

Seminar 5: Client Preferences and Service Co-creation (Room: 02.13)

Chair: **Mike Allen, IE**

John Cowman, IE: The Differences between Inpatient and Staff Housing and Support Preferences, for Individuals with Housing Need on an Irish Acute Mental Health Unit



John Cowman is the project manager (Housing Coordinator in Mental Health) in Community Healthcare Organisation 7 in the Republic of Ireland. He is also the project lead on the Creating Foundations housing support project, which he developed in partnership with the mental health services and Focus Ireland, a key provider of homeless services. John's background is as a professional social worker and he is currently a part time PhD student in the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast. John's passion is developing tailored responses to mental health service users who are at risk of homelessness.

Introduction: One of the best indicators of satisfactory housing outcomes for people with mental health disabilities is subjective preference. There have been very few housing preference studies carried out in the Irish context.

Methods: The study explored the differences between inpatient and key nurses' preferences for housing and support. The study was granted ethical approval by the hospital ethical research committee. Over 23 months, inpatients with housing needs and their key nurses were interviewed using a survey specifically designed to elicit their preferences for housing and support.

Findings: One hundred and ten inpatients with housing needs and 40 key nurses completed the survey. Inpatient characteristics included: mean age of 39 years, predominantly male (69%), single (83%), Irish (88%), only nine (8%) were in paid employment, one third were involuntary at admission and 70% had a diagnosis of a major mental disorder. One fifth were admitted from homeless situations and four fifths from hidden homelessness.

Most inpatients would prefer to live alone (63%) in a normal independent apartment or house (78%) compared to key nurses who preferred these inpatients live with others (60%) in more supported settings (53%).

Most inpatients preferred informal supports like family and friends (n = 71, 65%), while most key nurse responses (n = 65, 59%) chose supports from the mental health services and other professional supports like housing, homeless and addiction services. Inpatients also choose professional support according to their specific needs.

Conclusion: Inpatients and staff differ in terms of preferences for housing and support. When planning to address the housing and support needs of individuals with mental health difficulties it is important to listen to service users' preferences.

Lucia Fiorillo, Livia Sassoli, Caterina Cortese, IT: Giving People a Voice: Involving Beneficiaries in the Design of Support Services



Caterina Cortese, PhD, Social Policy and Research Officer in fio.PSD (Italian Federation of Organisation working with Homeless People). She is responsible for the Research Office for studying the poverty condition of homeless people. She carries out activities related to National Surveys on Adult marginalisation, Homelessness Services, and Data collection on Housing First. She is Lecturer in Sociology at the "Federico II" University of Naples.

Lucia Fiorillo is policy and research officer at fio.PSD (Italian Federation of Organisation for homeless people). She graduated in International Relations and European Studies from the University of Roma Tre and has a Master's degree in Gender Equality Policies. She has worked as analyst and evaluator of public policies, especially in the field of social inclusion and poverty.





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Participatory approaches have become increasingly important in the homelessness sector. The relevance of such approaches lies in the recognition that people have the right to have their say about the decisions that affect their lives. In particular, promoting people's involvement in the designing of services is important both to contribute to a process of empowerment of people and to help services in providing a more effective and respectful support. The first step toward the adoption of participatory approaches is the consultation of beneficiaries.

fio.PSD is involved in a European project (RETICULATE) that aims at promoting the involvement of homeless people and vulnerable households in the creation of 4 community centres in the Tuscany region (Italy). In this context, we carried out 37 face-to-face interviews with people with different characteristics, social backgrounds, and needs, in order to allow them to express their opinions, attitudes and remarks about the barriers they face in accessing social services. The data collected provides a meaningful picture of the overall criticalities that characterised the social service system, as seen through the eyes of the people who use it every day. People interviewed were asked to identify a number of suggestions which, from their point of view, could be relevant to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of the territorial services. These bottom-up recommendations could be used to raise awareness among the relevant stakeholders and to guide the development of social services in accordance with the needs of beneficiaries.