



APPENDIX 1

Mental health emergency accommodation Service Specification

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Introduction

Our vision

Cheshire East wants to prevent and reduce homelessness, and has a strong commitment to early intervention and prevention, to ensure prevention of homelessness takes place as early as possible whenever possible.

Emergency accommodation is such an intervention to prevent homelessness, seeking to support health and wellbeing through appropriate support to service-users, preventing them from falling into further crisis and reducing potential demand for more expensive social care, health services and for homelessness services. It is expected that this will see results consistent with similar initiatives nationally, such as falls in the number of episodes (26%), admissions (18%) and bed days (26%). There was a fall of one third in the number of episodes resulting in emergency re-admission within 28 days.

Decent affordable housing is the basis for increasing life opportunities for Cheshire East residents. Housing is a major determinant of health and well-being. Access to decent, sustainable and affordable housing is critical to enable people to maintain their social and support networks as well as their independence.

Most people leaving hospital will not need any further help. However, some people experiencing forms of mental illness are being discharged from hospital or services and have no home to go to. It is also the case that patients are discharged to inappropriate places, they were homeless when they were admitted, or have become homeless as a result of their stay in hospital. Occasionally a breakdown in mental health, or in the ability to maintain a successful tenancy, causes someone to be evicted either from general needs housing or supported housing, and as a consequence need somewhere to stay for a short time.

Cheshire East's Housing Options Team and local mental health hospital units and services have experienced problems in placing homeless persons with mental health problems when leaving mental health hospitals or units. Some discharges have been last minute and Housing Options have been notified very late in the day.

This has raised issues, in terms of patient welfare and safeguarding, and needing to place people into emergency accommodation which often is unsatisfactory.

Cheshire East wants to prevent homelessness, and reduce the rate of re-admission to hospital. A mental health and housing protocol has recently been produced which should result in a reduction in the number of unplanned discharges from mental health units and services.

Cheshire East has recruited 2 link workers (1 covering Macclesfield / North of Cheshire East and 1 covering Crewe / South of Cheshire East) to work with vulnerable adults with mental health issues (who don't, or no longer, reach the threshold for acute services) who are homeless when discharged. However the service-users may have continuing mental health and related support needs. Some may also have substance misuse issues.

The link workers will assist the service-users in a 'step down' to community-based services, and be an advocate for a safe place to stay for a short intervention to prevent homelessness and a repeat crisis, resulting in a return to hospital / mental health unit. Access to emergency accommodation ("sanctuary beds") is a preferable alternative to placing people into unsupported Bed and Breakfast accommodation or into a homeless hostel. The aim is that people supported to live independently will lessen demand for health and social care

services. It will also provide a better understanding of the demand issues for resettlement options.

Link workers will provide dedicated support to prevent crises from occurring by assisting with health and housing issues, by using co-ordinated pathways. Whilst the service-user has somewhere to stay, the link worker will engage with partners in order to find a housing solution and to facilitate engagement with relevant support, from service providers, and family and friend networks where possible. This will see improved outcomes not only regarding the housing situation but also in health. The link workers will refer service-users into emergency accommodation in order that service-users are supported from discharge through to appropriate accommodation.

Any housing issues will be addressed by the link worker at the earliest opportunity.

Bed spaces will be commissioned from local services to provide emergency accommodation to provide stability and time for a suitable housing solution to be devised with a continuity of care in place for each person. To this end, 4 units of appropriate accommodation are sought, 2 in the North of Cheshire East and 2 in the South of Cheshire East. Service-users may have a need or a preference for a particular area, especially if requiring support.

The findings of local research indicate that single homeless and people with mental health issues represent the greatest demand on services, across both accommodation and floating support.

The combination of the link workers and specialist emergency accommodation marks a new housing related support option in Cheshire East and will ensure services are flexible, providing a more personalised response to need, reducing dependency, avoiding duplication with other services, and meeting the priority of reducing re-admissions to hospital and return to homelessness services. The aim is to close this revolving door.

Requirements

The aim of the service is to provide an emergency bed provision for individuals with complex needs who are being discharged from a hospital or specialist setting.

The service will provide a total of 4 beds spaces to include 2 beds in the north of Cheshire East and 2 beds in the south of Cheshire East for people of any age 18 and over, to be available for immediate occupation.

Placements will be made during office hours by a link worker.

The provider must ensure that in delivering this service they will possess as a minimum:

- A good knowledge of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII as amended by Homelessness Act 2002
- A good knowledge of The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) of 2005 which provides the legal framework for acting and making decisions on behalf of individuals who lack the mental capacity to make particular decisions for themselves.
- A good knowledge of supporting individuals with complex needs.

Support Provision

This approach will ensure that those discharged into homelessness or rough sleeping (street homelessness) will have a suitable place to go instead, to prevent homelessness and explore longer-term accommodation options.

Accommodation:

[for male and female, and young single homeless]

Support will be through individual pathways, delivered in one of the 4 units of accommodation.

Accommodation:

Resettlement

A key aim is providing good foundations for a sustainable tenancy. Therefore, when service-users move on to more settled accommodation, the link worker will have set up appropriate support for an agreed period

Accommodation and Support Provision

Providing accommodation and support to service-users will, due to the requirements of the service-users, be needed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, subject to demand, The accommodation should be available when required. Placements will be made during office hours. Payment will be made whether the accommodation unit is used or not.

Service Overview

Aims

Effective emergency accommodation in which service-users:

- Feel safe and secure
- Have a flexible support plan produced in partnership with the link worker, and who will move with them through to their accommodation offer
- Gain new skills, or refresh knowledge already held, to maintain a tenancy with little experience of independent living and / or history of failed tenancy
- Connectivity with the right formal and informal support networks with a view to sustainment and reducing likelihood of re-admission to hospital and homelessness.

Objectives of the service

The service will contribute towards the strategic objective of ensuring good mental health and wellbeing of the residents of Cheshire East, specifically through the following minimum requirements:

1. Early intervention and prevention:

- It is essential that services have mechanisms in place to ensure early engagement with service users, to challenge the cycle of mental ill health and homelessness

2. Generic:

- Provision of a service that is generically focused is fundamental to ensure appropriate measures are in place in supporting service-users
- Low to medium level support needs (low level – for example, help to maintain a tenancy; medium level – for example, in housing need and / or chaotic lifestyle).

- Flexible and responsive:
- Ability to adapt to service-users' changing needs, in accordance with agreed pathways

Outcomes

1. Reduction in homelessness
2. Stopping of the cycle of: accommodation – mental ill health – hospital – homelessness
3. Reduction in people with mental health problems sleeping rough
4. Reduction in people with mental health problems being placed into unsuitable accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast or homeless hostel
5. Service-users receive timely support that reduces their risk of subsequent re-admission or homelessness.
6. Services are sustainable for the duration of the contract
7. Public perception and actual improvements in service-user quality of life

Promoting innovation

This is a new area of work and is making use of national good practice. Therefore innovation is encouraged in the delivery of the service, through a clear understanding of joint working between partners and agencies, and shared resources.

In addition, successful providers should have a track-record of adding value to the community and service-users by using their drive, creativity, and innovation which add value to the work of the organisation.

We would expect accommodation providers to work in partnership with the link worker and, through them, with other services as required, such as:

- Hospital Discharge Teams
- Adult Social Care
- Cheshire East Homechoice
- Police
- Youth Offending Service
- Integrated Health and Social Work Teams, especially Mental Health
- Housing Providers
- Housing Related Support Providers

The successful provider / providers will hold a contract with Cheshire East Council. The contract will be for 1 (one) year period, with the possibility of an extension, subject to additional funding and an appropriate number of service-users.

Who will access the service?

The service delivered by the Provider will support qualifying individuals who are ordinarily resident within the Borough. Anyone from outside Cheshire East will be re-engaged with their home authority.

The Service Provider will work in partnership with the Council to deliver high quality support services to service-users, minimise and reduce demand and crisis, and develop a positive pathway approach.

Housing will be provided to a range of qualifying residents, who will be shaped by need in terms of low and medium level support needs. Eligibility may include but not be exclusive to:

Residents with a local connection to Cheshire East [as defined by Cheshire East Housing Allocation Policy]

Residents facing homelessness or at risk of homelessness when leaving hospital or mental health service

Residents who are unlikely to sustain their independence without initial support

Applications into the service

The following information must be provided at the point of referral:

- Personal details of the service-user [name; address; date of birth, and age]
- Service-user contact requirements, including any special communication needs
- Details of current or previous housing status and information concerning their mental health, including risk information, which may be relevant to and / or may have a bearing on the services to be provided
- The link worker will be the liaison between the service-user and their medical contact in hospital or unit, and the Provider.

The provider will work in partnership with the link worker as required, to ensure joint working and deliver a successful pathway out of the emergency accommodation

We would expect the service provider to provide innovation in this joint working.

Accommodation

The service model will include the following accommodation principles:

- Support to service-users will be based on individual needs / risk assessment
- Support will be provided in the most appropriate accommodation offer for that individual.
- Appropriate accommodation will meet the minimum Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) standards.
- The accommodation offer must include disabled access where appropriate, in accordance with all relevant regulations.
- The Provider will be required to source the number of accommodation units to deliver the contract.
- Each bid's accommodation offer will be looked at to assess the comfort, safety and security of the service-users.

In working together, the link worker and accommodation provider will develop a positive working relationship, which clearly defines the tasks of the accommodation provider and provision of accommodation, including if necessary the housing management tasks administered by the accommodation provider, for example: repairs and maintenance, rent collection, legal notices, and security.

Consideration for accommodation need must be made in accordance with Equality and Diversity, particularly in terms of service-user age, gender and disability.

Support

The service model will include the following support principles:

- Intensive/ Crisis Intervention: Very short term intensive intervention, to meet identified support needs arising due to crisis / unexpected event.
- Resettlement: Development of a pathway to meet identified housing and support needs with the aim of maintaining independent living / reducing re-admission rates and homelessness.

Service-user Standards / Involvement

The needs and wishes of the service-user are of importance to Cheshire East Council. The provider staff must be fully involved with the link worker in the development and ongoing review of the service-user's support plans. Service-users must also be supported to develop their potential to live successfully and independently.

The Council expects that the link worker is involved as much as possible in making decisions concerning the way in which the services delivered through the accommodation provider are managed on a day to day basis, subject to the accommodation provider's rights to be responsible for the overall management of the Service being provided.

Staffing and staff training

Services will be flexible and person-centred. Service-users should be able to exercise choice and control over their support, in agreement with the link worker and accommodation provider. Staffing arrangement must be flexible to ensure that support can be arranged at a time suitable for service-users.

In dealing with service-user needs, the service provider will aim to match staff skills, knowledge and other attributes to service-users' needs and preferences. This will include a range of skills relevant to engaging with people from different backgrounds and circumstances.

Staff should have the necessary skills and experience and / or training required to deliver a quality service to a service-user.

We expect all staff employed by the service provider to be able to demonstrate knowledge of and skills in:

- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Mental health awareness
- Drug and alcohol awareness
- Equality and diversity
- Health and safety
- Life Skills
- Negotiation, persuasion and understanding
- Managing confrontation and challenging behaviour
- Working with people who are difficult to engage with