**Mental Health and Wellbeing**

**Mental health:** Mental health can be seen positively to identify a positive state of mental wellbeing or negatively, to identify a negative state of mental wellbeing, for example, experiencing mental health problems that cause distress and affect an individual’s functioning.

**Learning outcomes**

1. Understand the needs and experiences of people with mental health conditions, dementia or learning disabilities

2. Understand the importance of promoting positive health and wellbeing for an individual who may have a mental health condition, dementia or a learning disability

3. Understand the adjustments that may be necessary in care delivery relating to an individual who may have a mental health condition, dementia or learning disability

4. Understand the importance of early detection of   
mental health needs, dementia and learning disabilities

5. Understand legal frameworks, policy and guidelines relating to mental health needs, dementia and learning disabilities

6. Understand the meaning of mental capacity in relation to how care is provided

**Awareness of Mental Health, Dementia & Learning Disability**

* Your role may not include providing direct support to individuals with mental ill- health, dementia or learning disabilities
* Having an awareness of the experiences of others can help you to identify any signs and symptoms as well as enabling you to work in ways that show compassion and understanding

**Mental Health Conditions**

1 in 4 adults experience at least one mental health need in any year

Examples of mental health problems include:

* Depression
* Anxiety
* Psychosis

**Depression**

An individual experiencing depression will feel emotions such as hopelessness and negativity that don’t go away

The symptoms of depression:

* Can last weeks, months or longer
* Affects how individuals see themselves
* Can lead to people stopping engagement in social life, family life or work
* Symptoms of depression can last for a couple of weeks, several months or longer.
* Living with depression can affect how an individual sees themselves. This can lead to them not engaging in a social life, with family or their work.
* Depression is a treatable illness with recognised symptoms.
* Having the opportunity to talk and share how they feel can help some people.

**Anxiety**

Individuals living with anxiety find it hard to control their worries. Symptoms can be:

* Physical -such as increased heart rate, difficulty breathing and dizziness
* Psychological -such as feeling a loss of control, thinking that you might die or have a heart attack, and feelings of wanting to escape or run away
* Cognitive -such as changes to your thought processes, thinking negative thoughts repeatedly
* Behavioural or social. - such as not wanting to leave the house, abusing substances such as alcohol or drugs or behaving in ways that affect your relationships. Individuals may stop going out with friends, or to places such as the supermarket, as they are worried about how they might feel when they are there.

There are treatments which help alleviate the symptoms of anxiety such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). This helps someone to talk about their condition and manage the effects by trying to change the way they think.

* **Psychological**

Psychological symptoms relate to feelings and emotions, it includes how the mind looks at things and how this can affect behaviour.

**Cognitive**

Cognitive or cognition refers to our brains and how we think about things; how we process, use and store information we take in through our senses.

**Psychosis**

Psychosis is a symptom of conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder

Two significant signs of psychosis are:

* + Hallucinations
  + Delusions
* Experiencing these symptoms can be frightening
* Reassure the individual that you are safe

**Schizophrenia:** This condition can be described as having a break from reality, when it is difficult to understand what is real and what is in their own thoughts. Symptoms could include: hallucinations, delusions and changes in behaviour.

**Bipolar disorder:** This condition affects a person’s moods and means they can go from one extreme mood to another alongside having feelings of depression.

**Hallucinations:** where a person sees or hears things that aren’t real but are very real to them. They can also include feeling, smelling or tasting things that aren’t real.

**Delusions:** where a person believes things that aren’t true, for example believing that someone is spying on them.

**Causes of mental health problems**

An individual may experience a mental health need as a   
result of:

* A traumatic event -such as an accident, a death in the family or as a result of war (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
* A chemical imbalance in the brain
* Genetics-for example, a person’s additional needs may be due to their DNA.

**Chemical imbalance:** The chemicals or hormones that affect our emotions and behaviour may be lower or higher than they should be.

**Dementia**

A word commonly used to cover many different conditions that affect the brain

These conditions cause a decline or reduction in abilities, including:

* memory
* thinking
* reasoning
* communicating

The Alzheimer’s Society estimate there are over 100 different conditions that fall under the dementia umbrella.

Someone who experiences dementia may feel confused, frustrated and frightened. A common symptom is short term memory loss; the individual finds it difficult to remember recent events or conversations. This can lead to them repeating stories or asking the same question over and over again.

Dementia is often thought to be a condition that only affects older people. However, dementia can affect anyone, at any age.

**Supporting individuals with dementia**

There is currently no cure for dementia, and individual’s experience of living with the condition can be affected by the attitudes and views of others

* If people view living with dementia as a constant loss of abilities
* That there is nothing that can be done to support the person
* The person living with dementia is likely to experience feelings of ill-being
* That can then contribute to a negative experience of living with the condition

Working in negative ways could lead to the individual experiencing feelings of despair and depression. Ignoring the individual’s wishes means that the worker is not working in a person-centred way. The individual may feel that they are no longer in control of her own life or of the care that they receive. They may have feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness and experience a loss of a loss of self-esteem.

Working in positive ways that show respect for the individual’s wishes will help to promote the individual's feeling of self-worth, dignity and self-esteem. They will be more likely to engage in therapies and support groups that can improve their experience of living with the condition.

**Scenario 1**

Josie has dementia. She values her independence but is finding it increasingly difficult to remember where things are in her home and when to take her medication.

**Example of how to Manage him** -The worker supporting her suggests that they arrange for her to have an assessment of her needs and research ways of supporting her to remain in her own home for longer such as labelling cupboards and using dosette boxes.

**Scenario 2**

William has been living with dementia for some years. He is admitted to hospital after a fall.

**Example of how to Manage him** -Workers supporting William talk to him about what he wants and what he needs. He and his support network are involved in all decisions from his rehabilitation treatment and adaptations to support him to live as independently as possible to day-to-day decisions about what to eat and what to wear.

**Types of dementia**

The two most common types of dementia are:

**Alzheimer’s disease**

In individuals with Alzheimer’s disease- a bad protein develops in the brain causing damage to the brain cells and their connections

**Vascular dementia**

Vascular dementia is caused by oxygen failing to get to the brain cells as a result of problems with the blood supply (the vascular system)

Dementia will affect each individual differently depending on the type of dementia they have and the support they receive

**Learning disabilities**

The cause of learning disabilities is not always known but they can be due to:

* Complications during birth which can lead to lack of oxygen
* Genetic conditions such as Down’s Syndrome which happens as a result of an extra chromosome. This leads to impairments in both cognitive ability and physical growth that range from mild to moderate developmental disabilities
* Illness or injury in childhood which has affected the brain such as meningitis.

In most cases living with a learning disability will have a lifelong impact but this will vary depending on the type of learning disability and the severity of the condition.

An individual with a learning disability may have difficulty

* Understanding information
* Learning new skills
* Communicating
* Living independently

**The impact of learning disabilities**

An individual’s experience of living with a learning disability and the support they need will depend on the severity of the condition

* People with a mild learning disability may only need a little support to be independent
* Someone with a severe learning disability may not be able to verbally communicate

Individuals may communicate in ways that others find difficult to understand, and this can affect how others see and respond to them

**Supporting people with learning disabilities**

Every individual is unique with different needs, preferences, life history and experiences

The support provided must:

* Be person centred to meet their specific needs
* Develop and enable them to develop their skills and become more independent

**Promoting positive attitudes**

The stigma associated with mental health problems, dementia or learning disabilities can lead to feelings of loneliness and being left out of society

Positive attitudes can be promoted by:

* Reducing stigma by ensuring that individuals are not isolated in social situations
* Promoting wellbeing for those living with the condition
* Identifying and building on the individual’s skills and abilities
* Providing opportunities for individuals to feel empowered and in control

**The social model of disability**

The social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person’s impairment or difference

* The social model looks for ways of removing barriers that limit life choices
* When barriers are removed, people can work towards being as independent as they can be and be included and equal in society

Some examples of barriers that could limit an individual’s choices and stop them being included in society.

* The environment, for example, is a building accessible for a person who uses a wheelchair?
* The impact of people’s attitudes, for example, stereotyping all people with dementia as the same and assuming they will all be affected in the same way
* The impact of an organisation’s approach, for example, ways of working that are set to meet the needs of the organisation rather than the individual.

**Barriers**

The barriers could include:

* The environment – such as signs for information
* The impact of people’s attitudes such as stereotyping
* The impact of an organisation’s approach such as ways of working that are set to meet the needs of the organisation rather than the individual

**Environmental support:** such as adding handrails for support in the bathroom, labelling rooms and cupboards and dosette systems to remind people to take medication.

**Emotional support:** for both the person living with the condition and their family or carers. This might involve arranging a befriender or a counselling service.

**Practical information or additional services:** about an individual’s condition, illness, financial and legal issues and opportunities to plan ahead should also be available. Forums, charities, helplines or support groups are all useful sources of support and information.

**Adaptations**

The individual’s changing needs may need to be assessed to identify adaptations which can support them to live their lives more independently

**Adaptations could include:**

**Environmental support:** such as adding handrails for support in the bathroom, labelling rooms and cupboards and dosette systems to remind people to take medication.

**Emotional support:** for both the person living with the condition and their family or carers. This might involve arranging a befriender or a counselling service.

**Practical information or additional services:** about an individual’s condition, illness, financial and legal issues and opportunities to plan ahead should also be available. Forums, charities, helplines or support groups are all useful sources of support and information.

**Reporting concerns**

* If you think someone is developing symptoms of a mental health problem or dementia, or if their care and support needs have changed and need reassessing, you should record this information and pass it on
* It is important to follow your agreed ways of working on recording to reduce lost or misinterpreted information

**Agreed ways of working:** This refers to organisational policies and procedures. This includes those less formally documented by individual employers and the self-employed as well as formal policies such as the Dignity Code and Compassion in Practice.

When recording information there are a number of points to consider:

* Ensure the information is accurate
* It should be clear, concise, and legible
* It should be non-ambiguous and state facts not opinions or assumptions
* The person involved should be given the opportunity to contribute
* Apply the principles of the Data Protection Act and maintain confidentiality.

**Early diagnosis**

Similarities between conditions can mean that conditions are sometimes mistaken

**Psychosis**

* Confusion as a result of hallucinations and delusions
* Lack of insight and self-awareness
* Problems with sleeping

**Depression/ mood disorders**

* Change in mood/ personality
* Problems with sleeping

**Anxiety**

* Change in mood/ personality
* Problems with sleeping

**Dementia**

* Confusion as a result of memory loss
* Change in mood/ personality
* Problems with verbal communication
* Problems with sleeping

**Learning disabilities**

* Confusion due to difficulties with memory or relating to information
* Lack of insight and self-awareness
* Problems with verbal communication

**why it is important that conditions are diagnosed as early as possible;**

**Clear up uncertainty.** It can be upsetting living with symptoms like memory loss and changes in personality, particularly if you don’t understand why they are happening. As there are a number of conditions that have similar symptoms it is important that an accurate diagnosis is made. Whilst this can be difficult to hear it can clear up uncertainty and help someone to feel more in control.

**Help the individual and their family and friends to plan.** Planning for the future provides the opportunity to consider, discuss and record wishes and decisions. This is known as advance care planning; the individual makes plans about what they wish to happen while they are most able to be involved and make decisions.

**Identify possible treatments and therapies-**An individual may want to consider taking medication such as anti-dementia drugs or anti-depressants. They may also benefit from therapies such as counselling or cognitive behaviour therapy.

**Provide the right information, resources and support-**Through accessing information at an early stage someone can make best use of what is available such as support groups. They can also identify financial support that they may be entitled to.

**Adapting care and support**

Care and support must be person centred and will need to be reviewed and adapted to meet the changing needs of the individual

It may be necessary to develop your skills so that you can provide effective care and support. For example:

* Developing skills to support people to communicate such as Makaton
* Learning how to use assistive technology

Individuals also need support to learn how to use this technology in order to live independently

**Legislation:** polices to promote human rights, inclusion, equal life chances and citizenship of individuals with mental health needs, dementia or learning disabilities are a part of legislation in many countries.

**Additional information**

Those living with mental health needs, dementia or a learning disability are more vulnerable to abuse. You should follow your agreed ways of working to make sure each individual is best protected from harm or abuse.