



# Future Focus: Where next for policy on multiple disadvantage?

## FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

Over the last 12 months, our policy commission Future Focus has been exploring the next steps for policy on multiple disadvantage.

In May we published a set of [essays](#), with contributions from Labour voices including Andy Burnham, Josh MacAlister and Jess Phillips. In this briefing we look at the first steps a Labour government can take to lay the foundations for successfully tackling multiple disadvantage.

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## WHY ACT?

- **Up to 336,000 people in England are facing multiple disadvantage.** They live within every community and experience a combination of challenges including homelessness, substance misuse, domestic violence, contact with the criminal justice system and mental ill health. Services often fail to meet their needs, meaning that significant resources are used on emergency and unplanned interventions, without people receiving the coordinated support they need to improve their lives. People in this group often die prematurely, with relative mortality far in excess of people living in the most deprived communities in England.
- **Long-term [evidence](#) shows that local areas which take a more coordinated approach** can reduce rough sleeping by 89% and achieve statistically significant reductions in A&E attendance (37%), non-elective acute hospital admissions (50%), arrests (32%) and nights in prison (37%).
- **Tackling multiple disadvantage is key to Labour achieving its plans.** Labour can only deliver on its mission-driven objectives to end homelessness, take a whole government approach to mental health, relieve pressure on the criminal justice system, and halve violence against women and girls within a decade, by addressing the way that services and systems work for everyone, including people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

## WHAT CAN A LABOUR GOVERNMENT DO RIGHT NOW?

We would like to see the Labour government take the following immediate steps to lay the foundations for tackling multiple disadvantage, now and in future:

### 1. Establish a home in government for multiple disadvantage.

To create meaningful progress on tackling multiple disadvantage, there needs to be a home at the centre of government for multiple disadvantage, accountable for ensuring that government policies and funding incentivise coordinated approaches to creating positive change.

The experience from Labour's Social Exclusion Unit in the late 1990s shows that driving cross-departmental change requires strong, cross-sector leadership from the centre. A home in government should be closely linked to and able to coordinate work across the new homelessness reduction programme, the mission boards and other relevant parts of government.

### 2. Clearly articulate a commitment to multiple disadvantage, supported by funding to enable local areas to build on progress to date.

The Labour government must clearly articulate the problem of multiple disadvantage, drawing on progress already made in Labour-led local areas such as Greater Manchester, Westminster and Stoke-on-Trent.

In the first instance, this commitment may be demonstrated by continuing the Changing Futures programme for tackling multiple disadvantage, with a view to more ambitious and wide-ranging reform in future.

Any extension of Changing Futures should focus on leadership and learning as well as programme delivery. This should include cross-departmental agreement on outcomes and what 'good' looks like in relation to multiple disadvantage, giving local areas the autonomy to design and deliver services appropriate to local need.

### 3. Work across government to focus on the big changes needed.

The Labour government must commit to long-term actions to enable and incentivise local action on multiple disadvantage and improve how public services work with people, prevent failure between agencies and take an intersectional approach. For example, this includes aligned funding and outcomes across government, cross-departmental responsibility, promotion of relational service commissioning, a greater focus on 'place' and a reduction of system-to-system failures.

This will support and facilitate local responses to multiple disadvantage and support the vital cross-sector relationship building, locally and nationally, that is necessary to support people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

### 4. Involve people with lived experience in the design and delivery of policy.

Government can help to create the conditions for change, but only by working alongside people with lived experience. No policy or system should be designed without truly understanding the human impact.

Labour has already set a precedent for this, indicating its commitment to coproduction of policy in other areas, for example alongside people with disabilities. The Labour government should commit to creating space for listening to and working alongside people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage and commit to acting on their knowledge and expertise.

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.

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