

Sutton Mental Health Foundation

Background to the Sutton Crisis Café service



Sutton Crisis Café offers out-of-hours support to people in mental health crisis as an alternative to attending A&E. It has two main aims; to benefit people experiencing a mild to moderate mental health crisis by providing a safe, non-clinical supportive environment for them to use, and to reduce demands upon hospital emergency departments and other mental health and emergency services by providing a safe alternative to those services.

Sutton was one of the few areas locally without any alternative crisis provision to A&E, although it has been something local people have been working towards for some time. Through consultation and co-production we developed our crisis café model across all sectors, from people who use mental health services locally to carers, clinicians and commissioners.

Service Model:

The key objectives of the service are to:

- Provide a non-stigmatising, calm and safe environment
- Provide support to help people resolve their crisis
- Provide practical and emotional support to enable the person to better self- manage their distress, aid their recovery, and reduce dependency
- Ensure that support staff, peer supporters and volunteers are trained, supported and professional in their approach
- Operate as an alternative to Emergency Departments and other emergency services for people experiencing a mental health crisis that does not require medical intervention
- Link with wider services to ensure a joined-up partnership approach to the development of local services

The service provides immediate, focused and time-limited emotional and practical support to people experiencing a mental health crisis that does not require clinical input. It works with people experiencing a range of different distress, including psychosis. The support consists of:

- identifying coping strategies and improving wellbeing
- information and signposting
- conversations, group conversations and activities
- limited follow-up

Sutton Crisis Café is not a day centre or drop-in by another name. We support people through their crisis, and to enable them to develop the resilience, coping strategies and access to networks such that they minimise the need for frequent use of crisis services. We are

expected to have robust policies and operational procedures in place to ensure effective crisis prevention planning is in place.

If people use the service frequently we will work with secondary care teams and other partners to engage their active assistance to work with people to maintain their wellbeing with robust crisis prevention planning.

The service is open in the evenings, Monday-Sunday, every day of the year from 6.30 pm to 11pm, last admission 10.30pm.

Our model is a partnership approach between voluntary and statutory sector professionals and trained Intentional Peer Support workers and volunteers. The needs and views of visitors to our service is at the heart of all that we do.

Who we work with:

- Adult (18 years +) residents of Sutton or those presenting in crisis to Sutton emergency services
- People who perceive themselves in mental health crisis, or at risk of moving into mental health crisis and who are in need of help outside normal working hours (Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00 pm and Weekends).

Non-Sutton residents: it is expected that non-Sutton residents who are users of local emergency services will also present and should be accepted by the service. In these cases it is particularly important that the provider links the person with appropriate services in their home area.

We are unable to work with:

- Adults with dementia.
- Children or adolescents
- People exhibiting violent or aggressive behaviour
- Active suicidal ideation and who may need admitting to hospital
- Those requiring assessment under s136 of the Mental Health Act
- Those who need to be detained under the Mental Health Act
- Those with primary presentation with drug and alcohol problems

All visitors to the service will have an assessment to understand their needs and how best to support their needs. If the above cohort of users are deemed to be supported by the Crisis Café service safely, this will happen. Sign posting and other provider referral may be more relevant for specialist support in some cases. This excludes children or adolescents.

For example: Some users who are intoxicated or with drug withdrawal maybe suitable for this service and some users maybe temporarily unsuitable if they are intoxicated. Users with a substance misuse who don't present as intoxicated may benefit from the service.

Ways of working:

We are a non-clinical, short term service. We do not offer counselling or therapy, or long term support. What we do offer is a safe space and a listening ear, and the opportunity to speak openly and be heard without judgement.

The café offers individual and group support, peer support and mindful activities. Those attending the café should feel heard, understood and listened to and have trust in those they have spoken with.

People have the opportunity to receive support from staff members on a 1:1 basis in a private room where personal information can be shared and discussed without being overheard by others. They also have the opportunity to share the company of others in larger groups where they can talk or undertake quiet activities, such as board games.

The service provides informal peer support and buddying so those attending the café can benefit from other people's knowledge and understanding of the emotional and practical challenges faced by people experiencing mental ill health.

We work with people to identify coping strategies and ways of improving wellbeing.

We will support people to identify the triggers for crisis and personal strategies for preventing and resolving crisis. The crisis café is a crisis resolution service and not a care planning service. We seek to enable the person to understand how to improve their overall well-being, and support people to focus on their own individual needs and making their own choices about what will help them, and develop their own coping strategies. We operate in such a way that supports people to recognise their own strengths and talents, encourage hope and support people to work towards improving their emotional wellbeing.

We offer information and signposting, where appropriate

On leaving the service people should feel equipped with the right information and have confidence in the next steps. The service links people with health, support and community services that will help them address any factors or circumstances that contributed to their crisis. We draw on the wider community resources and assets in the support of people to build their resilience and well-being. Such services may include debt, welfare rights, domestic violence, relationship, housing, substance misuse, religious, cultural, recreational or employment advice and carer support. The café may also refer people to specialist health/ mental health services, such as the CRHTT services, GP, advocacy or social prescribing. Carers will also be given relevant information in managing individual crisis and will be signposted to local carers services.

We can provide computer and telephone access to those using the service and support them to make use of these resources as well as supporting in researching and contacting local services in order to make appointments. Where signposting to an appropriate service is requested by the person, this will be facilitated, however, wherever possible we proactively link the person with other services rather than simply point them in the right direction.

We offer follow-up support

Linking those who attend the café with appropriate services, networks and support to meet their needs, is key. Staff must therefore ensure that there is sufficient capacity to enable limited follow-up with people post-crisis, with their consent, to ensure that plans are put into effect. This could, for example, be meeting up the next day in order to introduce someone in person to a Sutton community resource. It may mean considerable liaison with a range of other services and organisations that will extend beyond the operational hours of the café.

Where the person is already under the care of a Sutton service, information on the café's interventions will be shared with their care co-ordinator and GP once the appropriate consent has been granted.

Where we are

Sutton Crisis Café operates from 63 Downs Road SM5 2NR. Our premises offer an environment that is warm, welcoming, non-stigmatising and does not feel clinical. It has good public transport links and has been designed so that people are likely to feel safe and not overwhelmed by excessive stimuli. We have a small outdoor smoking area, one-to-one rooms and communal spaces. Upstairs is a quiet area which can be used for people needing to be away from others, or as a space specifically for women, where female staff or volunteers can provide support.

Sutton Crisis Café also provides non-alcoholic hot and cold drinks, and snacks. It does not provide hot food or meals. Our kitchen is 5 star hygiene rates and staff are Level 2 food hygiene trained.