MENTAL HEALTH WELLBEING IN OUR COMMUNITY

VOLUNTARY SECTOR COORDINATION SERVICE
HEALTHWATCH WANDSWORTH
VOICING VIEWS

Summary

Background:

In many ways the pandemic has raised the importance of supporting mental health and wellbeing in our community higher than ever before. We wanted to talk about some key developments in support available locally and also explore what could be done to ensure our community and services work together to support one another. The Voluntary Sector Coordination Service, Healthwatch Wandsworth and Voicing Views joined forces to host an event to discuss the topic further.

What we did:

On 16th March 2022 WCA hosted an online event and we heard from speakers on a variety of topics including; Ethnicity and Mental Health Improvement Project (EMHIP) Hub at the New Testament Assembly, SWLSTG Community Mental Health Team (CMHT), Free2B support for the LGBTQ+ community and their parents, and Sound Minds – a mental health charity supporting people with mental health through music, film and art. We also talked about Mental Health first aid training and suggestions for future events. Some of the information from these presentations will be available online soon.

After the presentations, we held discussion groups to discuss any barriers that participants perceived in how the community can work together or how the community works with health and care services to support people in Wandsworth with their mental health. We then discussed how these barriers could be overcome. This report includes information about what was discussed amongst the 29 participants who took part.

What we were told and recommendations:

For full details about our findings read on. In summary we found:

Top barriers to service users working with services (raised within multiple groups):
• Digital exclusion
• Services not going to local groups and communities where people feel more comfortable
• Services being too far away and therefore inaccessible

To overcome the barriers it was suggested that:
• Training is provided to help overcome digital exclusion barriers (training will help but digital exclusion is also about access to devices and those capable of running apps etc.)
• Services should make more effort to visit people within their community spaces to make them more accessible and reduce stigma
• Run events such as a speed-dating session between services in the borough with a networking element

Next steps:
- WCA to explore possibility of running future speed-dating event to bring together services and help raise awareness and increase collaboration between services
- Recommendations to be shared with attendees and those who were unable to attend
- Share findings with those involved in the ICS governance and operations

Thank you to everyone who shared their experience with us.

BARRIERS

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Further barriers raised:

- **Digital exclusion** is an important barrier:
  - Knowing how to use digital e.g. mobile phones is an issue
    Trying to protect data can conflict in trying to communication within and between organisations.
- Services not going to the places where people are/ where they feel comfortable. Need to make more of an effort to **go to local groups**, go and discuss.
- Services too far away **– inaccessibility of services (sometimes services need to be concentrated together to enable better care and outcomes – local does not always mean good).**
- **Language and culture** is a big barrier – physical notices – however issues of where people are and what people need and what they can read.
- The **dissemination of information** (for which digital has been a factor). A variety of means is needed, not just digital, but including physical posters for example.
- Professionals may have **trouble stepping outside of their own knowledge and skill set** and is it difficult to step out of the boundaries of the area they work in and have the self-confidence.
- People who are able to attend meetings and read the notice boards – they are ok. It's the really **isolated who are very hard to reach**. A worrying group are people who have been isolated because they are under coercive control and they are prevented from accessing services.
- Families are worried about lots of other things at the moment. **Getting involved with services is not necessarily their main priority.**
- **Past experience of having tried to work together unsuccessfully** in similar forums and where **feedback doesn't get taken on board**
- People have **survey fatigue**
- There is too much of a **focus on the problems** and repeating the same story: Need to look at solutions.
- **Stigma:** both if mental health service are seen in community settings and if someone is seen talking to mental health services.
- **Shortage of services** generally

Barriers to services working together e.g. statutory and voluntary sector service

- Voluntary sector can experience difficulties in raising the issues they encounter. Often there are no direct links to professionals involved in care – used to be that they could link directly with a care coordinator but now have to go through the support line.
- **Fragmentation** – services are not very joined up – needs more continuity particularly when moving from a ward into the community – **information about someone can often be incomplete which can have an adverse impact on the care they receive.**
- **Issue with Mental Health Trust:**
  - **Lacks knowledge of what is going on in community**. In the past, they started a service that was already available in the community. Did eventually become aware and started to work more collaboratively but the lack of knowledge at the outset was disappointing.
  - **Seems to be constantly reorganising**
  - **Recruitment and retention of staff** is an issue.

- **People aren't getting the right information about services**
- **People are not always aware of what other organisations are doing – visibility**

Overcoming barriers of service users working with services

- Would like to see **more involvement** and **trying to recruit people from different cultures** to join these kinds of forums – people from grass roots need to be involved. **Reaching out to faith groups**.
- Healthwatch are keen to **speak to people around language and use of technology**.
- **Training, exposure and hand holding** to help staff to engage with communities they may not have otherwise. Services might also want to **share training across services** in Wandsworth. The training would hopefully help **raise awareness and eradicate racism and racial inequality**.
- Going to foodbanks and into communities. Physically going to door-steps has been difficult but this can help.
- Some of the isolated people might have **mobility issues** – we might want to use the people/services who already interact with these people
- Work in partnership
    - **Check on families' mental health** – those in the wider network of the service user to check on their health and wellbeing too: Families have needs of their own
    - Service users do not know **how to write complaints/share suggestions** – supporting them to do this would help, and ensure the process was as quick and simple as possible.
    - Create more places to go within the community – **nearby services needed**.
    - Beds are full meaning patients are taken to other cities over the UK and away from family and support networks – need **more preventative services** to reduce number of people requiring inpatient services.
- **Better marketing**
    - Would need to establish who to advertise to and where
    - Requires more money and funding.
    - Where to advertise?
    - Lack of resources – need more.

Overcoming barriers to services working with one another

- Clinical Reference Group for mental health: covers a lot, Tom Coffey chairs but group felt the **information that comes out of it could be made more publicly available** so more people were aware of the overall plans regarding mental health. The minutes of the group used to be posted on the Trust website but that appears to have fizzled out
- **Speed-dating session** between services and networking at end – more events like WCA mental health event where people can meet one another and learn about what each service does