

Mental Health Strategy for Scotland 2011 – 2015

INTRODUCTION

GHA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Mental Health strategy for Scotland 2011 – 2015.

GLASGOW HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) is the largest housing association in Scotland, with 45,000 homes. We are a registered charity with a voluntary Board.

We are also the largest factor for owner occupiers in Scotland, with 26,000 customers.

We are firmly focused on helping Glasgow residents lead better, happier and healthier lives, and provide services to around 25 percent of Glasgow's households. We are also a major employer in the city, with around 1600 staff.

We play a key role in the regeneration of Glasgow alongside our partners such as Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government.

Since stock transfer from the city council in 2003, we have invested more than £1billion in modernising and improving tenants' homes across the city. By the end of phase 2 of our new-build programme we will have provided a total of 670 new homes across Glasgow.

Working with a range of partners such as Glasgow City Council, Strathclyde Police, Strathclyde Fire and Rescue and NHS Greater Glasgow we have helped bring forward a host of projects which support tenants and make communities safer and more attractive.

We provide a housing support service for tenants who live in our sheltered housing complexes. Many of our tenants receive support from other providers in their own homes and we lease properties to providers to enable them to support people in the community.

COMMENTS

Our comments on the strategy are set out under the relevant outcomes in the strategy.

1. People and communities act to protect and promote their mental health and reduce the likelihood that they will become unwell

There is considerable evidence showing the impact of housing in promoting mental health and wellbeing. We would welcome much

greater drive to promote how communities can promote mental health and the role organisations like us can play.

GHA is a partner in GoWell, a research and learning programme that aims to investigate the impact of investment in housing, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities over a ten-year period. The study findings show that improvements to the home environment are associated with positive mental health impacts, as perceptions of home quality and security provide benefits to wellbeing in terms of both status and control. Housing and neighbourhood may also support mental wellbeing by providing psychosocial environments. They are spaces in which people meet and interact. The quality of these interactions has knock-on effects which impact on wellbeing. Neighbourhood satisfaction is an important additional factor positively associated with perceptions of home quality and sense of control and status.

There is link here with the Scottish Government's recently published Regeneration Strategy.

GHA's equality and diversity strategy and programmes aim to address discrimination, understand stigma and discrimination and promote mental wellbeing amongst both our customers and staff. This includes publicity campaigns, supporting diversity events and providing training for our staff.

2. Action is focused on early years and childhood to respond quickly and to improve both short and long term outcomes

GHA, as a full member of the city's Community Planning Partnership, is a key partner in the One Glasgow project. One Glasgow aims to review, demonstrate, and recommend how the partnership may maintain or improve outcomes in the city, while delivering services with fewer resources, by:

- Redesigning services through joint working to deliver improved outcomes using evidenced approaches;
- Reducing duplication or "de-cluttering" service provision by streamlining joint processes and or ceasing to do some activities; and
- Redirecting resources to more effective service approaches.

The community planning partners selected three priority themes to explore as part of One Glasgow. The three themes are:

- Children aged 0 – 8 years, specifically early intervention approaches for this group and their families;
- Reducing offending, targeted at those aged 12 – 25 years involved in anti social behaviour or in the criminal justice system, including prison leavers; and

- Older people aged 65 and over, specifically to assist those in single households to live in the community and minimise acute interventions and hospital admissions.

The themes selected by One Glasgow are linked to current or emerging priorities for the Scottish Government and also affect large sections of Glasgow's population, either directly or indirectly, attract large volumes of Glasgow's total public service expenditure, and require engagement by a number of diverse organisations. The Scottish Government has agreed through discussion with GCC and the Community Planning Partnership that the One Glasgow programme is the key mechanism that will deliver the Change agenda for the city. Glasgow's focus has informed the recently announced emphasis from the Scottish Government in its 2012/13 spending plans to shift to preventative spending with specific funding of £500 million over the next three years to encourage joint working across the public sector on adult social care, early years and tackling reoffending.

The 'Triple P' programme is a good example of support for young families which will contribute to better mental health outcomes. GHA is working with partners to promote and refer customers to this programme, and our staff also have access to the programme.

3. People have an understanding of their own mental health and if they are not well take appropriate action themselves or by seeking help

Employers have an important role to play in promoting positive mental health. GHA has a free comprehensive employee assistance programme which we promote for our staff. We run a number of wellbeing campaigns in partnership with other organisations, alongside national awareness campaigns, to promote wellbeing.

4. First contact services work well for people seeking help, whether in crisis or otherwise, and people move on to assessment and treatment services quickly

GHA recognises the importance of information and advice, and easily accessible treatments which can prevent less complex difficulties from developing into mental illnesses which may prove more difficult to treat.

The first professional contact point for people with mental health problems will very often be the landlord. GHA has a crucial role to play both at the point when an individual requires housing, and whilst they are a tenant.

GHA has attained Type 2 Scottish national standard in information and advice which means that our staff can signpost and provide appropriate advice.

For people who require housing, GHA is working with others to develop a partnership for the city which to prevent homelessness and crisis and will essentially 'join the dots' between Social Work, Health Services, and the voluntary sector. The partnership will offer a Housing Options , person centred service delivery model based on personal solutions and customer choice. A unique response is being designed in partnership with Glasgow City Council and a range of other partners, to meet the city's needs.

Repeat homelessness is often linked to poor mental health. Our new housing options approach will help us to identify issues as early as possible. Clear referral mechanisms need to be in place to make sure that individuals access the services they need as soon as possible.

For our existing customers, we carry out regular home visits, and work in partnership with the Police and Fire Service to provide fire safety checks. These contacts provide opportunities to identify early signs of vulnerability and refer to the appropriate statutory agency.

8. The balance of community and inpatient services is appropriate to meet the needs of the population safely, efficiently and with good outcomes

GHA is keen to work with partners to consider what a well-balanced community-focused service should look like, based on a robust analysis of need and taking into account the activity taking place in inpatient and community mental health services. We fully support the strategy's focus on taking Scotland's mental health policy forward in a more joined-up and systematic way.

We are currently developing a new strategy for older people, in partnership with a range of customers and partners. We are currently consulting on 5 key outcomes which, for older people with dementia and/ or other mental health problems, align closely with the government's mental health strategy –

1. Older customers and their carers are able to thrive with high quality services responsive to their changing needs
2. Our older customers are informed and supported to exercise choice over their housing options
3. Our older customers are able to remain independent in their own warm, safe and well-maintained home longer
4. Our older customers have greater choice of housing type and tenure in well managed, clean and safe neighbourhoods
5. Strategic planning and service commissioning recognise our critical role in helping older people to live independently and safely.

The strategy will consider how we can help people who suffer from the early stages of dementia through providing suitable housing and support. We are also aware that many younger people suffer from

mental health problems and are considering what supports we can put in place to help young people sustain successful tenancies.

10. Mental health services work well with other services such as learning disability and substance misuse and are integrated in other settings such as prisons, care homes and general medical settings

Our experience on the ground is that there is some way to go before this desired outcome becomes a reality. Whilst our housing officers have the tools and skills to identify vulnerability, there is no clear route map showing them who they should refer customers to – should they refer to addiction services, CPN etc. In order to deliver fully integrated services, clear arrangements need to be in place so that referrals can be made from housing (and other) professionals to the statutory sector in a consistent and coordinated way. This will allow the correct assessment to be carried out. We are working to develop better processes and outcomes with partners, for example through a recent public health secondment to GHA.

We are experiencing an increased number of escalated complaints from customers who have mental health problems, and from customers who have complained about the behaviour of neighbours who have mental health problems. Resolution of the complex issues in these complaints requires engagement with other agencies such as the Police and Social Work services.

Anti-social behaviour affects the mental health of people living nearby. Perpetrators also often suffer from mental health problems themselves. Our Housing Options approach includes developing mediation and support elements, and work with Police and Fire Services, to help resolve issues as quickly as possible.

11. The health and social care workforce has the skills and knowledge to undertake its duties effectively and displays appropriate attitudes and behaviours in their work and with service users and carers

It is important that as well as health and social care staff, other professionals have the skills and knowledge to identify when an individual is vulnerable, and that they know where to refer the person to. The mental health service landscape is difficult for our staff, as housing officers are not equipped to diagnose what an individual's medical issue is, which makes it difficult to know where to refer to for the correct service. Effective referral arrangements are crucial.

CONCLUSION

GHA supports the outcomes in the national strategy and looks forward to working with partners to support its delivery by

- Promoting wellbeing through provision of good quality housing and supportive thriving neighbourhoods
- Identifying customers who are vulnerable, and referring into statutory services via a clear route map and referral mechanisms
- Recognising the specific roles which housing can play
- Providing low level preventative services to help people stay in their homes
- Providing excellent advice and information through a person centred approach
- Working with partners to improve the hospital discharge process
- Being a great employer, helping our people to feel valued and improve overall wellbeing
- Promoting a culture of respect and understanding how to remove stigma and promote diversity amongst our people and customers.