Identifying the extent and nature of multiple complex needs in Coventry

What are multiple complex needs?

Individuals facing multiple complex needs (MCN) are people who experience several problems at the same time, often face ineffective contact with services, and live chaotic lives. This can be a combination of offending behaviour/violence, homelessness, substance misuse, mental ill-health, or adverse childhood experiences.

The case for change

Despite the disproportionate time and resources spent across different services such as social care, housing and homelessness, police, fire, NHS, criminal justice, probation and substance misuse services, outcomes for people facing MCN are poor. To services, they are a significant source of repeat demand for public services and are amongst the 'hardest to help'. To improve outcomes for people facing MCN, we need to understand the what, who, where, when, how and why. By understanding the issues, we can manage it better and see the problem through a different lens to achieve a common understanding and a shared solution.
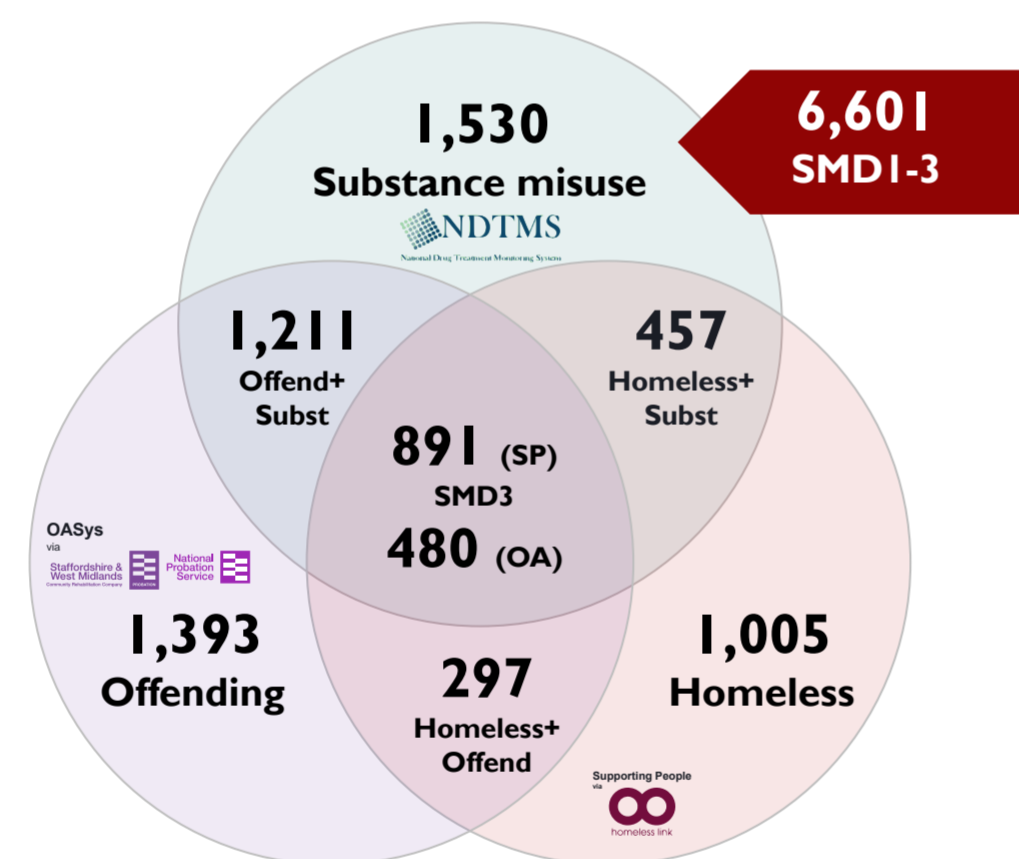
Background

In 2016, Coventry's health and wellbeing board made improving outcomes for individual facing multiple complex needs one of its three priorities for 2016-19. In addition, troubled individuals became part of the public sector reform programme for the West Midlands Combined Authority. We established a multi-agency multiple complex needs board in Coventry. The board is identifying the extent and nature of MCN in the city and modelling costs and outcomes (research work stream) and looking at how services and support can be redesigned around the needs of people at risk of and/or facing MCN (transformation work stream).

How we did it

We adopted a collaborative approach that was **iterative** (findings feed into work as we go along), **minimised reporting** (use of visual outputs), **data-driven** (informed by but not constrained by data), **hub-and-spoke** (partners undertake/lead different aspects of work), **continual sense checking** of findings with key stakeholders, and **reflective** (capturing and sharing experiences).
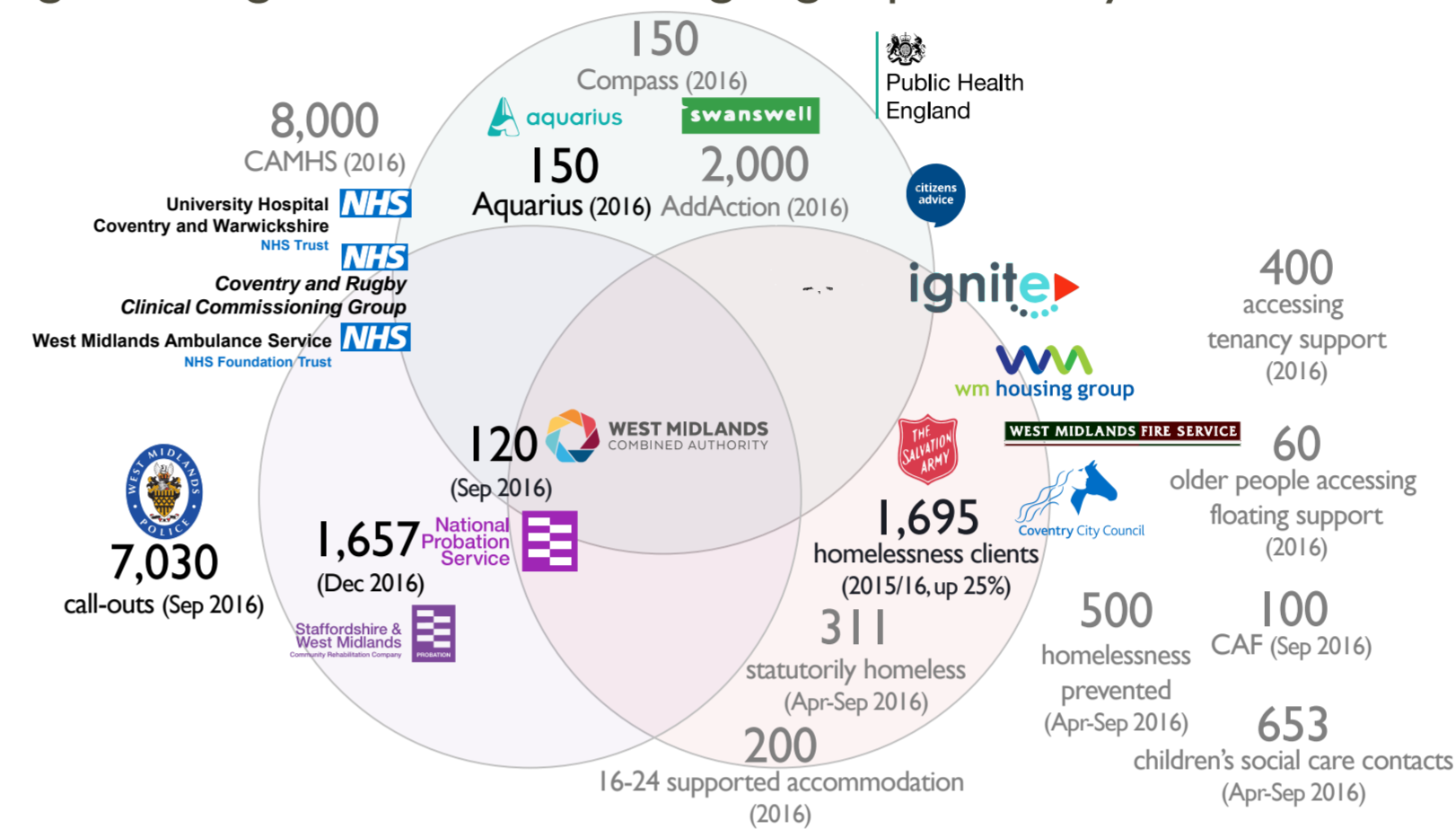
What we did

Our starting point was a literature review of existing studies locally and nationally, in particular **Hard Edges: mapping severe and multiple disadvantage** by LankellyChase Foundation & Heriot-Watt University. Estimates from Hard Edges suggest that Coventry has 6,601 people facing severe and multiple disadvantage at any one point, including…
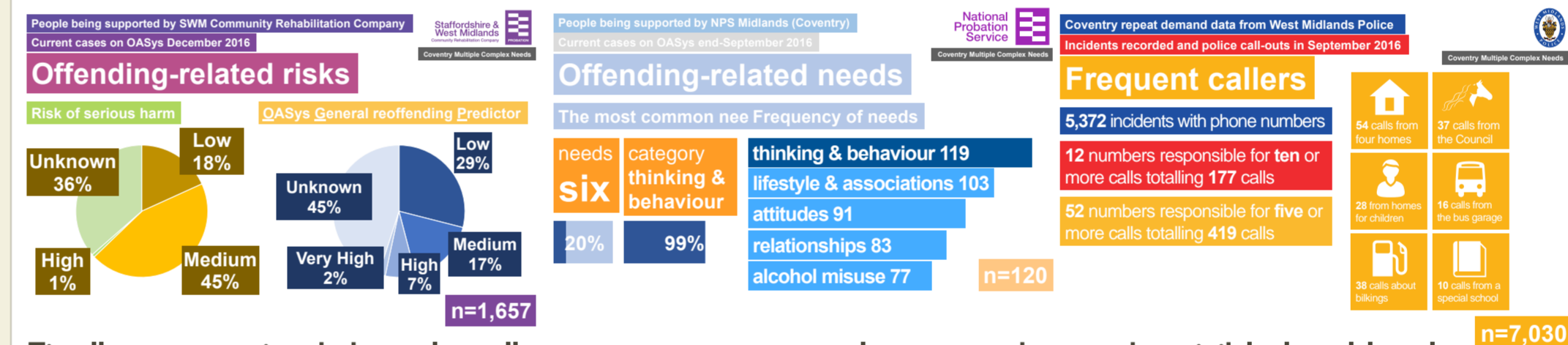

We wanted to go into more detail, and understand the local Coventry population better. To do so, we gathered anonymised data from agencies working across the city to understand the **characteristics** of people facing MCN and gathered **case studies** about the lives and experiences of people facing MCN.

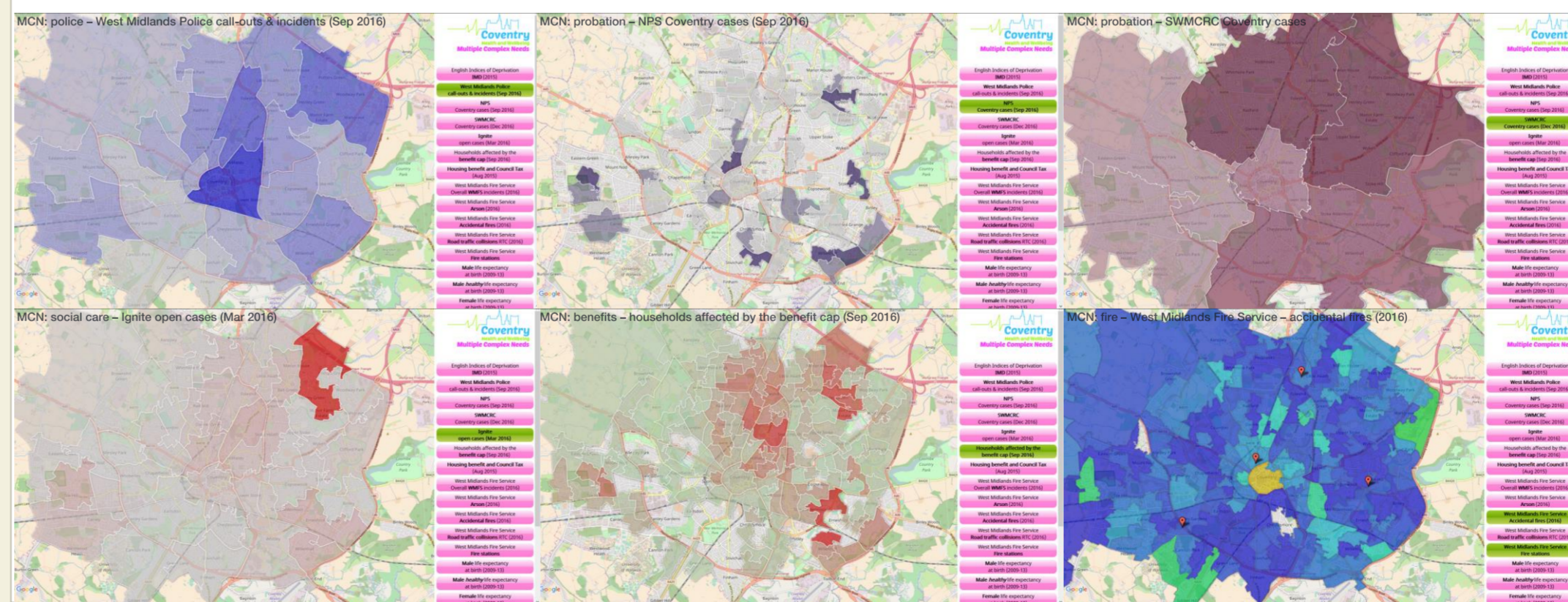## Characteristics of multiple complex needs

Using anonymised local data from agencies, we were able to add local data to the estimates from Hard Edges, building a better understanding of groups who may be at-risk of MCN.

In addition, anonymised row-level local data enabled us to build a picture of the risk factors associated with MCN, for instance, locations/incidents frequently attended by the police; and the risk factors associated with offenders.
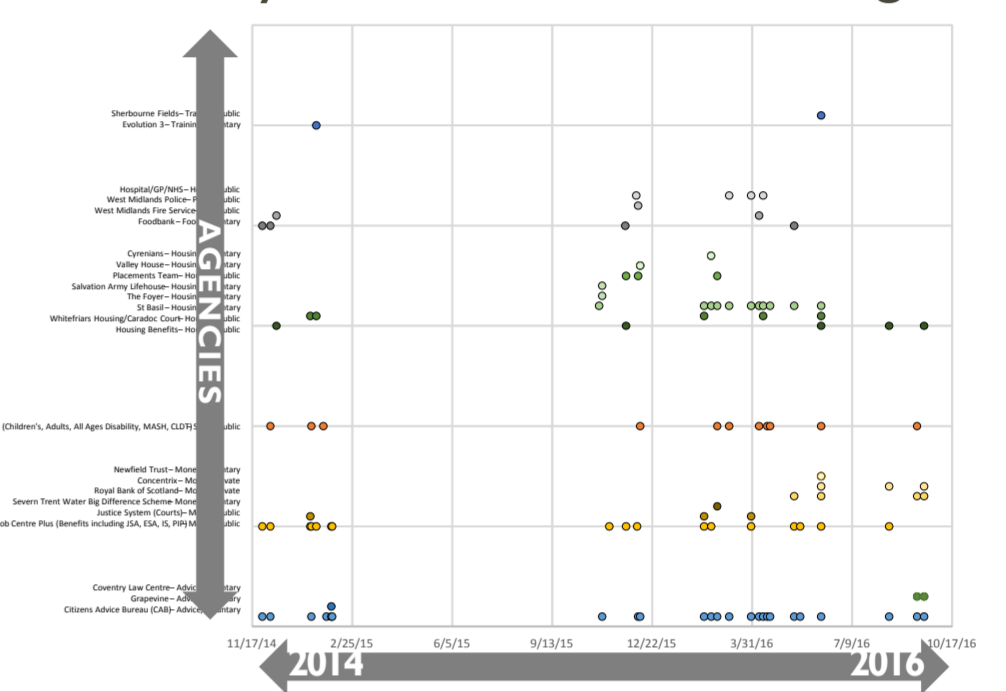

Finally, anonymised data also allow us to create overlay maps that make visible local levels of need and demand for services. We have mapped data from the police*, fire*, probation*; households affected by welfare reform*; as well as the English indices of deprivation and local life expectancy. This enables the MCN Board and partners to, for the first time, see correlations and patterns in the need and demand for different services.

shown below

Case studies

Using a range of case studies (children's social care, housing, fire, substance misuse, citizens advice) we are able to map out the lives and experiences of people facing MCN. For example, the timeline below sets out the contacts that a couple had contact with over the period of two years -- that is, 24 different agencies.

So what? Next steps…

We now have a range of data about the characteristics of people facing multiple complex needs, and case studies about the lives and experiences of people facing MCN. With this, we have gained a more granular and comprehensive understanding of the lives and experiences of people facing MCN in Coventry. In addition, data and maps enable us to illustrate how risk factors correlate and relate to each other.

Our intention now is to combine data and case studies to build **stories** about the lives and experiences of people facing MCN. We will do so by jointly identifying people, and locations that disproportionate affect our services where a different model could save us all time, money and resources to improve outcomes for this group of people – and use this as a basis for improving the whole system.

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