Health and Homelessness in Scotland

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Scottish Government

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Executive Summary

PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

social research

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Introduction

- Study Design
- The Cohorts
- The Health Datasets
- Interactions with Health Services
- Main Findings

Study Design

- Take people who have been in households assessed as homeless in Scotland (Ever Homeless Cohort)

- Match these by age and sex to a non-homeless person living in a:
  - 20% most deprived area in Scotland (Most Deprived Cohort)
  - 20% least deprived area in Scotland (Least Deprived Cohort)

- **Compares homeless people with non-homeless people living in areas of most and least deprivation, with age and sex controlled for.**

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Obtaining the Homelessness Data

- Scottish Government Homelessness data (HL1) does not contain names of individuals

- A one-off data supply was set up (H2H) to obtain identifiable information for people in homeless applications to enable linking

- Contact all 32 Local Authorities in Scotland to gather this information

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Summary: The Cohorts

	Ever Homeless Cohort (EHC)	Most Deprived Cohort (MDC)	Least Deprived Cohort (LDC)
Ever Homeless	Yes	No	No
Drawn from:	All Geographical Areas	20% Most Deprived areas in Scotland	20% Least Deprived areas in Scotland
Number of People	436,000	436,000	436,000

- Each person in the EHC is matched on age and sex to the LDC and MDC. Not constrained to a match within same local authority.

- Cohorts have the same number of people.

- 1.3 million people in total in the study.

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The Health Datasets

Dataset	Time Period	Number of Records
A&E (A&E2)	2011-2016	2.1 million
Acute Hospital Admissions (SMR01)	2002-2015	2.3 million
Outpatient Appointments (SMR00)	2002-2015	9 million
Dispensed Prescriptions* (PIS)	2009-2015	9.5 million
Admissions to Mental Health Specialities (SMR04)	2002-2015	100,000
Initial Assessments at Drug Treatment Services (SDMD)	2002-2015	89,000
Deaths	2002-2015	23,700

- Datasets contain records for people in the cohorts only
- *Selected prescriptions only relating to drugs, alcohol and mental health conditions.

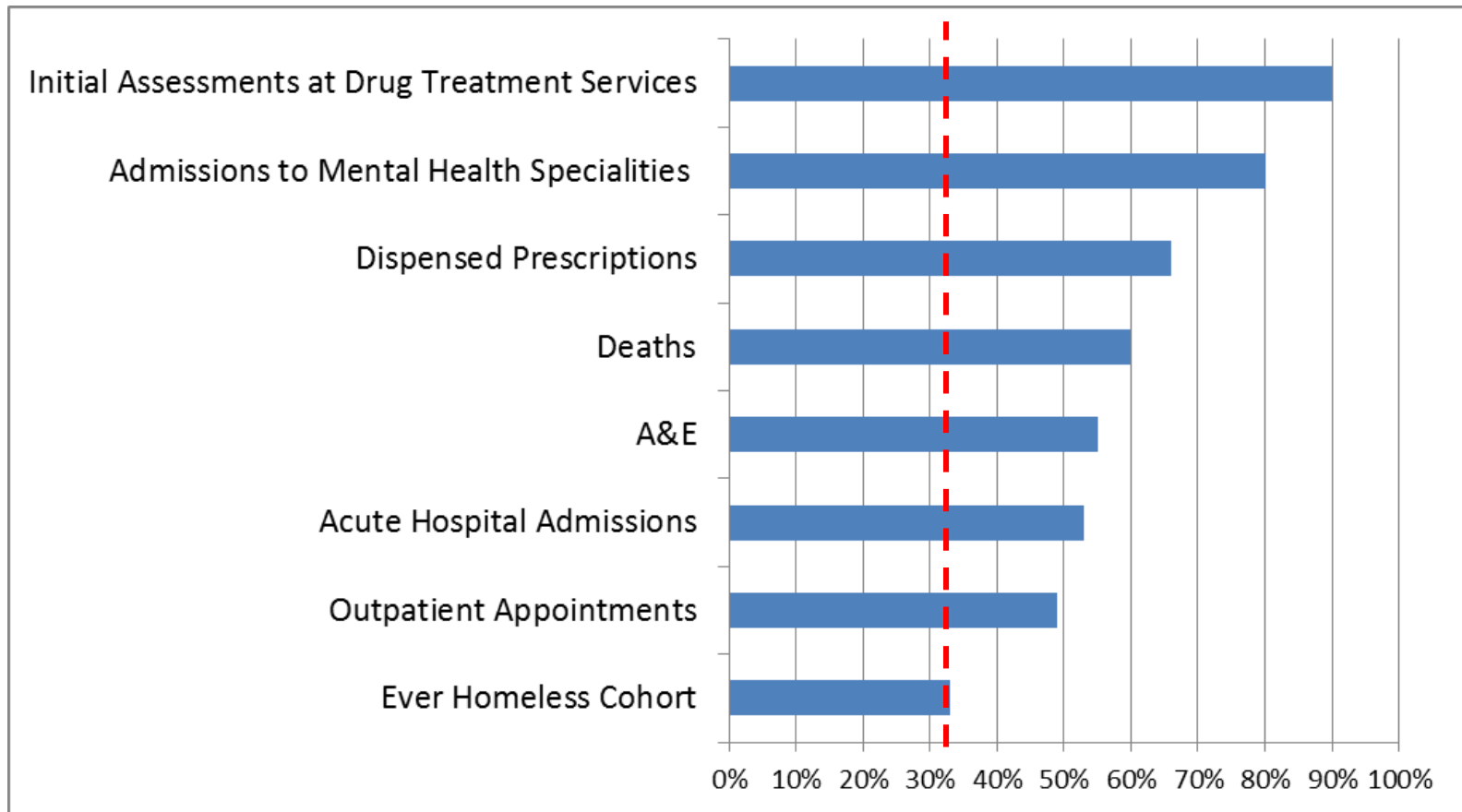Scottish Government
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Main Findings

- **At least 8% of the Scottish population** has been **homeless at some point** in their lives.

- Of those who had experienced homelessness at some point:
    - **over half (51%) had no evidence of health conditions** relating to drugs, alcohol or mental health. This was much lower than in the control groups (MDC 74%, LDC 86%).
    - **Around 30% had evidence of a mental health problem** at some point during the study period (with no evidence of drug or alcohol-related conditions at any point). This was higher than in the control groups (MDC 21%, LDC 13%).
    - **There was evidence of drug and/or alcohol-related interactions for the remaining fifth of people (19%),** higher than in the control groups (MDC 5.1%, LDC 1.2%). Of these, the vast majority (94%) also had evidence of mental health issues.

- **Increased interactions** with health services **preceded** people becoming homeless.

- **A peak in interactions** with health services was seen around the time of the first homelessness assessment.

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Proportion of Interactions
with each Health Service Dataset

• People in the EHC are over-represented in all datasets.

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Proportion of people in each cohort using selected services

	Males			Females		
	EHC	MDC	LDC	EHC	MDC	LDC
A&E	68%	52%	38%	66%	50%	32%
Inpatient	61%	44%	32%	65%	46%	31%
Outpatient	80%	63%	54%	87%	70%	58%
Mental Health	7.2%	1.4%	0.4%	4.9%	1.1%	0.4%
SDMD	8.8%	1.2%	0.1%	4.0%	0.5%	0.0%

People who have experienced homelessness are more likely to have used the above services.

SDMD = Scottish Drugs Misuse Database

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Cohort Ratio Differences

Dataset	EHC : MDC	EHC : LDC
A&E	1.8	3.5
Acute Hospital Admissions	1.7	3.1
Outpatient Appointments	1.6	2.3
Dispensed Prescriptions* • Opioid • Alcohol	2.5 6.5 3.9	8.2 169 23.6
Admissions to Mental Health Specialities	4.9	20.5
Initial Assessments at Drug Treatment Services	10	133
Deaths	2.1	5.3

Drugs+Alcohol+Mental Health

- 6% of people in EHC. This was much higher than in the control groups (MDC 1%, LDC 0.2%).
  - those experiencing repeat homelessness (11.4%).

	Once Only	Repeat
	EHC	EHC
Number of People in the Cohort	316,067	119,786
Proportion with:		
None	55.4%	39.3%
Any mental health	43.6%	59.4%
Any drugs	9.8%	26.4%
Any alcohol	8.1%	17.2%
Alcohol, drugs and mental health	3.8%	11.4%

Drugs+Alcohol+Mental Health

- 6% of people in EHC. This was much higher than in the control groups (MDC 1%, LDC 0.2%).
  – those experiencing repeat homelessness (11.4%).
  – those who had become homeless after being looked after by a local authority (13%).
  – those who had been looked after and slept rough at some point (25%)
  – those who had become homeless after being discharged from prison (27%).

Deaths

- Only 2% of the 1.3 million people in the study died (c. 23,600).

- The EHC accounted for 60% of all deaths (Most Deprived Cohort: 29%, Least Deprived Cohort: 11%)

- For 36-40 year olds, EHC males have over 20 times the rate of deaths per 1,000 people, compared to the LDC

Implications

The Report:

- **provides an opportunity to show the impact of health and homelessness** – there's always been an assumption that these are closely linked but now we have hard evidence to prove this.

- **reinforces the case for the prevention agenda:** having good early health interventions could promote earlier recovery and help reduce the risk of a health crisis (which is illustrated by a peak in health service activity around the dates of the 1st homelessness assessment or continued high levels of health service activity for repeat homeless people for particular services)

- **in turn this may help reduce the risk of homelessness itself** – i.e. better and earlier health outcomes may reduce the other risk factors associated with homelessness.

Full Report & Executive Summary

- ## Available at:

https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-homelessness-scotland