

## **Mental wellbeing and older people**

This quick reference guide presents the recommendations made in 'Occupational therapy interventions and physical activity interventions to promote the mental wellbeing of older people in primary care and residential care'. The guidance focuses on the role of occupational therapy interventions and physical activity interventions in the promotion of mental wellbeing for older people. It is for NHS primary care and other professionals who have a direct or indirect role in, and responsibility for, promoting older people's mental wellbeing. This includes those working in local authorities and the wider public, private, voluntary and community sectors. It will also be relevant for carers and family members who support older people and may be of interest to older people themselves.

The guidance complements and supports, but does not replace, NICE guidance on: supporting people with dementia and their carers in health and social care; managing depression in primary and secondary care; assessing and preventing falls in older people; obesity; commonly used methods to increase physical activity; physical activity and the environment; behaviour change and community engagement (see related NICE guidance for a list of publications).

### **NICE public health guidance 16**

**This guidance was developed using the NICE public health intervention process.**

NICE public health guidance makes recommendations on the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health. This guidance represents the views of the Institute and was arrived at after careful consideration of the evidence available. Implementation of this guidance is the responsibility of local commissioners and/or providers. Commissioners and providers are reminded that it is their responsibility to implement the guidance, in their local context, in light of their duties to avoid unlawful discrimination and to have regard to promoting equality of opportunity. Nothing in this guidance should be interpreted in a way which would be inconsistent with compliance with those duties.

# Recommendations

The definition of 'mental wellbeing' used in this guidance follows that developed by NHS Health Scotland as part of their national programme of work on mental health improvement. This definition includes areas such as life satisfaction, optimism, self-esteem, mastery and feeling in control, having a purpose in life, and a sense of belonging and support<sup>1</sup>.

Occupational therapy aims to enable people who have physical, mental and/or social needs, either from birth or as a result of accident, illness or ageing, to achieve as much as they can to get the most out of life<sup>2</sup>.

If need exceeds the resources available, there should be a focus on the most disadvantaged older people, for example, those with physical or learning disabilities, those on very low incomes or living in social or rural isolation, including older people from minority ethnic groups.

In this guidance 'older people' are people aged 65 years and over.

## Occupational therapy interventions

### Recommendation 1

#### Who is the target population?

- Older people and their carers.

#### Who should take action?

- Occupational therapists or other professionals who provide support and care services for older people in community or residential settings and who have been trained to apply the principles and methods of occupational therapy.

#### What action should they take?

- Offer regular group and/or individual sessions to encourage older people to identify, construct, rehearse and carry out daily routines and activities that help to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing. Sessions should:
  - involve older people as experts and partners in maintaining or improving their quality of life
  - pay particular attention to communication, physical access, length of session and informality to encourage the exchange of ideas and foster peer support

- take place in a setting and style that best meet the needs of the older person or group
- provide practical solutions to problem areas.
- Increase older people's knowledge and awareness of where to get reliable information and advice on a broad range of topics, by providing information directly, inviting local advisers to give informal talks, or arranging trips and social activities. Topics covered should include:
  - meeting or maintaining healthcare needs (for example, eye, hearing and foot care)
  - nutrition (for example, healthy eating on a budget)
  - personal care (for example, shopping, laundry, keeping warm)
  - staying active and increasing daily mobility
  - getting information on accessing services and benefits
  - home and community safety
  - using local transport schemes.
- Invite regular feedback from participants and use it to inform the content of the sessions and to gauge levels of motivation.

<sup>1</sup> NHS Health Scotland (2006) Mental health improvement programme, background and policy context. Available from: [www.healthscotland.com/mental-health-background.aspx](http://www.healthscotland.com/mental-health-background.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> College of Occupational Therapists (2008) What is occupational therapy? Available from: [www.cot.org.uk/public/promotingot/what/intro.php](http://www.cot.org.uk/public/promotingot/what/intro.php)

## Physical activity

### Recommendation 2

#### Who is the target population?

- Older people and their carers.

#### Who should take action?

- Physiotherapists, registered exercise professionals and fitness instructors and other health, social care, leisure services and voluntary sector staff who have the qualifications, skills and experience to deliver exercise programmes appropriate for older people.

#### What action should they take?

- In collaboration with older people and their carers, offer tailored exercise and physical activity programmes in the community, focusing on:
  - a range of mixed exercise programmes of moderate intensity (for example, dancing, walking, swimming)
  - strength and resistance exercise, especially for frail older people
  - toning and stretching exercise.
- Ensure that exercise programmes reflect the preferences of older people.
- Encourage older people to attend sessions at least once or twice a week by explaining the benefits of regular physical activity.
- Advise older people and their carers how to exercise safely for 30 minutes a day (which can be broken down into 10-minute bursts) on 5 days each week or more. Provide useful examples of activities in daily life that would help achieve this (for example, shopping, housework, gardening, cycling).
- Invite regular feedback from participants and use it to inform the content of the service and to gauge levels of motivation.

## Walking schemes

### Recommendation 3

#### Who is the target population?

- Older people and their carers.

#### Who should take action?

- GPs, community nurses, public health and health promotion specialists, 'Walking the way to health' initiative walk leaders, local authorities, leisure services, voluntary sector organisations, community development groups working with older people, carers, and older people themselves.

#### What action should they take?

- In collaboration with older people and their carers, offer a range of walking schemes of low to moderate intensity with a choice of local routes to suit different abilities.
- Promote regular participation in local walking schemes as a way to improve mental wellbeing for older people, and provide health advice and information on the benefits of walking.
- Encourage and support older people to participate fully according to health and mobility needs, and personal preference.
- Ensure that walking schemes:
  - are organised and led by trained workers or 'Walking the way to health' initiative walk leaders from the local community who have been trained in first aid and in creating suitable walking routes
  - incorporate a group meeting at the outset of a walking scheme that introduces the walk leader and participants
  - offer opportunities for local walks at least three times a week, with timing and location to be agreed with participants
  - last about 1 hour and include at least 30–40 minutes of walking plus stretching and warm-up/cool-down exercises (depending on older people's mobility and capacity)
  - invite regular feedback from participants and use it to inform the content of the service and to gauge levels of motivation.

## Training

### Recommendation 4

#### Who is the target population?

- Health and social care professionals, domiciliary care staff, residential care home managers and staff, and support workers, including the voluntary sector.

#### Who should take action?

- Professional bodies, skills councils and other organisations responsible for developing training programmes and setting competencies, standards and continuing professional development schemes.
- NHS and local authority senior managers, human resources and training providers and employers of residential and domiciliary care staff in the private and voluntary sector.

#### What action should they take?

- Involve occupational therapists in the design and development of locally relevant training schemes for those working with older people. Training schemes should include:
  - essential knowledge of (and application of) the principles and methods of occupational therapy and health and wellbeing promotion
  - effective communication skills to engage with older people and their carers (including group facilitation skills or a person-centred approach)
  - information on how to monitor and make the best use of service feedback to evaluate or redesign services to meet the needs of older people.

- Ensure practitioners have the skills to:
  - communicate effectively with older people to encourage an exchange of ideas and foster peer support
  - encourage older people to identify, construct, rehearse and carry out daily routines and promote activities that help to maintain or improve health and wellbeing
  - improve, maintain and support older people's ability to carry out daily routines and promote independence
  - collect and use regular feedback from participants.

## Implementation tools

NICE has developed tools to help organisations put this guidance into practice. For details see our website at [www.nice.org.uk/PH16](http://www.nice.org.uk/PH16)

## Further information

You can download the following documents from [www.nice.org.uk/PH16](http://www.nice.org.uk/PH16)

- A quick reference guide (this document) for professionals and the public.
- The guidance – all the recommendations, details of how they were developed and evidence statements.
- Details of all the evidence that was considered and other background information.

For printed copies of the quick reference guide, phone NICE publications on 0845 003 7783 or email [publications@nice.org.uk](mailto:publications@nice.org.uk) and quote N1703.

## Related NICE guidance

For more information about NICE guidance that has been issued or is in development, see [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### Published

- Community engagement: an assessment of community engagement and community development approaches including the collaborative methodology and community champions. NICE public health programme guidance 9 (2008). Available from: [www.nice.org.uk/PH9](http://www.nice.org.uk/PH9)
- Physical activity and the environment: guidance on the promotion and creation of physical environments that support increased levels of physical activity. NICE public health guidance 8 (2008). Available from: [www.nice.org.uk/PH8](http://www.nice.org.uk/PH8)

- Behaviour change: the most appropriate means of generic and specific interventions to support attitude and behaviour change at population and community levels. NICE public health programme guidance 6 (2007). Available from: [www.nice.org.uk/PH6](http://www.nice.org.uk/PH6)
- Depression: management of depression in primary and secondary care. NICE clinical guideline 23 (2007). Available from: [www.nice.org.uk/CG23](http://www.nice.org.uk/CG23)
- Dementia: supporting people with dementia and their carers in health and social care. NICE clinical guideline 42 (2006). Available from: [www.nice.org.uk/CG42](http://www.nice.org.uk/CG42)
- Four commonly used methods to increase physical activity: brief interventions in primary care, exercise referral schemes, pedometers and community-based exercise programmes for walking and cycling. NICE public health guidance 2 (2006). Available from: [www.nice.org.uk/PH2](http://www.nice.org.uk/PH2)
- Obesity: the prevention, identification, assessment and management of overweight and obesity in adults and children. NICE clinical guideline 43 (2006). Available from: [www.nice.org.uk/CG43](http://www.nice.org.uk/CG43)
- Falls: the assessment and prevention of falls in older people. NICE clinical guideline 21 (2004). Available from: [www.nice.org.uk/CG21](http://www.nice.org.uk/CG21)

## Updating the recommendations

This guidance will be updated as needed. Information on the progress of any update will be posted at [www.nice.org.uk/PH16](http://www.nice.org.uk/PH16)

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