



Porchlight - Crisis Private Renting Champions 2015 for Health and wellbeing

Good practice

During delivery of the private rented sector (PRS) access scheme over the last few years it has become clear that a number of clients we support to access accommodation have experienced anxiety, depression and mental health issues. Many of these experiences have been brought on by living in insecure environments and not knowing where to begin to deal their problems. For some the thought of addressing these feelings until they have a secure roof over their head is simply too much. However after the tenancy agreement is signed, wider needs become apparent. Needs that are often beyond the scope of the PRS service.

The function of the PRS access service is to provide support with finding and maintaining accommodation, as well as build key relationships with landlords. It was recognised that there may be a limit to how much emotional support around wider issues this worker could provide to over 40 clients across two local authority areas. Although we have previously utilised volunteers as successful mentors, providing tenancy sustainment support, we recognised that these health needs required more specialist support. After discussion a partnership between this service and another Porchlight project, the Primary Care Community Link Service (GP link) was established. The GP link service is aimed at people with mental health issues regardless of their housing situation and can provide support across a diverse range of areas: health, volunteering, benefits, sport, arts community services. As such this partnership allowed Porchlight to look beyond simply equipping people with independent living skills to supporting people to integrate into their communities. For many this may be through on-going support to access counselling or talking therapies or simply to take part in leisure and social activities that benefit their mental health and wellbeing. This partnership uses the 6 ways to wellbeing approach to the 'whole person'.

<http://www.liveitwell.org.uk/ways-to-wellbeing/six-ways-to-wellbeing/>

- Be Active: Body
- Keep Learning: Mind
- Give: Spirit
- Connect: People
- Take Notice: Place
- Care: Planet

GP link also uses the Recovery Outcomes Star which looks at areas of an individual's life in a holistic way e.g. social networks, relationships identity and self-esteem and allows us to measure improvements in their wellbeing. By addressing the health and wellbeing needs of the people we support we have evidence that tenancies are more likely to be sustained.

This partnership is 2-way and the PRS scheme has received referrals from GP link (working with over 400 people each year in this area) for people at risk of losing their accommodation or in need of more stability. A case study illustrating this is included below. Porchlight sees



this preventative, partnership model as one that we would like to replicate in other areas. We would welcome the opportunity to share best practice with other providers and contribute to key events. We believe that we have demonstrated this commitment over the last few years with our previous 'Champion' recognition in the area of peer mentors & volunteering.

Case study

TG, a 29 year old single woman, is a full-time factory worker. At the time of contact with Porchlight TG was sofa surfing with friends and particularly vulnerable. Prior to the event leading up to her homelessness TG was living happily with her friend in a house share in the Dover area. Without TG knowing the named tenancy holder stopped paying rent and bills despite the fact that TG continued paying her side of the commitments in faith. One day TG arrived home from work to discover that her house-mate had packed and left without any discussion or note. TG had no rights to remain in the property as she was not named on the tenancy. As such the landlord asked her to vacate his property as soon as possible.

TG's stress and anxiety levels were running high as she found herself NFA and highly vulnerable depending on anyone that was willing to help her. TG's anxiety was due to her fears and disappointment after feeling abandoned and rejected from her friend thus, re-stimulating past relationships that have ended in dysfunction. In addition she had virtually no support from her family and was referred to GP link service for help with her mental health.

After discussion a referral was emailed to the PRS worker to support TG in finding suitable, affordable accommodation. The PRS worker remained working with TG throughout and dealt with issues after move-in, this enabled GP link to focus on other factors that contribute to her poor mental health. TG has settled in her new home and is looking at opportunities to meet others in her community with the support of staff. She feels that she is able to concentrate on addressing her health and wellbeing needs now that she has stability, security and a home.

About the champion

Porchlight is the leading charity supporting vulnerable and homeless people in Kent. It has supported accommodation services in Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Ramsgate, Sittingbourne and Tonbridge, a homelessness prevention service and a dedicated rough sleeper team.

It provides a range of services supporting people with complex needs, with specialist services for young people, ex-offenders and people with enduring mental health issues. Its focus is on long-term solutions, breaking the cycle of homelessness and ensuring that people can live independently in the future.

- Porchlight
- T: 01227 760078
- E: headoffice@porchlight.org.uk
- W: www.porchlight.org.uk

