



TACKLING MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE NATIONWIDE

A strategy for the
MEAM coalition
2018–2022



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 @meamcoalition
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A PLAN FOR CHANGE

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) is a unique coalition of national charities – Clinks, Homeless Link, Mind and associate member Collective Voice.

Our vision is that everyone experiencing multiple disadvantage can reach their potential and contribute fully to their communities.


Working together as a coalition, we support over 35 local areas across England to develop effective, coordinated services that directly improve the lives of people facing multiple disadvantage.

We use our shared knowledge and practical experience from this work to influence policy at a national and local level.

By 2022 we aim to have reached a 'tipping point' with enough local areas acting on multiple disadvantage to persuade all others to do the same. Four key aims will drive our work:

- **Aim 1 – Transforming local systems:**
 We will support areas across the country to change the way that services, systems and people work for, and with, people facing multiple disadvantage.
- **Aim 2 – Influencing policy change:**
 We will help policymakers and commissioners to understand the challenges experienced by individuals facing multiple disadvantage, and ensure policy helps people get the right support.
- **Aim 3 – Promoting the value of every adult:** We will coproduce our work with people facing multiple disadvantage and support local areas to do the same. We will promote the value of every adult in our society and improve insight and attitudes towards people facing multiple disadvantage.
- **Aim 4 – Building a strong MEAM coalition:** We will ensure that we continue to work together, optimising our collective skills, knowledge and voice to model and achieve the change we want to see.

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WHAT IS MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE?

- People facing multiple disadvantage experience a combination of problems including homelessness, substance misuse, contact with the criminal justice system and mental ill health. They fall through the gaps between services and systems, making it harder for them to address their problems and lead fulfilling lives.
- It is estimated that 58,000 people 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. Similarly, people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities experience a range of social inequalities which contribute to their experience of multiple disadvantage.
- People's likelihood of experiencing multiple disadvantage is increased both by growing up in circumstances of material deprivation and experiencing abuse or neglect in early life.
- This group tend to be known to everyone, but often are served by no one as they are perceived to be 'hard to reach' or 'not my responsibility.' This can make services seem unhelpful and uncaring to someone experiencing multiple disadvantage who is seeking help.



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

People facing multiple disadvantage are often failed by services and systems that focus on singular issues. This makes it harder for individuals to address their problems, lead fulfilling lives and contribute fully to their communities.

This status quo is unacceptable. Evidence has shown that better coordinated interventions from statutory and voluntary agencies can improve people's lives and reduce the use and cost of crisis services.

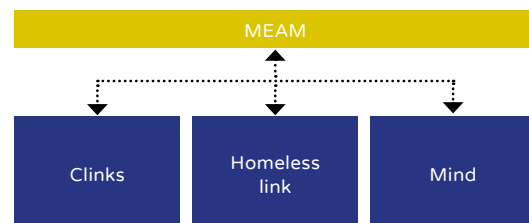
Over the period of this strategy we intend to develop and expand our work in local areas, and to bring the learning from our work into local and national policy debates.

But while some local areas are making progress on better coordinated interventions, others are not. In many local areas, services continue to operate in isolation; people with experience of multiple disadvantage continue to have limited power over the decisions that affect them; and the national policy environment often fails to promote collaborative ways of working.

WHAT MAKES MEAM UNIQUE?

Clinks, Homeless Link and Mind have been working together as MEAM since 2008. Over this time, we have developed a set of core behaviours that guide our work:

- **Collaborative:** We believe that collaboration at all levels is the best way to tackle multiple disadvantage. We accept that the world is 'messy' and that collaboration will be messy too. We model the collaborative behaviour that we want to see from local areas and national government by 'embedding' our delivery teams within the MEAM organisations and working closely with a wide range of external partners. We believe that effective collaboration is always preferable to 'one size fits all' solutions and that no one sector or department can solve multiple disadvantage on its own.



- **Constructive and open to learning:** We are a critical friend to local areas and policymakers who want to be more collaborative and joined-up in their approach. We learn from everything we do and are open to challenge, change and honest feedback about our own practice. We encourage others to do the same.

- **Ambitious yet pragmatic:** We are ambitious for change – in services, cultures, systems and people's lives. At the same time, we recognise that change is hard and can be gradual. We work with people and areas from the point at which they find themselves, with a focus on practical outcomes that can persuade people and systems to take the next steps.

- **Guided by coproduction and the experience of local areas:** We recognise that meaningful change must be coproduced and based on a new balance of power between people with experience of multiple disadvantage and the people who make decisions that affect them. We are committed to meaningfully coproducing our work and to challenging and supporting local areas to do the same. We use our unique position to bridge the gap between national and local policymakers and the experiences of services and individuals, ensuring that everyone benefits from each other's expertise.

“We are ambitious for change – in services, cultures, systems and people's lives.”

- **Aware that disadvantage affects people in different ways:** Our main focus is on individuals in England who experience a combination of problems such as homelessness, substance misuse, mental health problems and repeat contact with the Criminal Justice System. We recognise that some groups are under-represented in these figures and that however we define multiple disadvantage there will be sub-groups who face more extreme disadvantage and discrimination than others. We will continue to work closely with knowledgeable partners to highlight and better understand the prevalence and experience of multiple disadvantage within these groups and take a proactive approach to equalities and diversity across our work.

- **Recognise the importance of prevention:** We know that multiple disadvantage is closely linked to poverty and childhood trauma and that our work must explore preventative strategies to support people at risk now and in the future. We will work closely with relevant partners which are seeking to ensure that multiple disadvantage is understood in childhood settings and that individuals are supported in the transition to adulthood.

- **Value the power of movements:** We recognise the role the public needs to play in tackling multiple disadvantage and that their attitudes can sometimes be hostile to this group. On the other hand, we witness daily the power of social movements and the impact people can have when they come together around a common cause. We help people to have greater insight into the lives of individuals facing multiple disadvantage and to recognise that better outcomes for this group lead to social and economic benefits for all.

AIM 1

TRANSFORMING LOCAL SYSTEMS

We will support local areas across the country to change the way that services, systems and people work for, and with, people facing multiple disadvantage.

By 2022: 30% of top-tier local authorities in England (52 of 152) will have local partnerships that are working to develop an effective and coordinated approach to supporting people facing multiple disadvantage. Commissioning structures and local policies in these areas will actively support flexible responses from a wide range of services. People facing multiple disadvantage will have the power to shape services and will report a more seamless experience that gets them the right help at the right time.

Why? Local services are often poorly coordinated and do not work well for people facing multiple disadvantage. Since 2011, MEAM has supported local areas across the country to better coordinate services and improve local systems. This has led to better outcomes for individuals and a reduction in the use of crisis services, resulting in average cost savings of 23% in areas that undertook evaluation.

Using the MEAM Approach we now support local leaders across the country – including people with experience of multiple disadvantage – to design and deliver better coordinated services. We also helped to shape the Big Lottery’s Fulfilling Lives programme and provide support to the twelve partnerships. As a result, MEAM is uniquely placed to support partnerships across the country to prioritise the changes they want to make to the system and help them to make these aims a reality.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Expanding our local work

- We will significantly expand the number of areas using the MEAM Approach (from eight in 2014 to 25 in 2018 and 40 in 2020), supporting them to design and deliver better coordinated, person-centred interventions which recognise the impact of trauma on people’s lives.
- We will continue to support the twelve Fulfilling Lives areas to deliver on their outcomes, ensuring that each of them can achieve positive results for individuals and demonstrate lasting system change.
- We will ensure that our work is co-produced with, and informed by, the experience of people facing multiple disadvantage and support local areas to do the same. We will promote approaches to local practice that draw on people’s strengths, recognise their potential, and understand their past experiences.
- We will support partnerships in local areas to identify system change priorities, influence local policymakers and commissioners and ensure that their coordinated interventions are embedded within sustainable local systems.

Data, evidence and policy influence

- We will use evidence and data from local areas to support the case for policy change at local and national levels, bridging the gap between policymakers and the experiences of services and individuals, ensuring that everyone benefits from each other’s expertise.
- We will make a significant new contribution to the evidence base for coordinated services by collecting robust evaluation data from MEAM Approach areas and contrasting this with evidence from the Fulfilling Lives programme. This will provide a stronger legacy for both programmes.

Learning

- We will build and support a national network of people and organisations working on multiple disadvantage, providing them with opportunities to learn from and support each other. We will ensure that Fulfilling Lives, MEAM Approach and other interested areas share learning and benefit from their collective experience.

AIM 2

INFLUENCING POLICY CHANGE

We will help policymakers and commissioners to understand the challenges experienced by individuals facing multiple disadvantage, and ensure policy helps people get the right support.

By 2022: there will be a commitment to cross-departmental collaboration on multiple disadvantage at all levels of government. People experiencing multiple disadvantage, and those who support them, will feel that they are involved in policy decisions and that their voice is being heard.

Why? At the moment, policy decisions fail to reflect either the interests of people experiencing multiple disadvantage or their experiences. Better policy would enable local areas to provide the best possible support, and remove barriers to people's recovery and rehabilitation.

Better policy requires a shared commitment to act across government, more suitable models of funding than those available at present, a stronger focus on accountability and closer attention to the root causes of multiple disadvantage. It also requires continued investment in the services people need.

MEAM is respected by policymakers and trusted by the sectors we represent, and we are able to draw on a wealth of evidence and insight from our work with local areas. We can bridge the gap between national and local government and frontline services, ensuring that policy decisions are informed by the voices of people with experience of multiple disadvantage and frontline practitioners.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

National commitment, collaboration and investment

- We will support government to make a clear commitment to tackling both the causes and consequences of multiple disadvantage.
- We will support government to take a collaborative approach to multiple disadvantage, modelling the approach that local areas have shown can work.
- We will encourage government to challenge local areas to take the necessary action and provide them with flexible investment to find their own solutions.

Influencing local and national policy

- We will strive to change the way that policy is made – locally and nationally – ensuring that people with experience of multiple disadvantage and frontline practitioners are able to make their voices heard and have their ideas acted upon.

- We will support local areas to identify opportunities for influencing policy and will ensure that individuals facing multiple disadvantage and those who support them have the skills, knowledge and agency to get involved.
- We will use learning and evidence from local areas to inform our national policy and influencing work.

Shaping policy for the future

- We will work with a wide range of external partners to understand how multiple disadvantage is experienced by different groups and communities and what effective services look like for those requiring specific support.
- We will work with partners to explore and promote preventative approaches to multiple disadvantage, which recognise and prevent the structural causes and support those at risk of experiencing them.
- We will be aware of external factors and challenge policy and spending decisions that will damage the progress being made on multiple disadvantage.

AIM 3

PROMOTING THE VALUE OF EVERY ADULT

We will coproduce our work with people facing multiple disadvantage and support local areas to do the same. We will promote the value of every adult in our society and improve insight and attitudes towards people facing multiple disadvantage.

By 2022: Coproduction will be firmly embedded in our work and that of the local partnerships we support, with people facing multiple disadvantage involved as equals and local areas reporting value from their involvement. Services will be designed and delivered based on a better understanding of people's lives and past experiences, and public attitudes will be improving.

Why? We won't achieve better services or better policy without listening to and acting on the views, insights and experiences of people facing multiple disadvantage. Service provision is more effective if staff have a strong insight into people's lives, and a well-informed public can help to drive support for the services that people need.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Coproduction

- Effective change will require people with experience of multiple disadvantage to be involved as equals in decisions that affect them. We are committed to coproducing our work and to challenging and supporting the local areas and policymakers we work with to do the same.
- We will develop a network of people with experience of multiple disadvantage across the country who can shape and contribute to our work. Working together we will ensure that local partnerships have the skills, confidence and relationships to involve people with experience from the very start of their work and throughout.
- We will measure our success, be honest about our failures, and help build the evidence base for the benefits of coproduction and how to do it well.

Insight into people's lives

- We will develop a programme of work to help people better understand the causes of multiple disadvantage and to promote services and support which are based on a strong understanding of people's lives and past experiences.
- This will include work with organisations and services that may not currently or traditionally have this depth of understanding and we will challenge negative attitudes where we find them.

Public attitudes

- We will scope a piece of work that could help change the views of the wider public on people with experience of multiple disadvantage. We have much to draw on here – not least the work of Time to Change and the Frameworks Institute – but the first step will need to be an assessment of the issue and a plan for action.

AIM 4

BUILDING A STRONG MEAM COALITION

We will ensure that we continue to work together, optimising our collective skills, knowledge and voice to model and achieve the change we want to see.

By 2022: MEAM will be a beacon of collaborative behaviour for others to follow, constantly promoting evidence and frontline voices as crucial to effective change. People with multiple disadvantage will be a core part of our partnership and feel meaningfully involved in our work and the support we provide to local areas.

Why? Since its inception, MEAM has been committed to modelling the collaborative behaviour and commitment to listening that we want to see from local services and national government. The expertise of our members and the promotion of frontline voices means that we are unique in being able to provide cross-sector advice to practitioners, policymakers and wider stakeholders.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Our embedded model

- We will continue to strengthen our unique approach to collaboration and in particular our model of 'embedded' teams.
- We will ensure that the MEAM organisations continue to weave an awareness of and response to multiple disadvantage into their own strategies and work.

Our members and partners

- The MEAM organisations will engage their membership networks around the issue of multiple disadvantage, supporting them to see how it is beneficial for their work and enabling them to build vibrant cross-sector partnerships in their local communities.
- We will ensure that MEAM is able to represent all four key sectors that are vital to our work and regularly engage with a wide range of other partners too, including those working on family, gender, sexuality, race and other specific groups that have additional barriers to support.

- We will take advantage of our unique position between frontline providers and membership bodies to provide the support that others cannot.
- We will continue to ensure that the views, experience and insight of people facing multiple disadvantage and those who support them are at the heart of everything we do.

Governance, finance and reporting

- We will continue to ensure strong governance for the coalition. We value what each organisation brings and our collective expertise. We will continue to explore how the MEAM organisations can best collaborate in the future.
- We will continue to ensure a suitable mix of funding for activities, including income from charitable and commercial sources.
- We will develop ways to understand and report on the successes and the challenges in our policy and practice work and use this to shape our future activities.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE OUR PROGRESS?

We are committed to measuring our progress and the impact that we make.

- We value an open and collaborative approach and will share our learning with others, both in England and abroad.
- We will commission regular external evaluations of our work and publish the findings.
- We will ensure that people with experience of multiple disadvantage are involved in evaluating our work and that of our partners.
- We will ensure that our learning helps develop a better picture of how multiple disadvantage is experienced by different groups and communities, and what effective services look like for those requiring specific support.

- We will regularly publish materials and resources to support the growing network of local areas across the country working to tackle multiple disadvantage.

It is time for the government and local areas to transform this country's response to the problem of multiple disadvantage: both by tackling the issues people experience today, and by seeking to prevent them from developing in the first place.

It won't be easy: it will take political will and persistence. But by working together, we can ensure that people can reach their potential and contribute fully to their communities.



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