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# FUTURE FOCUS

Where next  
for policy  
on multiple  
disadvantage?

**M** Making Every  
**E** Adult Matter  
**A**  
**M**

**CLINKS**

**∞**  
Homeless Link

mind



## ABOUT MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE

People facing multiple disadvantage experience a combination of problems. For many, their current circumstances are shaped by long-term experiences of poverty, deprivation, trauma, abuse and neglect. Many also face racism, sexism and homophobia. These structural inequalities intersect in different ways, manifesting in a combination of experiences including homelessness, substance misuse, domestic violence, contact with the criminal justice system and mental ill health.

Multiple disadvantage is a systemic, not an individual issue. People facing multiple disadvantage live in every area of the country. They 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.



## FUTURE FOCUS: WHERE NEXT FOR POLICY ON MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE?

Over the last decade, significant progress has been made on tackling multiple disadvantage. Local areas across the country are increasingly working to transform services and systems, while national government is exploring how to support and enable reform.

Based on the learning to date, there is an opportunity to forge a policy environment that can further incentivise and accelerate this work.

To achieve that, government and interested partners need to explore some key, unresolved questions. These four questions go to the heart of what is needed to embed change, challenge the underlying systemic structures that drive current service responses, and resolve the few but persistent policy challenges that remain.

These questions will form the basis of Future Focus, our commission on the future of multiple disadvantage policy.

As we head towards the next election we will be inviting politicians, policymakers, sector leaders and people with lived experience to reflect on these questions and to help shape the answers that are needed for the future.

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## ACCOUNTABILITY AND FUNDING

We need a home in government for multiple disadvantage, a clear sense of strategy and accountability, and a change in the way that funding (and outcomes) flow to this issue.

**Where should responsibility lie within government for tackling multiple disadvantage and how do we determine shared outcomes that can support the flow of funding to local areas to enable rather than hinder systemic change?**

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## RELATIONAL SYSTEMS

Public services across the board need to take a more relational, coproduced and trauma-informed approach to service delivery. This will require significant levels of training and investment, but crucially also the creation of systems/structures that promote such ways of working. Good people can't work well in bad systems.

**What will it take to commission and deliver truly relational services within our local systems?**

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## PERSISTENT SILOS

Services are not working well together. Prison release, hospital discharge and failure to respond to dual diagnosis are key examples of this. This is despite the long-term existence of local protocols and national guidance to address these issues. We need to stop creating this failure demand if we are to support people properly.

**How do we address the system failures that stop our public services working effectively together?**

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## EQUITY

Structural inequalities, stigma and discrimination affect the way in which individuals experience multiple disadvantage. Responding to individual need should reflect individual experience.

**How should we take an intersectional approach to multiple disadvantage to ensure nobody is left behind?**





### **Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)**

is a coalition of the national charities Clinks, Collective Voice, Homeless Link and Mind, formed in 2009 to transform services, systems and policy for people facing multiple disadvantage. Working across government and with more than 50 local areas, we have helped to create a step-change in how local areas and national policymakers recognise and respond to people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

[www.meam.org.uk](http://www.meam.org.uk)

MEAM is supported by:

**Lankelly Chase**

