



## Place and Severe and Multiple Disadvantage Seminar 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016: Briefing Note

### As part of the Research Network on severe and multiple disadvantage

This document summarises the key themes of this seminar hosted by Revolving Doors and LankellyChase. The presenters were Dr Angela Donkin (UCL Institute of Health Equality) and Eliza Buckley (Institute for Voluntary Action Research). Presentations were followed by discussions amongst the 30 attendees.

#### Place, disadvantage and outcomes

Angela Donkin's presentation highlighted the importance of place in determining disadvantage and outcomes for people. Her presentation explored variations in life expectancy, health and quality of life through the lens of place and a model for social determinants of health.

Angela's presentation sparked a discussion about understandings of wellbeing and how these indicators relate to place. Participants mentioned that place has a temporal dimension, so that different places can have different impacts on people at different times. The gentrification of areas such as Hackney is appears to be correlated with changing geographies of multiple disadvantage. For instance, as areas undergo gentrification, participants noted increasing criminalisation of begging and sex work, driving out people experiencing multiple disadvantage. A final theme of the discussion was the interplay between individuals, families, communities and places.

#### Place-based funding: Historical review findings

Eliza Buckley presented the findings of IVAR's historical review of place-based funding approaches, to help assess the potential to support systems change through a place-based funding programme. The findings highlight the importance of relationships and engagement, of building trusting relationships with appropriate partners.

The audience responded to Eliza's presentation by echoing her statement that working together with organisations at the grassroots level, such as community organisations, is key to effective place-based approaches. The discussion focused on the importance of finding good partners. Participants questioned whether, in the past, there has been too much focus on structures and not enough focus on working with partners themselves.

<http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/partnerships--development/research-network/> for presentation slides from the day

## Themes of the breakout discussions

### Determining place and place-based effects

Participants highlighted the difficulty of designing an approach that effectively identifies severe and multiple disadvantage. It can be difficult to know whether an effect is an individual effect or caused by place. Similarly, it can be difficult to determine the boundaries of a given place, or even to define a place at all.

### Using place to understand severe and multiple disadvantage

There is a desire to use place as a means to understand severe and multiple disadvantage. Participants commented that place-based approaches don't always identify people with multiple and complex needs. A criticism of criminology is that it is often not sufficiently conscious of the importance of place. It was suggested that the best approach is a multidisciplinary approach, for instance bringing geographers into research on multiple and severe deprivation. It is also important to take into account the interplay between existing structures and individual agency in creating and perpetuating multiple disadvantage. Participants stressed that any approach should involve people with direct experience.

### Policies and place

In order to be effective, systems change needs to be place-based. Although many policy decisions are taken at a national level, their effects are felt at the place level. For instance, participants raised that spending cuts, housing policy and devolution deals would all be played out differently in different places. Devolution policy and other place-based policies have generally excluded people facing multiple problems, and practitioners need to be mindful of this exclusion.

### Design of services

A challenge for service providers is to provide services that are accessible to all those suffering from severe and multiple disadvantage. Participants noted that the trend towards e-service provision excludes those in prisons who have no access to the internet. There is a need to consider how outcomes are defined, and how conditions are measured when designing services, ensuring that they are designed based on user need in a way that enables peer support.

## Conclusion

Place can sometimes be a difficult concept dimension through which to understand multiple and severe deprivation. For instance, for some individuals and communities, networks are a better lens for identifying this deprivation. As places change, deprived communities and individuals continue to exist in other or diverse geographical areas. There is a need to take special account of placelessness and displaced persons when working on multiple and severe disadvantage.

## Continuing the discussion

- Email [lucy.terry@revolving-doors.org.uk](mailto:lucy.terry@revolving-doors.org.uk) to be put in touch with members of the network with a place specialism
- Tweet your thoughts: [#multipleneeds](https://twitter.com/multipleneeds)
- Join our LinkedIn group: [Research Network on Severe and Multiple Disadvantage](#)