

## Executive Summary

People living with multiple compound needs (MCN) are the most socially excluded members of our communities, and experience some of the poorest health and wellbeing outcomes. There are existing programmes of work to support this population in East Sussex, but these have been designed using limited local intelligence and temporarily funded via short-term grants. This needs assessment paints a picture of the true scale and nature of need amongst people with MCN in East Sussex, describes the support which this population requires and quantifies how far away the local system is from providing it.

The number of people experiencing MCN in East Sussex is higher than local stakeholders predicted, with 1,360 people estimated to have MCN in 2022 and 2023 combined. This is compared to the 389 people support by our specialist services, the RSI and Changing futures programmes in the same time period. The demography of the population with MCN in East Sussex is largely in line with published evidence, leaning more male and younger than the general local population. It is also clustered in urban areas and deprived coastal towns. Local analysis suggests that there may be disproportionate representation of LGBTQ+ communities and people with a learning disability among the local population with MCN.

The most common need among the population with MCN in East Sussex is poor mental health, closely followed by housing and then substance misuse needs. When narrowed only to those with four needs, namely a more complex cohort, substance misuse is the most common individual need. Analysis also suggests that people with MCN are least likely to receive support for mental health problems, out of all their needs. Furthermore, over a year's period in 2023 to 2024, just 43 clients were supported by the dedicated service for people with MCN in East Sussex, Changing Futures; a fraction of the local population.

Local data collected about the experiences and characteristics of people in East Sussex with MCN reveal a complex interplay of factors affecting access, engagement, and outcomes at the individual level, including trauma; people's capacity and skills to navigate care and make choices supportive of recovery; and the volatility of the individuals' needs.

A series of additional factors are identified as affecting access, engagement, and outcomes at the service and system levels. Aspects of local service delivery described as working well include the local system's appetite and interest in improving provision for this group; notable local progress towards delivering trauma-informed care; flexible approaches implemented in some local services, such as adopting outreach approaches, co-locating provision, facilitating re-engagement, and prioritising relationship-building between staff and clients; adopting prevention initiatives;

establishing joint working protocols, governance structures, and pathways; and placing strategic emphasis on co-occurring substance misuse and mental health problems.

There were also, however, several gaps identified in local service provision which are contributing to this population's exclusion and poor outcomes. These include:

- Difficulty in working with flexibility in the application of legislation and regulation when working with people with MCN;
- Need for further and ongoing development of psychologically informed environments;
- A need for on-going co-production in service design, delivery, and evaluation;
- A need to consider continuity of staff and relationships, including staff struggling to navigate the available services,
- Need for further training on working with this group for staff at all levels;
- A need to consider the limited availability of assertive outreach;
- Issues with the collection, use, and sharing of information;
- Cross-cutting issue of limited resource, including insufficient quantity, diversity, or adaptability of accommodation for people with MCN and inequitable distribution of resources

Support for people with MCN in East Sussex to date has focussed on amplifying support outside of mainstream and statutory services as a means of supporting people back into general-needs provision. Clear and considerable efforts have been made to increase the accessibility of mainstream and statutory services, as well as to provide high-quality specialist services, but many strategic ambitions have been difficult to mobilise and embed operationally. The magnitude and nature of need in East Sussex cannot be met by short-term, grant-funded, small-scale services aiming to tackle the near-impossible task of transitioning people with MCN into general-needs services which currently could be adapted to better meet their needs. Providing accessible, high-quality, and evidence-based support to people with MCN across the county will require service-level changes in large providers to align with models of best practice.

This needs assessment makes the following recommendations;

1. Review the current service delivery model
2. Systemwide uptake, or strengthening, of trauma informed approaches
3. Collaborative, system wide approaches to commissioning and funding to meet the need of the larger MCN population identified
4. The system should be prepared to be flexible around this client group.
5. Services should take into account how different aspects of MCN may overlap with other protected characteristics or vulnerabilities.
6. Continue to develop a systemwide approach to shared responsibility for this population.

7. Aim to review and initiate practical actions suggested by the report.
8. Strengthen research and evaluation practices specific for this cohort.

While the changes required are significant, and come at a time of considerable financial pressure, these recommendations are made to a system which is focussed on reducing inequalities and using the experiences of this excluded group to address the findings of the needs assessment.

*“There’s a great bunch of people in East Sussex, it’s one of the things I’ve really loved about working here. There are just brilliant people everywhere that are very similar in thought, and drive, and wanting to do the best for clients” (Strategic professional)*

The Multiple Compound Needs Health Needs Assessment (MCN HNA) shows that there is scope to make marked improvements in the lives and outcomes of some of East Sussex’ most vulnerable residents, and thereby address some of the starkest health inequalities in the county.