



Independent Lifestyles

Service User Engagement Strategy

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What we do



Ashford place is a local homeless charity and community centre based in Cricklewood, we provide a range of services including:

A night centre for the homeless

Older peoples services including a community café, one to one support for the most vulnerable and a dementia support group

In-house GP, mental health and substance abuse services

Community café

One-to-one casework to help vulnerable people move into secure accommodation and employment

An IT suite and training to help vulnerable people access services





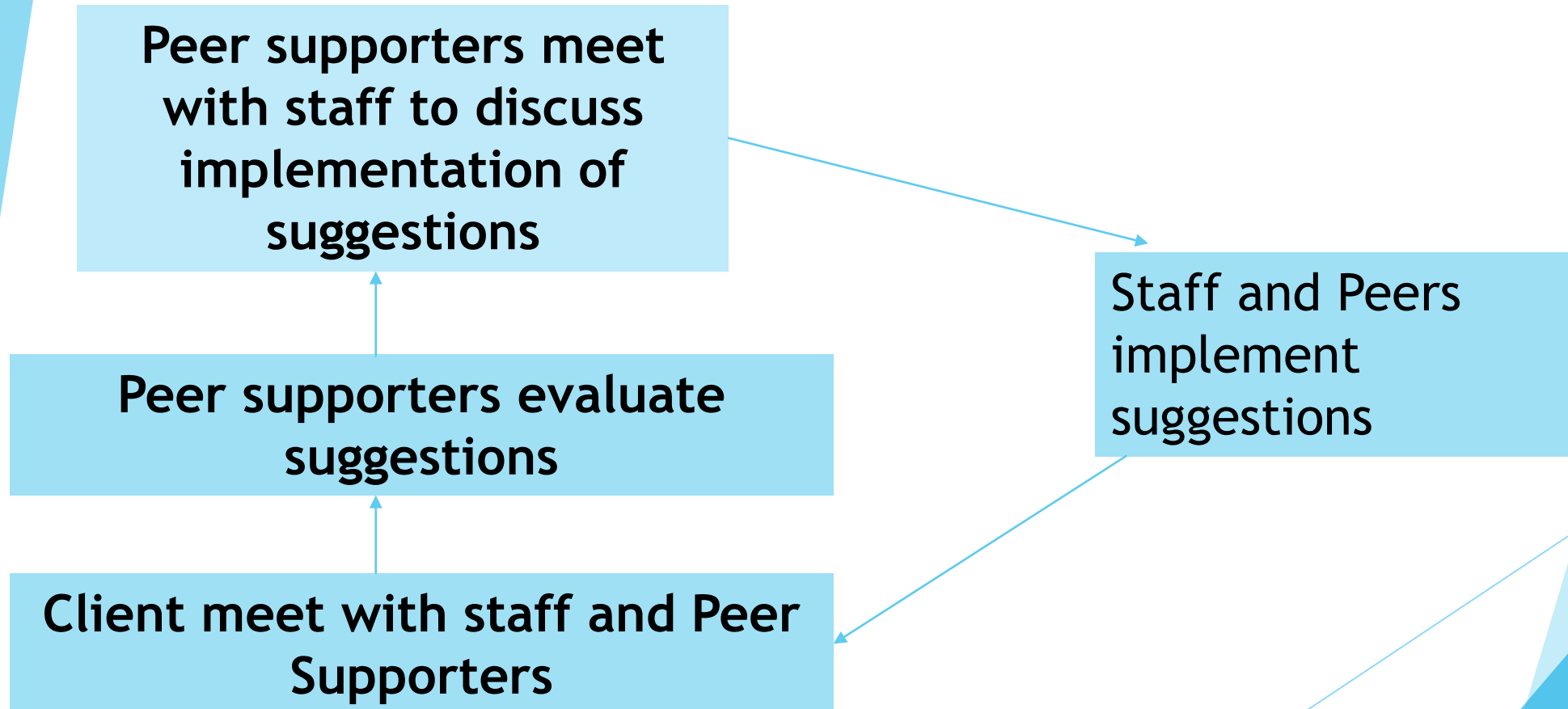
Our approach at Ashford Place

- Since 2014 we have been using a Peer based delivery model to design and deliver our services. Peers run our night centre and many of the other services we provide. Since then we have helped over 240 people into secure long term accommodation

- Capture peoples skills, passions and talent
- Embedded into our organisation
- Treated as equals
- Put service users at the heart of everything we do

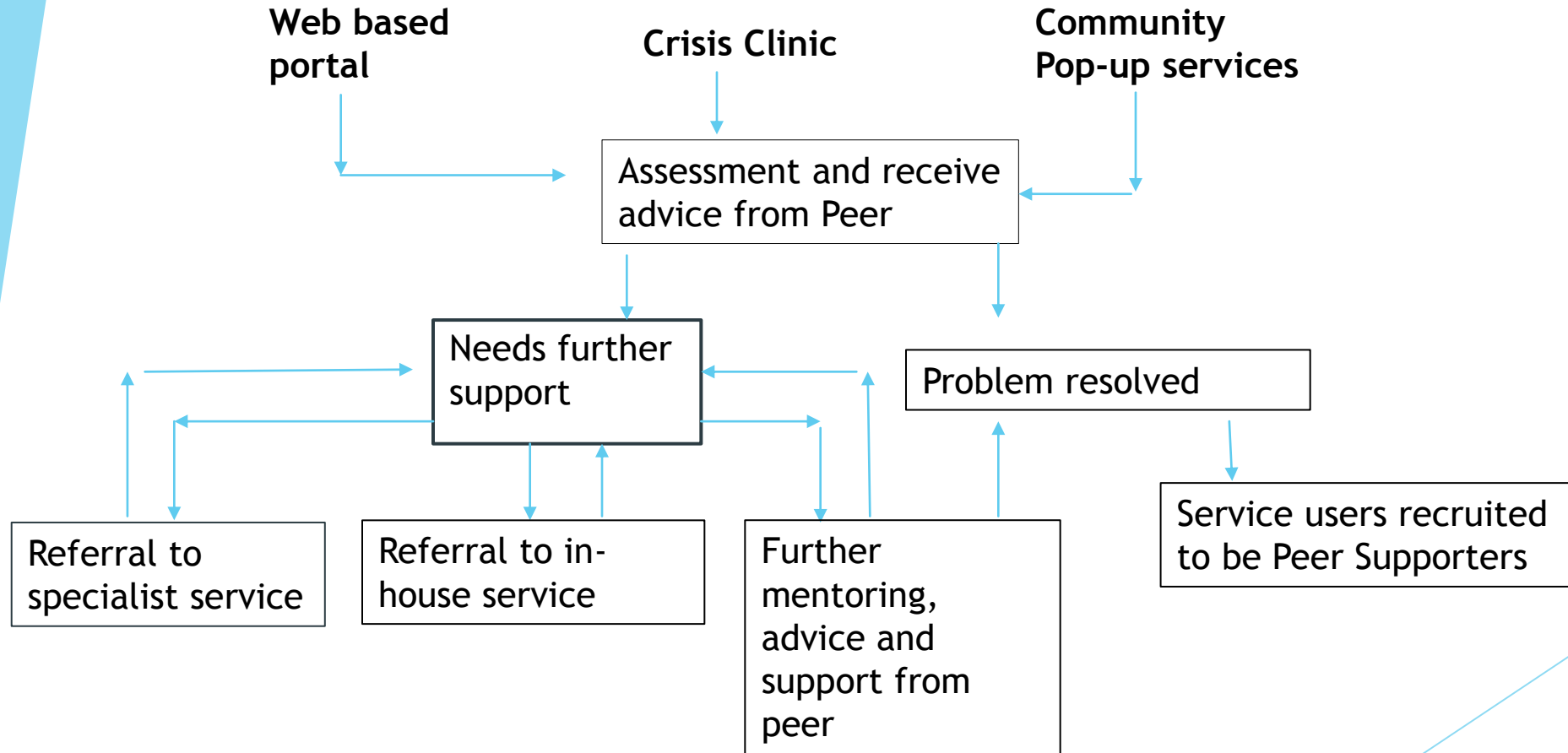
Our approach at Ashford Place

Decision Making



- Addresses the high level of homelessness and crisis in Brent by using the 'lived experience' and skills of our Peer Support Network.
- Peers currently run our night shelter and many of our other services.
- A 'Crisis Clinic' staffed by Peers
- Creating Pop-up services

Client pathways



- Recruited 15 Peer support advisers to advise, mentor and escort clients to meetings and appointments
- Running a regular crisis clinic and Universal Jobmatch workshop at our centre
- Running several pop-up clinics
- Online portal is in development and plans to launch shortly
- Establishing a service user advisory group to commission services
- Outreach into schools and hard to reach communities

Those who've used a service know how to shape it

- In partnership with Southampton University
- Involve service users from the beginning
- Use 'lived experience'
- Responsibility
- Formal accredited training
- Support finding work



Evaluation in Partnership with the University of Southampton

How do we know it works?

- Adapted database measures quantitative measures such as ‘benefit problem resolved’
- Qualitative measures such as ‘attitude’ and ‘ability to plan’ measured by homelessness star
- Model of social and economic impact linked to database
- Project will be continually evaluated by Peer researchers trained and overseen by Southampton University



Secrets of successful service user involvement:

Our Peers and service users are our greatest asset

- Allow service users the trust, scope and input to design and deliver services.
- Involve service users from the very beginning
- Place them on an equal footing
- Reward, train and support those who want to be involved
- Accredited training
- Pathways into paid employment
- Be flexible and look for different ways for service users to be involved.



Further Reading

- ‘The Four Principles of Involvement’ (2013) by The Network for Mental Health
- ‘Nothing about us without us: Seven Principles of Leadership and Inclusion of People with Lived Experience of Homelessness ’ (2016) by The Canadian Lived Experience Advisory Council
- ‘Saving lives Saving Money’ How Homeless Health Peer Advocacy Reduces Health Inequalities, (2015) by The Young Foundation