

- A partnership of public health researchers across six Universities in the North East and North Cumbria
- Working with policy makers and practice partners to improve health and wellbeing and tackle inequalities
- A founding member of the NIHR School for Public Health Research (SPHR)

Transforming support for people experiencing homelessness in rural coastal North East England

This policy brief presents key findings and recommendations from multi-study research led by academics from Fuse, the Centre for Translational Research in Public Health, on accessing care and support for people experiencing homelessness in rural coastal North East England.

This research involved analysing emergency healthcare data to understand the health and social needs of people experiencing homelessness accessing emergency healthcare services in Northumberland and North Tyneside.

To gain deeper insights into attendance, interviews and focus groups were held with those with lived experience of homelessness and professionals working across support services.

Additionally, a mapping survey was done to understand the collaborative efforts between various services providing support for people experiencing homelessness in the region.

The findings from these studies were shared with service leaders, staff and people with lived experience during a workshop. The goal was to identify necessary changes, important factors for success, and challenges in the system.

The workshop led to the development of seven recommendations, which were then validated in a subsequent workshop.

The validated recommendations were checked with people with lived experience. This briefing provides actionable recommendations for both policy and practice.

Key Findings

- There are high rates of co-existing conditions among people experiencing homelessness across Northumberland and North Tyneside, likely related to drug and alcohol use, as well as challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and lack of stable housing, all of which contribute to mental health issues.
- Emergency services are available 24/7 and represent the most accessible place for support for all needs.
- There is a low availability of services in Northumberland and North Tyneside that operate outside of the usual working hours.
- High incidences of trauma, and difficult past experiences when reaching out for support amongst people experiencing homelessness, restricts pathways into support.
- Services that support people experiencing homelessness are often fragmented and disconnected from each other. There are many services working in isolation.

- **Long-term funding and resources**

Implement strategic approaches focusing on prevention and sustainable solutions. Foster long-term partnerships and flexible funding commitments.

- **Coordination, connectivity, and communication**

Establish a central coordinating body for multi-agency collaboration. Develop joint practices, frameworks, and promote resource sharing. Ensure transparency in service offerings for better support.

- **Accessible services – pathways to support**

Use targeted outreach strategies, ensure 24/7 access to help. Adopt a life-course approach addressing wider determinants of health. Tailor services for specific needs intersecting with homelessness.

- **Build trust and co-develop services with people with lived experience**

Implement peer-support programs and involve people with lived experience in service design. Create feedback mechanisms for ongoing service improvement.

- **Improved data sharing**

Encourage data sharing between services to minimise trauma and improve client support.

- **Trauma-informed practice**

Train staff at all levels in trauma-informed care. Establish a coordinated entry system following trauma-informed principles. Develop educational resources to raise awareness and reduce stigma.

- **Staff retention and staff wellbeing**

Implement wellbeing initiatives and provide stability for staff, aligning with trauma-informed training.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Fuse, the Centre for Translational Research in Public Health, is a collaboration of six Universities in the North East and North Cumbria of Durham, Cumbria, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside.

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