

## Course introduction

Mental health concerns how we think, feel and behave – mental health problems can affect anyone. In fact, one in four of us will be diagnosed with some kind of mental health problem at some point in our lives. As one former Secretary of State for Health famously said, mental illnesses are as common as asthma (Dobson in DH, 1999). Furthermore, every year around 250,000 people in the UK reach a point where they have to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital because of their mental health difficulties. Statistics such as these mean that most people will have first-hand experience of mental distress, whether it is themselves or someone they know.

Given the prevalence of mental health problems, one would expect society to be tolerant and sympathetic. Sadly, this is often not the case. Despite being one of the most vulnerable groups in our society, people who experience mental distress are often subject to abuse, stigma, discrimination and even ridicule. So much so, that many people are even reluctant to tell family members and friends about their difficulties and experiences.

However, the future is relatively bright. We have come a long way since the old mental asylums were closed and people were left to almost fend for themselves in the community. Many would agree that it is better to have a mental disorder today than it would have been say fifty years ago. Within this more optimistic climate, many people with mental health issues have gained the confidence to have greater say and control over their futures.

This course is aimed at enhancing your knowledge and understanding of mental ill-health and some of the most commonly diagnosed mental health conditions. The course will give you an insight into how these conditions can affect people's day-to-day lives and how they can be successfully managed.

### Aims

On completion of this course, you should:

- Understand the concept of mental health and the potential causes of mental distress.
- Be able to identify a range of common mental health conditions and describe how these can affect people's lives.
- Understand the potential causes or risk factors associated with these conditions.
- Be able to explain ways in which these mental health conditions can be successfully managed.

## Content

This course has ten units:

**Unit 1: Understanding mental health**

**Unit 2: Understanding stress**

**Unit 3: Understanding anxiety**

**Unit 4: Understanding phobias**

**Unit 5: Understanding depression**

**Unit 6: Understanding post-natal depression**

**Unit 7: Understanding bipolar disorder**

**Unit 8: Understanding schizophrenia**

**Unit 9: Understanding dementia**

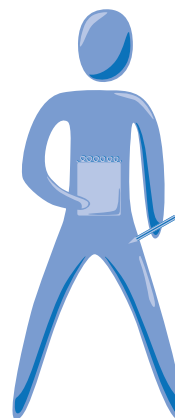
**Unit 10: Understanding eating disorders**

## Assessment

As you work through each unit, you will come across a number of learning activities. These are intended to help you reflect upon certain issues or your own practice.

Once you have worked through each section, including the learning activities, you will need to complete a series of questions entitled 'Assessment'. These can be found in a separate booklet at the end of each unit. When you have finished all of the assessment questions for a unit, you should submit them to your tutor, who will then give you feedback on your work.

***Good luck with your studies!***



## Unit introduction

This first unit of your course is intended to give you an overview of mental health and the mental health system. In **Section 1** you will look at what **the term 'mental health'** means together with the factors that help us maintain our sense of mental well-being.

You will also examine the **meaning of mental ill-health** and the **risk factors** that make people more prone to developing a **mental health condition**.

In **Section 2** you will look at how the care of people with mental health conditions has changed over time. The traditional approach was one of **institutionalisation**. In other words, it was believed that the best option for people experiencing mental distress was to be segregated from society, often for many years, and placed in secure hospitals. Today, people experiencing mental ill-health tend to be supported by a range of **community-based professionals and services**. You will examine how these changes have impacted upon those who either receive or provide mental health care.

In **Section 3** you will look at **social and cultural attitudes** to mental ill-health. You will also examine the **role of the mass media** and how this sometimes contributes to a climate of fear when it comes to dealing with mental health issues.

And finally, in **Section 4** you will look at the **legal context** of mental illness. Important legislation and guidance has been put in place to 'protect' both the interests of society and of those experiencing mental distress. In particular, you will examine the issues of compulsory detention, mental capacity and confidentiality.

## Aims

When you have worked through this unit, you should be able to:

- Define what is meant by 'mental health' and 'mental ill-health'.
- Describe the components of mental well-being and the key risk factors associated with developing mental health problems.
- Identify examples of mental disorders.
- Describe how mental health care has changed with the move towards community care.
- Describe social, cultural and media attitudes to mental ill-health and the impact these attitudes can have on people and their care.
- Identify relevant legislation to mental illness.
- Outline the implications in legislation for the provision of care to people with mental health problems.

## Content

This unit has four sections:

**Section 1: Background to mental health and mental ill-health**

**Section 2: The move to community-based care**

**Section 3: The social context of mental illness**

**Section 4: The legal context of mental illness**

## Assessment

Once you have worked through each section, including the learning activities, you will need to complete a series of questions entitled 'Assessment'. These can be found in a separate booklet at the end of each unit. When you have finished all of the assessment questions for a unit, you should submit them to your tutor, who will then give you feedback on your work.



## Background to mental health and mental ill-health

In this section you will learn about:

- **What 'mental health' is**
- **The key components of mental well-being**
- **Why we need 'good' mental health**
- **The mental health continuum**
- **Some key definitions**
- **What may put people at risk of developing mental ill-health**
- **The diagnosis and classification of mental illness**

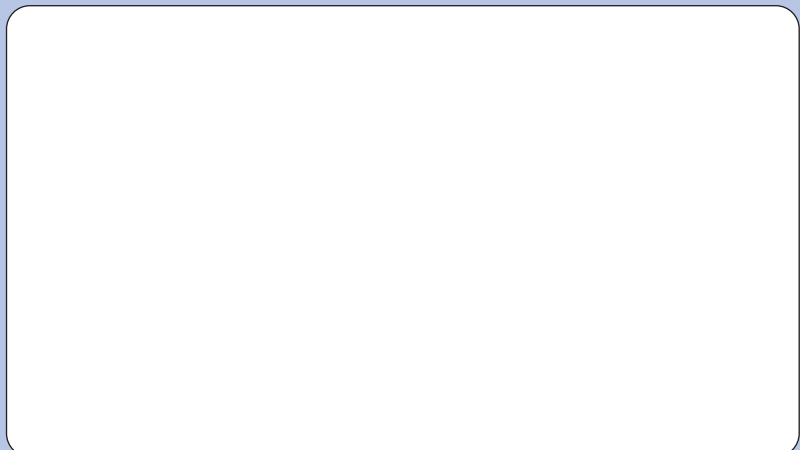
## What is 'mental health'?

Before you can look at mental health 'issues' or 'problems', you first need to spend a little time examining the basic concept of mental health. What does it mean to be 'mentally healthy'? Understanding this will, in turn, help you to understand mental ill-health and the types of mental distress you may encounter in your work or daily life.

### Activity 1

You may have heard or seen 'good' mental health presented in a number of different ways. 'Positive mental health', 'emotional well-being', 'emotional literacy' are just some of the possible examples.

In the space below, note what you think the term 'good' mental health actually means.



Like many questions within the field of mental health there is no definitive answer to this question. Indeed the World Health Organisation (2001) has stated that there is no one 'official' definition of the term 'mental health'. Different professional theories and cultural beliefs, for example, all affect how mental health is defined. Nevertheless, there are a number of common themes we can extract from quotes like these below.

The Health Education Authority (1997) describes mental health as:

**“ . . . the emotional and spiritual resilience which allows us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own dignity and others' dignity and worth. ”**

In a similar vein, the World Health Organisation (2001) describes mental health as:

**“ A state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. ”**

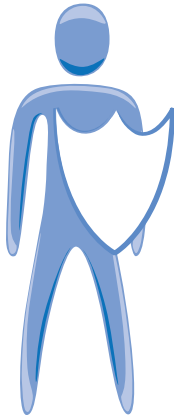
Now you can understand that positive mental health means much more than just being free of a mental illness.

Mental health includes some of the following factors:

- **Healthy cognition (thinking)** - this is about our ability to think clearly, to solve problems and to make sound decisions.
- **Healthy emotional health** - this is our ability to experience, understand and express feelings.
- **Healthy perception** - this is about making sense of events and the world around us.
- **Being able to function in everyday society** - this involves being able to make and sustain relationships and to participate in the wider society.
- **Being able to cope with the ordinary demands of life** - this is a key factor and is about our 'resilience'. In other words, our ability to deal with set-backs, difficult experiences and stress.

### Key point

**Mental health is the ability to live life in a positive way. Good mental health includes a sense of well-being and control over your life, allowing us to participate in society and to make sound decisions about different situations. Mental health means much more than just an absence of mental illness and is an issue for everybody.**



## The key components of mental well-being

As mental ill-health is something people tend to fear, how can we achieve or maintain a good state of mental health? In order to answer this adequately, we need to take into consideration a whole range of issues. In other words, we need to look at things **holistically** (the whole picture). 'Good' mental health is influenced by a combination of biological, social and psychological factors – what professionals like to call **'protective factors'**.

The components of mental well-being include:

### Genetic inheritance

Many mental health professionals believe that just as our physical health is linked to our genes, so is our mental health. For example, there is evidence – though hotly debated – that through their genes, some people may be more susceptible to certain mental health problems, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression.

### Childhood experiences

Positive family environments and pleasant childhood memories can lay the foundations of 'good' mental health throughout life.

### Life events

The things that happen to us during our lives – the events and experiences – play a huge role in our sense of mental well-being. Generally speaking, positive experiences of childhood, education, relationships and work life can all shape a similarly positive view of the world and our approach to life.

### Individual ability to cope

As you learned earlier, mental health has a lot to do with our 'resilience' – our ability to cope with the pressures within life. Some people are very good at this, while others lack those important coping skills.

### Levels of social support

Strong social networks can have a positive effect upon mental well-being and can help to counter the effects of negative events or experiences. For example, when someone is feeling vulnerable, the support provided by family and friends can help to provide a sense of strength and security. Similarly, when someone is feeling isolated, the local community can be a source of stimulation, interaction and support.

### Employment

Being in work has all sorts of potential benefits. It can promote a feeling of self-worth, satisfaction and inclusion. Employment provides five types of psychological experience that promotes mental well-being – **time structure, collective effort and purpose, social identity, regular activity and social contact.** This is not to say that all people in employment are free from the risk of mental health problems, or that all jobs give job satisfaction and a sense of worth. What it does mean is that being in meaningful employment (with a good work-life balance) is generally a protective factor in a person's mental well-being.

### Financial security

Being secure financially does not necessarily mean being rich. Someone may be earning a relatively modest wage, but still feel confident about their financial situation based upon their ability to manage their outgoings.

### Adequate housing

Access to good quality and stable housing is very important to an individual's sense of mental well-being.

### Access to appropriate health care

Should we experience physical or mental ill-health during our life, the access we have to the appropriate health-care services is obviously important. If we receive timely and effective treatment, if we feel that we are being listened to by health professionals, we are more likely to retain (or recover) our sense of well-being. The longer we have to put up with our difficulties the more likely it is that we will experience mental as well as physical distress.

These are just some of the components of mental well-being. It is important to remember that all of these are inter-connected and not to be viewed in isolation.

For example, if someone experiences a tragic life event it does not automatically follow that they will develop a mental health condition. They may have a strong family network to help them during such time. Therefore, when assessing mental well-being, you need to look at each person individually and assess the strength or weakness of each component part.





# LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE IN MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

## Unit 1 assessment Understanding mental health

After completing your assessment please staple it together with this header sheet and return it to your tutor

### ADVICE TO ALL CANDIDATES

- Please complete your personal details and candidate statement below.
- Complete all questions in this assessment.
- Write your answers in the spaces provided. Add any additional work for any of the questions on plain paper and attach to this assessment.
- You do not need to return your completed activities in the unit – just this assessment.
- If you require any assistance or guidance please contact your tutor.

### PERSONAL DETAILS

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone no. (evening) \_\_\_\_\_ (day) \_\_\_\_\_

Email (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

### CANDIDATE STATEMENT

I certify that I have read Unit 1 and completed all sections in this assessment.

I confirm that this is my own work.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

For office use only

Candidate ref: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessor: \_\_\_\_\_

IV: \_\_\_\_\_

Passed

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Re-submit

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Tutor feedback:

Written

Telephone

Personal tutorial

SAMPLE

## Unit 1: Understanding mental health

*(The references in brackets at the end of each question refer to the learning outcomes within the syllabus of this qualification and are for your tutor's use.)*

### Section 1.1: Background to mental health and mental ill-health

1. Define the term 'mental health'. (1.1)

2. Describe nine components of mental well-being. (1.2)

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

SAMPLE

2. g)

h)

i)

3. Define the term 'mental ill-health'. (1.1)

4. Describe some of the risk factors associated with developing mental health problems. (1.3)

SAMPLE