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FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

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Homeless people (Beijer and Andréasson 2009), travelling people and vulnerable migrants have an increased prevalence of both short- and long-term illness compared to the general population (Aspinall 2014).

Historically the NHS has considered vulnerable groups to be most at risk with regard to housing and social care issues, which are dealt with by other agencies. There is however increasing evidence to suggest that there are very serious discrepancies concerning healthcare.

Individuals from these vulnerable groups are less likely to access healthcare in the early stages of a disease or disability process and are thus more likely to attend A&E or be admitted to hospital as the result of serious acute disease or long-term chronic conditions.

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Px 1 is a 22yr old homeless man. He has been sleeping rough for the last 18 months and has battled drug addiction since his teens.

Px 1 grew up in the care system and has been in prison on a number of occasions.

Px 1 suffers from severe blepharitis but is reluctant to access health care.

There are a number of reasons for limited access to healthcare that could prevent Px 1 from getting the help he needs, discuss in your groups what they could be:

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Eye health needs of homeless people:

Research in the USA shows that homeless people have more eye problems than the general population (Gelberg et al. 2000).

There is limited peer-reviewed published evidence regarding the ocular health of homeless people in the UK; however, data from Vision Care for Homeless People(VCHP) suggest that the UK situation is similar to that in the USA.

Homeless people have difficulty in accessing community-based optometric primary care, with 85% of homeless people preferring to access special homelessness services.

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Px 2 is a 58 year old female who has been homeless since leaving her abusive partner 5 year ago. She is alcohol dependant and a heavy smoker.

Discuss in your groups, What kind of visual problems could be prevalent amongst homeless people like Px 2? Consider conditions and risk factors:

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So, now we need to discuss how would you deal with a homeless person when they come for an eye test.

Px 3 comes into practice for a test. He is 29 years old and has been sleeping rough or in hostels for the last 3 years. He has a history of drug and alcohol addiction and has been banned from the town centre for theft in the past.

Discuss in your groups how you would conduct the eye examination.

Points to consider:

- **Refraction methods and ocular examination techniques**
- **Communication methods**
- **Accurate testing obstacles — alcohol/drug use**
- **How would you feel conducting the test?**

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