

Piloting St Mungo's 'Bullying in Hostels' Toolkit

An evaluation of the pilot

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

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Audience: St Mungo's and London Housing Foundation

Purpose: 1) To evaluate the toolkit pilot and present evidence on how effective it is in developing an 'anti-bullying strategy'. 2) To provide practical recommendations for action in St Mungo's based on the findings of the research investigating the implementation of the toolkit.

Main findings:

The work done on evaluating the toolkit reinforces the findings of the earlier studies done by St Mungo's as well as external studies. The same issues are highlighted over and over again and there is clear evidence that St Mungo's is on the right lines with its work in this area. The community-based approach is obviously popular and makes sense to the people involved in the toolkit so far.

The toolkit pilot itself has proved effective in achieving its aims and further work to monitor its effect on client outcomes will take place over the following months.

About bullying in St Mungo's hostels

We found that bullying is an issue in all the hostels where the toolkit was piloted. There are different degrees of seriousness and pockets within hostels where it is more of a problem.

Money related bullying proved to be the most prevalent form of bullying, closely followed by bullying related to drugs and/or alcohol. 90% of interviewees post-toolkit had experienced or witness bullying in their hostel. We gathered data on the effect bullying has on clients and the negative effects on self-esteem, confidence and ability to achieve recovery are evident.

Findings about the bullying toolkit and its effectiveness

- The Bullying Toolkit is highly effective in engaging clients in discussions about bullying and in devising solutions
- The Bullying Toolkit can be used to produce tangible outputs on which to build healthier hostel communities
- Immediately post-toolkit there were already indications of a rise in clients' assessment of how well their project was dealing with bullying.
- The six week post-toolkit review showed that momentum had been retained and significant progress made in achieving the actions set during the toolkit sessions. This again shows that the toolkit is successful in achieving change within hostels.

Evaluating the impact on client outcomes and hostel communities

The process of evaluating the toolkit in terms of client outcomes needs to be done over months and years rather than weeks. Nevertheless, St Mungo's have made efforts to establish ways in which the effects of the bullying toolkit could be measured based on existing data sources and conducting specific interviews.

Recommendations: Staff

- **An additional session be added just for staff in the toolkit**
- **Steps be taken to ensure all staff understand the impact of bullying on clients, that it is not 'just part of hostel life'. They also need to know what can be done about it, how do spot it and understand the importance of their role in tackling it.**
- **Specific training be offered to help staff deal with bullying. For example, adult protection courses, assertiveness as well as 'bullying'**
- **Night times should be looked into. Much bullying goes on at night and night staff are frequently criticised for not reacting appropriately.**

Recommendation – setting the limits of acceptable behaviour:

- Hostels to continue development of a 'rights charter' started with the posters and incorporate it into e.g. keyworking and hostel meeting settings

Recommendations –building healthy communities:

- Working around the 'grassing culture' is a key next step.
- Future work should include attempts to ensure the entire community is involved, not just those who are either more assertive in the first place , or come forward because they have been involved in bullying.

Recommendation - confidentiality:

- Review confidentiality because it is a key element in getting people to report bullying and results show concerning levels of dissatisfaction with current arrangements.

Recommendations – reporting/ seeking help with bullying:

- Clients could be offered training in appropriate skills. Possibly even some kind of peer system set up whereby clients could support each other in tackling bullying.
- Review the current complaints procedure as a vehicle for reporting bullying to staff. Clients need mechanisms that are anonymous, confidential and deliver speedy action (within the practical limitations of a busy hostel environment).

Recommendation – Bullying Helpline:

- Using Outside In to provide a client-focussed Bullying Helpline may be a way forward in addressing the need for appropriate, confidential reporting mechanisms. They would need resources to access appropriate training and formalise contact arrangements.

Recommendation – meaningful activity:

- Reinforce the message that meaningful activity has an impact on many areas of hostel life including less obvious ones such as reducing bullying.