

# Fact Sheet

## Mental health and wellbeing definitions

### **Mental health**

Mental health is more than the absence of illness. The World Health Organization (2014) defines mental health as “...a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.” Like physical health, we can all benefit from looking after our mental health.

### **Mental wellbeing (also known as ‘positive mental health’ and ‘flourishing’)**

Mental wellbeing is more than the absence of mental illness and it is more than feeling happy. Someone with positive mental health and high wellbeing is feeling good, functioning well, has satisfaction with life, is developing as a person, and has strong relationships.

### **Poor mental health**

Poor mental health is a state of low mental wellbeing where your ability to cope with the day-to-day pressures of life, work productively or contribute to a community are impaired. A person’s ability to realise their potential is hampered because of impacts on their emotions and thinking, and in turn their behaviours.

### **Mental health problems (also known as mental distress or mental illness)**

We all have times when we struggle with our mental health, but mental health problems develop when these difficult experiences or feelings go on for a long time and affect our ability to enjoy and live our lives in the way we want to. You might receive a specific diagnosis from your doctor, or just feel more generally that you are experiencing poor mental health.

### **Resilience**

Resilience is the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to the ongoing demands and challenges of life. An increasing body of research from the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and sociology shows that most people bounce back from risks, stress, crises, and trauma and experience life success. Resilience can be considered an individual character trait, a set of skills and learnings or as part of an emotional response. Resilience can also be considered a characteristic of communities.