

# Homeless Health Needs Audit

# 2015

North East Regional Homelessness Group

## Executive Summary

The North East Homeless Health Needs Audit 2015, commissioned by the North East Regional Homeless Group, develops an understanding of the health and wellbeing of individuals who are homeless or working with homelessness services across the North East. It offers commissioners and service providers across all sectors, a better understanding of the health conditions those homeless face and highlights issues for address.

The North East Regional Homeless Group has membership across the 12 North East Local Authorities with each area contributing to this year's audit. Carried out using Homeless Links' Health Needs Audit Toolkit, the audit provides a multi-agency platform to plan and carry out a primary research study of the health needs of those homeless across a target area.

Over forty agencies were involved interviewing participants, with the audit being informed by the experiences and lives of some 600 individuals who were interviewed over the course of a month

The main report itself provides analysis against the 5 core themes (set out below) identifying how the health issues of those homeless in the North East compare and differ to the national audit Homeless Link carried out themselves in 2014.

- Access to health services
- Your physical health
- Your mental health
- Drug and alcohol use
- Vaccinations and screening

In addition a local overview for all 12 Local Authorities has been produced also which can be read in conjunction with this report to provide a more localised understanding.

### **Profile of Participants**

A higher number of male respondents were interviewed with 178 women involved in this year's audit. This was a similar response rate to the national audit where 69% of respondents were male. A small minority of respondents (7%) were from a BME background.

Those under 25 made up the majority of respondents; the national audit had a similar showing with 36% of respondents being within this cohort.

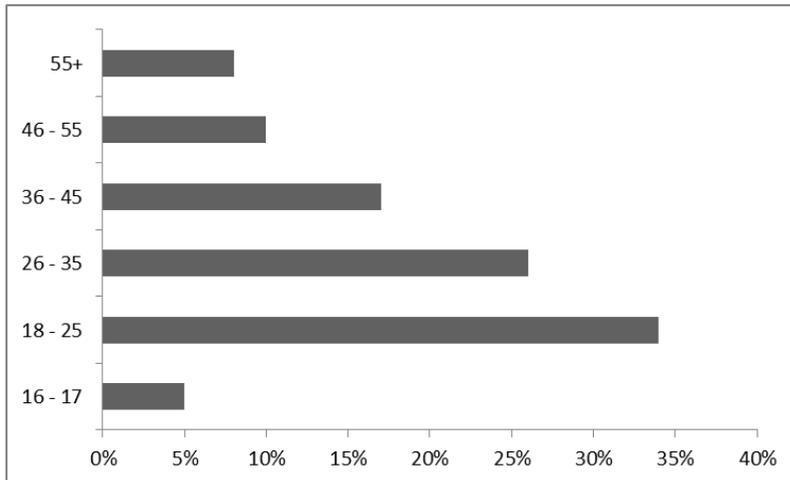


Those over 55 made up a small percentage both regionally and nationally. When compared to the national audit figures it would suggest the North East has more young people experiencing homelessness.

Fewer number of respondents compared to the national audit are in some form of training or education (11% compared to 18.9%) and there were fewer in employment (4% compared to 6.6%).

When asked where they were currently living, three main accommodation options came to light;

- Hostel **34%**
- Supported Accommodation **27%**
- Sofa Surfing/With Friends **10%**



Nationally the figure for sofa surfing is double the North East, but we appear to have more individuals in Hostel or Supported Accommodation as a result. A high level (21%) of those stated 'other' for where they are currently living. Responses were not always clear, mainly this was having their own tenancy, either as private rented or social housing.

Just under a third 29% of those interviewed were prison leavers with 79% of those working with probation. Only one respondent was a former serving member of the armed forces.

## Key Findings

- I. Those homeless in the North East are less likely to be registered with a GP – **84%** - when compared to the national survey **90%** of people are registered with a GP
- II. More likely to be a smoker over three times more likely with **77%** of those surveyed in this year's audit reported being smokers
- III. Twice as many respondents in North East were eating two meals a day when compared to the national survey
- IV. Over half (**54%**) of respondents were eating some amount of fruit and veg a day
- V. Respondents reported lower amounts of long terms health problems when compared to the national survey
- VI. Half of respondents have a formally diagnosed mental health issues – **84%** stated this was depression (**10%** of the UK population are estimated to suffer depression).
- VII. Those that are homeless are a third more likely to be a drug user, or recovering from a drug problem
- VIII. Only **14** respondents reported taking legal highs
- IX. **72%** of those surveyed consumed alcohol on at least a monthly basis – there was no difference between men and women.
- X. Only **13%** of people drank daily. Women were more likely to be daily drinkers, **42%** compared to **37%** for men.
- XI. **21%** of people had received a flu jab over the last 12 months. This is higher than the general population with only **15%** receiving annually. But should it be higher with the increased health issues of the cohort.
- XII. **25%** of men had received a sexual health check
- XIII. **46%** of women had received a sexual health check

## Focus on 18 – 25 year olds

A full overview of 18-25 year olds is included in the appendices. Set out below are the key issues for the 18 – 25 age group compared to the wider regional picture.

### Access to Health Services

- Less likely to be registered with a GP, **80%** are
- More likely to be registered with a dentist **66%** and more likely to use a Dentist **41%**
- More likely to use A&E and more likely to be admitted to hospital. **40%** have used A&E in the last 6 months

### Physical Health

- Slightly less smoked **72%** but more wanted to stop but more likely want to stop **40%**
- Health problems were less prevalent among this age group

### Mental Health

- Self-diagnosis with mental health issues wasn't more prevalent than the regional picture
- Slightly less people had a formal diagnosis **77%** compared **82%** for the region

- Very few people had received a dual diagnosis **6%**

### Drugs and Alcohol

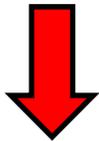
- Drug use was no higher among this age group but nearly all the use of legal highs (**86%**) was amongst those under 25
- Although cannabis use was higher it was still well below the national picture
- This age group is less likely to get support with their drug use
- More likely to be weekly drinkers – **23%** in total

### Vaccinations and Screening

- Less likely to have received vaccinations for Hep A, Hep B or Flu
- More likely to have received a sexual health check. Men **34%** and **56%** of Women

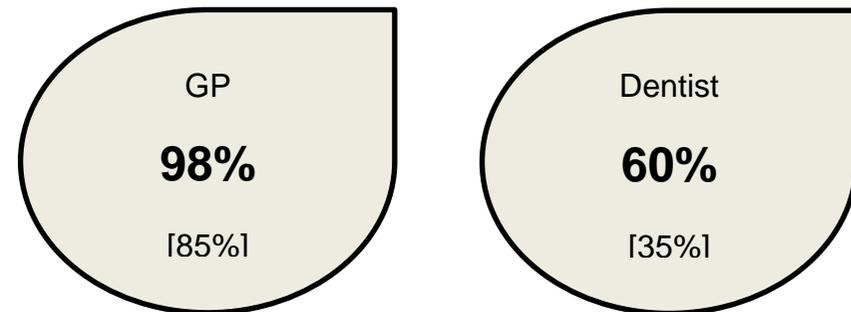
## Access of Health Services

The majority of participants were registered with a GP; although this is lower than that recorded on the national audit it still represents a reasonable amount of people being able to access primary health services. When asked the majority of respondents felt GP's were the vanguards of health advice for themselves.

Those registered with a GP		
North East		National
84%		90%

Those registered with a Dentist		
North East		National
65%		-

Very few people, **5%** in fact, reported being unable to access or register with a GP or Dentist. When asked why this was, previous missed appointments, they live outside the catchment area or the practice was taking on no more patients. It is reasonable to assume displaced individuals within temporary accommodation may struggle to register for services (unable to provide proof of address) but many no doubt will be accessing services under previous addresses before they found themselves homeless.



*Have you used any of the following in the last 6 months? % of those registered using services. [% of all respondents national survey]*

With trust being high of GP's, and most often the first contact point for individuals with health issues, nearly all participants had recently been in contact with their local GP (if they were registered).

<b>Have you used A&amp;E in the last 6 months?</b>		
<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
33%		35%

<b>Admitted to hospital in the last 6 months</b>		
<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
20%		26%

<b>Health Advice received from Homeless Project</b>		
<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
66%		-

This was somewhat lower for both Dentists; a discernible difference could be though the cost to access these services, even though minimal to many, this could be very prohibitive.

Planned medical assistance was not prevalent among respondents with most accessing health care on an adhoc basis. A third visited a nurse or walk in clinic recently, with only **20%** having an outpatient appointment over the past 6 months with a **third** using A&E in the last 6 months.

Reasons behind a trip to A&E (and subsequent hospital stay where needed) were for a plethora of reasons with no prominent issues highlighted. Where individuals went on to needed a hospital stay this was on average for 2 nights, but no more than 3, with **20%** of respondents being admitted to hospital.

Health advice (including posters and pamphlets) and information around local health services was well received by people and perceived as being very useful (**59%**) from local homeless services. But not all services provided information.

## Physical Health

The majority of those interviewed are smokers, three quarters in fact; with a third of these wanting to stop (41% reported they want to stop on the national audit and this is 63% for the main population). Of all those that smoked, 41% had been offered advice but this hadn't been taken up. Smoking is rife among those that find themselves homeless, nationally only 20% of people smoke.

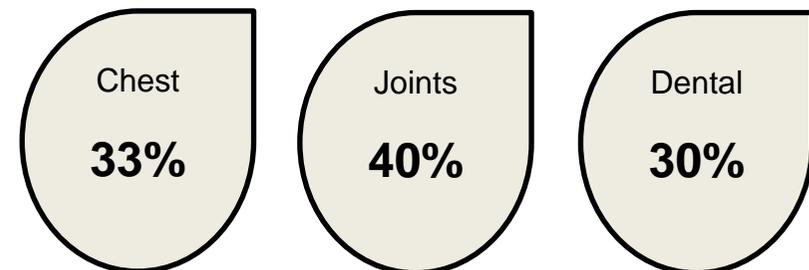
Do you smoke?		
<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
75%		77%

Do you eat two meals a day?		
<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
64%		35%

Beyond the number of meals respondents eat per day it is hard to get any further understanding over the quality of what they eat. Individuals eating patterns and habits could vary greatly and have a great effect on their health. Although over half (54%) stated they eat some amount of fruit or veg daily.

Amount of exercise was fairly split with half or those interviewed exercising twice a week. It would have been good to have more detail regarding the type of exercise people engaged in, or what type of exercise they would like to do. This could inform better how services can help to get people exercising not only for a physical benefit, but also for mental wealth being and the benefit of social interaction.

Three prominent health problems came out of the audit with a third of respondents suffering from either chest pain/breathing problems; joint aches/problems with bones and muscles; or Dental issues.



Long term chest problems		
North East		National
11%		15%

Long term joint, bone and muscle problems		
North East		National
16%		22%

Long terms dental problems		
North East		National
10%		15%

When looking particularly at long term health issues for each of the three prominent health issues, the North East reported lower health than those on the national survey. Other reported health issues were stomach problems (**8%**) nationally issues with eyesight featured highly with **14%** of respondents but this was a lot lower in the North East with only **9%** reporting long terms issues. When asked if they received adequate support/treatment with their health needs, **30%** felt it did.

## Mental Health

Participants were asked about their own mental health and how they feel, what issues do they experience in their everyday life, or what issues do they feel they have. The following self-reported issues were highlighted.

	North East	National
Often feel stressed	69%	73%
Often feel anxious	63%	65%
Suffer panic attacks	35%	39%
Feel depressed	66%	67%
Have difficulty sleeping	64%	64%
Have suicidal thoughts	33%	32%
Want to, or have, self-harmed	23%	22%
Difficulty in controlling anger	34%	33%
Can be aggressive/violent	27%	25%

Half (48%) of respondents have received a formal diagnosis of a mental health problem through a doctor or health professional. Depression was the prevalent diagnosed with **82%** of those diagnosed suffering with depression. Overall self-diagnosis mental health issues were broadly similar to those reported on the national audit.

When asked whether individuals self-medicated (consumed alcohol or drugs to help with their mental health issues) **43%** respondents stated they did. This was for all respondents and not solely for those with a formal diagnosis.

However, **14%** of respondents had a dual diagnosis with both a formal mental health diagnosis and a alcohol or drug problem.

Nearly half of those with a formal diagnosis were getting some form of help and support. Counselling was the most noted and wanted support people could or were receiving to help them with their needs.

Respondents who have had a formal diagnosis		
North East		National
48%		45%

Self-medicate to help with you mental health issue		
North East		National
43%		41%

## Drugs and Alcohol

Drug use, including those recovering from a drug problem, featured heavily in many respondents lives. Reported drug use was considerably higher than that recorded on the national survey with nearly a half of those surveyed being drug users.

Do you take drugs (or recovering from a drug problem)		
North East		National
44%		33%

The full breakdown is below of the types of drugs used is below with Cannabis used most commonly. Cannabis use was much higher national at **64%**.

- Cannabis (**26%**)
- Heroin (**13%**)
- Cocaine (**6%**)
- Speed (**11%**)
- Benzos (**11%**)
- Prescription Drugs (**14%**)

The use of prescription drugs was a lot higher also nationally with **29%** of those responding to the national survey were regularly taking prescription drugs. The use of legal highs wasn't widely reported with only 20 people (3%) reporting using legal highs (12 of these were aged 18 – 24). In addition **18%** of people stated they were on or have been using methadone. Close to a two-thirds (**62%**) of those interviewed was getting support with their drug use.

Do you get support with you drug use		
North East		National
62%		54%

There were varying levels of drinking among respondents, this ranged from never (**23%**) or monthly or less (**25%**) representing nearly half of people to a small percentage (**13%**) drinking every day. People reported drinking a varying amount of units, of most concern **23%** when they did drink that they had more than 10 units. There was no difference between the percentage of men surveyed who drank alcohol or the number of women, both surveyed at **72%**.

**Percentage of Male drug users**

<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
51%		44%

**Percentage of people who are weekly drinkers**

<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
13%		35%

**Percentage of Female drug users**

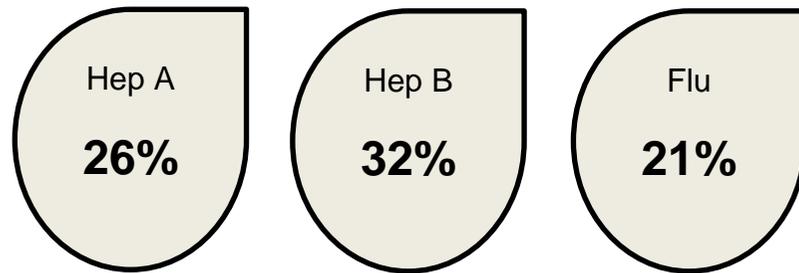
<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
28%		27%

**Percentage of those drinking more than 10 units**

<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
32%		36%

## Vaccinations and Screening

Relatively low amounts of respondents had received vaccinations for either Hep A, Hep B or Flu. With flu jabs being freely given approaching winter across many locations it is surprising that so few people had received them. In regards to Hep C just under half had been tested with only **33** people in total testing positive.

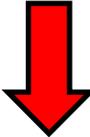


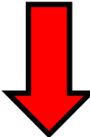
TB, despite the prevalence of reported chest problems, tests had only been carried out on a third of those interviewed with a very small percentage testing positive (**3%** of overall respondents).

A third of people have had a sexual health check in the last 12 months. Nearly all those interviewed were knowledgeable where to get advice and support, including contraception, regarding their sexual health. Both GP's and Clinics were

seen as the go to for this advice. This further cements the role of the GP as the entrusted health and medical advisor.

Of the **178** women surveyed, **32%** reported having a cervical smear recently and **11%** had a breast examination.

Sexual Health check in the last 12 months - Men		
<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
25%		28%

Sexual Health check in the last 12 months - Women		
<i>North East</i>		<i>National</i>
46%		50%

# Appendices

## Study Outline

The North East Homeless Regional Group commissioned a Health Needs Audit using the Homeless Link national toolkit which focuses on an interview led questionnaire with service users. As a primary data source with associated guidance, it provides a framework to implement strategic change to address health inequalities of those people who experience homelessness.

It is useful for those with responsibility for carrying out needs assessments, designing and commissioning services, or delivering services within a health or homelessness setting. Recent users of the toolkits include public health, JSNA leads, LA housing leads, and homelessness sector managers.

### Objectives

The Health Audit aims to increase the evidence available about the health needs of people who are homeless bring statutory and voluntary services together to develop responses to health need and gaps in services give homeless people a stronger voice in local commissioning processes. It focuses on 5 key areas;

- Access to health services
- Your physical health
- Your mental health
- Drug and alcohol use
- Vaccinations and screening

In addition to these global objectives, the group has set out additional objectives to focus on. These are detailed below;

- The presence of veterans in the regional homeless cohort
- The use of legal highs
- Particular issues relating to the 18 – 24 age group

### Methodology

The study was carried out in line with the national Homeless Link Health Needs Audit toolkit. This toolkit is designed to be used in partnership by representatives from the local authority, voluntary sector, and health services

The North East Regional Homeless Group has received commitment from 12 Local Authorities to take part in the audit.

- South Tyneside
- North Tyneside
- Newcastle
- Gateshead
- Sunderland
- Northumberland
- County Durham
- Hartlepool
- Darlington
- Middleborough

- Redcar & Cleveland
- Stockton on Tees

The audit was carried out by both service providers (identified by local leads) and local authorities themselves with over 40 agencies taking part. Interviews were carried out over a 1 month period from 1<sup>st</sup> February – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

### Limitations

The following limitations with the audit have been observed;

- Some areas have received a small number of return rendering some local overviews inappropriate to represent the wider homeless population
- Where there are fewer respondents, or a small amount of agencies have been involved, a polarisation of response to one core group – i.e. those under 25 – could result
- Risk of duplication as returns are anonymous with individuals presenting at multiple services
- Responses could vary dependent on the skill of those carry out the interviews – limits with training of those carry out the audit

### Acknowledgements

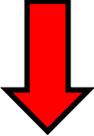
The North East Regional Homeless Group would like to thank all those who took part in this year's health needs audit, in particular respondents and those that carried out interviews.

In addition a special thank you to Homeless Link for letting the group use the Health Needs Audit Toolkit, and for supporting the audit including the use of LimeSurvey.

The North East Homeless Health Needs Audit 2015 was carried out by South Tyneside Council on behalf of the group.

**18 – 25 Year Old Overview**

## Access of Health Services

Those registered with a GP			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
80%			83.79%

Used a Dentist in the last 6 months			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
41%			35%

Those registered with a Dentist			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
66%			61%

Have you used A&E in the last 6 months			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
40%			35%

Used a GP in the last 6 months			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
78%			85%

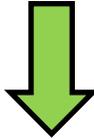
Admitted to hospital in the last 6 months			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
36%			20%

## Physical Health

Do you smoke			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
72%			75%

Do you have dental problems			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
35%			30%

Do you want to stop			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
40%			33%

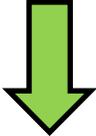
Do you have chest problems			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
25%			33%

Do you eat two meals a day			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
64%			64%

Do you have joint aches or problems with bones			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
31%			46%

## Mental Health

Do you often feel stressed			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
70%		69%	73%

Respondents with a formal diagnosis			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
42%		48%	45%

Do you often feel anxious			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
60%		63%	65%

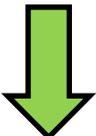
Formal diagnosis for depression			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
77%		82%	36%

Do you feel depressed			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
63%		66%	67%

Received a dual diagnosis			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
6%		30%	12%

## Drugs and Alcohol

Do you take drugs (or recovering from a drug problem)			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
43%		44%	33%

Percentage of drug users getting support			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
41%		62%	44%

Number of people taking legal highs			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
6%		3%	-

Percentage of people who are weekly drinkers			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
23%		13%	35%

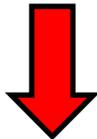
Percentage of cannabis users			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
37%		27%	64%

Percentage of those drinking more than 10 units			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
20%		23%	35%

## Vaccinations and Screening

Received a Hep A Vaccination			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
13%		26%	-

Received a Hep B Vaccination			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
14%		32%	-

Received a Flu Vaccination			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
16%		21%	-

Sexual Health Check - Men			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
34%		25%	-

Sexual Health Check - Women			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
56%		46%	-

Know where to get help around sexual health			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
90%		84%	-

## Respondent Profile

Number of respondents			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
199		-	-

Number of those left the armed services			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
0		1	-

Respondents who are prison leavers			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
12%		29%	-

Do you have a disability			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
23%		32%	-

Where are you currently staying - Hostel			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
29%		34%	-

Where are you currently staying – Rough Sleeping			
18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
0%		4%	-

### Where are you currently staying – Supported Accom'

18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
39%		26%	27%

### Percentage of respondents from a BME background

18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
6%		10%	-

### Are you in training or employment

18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
18%		13%	-

### Percentage of Male Respondents

18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
62%		69%	-

### Does your health stop you accessing employment

18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
31%		45%	-

### Percentage of Female Respondents

18 – 25 yrs		North East	National
38%		30%	-

