

Mentally healthier conditions for councillors and communities

Part two (of two):

Mentally healthier conditions for
communities

Presenter/author - Councillor Ed Davie

- Lambeth councillor since 2010
- LGA expert peer since 2013
- Longest serving [Mental Health Challenge Council Champion](#)
- Health charities including BMA and Mental Health Foundation since 2009
- King's College London public health master's and studied social determinants of health with Professor Sir Michael Marmot at UCL

In part one we learnt that



Humans evolved to be hunter gatherers.....

- Had control over their own lives
- Moved their bodies a lot of the time
- Constantly in green space
- With good social contact

...not lockdown zoomers



In part two (for communities)

- 1) Context of community mental health
- 2) Addressing social determinants – poverty and discrimination
- 3) Improving the environment
- 4) Using psychological insights

Largely based on this [handbook](#) by me and clinical psychologist Dr Katherine Garzonis



During this session please write down at least three things you are going to try to improve on (be as specific as you can) for example:

- 1) Get council, local NHS Trusts and other major employers Living Wage Trust accredited
- 2) Tighten alcohol licensing
- 3) Create better walking and cycling routes

Mental (ill) health is a major issue

- Tens of thousands of lost lives – people with serious mental illness die, on average, 20 years earlier
- Mental ill health is estimated to cost over £105 billion a year in England - £700m per upper tier council
- We cannot just treat are way out of this – Michael Marmot: ‘medicine is failed prevention’

What levers do councils have?

- Major employer and contractor
- Planning authority - housing, active travel, green and community space
- Provider and custodian of parks, libraries, leisure
- Licensing authority - alcohol, gambling
- Social care - child and vulnerable adult protection
- Education - through schools and communications
- Influencer - of partners and residents

What influences mental health?

Positively (protective factors)

- Secure, sufficient income
- Fair treatment
- Secure decent housing
- Positive parenting including secure attachment
- Positive school experience
- Exercise, healthy diet
- Green space

Negatively (risk factors)

- Poverty
- Discrimination
- Poor housing/homelessness
- Child neglect, abuse, bullying
- Traumatic events
- Isolation
- Inactivity, diet, substance misuse
- Poor environment

World Health Organisation factors behind health and illness

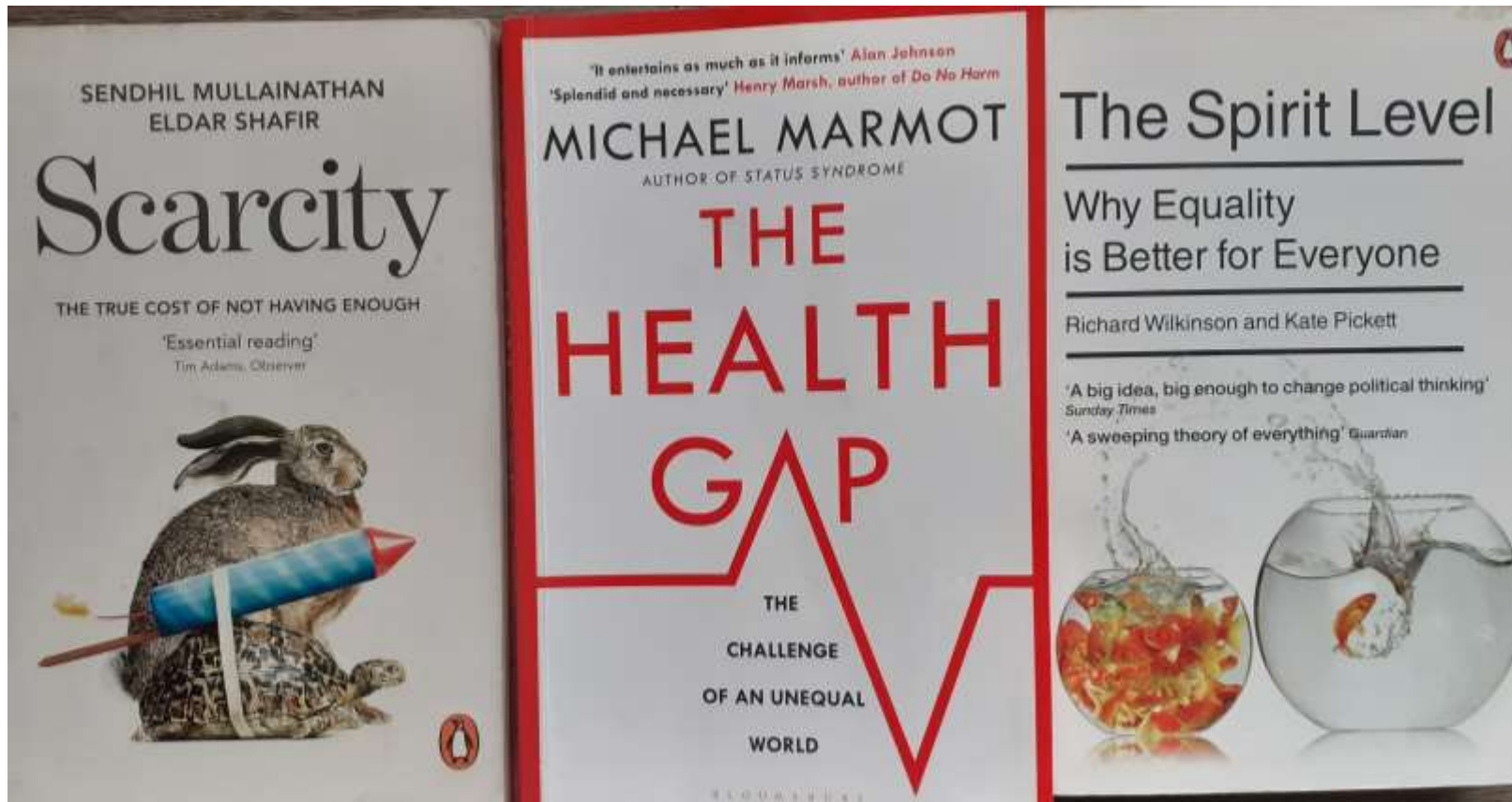
Social determinants – like poverty and discrimination

Environment - housing and access to green space, for example

Individual factors – including genetics and behaviours



Social determinants – determines up to 55% of health outcomes (WHO)



Poverty and discrimination

- Anyone can develop a mental health condition but risk depends on circumstances
- Those who live in poverty are at greater risk
- People who suffer discrimination are also at greater risk

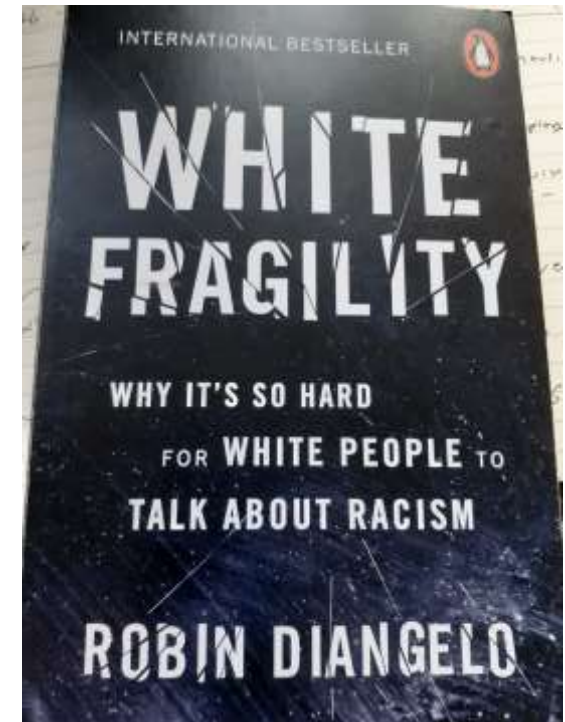
Black and LGBT+ people in particular are at higher risk because discrimination and discriminatory practice can:

- Increase risk of poverty
- Produce excess stress hormones
- Reduce sense of control – increase sense of powerlessness
- Interpret behaviour as ‘disordered’
- Lead to coercive/inferior/culturally inappropriate services
- Lead to reluctance to seek help – late presentation
- Increase risk of self medication or risky behaviour

Increased risk is not genetic or cultural ‘flaw’ in these communities

Tackling discrimination

- Check you are carrying out your Public Sector Equalities Duties under the Equalities Act 2010
- Check data for disproportionality
- Ensure representation at all levels
- Co-produce solutions with people and communities
- Invest in quality anti-discriminatory practice
- Educate yourselves and others



Lambeth Black Mental Health Commission



Poverty: Sections under the Mental Health Act by indices of deprivation

- [NHS Digital's 2019-20 Mental Health Act statistics report](#),

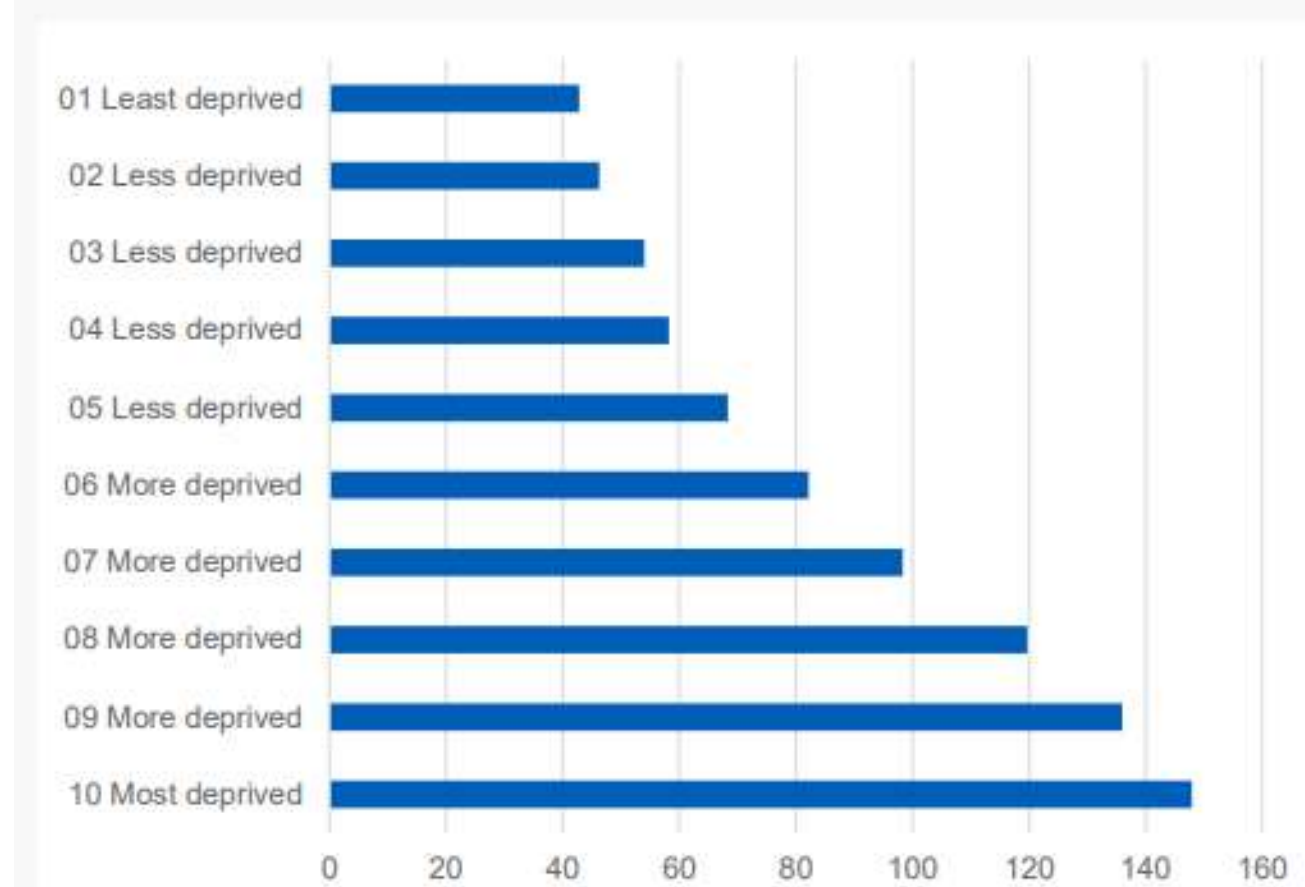


Figure 4: Map of County & UA (pre 4/19)s in England for Estimated prevalence of common mental disorders: % population aged 16 & over (Percentage point - per 100 2017)

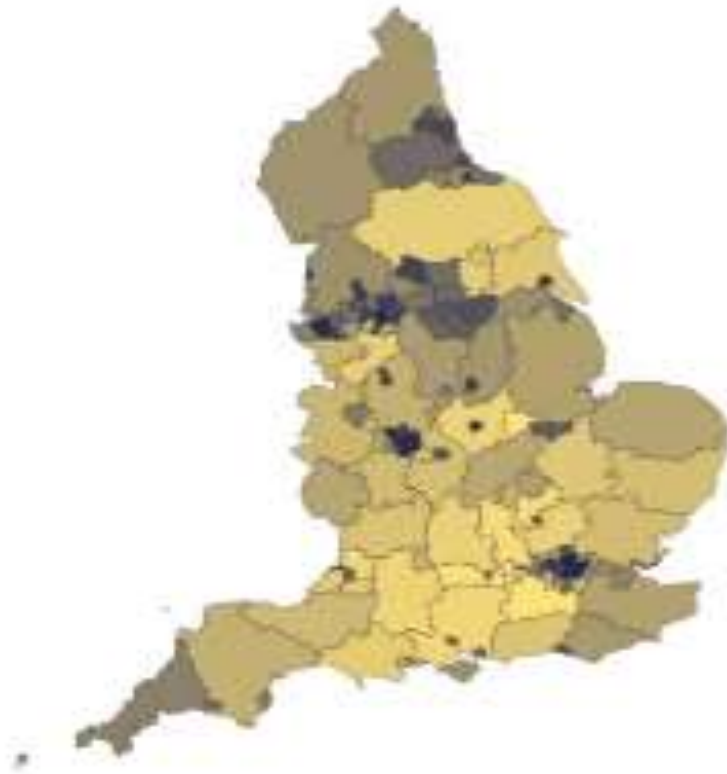
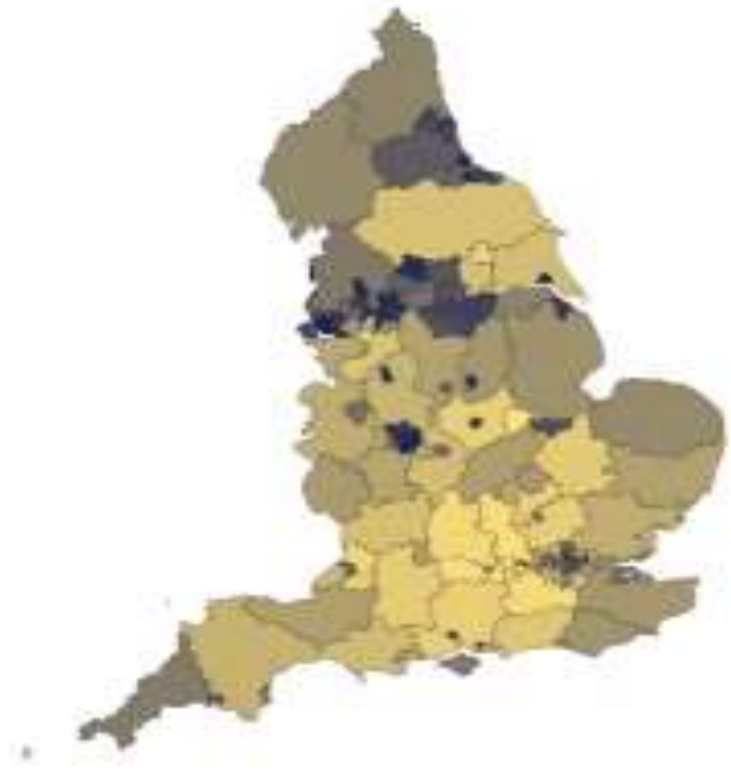


Figure 5: Map of County & UA (pre 4/19)s in England for Deprivation score (IMD 2015) (Score - 2015)

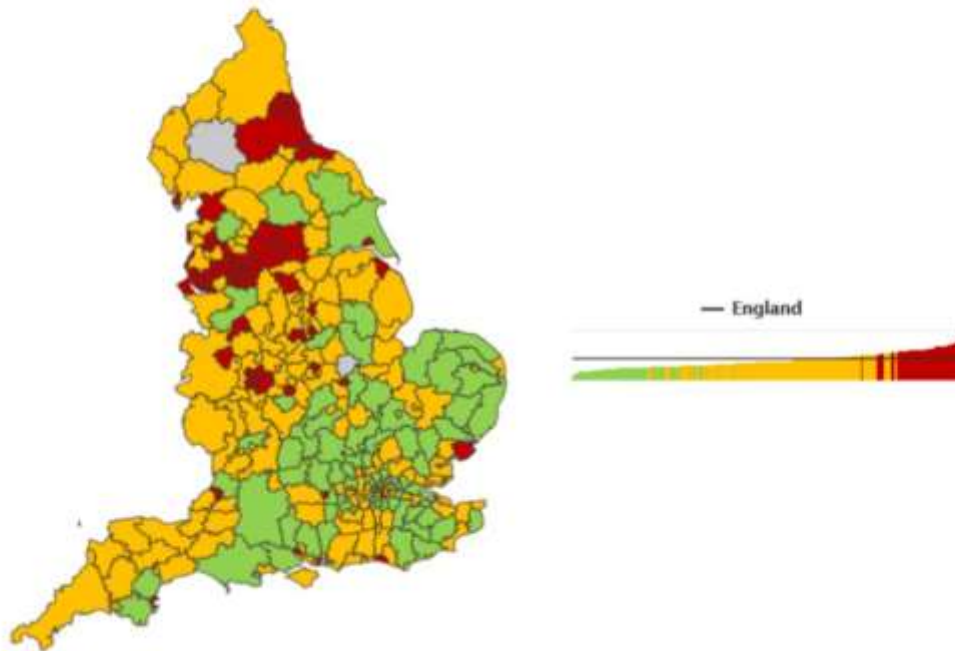


Continuous: Lowest Highest

‘Deaths of despair’ map to poverty

[Local Alcohol Profiles for England: short statistical commentary, January 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Figure 4: alcohol-specific mortality, district and unitary authorities in England, 2016 to 2018

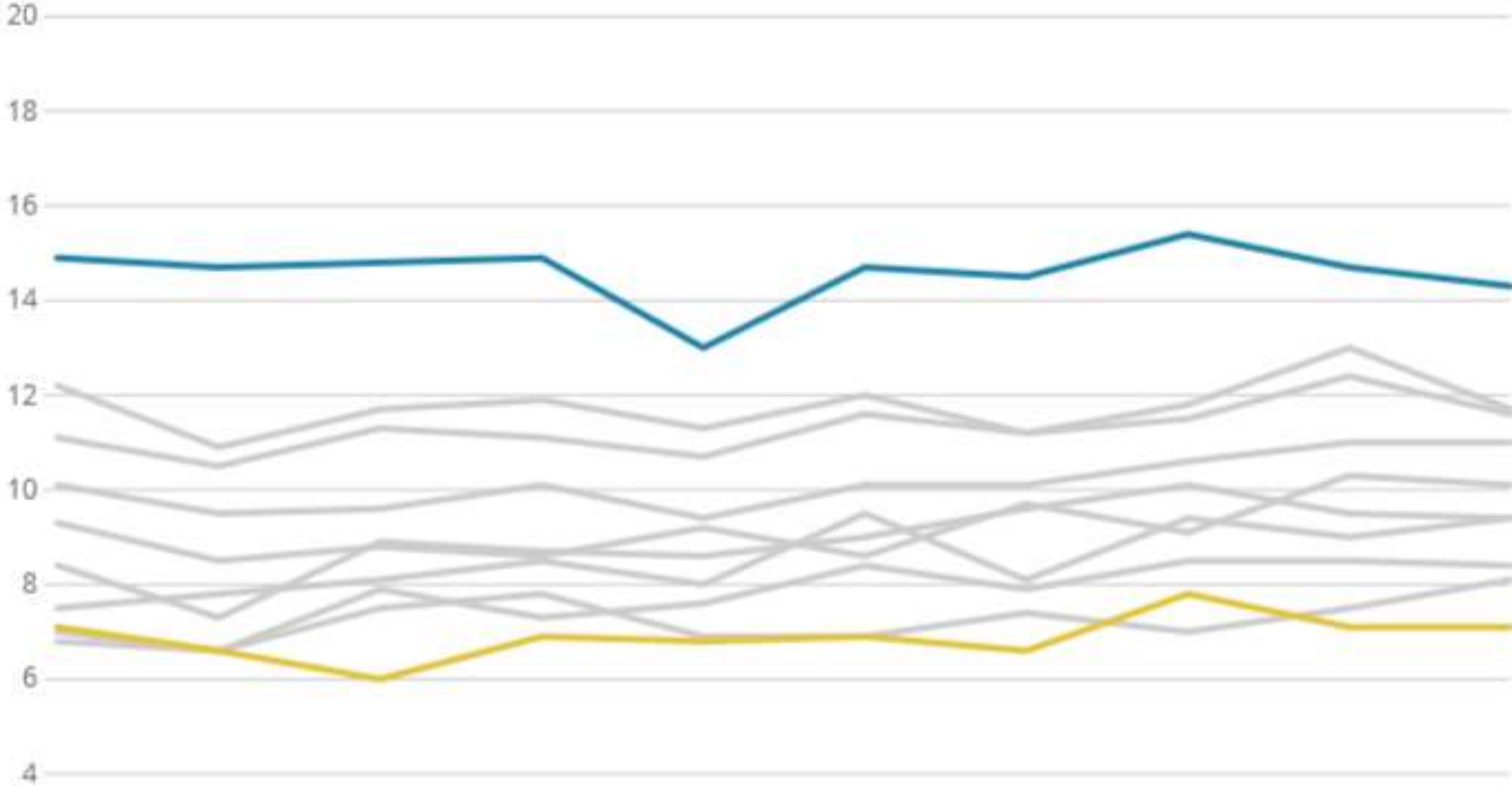


Suicide rate per deprivation decile, England, 2006 to 2015

[Who is most at risk of suicide? - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](http://ons.gov.uk)

— Most deprived 10% — Intermediate deciles — Least deprived 10%

Rate per 100,000 population



Poverty is bad for health because..

- Can't afford healthy stuff – eating recommended diet costs 75% of disposable income of most deprived for eg
- Reduces 'mental bandwidth' for 'good' health choices
- Is stressful – flooding body with excessive stress hormones
- Lowers self esteem and sense of control
- Understandably, all of the above can lead to 'comfort' eating, inactivity, substance misuse and risky behaviour

Increasing poor people's income does not encourage 'bad' behaviour...

'Increasing child tax credit leads to large declines in alcohol and tobacco use []....it is likely extra income reduces financial stress and hence reducing consumption of items like alcohol and tobacco.'

Jones, L., Milligan, K., Stabile, M. (2015) How do families who receive child tax credits spend their money? Martin Prosperity Institute.

Poverty reduction is key

- Ensure excellent financial, social security, housing, childcare **advice**
- Create as many decent Living Wage+ **jobs** and apprenticeships as possible
- Invest in education and training
- Ensure genuinely **affordable housing**
- **Support free childcare** – 30% of free childcare for two and three-year-olds is unused
- Be generous with your Council Tax Support Scheme

Living Wage Accreditation

Only one quarter of councils, and fewer than 10 per cent of NHS employers, are Living Wage Trust accredited.

This matters because accreditation covers contracted staff: cleaners, refuse collectors, carers, caterers, administrators, drivers. The heroic key workers we have been clapping

Case Study: Lambeth Living Wage

- Council's been Living Wage accredited since 2012 with more than 99 per cent of its contractors also paying the London Living Wage rate
- UK's first Living Wage building in council owned office block
- Borough's two NHS trusts, universities, several GP surgeries, schools now accredited
- Designated 'Living Wage Champion' councillor

Challenge - is your council and local NHS paying living wages?

Check whether your local authority and local NHS trusts (being the largest employers in most areas) are Living Wage accredited. [Accredited Living Wage Employers | Living Wage Foundation](#)

Create 'Living Wage Champion'?

Improve your council tax relief scheme – ideally to 100%

Case study - Camden's Council's new Council Tax Reduction Scheme:

- 10,000 out of work and low income households will not pay any council tax
- Changes to the proposed scheme will save £500,000 in staffing and other administration costs by making processes more simple and reducing bureaucracy

Employ, train and buy local

Act to develop your local economy through ‘anchor institutions’ and social value procurement.

Councils, NHS bodies, universities and other large institutions can sometimes, and understandably, be so focused on delivering the direct services they can overlook their role as major employers and procurers of goods and services.

Case study: The Preston Model

Anchor institutions worked on ways to increase the local economic and social benefits generated by their supply chains.

Within the wider Lancashire economy (including Preston) £489 million of spend had been retained, a rise of £200 million from the baseline analysis.

Unemployment was reduced from 6.5 per cent in 2014 to 3.1 per cent in 2017.

Silver bullet smoking cessation



- Smoking is linked to mental health problems from depression to psychosis
- Higher rates of smoking among those with serious mental illness are a major factor in average 20 year reduced life expectancy
- Disproportionate number of the poorest people smoke pushing them further into poverty and increasing their health risks
- Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) estimates that if everyone in the UK quit smoking, over one million people would be lifted out of poverty
- Your public health team can advise on smoking cessation
- Councils should ban smoking in public spaces like playgrounds and parks
- Create smoke-free tenancies in their social housing properties
- Ensure trading standards teams are enforcing legislation on displaying cigarettes and clamping down on illegal sales

Environment



We are all products of our environment

Planning, licensing and influencing powers can be used by local government to improve, or worsen, mental and physical health by shaping the environment in which residents live

Ideal mentally healthy environment

Everyone has a secure, decent home with access, via tree-lined, safe, walking, cycling and electric public transport routes, to:

- high-quality employment and training opportunities
- communal green and blue space
- free/affordable 'pro-social' space including libraries, leisure and community centres
- decent affordable childcare and schools
- healthy, affordable food

Utrecht – The Netherlands' green capital



It also limits:

- crime and anti-social behaviour
- air pollution
- access to cheap alcohol
- harmful gambling
- poor quality food



Housing

- Ensure your council has an up-to-date homelessness strategy
- Check the local data for success in preventing homelessness
- Make sure your local planning guidance maximises the number of high-quality, genuinely affordable homes in new developments and what ratio is being achieved –at least 30 per cent social rent level as part of 40 per cent overall ‘affordable’ is a good level to aim for depending on local circumstances

Support active travel

- Distances walked have fallen by 30 per cent since 1980 as planners have encouraged suburban housing and out of town facilities making cars the default mode of transport.
- More car journeys damages community cohesion – another predeterminant of mental health – because it reduces social interactions.
- Regular exercise is crucial to mental as well as physical health –reduces risk of many diseases and early death by up to 50 per cent

What councillors can do?

- The most effective way of supporting more people to exercise is to build it into everyday lives through the planning process. Ensuring staircases are placed more prominently than lifts for example
- Check your council has an active travel plan
- Discourage out of town shopping developments that require more car journeys. Check your planning guidance. [PHE Active Travel Guide for local authorities](#)
- Be brave! Some motoring lobbyists are noisy

Before.....Amsterdam....after





Increasing access to green space and other leisure facilities

Access to open spaces and leisure and recreational facilities has direct and indirect impacts on people's physical and mental health in part by enabling supporting people to meet others in their community and feel a greater sense of belonging. Plants including those in parks and street trees are known to improve health by releasing oxygen and absorbing pollution.

Using licensing powers

Stricter alcohol licensing reduces consumption, thereby cutting mental and physical health risks associated with excessive drinking.

This particularly applies to off license sales which are associated with worse problems.

Develop/refresh your alcohol strategy

Some councils have used their public health functions to advance a 'health in all policies' approach imposing new conditions on alcohol off licenses including:

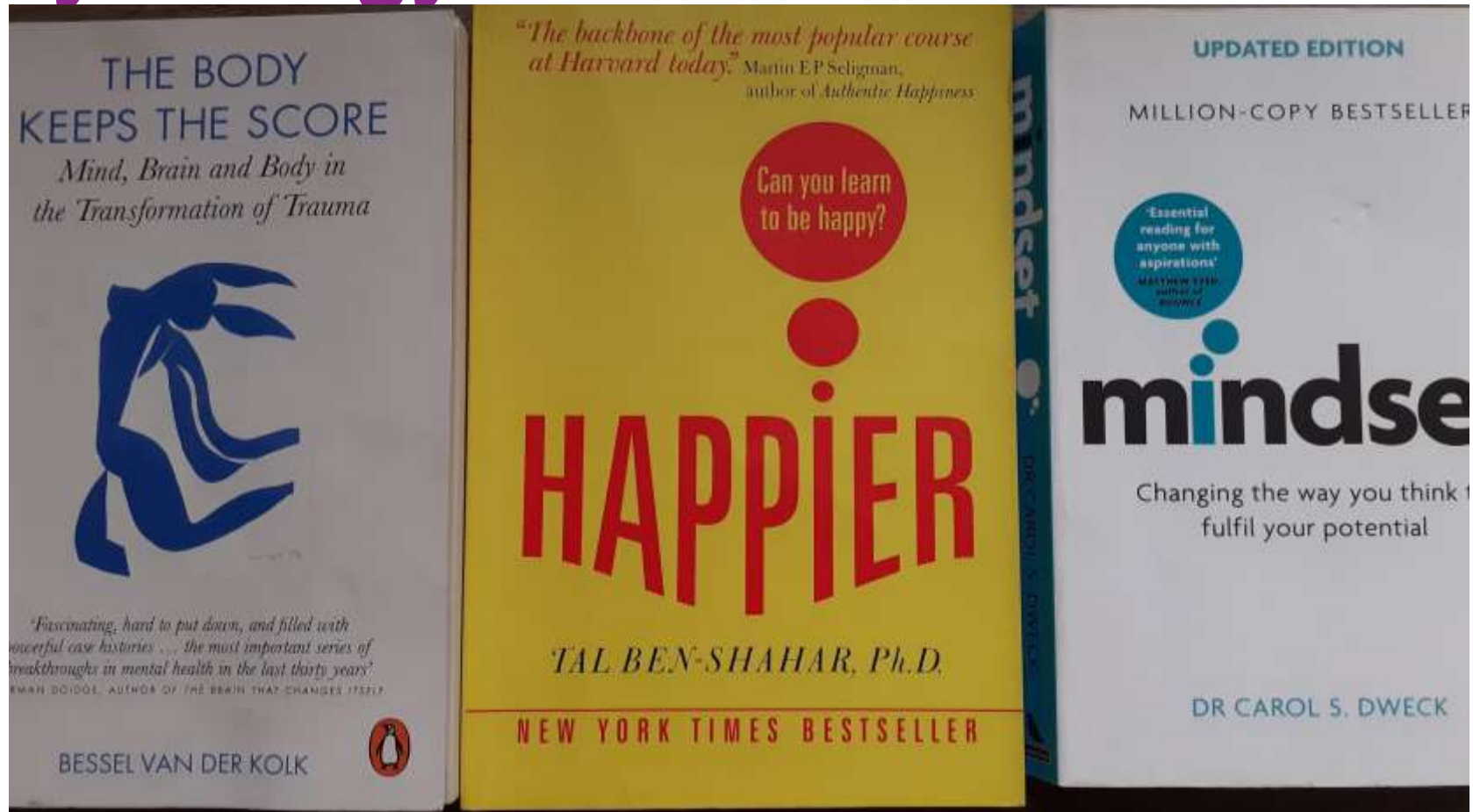
- restricting opening hours to between 11 am and 10 pm
- banning sale of 'super-strength' beer and cider, single cans and miniature bottles of spirits
- 'saturation zones' whereby there is a presumption that no new licences will be granted in an area with many existing licensees.

Case study: Newcastle City Council's local Minimum Unit Pricing

By mandating a Minimum Unit Price (MUP) for alcohol the Scottish Government has reduced consumption by 25 per cent. In the absence of an equivalent measure in England, Newcastle City Council updated its licensing policy to encourage business owners applying for new licenses to introduce a minimum unit to all alcohol products of 50p per unit.

The MUP has been voluntarily adopted by a number of licensed premises with a positive impact on the city

Psychology



Individual and community psychology

Psychology describes how people think, feel and behave, how these affect each other, and how altogether they influence health and other outcomes.

Psychological insights enable us to design systems that make better outcomes more likely.

We evolved to conserve energy

Psychologists suggest that conserving energy, is a survival mechanism that helped our ancestors in the wild be ready to escape attack, hunt and forage when necessary. Armed with this knowledge we can use it to support better outcomes without too much effort, like changing defaults on forms, building exercise into everyday life and supplying benches in public spaces so people interact - social distancing rules permitting.

Support connections between people councillors can help by working to ensure:

- communal spaces to meet and make friends
- access to nearby quality jobs
- good quality, accessible public services (15 minute cities)
- opportunities to gather like festivals, volunteering and markets.

When residents are connected to each other and good services they are more likely to be happy and successful. In turn they are more likely to support those around them to flourish further. Community wellbeing, when suitably nurtured, is a virtuous cycle.

Problem solving...

got our ancestors out of the rain and into caves and then into huts and finally flats and houses.

Good problem solvers see ways to make things better, thereby reducing the duration of crises or avoiding them altogether, making this a core skill for promoting resilience.

This naturally benefits those around them as well (particularly people in their network), and the ability to share problem solving tips and creations via technology such as the internet means this reach can be even further.

The great thing about being a problem-solving species is that everyone has the skills to help find solutions. This is why, properly managed, public consultations can be so useful – the more heads you have on a problem the better your solution.

Control

The desire for control includes the ability to choose what happens to us (even if we don't get to pick the choices), having a sense of mastery in some areas (such as hobbies, special skills, our homes), and that what we do is meaningful. Even when we choose not to control something, that is still us making a meaningful decision.

Case study: Giving away control: asset-based community development in Northumberland

An asset-based approach uses existing community strengths and resources to build capacity and generate positive outcomes. Since the main strength of any community is its people, citizens should be supported to develop positively.

For example, Northumberland County Council's public health team held a World Café event about wellness to help identify local resources and connect people.

People suggested that micro-grants would be a good way for people and groups to start activities to improve their own wellbeing.

A subsequent grants scheme has so far contributed to over 75 projects, with data suggesting 26 projects have together involved over a thousand people in positive action in the community.

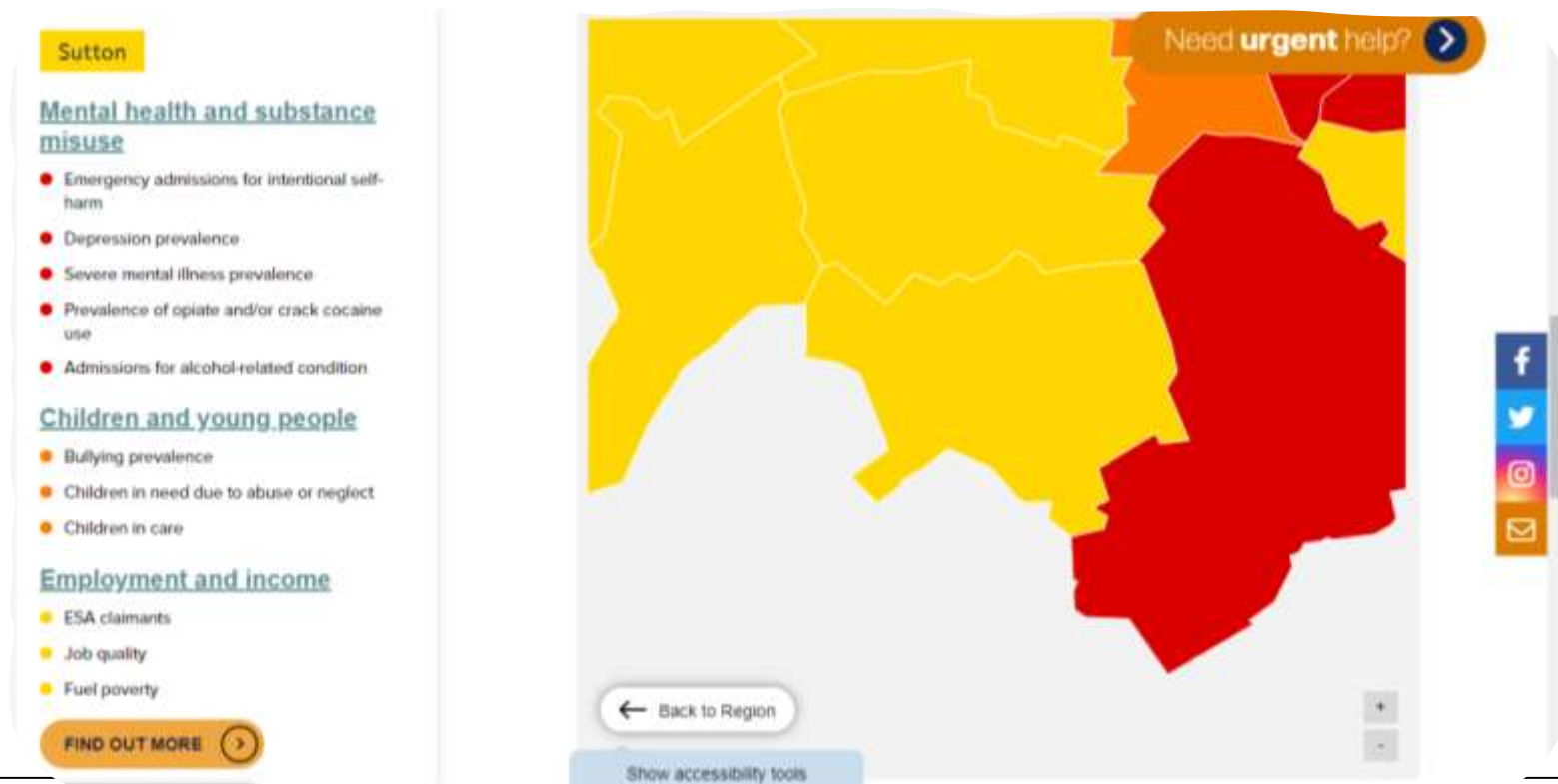
To sum up:

- **Social determinants** – reduce poverty by providing excellent advice and leading Living Wage accredited Anchor Institutions to employ, train and buy local. Examine data for disproportionality and address discrimination.
- **Environment** – use your planning and licensing powers to work towards everyone having a secure, decent home with access, via tree-lined, safe, walking, cycling and electric public transport routes to employment, green, community, childcare spaces limiting alcohol, pollution and unhealthy food.
- **Psychology** – through well designed community spaces, events and consultations facilitate people having a sense of control and connection with their community and services.

Other considerations...

- Registrars as points of contact in moments of upheaval: births, deaths, divorces
- Child protection and development
- Domestic and street violence
- Mental health and substance misuse services

This training also available bespoke for your council as interactive group sessions



Please complete feedback

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