

Introducing a Palliative Homeless Support Service to Birmingham

Background

There is a well-established link between homelessness, physical and mental ill health and premature death.

In 2017, the CQC in collaboration with the Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health, published their report A Second Class Ending, which identified huge variations in the quality of care that people receive at the end of their life with specific reference to people experiencing homelessness. The report highlights the role of Hospices in championing equality and their role in engaging minority and excluded communities to deliver equitable end of life care and in supporting others to do this.

In 2018 Birmingham St Mary's Hospice completed a scoping exercise of existing services to identify the needs in Birmingham for an end of life service to support our homeless population.

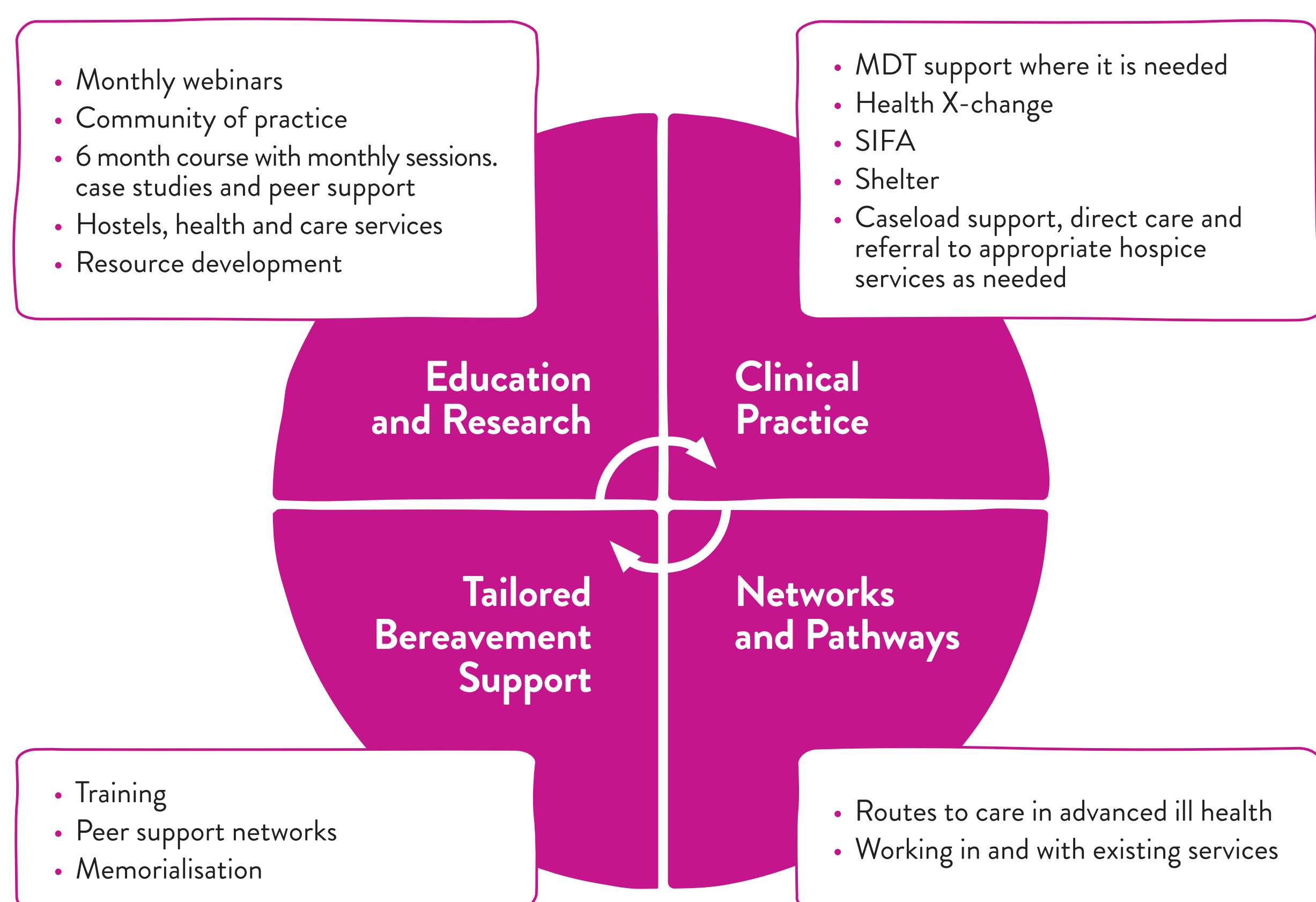
Key observations

- A person experiencing homelessness is most likely to present with an established disease than attend screening, or at the prevention stage of a disease.
- There remains a misconception about Hospice care and who may benefit from them.
- There was no current specific Palliative Homelessness Support Service in Birmingham, although such a service is operating in London and other Cities.

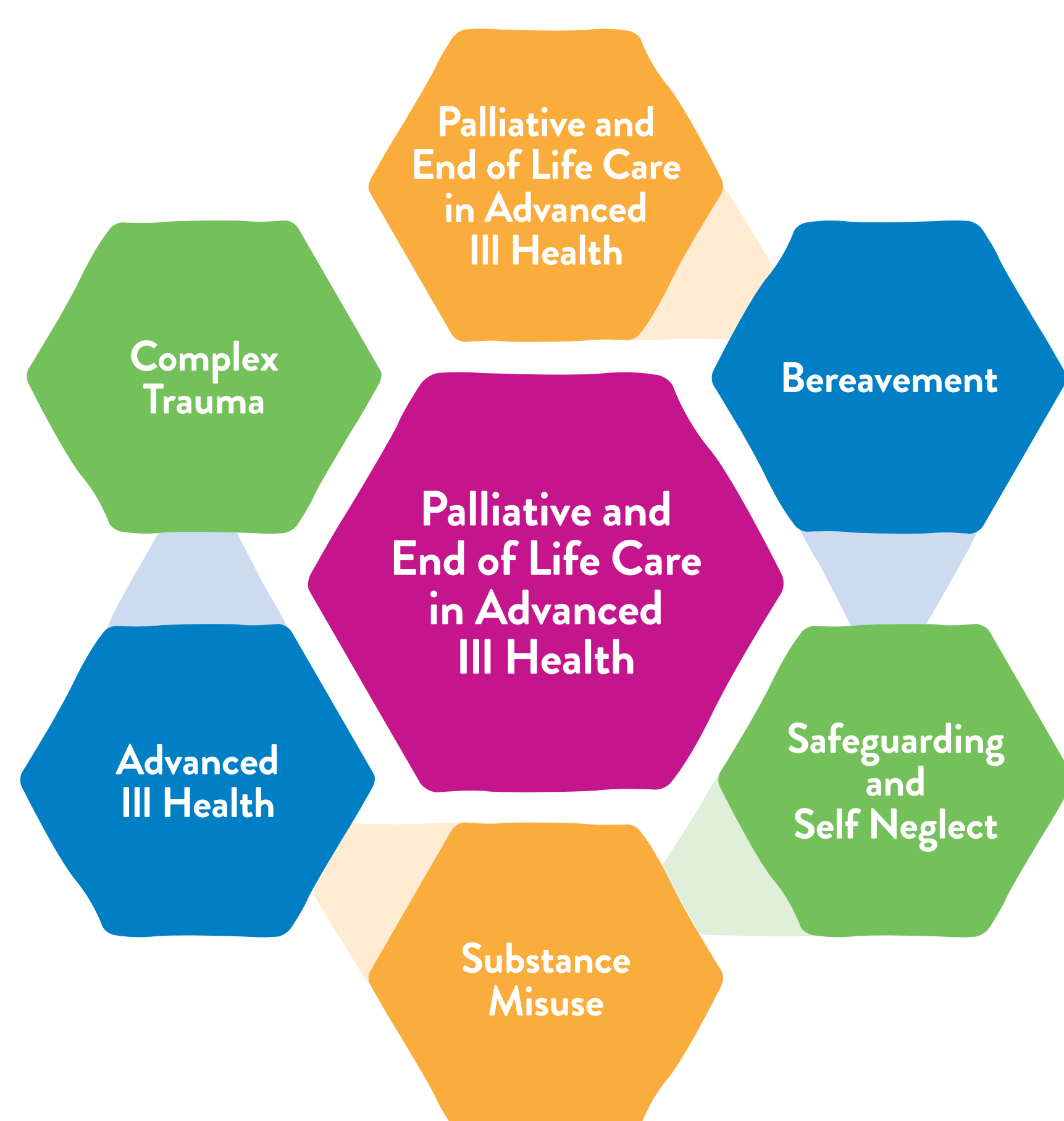
Package of support

In September 2020, we proudly launched a two year pilot project offering a Palliative Homeless Support Outreach Service across Birmingham into and in partnership with existing services.

Service overview



Training programme



Looking ahead

By introducing this new service and driving an increase in access to our end of life care services, rolling out a tailored education programme and bereavement support service we aim to;

- improve the physical and emotional support available to people experiencing homelessness and vulnerably housed individuals and reduce inequalities
- lead to a better experience of dying and to reduce the long term effects of bereavement and loss
- affect change in the third sector and homeless community's understanding and experience of hospice care
- give support to those facing difficulty finding suitable housing with advanced ill-health
- forge relationships with local service providers, agencies and organisations to work in partnership together
- work collaboratively to improve outcomes, reduce inappropriate hospital admissions and acute presentation of advanced illnesses
- explore Advance Care Planning to empower individuals and increase choice
- streamline the route out of homelessness and get the right support for those who are homeless with palliative needs
- ensure those with no recourse to public funds have equal access to palliative care
- ensure any rough sleepers who are identified in the city with advanced ill health are discussed in a MDT setting and considered for Hospice referral
- provide tailored bereavement support for the homeless population.

We will be reviewing and adapting the needs of the Service within the changing landscape in view of the current Pandemic and hope to build a clear evidence of our impact.

Authors

Ellie Winters, Palliative Care Homelessness Link Nurse
Hannah Warwick, Homelessness Palliative Care Social Worker