

Community Wellbeing: *A Powerhouse of Change*



2019

West Oxfordshire

Abstract:

*Seeking to reduce mild depression and anxiety by being preventative, creative and community-focused. Outlining the **Community Wellbeing** Platform as a solution to a increasing need.*

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Community Wellbeing: A Powerhouse of Change

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Foreword

The prevalence of poor mental health seems to be growing yearly - particularly around mild or low-level difficulties. This trend is seen across all age groups and demographics. It is clear that the changes within society over the last 15 to 30 years have had an impact on the way we live. It could be argued that this has had a detrimental effect on the population's mental health. One interpretation is that we are experiencing a time of lower resilience, resulting in increased mental health issues. Presently, we do not fully understand what these changes are, or their overall impact. However, it is clear that our lives - at home, work and in our local communities – are being affected. Often, this is in a negative way. Over the last 30 years we have seen a flood of social change, the most dramatic in modern history. This societal shift has transformed every aspect of our lives, but have we stopped to consider the question, “Are we



living lives that are best suited to the physical and emotional needs of the human body and mind?”

We are at a point where the conversation around mental health is at the forefront of many private and governmental organisations. Never before have we so openly spoken about mental health-related issues. However, when we examine the provision and treatments available, we can see a struggling system - resources are stretched and unable to meet demand, a national lack of preventive solutions, and a reliance on reactive care.

With more struggling with mild mental health issues – conditions such as depression and anxiety – demand for services has increased. It is apparent that statutory services/funding alone will never be able to keep up with this. Never before has it been so necessary for a new approach to address low-level mental illness, that is both long-term and community-led. Mental health provision cannot just be the NHS' responsibility, but needs to be steered by the whole community.

Mental health affects us all. None of us are immune to difficulties. Within each individual is the potential to become unwell - or at least experience a reduction in life enjoyment or productivity. With mental health issues having such an impact, it is of great importance to build a community-based concept, that works from the ground up, and for which we all take responsibility.



Barry Ingleton

CEO/Founder – Synolos CIC

Introduction

West Oxfordshire is a buzzing and vibrant district of Oxfordshire, famous for its historic landmarks, beautiful countryside and market towns. However, like most communities within the UK, services and providers are reporting an increase in low-level mental disorders. West Oxfordshire is not unique in this, but has the potential to be the model for a community-led preventative solution.

Many local communities lack joined-up thinking. Services and providers, especially in the field of mental health and wellbeing, often work independently of each other. This leads to a disparity in care at point-of-access. There is potential for different services to work together under a fixed **platform** that allows all elements of a community to collaborate and make real local change in a free-flowing way. As with many aspects of life, mental health support must work effectively with the resources it has, but also look to create innovative approaches with regards to funding, suitability and long-term solutions.

The clearest route forward is to create a **platform** that empowers the whole community to take ownership and responsibility - a **Community Wellbeing** concept. The aims for this are to build a network that meets support/treatment needs - fully-funded and involving all elements of the community.

At the heart of **Community Wellbeing** will be the core value of being preventative in all aspects of its approach. Underpinning the process will be these fundamental elements: that the user is at the forefront of any decisions, that it is cost-effective, that it moves the mental health conversation forward and that it asks the WHY? question. **Community Wellbeing** sees that, even with the increased exposure in recent years, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to bring the same awareness to the public as other, well-understood physical illnesses. **Community Wellbeing** will contribute to the awareness campaign with the agenda of moving from current messages of: **admitting mental illness is real -> to building better recovery services -> to asking why are we experiencing this increase -> to promoting positive lifestyle choices in the same manner as no smoking and healthy eating.**

What will Synolos Create?

Synolos will develop, create and operate a **Platform** that will allow West Oxfordshire to create **A Powerhouse of Change** to tackle mild depression and anxiety. This **Platform** will be called **Community Wellbeing** and will support the NHS and 3rd sector providers, creating a coordinated community approach.

Community Wellbeing

Aim:

- To allow individuals suffering with mild mental health issues to access required support easier and reduce long-term sickness
- 1) To create a Hub for those struggling with mild depression and anxiety, signposting to all known organisations within the local area (THE HUB)
- 2) To seek to plug or expand provision, either within Synolos or partnering organisations (THE PLUG)
- 3) To be a research facilitator, expanding UK knowledge on the root causes of environmentally-affected mental health issues (THE WHY)
- 4) To operate a unique and innovative funding model that recognises and brings together four corners – statutory funding, the 3rd sector, businesses, and individuals – that builds community and creates a pathway to recovery (THE MEANS)

Community Wellbeing Outlined

The **Community Wellbeing Platform** is designed to operate with a community-upwards approach. It will allow the local community to take an active part in its wellbeing needs.

Community Wellbeing recognises that not all mental illness has to be supported within a clinical setting. It also understands that individuals can play an active part in their own wellbeing, and to some extent individuals can play an active part in the wellbeing of their community. It is clear that the NHS is stretched. It is deluged with a constantly increasing caseload and it seems that no amount of extra funding can keep up with demand. Something different needs to be developed. **Community Wellbeing** can focus on reducing the NHS' workload and seek to deliver services that complement existing structures, while seeking to be the preventive voice for mild depression and anxiety. If **Community Wellbeing** can reduce low-level mental illness escalating into more complex difficulties, it will free up resources within the NHS - allowing individuals to live happier and more productive lives.

Community Wellbeing will become a local **Powerhouse of Change** and will support and involve the local community in all aspects of its creation.

The platform Vision – Summary

Synolos will operate a working partnership platform that will facilitate change and improve access to services – henceforth known as **Community Wellbeing**. It will be easy to access, to partner with and operate within. It will seek to take away the difficulties of partnership-building and the downtime associated with starting up new partnerships and implementing new services. This platform will allow for quick and



responsive intervention – meeting changing local needs – using a forward-thinking and insightful approach that spots gaps in provision or fluctuating needs. The platform will be founded on building community awareness and promoting the idea that we all play a part in supporting our own wellbeing and that of the community. The platform will seek to pull together local individuals, the business community, the third sector and statutory services. **Community Wellbeing** believes that these four corners have a responsibility to work together to improve and sustain the wellbeing of individuals and the wider community. Synolos will build **Community Wellbeing** not to replace any current provision, but instead seek to:

- Improve access to current support services and facilitate a stronger preventative approach
- Create stronger awareness of support pathways
- Build community awareness and involvement

The overall outcomes of this platform will:

- Look to enhance and compliment current provision and 3rd sector involvement
- Build stronger links with statutory and third sector services
- Create a long-term funding solution that brings together statutory services, third sector operators/funders, the business community, and local individuals, with the aim to create a long-term community-based funding model
- Allow individuals to take part in improving their own wellbeing, and that of the wider community.

Community Wellbeing will be operated by Synolos, for the support of the community, the NHS, 3rd sector providers and the business community and will focus on the following 5 key areas:

1) A Hub for mild depression and anxiety needs (THE HUB)

It will seek to grow awareness of all current mental health provision within West Oxfordshire, and signpost those in need of support, with the ambition of creating an easier pathway to recovery.

2) Seek to plugs gaps in provision (THE PLUG)

With a knowledge of local provision, **Community Wellbeing** will seek to plug gaps in provision, by either facilitating other organisations to increase

capacity, or create new provision. In addition to this, **Community Wellbeing** will look at creating provision in-house. To relieve pressure on existing services, **Community Wellbeing** aims to offer provision away from a clinical setting – where appropriate – with a strong emphasis on reducing isolation and bringing people together.

3) To be a research facilitator, expanding UK knowledge on the root causes of environmentally-affected mental health issues (THE WHY)

It is important to create provision that tackles expanding health issues, but the long-term solution to reduce this tidal wave of mental health issues has to address the reasons behind them. Only when we know WHY we are seeing this increase will we be able to handle the growing issue. Many say the reasons we are seeing an increase in mental illness due to a reduction in personal resilience. While this is certainly a factor, it does not offer the full answer. The question that needs to be asked is, 'What has changed within society to lower our resilience from previous generations?' Only with this understanding and the courage to make social change will we move forward. **Community Wellbeing** aims to find that answer.

4) Operate a unique and innovative funding model (THE MEANS)

This funding model will be centred on community engagement. It will promote the idea that funding is not merely financial resources, but should draw on local expertise, physical effort and local awareness. This model is summarised as The 4 Corners of Community that work together to create **A Powerhouse of Change**. Each corner consists of:

- 1) Statutory services
- 2) Third Sector operators and funders
- 3) The Business Community
- 4) Local Individuals.

To illustrate this point, we will look at one corner more closely: The Business Community. There are a reported 8,000 businesses in West Oxfordshire. If each business on average donated just £150 to **Community Wellbeing** per year, the income generated would have a massive impact and generate £1.2m ($£150 \times 8,000 = £1.2m.$) The business would benefit from a raised profile and engender productivity. If each other sector - statutory, third sector, and individual – contributes, you then create a funding Powerhouse that will lead to a **Powerhouse of Change** which is community-led and locally-focused.

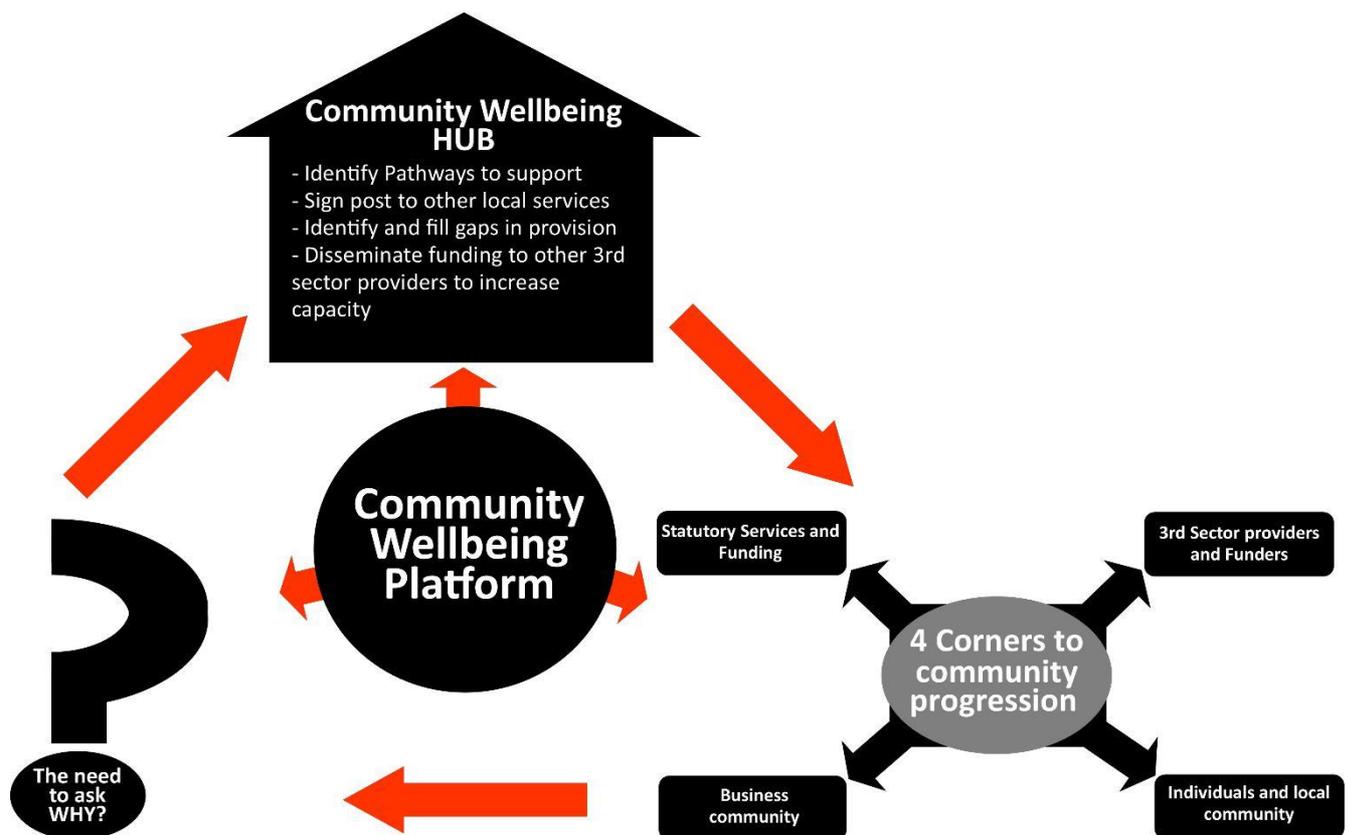
5) Harness the power of the individual

The individual is the key to **Community Wellbeing** being successful. There are obvious fundraising activities that an individual can become involved in, however this will not be the main focus. There is far more depth and value that can be had by empowering the individual. For example:

- 1) People changing their own lives by becoming informed and educated on day-to-day living in the modern world
- 2) Looking out for each other - seeing that someone is struggling and simply saying hello, or showing small acts of kindness
- 3) Arranging get-togethers, like craft or sport activities
- 4) Becoming educated in how to help or support family or friends

These simple examples alone would empower communities to help and support each other, in a way that historically communities have always done. In doing so, we then reduce mental health escalations and free up the NHS to work with more complex caseloads.

A Powerhouse of Change, Community Wellbeing Model



Conclusion

There are many steps that would need to be taken to make **Community Wellbeing: A Powerhouse of Change** a reality. If this opportunity is given the right outside support, it will be a game-changer. As a community we need to make changes before it is too late. We need to understand what has happened in the last 30 years to lower our resilience. With recent media attention, it is very clear that the NHS - and even the 3rd Sector - cannot keep up with demand. **Community Wellbeing** believes that only when you bring the whole community together, can you begin to reduce this growing problem. As I have explained, that does not mean increased financial input alone. The NHS was not created to cope with such caseloads, and with the growing awareness and need, we must create a **Powerhouse of Change**. Synolos, with support of those with influence, will seek to create **Community Wellbeing** – as a platform, sustainable funding model, and way of thinking.

For those who believe in this concept - let us stop dreaming of change, and make it happen.

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