

## Learning Snapshot: Positive Mental Health

Ageing Better is a test and learn programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

We collect information and insights from across 14 partnerships and use this learning to support service deliverers, funders and policy makers working to reduce social isolation in people aged over 50.

This learning snapshot details key findings and insights about positive mental health.

You can use it as a summary of the [full learning report](#), to share practical tools with colleagues and in teams, or include in your own presentations and briefings.

<p><b>1. Why are we exploring mental wellbeing?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have identified that one of the key risks for social isolation is having poor mental health.</li> <li>• We also know that good mental health can help an individual cope with life transitions and prevent social isolation and loneliness.</li> <li>• More than a third of those over 50 have experienced a mental health challenge and one in five have experienced a decline in their mental health.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. What are the challenges?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several risk factors contribute to people’s mental health declining. Common triggers are bereavement, physical health and financial worries.</li> <li>• We also found a lack of confidence and low self-esteem prevent people engaging in the protective activities that contribute to positive mental health.</li> <li>• The stigma around mental health means people may be unwilling to ask for or accept help. There are additional cultural implications that act as a barrier too.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. So what can we do with this learning?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund and support mental health interventions for older people.</li> <li>• Recognise the importance of good mental health as a protective factor against loneliness and social isolation.</li> <li>• Enable long term, flexible opportunities, including group activity.</li> <li>• Understand the characteristics of people with positive wellbeing that we identified as being: ‘Connected’ (to family and/or friends and a wider network), ‘Purposeful’, ‘Proactive and Confident’, ‘Secure’ (with suitable housing, finances and physical health).</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. How can we use this learning to improve people’s mental health?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a variety of opportunities in a flexible way for people to engage with - a combination of specific interventions and group and community work.</li> <li>• Groups play an important role in this by providing meaningful activity that can help prevent a decline in a person’s mental health.</li> <li>• Some groups, particularly those supporting people with more complex needs, will need ongoing support from other organisations which will include paid staff.</li> </ul>