

FACTSHEET 1: COMPLEX NEEDS AND DUAL DIAGNOSIS



INTRODUCTION

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Complex Needs and Dual Diagnosis (APPG) was established in 2007 in recognition of the fact that people seeking help often have a number of over-lapping needs. Through its work the APPG brings stakeholders together to ensure that this social issue remains on the political agenda and shapes future government policy. The Group is co-chaired by Lord Victor Adebawale CBE and David Burrowes MP. The secretariat is provided by Turning Point.

In most cases the services people access are delivered by separate providers, with separate funding streams and competing outcome measures in place. The result is that people with multiple and/or complex needs fall through the gaps in service provision. Although integrated services are cited as the best way to address the gaps that exist, they remain the exception rather than the rule. This points to institutional barriers in commissioning, service design and delivery that need to be overcome if people are to receive the support they need.

THE INQUIRY

In the summer of 2013 the APPG launched an inquiry into 'complex needs.' Aims of the inquiry include:

- Defining what the APPG means by 'complex needs' to inform our work going forward
- Speak to experts with experience to highlight the barriers and challenges people with complex needs experience – barriers that have challenged successive governments.
- Highlight examples of good practice where these challenges have been overcome.

The inquiry is ongoing, with a proposed timeframe of 18 months, and will combine the use of surveys, evidence sessions, group discussions and ongoing dialogues with stakeholders.

WHAT DOES COMPLEX NEEDS MEAN?

Everyone has a different view of what the term 'complex needs' means. It is intentionally a fluid term so any definition we drew was inevitably going to be broad. We have, however, outlined what the APPG means by this term based on consultation with our members and stakeholders.

DEFINING COMPLEX NEEDS

- A person with 'complex needs' is someone with two or more needs affecting their physical, mental, social or financial wellbeing.
- Such needs typically interact with and exacerbate one another leading to individuals experiencing several problems simultaneously.
- These needs are often severe and/or long standing, often proving difficult to ascertain, diagnose or treat.
- Individuals with complex needs are often at, or vulnerable to reaching crisis point and experience barriers to accessing services; usually requiring support from two or more services/agencies.

Someone described as having complex needs will have (although not limited to) a co-morbidity of two or more of the following:

- Mental health issues
- Substance misuse issues
- A dual diagnosis of mental health and substance misuse issues
- A physical health condition
- A learning disability
- A history of offending behaviour
- A physical disability
- Employment problems
- Homelessness or housing issues

- Family or relationship difficulties
- Domestic violence
- Social isolation
- Poverty
- Trauma (physical, psychological or social)

These needs are often severe, long-standing, difficult to diagnose and therefore to treat. Ongoing inequalities continue to exist and are only likely to increase as people live longer with a wider range of needs.

To keep up to date on the work of the APPG you can follow us on twitter @APPGComplexNeed or check updates on our website: www.turning-point.co.uk/for-professionals/appg

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WHO IS AFFECTED?

Data on the complex needs people face is not generally recorded by government or shared between commissioners. This means that although there is much anecdotal evidence, much needed statistics are lacking.

What we do know is that as well as thousands of individuals who would fall under our definition, there are many groups within our communities that are more susceptible to having entrenched complex needs and experience staggering health inequalities. These include: Gypsy Roma Traveller communities, sex workers, rough sleepers, ex-offenders and people in the criminal justice system.

As a society we often fail to understand and coordinate the support people need, particularly when they find services difficult to engage with. As we have heard at every meeting of the APPG over the last 5 years, this lack of understanding, priority and support leads to people feeling helpless, facing discrimination and even premature death.

Studies have been conducted which indicate that many people, from different backgrounds, across the country have complex needs and the majority of services are not being designed or delivered in a way that meets them:

- An estimated 60,000 people across England experience at least two of the following: homelessness, reoffending, problematic substance misuse and mental ill health (MEAM)
- Four out of five prisoners who are drug dependent have two additional mental health problems (NHS Confederation)
- More than 4 million people in England with a long-term physical health conditions also have mental health problems (The Kings Fund)
- 83% of sex workers disclosed current or former problematic drug or alcohol use (Eaves and South Bank University)

Insufficient attention in this area, at both the national and local level, mean that people are facing unnecessary social and economic costs that cannot continue unchecked.

WHAT NEXT?

Having established a definition of what we mean by complex needs, the APPG will continue its inquiry by talking with stakeholders to establish why barriers to equal access, integrated care and high quality support exist. Where services are working well we will share what makes this possible where so many areas continue to be challenged by the needs an increasing number of people face.

With increasing national focus on integration, wellbeing, giving patients a voice and reducing inequalities, people with complex needs - not just older people or those with long term conditions – must be considered when solutions are being sought.

As our Chairs often say, this group is the litmus test for reforms.

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