

Ensuring targeted mental health support reaches vulnerable people - Torbay



Torbay Council's Vulnerability and Complex Needs Officer, plays a key role in linking agencies to ensure that mental health needs reach the most vulnerable. Seconded from Devon Mental Health Trust for a year, the post is co-located with police, fire, immigration and probation.

The role provides advice, support and partnership work around mental health to vulnerable groups to assist the Council with collaborative working. Where mental health needs are multiple and complex, there can be barriers to accessing mental health services by not meeting thresholds or through lack of engagement. This role commits all professionals to maintain engagement to focus on a mental-health recovery response wherever possible.

It focuses on supporting people to improve health for example those living with health neglect. An issue causing a big challenge is hoarding, due to underlying mental health issues. This has led to properties being unfit for habitation. In these properties hygiene, vermin and fire risk are major concerns. In some properties fire risk is such an issue that fire crews are unable to enter the property.

The Officer links up adult safeguarding with other agencies and gives speedier access to appropriate mental and physical health interventions. On leaving prison, the Officer works with and links up individuals presenting with extremist views who are shown to be on the autistic spectrum. Linking into other projects e.g. horticultural projects, and having access to housing and benefits helps to improve these situations and reduce risk to self and others.

The Officer works with community nurses and a client's own networks to support reduction in suicide risk and harmful drug use, and physical health concerns (e.g. leg ulcers). The role also helps link GPs and the police to ensure cases that need additional mental health support are able to access timely assessments and interventions.

The Officer works with Street Wardens to target the street homeless who are at high risk of self-neglect and a risk to others. By organising visits with Street Wardens and Mental Health Workers, they are able to find out causes of concerning behaviour, and in some cases the necessity for immediate psychiatric assessment and treatment. Holding 2 clinics helps professionals to maintain good co-operations with community, and the Officer also participates in the Multi-agency MAPPA groups for adults who present a public risk.

The Council's Housing Department has a direct referral system so that it enables those with additional vulnerabilities to find out whether mental health needs require additional support, and the most appropriate use of multi-agency support. The model is developing and has applied for the Making Every Adult Matter Programme. It is also focused on key other issues in the community such as legal high use and is training street wardens and call centres in mental health first aid and managing agitated behaviour to help vulnerable people get the mental health support they need.

The features that make this project work are close geographical links, commitment to mental health intervention across different agencies and making every attempt to get the right mental health solution to people who need it.

To find out more, please contact:

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