

The Fulfilling Lives programme: supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage

A summary of programme achievements, evaluation findings, learning and resources

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CFE Research and
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Acknowledgements

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This report provides a summary of the evaluation of the National Lottery Community Fund Fulfilling Lives programme. It draws on previously published research and updated data analysis to provide a summary of the programme aims, design, achievements, key evaluation findings and learning. It also signposts to resources providing further insights and detail.

Since 2014, the Fulfilling Lives programme has supported more than 4,000 people experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage, including homelessness, alcohol and substance misuse, offending, mental ill-health, and domestic violence.

The report will be of interest to:

- The National Lottery Community Fund as key funders of the programme and funders of other similar programmes, in particular the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities
- Policy and decision-makers at the local and national level whose work affects people experiencing multiple disadvantage
- Staff working for services and organisations that support people affected by multiple disadvantage
- Host/legacy organisations of the Fulfilling Lives programme.

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Key messages

Experience of homelessness, mental ill-health, substance misuse and the criminal justice system are interrelated and often mutually reinforcing. Yet public services often engage with problems in isolation. Failing to recognise and address the complexity of people's experiences results in a substantial cost to the public purse and, more significantly, a tragic waste of human life and potential. The Fulfilling Lives programme aimed to address this.

Twelve partnerships in England received funding for between five and eight years to 'change lives, change systems and involve beneficiaries'. Over 4,000 people were directly supported by the programme. Over 1,200 people left the programme for a positive reason (or 41 per cent of those who left). The programme was designed to test and learn – to try new approaches and be innovative without being tied to targets.

Partnerships demonstrated the benefits of a holistic and strengths-based approach to supporting people. Effective support was trauma-informed, persistent and ongoing, and enabled trusting relationships to be built. Low caseloads for frontline staff gave the time needed to work in a personalised way. Navigators supported people through what can be a complex and confusing system.

Fulfilling Lives has shown that it is possible to engage and support those with the most complex and entrenched needs. There were significant reductions in time spent homeless and rough sleeping. There were improvements in people's self-reliance and reductions in levels of need and risk. Negative interactions with public services, such as arrests and visits to A&E, also reduced.

Attitudes towards multiple disadvantage have shifted, with a greater recognition of the role and impact of trauma. There is a better understanding of the need for involving people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage in the design and delivery of services. New structures exist to enable greater collaboration and coordination across agencies and sectors, and Fulfilling Lives leaves behind a local workforce better equipped to support this group. Multiple disadvantage is also now firmly on the national political agenda: the Changing Futures programme has adopted much of the learning from Fulfilling Lives.

However, changing systems takes time. Even after eight years, challenges remain. The programme made less progress in addressing siloed and short-term commissioning. While the role of navigators on the programme has been effective and integral in supporting better outcomes for individuals, there is no reduction in the need for this support as the service user journey remains often complex and difficult. Fulfilling Lives staff have advocated on behalf of beneficiaries and supported them into services, but there is only so much they can do if appropriate and accessible services do not exist. More needs to be done to make mental health services in particular more accessible to people experiencing co-occurring substance misuse and mental ill-health.

Coproduction work needs to be better resourced. The transition between prison and community remains problematic and repeated short sentences do more harm than good. Learning from Fulfilling Lives about what makes an effective navigator needs to be taken on board to ensure such roles do not become just another traditional support role.

Background and context

01

What do we mean by multiple disadvantage?

The Fulfilling Lives programme defined multiple disadvantage as experience of two or more of homelessness,¹ reoffending, substance misuse and mental ill-health. However, people are also likely to be affected by other forms of disadvantage, including physical and/or learning disabilities, domestic abuse and poverty. Understanding of multiple disadvantage has been extended more recently to include experience of domestic abuse² to address the under-representation of women in official estimates of people experiencing multiple disadvantage.³

Prior to data gathered through the Fulfilling Lives and MEAM evaluations, evidence on the characteristics and experiences of people experiencing multiple disadvantage was largely derived from the 2016 Hard Edges report. This estimated that at least 58,000 people in England annually have contact with homelessness, criminal justice and substance misuse services.⁴ This did not include mental health. More recently, it was estimated that approximately 336,000 people in England face at least three of homelessness, mental ill-health, substance misuse and violence and abuse.⁵

The early roots of multiple disadvantage can be found in backgrounds combining poverty, very poor educational experiences, family stress and complex trauma associated with childhood abuse and neglect.⁶

Find out more: [Understanding multiple needs](#)

Why does multiple disadvantage matter?

Alone, issues such as homelessness, mental ill-health and substance misuse are challenging. Together, they create a level of complexity that can be difficult to address. Issues are often mutually reinforcing.⁷ The effects of one impacts on the ability of individuals to cope with or manage another. Yet public services often engage with a single aspect of what are complex and interrelated problems and thus fail to meet people's needs.⁸ Narrowly focused remits and targets can contribute to a culture of 'silo' working. A particular form of disadvantage looked at in isolation may not be considered severe enough to meet thresholds for accessing support. Hence the importance of recognising the multiplicity of disadvantages someone is experiencing and the combined effect of these.⁹ The Fulfilling Lives programme aimed to address this.

Multiple disadvantage results in a substantial cost to the public purse. When people first joined the Fulfilling Lives programme they were each using, on average, public services costing at least £7,220 per quarter – over £28,800 per beneficiary per year. This is an under-estimate as it does not include all types of public service interactions.

More significant is the tragic waste of human life and potential. Over the course of the Fulfilling Lives programme, at least 217 people died – five per cent of all those who were involved. The average age of those on the programme who died was 43 for men and 39 for women. In the general population, the average age at death is 79 years for men and 83 years for women.¹⁰ The youngest person on the programme to die was just 21 years old.

Find out more: [Why we need to invest in multiple disadvantage](#)

The Fulfilling Lives programme

Key aims and outcomes

The Fulfilling Lives programme was one of a series of strategic investments made by The National Lottery Community Fund that were intended to make concerted progress on complex social issues by providing substantial funding over an extended period in targeted parts of the country.

Fulfilling Lives had three intended programme outcomes:

- People experiencing multiple disadvantage manage their lives better through access to person centred and coordinated services
- Services are tailored and better connected, with service users to fully take part in effective service design and delivery
- Shared learning and the improved measurement of outcomes will demonstrate the impact of service models to key stakeholders and influence future programme design by local services.

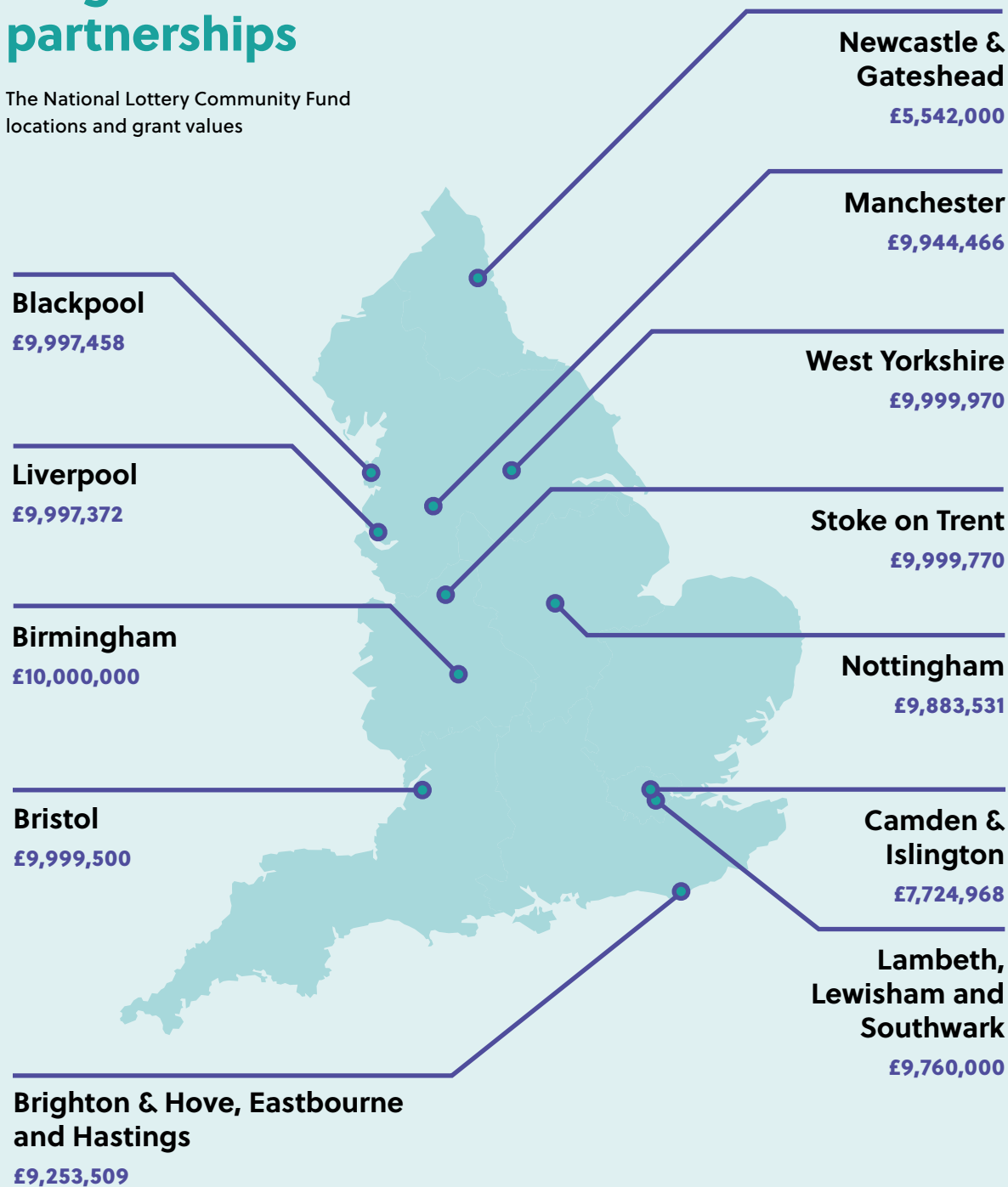
This was later summarised as ‘change lives, change systems and involve beneficiaries’. This report includes chapters on each of these summary outcomes. We also return to the original programme outcomes in the conclusions to weigh up the extent to which these have been achieved.

How the programme was structured and delivered

12 partnerships in parts of England with high concentrations of people experiencing multiple disadvantage were funded for a period of between five and eight years. Each partnership was led by a voluntary sector organisation (for example, housing associations and homelessness charities) and brought together representatives from other local statutory and voluntary sector agencies whose work affected those experiencing multiple disadvantage (such as, local authorities, drug and alcohol services and local police).

Programme partnerships

The National Lottery Community Fund locations and grant values



The Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition were contracted by the Fund to provide ongoing expertise and support to help partnerships with their work. CFE Research, in partnership with The University of Sheffield, undertook an overarching evaluation of the programme.

The programme was designed with input from people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage. Once the programme was underway, the National Expert Citizens Group (NECG) was formed, with representatives with lived experience from all partnership areas. The NECG was designed to ensure people with lived experience continued to influence and challenge the programme. The group has gone on to influence the wider system of support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage (see page 32).

Partnership leads, along with representatives of the Fund, national evaluation and NECG, met regularly as the Systems Change Action Network (SCAN) to share learning, provide mutual support and work together on creating systems change.

Key features of the programme design and approach

The programme was designed to **test and learn**. This meant partnerships were encouraged to be innovative and trial new approaches. Partnerships were able to work flexibly to pilot initiatives without being tied to these if they did not work or to achieving throughput targets.

Partnerships developed approaches relevant and in response to their local context and needs. The Fund set out a series of underlying principles¹¹ to guide partnership work:

- Provide learning which can be used to **create system change**
- Address the combination of factors that can affect the person, in a way that is **simple and straightforward** for individuals to navigate, with a single access point
- Assume that people can **improve their own circumstances** and life chances with the right support

- Engage people with **first-hand experience** of multiple disadvantage in the design and delivery of services
- Provide **better coordination** between those delivering services (both statutory and voluntary sector) and those commissioning services.

The programme recognised that the people it supported are people, not problems. Fulfilling Lives has shown that the barriers to supporting people effectively lie not with individuals experiencing complex issues but with a complex and failing system. Hence the focus on systems change.

Each partnership created its own systems change plan with a series of priorities. These are summarised here. Taken together, five common themes from the priorities emerged:

- Developing and expanding the role of **coproduction** in creating effective systems change
- Embedding a culture of **systems thinking** and ‘what works’
- System-wide **workforce development**, including the importance of trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches
- Improving **access to services** – particularly mental health services
- Improving **service transitions** – including hospital discharge and prison release.

These formed programme-wide systems change priorities and were the focus of thematic studies and campaigns.

A central way partnerships worked towards systems change was by providing direct support to local people experiencing multiple disadvantage. Through **personalised and strengths-based support**, partnerships demonstrated what could be achieved and gained valuable insights into how best to support people. This work was also an important way of achieving the first aim to change lives.

Learning point

Having the evaluation team on board at such an early stage, before the final 12 partnerships were announced even, meant that the evaluation could be integrated thoroughly within the programme. Data collection was designed with input from partnerships and people with lived experience. Partnerships had substantial funding dedicated for collecting and processing data for research and evaluation purposes.

The evaluation and learning programme

Evaluation and learning has been integral to Fulfilling Lives. The National Lottery Community Fund commissioned CFE Research and The University of Sheffield in early 2013 to carry out a national evaluation of the programme. Partnerships were also asked to do their own local evaluation.

The evaluation aimed to:

- Track and assess the achievements of the programme and to estimate the extent to which these are attributable to the projects and interventions delivered
- Calculate the value of benefits to the exchequer and wider society
- Identify what interventions and approaches work well, for which people and in what circumstances
- Assess the extent to which the Fund's principles (such as coproduction and partnership working) are incorporated into project design and delivery and to work out the degree to which these principles influence success
- Explore how projects are delivered, understand problems faced and to help identify solutions and lessons learned.

A **theory of change** in the form of two logic models was created to help identify key outputs and outcomes of interest and to guide the design of the evaluation. The original logic models are provided on pages 63 and 64. The models are reproduced as agreed at the start of the programme, referring to 'individuals with multiple and complex needs' – this terminology was replaced with 'people experiencing multiple disadvantage' to better reflect the fact that the issues people face are generally external structural and systemic factors rather than individual characteristics.

A **common data framework** (or CDF) was created to enable partnerships to gather comparable data on the people they supported. This included information on engagement with the programme, demographic characteristics, accommodation, use of services and assessments of need, risk and self-reliance.

Alongside the CDF we carried out an ongoing programme of partnership visits and **qualitative research** with partnership staff and volunteers, stakeholders and beneficiaries. The evaluation team worked closely with the NECG to gain insights from people with lived experience. From 2019 onwards the team focused on producing in-depth evaluative reports on particular aspects of multiple disadvantage and the programme response.

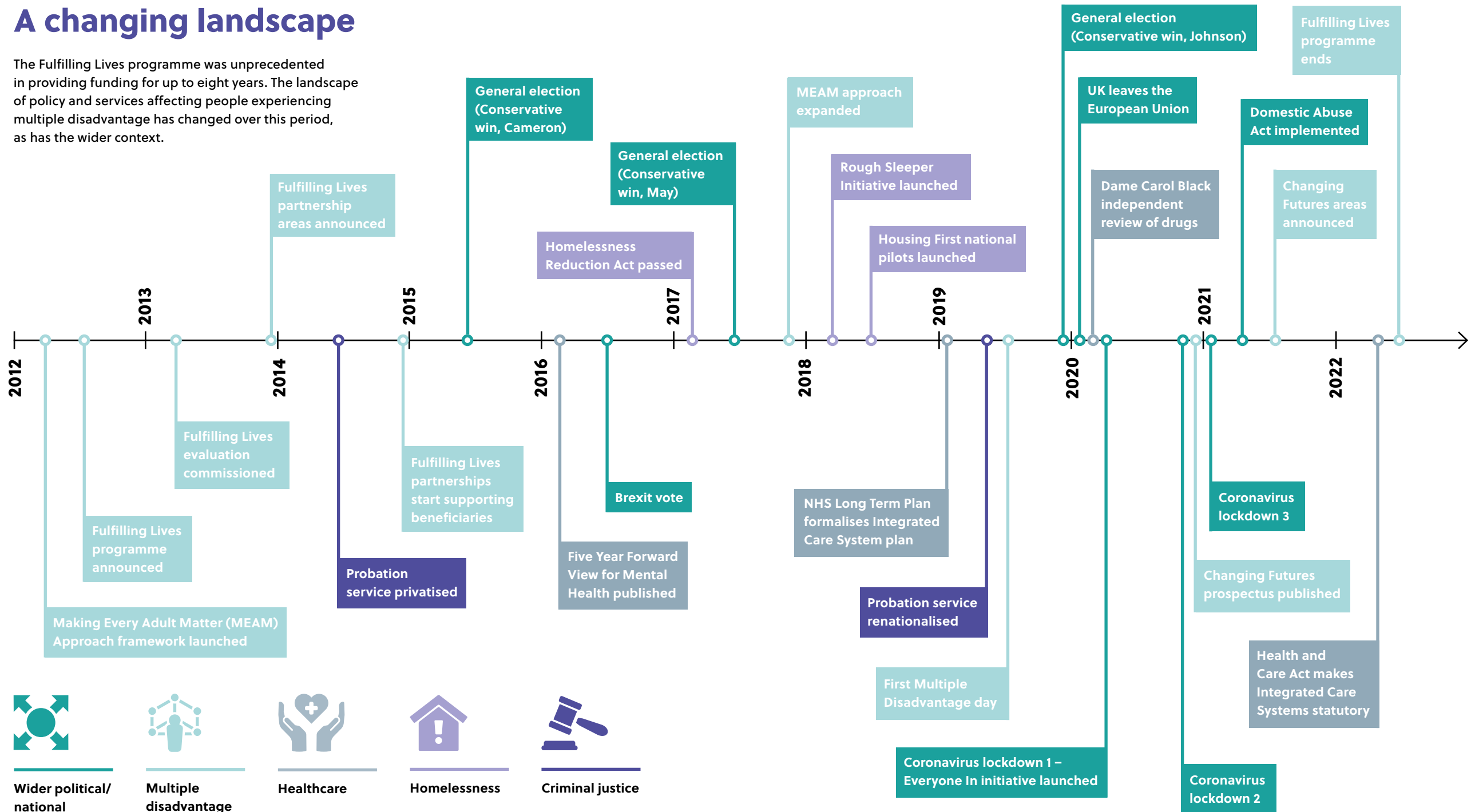
The evaluation contract also included a **comprehensive learning programme**. This aimed to support partnerships to engage in the evaluation, share their learning and communicate key findings to a wide audience. The learning programme comprised:

- Regular meetings of Communities of Practice – one focusing on systems change (SCAN) and one focusing on learning and evaluation
- A programme of seminars and webinars and two national conferences
- An evaluation website that housed national and local reports and other resources, with regular blogs and newsletters.

For more information on and learning about the evaluation, see our separate report 'Evaluating Fulfilling Lives' at www.fulfillinglivesevaluation.org.

A changing landscape

The Fulfilling Lives programme was unprecedented in providing funding for up to eight years. The landscape of policy and services affecting people experiencing multiple disadvantage has changed over this period, as has the wider context.



Fulfilling Lives in numbers

02

The Fulfilling Lives programme

See pages 70–73 for source data

12

local partnerships



£112 million

invested in the programme over


8 years



Who was reached?

4,073

direct beneficiaries

 = 100 people



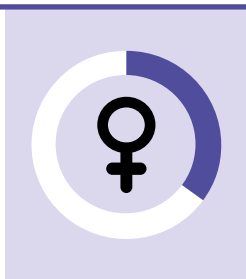
38

was the average age, ranging from **18 to 76**



35%

were female



42%

had a physical disability or long-term health condition other than mental ill-health



17%

were from ethnic minorities



Who was reached?

50%

experienced **all four** of homelessness, substance misuse, reoffending and mental ill-health

43%

experienced **three** of these



What difference was made?

1,200+

people left the programme for a positive reason



more than
£700

reduction in public service use per person per year



After **12 months** on the programme, there were...

reductions in...

- levels of **need** and **risk**
- people **arrested**, from 26% to 19% (n=1,065)
- people **evicted**, from 13% to 9% (n=1,178)
- people **rough sleeping**, from 25% to 15% (n=1,800)



increases in...

- people getting **key benefits**
- levels of **self-reliance**
- people **spending time in their own tenancy**, from 25% to 35% (n=1,800)



The evaluation and learning programme

21

seminars/workshops



27

webinars



1,702

Twitter followers



more than

1.2 million

visits to the evaluation website

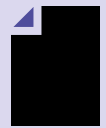


29

reports with **over 40,000** total downloads produced by the national evaluation team

300+

publications from across the programme housed on the website



5,500

downloads of our briefing *What makes a difference*



52

blog posts with nearly **16,000** reads



19

videos on the YouTube channel with over **1,000** views



2

national conferences



Key achievements

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Improving access to mental health services	47
Improving service transitions	53

Changing lives

What was the issue?

Too often people experiencing multiple disadvantage are denied the support they need. They may be labelled as too high risk to work with or 'hard to reach'. The extreme poverty and difficulties people face may be viewed as 'lifestyle choices'.

What did partnerships do?

Fulfilling Lives partnerships took a **personalised, strengths-based approach** to providing direct support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage, working alongside mainstream services to better coordinate the support that people receive. This differed from the traditional support worker approach in the following ways:

- **Persistent and ongoing support:** staff did not give up on beneficiaries or close the case for missed appointments, and partnerships were free from the time-limits that restrict some other commissioned services
- **Personal relationships were built, based on trust with beneficiaries:** small caseloads for workers was essential to give the time needed for this
- **Holistic support that focused on beneficiaries' priorities:** staff were not working to externally set targets so could personalise the support offered.

Navigators

Most partnerships employed navigators in some form (job titles varied) to support people. A navigator is a service-neutral staff member who works with people to secure and coordinate a range of support and services as needed. Some navigators had lived experience of multiple disadvantage and some had a specialist focus such as housing or substance misuse or were employed to engage specific groups such as women. See the section on Workforce development for more information on the navigator model.

Other features of support provided by Fulfilling Lives included peer mentors and personal budgets. **Peer mentors** are people with lived experience who provide additional support. They can play an important role in providing hope that recovery is possible, help to build trust and provide a bridge between services and people who use them. There can also be benefits for peer mentors themselves, in terms of learning new skills and developing confidence. **Personal budgets** set aside money for individual beneficiaries to use to buy essential items, additional support and engage in life-enhancing activities. Personal budgets played a role in helping build trusting relationships and empowering beneficiaries.

Housing First

Housing First is an evidence-based approach to supporting homeless people experiencing multiple disadvantage to live in their own homes.¹² Independent accommodation is provided in combination with wraparound support, with neither dependent on people first addressing other needs or showing that they are 'housing-ready'. While there is good quality evidence of its effectiveness, much of this comes from outside the UK context.¹³ Several Fulfilling Lives partnerships ran successful small-scale pilots and gathered evidence and learning on how to deliver the approach. For example:

- [An Evaluation of Basis Yorkshire's Housing First Pilot](#) West Yorkshire – Finding Independence
- [The Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First Pilot: Final evaluation report](#) Inspiring Change Manchester
- [A Place for Everyone: Housing First and tenancy support in Nottingham](#) Opportunity Nottingham.

What were the key achievements and outcomes?

Fulfilling Lives has shown that **it is possible to engage and support those with the most complex and entrenched needs**. Fulfilling Lives aimed to work with those with the most severe and entrenched needs, and the evidence we gathered suggests they were successful in doing so. The programme had a lower drop-out rate (27 per cent of all those who left – see Table 4 on page 72) compared with some other projects working with people with less-complex needs (45 per cent).¹⁴

After a year with Fulfilling Lives, there were **significant reductions in the amount of time people spend homeless and rough sleeping**, and an increase in time spent in more stable forms of accommodation, including supported accommodation and their own tenancies. The positive trend of reducing homelessness and increases in people spending time in their own

tenancies continued for those who stay on the programme for two years.¹⁵ This reduction is particularly impressive in the context of persistent levels of homelessness¹⁶ and increasing levels of rough sleeping¹⁷ across England over the time of the programme. However, people who joined with current needs relating to homelessness were less likely to show reductions in levels of need and risk over time (see Table 5 on page 74).

There are clear and significant **improvements in people's self-reliance and reductions in levels of need and risk. People are engaging better with services.** Over time, Fulfilling Lives beneficiaries also increased their participation in **positive social, cultural and wellbeing activities.** And more people are beginning to give something back through **volunteering.**¹⁸

Negative interactions with public services also reduced – on average, there were fewer arrests, convictions, presentations at A&E and evictions from tenancies after nearly a year with the programme. Reductions in negative service use continued for those who remained on the programme for at least two years.¹⁹ Supporting people to access safe and stable accommodation can help to reduce use of crisis and emergency services and contact with the criminal justice system.²⁰

Stacey's story: Reducing negative service use

Many Fulfilling Lives beneficiaries joined the programme with histories of avoidable service use. Stacey* experienced multiple trauma, including racial and sexual abuse, which contributed to difficulty in engaging with services and she moved in and out of hospital, offending and street homelessness. Fulfilling Lives worked with Stacey to coproduce her support; she built a positive relationship with her worker, moved into her own tenancy and had no involvement with the police.

* Pseudonym used for anonymity

Effective practice and key learning points

- Allow cases to **remain open as long as needed** rather than exclude for non-engagement. Relapses and setbacks are part of the recovery pathway. It is essential that services acknowledge and accommodate this reality rather than punish it
- **Coproduce support packages** with beneficiaries based on their preferences and personal goals. Choice and control over what support is provided and how is vital for building trust
- Maintain **low caseloads for frontline staff** to give them the time needed to work in a personalised way with those experiencing multiple disadvantage
- Develop **gender-specific services** to meet the particular needs of women. These should be safe, women-only spaces in discrete locations in the community
- Provide **culturally specific services** for people from under-represented ethnic backgrounds. People with an Asian ethnic background were under-represented among Fulfilling Lives beneficiaries and are likely to face additional barriers in accessing support
- Ensure support is **trauma-informed and psychologically-informed**. This requires not only initial training for staff, but ongoing support and reflection on how best to implement these approaches
- Support people to **access and maintain stable and appropriate accommodation** as a priority. This is a crucial element of tackling multiple disadvantage; people whose levels of rough sleeping and/or homelessness decreased were more likely to leave the programme for a positive destination.²¹

Key learning

Overall, 35 per cent of beneficiaries were female – many from partnerships that provided specialist support for women. This is important as women have a different experience of multiple disadvantage and can often be excluded or overlooked by mainstream services. Women generally stayed with the programme longer than men and were more likely to show reductions in levels of need and risk (see Table 5 on page 74).

The importance of gender-specific services

Examples of gender-specific services supported by Fulfilling Lives partnerships include:

- A gender-informed drug and alcohol service for women was co-designed by Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham bringing together practitioners, commissioners and women with lived experience
- A women's hub was set up by provider Change, Grow, Live following work in partnership with Fulfilling Lives South East to improve engagement of women in drug and alcohol services following feedback that they did not feel safe participating in mixed groups
- In-depth research into hidden homelessness and women by Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden informed a specialist women's outreach service, guidance and training for practitioners working with domestic abuse survivors, and better support for women identified as high risk of continued domestic violence and homelessness.

What next?

Fulfilling Lives has demonstrated a need for flexible and person-centred support and that this can help achieve improved outcomes. Learning and approaches from Fulfilling Lives have been taken up locally by other services and importantly by the Changing Futures programme. This provides an important opportunity to continue to grow the work of Fulfilling Lives. However, services do not exist in a vacuum and navigators can only do so much to connect people to services. Development of direct support services must be accompanied by wider changes to the system. We explore this further in the next section.

Resources and further reading

General

[What has Fulfilling Lives achieved](#) National evaluation

[What makes a difference](#) National evaluation

[Birmingham Changing Futures Together Programme impact and learning report](#) Birmingham Changing Futures Together

[Fulfilling Lives Islington & Camden: A Final Report Addressing Multiple Disadvantage](#) Fulfilling Lives Islington and Camden

[Lead Worker Peer Mentor Service – An Organisational Toolkit](#) Birmingham Changing Futures Together

[Understanding models of support for people facing multiple disadvantage](#) Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham

Housing/homelessness

['More than a roof' – Addressing homelessness with people experiencing multiple disadvantage](#) National evaluation

[Fixing the hamster wheel of homelessness](#) Opportunity Nottingham

[Liverpool Waves of Hope Accommodation Based Service: Lessons from a Psychologically Informed Approach](#) Liverpool Waves of Hope

Supporting women

[The Fulfilling Lives Women's Study: An Ideal Support System](#) Fulfilling Lives South East

[Gender and severe multiple disadvantage: Women's experiences of accessing services in Bristol](#) Golden Key

[A guide to working well with women](#) Inspiring Change Manchester

[The importance of women-only spaces](#) Inspiring Change Manchester

[A question of trust: How services fail women experiencing multiple disadvantage](#) Opportunity Nottingham

[Still a Mam: Telling the stories of women who have experienced child removal and exploring what can be done to make things fairer](#)
Fulfilling Lives Newcastle and Gateshead

[Women experiencing multiple disadvantage and involved in street-based sex work](#) Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham

[Women's Homelessness in Camden: Improving data, strategy and outcomes](#)
Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden

[The Women's Hub and Staff Development Spaces: A Review of Practice Development at Change Grow Live \(CGL\)](#) South East Partnership

[Working Effectively with Perpetrators and Survivors of Domestic Abuse in Homelessness Settings](#) Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden

Changing the system

What was the issue?

Local systems at the start of the Fulfilling Lives programme were described as inefficient, fragmented and inconsistent, which meant that people experiencing multiple disadvantage were moving in and out of services time and time again but experiencing little progress. Systems change was therefore integral to the programme.

Defining systems change

The 12 Fulfilling Lives partnerships, alongside the MEAM coalition, coproduced the following definition of systems change:

Changes to the people, organisations, policies, processes, culture, beliefs and environment that make up the system. Systems change is beneficial, sustainable in the long term and transformational. It is not tokenistic, doing the same thing under a different name, or overly reliant on key individuals.

We agreed that flexing the system (making a one-off exception) is not systems change, but it might be a useful starting point. It is also important to see systems change as an ongoing process, rather than a destination.

It can be easy to get tied up in knots trying to come up with the perfect definition of systems change. There are several definitions of systems change out there. Choose some words that are meaningful to you and your partners, then get stuck in.

What did partnerships do?

Fulfilling Lives partnerships:

- Demonstrated that things could be done differently and that building services with the person at the centre can lead to better outcomes. They ran a range of **small-scale tests, pilots and demonstration projects**. These included specialist support for women, Housing First services, psychological support and wound care, as well as the direct support provided by navigator teams
- Created **opportunities to upskill the workforce**. This included communities of practice, training courses, good practice guidance, toolkits and videos, often based on learning from delivering Fulfilling Lives. Some sought to create sustainable change by embedding new approaches and understanding of multiple disadvantage in higher education course for social workers and healthcare professionals
- Set up **cross-agency networks and groups** to better coordinate support and address system blockages. These groups also provided opportunities to build contacts, relationships and understanding
- Produced a huge volume of **research and evaluation evidence and learning** to capture what worked and communicate this to a wide audience.

What changed?

Across Fulfilling Lives areas there is evidence of:

- **Changed attitudes towards and a greater understanding of multiple disadvantage**, with a greater recognition of the role and impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma on people's behaviour
- **Multiple disadvantage now being firmly on the national political agenda**. The central government funded Changing Futures programme has adopted much of the learning from Fulfilling Lives

- **Better understanding and acceptance of coproduction with people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage** in partnership areas, with increased recognition of the benefits of working in this way. Established lived experience groups and networks are continuing beyond the lifespan of Fulfilling Lives
- **New structures to enable greater collaboration and coordination across agencies and sectors**, vital in discouraging silo working across services. Many multi-agency groups, boards and networks are set to continue beyond the lifetime of the programme
- **A better equipped local workforce to support people experiencing multiple disadvantage**. Partnership staff will take their learning, knowledge and outlook with them, and people with lived experience have moved into the wider workforce.

Key learning

The National Lottery Community Fund staff developed trusting relationships with partnerships. This enabled open and honest conversations about challenges and things that were not working well. Movement away from a focus on reaching target numbers and moving people swiftly through the system required staff at the Fund to educate senior stakeholders about what were realistic expectations for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Effective practice and learning points

Systems change ambitions were supported by the way the programme was funded and managed.

- Recognise that the system is complex and change can be slow. **Substantial funding over a much longer period than usual** was important in enabling partnerships to get to grips with the system challenges and begin to enact change locally
- **Take a test and learn approach without hard targets**. This gave partnerships the flexibility to work in different ways and be innovative to demonstrate what works. This was a welcome change to traditional funding models
- **Personal relationships are crucial** in building trust between the programme staff and other partners, services and commissioners. These take time to develop
- **Involve people with lived experience in creating change**. Incorporating the voice of lived experience in training and evidence ensures authenticity and impact as well as developing an understanding of where the system isn't working

- **Capture and share learning regularly.** This ensures there are tangible outputs that can be used to generate interest and influence practice. Provide evidence in a range of formats to ensure it is accessible to a broad audience.

What next?

Despite positive changes, the system is far from fixed. Changes and successes are not consistent across all partnership areas or all sectors. Systems issues that partnerships are frustrated about being unable to change include siloed and short-term commissioning, ineffective information sharing and a lack of engagement from some statutory services. Many big challenges remain, such as the catch-22 situation faced by people with co-occurring mental ill-health and substance misuse. Data from programme beneficiaries shows that after a year, with the exception of the small increase in time spent in rehab, there are no significant changes in the levels of use of more therapeutic or treatment services. In particular, there were consistently low levels of use of mental health services. This highlights the need for further systemic change to make services more accessible to those who need them.²²

Systems change takes time. Fulfilling Lives partnerships have in many ways planted the seeds of change. The hope is that the Changing Futures programme will take forward the baton from Fulfilling Lives and continue to progress and spread the good work.

Resources and further reading

Evidence of systems change

[Creating systems change](#) National evaluation report

[Impact Report](#) Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham

[Inspiring Change Manchester Systems Review: How ICM has influenced systems for people experiencing multiple disadvantage](#)
Inspiring Change Manchester

[Legacy Evaluation VOICES \(Fulfilling Lives in Stoke-on-Trent\)](#)

[Opportunities Fulfilled Opportunity Nottingham](#)

[Ripple Effect: The systems change impacts of Fulfilling Lives South East](#)
Fulfilling Lives South East

[Report on the year five evaluation Blackpool Fulfilling Lives](#)

Toolkits and guidance

[A Practical Guide to System Change Golden Key](#)

[Ripple Effect: The systems change principles and methods of Fulfilling Lives South East project](#) Fulfilling Lives South East

[System thinking: How to think differently](#) Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham

Blogs, videos and other resources

[Evaluating Systems Change – Webinar recording](#) National evaluation

[Severe Multiple Disadvantage in Nottingham: A summary document based on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Nottingham City](#)
Opportunity Nottingham

[A Systems Map: Thinking about the system as a whole](#) Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham

Involving beneficiaries: Coproductio

What was the issue?

Addressing multiple disadvantage is a complex challenge. Organisations and services often recognise that they do not have all of the answers, and people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage have insights which others do not. **Coproductio** with experts by experience (people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage, often called 'experts') can bring about improvements to services, both for those using them and for staff.²³

What do we mean by coproductio?

In order to be effective, it is important that everyone involved has a shared understanding of what coproductio means. The National Lottery Community Fund proposes the following definition:

Creating, delivering, improving and evaluating services jointly with people who will use them and stakeholders like local authorities, charities, frontline staff, funders, or academics.

Genuine coproductio goes beyond consultation and service user involvement; it is a way of working in which professionals and people with lived experience work together as equals.

What did Fulfilling Lives do?

Coproduction has been at the heart of the Fulfilling Lives programme since the start – partnership proposals had to outline how they would engage people with lived experience and one of the core strategic aims shared by partnerships was to develop and expand the role of coproduction in creating systems change. All partnerships established expert groups and employed a coordinator or similar to provide support for experts and manage requests for their involvement in projects and other activities.

The [National Expert Citizens Group](#) (NECG) was established to bring together the 12 Fulfilling Lives areas as a group to support programme development and work towards systems change by interacting with government and service organisations. The NECG has regional and local lived experience groups that meet regularly and feed into a national group. The group has been consulted on national policy, such as advising the Dame Carol Black Independent Review of Drugs, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now DLUHC) rough sleeping response team and the Changing Futures programme.

Examples of coproduced projects

- Fulfilling Lives Newcastle and Gateshead: [Respond training](#)
- Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham: [Gender-informed drug and alcohol service](#)
- Fulfilling Lives South East: [Working with DWP](#)
- Expert Citizens (VOICES): [Guide to effective sustainable community research](#).

What changed?

Coproduction with people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage is now much better understood and accepted in Fulfilling Lives areas, with increased recognition of the benefits of working in this way.

Many lived experience or expert groups are continuing beyond the lifetime of the programme, either as independent groups with their own funding (for example, the [Expert Citizens CIC](#) in Stoke) or by being taken on by other voluntary sector organisations (for example, [Empowerment](#) in Blackpool). In areas with Changing Futures funding, expert groups and networks set up by Fulfilling Lives are continuing to be involved in systems change work.

The NECG, managed by [Revolving Doors](#), is also continuing beyond the Fulfilling Lives programme and is expanding to include members outside of the initial 12 areas.

Key learning

Don't underestimate the time and resource that is needed to do coproduction properly. If there is an expectation that projects/programmes are coproduced, funders/commissioners should include substantial and adequate funding for this – for example, resources for a dedicated coproduction coordinator.

Effective practice and key learning points

As a result of the core focus on coproduction and lived experience involvement, a great deal has been learnt about the value of coproduction and how to do it well.²⁴

- **Create a safe, welcoming environment in which everyone has the opportunity to contribute.** Use accessible language and avoid labels (such as job titles) to work towards equality of contribution when coproducing
- **Involve experts at the outset of any coproduced project** to help shape it, rather than consult them once key decisions have already been made
- **Be open and honest** – ask why service users are to be involved and how they can best add value and be clear about parameters, desired outcomes, roles and time commitments expected

- **Ensure all participants in a coproduced project are appropriately supported** – this includes experts and professional staff. Experts benefit from a dedicated support network with a coordinator and need appropriate recompense for their time and effort (though not necessarily financial). Other participants also need support to fully understand what coproduction means and engage effectively in the process, particularly the time to fully commit and adapt as necessary.

What next?

Despite good progress in raising awareness of the importance of coproduction in Fulfilling Lives areas, **coproduction has not yet been embedded** as the usual way in which services are designed, commissioned, delivered and evaluated. Introducing a new way of working takes time and a cultural shift at all levels of services. Coproduction still needs to be better resourced, with adequate time and money built in. Encouraging organisations to try it is the first hurdle and collating and communicating evidence of the positive impact coproduction can have helps to convince others to adopt this approach.

Resources and further reading

Reports and evidence

[Coproduction: Principles into practice](#) National evaluation and SCAN

[The role of lived experience in creating systems change](#) National evaluation

[Co-producing research with people who have experienced severe and multiple disadvantages](#) Fulfilling Lives South East

[Inspiring Change Manchester's Coproduction Journey](#) Inspiring Change Manchester

Toolkits and guidance

[Co-producers in conversation: The ingredients for successful sustainable co-production](#) Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden

A summary of programme achievements, evaluation findings, learning and resources

[Co-Production toolkit](#) Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden

[Trauma-Informed Practice in Co-Production](#) Fulfilling Lives South East

[A starter guide to co-production](#) Golden Key

Blogs, videos and other resources

[Co-production: Forget about the word and focus on the principles](#)
Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham

[Learning from the process of co-production: Reflections, hints and tips](#)
Fulfilling Lives Newcastle and Gateshead

Workforce development

What was the issue?

Providing effective support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage requires a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. This includes frontline staff who work in substance misuse, mental health, the criminal justice system and housing, but also wider roles such as paramedics, GPs and their receptionists, pharmacists, police officers and Jobcentre staff. It is important that all staff, but particularly those who are not necessarily specialists in supporting people facing multiple disadvantage, have the skills, experience and confidence needed to effectively provide services for this group.

People with lived experience themselves have a huge amount to offer the workforce. They can act as positive role models and rapidly build trust with beneficiaries from the perspective of someone who has been in a similar situation. Employment can be a benefit to recovery, yet people with lived experience face numerous barriers that need to be overcome in order to move into and progress once in the workforce.

What did partnerships do?

Workforce development was a systems change ambition common across all partnerships. Partnerships' activity encompassed the following:

- **Championing trauma and psychologically informed approaches** (see this guide on [dealing with trauma](#) from Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham)
- **Supporting people with lived experience into the workforce** (see for example Fulfilling Lives South East's [report](#) on employing people with multiple disadvantage in their partnership)
- **Sharing good practice on the navigator role** and how to best support frontline staff (for example [rough sleeping navigators](#))

- **Upskilling the wider workforce** through training and learning programmes (see for example Opportunity Nottingham's [Practice Development Unit](#))
- **Modelling good practice in supporting the workforce**, (for example, though using reflective practice – see this [Guide to Independent Reflective Practice](#) from WY-FI)
- **Providing tools and resources** to assist services working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage (for example, see VOICES' [Care Act Toolkit](#)).

Effective practice and key learning points

Supporting people with lived experience into the workforce

- Create opportunities for people experiencing multiple disadvantage to **develop skills and gain qualifications** to help enhance their employability
- Volunteering opportunities can help provide vital experience and build confidence, but make sure that there is a **progression pathway out of volunteering** with support to make what can be a difficult jump into paid work
- To help people with the transition into paid work, **employers should make adjustments to working practices and policies**, such as flexible working hours, enhanced inductions, pay flexibility, reflective practice opportunities and a strong package of support
- **Choice is essential** – not everyone with lived experience will want to move into frontline support roles. Particularly outside of the voluntary sector, applicants **need support to discuss their past in positive ways**.

Key learning

In order to be effective, navigators need to be able to work with people over an extended period (this could be several years) to develop trusting relationships. **Small caseloads**, ideally between six and ten people, gives space to provide holistic and sometimes intensive support.

Good practice for the navigator role

- Navigators need to be **focused on the needs of the individual** and not led by service targets. Knowledge of trauma-informed approaches is essential
- They need **excellent interpersonal and communication skills**, including the ability to show empathy and build relationships, not just with beneficiaries, but with professionals too
- **Advocacy skills** and knowledge of local services, referral pathways and legal entitlements are also required
- Navigators need to be **flexible, spontaneous and resourceful** and may find themselves doing things other support workers would consider unorthodox
- As the navigator role is intensive and demanding, staff need a **supportive environment** to protect their wellbeing and avoid burnout. This includes providing a clear job specification, creating a culture of self-care, comprehensive training and development programmes and opportunities for regular **reflective practice**.

Upskilling the wider workforce

- The wider workforce need to **understand how trauma may affect behaviour** and have **good knowledge of local support** so they can refer people on to this. A shift in organisational culture may be needed and change is often feared
- **Long-term commitment and collaboration with service providers** is key; a programme is more likely to succeed if all partners have ownership and none feel that another organisation is imposing their way of working
- **Involving staff at all levels is also vital**. Without both senior manager and frontline worker buy-in, programmes will be harder to implement and less likely to be sustainable
- **People with lived experience** can help identify workforce development needs through peer research and mystery shopping. Involving experts in delivering training adds an authentic voice and can help motivate staff.

Craig's story: The benefit of navigators with lived experience

Craig* started working with Fulfilling Lives in 2020. He had been in prison several times, had a history of drug use and had not found support effective prior to joining the programme. His Fulfilling Lives worker had lived experience of drug use and was open about this when working with Craig. After being released from prison for the final time, his worker helped Craig register with a dentist and a doctor and supported him with benefit applications and JobCentre appointments. Without someone to help with these things, Craig felt he could have quickly returned to using drugs.

Craig's worker supported him to move into his own place from unsuitable accommodation, provided paint and paintbrushes and made sure he had everything needed to settle in. For Craig, his worker's lived experience made him credible as he understands how difficult life can be. When settled in his own accommodation he expressed positive thoughts for the future.



I'd say this is probably the best chance I've ever had at [staying out of prison], I can't think what I'd want more [...] but it's not easy. I needed a bit of stability, and that's what they've helped me get.

* Pseudonym used for anonymity

What next?

As navigators are increasingly recognised and commissioned as a frontline support role, it is essential that learning from Fulfilling Lives about how to ensure this role is effective is taken on board. Flexibility, small caseloads and other key aspects of the role must be maintained to prevent this becoming just another traditional support role. The wider workforce should also be better equipped to take a gender and trauma-informed approach to all aspects of its work and to acknowledge the specific needs of marginalised groups. To ensure the impacts of upskilling are sustained, training and learning around supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage

needs to be embedded in job descriptions, staff recruitment and development policies. Some partnerships began work with higher education institutions to embed multiple disadvantage in professional training courses.

Resources and further reading

Reports and evidence

Workforce development and multiple disadvantage National evaluation

The impact of clinical supervision on supporting non-specialist client-facing workers to engage clients experiencing co-existing mental ill health and substance misuse Fulfilling Lives South East

Navigator Practice in the WY-FI Project West Yorkshire – Finding Independence

Pathways into training, volunteering and employment for people with personal experience of multiple disadvantage in Manchester Inspiring Change Manchester

What makes an effective multiple and complex needs worker? Fulfilling Lives Newcastle and Gateshead

Toolkits and guidance

Core competencies framework: Supporting people with complex needs Fulfilling Lives South East

Navigating Complexity: Learning from navigators across Birmingham Birmingham Changing Futures Together

Strengths Meeting Toolkit Golden Key

Improving access to mental health services

What was the issue?

Mental ill-health is both a cause and a consequence of multiple disadvantage. Almost all of Fulfilling Lives beneficiaries experienced mental health problems during their time on the programme. Getting help with mental health, and in particular counselling and psychological therapies, is linked to people making better progress, but few people receive this kind of support (only 17 per cent of those with a mental health need received counselling or therapy within the first three months with Fulfilling Lives).²⁵ Co-occurring mental ill-health and substance misuse is a particular issue. Clinical support often requires people to address their substance misuse before they can get help with their mental health or even be assessed. This despite the fact that many are using substances to self-medicate mental health problems.

We identified numerous and interlinked barriers for people experiencing multiple disadvantage when trying to get support with mental health. These can be grouped into three main challenges, which were the focus of much Fulfilling Lives work in this area.

Difficulty in accessing mental health support:

- The mental health system is complex and difficult to navigate – for people experiencing multiple disadvantage and those who support them
- Co-occurring mental ill-health and substance misuse excludes people from getting an assessment
- GP registration (needed for referral to mental health services) is sometimes refused to people who are homeless
- Lack of understanding of multiple disadvantage can result in stigma and discrimination.

Unsuitable/inappropriate mental health support:

- Services struggle to deal with complex issues and behaviours
- Traditional models of delivery exclude people experiencing multiple disadvantage - People are required to remember appointments that take place in daunting clinical settings. Long waits for assessment or treatment can lead to disengagement
- Services are not set up in gender-sensitive ways for people experiencing multiple disadvantage – for example, mixed-sex mental health wards.

A mental health system that is not designed or resourced to meet the needs of people experiencing multiple disadvantage:

- People with lived experience are not consulted on the design of services and strategies
- There is a lack of specialist services
- People experiencing multiple disadvantage often fall between service thresholds – too complex for primary services but below eligibility thresholds for more specialist secondary care.

What did partnerships do?

Fulfilling Lives demonstrated the **importance of navigators** to:

- Advocate on behalf of beneficiaries, through challenging decisions made by statutory services, persevering with a service and taking action if they feel that a refusal or denial by a service is contrary to policy or legislation
- Build positive working relationships with service providers and enhance understanding of the needs of people affected by multiple disadvantage
- Prepare and accompany beneficiaries to appointments and assessments, for example going through the types of questions that might be asked, so beneficiaries are less anxious and more likely to attend.

Paul's story: Mental health advocacy and support

Probation referred Paul* to Fulfilling Lives in June 2019 after he was released from prison. Paul has a history of mental ill-health, including bipolar disorder for which he is prescribed medication.

Soon after his release, a Fulfilling Lives worker met with Paul and his probation officer to discuss how best to support him and what help he would like. Paul identified that he struggles to communicate effectively and felt one-to-one support worked for him. He asked for advocacy and support to attend meetings as he often struggles in social situations due to his mental health, often feeling very paranoid.

Paul spoke about his mental health and admitted that he had not been taking his medication properly and would like this reviewed. He was supported to attend an appointment at his local GP surgery to discuss referral to the mental health team for an up-to-date assessment.

Fulfilling Lives continued to support Paul past the point he was signed off from probation in March 2020 with no concerns recorded. He moved into self-contained supported housing in December 2020, continued with his methadone script and told staff he was much happier.

* Pseudonym used for anonymity

Partnerships provided opportunities for **professionals from a variety of sectors and disciplines to come together** to enhance understanding of different services and how they can work more collaboratively. Initiatives such as communities of practice, multi-agency training sessions and co-locating mental health professionals within Fulfilling Lives teams, all led to improved relationships and greater understanding of different services, what they do and how best to access them.

- The **RESPOND training** for professionals involved in responding to a mental health crisis in Newcastle and Gateshead is one example of coproduced multi-agency training.

Mechanisms for sharing information about people across services, including mental health, housing and the criminal justice system were developed, with some still being used following the end of Fulfilling Lives.

- Inspiring Change Manchester’s GM-Think system is now used in the area to share information quickly and safely.

Several partnerships created **in-house, bespoke mental health services** to effectively support people experiencing multiple disadvantage and learn more about how to engage this group in mental health support. Pilot projects included:

- Specialist mental health workers at Opportunity Nottingham
- A flexible psychological support service at West Yorkshire-Finding Independence.

People with lived experience of multiple disadvantage have been involved in service review, design and delivery to help ensure that services are built with their needs in mind.

- Experts from Golden Key (Bristol) were involved in the development of the local ten-year mental health strategy
- A coproduced report with experts from Inspiring Change Manchester on the link between mental health and homelessness set out a blueprint for ‘getting it right’, with all recommendations from the report adopted locally.

Effective practice and key learning points

Pilot projects demonstrated that when designed appropriately, clinical services can engage and effectively support people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

- Adopt a **flexible and personalised approach** to support, for example schedule sessions at times that are best for the client, move at their pace, have no time limits and give the option to take a break and return without penalty
- Use outreach methods to offer support in a **comfortable, non-clinical environment** – this could include co-locating therapists in outreach teams
- Combine mental health treatment with **holistic support**, to help people to address other needs and issues
- Try to ensure **consistency of support** to help relationship building and prevent people having to re-tell their story where possible
- **Involve people with experience of multiple disadvantage** in the design of services – they have invaluable insight into why some people do not engage.

What next?

Accessing mental health support remains a challenge for people experiencing multiple disadvantage, particularly those with co-occurring mental ill-health and substance misuse. Stretched mental health services and increasing demand following the pandemic means there has been limited systems-level change in this sector; proper resourcing is needed to improve the situation in the long-term.

Referral and care pathways, which often involve multiple organisations, need to be easier to navigate with multiple points of access. The move towards a more collaborative approach to commissioning mental health (and substance misuse) services through Integrated Care Systems is welcome and crucial to creating a system that is better set up for those experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Resources and further reading

Reports and evidence

[Improving access to mental health support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage](#) National evaluation

[Learning from people with lived experiences through substance misuse treatment and mental health support](#) Fulfilling Lives South East

[Service User Perspective: Peer Support Research](#) Birmingham Changing Futures Together

[Telling the Whole Story: Summaries of ten psychologist-led research projects in homelessness services in Nottingham](#) Opportunity Nottingham

Toolkits and guidance

[Mystery shopping toolkit](#) Fulfilling Lives South East

[Personality Disorder Gap Map](#) Golden Key

Blogs, videos and other resources

[Case study: Barriers to healthcare \[Addiction\]](#) VOICES

[Case Study: Mental health assessment whilst NFA](#) VOICES

[Multiple disadvantage and access to services: peer research findings](#) Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham

Improving service transitions

What was the issue?

The experience of prison for people experiencing multiple disadvantage is often a reoccurring series of short sentences, which create huge disruption to their lives with limited benefit in terms of rehabilitation. Among people supported by the Fulfilling Lives programme, there was an association between spending time in prison and having poorer outcomes.²⁶

A smooth prison release requires preparation but there is often insufficient time for this, particularly for those serving short sentences. There are shortcomings in assessments and screening processes that mean people's needs are not identified early enough to get support in place. Prisoners are still released to no fixed abode or to unsafe, unsuitable or insecure accommodation. With limited funds and without positive support networks, there is an increased risk that prison leavers rapidly resort to reoffending.

On the day of release from prison, people experiencing multiple disadvantage will often have a long and intimidating list of appointments and tasks to complete to secure accommodation, benefits and medication. Case studies from Fulfilling Lives partnerships demonstrate that it is often simply not possible to achieve everything required. Friday release puts even more pressure on people since many services are closed over the weekend. Missing an appointment can result in being discharged from a service or even recalled to prison. See case studies from [VOICES](#) and [Fulfilling Lives South East](#) for examples.

What did partnerships do?

Through navigator services, Fulfilling Lives demonstrated the importance of having someone to:

- **Engage with people while they are in prison** to support and prepare them in advance of release. This included helping to secure suitable housing or advocating with landlords for places to be retained during a short sentence, preparing to make a benefit claim as soon as possible on release, offering debt support and providing funds to purchase essential items
- **Coordinate appointments** with drug services, register people with GPs, organise needs assessments and help maintain contact with families in advance of release
- **Meet prison leavers at the gate** and support them throughout this important day, not just helping people navigate their myriad appointments but also providing critical emotional support and encouragement.

Peer support from someone with lived experience of prison was shown to be particularly welcomed by prison leavers. Peers can build trusting relationships based on shared experience and offer a role model for change.

Partnerships also provided **specialist support for women** leaving prison. Women often have differing needs to men, particularly if they have children, and/or experience of domestic abuse.

Bill's story: Supporting prison release

Bill* was working with Fulfilling Lives prior to his release from prison. Because of severe physical health needs following a stroke, Bill's service coordinator arranged a social care needs assessment. The assessment was used to ensure that appropriate accommodation was provided on release.

The local authority housing provider was informed and made aware that hostel accommodation was not suitable for Bill. The Fulfilling Lives service coordinator spent a great deal of time liaising with the different agencies involved to ensure that Bill's needs were met. The coordinator's advocacy and persistence were crucial in ensuring Bill had appropriate accommodation and care on release.

Although Bill had to spend his first night after release in emergency accommodation, his service coordinator pressed for a further social care visit. It was agreed that his health needs could not be met in the accommodation and he was moved to a care home and eventually to appropriate shared accommodation.

* Pseudonym used for anonymity

Effective practice and key learning points

- **Navigators** and other frontline staff need knowledge of different support services, to understand referral processes and criteria and have good working relationships with professionals, including in-prison teams
- **Small caseloads and flexible working arrangements** are essential to build relationships and spend the whole day supporting someone when they are released from prison
- **Gender-specific accommodation, support services and release pathways** are needed to meet the needs of women

- **Effective sharing of information** about prison leavers is necessary so that people are not expected to retell their story multiple times. Information sharing between support teams and probation services can be strengthened through secondments
- The **relationship between support worker and the prison leaver** is vital for encouraging prison leavers to make positive choices on release and engage with the support on offer. Relationship building needs to begin before release to allow the time needed
- **Planning for prison release** should be undertaken in partnership with the prison leaver and plans coproduced so they meet personal goals
- The support on offer should be **separate from (and additional to) probation and prison services** and allow staff to advocate on behalf of prison leavers. Support workers or peer mentors with **lived experience** can be particularly powerful.

What next?

The privatisation and renationalisation of the probation service has created a challenging and unstable environment to build relationships and enact systems change. The transition from prison to the community remains problematic and the repeated short sentences do more harm than good. People experiencing multiple disadvantage are at particular risk of recall to prison given the high number of issues they are required to address on return to the community. Further flexibility in current strict probation requirements is needed to prevent unnecessary recall.

Other transitions

The journey towards a more fulfilling life is one of transitions – from homelessness to being housed, from addiction to recovery, from negative to positive peer networks. Transitions between services (not just leaving prison but leaving care or hospital) can often be

challenging. Silo working by service providers can mean that people are not supported through the transition and end up disengaging at this stage. Examples of local work on transitions include:

- VOICES [Coproducting Hospital Discharge](#) report
- Fulfilling Lives Newcastle and Gateshead's evaluation of a [Critical Time Intervention](#) – a model for providing support for people during times of transition
- Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham's report on [Barriers to moving into and Remaining in Settled Accommodation](#).

Resources and further reading

Reports and evidence

[Improving service transitions for people experiencing multiple disadvantage: Prison release](#) National evaluation

[Coproducting prison release pathways in Stoke on Trent](#) VOICES

[Creative & flexible partnership working: Interrupting cycles of reoffending to improve outcomes for individuals facing multiple disadvantage](#)
Fulfilling Lives South East

[A Criminal Waste: Multiple disadvantage, offending and systems failure](#)
Fulfilling Lives Newcastle and Gateshead, Opportunity Nottingham and West Yorkshire – Finding Independence

[Entering and leaving prison: A co-constructed research study exploring the experiences of beneficiaries](#) Opportunity Nottingham

[Roundabout Tales: three stories of prison release](#) VOICES

[Understanding the transition between the community and prison for individuals with multiple and complex needs](#) Fulfilling Lives Newcastle and Gateshead

**Drawing it
all together**

04

At the start of the Fulfilling Lives programme, the evaluation team developed a theory of change, in the form of two logic models, setting out the key programme activities and the intended outputs and outcomes – the short and longer-term changes that it was hoped would be achieved (see pages 63 and 64 for the original models). The purpose of the models was to help guide the design of our evaluation, in identifying key things to measure and track. Revisiting them now at the end of the programme is useful in assessing not only how far we have come but also how our understanding of the issues and what needs to change has developed.

Better lives

Outcome 1: People experiencing multiple disadvantage manage their lives through access to person centred and coordinated services.

The logic model sets out early indications of progress (outputs) and longer-term changes (outcomes). Generally, these outputs and outcomes have been evidenced through the programme evaluation. We have less evidence for the achievement of some due to changes in the evaluation method (see the accompanying Evaluating Fulfilling Lives report for further detail).

Partnerships have successfully engaged people experiencing multiple disadvantage (output 2), although some groups (notably people with an Asian ethnic background) were under-represented. Beneficiaries built trusting and positive relationships with staff and volunteers (output 3). This was a particular strength of the programme, with people with lived experience playing a key role in achieving this by acting as peer mentors. The support enabled people to take important steps towards a more stable and fulfilling life, with reductions in rough sleeping and increases in time spent in stable accommodation (output 4 and outcome 15) and people receiving benefit entitlements (output 7). Over time, people generally demonstrated increased self-reliance and reduced levels of need and harmful behaviour (outcomes 16, 20 and 21).

These achievements arguably help contribute to longer-term changes, such as improvements in wellbeing. There were reductions in the use of crisis services (namely A&E departments – output 6) and arrests and convictions (outcome 18) and evictions. People began to undertake meaningful activities, with small but significant increases in participation in social and cultural activities and volunteering. A small number of people have progressed from programme beneficiary to volunteer and into paid roles (outcome 22).

Lives have undoubtedly been changed, though progress has perhaps been slower and less widespread than at first anticipated. The logic models and early interviews with programme staff reflect some naivety about the difficulty of the challenge and the speed at which change could be achieved. Beneficiaries stayed with the programme for much longer than originally anticipated.

One area where progress has been harder has been ensuring there are services appropriate to the needs of people experiencing multiple disadvantage. Fulfilling Lives staff have advocated on behalf of beneficiaries and supported them into services (output 5), but there is only so much they can do if appropriate and accessible services do not exist. This relates to the second overarching programme outcome.

Better services

Outcome 2: Services are more tailored and better connected and empower users to fully take part in effective service design and delivery.

Partnerships certainly delivered on the activities as originally broadly envisaged (multi-agency partnerships, shared learning, pilot/test projects, evaluation and lived experience involvement). And there is evidence of some progress towards some of the short-term changes outlined in the logic model – improved understanding of multiple disadvantage being a notable success (output 10). The programme was said to have set a new high bar in terms of coproduction and the meaningful involvement of people with lived experience in service design and delivery (outputs 11 and 13 and outcome 28).

However, while the partnerships themselves modelled good practice in providing holistic and flexible support that gave people choice and control (outcomes 15 and 26), these features are less evident outside of the partnerships. Changes and successes are not consistent across all areas and sectors. Particularly challenging has been making changes to the way services are commissioned (outcome 24) – which is required to help make progress on some of the other areas of improving service accessibility and coordination. While the role of navigators on the programme has been effective and integral in supporting better outcomes for individuals, there is no reduction in the need for this support as the service user journey remains often complex and difficult (output 12 and outcome 27).

Jane's story: The importance of choice

Jane* first became homeless in her early 20s and spent several years in hostels, sofa surfing, on the streets and in other temporary accommodation. She also spent time in prison and in hospitals under the Mental Health Act and has experience of substance misuse and domestic violence. She was supported by Fulfilling Lives for five years.

For ten years Jane lived in the same one-bed flat on the estate where she grew up. The early days of having her own tenancy were challenging after spending so long in temporary accommodation and she struggled with paying bills. But with support from workers from different agencies she maintained her tenancy. Jane attributes this to the community she lives in. Having choice over where she lived, being able to return to a place she knew and being around family and friends meant that she not only had a support network but was also living in a community of her choice where she was happy and comfortable.

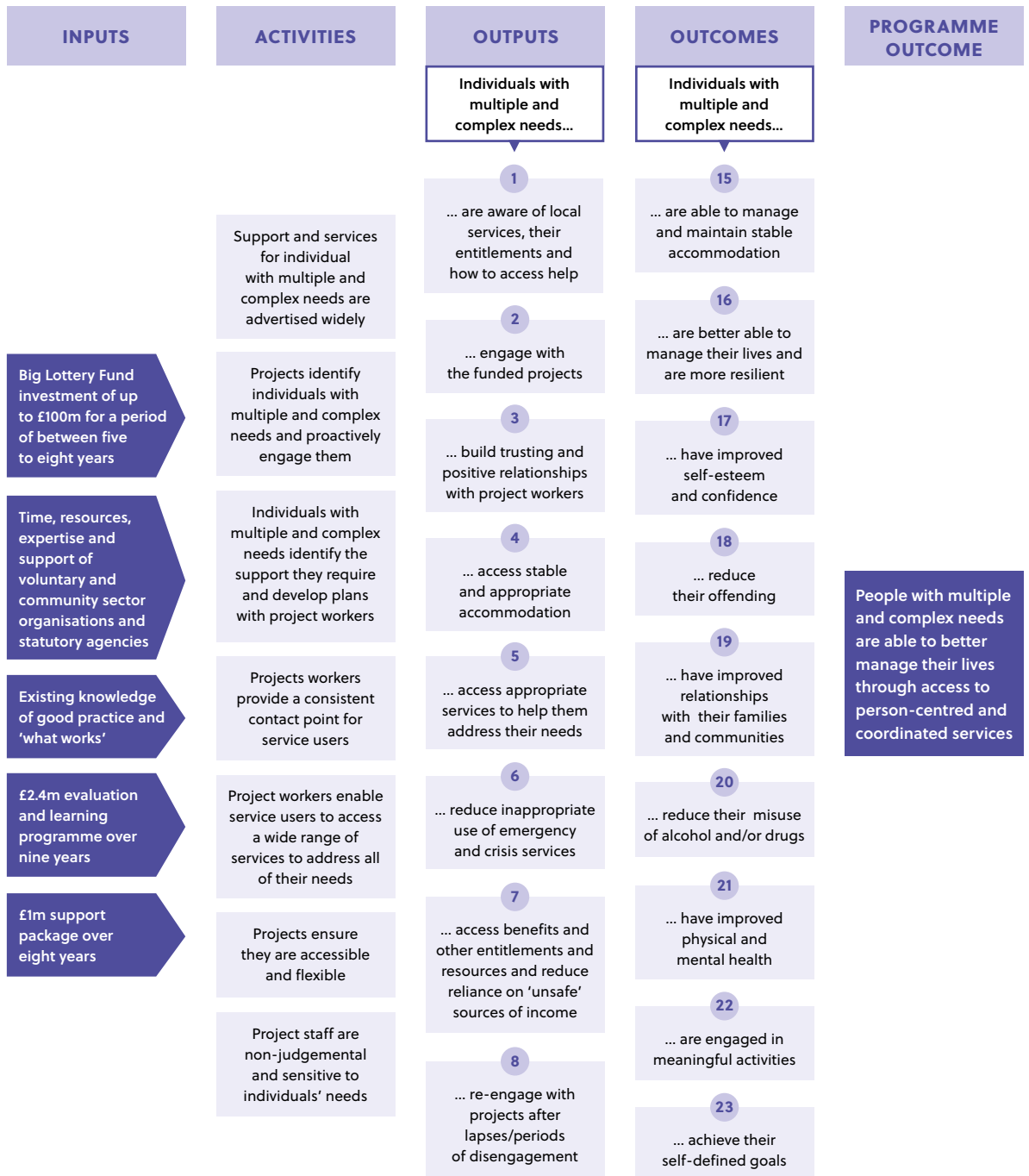
* Pseudonym used for anonymity

Influencing the future

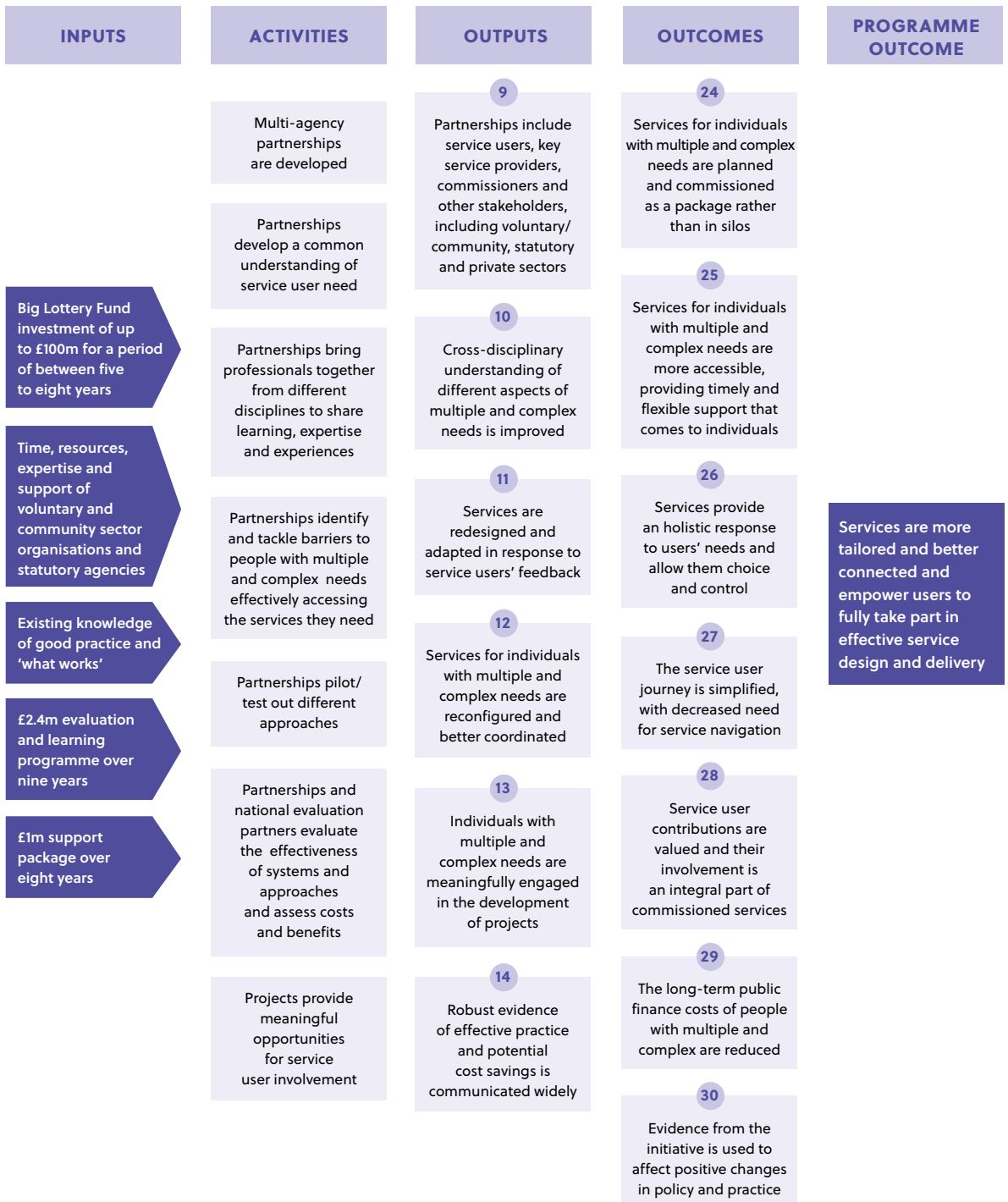
Outcome 3: Shared learning and the improved measurement of outcomes will demonstrate the impact of service models to key stakeholders and influence future programme design by local services.

Our accompanying report describing some of the learning from carrying out the evaluation shows how we were ambitious and strove to provide the most robust evidence we could. Not all our planned evaluation methods were successful, but we believe the programme as a whole has made a substantial contribution to the evidence base on multiple disadvantage (output 14). As set out in our report on systems change,²⁷ evidence produced at local and national levels has been a key part of creating change – this includes evidence on reductions in average public service costs – output 14 and outcome 29). There are many examples of services making changes to the way they are designed and delivered as a result of influence from Fulfilling Lives (outcome 30). Further, a clear link can be drawn between Fulfilling Lives and the three-year, £64 million, Changing Futures programme, jointly funded by central government and The National Lottery Community Fund. The Changing Futures programme has adopted much of the learning from Fulfilling Lives and represents a continuation of the drive to improve systems of support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Appendix: Evaluation logic model (better lives)



Appendix: Evaluation logic model (better services)



References and notes

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27. CFE Research (2022) [Creating systems change: Evaluating the contribution of the Fulfilling Lives programme](#) CFE Research

Method notes and data tables

The background features a dark blue field on the left and bottom, with a teal shape on the right and a purple shape at the bottom right. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant.

Desk review of evidence

This report is a summary of the main areas of work and evidence generated as part of the Fulfilling Lives programme. We extracted key messages and learning from our reports for each of the three main programme aims and strategic priorities. We reviewed the repository of evidence held on the [national evaluation website](#) as well as local partnership websites to identify a representative selection of resources for each theme. In selecting resources to include we considered:

- relevance of content to the topic
- variety of content to ensure we covered as broad a range of issues as possible
- format of resources, aiming to provide a range of outputs for each theme.

Qualitative data collection

Three group discussions were held with stakeholder groups who played a key role in the programme and evaluation. These were:

- Relationship managers from The National Lottery Community Fund (x3)
- Members of the Evaluation Steering Group (x4)
- Members of the Evaluation and Learning Community of Practice (x5).

All feedback, learning and insight from these discussions was organised under each theme covered in the report.

Analysis of quantitative data

For this final report we updated some key descriptive statistics to provide an overview of who the programme had reached. We also carried out regression analysis to explore the characteristics associated with improvements in outcomes (see pages 73 to 75). The tables below draw on the final dataset for the evaluation. Other quantitative analysis results reported are drawn from previous reports.

A common data framework (CDF) was developed at the start of the Fulfilling Lives programme to ensure consistent data was collected by all 12 partnership areas. The CDF included:

- demographic information on beneficiaries and their dates of engagement with the programme
- proportion of time spent in different types of accommodation each quarter
- use of a range of statutory and other support services
- six monthly assessments of need and risk (New Directions Team assessment) and self-reliance (Homelessness Outcomes Star™).

The New Direction Team assessment, or NDT assessment, is a tool for assessing beneficiary need, risk and involvement with other services. It is completed by the support worker and covers ten areas. Each item in the assessment is rated on a five-point scale, with zero being the lowest possible score and four being the highest. Risk to others and risk from others are double weighted with a high score of eight. The highest possible NDT score is 48 and the lowest is zero. Low scores denote lower needs (so low NDT assessment scores are good). For more information see: www.meam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/NDT-Assessment-process-summary-April-2008.pdf.

The Homelessness Outcomes Star is a tool for supporting and measuring change in people experiencing multiple disadvantage and is completed by beneficiaries with support from key workers. People agree on a score from 1–10 in each of ten areas. A total score is also calculated, with an increase in the score indicating progress towards self-reliance (so high scores are good). For more information see: www.outcomesstar.org.uk/homelessness.

Only beneficiaries who consented to their data being collected by partnerships and shared with the national evaluation team are included in our analysis. Partnerships submitted CDF data to us on a quarterly basis from the fourth quarter of 2014 to the first quarter of 2021, although there were some beneficiaries still receiving support from the programme after this date.

Descriptive statistics

Note: base sizes for variables vary due to missing data.

Table 1: Demographic profile of beneficiaries

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	1,307	35
Male	2,462	65
Total (n)	3,769	

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
White – British	3,007	83
White – Other	196	5
Mixed	167	4.5
Black/Black British	163	4.5
Asian/Asian British	72	2
Other	31	1
Total (n)	3,636	

Other variable	Frequency	Percent
Disabled/long-term conditions (excluding mental ill-health)	1,393	42
Total (n)	3,307	

Table 2: Experience of different forms of disadvantage

Experience of disadvantage	Frequency	Percent	Total (n)
Homelessness	2,633	66	3,977
Offending	3,037	76.5	3,972
Substance misuse	3,533	89	3,981
Mental ill-health	3,413	86	3,974

Table 3: Experience of multiple forms of disadvantage

Number of forms of disadvantage	Frequency	Percent
1	27	0.5
2	239	6.5
3	1,581	43
4	1,820	50
Total (n)	3,667	

Table 4: Destinations on leaving the programme

Destination	Frequency	Percent
Moved to other support	413	10
No longer needs support	831	20
Disengaged	824	20
Prison	182	5
Deceased	217	5
Moved out of area	284	7
Hospital	28	1
Excluded	6	< 1
Other	59	1
Unknown	190	5
Still on programme at end of data collection	1,039	26
Total (n)	4,073	
<hr/>		
Of those who had left the programme	Frequency	Percent
Positive destination (no longer require support or moved to other support)	1,244	41
Disengaged	824	27
Total (n)	3,034	

Other data in the infographic on pages 20 and 21 comes from the following sources:

- [Why we need to invest in multiple disadvantage](#) (March 2021) – changes in service use and associated value
- [What has Fulfilling Lives achieved](#) (August 2019) – changes in levels of need, risk and self-reliance.

Regression analysis

Table 5 shows linear regression models that explore which variables are associated with length of time on the programme (measured in quarters) and with *changes* in scores on the Outcomes Start and NDT assessment between joining the programme and leaving. In the latter two cases we are looking at the predictors of improvement (or worsening) in outcomes; increases in the Outcomes Star indicate improvement in self-reliance, while decreases in the NDT score mean improvement in levels of need and risk. See page 69 for further information on these measures. We experimented with different forms of the age variables and the '50 and over' dummy variable is the one that performed best. Experience of disadvantage relates to experience when beneficiaries first join the programme.

The results suggest that in terms of length of time on the programme (the first column in Table 5):

- Females and disabled people are more likely to spend longer time on the programme. On average females spent 0.9 quarters (approximately 11–12 weeks) longer on the programme than males. Also, on average beneficiaries who report a disability spent 1.1 quarters (approximately 14 weeks) longer on the programme than those without a disability
- There is some indication (at the 10 per cent level of significance) that beneficiaries with substance abuse problems (at baseline) spent less time on the programme (0.8 quarters, or approximately 10 weeks).

In terms of changes in the outcomes (the final 2 columns of Table 5):

- Being over 50 and having experience of substance misuse (at baseline) are both associated with improvement in the Outcomes Star score (positive coefficient estimates) and the NDT (negative coefficient estimates). Those beneficiaries aged 50 and over saw an average change in Outcomes Star score that was 2.4 points higher than for the younger beneficiaries
- Similarly, those with substance misuse problems had an improvement in score more than 3 points higher than those without. Across all beneficiaries the average change in Outcomes Star score was 11.2 so the age and substance misuse effects seem important quantitatively (as well as statistically)
- These two groups (those over 50 and people with experience of substance misuse) are also more likely to show improvements in NDT assessment (lower score); just over 2 points on the scale in the former case and just under 2 points in the latter. The average change in NDT score for all beneficiaries was -7.5, so again the differences for these groups seem quantitatively important
- In contrast, those beneficiaries with experience of homelessness (at baseline) see on average a deterioration in their NDT assessment score of 1.4 points.

Table 5: Linear regression models – predictors of time on programme and change in Outcomes Star and NDT assessment score

Variable	Time on programme	Outcomes Star	NDT assessment
Female	0.902***	0.110	-0.840**
Age 50 & over	0.383	2.358**	-2.153***
Ethnic minority groups	0.289	-0.625	0.463
Disabled	1.149***	1.036	0.205
Experience of disadvantage			
Homelessness	-0.182	-1.277	1.422***
Reoffending	0.311	-1.577*	0.295
Substance misuse	-0.763*	3.097**	-1.780**
Mental ill-health	-0.288	0.557	-0.196
Total beneficiaries	2,904	2,705	2,816
R-squared	0.020	0.007	0.014

Coefficients are reported. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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