



CITIZENS ASSEMBLY ON DRUGS USE

Catherine Kenny, CEO.

Homelessness & Addiction



*"Health problems,
even death."*

"Depression"

"Broken Families"

"your family are judged"

"Isolation"

**"Communities get a bad
reputation because of
increases in dealing drugs,
break ins, robberies etc."**

"Sometimes addiction will take everything (...) and you will find yourself homeless. (...) Other times you become homeless for other reasons and then end up mixing with people on the streets/in hostels who use everything and then you will get addicted. 2 of 5 in this group had not done crack until they entered homelessness."

"People are consuming in
public places."

**"Being looked down on
as if you are scum."**

"Conflict"

HOMELESSNESS, HEALTH & DRUG USE



Homelessness has a profound affect on a person's health, and addiction can be both a cause and a consequence of homelessness.

'Drug use' was the second most commonly cited **ORIGINAL REASON FOR HOMELESSNESS** across Dublin Simon emergency accommodation in 2022.

Clients frequently present with **COMPLEX MULTI-MORBIDITIES** involving physical health, mental health and addiction - all of which are interdependent.

POLY-DRUG USE is common e.g. using both crack cocaine and benzodiazepines. The vast majority of referrals for Dublin Simon addiction treatment involve multiple types of drugs and alcohol.

Due to children and family responsibilities, **WOMEN** often experience distinct barriers to addiction treatment, experience increased stigma, and can delay seeking support until crisis point.

SERVICE PROVISION



OUTREACH



EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION



CLINICAL & THERAPEUTIC SERVICES



TENANCY SUSTAINMENT



LONG TERM ACCOMMODATION



INDEPENDENT HOUSING



WHAT WORKS?

HEALTH-LED APPROACH



- ✓ Health-based interventions
- ✓ Open, non-judgemental conversation
- ✓ Client choice & control
- ✓ Low-threshold services
- ✓ Building recovery capital
- ✓ Harm Reduction:
Needle Exchange, Naloxone, Methadone / Suboxone, Education & Health Promotion, Reduce the Use Programmes, Stabilisation.



WHAT WORKS?

TREATMENT & HEALTHCARE

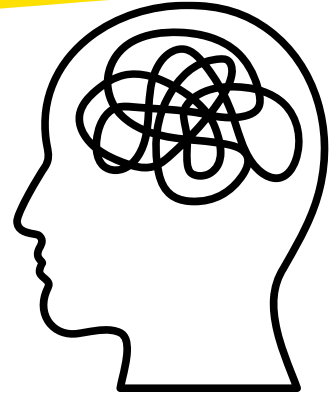


100 Bed Health & Addiction Treatment Facility (Operational Q2 2024)

- Alcohol and Benzodiazepine Detox
- Step Up Step Down Unit
- Blood Borne Virus Unit
- Rapid Access Stabilisation
- Residential Recovery
- Counselling, Health & Wellbeing, Client Development



Invest in Prevention



- For a PTSD diagnosis, a score of 31-33 is sufficient.
- Across Dublin Simon Recovery services in 2022, a mean score of 30.5 was found across all participants.
- In the earliest stage of recovery, a mean PTSD score of 41.9 was found.
- Only 9.7% of people reported no childhood trauma.

Comiskey, C. et al (2023)

"Prevention definitely beats trying to cure an addict."

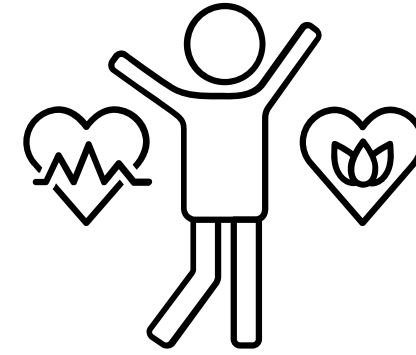
"Educate young people on the dangers of addiction."

"Higher sentencing for drug dealers, more police, more response within the community."

"Because of the (il)legality of drugs, small time recreational users of cannabis receive criminal records and can be a slippery slope as having a criminal record carries stigma and lots of repercussions."

"Funds captured by the Criminal Assets Bureau could go directly into community diversion programmes aimed at youth in disadvantaged areas."

Tailored Service Delivery



"Focus on mental health supports, more detox & stabilisation, and ending homelessness which breeds chaotic drug use."

"More treatment centres that can be accessed in very short times"

"safe injecting/ drug use sites"

- In an evaluation of the three phases of DSC Recovery services, at baseline the participants in Phase 3 had fewer physical health symptoms, lower anxiety, better social functioning, and better psychological wellbeing than those in Phase 1.
- After 6 months, there were significant improvements in self-confidence, goal-setting and self-efficacy across all participant groups.

Comiskey, C. et al (2023)

"All the addicts and staff in addiction areas of work trained in Naloxone."

"Access to healthcare in hostels"

"Better access to harm reduction materials like clean needles, condoms, contraception."

Create Opportunities for Stability



“I’ve never got a chance of a home. I’d be on my own and I could put my cups, my plates, my medication here, and open my medication and put it beside my methadone. I could just have my medical press in the bathroom when you’re getting ready, your methadone in there, you’re HIV treatment or whatever else you’re on, and take it all in the bathroom.”

"Once you have a fixed address, you have a base and you can work on everything else."

"Everybody knows someone addicted to something."

“I know I have 6 months left, but I’m really traumatised by the prospect of being homeless again, it’s all I think about, I’m not sleeping, and I can’t believe I have worked this hard, and it could all disappear.”

- HIV is a very manageable condition, which can reach an untransmissible level when treated.
- In a study of adherence to HIV medication in the context of homelessness & addiction, clients in DSC Blood Borne Virus Unit had significantly better adherence to medication during periods of stabilising (not necessarily abstaining from) drug use.

Maloney, E. (2023)



NEXT STEPS: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FRONTLINE



Invest in Prevention

Investment in early intervention and prevention: youth education, family mediation, community supports. Tackle poverty and deprivation in disadvantaged communities.



Tailored Service Delivery

Full cost recovery for services supporting people in homelessness and addiction; high quality services that can retain specialised staff and support clients to achieve best outcomes. Additional funding to provide more treatment services.



Create Opportunities for Stability

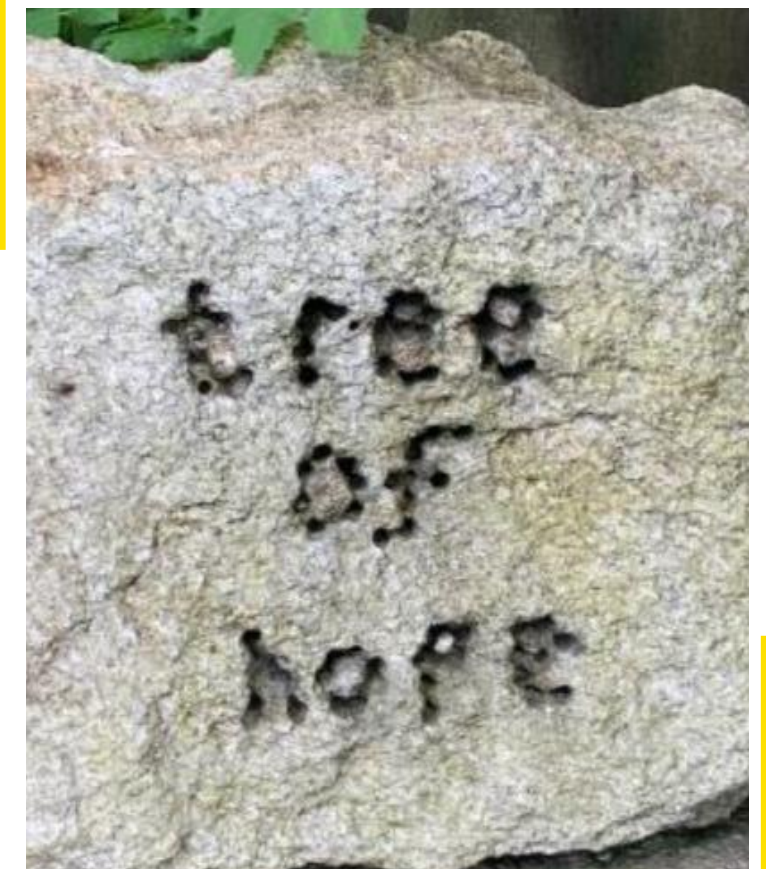
Improved understanding of the needs and barriers of vulnerable sub-populations (e.g. women) and improved accessibility for people with more complex multi-morbidities is critical. Support must be as easily accessible as drugs.

THANK YOU!



“Simon saved my life. The nurse in James' said 24 hours more on the street and I would be dead. I'm never going down that road again”

“The last relapse broke me; mentally, spiritually and physically. I had no choice but to change. And I'm enjoying it. I'm enjoying it this time around. I didn't last time - I was up to bits and pieces. I'm not up to anything this time. I can sleep.”



“The best part of the changes was finding yourself again, because I lost myself big time. I forgot who I was. Forgot there is a better life out there.”