

NHS Ayrshire & Arran Addiction Services and East, North and South Ayrshire Councils launch research project with the homeless

NHS Ayrshire & Arran Addiction Services in collaboration with East, North and South Ayrshire Councils are launching an 18-month study investigating the relationships between single homelessness, alcohol, substance misuse and mental health.

During 2004/2005 more than 3,900 homeless applications were made in Ayrshire & Arran, of which more than 2,500 were applications as single homeless adults.

Pat Lerpiniere, Addiction Services Manager, explained: "There is a lack of long-term research into homelessness among this population group. The study will allow us to track the experiences of homeless single adults and to identify and develop an understanding of factors and pathways which can often result in individuals finding themselves in the homeless cycle"

The proposed study will be led by Faye Murfet of NHS Ayrshire & Arran Addiction Services' Information & Research Team. Faye will gather information by carrying out a series of in-depth interviews with single adults currently applying as homeless to one of the local authorities and will receive regular update reports from support workers. She will also review literature to highlight areas of good practice both locally and nationally.

Pat Lerpiniere commented: "We hope that the results of the study will form recommendations which will influence service development locally and nationally. Our aim is to try to prevent single adults entering into homelessness and, where they do, to help them find a long-term sustainable route out of homelessness."

Councillor James Kelly, Chair of East Ayrshire Council's Housing Committee, commented: "The results of this study will help us focus on the needs of those who are homeless and suffer addiction or mental health issues, and allow us to develop services that will provide the support and assistance to help them find a route out of homelessness."

Olga Clayton, Head of Housing at North Ayrshire Council, added: "Tackling homelessness means tackling its underlying causes. This research will allow us to improve our understanding of the links between addiction and homelessness at a local level. We can only tackle these problems in partnership with health and other services and as such this study is an important first step."

The Vice Convener of South Ayrshire Council's Social Justice Committee, Councillor John McDowall, said: "This study will add to the Council's significant progress in preventing homelessness. The information gathered will assist the Council to direct appropriate support services and resources to where they are most required."

For more information and updates on the progress of the project, please contact faye.murfet@aapct.scot.nhs.uk



Some of the team behind the homelessness research project (from left): Elizabeth Copeland, Assistant Homeless Manager, South Ayrshire Council; Faye Murfet - Lead Researcher, NHS Ayrshire & Arran Addiction Services; Nicola Thom - Homeless Strategy and Services Manager, East Ayrshire Council; Peter McArthur - IRT Coordinator, NHS Ayrshire & Arran Addiction Services

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