

Homelessness and Palliative Care

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Who is homeless in Scotland?

- ▶ Definitions
- ▶ In 2019/20 number of households who made homelessness applications to local authorities in Scotland ⁽¹⁾
= 36,855
- ▶ The actual number of homeless people may be double this ⁽²⁾

Homelessness is often not just a housing issue but an indicator of multiple severe disadvantage and complex needs ⁽³⁾

Morbidity and Mortality of people who are homeless

- ▶ Worse health than general population
- ▶ 80% have at least one physical health problem (4)
- ▶ Higher rates of mortality (2)
- ▶ Homelessness is itself an independent risk factor for mortality (6)
- ▶ Is homelessness a life limiting condition?

Condition	Prevalence in homeless compared to general population
Heart Disease	6x
Stroke	5x
Cancer	4x
Diabetes	2x
Hepatitis	29x
Chronic respiratory problems	2x
Epilepsy	12x

Who is dying while homeless in Scotland?

- ▶ NRS - 195 deaths in Scotland of people who were homeless in 2018
- ▶ 75% male, 25% female
- ▶ Average age of death 43 -females, 44 - males
- ▶ 53% drug related deaths, 14% circulatory disease, 9% digestive system, 8% alcohol, 5% cancers
- ▶ Scotland has the HIGHEST rate of homeless deaths in the UK - DOUBLE the rest of UK

Palliative Care

- ▶ Palliative care is care provided for people with a life-limiting condition which aims to improve their quality of life
- ▶ Holistic approach - looking at meeting:
 - ▶ PHYSICAL NEEDS
 - ▶ PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS
 - ▶ SOCIAL/CULTURAL NEEDS
 - ▶ SPIRITUAL NEEDS
- ▶ Better outcomes
- ▶ Supporting families/friends/care-givers
- ▶ Walking alongside - about dying but also living well until you die

Palliative Care and homelessness

- ▶ Homeless people have complex palliative care needs
- ▶ They have significant worse symptoms at end of life than other end of life groups (7)
- ▶ Yet homeless people:
 - ▶ Have poorer access to quality palliative care,
 - ▶ Have worse outcomes
 - ▶ Often die without accessing end of life care (8-

What do homeless people want from palliative care?

▶ Concerned about:

- ▶ Dying alone
- ▶ Dying on the streets and anonymously
- ▶ Being forgotten after death
- ▶ Admission leading to loss of freedom and control
- ▶ Spiritual concerns
- ▶ Practical concerns

▶ Need for:

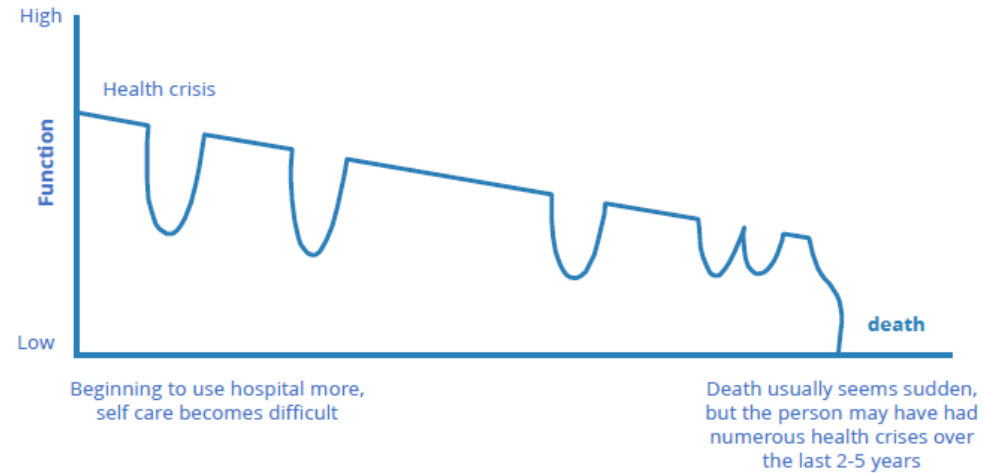
- ▶ Self determination, Freedom and control, wishes respected
- ▶ Psychosocial care - story heard, authenticity
- ▶ Trusting relationships - “face of care rather than place of care”
- ▶ Professionals to take the initiative and reach out
- ▶ Care in a familiar environment (12-14, 20)

Barriers to Palliative Care for people who are homeless

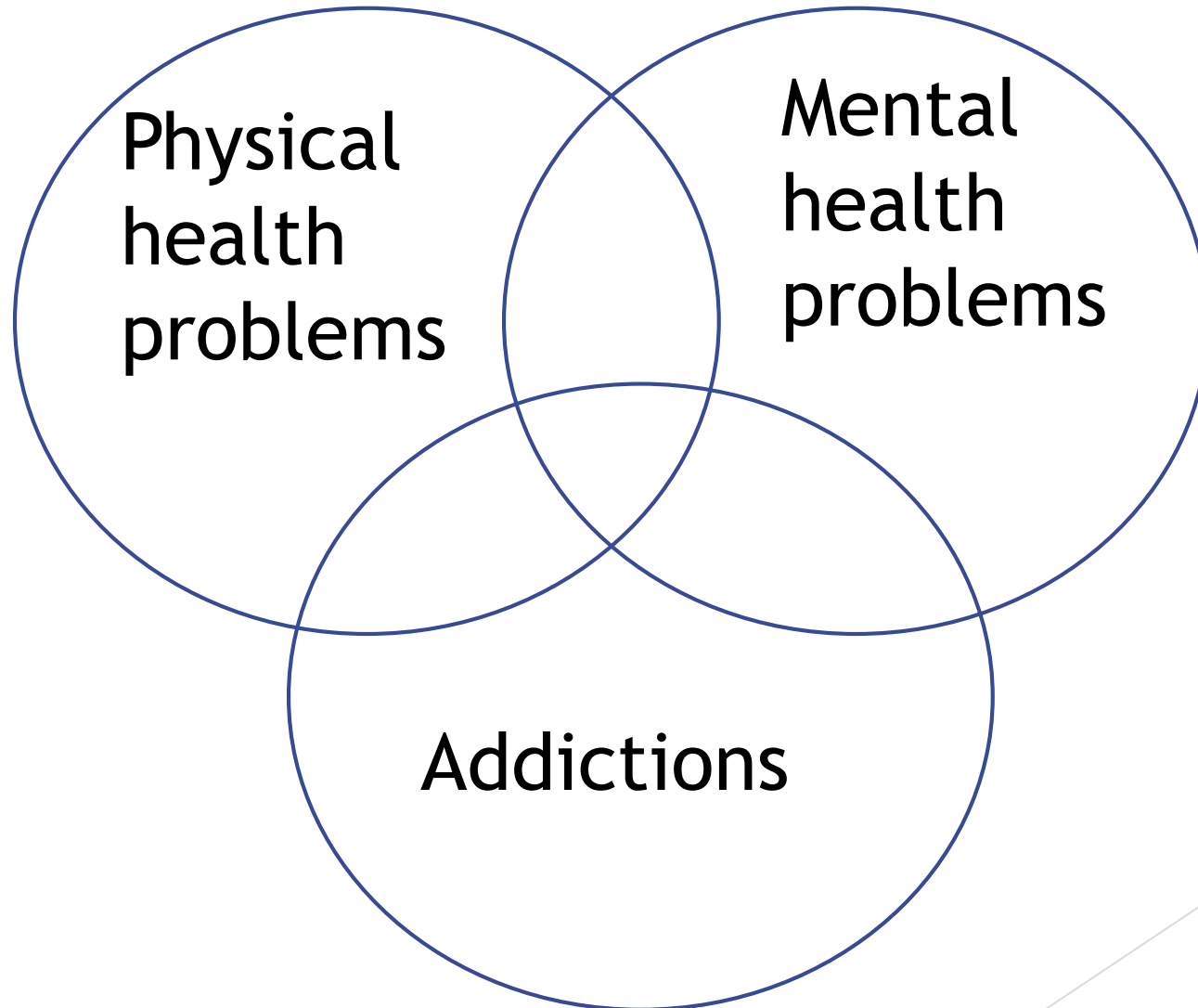


Uncertain Prognosis

- ▶ Tend to be young
- ▶ Causes of death (15,20)
- ▶ Uncertain trajectory
- ▶ Potential reversibility
- ▶ People whose health is of concern
- ▶ Parallel Planning - hope for the best but plan for the worse (16,17)



Tri-morbidity



Complex Trauma

- ▶ Adverse childhood experiences/complex trauma/homelessness
- ▶ 85% UK-born people with multiple exclusion homelessness have experienced childhood trauma and/or exclusion ⁽¹⁸⁾
- ▶ PTSD common
- ▶ Trauma affects symptoms ⁽¹⁹⁾
- ▶ Trauma significantly impacts ability to access and benefit from services ⁽¹⁹⁾

Service Issues

- ▶ Lack of awareness
- ▶ Need for additional flexibility & assertive follow up
- ▶ Concerns about withdrawals causing reluctance to be admitted or early self-discharge
- ▶ Continuity of care difficult
- ▶ Multiple agencies -fragmented care
- ▶ Can be a lack of social support

Lack of Options

- ▶ Young age
- ▶ Mainstream services struggle with addictions, mental health needs and complex trauma
- ▶ Homeless people may wish to remain in hostels
- ▶ Hostels not designed for people with ill health
- ▶ May end up dying in hospital by default

What is being done elsewhere in the world?



Recommendations

- ▶ Greater awareness
- ▶ CNS with specialist interest
- ▶ Education and support for homelessness staff
- ▶ Palliative care MDTs
- ▶ Need for outreach
- ▶ In reach into hospitals
- ▶ Bereavement support
- ▶ Provision of community palliative care beds within homeless hostels

- ▶ *“You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life. We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die”*
- ▶ How do we make this a reality for people who are homeless in Scotland?

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