

The Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition is formed of Clinks, DrugScope, Homeless Link and Mind. Together we represent 1,600 frontline agencies that support people facing multiple needs: a combination of homelessness, substance misuse, mental health problems and offending.

We are asking the next government to:

Commit to listen to the voices of people with multiple needs, and the frontline staff who support them

Why: People should be involved in decisions that affect them. However, when it comes to the big policy decisions that are being made now around social support, welfare, health and criminal justice, frontline voices are rarely heard. Listening to individuals and involving them in decisions can help policy makers understand the challenges they face and avoid adverse consequences of policy decisions.

How: We're asking MPs, peers and prospective parliamentary candidates to spend some time at local services, get to know the people who can create change locally, and work with MEAM's Voices from the Frontline project in the run-up to the election.

Make local areas accountable for delivering effective, joined-up services for people with multiple needs

Why: At the moment, many areas struggle to meet the needs of those who fall in the gaps between services. There are examples of good practice – such as the areas using the MEAM Approach¹ – which have improved support for this group while also achieving cost savings. The 60,000 people in England with multiple needs deserve similar action in their own areas.

How: The government should encourage local authorities to work with their partners to design and deliver better coordinated services. A named official and elected counterpart should oversee the process and report progress on locally agreed outcomes to government. This could be further enhanced by creating a complementary structure for goals, funding and evaluation, as set out in our third recommendation.

Develop a new national focus to help local areas tackle multiple needs

Why: Evidence has shown that better coordinated interventions from statutory and voluntary agencies can reduce the cost of wider service use for people with multiple and complex needs by up to 26.4% over two years². Yet while 'troubled families' have received the attention of government, until recently this group of individuals has not. As public spending continues to tighten, a new national focus on this group could help minimise the impact on those at the margins of our communities.

How: This doesn't require a top-down approach. Instead, the government should encourage and support local areas by setting out clear top-level goals, providing targeted funding and evaluating progress. We welcome the announcement of a new national focus on individuals in the Autumn Statement and believe that the best elements of programmes such as Troubled Families, the Better Care Fund and Total Place could be combined to create the vehicle for achieving this. The programme should be delivered at a local level, with the voluntary sector fully involved in planning and implementation³.

¹ The [MEAM Approach](#) is a non-prescriptive framework to help local areas design and deliver better coordinated service for people with multiple needs.

² [Battrick, T et al \(2014\)](#) In February 2014, FTI Consulting and Pro Bono Economics published the results of a two-year evaluation of the MEAM pilots. The results show statistically significant improvements in wellbeing and a reduction in wider service use costs of up to 26.4% as individuals engage with better-coordinated interventions.

³ The implementation of this proposal would be complex, and should draw on helpful thinking from other organisations including the Public Service Transformation Network (in the report of the [Challenge Panel](#)); IPPR (which proposes a version of this idea in [The Condition of Britain](#)); the Institute for Government ([Beyond Big Contracts](#)) and Policy Exchange ([Joined Up Welfare](#)).