Walking the Frontline

An exhibition exploring how we can improve support for people with multiple needs

Introduction

People with multiple needs experience several problems at the same time, including mental ill health, homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, offending and family breakdown.

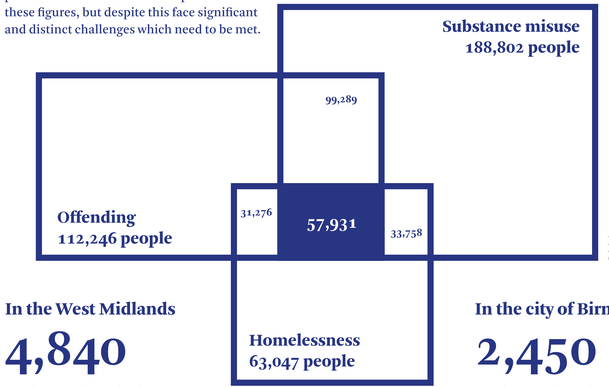
They live in every community in Britain, but have ineffective contact with local services that are often designed to deal with one problem at a time, and support people with single, severe conditions. This can lead to them living chaotic lives.

Over the last two years, the Making Every Adult Matter coalition formed of Clinks, Homeless Link and Mind has worked with over 100 people who have multiple needs – and with the frontline practitioners who support them – to understand these challenges and find out what needs to change.

In this exhibition, they tell their own stories and together we show what needs to change.

Multiple needs in numbers

An estimated 58,000 people in England face problems of homelessness, substance misuse and offending in any one year. Within this group, a majority will have experienced mental health problems. Women are under-represented in these figures, but despite this face significant and distinct challenges which need to be met.



Adapted from *Hard Edges: Mapping severe and multiple disadvantage*, (Lankelly Chase, 2015)

In the West Midlands

4,840

people are estimated to be experiencing homelessness, substance misuse and offending at the same time

In the city of Birmingham

2,450

people are estimated to be experiencing homelessness, substance misuse and offending at the same time

Getting to the doctor

You wake up feeling terrible.

You've only had a few hours' sleep – some of your neighbours in the hostel are pretty lively at night.

You start ringing the doctor's at 8am, but are put on hold for ten minutes. Then your credit runs out.

By the time you get through there's one appointment in an hour's time. You've got no money for the bus and the surgery is two miles away.

You start to feel really anxious: you're worried

...about whether your clothes are clean,

....about whether there'll be many other people in the waiting room,

.....about whether you'll have to use the automatic sign-in thingy,

.....about whether you'll still get seen if you're a bit late,

.....about whether you'll have to explain where you're living,

.....about whether the doctor will listen,

.....about what you're going to eat today,

.....about how you'll make it across town for your appointment with probation later.

It feels like a miracle, but you get there on time...

Ruth Wallbank
Systems Broker at Voices of Stoke
ruthfranciszka.blogspot.co.uk

I self harm, and [the service] are like, 'no, you can't use the services. We don't want you here.' And I'm like, 'okay then.'

And then that has a roll-on effect with my GP, which then was 'well, you're not interested, you're not trying.'

Which then has the snowball effect that my benefits were, well, you know – 'you're not complying, you're not helping yourself.'

And I'm trying to say to people, hold on a minute, it wasn't me, I turned up there and it was them that turned around and said 'you can't come in'.

PEOPLE WITH MULTIPLE NEEDS OFTEN HAVE PROBLEMS THAT ARE COMPLICATED, BUT THE SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS CAN BE SIMPLE. WE ALL WANT TO LEAD A FULFILLED LIFE...

Occupational hazards

Most people want to return to work.

There are many barriers in the way, and the path to finding and keeping a job is rarely straightforward. Some people may take years to reach the point where they are ready.

People's real lives are complex. Back-to-work support, such as that provided through the government's Work Programme, often ignores the reasons they may have struggled with employment. People might be managing mental health problems or have difficulty building their confidence and skills.

Going back to square one

You're homeless and dealing with a substance misuse problem

The right support helps you to move into stable housing

You begin your recovery and eventually find a full-time job

Your housing benefit is withdrawn and you start to pay rent

You have a sudden relapse, and as a result lose your job

Unable to meet the rent, you become homeless again

Recommendation

The Department for Work and Pensions should ensure Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme providers offer appropriate, flexible and personalised support to help people with multiple needs move towards independence.

A LIFE with FRIENDS and a PURPOSE, a POSITIVE REASON to GET UP in the MORNING.

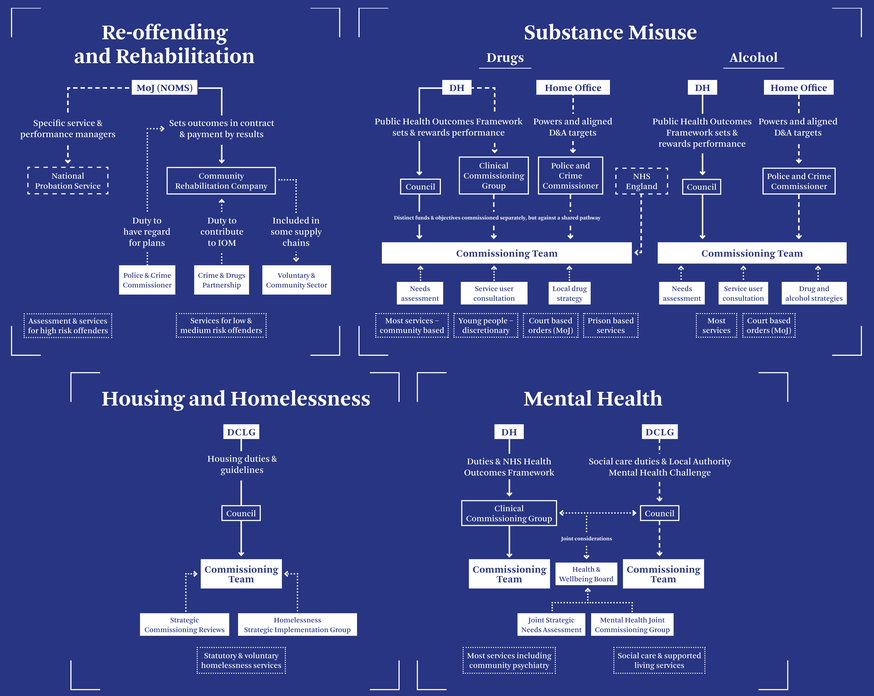
Joining things up

Many people with multiple needs fall in the gaps between different services, or find that the support they are offered is not flexible and appropriate for them.

Often, a single service isn't able to resolve all the challenges they face, and so services need to work together.

Although the issues people face – including access to healthcare and experiences of violence and abuse – are related, our responses to them have separate policy, separate funding and separate lines of accountability at every level.

How do you change a system this complicated?



From central government to local areas, the system of support for people with multiple needs is complex and diverse. This diagram shows just some of the people and organisations involved, and is based on work by Opportunity Nottingham that maps systems in their area.

DCLG: Department for Communities and Local Government
DH: Department of Health
MoJ: Ministry of Justice
NOMS: National Offender Management Service
Adapted from *System Change Plan: May 2015 – April 2018* (Opportunity Nottingham, 2015)

Recommendation

Commissioners should be accountable for ensuring local areas have joined-up services, and identifying where people with multiple needs fall through the gaps.

A LIFE where the HELP WE NEED is there WHEN WE NEED IT, for as LONG AS WE NEED IT.

Opportunity knocks

The current government is devolving new powers to local areas across England.

As these places start to rethink their wider approach to public service delivery through devolution, there is an opportunity to ensure that more people with multiple needs get the support they need.

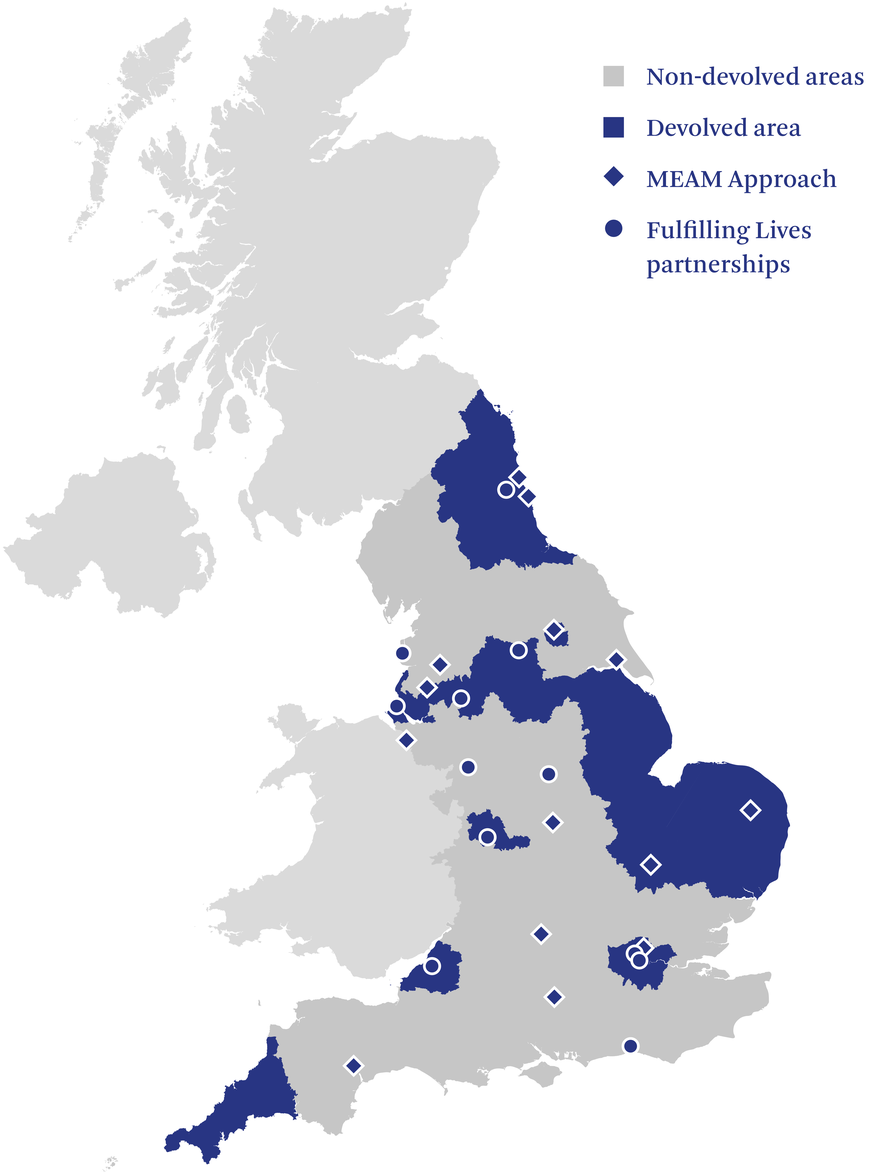
There is also a risk that the voices of people experiencing multiple needs and those who support them will not be heard, and their interests not taken into account. This is what happened with previous reforms to employment support, housing and healthcare services.

The new West Midlands Combined Authority has committed to co-designing and implementing a new approach to problems such as homelessness, substance misuse, offending and mental health, and is working with Birmingham Changing Futures Together to build on its learning. We hope other areas will follow this example.

Devolution and local action

The Making Every Adult Matter coalition works with 26 local areas across England. These include the 12 Fulfilling Lives partnerships supported by the Big Lottery Fund, and areas using the MEAM Approach – a non-prescriptive framework for developing a coordinated approach to multiple needs.

Many of these places overlap with devolution deals that have already been agreed, and more will be announced in the future.



Recommendation

Devolved authorities should ensure people experiencing multiple needs are involved throughout the design and development of their devolution plans.

A LIFE where the PEOPLE who MAKE DECISIONS UNDERSTAND US, and the COMMUNITIES we live in.

Experts by experience

People with multiple needs feel their experiences are not well understood, especially by decision-makers.

This contributes to – and is heightened by – the stigma they often face.

For this to change, policymakers must become more open to the perspectives of people with lived experience of multiple needs, and the frontline workers who support them. It's particularly important that they hear the voices of people who have distinct needs and may be excluded from these discussions, particularly women and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Recommendation

Ministers should identify a structured way to listen to the voices of people with multiple needs – and the frontline staff who support them – to ensure that policies properly reflect their experiences and meet their needs.

> ***If there's a meeting with a commissioner and they're dropping acronyms left, right and centre, we're encouraged to say: "sorry, if you want my opinion I need to understand what you're talking about." That applies to how politicians speak with us, too.***

A LIFE where we ALL have a PURPOSE; we have FRIENDSHIP and SUPPORT; a life where we are LISTENED TO.

This exhibition was made possible by a partnership between:

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) is a coalition of Clinks, Homeless Link and Mind, formed to improve policy and services for people facing multiple needs. Together the charities represent over 1,300 frontline organisations and have an interest in the criminal justice, substance misuse, homelessness and mental health sectors.

Our aim is to enable people with complex needs to achieve their aspirations and make their own vision of a 'fulfilling life' a reality. Every aspect of the service transformation we propose in this project is focused on this and the extent to which we make this possible is how we will measure ourselves and the success we achieve.

Designed by:

Soapbox

Soapbox helps leading policy, research and advocacy organisations to communicate their ideas – in words and images, in print and online. We help our clients produce policy communications for ideas that matter.

Funded by:

Lankelly Chase

People facing severe and multiple disadvantage have been pushed to the extreme margins of UK society. Lankelly Chase wants to change this by supporting innovative work aimed at helping everyone to lead rewarding lives.

Further information

Many of the issues explored in this exhibition are discussed in the following reports:

Voices from the Frontline (MEAM, 2014)

Solutions from the Frontline (MEAM, 2015)

Some of quotes used have been slightly adapted to provide context.

Credits

Voices from the Frontline ran from 2014 – 2016, and everything in this room was produced as part of the project. The following people helped to design the final exhibition:

Chris Conway
Chris Harris
Earl Salter
Lee Orrell
Marie Ludlam
Patrick McCaffery
Richard Harris
Ruth Wallbank
Sandra Morgan
Cormac Bakewell
Vita Cameron

Voices from the Frontline was delivered by MEAM's policy team:

Nicola Drinkwater, Clinks
Jonathon Graham, Homeless Link
Andy Kempster, Mind
Sam Thomas, Homeless Link

What next?

The practical solutions to the issues we explore in this exhibition will come from people who are working for change across the country.

We have put together a policy influencing guide, which draws on the experience of people who have been involved in this project and helps local areas engage with a wide range of different bodies and stakeholders across criminal justice, health and housing.

Over the next two years, the Making Every Adult Matter coalition will support local areas throughout England to help develop their approach to improving and influencing policy.

We will also continue to work with national policymakers and politicians on the issues explored in this exhibition, drawing on the knowledge and experience of all voices from the frontline.

Making the case for change

Influencing policy – whether at a local or national level – takes time. There are no guarantees that policy changes will happen as a result of your work, or if they do that they will be exactly what you want to happen.

Here are some steps you can take to think through the issue you want to address, and who you need to speak to. For further advice on this, see the Voices from the Frontline policy influencing guide, available at **www.meam.org.uk/voices**

Issue analysis

- Identify the issue
- Work out the cause
- What are the likely impacts?
- What is your solution?

→

Research

- Map key contacts and decision-makers
- Identify key decision-makers
- Assess decision-makers' and commissioners' priorities and timelines

→

Influencing plan

- Develop a focused action plan
- Develop targeted briefings
- Request meetings with stakeholders
- Run seminars or focus groups

"It is important to include people with lived experience, as it ensures policymakers hear first-hand from those whom the policy will impact upon. How can policymakers implement change without actually having spoken to those with lived experience in a particular area?"

Maxine
Beneficiary Ambassador
Opportunity Nottingham

A LIFE where PEOPLE don't just HEAR OUR VOICES, they LISTEN TO THEM.