



North Staffs Community Chaplaincy

Background

North Staffs Community Chaplaincy (NSCC) provides accommodation and mentoring support to ex-offenders of all faiths and none. This service was established in June 2004 and during December 2007 became the responsibility of the Saltbox as Accountable Body and deliverer of the service.

Service

NSCC has evolved from a mentoring/support service into a unique combination of mentoring, housing and employment support. This has been achieved through developing innovative partnerships that aim to help ex-offenders break their cycle of re-offending and successfully re-settle and integrate back into community life.

Our service recognises the "Golden Hour", the first hour on the day that prisoners are released. This hour is a crucial time for ex-offenders, where maximum support is given to assist each individual to make that sometimes difficult transition. Once released, we seek to help improve the health and well-being of our clients, develop life skills and work in partnership with others to help reduce re-offending. Our houses provide secure accommodation to those who would not normally have access to accommodation due to being identified as clients with high support needs or through possible issues caused with previous housing providers.

Statistics and re-conviction rates

We currently have 26 properties providing 53 bed spaces and support on average 50 clients at any one time. Over the past 3 months, we have received between 6 - 10 referrals each week. Our current waiting list for accommodation/support is 63 people.

Our rate of re-conviction shows that we are still greatly contributing to a reduction in re-offending. For the period March - December 2009, our general re-conviction rate was 7.7% against a predicted rate for the area of 10.26%, showing a reduction of 25%.

Currently 25% of our clients are Priority and Prolific Offender who have a higher probability of re-offending and require additional intense support. When we include our PPO clients into our general statistics this shows an overall reconviction rate of 9% against the reconviction rate of 10.26%, showing an overall reduction of 12%. Of the clients that we work with, over 80% have either addiction and/or mental health issues.

It is recognised that a key element of this success is achieved through partnership working with other agencies and service providers.

Properties

We currently manage 26 properties across North Staffordshire, providing 53 units of accommodation. Our average rate of occupancy is over 90%, and the average length of tenancy for the past 9 months is 208 days. This figure has dropped over the last couple of months as we have successfully resettled some of our long term clients into their own accommodation.

Staff

The service has a team of 5 members of staff, consisting of: Manager (Michelle Cullen); Support Workers (Graham Beech and Nathan Marriott); Maintenance Worker (Chris James) and Administrator (Dave Brewer).

Project management and oversight is provided by the Saltbox management team with ultimate accountability to the Saltbox Trustees.

Partnership Working

Our partnerships throughout the city remain excellent, and include the Police, Probation Service, Prolific Offenders Team, Health, Education, Employment, Community Rehabilitation and others in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Recent Developments

- During 2009, we developed and expanded our staff team which has led to major changes and improvements to the service that we deliver. The new team will all have been in post for 1 year in March.
- We have enhanced and implemented new processes, policies and procedures in line with Supporting People's Quality Assurance Framework which has been an extremely successful process. This will enable us to bid for funding through Supporting People.
- Our new processes, policies and procedures have enabled us to capture and record improvements to the quality of service that we offer.
- The Saltbox, through the NSCC service, has invested a large amount of finance and resource to upgrade and improve the quality of our properties. All properties now reach the required quality standards set for our accommodation.
- Throughout the year, we recognised the need to redistribute the geographical locations of our properties and have therefore sourced an additional 6 properties in different neighbourhoods.
- The service has focussed on improving the health and well-being of our clients, offering health support from within the scheme as well as exploring opportunities to partner with other services such as local nurse practitioner, CPN or similar.
- We continue to develop our 'Lifeskills' and 'Practical Skills' programmes. These programmes include tackling issues of low self esteem/self confidence, health, tenancy management, budgeting skills and how to be a good neighbour. Our practical skills programme will provide training which will support clients to engage in volunteering, training and employment opportunities.
- An investment in additional infrastructure development has been given during 2009 and will continue up to the end of March 2010, supporting the development of the service.

Future Plans

- During 2010, we aim to increase the number of units of accommodation from 26 to 30 by the end of 2010. This will increase the number of clients that we offer support to 63.
- We will develop our service to include accommodate and support for up to 8 females returning to North Staffordshire.
- We aim to develop a mentoring programme which will run alongside the support work that is offered to our clients.
- We will focus on improving communication, monitoring and evaluation through a bi-monthly newsletter, customer focus groups, practitioner groups and customer satisfaction surveys.
- We are exploring engaging with local faith leaders who will offer pastoral and faith support from our offices on a bi monthly basis.
- We will continue to develop our training and development programmes, linking with other partners who can support the delivery of some of the programme modules.