

What do we know about wellbeing?

In the last two decades there has been progress in public understanding of mental health and wellbeing. There is now greater acceptance and awareness that:

Most people experience mental distress at some point in their lives. This is not just about having a diagnosable mental health problem, but life experiences that produce a stress, sadness or anxiety that we're not sure we can cope with.

Negative experiences that can impact on wellbeing are many and various. It's not just major life experiences that can have this effect. So can everyday experiences of discrimination, harassment, or financial worries.

Preventive and promotive health is therefore part of the picture. We should not wait until there's a problem to think about sources of stress and on the other side, what makes us feel well.

If we are feeling low or anxious then - as with any problem - a good place to start is to let someone else know. In trying to 'bottle it up' instead, it's common for people to overlook sources of valuable support and advice readily at hand.

Physical health and lifestyle factors impact on mental health. Even simple things like lack of routine, or lack of variety and progression, can make us feel out of touch with ourselves and others.

People diagnosed with mental health problems can and do recover, often by reaching their own decisions about what medical help has worked for them (or not), and with support from friends and family.

There is diversity of opinion, and healthy debate, about what makes life good. No single tradition, institution or profession has all the answers about wellbeing.

Promoting wellbeing among staff is humane and a good thing in itself. Good staff wellbeing can also have a number of benefits for settings including:

- Positive impact on children, including stronger relationships with children
- Increased productivity of staff members
- Reduced absences from work in relation to sickness (both short term and long term)
- Staff being able to manage stress better and develop healthier coping strategies
- Improved job satisfaction, which can support retention
- Staff feeling valued, supported and invested in.

