



Evidence Review of Community-based Mental Health Promotion Interventions for Priority Groups in Ireland

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Background: This project concerns a review of the evidence on community-based mental health promotion interventions designed to meet the needs of population groups most at risk of developing mental health difficulties. This review set out to identify key priority population groups in the Irish context, together with examples of best practice drawn from the literature and current practice, that could be feasibly implemented in Irish community settings. The study addresses priority actions identified in current policy frameworks including; “Connecting for life: Ireland’s national strategy to reduce suicide 2015-2020” (DOH, 2015), “Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health policy for Everyone” (DOH, 2020) and “Stronger Together: The HSE Mental Health Promotion Plan 2022-2027” (HSE, 2022).

Aims & Objectives:

With the aim of reviewing the evidence for community-based mental health promotion for priority groups in Ireland, the project involved four research objectives:

1. To identify priority populations in Ireland who are at risk of poor mental health outcomes.
2. To summarise the evidence around community-based mental health promotion interventions through a scoping review of the international literature.
3. To identify best-practice case examples of community-based initiatives in Ireland through consultations with stakeholders in Ireland who are implementing community-based mental health promotion interventions to priority groups.
4. To provide recommendations on community-based initiatives that could be appropriately resourced and scaled in the Irish context.

Design & Methods:

The project proceeded in three phases which are outlined below.

- A **literature review** was conducted to identify population who are deemed to be most ‘at-risk’ of mental health difficulties, as identified in current Irish policy frameworks and in the international literature.
- A **scoping review** of the evidence, which included a search for review papers of community-based mental health promotion interventions for the priority groups of interest. Six electronic databases were consulted, PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO, Embase, CINAHL and Cochrane. Search limiters included English language text only and publications since 2014. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analysis extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) (Tricco et al., 2018) was followed and the search process was guided by the Arksey & O’Malley framework (2005).
- The **stakeholder consultations** included a series of one-hour online consultations with stakeholders in statutory roles and in the community and voluntary sector implementing community-based mental health promotion supports to priority groups in Ireland.

Findings & Results:

Identifying Priority Groups: The following lists the priority groups selected for the purpose of this study:

- People living with disabilities and their families
- People experiencing social isolation and loneliness
- People living in deprived and disadvantaged communities
- Carers of people living with chronic illness
- Migrants and refugees
- Ethnic populations, including Traveller and Roma communities
- People with experience of domestic violence
- Members of the LGTBQI+ community

Scoping Review: Thirty three eligible reviews were included. The review found a paucity of robust evidence specific to the identified priority population groups. Promising findings to support evidence-based implementation of effective community-based mental health promotion were identified. These included:

- Partnership and collaborative practices involving co-production, co-design, co-delivery and community-based participatory research;
- Peer-led and lay community member approaches to programme facilitation (particularly pairing those with similar background and language);
- Culturally tailored approaches to evidence-based interventions;
- Community strengthening approaches such as Men's Sheds; Social Prescribing services; and digital interventions.
- Enabling factors identified included supportive infrastructure (including structured training, implementation support, and support beyond initial programme design and delivery) and strengthening the evidence base by documenting and evaluating community-based mental health promotion implementation.

Stakeholder Consultations: Consultations were conducted with key stakeholders (n=13) to ascertain which community-based mental health promotion interventions work best in practice and under which conditions, with insights into the feasibility of, and support needed for, scaling-up selected interventions in the Irish context. The following key findings were found to support community-based mental health promotion practice for priority groups in Ireland:

- Mapping local and wider contexts - tailored, accessible and understandable communication and community-based mental health promotion must sit within a broader whole-system approach.
- Building trust and creating the conditions for meaningful engagement
- Encouraging community involvement and connectedness
- Stable and dedicated funding for mental health promotion with priority groups
Strengthening the evidence base.

Recommendations: A set of key recommendations were drafted that reflect a synthesis of the findings from the scoping review and stakeholder consultations and will inform priority actions for effective delivery of community-based mental health promotion for priority groups in Ireland.

Dissemination:

Gilmartin, D., Mercado-Garrido, E., Harte, P., Keppler, T. & Barry, M.M. (2024). *Evidence Review of Community-based Mental Health Promotion Interventions for Priority Groups in Ireland. A report prepared for the Health Service Executive, Ireland.* Health Promotion Research Centre, University of Galway.

Presentations on the findings were made to HSE project coordinators and the national Stronger Together Steering Group in October and Sharing the Vision stakeholders in November 2024. Further dissemination is forthcoming.

Patient Public Involvement: Stakeholder consultations and engagement with representatives of organisations in the community and voluntary sector played a key role in the project and guided the development of the set of recommendations in the final report.

Knowledge Translation: The findings from this review will inform the delivery of effective community-based mental health promotion interventions for priority groups that could be implemented and scaled-up in the Irish context. They will inform HSE actions as recommended in “Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health policy for Everyone” (DOH, 2020) and “Stronger Together: The HSE Mental Health Promotion Plan 2022-2027” (HSE, 2022) and sit within the backdrop of current policy implementation including; “Connecting for life: Ireland’s national strategy to reduce suicide 2015-2020” (DOH, 2015).