

# Hope into Action Report for Beer-Harris March 2019

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## Summary

In their email of 3 October 2018, the trustees of the Beer-Harris Memorial Trust awarded Hope into Action £2,640 towards supporting a person or persons with severe mental health difficulties. £1,500 has already been received and the balance will be forwarded upon receipt of a report. This document is the report as requested (March 2019).

We are delighted to continue our work with The Beer-Harris Memorial Trust and are extremely grateful for your funding supporting our work with the homeless and mental health. Thank you.

## How have Hope into Action benefitted people with Mental Illness?

Our Theory of Change is that if people have a safe home and the security of positive relationships they will find the motivation to bring about positive change in their lives. 90% of our tenants have mental health needs and mental-ill health continues to be the most commonly reported support need amongst the homeless according to Homeless Link. Our model is to offer housing **with support**, both professional and from community volunteers.

As an organisation we are constantly looking for ways to listen, learn and improve our service to those with mental health problems. Last week at our annual conference, Hope into Action volunteers and staff benefitted from training from Mike Royal, chaplain in a secure unit for 10 years, exploring how you can bring spirituality into conversations with people suffering mental health difficulties in a sensitive and appropriate way. We learned when to access external professional support and how for someone with a healthy spirituality, engagement with a person spirituality can help them on their journey of mental health recovery.

### HEAD OFFICE

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## Case Study: focus on supporting the mental health of domestic violence survivors

We have focussed your funding on our work in Cambridge with female victims of domestic violence.

The effect on survivors' mental health is profound. Research suggests that women experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to experience a mental health problem. Women with mental health problems are more likely to be domestically abused, with 30-60% of women with a mental health problem having experienced domestic violence according to the Mental Health Foundation.

Our professional empowerment worker in Cambridge, formerly an occupational therapist with the NHS, who works with our female tenants, was. She recently shared this report:

“One of our young female tenants, “A”, recently moved on, having been with us for just over a year. Her mental health /severe depression meant that this lady had not been able to hold down a job form more than a few weeks. She often struggled with the interpersonal aspects of shared living, but despite some difficult times and many ups and downs, always managed to hold down her full-time job whilst with us, paid her rent/personal charge without fail by standing order, and engaged with her befriender and the supporting church.

She sorted out her move-on pretty much independently and is now living in supported lodging, where she has a self-contained studio flat in an older lady’s bungalow. I caught up with her befriender a couple of weeks ago and was so encouraged to hear how well A’s doing now. Recently, she invited her befriender to her new home, took her down to the local pub and bought her dinner! Also, A’s befriender recently completed and graduated from the leadership academy run by the supporting church, and A came along to the graduation service to show her support, with a congratulations gift for her.

It is so heartening to get this feedback from one of our befrienders. It has not always an easy journey with this tenant. But we can never underestimate the ripple-effects of unconditional love; the ripples don’t stop when a tenant leaves Hope into Action housing.”

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## A reminder of our model

### What we do

**Hope into Action supports some of the most vulnerable adults in Peterborough, Nottingham, Norwich and Cambridge to maintain living in the community.**

We offer housing (which is self-funding) and combine it with holistic professional and community-based volunteer support. Our main activities are carried out by our Empowerment Workers (EWs) and church volunteers.

**We promote, recruit, train and meet monthly with volunteers to advise and support the mentoring process.** This involves joining in events to promote our work and keep volunteer groups enthused.

**We seek referrals from as wide a range of agencies as possible** eg addiction services, mental health teams, the Prison. We build relationships with and work with other local organisations, including mental health teams to identify services that provide support to participants eg counselling services or other charities where our beneficiaries can volunteer.

**When a prospective beneficiary is referred, we meet to explore if we can work together.** At a second meeting we work together on risks, strengths and needs to further assess compatibility. Once agreed we can work together, a third meeting is at the house to introduce the other tenant(s) and explain house rules. EW's organise volunteers to be hands on with the welcome and move in. We ensure they register at the job centre and GP. EW's provide benefits information and support to aid the completion and submission of forms and help with budgeting. EW's mediate for the tenant and enable them to advocate for themselves at meetings eg with mental health and social services teams. This tenancy support is ongoing. An EW is available at any crisis point and we offer 24/7 emergency support.

**When a tenant moves in, we meet them to form a support plan; identify barriers and signposting to support agencies and encouraging volunteering and re-engagement with estranged family.** Progress is discussed formally every 6 weeks with meetings in place as often as necessary between, fortnightly at minimum. Here, the EW supports

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tenants to carry out actions on their plan and agrees any corrective action to address shortcomings. They deliver one to one motivational advice and guidance eg to maintain tenancy with practical skills; house cleanliness, paying bills. They offer listening for softer issues such as relationships and reconciling past hurts.

Our empowerment workers understand the spectrum of mental health problems and recognise common symptoms and behaviours. They understand the development of complex needs and the impact of traumatic life events and understand when and how to refer people to specialist mental health services.

Empowerment workers meet once a month and share good practice examples of client support around complex mental health needs.

**The volunteers mentor and befriend.** They offer day to day support and companionship eg lifts in their car, but also accompanying them on a bus journey, helping fill in an official form. They use their networks to make introductions to social activities and groups and support opportunities involving a wider section of the community eg a sports club. They offer face to face contact eg cooking a meal together or walking in a local park offering supportive listening.

When appropriate, the EW explores move on options with tenants.

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