

CAF/24/15 - Exploring the needs of women with co-occurring homelessness and problem substance use, and their experiences of 'inclusion health services' in meeting these needs.

Background

The number of women who are experiencing homelessness and problems with drugs and/or alcohol in Scotland is increasing. Many of these women have a poor quality of life and struggle to get help within their communities. Women who are experiencing these challenges often resort to using emergency services, which can be costly for the NHS and increase the burden on such services.

Little research has focused specifically on the needs of women who experience both homelessness and problems with drugs and/or alcohol. This has prevented the development of policy and practice to improve their care.

Inclusion health services are teams of specialists who support people who are isolated from mainstream services to access health and social care, improving their health and wellbeing. However, these teams are not equally available across Scotland.

This project wants to find out what the needs of women who are experiencing homelessness and problems with drugs and/or alcohol are, and what services are available for them. The research will also consider the experiences of women using an inclusion health service in NHS Lothian to better understand the challenges they meet in accessing healthcare, and the improvements in health that can result from using an inclusion health service.

Design

The project includes five linked work packages:

Work package 1: Review of literature exploring the experiences of women who experience homelessness and have problems with drugs and/or alcohol.

Work package 2: A mapping exercise to identify services across the UK and Republic of Ireland that support women who experience both homelessness and problems with drugs and/or alcohol.

Work package 3: Surveys research to gather knowledge from professionals within Scottish services that provide support to women who experience both homelessness and problems with drugs and/or alcohol about providing support to women.

Work package 4: One-to-one interviews with women who are experiencing homelessness and problems with drugs and/or alcohol, to understand their experiences of current inclusion health services in meeting their needs and identify service gaps.

Work package 5: A logical sequence of steps, known as a Theory of Change, will be developed for an optimal inclusion health service within Scotland. This will use the findings from work packages 1-4 and will involve patients, professionals, and policymakers in the design.

Women who have experienced homelessness and problems with drugs and/or alcohol will be involved in shaping the design of this project, alongside professionals who work with these women.

Promoting the findings

Each work package will publish findings in academic journals. Social media platforms and presentation at conferences and network meetings will be used to promote the results. Sharing findings with policy makers will aim to inform local and national policy. The findings will also be shared with participants through easy-to-read briefings.