

Context

In its 'Promoting Mental Health: Strategy and Action Plan 2003-2008', the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety reflects much of modern thinking on mental health and associated issues. While recognising that in the population there are 'at risk' groups who are especially vulnerable to mental health problems, there is also equal recognition of the fact that everyone benefits from improved mental health.

Why work to promote better mental health and emotional well being?

There can be no doubt that in disadvantaged areas there are many factors that threaten and undermine people's mental health and emotional well-being: poverty and unemployment; social exclusion or discrimination; poor physical environment; negative peer pressures; experience of abuse or violence and family or community conflict or tension.

Poverty is particularly destructive in the way it grinds people's confidence into the ground. The Strategy document explains that Northern Ireland, 'experiences higher levels of deprivation than Britain or Europe. The proportion of people on social security benefits here is higher than in Britain or Europe. . . . Poverty, low wages, unemployment, poor housing and poor education have a substantial impact on people's health'. The document also draws attention to the simple fact that 'economic or financial disadvantage increases stresses, including everyday pressures to pay bills or to purchase food and clothing and limits access to activities that enhance independence and well-being.'

Aims of the programme

This training resource pack is primarily about an approach to mental health that enables people – if they think it necessary – to explore ways of making realistic changes, it raises awareness and is essentially a guide to personal development. The training pack will encourage people to:

- Know more about themselves.
- Value themselves and others.
- Gain more confidence and control of their lives.
- Know their limits and, if and when those limits are reached, honestly communicate with someone who can help – a relative, a friend or a professional.

TRAINING RESOURCE PACK

TOWARDS BETTER MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING[©]

CONTENT OF SESSIONS

Session 1: What is Mental Health?

Preconceptions of Mental Health
Defining Mental Health

Session 2: Mental Illness

Causes of Mental Illness
Defining Mental Illness
Myths Surrounding Mental Illness
Statistics of Mental Illness
Common Mental Illnesses

Session 3: Factors Influencing Mental Health

Social Experiences
Needs Versus Wants/Expectations
Positive & Negative Effects on Mental Health

Session 4: Assessing Your Mental Health

Personal Assessment
Evaluating your own Mental Health

Session 5: Stress

What Is Stress?
Symptoms of Stress
Stressors
Stress Is a Normal Part of Life

Session 6: Ideas for Change

Being Nice Isn't Always a Good Idea
Making Positive Changes
Positive Personal Changes