

# Health champions for the homeless

30 - 50% of homeless people have mental health problems, 45% have physical health problems and 60% substance misuse issues, yet, homeless people are 40 more likely not to be registered with a GP. The use of 'health champions' has proven to have a significant impact on fellow service users' attitudes and knowledge about health, accepting of lifestyle advice and access to medical care, especially in primary health care.

## Project leader:

Clare Cassidy - Community primary care nurse for homeless, Birmingham

## Project aim:

To improve the health of single homeless men and women by providing a peer group support network

## Outputs:

- leaflet for health champions about using GP services appropriately
- planned translation of the leaflets into Polish for use with Polish rough sleepers

## Outcomes:

- a successful peer support programme was delivered to 9 service users
- 3 health champions are in voluntary placements
- 3 health champions volunteering weekly with a homeless service to deliver health messages and advice to peers
- limited evidence to date of an increase in GP registrations
- an overall reduction in A+E attendances leading to monthly case review with the casualty team to agree a case management approach for frequent attenders and target individuals for proactive care
- closer working partnerships with other agencies particularly the 3rd sector
- one health champion is now running a self-help alcohol support group and is attending college for further health and social care training
- one health champion is in part time paid employment

'The course has helped my confidence; it feels good to help others.' Health champion

'It's a good feeling to give something back to the community that helped me.' Health champion

