

HSVP 17

Cymorth tai i bobl sy'n agored i niwed

Housing support for vulnerable people

Ymateb gan: Canolfan Effaith Digartrefedd

Response from: Centre for Homelessness Impact

LGHC Inquiry: Housing support for vulnerable people

February 6th, 2025

Purpose

This briefing note is intended to support the Senedd's Local Government and Housing Committee in its inquiry into housing support for vulnerable people in Wales. This note adds evidence on what can be done to better prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping for vulnerable people. While clarity is needed about what is meant by a vulnerable person, this note uses this term interchangeably with the terms 'people with complex needs' and 'people who face multiple disadvantage'.

Improving outcomes: getting the foundations right

A range of vulnerabilities increase the risks of homelessness, and these are more potent when multiple forms of vulnerability occur. This includes economic insecurity, relational instability, poor health, low skills, learning disabilities, and irregular immigration status. Experiences of homelessness itself can compound and increase vulnerabilities.

Doing better to prevent people who face multiple disadvantage from experiencing homelessness requires work to re-design the ways in which services across health, public health, social care and housing seek to provide support. It has long been recognised by people with lived experience and professionals working to support people with multiple disadvantage that it is the complexity of the public service system that prevents people from receiving effective support that recognises and builds on the context of their life circumstances beyond singular needs. There are emerging models of integrated service delivery that show positive outcomes to better support people with multiple disadvantage. This includes the Wigan Deal¹, Changing Futures Northumbria 'Liberated Method'², and the Greater Manchester 'Live Well' initiative³. These approaches all emphasise the need for housing support to be integrated into wider offers of support in order to improve outcomes for vulnerable people. They have started to demonstrate the importance of place-based leadership across public services, relational and preventative support practises, and community-led support that makes the best use of voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations.

The Centre for Homelessness Impact recommends that work to end homelessness builds on the Ending Homelessness Outcomes Framework, due to be adopted by the Welsh Government. To support vulnerable adults within the context of ending homelessness, the framework can provide a consistent set of outcomes and indicators, at each stage of homelessness risk for vulnerable adults, that can be measured and analysed. Clarifying the conditions of vulnerability that are in scope is critical to support robust data collection and analysis. Categorisations of vulnerability within

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https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/reports/wigan-deal?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiA-5a9BhCBARIsACwMkJ7yVS_eDK7QwlSm4UvgqY3swX87GQBdYTTJtmF0LYNXLJdwua1RrGcaAnTtEALw_wcB

² <https://www.changingfuturesnorthumbria.co.uk/rethinking-public-service>

³ <https://gmintegratedcare.org.uk/livewell/>

homelessness legislation and terms like multiple disadvantage as defined by MEAM⁴ do not currently align and there is a need for further clarity - only then can multiple disadvantage or vulnerability be taken into account when attempting to prevent or bring instances of homelessness to a swift end.

Improving outcomes: key areas of focus

Despite the best efforts of many committed organisations and individuals, people who are at risk of homelessness or are already experiencing homelessness are frequently poorly served by the health and care system and are often unable to get basic health and care needs met. When they are able to access health care, the services they may be offered will often only be able, or willing, to work with a single need, with staff lacking the expertise or the permission to look beyond that need at the whole person. Equipping staff to work more holistically so that people have the opportunity to access and receive services that appreciate the whole of their life circumstances is critical.

Where domestic abuse, asylum/migration issues, and experience of the criminal justice system are additional complicating factors for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, interventions must also encompass specialist and well integrated support from across different areas of public service.

The challenges in achieving a joined up approach to tackling vulnerabilities such as concurring mental health and substance use have been long understood and subject to multiple attempts to improve practice. However, there are gaps in work to address and reduce multiple disadvantage that should be explicitly addressed. These include:

- Domestic abuse: for women who are experiencing homelessness and/or sleeping rough, abuse and violence are a far too frequent occurrence and the provision of suitable housing and support is often complicated by issues around local connection, the need to be seen bedded down before being offered support, and/or being in a current relationship with an abuser. Recent work to assess the needs of women who are hidden in their rough sleeping⁵ demonstrates these barriers well. In London, the Target Priority Group initiative which takes a by-list approach to casework with people sleeping rough in the long-term suggests that women with an abusive partner who they are unwilling to leave are a group for whom local authorities find it very difficult to secure appropriate supported and settled accommodation. Women are over-represented in this cohort within London, suggesting a particular failure to meet the needs of women with complex needs.
- People with a learning disability and/or cognitive impairments: various research suggests that there is above average incidence of cognitive impairment amongst people experiencing homelessness.⁶⁷ Research into the typology of hostels conducted by the Centre for

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<https://meam.org.uk/multiple-needs-and-exclusions/#.~:text=What%20is%20multiple%20disadvantage%3F,face%20racism%2C%20sexism%20and%20homophobia>

⁵ <https://www.solacewomensaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/FINAL-2023-WRSC-report-10-May-20241.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2468-2667%2824%2900044-6>

⁷ https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/182514083/Stone_et_al_2018_Health_Social_Care_in_the_Community.pdf

Homelessness Impact in 2023⁸ also suggested that homeless hostels are accommodating and supporting a greater proportion of people with a learning disability than they were commissioned to, with staff as a result often ill-equipped to meet the specialist needs of this group. Accessing social care for people resident in hostels with care needs associated with cognitive impairments - some of whom may also be using substances - remains stubbornly difficult.

- Immigration status: for many people who are experiencing homelessness who have uncertain or restricted access to public funds, accessing appropriate support, substance use treatment and housing is made difficult by legislation that can trap them in destitution, exacerbating health needs and entrenching substance use. A good summary of the issues has been developed by Homeless Link.⁹

Testing and learning from what works

The Centre for Homelessness Impact has gathered examples of a range of potential interventions that have been trialled in local areas and which show promise but which (mostly) have not been properly evaluated. Some of these interventions have been subject to a formal feasibility process and some have not. Partners who have delivered, or commissioned, the services and interventions are confident of the contribution they could make in supporting improved outcomes for people with complex needs who may not be being well served by existing support services.

Across the UK, the Centre is driving forward several regional and local Accelerator programmes aimed at speeding up progress towards ending homelessness and rough sleeping through testing and learning what works, improving system join-up, capacity-building, supporting improved data collection and data systems and ensuring that a shared outcomes framework with clear metrics is in place to drive progress. Working across these Accelerator areas, we have Combined Authorities and local authorities who stand ready to deliver, evaluate and share the learning from any of the suggested interventions set out below:

Service	Brief description of options
Embedded health and care professionals in outreach and temporary accommodation, hostel and supported housing	<p>An existing Test & Learn project is testing the impact of co-locating nurses within outreach teams. Scale if successful.</p> <p>Some outreach teams have embedded mental health professionals. Test and evaluate for impact and scale if successful.</p> <p>Some hostels, supported housing and temporary accommodation projects have visiting support from primary care professionals. Test and evaluate for impact and scale if successful.</p> <p>Some hostels have on-site care staff delivering flexible care without the need for care packages or a test of ordinary residence. Test and evaluate for impact and scale if successful.</p>

⁸ Due to be published in February 2025

⁹ <https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/substance-misuse-toolkit-for-migrants-experiencing-homelessness/>

	Some hubs/day services have co-located primary care professionals. Test and evaluate for impact and scale if successful.
Embedded housing and debt advice in health care settings	Various models have been trialled and are in operation, with housing and debt advice workers embedded within (eg) primary care and in mental health hospitals. Test and evaluate for impact.
Unified data	<p>Examples from around the world of systems which match health, criminal justice, housing data. In the UK, more limited examples exist.</p> <p>An existing Test & Learn project is testing the combining of council datasets to identify households vulnerable to homelessness. This could be extended to test the impact of including a wider set of partner data.</p>
Specialist accommodation with unconditional support	<p>Test the effectiveness of specialist Housing First schemes focused on cohorts of people where the need at local level is too small to justify a specific scheme (eg: couples, women)</p> <p>Test the effectiveness of congregate Housing First schemes for people with complex needs that wish to remain housed in a communal setting. Specification already developed.</p> <p>Evaluate interventions such as the Housing First Westminster model - https://www.solacewomensaid.org/our-services/housing-first/ - which combines the Housing First principles with a focus on stable housing and specialist domestic abuse support - and scale up if found to be effective.</p>