

# Collaboration for Mental Wealth in Moray: Building a Community Research Network



**Discussion Paper**

**Challenges, ideas, and where we go from here**



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## Version history:

This version was last updated May 2024 following an open call for feedback from Moray Community members. This is shown within the document as green and orange quotes.

# Welcome

**In establishing this community research network in early 2023, the founding partners, Heidi Tweedie from Moray Wellbeing Hub (MWH) and Karim Mahmoud from the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre (DHI) aimed to empower community members to be equal partners in finding out what works well in creating mental wealth for Moray, in tapping into community-owned knowledge and in developing a sustainable research partnership to help drive mental wealth.**

For us, mental wealth is a concept that goes beyond crisis management and where mental health is seen from a purely medical perspective. Mental Wealth is an approach that builds community resilience at a system level making use of collective frameworks developed and maintained by the thing that powers communities – people. We believe that huge value can be generated by the collective mental resources and social networks that we have in Moray. Join us on this journey as we collectively map, discover, and facilitate action, conversation, and research aiming to direct all of society towards a mental ‘wealth’ perspective.

This document is a work in progress and would not have been possible without contributions from members of the Moray community, the enthusiasm and expertise of network members and the participation of partners and colleagues from similar community research networks. All have our gratitude and have been generous with their time, so we sincerely thank all those involved. The following pages provide a short discussion of some of the main themes from our discovery work which took place between April and October 2023, and we invite you to feedback, comment and initiate discussion regarding the findings here.

We can all learn from each other if we allow ourselves.

*Heidi Tweedie & Karim Mahmoud, May 2024.*

# Our shared vision statement

**Our vision is for active, meaningful engagement of a broad and diverse range of partners, community members and statutory organisations with the aim of creating and embedding mental wealth in Moray . This can be achieved by a CRN acting as a facilitator, a collective voice and with resources to support and make change happen.**

**This initial vision has been developed through conversation and engagement with our core network.**

The Community Research Network (CRN) for Mental Wealth in Moray suggests four key aims:

1. Increase capacity for community research in Moray focussed on mental wealth.
2. Strengthen data and knowledge creation for mental wealth in Moray.
3. Share and collate knowledge with a focus on mental wealth.
4. Develop infrastructure to support coordination and tools to enhance mental wealth in Moray.

**These objectives would enable the community research network to act as an infrastructure and an adaptive learning system.**

Having an accessible definition on what mental wealth is, how it relates to mental health, and why we would chose this term, has to be clear in all communication.

“I like the sound of bringing, strengthening, building, sharing... all positive and these things sound like they bring ‘wealth’ and feel good to be a part of.”

Positive feedback shows that these are broadly the right aims for the CRN to take.

# Guiding principles

Our network is constantly evolving and growing, as such some guiding principles are central. As a key aspect of our approach with the CRN network is creating, nurturing and supporting CHIME, an evidenced-based framework for mental health, we have used this to help frame these:

1. **CONNECT:** Focus on engaging and aiming to be a facilitator of conversation and interaction.
2. **HOPEFUL:** Everyone should have the opportunity to live a mentally healthy life so we will take a strengths-based perspective which is focused upon assets, ambition and hope.
3. **IDENTITY:** Constantly reflect on ensuring actions are inclusive. Actively working towards removing barriers to access, reaching out to providing opportunities for a wide diversity of people to be involved and striving to account for differences.
4. **MEANINGFUL:** Sense checking that focus is set by community, drives change and is useable.
5. **EMPOWERING:** Supportive – facilitating multiple forms of engagement and complementing existing community action.

Referencing support documents on CHIME principles such as those in law, policy and practice is useful.

Communication around CHIME principles could be further simplified, brought to a personal and relatable level, ensuring inclusion.

“This feels thorough and based on prior research.”

Regularly checking in with the community that these guiding principles continue to align with the values of the network.

# Making Recovery Real in Moray Partnership: Building on existing good practice

Since 2014 the Making Recovery Real Partnership for Moray has taken a co-produced approach to the implementation of Moray's Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy (Good Mental Health For All). The group is designed to be a meaningful and mutual balance of lived experience and professional expertise.

Throughout the initial work of the CRN the MRR partnership has been central in supporting actions and attracting partners and supporters. Their guiding documents have been through many iterations with this diverse community to ensure clarity of communications, maintaining partner mutuality and setting their activity. This is aligned with our own ambitions and therefore we propose to use their resources in group agreement and terms of reference as a foundation to build our own documentation and approaches.

Approaches developed through the Making Recovery Real partnership provide a good foundation for CRN's work.

Include more context on Making Recovery Real partnership.

The word 'recovery' is still not well understood. Providing more context on what we mean in using this and similar words, why we use it and where it comes from can help bring consensus or acceptance in use.

"Not been involved previously (in MRRP) but looks structured and embedded."  
"Sounds like building on a strong foundation."

# Mental Wealth: Key challenge and opportunity -

Identified through community engagement in 2023

**What - The 'what' as expected was particularly difficult as we embarked on this journey of navigating what is a complex set of inter-related concepts (mental wellbeing, mental health, research, community action, mental wealth etc)**

In our 2023 engagement we were able to gather numerous insights as to what creates mental wealth, and how it manifests, although almost universally it was difficult to define what mental wealth means.

A key question and function of the Community Research Network will be to evolve the definition of 'mental wealth' and to attempt to define and explain the different themes, aspects and dimensions of mental wealth in Moray.

We recognise, however, that no single metric or measure may be suitable, nevertheless we believe that key to embedding mental wealth is identifying, creating or building on existing frameworks for understanding what mental wealth encompasses. We will use recovery framework CHIME as a starting point (Connection, Hope, Identity, Meaning & Empowerment).

The end goal is not to simply be able to quantify 'mental wealth' but to be able to have a tool to effectively communicate this concept, embed it in the community and ensure that Mental Wealth happens for Moray citizens.

Make clear why we use are using the term 'mental wealth' rather than mental health. This links to supporting understanding around the evolution of language, ownership and how this impacts power.

# What do you think about the above focus for the Community Research Network as 'How do we define, measure and communicate Mental Wealth?'

## Issues in exploring 'what'

In trying to explore the 'what', two somewhat related issues also emerged:

1. First, how can we promote mental wealth? – and, within this, was almost always phrased in the negative as how could we prevent mental ill-health. To challenge this negative bias and achieve our aims in promotion we need to data gather and build up the evidence base via the network.
2. Second, what does it mean to embed mental wealth across the life course given the different life stages experienced by community members? Again, the network would be best placed to attempt building up a picture over time.

Feedback highlighted the gap between those that are comfortable with 'research' and those that aren't comfortable with 'research'. Reminding of the need to acknowledge different starting points in terms of the language and conversation.



# How

**The 'how' is focused on the Community Research Network and how it functions operationally.**

**Our engagement showed that while there is broad support from partners and community members for being involved, either now or in the future, and that this work is valuable, some key aspects need to be addressed:**

1. Community organisations reported being interested in getting involved although uncertain how their existing activities can contribute to research. On the other hand they also noted that undertaking research would help them with evidencing the impact their activities have in making positive change.
2. The concept of research can seem too abstract for many partners and something that is normally led by academics in universities and not communities. This disconnect from the realities of every day leads to uncertainty in what level individual groups feel sufficiently equipped & confident to contribute to community research.
3. The need for resources, capacity building, coordinating infrastructure, and clear roles in order to support partners participation in the network.

Consideration around methods of engagement that meet people where they are most comfortable and in enjoyable ways. What we do must also create mental wealth as well as deepen understanding of this.

Foster a culture of collaborative decision-making within the CRN, where input from all stakeholders is valued and considered in the planning and implementation of research activities.

Clear asks around testing specific models of accessible support across Moray localities. Vital components include geographical spread of activity, provision of practical data collection support, up-skilling community around research and communications to wide range of stakeholders throughout delivery regarding our learning. Core in feedback is the importance of community delivery contributing at all levels.

It is the intention that a funding application to Innovate UK (who funded this set-up activity) for a follow-on implementation project would provide financial resources to make the Community Research Network a reality. Network members would be resourced appropriately to their roles, and specialist partners (e.g. universities) may help to build capacity and with data interpretation.

We envisage the network having a core 'membership' where full members receive funding to carry out activities associated with the research network. In addition, network 'supporters' would be able to be involved to the extent that they feel able and depending on their level of participation may be able to access resources or indeed provide in-kind resources (e.g. venue, access to participants) to the Community Research Network.

## Other emerging areas to consider:

- **Governance model:** This still being developed and is likely to evolve over time. It will be important to agree on decision making mechanisms and how communications between partners and supporters will be organised and how they relate in delivering activity.
- **Data protection** and ownership of data: This will likely present many ethics questions. We are hopeful that our sister network 'Community Knowledge Matters: A Highlands & Islands Network for Community-led Research', will be an instrumental partner in supporting this development.

# Next steps

**The founding partners of this network are warmly inviting community organisations and residents of Moray, and our neighbouring areas, to contribute to our CRN. By joining the network, participating in setting what the research will explore, and by taking part in sharing knowledge and practice, the Moray community can lead in focusing the progress being made on mental wellbeing and together we can co-create solutions.**

**In this way the CRN's focus will be co-produced aligning with the needs of the Moray community and civil society. The CRN will respond to these areas of focus by:**

- Hosting workshops and exhibitions.
- Informing policy, practice and public understanding.
- Feeding into development processes underway for improving mental health and wellbeing in Moray.
- Bidding for further funding from Innovate UK to enable the network to continue longer term, taking forward the areas identified from this first phase of funding.

# Conclusion

**Promoting and maintaining mental health and wellbeing is a growing societal challenge globally with an estimated 1 billion people affected worldwide. Moray is a rural area with diverse communities and with a rich legacy of community action, collaboration and realising the value of joint working. By catalysing this spirit of collaboration, this Community Research Network will increase learning about the local challenges and formalising structures that may help transform mental health and wellbeing in later years, all through changing the narrative to one that is focussed on 'mental wealth'.**

## What happens next?

The feedback on this initial document is now closed. Thank you to all who took part over the winter and spring of 2024.

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