

# Participation: Meeting the health needs of people experiencing homelessness

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**Groundswell**  
Out of homelessness



# Who are Groundswell?

We enable homeless and vulnerable people to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on services and play a fuller role in the community.

## **Speaking up & speaking out about homelessness**

- Homeless Health Peer Advocacy
- Peer Research & Peer Journalism
- Service User Participation
- Information for Self-Advocacy



# Why health?

**Health Need** – Complex health needs and poor health outcomes.

**Health first** – Good health prerequisite to living a full life – an unaddressed need that is holding people back.

**Mistrust of services** – Difficulty accessing and working with ‘authority figures’

**Practical Barriers** – Communications, travel, getting past the receptionist.

**Get Busy** – Volunteering can move people out of homelessness.

# Homeless Health Peer Advocacy



## The Intervention:

- One-to one support to make and attend health appointments
- Health Promotion Sessions

## The Result:

- Increased attendance at scheduled appointments; reduction in DNA rates to that of the general population
- A 42% reduction in unplanned care activity costs. Leading to a saving of £2.43 for every £1 spent.
- Volunteers move on!

# HHPA Development

## It's come from...

- One year pilot in Westminster in 2010
- 100 appointments

## Where it's at:

- 8 London boroughs
- 2,500 engagements last year
- 450 Health Promotion Sessions
- Specialist projects: Hep C, Hospital Discharge, Mental Health and Women
- GSK Impact Award overall Winner 2016

## Where its going:

- HHPA National
- NIHR Evaluation



# Insight and Action

**Out of Homelessness** comes Insight... Out of Insight comes Action!

**No-one has nothing, everyone has their story.**

**Groundswell generates unique insight on homelessness.**

**New insight brings new solutions.**

**Information for Action!**



**Peer Research**

**Peer Journalism**

**Training**

**Influencing policy, practice and piloting solutions.**

**Creating Resources**

# Groundswell spoke to over 260 people experiencing homelessness about their health. We found:

90%

had a problem with their mouth

63%

are self-conscious about their teeth

70%

had lost teeth since becoming homeless

31%

had been unsuccessful signing up with a dentist

60%

are high sugar users

28%

had been diagnosed with gum disease

46%

had holes in their teeth

7%

had no teeth at all



70%

had lost teeth since becoming homeless

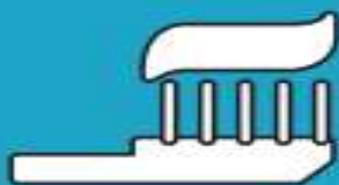
65%

don't brush teeth twice a day

Dentists are there to help

89%

agreed



30%

currently have pain in their mouth



56%

had experienced bleeding gums



# Accessible Information for informed choices



Healthy London Partnership | Groundswell Out of homelessness | NHS

## Been a while since you smiled?

You have a right to a healthy mouth!

### Keep your mouth healthy!

- Brush your teeth twice a day
- Use toothpaste with fluoride
- Brush for 2 minutes
- Cut down on sugary snacks and drinks
- See your dentist as often as they recommend
- If you smoke or drink alcohol then going to the dentist is even more important.

There is an NHS Dental Service nearby that can help you!

Your local NHS dental practice(s) taking patients are:

What does treatment cost?

If you are on most benefits you can get NHS dentistry for free. Take proof of your benefits with you each time you go to the dentist. There may be set charges if you are not on benefits.

For more information on dental services talk to:

Call NHS 111 if you need treatment urgently.

You can find other dental practices at [www.NHS.uk](http://www.NHS.uk)

[www.groundswell.org.uk](http://www.groundswell.org.uk)  
@GNDWELL

Professional collaboration with Public Health England, The Healthy London Partnership and Groundswell. Groundswell is a charity that works to help people to create solutions to homelessness. We specialise in supporting people with health issues.



Groundswell Out of homelessness

## Healthy Mouths

Action Guide

Groundswell Out of homelessness

## Action update

### Safer injecting

Trust for London

Groundswell Out of homelessness

## Action update

### Bacteria infections

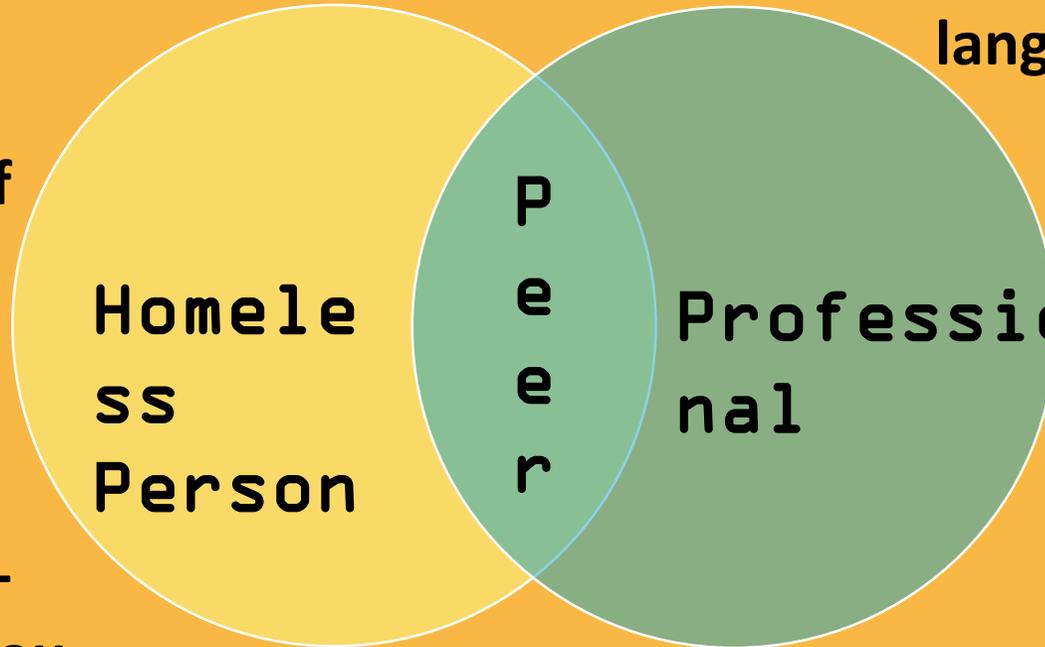
Trust for London

# Why 'Peers'?



Speak the language!

Real understanding of the problems people face.



Not an authority figure

Not your job – but because you care!

Don't feel judged

Re-build trust!  
Provide  
Inspiration!

# Deeper Understanding



- **Unique insight** - essential if we are to tackle homelessness effectively as a society.
- **Identifying the 'gaps in the net'**.
- **Understanding from front line** – we need to capture what they see & take action!
- **Voice matters** – Clients can become contributors to our research to help create more accessible services – not just passive recipients of support.
- **Collaboration** - Bringing people with lived experience together with professionals and policy makers is a powerful tool for change.

# Shared Experience



- “Well a lot of the Advocates have been there and done it. So they understand us a little bit better, and you can talk to them on a level and you can be honest with them.” – HHPA client
- “I’ve been in the system all my life, it takes a lot for me to trust people, but straight away from the word go he explained that he’s had his troubles in the past and that really broke the ice, I felt quite comfortable.” – HHPA Client
- “Groundswell achieves not just a massive increase in access to health services but also fosters an atmosphere where clients know change is possible” (Referrer)

# Asset Based Approach



- We value the experience and skills people gain through their lives.
- We take an asset-based approach - starting with the skills, experiences and knowledge that someone already has gained.
- Coaching & Advocacy – not support work.

*“I was taught to see my past as a life-experience and in doing so have recovered lost years to hopefully benefit others.” – Peer Advocate*



# Support: Give a Lot - Get a Lot

- 7 Weeks training – ending in a Graduation Ceremony
- Volunteer 3 days a week in a very tough role
- Monthly one-to-one supervision
- Monthly group clinical supervision
- Travel, lunch and phone reimbursed
- Winter clothing allowance
- Support from the Volunteer Progression Project
- Groundswell Forum
- Volunteer Bursary



***“Groundswell provided me with stability. Volunteering provided me with a support system and a basic structure in my life, and helped me integrate again into the rest of the world.” – Peer Advocate***



# Case Study - Groundswell achieving a simple solution:



- Peers working at a hostel helping clients identify 'teeth' as their priority health issue.
- Clients banned from attending the dentist surgery opposite.
- Surgery was paid per appointment. Client group particularly chaotic - challenging to keep appointments booked weeks ahead. Attendance rate of 40% was basis for dentist's ban.
- We arranged regular 'unnamed appointments' – attending the hostel just before appointments offering any available clients immediate access to the dentist.
- Clients accompanied straight to dentist, achieving a 100% attendance rate over a six month period.
- Solving 'tooth pain' was instrumental in stopping one client drinking – now resettled and in work.
- Groundswell will now disseminate good practice to other services.



# Thank You!

**People experiencing homelessness are not the problem –  
but are the solution to homelessness**

**Martin Burrows**

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# Groundswell's Journey



- 1. Campaigning**
- 2. Peer Research & Client Involvement**
- 3. Health Advocacy**
- 4. Insight & Action**

Core Beliefs

# Groundswell's Core Beliefs

**The whole community benefits** when we effectively tackle homelessness and social exclusion.

**We believe in people!** People are society's most valuable resource, and everyone has the capacity to make a contribution.

**There is no Them & Us – only Us!** Groundswell brings everyone together to create genuine solutions to homelessness.

**Participation works!** Supporting homeless people to participate creates more effective services and policy - and crucially enables people to move **out of homelessness**.