

Mental health training

These notes have been written to complement the videos. This video was prepared with CAP – Christians Against Poverty. CAP's service aims to address the needs of clients with a full range of mental health problems. Some of the comments in these notes and on the video mention CAP but can be adapted to your own situation.

Definition of mental health

The World Health Organisation defines **health** as a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

- Mental health is when an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to contribute to his or her community.
- Mental ill health is when an individual has difficulty in one or more of these areas resulting in the breakdown of an individual's wellbeing, which also affects how a community may function.

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Vulnerable clients

Mental ill health can make a client 'vulnerable' by itself or combine with other factors to make someone vulnerable. The FCA identifies vulnerable clients as the following;

1. Clients with a diagnosis of terminal illness.
2. Clients with a diagnosed mental health illness for which they are receiving treatment.
 - This would usually be an illness such as severe depression or a psychotic illness and people would be in touch with mental health services, rather than depression treated by a GP.
3. The elderly who cannot increase their income and/or re pay their debt within a short-term repayment plan.
 - Some of this group may also have dementia which can make understanding finances difficult.

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4. Other more extreme circumstances may also be included i.e. serious illness, severe learning difficulties.
 - This may include clients who are spending a lot of time in hospital – psychiatric hospital admissions can be quite lengthy.

Mental ill health and debt

People with mental ill health are 3 times more likely to be in debt. These diagrams come from Martin Lewis' Money and Mental Health Policy Institute – www.moneyandmentalhealth.org.

· Psychosis [voices and disordered thinking] can make it hard to concentrate. Depression can make you believe your finances are in a hopeless state when this is not the case. Anxiety can stop people attending banks or other appointments. Dementia [and severe depression] can make people forgetful and they can find calculations hard.

Mental Health conditions affect a client's ability to work well with CAP.

· For the same reasons people will find it hard to manage their money, they may also find it harder to engage with CAP. They may be anxious or paranoid about using the phone or have bad days when they will not feel up to meeting with anyone. They may also be in hospital for periods – sometimes some distance from their usual supports.

Undiagnosed mental ill health

Whilst many people who experience mental health problems will be seeing their GP and/or local mental health services, there will be some who have not yet done this. They may be thinking all their problems are due to debt and not realizing that help is available for their health. Whilst no-one expects staff/volunteers to be making diagnoses, you may be able to support them to get help.

Some people may be so unwell that they no longer have the capacity to address their finances or manage other problems they are facing. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do they understand the extent of their problem?
- Do they understand the risks and benefits of certain actions/behaviours?
- Are they able to weigh up/make decisions?
- Are they able to retain information?

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If they cannot do these things, they are likely to need an assessment – either from their GP or through social services if you think they are vulnerable. We have a duty to optimize their capacity where possible.

Personal protection

For your personal protection there are some *absolute DON'T's*,

- Don't allow overdosing/cutting/drinking/drugs at your main venue or when visiting at home. If you become aware that they have done any of these things on the day of an appointment, curtail this and arrange another one. If you think they are at immediate risk, then get them help.
- Don't advise them against going to see their GP or A&E, even if you feel Christianity is 'the answer'.

Point them to Jesus

No one is too vulnerable to need Jesus. If they are vulnerable, they need Him more than ever! However, remember that they may be in a dark place, so the bright light of the Good News may be quite a shock. It is best to:

- Simplify the gospel.
- Give it to them in small chunks.
- Offer to pray for them.

Also, bear in mind that mental illness, like other illness, does not always go away when someone becomes a Christian. The Mind and the Soul are different things which are related but can also do different things.

Useful national contacts

Samaritans

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: 116 123 (24-hour helpline). Also available by email (jo@samaritans.org).

Website: www.samaritans.org

Mind

Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems. Mind are the main national mental health charity.

Phone: 0300 123 3393 [or text 86463, or online chat]

Website: www.mind.org.uk

Rethink Mental Health

Confidential support to help everyone affected by severe mental illness to recover a better quality of life.

Phone: 0300 5000 927 (Mon-Fri 9:30am-4pm)

Website: www.rethink.org

Christians Against Poverty

A large national Christian debt relief organisation with lots of experience in helping people with mental health problems and who kindly filmed this video with us.

Website: www.capuk.org

Specific disorders

For more detailed information, see the following websites:

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/ - from the charity

Mind

www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsanddisorders.aspx - from the Royal College of Psychiatrists

Both these websites also have sections on different treatment, as well as lots of other high quality and up to date information.