



Making Every Adult Matter

Frequently Asked Questions - updated October 2012

What is MEAM?

MEAM is a coalition of four national charities - Clinks, DrugScope, Homeless Link and Mind - formed to influence policy and services for adults facing multiple needs and exclusions. Together the charities represent over 1600 frontline organisations working in the criminal justice, drug treatment, homelessness and mental health sectors. The coalition was formed in 2008 and is generously supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Who experiences multiple needs and exclusions?

People facing multiple needs and exclusions are in every community in Britain:

- **They experience several problems** at the same time, such as mental ill health, homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, offending and family breakdown. They may have one main need complicated by others, or a combination of lower level issues which together are a cause for concern. These problems often develop after traumatic experiences such as abuse or bereavement. They live in poverty and experience stigma and discrimination.
- **They have ineffective contact with services.** People facing multiple needs usually look for help, but most public services are designed to deal with one problem at a time and to support people with single, severe conditions. As a result, professionals often see people with multiple needs (some of which may fall below service thresholds) as 'hard to reach' or 'not my problem'. For the person seeking help this can make services seem unhelpful and uncaring. In contrast to when children are involved, no one takes overall responsibility.
- **And they are living chaotic lives.** Facing multiple problems that exacerbate each other, and lacking effective support from services, people easily end up in a downward spiral of mental ill health, drug and alcohol problems, crime and homelessness. They become trapped, living chaotic lives where escape seems impossible, with no one offering a way out.¹

We estimate that there are approximately 60,000 adults in this situation at any one time in England², with more people constantly moving in and out of the group. While relatively small in number, this group imposes disproportionate costs on government and society.

¹ Definition taken from: MEAM and Revolving Doors (2011) *Turning the Tide: A vision paper for multiple needs and exclusions*, MEAM/RDA, London, p.4

² MEAM (2009) *A four-point manifesto for tackling multiple needs and exclusions*, MEAM, London, p.8

What is the MEAM vision?

Our vision is simple: that in every local area people experiencing multiple needs are:

- Supported by effective, coordinated services
- Empowered to tackle their problems, reach their full potential and contribute to their communities.

Our ambition is for a national programme of investment and reform to improve the well-being and life chances of adults facing multiple needs and exclusions.

What has MEAM done to date?

Achieving the vision requires changes to policy and practice. Our work to date has included:

- **Policy:** MEAM has sought to raise the issue of multiple needs and exclusions on the political agenda, develop a cross-party consensus for action, and support government to develop policies that make it the norm for leaders in local areas to put coordinated services in place (for example, see [Turning the Tide](#) published with Revolving Doors). In recent months the government's social justice strategy and the homelessness strategy have made commitments to coordinated interventions:

"We recognise that more can be done to support those who are least well served by current approaches. Through this strategy and the work that follows, we want to encourage local areas to design and commission interventions that are better coordinated and that deliver multiple outcomes."

(Social Justice: Transforming Lives, HM Government, 2012)

"The Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition has demonstrated how intensive case management coupled with a flexible response from local agencies can benefit vulnerable people. Coordination is already common in serious circumstances such as child protection, domestic violence and serious ex-offenders and coordinated approaches such as those developed by MEAM should be used more widely for individuals facing multiple needs and exclusions"

(Making Every Contact Count - A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness, DCLG, 2012)

- **Practice:** During 2011 MEAM supported three pilot areas to better coordinate existing services for people facing multiple needs and exclusions and shared its learning with others looking to develop similar interventions. Over 300 delegates attended a series of regional events held in early 2012 and in June we published an [evaluation of the pilots](#) from Pro Bono Economics and FTI Consulting. The evaluation provides some of the strongest data available about wellbeing and the changing pattern of service use costs as individuals engage with coordinated interventions.

What next?

In recent months MEAM has undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of its work to date and discussed 'phase three' with a range of stakeholders. Our future plans involve supporting local networks in a much larger number of local areas to design and deliver coordinated interventions, while also continuing our policy and research work. We have developed four strategic outcomes to guide this work and would be happy to provide more detail on request.

For further information on MEAM please see <http://www.meam.org.uk> or contact the Project Director, Oliver Hilbery: 07810 867 190 | oliver.hilbery@meam.org.uk