Mental Well-being Impact Assessment (MWIA) Newsletter January 2011

The Public Health White Paper—New Opportunities for Public Mental Health

Healthy Lives, Healthy People (HLHP) presents the most comprehensive understanding of mental health within national public health policy to date and uses a broad definition of health, including physical, social and emotional dimensions:

“Good wellbeing does not just mean the absence of mental illness – it brings a wide range of benefits, including reduced health risk behaviour (such as smoking), reduced mortality, improved educational outcomes and increased productivity at work.” – (HLHP p14)

It recognises the value of promoting the mental health and well-being of the whole community, of preventing mental illness and of supporting those experiencing mental health problems. It also recognises how improving mental health will contribute to wider social and economic goals and to tackling health inequalities. Distinguishing health as a positive sense of well-being, and not merely the absence of mental illness, is an important leap for evidence based policy and planning.

Traditionally, the mental health of the nation has been measured by looking at suicide rates and levels of mental illness. The Office for National Statistics launch of a debate on measuring national wellbeing is a radical new development that will have important implications for public mental health. The White Paper observes that tackling poor mental health could reduce our overall disease burden by nearly a quarter. The paper is clear that it is better prevention, rather than treatment, that will deliver greater overall increases in healthy life expectancy.

The new arrangements for public health – notably the transition to local authority responsibility and the focus on empowering local communities – present important opportunities for public mental health. Key strengths include greater potential for:

• whole systems approaches to promotion, prevention and recovery
• community involvement, as public health becomes part of the local democratic process
• strengthening the public mental health contribution of primary care
• greater recognition of the role of voluntary and business sectors
• personalisation and identifying/enabling community based and mainstream sources of support for mental health

As a tool for integrating and improving impact on mental well-being across policy, systems and services MWIA will have an important role to play in this agenda.

This is an edited extract from a briefing on the White Paper by NMHDU for the full briefing go to:


MWIA online forum and resource launched

February 7th will see a new online community for people interested in MWIA going live. The site will enable people to network, access resources and reports, share ideas and experience, debate and keep up to date with developments in MWIA.

We have created a sub community of the Local Government Improvement and Development Healthy Communities “Community of Practice” page. To join take three quick steps:

1. Register at www.communities.idea.gov.uk
2. Join the Healthy Communities Community of Practice
3. Then apply to join the MWIA sub community

Join now in time for the public launch of the new site with a live “Hot Seat” discussion on MWIA with Dr. Lynne Friedli and others on February 14th 11.30-1pm.
“Today the government is asking the Office for National Statistics to devise a new way of measuring well-being in Britain”. Prime Ministers speech 25 Nov 2010 Join the debate@ www.ons.gov.uk/well-being

MWIA features in new commissioning guidance

Commissioning mental well-being for all: A toolkit for commissioners was published this month. The toolkit, commissioned by NMHDU and developed and produced by Karen Newbigging and Chris Heginbotham, The International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion - University of Central Lancashire, provides a resource for local authority and health commissioners to improve the mental well-being of people living in their areas.

The toolkit describes ten steps for commissioning for mental health and wellbeing and lists key resources to support these commissioning processes.

The ten steps are:
1. focus on the mental well-being of the population
2. collaborate across sectors and levels
3. develop and use methods to engage communities
4. understand local factors and determinants of health and community assets and resources
5. base decisions on evidence
6. develop strategies and interventions across the life course
7. put measures in place to ensure effective implementation
8. identify opportunities to mainstream mental well-being into existing activities
9. increase investments upstream
10. demonstrate accountability for outcomes.

MWIA is listed as a key resource to support the commissioning process, in particular for securing collaboration across sectors in promoting well-being. The toolkit can be downloaded from: http://www.nmhdu.org.uk/silo/files/commissioning-wellbeing-for-all.pdf

Help to Save the HIA Gateway

The HIA Gateway which has been funded by the Department of Health for the last 7-8 years is under threat. The gateway has provided an important access point and resource for MWIA reports, the MWIA toolkit and useful evidence and guidance. It’s likely that the pages will remain but there will be no value of the HIA gateway to update them and as we all know resources that aren’t updated increasingly lose their relevance except as a historical archive. Worse, they then tend to disappear as visitors numbers to the web pages declines.

Support the Campaign by sending an email with your name, organisation and the value of the HIA gateway to savehiagateway@gmail.com.

A letter will then be sent to key people in the Department of Health and professional bodies to lobby to keep the HIA as an active resource.

Nicholas Henry 1963 –2010

We are very sad to report that our colleague Nicholas Henry died suddenly on December 21st. Nicholas was a trainer and mentor to many teams taking part in MWIA training. He was very active in putting MWIA into practice with a wide range of organisations in Lambeth where he was based and he had had significant success in influencing the local authority to begin to use MWIA on their services and developments.

Last year Nicholas carried out an MWIA on the redevelopment of Windrush Square in Brixton.

Nicholas was also very committed to using MWIA to demonstrate the impact of the arts on mental well-being and in late 2010 he had adapted MWIA to assess the impact of an arts programme for older adults with mental health problems based at Tate Modern.

Nicholas’ enthusiasm, knowledge, ideas, creativity, support and humour will be sorely missed by many in the MWIA field.

Stop Press

Your help needed

We need your help to keep the HIA gateway going. A letter will then be sent to key people in the Department of Health and professional bodies to lobby to keep the HIA as an active resource.

Send an email with your name, organisation and the value of the HIA gateway to savehiagateway@gmail.com. We are setting up a website which will be available from December 21st.

Tate Modern.


The toolkit can be downloaded from:
Recent publications and events on well-being

The role of local government in promoting well-being. This report was published in late 2010 and focuses on applying the latest research on promoting mental well-being to re-shaping the role of local authorities, particularly in the context of public spending cuts and recession. MWIA is highlighted as a tool for designing services with well-being in mind.


WARM: Well-being and Resilience Measure

WARM is a new tool to help communities understand their underlying needs and capacities. It brings together a wide range of indicators to measure wellbeing and resilience. WARM captures both a community's assets, including levels of social capital, good schools and public services, or high educational achievement; as well as vulnerabilities, including levels of depression and unemployment.

http://www.youngfoundation.org/publications/reports/temperature-local-communities

Atlas of Mental Well-being

This is an atlas of regional and local authority level maps of factors that influence mental health and well-being to help to inform Joint Strategic Needs Assessments. Produced by the North East Public Health Observatory as an initial study to test the feasibility of an index for wellbeing.

http://www.nepho.org.uk/publications/805/

A debate on “Measuring Well-being: A need or a political strategy?” took place at Kings College on Jan 19th. This included contributions from Paul Allin Deputy Director of the Measuring National Well-being at the Office for National Statistics. Presentations can be downloaded from http://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/groups/khsc/events/seminars.html

Using MWIA to improve well-being in the workplace

A presentation on MWIA has recently been given to the national meeting of the regional workplace health and well-being coordinators. There is keen interest in using MWIA in the workplace – for the public sector in the context of efficiency savings and in the private sector in the context of human resource issues. We are working towards undertaking a ‘showcase MWIA’ with one or two major employers in the south east to generate some examples of how MWIA could be used to improve well-being in the workplace setting.

We are planning a conference with employers in late Spring so watch this space for more details and please get in touch if you have used MWIA in the workplace.

MWIA News In brief

By January 17th The New MWIA Toolkit had been downloaded 2529 times from the HIA Gateway since the launch in October. This figure far outstrips any other download resource that the HIA Gateway has ever promoted.

The MWIA National Collaborative have recently carried out a MWIA Screening of the Big Society. The intention is to publish a short report summarising the potential positive impacts and identify where there may be areas of unintended negative impact with a view to making recommendations in response to the findings.

MWIA Training is now taking place in the West Midlands and North East regions as part of the capacity building programme funded by the National Mental Health Development Unit.

This year MWIA will be on the agenda at the 11th International Health Impact Assessment Conference “In Crisis Times, Healthier Ways” in Granada 14th—15th April.

www.hiainternationalconference.org
MWIA in practice: How do we make the most impact with MWIA? By Nerys Edmonds

If you are keen to use MWIA in your work often the question is where do you start? There is only so much time and so many programmes, services and projects to which MWIA could be applied.

Do you focus on projects that are having a fairly obvious positive impact on well-being, but maybe have not been able to “measure” or evidence this impact? E.g. a walking group.

Or do you focus on programmes that have the potential to have a major impact on a whole community’s well-being but this is less obvious and perhaps has not been considered? E.g. redevelopment of a town centre?

Or you may be interested in improving and enhancing the impact that an existing service has on well-being, such as a day centre or a cardiac rehab programme?

Of course, it will depend on what you are trying to achieve and all of these are good uses of MWIA, but where might we make the most impact? Or gain the most influence on well-being?

The case of two recent MWIAs in Lambeth sparked this conversation with my colleague Nicholas, and also highlighted the importance of screening. Nicholas had carried out a screening on a programme to support recently released offenders with sentences less than 12 months. The screening revealed that the programme was having many impacts on the protective factors that the outcomes were already linked to well-being and the programme also had a robust evaluation process in place to measure outcomes. In this case the outcome of screening was that a full MWIA was not necessary, but the screening had proved useful in highlighting actions for service improvement.

In contrast, a screening of a recent urban redevelopment identified that the project had the potential to impact on a wide range of wider determinants, population groups and protective factors but also a number of potential negative impacts were highlighted. As a result a full MWIA took place which engaged stakeholders in a dialogue about how the re-development could maximize positive and avoid negative impacts on community well-being.

It could be argued that it is in these scenarios that MWIA can make the most difference by bringing awareness of well-being into new arenas and by addressing negative impacts? Any thoughts?

We welcome your contributions to this conversation!