

Leading academics report: Talk for Health a top community wellbeing intervention

In UK-wide research on mental wellbeing and social inclusion, leading UK academics found Talk for Health a particularly effective wellbeing intervention.

Key findings from the report were:

- Social connectedness is the key to wellbeing – more so than social status or life circumstances.
- Creating bonds between diverse people in the community can have a more far reaching impact on wellbeing than targeting troubled individuals
- Talk for Health is a particularly effective intervention in this respect

As part of the research, Talk for Health was selected as one of seven innovative community interventions thought likely to enhance wellbeing. Each intervention was assessed using a range of measures.

Findings on Talk for Health were:

- Participants scored particularly well for increased wellbeing, ‘feeling part of a community’, and empowerment
- Those who started out with low wellbeing returned to normal levels
- Participants continued to connect, and the wellbeing impacts lasted, after the programme ended

The authors commented: *“What was notable was the extent to which the participants had bonded and formed a supportive emotional community between themselves.”*

The authors conclude that interventions such as Talk for Health that work with small groups to build strong relationships have very significant impacts on wellbeing.

They recommend that Health and Wellbeing Boards and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) should set aside funding for such interventions to improve wellbeing, build resilient communities, and create savings in health and welfare expenditure.

The Royal Society of Arts report [Community Capital: The Value of Connected Communities](#) was published in October 2015, edited by Matthew Parsfield, with Professor David Morris, Dr Manjit Bola, Dr Martin Knapp, A-La Park, Maximilian Yoshioka and Gaia Marcus.

Full report on <https://www.thersa.org/action-and-research/rsa-projects/public-services-and-communities-folder/connected-communities-social-inclusion-and-mental-wellbeing/>



Supplementary points:

- Building connections amongst *diverse* groups – i.e. some who are disadvantaged and others who are not - is a more effective approach to building 'community capital' than ghetto-ising the disadvantaged, or targeting troubled individuals.
- Connections, and even the *capacity to connect*, are assets that can and should be harnessed, appreciated, protected and cultivated.
- In a survey of 2,840 people, the variable most consistently associated with having higher subjective wellbeing was 'feeling part of a community'.
- Loneliness is a major public health concern: it has twice the impact of obesity as a cause of premature death. Alleviating loneliness through supporting social connections is likely to generate great wellbeing benefits.

Pages on Talk for Health:

37- 39

52 - 53 under 'The wellbeing dividends of community capital'

56 - 57 under 'Empowering Interventions'

60 under 'The capacity dividend in practice'