

Alcohol Interventions for People at Risk of Homelessness

Evaluating the Cyrenians “Getting the Measure” Project.

Niamh Fitzgerald

Visiting Professor, Robert Gordon University

Lead Researchers:

Steven McCluskey & Julie Dowds





Plan

1. Cyrenians, Homelessness & Alcohol
2. The Getting the Measure Project
3. The Evaluation
4. Findings
5. The Way Forward

Cyrenians



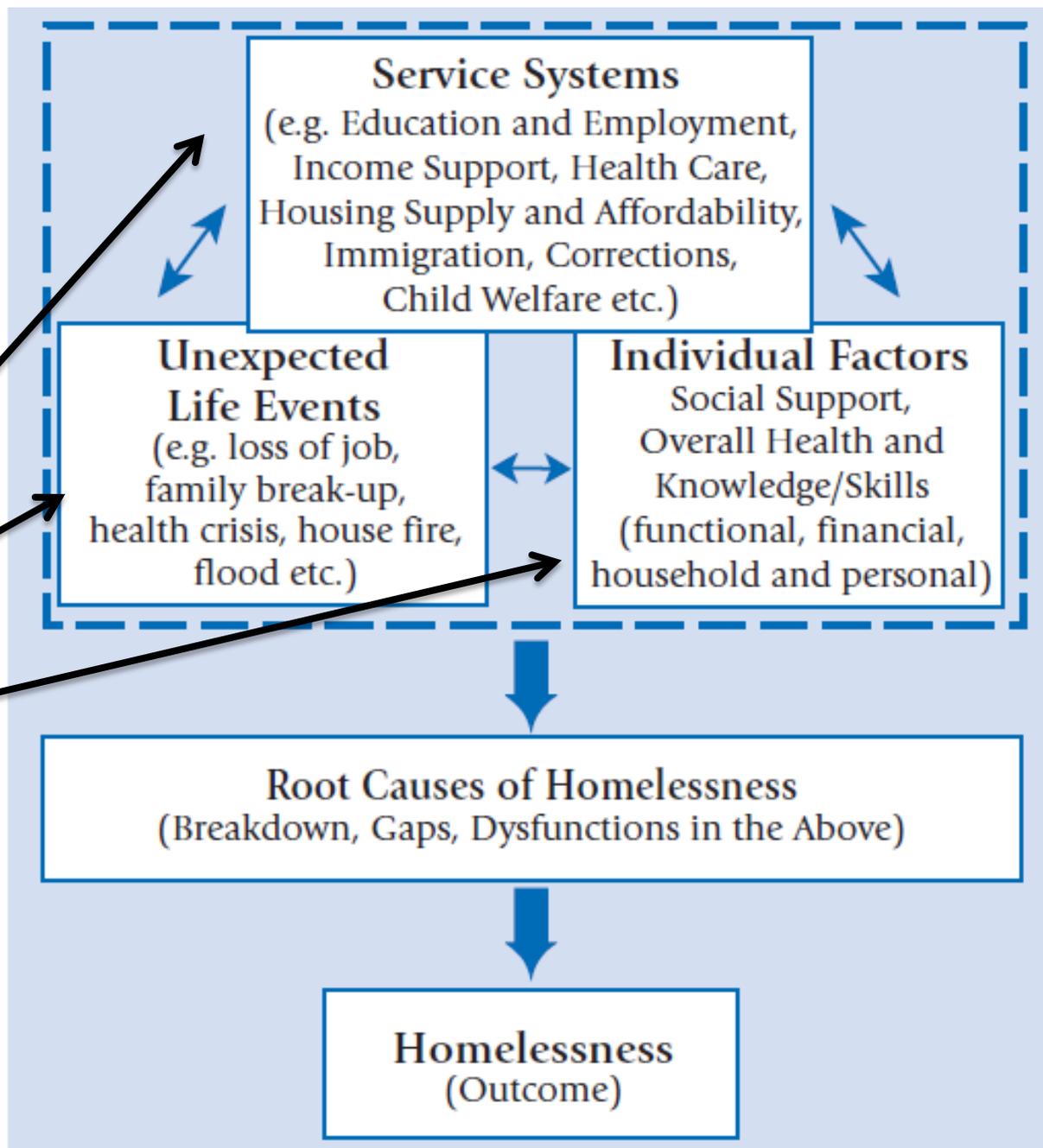
- Scottish charity offering support to homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.
- 'Key Workers' and 'Key workers light'
- Diverse target group – socioeconomically and demographically.

"Homelessness means not having a home. You don't have to be living on the street to be homeless."

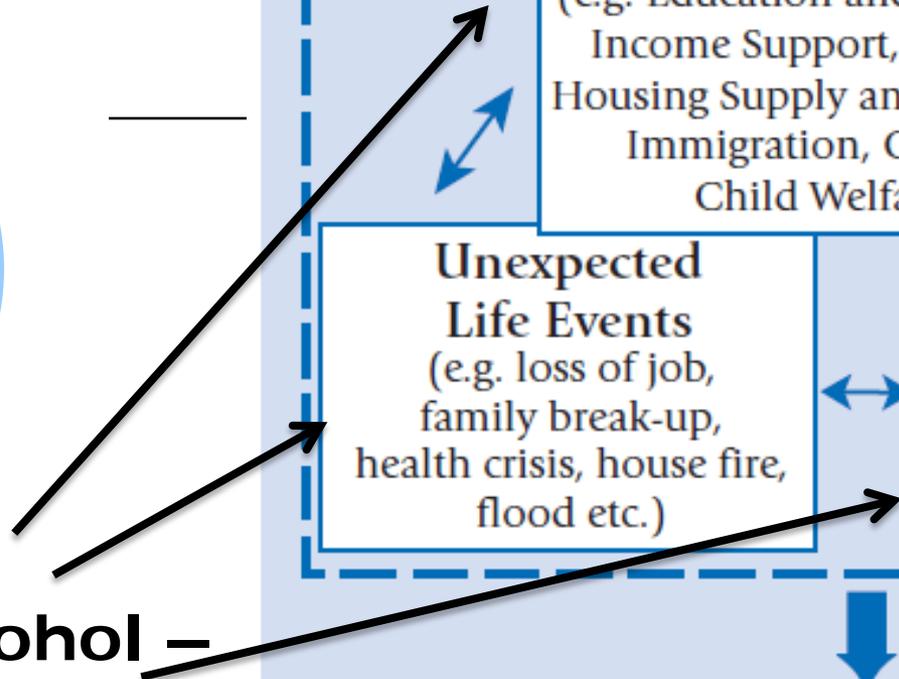
Why do alcohol intervention in a homelessness project?



- Links between alcohol and homelessness are well documented (Fitzpatrick et al, 2000; Morrison, 2008)
- Alcohol use is present along with multiple other problems including:
 - Poverty
 - Unemployment
 - Drug use
 - Relationship breakdown
 - Mental health



Alcohol – helps to cause and keep people homeless





Getting the Measure

- Organisation-wide approach
- Funded by Comic Relief – included training, a website.
- Changes to the 'Key Worker Practice Model' to incorporate:
 - Exploration of alcohol consumption (units consumed daily, weekly)
 - Exploration of alcohol-related social problems

Getting the Measure Website



 **Cyrenians Getting the Measure**

$$\frac{\text{ml} \times \%}{1000} = \text{units}$$

Search this site Search
powered by freefind

[Home](#) [Background](#) [What's in a drink?](#) [Alcohol & the body](#) [Alcohol & the mind](#) [How to...](#) [Resources](#) [Services](#)

Resources

- ▶ Key-worker paperwork
- ▶ Raising the issue
- ▶ Harm reduction advice
- ▶ Downloadable Resources
- ▶ Information and self-help leaflets
- ▶ Training and Events

Make a donation

▶ Donate now and help us to tackle homelessness.



Resources



Key-worker paperwork
more...



Raising the issue
more...



Harm reduction and advice
more...



Downloadable Resources
more...



Information and self-help leaflets
more...



Training and Events
more...

Aims of Getting the Measure



- To enable more interventions and specialist help to be provided to young service users?
- To improve knowledge, practice skills and general capacity within Cyrenians to address alcohol problems in the longer term beyond funding?



The Alcohol Intervention

- Alcohol consumption questions
- Personalised feedback compared with limits.
- Exploration of potential alcohol-related social problems.
- Revisited as part of discussion over multiple sessions.
- Ongoing support with changing behaviour one to one over time (less emphasis on self-help).



The Evaluation

- Brief literature review
- Pre- and Post (0,3,6m post) Training questionnaires with 39 staff.
- Qualitative interviews with 13 staff.
- Analysis of 22 sets of anonymised case file notes from before and after training.
- 2 focus groups with 12 staff to discuss initial findings/implications.

Knowledge/Confidence Findings – from Survey



- Importance of the issue was high at all stages (Pre, 0, 3, 6 months)
- Staff knowledge increased significantly post training especially in relation to:
 - Approaches for assessing levels of risk
 - How to deliver harm reduction advice
 - Significance was maintained at 3 and 6m
- Staff confidence also increased significantly and was maintained.

Attitude Findings – from Survey



- Selected statements from AAPPQ
- Significant improvement in relation to:
 - I feel I have clear idea of my responsibilities (legitimacy)
 - I feel I can appropriately advise... (adequacy)
 - If I felt the need I could easily find someone to help...(support)
- No change at any stage post in relation to:
 - Level of agreement with negative statements from AAPPQ
 - Also: I feel I have the right to ask (legitimacy)
 - Clients can make good progress with the right help...



Seeing the benefits

- *“Seeing an effect in doing them, seeing that people aren’t offended when you bring alcohol into the conversation, having confidence.”*
- *“It’s a good intervention for trying to help people to address harm reduction for their alcohol intake rather than abstinence and stopping completely...then the other aspects such as tenancy, benefits or financial aspects may be benefited.”*

Findings from Case File Analysis



- Some difficulties with this over the time of the project however:
 - Greater and improved detail on alcohol consumption, more effective initial exploration, post-training.
 - Some indication of more follow-up of alcohol in ongoing case management.
- Unable to conclude whether the findings were reflective of better conversations on alcohol, better record-keeping or both.
 - Still some inconsistencies/problems in assessment of risk, unit calculations and language used in recording.

Conclusions/Discussion



- Organisation-wide approach was (probably) effective in increasing staff focus on alcohol over a short timescale.
- The approach also increased staff knowledge and confidence which could be built on.
- Some issues and inconsistencies remain.
- The effectiveness of the changes in terms of outcomes for service users (whether alcohol consumption, harm reduction, or social outcomes) requires further exploration.

Key Questions for Cyrenians



- Is a formal screening tool necessary for effectiveness (or for outcome evaluation?)
- Can the objections to screening be overcome? Can Cyrenians build on this informal approach to standardise their alcohol intervention?
- Can the inconsistencies be ironed out sufficiently for an outcome evaluation to be possible?



Thank You

- All the staff and team at Cyrenians
- The Create team
- Comic Relief

Questions/Queries/ Full report?

niamh@createconsultancy.com

www.createconsultancy.com

On Twitter @NiamhCreate

Visit www.alcoholiba.com BLOG in SBI