

# Mental Health Crisis Support Evaluation Report – March 2022

## Overview

Brent's Winter Access Fund included funding for Mental Health Crisis Support, providing early interventions for patients at higher risk of experiencing mental health crisis. This included support for existing mental health and learning disability service users, as well as people living with dementia and their carers.

Support was delivered by Ashford Place, whose Advice Workers were able to offer support for patients within the three groups listed above. This included support with accessing services, care from a Senior Healthcare Assistant Nurse as well as information and advice on non-health related issues such as benefits and housing which may have an overall impact on patient wellbeing.

Healthwatch Brent has been asked to evaluate the service to understand patient experience when accessing Mental Health Crisis Support. Our aims are:

- To understand whether the pilot scheme access to essential support has been successful for mental health and learning disability service users
- To understand whether the emergency support for people living with dementia has been successful
- To understand whether patients accessing these services have been able to avoid using A&E in a crisis or being admitted to hospital
- To understand whether there has been an improvement to diagnosis, treatment and after care community support for people living with dementia

In order to gather this feedback, our team visited Ashford Place and met with service users who had made use of the mental health crisis support offer. We interviewed ten service users who had made use of the mental health and learning disability support, and 12 service users who had made use of the support for people living with dementia.

Overall feedback from both groups was extremely positive, with 100% of individuals rating the service as very good or good. Of the 22 people we spoke to, only one had needed to use A&E during the relevant period. Many participants also stated that the access to health checks meant they had not needed to go to their GP.

## Individual service findings

### Services for people living with dementia

We visited the Dementia Café service to ask service users about their experiences. All 12 of the people we spoke to rated the service as good or very good. They shared some examples of the types of support they had received:

- Arranging GP appointments
- Arranging health checks
- Arranging blood tests
- Family members being provided with advice about carers' support services and eligibility within Brent
- Accessing one-to-one advice from staff

The dementia cafes also provided social activities, and participants described how this had helped to reduce loneliness and improve their wellbeing. The sessions were viewed as a safe place to ask questions and get help.

The two case studies below highlight the positive outcomes from the service.

**Case study one:** After hearing about the services, an individual brought her partner to the session; she found that he enjoyed being able to interact with others. The service user had previously been receiving physiotherapy, but his condition improved after he started joining in activities at Ashford Place. As a result, he no longer needed any physiotherapy. The family member who cared for this individual was also able to join in social activities at Ashford Place. As a result, the project has reduced loneliness for both the service user and their carer.

The family member also said she was able to find out about other services she was entitled to across Brent. She said: "I didn't know that such help was available. I have been struggling alone. It is a life saver. My GP told me about this service." The family member stated that she was not getting any support from social services and that she was paying for private treatment for her partner. After coming to Ashford Place, the service user's health condition had shown improvements and he was able to keep active and join in with the sessions.

**Case study two:** An individual learned about the service and started bringing her mother to the sessions. She explained that the service gave: "progressive advice. They give advice on things I haven't thought about. They support mum very well

and I wish it could be more than once a week, because I am so happy to come here.”

This individual told us that her mother didn't need to use A&E because they were able to get help from the project. The staff were praised as an excellent source of support, and the social activities and atmosphere were also rated highly. The family member explained that their mother enjoyed coming to the session and that it was a great opportunity to get advice on many different issues. The project offered support to the relatives as well as the service users. This had decreased their reliance on A&E and GP visits. The daughter stated: “I wish it was twice a week, it is so needed, we need more of this type of service support.”

### **Services for mental health and learning disability service users**

All ten of the service users we spoke to gave positive feedback, and none had needed to access A&E while receiving Mental Health Crisis Support. They found that the activities provided had reduced loneliness and helped to improve social interaction. They had also had the opportunity to share their problems with support workers and peers and receive one-to-one support where required.

Where necessary, service users were also signposted to other services. This included support accessing the diabetes clinic, which prevented participants from needing to visit their GP.

Here are some of the specific comments we heard from service users about their experiences:

- “I have a tremor which makes my handwriting illegible. They help me complete forms and this takes the stress out because I get worried about form filling.”
- “I never used to leave the house, but now there have been changes since using this service. I am more confident and can now go to different places.”
- “If I didn't have this service to come to, I would just stay at home.”
- “If I had a serious crisis, I would feel confident in asking for help from the staff now.”
- “I received one-to-one support with my diabetes, with a health check. So, I didn't need to go to the GP.”
- “It is very hard for me to attend a group. I find it difficult going to new things. It would really hurt me if this service wasn't available.”

- “My habits have changed. Found out I had a kidney condition and staff help me change my lifestyle and drink more water. I drink a bottle a day, which I never use to do.”

## Conclusion

The feedback we received made it clear how valuable patients found the Mental Health Crisis Support offered by Ashford Place. We would consider the service extremely successful both in terms of patient satisfaction, and in terms of reduction of visits to A&E and reduction of pressure on other services. These services provide a more holistic treatment, offering support with a variety of issues that can affect health and wellbeing, including social isolation, physical activity and specialist advice.

We also note that the Mental Health Crisis Support offered as part of this scheme built on existing services already available from Ashford Place. It is vital that Ashford Place and other similar community organisations receive adequate funding to allow them to continue delivering these services to those groups who can most benefit from them, allowing more support to be delivered in the community and relieving the pressure on both primary and secondary care.





Healthwatch Brent

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