

IIMHL & IIDL Leadership Briefing XXIX

National Community Solutions to COVID-19

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Janet Peters

Introduction

The following two documents are examples of what communities can do to bring solutions to the impact of COVID-19 on people. The first is a major thought piece from the Wellbeing Trust on how communities can thrive:

“Over the past eight weeks (May through June 2020), amidst unprecedented upheavals across the country and around the world, more than 100 people and organizations diverted their daily work to help craft this Springboard for equitable recovery and resilience in communities across America. We drafted this document for ourselves, and for everyone who wants to help America to emerge from the compounding crises of 2020 with greater resilience, humanity, and direction”. (pVI)¹

The second from the Centre for Mental Health in the UK outlines community case studies that show how preventing mental health problems requires an understanding that mental health is interwoven with other agendas including housing, employment, social inclusion, economic development, and safety and that local government is uniquely placed to connect all parts of the system.

We hope these are helpful for leaders.

US

Well Being Trust, Community Initiatives and ReThink Health: Thriving Together: A Springboard for Equitable Recovery and Resilience in Communities Across America

4th July 2020

A summary of this large document outlines the following:

Vital Conditions

Thriving Natural World

Sustainable resources, contact with nature, freedom from hazards - Clean air, water, soil; healthy ecosystems able to sustainably provide necessary resources;

¹ Thriving Together Wellbeing Trust, July 2020
, <https://thriving.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Springboard-Full-Content-For-Screen-.pdf>

accessible natural spaces; freedom from extreme heat, flooding, wind, radiation, earthquakes, pathogens

Basic Needs for Health & Safety

Basic requirements for health and safety - Nutritious food, safe drinking water; fresh air; sufficient sleep; routine physical activity; safe, satisfying sexuality and reproduction; freedom from trauma, violence, addiction, and crime; routine care for physical and mental health

Humane Housing

Humane, consistent housing - Adequate space per person; safe structures; affordable costs; diverse neighborhoods (without gentrification, segregation, concentrated poverty); close to work, school, food, recreation and nature

Meaningful Work & Wealth

Rewarding work, careers, and standards of living - job training/retraining; good-paying and fulfilling jobs; family and community wealth; savings and limited debt

Lifelong Learning

Continuous learning, education, and literacy - continuous development of cognitive, social, emotional abilities; early childhood experiences; elementary, high school, and higher education; career and adult education

Reliable Transportation

Reliable, safe, and accessible transportation - close to work, school, food, leisure; safe transport; active transport; efficient energy use; few environmental hazards

Belonging & Civic Muscle

Sense of belonging and power to shape a common world - Social support; civic associations; freedom from stigma, discrimination, oppression; support for civil rights, human rights; civic agency; collective efficacy; vibrant arts, culture, and spiritual life; equitable access to information; many opportunities for civic engagement (voting, volunteer, public work)

Strategic Imperatives

1. Affirm human dignity by establishing racial justice and full inclusion for all people as a daily, living reality.
2. Strengthen Belonging and Civic Muscle by working across differences for the wellbeing of people and places, which in turn, unlocks abundant assets of those same people and places.
3. Expand the other vital conditions with local stewards in the lead, beginning with people and places that are struggling and suffering.

4. Solidify new legacies for living together by renewing civic life; economic life; as well as social, emotional, and spiritual life.

<https://thriving.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Springboard-Full-Content-For-Screen-.pdf>

UK

Centre for Mental Health (CMH): Local authorities and the public's mental health

7 August 2020

Promoting positive mental wellbeing and preventing mental health problems helps us stay healthy, live meaningful lives and avoid serious (and sometimes lifelong) distress. Preventing mental health problems requires an understanding that mental health is interwoven with other agendas – including housing, employment, social inclusion, economic development, and safety. Local authorities are uniquely placed to connect all parts of the system. They have the ability to knit together their own strategies to work towards fewer health inequalities and better mental health for all.

Our place: local authorities and the public's mental health examines the initiatives of local councils that are rising to the challenge of promoting good mental health and preventing poor mental health in their communities. These councils seek to improve population mental health, reduce inequalities and prevent mental ill health in their communities through a combination of strategic and practical approaches. The report presents learning from these areas, prior to the pandemic and in the midst of the challenges brought by Covid-19, alongside an overview of the evidence for prevention and the national policy context.

CMH looked at nine local councils that are pioneering work in this area:

- Basildon Borough Council – Health in all policies
- Birmingham City Council – Prioritising upstream mental health support
- Bristol City Council – Thrive Bristol: Thriving at Work
- Camden and Islington Council – Addressing determinants of poor mental health using Making Every Contact Count (MECC) and Psychologically Informed Consultation and Training (PICT)
- Leeds City Council – Mentally Healthy Leeds: a whole city approach
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – Stronger Sandwell: asset-based community development for better mental health
- St Albans City and District Council – A strategic approach in a district level authority
- Surrey County Council – Developing a long-term strategy at county level
- Tameside and Glossop Strategic Commission – Living Well: integration and neighbourhood support

There is a real risk that many more people will experience mental ill health in the wake of the pandemic. But, by taking affirmative action to reduce the risk of serious and long-lasting mental health problems, it will be possible to help individuals and communities to recover. While it's not possible to prevent all mental ill health either now or at any other time, it is possible to boost communities' resilience and help people to 'bounce back' from the crisis. The nine case studies in this document demonstrate promising approaches to achieving this.

https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-08/CentreforMH_OurPlace.pdf