

### Spotlight on Mental Health Initiative (Berneslai Homes)

*Berneslai Homes were one of seven organisations to take part in the NFA and PlaceShapers project looking at health creating practices in housing initiatives. Health Creation is a concept developed by the New NHS Alliance: it is 'a route to wellness, which comes about when local people and professionals work together as equal partners and focus on what matters to people and their communities.'*

**Kat Allott-Stevens is Tenants First Service Manager at Berneslai Homes and is responsible for managing the Mental Health Scheme.**



“We started our Mental Health Scheme in September 2016 after noting the significant and increasing number of our tenants who were affected by mental health. I am proud to lead the scheme which offers a flexible, supportive and responsive service. So far we’ve made over 220 referrals and delivered over 2,400 interventions, helping people with issues such as depression, domestic abuse, undiagnosed learning disabilities, hoarding and alcohol abuse.

*“I was suffering from post traumatic stress disorder and didn’t have anything, was homeless, unable to see my daughter and was ready for giving up. The support worker was so helpful and calming and always on the other end of the phone whenever I needed help. I am now able to move forward because of them and want to say thank you” – customer quote*

Many of our customers accessing the service have a level of need which falls below the threshold for help and support from statutory agencies and the third sector. This has an impact on their ability to successfully sustain their tenancy, the wider community and the workload of staff that don’t necessarily have the skills and experience to provide appropriate support. With increasing budgetary pressures and reducing support available for people who are affected by mental health, we developed the scheme, initially started as a pilot with mental health support provider Community Links, to deliver support to our customers. This service is now delivered in-house.

*“I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and OCD and was struggling to manage this along with tenancy issues. With the support from the service I gained pathways in to the right services and now have regular meetings. I am now taking the correct medication which makes the stresses of my mental health more manageable and stable” – customer quote*

I’m pleased to say that over the last two years we’ve really developed our mental health support service. We use a holistic approach which addresses the current and future needs of the individual and their family and not just the symptoms. We work to empower them to gain the 3C’s: **Control** over the circumstances of their lives, meaningful **contact** with others and **confidence** to live the life they want. Our scheme has really helped turn the lives around of our vulnerable customers helping them sustain their tenancies and positively contribute to their local communities.”

*“I was facing eviction from my property due to debt and financial difficulties and also suffered from anxiety and depression. I buried my head in the sand rather than dealing with my issues. After getting support from my Mental Health Support Worker I managed to obtain correct benefits, have plans in place to pay off debt and am now maintaining my tenancy and my future looks a lot brighter and I have a more positive outlook and can cope with the stresses life throws at me” – customer quote*



- 
- Berneslai Homes’ Mental Health Scheme features in the new report, **Health Creating Practices**, published by the NFA in partnership with PlaceShapers. A copy of the report can be found [here](#).
  - For more information about the New NHS Alliance and Health Creation, please see: <https://www.nhsalliance.org/>