

INTEGRATING MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING SERVICES FOR BETTER AND MORE FULFILLING LIVES

Across Sussex, health and care organisations are working together to improve the outcomes for people living with mental health needs. The Sussex Health and Care Partnership recognise that high quality housing is a key foundation for stronger mental health and, likewise, low-quality housing, homelessness and other housing problems negatively impact emotional wellbeing and mental health. People using mental health services value having safe, affordable and local housing as one of the most important things to keep well and aid recovery.

Housing problems can also lead to significant challenges across our systems and services.



Housing issues account for nearly 20% of all delays to discharge from mental health hospitals, people experience worse outcomes when housing support is not in place at the right time, and more people are placed in residential care services when supported housing options are unavailable which limits their independence as well as producing cost pressures.

Our Sussex Mental Health and Housing Strategy involves a range of partners across the NHS, social care, housing and community sectors, and describes our plan to enhance the outcomes for people using mental health services through integration of our mental health and housing systems.

The Strategy has five key objectives with place-based plans established in East Sussex, West Sussex and soon to follow in Brighton and Hove. The place-based plans include a range of approaches to expand the quantity and quality of supported housing options for people with mental health needs, namely to:



1

Increase the availability of mental health support in the housing pathway, including improving the supply of specialist mental health housing provision.

2

Develop specialist provision for 18-25 year-olds to improve transition from children to adult services

3

Improve the connection between mental health and housing to improve the ability of the system to manage mental health needs.

4

Develop housing and support services to meet the needs of people with co-existing conditions and multiple and compound needs

5

Reduce barriers to hospital discharge by utilising new housing based models, including Discharge to Assess approaches.

Peter Molyneux, Chair at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, said:

"Providing support for people seriously affected by mental health problems with housing and employment alongside clinical services is essential to their recovery. By working together, we can provide better housing options and ensure access to NHS, social care, housing, and community sector support is available to help people live better and more fulfilling lives."

Work has already begun to translate these ambitions into meaningful reality for people using mental health services. An example is through the Discharge to Assess (D2A) pathway delivering supported housing services for people who are ready to leave hospital but need ongoing assessment and support. D2A has already been established in West Sussex and Brighton to enable over 650 supported discharges from Sussex mental health hospitals.



Joe's Story

Joe (not their real name) shares their experience of how this service helped them:

"I was referred to D2A following a serious attempt on my life. I have Bi-Polar Affective Disorder and experienced a relapse after losing a close family member. When admitted to hospital I was uncertain about my future and anxious about becoming homeless. My mental health team were talking about a long-term residential care home but instead referred me to D2A as a 'trial' placement in the community.



"I was offered a six-week placement in a supported housing service and there I could access support that made me feel safe and think about my longer-term goals. A social worker assessed my longer term needs and we agreed that it was best for me to move into my own independent accommodation with a small package of care because I had shown in the D2A placement that I don't need to live in residential care.

"I got help to look for different types of accommodation and viewed a flat provided by a private landlord which I accepted. I was helped to purchase essential items and got other things I needed from local charities.

"I'm really optimistic about my future. I have good, stable accommodation and a package of support. I now really want to become a peer support worker to help others who are going through what I did."