support children
Women of Wolverhampton <i>(ethnic minorities & women)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity of informal support groups such as WoW • Conversations with peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thresholds to mental health support • Holding multiple roles including caring so unable to work • Trauma of loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal support groups without thresholds to attend or limited number of sessions