

Seminar 16: Service Design (Room: TBD) - Chair: Mike Allen, IE

Valeria Ruiz and Alicia García Rodríguez-Marín, ES: The Early Care Approach. An Assessment of Deinstitutionalisation of Homelessness

Right to Housing is an innovative program that began its development in Spain in 2022 with a clear objective of transforming the homelessness support system. One of its main lines of action is "Early Attention" aimed at preventing the institutionalization of individuals with a brief history of homelessness by offering housing solutions from an autonomy-focused approach.

To measure the project's impact, an evaluation was conducted with two equivalent groups: 221 individuals in the experimental group (EG) and 108 in the control group (CG). From the interim results obtained multiple insights have been derived. The impact of the first 7 months of support shows a clear increase in key aspects such as autonomy, decision-making capacity, self-esteem, and motivation for change. Improvement in emotional well-being and quality of life has emerged as pivotal factors for life stability.

Overall, a highly positive impact has been noted on the digital divide, prospects for the future and social capital, with substantial evidence indicating enhancements in social relationships, community integration and a sense of belonging within the neighbourhood.

Regarding major impact indicators: in employment terms, 40.1% of the EG have undergone job interviews in the last 3 months compared to 26.7% of the CG and the percentage of employed individuals in EG has doubled since the outset. Concerning housing, 54% of participants in the EG have found a housing solution with program support and 43% consider it probable or highly probable to find or remain autonomously housed in their current accommodation.

In conclusion, the program has achieved a 24.5% rate of autonomous exits within 7 months with an expected extra 29% increase over the next 3 months. This signifies that in just 10 months of support more than half of the individuals who started the program will be out of homelessness.



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Alicia García, graduate in Political Science from the Complutense University of Madrid and a masters degree in International Relations from the University of Sussex. She has developed her professional career in the field of human rights with various groups (whistleblowers, migrants, and people in situation of homeless). For the past two years, she has been part of the international advocacy team at HOGAR SÍ, working on the development of the Derechos a la Vivienda and Hay Futuro Innovation Projects, initiatives aimed at deinstitutionalization and homelessness eradication.

Branagh O'Shaughnessy and Paula Mayock, IE: Recovery from Homelessness and Substance Use Disorder: A Qualitative Examination

Background: The complex relationship between homelessness and substance use disorder (SUD) and the recovery journey out of homelessness and SUD are only partially captured in existing research. Research in this area is dominated by quantitative methods which do not capture how individuals navigate homelessness and treatment services in their efforts to overcome adversity and embark on recovery. Through the lens of complex recovery, this research aimed to examine 60 homelessness service users' conceptions of recovery and their personal recovery journeys.

Method: Semi-structured interviews were carried out with participants in three service contexts in Ireland: emergency accommodation (n = 25), transitional housing (n = 15), and housing with supports (n = 20). Interview transcripts were coded and analysed thematically. All participants had lifetime SUD and experiences of homelessness.

Results: Themes generated from the data include: Recovery signifiers and supports; A broken homelessness service

system; Centrality of personal relationships; and Housing as a shot at life. Recovery signifiers included self-discovery and being free of dependency. Treatment experiences were diverse, the success of which depended on the approach employed and it's fit with the individual. The homelessness service system was often described as fragmented, although some felt lucky to have supportive case managers. Family reconnection was often a recovery goal, especially reconnection with children. Contrasting experiences of housed versus unhoused participants indicated that home was a safe haven for recovery and reconnection. Relying on hostels was risky for recovery and also for personal safety. Discussion: Findings support a holistic conceptualisation of recovery in the context of homelessness and SUD. They also support person-centred programmes that prioritise housing and supportive relationships as facilitators of the recovery process. At policy level, a fusion of housing-led, community-based approaches and person-centred programmes can comprehensively address the overlapping challenges of homelessness and SUD.



Dr. Branagh O'Shaughnessy is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. Her research focuses on the psychological well-being of adults experiencing homelessness and mental health issues, with particular interest in empowering community-based programmes.



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 to the international journal "Addiction".