

THE ROLE OF HOUSING AND SUPPORT IN FOSTERING CARE-FULL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE COMMUNITY FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES

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BACKGROUND

People Experiencing Mental Health Difficulties (PEMHD) face significant challenges in securing stable housing and are disproportionately represented among the homeless population and in institutional settings in Ireland. Stable housing and support models have emerged as key approaches to addressing the housing and support needs of PEMHD. Supported housing models have been shown to help PEMHD reconnect with family, friends, and their wider community.

This study explores the lived experiences of PEMHD supported through the START (Support for Tenancy and Recovery Targets) programme, a housing and support model in the South East of Ireland. It examines participants' experiences of creating and sustaining a home, as well as their inclusion and participation in the community, in order to identify whether PEMHD experience relations of care-fulness or care-lessness.

METHODS

Longitudinal Case Study Design

- **Visual Voices:** photography and personal reflections were used as a community needs assessment tool with START Participants
- **In-depth Interviews:** Repeat interviews with START Participants.
- **In-depth Interviews:** Conducted with Community-Based Service Providers

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Findings from this study suggest that stable housing and supportive caring relations, provide a foundation for building and sustaining meaningful relationships in the community.

- **Stable housing provided a foundation for reconnecting with family.**
 - See living room photo
- **Housing created space for companionship and care.**
 - See pet photo.

• Neighbours and reciprocal support fostered trust and belonging.

- 'When she moved, I helped her out... when I moved here, she said no problem bringing me shopping. We help each other out.' (Anon 2).
- 'There's not one bad neighbour on this estate — they'd all bend over backwards to help.' (Annie)

• Trusting relationships with community based workers were central to recovery.

- 'She's the best. Couldn't wish for no one nicer... she's got more of an understanding and compassion than a lot of people. I can tell her anything... she hasn't changed.' (Annie)



She keeps me company and gives me a reason to get up.

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My father gave me this picture... It is important because my father gave it to me, and he showed me how to hang the picture. My father is a big help, and my mother is a big help. She helps me clean the house.

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This is my front door that I silently struggle to open sometimes depending on how I feel or what's going on in my head and life. When I first moved in, I didn't go out for a long time... I want people to visit but not the wrong crowd.

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The bench outside and the chairs inside of the activity centre. The staff are very nice, and the people who attend—it's been a big part of my recovery... I like to get out and meet other people to have the chats. It's nice to see everyone; this is the only place to see everyone... You can relax or let off steam. Staff are nice and understanding. The staff can pick up on things. I feel safe and supported there.

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