Mental health promotion in high risk groups

NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination

Record Status
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Authors' objectives
This report focuses on interventions aimed at people who are likely to be at higher risk of developing mental health problems, and embraces elements both of health promotion and prevention models. It examines studies which look at interventions designed to prevent the deterioration of mental health in groups at high risk as measured by a range of outcomes such as self-esteem, anxiety and depression.

Authors' conclusions
It is possible to identify people who are vulnerable to mental health problems due to poor social environments or severe adverse life events. Several effective interventions can help promote mental health and prevent mental health problems in those at high risk.

High quality pre-school education and support visits for new parents can improve mental health in children and parents in disadvantaged communities.

School-based interventions and parent training programmes for children showing behavioural problems can improve conduct and mental well being.

Mental health problems in children of separating parents can be reduced by providing cognitive skills training and emotional support.

Social support and problem solving or cognitive-behavioural training in the unemployed can improve mental health and employment outcomes.

Mental health problems often experienced by long-term carers can be prevented by respite care and some forms of psycho-social support.

Counselling, by itself, has not been shown to produce sustained benefit in a variety of groups at risk.

The primary health care team has an important role in identifying and co-ordinating the management of people at high risk. Structured multi-sectoral co-ordination of strategies targeting those most likely to benefit are needed.

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MeSH
Adult; Child; Health Promotion /methods; Life Change Events; Mental Health; Mental Health Services /organization & administration; Risk Factors