

EXPLORING THE OVERLAP BETWEEN ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG (AOD) TREATMENT AND SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SERVICES (SHS)

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Introduction and Aims: This project aimed to both identify and explore the profiles (demographic, service use and service outcome) of people who received both publicly-funded AOD treatment services and SHS.

Design and Methods: Using the statistical linkage key (SLK) 581 identifier, clients who received AOD treatment from 2012–13 to 2013–14 and SHS from 2011–12 to 2013–14 were identified and their records linked. The quality of linkage across datasets was tested using demographic (age, sex, DOB) and geographic (postcode, state) information.

Results: Almost 40,000 people received both AOD treatment and SHS in the period from July 2011 to June 2014—representing nearly one in ten of all clients receiving SHS and one in five of all clients receiving AOD treatment.

Of those clients, just over half (51%) also reported mental health issues, around a third (34%) had experienced domestic and family violence and a quarter (25%) were aged between 15 and 24.

The results indicated that matched clients (those receiving both services) experienced more complex issues and required a greater volume of services. They had an average of 2.2 AOD treatment episodes and 3.8 SHS support periods, compared with 1.5 and 2.1, respectively, for clients in only one service. Similarly, on average, over two-fifths (44%) of matched clients reported multiple drugs of concern that required treatment; compared with just 7% who accessed only AOD services. Matched clients also had poorer housing outcomes on average, with just over half (55%) achieving independent housing over the period investigated compared with two-thirds (66%) of clients receiving SHS only.

Discussions and Conclusions: These results highlight the significant overlap between these two issues, but also the significant barriers towards overcoming them when they are experienced together.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Further research into understanding what may help people overcome these issues is necessary to identify appropriate policies and services to help achieve these outcomes.

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