

Thursday 10 September 2015

City Council's Preparations for World Mental Health Day, 10 October 2015

Introduction

"The environment in which we live can make some individuals and population groups more at risk of poor mental health. These risk factors include low income and/or debt, housing conditions, unemployment, social isolation and adverse life experiences such as adversity in childhood and domestic abuse" [Cambridgeshire Public Mental Health Strategy 2015 – 2018](#)

This paper focuses on some of the work the City Council is doing to help raise awareness of mental health issues in the lead up to World Mental Health Day and highlights some of its key policies and strategies that help address environmental risk factors for poor mental health.

Recent Work

Some highlights of what the city council is working on include:

- Delivering an [Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) that will improve the quality of life for local people living on low incomes in the city. Low income and debt are significant risk factor for poor mental health. Actions include:
 - Helping people on low incomes to maximise their income and minimise their costs
 - Increasing community pride, raising aspirations and making the move into work easier
 - Reducing the impact of poverty on children and helping low income families with the cost of raising a child
 - Reducing the link between poor health and poverty
 - Ensuring that vulnerable older people and people with disabilities get the services that they need and reducing the social isolation they can experience
 - Helping people with high housing costs, increasing numbers of affordable homes, and improving the condition of people's homes
 - Working in partnership to tackle wider barriers to employment and engagement.
- Commissioning, through its substantial community development grants programme, services from the voluntary and community sector that support vulnerable people with mental health issues, and delivering neighbourhood support projects through its community development programme.
- Developing a Housing Strategy that recognises the links between health, social care and housing, and the importance of promoting and improving

quality of life and health and well-being. Homelessness prevention is a high priority, as is promoting sustained and settled lifestyles, supporting health and social care partners in their plans for transformation of commissioning and services, developing more integrated services, supporting people to make choices about living independently.

- Implementing a Community Safety Plan which includes continuing the work of the ‘Supporting People and Preventing Anti-social Behaviour’ pilot which started last year. Through this pilot we are working with a cohort of people with medium level of needs in terms of support to manage alcohol and substance misuse or mental health issues.
- Working with children and young people, some of whom will have poor mental health, through our CHYPPS service and promoting their inclusion in community activities.
- Delivering a Single Equality Scheme that included commissioning research into the needs of the LGB&T community, which highlighted social isolation and hate crime as particular concerns.
- Working to address the incidence and impact of benefit sanctions and the introduction of Universal Credit on vulnerable families through our Revenues team and involvement in the Together for Families programme.
- Reducing the risk factors that identify potential homelessness including, debt, rent arrears and anti-social behaviour. Our City Homes service has a number of dedicated tenancy sustainment officers and our housing advice and homeless team are involved with supporting people presenting with mental health issues. We also run a supported housing service, sign-posting people to services and carrying out assessments for older people as part of a contractual agreement with the county council.
- Ensuring our enforcement activity is appropriate for people with mental health issues and to help alleviate problems affecting the wider community, such as noise control and a hoarder’s policy, and to safeguard vulnerable people.

Activities during World Mental Health Week 5th to 10th October.

The city council aims to raise awareness across different organisations, groups and communities during the week and also facilitate discussions and action about mental health issues. We would welcome any interest from those who may wish to join in.

We are co-ordinating a list of events in the City and publishing them on our website. As part of this week, the city council will be offering additional training and support to council staff and managers on mental health awareness and running a variety of activities for staff and the public. Activities include:

- Unison are proposing to run some activities for their UNISON members – 2 sessions of mindfulness workshop and 2 sessions of Pilates and maybe some short daily walks during lunch breaks from different sites.
- Mental Health Training sessions for staff – we have already started in on this by taking up the kind offer from the County Council who are offering Mental Health First Aid Training
- A Tea Dance in partnership with the Cambridge Arts Salon at Ditchburn Place on the 10th with the young women we work with for the residents there - it will be opened up to the public too and details and ticket will be available soon.
- CityNet and the Councils website will have dedicated pages listing mental health resources and offering quizzes, case studies, ideas and practical examples and feature good practice. It will also list all the events happening across the week in the City and beyond so that people can see what is happening and join in.
- Promoting a Safer Spaces Project with the Encompass Network that asks businesses and organisations to display a symbol and sign a pledge to be a 'safer space' for the LGB&T community. The project is aimed for example at transgender people who might feel unsafe when shopping for clothes or to queer couples who might feel uncomfortable being together in public spaces.
- Signing up to the "Mental Health Challenge" which asks for elected member 'mental health champions, identifying a lead officer for mental health to link in with colleagues across the council and following the [implementation framework](#) * for the mental health strategy where it is relevant to the council's work and local needs.

Report prepared by:

Suzanne Goff, Strategy Officer, Cambridge City Council