

Developing innovative new approaches to working with people with multiple needs, and putting people with lived experience at its heart.

At a Glance **February** 2018

Mental Health and Homelessness Action Group

My name is Tess and I'm the co-chair of the Mental Health Action Group for the Manchester Homelessness Charter.

The Mental Health Action Group has been running for around a year now. We've recently completed a piece of peer-led research which we'll publish in the coming months. This research was the idea of those who'd experienced this situation before, and took place over two sessions in the summer of 2017.

During the research groups, people with lived experience were asked what they thought was broken about services and what they considered the priorities to be to make things better for those experiencing both homelessness and poor mental health.

This information was then taken back to the action group who came up with their own solutions to the problems identified in the research. It has been encouraging to find many of both sets of suggested solutions are the same.

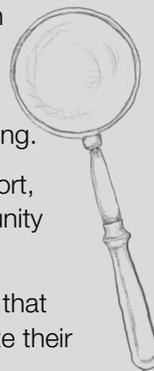
To find out more about this research or how we're going to work with systems to change them for the better then flick through this edition of At a Glance!



Tess Tainton and Paul Pandolfo sharing the Action Group's learning at a recent mental health and homelessness event

Our top priorities

- Discharge should be a joint decision with the person accessing the service.
- Mental health must be where the people are living.
- More peer mentor support, alongside better community interventions.
- Exploring different ways that people can communicate their diagnosis when in crisis.
- No jargon. Be open and honest.
- Stop the stigma culture around mental health – educate public and frontline staff.
- Support when you need it, not just when you hit rock bottom.
- Better communication between different teams/services so they work together.
- Make sure individuals experiencing mental health issues and homelessness know their rights.



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The five stages of our journey



Stage 1 The story tree meet-ups

Individuals with lived experience of mental health issues and homelessness were invited to share how the system is broken, and what changes are needed to make it work better.

The meet-ups were led by individuals with lived experience, and were informal and flexible. Instead of a questionnaire we used a story tree – a hand drawn tree which was decorated with thoughts and ideas as though they were leaves.

Using the tree as a focus for sharing ideas was a way to respect that individuals may prefer to engage in different ways – writing or drawing, as well as speaking.

Decorating the tree and seeing other ideas also helps encourage discussion and extra thoughts. At the end of each meet-up the group prioritised the changes they wanted to see.



Stage 4 Comparing notes

A close look at what was shared in the action group discussion, meant we could compare it to the thoughts shared in the story tree meet-ups.

Comparisons showed a lot of agreement on what changes need to happen.



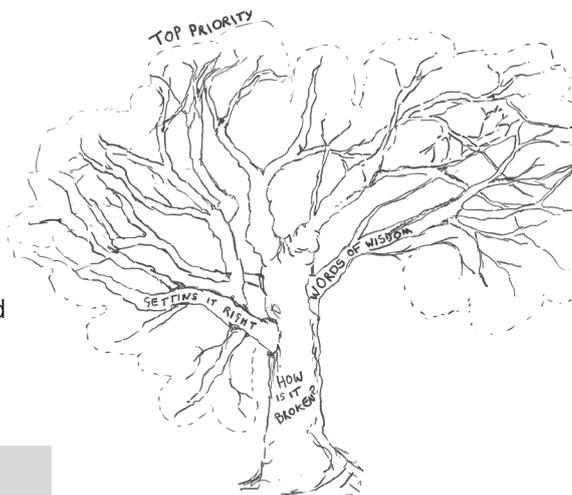
Stage 2 Grouping thoughts together

By looking at all the different thoughts shared in the story tree meet-ups, three themes were identified:

Access and eligibility: focuses on an individual's right, or eligibility to access services or support.

Systems and services: focuses on processes/systems and the details around service provision.

Communication and training: focuses on how services and staff communicate, as well as any training requirements.



“The story tree was a visual way to give people the freedom to say what they wanted.”



Stage 3 Discussing ideas with the Mental Health Action Group

Stage three brought the themes and thoughts, shared by individuals with lived experience, back to our Mental Health Action Group.

Those presenting during this session were mainly professionals representing organisations which provide services (or could influence services) related to mental health and homelessness.

The group discussed ideas around how to ‘get it right’ based on what had been identified in the story tree meet-ups.



Stage 5 Our co-produced vision

We now have a vision of what ‘getting it right’ means in terms of mental health and homelessness.

The only way to achieve this vision is through co-production.

Mental Health and Homelessness Action Group

The Story Tree

Each section of the story tree related to an area of discussion. To get things going we asked a few broad questions around these topics:

How is it broken?: What isn't working in services for people who are experiencing mental health issues and homelessness? What are the missed opportunities by services?

Getting it right: What needs to happen to make the system and services work better for people experiencing mental health issues and homelessness? What do you want services to do/have in the future?

Words of wisdom: What do decision-makers and staff running services need to know about mental health and homelessness? What advice would you give to other people who might be going through similar experiences?



The story tree in numbers

2

story tree meet-ups with individuals with lived experience of mental health issues and homelessness.

145

different thoughts shared.

3

themes identified for change.

100+

individuals, groups or organisations now involved in taking this forward



Mental Health and Homelessness Action Group

Where we are now

After the initial scoping work concluded the group – made up of people both working in services, as well as those with experience of accessing them – came back together to review the findings.

Crucially, there was absolute agreement within the group of what is broken and how to fix it.

Participants were asked to not only discuss the issues that aren't working, but also to share possible solutions in order to start to make things right for those who are experiencing issues around mental health and homelessness. **Forty-two solutions came out of this and we have since taken this research to external meetings,**



two conferences (a regional conference on health and homelessness and a national Big Lottery learning conference on multiple needs).

Having now reached an expert audience of over one hundred people who are part of the Mental Health Action Group, two meetings of over fifty people and two packed conferences we're ready for the next step.



We're going to meet again on Tuesday 6 February 2018 at 2pm at the Friend's Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester, M2 5NS where we'll finalise the learning and think about how the action group can disseminate it.

We'd like to see you there and to hear from you on how the city can explore solutions, develop a plan for the way forward and ultimately pledge a commitment to making Manchester a beacon of best practice in prevention and support for those experiencing mental health issues and homelessness.

If you'd like to learn more about the work of the Homelessness Charter's action groups **here**.

If you want to find out more, join the Mental Health Action Group, or have any other comments, get in touch with:
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