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Public Health Intervention Responsive Studies Team (PHIRST)

The Lincoln, Loughborough, Nottingham (LIGHT)

Evaluating Housing and Wellbeing Co-ordinators in housing teams. The East Sussex Wellbeing and Employment Service Evaluation (ESWE)

Hayden Bird, Lincoln Institute for Rural and Coastal Health

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Why East Sussex Wellbeing and Employment service matters in an RSN context?

- Hidden homelessness
- Fragmented support
- Access to accommodation/support services in rural communities
- The need for one adaptable service model across contexts

"Hastings and Eastbourne are always gonna have the highest cases, but I do know obviously that the rural areas are difficult for people to engage with services. So, I think for those people … that can't or aren't able to get online or kind of have phone calls I think that face to face support is really important"
(Stakeholder)

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Public **H**ealth **I**nterventions **R**esponsive **S**tudies **T**eams

- Responsive evaluations of Local Authorities public health interventions.
- Public and Patient Involvement.
- Mixed-methods evaluation of East Sussex Wellbeing and Employment Service.

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What is East Sussex Wellbeing and Employment Service?

- **Funded by** East Sussex County Council and Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Councils since June 2021.
- **Co-location** of six Wellbeing Coordinators (WBCs) with Local Authority Housing Officers.
- **Personalised 'holistic' coaching** of people facing homelessness.
- **Person-centred** and behaviour change techniques.

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Who is the service trying to reach/support?

- Adults (18+) at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- People with complex health, wellbeing, and housing needs.
- Those transitioning to independent living or socially isolated.
- Works preventatively to build stability and reduce system strain.

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Who is the service trying to reach/support?

- Mixed-methods pragmatic evaluation
- Learning and Development Working Group (LDWG) – rapid learning circle
- East Sussex Public Advisory Group (ESPAG)

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Key Findings:

Mental and Physical Health

I'm more proactive… I am not working but I do need to fill my days with good things and I'm more likely to do that because I've got somebody (WBC) who understands the housing situation, who's positive" (Customer)

Employability and Upskilling

someone may not be in a position to focus on gaining the skills or entering the employment market without their wellbeing been supported.. that two-pronged approach in and around the area of homelessness is really useful" (Stakeholder)

Social Isolation

"It's embarrassing… I can't feed my 2 year-old... some of us go through struggles in life. Like it's what (WBCs) are here for... So they kind of normalised it." (Customer)

Lifestyle Behaviours

"I've basically gone from controlling relationship to controlling relationship, so I never paid bills or anything like that… never lived on my own either. I literally had to learn everything, so when they transferred me to emergency accommodation… they put me in contact with my (WBC)" (Customer)

*WBC – Wellbeing Coordinator

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What Makes ESWE Work (Implementation & Fidelity)

- **Builds relationships** through emotional and practical support.
- **Flexible, agile, non-judgemental and person-centred**
- Covers a wide range of **health, housing, wellbeing issues.**
- **Co-location** between Wellbeing Coordinators (WBC) and Housing Officers

"[WBC and customer] make a decision on the priority of the issues they want to deal with when they want to deal with them... We can break it down and be like, OK, well, what's the most highest priority to you at the moment." (WBC).

"Co-location within the local authorities has been key to strengthening referral pathways. The project will also work as part of the multi-agency homelessness hub which Eastbourne Council are developing." (Stakeholder, survey respondent)

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Economic Findings:

Project spends	Amounts		Cost calculations	Amounts
Set-up and licence	£21,120.00		Cost per client	£550.40
Management	£63,555.67		Average cost per day	£7.24
Coordinators	£212,538.30		Cost per wellbeing unit	£68.12
			Cost per star change	£36.45
Total	**£297,213.97**		**(Total cost) – (housing cost avoided)**	**-£162,786.03***

*A Feb 2023 local report estimated the annual cost avoidance of a client being prevented from needing to go into temporary accommodation is in the region of £20,000 per household. **It was estimated that East Sussex Wellbeing and Employment joint working contributed to the housing cost avoided of £460,000.**

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What can we learn from East Sussex Wellbeing and Employment project for rural and coastal communities:

- **Person-centred flexibility**
- **Evidence-informed, not KPI-driven** models enable sustained change.
- **The colocation of Wellbeing Coordinators and collaboration** with housing officers build trust and early engagement.

"Due to the service provided by the homelessness team being governed by legislation, often key information about why a person is in their current situation is missed ...However, the Wellbeing team are able to recognise why a person is in their current situation...The Wellbeing Coordinators are extremely compassionate and adapt accordingly with a customer's ever-changing needs." (Stakeholder).

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And finally…

Eastbourne Borough Council honoured in national homelessness excellence awards

Eastbourne Borough Council has won one of five coveted awards at Homeless Link's national Excellence Awards 2025.

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness organisations and its annual awards recognise the innovative and impactful work happening across the sector to support people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping in England.

The Housing Options & Wellbeing Team, which works to offer, long-term solutions for individual's housing and wellbeing needs, and to prevent homelessness wherever possible won the award for Excellent Support, for its East Sussex Wellbeing and Employment project (ESWE).

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Links

Full evaluation report https://phirst.nihr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/ESWE-report-September-2024-Final.pdf

Information about PHIRST Light and other evaluations https://phirst.nihr.ac.uk/about-phirst/phirst-light/

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