

HLG

Mental Health Support Team for Homeless People (MHST)

Set up in 1989, the Mental Health Support Team for Homeless People (MHST) is a specialist service in Nottingham, which supports homeless and vulnerably housed people with a variety of mental health and other complex needs, who have difficulty accessing and maintaining both mainstream services and accommodation.

Based within Nottingham Hostels Liaison Group (HLG) and funded by Nottingham City PCT, Nottinghamshire PCT and Nottingham City Council, the service targets those people who have lost contact with or do not meet the threshold for key health and social care services. It works alongside other agencies to equip them to live as independently as possible.

The Nottingham City Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, in April 2010, acknowledged that homeless and unemployed adults are at a high risk of developing mental health problems. MHSTs' client group is at increased risk of experiencing mental health problems due to their housing situation, leaving them socially excluded, with high levels of unemployment.

The team works with 250 service users per year, referred through drop-ins and direct from homeless, health and social care services, the team offers assessment, support, coordination and referral.

The team offers drop-ins at key services across Nottingham City, making it as easy as possible for individuals to self-refer and providing a continuity of support from the point of sleeping rough to being housed in an independent tenancy.

The MHST links with a wide range of services, knowledge of health and social care services, and long track record means that it can work in partnership to access the best outcomes for its service users.

Jointly commissioned by Health and Social Care for over 20 years, the service has been instrumental in coordinating packages of care for the population it supports and bridging and identifying gaps between the voluntary and statutory sectors.

A key element of this work is the continuity of mental health interventions as service users' move through the system. This is achieved through a responsive and flexible service that supports individuals through



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their housing, health and social care pathways.

The service also supports a number of service users with additional drug and alcohol problems, working in partnership with drug and alcohol services to ensure their needs are addressed on an individual basis.

By providing an outreach service, the team are able to meet and assess people in a timely manner and provide brief interventions and support, reducing the pressure on GPs, hospital services and social care.

Homeless people who use the service see improvements in their self-esteem, self-confidence and coping strategies; are less likely to take risks; better able to manage their use of substances; and more likely to access and maintain settled accommodation.

In 2003, recognising the link between mental well-being and physical activity, MHST began a walking group. The sessions take place every four to six weeks and are open to all HLG service users.

In partnership with the Himmah Institute,

“They meet you where you are and make you feel safe”

“I feel part of society and have a family”

“This is a progressive service and it helped me to progress”

“If I don’t feel confident about what’s next, they are only a phone call away...”

Comments from service users

HLG has also recently hosted two “Big Supper” events (pictured overleaf) for service users.

For further information on MHST and HLG visit www.hlg.org.uk, email admin@hlg.org.uk or telephone 0115 956 5313.