



How improving the wellbeing of Wokingham Borough residents could alleviate pressure on local health & care services

February 2017

Introduction

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough supported Unlock Your Wellbeing, a new Community Interest Company, to offer free places for local people to attend one of a series of 4 workshops; Living with A Long Term Condition; Increasing Happiness, Wellbeing and Resilience, Coping with Fatigues and an introduction to Wellness Action Recovery Planning (WRAP).

The driving theory is that the more people can look after their own mental health and wellbeing, the healthier they will be and the less intervention they will need from statutory services such as the NHS or social care. They will also have a better quality of life.

Why Wellbeing matters?

Well-being can be understood as how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole.

Wellbeing.....

- Adds years to life / increases life expectancy
- Improves recovery from illness
- Is associated with positive health behaviours in adults and children
- Influences the wellbeing and mental health of those close to us
- Creates a greater resilience to developing illness

The UK is below average for mental wellbeing, ranking 20th out of 27 countries (European Quality of Life Survey (2012).

According to the latest findings from the Office of National Statistics Annual Population Survey, there were small improvements in personal wellbeing in the UK between 2012 and 2013. The percentage of people reporting higher levels of life satisfaction, feeling that the things they do in life are worthwhile and happiness levels all increased while the percentage reporting higher levels of anxiety declined.

The Workshops

Anne-Marie Gawen, Life Coach & Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) facilitator, ran a series of four innovative workshops for the Wokingham Community, with the intention of improving individual's ability to cope and enhance their general resilience.

- Living with a Long Term Condition
- Managing Fatigue,
- Increasing Happiness, Wellbeing & Resilience
- Introduction to Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP)

Living with a Long Term Condition

Long-term conditions (LTC) or chronic diseases cannot currently be cured, but can be controlled or managed by medication, treatment and/or lifestyle changes. Examples of long-term conditions include high blood pressure, depression, Multiple Sclerosis, Life after a Stroke and arthritis. Over 15 million people in England have an LTC. They make up a

quarter of the population yet they use a disproportionate amount of NHS resources: 50% of all GP appointments, 70% of all hospital bed days and 70% of the total health and care spend in England.

The NHS, working with the Council needs to be much better at providing a service that appropriately supports these patients' needs and helps them to manage their own conditions. Better management of their own conditions by patients themselves will mean fewer hospital visits and lower costs to the NHS overall, and more community-based care, including care delivered in people's homes. Patients who are empowered to take an active role in the own health management will be more confident and have improved self esteem and quality of life.

Managing Fatigue

Fatigue can be a symptom, side effect or after effect of many conditions, both physical and mental e.g Multiple Sclerosis, ME, Fibromyalgia, Head Injury or depression. It faces very many people and is greatly debilitating. Being able to manage their lives better with fatigue is largely about receiving non- clinical advice and support which health care professionals do not have sufficient time to provide.

Not getting good enough sleep over a period of time can leave us feeling exhausted. The effects of fatigue on judgement are similar to those experienced under the influence of alcohol, our critical thinking and decision making is impaired. Fatigue can adversely impact on work performance, relationships, safety and health. The workshop provided participants the ability to better understanding and manage their own fatigue and mitigate associated risks.

Happiness, Wellbeing & Resilience

The UK is 23rd in the World Happiness rankings. The government have committed to measure Gross National Happiness as well as DGP, recognising the importance of happiness to people's lives. Wellbeing has also been added to the Social Care Act of 2014 – it MUST be considered when assessing needs. This workshop looked at the scientific evidence of how to improve happiness and emotional wellbeing,

Evidence supports the view that the development of resilience as a life skill is an essential tool when it comes to surviving stressful events. Resilient people can rise above challenges and their personal circumstances to succeed, grow and thrive in any environment. The workshop provided participants with essential knowledge to help them understand why resilience is so important and think about how they can develop and effectively use it in their own recovery journey.

Introduction to Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP)

The Wellness Recover Action Planning or WRAP is a prevention and wellness process that anyone can use to stay well and make their life the way they want it to be. The WRAP workshop provided participants with the ability to discover simple wellness tools; Identify upsetting events, early warning signs and signs that things have gotten much worse and, using Wellness Tools, develop action plans for responding at these times. Originally emerging from patients with mental health problems, it is a well respected method of supporting recovery which can be applied to man self management situations. It has a he body of evidence in relation to its efficacy and is the gold standard for mental health Recovery Colleges.

Evaluation

All workshops were oversubscribed. Participant evaluations show they were highly impactful. According to the participants' opinion, their coping abilities with fatigue, their resilience, as well as wellbeing, significantly improved after just a one session. These are outstanding results considering that the majority of the attendees were already armed with some sort of techniques aiming at alleviating fatigue and increasing happiness.

What is noteworthy is that 92% of the participants agreed that the workshops achieved their aims, meaning that they found them informative and educative. Furthermore, over half of the attendees of each of the workshops requested a follow-up, with a frequency of 100% for the Living with a Long Term Condition, 75% for Wellbeing and 63% for Fatigue workshops.



These numbers show how important it is to run regular sessions which would enable target groups to reflect on the real-life application of learned methods, as well as monitor their progression.

Overall, the numbers and participants' feedback indicate that the series of workshops was highly successful. It is hoped that further funding will enable the Workshops to be offered on a regular basis.



Participants' Comments

- “The breathing technique and thinking of my energy levels as 12 spoons. As a result I have cancelled some events and DON'T FEEL GUILTY. Excellent. Thank you”

•“I found the RAS interesting I had not heard of this before – will try and put this to use.”

“Very good session would recommend it”

“Try not to be jealous of friends who appear to have a nicer life, with no illness”

•“Excellent! I loved the homely relaxed attitude that you brought to the subject. Thank you so very much

“Very informative and easy to understand”

“I learned so much today. Really will help me”

In Summary

At a time when the pressures on Wokingham GPs have never been greater, we all need to examine ways in which we can take more responsibility for maintaining our health and wellbeing.

There are small things that we can do to protect and improve our mental health. The Workshops have evidenced that by providing support to local people about how to prioritise their wellbeing, in turn impacts on improved personal resilience and health outcomes

References

The NHS Belongs to All: Call to Action https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/nhs_belongs.pdf