

Physical health in the Survey of Needs and Provision

Survey of Needs and Provision

The Survey of Needs and Provision (SNAP), conducted by Homeless Link and Resource Information Service (RIS), and funded by the CLG and CRASH¹, brings together and makes publicly available data on single homeless people and couples in England.

The research focused on day centres and accommodation based services for single homeless people and couples, including both direct access/emergency hostels² and second stage supported accommodation³. The research consisted of three main elements:

- Analysis of data about hostels and supported accommodation from the Supporting People (SP) provider database⁴ and basic analysis of SP client records.
- Analysis of data about day centres, direct access hostels and second stage supported accommodation from Homeless UK.
- A telephone survey of a sample of 151 day centres, hostels and second stage supported accommodation providers on Homeless UK, to gather more detailed information about clients served and their needs, services provided, standards of buildings and sources of funding.

This briefing summarises the telephone survey findings in SNAP relating to physical health. There is a separate briefing on information related to mental health.

Summary of findings

The proportion of clients with physical health problems is higher in day centres than in accommodation services. Although some projects do have health services in-house, most projects access them for their clients by referring to external agencies. Available to 82% of projects surveyed, GPs are the most accessible physical health service; 26 projects (17%) have GPs in-house. The two most common in-house services, delivered either by a project's own staff or external agencies coming into the service, are nursing care and alternative therapies.

¹ CRASH is the property and construction industry charity for the homeless. www.crash.org.uk

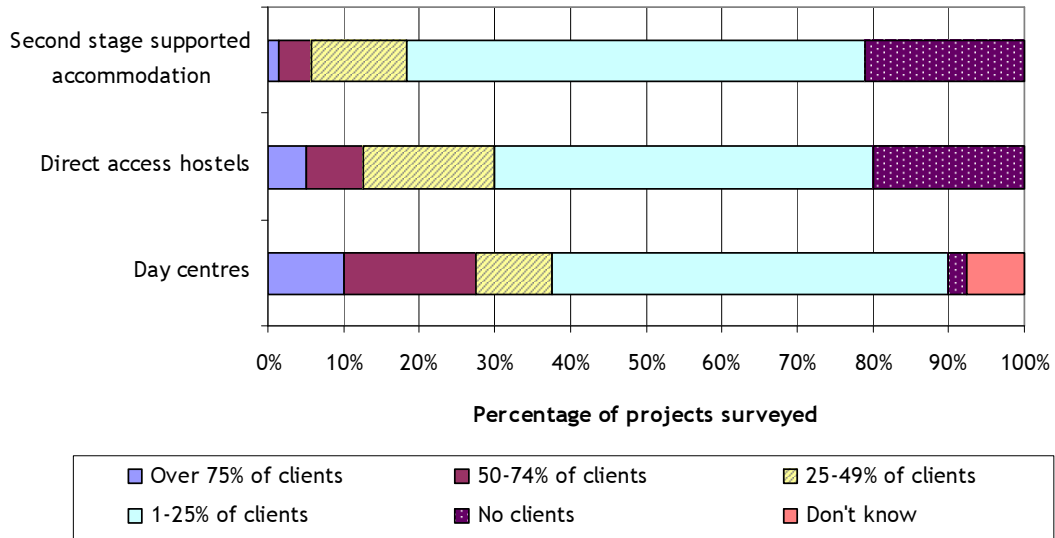
² Direct access hostels are short stay emergency services aimed at rough sleepers or those in need of immediate accommodation that usually have 24 hour staffing, frequent vacancies, no or limited waiting lists and can often accept self referrals.

³ Second stage supported accommodation projects provide longer-term accommodation for homeless people, often to those moving on from "first stage" direct access hostels. These projects usually have waiting lists, less frequent vacancies than direct access hostels, and are less likely to accept self referrals.

⁴ Supporting People data covers England.

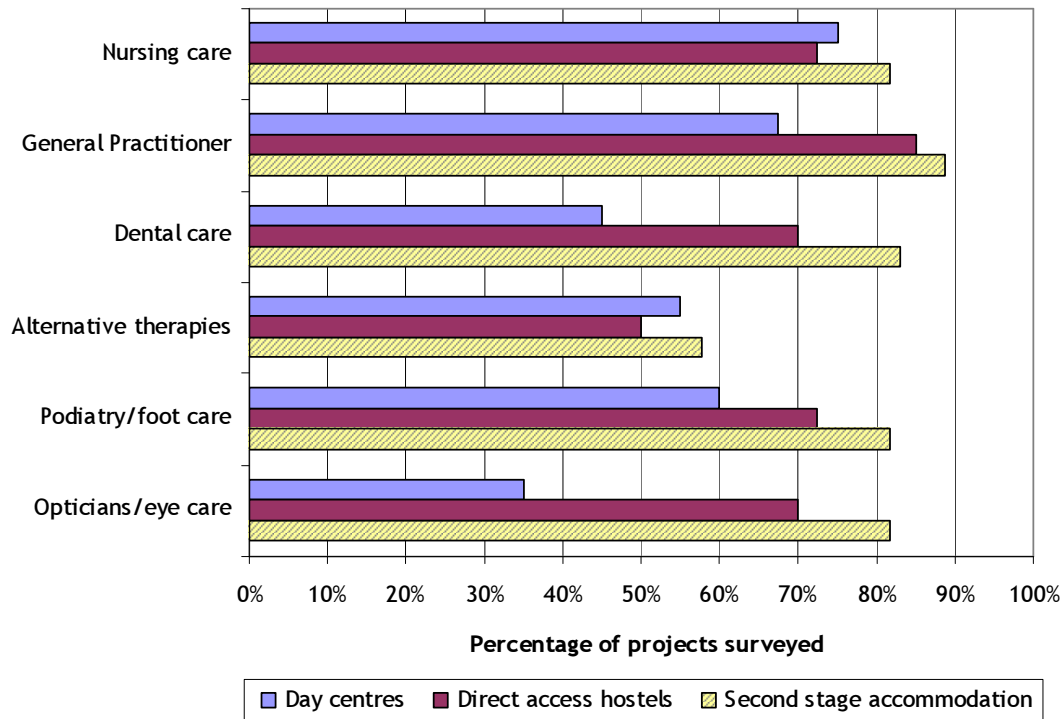
Only 10% of day centres had no clients with physical health problems, as opposed to around 20% of accommodation projects. The proportion of clients with physical health problems appear to reduce as you move through resettlement pathways (from day centres, to direct access hostels, to second stage supported accommodation), which could be an indication that clients' health improve as they find more settled accommodation.

Proportion of clients with physical health problems in projects surveyed



Respondents were asked about the availability of nursing care, general practitioners, dentists, alternative therapies, podiatry/foot care, and opticians/eye care.

Services available (in-house or by referral) to projects surveyed



- Just over a quarter of services have nursing services available in-house. The majority of these are delivered by an external agency. There are no noticeable differences in the availability of nursing care between day centres, direct access hostels and second stage supported accommodation.
- 26 services (17%) have a GP service available in-house. As the graph above illustrates, one third of day centres (33%) reported not having a GP available, whereas only 13% of accommodation providers have none available. This is despite the fact that day centres are more likely to report that a higher proportion of their clients had physical health problems.

Service delivery agents of physical health services in projects surveyed

Type of service or activity	Services are available	Service delivery agent		
		In-house support service/ activity delivered by own staff	In-house support/ activity delivered by an external agency	Have a referral system to an external service delivering this support/ activity
Nursing care	117 (77%)	10 (7%)	29 (19%)	86 (57%)
General Practitioner	124 (82%)	6 (4%)	20 (13%)	107 (71%)
Podiatry/foot care	111 (74%)	8 (5%)	19 (13%)	86 (57%)
Dental care	105 (70%)	-	7 (5%)	100 (66%)
Alternative therapies	83 (55%)	29 (19%)	11 (7%)	55 (36%)
Opticians/eye care	100 (66%)	-	12 (8%)	89 (59%)

- There appeared to be no direct relationship between the proportion of clients who have physical health problems and the availability of health services.
- More specialist services such as podiatry, eye care and dentistry are not quite as commonly available as general health services (nursing care and GPs), and they are less common in day centres than in accommodation services.
- Dental care and opticians/eye care are available in-house in a few projects, but are never delivered by their own staff.
- Alternative therapies are the most likely physical health services to be delivered in-house by a projects' own staff.
- The majority of respondents felt that the available services were adequate and accessible to their clients.

Out of the services that did have support available:

- Twelve have purpose built facilities for nursing care
- Ten have purpose built facilities for general practitioners
- Nine have purpose built facilities for podiatry/foot care
- Six have purpose built facilities for alternative therapies
- Two have purpose built facilities for dental care
- Two have purpose built facilities for eye care/opticians

Health funding was the primary funding stream for one project (a day centre) and in total 10 projects (7%) received some form of funding from the health sector (e.g. NHS trusts, Primary Care trusts, etc).

Day centres

There are a total of 187 day centres in England and we surveyed 40. The vast majority of day centres in our telephone survey stated that at least some of their clients have physical health problems and in 11 projects a majority of clients did.

- Almost half (19) of the day centres in our telephone survey have nursing services available in-house and seven have an in-house GP service.
- However, one quarter of agencies said that nursing services are not available to them (in-house or by referral) and one third do not have access to a GP.
- Over half of day centres have access to alternative therapies and 11 day centres have these available in-house.
- The health services least available are dental care and opticians/eye care. Where they are available it is, in all but a few cases, by referral. Two day centres have dental care and two have opticians/eye care in-house delivered by an external agency.
- Three of the eleven services where over half of clients had physical health problems do not have nursing care available and four do not have GP services available.

Direct access hostels

We surveyed 40 of the 246 direct access hostels in England. Out of these:

- A quarter of direct access hostels do not have nursing care available. Six of the 40 hostels surveyed also reported that they do not have a GP available. Although clients may be able to access generic health services, it may be a concern that some hostels do not have agreed referral systems.
- At the same time, a quarter of hostels have GPs delivering services in-house, suggesting good links with local health services in those projects.
- Moreover, eleven of the twelve services where over 25% of clients have physical health problems, have both nursing care and a GP available
- Dental care and opticians are generally available by referral, but two and three hostels respectively have an external agency come to deliver this service in-house.
- 30% of hostels reported that dental care or opticians/eye care are not available, even by a system of referral to an external agency.

Second stage supported accommodation

- For all types of support around physical health, second stage accommodation projects are more likely than day centres and direct access hostels to report that physical health services are available to them.
- Very few have in-house services delivered by their own staff but over 10% of projects do have external agencies delivering nursing care, GP services, podiatry/foot care or opticians/eye care.