

Mindful Nation UK: A Synopsis

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In October, the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group in the UK, assisted by The Mindfulness Initiative of London, submitted comprehensive recommendations to government regarding mindfulness implementations in Health, Education, Workplace, and the Criminal Justice System. This Parliamentary Group is a world leader in proposing the nationwide adoption of mindfulness in key sectors of society. This report follows over a year of research and inquiry. Following are some excerpts from the report:

“Mindfulness is one of the most promising prevention strategies and is regarded as popular and non-stigmatizing, unlike some other mental health interventions.”

“The government’s Foresight report developed the concept of mental capital, by which it meant the cognitive and emotional resources that ensured resilience in the face of stress, and the flexibility of mind and learning to adapt to a fast-changing employment market and longer working lives. It argued that developing the mental capital of the nation will be ‘crucial to our future prosperity and wellbeing’. Qualitative research shows that mindfulness develops exactly these aspects of mental capital, encouraging a curious, responsive and creative engagement to experience.”

Note: To date, 115 Parliamentarians and 80 staff have attended a program of mindfulness classes established by Lord Richard Layard and former Labour MP Chris Ruane.

Following are recommendations from the Executive Summary (paraphrased):

Health

- Based on the demonstrated outcomes of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), training in this mindfulness-based treatment should be made available to 580,000 adults per year who are at risk of recurrent depression.
- The first step toward this goal is to provide MBCT training to 15 per cent of this population (87,000 per year) by 2020, with standard outcome monitoring.

Education

- The Department of Education should designate three schools for the purpose of initiating mindfulness teaching, facilitating and developing innovation, gauging replicability and scalability, and sharing best practice.

Workplace

- The Department of Business Innovation and Skills should work with employers to promote the implementation of mindfulness, understand good practice, and pilot research studies on the role of mindfulness in the workplace.
- Government departments should encourage mindfulness training in the public sector, with an emphasis on Health, Education, and the Criminal Justice System, to combat stress and improve organizational effectiveness. This could include supporting a pilot project in policing.
- The National Institute of Health Research should accept bids to research the use and effectiveness of mindfulness as an occupational health intervention in addressing occupational mental health issues such as stress, work-related rumination, fatigue, and disrupted sleep.

Criminal Justice System

- The National Health Service and National Offender Management Services (NOMS) should ensure urgent implementation of MBCT for inmates with recurrent depression.
- The Ministry of Justice and NOMS should fund a randomized control trial of mindfulness-based interventions among offender populations.

