Enter and View report

Oxford Safe Haven

November 2019

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1 Introduction

1.1 Details of visit

Details of visit:	
Service Address	Oxford Safe Haven, Manzil Resource Centre, Manzil Way, Oxford, OX4 1XE
Service Provider	Mind Oxfordshire on behalf of Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership
Date and Time	Saturday 16th November. 2019
Authorised Representatives	Veronica Barry, Rosalind Pearce
Contact details	01865 520520

1.2 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Oxfordshire would like to thank the service provider, service users, members of staff and volunteers for their contribution to the Enter and View Programme.

1.3 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

2   What is Enter and View?

Part of the Healthwatch Oxfordshire programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Healthwatch Oxfordshire representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation – so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Enter and Views are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies.

2.1   Purpose of Visit

To engage with service users to understand their experience of attending Oxford Safe Haven, including activities and support, as well as to hear about experiences of wider mental health support.

To get a staff and volunteer perspective on working and support at Safe Haven.

To observe how the project operates and provides its services.

2.2   Strategic drivers

During 2019, Healthwatch Oxfordshire looked at people's experiences of mental health services across the county. We heard what is working well as well as where things could be improved. We visited a range of providers and mental health settings provided under Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership (OMHP), including inpatient acute care, community-based care and voluntary sector provision.

2.3   Methodology

This report stems from a visit to Safe Haven in Oxford.

We undertook planning the visit by phone and emails, following initial meeting with Mind's Chief Executive.

We visited Oxford Safe Haven on a Saturday night. We saw the project in action, as well as hearing from individual service users who were happy to speak with us and from staff members.

We collected information by talking with service users and staff by using prompt sheets to act as an aide memoire to promote free-flowing conversation. We heard from **four service users** who were happy to speak with us on an individual basis on the day. We also spoke with **two staff members including the manager**. We left copies of our mental health questionnaire for other service users to fill in in their own time and staff were able to fill in an online questionnaire.

2.4 Background

Oxford Safe Haven was set up by Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership in 2018, and is managed by Mind Oxfordshire with input from Elmore and Oxford Health. Its aim is to meet the identified need for an out-of-hours, non-clinical space offering crisis support, signposting, safety planning and listening support for people in crisis over the weekend. It offers an alternative to using Accident and Emergency, and aims to reduce the burden on this service, whilst providing a more appropriate setting for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

The Oxford Safe Haven is open on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday from 6pm until 10pm. It is open to anyone over 18 years living in Oxfordshire. The referral line is open from 5pm on the day of the service and the last entry is at 9pm. The referrer or service user must call the phoneline first before going to Safe Haven to make sure space is available.

Oxford Safe Haven offers:

- Safe place to be during the crisis.

- Someone to talk to if desired.

- Opportunity to work on safety planning, coping skills, and relaxation techniques.

- Opportunity to use the space to relax, listen to music, use art materials or other distractions - refreshments .

- Staff come from a range of backgrounds and offer person centred support in line with Oxfordshire Mind and Elmore values.

Oxfordshire Mind was established in 1967, as an independent charity to support people living in Oxfordshire (https://www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk). It is part of a network of local Minds, adhering to National Mind's standards. Oxfordshire Mind is part of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, working to outcomes-based commissioning with people falling under Mental Health Clusters 4-17. In addition, it receives funding from a range of other sources including Safe Haven to enable it to provide wider wellbeing support, courses and information services for anyone experiencing mental health issues.

2.5 Summary of findings

2.6 Results of visit

Safe Haven in Oxford, is located off Manzil Way in East Oxford, in Manzil Resource Centre. The centre is shared with Complex Needs Service, offices of which operate during daytime hours in the week. The service was opened in 2018, and as a relatively new and innovative service is still learning lessons from its work, and in continual development as a result.

The building is on one level, with full access, and has offices, large room with comfortable seating and small area to make refreshments, as well as a room for 'quiet space'. The atmosphere of Safe Haven is calm and quiet, lighting is kept low, and conversations quiet, with space given to people who are wanting not to engage or speak. There is calming music, plants, and artwork creating an environment that is a welcoming space in contrast to the busy Cowley Road area outside. The environment is in stark contrast to the Accident and Emergency department.

Whilst the centre is not dedicated use for Safe Haven, staff do their best to ensure that it becomes a less 'official' environment during the night. However, sharing the space does mean that staff have to clear up all equipment at the end of the weekend in preparation its use by Complex Needs service during the week.

The centre is managed by a dedicated, and highly skilled manager, who has a real passion for the work, and for ensuring service users and staff have a safe and supportive environment. As the service is new, staff encouraged to reflect and

learn about what works using this approach, as well as engaging service users as far as possible in helping to develop the service. Efforts are made to support service users to voice comments and suggestions, and a recent review of the service took place leading to an additional night's provision being implemented. There are five staff employed at the centre over the week. Up to 12 service users can access the Safe Haven, on a night, and need to ring in advance to ensure there is capacity.

Available Information

Information was displayed and available to service users, including information about mental health support and services. Opportunity to comment and feedback to the organisation was promoted through use of a comments book, suggestions board, and via evaluation forms. Signposting to Safe Haven is through Adult Mental Health Teams, Accident and Emergency, other agencies or via self-referral.

Service user Feedback

Service users we spoke to were hugely positive about the support offered by the Safe Haven, describing it as 'life saving', and 'life changing'. All commented that Safe Haven was more helpful and appropriate as support in a crisis, compared to Accident and Emergency, and had reduced their use of A&E. Safe Haven was seen as more empowering, enabling people to find support to manage and to be heard. Service users spoke of different and tailored ways of making use of Safe Haven to help manage, and some felt they only needed a limited input and chance to be heard, to make all the difference. Safe Haven had given a choice to people as to where to go in a crisis, and was seen to take pressure off friends and families.

Staff were seen as caring, engaging and inciteful, with strong leadership and commitment. Service users felt safe and a sense of trust when at Safe Haven. Enable

Service users had taken part in giving feedback to the service, via the suggestions board and book, comments forms and at a feedback session. However, there was some uncertainty expressed about what happened to suggestions, and the need for clearer responses.

Suggestions from service users about Safe Haven:

- Comments were made on the lack of confidential space for personal phone calls. Currently service users go outside to make calls - and would welcome some space for private calls.

- Some commented on being uncertain as to where feedback on service went and what happened to suggestions - this could be made clearer.

- Service users all would like to see extended opening days for Safe Haven - 'you can't time a crisis'.

- Service users suggested 'pop up' Safe Havens in other areas for more localised provision beyond Oxford, as people often have to travel some distance often under great stress.

- Space was seen as a limitation in the building that was not designed for use, and some commented that the 'quiet' room was not always quiet, due to being busy.

- Service users valued the support and expertise of staff. However, specific knowledge about certain mental health conditions, such as eating disorder, was seen to be something that could enhance support.

- Comments were made on feeling unsafe and vulnerable coming out of Safe Haven late at night, particularly if walking, or when Cowley Road was busy.

Service user comments about the wider mental health system

- We heard about use of Accident and Emergency for crisis help, which was seen as a difficult place to be if feeling unwell, with long waiting times and lack of privacy.

- Positive comments about courses offered through the Recovery College, using Restore and about use of 111 and call-backs from mental health team.

- Lack of tailored support and long waiting times for Complex Needs.

Activities

Activities based at Safe Haven are focused on providing a safe, contained and calm space, to enable support to service users at a time of crisis. Activities are based around providing distraction in addition to 1:1 support and listening. Service users can make refreshments, and healthy snacks, listen to music, play games, do art work, relaxation, or talk to staff and others. However, they can also just come to 'be' as they are, and also make use of the quiet room.

Staff spoke of wanting to develop and expand activities on offer, for example focusing on healthier eating or food growing, using the garden area, as well as offering relaxation and yoga.

Staff Feedback

Staff we spoke to are passionate about the Safe Haven model, and the concept of providing a space for people in crisis that is human centred and based on empowerment principles. They are proud to be working in an innovative service, which is meeting a real need. Staff are committed to reflection and learning as the service develops.

The staff felt they work well as a team, valuing the range of approaches, backgrounds and perspectives they brought to the work. Debrief sessions and supportive meetups are held nightly at close of service, and at fortnightly team meetings. Clinical supervision and support is also provided monthly by Complex Needs Service and Suicide Prevention group to all staff. Strong management provided within the team was valued. Support was seen as good, and responsive from the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership Board at a strategic and managerial level.

Staff comments on improvements and changes

- Consideration to open Safe Haven seven nights a week, perhaps for shorter hours enabling whole-week cover.
- Ensure that there is dedicated ongoing continuity of funding for the resource. Lack of certainty can impact on service users and staff.
- Access to a kitchen for healthy eating cooking and to a confidential space
- The Safe Haven makes the most of the dual purpose building, however sharing space means that equipment has to be cleared up before the week starts. Ideally, Safe Haven would operate from a dedicated, purposed venue.
- As staff reflect on the model, ongoing thought needs to be placed on ensuring a 'dependency' on the service does not develop. More focus on developing wider community-based support to reduce social isolation and provide a safety net for those feeling unwell needs to be considered. One staff member felt that there was a gap in supporting and signposting those who did not engage with wider services to do so.

Staff comments on the wider mental health system

Links with wider mental health services (statutory and third sector) were seen as positive, partly due to this being a service established at Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership level bringing buy in to a collaborative approach from the start. Relationships are still developing, and the service also has regular links with wider services such as the police and hospitals. Staff from Safe Haven attend Adult Mental Health Team meetings in Oxford to ensure close working, and have 'hand over' calls on a nightly basis to the Night Team to ensure continuity of care.

2.4   Recommendations

For Safe Haven

- To investigate potential for providing confidential space for private calls.

- Ensure service users clearly see the results or response to any feedback given.
- Safety of people feeling vulnerable leaving Safe Haven late at night on foot was raised as a concern and needs to be explored.

Wider observations for the attention of Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership

- Safe Haven is successfully providing an alternative space to A&E services and is much valued by people who use it, however, consideration to opening the service seven days a week could be made.
- Some service users drive long distances to come to Safe Haven. Whilst there is a service opening in Banbury, and much welcomed, more spaces across the county would also be welcomed.
- Some use of Safe Haven may be driven by social isolation and lack of alternative safe, welcoming spaces to go within the community at night time. Social isolation was seen as one driver of mental health crisis.
- Waiting times for Complex Needs Service are long.

2.5   Service provider response

"All good comments. We are constantly working on service development and improvement in response to people's feedback. We now have a board for "You Said, We Did" to make sure service users clearly see the response to their feedback.

"We will make sure to encourage people to chat to staff when in need of a confidential space as this can be arranged. We take safety very seriously and since opening, we have changed the lights at the car park and will explore further ways of making the walk from Safe Haven safer.

"We would encourage service users to talk to staff directly for individual support if needed, as you have observed Oxford Safe Haven staff is very responsive and sensitive to service users' needs".

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