

Abstract

A Common Trajectory: Plotting the experience of 100 veterans from discharge to crisis & beyond.

In 2012, I founded Homes for Heroes (H4H), a specialist homelessness service for contemporary veterans. Over the next four years I conducted extensive interviews with more than 100 veterans who sought assistance from the service. These veterans provided detailed accounts of the circumstances and events that resulted in homelessness and in most cases suicidality. Over time, a near ubiquitous pattern emerged.

In this presentation that pattern is plotted as a trajectory of a veteran's wellbeing over time. The model maps the implications of risk and protective factors prior to discharge, proposes intervention points, demonstrates the effectiveness of early intervention, clinical treatment and meaningful engagement, and then charts the cumulative effect of risk factors and life events that led the veteran to crisis point. The model also maps the point at which these veterans were no longer able to resolve their issues alone and illustrates the outcomes of veterans who passed this point.

Whilst the model may obscure the unique circumstances of some veterans, this simple visual reference uniquely captures the very personal stories that were shared with me during my time at H4H and correlates positively and strongly to findings in recent reports on veterans' wellbeing, homelessness, suicidality and related issues.