

Trajectories: the interplay between mental health and housing pathways

Mind Australia and the **Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute** have partnered in an exciting new research venture.

Trajectories is a national study that will develop a clearer understanding of the relationships between the housing and mental health pathways of people with mental health issues, in order to identify potential points of practical intervention and key issues for system improvement.

Trajectories is seeking partners to contribute to this important new initiative and to make a difference in the lives of people living with mental health issues. Partners will benefit by having access to the data and findings from the research to use for advocacy, policy and project planning.





The problem

The relationship between mental health, housing and homelessness is complex and affects people's ability to access the supports and services they need.

The evidence indicates that poor mental health is a risk factor for homelessnessⁱ and that unstable housing and homelessness are risk factors that can contribute to and exacerbate poor mental health.ⁱⁱ Stable housing is critical for being able to access mental health support services and is important for recovery.ⁱⁱⁱ

Although the evidence supports the reciprocal links between mental health and housing, neither policy nor the design of the service system takes sufficient account of this, leading many people to miss out on the support they require for recovery and to lead full and contributing lives. This can have devastating consequences for affected individuals, their friends, families, communities and for society at large.

A lack of data and research stands in the way of the development of policy and practice solutions that would enable people with mental health issues to access and sustain affordable and appropriate housing. For example, the 'proportion of mental health consumers in suitable housing' is one of the KPIs of the *5th National Mental Health Plan*, yet the

data needed for this indicator is not currently available.

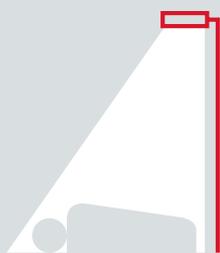
Trajectories will seek to address this gap and improve the understanding of the relationship between mental health, housing and homelessness in Australia.

“ Ensuring that people with mental health issues have affordable and appropriate housing while they recover has been core to our mission for forty years. Mind has invested in this project to understand more about what happens at the points where mental health and housing intersect, so that we can advocate for solutions that ensure people recover in safe and secure environments.



Julian Gardner AM
Chair of the Board, Mind Australia

Key figures



116,427

homeless persons in Australia

The 2016 census estimates that 116,427 Australians are homeless, an increase of 14 per cent over the last 5 years.



27%

of specialist homelessness services clients experience a mental health issue

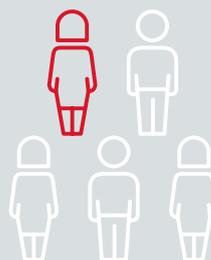
In 2016–17, 27 per cent of the 288,000 people who received support from specialist homelessness services were identified as experiencing a current mental health issue.^{vi}



↑ 12%

yearly growth of specialist homelessness clients with a mental health issue

People with a current mental health issue are one of the fastest growing client groups for specialist homelessness services, growing at an average rate of 12 per cent per year since 2012–13.^{vii}



20%

1 in 5 Australians experience a mental disorder each year

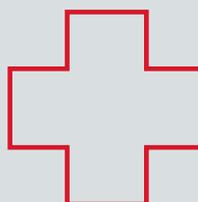
1 in 5 (20%) of Australians are estimated to experience a mental disorder each year and almost half (45.5%) of Australian adults will experience a common mental disorder in their lifetime.^{viii}



9.4m

community mental health care service contacts

State and territory community mental health care services provided 9.4 million service contacts in 2015–16 and \$8.5 billion was spent on mental health-related services in 2014–15.^{xii}



273,439

emergency department presentations

In 2015–16 there were an estimated 273,439 emergency department presentations with a mental health-related principal diagnosis.^{xiii}

The project

Trajectories is a national study that aims to develop an applied understanding of the housing and mental health pathways of people with lived experience of mental health issues, the interaction of these pathways, and the potential points of intervention identified through this understanding.

The study will develop a typology of trajectories (case studies) to understand typical housing and mental health pathways. It will also identify failure points in the housing and mental health systems—failure points represent missed opportunities for early intervention, and potential key points for system improvement.

It is intended that *Trajectories* will also contribute to an improved understanding of the housing needs of NDIS participants with mental health issues.

PROPOSED APPROACH

The project will be completed in two main stages. Stage 1 of *Trajectories* will explore people's housing histories and the range of factors that have influenced their aspirations for and choices of housing, including the types of housing people live in; what housing they can afford; what housing they would prefer to live in; the role and appropriateness of Supported Residential Services (SRS) and various forms of congregate accommodation (e.g. boarding houses, psych hostels); the role of NDIS now and into the future; and differences between the states.

Stage 2 will examine the costs to government and whole of government cost offsets for identified failure points.

Stage 1

Research synthesis

Trajectories will be informed by a research synthesis of the Australian and international literatures on the links between housing and mental health, focusing on identifying interventions that lead to sustainable tenancies for people with mental health issues.

Data

Trajectories has a strong emphasis on data and will analyse national data sets, supplemented by state level data and data from key providers. Examples of data that will be investigated include Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP), and Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA).

National consultations

Trajectories will undertake a series of 13 consultations across Australia with people with lived experience of mental ill-health, and seven consultations with service practitioners. These consultations will enable the development of a comprehensive understanding of housing and mental health pathways and system failure points.

Case Studies

Informed by the research synthesis, data and national consultations, *Trajectories* will develop a series of case studies of typical housing and mental health pathways.

Policy transfer

A series of three policy transfer workshops will engage policy practitioners. Participants will include leaders in the service arms of government agencies with responsibility for the mental health, housing and homelessness systems. These workshops will assist in developing an understanding of policy perspectives on typical trajectories and potential intervention points.

Stage 2

Cost analysis

Stage 2 will build on the findings of stage 1. The cost of identified failure points will be calculated and the potential benefits or savings to government that would arise from addressing these. A cost offset methodology will be used as this will allow

Trajectories to present both costs and outcomes in dollar terms and estimate the potential whole of government savings associated with the intervention (e.g. forgone cost of using government services such as justice, health and housing).

Timeline

Trajectories is taking place in 2018–2020.

| TASK | Q2 '18 | Q3 '18 | Q4 '18 | Q1 '19 | Q2 '19 | Q3 '19 | Q4 '19 | Q1 '20 | Q2 '20 | Q3 '20 | Q4 '20 |
|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
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Stage 1: Housing and mental health pathways

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|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| Data discovery & analysis | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | |
| Research synthesis | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 x Consumer consultations | | █ | █ | █ | | | | | | | |
| 7 x Service practitioner consultations | | | █ | █ | █ | | | | | | |
| Case studies | | | █ | █ | █ | | | | | | |
| 3 x Policy workshops | | | | | | █ | █ | | | | |
| Stage 1 final report | | | | | | █ | █ | | | | |

Stage 2: Cost analysis

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|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| Constitute project steering group | | | | | | | | █ | | | |
| Cost and cost offset analysis | | | | | | | | | █ | █ | |
| Stage 2 final report | | | | | | | | | | | █ |

References

- i Costello, Thomson & Jones (2013) *Mental health and homelessness. Final report*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute for the Mental Health Commission of NSW, Melbourne; Robinson (2005) 'Grieving home', *Social and Cultural Geography*, vol. 6, no. 1, 47-60.
- ii Chamberlain, Johnson & Theobald (2007) *Homelessness in Melbourne: confronting the challenge*, RMIT Publishing, Melbourne; Costello, Thomson, & Jones (2013) *Mental health and homelessness. Final report*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute for the Mental Health Commission of NSW, Melbourne.
- iii Duff, Loo, & Murray (2012) *The role of informal community resources in supporting independent housing for young people recovering from mental illness: key issues for housing policy-makers and practitioners*, AHURI Final Report No. 199, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.
- v-vii Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) *Specialist homelessness services 2016–17*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-2016-17>.
- viii-xii Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) *Mental health services—in brief 2017*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mental-health-services/mental-health-services-in-brief-2017>.
- xiii Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) *Mental health services in Australia*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mental-health-services/mental-health-services-in-australia/specialised-mental-health-care/hospital-emergency-services>.

Project partners

THE AUSTRALIAN HOUSING AND URBAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) is a national independent research network.

AHURI's mission is to deliver high quality research that influences policy development to improve the housing and urban environments of all Australians.

AHURI undertakes evidence-based policy development on a range of issues, including housing and labour markets, urban growth and renewal, planning and infrastructure development, housing supply and affordability, homelessness, and economic productivity.

AHURI's work informs the policies and practices of governments and the housing and urban development industries, and stimulates debate in the broader Australian community. AHURI does this by active engagement to influence policy development and practice change; delivering high quality evidence; maximising value for stakeholders; and building research capability and national capacity.

Eight university based AHURI Research Centres make up AHURI's national research network. In addition, AHURI Professional Services brings together AHURI's in-depth understanding of housing policy and policy development processes with expertise in research management, brokerage, synthesis and dissemination. It provides concise and targeted analyses and explanations of research evidence, offers innovative engagement processes to draw out policy and practice implications.

MIND AUSTRALIA

Mind Australia (Mind) is one of Australia's leading community managed specialist mental health service providers. Mind has been supporting people dealing with the day-to-day impacts of mental ill-health, as well as their families, friends and carers for over 40 years. Located across Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia, Mind employs over 860 staff, with residential and other services in 72 locations. In 2016–17 Mind supported almost 20,000 clients.

Mind supports people with both low and high prevalence mental health conditions, and has extensive experience working with people with severe mental illness in the community. This includes people who experience significant daily challenges resulting from their mental ill-health, including people with co-morbid presentations such as use of alcohol and other drugs, people with dual disabilities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. At the core of Mind's ethos is a model of recovery oriented practice, that recognises many people can and do recover from their experience of mental ill-health and go on to have purposeful and productive lives of their choosing.

In addition to its core services, Mind undertakes research and systemic advocacy to advance progressive policy, systems, and social changes on behalf of the community it serves. Over the last several years, Mind has invested substantially in applied research partnerships with leading academic institutions. Through this work, Mind seeks to explore and address the social determinants of mental ill-health. Mind's advocacy program is focused on gaps in the current mental health system, and the wider social impacts of mental health and social welfare system reforms. It also focuses on the need to develop knowledge about government policies and the underlying structural political and economic drivers that adversely impact the lives of the community that we serve, identifying points of leverage so as to meaningfully influence policy.

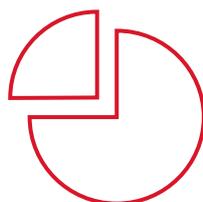
Ways to get involved

Trajectories is seeking partners to contribute to this important new initiative. Partners will benefit by having access to the data and findings from the research to use for advocacy and policy and project planning. There are three ways to contribute.



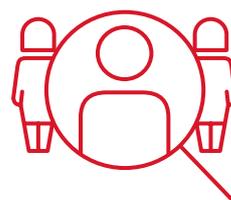
FUNDING PARTNER

Trajectories is seeking funding partners for the cost analysis, which forms stage 2 of the research. In addition to having access to the data and findings from the research, funding partners will have the opportunity to participate in the project steering group.



DATA PARTNER

Trajectories is seeking data partners for both stages of the research. Data partners will be organisations that hold data sets that are relevant to the project and are of state or national significance. Data partners will assist with data access and data provision and will benefit by gaining access to research data and findings.



CONSULTATION PARTNER

Consultation partners will be organisations or individuals who have the capacity to assist with recruitment for the planned service provider and consumer, family and carer consultations in stage 1 of the research.

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