

## Abstract of Master project

“What is the perspective of professional groups within Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) on the ‘duty to ask and act’ to prevent homelessness?”

**Introduction:** Homelessness is a public health issue affecting individuals in Scotland. There continues to be an increasing prevalence despite efforts by the Scottish Government to reduce it through strategies like policies that promote housing as a priority for individuals. Research has shown a cause-and-effect relationship between homelessness and health, suggesting early involvement of health and social care workers as well as partnership with other services as a possible solution to prevent homelessness. In response to this, the Scottish Government is working towards a new housing bill in which duties will be placed on wider public bodies to ask and act to prevent homelessness. This dissertation therefore aims understanding the experiences of Midlothian health and social care staff who work with homeless individuals and their opinions as useful considerations in anticipation for implementation of the duty.

**Methods:** This qualitative study utilised semi-structured interviews to collect data from eight health and social care workers who work within the Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). Interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis resulted in three key themes.

**Findings:** The three key themes identified are: ‘outlook on the policy’, ‘Implementing Change’ and ‘Partnership and Governance in Midlothian Council’. Participants generally supported the policy's preventative approach and welcomed wider professional involvement. Though key challenges were identified, participants gave various suggestions that would aid implementation. They highlighted the importance of management and frontline relationships in decision and implementation of changes as this factor could fuel their motivation to work effectively. Participants noted difficulties in working in partnership with other professionals, especially with communication and information sharing. Regardless of their support of the policy's aims, professionals emphasized the need for system, organizational and culture changes to ensure effective implementation.

**Conclusion:** This study revealed that participants are envisioned to implement the policy, are keen to build on the care they provide for the homeless population and welcoming to the duty to ask and act that enables better collaboration with other services to provide holistic care for individuals.

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