

How Housing Related support in Cambridgeshire Links to the Health and Well-being in Cambridge City.

Purpose

The housing related support team is based at Cambridgeshire County Council and works across the county. The team contracts and commissions housing related support services aimed at helping people to develop or maintain their independence from young people leaving care right through to elderly people in Extra Care housing and many other groups in between.

By focussing on the areas people need help with to develop greater independence, housing support makes a significant contribution to the health and wellbeing agenda in Cambridge City. This paper evidences how housing support is making a contribution.

Work is progressing to align Housing Related support services into existing contracting and commissioning structures in Cambridgeshire County Council. As alignment takes place it is important to demonstrate the value of Housing Related support interventions in delivering the broader health and well-being agenda. Housing Related support helps people at difficult times of their life and/or towards the end of their life. Without support people may suffer poorer health, life-chances or die prematurely. Good health and well-being will help the residents of Cambridge City to play a greater role in their local communities.

Linking Housing Related support to the priorities in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy – A focus on Cambridge City.

Cambridgeshire's Health and Well-being (HWB) Strategy stresses the importance of supporting the physical and mental health of all residents particularly for children and young people, the elderly and vulnerable individuals. Given the number of vulnerable people supported by Housing Related support and the particular focus on vulnerable groups it is an important resource to improve health and well-being. There are six key priorities in Cambridgeshire's HWB strategy and the following sections show the contribution made by Housing Related support with specific regard to the Cambridge City area. Links are also made where appropriate to local priorities for Health and Wellbeing in Cambridge City.

Housing Related support is tackled strategically across the county and takes an outcomes focussed approach helping people from 16 years right through to people at the end of their lives working to the following outcomes:

Achieving economic wellbeing – Maximising income, reducing overall debt and obtaining paid work

Enjoy and Achieve – Training/education plus leisure, culture and faith plus informal learning

Be healthy – Physical health, mental health and substance misuse

Stay Safe – Maintain accommodation/avoid eviction, improve compliance with statutory orders, reduce risk of harm to or from others

Making a positive contribution – Giving more choice/involvement and control

More specific examples are given below setting out some of the outcomes achieved in the Cambridge City area.

Linking Housing Related support to the priorities in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Priority 1 - Ensure a positive start to life for children and young people and their families.

This priority includes a focus on creating positive opportunities for young people to contribute to their community and raise their self esteem. Housing Related support services help young people who may have experienced homelessness and/or relationship breakdown often with their parents or carers. At any one time there are 162 places in Cambridge City available to young people funded via Housing Related support in a range of different types of accommodation from young person's hostels and foyers (designed to help young people particularly with accessing training and education) to supported lodgings. The services help people to find new housing, placing a particular focus on accessing training, education or employment and maintaining their tenancies.

Between 1st of April 2012 and the 31st Dec 2012 102 moved on from the 6 young people's services to permanent accommodation. Out of these, 37 had been found paid work, 38 were taking part in training and education and 40 participated in work-like activities. This is at time when youth unemployment is a real issue locally and nationally.

Priority 2 – Support older people to be independent, safe and well

This area is focused on promoting interventions which reduce unnecessary hospital admittance and enabling older people to live at home, or in a community setting, where appropriate.

At any one time 893 older people are housed in 24 sheltered and extra care schemes across Cambridge City. Housing Related support funds vital staff time to support these services. In sheltered housing schemes safe and accessible housing is provided to residents, and support staff help people to maintain their independence for as long as possible. Plans are underway to extend this support to older people living in the community, so that this valuable support is accessible to all those that need it, not just those living in sheltered housing. Extra Care schemes also help older people with significant health problems who would otherwise need to be in more expensive residential care or hospital.

As well as housing schemes for older people housing related support contributes to Home Improvement Agencies which help older people or people with physical disabilities to remain in their own homes. Between April and December 2012 a total of 59 major jobs were completed by Cambridge Home Improvement Agency. Major jobs included installing level access showers and or bathrooms downstairs for example.

Priority 3 - Encourage healthy lifestyles and behaviours in all actions and activities while respecting people's personal choices

This is about encouraging individuals to take more responsibility for their health and wellbeing. The ethos of Housing Related support is about encouraging personal

responsibility and independence. An outcomes framework is in place which asks service users as they leave services how support has helped them.

Between April 2012 to December 2012 a total of 267 individuals supported by Housing Related support reported that their physical health had been improved whilst using these services in Cambridge City.

Some of the services funded to provide housing related support are testing out new ways of working to enable greater personal choice. This has involved thinking very differently about how support should be delivered focussing more on outcomes rather than traditional support sessions. Here is an example from one of the schemes.

Early reporting from the first pilot project has demonstrated: individuals have more control over their support as a result; the support they access is more focused on their aspirations rather than their disabilities/vulnerabilities; cycling proved to be a popular activity, which has clear health benefits but has also enabled individuals to access other services and people, including sustaining relationships with families; relationships with other residents have improved, resulting in increased confidence and reduced isolation; and personal health and hygiene has improved. One resident stated that living in the scheme now is like “being your own boss”.

Priority 4 - Create a safe environment and help build strong communities, wellbeing and mental health

The work of Housing Related support is particularly relevant to this priority because it is concerned with minimising the negative impacts of alcohol and illegal drugs, providing support for victims of domestic abuse and working to prevent and tackle homelessness. These are all areas where Housing Related support makes a significant contribution.

In terms of helping people who use drug and alcohol, Housing Related support provides 179 spaces across Cambridge in schemes for adult homeless individuals or homeless families. Each homeless person has an individual support plan which identifies the areas in which they need help. There is a strong link between addiction issues and homelessness and services work hard to address this. Additionally a floating support service supports up to 167 clients at any one time.

Between April and December 2012 a total of 160 individuals reported they had made progress towards addressing their drug and or alcohol issues during their period of receiving Housing Related support. For some of these it will have resulted in complete abstinence from substances and for others they will have reduced their consumption or moved further towards recovery. This can only be achieved via a multi-agency approach involving specialist drug and alcohol services.

In the area of addressing domestic abuse Housing Related support is a key intervention both in terms of prevention and helping victims if they have been subject to abuse. Services provided include 1 refuge in the City for victims of abuse which helps people who have become homeless. There is also an outreach/floating support service which helps people who are still housed but might be at risk of abuse in some way, meaning that individuals do not have to move home in order to access support.

Between April and December 2012, 44 individuals were helped to leave the refuge into new accommodation in a planned way when previously they were homeless. Through other Housing Related support funding a further 550 women who have experienced domestic abuse are known to the refuges and are being supported in some way. This will vary from basic contact, which could be a lifeline if a person suddenly becomes at greater risk, to a full support plan and goals to help an individual, and their family, make a new life following being victims of abuse.

As well as housing homeless people Housing Related support services help people who are at risk of homelessness in their own homes. Particularly important interventions are the floating support services, especially those which help people who have previously been homeless or are at risk of homelessness. These services will help people with managing their homes and maintaining their tenancies, setting up utilities, preventing rent arrears and helping people to improve their wellbeing and manage their recovery.

Housing Related support funds floating support services within Cambridge City. At any one time over 175 individuals who may have been identified as at risk of homelessness receive prevention work via floating support to help them maintain their tenancies. Without this support being in place it is likely that a number of individuals may become homeless again and their support needs and other associated costs may have increased as a result.

Priority 5 Create a sustainable environment in which communities can flourish & Priority 6 – Work together effectively

This is about seeking the views of the local voluntary sector and the communities of Cambridge as well and recognising their importance. The strategy is also concerned with promoting social inclusion of marginalised groups and individuals.

Housing Related support is channelled through 21 organisations and businesses in Cambridge City. The majority of these are in the voluntary sector and include many local charities and enterprises working with a range of marginalised groups e.g. offenders and young people leaving care. A key component is to improve social inclusion is helping people to find employment and not be dependent on welfare benefits. Between April and December 2012 across all age groups Housing Related support services helped 98 individuals into paid work in Cambridge City.

Issues

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy is a new document and has only recently been agreed. Evidencing outcomes against another document is not always easy given the wider context of health and wellbeing compared to Housing Related support forming only one component. Outcomes can also be hard to demonstrate and individual measures don't always tell the whole story. A person may secure a job but may still end up homeless. Outcomes attributable to Housing Related support in many cases would not have been possible without multi-agency working. This report highlights the contribution of just one of the key components of what is a multifaceted approach to improving the health and wellbeing of Cambridgeshire's residents. This report is a collection of ideas about how to link Housing Related support to health and wellbeing which can be further refined.

Feedback following the plans to integrate HRS into mainstream commissioning is that there are concerns these benefits will be lost if the emphasis on HRS as a key contributor to HWB and the prevention agenda is not maintained.

Recommendations

Note the work to link Housing Related support to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and how housing related support contributes to improved health and wellbeing in Cambridge City.