

August
2020

A Slice of PIE

PIE is all about relationships....A Psychologically Informed Environment is a place or service that has been purposefully designed to support the mental, emotional, relational, learning and social needs of both service users and staff.



COVID 19 and working during lockdown



Coronavirus struck in the UK with force in March 2020. Within 3 weeks, society was shutting down, people were required to self-isolate and to practice social distancing.

The following case studies from our schemes illustrates that amid the cacophony of information, hostel and supported accommodation staff have risen to the challenge and have come up with practical ways to ensure service users and colleagues can socially distance and self isolate and still meet the needs of service users.

More case studies will feature in the next PIE bulletin.

TOWER HAMLETS NORTH (THN)

At THN, we realised the more the news became clearer, that the risk to our staff and residents were rising dramatically. We had staff who had health issues that made them high risk and residents who were very

much worried about their health but mostly the health of their families.

When the lockdown was announced, we could no longer make physical contact with others. This also raised questions as to whether essential services were allowed to gain access to people's homes such as care and support workers.

PRHA had to act fast to risk assess the pandemic and send instructions to all schemes as to how we would work around this widespread virus that was taking lives.

Our residents have been resilient and those who had symptoms that were COVID-19 related were independent enough to seek medical advice and keep staff informed.

Challenges:

The most missed and painful change was the immediate stop to residents gaining access to staff physically. Due to infection risks, staff were no longer on site but would let residents know when they were in the vicinity doing health & safety checks.

3 residents had lost their loved ones and although their deaths were not COVID-19 related, it has been challenging to try and comfort them due to the



COVID-19 and working during lockdown

restrictions. A hug goes a long way!

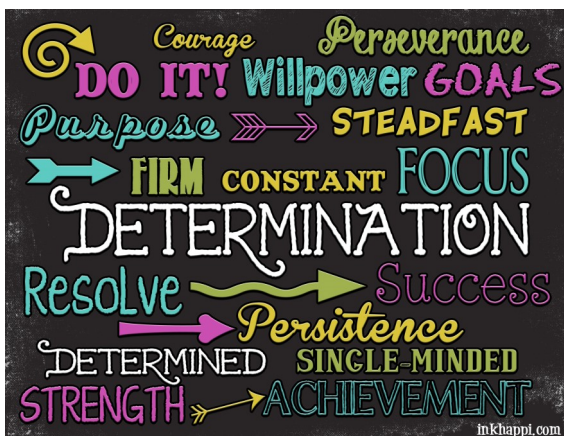
Support offered

COVID-19 has revealed that there are new ways of working which we have adopted during lockdown and still continuing:

- Keywork sessions over the phone.
- Technology contacts, zoom calls, WhatsApp, facetime.
- Reflective practice conducted around staff and supporting them during the pandemic.
- Continued floating support door to door.

Gabriel Obagbemiro

Senior Support Worker, Tower Hamlets North



DELLOW CENTRE

The Dellow centre

is a complex hostel

with a number of different agencies based within the building as well as 40 shared rooms.



At the beginning of lockdown it became evident that we needed to create units where residents with symptoms can isolate in. Different options were considered and we decided to create a list of clients that would be high risk of complications if they contracted the virus.

We then took action to support those individuals to be housed in self-contained units. Within a 2 week period we managed to move 7 clients on from the building into independent properties and also turn voids around to get them ready for re-let.

We then moved high risk clients into self-contained units where possible as well as creating a cluster of voids where residents could isolate. All this was done with a team of 3 permanent day staff compared to a usual team of around 13.

Mohammed Rashad

Contract Manager, Dellow Centre

COVID-19 and working during lockdown

CRIMSCOTT STREET

ML is a 39 year old man from the Czech Republic. He was referred to Crimscott St by PRHA Winter Assessment Service (WAS). ML had substance misuse issues. There had been concerns with ML's mental health (PTSD) and he had been linked in with Health E1. Staff had also supported him to register with the local GP.

ML is following and respecting the preventative measures put in place to support himself and others against COVID-19. ML decided to slow down his drinking without any external support. He continues

to engage with his support worker at the Dellow Charity on a weekly basis and completes all tasks assigned to him. This has provided structure and focus for ML.

ML is a very good example of how during a very difficult and challenging time, a positive outcome can be achieved through determination and drive.

Joseline Barahinduka

Senior Support Worker, Crimscott St

A conversation with Fiona Humphrey, PRHA Chief Executive

To say that COVID-19 has turned this year upside down would be an understatement. Fiona Humphrey has worked in the homelessness sector for over 40 years. Starting with PRHA as Director of Operations, within 6 months, in 2003, Fiona became the Chief Executive. Ché took the opportunity to speak to Fiona about what she has been thinking and feeling during the pandemic.



How did you feel when it started to become clear that COVID-19 would have such an impact?

The pandemic has been unprecedented in my working life. The level of threat, challenge and disruption reminded me of my Father's generation fighting the war. We have always had a plan for a pandemic but the closest we came to using it was when there was a global threat of Bird flu in 2005.

At PRHA we started to prepare weeks before the lockdown. I asked colleagues not to go to big meetings and to limit travel. I was made to feel silly as if I were being extreme by outside agencies. We had to start planning for worst case scenarios, what if many people died? What if staff couldn't come to work? ***Never before had my objective been to get everyone out of this alive.***

I was concerned that the pandemic would be a threat to the hope and resilience of us all. When lockdown started I had to ask how do we carry on doing even the most basic of things in different ways. ***It seemed like I was asking the impossible. Staff have been amazing— coming into work despite the risks; I have felt so proud.***

The strength of the frontline teams has been their commitment, cohesion, organisation and support of one another. They have never stopped working with our service users.

Always asking— **Have you got what you need?**
How will the lockdown affect you?

What did you notice was going well?

One of the advantages of PRHA is that we are a relatively small organisation, this means we are agile. We also plan ahead. We had expected disruptions to our goods supply due to Brexit so already had essentials like 3 month's supply of toilet loo rolls and blue gloves.

I was so inspired by the staff who quickly became innovative and creative in finding ways to continue to be person centred and offer personalised care.

When I visit teams they say that working less formally has increased the access some of our service users have had with some of the people working with them. There's been more external staff attendance at case conferences.

The East London Mosque have been incredibly supportive of us. They have publicised our fundraising campaign.

We have even taken on a brand new service—The City Assessment Service which recently featured in a BBC Radio programme 'The Patch':

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000ldd4>

How are you supported?

I belong to networks at an organisational level, I talk with other Chief Executives of Housing Associations and we share experiences and resources. The PRHA Management Board have been really supportive, we're meeting more regularly and they are also concerned about staff.

I have revisited the five ways to wellbeing and try to take a walk everyday however busy I may be.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>



Anything else you would like to share?

Discussions I have at the moment are about how staff, residents, service users and volunteers can continue to get through when we don't have normal activities.

I think about people who live on their own, I wonder what damage the pandemic has done to people's mental health. We know that COVID-19 is affecting people differently. We want to be responsive to this and other important issues such as **Black Lives Matter**.

It's important to know that our family and friends are ok. That we can meet socially even if physically distanced, that we can take leave or go on holiday.

Without hope all fail. I try to give realistic messages and balance getting people back together safely. It's important that we feel and work as one organisation. This is a marathon not a sprint.



Useful Links



Pielink is a practice exchange network for homelessness/ resettlement and others wishing to develop Psychologically Informed Environments –PIEs.

PieLink aims to develop a community of knowledge and a community or practice; to provide information, inspiration, and a forum for discussion and exchange.

Search:
<http://pielink.net/>

More information can also be found on the G Drive under PRHA Referencing Folder:
G:\PRHA Reference.

The PIE strategy team can also be contacted for more information and advice:

crosebert@prha.net
sMcPhillips@prha.net
janciro@prha.net
cthomas@prha.net
cMpofu@prha.net
ahouse@prha.net



We are always looking for feedback, comments, suggestions, articles and photos for the Bulletin.

**Please email Jaydee Anciro,
Specialist Services Team Manager with your
contributions at: janciro@prha.net**