Promoting mental well-being in young people

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Overview

A. What is mental well-being?
B. DISCOVER: A pilot study
C. The Big One: HeadStart
Mental wellbeing

- “Mental illness” - Diagnosable disorder
- Mental health - Absence of disorder?
- Positive mental health - Resilience / coping, growth, self-actualisation etc.
- Mental wellbeing - Subjective wellbeing + social functioning?
The views of young people

Mental wellbeing ...

- "...means a person feeling like they are making a positive and useful contribution."
- "...is broader than just emotional and mental health - it incorporates your economic wellbeing, and your physical health and wellbeing."
- "...rests on knowing how to help yourself as well as how to seek support from others."
- "...means flourishing in all aspects of your life."
Measurement - WEMWBS

14 positively worded statements, e.g.:

- “I’ve been feeling good about myself”
- “I’ve been feeling useful”
- “I’ve been dealing with problems well”
Fewer than 25% of young people with mental health needs access CAMHS in the UK

(Green et al., 2005)
The views of young people

- Difficulties in developing relationships with others
- Poor mental well-being constructed as young person being difficult, rather than distressed → shame
- Poor self esteem
- Low expectations, low aspirations
- No experience of being or feeling worthwhile or valued
- Lack of self-care → poorer physical health and wellbeing
→ Not seeking help early as result of poor MWB
DISCOVER

• “Early intervention for inner-city youth: CBT workshops for anxiety and depression in 16-18-year-olds” → “DISCOVER”

• School-based CBT workshops

• Recruited & randomised 10 schools

• 155 participants, very low drop-out → engagement work

• Aims:
  - Feasibility: Engage schools & participants; select outcome measures
  - Acceptability: Students rate the intervention positively
  - Accessibility: Diverse population recruited

Contact: June Brown, June.Brown@kcl.ac.uk
RCADS Anxiety t-score
HeadStart

• Big Lottery strategic investment
• Aim: Improve mental wellbeing of 10 to 16 year-olds
• Up to £75m in six local partnerships, 2016-2023:
  – Locally developed, cross-disciplinary, multi-layered and integrated prevention strategy
  – Development of local conditions to ensure strategy is sustainable
  – Develop robust evidence base around “what works”
HeadStart

Improved MWB

- Reduced onset of mental health problems
- “Positive transitions”, e.g. attainment, engagement
- Reduction in “risky behaviours”, e.g. substance abuse, teen pregnancy, criminality

Improved employability
Economic evaluation of HeadStart

• **Aim:**
  - To develop models and frameworks to help understand the costs and potential down-stream savings from intervening early to improve mental wellbeing in young people

• **Approach:**
  - Calculate the costs of poor mental wellbeing
  - Estimate the (potential) cost savings from intervening ("cost avoided" - because problems were prevented)
The costs of poor MWB

- Poor MWB
- Mental health problem
- Criminality
- Poorer attainment
- Reduced productivity

The costs are symbolized by the currency symbol £.
The views of young people

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• “...rests on knowing how to help yourself as well as how to seek support from others.”

• “...means flourishing in all aspects of your life.”
Discussion

- Nature of poor MWB has implications for access, service design
- Working effectively with young people, schools → time, resources
- Issue of effect size in low-level /preventative interventions
- How can we capture the nuances of MWB in economic evaluation? Do we need to?
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Promoting Mental Health: the economic case

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