

Seminar 10: Health and Homelessness (Room: TBD) - Chair: Nicholas Pleace, UK

István Sziklai and Kata Miklós, HU: "System Deficits in Everyday Life" - On the Situation of People Living in Homelessness and with Psychiatric Illness and Mental Disorder in Budapest, and their Support Systems

Our research is about the situation of people living in homelessness and with psychiatric illness or mental disorder in Budapest and the state of their support systems. The research, which took place between October 2022 and October 2023, was carried out in cooperation with the Semmelweis University and the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta. 540 people experiencing homelessness were surveyed and focus groups were conducted with health and social professionals.

In addition to access to social and health services, we have looked at how to navigate these systems. Some homeless people are in a particularly poor mental state and present a significant challenge to the social services system for which the care system is not prepared or sometimes empowered.

The likelihood of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has been demonstrated in several cases. In addition, the care of homeless people with dementia is a growing problem in homeless care.

The mapping of the various barriers specifically highlighted the need for targeted training of professional support workers, who are overburdened by the lack of a natural support system, and the fundamental gaps in these professional support systems.

Recommendations: Ongoing collaboration between social and health services, embedded in protocols and funding system. Increasing the role and capacity of community-based care in social services necessary, and specific support programmes for health and social care professionals needed.



Istvan SZIKLAI, Phd - teaching social policy at the University of ELTE, Budapest Faculty of Social Science since 2006 and director of the Institute for Social Studies at the university. He is the leader of Budapest Social Services Support Network dedicated to support the community-based social services and residential care homes for homeless people, frail elderly persons, disabled people,, children in need. The support focuses primarily on the social professionals including front-line workers and leaders as well.



Kata MIKLÓS - social policy expert, managing different social projects, manager of Budapest Social Services Support Network. She was deeply involved in the equal rights, self-interest representation movement in Hungary, especially in the field of the physically disabled persons.

John Cowman, IE: Counting Housing Needs among Individuals with Mental Health Difficulties in a Mental Health Inpatient unit in Dublin

In Ireland, while homeless figures continue to reach new record highs, there is an increasing awareness these figures are a considerable underestimate of the real scale of the issue. Traditionally Irish mental health services did not routinely collect homeless and housing need data and so mental health housing need is largely invisible. For example, the 2023 figures for one local authority recorded three applicants for social housing on the basis of mental health, while one Community Mental Health Team identified 24 service users registered for housing on that local authority housing waiting list.

This study was part of a larger study to explore housing need among people with mental health difficulties. The purpose of this part of the study was to identify the prevalence of housing need among inpatients on the acute inpatient unit and to see whether the level of need changed since a similar study six years earlier. The study took place on a psychiatric inpatient unit in a large general hospital in Dublin. Nurse Managers provided the quantitative data each week for 12 months. Ethical approval was granted by the SJS/AMNCH Research Ethics Committee.

On average 55% of inpatients had accommodation related needs. Fifteen (32%) were considered delayed discharge and 97% of these had accommodation related needs. An inpatient was discharged to NFA every eight days, and to homeless services every 13 days. Twelve individuals (26%) were waiting for a particular mental health or care placement and 25% of these could live in independent accommodation if appropriate supports were available. There was a 44% increase in housing need among inpatients over six years. This notably reflected a 133% increase in females discharged to homeless services.

The study found higher than expected housing need, which is largely invisible. Planning must be informed by accurate data on housing need.



John Cowman is a Housing Coordinator in mental health services in Dublin. He is a qualified social worker who has worked in specialist housing roles since 2013. His main focus is on promoting recovery oriented housing and supports for people with mental health disabilities, in particular, ways to elicit and incorporate the service user's subjective needs and preferences. John has developed several innovative interagency housing projects and also been involved in research and evaluation. John is currently a PhD student at Queen's University Belfast. His PhD study is exploring the housing needs of people in psychiatric in-patient care.

Alex Bax, Theo Jackson, UK: Barometer of Homelessness and Inclusion Health

Pathway, a UK-based homeless and inclusion health charity, this year published its first Barometer of Homeless and Inclusion Health, in conjunction with Crisis. It provides an independent account of the state of homeless and inclusion health in England, considering access to and experience of healthcare, health outcomes and the social determinants of health.

We analysed four sources of evidence for the report:

- i. Literature: A rapid scoping review of recent literature on inclusion health (85 UK based pieces).
- ii. Data: Public health data presented in the 'Spotlight' analytical tool, from the UK Government's Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID).
- iii. Hospital Needs Assessments: 16 health needs assessment reports examining how hospital systems provide care to people experiencing homelessness.
- iv. Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health Survey: A cross-sectional survey of the Faculty of Homeless and Inclusion Health, a membership organisation for people involved in health care for inclusion health groups.

The report provides important insights for policy makers and commissioners. It describes how pressures on the healthcare system drive service inflexibility, with high thresholds. Prevention opportunities are therefore missed. Stigma and discrimination are barriers to care, and are found to drive unsafe clinical practice. Poor outcomes and experiences across all services examined point to system failure, demanding fundamental reform. The report describes the apparent choice between specialist and mainstream services as a false dichotomy; the complex relationship between the two points to the need for whole system approach.

Inclusion health groups are near-invisible within health data, a barrier to effective service commissioning. Improved recording of housing status in health settings would improve the statistical visibility of people experiencing homelessness. The report highlights gaps in research and evidence for several key topics, including questions about the role of health and care in homelessness prevention and effective interventions to challenge stigma.



Alex Bax is the Chief Executive of Pathway, the UK's leading homeless and inclusion health charity. He was closely involved in the development of the Barometer of Homelessness. Alex joined Pathway in 2010. He brings two decades of public health experience, as a senior advisor to Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson. He led the development of London's first statutory health inequalities strategy, oversaw major reviews of planning policy for London, and chaired London's European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund Committees. Alex became a member (through distinction) of the UK Faculty of Public Health in 2012. Alex's work with the Mayor's Office, National Institute for Clinical Excellence, Greater London Alcohol and Drugs Alliance and as a London Child Poverty Commissioner offer him unique insights into the long-term social determinants of health, matched only by his passion for fairness and equality. In addition to his work with Pathway, Alex is a visiting fellow at the Institute of Health and Human Development at the University of East London. He is also Chair of My Fair London.



Theo Jackson is Pathway's Research and Data Lead, supporting specialist services with monitoring and evaluation, working to improve the availability and use of healthcare data for Inclusion Health groups, conducting research and leading on organisational research strategy. Before joining Pathway, Theo worked as a coordinator at a charity supporting homeless migrants in Copenhagen and has volunteered with grassroots organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers in England, Denmark and Greece. Theo has an MA in Cognitive Science and Communication and his previous research has focussed on evaluating cost-effective mental health interventions.