



# HAIL

Housing Association for Integrated Living

## COMMENTARY & EVALUATION OF THE REGIONAL VISITING SUPPORT SERVICE

FEBRUARY 2015



Mental Health Recovery is a process by which an individual can live a full and satisfying life. Individual recovery can be promoted when agencies and services adopt a recovery culture. Recovery means moving beyond compliance and getting one's needs met from other sources, professional and personal.

Life occurs out in the community not inside a program, recovery is therefore a return to a web of personal relationships, family, neighbours, this is not a private isolated journey but an embracing of life. As a service we believe that recovery can only take place in a safe and stable tenancy.

A shortage of available and affordable housing with accompanying services prevents individuals with mental ill health from achieving recovery, living full lives and participating in their communities. Without housing as a "Platform for Recovery" individuals move between jail, institutions, shelters and the streets. As a service we have a fundamental role to **Prevent Homelessness and Sustain Tenancies** once housing has been acquired. Hospitalised individuals should not be expected to change their residence or lose their tenancy and should be able to choose their living arrangements from among those living environments available to the general public. Research, experience and the mapping of service inputs and outcomes has demonstrated to us that homeless prevention strategies can be the pivotal catalyst to long term stability for individuals with mental ill health. Furthermore Homeless Prevention goals included in our service such as case management, access to supported employment, referrals to therapeutic services, access to assertive community treatment, debt management, antisocial behaviour contracts and advocacy are critical components within our Homeless Prevention toolkit.

It is imperative that we evaluate both our inputs and outcomes alongside those that refer to our service, work in our service and avail of our service. So how do we measure what matters to all parties? In this booklet, we have asked our clients and colleagues specific questions related to their experience of the service from initial engagement to individual support planning and relations with staff. We have also captured outcomes related to objective quality of life indicators such as housing, friendship, safety, employment, income .....alongside progress towards personal goals. We hope you find both informative and thought provoking.

# INTRODUCTION

# BACKGROUND

As a service one of our key commitments involves assessing and evaluating the experiences of our service users, our referral agents and the colleges and students who work alongside us in providing our student placement programme.

This booklet contains feedback from individuals availing of our service, their comments on impacts upon them arising from their involvement with the HAIL Regional Visiting Support Service. We have also gathered the experiences and feedback from other people who have come into contact with our service such as referral agents, the placement students of Dublin City University (DCU) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and the departmental staff who are overseeing these students. We feel that this wide range of feedback is vital for progressing our service and maximising the positive impact we have on all of the people we work with.

## METHODOLOGY

A survey form was used to gather feedback from our service users and referral agents, Students and staff from DCU and TCD were asked to send in written feedback about their experiences of working with our service.

A total of 40 people provided us with feedback, these were broken down into 19 service users, 3 college staff, 3 placement students and 15 referral agents.



The questionnaire 'How Are We Doing?' was distributed to our service users who were advised that their answers will remain anonymous in the hope that they would feel free to express their opinion.

The following 5 questions were asked:

**1 How satisfied were you with the information you received about the service? (e.g. brochures, leaflets, verbal explanation)**

All respondents reported that they were satisfied with the information received about our service.

Some comments offered by Service Users included that they found the information received "very helpful", "informative" and that they had received "good advice and good support" during the initial period.

One lady informed us that she was given "a very clear and straightforward impression of the service and a sense of hope that I would get supportive encouragement in moving on with my life".

**2 How do you feel about the helpfulness of information given to you - To help prevent relapse? To improve your overall wellness? To help manage your symptoms?**

100% of respondents felt very satisfied with the information given to them for the above issues.

One Respondent reported that the "Help and Information was excellent. I was brought through a very difficult time with great sensitivity and kindness".

Another person described an experience they had and how a HAIL staff member was able to support them to manage it "Yes. It was really great to have someone speak to the Garda and DCC on my behalf. I cannot begin to express how helpful it was to feel someone was there for me and on my side".

Another service user mentioned how "The support really helped me with difficult things in my life and to keep going and not give up".

Finally a correspondent highlighted her experiences of working with her support worker. She stated that "the help I'm getting is a positive balance between professional, focussed advice and general, friendly human care".

SERVICE USER FEEDBACK

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**Do you like the way your support worker talks to you and listens to you?**

100% of respondents indicated that they were happy with the way their HAIL support worker communicates with them.

One individual mentioned that they found their support worker to be “very understanding and helpful. I like your approach”.

Another described how she felt part of the process and that she always felt valued and her thoughts and feelings were listened to and heard. She went on to say that “My support worker treats me as an equal, not a patient. I always feel heard and understood”.

One gentleman was very complimentary about the service he received mentioning that “without my support worker, I would not have been able to get through what was the most difficult time of my life”.

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**Are you happy with your support plan?**

All feedback forms indicated that our service users were happy with their support plans.

One person commented how her support plan “helped me with household things, good suggestions, hygiene, bills, benefits, etc.”. Whilst another summed it up in one word “delighted”.

Another spoke about how their support plan gave them a direction, when they responded to this question they said “Completely. Very good service and advice was exceptional”.

A final commenter said that they “found the support plan helpful in organising their recovery and maintaining their home”.

## 5 Overall how satisfied are you with the HAIL Regional Visiting Support Service?

We were very pleased to discover that all of our service users who responded reported that they were satisfied with the overall service provided by HAIL.

Two individuals spoke about how their HAIL support workers helped them through a particularly difficult time in their lives. One commenting that the service was “very good – helped when things were a mess, helped to undo them and put them right”. Another said that “I don’t know where I would have been without the support I received from HAIL. Thank You”.

Another service user recommended how we could improve part of the work that we do, his suggestion was that “improvement could be made through inspection of premises prior to signing of letting agreement”.

Others commented that they found HAIL to be a “great service” and another offered their gratitude for the help and support they received “Thank you for all of your help. It was greatly appreciated and I feel very lucky to have had your help”.



# MAY 2012 – DECEMBER 2014



# REFERRAL AGENCY FEEDBACK

We distributed a feedback survey form to our referral agents and invited them to provide us with their thoughts on our service. We looked for feedback to see what areas are working well and what areas could be improved. We received some fantastic feedback from a wide range of referrers who use our service across the 4 Dublin regions. The overwhelming message from stakeholders is that the HAIL Regional Support Service is highly valued by them.

**The following 5 questions were asked:**

## **1 Overall, how satisfied were you with our service?**

100% of responders to this question were extremely positive. Our findings showed that our referrers are extremely satisfied with our service.

Referral agents described us as a supportive, approachable, flexible and professional service. One commenter highlighted that HAIL provide an invaluable service to the population that she works with and does so in a comprehensive, effective and quality driven way. The service provided is person-centred, flexible and creative. In her opinion this is essential in providing progressive mental health services.

## **2 Would you recommend our service to colleagues within your sector? Please explain the reasons for your answer.**

When invited to consider whether they would recommend our service to their colleagues - 100% of respondents said that they would recommend the service.

Areas of note that were identified by our referral agents included the specialised mental health skills that our service brings to a case, the more intensive support we can offer, the collaborative nature of our work was mentioned numerous times and the straight forward referral process was also highlighted.



“...THERE SHOULD BE AT LEAST TWO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT WORKERS LIKE THE STAFF IN HAIL ON EVERY SINGLE MENTAL HEALTH TEAM IN THE COUNTRY.”

### 3 What aspect of the service were you most satisfied with?

Again we were delighted to receive an overwhelming positive response in this area.

Respondents spoke about the professionalism, resourcefulness and dedication that they encountered during their dealings with the staff at HAIL.

Others detailed their satisfaction with the communication and collaboration between HAIL staff and mental health services. Our ability to advocate on behalf of our clients, the flexibility of our service i.e. willingness to adopt work practice to a particular service user's needs, the openness of our referral pathway (i.e. no gatekeeping) and the 'thinking outside the box' aspect of our work was also acknowledged.

### 4 What aspect of the service were you most dissatisfied with?

A number of our referral agents commented on the time-limited nature of our work – and that they would like the support to be more long-term. Ideas offered to us included expanding the service to allow further and sustained work.

The resounding feedback, however is that there are not enough HAIL workers. One respondent citing that “there should be at least two mental health support workers like the staff in HAIL on every single mental health team in the country. If we are to meaningfully address the proposals outlined in A Vision for Change in relation to “modern mental health services then we need to invest properly in this. That means having mental health support workers and peer support workers in every single mental health team. Services like HAIL should be seen and treated as a necessity not as a luxury.”

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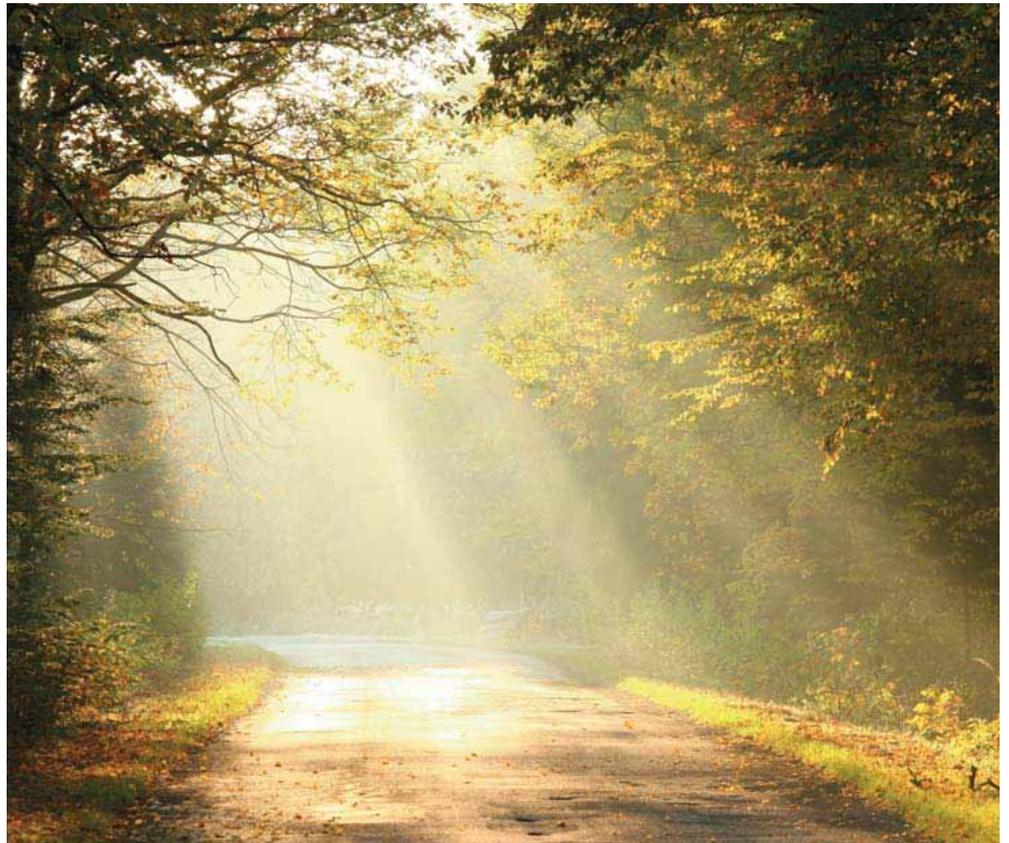
**Have you any other comments/suggestions regarding the provision of our service?**

Suggestions offered to us by our referral agents regarding the provision of our service covered a range of areas.

Some commenters encouraged us to focus more on advertising the service “I’d like to see it better advertised, in particular to service users” and another suggested that “perhaps you could email around services every few months to remind them of your service”.

A number of others commented that our service should not be time-limited and that it would be better if we could “extend our service on for as long as the service user may require it”. Whilst another highlighted the continuing importance of the pre-tenancy work that we have done, mentioning how this “can sometimes make the difference/make it easier for a person to move on”.

A final respondent commented on “an excellent service worthy of significant development”.



As a service we provide work placement opportunities to students who are studying Occupational Therapy at TCD and students of Psychiatric Nursing at DCU. The HAIL Regional Visiting Support Team has developed a close relationship with both of these departments and we are now in our 2nd year of providing placements to their students.

**Marian Mulroe (DCU CNM Nursing Placement Officer)**

Informed us that she had looked through the feedback evaluation forms from her students and she was pleased to inform us that the rating for HAIL placement from the 4 students whom she had placed with us was 'Excellent'.

**Sarah Quinn (Assistant Professor, Discipline of Occupational Therapy, TCD)** provided us with the following feedback:

"HAIL has managed to achieve a service that is both client-centred and yet ordered. This ethos, together with their high expectations of performance and professionalism, have contributed greatly to the development of the required attitudes and behaviours on a personal and professional level in students on this module"

**Dr Siobhan MacCobb (Assistant Professor, Discipline of Occupational Therapy, TCD)** provided us with the following commentary:

"HAIL seems to provide a very effective and person-centred support service for their clients. They do the same for students, with lots of feedback, if and when needed. Yet, there is enough free-rein for the students to 'get on with it' and to learn a lot through experience" she went on to say that "HAIL offers a lot of deep learning opportunities to our students".



# STUDENT FEEDBACK

Finally some of our placement students commented on their experiences whilst undertaking their placement with HAIL. They also elaborated on how this experience has impacted on their own personal and professional development in the field of Mental Health.

One of our long term students said "Volunteering with HAIL has been a fantastic experience for me and has helped me greatly in my Occupational Therapy training. Meeting clients and observing the work which the support workers do is an excellent way of learning".

One of our Psychiatric Nurse students spoke about his learning experiences whilst with HAIL "I found my 8 week placement in HAIL to be a very worthwhile placement that offered a wide variety of learning opportunities. It provided me with the opportunity to visit and assist people with a mental health diagnosis in their home environment, which is a rare experience as a student psychiatric nurse. I was able to increase my knowledge regarding other mental health services through referrals and visits to services like GROW, SHINE, EVE: Thomas Court, Simon Detox Unit and Threshold, as well as local authorities and communities".

Another example of the learning that our students gained from working with us came from one of our 2nd year Psychiatric Nurse placements "I was given every opportunity to develop as a nurse and I have a greater understanding of the issues a person faces in maintaining their tenancy".



We are delighted to conclude that feedback from our service users, referral agents and placement agencies has been consistent, strong and positive. It was evident in the responses that there is a strong demand for the services provided by HAIL.

In a recent meeting we asked ourselves the following questions

1. Are we reducing homelessness?
2. Are we increasing social inclusion?
3. Are we helping people manage/recover in their own community?
4. Are we educating, teaching and shaping our future colleagues?

By reviewing this recent feedback and also reflecting back on the feedback we have from previous years we were able to confidently answer YES to all of the above crucial questions.

This feedback highlights and clearly demonstrates the necessity of the HAIL Regional Visiting Support Service to be extended, funded and part of mainstream services.



# CONCLUSIONS



**HAIL**

Housing Association for Integrated Living

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