MENTALLY HEALTHIER COUNCIL AREAS
MANIFESTO IDEAS FOR LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Summary

◎ The Victorian sewers and slums which local government was established to clear are long gone in the UK. But air pollution, childhood trauma and poverty are still major problems which contribute to poorer mental and physical health. This manifesto recognises the vital role councils can play today in reducing threats to mental health and supporting recovery from illnesses.

◎ Even before the pandemic, which has increased demand on mental health services to record levels, mental ill health was one of the most prevalent forms of illness in the UK. One in six people experience diagnosable symptoms at any time, at a cost of an average £900m a year in every upper tier local authority area in England.

◎ Our mental health is largely determined by our childhood and current circumstances. The balance of positive (protective) factors and negative (risk) factors in our lives plays a big part in determining our mental health outcomes. Councils have opportunities to help protect our mental health as well as ensuring the best possible support for people with mental health difficulties.

◎ The evidence is very clear that poverty causes and worsens mental illness. Councils should work to reduce poverty, create mentally healthier environments, support the best start in life, and ensure everyone can get the support they need through access to quality services. This manifesto outlines tangible actions every council can take to make these goals a reality.

SUMMARY

Local councils play a crucial role in supporting the mental health of their residents. This briefing sets out ideas for council election candidates to put in their manifestos that will enable their local authorities to improve mental health in their communities.

CHAMPION MENTAL HEALTH FROM DAY ONE

The Mentally Healthier Councils Network, created by Centre for Mental Health and supported by the Health Foundation, has been launched to support councillors and officers improve mental health in their borough, county or district. Building on our Mental Health Challenge initiative, the Network provides training, resources and webinars to help local councils promote the mental health of their communities. **Get involved or learn more**.

REDUCE POVERTY

The cost of living crisis has dragged more people into the poverty that causes and worsens mental ill health, but for decades about 20% of the population have been living with less than 60% of the average income. Councils can do a lot to reduce poverty and lessen its effects on health:

1. **Get Living Wage Foundation accredited** and support other employers, especially large 'anchor institutions' such as NHS trusts, universities and major sports clubs, to get accredited.

2. **Adopt social value procurement**. Buy more goods and services from local providers and encourage them to enable more residents to benefit from quality jobs and contracts.

3. **Commission sufficient, high-quality, accessible money and other advice** and 'make every contact count' with residents in contact with council registrars, housing, social care, libraries and other services. Some areas have advice services attached to GP surgeries, mental health services and children's centres so that people get access to help with money, housing, work or the law at the same time as with their health and wellbeing.

4. **Improve your Council Tax Support scheme** to support households on low incomes. This can be extended to other schemes to increase access to benefits and reduce the risk of homelessness among people with mental health difficulties.

5. **Work with schools to 'poverty proof' the school day** by increasing the number of children covered by free school breakfasts and lunches, free or cheap after school clubs, period products, uniforms, trips and equipment.

IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT

6. **Provide more genuinely affordable, decent housing**. Use your planning policies to ensure people have access to affordable housing, to tackle homelessness through effective approaches such as 'housing first', and to enable people to keep their homes warm and well insulated.

7. **Use licensing powers to reduce access to cheap alcohol**, especially from off-licences.

8. **Create physically healthy environments**, by promoting active travel opportunities, making streets feel safer and widening easy access to green spaces.

9. **Create and support community spaces and events** where people can freely meet and access support. This includes libraries, leisure centres, youth and community centres, markets, festivals, sports competitions, arts events and street parties. Being part of a community has been shown to boost mental health.

SUPPORT THE BEST START IN LIFE

10. **Refresh your child poverty strategy.** Councils have not been required by law to have a child poverty strategy since 2016 but refreshing it can provide new ideas and impetus to reduce the poverty that can cause life-long mental ill health.

11. **Give children and families effective help in the early years.** Early years services offer families essential support to give babies and young children a healthy start in life. Effective support with parenting has been shown to be especially valuable, yet access is a postcode lottery.

12. **Support your local schools to boost children's mental health.** Schools have a major impact on children's mental health. The school environment and culture is as important as the lessons they teach and the support they offer when children have difficulties. A 'whole school approach' to mental health is widely recommended to have the biggest impact. Supporting your local schools to adopt this approach will boost children's health and school achievement.

13. **Fund early support hubs for young people.** Young people have high rates of mental ill health but poor access to help. Early support hubs offer a speedy, easy-to-access and non-stigmatising way of getting help. Make sure your area has an early support hub that reaches young people quickly.

14. **Tackle racism and discrimination.** Racial injustice is toxic to young people's mental health. Councils can take action to prevent discrimination, for example by working with schools, the police and employers to listen to young people's experiences and change systems.

ENSURE ACCESS TO QUALITY SERVICES

15. **Commit your council to 'parity of esteem' between mental and physical health** so that people get the same quality of care whatever their need. Councils can ensure mental health is always treated equally, especially in the ways funding is allocated and priorities are set.

16. **Invest in high quality substance use (drug and alcohol) services.** Poor mental health is closely linked to addiction, and too many people with drug or alcohol problems have mental health difficulties but don't get effective help. Councils can help to close the gap and offer better integrated care.

17. **Boost social care services for adults with mental health difficulties.** Social care is as important to mental health care as the NHS. Social services help people to live independently, secure their rights and be a part of their community. Yet this is often overlooked, and many social services departments are struggling to meet their statutory requirements.

18. **Take vital steps to prevent suicide deaths.** Every county and unitary authority in England has a suicide prevention strategy. These need to be delivered in full and regularly updated to ensure the council is doing all it can to save lives.

INTRODUCTION

Modern local government was established by the Victorians to improve health by providing clean water, better housing and relief to people living in poverty.

Open sewers, cholera and workhouses may be long gone in the UK but air pollution, childhood trauma and poverty are still major problems leading to worse mental and physical health.

The vital role of councils in reducing threats to health and supporting recovery from illnesses has been highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic and, more recently, the cost of living crisis.

As host of the Mentally Healthier Councils Network, Centre for Mental Health has long recognised, celebrated and supported the role of councillors and council officers in these public health roles.

To support them further we have brought together evidence-based and informed policy suggestions, many of which are already being delivered by councils all over the country.

We know that local councils have faced major financial challenges in recent years, including tighter public health and social care budgets. The recent cost-of-living crisis has increased bills for councils and residents, making the financial situation even tougher for many local authorities and the people they serve. We will continue to lobby nationally for fairer local authority funding and for efforts to be concentrated on areas with the highest rates of poverty and health inequalities, including former industrial and coastal towns and inner cities.

Despite those funding and other challenges, we hope that by providing a clear set of manifesto ideas for mentally healthier council areas, we can inspire more local authorities to go even further to support their communities. In many cases, investing in prevention saves money by reducing the costs of crisis services.

CONTEXT

The number of people seeking support from mental health services has risen sharply in recent years. In 2016, approximately 2.6 million people were in contact with these services, but by 2024, this figure had grown to 3.6 million (Darzi, 2024).

Sadly this is not surprising, as many of the risk factors for mental ill health including bereavement, physical illness, loss of income, isolation, uncertainty, abuse and neglect have been exacerbated by austerity policies, the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent cost-of-living crisis. Even before the pandemic, mental ill health was one of the most prevalent forms of illness in the UK (ONS, 2017) with one in six people experiencing diagnosable symptoms at any time, at a cost of over £119 billion in England alone (O'Shea and Bell, 2020).

Our mental health is determined by our childhood, our current circumstances, and the places we live. Good mental health can be nurtured just as much as poor mental health can be caused by our environment and life experience. The balance of positive (protective) factors and negative (risk) factors in our lives plays a big part in determining our mental health outcomes from cradle to grave.

Councils have opportunities to tip the balance in favour of protecting our mental health as well as ensuring the best possible support for people with mental health difficulties.
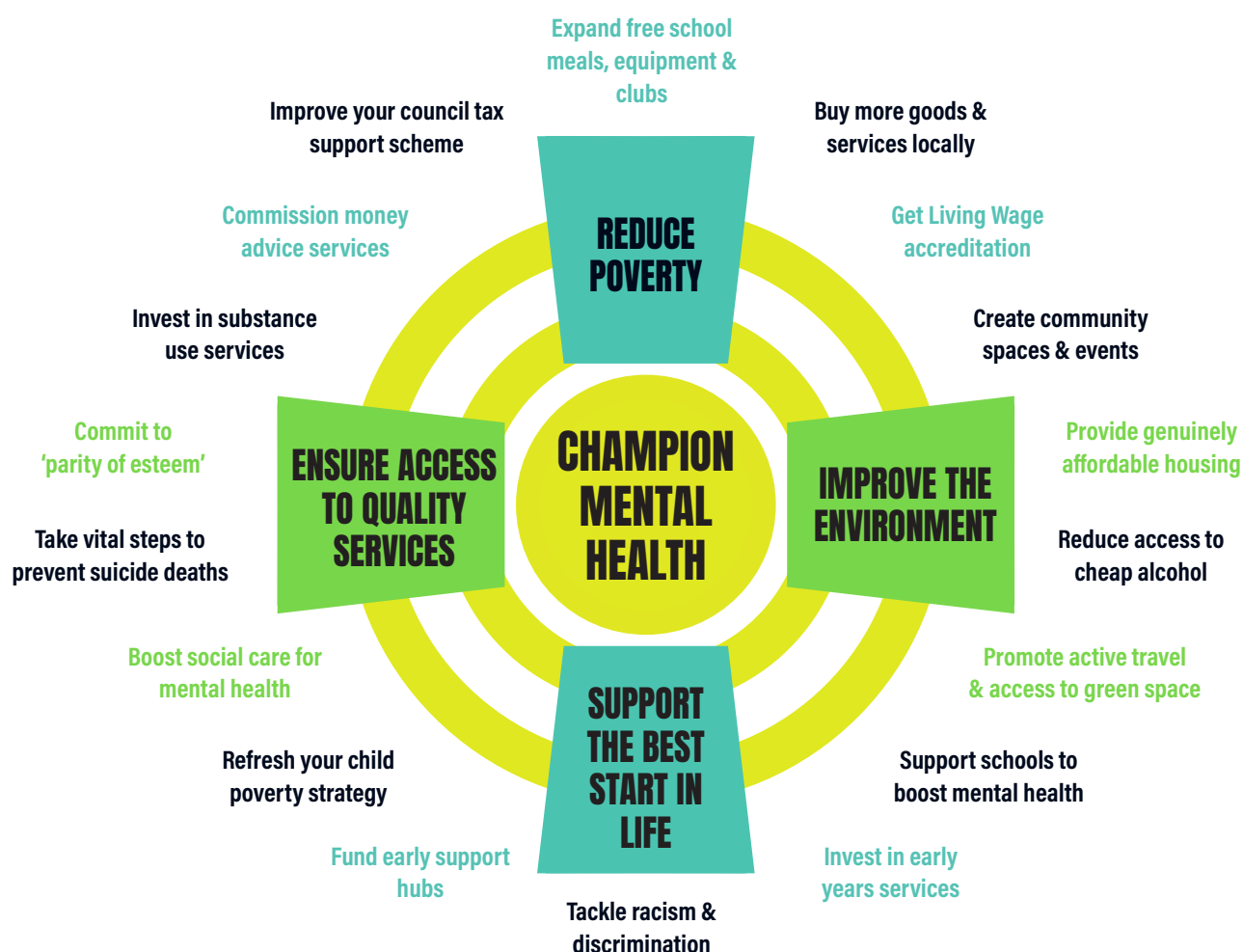
FACTORS THAT AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH

POSITIVELY (PROTECTIVE FACTORS)

- Secure and sufficient income
- Fair treatment
- Secure, decent housing
- Positive parenting including secure attachment
- Positive school experience
- Exercise, healthy diet
- Access to green space like parks and gardens

NEGATIVELY (RISK FACTORS)

- Poverty
- Discrimination
- Poor housing/homelessness
- Child neglect and abuse
- Bullying, excessive exam and social pressure
- Inactivity, poor diet, substance use
- Polluted, high-traffic environments

FIGURE 1: KEY ACTIONS FOR MENTALLY HEALTHIER COUNCIL AREAS

Expand free school meals, equipment & clubs

Improve your council tax support scheme

Buy more goods & services locally

Commission money advice services

Get Living Wage accreditation

Invest in substance use services

Create community spaces & events

Commit to 'parity of esteem'

Provide genuinely affordable housing

Take vital steps to prevent suicide deaths

Reduce access to cheap alcohol

Boost social care for mental health

Promote active travel & access to green space

Refresh your child poverty strategy

Support schools to boost mental health

Fund early support hubs

Invest in early years services

Tackle racism & discrimination

REDUCE POVERTY

ENSURE ACCESS TO QUALITY SERVICES

CHAMPION MENTAL HEALTH

IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT

SUPPORT THE BEST START IN LIFE

WHAT LEVERS DO COUNCILS HAVE OVER THESE FACTORS?

◎ Major employer and contractor

◎ Planning authority – housing, active travel, green and community space

◎ Provider and custodian of parks, libraries, leisure centres

◎ Licensing authority – alcohol, gambling

◎ Social care – child and vulnerable adult protection

◎ Education – through schools and communications

◎ Influencer – of partners and residents

◎ Not least directly on health services, by hosting the Health and Wellbeing Board, Healthwatch and participating in the Integrated Care System.

Centre for Mental Health has brought together some suggested policies for local government to adopt, or enhance where they already take action, in four domains:

◎ Reduce poverty

◎ Improve the environment

◎ Support the best start in life

◎ Better access to quality services.

REDUCE POVERTY

Research evidence is clear that poverty harms our mental health (Centre for Mental Health, 2022). In essence, poverty is bad for our health because it can:

◎ Make affording healthy food and activities harder

◎ Increase stress, which is harmful in itself, and reduce 'mental bandwidth' for healthier choices

◎ Lower self-esteem and sense of control

◎ Lead to 'comfort' eating, smoking, drinking and inactivity.

As a result, there are more years of lost life associated with deprivation than smoking and obesity combined (Galea *et al*., 2011).

This problem is getting worse, with UK child poverty reaching record levels in the UK in the financial year ending 2024. There were 4.5 million children living in poverty, up 100,000 from the previous year (DWP, 2025).

Data also shows that some groups are disproportionately impacted by poverty than others. For example, almost half (47%) of children from Asian and British Asian families, and 51% of children in Black/African/Caribbean and Black British families, live in poverty, compared to 24% of white families (DWP, 2024).

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 3.8 million people in the UK are living in destitution – a number that has more than doubled between 2017 and 2022. Worryingly, this means even more people are struggling to meet basic needs like having enough to eat, staying clean, and keeping warm (JRF, 2025).

In order to address the toxic effect of poverty on health, councils should use what levers they have to increase incomes, reduce living costs and support measures that lessen the health impacts of poverty.

Figure 2 shows the correlation between common mental health problems and levels of deprivation.

FIGURE 2

Map of County & UA (pre 4/19)s in England for Estimated prevalence of common mental disorders: % population aged 16 & over (Percentage point - per 100 2017)

Map of County & UA (pre 4/19)s in England for Deprivation score (IMD 2015) (Score - 2015)


Continuous: Lowest   Highest
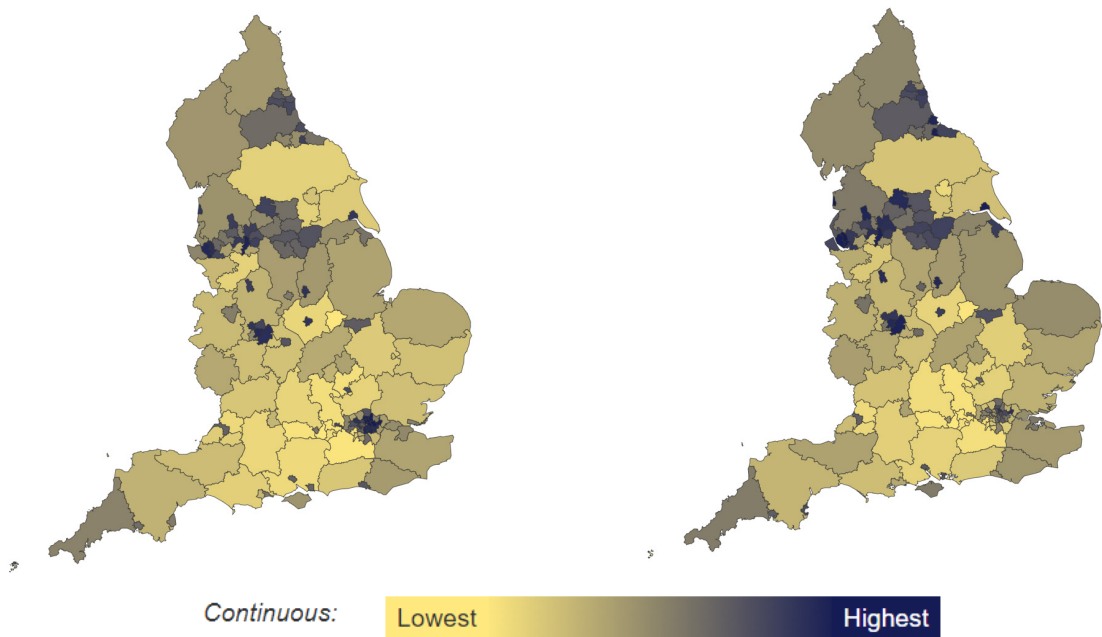
Used with permission from Public Health England

Severe mental illness is also closely linked with deprivation as illustrated by Figure 3, clearly showing that the more deprived a community, the more residents are sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

FIGURE 3

Sections under the Mental Health Act by indices of deprivation (NHS Digital, 2024)

Crude rate per 100,000 population
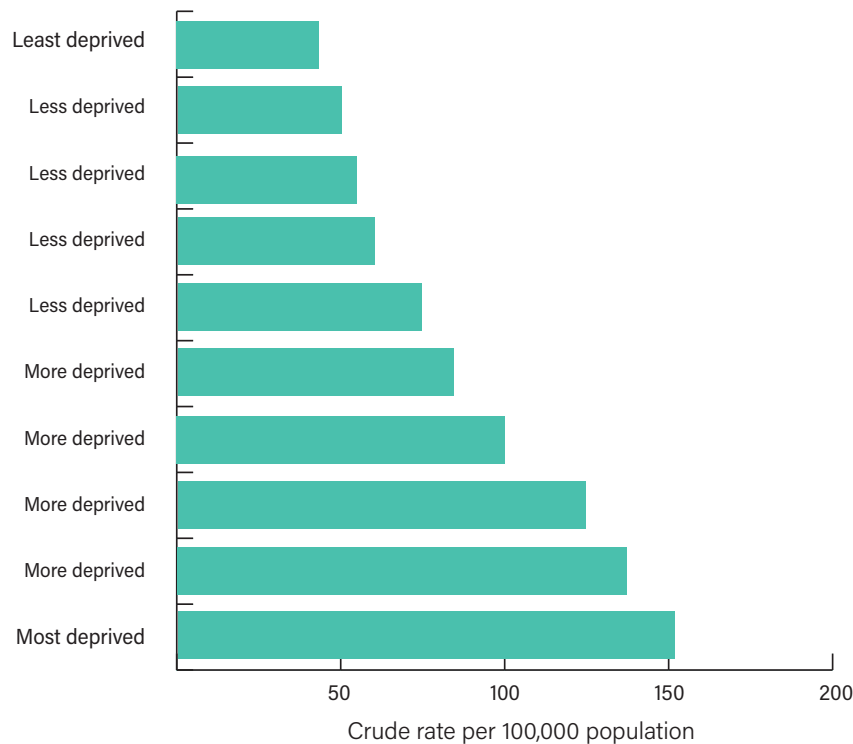
1. GET LIVING WAGE ACCREDITED

Councils and their partners are usually the largest employers and buyers of goods and services in their area – the NHS alone is Europe's biggest employer.

By paying directly employed and contracted staff fairly, that is to at least Living Wage Foundation level, councils and their partners can reduce poverty and ill health for large numbers of people.

The Living Wage Foundation is an independent body. Its Living Wage rate – calculated by experts every year – is, at the time of writing, £13.85 per hour in London and £12.60 in the rest of the UK. Accreditation is important as it covers contracted workers and (unlike government 'Living Wage' levels) all adults, regardless of age.

Employers who have gained Living Wage Foundation accreditation report higher productivity and better recruitment, retention, and satisfaction of staff, as well as improving the health and wellbeing of their workforce. This is especially important in the public sector and supply chains where low wages are contributing to a major labour shortage and thousands of vacancies.

2. BUY MORE GOODS AND SERVICES LOCALLY

Councils spend billions of pounds a year buying goods and services.

By supporting local businesses and other organisations to bid and supply more of those goods and services, councils can support more residents in their area into decent employment and out of poverty. In doing so, the risks of them and their families becoming mentally and physically unwell reduces, and pressure on services falls as well.

Social value procurement, where the awarding of contracts is influenced by outcomes other than just quality and price, can also be used to create opportunity among groups who are otherwise disadvantaged in their local areas.

In the US, not-for-profit health and social care provider Kaiser Permanente spends $1 billion procuring from minority and women-led local enterprises, reducing demand on services by alleviating poverty in the communities it serves.

3. INVEST IN QUALITY ADVICE SERVICES

Councils are often among the biggest commissioners and providers of advice services. When people are in financial or other difficulties, getting quality advice can make a huge difference to their outcomes and can save council resources further downstream.

By making 'every contact count' and providing access to money, debt, housing and legal advice in council offices, GP surgeries, libraries and other outlets, councils can deal more effectively with what the epidemiologist Professor Sir Michael Marmot calls the 'causes of the causes' of people's health and social problems.

A study for the Money Advice Service (2018) found that debt advice alone has a direct beneficial social impact on health, as well as reducing mental health care costs by up to £93 million per year.

4. IMPROVE COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEMES

Councils can choose to improve their council tax relief schemes to be more generous and cover more low-income families.

Not only does this reduce poverty but also benefits the local economy, as tax cuts for people on low incomes tend to be spent in nearby businesses.

Some of the cost of extending such schemes is also offset in reduced administration and legal costs chasing debt from those least able to pay.

Generous schemes provide extra support for care leavers, foster carers and war widow(er)s, people on low and irregular earning patterns, disabled people and families with children.

5. WORK WITH SCHOOLS TO 'POVERTY PROOF' THE SCHOOL DAY

By increasing the number of children covered by free school breakfasts and lunches, free or cheap after school clubs, period products, uniforms, trips and equipment.

IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Councils have a lot of influence over the local physical environment which affects the health and wellbeing of residents.

Not only does the immediate environment have a strong influence on local people's health, but studies (Charlson *et al.*, 2021) suggest that climate change is negatively impacting the mental health of populations through extreme weather events, flooding and fires.

As well as being major landowners and custodians of public buildings, green spaces and social housing, councils have significant planning and licensing powers that can improve, or worsen, mental and physical health by influencing the environment in which residents live.

The ideal mentally healthy environment is one where everyone has a decent home with easy access to:

◎ Parks, woods, waterways and other green spaces

◎ High quality employment and training opportunities

◎ Free or affordable 'pro-social' space including libraries, community and leisure centres

◎ Good childcare and schools

◎ Affordable, healthy food.

6. PROVIDE MORE AFFORDABLE, DECENT HOUSING

We all know that a stable home is fundamental to our mental and physical health. Homelessness and poor-quality housing are risk factors for mental health problems whilst secure, good-quality housing is a protective factor and can be a vital element of recovery from mental ill health.

Local authorities in England have various legal duties for housing and homelessness, and it is important that these are discharged effectively. Councils can improve housing and mental health by:

◎ Using their land to build genuinely affordable homes and reserving some of it to provide supported housing for vulnerable people, including those living with and recovering from mental ill health

◎ Supporting a 'housing first' model that seeks to provide homeless people with a decent home as a fundamental step in addressing other needs

◎ Supporting people on low incomes to keep their homes warm and well insulated

◎ Boosting flood defences in areas at high risk of flood damage.

7. TOUGHEN ALCOHOL LICENSING

From a heightened risk of depression and suicide to a clear link to violence and sexual abuse, excessive drinking is a clear threat to mental health.

As the local alcohol licensing authority, councils can support communities to cut this risk by creating and enforcing stricter alcohol licensing.

Some councils have used their public health functions to create new conditions for off licences including restricting opening hours, banning sales of 'super-strength' beer and cider, single cans and miniature bottles of spirits, and creating 'saturation zones' with large numbers of outlets. There is also a presumption that no new licences will be granted.

Councils can go further by adopting local Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) schemes. Scotland and Wales have introduced MUP schemes that have helped reduce drinking by up to 8% with the largest effect on the most problematic drinking (Anderson *et al.*, 2021). At least one council in England has updated its licensing policy to encourage business owners applying for new licenses to introduce a minimum price to all alcohol products of 50p per unit.

8. CREATE PHYSICALLY HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

Regular exercise is crucial to mental as well as physical health. The most effective way of supporting more people to exercise is to build it into everyday lives through the planning process.

From promoting walking and cycling to discouraging out of town developments that require more car journeys, local planners can make a huge difference to activity levels.

In the last 40 years, distances walked have fallen by 30% as planners have encouraged suburban housing and out of town facilities like shopping centres, making cars the default mode of transport.

Increased walking and cycling have a range of benefits including improved air quality. Not only does vehicle-emitted pollution kill about 60,000 people in the UK a year, associations have also been found between long-term exposure and mental health conditions such as depression (Braithwaite *et al.*, 2019).

9. CREATE AND SUPPORT COMMUNITY SPACES AND EVENTS

Access to open spaces and leisure and recreational facilities has direct and indirect impacts on people's physical and mental health. In part, this is through supporting people to meet others in their community and feel a greater sense of belonging (Davie and Garzonis, 2019).

By sharing resources like time, money, space and knowledge, we help each other survive the lows and reach greater heights. Places where people have a greater number of links with each other, meet regularly, and have networks that overlap have higher overall wellbeing and are more likely to take responsibility for what happens in their area. Councils can encourage this by supporting people to organise community activities such as litter picks, gardening and shared celebrations.

SUPPORT THE BEST START IN LIFE

Three-quarters of adults who experience poor mental health first experienced problems in childhood. Early life experiences within families, neighbourhoods, schools and colleges have a huge impact on our chances of having good mental health throughout our lives. Councils can make a difference at every stage of childhood and adolescence to tip the scales in favour of good mental health and reduce the risks of mental illness.

10. REFRESH YOUR CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

Councils have not been required by law to have a child poverty strategy since 2016 but refreshing it can provide new ideas and impetus to reduce the child poverty that causes and worsens life-long mental ill health.

11. GIVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES EFFECTIVE HELP IN THE EARLY YEARS

Early years services offer families essential support to give babies and young children a healthy start in life. Effective support with parenting has been shown to be especially valuable, yet access is a postcode lottery. Good-quality maternal mental health support is crucial for babies as well as mothers, with health visitors playing an especially important part in helping women when they are struggling.

There is very little mental health provision in place for children aged three and under. In a survey of professionals working within children and young people's mental health services by the Parent-Infant Foundation, just over a third (36%) of respondents reported that there are mental health services that can work effectively with babies and toddlers aged zero to two in their local area (Parent-Infant Foundation, 2021).

12. SUPPORT SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES TO BOOST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH

Education settings play a crucial role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and their families. Children's experiences of school have a big impact on their mental health, for better or worse. A positive and safe environment with a broad curriculum (including learning about mental health) and time for play and physical activity can boost wellbeing (Abdinasir, 2019). By contrast, excessive academic pressures, bullying, discrimination and exclusion can cause lasting harm (Centre for Mental Health, 2020).

Whole school and college approaches are crucial to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all students. There is a strong evidence base that whole school and college approaches to wellbeing, and social and emotional learning, can have a range of benefits including higher attendance and academic attainment, improved behaviour, and reduced anxiety, bullying and stigma (Banerjee *et al*., 2016). Government guidance sets out how a whole school approach can be implemented in practice (Public Health England, Department for Education and Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition, 2021).

13. FUND EARLY SUPPORT HUBS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

There are around one million children in England with 'lower-level' and emerging mental health needs, who would benefit from some form of mental health support but do not require specialist care from NHS children and young people's mental health services (Children's Commissioner, 2020). Services providing mental health support in the community play a crucial role in addressing needs at an early stage, preventing escalation and the potential for later, more costly referrals to specialist services. However, there is patchy provision of these services across the country due to a lack of sustainable funding and confusing commissioning arrangements.

Early support hubs offer easy-to-access, drop-in support on a self-referral basis for young people up to age 25. They are often delivered by voluntary and community sector organisations. A mix of clinical staff, youth workers and volunteers provide a range of support on issues related to wellbeing as well as psychological therapies, employment advice, youth services and sexual health services (O'Shea, 2021).

14. TACKLE RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Racial injustice is toxic to young people's mental health (Ghezae *et al*., 2022). Councils can take action to prevent discrimination, for example by working with schools, the police and employers to listen to young people's experiences and change systems. Arts-based and cultural activities can help to create a platform for change by highlighting young people's experiences, at the same time as building confidence and creating opportunity (Khan *et al*., 2017).

Intervening early to prevent racial discrimination and disadvantage is essential to address the disproportionate use of the Mental Health Act among people from some racialised groups, especially Black African and Caribbean communities.

ENSURE ACCESS TO QUALITY SERVICES

While protecting and promoting mental health can make a big difference to people's lives, we will always need high quality support for people experiencing mental health problems. Councils are at the heart of mental health care. It's not just the NHS's job. Social care, addiction services and housing support are all crucial elements of mental health care. And councils also play an important role in developing health and wellbeing strategies and holding health and care services to account.

15. COMMIT YOUR COUNCIL TO 'PARITY OF ESTEEM' BETWEEN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Councils have a vital role working with the NHS locally to deliver health and wellbeing strategies and to hold systems to account. They can ensure mental health is always treated equally, especially in the ways funding is allocated and priorities are set.

As well as equal support for mental health, councils can ensure more equal treatment is offered to all their residents when they need mental health support. This includes tackling racial discrimination in mental health services.

Despite no evidence of a genetic or cultural difference between ethnicities that would account for different mental health outcomes, 3.5 times as many Black people are sectioned under the Mental Health Act as white people, and seven times as many Black people are given Community Treatment Orders when they leave hospital (NHS Digital, 2024).

The cause of this disproportionality is systemic racism, and it needs to be addressed across the system (including local government) by ensuring duties under the Equality Act to serve all communities fairly are carried out. This includes ensuring representation of racialised communities at all levels of decision-making bodies including councils, and developing a culturally competent and diverse workforce.

16. INVEST IN HIGH QUALITY SUBSTANCE USE (DRUG AND ALCOHOL) SERVICES

Poor mental health is closely linked to addiction, and too many people with drug or alcohol problems have mental health difficulties but don't get effective help. More than eight out of ten people in alcohol treatment services also have a mental health problem. Problem drinking is a major risk for mental illness, suicide and violent crime. Yet too many people are denied help for mental health and addictions at the same time, often bounced between services without being offered support. Joined up support is vital to help people to recover (Institute for Alcohol Studies and Centre for Mental Health, 2018).

15. BOOST SOCIAL SERVICES FOR ADULTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES

Social care is as important to mental health care as the NHS. Social services help people to live independently, secure their rights and be a part of their community. They have specific responsibilities under the Mental Health Act that determine when people are sectioned and how they are supported when they leave hospital. Yet this is often overlooked, and many social services departments are struggling to meet their statutory requirements under the Care Act and the Mental Health Act.

Mental health social care is often overlooked when priorities are being set for social services spending. Councils face incredibly tough decisions about how they use scarce resources for social care. But investing in mental health social care has significant benefits, enabling people to recover and live well. And through collaboration with the NHS and local voluntary and community organisations, it can offer people truly holistic help that safeguards their rights and meets their needs.

16. TAKE VITAL STEPS TO PREVENT SUICIDE DEATHS

Every county and unitary authority in England has a suicide prevention strategy. These need to be delivered in full and regularly updated to ensure the council is doing all it can to save lives and respond to changing patterns of risk.

Councils can help to prevent tragic losses of life from suicide in many ways. This includes steps to improve safety in high-risk locations, Save a Life training for workers in key occupations (such as housing services, railways and hospitality), working closely with coroners and the police to identify potential clusters, and providing emotional and practical support to bereaved families and friends.

Some useful resources for suicide prevention work can be found here:

National Suicide Prevention Alliance
https://nspa.org.uk/

Samaritans
https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/research-policy/national-local-suicide-prevention-strategies/

Zero Suicide Alliance
https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/ZSA-Resources

CONCLUSION

Local authorities register every birth and death in the country. In between those two bookends of existence, councils support their residents with over 800 duties to help make lives safer, healthier and more fulfilled.

In discharging these duties effectively, and putting the health and wellbeing of residents at the centre of it all, councils can make a substantial contribution to the quality of people's lives and the opportunities and risks they are exposed to.

All over the country, all kinds of councils are doing excellent work like this with their communities. Centre for Mental Health looks forward to supporting councils further and hopes candidates, councillors and council officers find these suggestions helpful.

CONTACT US

To discuss any element of this briefing paper, please get in touch us at **contact@centreformentalhealth.org.uk**

Local councils have a huge role to play in the mental health of their local community. Our **Mentally Healthier Councils Network** is a vibrant learning community for elected members and council staff providing training, resources and webinars. **Get involved or find out more**.

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