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PERSONS WITH MENTAL HEALTH AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN THE IRISH CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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ICJA Conference 4th June 2021

The prevalence of major mental illness, substance misuse and homelessness in Irish prisoners: systematic review and meta-analyses

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Aims. To systematically review studies from Irish prisons that estimate the prevalence of major mental illness, alcohol and substance misuse, and homelessness at the time of committal.

Methods. Healthcare databases were searched for studies quantifying the point prevalence for each outcome of interest. Searches were augmented by scanning of bibliographies and searches of governmental and non-governmental websites. Proportional meta-analyses were completed for each outcome.

Results. We found eight, six and five studies quantifying the point prevalence of major mental illness, substance misuse, and homelessness respectively. Considerable heterogeneity was found for each subgroup (except psychosis where substantial heterogeneity was observed) and random effects models were used to calculate pooled percentages. The pooled percentage for psychotic disorder was 3.6% [95% confidence interval (CI) 3.0–4.2%], for affective disorder 4.3% (95% CI 2.1–7.1%), for alcohol use disorder 28.3% (95% CI 19.9–37.4%), for substance use disorder 50.9% (95% CI 37.6–64.2%) and for those who were homeless on committal 17.4% (95% CI 8.7–28.4%).

Intellectual disability in Irish prisoners: systematic review of prevalence

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Abstract

Purpose – *While individuals with an intellectual disability form a significant minority in the worldwide prison population, their healthcare needs require specialist attention. In Ireland, services for prisoners with intellectual disabilities need development. However, there is little substantive data estimating the prevalence of intellectual disabilities within the Irish prison system. The paper aims to discuss these issues.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The authors systematically review published data relating to the prevalence of intellectual disabilities in prisons in the Republic of Ireland. The authors searched four databases, governmental websites and corresponded with experts.*

Findings – *Little published data were elicited from searches except for one nationwide cross-sectional survey which reflected a higher prevalence than reported in international studies. Studies from forensic mental health populations are narrated to contextualise findings.*

Originality/value – *This study found that there is little data to accurately estimate the prevalence of intellectual disabilities in the Irish prison system and the limited data available suggests that this is likely to be higher than international estimates. The authors highlight the need for further research to accurately estimate prevalence in this jurisdiction, alongside the need to develop screening and care pathways for prisoners with an intellectual disability.*

Mental healthcare interfaces in a regional Irish prison

Gautam Gulati, Kizito Otuokpaikhian, Maeve Crowley, Vishnu Pradeep, David Meagher and Colum P. Dunne

Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to study the demographic, clinical characteristics and outcomes for those prisoners referred to secondary mental healthcare in a regional Irish prison and the proportion of individuals diverted subsequently from prison to psychiatric settings.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The authors conducted a retrospective review of 130 successive psychiatric assessment case records at a regional mixed gender prison serving six southern Irish counties. The authors analysed demographics, clinical characteristics and outcomes. Where diversion out of prison was undertaken, Dangerousness, Understanding, Recovery and Urgency Manual (DUNDRUM) scores were retrospectively completed to assess security need.*

Findings – *In total, 8.6 per cent of all committals from liberty were referred by a general practitioner and 8.1 per cent subsequently assessed by the visiting psychiatrist. Predominantly, these were young males charged with a violent offence. In all, 42.2 per cent of those assessed by secondary care were diagnosed with a substance misuse disorder and 21.1 per cent with a personality disorder. In total, 20.3 per cent suffered from a psychotic disorder and 10.6 per cent with an affective disorder. Of those seen by psychiatric services, 51.2 per cent required psychotropic medication, 29.2 per cent required psychological input and 59.3 per cent required addiction counselling. In all, 10.6 per cent of those assessed were diverted from prison, the majority to approved centres. Mean DUNDRUM-1 scores suggested that those referred to high and medium secure hospitals were appropriately placed, whereas those diverted to open wards would have benefited from a low secure/intensive care setting.*

Originality/value – *The multifaceted need set of those referred strengthens the argument for the provision of multidisciplinary mental healthcare into prisons. The analysis of security needs for those diverted from prisons supports the need for Intensive Care Regional Units in Ireland.*

Keywords *Mental illness, Prisons, Diversion, Psychiatric, Psychosocial*

Paper type *Research paper*

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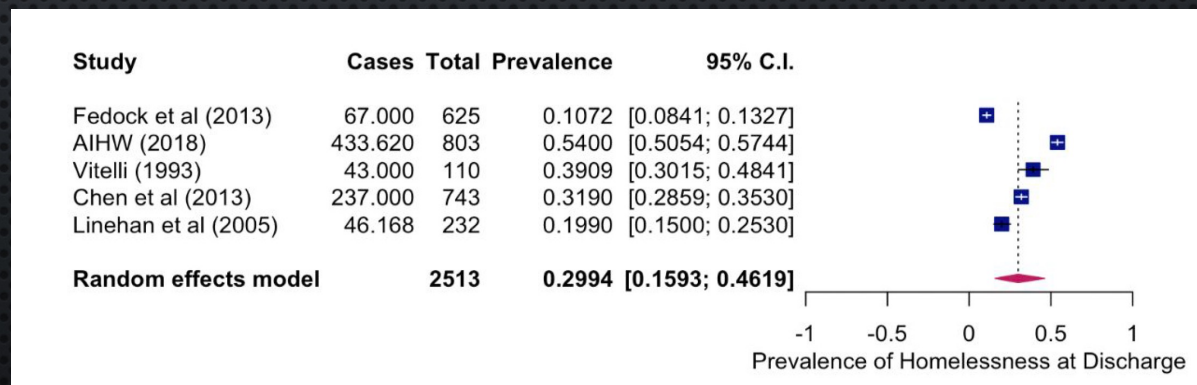
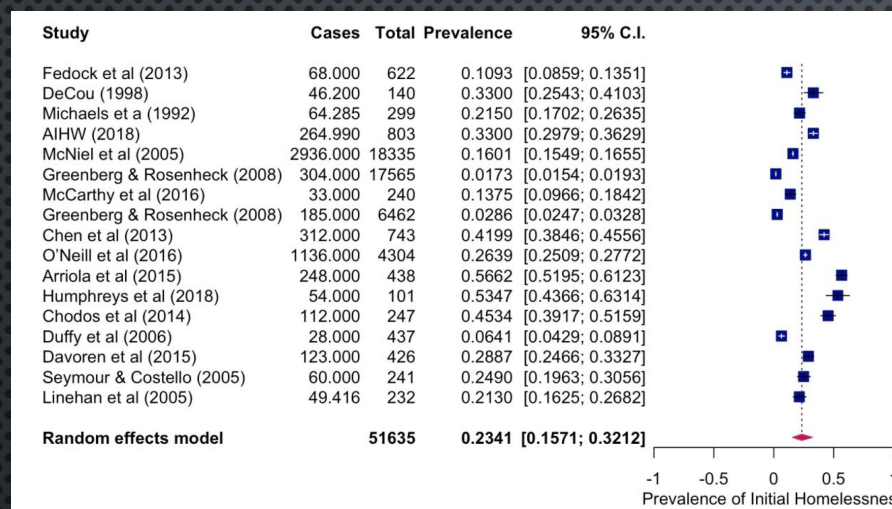
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FROM NOWHERE TO NOWHERE. HOMELESSNESS AND INCARCERATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND META-ANALYSIS. BASHIR, A MOLONEY N, EL-ZAIN M, KELLY BD, DUNNE CP & GULATI.G. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PRISONER HEALTH 2021 (IN PRESS)



Diversion of Mentally Ill Offenders from the Criminal Justice System in Ireland: Comparison with England and Wales.

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Abstract

Aim

It is generally accepted that certain people who are mentally ill and have contact with the criminal justice system should be diverted to psychiatric care rather than imprisoned. We sought to comment on priorities relating to the development of diversion services in Ireland through comparison with developments in a neighbouring jurisdiction.

Methods

A comparative review was undertaken in relation to the provision for psychiatric diversion across the offender pathway in Ireland and England and Wales. This included legal and service related considerations.

Results

In both jurisdictions, services show significant geographical variability. While developments in England and Wales have focussed on the broader offender pathway, diversion services in Ireland are chiefly linked to imprisonment. There is little or no specialist psychiatric expertise available to Gardaí in Ireland. Prison In-reach and Court Liaison Services (PICLS) are developing in Ireland but expertise and resourcing are variable geographically. There is a lack of Intensive Care Regional Units (ICRU) in Ireland, in sharp contrast with the availability of Intensive Care and Low Secure Units in England and Wales. There is limited scope to divert to hospital at sentencing stage in the absence of a 'hospital order' provision in Irish legislation.

Conclusions

Three areas in the development of Irish diversion services should be prioritised. Firstly, the provision of advice and assistance to Gardaí at arrest, custody and initial court hearing stages. Secondly, legislative reform to remove barriers to diverting remand prisoners and facilitating hospital disposal on sentencing. Thirdly, an urgent need to develop of ICRU's (Intensive Care Regional Units) to facilitate provision of appropriate care by local mental health services.

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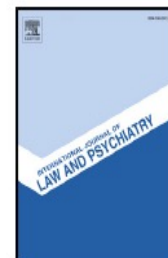




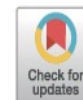
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Intellectual disabilities in Irish prisons: Could Article 13 of the UNCRPD hold the key?



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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of intellectual disabilities amongst adult prisoners in Ireland is higher than international estimates. There is little evidence that the development of diversion services has impacted such prevalence. The authors argue that Ireland's ratification of the UNCRPD presents a timely opportunity to address this problem through an awareness programme aimed at frontline law enforcement officials.

Table 1. Pre- and post-training mean Likert scores

	Pre-training (<i>n</i> = 10) [Mean (s.d.)]	Post-training (<i>n</i> = 11) [Mean (s.d.)]	<i>p</i>
Question 1: I have an understanding of what autistic spectrum disorder is	4.9 (1.5)	7.9 (1.4)	<0.0001
Question 2: I understand the common difficulties those with autistic spectrum disorder experience	4.7 (1.7)	8.3 (1.6)	<0.0001
Question 3: I feel I know strategies to help me communicate with those who have autistic spectrum disorders	4.1 (2.1)	9.8 (1.4)	<0.0001
Question 4: I know how to approach those who are experiencing a 'meltdown'	4 (2.2)	8.8 (1.3)	<0.0001
Question 5: This training will help me in my day-to-day work	7.5 (1.6)	8.8 (1.2)	0.0474

MURPHY, V., KELLEHER, M., & GULATI, G. LETTER TO THE EDITOR (AUTISM AWARENESS TRAINING FOR AN GARDA SIOCHANA). **IRISH JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MEDICINE**, 35 (4), 345-346 (2017).



Experiences of people with intellectual disabilities encountering law enforcement officials as the suspects of crime – A narrative systematic review

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Keywords:

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United Nations' convention on the rights of persons with disabilities

ABSTRACT

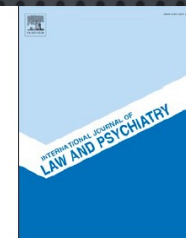
It is well established internationally that there is a high prevalence of intellectual disability (ID) among people in police custody. Some people with ID may face particular challenges in negotiating the forensic formalities adopted by police at the pre-trial stage of the criminal process. These challenges need to be acknowledged and mitigated through appropriate procedural safeguards in order to, at once, preserve the fact-finding accuracy of criminal investigations and minimise the risk of securing a wrongful conviction. And yet, despite the formative role which pre-trial procedures exert over the trajectory of proceedings, little is known about the experiences of people with ID during their initial interaction with law enforcement officers. In an attempt to address this research lacuna, we reviewed six databases systematically to identify studies that explore such experiences. Seven studies with a total of 1199 participants were identified. Frequently, participants with ID describe challenges in police custody, experiencing particular difficulties in understanding and communicating information. They report a paucity of appropriate supports generally in this setting and an unmet need for the provision of procedural and emotional supports. Consistent implementation of legal safeguards is necessary, along with consistent availability of accessible practical measures to support people with ID within the criminal justice system.



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The experience of law enforcement officers interfacing with suspects who have an intellectual disability – A systematic review



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ABSTRACT

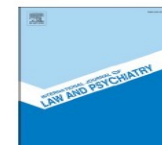
There is a high prevalence of people with intellectual disability (ID) among those in police custody. Consequently, law enforcement officers (LEOs) at the frontline of the criminal justice system are commonly required to interact with people who have ID. Notwithstanding the frequency of these interactions, research indicates that police exchanges with persons with ID frequently take place against a backdrop of tenuously-resourced disability awareness training. At the time of writing, a paucity of research data exists with respect to the experiences of LEOs operating within this training vacuum at an international level. A better understanding of their experiences could meaningfully inform research, training and improve support programmes for LEO's. We systematically reviewed six databases to identify studies published up to 1st December 2019 reporting the experience of LEOs interfacing with suspects who have an ID. Following a review of 670 abstracts, 16 studies were identified from five countries involving 983 LEOs. LEOs identified 1) a need for specialised training; 2) challenges in identifying people with ID; 3) a need to improve safeguards and 4) challenges in supporting/communicating with individuals who have ID through the investigation process.



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Challenges for people with intellectual disabilities in law enforcement interactions in Ireland; thematic analysis informed by 1537 person-years' experience

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ABSTRACT



Background: People with intellectual disabilities (PWID) are over-represented in criminal justice systems globally. This over-representation reveals itself at once in the demographic make-up of prison populations, as well as those detained in police settings as suspects of crime. While it is well-established in international literature that individuals who find themselves in the latter scenario face particular challenges in negotiating the forensic formalities routinely followed by the police at the pre-trial stage of criminal proceedings on account of their impairments, the specific difficulties experienced by PWID as suspects within Ireland's criminal justice system has yet to be explained, or indeed, understood. In seeking to address this research lacuna, this paper yields an account of a qualitative study which was aimed at identifying the unique challenges which PWID face in their interactions with Law Enforcement Officials (LEOs) in Ireland.

Aims: This study aimed to elicit perspectives across a range of disciplines with regard to barriers for PWID interacting with LEOs in Ireland, and sought viewpoints on the content of a proposed awareness programme.

Methods: A survey using purposive sampling was used to elicit viewpoints from people from representative organisations for PWID, people working with voluntary organisations for PWID, healthcare professionals working with PWID and professionals from the criminal justice system (including members of An Garda Síochána, lawyers, members of the Irish judiciary and officials within the Airport Police). Data were anonymised at the point of collection. Qualitative thematic analysis was conducted to extract themes based on the data retrieved through the survey.

Results: Ninety-five ($n = 95$) responses were received from individuals reporting a cumulative experience of 1537 person-years. Respondents identified themselves as members of one of three groups; people working in a voluntary or representative organisation for PWID ($n = 42$, 44.2%); people working in healthcare ($n = 31$, 32.6%); and people working in law enforcement ($n = 22$, 23.1%). Three themes were identified from the qualitative thematic analysis. The first theme, "Barriers to Communication", identified challenges which PWID and LEO experience in their mutual interactions and communications with one another. The second theme, "Building Awareness and Skills", identified elements of an ID awareness programme for LEOs. The third theme, "Institutional and System Change", identified possible lines of innovation with respect to contemporary police practice and the availability of supports for both PWID and the LEOs who work with them.

What is the role of doctors in respect of suspects with mental health and intellectual disabilities in police custody?

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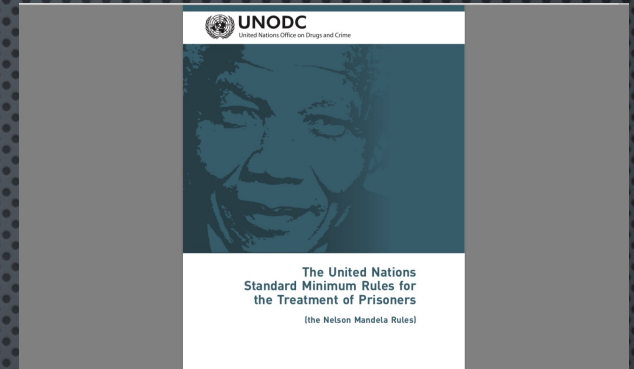
People with severe mental illness and intellectual disabilities are overrepresented in the criminal justice system worldwide and this is also the case in Ireland. Following Ireland's ratification of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2018, there has been an increasing emphasis on ensuring access to justice for people with disabilities as in Article 13. For people with mental health and intellectual disabilities, this requires a multi-agency approach and a useful point of intervention may be at the police custody stage. Medicine has a key role to play both in advocacy and in practice. We suggest a functional approach to assessment, in practice, and list key considerations for doctors attending police custody suites. Improved training opportunities and greater resources are needed for general practitioners and psychiatrists who attend police custody suites to help fulfill this role.

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Key words: Forensic, intellectual disabilities, mental illness, police, Garda.

SUMMARY

- DIVERSION FROM POLICE CUSTODY?
- "RESPONSIBLE ADULT"
- ADVOCACY
- ACCESS TO A SOLICITOR?
- BARRIERS TO DIVERSION FROM PRISON?
- STIGMA?
- EQUIVALENCE OF CARE?
- HUMAN RIGHTS?



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