M Q I

Merchants Quay Ireland

Homeless and Drugs Services

CURRENT STATISTICS ON HOMELESSNESS

- **Govt. statistics indicate that there are about 5,000 persons homeless in Ireland at any one time.**

- **SPSS /HA Assessment of Homelessness 2008 found 2,366 homeless adults in Dublin including 576 dependent children in Dublin.**

- **The Assessment found 110 Rough sleepers**

- **Demand for services increasing following on economic downturn. MQI 17% increase in demand for homeless services in 2010.**

Homelessness & Drug Use

Cause or Effect ?

- ☐ Complex Relationship
- ☐ Vicious Circle
- ☐ Social Adaption Theory

Drug Use Among the Homeless Population

Variable	Total (n =355)	Dublin (n=247)	Cork (n=36)	Limerick (n=36)	Galway (n=36)
	%	%	%	%	%
Lifetime Illicit Use*	74	80	72	42	64
Recent Illicit Use*	64	72	53	28	50
Current Illicit Use*	52	59	42	25	36
Current Alcohol Use	70	69	66	83	68
Problematic Alcohol Use	51	49	56	64	47
Problematic Drug Use**	36	43	25	19	14
Problematic Alcohol and Drug Use	18	19	25	17	6
Dependent Drug Use (high degree of psychological dependence)	24	30	14	6	11
Ever injected	35	46	9	9	11
Current Injectors	19	27	-	-	-

*for the purpose of this study, "illicit drugs refers to cannabis, ecstasy,amphetamines,crack cocaine cocaine powder, heroin,halllucingens(LSD,poppers and magic mushrooms) and solvents
**Drug use is all drugs excl alcohol as follows; cannabis, ecstasy,amphetamines,crack cocaine cocaine powder, heroin,halllucingens(LSD,poppers and magic mushrooms) and solvents,tranquilizers, Sedatives, antidepressants,methadone,other opiates, steroids and other drugs

NACD: Drug Use Among the Homeless Population in Ireland; April 2005

Homelessness among Drug Users

Homeless Drug Users in Treatment:

<u>2004</u>   <u>2008</u>

197   351   (NDTRS. 2010)

MQI Needle Exchange:

Homeless Clients 51%(MQI 2009)

High Park Residential:

Homeless Clients 59% (MQI 2009)

Homelessness Among Drug Users

☐ Demographics:

- 62% male; 38% female
- mean age 24.4 years
- 71% early school leavers
- 100% unemployed
- 59% had children
- 50% served prison sentence
- 40% currently on Bail
- 18% currently on TR

Experience of Homelessness

- Reasons for current sleeping arrangements
  - 64% drug use
  - 38% family conflict
  - 16% forced out of home (court order/vigilantism).
- 59% prior experience of homelessness
  - Mean age first homeless 19.2 years
  - Average length of time out of home 2.26 years
- 57% drug use barrier to accommodation

Homeless Drug Users
Physical Health Complaints

Health Complaint	Male	Female	Total
Abscesses	29%	49%	36%
Accidental Overdose	16%	5%	12%
Deliberate Overdose	10%	5%	8%
Weight Loss	52%	68%	58%
Hepatitis B	10%	16%	12%
Hepatitis C	45%	63%	52%

Homelessness, Drug Use & Risk Behaviours

Issues:

- ☐ Use drugs more frequently & less safely
- ☐ Poly-drug use
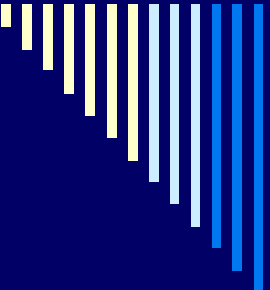- ☐ Injecting practices
- ☐ Overdose

Client Comments

- *I've got really careless about my injecting practices, because I don't have fresh water and*

  a safe place to inject"

  35 year old male staying in a hostel

- *"I'm using a lot more because I'm bored and have nothing to do all day and night"*

  18 year old male sleeping rough

Responding to the Needs of Homeless Drug Users

- Housing First Approach
- Greater Integration of Homeless & Drug Services
- Ensuring Access to Treatment
- Addressing compliance issues
- Expanding services:
  - Out of Hours Needle Exchange
  - Respite Care
  - Detoxification
  - Safer Drug Use Facilities
  - Social Support

Policy Recommendations

☐ Housing First for drug users too.

☐ Make drug services more accessible to homeless drug users

☐ Targeted harm reduction interventions with homeless drug users

☐ Open up homeless services to active drug users

☐ Responses to anti-social behaviour that do not result in increased homelessness should be developed