

The Sanctuary: An overnight, every night service for adults in mental health crisis

SELF HELP SERVICES: A USER-LED MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY PROVIDING ACCESS ACROSS THE NORTH WEST

At a glance

- The 'Sanctuary' provides crisis support for people with mental health conditions such as panic attacks, low mood and depression, seven nights a week.
- The service, delivered by the voluntary sector and commissioned by health, bridges a significant gap in primary and secondary care mental health provision and provides a positive alternative to accident and emergency as a place of safety and a route to accessing support.
- User feedback is positive with one fifth of clients reporting they would not have been able to find appropriate support elsewhere had it not been for the Sanctuary and 6.7% indicating they may have self-harmed or attempted suicide had it not been for the service.

- A community services manager was appointed to turn the concept into reality.
- A pilot, funded by both grants and from the charity's own funds, planned initially for a year and subsequently extended for a further six months, was delivered in Manchester. Its success resulted in the initiative receiving funding until April 2016.
- Two further initiatives have since been commissioned, one financed directly by Bolton CCG, and one by Wigan and Leigh CCG via a service level agreement with five Borough Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. To run the service costs approximately £150,000 per year.
- A comprehensive marketing strategy has been deployed at all three sites to encourage service users to access the service.

What was achieved?

The Sanctuary runs throughout the year from 8pm to 6am in three locations (Manchester, Wigan & Leigh and Bolton). Support is provided both in a face to face capacity and via telephone, by paid staff and peer volunteers for up to five clients at any one time.

Established in 1995, 'Self Help Services' is a user-led charity providing primary care mental health services and self-help initiatives. The organisation values the experiences of those who have had a mental health difficulty and empowers them to use expertise by experience to help others similarly affected.

How the improvements were made

- Feedback from service users highlighted the distressing effects and inappropriateness of accident and emergency departments (A&E) for mental health crisis support and subsequent paucity of support, especially for people not triggering the threshold for secondary mental health intervention. To address this perceived gap in provision, a working group including service users, the CCG lead for mental health and representatives from Manchester University, North West Ambulance Services and the Samaritans was convened. Together they developed the concept of the 'Sanctuary'.

www.nhs.uk/sevendays

Ensuring equity in care for all, regardless of the day of the week... every day counts



Clients can self-refer to the service by making a telephone call. Referrals also come from a number of sources such as health, social care, the police, ambulance services, crisis teams, out of hour GPs, Samaritans and mental health liaison services at A & E. Although the Sanctuary does not provide beds, clients can stay as long as they wish between the hours of 8pm and 6am. All clients who access the service leave with a plan in place to address their ongoing support needs.

Future plans for the service include: extending opening hours across the whole day, seven days week. Plans are already in place for the telephone service to be available 24 hours a day from September 2015.

Additional packages of support will be developed to meet identified need. These include; peer support for people who have attempted suicide, emotional resilience programmes and workshops, support for those bereaved by suicide and support for families and carers.

A post-crisis pilot is planned in Salford (funded by Salford CCG's innovation fund) where people presenting at an A & E for assessment and who are referred back to primary care, will be followed up within 24 – 48 hours. Vulnerable adults who frequently attend A & E will also be proactively targeted for support.

What was the impact?

An evaluation of the service delivered in Manchester was undertaken by Manchester University. Between September 2013 and May 2014, 242 people had used the service. In summary they concluded that:

- Providing a service individuals can self-refer to when other services are unavailable has been key to the scheme's success.
- A third of clients said that as an alternative to The Sanctuary they would have resorted to A&E or relied on emergency services.
- Just under a fifth of clients would have been unable to identify support elsewhere, with 6.7% indicating that they may have self-harmed or attempted suicide.
- Overall the distress that clients experienced significantly reduced following contact with the service, true for both support calls and attendance at The Sanctuary.



There's a need for one in every town, that's how I feel... I mean they know what they're doing these guys, they know exactly what they're doing, and it's nice when you're confident because they've got every single angle covered that they should have covered... you can feel vulnerable if it's NHS, because that person doesn't usually, always understand... So... I think it is a truly amazing place and I hope it really catches on and grows...

Service User





...you just get talked to and shoved out the door [at A&E], and hope for the best, type of thing. Whereas there [The Sanctuary], I stayed all night there, I was fortunate to be able to do that, and then there was a follow-up the next day. You don't get anything like that at A&E, they need to get lessons off them [The Sanctuary] how to do it.

Service User



A video providing information about the Sanctuary is available at:
<https://youtu.be/qmtVChnhYZE>

TOP TIPS

- Make sure that relationships with key referral sources are established from the outset to allow confidence and trust to develop in what you are trying to accomplish.
- Ensure that buy-in to proposed alternative pathways is in place prior to launch.
- If providing an alternative to existing services, ensure integration within existing pathways.

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