



Dual Diagnosis

Brief Learning Resource

This brief guidance was produced by members of the QNI's Homeless Health Network in October 2014.

This guidance includes:

- What is dual diagnosis?
- What causes dual diagnosis?
- Supporting mental health during detox
- The experience of the patient
- Holistic services
- Other challenges and opportunities
- Support for health professionals
- Further learning and resources

TIP: Click on the underlined links for more content

What is dual diagnosis?

Dual diagnosis is the term used to describe patients with both severe mental illness (mainly psychotic disorders) and problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

Source: Patient.co.uk

Key advice:

Consider the impact of novel psychoactive substances too.

“Whether cannabis can cause psychotic or affective symptoms that persist beyond transient intoxication is unclear.”

Progress Dual Diagnosis Network

What causes Dual Diagnosis?

Issues

- Lack of support once someone is back in housing and so they are unable to cope.
- People who are unable to access services end up self-medicating
- Lack of a secure place, and learnt approaches
- Economic situation affects an individual's social capital, i.e. job, housing, and relationships, which can lead to mental health issues.

Identified solutions

- Understanding what the issues are and having a means to learn and access the support needed.
- Managing stress.
- Stress affects mental health, increase awareness.
- Tackling childhood trauma and lifelong reinforcement of this.

[Information about the most-used substances](#)

Supporting mental health during detox

What works

- Mental health engagement in-hostel while patient's undergo alcohol reduction.
- Collaboration with Drug Alcohol teams. Effective information sharing services.
- Listening and having realistic expectations discussed with outcomes.
- Allowing more time for patients with mental health issues.
- Being aware that patients will feel vulnerable and will need more time to reflect on how they feel.

The experience of the patient

Issues

- Patients are discharged if they miss one appointment. Lack of understanding from health services.
- Difficulty to fit in with NHS system.
- Difficult to attend so many assessments.
- Too complex and clients are put off and feel alienated.
- No one listens to me.

Identified solutions

- Be real and non-judgemental.
- User involvement in service delivery and decision making. Recovery mentors.
- What does the patient expect? Listen. Have realistic outcomes. Find their identity.
- What do the service users want/need? Ask?

[Film of a patient's experience](#)

Holistic services

Issues

- Separation and difficult communication between services and specialists
- Lack of time to set up working holistically.
- Too many targets and outcome measures inappropriately manipulated. This is not representing the real situation

Identified solutions

- More productive if good links with hostel staff
- Change from bottom up, not top down.
- All homeless health team including physical and mental health and substance abuse.
- Central point of access open to all, taking referrals from anyone.
- Move frontline staff with appropriate training and experience.
- Networking across all the agencies involved with homeless people – outreach, mental health, homeless prevention, resettlement, nursing and counselling.
- Open door policy, no appointment needed.
- Designated GP surgery for homeless – with GP and nurse practitioners, substance misuse worker, mental health nurse.

“Mental health services have a responsibility to work with substance misuse services to provide integrated care, and substance misuse services have a responsibility to work with mental health services to provide care.” **NICE**

Guidance CG120

Other challenges and opportunities

- Reduced funding.
- Changes to commissioning.
- Establishing clear roles and responsibility.
- Encourage patient representation at CCG's and health and wellbeing boards.
- Creating a network of service users.
- More suitable accommodation for homeless people.
- Sharing information between services.

What support is there for health professionals?

- [QNI Homeless Health Network](#)
- [Progress Dual Diagnosis Network](#)
- [Royal College of Nurses – Mental Health Network](#)
- [Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health Mental Health Network](#)

Further learning and resources

- [Progress e-learning](#) and commissioning resources
- [Turning Point Good Practice Handbook](#)
- [Turning Point and Rethink Dual Diagnosis Toolkit](#)
- [NICE Consultation](#) – closes 25 Nov 2014
- [Advances in Dual Diagnosis Journal](#)
- [Journal of Dual Diagnosis](#)
- [Policy Paper, UK Drug Policy Commission](#)

Get in touch for further resources
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Thanks to:

The QNI Homeless Health Network, The Monument Trust, Public Health England, Progress Dual Diagnosis Network, Inclusion Healthcare