



The Revolving Doors Agency Manifesto 2015

Five priorities for an
incoming government



Summary

Across the country, there are thousands of people stuck in a ‘revolving door’ situation – facing multiple and complex needs and caught in a cycle of crisis and crime because as a society we fail to coordinate the right kind of support.

Drawing on the views of people with direct experience through consultation with our National Service User Forum, this document sets out five priorities for the next government to improve responses for the most excluded individuals across the country:

- 1. A national programme to coordinate better support for people facing multiple and complex needs**
- 2. Earlier identification and diversion into support for people facing mental health problems**
- 3. Effective community-based rehabilitation and reparation for offenders with multiple and complex needs**
- 4. Improved infrastructure and opportunities for service user involvement**
- 5. A system that supports long-term recovery, including the journey towards employment.**

The problem

In every local area there are people caught in a negative ‘revolving door’ cycle – living chaotic lives, and not receiving the support they need to help them overcome their problems. They face a combination of problems at once, including mental health issues, homelessness, substance misuse, and offending behaviour. These issues are complex and mutually reinforcing, often have their roots in entrenched disadvantage, and leave people socially and economically excluded.

Our health and welfare systems, designed to tackle one problem at a time, fail to respond to these complex needs. Our criminal justice system and emergency services are forced to respond repeatedly as people are caught in a downward spiral of crisis and crime, causing damage to themselves, their communities, and generating significant costs to the public purse.

Recent research found a minimum of **58,000 people in England** experiencing a combination of homelessness, substance misuse issues, and offending at once.ⁱ

The case for change

The overall impact of people facing multiple needs on public services is estimated to cost around **£10.1 billion a year.**ⁱⁱ

We cannot continue in a situation where shrinking public funds are tied up paying for the consequences of repeated failed interventions. The financial, social and above all human cost of this failure is too great.

The evidence shows that taking a person-centred approach, and coordinating interventions that work intensively, can help people to tackle their problems, rebuild their lives, and contribute to their communities. There is also positive evidence that this can generate savings through better coordinated support and reduced demand on services in the long-run.ⁱⁱⁱ

Achieving change: Five priorities for the next government

In a period of falling spending and rising demand on our public services, tackling the complex problems faced by individuals in this ‘revolving door’ group must be a priority in every area. We want to see a system where people facing multiple and complex needs are supported by effective, coordinated services and able to tackle their problems, reach their potential, and contribute to their communities.

A Good Life: Exploring what matters to people facing multiple and complex needs

Research with members of our National Service User Forum found:

- Participants prioritised stability, emphasising the importance of a ‘normal’ life with realistic goals, underpinned by a sense of being internally content
- Positive relationships could play a key role in recovery, being motivational and supportive. They may come through professionals, family, or people with similar experiences
- The ‘good life’ includes things beyond the traditional remit of services, like informal support networks or outdoor activities, and these play an important role in the recovery journey
- The journey towards the good life is as important as the destination, and will involve setbacks and difficulties

This change should be locally-led and will require a ‘whole system’ view, with commissioners, services, and service users working together across sectors and service boundaries to deliver change. However, the next government will have a crucial role to play in prioritising this issue and ensuring every area delivers. We call on the next government to prioritise:

I. A national programme to coordinate better support for people facing multiple and complex needs

The next government should **identify tackling multiple and complex needs as a priority, and show leadership in supporting local areas to develop a more effective approach.**

This should **involve a national programme to ensure all areas are working to coordinate better responses for individuals facing multiple and complex needs**, building on the principles of the ‘Troubled Families’ approach as suggested in the 2015 Budget and a number of recent reports.^{iv}

Alongside oversight of this programme, a broader multiple needs strategy should also act as a vehicle to bring different departments together to tackle this cross-cutting issue. This should:

- **Take a genuinely cross-departmental approach**, with oversight from a designated group of ministers and officials
- **Include a focus on each of the priorities identified below**, acknowledging that changes in different government departments will be required to promote earlier intervention; improve criminal justice responses; and support long-term recovery for people facing complex needs
- **Continue to expand whole area pooled budget approaches**, empowering local areas to develop a more effective response by bringing budgets together and redesigning services.

A national programme for multiple and complex needs

There is a growing political consensus on the need to better mobilise and coordinate local efforts to address multiple and complex needs. Both the Coalition's 2015 Budget and reports linked to the Opposition's policy review set out plans to explore a new programme, building on the principles of the 'Troubled Families' approach.

We call for implementation of a new national programme, drawing on some of the best aspects of the current 'Troubled Families' approach and building on learning to date to ensure that every area is working to coordinate better support for people facing multiple and complex needs. The programme should:

- **Build on the evidence-base of effective support** – Our research suggests effective approaches are: flexible; strengths-based; holistic; coproduced; assertive and persistent; and employ a 'lead professional' to build a strong relationship with the client and coordinate support^v
- **Get the funding right** – Payment by results approaches raise particular challenges when applied to services for this client group. While a focus on outcomes is important, savings will be generated by local areas pooling funds, and reducing duplication and repeat demand on services in the long-run rather than processing people towards overly simplistic outcomes more efficiently^{vi}
- **Involve service users in design and delivery** – Any programme should begin with the aims and ambitions of people with direct experience of the problem, and involve them in setting the approach and key outcomes.^{vii}

2. Earlier identification and diversion into support for people facing mental health problems

Members of our National Service User Forum report repeated missed opportunities to intervene earlier in their problems, often being told that they did not meet the right criteria for ongoing support or that taken on its own their mental health problem was not severe enough to qualify.

Whether people are coming into contact with the police in crisis, making repeated visits to A&E, or asking for help at a housing office, there should be routes into comprehensive support when mental health and other needs are identified. To achieve this, the next government should:

“The change I want to see is with the mental health. Because with the mental health, if you’ve got a drug or alcohol problem that’s a stigma. You’re a druggie or you’re alcoholic, your mental health goes out the window”

- **Continue to rollout mental health liaison and diversion services**, operating at police custody and courts and explore how these could be integrated with progress on mental health crisis responses, including ‘street triage’
- **Target improved data collection and analysis** of the needs of repeat visitors to police custody and A&E, and remove unnecessary barriers to data sharing between agencies
- **Promote a “no wrong door” approach**, with links to support when people facing multiple problems are looking for help whether they come into A&E, Housing Services or JobCentres
- **Expand access to counselling services and mental healthcare for the most excluded groups**, removing barriers to access for people facing multiple needs and championing community services that provide more holistic support.

3. Effective community-based rehabilitation and reparation for offenders with multiple needs

There have been significant changes to the criminal justice system through recent reforms, with probation supervision now extended to short-sentenced prisoners. However, much of the attention has focused on rehabilitation after a custodial sentence, rather than opportunities to divert earlier and to develop more effective alternative approaches.

While prison will remain an appropriate disposal in some cases, sentencers need more effective community-based options available to end an over-reliance on costly short prison sentences. Priorities for the next government should include:

- **A focus on developing intensive, community-based alternatives to custody for people facing multiple and complex needs**, and promoting greater use of these approaches
- **Improving access to rehabilitative support** as part of existing out of court disposals and community sentences, and improving access to appropriate housing for offenders
- **Promoting wider involvement in ‘integrated offender management’ approaches locally**, including a range of services such as housing, physical health and mental health
- **Considering how the success of the youth justice board could be extended to other key groups that would benefit from a distinct approach**, including diverting young adults (18-24) from crime and providing holistic support for women offenders.

“I had a lot of problems...so it wasn't rocket science to offer me a bit of rehabilitation. If they'd have intervened earlier, and given me another way to go I would have taken it and I wouldn't have wasted 35 plus years of my life.”

4. Improved infrastructure and opportunities for service user involvement

Involving people with direct experience of multiple needs in the design and delivery of local services is crucial. Effective involvement informs commissioners and service leaders of key priorities and challenges from the service user's perspective, helping to make services more responsive to the needs of those they serve. It also benefits service users themselves, helping to build confidence and skills that support their recovery journey and to rebuild a sense of place and purpose in society.

“if you're a drug addict, and you think 'I can never stop taking drugs', to see someone who has stopped is 100 times better than someone who has never took it just telling you”.

The next government should further develop infrastructure and opportunities for the most excluded individuals to have a greater role in the commissioning, design and delivery of the services that they use. This should include:

- **A duty on all commissioners to engage with service users in setting outcomes and commissioning services**, including a requirement to demonstrate that they are engaging the most excluded and to show the impact of their involvement
- **A review of current barriers to service user involvement for the most excluded groups**, including challenges around loss of benefits and offending history restricting opportunities
- **A national peer support programme**, targeted at coordinating opportunities for people with experience of multiple needs to take on a greater role in delivering recovery and support services in every area
- **A start-up fund for 'experts by experience'** to start their own peer support and advocacy groups in their area.

5. A system that supports long-term recovery, including the journey towards employment.

“Once I got a job, I was left with very little support. And what ended up happening was I had practically a breakdown. It was take the drugs again because I knew they took the pain away”

For people facing multiple and complex needs, recovery is a journey that often includes multiple setbacks. Members of our National Service User Forum report challenges around services pulling away support too quickly, or pushing them towards single outcomes such as employment too fast without taking account of their other problems. Many also report problems with welfare sanctions, and felt that standard welfare to work support simply did not work for them.

The next government must champion an approach that puts the service user in charge of their recovery, and removes barriers that can inhibit the recovery process, including:

- **More tailored employment support people facing multiple and complex needs**, which links with other support in place, takes a gradual “stepped” approach, and recognises progress such as volunteering
- **Rethinking current ‘payment by results’ models for recovery and employment services**, and developing an approach for those facing more complex needs which rewards ‘distance travelled’ and supports progress on a range of relevant outcomes^{viii}
- **An immediate review of the impact of welfare sanctions on vulnerable groups who face multiple needs**, with recommendations for a fairer and more proportionate system
- **Ensuring support for the most excluded individuals continues into employment** where people are able to find a job.

Endnotes

ⁱ LankellyChase Foundation (2015) *Mapping Severe and Multiple Disadvantage*, p.13

ⁱⁱ Ibid, p. 41

ⁱⁱⁱ Revolving Doors Agency & Centre for Mental Health (2015), *Comprehensive Services for Complex Needs: A summary of the evidence*, p. 8-9

^{iv} The 2015 budget included a series of commitments on integrating services for people facing multiple needs. This built on a similar commitment in the Autumn Statement 2014 to “look to develop and extend the principles of the Troubled Families programme to other groups of people with complex needs from the next Spending Review”, reflecting recommendations from the Independent Service Transformation Challenge Panel

^v See Revolving Doors Agency & Centre for Mental Health (2015), *Comprehensive Services for Complex Needs: A summary of the evidence*

^{vi} See Revolving Doors Agency (2015), *Adding value? Reflections on payment by results for people with multiple and complex needs*

^{vii} See Revolving Doors Agency (2015), *A Good Life: exploring what matters to people facing multiple and complex needs*

^{viii} See Revolving Doors Agency (2015), *Adding value? Reflections on payment by results for people with multiple and complex needs* for key recommendations

For further information, or to discuss these issues with members of our National Service User Forum, please contact:

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Revolving Doors Agency is a national charity working across England.

Our vision is that by 2025 there is an end to the revolving door of crisis and crime, when anyone facing multiple and complex needs, including poor mental health, is supported to reach their potential, with fewer victims and safer communities as a result.

Our mission is to demonstrate and share evidence of effective interventions and to promote reform of public services through partnerships with political leaders, policymakers, commissioners and other experts and by involving people with direct experience of the problem in all of our work.



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