



# Pioneering psychological therapy for rough sleepers and other chronically excluded adults

## St Mungo's LifeWorks Programme

### About LifeWorks

Since January 2008 St Mungo's **LifeWorks** project has provided face-to-face counselling services to chronically excluded adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness at eight different sites across London. St Mungo's LifeWorks project is one of 12 national pilots funded by the Adults facing Chronic Exclusion (ACE) programme.

This pioneering scheme brings talking treatment to rough sleepers and other people usually excluded from psychological therapy services. We are now seeing over 70 people a week for individual psychodynamic psychotherapy, working across the statutory and voluntary sector and directly employ six part-time fully qualified, highly skilled BACP/UKCP-registered psychotherapists, who can work across the range of complex issues clients bring.

The content of the psychotherapy sessions is client-directed; they tend to want to talk about their emotional issues (typically bereavement, relationship breakdown) not 'needs led' issues (typically substance use, non-engagement). There is a 70:30 male to female split among the clients involved, roughly in line with St Mungo's population, but with ethnic minorities slightly over-represented.

- 75% of clients are achieving positive outcomes on the CSIP evidence-based Wellbeing Impact Assessment Measure
- Clients have taken up employment or training, renewed contact with families or children, moved into independent accommodation, taken up drug or alcohol treatment or resisted the impetus to return to substance use
- We have had 263 referrals and have not excluded a single person
- 63% of referrals have taken up therapy with us, and of those who do take it up 76% attend regularly
- Shortlisted for the Andy Ludlow Homelessness Awards 2009.

*“My LifeWorks psychotherapist was fantastic. She helped me figure out my past, what I wanted to do with my future and what was holding me back in the present. If it wasn't for her I would still be in a rut.”*

Shaheen, a LifeWorks client

*Continued overleaf...*



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### What have we learnt?

LifeWorks is confirming our thinking that most of the people we see have suffered chronic histories of trauma and loss and that their so-called 'challenging' or 'chaotic' behaviours are responses to their personal histories, not meaningless acts. Over half (52%) of LifeWorks clients lost a parent in early childhood (half of those in traumatic circumstances such as murder or suicide), and over half were abused as children.

Over 60% of LifeWorks clients use three or more substances, but very few regard this as a problem, for them it's simply a response to their situation. It is currently very hard for people with multiple needs to access statutory psychotherapy services - when they seek medical help, services focus on the substance use. The success of the LifeWorks project has shows psychotherapists **can** successfully work with people with complex needs, something which could be extended beyond the homeless world to other people with complex needs.

St Mungo's adoption of the Recovery Approach is key to the success seen in this programme. This approach focuses on clients' goals and aspirations, rather than their needs. St Mungo's provision of integrated services treating complex, multiple needs is also key to the project's continuing success.



### The way ahead

Providing chronically excluded adults with access to psychotherapy services has proved **a significant success** and we would like the opportunity to continue the LifeWorks programme after the end of the pilot period in September 2010. We are seeking funding to deliver the service on a sustainable basis, and extend the opportunity to a greater numbers of people.



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Charity exempt from registration

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St Mungo's   
Opening doors for London's homeless