People with Intellectual & Psychosocial Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System: A Research Update

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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 psychotic where substantial heterogeneity was observed) and random effects models were used to calculate pooled percentages. The pooled percentage for psychotic disorder was 5.6% (95% confidence interval (CI) 3.0–8.4%), for affective disorder 4.3% (95% CI 2.3–7.3%), for alcohol use disorder 28.3% (95% CI 18.9–37.4%), for substance use disorder 50.9% (95% CI 37.6–64.2%) and for those who were homeless on committal 17.4% (95% CI 13.7–21.4%).

Conclusions. Estimates for the prevalence of psychotic illness and substance abuse among Irish prisoners are inkeeping with international estimates of morbidity in prisons, whilst those for affective disorders are lower. The prevalence of homelessness in committed to Irish prisons is higher than some international estimates. Rates for psychoses, alcohol and substance misuse as well as homelessness in Irish prisons are significantly higher than the general population prevalence of these vulnerabilities. A need for service development is discussed.

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 reviewed 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.
Trans-institutionalisation in Ireland: New and Emerging Congregated Settings for People with Disabilities

Gautam Gulati, Alan Cusack, Brendan D. Kelly, Valerie E. Murphy, Shane Kilcommins, and Colum P. Dunne

Human Rights, Public Health, and Disability Awareness Training of Police

Gautam Gulati, Brendan D. Kelly, Alan Cusack, Shane Kilcommins, and Colum P. Dunne
Experiences of people with intellectual disabilities encountering law enforcement officials as the suspects of crime – A narrative systematic review

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ABSTRACT

It is well established internationally that police custody is a stressful experience for people with intellectual disabilities. This study aimed to investigate the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities during police encounters, focusing on the role of the police in managing the circumstances and ensuring that their rights are respected. The study followed a qualitative, narrative systematic review approach, which involved conducting a comprehensive search of the literature to identify relevant studies. The findings revealed that the police are often poorly trained to deal with people with intellectual disabilities, and that there is a lack of appropriate resources and support available to the police to manage these encounters effectively.

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

A cross-sectional study was conducted to examine the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities in interactions with the police. The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research. A sample of people with intellectual disabilities was recruited from various locations in Ireland, and they were asked to complete a survey assessing their experiences of police encounters. The findings revealed that people with intellectual disabilities often feel vulnerable and marginalized in interactions with the police, and that there is a need for improved training and resources for the police to better manage these encounters.

A randomized trial was conducted to assess the impact of a new training programme for police officers on their responses to interactions with people with intellectual disabilities. The programme involved a intensive training session followed by ongoing support and feedback. The results showed that the training programme led to improved attitudes and practices among police officers, resulting in more positive interactions with people with intellectual disabilities.
What is the role of doctors in respect of suspects with mental health and intellectual disabilities in police custody?


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Keywords: Mental health, intellectual disabilities, police custody, psychiatry, triage, forensic psychiatry.

The evaluation of a training course to enhance intellectual disabilities and mental health awareness amongst General Practitioners attending police stations

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RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO VULNERABILITY: SECURING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR VULNERABLE ACCUSED PERSONS IN IRELAND

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Abstract: This paper outlines international obligations and domestic safeguards that shape the treatment of suspects with intellectual disabilities in Ireland. It recognises that the widespread operationalisation of these safeguards, and, by extension, the realisation of Ireland's international human rights obligations, is often contingent upon securing a correct, and timely, identification of a suspect's disability, the paper places emphasis on the urgent need for dialogue, training and development at all fronts of the Irish criminal process. Against a backdrop of frightening judicial, media and legal debates surrounding the flaws, context and reach of the “disability” narrative, in the present paper, we aim to challenge the dominant narratives that permeate the discourse of judicial, media and legal debates concerning the flaws, context and reach of the “disability” narrative.

Towards inclusionary policing: a critical inquiry into the pre-trial treatment of suspects with intellectual disabilities in Ireland

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

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Mental healthcare interfaces in a regional Irish prison

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Abstract

Purpose—The purpose of this paper is to study the demographic, clinical characteristics and outcomes for those prisoners referred to secondary mental health care 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 100 consecutive psychiatric assessment case records at a regional mixed-gender prison serving six southern Irish counties. The authors analysed demographic, clinical characteristics and outcomes. When diversion out of prison was undertaken, dangerousness, Understanding, Recovery and Usage (MURUN) scores were retrospectively completed to assess severity need.

Findings—In total, 4.6 per cent of all commitments from liberty were referred by a general practitioner and 6.1 per cent subsequently assessed by the visiting psychiatrist. Accordingly, these were young males charged with a violent offence. In all, 43.1 per cent of those assessed by secondary care were diagnosed with a substance misuse disorder and 2.1 per cent with a personality disorder. In total, 26.9 per cent suffered from a psychotic disorder and 16.8 per cent with an affective disorder. Of those seen by psychiatric services, 97.2 per cent received psychotropic medication, 26.2 per cent required psychological input and 59.3 per cent required additional counseling. In total, 10.9 per cent of those assessed were diverted from prisons, the majority to approved centers. Mean QUIDRUM 1 scores suggested that those referred to high and medium secure hospital were appropriately placed, whereas those diverted to open wards would have benefited from a lower secure/rehabilitation care setting.

Originality/value—The multifaceted nature of those referred strengthens the argument for the provision of multidisciplinary mental health care interfaces. The analysis of security needs for those diverted from prisons supports the need for intensive Case/Regional Units in Ireland.

Keywords Mental illness, Prison, Diversion, Psychiatric, Psychosocial

Paper type Research paper

Introduction