



Mental health and housing: developing a care and support pathway

Nick Welch

Head of Major Programmes, Social & Community Services, Oxfordshire County Council, UK

Angelo Fernandes

Mental Health Services Project Manager, Social & Community Services, Oxfordshire County Council, UK

Abstract

This article describes the development of the Supported to Independent Living project (SIL), which is for the support and care for people with mental health needs in Oxfordshire to live as independently as possible in ordinary housing in the community. The project is a partnership between NHS Oxfordshire (Primary Care Trust), the Oxfordshire Supporting People programme and Oxfordshire County Council Social and Community Services.

Although there was a very vigorous development of community living for people with longstanding mental health needs through the provision of group homes, particularly in Oxford City that started in 1963, there has not been an overall strategy for the development of mental health services for the County as a whole. The needs of a diverse, younger, often more mobile and potentially more challenging group of service users for housing with appropriate care and support have not been met.

A joint strategy between the County Council and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to meet these needs has therefore been developed that introduces a pathway of linked accommodation and support arrangements. These range from intensive support through to floating support in the community, and are intended to offer individuals a guided pathway away from specialist services to more mainstream provision. The services are based on the principles of recovery, personalisation and ordinary housing.

As well as achieving significantly reconfigured services the strategy has to deliver savings to meet the cuts imposed on the Supporting People programme grant by Central Government.

The project has involved the PCT and the County Council in close partnership working, and important and significant involvement of and engagement with service users and carers. A framework agreement has been agreed by all of the organisations involved. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of each and covers local government, the NHS, housing and support.

Key words

Housing; mental health needs; recovery; ordinary living; housing and support pathway

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