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TACKLING INEQUALITY IN HEALTH BRINGS TOP NATIONAL AWARD FOR OPEN DOOR

A health and social care project set up to tackle the health divide in North East Lincolnshire has won a national NHS award for its ground breaking work with vulnerable people.

Open Door based in Grimsby, is a social enterprise run by North East Lincolnshire Care Trust Plus in partnership with the Big Life group of social businesses and charities.

Now in its second year, Open Door has won the national award for Improving Health and Reducing Inequalities as part of the Health and Social Care Awards, which are organised by the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement and the Department of Health.

Associate Director for Open Door Lance Gardner said: "Open Door is about to celebrate its second birthday, and this award shows just how much we have achieved in a relatively short amount of time. We couldn't have done this without the help of the Big Life group."

"The award is really important not just for us, but also in raising awareness about the needs of the vulnerable people we work with and people with similar needs around the country. Our clients have difficult lives and often their place in society is challenged – this is a good opportunity to give a voice to the voiceless."

Congratulating Open Door on this national acknowledgement, Jane Lewington, Chief Executive of NELCTP said, "This award is well deserved recognition for the trail blazing work done by Open Door and the dedication of their hard working staff."

The Open Door project has been designed to meet the varying needs of vulnerable people. There is an activity and social centre where a wealth of services such as basic skills training and alternative therapies including acupuncture and anger management are provided. The Open Door surgery also provides access to GPs and other healthcare.

Mark Dodd, who is currently completing his NVQ level two in Health and Social Care at Open Door, has turned his life round with the help of the project and is now a support worker at the centre.

He said: "I have experienced homelessness in the past, and I wish a project like this had been around for me then. Now I'm working with them and am full of admiration for the staff and the work they do, and their positive attitude to helping people get the help they need."

For press information please contact Communications Officer Dawn Bunnell on 0161 227 0205 or email dawn.bunnell@thebiglifecompany.com

Notes to Editors:

What is Open Door?

The people Open Door works with could have one or a combination of barriers which stop them from accessing mainstream services – they could be living with addiction or substance misuse, leaving statutory care, be homeless, an ex-offender, an economic migrant, a sex worker or someone who has been banned from services as a result of violent or aggressive behaviour.

The project began in 2003, when two specialist health visitors identified that around 1,000 Grimsby people did not have a GP. NE Lincolnshire PCT worked with a designer, to work with people and find out the reasons they were unable to use mainstream services.

Open Door now has a social and activity centre with a wide range of well being services on offer, and its GP service now has some 550 patients registered with them.