

Comprehensive Spending Review 2021

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 and sexual violence/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 ‘revolving’ between services, never getting the holistic support they need, and at significant cost to the public purse. Estimates for the number of people facing multiple disadvantage vary depending on how the term is defined. However, as an 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.¹

MEAM supports over 40 local areas across the country to develop effective, coordinated approaches to multiple disadvantage that increase wellbeing, improve individuals’ outcomes 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 eleven are part of the National Lottery Community Fund’s Fulfilling Lives programme, which we are pleased to support.

A continued focus on multiple disadvantage

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021 setting out government’s spending priorities for the next three years and in particular the aim of ensuring strong and innovative public services for all. A spending review that takes a 3 year approach should enable local areas to implement longer lasting change for people facing multiple disadvantage.

¹ [MEAM and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation \(2015\) Individuals with multiple needs: the case for a national focus, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation](#)

This year we welcomed government's recognition of multiple disadvantage as a national, cross-departmental priority through its implementation of the Changing Futures Programme. With leadership from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, this cross-government programme will improve the way that local systems and services work for adults experiencing multiple disadvantage and use the learning to influence future government programmes and policy.

However, investment in the 15 Changing Futures programme areas alone will not be enough to create a *nationwide* focus on multiple disadvantage. This will require a stronger focus on supporting local areas outside the programme and ensuring a legacy for the work of MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas over the last decade. Over 90 areas across the country applied for the Changing Futures programme to support collaborative work across local public services to address the needs of people experiencing multiple disadvantage and it is vital that they are supported in the years ahead.

The last eighteen months has shown that there is a clear need for commitment to local action on multiple disadvantage. During the Covid-19 response, a wide range of flexibilities and adaptations were implemented at pace across local services supporting people facing multiple disadvantage.² However, those services can only continue to do this when the right resources, incentives and leadership are put in place by national government.

Actions needed within this spending review

The Spending Review provides an opportunity for government to put in place three key building blocks that can support the development of effective policy on multiple disadvantage in the years ahead:

(i) A clear commitment to multiple disadvantage and a focus on learning

The government should build on its commitment to the Changing Futures Programme by making a clear statement in the Spending Review about the importance of tackling multiple disadvantage. This would outline its understanding of the problem and its willingness to direct government resources and policy development towards this challenge.

As part of this there must be a clear commitment to supporting the Changing Futures programme and to ensuring that learning from this - and from other areas tackling multiple disadvantage - informs policy across all relevant government departments. The Spending Review should support the core Changing Futures team across the three year programme and ensure that all relevant departments are able to engage meaningfully with a senior cross-departmental mechanism to drive collective policy development. This should be backed by a ministerial level mechanism, for example, a Cabinet Committee on multiple disadvantage.

² [MEAM \(2020\) Flexible responses during the Coronavirus crisis: rapid evidence gathering](#)

In addition, Project ADDER and the Prison Leavers Programme (PLP) (both of which were also funded through the Shared Outcomes Fund) are focussed on addressing complex social problems that require multi-agency working and all these programmes should clearly relate to and inform one another. Both ADDER and the PLP programme, will pilot new ways of working that could have huge benefit to people facing multiple disadvantage. It is vital however that the clear intention of piloting programmes is to develop learning that leads to long-term sustainable funding for interventions that work.

(ii) Secure funding

Alongside a clear commitment to tackling multiple disadvantage, there must be continued, secure and long-term investment in the public services that support people on a daily basis. Individual 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.

The four MEAM organisations have made individual representations to the Spending Review highlighting what is needed within each of the sectors they represent. MEAM fully endorses these suggestions. In particular we highlight:

The asks from **Homeless Link** to:

- Match enhanced investment in rough sleeping services during COVID-19 with a £132.5 million annual boost to the Rough Sleeping Initiative through to 2024/25, compared to 2021/22 levels.
- Deliver this through a simplified and long-term, guaranteed grant programme to local authorities.
- Commit £150.3 million annually for an initial three years for a national Housing First programme, led by DLUHC but with cross-departmental investment and stewardship.
- Commit to a ten-year investment plan to realise the 90,000 social rent homes that England needs per year.
- Unfreeze the Local Housing Allowance so that it continues to cover at least the 30th percentile of local rents.

The asks from **Collective Voice** to:

- Implement the whole-system, long-term project of rebuilding the treatment sector advocated by Dame Carol Black in her Independent Review of Drugs. This programme, if properly funded, could save the lives of over 3,000 opiate users, bring 95,000 new people into recovery, prevent 2.8 million crimes, and save many billions of pounds for the public purse. The business case for investment is clear with every £1 spent on drug treatment saving £4 from reduced demand on health, prisons, police and emergency services.
- Ensure a multi-year settlement to provide frontline services with the security they need to plan effectively for the future.

- While there has been much focus on drug treatment, alcohol use should not be forgotten in the government's plans to improve the nation's health, reduce crime and level up communities. Every £1 spent on alcohol treatment saves £3, but just one in five people who need treatment for alcohol dependency receive it.

The ask from **Mind** that:

- Government provide funding to meet the costs of vital reforms to the Mental Health Act. No funding has been made available to implement the ambitions set out in the Mental Health Act White Paper. These stand at £1.9bn, alongside approximately £3bn capital investment over three years (above day-to-day spending) towards making the mental health estate safe and fit for purpose and investing in digital transformation. This cannot come from baseline funding.

The asks from **Clinks** for:

- Commitment to sufficient funding to achieve national coverage of programmes that address health inequalities for people in contact with the criminal justice system, such as RECONNECT and Community Sentence Treatment Requirements.
- Cross departmental investment to provide long-term support for women's centres to realise the ambitions of the Female Offender Strategy and ensure that vulnerable women get support to prevent their contact with the criminal justice system and divert them away from it as early as possible.
Long-term grant funding for voluntary organisations led by and focussed on racially minoritised people as part of a wider cross-government strategy to address racial inequality and racism in the criminal justice system.

(iii) Coordinated investment

Finally, the Spending Review provides an opportunity for a step-change in the way that government funding supports its policy ambitions for tackling multiple disadvantage. At present, at least 6 departments have significant programmes in place that have the potential to support people facing multiple disadvantage. However, in practice, these programmes are usually focused on and driven by singular departmental priorities, there is limited coordination of them across government and learning is rarely collated and shared to drive cross-government reform and policy development.

The departmental investment made in this Spending Review should be provided alongside a commitment that new processes will be put in place to create the conditions for cross-departmental collaboration and learning, ensuring that the investment government makes as a whole can have the strongest possible positive impact on people facing multiple disadvantage.

During the summer, the MEAM Coalition interviewed a cross section of MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas. We sought their views on whether current funding available for homelessness, substance misuse, domestic/sexual violence and abuse, contact with the criminal justice system and mental ill health supports their local work on multiple

disadvantage. We wanted to understand whether the existing flow of money into local authorities and other partners reinforces a silo approach to working or whether individual sources of funding were creating the conditions for cross sector collaboration and systemic change over time.

Key findings from our research revealed:

- Local areas recognise that the flow of resource from central government into local areas has allowed them to address specific needs such as addressing rising rough sleeping numbers. However, there remains concern as to how they can continue to support people to make lasting change without tackling systemic barriers such as access to wider support services and appropriate housing.
- There is a perception that there is a lack of recognition within government as to what it takes to achieve system change (for example, time required to build relationships, capacity to recruit the right skills and expertise, time to create meaningful lived experience involvement) and that this is not possible within a number of current funding streams.
- Many funding streams are simply too short term (many are for only 12 months) providing insufficient time to mobilise, deliver and evaluate a service. Local areas feel they cannot afford to build too many foundations on a pot of money that might end in a year. Providers are left to employ people on temporary contracts and have difficulty maintaining and developing workforce expertise in this insecure environment.
- Specific groups of people are being overlooked including women, people from black and minority ethnic communities and people subject to immigration control including no recourse to public funds.
- A lack of capacity within local authority commissioning teams is preventing some areas from applying for available funding. Where applications are made, there is frustration at the short timeframes in which bids need to be submitted, and the potential for duplication where different government departments are offering support for similar programmes at the same time.
- There is a perception that there is a lack of communication and joint learning between existing government programmes at a national level.

MEAM will be conducting a programme of practical work in the coming months about how these issues can be addressed. We would be pleased to contribute learning from this work to support the development of a new coordination mechanism across government.

Summary

In summary, we recommend that this CSR:

- Makes a clear commitment to tackling multiple disadvantage with a focus on cross departmental learning;

- Ensures continued, secure and long-term investment in the public services that support people experiencing multiple disadvantage on a daily basis; and
- Signals a step-change in the way that government funding supports its policy ambitions for tackling multiple disadvantage by ensuring new processes are in place to create the conditions for cross-departmental collaboration and learning. This will allow the investment that government makes as a whole to have the strongest possible positive impact on people facing multiple disadvantage.