

# Exploring the delivery and impact of the Complex Lives Service: Emerging findings from a mixed-methods evaluation

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## Background

- The Doncaster Council Complex Lives Service provides support to people who face complex needs including homelessness, offending background, mental health difficulties, substance and alcohol misuse.
- It consists of a multi-disciplinary team that closely works with other services e.g. housing and benefit services.
- Support is shaped to clients' needs including help with accessing housing, advocacy, supporting clients to attend appointments and providing social support.
- The service wanted the Health Determinants Research Collaboration to conduct an evaluation to inform service improvement.



## Key components of the service

- The service provided flexible support tailored to individuals' needs including housing support, advocacy and 'little' things like washing clothes - these less formal tasks made clients feel that someone cared.
- The multi-disciplinary approach combining support across several services in one physical space (e.g. DWP and housing services) provided clients with consistency of support.
- The partnership model adopted within Complex Lives supported information sharing across different agencies which was valued by practitioners.



## Challenges of the service

- Having committed, experienced staff was essential but it was challenging retaining them.
- Clients felt there was a lack of transparency in why things happened e.g. why they had to move accommodation, or their support worker changed.
- Insecure funding of the service was detrimental for staff retention and ongoing delivery.
- The service required buy in and resources from other organisations e.g. housing offers were dependent on what was available from local housing associations.
- It was difficult supporting people to move on from the service to enable capacity for new clients.
- There was difficulty providing mental health support especially alongside substance misuse/addiction needs. Strengthening mental health support in conjunction with NHS services is key.

**Aim:** Use mixed-methods to evaluate the delivery and impact of the Complex Lives' Service to inform service development.



## Methods

- Mixed-methods evaluation including:
  - ❖ 16 interviews with practitioners - 6 from Complex Lives Service and 11 who work with the service e.g. Commissioners or those who represent the partnership organisations.
  - ❖ 9 interviews with clients.
  - ❖ 13 hours of observations including team meetings and multi-organisation meetings.
  - ❖ Analysis of client case notes.
  - ❖ Statistical analysis of routinely collected client data e.g. demographics and outcome measures.
- We have undertaken some analysis to date and present the emerging findings in this poster.
- As the evaluation is formative, findings are being fed back to the service as they emerge to support service delivery.

## Impact

- Clients developed positive relationships with staff - facilitating consistent engagement and improving their trust in services.
- It was easier for clients to access relevant services as Complex Lives developed a 'one stop shop' e.g. people could access benefits support through the drop-in service.
- The service helped people to access housing & other support e.g. income, and medication.
- This led to improved mental and physical health outcomes.
- Specific examples of impact included: entrenched rough sleepers sustaining their own home, accessing mental health support and the correct medication, and leading independent lives.
- Services working together helped provide 'wraparound' care for clients to reduce the risk that they would fall between the cracks of services.

## Summary

- Emerging findings indicate that the Complex Lives' Service is having a positive impact on people's mental health and helping to address social determinants of health e.g. housing, income etc.
- Further analysis will enable us to develop greater insights to inform service development.

## Thank you

- The evaluation was only possible because of the incredible engagement of the Complex Lives' staff and clients.
- Thank you to everyone for supporting the evaluation including Managers, Support Workers who encouraged their clients to participate and people who were interviewed.
- The evaluation has been a wonderful example of how in the HDRC practitioners, clients and researchers can collaborate to understand more about the impact of services and how to improve them.

## Want to find out more?

Email the team via Ellie Holding (Project lead, University of Sheffield):  
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