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FIVE MESSAGES

1. Employment status impacts on mental health
2. Young people's well-being is shaped by early career experiences
3. There are socio-economic gradients in mental health outcomes
4. Career development is a public health issue
5. Career education and guidance can make a difference

I. EMPLOYMENT STATUS IMPACTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

UNEMPLOYMENT AND HEALTH

Unemployment is associated with increased symptoms of mental health conditions

There is very strong evidence from literature reviews & meta-analyses

This is a causal relationship, although health conditions can also be a barrier to employment, particularly in a challenging labour market



HOW DOES UNEMPLOYMENT IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH?

- Money (freedom from financial anxiety)
- Identity
- Time structure
- Skill use
- External goals
- A sense of purpose
- Social contact

In modern societies formal paid employment tends to be how people access the psycho-social factors that promote well-being

Unemployment tends to reduce or deny access to these factors

“There is a strong evidence base showing that work is generally good for physical and mental health and well-being. Worklessness is associated with poorer physical and mental health and well-being.”

(Waddell & Burton, 2006).

BUT SOME CAVEATS...

Participation in precarious work – low pay, insecure, poor quality, less dignified	Offers significantly reduced or no mental health benefits over unemployment
Participation in education & training	Evidence mixed but most likely offers access to most of the psycho-social factors but reduced financial and long term security
Participation in volunteering	Most evidence relates to older adults/pensioners – suggests some benefits

2. YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELL-BEING IS SHAPED BY EARLY CAREER EXPERIENCES

WHAT KINDS OF MENTAL HEALTH RISK FACTORS YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EXPOSED TO?

- Peer pressure
- Problems in forming an adult social identity
- Relationships & sexuality
- Repeated formation and loss of social ties
- Drug & alcohol use
- Particular pressures affecting care leavers, disabled, minorities etc.
- Challenges of establishing independent living
- Financial problems
- Social media, online imagery & abuse

- ❑ Identity formation & neuroplasticity in **adolescence/young adulthood**
- ❑ Mental health conditions early onset compared to other disease groups
- ❑ So burden of disease & economic impacts are potentially great/last longer
- ❑ Often first appear in during the years of transitions from youth to adulthood: 15-25 years
- ❑ The same years that are critical for career development



YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE LABOUR MARKET: MULTIPLE SCARRING EFFECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Youth employment is particularly sensitive to economic cycles & shocks

Very high levels of youth unemployment across Europe

- Banking crisis
- COVID-19

There is evidence that extended periods of youth unemployment can cause ***economic scarring***

Long term negative impacts on:

- Income/earning potential
- Vulnerability to future periods of unemployment

MULTIPLE SCARRING EFFECTS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: SCANDINAVIAN EVIDENCE

Emerging evidence in Europe of *health scarring*

Notably the North Swedish cohort studies detect the effects of youth unemployment enduring into mid-adulthood:

- Increased mental health symptoms
- Poorer health behaviours e.g. smoking



Effects were mitigated if engaged in youth training programmes

3. THERE ARE SOCIO-ECONOMIC GRADIENTS IN MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES



TWO CLASSIC EXAMPLES FROM LONDON





Civil Service

HEALTH INEQUALITY MEANS...

- There are socio-economic gradients in morbidity and mortality
- There are gradients in **both** physical and mental health
- Physical and mental health are inter-related
- The gradients vary between nations
- Ethnic minorities are often more exposed to health risk
- Pathways adult health status are set in youth/childhood

“Persistent high levels of the number of young people...not in employment, education or training is storing up a public health time bomb waiting to explode”

Professor Michael Marmot (2013)



**4. CAREER DEVELOPMENT IS A
PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE**

Public health outcomes are determined by...

Housing **Diet** **Sanitation** **Medical care**

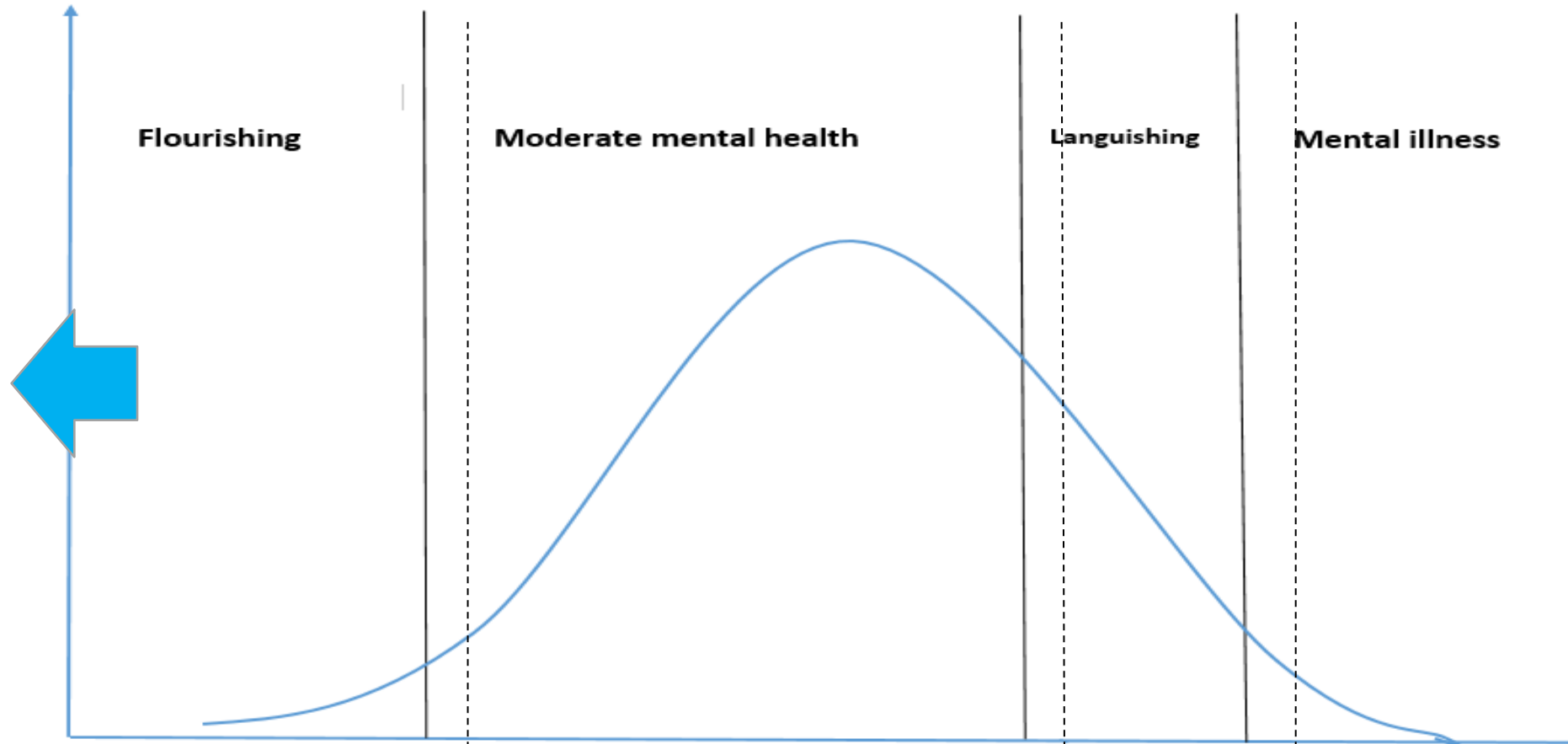
But also...

“Above all, I have argued that **work** and the socio-economic class polarities it creates play a fundamental role in creating inequalities in the distribution of morbidity and mortality, via uneven exposure to physical hazards and psycho-social risks in the workplace, as well as via inequalities in exclusion from the labour market and the absence of paid work”

Professor Clare Bambra (2011)

INTERVENTIONS MAKING VERY SMALL IMPROVEMENTS CAN HAVE A BIG IMPACT

Number of people




Graphs based on work of Keyes; and Huppert

WHOLE POPULATION INTERVENTIONS SHIFT THE DISTRIBUTION OF RISK FACTORS

- Small impacts to manage risk factors in the whole population have a bigger than expected impact on outcomes
- Some interventions have *additional* impact in the vulnerable populations that most need them (e.g. minimum alcohol pricing in Scotland)
- Career development interventions are
 - Relevant to entire cohorts/whole populations
 - Non-clinical and non-stigmatising

**5. CAREER EDUCATION AND
GUIDANCE *CAN* MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

**CAREER EDUCATION & GUIDANCE PROMOTE
MENTAL WELL-BEING IN THE SHORT TERM**

<u>Activity</u>		<u>Impact</u>
Future focus		Offers hope
Identify resources		Build on strengths
Focus on choice/goals		Promotes a sense of agency
Explore work identity		(Re)builds self-concept
Encourage networking		Builds social capital

CAREER EDUCATION & GUIDANCE PROMOTE MENTAL WELL-BEING IN THE MEDIUM TO LONG TERM

SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

Access to meaningful work and learning...which provide long-term access to the psycho-social factors that promote well-being

COPING SKILLS

Transferable career management skills, and resilience...ready for future challenges

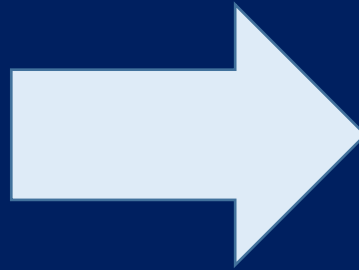
WHAT CAN WE SAY TO POLICYMAKERS AND FUNDING AGENCIES?

- The importance of young people having a positive start to their careers to prevent a mental health crisis in the future
- The economic case for promoting health to reduce costs to society
- The value of *sustainable* careers as a defence against risk factors for mental illness
- Career education & guidance is a cost effective preventive intervention that can contribute to reducing health inequality
- Get credit for the contribution we are *already* making to public health

CONCLUSION: THE FIVE MESSAGES ARE...

1. Employment status impacts on mental health
2. Young people's well-being is shaped by early career experiences
3. There are socio-economic gradients in mental health outcomes
4. Career development is a public health issue
5. Career education and guidance **can** make a difference

For more detail, and relevant sources, download this free briefing document



<https://www.thecdi.net/write/BP620-Briefing- Mental wellbeing- FINAL.pdf>



Briefing Paper

January 2019

The impact of career guidance on the mental well-being of young people

Dr Pete Robertson



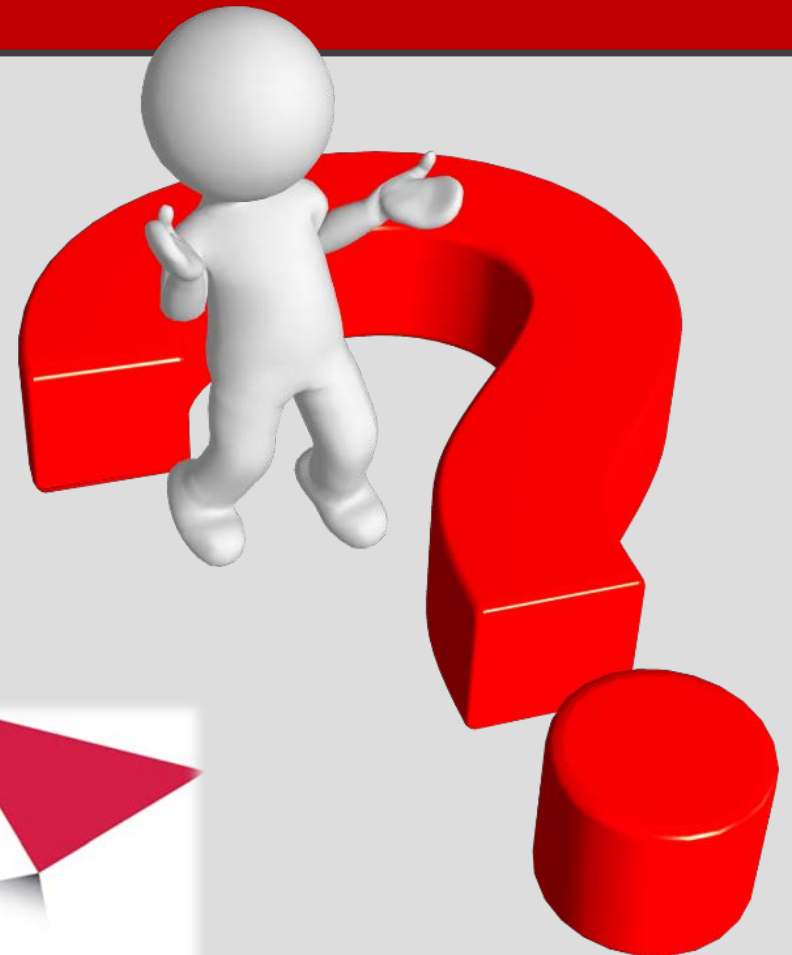
THANK YOU

ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

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