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Purpose of document

As part of Mental Health Awareness Week 2017, the Mental Health Foundation wanted to find out why too few people are thriving with good mental health. They commissioned a survey in March 2017, conducted by The National Centre for Social Research, in England, Scotland and Wales to address the question. The survey asked specific questions to: a) understanding how widespread mental health problems are experienced and reported; b) find out the levels of positive and negative mental health and c) know what people do to cope with stressful problems and difficult times in their everyday lives. For the research, a total of 2,290 interviews were completed using the survey - 82% online and 18% by phone. The findings have been published in a report which is the first to look overall at the UK's mental health after over 17 years of Mental Health Awareness campaigning each year, asking are we '*Surviving or Thriving?*'

Summary of contents

To begin with, the report summarises the key findings of self-reported mental health problems from the survey. It then describes what it means to thrive and puts it in context on a national UK level by drawing on the scale of problem of negative mental health and the broader challenge of achieving improvements in mental health both individually and as a society, to match that of physical health. The report includes a case study about a person's lived experience of depression. It sets out 10 steps, and describes what people can do for each step, to thrive with good mental health and look after their mental health. The report concludes with a list of five steps which are responsibilities that can be taken by the government to ensure a mentally thriving UK.

Summary of outcomes

Levels of good mental health are worryingly low as nearly two-thirds of people surveyed said that they have experienced a mental health problem. Only 13% reported living with high levels of good mental health. Experiences of poor mental health are not evenly distributed among different groups of people. Reported experiences of a mental health problem are greater among young adults aged 18-34 compared to people over the age of 55. The over 55s reported experiencing better mental health than average and were more likely to take positive steps to help them cope better with the problems that come with everyday life. Also, 3 in 4 people living in low-income households reported experiencing a mental health problem compared to 6 in 10 of the highest household income. Among the people surveyed who are not in employment, the majority (85%) have experienced a mental health problem compared to two-thirds of people in work and just over half of people who have retired. The risk of experiencing mental ill health is higher if female, a young adult, living alone or in a large household. The findings suggest that the UK has a long way to go before they can be described as a thriving nation. Despite making great strides in achieving good physical health and increasing life expectancy, the nation is yet to achieve the same for mental health.

Summary of recommendations

- Develop a National Thriving Mental Health Programme to be delivered in, for example, schools and workplaces, and use leaders of local community groups and local networks and peer supporters to raise public awareness and spread understanding about personal mental health and building resilience.
- Investigate effective ways to address the key contributing factors to poor mental health to prevent it from happening, using evidence from mental health stakeholders, academics and people with lived experience of mental health problems.
- Introduce a regular '100% Health' check, available to everyone in a variety of ways, to help people manage their mental health, reduce their risk of mental ill health and identify when they need professional mental health support.

- Put a fair amount of funding into mental health research equal to that put into preventing physical health problems. Research should focus on preventing, rather than treating mental health problems, and identify ways to address them early.

Further information and resources

Mental Health Awareness Week (8th-14th May 2017)

https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week?gclid=EAlalQobChMI2t2Pglia1QlVwgrTCh3jRwT1EAAYASAAEgIyy_D_BwE