

## **Mental Health Awareness Training**

### **Guidance for Good Practice**

Mental health awareness training should aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Participants are well informed and motivated to look after their own mental health and that of others
- Participants have positive and accepting attitudes to people with mental health problems

To do so, training courses and programmes should encompass the following:

- Language in relation to mental health – in particular the meaning of mental health as distinct from mental illness
- The determinants of mental health and how these can be addressed at the individual and community level<sup>1</sup>
- The positive steps everyone can take to protect their mental wellbeing

Keeping physically active

Eating well

Drinking in Moderation

Valuing yourself and others

Talking about your feelings

Keeping in touch with friends and loved ones

Caring for others

Getting involved and making a contribution

Learning new skills

Doing something creative

Taking a break

Asking for help

- The development of skills and personal resources for good mental health including problem solving, communication, relaxation, self-efficacy, optimism, hopefulness and confidence
- Mental health problems and treatment options
- Stigma and discrimination in relation to mental illness and how this can be tackled, including language and addressing misunderstandings and stereotypes

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<sup>1</sup> For useful models see MacDonald and O'Hara (1996) 'Position Paper on Mental Health Promotion: Ten Elements of Mental Health, its Promotion and Demotion: Implications for Practice', SHEPS, and Sources of Support for People with Mental Health Problems in 'An Executive Briefing on Mental Health Promotion: implementing Standard One of the National Service Framework, Mentality/The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health (2001)

- Where professionals are the audience, the development of their mental health promotion role within their current remit and the context of the local mental health promotion strategy

This outline represents a gold standard for training to raise mental health awareness, tackle stigma and equip people with knowledge and skills to achieve good mental health.

Some mental health related training courses will have a fixed curriculum around a specific topic or training aim. Adopting the comprehensive outline suggested would therefore not be feasible and the scope to develop course content will of course be limited. However, there will still be value in building some brief and basic information into courses that do not address mental health. Where there is the possibility to do so, it is recommended that the following areas could reasonably be covered in an add-on session of half-an hour to an hour.

- Definitions of mental health and mental illness
- 12 positive steps to protect mental wellbeing
- Common signs of mental distress and local sources of support
- The damage caused by stigma and discrimination and the facts behind common myths surrounding mental illness