

# Psychiatric disorder prevalence among homeless young

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Vulnerable young people have a higher occurrence of psychiatric disorders and there is a vital need for better uptake of long-term treatment services, a Cardiff University study has found.

Led by the School of Psychology, the research examined the prevalence of conditions including substance misuse, eating disorders and [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) among young homeless people. It also investigated the relationship between psychiatric conditions and different types of health service use.

Recruiting participants via Llamau, the youth homelessness charity, the researchers discovered that [young people](#) with experience of homelessness had higher levels of psychiatric disorders, but few were able to access the mental healthcare available, turning instead to GPs and hospital services. Gaps in service provision for young adults were also identified and treatment for the complex needs of individuals was lacking.

"Homeless young people represent one of the most vulnerable and underserved populations in society," said Dr Kate Hodgson of the School of Psychology who led the study.

"The frequency of [psychiatric disorders](#) in this sample of young people with experiences of homelessness was considerably higher than that reported for this age group in the general population. This indicates a high level of need for appropriate mental health services. However, few of the participants were accessing any form of mental healthcare.

"In addition, we also found barriers to access. For example many of the participants were unable to access child and adolescent [mental health services](#) because they were not in full-time education. Accessing adult services was also difficult because the threshold for a disorder to receive treatment is often higher.

"Many of this group also had two or more [mental health](#) problems. Although the symptoms of each individual condition may not meet the criteria for access to a particular service, when a number of low-level conditions are combined, the effect can be very debilitating and may require extensive support. This support is not often provided."

The study "Mental health problems in young people with experiences of homelessness and the relationship with health service use: a follow-up study" is published in the *British Medical Journal* Evidence-Based

Mental Health.

**More information:** "Mental health problems in young people with experiences of homelessness and the relationship with health service use: a follow-up study." Kate J Hodgson, Katherine H Shelton, Marianne B M van den Bree. *Evid Based Mental Health* 2014;17:3 76-80 [DOI: 10.1136/eb-2014-101810](https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2014-101810)

Provided by Cardiff University

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