

# Opening Doors

Final Impact Report 2012







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Homeless people are among the most vulnerable in our society, often suffering from significant and multiple health inequalities. The professionals who support them report that they are often marginalised and left without sufficient and effective support to deliver their service.

Initially, the Homeless Health Initiative was an externally funded enterprise which assisted with the development of a unique nursing network. Connecting nurses who work in isolation but with similar client groups, the facilitated network assists the process of learning, support and practice development. Two years ago the QNI was successful in being awarded funding for further investment in our work to support nurses working with homeless people. The results of this investment have been outstanding; there have been significant and tangible outcomes and the Opening Doors project has been one of the QNI's most successful practice development initiatives to date.

The Opening Doors project has raised the profile of nurses working with some of the most disadvantaged people in our society and often in the most challenging environments. To date, our nursing network has more than 730 members. In addition to offering learning resources to all who work with homeless people, including five sets of guidance related to homeless health, there have been five workshops held nationwide and a monthly member newsletter has been published for the network throughout the life of the project. This work has provided updating and professional development as well as a sense of community and support for the nurses, in what could otherwise be a very isolated role.

The following final report outlines the considerable successes of the Opening Doors project. We anticipate that the QNI's next project will build upon this work, supporting the development of nursing care for the homeless in our communities and thereby making a sustainable difference to the health of the most vulnerable members of our society.

I would like to thank our generous funders, the J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust and the Merchant Taylors' Company without whom this project would not have been possible.

Crystal Oldman  
Chief Executive





# Key Opening Doors Achievements

- + 73.2% of members made a change to service users, spoke to commissioners or implemented a new service\* and 87.3% said the Opening Doors project improved their knowledge
- + Total number of webpage views for the Opening Doors project was 28,135
- + Grew the network by 33% to have over 730 members
- + Developed and distributed 5 sets of guidance notes on homeless health issues that were distributed to more than 800 nurses and health workers
- + Held 5 workshops attended by 164 health practitioners, 88% of whom said they felt attending would impact their work in a positive way\*\*

\* Based on final survey responses provided by 10% of the network

\*\* Based on 126 evaluation responses from workshop attendees

# About Opening Doors



## History of the Project

The Opening Doors project was designed to improve the quality of support for homeless people and homeless families, especially those affected by substance misuse. The programme ran for two years, from 2011-2012 and benefitted homeless people across England by providing nurses and health professionals with guidance, information and training surrounding the various health issues related to drug and alcohol addiction.

The project built on the incredibly successful Homeless Healthcare Initiative (HHI), When asked, 93% of HHI members stated that they still needed help improving service user involvement, commissioning quality care and hospital discharge. 83% stated that they needed assistance with skill development, innovation and leadership, and only 34% of nurses stated that they had a drugs and alcohol practitioner in their services. It was also noted that they would welcome better links and shared learning opportunities. As a result, a series of tailored resources were developed to meet their needs.

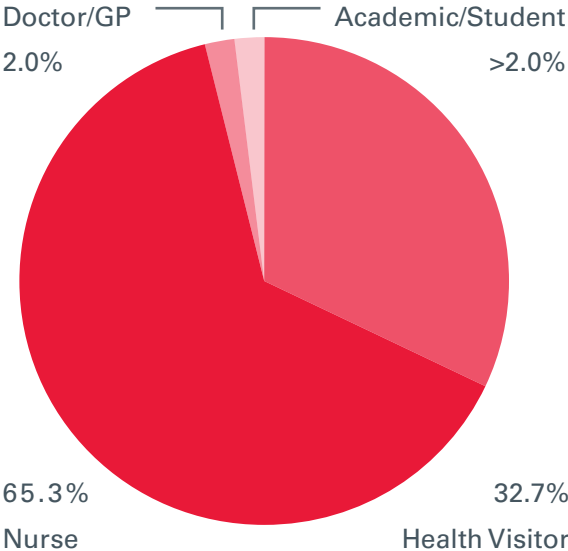
## About this Report

This report is based on a combination of surveys, interviews, reports and evaluations by the QNI. Being disparate the network was at times difficult to engage for feedback. Every attempt was made to provide an accurate description of successes and challenges.

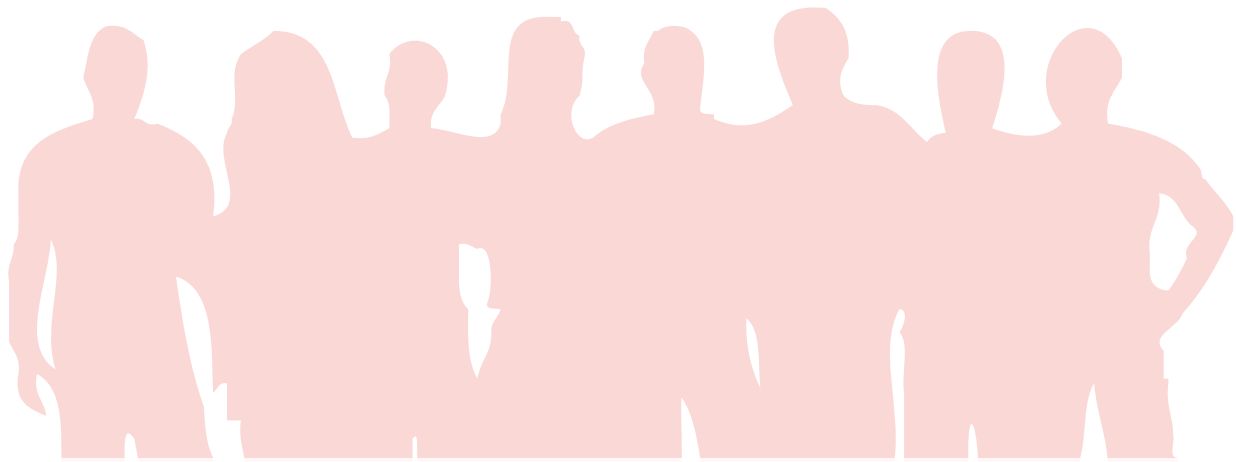
## About the Network

The Opening Doors network has grown by 33% in the last two years to now include more than 730 professionals involved with homeless health. This is in large part due to the enthusiasm of our members, as well as a new effort to expand our reach through the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter.

The network is made up primarily of specialists homeless nurses, midwives and health visitors, comprising 98% of the network\*. A smaller percentage of members include doctors and GPs with less than two percent being academics and student nurses. Based on an average of 20 patients per week per health visitor, we estimate that Opening Doors members are supporting around 14,000-15,000 homeless people per week, a 4% increase from the HHI.







## Programmatic Offerings

The Opening Doors programme was developed to provide nurses and homeless health workers with practical training, information and guidance to improve their practice, commissioning and influence.

### Guidance

The Opening Doors project published five sets of guidance specifically related to homeless health and issues and circumstances surrounding substance misuse. They included the following:

- ✦ *Safeguarding Homeless Families*: enables practitioners to identify the needs of homeless families, interventions and solutions
- ✦ *Food, Nutrition and Homelessness*: looks at the key issues and barriers faced by the homeless in the context of healthy eating
- ✦ *Mental Health and Homelessness*: offers information about how best to deal with the various mental health issues related to homelessness and substance misuse
- ✦ *Outcomes: Safeguarding Homeless Families*: outlines the process of developing achievable outcomes for working with homeless families
- ✦ *Homelessness and the Criminal Justice System*: provides information regarding the Offender Health Pathway for homeless individuals

### Newsletter

The monthly newsletter offered project updates, resources, links to external studies and reports; a section for nurses to ask questions and receive responses from the network; the latest headlines in homeless health; opportunities for employment and project funding and a 'focus on' section that highlighted the best practices of a nurse-led project related to homeless health.

### Workshops

The project hosted five workshops on topics including cradle to grave care, linking statutory agencies, safeguarding homeless families, offending and mental health. All included a focus on substance misuse.

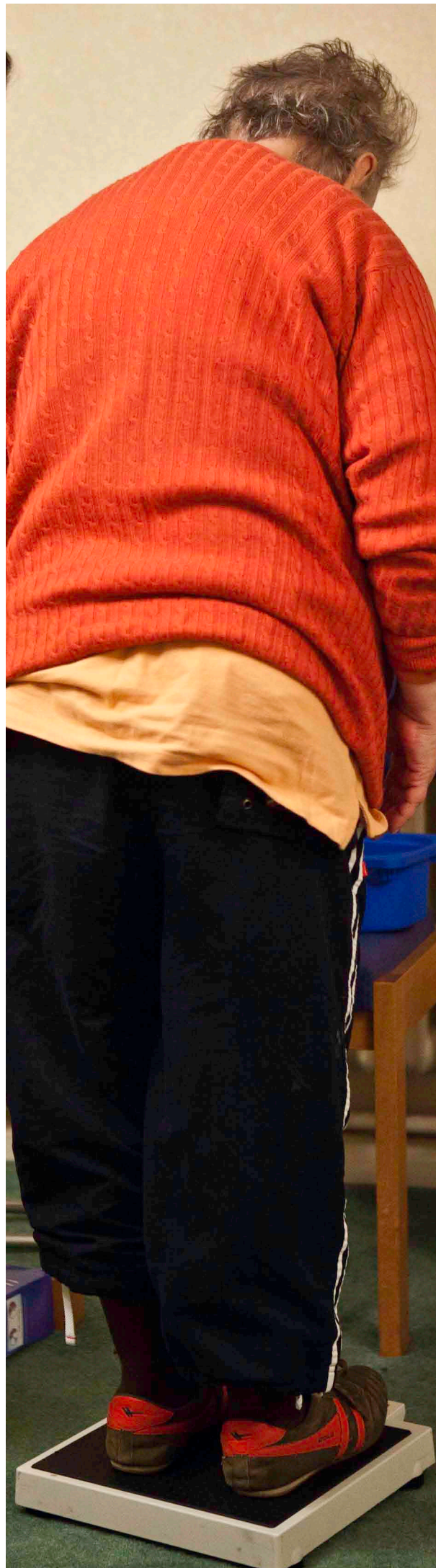
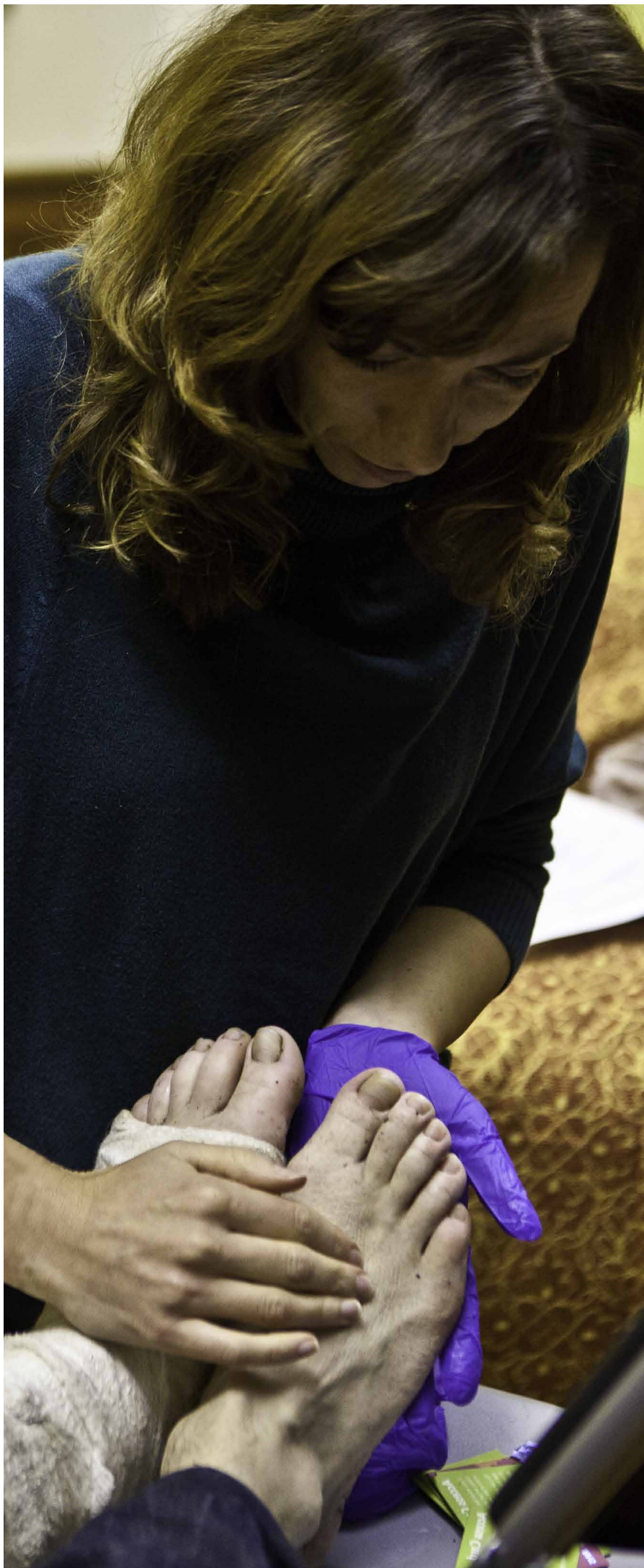
### Website

Open to the public, the website offered 'Virtual Workshops', resources related to homeless health, and case studies as well as a glossary, a health needs assessment template, a best practices guide and a resource pack.

### Awareness Raising

The project raised awareness of issues related to homeless health in the wider nursing media and influenced policy through responding to consultations.

\*Based on final survey responses provided by 10% of the Opening Doors network





# Improving Practice



36% of network members have made changes to their services and 11.3% implemented a new one as a result of the workshops, information and guidance provided by the Opening Doors project.

## Service User Involvement

One of the primary aims of the Opening Doors project was to increase the support provided to homeless people (service users) with substance misuse problems. This was achieved through the development and distribution of a resource pack which was downloaded 2,603 times. In addition, through workshops the Opening Doors project trained community nurses on related issues such as nutrition, mental health and safeguarding families. With estimates of Opening Doors members supporting between 14,000-15,000 homeless people per week, the total number of interactions reached in the project's two-year duration topped more than 1.5 million.

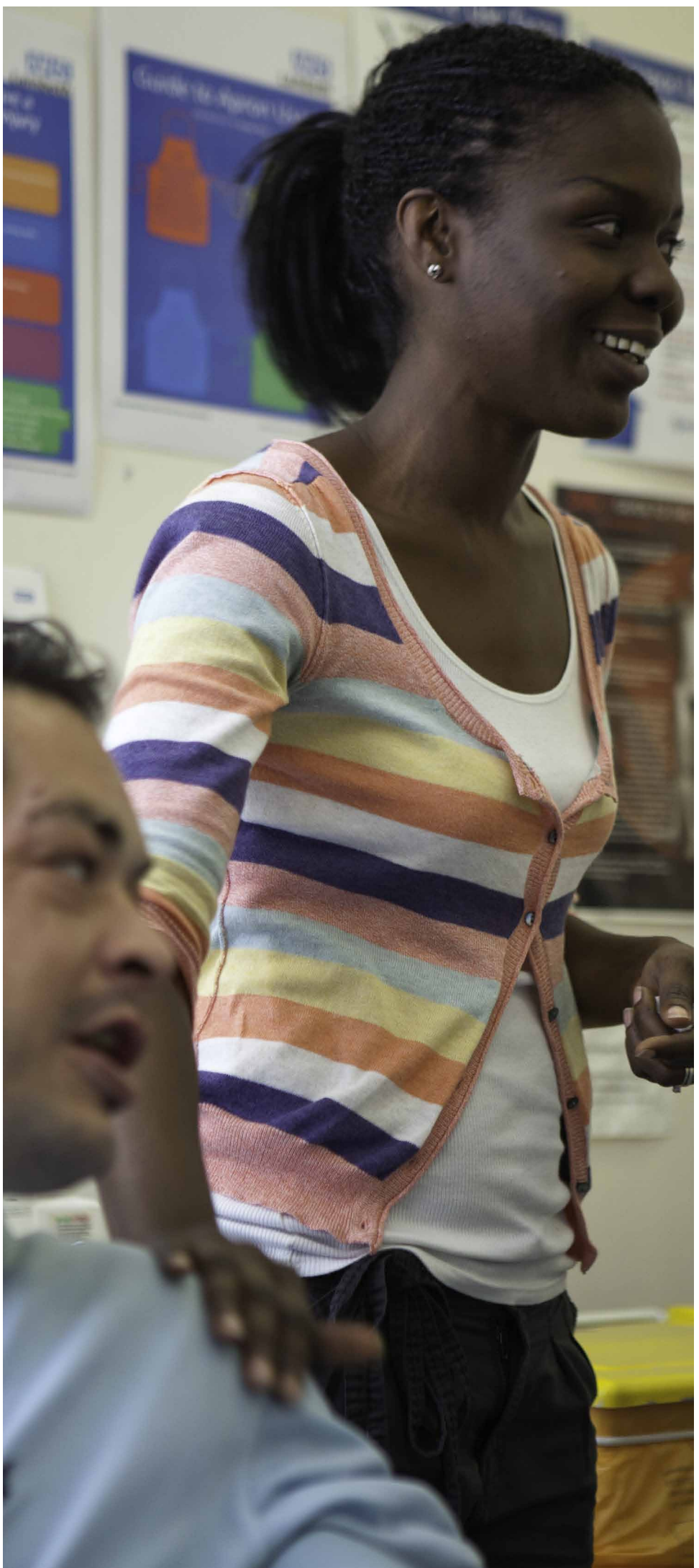
## Improving Services

In addition to serving more clients, Opening Doors members have improved their practice. 40.8% made changes to their service and 11.3% implemented a new service, such as patient advocacy. A further 11.3% added a new member of staff. One practice added a specialist in homeless health to their A & E department.

More attempts could have been made to improve services directly related to substance misuse. The final survey revealed specific ways nurses are improving services:

- ✦ "I used the project information as a Health Visitor in North Yorkshire where we had a homeless unit with mothers and children a predominant feature. With information from the resource we managed to make it a smoke free home and reduce the numbers of children with chest infections."
- ✦ "I have met with agencies who provide services to homeless people and improved care pathways, particularly related to accessing services."
- ✦ "We instigated service user questionnaires and an advocacy service to accompany clients to appointments."
- ✦ "I have implemented the food and nutrition guidelines and utilised the safeguarding guidelines to inform screening."

Left: A patient being weighed by an Opening Doors nurse  
Far left: An Opening Doors nurse caring for a patient's feet





# Sharing Knowledge



80.6% of network members stated that sharing information was the greatest asset of Opening Doors and 87.3% felt their knowledge of homeless health issues and practices had improved as a result

## Sharing Knowledge

Knowledge sharing is one of the biggest draws of the Opening Doors project. Said one member, "I have improved my knowledge and helped others in my Trust to improve their knowledge of homelessness and its impact on families."

## Publications

Opening Doors created five sets of guidance notes available as a pdf or hard copy, exceeding the original target of four. In total they were distributed to more than 800 professionals, with many passing them on to colleagues. Overall the guidance ranked second on the list of the most useful parts of the project, gaining 66.7%. 55.2% of members found it useful with 59.7% using it to improve the way they did their job and 7.5% using it to commission services. One member used them when speaking to GPs, one of the project's target groups, and another in education: "I have used the nutrition guidance to support a teaching pack I have developed for students."

## Newsletters

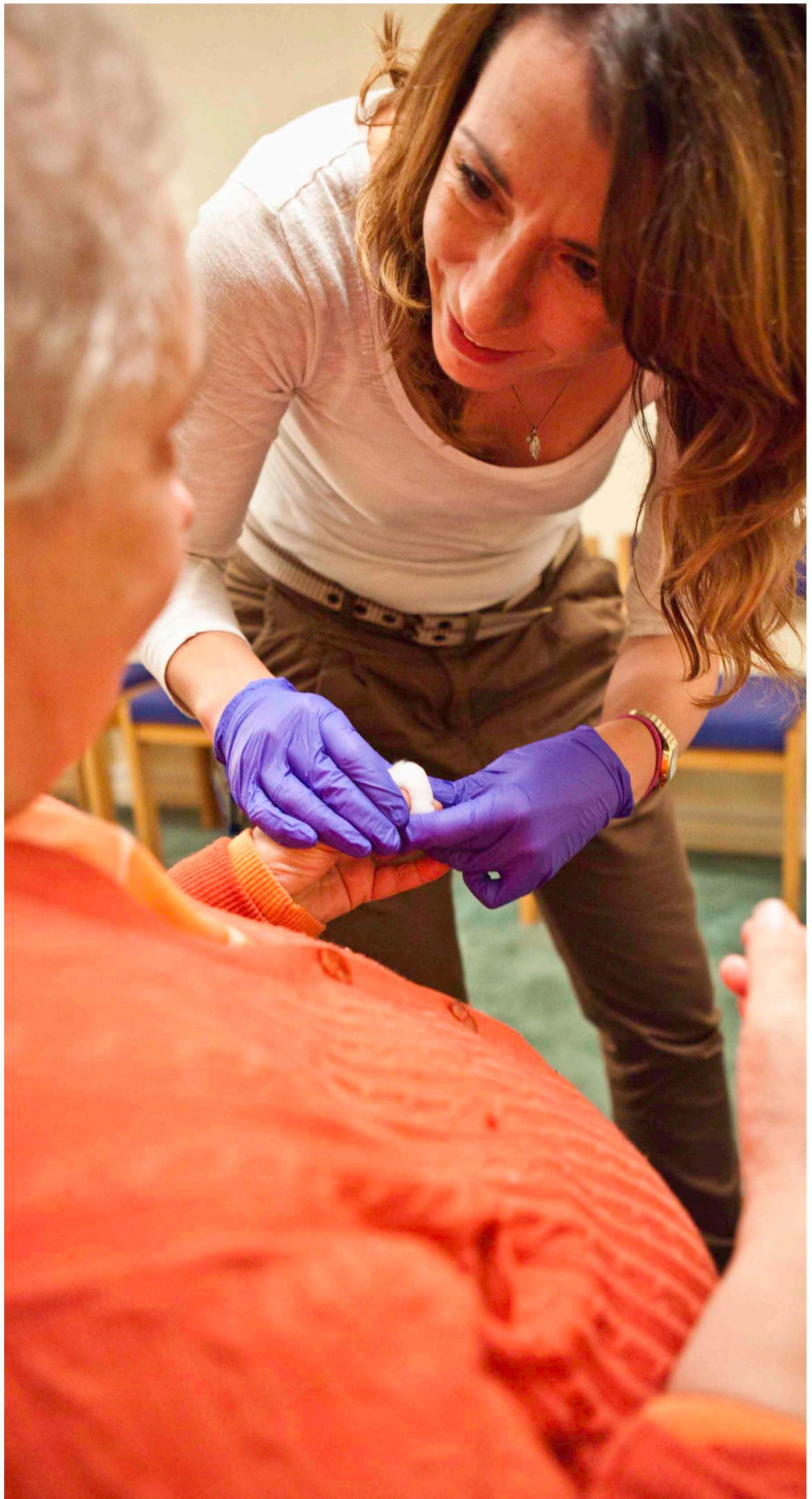
The newsletter was by far the most utilised aspect of the programme according to 89% of members. One called it a "rare resource" and another stated, "I learned about a course that I am sending staff members on and have made several contacts on account of the newsletter."

## Events

The project hosted five of the six workshops planned, the sixth becoming part of our QNI 125 Anniversary Conference. 66.7% of members found the workshops useful and 66.7% stated they changed the way they did their job.

## Website

In total the website was visited more than 28,000 times, with a 49% increase in the second year. 68.5% of members reporting using the website with one stating "the website is a time saving one-stop-shop for homeless healthcare professionals resulting in better outcomes for clients."





# Raising Awareness



21% of the network reported that they have spoken to a commissioner as a result of the Opening Doors project.

## Speaking to Commissioners

As part of the Opening Doors project, we encouraged members to speak to commissioners. At the close of the project, 21.1% reported that they had used the information or resources we provided when speaking to do so. One member stated, "I have improved the database I use to capture information to inform commissioners in my area about homeless health."

## Influencing Policy

The Opening Doors project helped to influence policy in two main ways. The first was to participate in external events attended by commissioners. In September 2012, the Project Manager participated in a roundtable discussion organised by Crisis which brought together key players from the fields of health and homelessness, including a newly appointed member of the UK Health Committee. The second was through collecting feedback from members and submitting a formal response to governmental consultations including the NTA Consultation 'Building Recovery in

Communities' and the Department of Health Consultation 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Towards a workforce strategy for the public health system'.

## Articles

The Opening Doors project published more than a dozen articles in major nursing magazines such as Independent Nurse and the Nursing Standard as well as smaller publications such as Community Practitioner and the British Journal of School Nursing. The project was also promoted on the Department of Health's website and in in-house publications such as QNI News.

## Event Presence

Opening Doors had an active presence at a variety of external events either as an attendee, a speaker or an exhibitor. Project resources were displayed at 17 national conferences including the Royal College of Nursing's Public Health Conference and the Homeless Link Annual Conference.





# Building Community



“It’s really important to keep the network function - many practitioners are spread out so it’s useful for sharing ideas and also for collating experiences and views which can inform national debate and policy.”

## Leveraging the Network

In addition to combating isolation, the network also provided the opportunity to leverage connections. 55.6% of members felt networking was one of the most useful parts of the project and 45.1% reported that they had been in communication with other network members as a result. One member stated, “I have made stronger links with other homeless projects. In the current climate we are having to prove our worth. Sharing good practice is vital.”

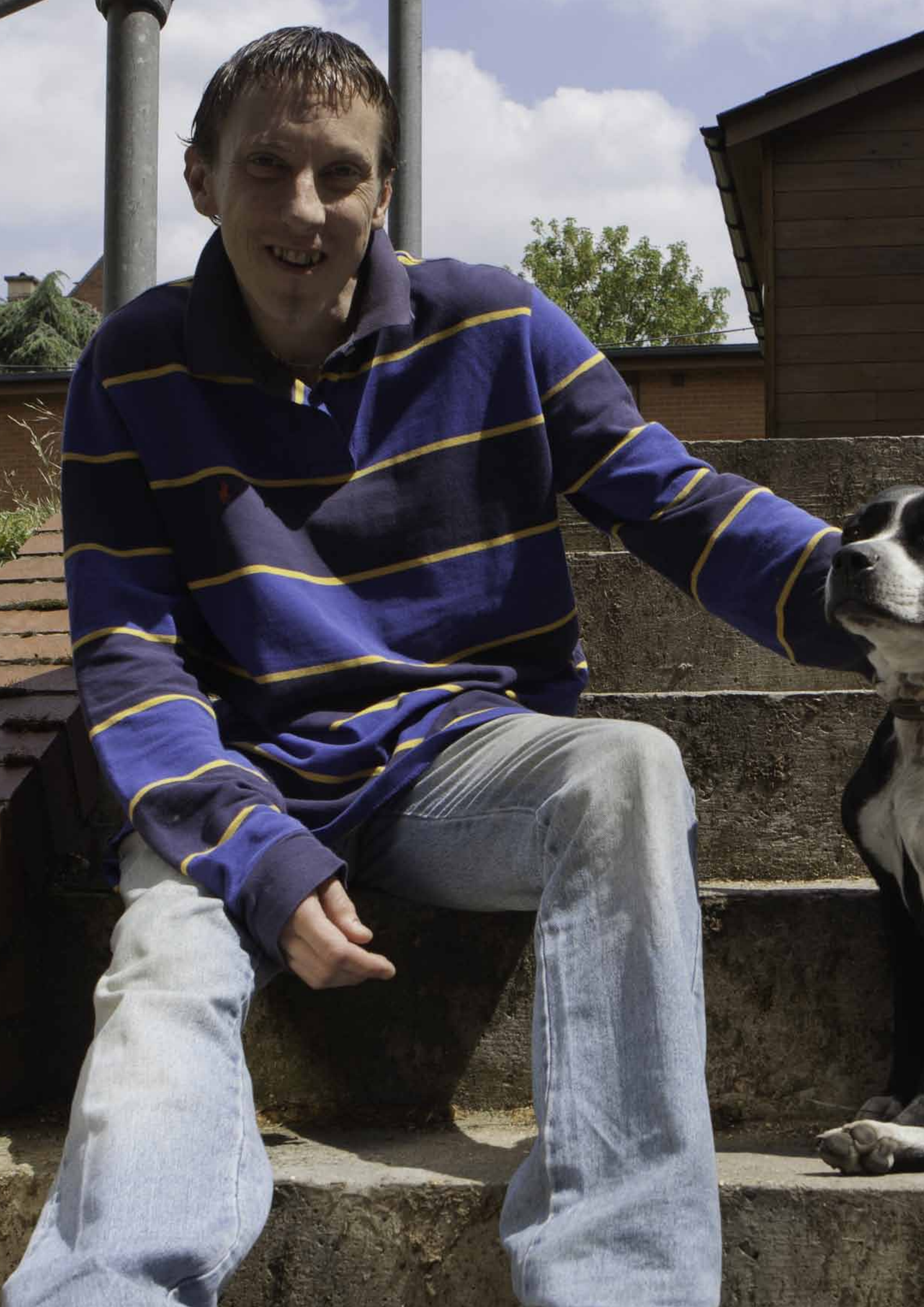
## Sharing Ideas

Finally, the Opening Doors community provided the opportunity to meet others and exchange ideas. One member stated “Being able to discuss issues with other professionals through networking at the workshop I attended was great - it helped me to build resource ideas.”

## Providing Community

The Opening Doors network grew 33% since it began to include more than 730 health professionals working with the homeless. For many the network provided an invaluable sense of community in what could otherwise be an isolated role:

- ✦ “The most useful thing about the project was knowing that I am not alone.”
- ✦ “The newsletter was my only real link with other health professionals working in homeless health.”
- ✦ “As there are very few homeless nurses the Opening Doors project has offered a vital link for support, education and advice. It is an invaluable resource.”





# Looking Forward

There is a clear need for an initiative around homeless health, with network members expressing an overwhelming appreciation for the unique support provided by Opening Doors upon the project's close:

- ✦ "What a shame it is coming to an end. It has been a really useful and worthwhile initiative."
- ✦ "I think it is really important to keep the network function - many practitioners are spread out so it's useful for sharing ideas and also for collating experiences and views which can inform national debate and policy (e.g. QNI's importance in shaping new standards for skills as part of the Inclusion Health Board.)"
- ✦ "The project has been very useful as a lone worker. It would be excellent to keep it going."

Although the Opening Doors project came to a close in December 2012, the QNI hopes to continue its work in homeless health through the development of a new project on similar themes. In the meantime, the QNI will maintain the network, responding to inquiries and offering limited support.

When asked what they would like to see featured in the next QNI project on homeless health, network members responded with several ideas:

## Social issues in homeless health

- ✦ "Dealing with social issues around homelessness"
- ✦ "How to help those with no recourse to public funds"
- ✦ "How benefits caps will work in practice, linking finance and housing stress"

## Homelessness and Sexual Health

- ✦ "STIs and young homeless individuals"

## More on mental health and homelessness

- ✦ "Practical tips in terms of managing and treating clients with personality disorders."
- ✦ "Something for specialist mental health services."
- ✦ "Increased use of legal highs and their impact on physical and mental health."

## More on Youth and Families

- ✦ "Under 5s and homelessness. Pregnancy outcomes."
- ✦ "Children and families, including travelling communities."

# Acknowledgements

The Opening Doors project would like to thank the following people for their support, without which The QNI would not have been able to improve the health of the homeless and support those who care for them:

Our generous funders, the J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust and the Merchant Taylors' Company.

The Opening Doors Steering Group for providing counsel, advice and strategic direction for the project:

- Pippa Bagnall (Chair)
- Jane Gray
- Jane Cook
- Gayle Clay
- Maxine Jenkins
- Val Keenan
- Claudine Evetts
- Peter Melvin
- Marianne Bubb-McGhee

The QNI Staff, notably Jo Fitzpatrick and Andrea Davids, Opening Doors Project Managers for handling the day-to-day operations of the network, and Anne Pearson for supervision and direction.

And finally, the 730 brilliant members of the Opening Doors network who are making change both in their local communities and on a national level by helping to develop and influence policy surrounding homeless health.





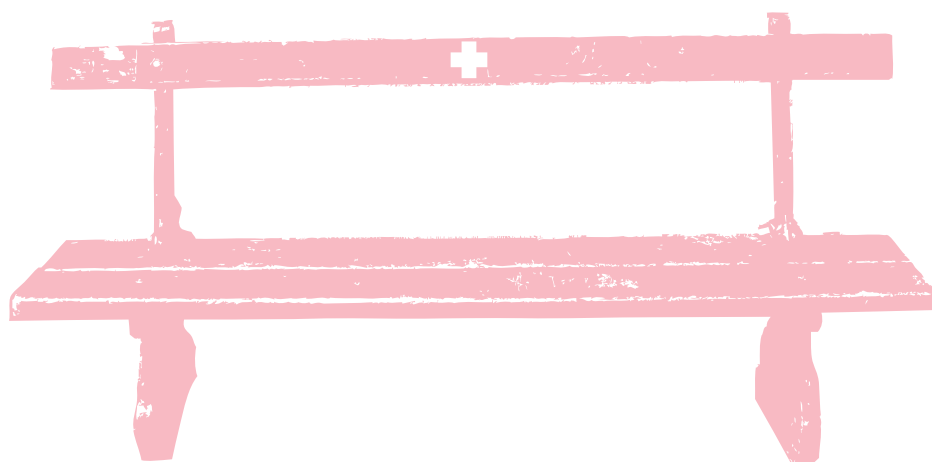
## About the QNI

Every year, millions of people of all ages need professional nursing care at home and in the community.

The QNI works with the public, nurses and decision-makers to make sure that good quality nursing is available for everyone when and where they need it.

We do this by:

- ✦ Funding community nurses' good ideas for ways to improve care and we help them develop their skills through workshops, conferences and resources
- ✦ Building a community of Queen's Nurses who are committed to high standards of care and who can inspire others
- ✦ Talking to Governments and policy makers and campaigning to influence the future of community health services.



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