

PRESS RELEASE

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Over One in Four with Both Diagnosed Mental and Physical Health Condition

Dublin Simon Says Homelessness is not just Being Without A Home

Over 60% of people using Dublin Simon Community services have a diagnosed physical health condition, while a further 40% suffer from a diagnosed mental health condition. More than one in four of these suffer from both a diagnosed physical and mental health condition.

The Dublin Simon Community health audit which took place over a one week period, from October 27th to November 2nd, highlights the extent of the health complexities endured by people experiencing homelessness. "These survey results prove that homelessness is not just about a lack of a roof, it is much more complex," said Sam McGuinness, CEO of Dublin Simon Community. "The hundreds of people that we work with on a daily basis suffer multiple health related illnesses, both physical and mental.

We have always said that homelessness isn't just about being without a home. These findings further justify it. People need the adequate resources to move out of homelessness. If they don't, their physical and mental health will deteriorate."

The health audit found that the most common three diagnosed health conditions were Hepatitis B and/or C, Liver conditions and Respiratory conditions. According to Sam McGuinness "these illnesses are in line with what you would expect from someone who has experienced homelessness, most notably respiratory conditions, while hepatitis and liver conditions are often reflective of prolonged substance abuse".

The audit showed that in a one week period 79% of Dublin Simon service users were male, 89% were Irish and the majority were in the 26 – 35 year age group. Of those included in the 300 person sample, 24% had been homeless for less than a year and 38% had been homeless for over five years. Over half (55%) of people avail of disability allowance, 66% consume alcohol and 56% use one or more drug types.

"These results highlight for us that at a time when we are making considerable progress to eliminate long-term homelessness, the health services must protect funding for adequate supports to move people with health complexities out of homelessness, long-term," said McGuinness.

Full audit can be downloaded at: http://www.dubsimon.ie/publications/policy_papers.htm

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