

A response to:
Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland: The Future of Mental Health
Improvement in Scotland 2008-11

East Renfrewshire Mental Health Forum (EMHF) welcomes the policy document and in particular acknowledges the positive and inclusive approach of focussing on protecting and promoting wellbeing for all of Scotland. The easy-read version makes the document more accessible to most people.

In terms of the proposed actions, EMHF makes the following observations:

1. **Mental health “literacy”.** Current training programmes such as Scottish Mental Health First Aid Training, safeTALK and ASIST tend to have a crisis focus, and while they explain mental illness and mental health crises very well, they will not of themselves serve to progress the Government’s national mental wellbeing agenda. Building on the existing National Programme, work will need to be done around introducing the language, concepts and evidence that underpin this approach to wellbeing; continuing to challenge the stigma and misconceptions associated with mental health issues; and educating the public on how to maximise good mental health and develop positive coping strategies for life.
2. **Equality.** Risk factors vary with age, sex, sexuality, race, culture, income, geography and so on. While an emphasis on the young is necessary and more work in schools, residential settings and colleges etc. would be welcome, it is vitally important that we do not lose sight of the fact that we have an aging population and later life brings its own challenges to maintaining mental wellbeing. EMHF would also like to see more consideration given to the workplace and more awareness raising and guidance for employers, while acknowledging that it can be difficult to reach smaller organisations. East Renfrewshire is a diverse, multicultural area with distinctive characteristics, including around half of Scotland’s Jewish population and a significant Asian population. Contrasting fortunes of wealth and deprivation are highlighted in neighbouring communities. It also has particular issues relating to gaps in public transport across the district. EMHF hopes that local action to promote the wellbeing of East Renfrewshire residents will also attempt to address health inequalities and access to services.
3. **Existing provision.** EMHF is keen to ensure that good quality services continue to be provided for people who have mental health issues. There will always be a need for acute crisis services and ongoing support services for a proportion of the population and EMHF wants to ensure that services are: available in timely fashion, appropriate for the individual’s needs and consistent with a recovery approach. EMHF notes that the Government has stated its intention to sustain good quality services and this is welcome.

East Renfrewshire Mental Health Forum

EMHF aims are:

- To relieve the needs of people resident in East Renfrewshire who are suffering from or recovering from mental illness and their carer and/or families.
- To advance education and, in particular, to raise awareness among the residents of East Renfrewshire of issues relating to mental health and mental illness.

Throughout its 13 year history it has sought to ensure that people with mental health issues and their carers have a say in all mental health matters in East Renfrewshire.

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