



## Comprehensive Spending Review 2020

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) is a coalition of national charities – Clinks, Homeless Link, Mind and Collective Voice. Together MEAM represents over 1,300 frontline organisations across England. Working together we support local areas across the country to develop effective, coordinated services that directly improve the lives of people facing multiple disadvantage and use learning from this work to inform policy.

People experiencing multiple disadvantage face a combination of problems including homelessness, substance misuse, domestic/violent abuse, contact with the criminal justice system and mental ill health. These individuals are frequently among the most vulnerable and isolated individuals within local communities. The majority have been repeatedly failed by services that are designed and commissioned in silos and which are unable to respond appropriately to multiple needs. This results in individuals 'recycling' between services, never getting the holistic support they need, and at significant cost to the public purse. For example, it is estimated that the cost of public spending on the 58,000 people in England with overlapping problems of homelessness, substance misuse and contact with the criminal justice system is between £1.1bn and £2.1bn a year.

MEAM supports over 40 local areas across the country to develop effective, coordinated approaches to multiple disadvantage that increase wellbeing, improve individuals' outcome and reduce costs to public services. 31 of these areas are using the MEAM Approach – a non-prescriptive framework to help local areas design and deliver better coordinated services – while twelve are part of the National Lottery Community Fund's Fulfilling Lives programme, which we are pleased to support.

## **A clear commitment to multiple disadvantage in the Spending Review**

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the government's Comprehensive Spending Review 2020. We are pleased to see that "improving outcomes in public services" is stated as a key aim of the Review. This is particularly important during these uncertain times as demand on all public services is likely to grow as a result of the crisis and there will be unacceptable costs to communities of leaving needs unaddressed. Based on our experience of working across the county, it is also the case that this aim cannot be achieved without significantly changing the way in which public services respond to and support individuals facing multiple disadvantage.

If public services can effectively and efficiently support those with the most complex issues, then they will be in an excellent position to help all members of local communities. In this way, by guaranteeing the provision of appropriate support for individuals facing multiple disadvantage public services will improve the help all individuals receive, and drive improvements across outcomes for everyone.

As a first step, the Government needs to make clear commitments to improving public service outcomes specifically for this people facing multiple disadvantage. The CSR represents an excellent opportunity for the government to formally announce multiple disadvantage as a national, cross-departmental priority and make clear commitments to improving the way in which all government departments work together and incentivise local public services to collaborate for people facing multiple disadvantage.

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted that there is a clear need for national and local action on multiple disadvantage and that public services can respond flexibly when the right incentives and leadership are in place (see for example our report on flexibilities developed during the crisis). Now is an opportune time to focus on multiple disadvantage within the CSR.

### **Actions needed as part of this commitment**

MEAM has been supporting local areas to improve outcomes for individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage for over 10 years. Throughout that time, we have developed in-depth knowledge, reinforced by our network and national evaluation, of what steps local areas and public services can take to improve support, outcomes and wellbeing of people facing multiple disadvantage. However, as noted above government plays a vital role in providing the necessary landscape and environment to encourage and allow local areas and public services to take those steps. A commitment to multiple disadvantage in the Spending Review would require two key

elements:

**(i) Well-funded support services**

First and foremost, government must provide adequate funding for frontline support services, statutory and voluntary, to operate effectively and efficiently. Individual public service sectors such as substance misuse treatment, homelessness and housing, criminal justice, mental health and domestic/sexual violence need sufficient resources in order to provide appropriate support for people facing multiple disadvantage.

Insufficient funding means public services have fewer staff, leading to higher individual caseloads and reduced personalised support. Services with inadequate resources will often be forced to create eligibility criteria as well as stricter behavioural requirements for individuals. In our experience this can result in clients being forced to adapt to the needs of services rather than the other way round. Individuals fail to receive flexible support and levels of unmet need increase. This results in poorer health, wellbeing, social and economic outcomes for more marginalised and vulnerable groups. As these worsen it leads to costlier interventions in time, for example through acute health care services or criminal justice involvement.

We do not seek to set out the specific requirements for each sector in this document, but support the submissions and work of our members Clinks, Collective Voice, Mind and Homeless Link in regards to specific funding for the relevant sectors. Government needs to provide long term and stable funding commitments under the CSR for each sector if public services are to have the stability to support people facing the most complex needs.

**(ii) Encouraging collaboration**

Secondly, government needs to ensure that local public services are incentivised to work together to tackle multiple disadvantage, not to work in silos. The findings from our MEAM Approach evaluation and that of Fulfilling Lives programmes clearly demonstrates why this is so important for people facing multiple disadvantage.

As just one example, a rough sleeper with alcohol issues and pulmonary problems should receive support from housing, substance misuse treatment and health care services simultaneously. Those agencies must work together with a coordinated approach to supporting the individual. Such collaboration reduces the risk of duplications, improves efficiencies and increases the likelihood of success as improvements in one aspect of an individual's life will have positive impact on others.

At present, however, the way in which individual government departments set national policies, funding streams, commissioning outcomes and accountability frameworks drives local public services apart rather than pulling them together. There is for example limited exploration of what impact policy or funding changes in one department will have on other parts of the system or the ability for successful policies in one department to be rewarded by others where the benefit is felt. This plays out in the same way locally, with services tending to focus on the direct targets they are set and having little incentive to do work which might benefit a different part of the system.

The government must do more to enhance and encourage local collaboration between public services and to lead by example. One step is for the CSR to prioritise cross departmental programmes and funding of public services, acknowledging that individual departments themselves can't address people's lives without the support, input and influence of others.

### **Shared Outcomes Fund on multiple disadvantage**

The commitment in Budget 2020 to fund the Better Supporting People with Multiple Complex Needs programme under the Shared Outcomes Fund is extremely welcome. It shows considerable commitment to the issues outlined in this document and we are pleased the programme will take a systemic learning approach rather than simply focusing on delivery in local areas. We will continue to engage with civil servants on the programme and to support its implementation.

However, it is vital that this programme is not seen as a one-off standalone programme of work. A longer term commitment should be made within the CSR to providing sufficient resources to fund the roll out and wider implementation of the programme (based on a successful evaluation). A commitment should also be made to ensure that all relevant departments can build on the findings from the programme and make changes to the way that they work on multiple disadvantage in the longer-term.

## Summary:

In summary, we recommend that this CSR:

- Formally announces multiple disadvantage as a national, cross-departmental priority and makes a clear commitment to tackling multiple disadvantage as part of the government's aim to improve outcomes from public services.
- Commits to providing stable, long-term funding for all relevant services that support people facing multiple disadvantage
- Promotes the financial commitment already made to the Shared Outcomes Fund programme on multiple disadvantage and earmarks funding for its further roll-out (based on a successful evaluation)
- Commits to all departments reviewing their practice as a result of the findings of the Shared Outcomes Fund programme so that local areas are better incentivised to collaborate to tackle multiple disadvantage.
- Prioritises cross-departmental programmes and funding of public services, acknowledging that individual departments themselves can't address people's lives without the support, input and influence of others.