

## Seminar 10: Youth Homelessness (Room: 00.12)

Chair: Eoin O'Sullivan, IE

### Bill Rowlands, UK: 'Impossible to Navigate' – Exploring Youth Homelessness through the Lens of Neurodiversity



**Bill Rowlands is the Head of End Youth Homelessness Cymru. His research interests lie in the areas of homelessness, youth disadvantage and participatory research methods. He graduated with an MSc in Public Policy from Cardiff University in 2017 and he previously studied Politics at Cardiff University.**

End Youth Homelessness Cymru is a national Welsh coalition working collaboratively towards ending youth homelessness in Wales. Over the course of our existence, we've gathered anecdotal evidence on the prevalence of homelessness amongst neurodivergent youth and the additional inaccessibility of housing and homelessness service for the said group of young people. To examine the intersection of neurodiversity and youth homelessness further, we carried out a qualitative research exploring the lived realities of both neurodivergent young people accessing homelessness services and practitioners working within those services.

This presentation will explore the main findings of our research project, including pathways into youth homelessness, barriers to accessing and providing support, as well as best practice and potential solutions to preventing youth homelessness and improving the accessibility and inclusivity of housing services for neurodivergent young people.

In line with our participatory approach, the findings of the research will be explored through the voices of both young people and practitioners.

### Paula Mayock, IE: Cycling the Service System: Young People's Paths Through and Out of Homelessness

**Dr. Paula Mayock is an Associate Professor at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. Her research focuses primarily on the lives and experiences of marginalised youth and adult populations, covering areas such as homelessness, drug use and drug problems. Paula is the author of numerous articles, book chapters and research reports and is an Associate Editor of the international journal Addiction.**



Youth homelessness is a significant problem across Europe, with growing numbers of young people recorded as homeless in several countries. Relative to the large body of research examining risk factors for – or determinants of – youth homelessness, fewer studies have investigated the journeys embarked on by young people after they first experience homelessness. This paper examines young people's paths through and, in some cases, out of homelessness based on the findings of a biographical longitudinal study of homeless youth in Ireland. Conducted between 2013 and 2016, the research involved the collection of data at two points in time. At baseline, 40 young people aged 16–24 years and 10 of their family members were recruited (Phase 1) and, at the point of follow-up two years later (Phase 2), 74% of participants were retained in the study. Over the course of the study, low levels of exiting were recorded, with less than one quarter of the young people having achieved housing stability by Phase 2. Those who had transitioned to housing tended to report lower levels of mobility and need, had positive relationships with service providers and strong family support. The challenges encountered by a majority in their attempts to carve a route to housing were diverse and included the lack of affordable housing, their inadequate experience of navigating the private rental market and inadequate supports. Very often, young people found themselves alternating between multiple adult homelessness services, sometimes amid periods of hidden homelessness, a pattern which also negatively impacted their ability to form and maintain meaningful relationships with service professionals. With a sense of 'limbo' or stasis



# 17th European Research Conference

14th and 15th September, 2023



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permeating their accounts, most expressed a lack of faith in the service systems designed to meet their needs. The implications of the study's findings for policy and service provision are discussed.