

**Users and staff  
perceptions of  
resettlement services for  
homeless people on  
Merseyside**

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resettlement services for  
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Figure 1 p.14

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Appendices D,E and F.

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## **Abstract**

The study of resettlement services for homeless people is a relatively new area in the field of homelessness studies. Such services aim to assist homeless people to find new housing and support individuals to settle into accommodation after a period of housing crisis. The New Labour Government has recognized the importance of these services in preventing homelessness and since 2003 has provided monies through the Supporting People fund which has allowed for the growth of such support services. Homeless practitioners and policy makers now acknowledge that resolving an individual's homelessness will not be achieved by simply providing housing.

Whilst there is a growing acknowledgement of the usefulness of resettlement services there is a limited body of research which has examined homelessness services in a particular locality and evaluated service users' experiences since the introduction of the Supporting People funding. This research therefore aimed to examine resettlement services within the Merseyside area. Qualitative and qualitative evidence is provided which considers the perceptions and experiences of homeless people who experience resettlement services and the staff who offer such services. This thesis further describes the effects that local and national policy interventions can have on the resettlement process.

The evidence shows that for resettlement support to be successful, it relies on a combination of practical and emotional support being offered by support worker to a service user, but, more importantly, a high level of motivation is needed from a homeless person to want to improve their housing status. This thesis concludes that for many resettlement support can have a profound impact on the pathway that an individual takes out of homelessness, however those who are not prepared or are unable to participate in this support process as active citizens are vulnerable to further exclusion as support is withdrawn to such individuals. Moreover, whilst resettlement support has gone some way to assist many individuals into settled accommodation, this alone is not enough to overcome homelessness. The homelessness problem is always going to be affected by the structural and legislative forces which determine the quality, quantity and availability of accommodation.

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## **Glossary of Terms**

<b>BC</b>	<b>Borough Council</b>
<b>BL</b>	<b>Budgeting Loan</b>
<b>CBL</b>	<b>Choice Based Lettings</b>
<b>CCG</b>	<b>Community Care Grant</b>
<b>DETR</b>	<b>Department for Transport and the Regions</b>
<b>DoE</b>	<b>Department of the Environment</b>
<b>DSS</b>	<b>Department of Social Security</b>
<b>DWP</b>	<b>Department of Work and Pensions</b>
<b>EI</b>	<b>Emotional Intelligence</b>
<b>HA</b>	<b>Housing Association</b>
<b>IS</b>	<b>Income Support</b>
<b>JSA</b>	<b>Job Seekers Allowance</b>
<b>LA</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>
<b>MBC</b>	<b>Metropolitan Borough Council</b>
<b>ODPM</b>	<b>Office of the Deputy Prime Minister</b>
<b>RSL</b>	<b>Registered Social Landlord</b>
<b>SEU</b>	<b>Social Exclusion Unit</b>
<b>SPSS</b>	<b>Statistics Package for the Social Sciences</b>

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to outline the background of the study and the rationale for the need for research to be conducted into resettlement of homeless people in the Merseyside area. It will also outline how the researcher's interest in homelessness and resettlement services developed from a previous career working in the local authority. Describing the origins of the study, the chapter will show how the investigative process began from a small-scale pilot project and developed into a doctoral thesis. Finally the section will outline how the aims and objectives of the study informed the parameters and context of the research.

### **1.1 The development of the research study**

Homelessness has been an on going social problem throughout the twentieth and beginnings of the twenty first century, the solutions to which have perplexed social policy makers for as many years. National initiatives and legislation (these issues are further discussed in chapter 2) have gone some way to addressing the homelessness problem and there have been significant developments in understanding the causes and solutions to the homelessness problem. Despite the development of a national framework established by the legislation to assist homeless individuals to find permanent accommodation, many individuals who find themselves homeless are still forced to reside temporarily in local hostels and housing projects, whilst a long-term solution to their housing crisis is established. From the late 1990s the importance of 'resettlement services' as a complimentary service along side the provision of permanent accommodation began to be acknowledged by both practitioners and academics. It is indeed hostels, mostly provided by the voluntary sector, that have been at the forefront of developing resettlement services, which have aimed to find homeless individuals not only accommodation, but to offer support in both practical and emotional terms thus assisting individuals to be able to settle into the wider community after a period of homelessness.

The origins of this research project were established in 2002 when a local hostel who had established a resettlement service wanted to carry out an evaluation of the service

that they offered. The hostel was based near to the centre of Liverpool and provided single room temporary accommodation for 29 people aged between 16 to 30. Accommodation at the hostel was given on a temporary basis with the aim that individuals would move on into more permanent accommodation. Accommodation such as social rented flats or houses owned by the local authority or local housing associations were the preferred options by hostel dwellers.

The need for a resettlement service at this particular hostel had become clear in the early to mid 1990s, as the young people who moved on from the hostel were not felt to be receiving adequate support to ensure that they were successful in living in independent accommodation. Whilst support staff (who worked in the hostel) would try to keep in contact with ex residents once they had moved out of the hostel they had little time to visit ex residents living in the community because of the constraints of their work which required them to be on site in the hostel. There was a general concern that a significant number of individuals were returning to the hostel after being unable able to cope in their own independent accommodation. There was a consensus amongst hostel staff and management that a resettlement worker could go some way to overcoming these repeated episodes of living in the hostel. Thus, a resettlement worker would be able to carry out specialist resettlement to help individuals move on from hostel living. This resettlement work included making applications to social housing providers, providing practical help such as form filling and liaising with registered social landlords as well as providing emotional support, thus helping to prepare the young person for the upheaval and difficulties that may ensue from independent accommodation.

Three years after the resettlement service was established an evaluation of the service was needed in order to review the practices which had been developed within the initial years of the project. Although anecdotal feedback regarding the resettlement service from staff and ex residents was positive, there was no objective evidence on which to establish how successful the project had been in its three years of practice. Management at the hostel wished to carry out an evaluation which would help to develop a model of good resettlement practice within the hostel. An important aim of this evaluation study was to listen and give a voice to the young people who used the services offered at the hostel. This was felt to be extremely important to enable the

resettlement service to be informed by both service users and staff at the project in order that the service could be service user led and met the needs of the homeless young people for whom the service was designed.

The researcher who had knowledge of homelessness and an understanding of problems facing young people in housing crisis was employed by the Comino Foundation<sup>1</sup> to carry out the service evaluation. The hostel management made the decision to develop a working partnership with a local university (Liverpool John Moores) who were able to provide a member of staff with the relevant expertise to carry out a review and evaluation of the resettlement service. The researcher was recruited to carry out this research with funding from the Comino Foundation to undertake the evaluation.

This project was an ideal research opportunity for the researcher, already having an extensive knowledge of both the housing and social security systems from previous work in two local authorities within the Merseyside area. The work involved advising on housing rights and entitlement to welfare benefits. The researcher had also worked in the Supporting People team in the Local Authority to ensure the smooth introduction of this new government funding stream designed to support housing projects. This experience provided the researcher with a grounding in the legislative framework which governed homelessness. The researcher was also aware of the local dynamics which controlled housing allocations of social rented accommodation by local authorities and housing associations as well as an in depth understanding of the social security system. This evaluation study offered an opportunity to continue researching in an area which was already familiar to the researcher and would build upon previously conducted published research with young people in a community setting (Woolfall and Hennessy, 2002).

The evaluation was carried out between 2002 and 2003 and was successful in achieving its aims. It outlined, in a detailed report, where service delivery of resettlement services was excellent and where there was still room for improvement. The recommendations of this study began to inform practice within the hostel and

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<sup>1</sup> A charitable organisation interested in improving individuals' self efficacy

were implemented with enthusiasm by hostel staff (the results of this are outlined in chapter 3). The results of this initial study, particularly as only being conducted in one hostel left many unanswered questions about homelessness and resettlement provision across Merseyside. This small hostel successfully offered a client led resettlement service which had assisted its residents in finding accommodation for a number of ex residents and helped individuals to establish a new settled way of life in the community. Yet, some of the research interviews highlighted that this project was perhaps unique, and that staff and ex residents knew from their previous experience that standards of resettlement support varied considerably between housing projects and homelessness hostels. This led the researcher to consider whether a method of best practice could be established in resettlement? However, there were limitations to the results of this small-scale study and it was not possible to generalise the recommendations to other hostels as they delivered and managed their resettlement services in a different manner to that of the hostel investigated.

Nevertheless, despite its pitfalls, the initial evaluation study acted as a good pilot study on which to base further research. The initial research had highlighted that there was little evidence on which to examine the issues of resettlement on a regional basis and that there was certainly a need for a localised study in the Merseyside area which examined issues to further explore the issues surrounding homelessness and resettlement. Furthermore, the initial research had highlighted that there was an important dynamic between service users (of resettlement services) and resettlement workers which appeared to affect the outcome of the resettlement process. Thus further research was needed to examine this relationship in more depth. Although the evaluation study had given some context to the development of resettlement services, a wider study of resettlement would be required to examine the development of resettlement in relation to the national policy strategy to overcome homelessness.

A larger study of resettlement was initiated in 2003 which aimed to look at the issues of homelessness and resettlement in the Merseyside area of single people. Single people were chosen as the focus of the study as they were less likely to receive statutory assistance to be rehoused by the local authority if they found themselves homeless. Thus they were more likely to approach voluntary agencies for assistance to resettle. Like the initial research, it aimed to examine resettlement provision from

two perspectives, that of the user of resettlement services and staff who provided the services. The years of 2002 and 2003 were timely to carry out such a research project looking at resettlement services, as the national funding structure for resettlement services was about to change with the introduction of a new scheme called 'Supporting People' (the development of this scheme is described in more detail in chapter 2). This promised to offer a more streamlined, less complex manner of funding for support services to homeless people which would include, for the first time, funding to aid resettlement support. This funding had also allowed the development of 'floating support' services, a new method of delivering resettlement services (see chapter 3 for a full definition of a floating support service). Research carried out at this time would be able to consider the impact of new policy (such as Supporting People), as well as assess more innovative service delivery and this provides an apparatus to judge its impact on the provision of services to homeless people.

At the same time as the introduction of Supporting People, and, after a gap of 8 years, primary legislation (2002 Homelessness Act) to tackle the problem of homelessness was introduced. Unlike other homelessness policies of earlier decades, this placed a stronger emphasis on developing strategies which could assist in the prevention of both homelessness and the repeated cycle of homelessness. There was considerable scope to investigate the effects of preventative services such as resettlement and establish whether they could go any way to preventing homelessness. Although the research was not designed to look directly at the effects of this policy, it was critical to see how any change in legislation may assist the prevention of homelessness of single people.

## ***1.2 Aims and objectives of the study***

Despite there being a plethora of studies around homelessness there still remains a sizable dearth of research regarding resettlement and 'what works' in overcoming homelessness. Moreover, with the recent development of policy (Supporting People and 2002 Homelessness Act) as Fitzpatrick et al (2000) describe, monitoring service provision to ensure quality of services is critical. To achieve this it was important to design a research programme that engaged with individuals who were involved in

giving and receiving services. It was also important to consider the geographical relevance in order that best practice could be developed which was geographically relevant to service users living in the Merseyside area. From this premise, the aim of this research was to investigate and assess the need for a resettlement service and the scope of the services available to homeless people.

The following objectives were also developed:

1. To investigate the perceptions of resettlement by service users.
2. To evaluate the impact of the resettlement service on the lives of service users.
3. To critically evaluate the role of the staff in facilitating resettlement.
4. To explore the attitudes and perceptions of staff towards concepts of resettlement.
5. To find a model of best practice in resettlement and support services.
6. To determine the effects of local and national policy in the prevention of homelessness and in the development of resettlement and housing support services.

In order to achieve these aims, the following chapters report and evaluate the findings of a study of single individuals who had previously been homeless and experienced resettlement support offered by a variety of support providers. The following chapter, (Chapter 2) examines previous literature regarding resettlement and highlights the growth in resettlement work over the last twenty years. This chapter will also examine housing and homelessness policy which has influenced and impacted the growth of resettlement services. The following chapter (Chapter 3) considers the method and methodology which was taken to research this topic. As this study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine this subject area, chapters 4 and 5

respectively report the quantitative and qualitative results of the survey and semi structured interviews. The concluding chapter, after considering the evidence from both service users and providers, makes recommendations for best practice in order to achieve long-term resettlement.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Context and Background**

The aim of this chapter is to give a background to the development of resettlement services for homeless individuals. In order to do this, throughout the chapter the concept of resettlement will be discussed in relation to housing and homelessness legislation and relevant political ideologies. The chapter will begin by outlining and defining the two terms, homelessness and resettlement. It will then go on to discuss why there is a need for resettlement services and explain the effects of recent housing and homelessness legislation on the resettlement process. Recent developments to fund resettlement services will also be outlined and analysed. In order to contextualise the data, the chapter will conclude by giving an overview of services for homeless people in the Merseyside area specifically examining the data available regarding resettlement services for homeless people in this locality.

#### **2.1 What are resettlement and homelessness? Origins and definitions of the terms**

##### ***2.1.1 The nature and definition of homelessness***

There is no single, universal definition of homelessness. Homelessness has been identified as an international problem with there being no common definition used between countries even within the European Union (Springer, 2000). Defining homelessness has an important effect on the numbers of people who will be counted as homeless, and subsequently who will be offered assistance from government or other agencies to ameliorate their housing situation. Like poverty, homelessness can be understood in relative or absolute terms. Absolute homelessness would refer to those who physically have no shelter and only include those who were rough sleepers. However, according to Watson (1984) like poverty, the terms housing and homelessness must be understood as relative to standards of other individuals in that society. In most western societies it is accepted that the majority of people expect housing which is in reasonable repair, of a size appropriate to the needs of its residents and accommodation which offers a certain amount of safety and privacy. Using this wider definition of homelessness, homelessness is an arbitrary judgement

but could include those who are poorly housed and/or threatened with homelessness, not simply those who are physically without accommodation.

The debate regarding definitions of homelessness, has been broadly shaped by variations of this absolute/relative understanding of the term. However it is, as Lund (1996) suggests, predisposed to political influences which have altered the way in which the debate has been understood. Drawing on the work of Hayek, Lund argues that laissez faire politics have given rise to the justification for absolute understandings of homelessness (Hayek, 1960, cited in Lund 1996). This has seen the reinvention of Victorian ideals with those who are homeless being blamed for their housing situation, being victims of their own feckless and/or work-shy behaviour which prevents them from being adequately housed. Conservative politicians of the 1980s and 1990s were keen to 'individualise' the problem of housing need and they clearly took steps towards altering their housing and homelessness policies to proffer these ideals.

Lund (1996) also suggests that a further understanding of the definition of homelessness has been, from what he describes as a 'social reformist' perspective. This approach considers a wide range of housing circumstances to be determined as homelessness, and has been a common, academic understanding of the term. One of the most well known definitions of homelessness has been presented by Bramley (1988) who suggests that there are several ways in which homelessness can be defined and understood. These range from those who are roofless to those who are inadequately housed. Fitzpatrick, Kemp and Klinker (2000) simplify the definition to five groups of people who include those who are roofless, those living in temporary accommodation, who have insecure or impermanent tenures, and includes those who are staying with friends or with a notice to quit. They also consider that those who live in intolerable housing conditions with threats to physical or psychological well-being and those who are involuntarily sharing to be homeless. Similar definitions have also been used as the basis for studies of youth homelessness (Evans, 1996) and homelessness and mental health (McCabe, Stanyer and Commander, 1998). Understandably using such a broad description of the term will incorporate larger numbers of individuals and the campaigning groups Shelter and Crisis have used such a definition to improve the rights of those who find themselves in housing distress. In

a report in 1990, Shelter (Mann and Smith, 1990:4) described homelessness as “anyone who does not have decent, secure and affordable housing”. Similarly Kearns, Smith and Abbott (1992) also describe that individuals who constantly live with the risk of becoming homeless (or the incipient homeless) may suffer detrimental consequences with a positive link established between poor mental and physical health and the threat of homelessness.

Yet casting such a wide net regarding the definition of homelessness has not gone without some criticism not least from certain political parties, keen to limit the legislative obligation to access state provided housing. This is despite the proven evidence to illustrate the negative effects of living in difficult housing circumstances with a threat of homelessness (Kearns, Smith and Abbott, 1992). This has also appeared from academic commentators who have shown concern that the real problem of homelessness is being undermined by categorising all groups in housing need as homeless. As Pleace et al (1997:8) argue “being poorly housed is one thing, having nowhere at all to live is something else”. However Pleace’s argument would appear to undermine the needs of large numbers of homeless people who are forced to live in overcrowded conditions who may outstay their welcome when ‘sofa surfing’ between friends and family. Whilst this group of hidden homeless people may remain discounted from some stricter definitions of homelessness, it is inevitable that at some point these individuals will be forced into more formal sources of homeless institutions such as hostels, or present to the local authority as needing housing. Watson with Austerberry (1986) also suggests that individuals within households may experience their housing situation differently to each other. They argue that women who are responsible for household management may suffer more from poor housing conditions as they struggle as the main carers of children to deal with difficult/inappropriate housing situations. Critically the interpretation and understanding of homelessness can determine how local decision makers deal with the problem. These issues will be discussed further on in this chapter.

### ***2.1.2 Defining resettlement***

The discussion above highlights how difficult it has become to define homelessness and how the term has been subject to political manipulation. There is a clear link

between homelessness and resettlement since resettlement services are aimed at assisting those who are suffering homelessness or housing crisis, to ameliorate their housing situation with the aim of providing a long term housing solution. In the study of resettlement 'homelessness' is understood by using a wide definition of the term. Those working in the field of resettlement would use the definition of homelessness provided by Shelter (2005) which argues that homelessness is not only about losing a place to live and physical shelter but also about not having a 'home', lacking the privacy and security that having a home can bring as well as the problems associated with losing links to a precise local community which can make individuals feel isolated. This is similar to the definition of homelessness provided in the section above by Mann and Smith (1990).

However, similar to defining homelessness, finding an exact definition for resettlement work has been difficult to establish. Deacon (1999) poses a number of questions regarding the nature of resettlement which include, what constitutes effective resettlement, what forms of accommodation should those being resettled be expected to move to and how long they have to remain there for it to be judged a success? Critically, however Deacon fails to pose the question 'what is resettlement?' with an underlying inference that there has been a common definition of the term, yet there has been considerable usage of this concept which has engendered a number of understandings. Indeed one early report on resettlement work in resettlement units for homeless people (see below) stated that "there was little agreement on the definition of resettlement itself" (Tilt and Denford, 1986). Since the early 1980s the term has referred to a number of different concepts and the meaning of the term has been further confused by the use of the term in areas of academic study other than homelessness. The word 'resettlement' has also been associated with resettling users of large institutions for people with learning difficulties, mental health and psychiatric disorders into the community (see Forrester-Jones et al, 2002 and McCourt, 2000) as well as being used to refer to the resettlement of displaced people or refugees. The term was initially used to describe units administered by central government to provide housing for single homeless people with their role to "help people back to a settled way of life" (Smith et al 1992:5). These units were direct access hostels which, in many cases, were the buildings of the former workhouses.

The aim of resettlement within these resettlement units was interpreted in a number of ways. Tilt and Denford (1986) in their study of these resettlement units, describe that there were four ways that resettlement was understood and this depended on the organisational philosophy in practice in the resettlement unit at the time. These ranged from compulsory training and resocialisation where it was expected that residents would move into other accommodation, to a passive approach where there were thought to be few prospects for residents. Here move on was not expected because of the vulnerability of the residents. In these instances residents were likely to achieve resettlement by 'settling' into the resettlement unit but they did not move on after staying in the hostel. In this way these units achieved resettlement through the provision of accommodation as an alternative to sleeping rough. Smith et al (1992) describe that 40 per cent of residents who came to the resettlement units entered because they were homeless, sleeping rough or squatting. Ten per cent of residents also described that they had an itinerant lifestyle. Thus one type of resettlement was achieved for some residents, who, for a certain length of time would begin to lead a settled way of life within the hostel.

Evidence suggests, however, that the aim of each unit to provide direction and assistance to find move-on accommodation was far from successful. A report by the National Audit office in 1992 (cited by Oldman, 1993) found that resettlement work to find people longer-term accommodation, other than a hostel, was patchy. In a survey of residents, 50 per cent reported that resettlement staff had little knowledge of alternative forms of accommodation (ibid) (a result also reflected in Smith et al's (1992) research). Moreover evidence suggests that there was some complacency regarding finding move on accommodation for some groups who found themselves in these units as Smith et al (1992:51) conclude "The resettlement process need not be undertaken for those who are either unsuitable or simply do not wish for resettlement beyond the hostel". Although the resettlement units reflect the aim to offer a settled way of life, this quote shows ambivalence towards some groups of homeless people who may be the most difficult to rehouse. There was little expectation that those who faced exclusion through an itinerant lifestyle should be encouraged to settle into anything more than hostel accommodation.

Large direct access hostels such as these units came to be unpopular with their residents, and what is more, made unequivocal political statements about attitudes towards homeless people (see Dant and Deacon, 1988 and Oldman, 1993). In 1989 a government agency was established to ensure the closure of all the resettlement units over a number of years and be replaced by smaller scale hostels and self-contained accommodation. The decision to close these units reflected the Conservative government's philosophy to withdraw state involvement in the provision of services through de-institutionalisation, with new service provision to be offered in smaller self contained units which were, on the whole, owned and administered by housing associations or voluntary organisations. Resettlement work was to be continued by these smaller community based providers. Throughout the 1990s there was a growth in the amount of what could be described as 'resettlement work' carried out particularly with those who were sleeping rough, although there was still no standard definition of the term resettlement in the homelessness context (Randall and Brown, 1995).

However, despite the difficulties of defining the term resettlement (because of its use in a variety of contexts), the term generally has come to have a common understanding which is to ensure that those resettled are not only found suitable accommodation but are also given the skills to maintain their accommodation and integrate into wider community life. On the most practical level, resettlement work involves providing support to vulnerable homeless people to enable them to sustain and maintain their accommodation after a period of rough sleeping or living in temporary accommodation. It involves finding move on accommodation suitable for their needs and ensuring they do not lose it. Galchagan and Wallace (2001) suggest that before a person can be resettled, a lengthy process of becoming unsettled may have occurred which leads to a person being homeless and in temporary accommodation. They also point out that when a person says that they have been homeless for a few months this often means that they have been homeless, settled, homeless and settled a number of times. Thus they argue that "homelessness is therefore a revolving door process" (p2) as there is a risk that some individuals will find themselves prone to repeat episodes of homelessness due to the lack of skills that would enable them to hold down independent accommodation. This revolving door process is represented in the diagram below.

*Figure 1 The Revolving Door Process*

Resettlement aims to help break this merry-go-round cycle, offer support and empower homeless people to draw on their own skills and knowledge to make their accommodation a success. Without support Schofield (1999) suggests that certain groups (such as those with mental health problems) will end up back in this 'revolving door' process. Schofield goes on to argue that not only is this a "crushing blow" (p3) to the hopes and aspirations of a homeless person it also incurs an incredible cost imposed by tenancy failure and extra time spent in temporary accommodation which is inevitably more expensive than an independent tenancy. Resettlement support work has become a specialist type of work amongst those working with homeless people. Resettlement support workers operate on a one to one basis with those who are homeless to try and address practical and emotional issues which are preventing an individual from finding new accommodation. A resettlement worker acts as a link to other specialist agencies (Oldman, 1993) who may also be able provide extra services to the homeless individual to overcome his/her housing crisis.

The concept of resettlement and homelessness has therefore been developed to have a common meaning in its own area of specialism. A working definition has been created by professionals in this area who have come to understand resettlement as

“a discreet area of work from generalist hostel work, from counselling, keyworking, from outreach and from long-term tenancy support work. It does link in with these areas of work but needs to be understood as separate from them. Resettlement support is where the client is still on the learning curve. At the point at which this levels out, is just maintenance support it becomes housing, or tenancy support” (Bevan, 1998:1).

With the closing of large scale hostels or resettlement units in the mid 1980s there has been a growth of smaller housing projects for homeless people. Neale (1995) also highlights that during the 1980s and 1990s there was an expansion of housing services provided by the voluntary sector that expanded the scope of the types of accommodation available to homeless individuals. This expansion included a growth of indirect access hostels as well as a number of non-direct access<sup>2</sup> housing projects which can provide specialist support services for particular individuals. These include young homeless people, those with alcohol, drug or mental health problems or those with simply more general housing needs. Increasingly these projects began to not only offer immediate access to temporary accommodation but also offered resettlement support as Bevan (1998) describes above. Many accommodation projects (such as foyers for young people) have a strong focus on resettlement and the basis of the support that they are able to offer individuals is focused on developing adequate life skills for individuals to be able to live independently after a period living in temporary accommodation.

Other more unique projects, such as the Emmaus communities in the south of England, have provided a different approach to the concept of resettlement by providing both supported accommodation and employment within a community setting for individuals who have previously had difficulties establishing and maintaining their own accommodation (Randall and Brown, 2002). The focus of such unique projects is to provide a supportive environment and long-term accommodation rather than encouraging individuals to resettle into independent housing. However, although these do not offer resettlement as described by Bevan (1998) they can offer

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Direct access hostels’ refers to a hostel where an individual can self present for accommodation. Access to accommodation in a non direct hostels/accommodation requires a referral from another agency (such as social services or a housing advice centre) before an individual can be granted a place in a project.

housing options to people who have exhausted many more conventional routes to settled accommodation. This illustrates that a variety of projects can offer different forms of resettlement support for some individuals as any step from living in unstable, temporary or hostel accommodation can represent resettlement.

## **2.2 Why is there a need for resettlement services?**

The previous section illustrates that there are a number of complex processes that are involved in the causation of a person becoming homeless and that support might be needed to assist individuals overcome this revolving door of homelessness. Failing to settle after a period of homelessness, as described above, has a detrimental effect on an individual. Descriptions of resettlement support (see Galchagan and Wallace (2001)) describe that such support has a number of key objectives. These include helping individuals to:

- Overcome and deal with the problems that caused the individual to be initially homeless. This might include drug or alcohol misuse issues, family or relationship breakdown. Without these issues being significantly dealt with it is likely that homelessness may reoccur. This may involve dealing with the complex emotional problems from which individuals may suffer which would prevent resettlement.
- Overcome the practicalities of finding accommodation.
- Understand his/her legal rights to accommodation under the current homelessness and housing legislation.

The following sections will outline why resettlement support is needed to assist individuals to deal with these three particular issues.

### ***2.2.1 Homelessness Causation***

The availability of affordable housing coupled with having the correct legislation are critical dimensions to the homelessness and resettlement debates (these two themes will be discussed in the sections below), however there are still issues that individuals may need to address to overcome a housing crisis. The reasons why many individuals suffer homelessness are complex and his/her reason for needing resettlement support may well be determined by the causes of an individual's homelessness. Crane and Warnes (2000) state homelessness can be caused by natural disasters, accidents or a combination of socio-economic, political and legal conditions and personal behaviour. Whilst individuals who become homeless because of the former (natural disasters and accidents) may simply require rehousing, those who become homeless because of the latter reasons are more likely to need resettlement support to help them overcome the complexity of reasons why they became homeless in the first place.

Providing a detailed study of the causes of homelessness, Lemos (1999) argues that there are 264 different explanations why people find themselves homeless which he groups into a number of significant categories. One of the most common 'biographical' reasons Lemos (*ibid.*) cites for homelessness is the breakdown of relationships within the family home. This can include divorce or separation with a partner as well as domestic violence or relationship breakdown with other family members. These problems have been exacerbated by the rise in 'reconstituted' families and a general increase in divorce. O'Callaghan and Dominain (1996) examining a sample of 1497 homeless people found that family breakdown or being asked to leave by family accounted for 38 per cent of applicants to local authorities as homeless. Those who are very young (16-18 years old), according to Smith, Kirby and Gilford (1996), are most likely to cite household friction as the cause of homelessness. Sibley (1995) highlights that particularly in adolescence that the home can become a place of conflict. This can be attributed to parents either being too intrusive in a young person's life or excluding an adolescent from family life in order to give them privacy. The evidence indicates (Smith, Kirby and Gilford, (*ibid.*)) that the result of such family conflict can lead to young people being asked to leave the family home. The frequency of homelessness occurring because of family conflict decreases with age, with those slightly older more likely to state that homelessness

was a result of housing difficulties. However, Ravenhill (2000) found in her study of homeless women of all ages, that household conflict was a major causal factor of homelessness, exacerbated when family conflict involved alcohol or drug abuse.

When people are forced to leave accommodation because of relationship breakdown it may be likely that they will not have the social or support networks to be able to help them find accommodation and subsequently maintain it. This has been particularly illustrated in studies of young people making the transition from home to independent living. Evans (1996) suggests that young people who do not receive support when they leave home are significantly less likely to make a successful transition to settled accommodation and are more likely to experience homelessness. Citing examples from their research, Smith, Gilford and O'Sullivan (1998) argue that this would include young people who have lived in the care of the local authority, although it seems this argument could easily be transferred to older homeless people who have left institutions or the armed forces. Research by Evans (1996) highlights that between one fifth and a half of young homeless people have been in care and that care-leavers are particularly over-represented amongst those sleeping rough or in temporary accommodation. The consequences of this means that many young people, already vulnerable through their experience of the care system, are forced into independent living that leaves them no margin for error. Most young people, according to Lahema and Gordon (2003), do not leave home (the parental home) in one single step but will move out and then move back home a number of times before finally settling in their accommodation. They refer to this as the 'boomerang' phenomenon and the majority of young people will fall back on the parental home should their accommodation fail. For young people leaving care the fallback of parental accommodation is unlikely to be available, so in effect those young people are more likely to become homeless if accommodation breaks down. Resettlement support becomes more important for such individuals as it is able to offer assistance, both emotional and practical, that other young people may be able to receive from close family. Strachan et al (2000) suggests that support visits for young people who had left care were particularly important to determine whether he/she was managing in new accommodation.

The discussion above highlights the variety of causal factors which can influence individuals becoming homeless and thus finding a solution to an individual's homelessness may involve not only the provision of housing but also address some of the social reasons why individuals became homeless initially. Resettlement work can play an important role in overcoming homelessness as resettlement workers assist service users to overcome the myriad of interconnected reasons which have caused their housing crisis. The problem of housing availability for homeless individuals is complex and is determined by both housing and homelessness policies. Most resettlement workers are required to have at least a working knowledge of how the homelessness legislation functions and might affect a service user. Therefore the following section will examine the legal rights that homeless individuals have to rehousing by the local authority.

### ***2.2.2 Understanding legal rights to accommodation***

The first legislation that dealt directly with the issue of homelessness was the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act which provided the first legal definition of homelessness. Prior to this the only statutory assistance offered to homeless individuals was through the 1948 National Assistance Act which could provide emergency, usually single sex, accommodation. The accommodation provided as a result of this legislation was often in 'reception centres' which were converted workhouses established under the 1834 Poor Law (see Steele, 1949). The 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act was seen as a turning point in homeless policy as it gave certain rights to different groups of homeless individuals to permanent rehousing by the local authority. The act itself was seen as a major step forward in providing some legislative protection for homeless people, placing the responsibility for those who were statutorily homeless firmly in the hands of the local authority housing department. The creation of the new act was the result of a number of structural changes which occurred in the mid 1970s. Somerville (1994) highlights that mass housing had been relatively successful with the majority of the serious housing problems caused by the Second World War being mitigated. This allowed for a greater focus to be placed on providing housing for homeless people. Furthermore, Somerville (ibid.) highlights that a number of ideological factors influenced the creation of the 1977 act. He highlights the shift away from Poor Law attitudes

towards welfarism. The policy trend in the 1960s was to keep families together which provision under the 1948 act did little to support.

The Act relied on a homeless person fulfilling four categories. An individual needed to be:

- homeless, or be threatened with homelessness within the next 28 days.
- in priority need. This included adults who had responsibility for dependants, vulnerable people, pregnant women or victims of fires or floods.
- unintentionally homeless and
- have a local connection. Those who did not have a local connection could be referred to a local authority where they did have a connection.

On local authority investigation if an individual met these requirements then they would be defined as statutorily homeless and were legally entitled to permanent rehousing. The introduction of the 1977 act was heralded as a major step forward in policy to assist homeless people and guaranteed that homeless people “would for the first time have some assurance of being given a high priority for council housing” (Lemos, 1999:3). Critically, for the first time, there was a legislative definition of those who were to be counted as homeless. This was to include families with children, pregnant women, elderly persons or those defined as ‘vulnerable’, making the responsibility for homeless people the remit of the Local Authority housing department. The 1977 act was described as a “a major step forward in provision for homeless people” (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 1999:415) because it established a set of procedures to deal with homeless applicants and acknowledged the fact that a significant proportion of homelessness was not caused by individual failing requiring welfare but by a need for accommodation.

The act was well received, although it had a number of shortcomings. It would only offer assistance to those in priority need and those who were defined as unintentionally homeless. Councils were only obliged to offer accommodation to such intentionally homeless cases for 28 days. There was also no obligation for assistance to people who had no local connection; responsibility could be given to a

different local authority where local connection could be proven. Nevertheless, despite the accolade given to this legislation, the policy has become renowned for a more critical omission - it's exclusion of legislative assistance for single homeless people who are not classed as vulnerable (Fitzpatrick, et al 2000; Watson with Austerberry, 1986). This feature has remained, although, as Fitzpatrick and Stephens (1999) highlight the 1977 act was never intended to be the only legislative protection for homeless people but crucially the starting point of legislative protection for all homeless people. During the following decades there was growing recognition that there was a lack of policy to support homeless people. Although a government review of homelessness legislation in 1989 acknowledged some of the inherent difficulties of defining homelessness and those in priority need (Department of the Environment, (DOE) 1989), the department concluded that "they do not propose changes to the statutory framework" (DOE 1989:16). Indeed the review only advised improvements to the existing regulations with the aim to secure a better and consistent service for homeless people. Despite this, however, the Conservative administration pushed forward with reform for a number of reasons and the resulting changes represented a new trajectory for homelessness legislation contrasting with the approach taken by the 1977 act. Cowan (1998) suggests that this turn around in approach is related to a problem created by the supply and demand of socially rented housing. Whilst homelessness legislation gave a right to housing for certain people, there was not enough housing to meet that demand.

Despite the initial indications highlighting that there was to be little change to the homelessness legislation, the 1996 Housing Act did subsequently radically alter the terms of the 1977 act by removing the statutory duty to provide permanent tenancies for those who found themselves homeless. Instead the act only offered temporary accommodation for homeless people for two years. The changes in policy introduced by the 1996 act also reflect attempts to introduce welfare retrenchment and to introduce market ideology into aspects of welfare previously accepted as being the responsibility of the state (Anderson and Christian, 2003). Jacobs, Kemeny and Manzi (1999) highlight the turnaround in policy direction by contrasting initial homeless policy with policies established in the 1990s. The 1977 act can be viewed as a compromise between two competing ideologies of state welfare – the first a structuralist ideology in which the state should address social needs and the second a

minimalist one where state support should address social need only to those 'deserving' of it. These two approaches were illustrated in the 1977 act by firstly offering provision to homeless people (structuralist approach) but then only offering support to certain groups such as families with children or those deemed to be vulnerable (minimalist). The subsequent 1996 act changed the obligations of the local authority to only providing assistance for a limited amount of time (two years), rather than finding a permanent tenancy and typically epitomised the minimalist provision for homelessness from the Conservative government. Furthermore to approach the local authority for assistance as homeless became stigmatising (Evans, 1996). Applicants realised that they had to have something 'wrong' with them, other than being homeless, in order to be offered assistance which would lead to accommodation (Carlen, 1994). Proposals for the policy changes also received objections from opposition parties as well as tenants advice groups (Housing Association Weekly, 1996; Manchester Advice Centre, 1995). Despite this, the then minister for housing, David Curry, pushed forward with the policy reforms reiterating the emphasis on changing the route to gain council housing stating "we wish to get a common route into housing and the way we do that is by saying no-one has priority over anyone else purely by the circumstances they find themselves in" (Housing Association Weekly, 26<sup>th</sup> January 1996:3). There was little acknowledgement of the complexities of the problems of homelessness, instead legislation was simply aimed to progress neo liberal policy aims.

### ***2.2.3 New labour policy approach to housing and homelessness policy***

1997 saw the beginning of the 'New Labour' administration after 18 years of Conservative rule in the UK. Along with this new administration came a different political ideology of 'third way' politics. This subsequent alteration in ideology came a greater understanding of the issues of homelessness and resettlement. The approach taken by Blair, highly influenced by the sociological theories of Anthony Giddens, was placed politically somewhere between social democratic, of old Labour governments and new right/ new liberal politics of Conservative (most notably Thatcher). There are a number of key factors that highlight this as distinctive from previous political thinking which has then influenced social policy making. Driver and Martell (2000) consider the New Labour 'Third Way' to be a number of things

that previous governments were not, rejecting some of the key factors of social democratic and neo liberal philosophies. Social democracy had been too concerned with distribution and not placed enough emphasis on the creation of wealth also creating rights without any responsibilities. Conversely the Conservatism of Thatcher placed too much emphasis on the laissez-faire view of the state and took an "asocial" view of society. Taking some of its influences from both schools of thought, critical factors to Third Way thinking has placed emphasis on equal worth, opportunity for all and responsibility closely linked to the theme of community (Driver and Martell, 2000). Achieving these aims requires an alternative understanding of the role of government in providing, funding and regulating welfare services. Powell (2000) considers that Third Way politics rely on the state being an investor, striving for inclusion, with citizenship based on rights coupled with responsibilities. Blair's political ideology began to have a significant effect on social policy, and proposals were made to modernise the welfare state (including some areas of housing) and welfare to work, as well as plans to change key components of the NHS.

With the abandonment of New Right philosophy in favour of the political approach of New Labour's political ideology, Cowan (1998) suggested that it seemed that there would be immediate changes made to the 1996 Housing Act which would alter the assistance offered to homeless people. However it was made clear by Hilary Armstrong, the new Housing Minister that this would not be done in the first administration (ibid.). Initially the new administration did little to alter the housing and homeless legislation. Indeed writing in 1999 about housing policy, Malpass and Murie (1999:276) concur "for the foreseeable future, at least, it is reasonable to expect considerable continuity with policies established under the Conservatives". Furthermore there has been some academic interest in the argument that in the late 1990s there was a decline in the interest in housing policy as an independent area of policy (Bramley, 1997). Paris and Muir (2002) highlight this by considering the lack of interest that political parties took in housing issues in the party manifestos for the 2001 general election. This can be contrasted with political campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s which tended to concentrate on the quantity of housing that parties would build. One explanation for the decline in interest in housing policy has been the result of privatisation. King (2003) suggests that because of the encouragement of the growth of owner occupation, housing becomes part of the private domain where the

state no longer needs to legislate. The consequence of this, according to Bramley (1997), is that in the administration of New Labour housing policy will emerge in adjacent and overlapping policy sectors to housing such as social security, planning, financial regulation and health and urban planning rather than having a unique area of housing policy. It was clear that there was no longer a distinctive field of housing policy as there had been in the past, however, policy documents which dealt with the issue of homelessness illustrated a growing acknowledgement of the complexities of the issue homelessness and for the first time policy documents began to discuss the merits of resettlement schemes (see Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). This was a critical turning point for the development of resettlement services as homelessness began to be understood as a result of social exclusion and one of the first reports of the newly formed Social Exclusion unit outlined the issues that could cause rough sleeping. This showed that there was a growing acknowledgement of the issues of homelessness and resettlement and how to go about overcoming these issues.

#### ***2.2.4 The 2002 Homelessness Act: A move towards homelessness prevention***

One of the major criticisms of the basis of the statutory definitions of homelessness has been that they exclude a high proportion of those who find themselves with housing needs, including many single people (unless they are vulnerable) and childless couples. Indeed the legal definition is far removed from the definition of homelessness described by Shelter. As Third (2000:451) suggests these groups may still be conceptualised as homeless but “the legislation defines who gets to be housed rather than who is homeless”. This has serious consequences for those who are not afforded any obligation for housing by the local authority, meaning that they will be reliant on gaining temporary accommodation usually provided by the voluntary sector and have to wait longer for local authority available properties. This means a longer period for individuals to become unsettled, thus making the resettlement process much more difficult to achieve.

However the first major policy document produced by the New Labour government (DSS and DETR, 2000) seemed very progressive placing an emphasis on prevention of homelessness. This Housing Green paper illustrated a marked difference from previous policy documents emanating from previous administration, where the focus

had been placed on preventing individuals gaining housing through the homelessness route. The proposed changes by the Green Paper gave the opportunity for local authorities to offer housing to those who were unintentionally homeless but not in priority need, should they have the resources to do so. Local authorities would now be obliged to offer advice and assistance to those in housing difficulties and thus possibly avert individuals from experiencing housing crisis

The Green Paper proposals were welcomed by the homeless pressure groups Crisis (2000) and Shelter (2005), with particular support for the widening of the homeless safety net and the need for local authorities to strategically plan their homeless provision. Predating new legislation, in March 2002 the ODPM published a report "More than a roof: a report into tackling homelessness" (ODPM 2002a) which highlighted the key causes of homelessness as well as the possible solutions to it. What is critically important about this report is that it recognises the importance of the personal and social causes of homelessness, and goes some way to outlining solutions to them. Similar to prior reports produced by the New Labour government it places an emphasis on the 'joined up' aspects of policy. They describe how housing policy alone is unable to deal with the problem of homelessness, but it requires inter-departmental co-operation between local authority departments, other statutory organisations (such as probation), as well as highlighting the importance of the 'third sector' i.e. voluntary organisations who offer services to prevent homelessness and assist those who become homeless.

This resulted in the 2002 Homelessness Act, which altered the statutory framework for dealing with homelessness which came into effect in July 2002. The Homelessness Act 2002 was hoped to be a more progressive method to deal with homelessness than the 1996 act. It also extended the groups of people who are now considered in priority need to include 16 and 17 year olds, as well as those with an institutional background (e.g. prison, the army or care of the Local Authority) as well as people who are vulnerable through threats of violence.

This legislation according to Credland (2002) provided a new focus on the causes and prevention of homelessness, as it required each Local Authority to conduct a homelessness review and strategy. This duty means that local authorities must take

action to prevent homelessness, and ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for those who are at risk of homelessness, or those who become homeless. A further important requirement of the act was that there be sufficient support for those who have been homeless to prevent them from being homeless again. This meant that there was a requirement to work with other organisations who provide services to homeless people to guarantee that this type of support was available and in place. 'Joined up' working would be required between statutory departments and voluntary agencies.

Critically, however, the new legislation gave no new rights to single homeless people to be rehoused by the local authority. Although there were now to be wider classifications of those who were to be described as 'vulnerable', the act did little to improve access to permanent rehousing. Despite this, the policy illustrated a new approach to tackling the problem of homelessness. The emphasis was now changing to prevention of homelessness with a greater need placed on agencies working together to develop prevention strategies rather than simply dealing with individuals when they reached housing crisis. Thus the approach to homelessness was altering and it was at this time that the expansion of resettlement services as a method of prevention of homelessness began to develop. Further policy initiatives, which were also developed to encourage the expansion of resettlement services, will be explained later on in the chapter. These initiatives, although affecting the provision of housing, have appeared in different areas of policy to primary housing or homelessness legislation. Moreover, the following section will describe and explain how it is not just homelessness policy which has an effect on the ability of homeless individuals to access accommodation but it is also affected by other housing policies, particularly those which affect the availability of housing.

### ***2.2.5 Housing policies and the impact on affordable accommodation***

Although, as discussed above there is legislation to protect the rights of homeless people, other housing policy has affected the quantity of available accommodation for homeless people. Anderson and Christian (2003) highlight that housing policy such as the right to buy, introduced by the 1980 Housing Act, removed council housing stock that would have been used to rehouse homeless people thus having a

detrimental effect on housing availability. The introduction of right to buy offered the opportunity for sitting council tenants to purchase their property at heavily discounted rates. The policy actively promoted the concept that owner occupation was the tenure of preference and gave large discounts to local authority tenants in order to buy their properties from the council as well as a system of loans and mortgages to encourage take up. The 1980 Housing Act epitomised neo-liberal policy aims of the 1980s, rolling back state provision of housing and eroding the universalistic and social democratic social policies which formed the basis of Beveridge's welfare state. Cole and Furbey (1994) also point out that housing seemed an ideal area where provision could be made by the market (i.e. through private renting or owner occupation). Conversely, however "council housing seemed to be the perfect symbol for the failings of the public sector: unpopular, socially stigmatising, incompetently managed and oblivious to consumer preferences" (Cole and Furbey, 1994:188).

The overall effect of this policy was to reduce the number of council houses available to potential tenants, with better quality housing being bought and housing in poorer areas left in LA control. The ODPM (2003a) describe that between 1980 and 2002 a total of 1,569,840 council properties were sold. Right to buy had significantly reduced the amount of housing stock available to local authorities but there was no subsequent supply side policy throughout the 1980s to address the shortage of accommodation and housing need (Murie, 1991). Instead the 1988 Housing Act attempted to revive the private housing market by deregulating the sector but this could not solely bridge the gap of lack of investment in the social housing sector when the emphasis was still on the merits of owner occupation. Housing Associations were also to play a key role in provision of housing and in 1989 the government stated that housing associations were to be the main providers of new subsidised homes for renting (Department of the Environment, 1989). The evidence in 1988 however, suggested that developing the role of Housing Associations in providing housing to the homeless would need considerable improvement as only 11 per cent of nominations to housing associations were given to homeless households (Stearn, 1988).

It was evident that the 1980s was an era when a significant shift in thinking regarding the delivery of housing was taking place as Flynn (1989:103) comments, reforms

represented a continuation of “radical changes to public housing provision, introducing markets (and) reducing public provision”. These policy changes, although not directly related to homelessness policy had a considerable affect on the availability of social rented housing with less being available to house those who found themselves homeless. As a consequence of such an approach local authorities now had less housing stock to be able to rehouse or resettle people who approach the authority as homeless. A further difficulty lies in what Malpass and Murie (1999) refer to as the residualisation of council housing. Those who can afford to become homeowners do so, typically buying housing stock in more affluent estates. The residual housing becomes reserved for anyone whose economic status excludes them from home ownership. Therefore Murie (1997) concludes that the term marginalisation may be the better term to describe this process. This is because members of households who receive council housing will be the poorest members of society; they are therefore marginalised into council tenancies. The overall effect of this is that housing estates, which remain in local authority ownership, become areas likely to contain a high proportion of residents reliant on state benefits in poor quality housing who brink on suffering the extremes of social exclusion.

Furthermore, the reduction in the amount of social rented housing was exacerbated by the end of the 1990s by certain social and demographic changes which altered the nature of the housing market, exacerbating problems of availability and affordability causing an upsurge in the demand for housing. Demands on housing, regardless of tenure type, had never been higher with a significant growth in the number of people living alone. According to Social Trends (2002), the number of people living alone has doubled between 1971 and 2001 from 6% to 12%. This coupled with increasing divorce and separation rates, creating the need for two separate households and an increase in average life expectancy which resulted in extra demands on housing stock. The population over the twentieth century increased by half and the number of households tripled (ibid) and the current housing stock could not meet the demand as a result of this demographic change.

Despite such a demand for housing there has been a drastic reduction in the amount of properties being built. In 1999 (according to the Department of Transport and the Regions, 2000) there were 177,400 dwellings started being built. This is compared to

over 400,000 properties being built per year in the mid and late 1960s (Social Trends, 2002). Local authorities are now unlikely to build any new social housing themselves with the majority of housing in the social rented sector being built by registered social landlords.

### ***2.2.6 The experience of accessing social rented housing by homeless households***

As the evidence above highlights, one of the main reasons for homelessness has been the difficulties that single people have had in gaining social rented housing because of the decreasing amount of housing available. This trend has become increasingly apparent with the sale of social rented housing coupled with a lack of investment from local authorities in building properties to replace those which were sold under the 1980 Housing Act. Whilst the amount of housing decreased, there has also been changes in the allocation system which have altered the opportunities for homeless people to be allocated available housing. Thus much resettlement work focuses on assistance in dealing with applications for social rented housing which has become so difficult to acquire. The limitations of the statutory framework which deals with homelessness means that many individuals, even though they are homeless, will have to apply for social rented housing via a local authority's housing allocation system. Such systems have seen recent change and new methods of allocating housing may determine the speed, quality and location of housing that such people may be offered. Thus an allocation policy has an impact on the length of time that a person may have to spend residing in temporary accommodation such as a hostel and delaying the process of resettlement. Because of this resettlement workers are required to have an in-depth knowledge of any allocation policy in order to maximise a client's chances of finding a suitable property. The following section will explain the allocation policies which the majority of local councils use to allocate their available housing stock.

### ***2.2.7 Allocation of social rented accommodation***

In order to be selected for social rented property households can take a number of routes, the two major means being via a homeless assessment or the general waiting list. Cowan (1998) refers to the mechanics of selecting households for council properties as based on a process of selection and then allocation. The homeless route

relies on an individual being assessed as statutorily homeless under the appropriate legislation (2002 Homelessness Act) and this gives those who are deemed homeless under the law a right to be housed by the local authority. Those who are determined as statutorily homeless by the LA may bypass the authority waiting list and may be allocated a property more quickly than other households.

Thus how any individual is allocated housing has been very much determined by housing legislation and whether an individual is determined as 'statutorily homeless'. Housing policy in the 1990s had a strong detrimental affect on the opportunities of homeless households to be allocated permanent accommodation. Prior to the 1996 act, section 22 of the 1985 Housing Act required local authorities to give allocation preferences to people in slums, overcrowded or unsatisfactory conditions as well as those found to be statutorily homeless. Mullins and Niner (1996:8) emphasize that until the mid 1990s local authorities had "enjoyed considerable discretion to allocate their housing stock according to local priorities... and meeting housing needs has been laid firmly at the door of local government". However, the 1996 Housing Act took away the flexibility that local authorities had, instead making it a legal requirement that local authorities together with local housing associations were to set up a common housing register through which all social rented housing had to be allocated. In effect this gave homeless applicants the same access to social rented housing as those who had more general needs. Access to accommodation for those who were statutorily homeless would be considered in accordance with the same criteria as others on the waiting list (Driscoll, 1997).

Moreover, the same act (1996 Housing Act) altered the statutory obligation of the local authority to only be obliged to allocate temporary accommodation for two years out of any three. The main reasoning behind this was to stop the perceived abuses of the housing allocation system from individuals thought to be falsely claiming to be homeless and in priority need simply to gain a permanent local authority tenancy. However, empirical evidence suggests (O'Callaghan and Dominian, 1996) that rather than being a passport to social housing the homelessness legislation represented a strict rationing mechanism where only one third of applicants were actually rehoused as a result of a homeless application to the local authority. It would seem therefore that the government, keen to detract from the fact that there was a shortage of

housing, tried to morally justify the accession of the policy claiming that certain groups of people (such as young, single mothers) were using the homeless route to queue jump and access housing more quickly than more 'worthy' persons. In effect such arguments reignited debates on deserving and undeserving cases for social support, at the same time managing to cloud the real issue of housing shortage.

The discussion above describes how the approach to housing allocations was influenced by political thinking to the detriment of homeless people who needed rehousing. Indeed, the New Labour government altered policy direction for allocation of housing and gave Local Authorities the opportunity to choose the method by which they allowed allocation to properties; holding a housing register is no longer a policy requirement. This change in allocation policy formed a key part of the 2002 Homelessness Act and a change in the direction of policy was also evident. Lee and Woodward (2002) point out that one of the key parts of third way politics under New Labour was the devolution of power to local level. This is contrary to the approach taken by the previous administration, who according to Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield (2000) had the broader ideological concern to limit the power of local authorities.

As councils are no longer required to have such a central housing register (described above), this meant that local authorities were again able to implement different methods of housing allocation. Despite this, research still indicated (Smith et al, 2001) that even when formally classed as homeless, the majority of homeless households were offered only one property from the local authority, with the LA then describing that they had discharged their duty to house a homeless household. This evidently gave homeless households little choice in the type of property or location of the housing which they were offered. This can be detrimental to homeless households as it impedes their ability to settle as Randall and Brown (1995) found in their study of rough sleepers. Those who did not get accommodation in an area in which they chose or the type of housing which they wanted were significantly more likely to want to move on from their accommodation.

Significantly, however, most single homeless people were not assessed by the local authority as being statutorily homeless and subsequently most have to apply for

housing through the council housing waiting list. Cowan (1998) suggests that the local authority should give preference for allocation of property to those in poor housing or difficult housing circumstances. Pawson and Kintrea (2002) also suggest that giving housing to households in most need has become the dominant theme of good practice in housing allocations. In practice however, local authorities can pursue any allocation policy which suits their local requirements and prioritise certain social groups for housing as they see fit. Nevertheless most areas have shown similarity in the methods which they use to allocate property. The most common system of housing allocation, until the latter part of the 1990s, was a needs based system, which generally have two different approaches to allocate housing. The first system uses a 'points' scheme to allocate vacant housing. This is where applicants to the council are awarded differing amounts of points depending on personal circumstances. Allocation of property is then based on the highest number of points and the appropriateness of the applicant to the available accommodation. Alternatively, local authorities have used a system that is based primarily on time where those who have been on the waiting list for the longest amount of time are allocated a property although Pawson and Kintrea (ibid.) suggest that this system is less common than a points system.

More recently, councils' allocations systems have become increasingly important to attempt to balance a number of competing housing trends. Marsh (2004) highlights that from the early 1970s there has been an emergence of 'difficult to let' estates which has affected large amounts of housing stock in the midlands and the north of England. This can result in those with the highest housing need being placed in poorer estates where there are more likely to be vacant properties. This can perpetuate the problem of residualisation, where certain estates result in having tenants in the same, usually difficult, social circumstances with a high number of residents who may face issues which would deem them socially excluded. At the other end of the scale the right to buy has removed over 2 million properties which have tended to be better quality and in more affluent areas leaving a high number of flats, bedsits and sheltered accommodation units for which there has been falling demand (Marsh, 2004).

There has been increasing criticisms of needs-based methods of allocation, particularly from government sources. One of the first is that they are very staff intensive, as they require a local authority to take responsibility for the allocation of the correct person to a vacant property. A further critique of needs based lettings was that the design of the scheme required tenants to highlight the 'bad parts' of their lives; a study in Caerphilly (Smit, 2002) suggested that this was one of the key parts of the system that tenants did not like. For homeless people this may involve highlighting the causes of their homelessness and explaining in some detail the route that has caused them to be homeless.

Furthermore, perhaps one of the more significant criticisms has been that there is little opportunity for any choice for applicants in this process; they take a very passive role, rather than being active consumers in gaining housing. Mullins and Niner (1998) suggest that applicants are asked to express a choice by highlighting to the social housing provider the area in which they would like to live. However, although individuals may highlight an area of preference where they would like to live, this does not mean that they would be rehoused into this area. Instead housing providers have policies which ration the available property and often encourage applicants for social renting to increase the areas that they will consider in order to expedite their chances of rehousing. This is considerably different to housing in the private sector where the consumer plays a key part in choosing and acquiring his/her accommodation. It is thought that if applicants are able to take an active part in choosing the accommodation in which they live that they will become more attached to the local community and take a more active part in its development, a point which has been highlighted as being particularly important for community sustainability and cohesion.

The problems with needs based lettings (as described above) were highlighted by the 2000 Housing Green Paper (DSS and DETR, 2000) which also described how a number of housing providers took an innovative new approach to housing allocations. A number of local authorities had been using this system of housing allocation since the late 1990s. This system relies on vacant properties being advertised and those who are interested in the properties registering this interest with the local authority. Typically with a choice based lettings allocations system those who have been waiting

for property the longest time will be allocated property most quickly. Details regarding the length of time that the successful applicant has waited for the property are published in the local press by the local authority. The system of choice based letting has been piloted in 27 areas around England and Wales and early indications seem complimentary of the new manner in which properties are allocated. The main feature which tenants seem to like about the system is its apparent transparency. Those who want property can see the type of applicant that has been allocated property, and the length of time a successful tenant has been on the waiting list as this information is made public after a property has been allocated. This contrasts to needs-based systems where members of the public were often unable to understand the decisions made by local authority officers to allocate properties.

There is also a significant advantage of these systems to local authorities who have housing which is 'low demand'. A choice based lettings system heightens the awareness of council housing and can generate interest from people who would not have previously considered being a council tenant thus bringing the potential for vacant properties to be filled more quickly. Furthermore, potential tenants are able to evaluate whether it is better for them (depending on the severity of their housing need) to move quickly into a less popular area, or wait longer for housing in an area where there is higher demand. The advantage of the scheme means that the choice of action lies with the housing consumer who has to take responsibility for their housing decisions rather than being a passive recipient of state provided services. This change in policy reflects the government's attempts to place a greater emphasis on individual responsibility in receiving state services. Cole et al (2001) suggest that moving away from needs based allocations stems from a wider political project to redraw the contours of social housing. Choice based lettings represent New Labour's 'third way' thinking which emphasises stakeholding, citizenship and taking responsibilities (Brown et al (2000) cited in Cole et al 2001).

Despite these initial studies indicating a positive reception for these new policies more fundamental questions remain as to how choice based allocations, which are now becoming the preferable method of allocation, will function for vulnerable and homeless households. Most homeless people are expected to take part in the bidding system although they are given a 'priority ticket' which acts as a trump card to

prioritise them over those applying for vacant property who have more general housing need. A number of concerns about this type of system have become apparent particularly regarding the needs of homeless and vulnerable households. Research carried out by the ODPM (2004a) looked at six local authority areas which had piloted the choice based lettings system. This study indicated that homeless people appeared to bid less for properties and some vulnerable households did not understand or realise their need to be active in the allocation process. Some local authorities identified voluntary and statutory agencies that were prepared to assist vulnerable clients, although the research identified that some individuals may be slipping through the net and not getting any assistance to apply for properties. A further concern is that homeless people will not have the luxury of time to wait for the ideal property in their first choice of area. This could force them to compromise their housing requirements in order to facilitate speedy access to permanent accommodation. Housing which is more quickly accessible may be in areas of low demand and located away from family, friends and other means of social support. This has the potential to cause social exclusion and could be instrumental in tenancy failure due to isolation. Real choice to access properties may actually be limited. An individual may choose to register an interest in the property but it does not necessarily mean that they would be allocated the property.

Research is yet to give a detailed assessment as to whether the predications discussed above are correct, although early indications illustrate that most people are unlikely to trade down their choice of areas particularly if they perceive other areas to be unsafe or less desirable (ODPM, 2004b). Thus the evidence highlights that for those who are vulnerable, as are the majority of homeless people, there might be problems with such individuals being allocated accommodation that is appropriate for their needs. Indeed Third and Yanetta (2000) suggest that there are a few nomination systems that work well in practice in dealing with single homeless people. The need for resettlement support becomes particularly apparent in order assist vulnerable service users to negotiate through this allocation system in order that they are given accommodation that is relevant to their needs.

## 2.3 Developing debates about resettlement

As the discussions in the previous sections explain, there has been a change in policy direction, from the minimalist provision of policy of the 1990s. The 2002 Homelessness Act widens the classification of those who may be described as statutorily homeless. This illustrates that there has been some acknowledgement that certain groups of individuals may be more vulnerable to homelessness and gives them increasing rights to be allocated social rented accommodation. However, there is increasing evidence to suggest that the study of homelessness is not simply concerned with the study of allocation, availability and legal rights to social housing. Thus the following section will explain how academics and campaigning groups, like policy makers, have begun to redefine the study of homelessness, placing a greater emphasis on the study of the routes out of homelessness and the prevention of housing crisis. In order to understand these developing debates, it is necessary to first examine some of the debates surrounding the phenomenon of understanding homelessness, this will then provide a basis to explain the growth in the study of resettlement services.

Until the 1990s studies of homelessness tended to separate out the causes of homelessness into two distinct categories. Early debates discussed, regarding the causes of homelessness, illustrate a simple dichotomy between the structural and biographical causes. Fitzpatrick, Kemp and Klinker (2000) highlight most researchers tend to favour the structural explanations which include inadequate provision of housing, cuts in social security and family restructuring. Conversely however, Neale (1997) points out that individual explanations of homelessness have tended to generally predominate where individuals have been thought to be deemed responsible for their housing situation. The emphasis on this approach affected statutory responses to homelessness which have tended to emphasise the concept of less eligibility.

By the end of the 1990s, however, a critical discussion began to appear regarding the limits of this dichotomous understanding of the causes of homelessness with both Pleace (1998) and Neale (1997) suggesting that the structure/agency explanation is flawed with Pleace (1998:56) arguing that in past discussions of homelessness none of which was "exactly wrong but none provides an explanation of all forms of single

homelessness or what is known about single homelessness on a case by case basis". Thus Smith, Gilford and O'Sullivan (1998) have provided a more comprehensive explanation of the reasons for homelessness by considering three main perspectives which explain the causes of homelessness. Whilst Smith (ibid.) presents a similar debate to other authors regarding the reasons for homelessness (structural versus biographical), they present a further category of the 'social individual' perspective. This argues that there are certain individuals with particular characteristics who are more likely to become homeless, and perhaps, more critically, highlighting the interaction between structural and biographical explanations.

In response to the furthering the debate on the causes of homelessness, Pleace suggests that homelessness must be understood in a wider context, placing the problem of homelessness as part of the wider debates surrounding social exclusion, whilst Neale (1997) argues that for homelessness the structure/agency (or structural versus biographical) debate needs to be reconsidered in a more theoretical manner. Using Giddens's theory of structuration, Neale highlights how structure and individualistic factors are not independent but more interdependent on each other. External forces such as power relations work at different levels and individuals make their route through such relations in a variety of different ways, thus meaning that both individual and biographical reasons play a role in determining an individual's housing career.

Emerging homelessness evidence from practitioner and campaigning groups at the end of the 1990s also began to identify with academic arguments about the complexities of the homelessness issue. A wider understanding of the homelessness issue illustrated that homelessness could no longer be fully comprehended by one set of determinates either structural or biographical. Indeed, a myriad of factors can influence an individual's route into homelessness and evidence began to reveal that homeless was not simply a housing issue but could be an accumulation of social reasons which made some individuals more prone to homelessness. These factors often combined with structural reasons concerning the allocation and availability of housing (as discussed earlier in this chapter) exacerbate the homelessness problem. This was a significant step in the thinking around homelessness which had, up until the mid 1990s, failed to focus on the numerous 'push' factors which caused

homelessness. Evidently the 2002 act reflected a change in policy direction - there has been recognition of a need for a wider understanding of the complexities of the issues around the causes of homelessness. It was clear that homelessness was being re-conceptualised as a result of numerous factors of social exclusion.

Moreover, academic research began to highlight the concept of a 'housing pathway'. This conceptualised homelessness as more than simply a series of factors which caused homelessness but highlighted, the route in, the experience of homelessness and the ability of the individual to find routes out of homelessness were all linked. Fitzpatrick (2000) in her study of homeless young people first suggested the concept of 'homeless pathways', which according to Clapham (2003:121), "sought to shed light on the dynamic nature of the experience of homelessness". The conceptualisation of homelessness as a 'pathway' considers that homelessness cannot simply be understood through causal factors. Clapham (2003), nevertheless, is critical of some of the early work using the pathways approach because of its overemphasis on using individual biographies. He is critical of the work of Fitzpatrick (2000) as it describes young people's biographies and identifies structural causes but he argues that the two approaches have not been considered together. He highlights that ignoring the interaction between the two approaches simply seeks to maintain the minimalist approach to homelessness because of the emphasis put on the difficulties presented in individual housing histories. Homelessness needs to be understood as a social process where the factors causing homelessness are often related to the actual experience of homelessness and the subsequent route to rehousing. Successive research has now adopted the pathways approach, policy also appears to be considering homelessness in this wider perspective and more importantly how resettlement support can play an effective part in overcoming homelessness and shaping the homelessness pathway. The following section will examine how the New Labour government have begun to examine the homelessness and resettlement issue as part of the social exclusion agenda, thus acknowledging that homelessness can be a multi faceted problem which can require a specialist approach to overcome. In order to contextualise debates on social exclusion in relation to resettlement and homelessness, an explanation of the concept of social exclusion will firstly be discussed.

### *2.3.1 Homelessness, resettlement and social exclusion*

Whilst the first proposals to make direct changes to housing policy were introduced in the 2000 Housing Green Paper, the first interest expressed by the New Labour government in homelessness issues was in a report issued by the newly created Social Exclusion Unit regarding Rough Sleeping. Key to the New Labour agenda was the emphasis not on equality (as had been the agenda of old labour governments influenced by the social democratic agenda) but inclusion, the problem of rough sleeping was the antithesis of a person being able to be an active citizen taking part in community life. The debate regarding social exclusion at the turn of the twenty first century was relatively new to the UK although the concept had been established from the 1970s in France and picked up political interest in Britain from the mid 1990s. A number of authors (Levitas, 1998; Marsh and Mullins, 1998 and Somerville, 1998) describe that one of the unique parts of the debate on social exclusion is that the term is relatively vague with variation in meaning attached to the term. According to Marsh and Mullins (1998:751) the advantage to this 'vague' approach is it allows politicians to subscribe to the concept and commit themselves "to an imprecise, but nonetheless worthy-sounding, mission". Nevertheless Powell (2000:57) describes social inclusion as being one of New Labour's 'hurrah' words illustrating the importance placed on the concept by this administration.

One interpretation of social exclusion which attempts to overcome this perceived vagueness has been presented by Levitas (1998) who suggests that there are three discourses of social exclusion. The discourses differ in how they characterise the boundary of exclusion, and how inclusion is brought about. She relates these discourses to political paradigms established by recent governments. The first discourse, redistribution, considers social exclusion to be caused and related to debates on poverty, whilst a further understanding, the moral underclass discourse, is influenced by debates on the underclass and the behaviour of those who are excluded. Levitas (ibid.) suggests that New Labour have been influenced by the third discourse, a social integrationist discourse and this is illustrated by their central focus on work. Exclusion is defined as those who lie on the periphery of the labour market whose opportunities to partake in the local community are limited by unemployment, educational failure and rising poverty. Paid employment and their emphasis placed

on welfare to work schemes such as the New Deal therefore are central to individuals achieving integration.

It is clear that Levitas' (1998) discussion of social exclusion is highly influenced by discussions of work and welfare rather than housing as Watt and Jacobs (2000) highlight. This is not surprising considering the political emphasis placed on welfare to work schemes such as New Deal by current government documentation. Nevertheless, housing has been identified to being a key issue to overcoming the problem of social exclusion. Moreover, poor housing, and more importantly homelessness, is often recognised as an issue which prevents entry/re-entry into the workforce and is viewed as critical to overcoming the social exclusion problem. Somerville (1998:772) highlights how vital housing is to the social exclusion debate stating "social exclusion through housing happens if the effect of housing processes is to deny certain social groups control over their daily lives, or to impair enjoyment of wider citizenship rights". Somerville (ibid.) suggests that there are a number of ways that housing processes can exclude individuals, firstly through housing production. Often housing is only developed for certain types of people and may exclude those with low incomes or special housing requirements, such as those with disabilities. Secondly, individuals can also be excluded from certain types of tenure. Again, those with low incomes find themselves excluded because they are not able to afford certain tenure types such as owner occupation or privately let properties. Moreover, if individuals do not display a high level of need then they can be excluded from local authority lettings by the allocation system. Interrelated to these factors put forward by Somerville, Murie (1991) also highlights that social exclusion and housing also has a further dynamic, that of spatial exclusion where individuals with certain characteristics (such as those who are unemployed and reliant on state benefits) find themselves living in specific deprived urban areas. This process, he explains, has come about because of changes in housing and the welfare state from 1979 which has decreased the amount of publicly owned property; what remains in public ownership is in poorer areas of deprivation.

One of the first reports by the Social Exclusion Unit in 1998 created by the new Labour government highlighted future government action on the issue of rough sleeping (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). The problem of rough sleeping had already

been addressed by the previous administration with the Rough Sleepers Initiative which was established in 1995. The Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI), according to Randall and Brown (1995), was initially a response to the growing number of rough sleepers in central London. The funding of £255 million from this initiative offered support for those who were sleeping rough and provided temporary and permanent accommodation, cold weather shelters, and outreach and resettlement workers (Crane and Warnes, 2000). However far from being progressive, Jacobs et al (1999) explain that the RSI was representative of a minimalist ideology where state provision should only be offered to those seen as in greatest need. By meeting the needs of rough sleepers, the government appeared to be taking steps to assist those who were visibly homeless, although in reality they were simply deflecting attention from the fact that the result of social and economic policies were leading to an upsurge in people sleeping rough.

The analysis of rough sleeping by the Social Exclusion Unit starkly contrasted to the approach taken previously by the RSI. Evident throughout documentation produced by the Social Exclusion Unit was an attempt to analyse social problems in an integrated manner relating social and biographical problems as serious issues that caused the homelessness problem. The report made a clear acknowledgement of the links between extreme housing problems, access to the labour market and social exclusion, although its focus was limited to rough sleeping rather than some of the wider issues of housing and social exclusion as described by Somerville and Murie above. It highlighted the vulnerability of certain groups of individuals and describes that rough sleeping is often the end result of a myriad of social problems that an individual may need addressing. Policy approaches to the problem of street homelessness such as zero tolerance (an approach adopted in the USA) will not be considered in the UK. Instead, the majority of the report focuses on problems which are related to rough sleeping and perceived to be some of its causal factors. It was acknowledged that in order to find a solution to these issues it was necessary to recognise the problems that caused rough sleeping, to develop inter-agency co-operation and to provide support services to enable people to move on from living on the streets to living in their own accommodation. Also evident is New Labour's 'pragmatic' approach to a social problem, stating that the government will draw experience from all partners who work with homeless people in order to try and find a

solution to the rough sleeping problem. Critically, social exclusion is recognised as both a cause and a result of housing circumstances. Homeless people and those living on deprived housing estates being acknowledged as groups who could potentially be excluded, resolving such issues was highly placed upon the New Labour policy agenda.

The evidence above suggests that there has been a shift in thinking about homelessness and debates about homelessness have developed from simply looking at the causes of homelessness. Instead there is a new emphasis placed on the relationship between the routes in and out of homelessness and a greater acknowledgement that homeless is a complex problem that can be both a cause and consequence of social exclusion. Research now indicates that the whole process from initial experience of homelessness to final housing outcome needs to be studied to understand the homelessness process. Indeed in a study with service users and providers, Rosengard et al (2001) suggest that the initial causes of homelessness had little influence on whether individuals were able to resolve their homelessness, instead assessed statutory homelessness status and people's access to support was shown to be a more significant influence. This shift in focus illustrates the growing importance of providing support and assistance to help individuals move out of homelessness once such a housing crisis has occurred. Developing this theme, Anderson and Tulloch (2000) suggest that there are a number of major routes out of homelessness. These include people resolving their housing situation independently and being accepted as statutorily homeless. Moreover they also identify that the route out of homelessness for some individuals will involve resettlement support of some sort in order to achieve independent living. This could be through support to gain independent living or assistance for a permanent move to supported accommodation. Thus a growing body of research indicates that housing and resettlement support plays a critical role in improving the long term housing prospects of those who are homeless.

#### **2.4 Evaluation of resettlement services**

The discussions earlier in this chapter highlights that the study of homelessness has been carried out in a number of different ways with a consistent high emphasis placed

on debates about legislation and the strategic provision of services. Data collected by official sources (see ODPM, 2005 for an example) is often gathered through statistical returns rather than through exploring user and practitioner views. Further academic studies have also focused on the interpretation of statistics provided by staff working with homeless people rather than the opinions of staff themselves (Smith Gilford and O'Sullivan 1998). Whilst these are critical areas of study and their impact on homeless service users is undeniably important, in order to ensure adequate provision of services and there is a growing body of evidence which points to the importance of the consideration of the views of service users and providers. As Sosin, Piliavin and Westerfelt (1990) argue quantitative investigations of homelessness are especially limited as they provide little information on the course of homelessness or details of the lifestyle of homeless people. May (2000) suggests that a more appropriate way to understand users perspectives of homelessness services is to explore individuals housing histories. By asking interviewees to describe their housing history, key life events and employment details he asserts that this type of evidence is able to unpack and explain more clearly how individuals experience homelessness and the complexities of factors which determine an individual's housing situation. Studies considering users' perceptions of resettlement were slow to emerge with a number uniquely considering resettlement beginning to appear in the 1980s and early 1990s (Cook, 1983; Smith, Wright and Dawson 1992).

Thus as these studies illustrate and May (op.cit.) suggests, understanding user perspectives is critical to appreciate the interrelating factors involved in causing and sustaining homelessness. These perspectives and experiences can be useful to improve resettlement services and fully appreciate the experiences of individuals who have been homeless and user perspectives have been used in the majority of studies which have examined resettlement. The advantage of developing research that examines user perspectives is that they can subsequently assist in the development of services by responding to the needs highlighted by service users.

Research that has been carried out to evaluate resettlement schemes by studying user perceptions have highlighted the importance of support in order to find a route out of homelessness. Randall and Brown (1995) suggest that in a study of those moving from rough sleeping to their own accommodation that ninety per cent thought that

they would need help to move house. Respondents also suggested that they would need practical support to find and pay for furniture as well as help and advice with benefits and rental payments. All such services could be supplied by resettlement workers. Similarly Dant and Deacon (1988:11) suggest that those moving out of large institutions (such as resettlement units discussed above) were effectively deskilled as "the ability to cook clean, and to budget is not required in a hostel, but it is essential for independent living". The results of an evaluation services provided for rough sleepers by Pleace (1998) suggests that the only way forward to developing services is to provide resettlement support. Pleace (ibid.) argues that resettlement services could "make a real difference to the levels of rough sleeping around England" (p90). However it is not just for rough sleepers that resettlement has been noted to be effective. Both Tischler (2002) and Collard (1997) point to the usefulness of resettlement support services for families, Tischler particularly comments on the usefulness of such a service with vulnerable families. Douglas et al. (1998) also illustrated that 'floating support'<sup>3</sup> could offer support to vulnerable young people, those with mental health problems and those with a physical impairment to maintain accommodation. Although this study did not specifically look at homelessness the level of support that could be offered from support workers may prevent housing arrangements from breaking down and thus causing homelessness.

In a qualitative study of homeless people who had been resettled, (Alexander and Ruggeri, 1998) it was found that support given to them by homelessness project workers or resettlement workers was important because of the lack of support that they may have had from other sources (e.g. family or friends). Such support was highlighted as one of the keys to success for the transition from homelessness to holding a tenancy, critically illustrating the important role that staff play to establish successful resettlement. Yet despite the evidence suggesting the important role that staff play in resettlement, there is limited literature on the views of staff working with homeless individuals. Hagen and Hutchinson (1988) highlight that there is little

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<sup>3</sup> Floating support can be thought of as a support service that are not tied to a dwelling. This type of worker may provide out the same type of support that a resettlement worker may provide. However floating support is not reliant on a person living in a particular property or accessing services through a certain housing project as is the case with some types of resettlement services. A support is offered whatever accommodation that a person chooses to live in. In this way floating support is tied to the individual not the accommodation.

known about the staff who carried out work with homeless people or the exact work they undertake. In their survey of support workers in New York they were surprised to find that workers carried out many social work duties although very few had any formal social work training. It seems that there is still little research outlining the role staff play in resettlement and often surveys which gather data regarding the variety of staff roles (e.g. Watkins, 2003) do little to gain the perceptions of workers who deal with homeless individuals on an everyday basis. Rosengard et al (2002:15) suggest that generally there is limited evidence on the success of homelessness resettlement services and despite the growing number of resettlement projects there has been little research evaluating resettlement services on a large scale. This can be partially explained because resettlement is one of the newer areas of homelessness studies, however it is critical to gain the views of staff and service users to ensure best practice and optimum service delivery.

The evidence above illustrates the emerging importance of support to assist resettlement and overcome homelessness. Despite support services being shown to have an important role in assisting those who are homeless such services are funded not under the directive of housing policy but through a separate area of policy. The funding for support services therefore requires some individual explanation and discussion.

## **2.5 Funding for resettlement services**

The provision of support services have a long history of being provided by a myriad of organisations both voluntary and statutory, with voluntary organisations often plugging the gap where statutory agencies are limited in the services that they provide. Historically, charitable organisations have often been on the front line of providing services to homeless people (e.g. Barnardos and the Salvation Army) with this tradition, if anything, expanding in the 1980s and 1990s as the 'safety net' as social support provided by central government was cast over narrower ground. The 1990s saw a significant development of smaller hostels and projects for single homeless people with the closure of government resettlement units and larger hostels. A considerable number of these began to offer support services through a system of key working to their residents. The growth of services began in the light of increasing

evidence that support could be instrumental in assisting those who were vulnerable to tenancy failure to keep their accommodation. Some services began to provide resettlement support, although according Crane and Warnes (2005) argue that services began to develop in an ad hoc fashion with some support services for homeless people being established with funding from the Rough Sleepers Initiative. However many resettlement services needed other sources of income to establish their services.

Until the mid 1990s support services were funded through a number of sources. The main source was Housing Benefit although funding was also available from Income Support, Supported Housing Management Grant, the Home Office and the DETR as well as numerous projects still relying heavily on charitable funding. The limitations of some of these sources became particularly apparent. One notable example highlighted by Morris (1996) was the limitation of the Special Needs Management Allowance, another source that had been used to fund support services. This allowance was able to fund some floating support services, although its parameters were restricted to assistance for housing association tenants only, rather than tenants of all social landlords, thereby limiting services to some potentially vulnerable clients. McAllister (2000) also describes how specialist housing providers had to look beyond funding from Housing Benefit and the Supported Housing Management Grant if a service user needed particular support that was not eligible for funding through these sources. Evidence from Douglas et al. (1998) also illustrated that there was a general concern about there a lack of support available to tenants in social rented, general needs housing as this was the tenure where those with care and support needs were becoming increasingly concentrated.

### ***2.5.1 The introduction of Supporting People***

During the mid-1990s governmental concerns regarding the funding for housing support services began to emerge. Firstly it became apparent that these different funding streams were overlapping and that using housing benefit as the main source of funding created a number of problems. Bamford (2000) points out that one of the major faults highlighted by the government regarding the provision of support services via housing benefit was that they were demand led. In effect this meant that the amount spent on them was infinite. Housing benefit since its creation in 1984 was

a particularly complex benefit to administer making awards difficult to determine. The complexities of the housing benefit regulations made understanding entitlement complex and meant that using housing benefit as a source of funding for support was unreliable and lacked uniformity, two key factors which were necessary to be able to plan and sustain support services.

Furthermore, as Griffiths (2003) highlights, there was an increased number of people who needed support living in the community rather than in institutions due to the closure of institutions and long stay hospitals through the Community Care policy. In response to this, in 1996 a government review was announced for the funding of supported accommodation (ibid.). In the meantime, a series of landmark court rulings (*R v The London Borough of Sutton ex p Harrison* and *R v Welwyn Hatfield Council ex p Nunan, Randall, Lay and De Smitt*) took place. These forced a turnaround in the practice of housing benefit paying for support services, which from these court cases was ruled to be unlawful. The Divisional Court in 1997 therefore concluded that housing benefit could only be used to pay for the 'bricks and mortar' rental charges of property not additional housing support services. Thus as Carr (2005:396) suggests "a powerful narrative from government, the courts and academia emerged that housing benefit, because of its uncertainty and complexity, was not a satisfactory base for the funding of supported housing". Transitional arrangements were put into place to ensure that payments to those receiving support services continued to be funded by housing benefit between 1998 and 2003.

During this transition, attempts were made to establish what would be included in any definition of support services and how these would be distinct from other areas of community care or general housing management tasks. This posed a challenge to those defining the parameters of these services, as these services are often incorporated into the general management function of social rented housing as social housing management often has a welfare or social role (Clapham and Franklin, 1994). Furthermore, the dividing line between community care and supported housing has always been very thin, with those who are living in supported housing, often also needing the services of health care practitioners and/or social workers to maintain independent living. This period between the two funding systems was seen opportunistically by many service providers to gain funding for new schemes, as all

projects in receipt of Transitional Housing Benefit when changing over to Supporting People were guaranteed funding from the Supporting People 'pot'(Robson Rhodes, 2004). The new Supporting People regulations, came into effect in April 2003 after a series of transitional arrangements were used to administer funding for support services. The review of services established the types of services that would be included in the new funding policy which included monies to offer supported housing services as well as for floating support services, services which were increasing in popularity because of their significant successful results rehousing homeless people.

Administration for this new scheme was given to local authorities who would regulate funding to all services providing housing and resettlement support to vulnerable people. Initially Watson et al (2003:1) state that Supporting People was only based on the desire to move support out of the housing benefit budget but they suggest that Supporting People "has become an important social policy enterprise and one which falls squarely within the Government's aims of promoting preventative services and social exclusion". Indeed the scale of these changes can not be underestimated with SITRA (2003:4) stating "Supporting People is the biggest ever administrative reform of the funding and regulatory structures that govern supported housing and related support services". The introduction of the new Supporting People policy in April 2003 required the Local Authority to strategically plan what services were required in its area with the aim of providers working together to offer services needed. The scheme then introduced a central pot of funds to which service providers could apply. Unlike the previous manner in which services were funded, Supporting People monies were cash limited and such changes represent a fundamental change in the manner in which housing support services were funded.

The Supporting People policy which emerged in 2003 epitomises third way policy initiatives encouraging a pragmatic approach through the growth of innovative support projects to meet the needs of those who required a varied level of assistance for independent living. Resettlement was an important element of this policy with support to help individuals establish themselves in a new home and community was thus a key part of this policy (DSS, 1998). Furthermore when first introduced, Supporting People had an important place to complement other areas of social policy such as care services provided by funding through community care packages. The

success of Supporting People relies on 'joined up' policy practices as it requires practitioners to work closely with those providing other services such as health and housing in order to provide a seamless service which meets the needs of the service user. The publication of the white paper, *Modernising Social Services*, (Department of Health, 1998) also highlighted the poor relationship between different service providers and the need to improve the relationships between those who provided services to vulnerable service users.

There are significant parallels between Supporting People legislation and the Homelessness Act 2002. Both require a significant amount of mapping of services by the local authority and are aimed to respond to the needs of vulnerable people within the locality, allowing a diversity of service planning to meet the needs of local residents. Furthermore, the 2002 Homelessness Act extends the definition of those who are defined as statutorily homeless. Watson et al (2003) state that this will have direct implications for Supporting People as it will increase the number of people who are accepted as homeless and who therefore are in need of support to settle and sustain their housing. The Supporting People fund is claimed to hold "real promise of producing the strategic support service that should exist for vulnerable people" (Community Care magazine, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2002). Indeed one of the main advantages of the Supporting People Fund is that it has broken the link between tenure and support services therefore receiving a support service is not dependant on living in a particular property. This gives a greater flexibility to offer floating support services (for example) as such services are no longer tenure specific and have the potential to reach larger numbers of vulnerable people who are home owners or living in the private rented sector (Smith and McMullan, 2002) where previously services had tended to be limited to those living in the social rented sector. This could be of particular importance to the planning and development of resettlement services as service users are able to live in a range of housing situations and receive support which is not related to their accommodation

Despite these potential advantages some commentators have been wary of the new policy for a number of reasons. Whilst seeming to progress the aims of third way policy, a further aim of the scheme was to provide cost effective support services (DSS, 1998) which had been difficult to achieve with the variety of funding streams

which had previously existed. Indeed before the Supporting People scheme was launched, government sources were unable to accurately estimate how much support services were costing with total estimates thought to be anything between £350 million and £750 million (ibid.). However the change to a cash limited service has caused concerns over the financial limitations of the Supporting People scheme. Bamford (2000) (although writing before the policy was implemented) suggests that the Supporting People policy will be akin to Community Care policy in the early 1990s which ensured that cash was limited for care services. Indeed, concerns regarding the similarity between Supporting People and Community Care policy of the 1990s rippled throughout the homelessness sector with the most concern being over proposals to cash limit the scheme (McGarry, 1999). Miller (2003) however, highlights that unlike Community Care policy which did at least seem to have the funding for the first few years and to effect the transition from previous funding arrangements, Supporting People was thought to be cash starved from the outset. Bamford (2000) claims that such an approach would not allow for flexibility because the fund was to be limited and sums of money in the 'pot' may not allow for service planning for future services.

Early indications since the implementation of Supporting People in April 2003 suggests Bamford's early scepticism about the allocation of funds may be correct. In February 2003, Community Care magazine suggested that despite there being a substantial allocation of funds to Supporting People (£1.4 billion) English councils were asked to make savings adjustments of 2-3 per cent (Hunter, 2003). This initial cut in budgets threatened the funding for housing schemes nationwide (ibid.) although even after its implementation Supporting People still came under criticism and threat of income shortages. A review of Supporting People in 2004 (Robson Rhodes, 2004) describes that the costs for Supporting People had escalated to £1.8 billion and, as some commentators projected, authorities have been required to make savings to improve value for money. The conclusions of this review were of grave concern to those who provide services to homeless people as it may now become necessary for organisations to justify the services that they are providing in relation to the local authority's strategic plan (Spurling, 2004). This made it difficult for services who required funding from the Supporting People 'pot' to be able to plan and develop services with limited or uncertain funding.

Further concerns also became apparent from the outset of the new policy. Centrepoint (1999), in their reply to requests for consultation on the Supporting People policy, highlighted that one of the failings of Community Care policy had been that those with lower support needs had been neglected and any new policy had to learn from the lessons of Community Care to ensure all those with support needs were provided with services. A further concern has also emerged that Supporting People monies were being denied to particular homeless people with certain restrictive categories being placed on access. Brody (2005) highlights a number of cases of bad practice where Supporting People regulations have started to be misinterpreted. The main problem Brody stresses is the practice of council officers using the local connection criteria from the homelessness legislation to assess cases for Supporting People. This, Brody highlights, is a misinterpretation of the Supporting People regulations that have no such restrictions.

The relation of these problems to resettlement and support services are clear. Support can assist service users to overcome personal issues that a homeless person may face and the development of such services illustrates a recognition of the multiple needs of homeless people; overcoming homelessness is no longer about only providing housing. Whilst housing policy may now have turned an important corner in providing assistance to homeless people as well as attempting to change the ideological culture surrounding homelessness, the new Homelessness Act does not in itself make provision for support services for homeless people to assist them making the move from homeless accommodation or sleeping rough. The importance of support for making the transition from homelessness or rough sleeping has been highlighted to be imperative and the development of resettlement services particularly important.

## **2.6 Housing profile of Merseyside**

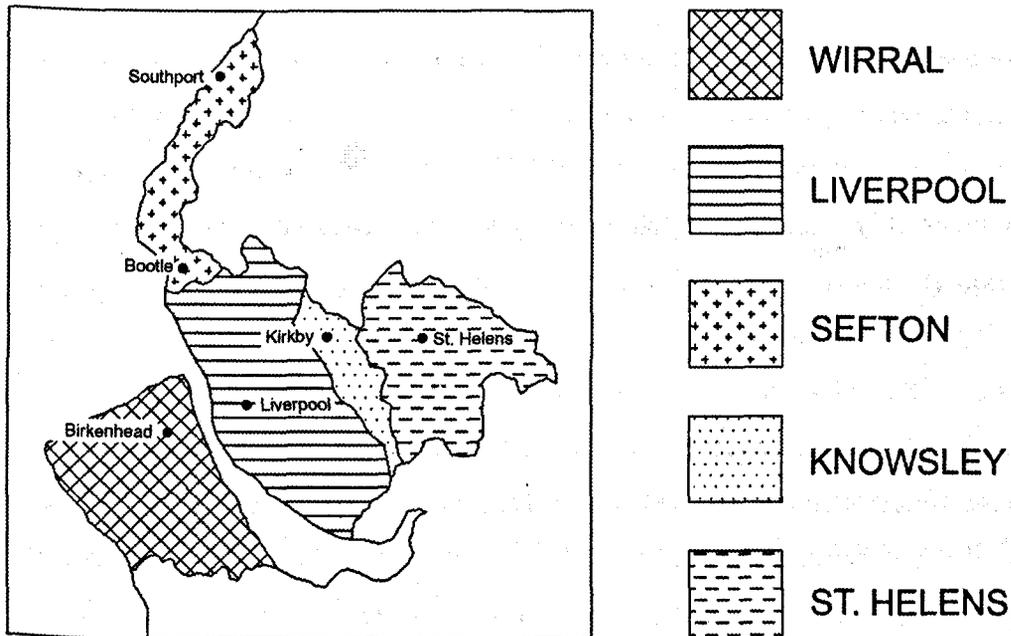
The discussion above outlines the national trends and describes the experiences of homeless people throughout England and Wales. This study aimed to look at the experiences of resettlement of homeless people in the specific locality of Merseyside. Whilst many studies have looked at the phenomenon of homeless and resettlement in

a specific locality (see Fitzpatrick, 2000; Dant and Deacon, 1988; Cook, 1983), there have been no studies of these particular services in the Merseyside area. Other studies show little consideration for the geographic locality in which homelessness and resettlement takes place and whilst conclusions from these studies and other national studies can be generalized to the Merseyside area, a study uniquely focused on homelessness and resettlement in Merseyside is needed to determine the effects of both national and local policies within this particular region. In order to contextualise this research therefore, the following section outlines and discusses the shape of the housing market in Merseyside which can have a direct impact on individuals' experiences of homelessness.

Merseyside is a diverse county which consists of five local authority areas, Liverpool, Sefton, Wirral, St Helens and Knowsley. The area includes a large city (Liverpool), several large towns (Southport, St Helens, Birkenhead and Kirkby) with each local authority, except Liverpool, having some semi-rural/rural areas. The OPDM (2004d) highlight that the five authorities that constitute Merseyside have a large number of wards with high rates of deprivation with one ward on the Wirral peninsula having the highest rate of child poverty in the UK (Wirral Borough Council, 2003). Figure 2 below shows a Map of Merseyside showing the five boroughs of Merseyside and their major towns.

Figure 2

## MAP OF MERSEYSIDE



The availability of social rented housing varies throughout the boroughs with just over 30,000 properties in 2005 being owned by local councils within the area (ODPM, 2006a). Between 2002 and 2005 the large-scale transfer of council housing stock between the council and large housing associations took place within three Merseyside Authorities (Knowsley, Wirral and Liverpool). The new ownership of housing associations meant there had been a recent increase in the number of properties owned by social rented landlords (RSLs), with 110,000 properties owned by RSLs on Merseyside by the end of 2005 (ODPM, 2006a). This illustrates a similarity to the national trend for England which shows the steady increase in ownership of property by RSLs within in the last three years (ODPM, 2006b).

Socially rented accommodation does not have an even dispersal throughout these local authority areas, a trend most likely to be as a direct result of the right to buy. In Sefton, for example, there is very little available council housing in the north of the borough near the more affluent area of Southport, Formby and Crosby with most available housing being situated in the south of the borough near the boundary with

Liverpool. Similarly other wards within the other local authority areas in the district show diversity with each having wards which have considerable deprivation, whilst in contrast, there are pockets of affluence throughout the region.

For many homeless people the availability of social rented housing will determine the length of time that they will spend in homeless/ temporary accommodation. Throughout Merseyside at the end of 2005 7.9% of households were on a waiting list for council or housing association property (ODPM, 2006c). With many single homeless people not being assessed by the local council as being statutorily homeless (as they are not defined as being in priority need), joining the council waiting list will be one of the main routes into socially rented housing. In line with national trends there has been a sharp decline in social rented housing in the Merseyside area as a result of the 1980 Housing Act and the right to buy. Despite this decrease in available property, between 2004 and 2005 there was a large rise in the numbers of individuals who were waiting for accommodation in the boroughs of Sefton, Wirral and Liverpool. The ODPM (2006c) account for this rise because of the introduction of choice-based letting which has meant that individuals who previously might not have been interested in social renting (e.g. those in employment) have a renewed awareness and subsequently such individuals then register with the LA as wanting social rented housing.

What is also notable about the housing market within Merseyside is the high number of vacant properties, a large proportion of which are under the ownership of the local authority and social rented landlords. The Empty Homes Agency (2006) directly compares the number of empty properties to the numbers of individuals that have been accepted as statutorily homeless, and as Table 1 below illustrates, there are more empty properties than there are statutorily homeless individuals with Liverpool having the highest number of vacant properties within the area.

*Table 1 Empty homes throughout Merseyside compared to statutorily homeless*

<b>Local Authority Area</b>	<b>Number of empty properties</b>	<b>Number accepted as statutorily homeless</b>
Knowsley	1348	503
Liverpool	14740	1171
Sefton	6182	437
St Helens	2803	378
Wirral	5915	659

Adapted from Empty Homes Agency (2006)

The evidence suggests a rather contradictory situation, whilst there are numbers of individuals who are accepted by the authority as being homeless, there are large numbers of vacant properties in each local authority. This illustrates one critical point regarding the debates about homelessness, that placing homeless households into vacant properties cannot solve the homelessness problem. High numbers of vacant properties are usually found in areas of low demand, areas which have been earmarked for regeneration. This evidence strongly illustrates that solving the region's homelessness problems goes beyond providing housing as the high numbers of vacant properties could be matched to homeless households. This gives support for the argument that for many individuals overcoming their homelessness will be achieved by providing accommodation and assistance to ensure that any tenancy is maintained.

### *2.6.1 Homeless and resettlement provision on Merseyside*

There is a diverse range of accommodation for individuals who find themselves homeless in the Merseyside area. Each local authority in the Merseyside area has a mixture of direct and non direct accommodation, with some hostels and accommodation projects have stringent admissions policies which exclude individuals, most commonly those with chaotic behaviour and/or drug or alcohol problems. There is no comprehensive list of accommodation available to homeless people of accommodations in a particular area. The Resource and Information Service (2006) provides details of twelve emergency accommodation projects in the Merseyside area of which ten offer a resettlement advice or assistance. However, this underestimates the quantity of both homeless and resettlement provision as this only

includes projects which give emergency direct access accommodation and the lack of an extensive guide to accommodations makes it difficult to estimate the full extent of resettlement support within the area as a whole. There is also an uneven distribution of projects within the local authority areas, with some, more suburban areas, having a little or no homeless and resettlement services. Those who find themselves homeless in these areas have to relocate to find adequate homelessness provision.

Table 2 below outlines some of the hostel provision for those in Merseyside. Although the Resource and Information Service describes twelve projects available in the area, further information from each local authority outlines a greater number of services throughout the district. Indeed, information as to the amount of hostel and resettlement provision is sketchy as there is no one document that compares provision from each of the five boroughs of Merseyside. The information presented in table 2 is taken from a number of sources provided by each borough. These include the borough's homelessness review, homeless strategy (which each authority has a statutory obligation to develop under the 2002 Homelessness Act) and each borough's Supporting People documentation. Since there is no uniform method of gathering of presenting such strategy documents, comparing data regarding provision proves difficult.

*Table 2 Provision of services for homeless people in the Merseyside area*

Merseyside Borough	Details of services and projects available to homeless people and to assist resettlement
Liverpool	Liverpool City Council's Supporting People Strategy (2005) outlines that there are 703 units <sup>4</sup> of accommodation for homeless people throughout the area. This figure includes all bedspaces for homeless people throughout the city and incorporates emergency places in hostels. Neither the city's Supporting People Strategy (2005) nor the Homelessness Strategy (2003) indicates how many places/agencies offer resettlement support.
Sefton	Throughout the Borough of Sefton there are 69 direct access bedspaces for single homeless people (Sefton Council 2002). These provide hostel accommodation rather than resettlement support. The Supporting People Strategy (Sefton Council, 2005a) estimates that

<sup>4</sup> A 'Unit' can refer to a bedspace in a hostel or allocated place in supported accommodation.

	<p>there is funding of a further 28 units of accommodation provided for single homeless people, although the type of accommodation/ support these offer is unspecified.</p> <p>The Homeless Review carried out by the council in 2002 also highlights that because of the lack of provision of services, many homeless people approach service providers in the neighbouring borough of Liverpool, where provision is thought to be better.</p>
Wirral	<p>Wirral Borough Council (Wirral MBC, 2002) have 426 units of supported accommodation for single homeless people, although they state that they have no floating support<sup>5</sup> services. This figure includes direct access hostels so is not exclusively resettlement/move on support for homeless people. Provision of these services is offered by a number of organisations including the voluntary sector, local charity and a housing association.</p>
Knowsley	<p>According to the Homelessness Strategy for Knowsley Borough Council (Knowsley Borough Council, 2005) there are 295 funded places for resettlement/floating support and supported accommodation throughout the borough. These are divided between a number of projects including (although not exclusively limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 120 units available to provide supported accommodation for young people aged 18-25.</li> <li>• Lodging agency for young people. This allows 16-18 lodge in supported family-style accommodation with a householder.</li> <li>• Extra Support Scheme for Tenants, offered by the local authority and a local housing association.</li> </ul> <p>Three other agencies listed by the local authority are available to give advice to homeless people but not directly give accommodation or support services.</p> <p>A mediation service is also available throughout the borough for young people threatened with losing accommodation with family</p>
St Helens	<p>Within the borough of St Helens there are 130 bedspaces within homeless hostels. There are also 152 individuals who are living in supported accommodation for homeless people or living in mainstream accommodation and receiving floating support. Provision is from 10 different organisations, including local and national providers. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 homeless hostels.</li> <li>• 6 schemes providing supporting accommodation/ floating support. (St Helens Council, 2004a)</li> </ul>

NB Figures listed outline provision for single homeless people only. Those for homeless families have been excluded.

<sup>5</sup> A definition of floating support can be found on page 44.

Analysis of this provision illustrates that the types and sources of resettlement support are difficult to determine within the Merseyside area. Although the LA would report the amount of 'units' for which they offered support for homeless people, the type of accommodation or service on offer to assist resettlement was unclear. This makes it very difficult to appreciate precisely what services are on offer and who currently uses the services. Nevertheless, there is a clear indication that particular boroughs are meeting the obligations of the 2002 Homelessness Act as some (such as Knowsley) outline schemes to prevent homelessness (a mediation scheme). The appearance of such schemes may reduce the need for other services such as resettlement as they act as an early instigation measure which can prevent household breakdown, one of the known causes of homelessness. This may then decrease the need for a resettlement service. What is also notable is that there is no available literature from the service providers which evaluates the services that are on offer.

Furthermore comparing the statistics provided in table 1 of the number of individuals who are classed as statutorily homeless, there is a mismatch of supply and demand of services as there are far more individuals requiring services than there are places in projects offering services for homeless people, as outlined in table 2. Moreover the statistics given in table 1 may seriously underestimate the real amount of homelessness as many single people homeless people will be omitted from this count as they are not counted as homeless according to the legal definition of homelessness (discussed earlier in this chapter).

## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter has examined the development of resettlement services and the rise in importance of these services. The literature illustrates continued debates regarding the causes of homelessness, which have been influenced by political ideology and have affected the course of social policy and determined the approach taken to deal with the homelessness problem. However, the chapter has outlined and argued that homelessness has now for the first time been included on the social exclusion agenda signalling a turn around in thinking about homelessness. This can be compared previous administrations, which had implemented policies which had withdrawn assistance to homeless people. The chapter has also highlighted that in studies of

homelessness there has been a tradition to examine the reasons why people are homeless, the homelessness policy or the routes out of homelessness. The study of resettlement involves examining all these facets as contributory factors. Why a person is homeless will often affect the route that they are able to take out of homelessness, thus the process is interconnected. Thus the homelessness journey is compounded by personal experiences, social and psychological factors as well as housing and homelessness policies a combination of which can determine the end result of the homelessness pathway.

The recognition of these factors mean that both government and academic studies now indicate that the causes of homelessness cannot simply be understood by looking simply at individual and structural reasons for homelessness, there needs to be a greater understanding of the 'homelessness pathway'. Critically, individuals need to be able to be offered support to negotiate their way through this path. This is where resettlement support becomes important to be able to assist individuals to find a long-term solution to a housing crisis and stable independent living. The problem of homelessness is now being re-conceptualised as part of the social exclusion agenda. This illustrates that there is a deeper understanding of the implications homelessness can have, not just the individual who is homeless but also on the wider community. With new funding available (Supporting People) it is clear that this has allowed for a growth in resettlement services, and, moreover, the change in policy direction in the Homelessness Act 2002 illustrates that there will be a statutory obligation for local authorities to support and encourage the growth of schemes (such as resettlement) that will prevent incidences of homelessness or repeat homelessness.

More notably there is has been a realisation that homelessness cannot simply be solved by greater access or provision of housing; homelessness cannot be simply overcome by putting individuals into vacant properties. There is an additional need for services to help individuals overcome the complex issues which cause homelessness in order that they might find a sustainable housing solution. Resettlement services plug this gap and provide the practical and emotional support that an individual might need to overcome any housing crisis. On a local level in Merseyside the effects of these national policies are evident with various support services being available to those who do find themselves homeless. It is through the

delivery of services on a local level and support through resettlement workers that homeless individuals will have a realistic opportunity to resettle.

This research aimed to examine the views of service users and staff who use and deliver the type of resettlement services described throughout this chapter. The evidence provided illustrates that whilst there are a plethora of services and projects that deliver the resettlement services on Merseyside there has been no study to date that has examined how these services affect the lives of the service users who use them. This study aims to examine this aspect of homelessness from both service users and service providers on Merseyside in an effort to add a fuller understanding of resettlement. In order to achieve this the following chapter will outline the approach taken in this study to research these resettlement schemes in Merseyside. The methods used and unpinning methodology to research this topic will be explained and explored.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology and Method

This chapter will outline the methodological approach taken in this study to examine the experiences of resettlement of service users and service providers. The methodology is closely linked to the research methods chosen to carry out the study, and therefore the rationale for choosing particular research methods will also be explained. The chapter will begin by considering some of the possible methodological approaches that could be taken to research this particular field, and explain why the pragmatism was used as the methodological basis for this study. It will then go on to explain and describe the methods used to analyse the resulting data.

#### *3.1 Methodological paradigms*

The basis of any methodological approach is closely linked to the interpretation of the ontological and epistemological positions. Guba and Lincoln (1994) state simply that the issue of ontology questions the nature of reality or how we understand or know what is going on in the world. The closely related issue of epistemology considers the relationship between the inquirer and the known (i.e. the research subject). Both the ontological and epistemological standpoint of a researcher will, in turn, affect the methodological approach adopted to answer any research question and the subsequent research methods used in a study.

DePoy and Gitlin (1994) state that traditionally, social sciences have been divided into two main genres of approach. Each adopts a unique ontological and epistemological position and therefore affects the methodological stance as Williams and May (1996:11) point out "methodological decisions are implicitly ontological and epistemological". DePoy and Gitlin (ibid.) describe a number of differing approaches the first being described as 'experimental' approaches which share the common epistemology of positivism or logical positivism. The second methodological approach, collectively entitled humanistic or interpretivist, unlike positivism, places an emphasis on the study of meaning and social interaction. More recently, a third paradigm of a mixed methodology has developed drawing on methodologies of both the experimental and humanistic approaches. Such a methodology has grown in

popularity, despite it being accused of being methodologically 'unpure,' because it suggests that the ontological and epistemological approaches of the previous two methodologies can be mixed. This methodology has been favoured by those from the pragmatist school of thought. All three approaches will be discussed in order to highlight and contextualise the reasons for the methodology chosen in this study.

### **3.1.1 Positivism**

Following the work of Comte, the work of positivists has been influenced by the study of science. Natural sciences establish laws and theories through experimentation, examination of statistics and the analysis of numbers. Positivists assume that, in a similar manner to natural sciences, social life can be explained and predicted by establishing social laws. When carrying out research in this paradigm, the social scientist remains objective to the phenomena under study. Positivists perceive that there is an external reality outside of the researcher, which exists 'out there'. Epistemologically, the investigator and investigated are independent entities (Smith, 1998). This means that the researcher remains detached from the subjects, by using research methods such as that of experimentation or questionnaires, which aim to collect quantifiable data from the research subject. There is an assumption that an investigator can easily adopt an objective stance and can remain detached from the subject that is being studied. Thus positivists have pursued quantitative research methods and perceive such methods as the most effective way of gathering 'social facts' in an objective manner. The result of any research based on a positivist methodology is direct knowledge based on scientific principles which should be true, repeatable and generalizable to a wider population.

This type of research is most commonly associated with knowledge creation through deduction, where a researcher begins with a number of theories and a priori assumptions, which they aim to test against hard empirical evidence. Such research looks for causal links between factors favouring the use of questionnaires and statistical testing to examine phenomena.

### **3.1.2 Interpretive social sciences**

The methodological approach of positivists has been highly criticised by the style of research carried out by interpretivist social sciences and fundamental differences exist between the ontological and epistemological approaches of these two paradigms. Such researchers have criticized the paradigm of positivist methodology and the resulting quantitative methods. More specifically, interpretivist researchers believe that 'naturalistic' based research is flawed, as there are fundamental differences between natural and social sciences, meaning that it is difficult, if not impossible, to study human experience in the same manner as scientific phenomena.

According to Laurence Neuman (2000) the term "interpretivist" refers to the branch of the social sciences which includes a number of diverse approaches which include hermeneutics, ethnomethodology, phenomenology and constructivism. Whilst it is evident that differences between these approaches exist, a fundamental similarity between them is that research carried out within the interpretivist paradigm, is based on the study of meaningful social action. Thus as Clarke (1999) suggests, reality is not a single entity, which can be subjected to objective measurement, as positivist researchers claim. The epistemological position of interpretive social sciences suggest that individuals construct their social world and that the researcher can not be an independent or objective external observer of social processes, but is intrinsically linked within them. Thus any social enquiry can not be objective or value free, but is more likely to be value bound and as Denzin (1970) suggests, objectivism is often a fallacy and something that a researcher would find difficult to achieve. There is an acknowledgement that the researcher is part of the research process and can affect how evidence is collected. Researchers from this school of thought have been more likely to favour qualitative methods of in-depth interviews, participant observation, conversational analysis and interpretivist case studies.

### **3.2 Studying homelessness, difficulties with methodological paradigms**

The plethora of research into homelessness has been able to highlight some of the difficulties apparent researching this topic. The positivist paradigm has been favoured particularly when trying to count and define the numbers of people who are homeless

(e.g. Fitzgerald et al (2000) and Shaw et al (1996)). Such analysis has focused on deductive methods, with a certain amount of theory testing of a priori assumptions involved. However, one of the main problems of using a positivist research paradigm to study homeless people is because of the difficulties of defining homelessness. Previous research (see chapter 2) indicates that there is considerable debate regarding the definition of homelessness between political parties, pressure groups and even amongst academics. This variation in understanding, indicates that homelessness is not an objective fact. Defining someone as homeless is already the result of a subjective interpretation. Similarly, as a new and developing field within homelessness, resettlement does not, as yet, have a clearly determined definition even amongst practitioners and the meaning of resettlement can be perceived differently, by the parties involved in the support and resettlement process. There does seem to be a general trend within the newer field of resettlement to favour interpretivist methodologies with many of them relying on qualitative methods for data collection (e.g. Alexander and Ruggieri, 1998). Nevertheless, this does not stop the continued debate, amongst researchers studying homelessness, regarding the most appropriate methodological approach. Christian and Abrams (2003) in a critical appraisal of research about self-identity issues amongst homeless people, highlight the shortcomings of interpretivist methodologies, particularly pointing out studies (e.g. Farrington and Robinson, 1999) which lack quantitative tests which make it impossible to generalise findings.

The difficulties identified in these studies highlight that the study of homelessness and resettlement could adopt a number of methodological approaches. As one important aspect of the research was to examine the perceptions of resettlement services, this research needed a methodology which would be able to analyse the meaning of the social processes and consider the interpretations of these. From this premise, an interpretivist paradigm seemed a most appropriate methodology for this piece of research and the specific branch of symbolic interactionism, which focuses on the meanings of social interaction was specifically relevant.

Symbolic interactionism places an important emphasis on the meaning of social action which, symbolic interactionists claim, needs to be understood in order to interpret how people create and maintain their social worlds. Blumer (1969) suggests

that the basis of symbolic interaction is the examination of the social world via two principles, exploration and inspection. Exploration involves gaining a clearer picture of what is happening in an area of social life. Stryker (1981) argues that this process tends not to be tied to any particular research procedure, but is used to construct a comprehensive account of what takes place in the social world constantly revising images, beliefs and conceptions of the social world being studied. Inspection follows the process of exploration and this aims to make sense of the problem in a theoretical form. The process of inspection, according to Blumer (1969), does not simply look at the relationships between variables, but involves looking at the research situation in a flexible and imaginative way. Critically, symbolic interactionists reject the study of society via a positivist methodology which reduces social situations to the observations of variables. Instead, the process of exploration and inspection should involve the study of social action with a focus on the meaning of social interaction between individuals, as indeed Manis and Meltzer (1978) suggest that this focus on meaning and symbols is what defines symbolic interactionism from other research methodologies. This focus on meaning and symbols will be discussed in more depth below in relation to the topic of this research study.

As suggested above, according to symbolic interactionists, human behaviour and interaction are carried out through the medium of symbols and their meanings. As Scott (1995) highlights, human life is a continual process of ongoing activity and individuals do not react in automatic or mechanistic ways but must enter into a process of definition or interpretation in order to give events in social life meaning, with such interpretations being based on a common stock of knowledge. Any subsequent behaviour becomes symbolic when people ascribe a meaning to it. This knowledge, according to Anderson et al (1986) is idiosyncratic since it is formed out of the particular biographically-defined experiences, which are shaped from the contextualised knowledge of the society in which an individual lives. In relation to the homeless this means that individuals will interpret their homelessness experiences in relation to their previous housing career.

The second critical part of the symbolic interactionism approach is the description of the role of individuals within wider society. Manis and Meltzer (1978) describe how individuals become humanized through interaction with other persons and these

interactions with others are what make human society. Human nature is not a biological given but emerges out of the processes of human interaction. Thus the process of social interaction means individuals develop a sense of self through their interactions with others. This would be useful to consider how those experiencing the resettlement process viewed themselves, in relation to others in similar situations and how their interactions with others affected their housing prospects. Furthermore, wider society acts as framework for social action to take place, society does not set the determinates for the action and it is the individual who determines their behaviour within this framework, although symbolic interactionism recognises that social structures may impact on individuals even if these structures are far removed from the individual. In homelessness studies, this methodological approach appreciates the role of policy (as part of a wider social structure that impacts on individuals) and still allows for the study of the impact of these on the individual.

The symbolic interactionist perspective was a relevant methodology to pursue in this research, because the overarching question of the research was 'How did service users make sense of the undesirable social situation of being homeless and their experience of resettlement services?' To summarise the symbolic interactionism methodology was therefore important to understand the following:

- a) the subjective meaning ascribed to the living situation of being homeless
- b) how the relationship between service user and service provider developed and the meaning that the two different parties ascribed to their role within this relationship
- c) the interaction of individuals who were homeless with other homeless people and the effects that this had on the resettlement process
- d) the experiences of interactions of service users and providers with agencies, aimed to assist homeless people

Whilst there were parts of this research which needed to consider the dynamics of social action and the meanings that individuals placed on these incidences within their lives, there were some aspects of the research that required more 'factual' information, which did not need such interpretation of meaning. For example, one of the research aims was to consider the effects of causal factors of homelessness on the outcome of the resettlement process. The result of this was that there were a number of a priori assumptions which needed to be examined through deductive reasoning,

where the approach of symbolic interactionism calls for inductive reasoning. Blumer (1956) criticizes any sort of variable analysis, as pursued by a positivist methodology, because variables are not simply static 'objects' to analyse. Definition and a process of interpretation has already been conferred on these variables before they are examined. Yet there was a huge value in carrying out some parts of the research using a more positivist framework and there did seem some areas where factual information could be collected and variable analysis take place. For example, homelessness is usually studied by the comparison of contrasting age groups, with a general consensus that the experiences of younger and older people are particularly different and there was need to draw these type of comparison in this research. There was also a need to discover if there were any particular variables which affected the resettlement process, which were common to all individuals experiencing resettlement. If the outcome of the research was to develop a model of best practice, there needed to be some results that were more generalizable. This type of variable analysis was also critically important for the study of resettlement, and this method could only be achieved through adopting some type of variable analysis through positivist research. The nature of these research questions left a methodological challenge; although the methodology of symbolic interaction would be useful to follow in order to understand the meaning in social interaction, there were still a number of factors which needed to be examined by variable analysis. This raised an important question as to whether methodologies could be mixed to meet the research objectives.

Therefore, the varied nature of the objectives of this study highlighted that it did not 'fit' neatly into either of the methodological paradigms described above. The questions required by this research demanded that a more pragmatic approach was taken. It was important, as Hammersley (1992) suggests, that the research was not simply aligned to a theoretical paradigm to increase the legitimacy of the work. However, the philosophy of pragmatism, which favours mixed methods and allows for the use of mixed methodologies, seemed the most appropriate approach to meet the demands of the research puzzle (Mason, 1996).

### 3.3 Towards a pragmatic methodology and a mixed method approach

Historically within research there has been a division between the main two methodological approaches interpretivism and positivism as highlighted in the discussion above. Methodological purists, (see Guba, 1990 and Guba and Lincoln, 1994) have described that the two stances of positivist and interpretivists are incompatible with each other. According to methodological purists it would be impossible to combine the use of a positivist methodology for one part of research with that of interactionism as Guba (1990:81) states “accommodation between paradigms is impossible . . . we are led to vastly diverse, disparate, and totally antithetical ends”. This has results in what some authors have described as “paradigm wars” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). The basis of these ‘wars’ has been developed on the premise that there is such a schism between the ontological and epistemological stances of each of these approaches, it is impossible for there to be an integration of these two paradigms and subsequently methods associated with each methodology should not be mixed.

Such wars have divided methodological schools of thought and traditionally the majority of research studies have been aligned to a particular methodological school and paradigm. However, it is clear that a number of researchers have stated that the differences between such paradigms have been overdrawn and that the schism is not as wide as has been portrayed by “purists”. Indeed Erzberger and Prein (1997) and Erzberger and Kelle (2003) highlight that some classic studies within the social sciences (such as the Hawthorne experiment) have used mixed methods to collect and validate their results. Furthermore, as Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue, unlike purists, mixed methodology research actually has a long history in research practice. Those who practise research frequently ignore what is written by methodologists, preferring instead to use methods that will help them to answer their research questions. Thus as Brannen (1992:3) suggests practical application of research is often “messy and untidy” and rarely conforms to set methodological procedures. These latter views have been described as those of methodological pragmatists.

It is clear that there are fundamental differences between purists and pragmatists (as described above,) with one of the main differences being the different approaches to epistemology and ontology (Tashakkori and Teddie, 1998). Purists maintain that research should be determined by a basic belief system or world view, that should guide any investigation and ultimately determine the research method. Pragmatists describe that the research question itself determines the research methods that should be adopted. However, this does not mean that those who have chosen the pragmatist approach have not adopted an underlying philosophy. Researchers who have opted to approach research using mixed methods, have, in many cases, aligned themselves within the pragmatic philosophy. This well established philosophy has its roots in the pragmatic movement of the early twentieth century. Maxcy (2003) suggests that genre of pragmatism, based on the work of Dewey, rejects that there is one scientific method and a single collection of scientists who gathered indisputable knowledge. Instead research should be based on understanding "characters and events that make up our praxis" (Maxcy, 2003:59). There should be limited consideration given to the methodology needed to achieve this aim, instead research methods should meet the needs of the research question.

With a move towards methodological pragmatism, there has been a growth of studies which have drawn methodologies from each research genre. The growth of these studies with mixed methodologies could reflect the growing trend of contract research, which does not need to be so methodologically pure, but moreover needs to practically use all available research tools to answer a particular research question. Thus the growth of mixed method research has recently become popular. Indeed Greene et al (1989) describe that a mixed method approach is particularly popular in evaluation studies. Considering these factors, it seemed the ideal way to examine this research question was to combine methodologies of both positivist and interpretivist schools of thought. Furthermore, as Denzin (1990) highlights, using two approaches in this manner can lead to data triangulation which can strengthen the validity of any study because of the cross referencing of data between the two data types. Taking a pragmatic approach to the research would, therefore, allow methodologies to be used from the two schools of thought, which would lead to the establishment of a richer evidence base.

### **3.4 Choosing the methods**

Once the methodological premise on which this study is based was decided, the appropriate methods were chosen and a pilot study carried out. This following section will begin by considering the methods used in the pilot study. The pilot study was commissioned by a charitable organisation wanting an evaluation of the resettlement service in one particular hostel. Whilst this study was a piece of research within its own right and resulted in a report (see Hennessy, 2003a) and a publication (Hennessy et al 2005, appendix e) it shaped the direction of the main study. This section will continue by discussing how two methods a questionnaire and qualitative interviews, have been used to carry out this piece of research.

#### **3.4.1 Pilot study**

The pilot study for this research was carried out in one hostel in the Liverpool area. This particular hostel housed homeless young people between the ages of sixteen and thirty. A high priority of the service offered was to resettle young people from the hostel into their own accommodation, via an independent tenancy. As described above, the aim of the pilot study was to evaluate the resettlement service at a hostel for young people in Liverpool, to which the commissioning body gave funding for a resettlement service. This involved understanding the perceptions and experiences of both staff and service users who had been involved with using and providing the service since it started in 1998. This initial pilot study was commissioned by the Comino Foundation, a charity interested in self efficacy and self improvement of young people, who had provided funding for a worker to provide the resettlement service within the hostel.

As a piece of research funded by a charitable organisation, it was evident that the research needed to meet the requirements of the funding body, as well as the expectations of the hostel management who were hoping that this research could be used to develop and improve the resettlement service. Early consultation with all interested parties, (especially hostel management and resettlement staff) highlighted that the experiences of the homeless people resettled from the hostel seemed to be affected by relationships between residents, hostel staff, hostel management and

external agencies. Despite the fact that the research needed to be pragmatic to meet the expectations of the funders and hostel management, it was still necessary for the research to have clearly defined epistemological underpinnings. An epistemological stance emphasising the importance of understanding the interactions of the aforementioned groups was clearly apparent and a methodological approach using qualitative methods was deemed appropriate. This methodological approach seemed a pragmatic solution to evaluating the resettlement service, as hostel management pointed to the failure of a previous quantitative 'exit' survey given to residents who no longer required resettlement support. This survey gave inadequate information for the accurate evaluation of the service which ex-residents had received. Furthermore, the rate of completion was low.

As this pilot study was to evaluate the resettlement at one particular hostel, it was critical that the research methods were able to gather data in sufficient quantity and quality for an evaluation of the service to take place. At this point in the research, it was critical, therefore, that the research methods were practical to gain evaluation data as Darlington and Scott (2002:120) state "evaluations are more likely to be concerned with getting answers to all questions that interest them than with the ideological purity of how those answers are obtained". After the failure of quantitative methods (the exit survey mentioned above) to adequately evaluate the resettlement service and the need for more in depth information, the method used for this pilot study was qualitative semi structured interviews. The qualitative data collected via interviews was used with some statistical data collected by the hostel, when individuals entered the hostel. This dual method was thought to be important to give some statistical background and help contextualise interview data. The quantitative data provided basic demographic information about the users of the service, gave some background as to previous experiences of homelessness and was used to develop a profile of the service users who used the service. This gave details of education, past accommodation and reasons for moving into the hostel. It was not compulsory for young people to complete this questionnaire, however, unlike the exit questionnaire (discussed above) most young people completed this whilst filling out paperwork to commence living in the hostel.

### *3.4.2 Sampling for the pilot study*

Hostel records indicated that there had been forty users of the resettlement service since it began in 1998. It was hoped that at least a quarter of these individuals would be able to take part in an interview thus all service users who had previously used the hostel service were included in the sampling frame. However, further issues of recruiting and accessing service users, as described on page 73, resulted in a much lower number of service users being involved in the research sample than had first been anticipated.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a number of young people who had been resettled into the local community after having been resident in the homeless hostel. Interviews were also carried out with young people, currently living in the hostel, who were undertaking resettlement training and working with the hostel's resettlement workers, as well as generic support and resettlement staff. The pilot study informed the report "The Resettlement Service at a Liverpool Hostel" completed on behalf of the Comino Foundation. The results of this were critical to informing the method and future direction of the main study. These issues will be discussed below.

The results of this study illustrated that the service could be improved by some changes to service delivery. Although these results were unique to the delivery of services within this one particular housing project, they could also be useful in a wider range of projects offering a similar type of service. The results illustrated that four major themes occurred and they are outlined very briefly below. They are also described in more detail in Hennessy et al 2005 (see appendix e).

#### *1. Hostel culture*

The aim of support work at the hostel was to offer assistance to young people to move into longer term and alternative housing options. The pilot study found that there was an optimum length of time in which a resident should stay in the hostel. Those who remained in the hostel for a longer length of time tended to easily lose the will and the motivation to find new accommodation and began to see an attraction in hostel living.

These attractions included the low cost of hostel accommodation and the daily contact with other young people in the hostel who were experiencing the same living situation.

## ***2. Availability and approachability of the resettlement service***

This result was perhaps specific to the hostel in which this research took place. The results illustrated that resettlement workers need to be integrated into the workings of the hostel in order that the service became easily accessible to hostel residents. Individuals who were homeless often suffered from lack of confidence which made attempting resettlement difficult, especially if they had little awareness of the resettlement service from their stay at the hostel.

## ***3. Creation of a resettlement team***

The demands of running a resettlement service meant that there needed to be available resettlement officers to deal with enquiries throughout the day, whilst others might be completing jobs offsite. This illustrated the highly demanding nature of this type of work which required a large amount of input from staff.

## ***4. Types of accommodation***

There was a narrow range of accommodation that was available to service users moving out of the hostel. Options available were independent accommodation or supported housing. Those who were moved on through the resettlement service received longer term assistance, with regular support visits to their new home from the resettlement worker. However, not all young people were moved on through the resettlement service; sometimes their hostel support workers assisted them to find accommodation in other local housing projects. This meant that some clients were not receiving the follow-on support from which such young people could have benefited.

### *3.4.3 Difficulties and limitations of the pilot study*

The results of the pilot study produced a useful report, and illustrated how dual methods could be useful to provide data which gave a fuller profile of the research problem. However, there were certain limitations of the results as the pilot was based on a small study in one hostel and moreover, hostel residents were aged between sixteen and thirty thus excluding a large proportion of those who might be homeless but were older. Also, any further research needed to consider those using resettlement services in a wider geographical area. Moreover, as the results described above illustrate there were key factors which seemed to determine whether the resettlement process was indeed successful but these seemed to be issues that were particularly localised to this housing project. Further research was needed to establish whether these were generalizable results or very specific to a particular cohort of young, homeless people.

The pilot study also highlighted some of the key difficulties of researching both service users and resettlement / support workers. These difficulties centred around accessing service users who were prepared to be involved in the research process. Such difficulties accessing resettled individuals were related to the complexities inherent in the process of resettling from homeless accommodation. These require further discussion in order to outline the effects that such challenges placed on the research process.

Many service users experienced a turbulent time when they first moved out of the hostel because of a change in both accommodation and lifestyle. Once away from the more structured lifestyle of the hostel, some service users found it difficult to adhere to appointments, making it difficult to organise research interviews. Some found it difficult, without onsite assistance of a support worker, to plan for such appointments, having no prior experience of doing this. In other cases, understandably, service users prioritised college or work commitments over meetings with the resettlement worker or a researcher. Furthermore, once service users moved out of the hostel, one of the key aims of resettlement work was for service users to become independent and to no longer receive support. A number of service users had already achieved this aim and

were reluctant to make contact with the support worker, when enquiries were made for them to take part in interviews for the research.

Moreover, it was inappropriate for some individuals to take part in the research study. The resettlement worker involved in the pilot study described how some service users suffered difficulties, which could potentially threaten the success of a new tenancy, once they left the hostel and were settled in their new accommodation. Such difficulties were wide ranging but included dealing with the poor quality of accommodation and with relationships with family, friends and partners. Furthermore, many service users found that adjusting to living alone could be especially problematic and stressful. This resulted in service users needing sensitively managed support and it was thought unethical to carry out research interviews with those who were already experiencing such challenging circumstances.

The complexities of the nature of resettlement caused many individuals to actively refuse to take part in the research, or for individuals to be excluded from the sampling frame because the process of resettlement was particularly stressful to them. The result of this process was that it excluded certain individuals from the sampling frame either by choice (excluding themselves) or being excluded because they were not thought to be suitable interviewees. The result of this was an opportunity for bias to occur within the sampling process. Whilst it was critical that guidance was sought from a resettlement worker regarding which service users would be available and suitable for interview, it was easy for the resettlement worker to suggest particular clients who could portray a certain view of the service on offer. Obviously the primary responsibility of the support worker was to look after the interests of the service users and whilst it is clear that there are important ethical questions regarding access to vulnerable service users, it seemed that certain service users were being denied the opportunity to take part in the research by key gatekeepers.

Observations and discussions with the resettlement worker also revealed challenging roles which resettlement workers undertook and which also made researching in this area a more difficult process. The work of a resettlement worker was varied and involved interaction to offer service users support, as well as working with service providers to attempt to ensure the provision of good quality accommodation. Working

with service providers was a time consuming task and one which often detracted from the fundamental role of providing support to young homeless people who had moved on from the hostel. The competing demands on a resettlement workers' time meant that although they were keen to improve the service, research came low on their list of priorities.

Moreover, there was some natural hesitancy from staff members working at this particular housing project about the intentions of the research and how the outcomes were to be utilised. This highlighted one of the fundamental problems inherent in researching in this field and carrying out evaluation studies. There was a general suspicion regarding what effects, if any, the research would have on service delivery. The terms and outcomes of the research had been negotiated with hostel management and as staff involved in service delivery had not been involved in this process, they seemed unclear what level of confidentiality could be assumed and what type of information that they could safely discuss. These difficulties were also compounded by the researcher being from an academic institution and being an 'outsider' to the organisation being researched.

As a result of the pilot study three main difficulties of carrying out resettlement research became apparent and are listed below, these needed to be overcome in order to carry out a larger study in this field.

- 1) Access to service users was evidently critical to the success of the research. However, it seemed that the method of accessing service users (through the resettlement worker) was not successful and risked collecting data which was potentially flawed as only those recommended by the resettlement worker were interviewed.
- 2) Gaining the support of the hostel staff, as well as management, relied on making the outcome of the research transparent as there seemed a general suspicion from both service users and support workers as to the aims, objectives and outcomes of the research. This seemed extremely important and whilst the basis of good research should explain the intended outcomes this seemed more critical to those who were working with vulnerable service users, who had suffered distressing personal

circumstances and needed extra reassurances regarding the confidentiality of the research.

3) A great deal of effort was needed to overcome apathy of potential respondents towards the research process. Both service users and service providers seemed to illustrate a lack of interest in taking part in the research.

### **3.5 Research design for the main study**

The challenges identified in the pilot study affected the overall research design of the larger study. The difficulties inherent in the initial piece of work illustrated how access to potential respondents and interviewees could be a major factor in how the research progressed. The pilot study had concentrated on gathering qualitative data. The use of secondary quantitative data had contextualised the qualitative data particularly providing demographic information about a wider range of individuals than the qualitative research was able to access. After carrying out the pilot study, there was a major concern that service users would not want to take part in the research. Furthermore, Steel (2001) emphasizes that vulnerable groups such as homeless people may be excluded from research simply because they have historically been a hard-to-reach population. When researching previously homeless but now resettled people there is a greater risk that the opinions of this group may become less accessible and they have the potential to be further marginalized. It was hoped, therefore, that by using a variety of methods to research service users that this would go some way to encourage service users to take part in the research.

It was decided, therefore, that this larger piece of doctoral research, would like the pilot study, need a dual method to provide an accurate picture of the resettled population as well as to practically access to the target group of service users. The main study would combine the use of a quantitative method (a questionnaire) and a qualitative method (semi-structured interviews). The ontological and epistemological stance of the main body of the research remained aligned to a pragmatic methodology, as it was clear that in order to gain data about the target population, that no method alone could independently provide adequate data about the research field. Moreover, the format of the semi-structured interviews was influenced by symbolic interactionism, as they focused on the interaction between individuals and the

meanings that homeless individuals placed on these interactions. Thus the research was designed to be in two sections:

Section 1: A quantitative questionnaire to be completed by service users of resettlement support services. The aim was to collect 200 completed questionnaires from users of resettlement services.

Section 2: Qualitative interviews carried out with service users and support workers.

The research population therefore included two distinct groups. The first was all homeless people who had used a resettlement service in the Greater Merseyside Area. The second was the staff who worked in the area of resettlement or supported housing and whose job involved providing support to those who had been homeless. The research was also divided into two parts. The first stage was the completion of the questionnaires by service users which would be followed up by interviews with a sample of service users and service providers.

The use of a questionnaire could be used to help to break down barriers and the initial suspicion of potential respondents, by asking some general questions about their experiences of resettlement. A questionnaire was thought to be one way which would help to overcome some of the problems with accessing service users identified when carrying out the pilot study.

It was decided, however, that the use of a questionnaire would not be the best manner in which to research the perspectives of support workers. Initial contacts illustrated that there was a fairly small number of workers who specialised in resettlement support work within the geographical area of the research. This meant that the research would have to have a larger sampling frame thus making it necessary to extend the geographical boundary of the research. This would have been difficult considering the time constraints placed on data collection. Even with a high proportion of possible respondents within the sampling frame returning a questionnaire this may not have yielded a large return. Moreover, as De Vaus (1991) suggests the size of a sample can be determined by the manner in which the data is going to be analysed. The intention was to analyse any resulting data from the research using a computer aided statistics package (SPSS). As De Vaus points out a

sample needs to be sufficiently large so that when the data is put into subcategories during such analysis there will be sufficient numbers in each to carry out statistical testing. A questionnaire survey, therefore, of support workers would have been difficult to analyse because of the potential low numbers responding to a questionnaire making it difficult to derive accurate statistical results and make inferences. Furthermore, initial enquiries revealed that there was variation in job titles and responsibilities amongst resettlement staff. This did not make carrying out a survey a realistic proposition, as it would have been difficult to design a questionnaire that was generic enough to make allowances for these differences. With the problems of using a questionnaire identified it was decided that semi structured interviews would be used as these had been successfully employed in the pilot study. Initial enquiries with support workers in the area found that most support workers were prepared to take part in such an interview.

The decision to use two different research methods resulted in there being two distinctly different parts of the research however, the method involved in gaining the sample was interlinked. Individuals who filled out the questionnaire could give their details at the end of the questionnaire if they were prepared to take part in an interview. Through the process of delivering the questionnaires to the various projects resettlement workers were also identified who were prepared to be interviewed about their work. This process of accessing service users is discussed in more depth below.

### ***3.5.1 Accessing service users***

The research aim was to try and access 200 service users to complete questionnaires regarding their experiences of using resettlement support services. It was hoped that support workers would aid facilitation of the survey by distributing the questionnaire to his/her service users. Service users who filled out the questionnaire were given the opportunity to provide contact details if they were happy to be interviewed at a later date. Service users were then given the choice to return the questionnaire to the support worker in a sealed envelope or return it directly to the researcher via a pre paid envelope. This gave the opportunity for the respondent to be candid in their responses, without concern about the support worker reading written comments and responses.

In order to carry out this procedure successfully, it was therefore necessary for the researcher to gain the trust of the support workers and for them to see a purpose in being involved in the research. To achieve this the researcher first contacted project management by telephone and then, where possible, agreed a follow up meeting with appropriate staff at each project soon after the initial telephone contact to discuss the purpose, aims and objectives of the research.

### ***3.5.2 Research methods: use of a questionnaire***

As highlighted below, resettlement support to homeless individuals could be offered by disparate types of organisations, thus the design of the questionnaire had to be able to be completed by a variety of service users who accessed different types of support. In order to achieve a generic questionnaire that would be appropriate to all service users the design of the questionnaire was based on information gathered from the pilot study, the current literature and advice from workers at a number of organisations. The main themes which emerged from these sources were then used to develop the questionnaire. The major areas that the questionnaire included regarded the types of assistance that service users wanted from support workers, their perceptions of the areas in which they were living and their previous housing and homelessness experiences. Critically, one issue that the questionnaire needed to address was as to whether there were differences in the type of support that was being offered by the varying support providers. Although the pilot study had been based in one hostel it became apparent that the individual workers used different approaches when offering support. It was clear that research was needed to further examine the differences between support services at a variety of projects. Details regarding income and involvement in training schemes were also included again because these issues seemed so intrinsically linked to the experience individuals had of the resettlement process.

The questionnaire was constructed using simple questions, with straightforward language, which avoid technical terminology. Oppenheim (1992) considers this to be important to the design of a good questionnaire but it was critical that this was

achieved in this study because of the potential of respondents having low levels of literacy, a trend already established by the pilot study.

The questionnaire was to be self administered, the advantages of using this type of questionnaire were that it required less input from the researcher to complete it. Thus the researcher could concentrate on getting a larger sample size, rather than needing to offer individual assistance to complete each questionnaire. This also removed any effects of bias that might be introduced by having a third party complete the questionnaire. In order to ensure that service users were able to complete the questionnaire it was piloted with a small group of service users (n=12) and support workers from two different agencies were asked for their opinion of the layout, structure and wording. Staff feedback regarding the questionnaire was very positive although they suggested some minor alterations to the ordering of the questions.

The design of the questionnaire was also generally well received a by pilot sample of service users. The service users chosen to pilot the questionnaire were resident in a number of housing projects in South Liverpool, all of whom had the same landlord. This was an excellent organisation with which to carry out a pilot because of the range of different service users supported by this project. Thus as Finch and Kosecoff (1998) suggest as a model of good practice the survey was piloted with a sample who would reflect the sample in the main part of the study. The majority of respondents to the questionnaire in the pilot were able to fill in the questionnaire with no assistance and understood the questions. However, two service users requested help with its completion as both acknowledged having poor literacy skills. This highlighted the complications that using a self administered questionnaire may bring. When these two individuals had been unable to complete the questionnaire they had naturally approached their support worker for assistance, seeing their support worker as someone they could trust for this sort of help. However, whilst it was critical to gain a sizeable questionnaire return, help from a support worker to complete the questionnaire could introduce bias as many of the questions examined the service that clients were receiving from support services. In order to overcome this problem when the questionnaire was distributed the cover letter for each questionnaire gave the researcher's contact details should they want assistance with completion. Provision of

these details resulted in requests from three service users for assistance to complete questionnaires.

### *3.5.3 Sampling procedure for the questionnaire*

It was critical that an effective sampling frame was used in order to ensure external validity and thus be representative of homeless people who were experiencing resettlement services. In order to begin the research there was a need for a sampling frame in order to distribute the questionnaire. Probability sampling was thought to be the most effective type of way to choose a sample as Fowler (1984) suggests, the key to good sampling is to use probability sampling, where everyone from a wider population has an equal chance of being included in the study. This was the premise on which the sampling procedure for this study was based, in order to try and ensure a wide and unbiased sampling frame. To achieve this aim and to ensure that individuals from all projects had the chance to be included, the researcher approached the Supporting People sections of five local authorities and requested a list of all projects which provided support services to homeless people in the Merseyside area. Four local councils provided a list of service providers, whilst the fifth local council refused to give a list of resettlement support services, claiming that issuing this list contravened Data Protection Legislation. In order to ensure that projects within this area were still included in the research the researcher asked workers at other projects about the availability of services in this particular Local Authority district. Furthermore, in April 2003 a conference about the topic of resettlement resulted in a number of contacts from a variety of projects which were also approached to take part in the research. This comprehensive method to try and contact the whole of the resettled population ensured that the vast majority of the projects within the Merseyside area were invited to take part in the research. However, although project workers agreed to be involved in the project this did not mean that it was easy to contact the service users or to encourage them to take part.

Initial contact with all the projects was made by telephone. The purpose of this was to establish specific details regarding the nature of the project and what type of housing support the project offered to its service users. Details regarding how many service users were currently using support services and how many staff were employed

offering housing support services were also gathered at this time. Many services could only give an estimate of the numbers of service users using the resettlement service as they did not keep an exact record of the number of users. At the same time, the key contact at each organisation was informed of the research and asked if support staff at the organisation would be able to facilitate the distribution of questionnaires. An information pack about the research was sent to each organisation that expressed an interest in the research.

It was at this point that a number of projects were identified as not being relevant to the research. For example, one service provided a day centre for homeless people offering basic amenities such as hot food and laundry facilities but did not provide help with rehousing or resettlement. The final research project included fifteen projects the majority of which fell into the five local authority boroughs of the Merseyside area. A further two projects were also included and they fell just beyond the boundaries of these boroughs. It was important for these projects to be included, because a number of resettlement workers identified these projects as providing services to those living in two of the aforementioned boroughs, where there was an apparent lack of service provision and availability. A brief description of each type of project included in the study is given below.

#### ***3.5.4 Projects included in the study***

Research indicated that there was a diverse range of projects which were offering services in the Merseyside area. All of these offered resettlement support although services often use different terminology to describe similar services. In keeping with the aims and objectives of the study, a range of projects were included in the sampling frame and the aim was to examine the widest range of resettlement experiences. In order to meet these aims effort was made to ensure that different types of projects were included thus ensuring the opportunity to achieve disparate data. Furthermore, it was also important to ensure that individuals from the different parts of the region were included. This would add a further dimension to the data as experiences between local authority areas were being compared and contrasted. The sample area therefore included the mainly urban areas of a large city and three major towns, as well as the suburbs of the aforementioned areas.

### ***3.5.5 Floating/resettlement support from a hostel-based service***

This was the most common type of project involved in the study. Resettlement support was available to residents who wanted to move on from hostel accommodation. A resettlement worker would offer assistance to ensure a smooth transition from living in the hostel to living in independent accommodation and continue to visit a service user once they were living independently in the community.

### ***3.5.6 Floating support through rent deposit/bond schemes***

Bond schemes provide a deposit and/or rent in advance for service users who need to access private rented housing and two bond schemes were included in the study. The scheme made an agreement with the client's landlord to offer cash in advance to pay a deposit or a guarantee. These amounts covered any damage to the property during the tenancy of the client. The schemes also offered housing support for those who may have to take accommodation in the private rental sector. The support was adapted to the needs of the client and was usually offered via home visits to a client, whilst they settled into their new accommodation. This type of scheme was especially used by service users who were unlikely to be defined by the Local Authority as statutorily homeless or had been excluded from living in social rented housing because of exclusion policies used by certain landlords. Such schemes also increased access to private rented accommodation where access could be easily denied because of the lack of rent deposit.

### ***3.5.7 Supported accommodation***

A number of organisations offered supported accommodation with on-site support. These provided different levels of support through a variety of housing projects. Support was offered through a support plan drawn up whilst the service user was living in the project. Some service users would eventually move from this type of accommodation to other types of accommodation, which offered less intensive support.

### 3.5.8 Supported lodging schemes

These schemes were aimed at young people who were homeless and provided accommodation for individuals with host families who would provide support to the young person. The scheme opened up another avenue of housing to young people who were especially vulnerable, where hostel living might not be a suitable option.

The process described above to develop a relevant sampling frame and to identify the appropriate projects took a number of weeks and was complicated by the unique organisational structure of each project. Some resettlement and support workers were autonomous of their organisation's management and could make an independent decision to take part in the research process. However, in other cases, approval for staff and residents to take part had to be gained from project management. In the majority of cases this was successfully acquired and initial meetings with project workers who worked with individuals needing housing and resettlement support were arranged. Such workers agreed to distribute the questionnaire to current service users, whilst a number also agreed to contact previous service users, in an effort to gather a larger sample.

As described above, the aim was to achieve a representative sample of the resettled population via probability sampling, where individuals had a random chance of being selected to fill out a questionnaire. In reality, however, there were a plethora of forces which prevented a truly random sample from being achieved. The resettlement workers played a large part in this, as it was their co-operation which determined whether certain service users took part in the research. The sampling procedure was therefore more akin to convenience sampling i.e. those who are present and able to complete a questionnaire when needed by the researcher. The sampling process was somewhat influenced by the difficulties of accessing individuals (see below), and achieving a target figure of 200 completed questionnaires proved to be an impossible challenge. It was important however that the questionnaire was still given to relevant individuals (i.e. those who had experienced a resettlement service) and the research did not succumb to using what Groger et al (1999) describe as a 'scrounge sampling' method. They (ibid.: 830) describe this as "desperate and continuing efforts, against all mounting odds, to round out the collection of individuals with relevant types of

experiences we know to exist but have not been able to capture". The questionnaires were collected from projects over a six month period between December 2003 and June 2003 with 172 questionnaires being completed and returned. It was found that meeting the target figure of 200 returned questionnaires had been an unrealistic target and this return although lower than anticipated reflects the complications and difficulties of accessing previously homeless individuals (discussed in the next section). To gather more data would have required extending the geographical area of the research, which would have made it difficult to make the results generalizable to a specific location (as this study aimed to do). Moreover, there had been a saturation of projects within the Merseyside area and all projects offering resettlement services had been asked to take part. Furthermore, extending the location would have made it practically difficult to meet the deadline for data collection. Nevertheless, the quantity of questionnaires collected was judged an adequate number on which to carry out analysis of the quantitative data.

### **3.6 Access and gatekeepers and their effects on questionnaire sampling**

Access to vulnerable service user groups can be particularly difficult to achieve. Despite the large number of studies around the subject of homelessness, there is little attention given to the issue of access to homeless people, although Christian and Abrams (2003:145) do comment "it is perhaps worth noting the resource-intensive nature of studying homeless people". Initial research for this project identified the difficulties that a researcher could face when attempting to access a particular service user group. One of the important key factors about resettlement is that individuals are given the opportunity to settle into the local community, and thus have moved away from the lifestyle related to temporary accommodation. By definition, this meant that those individuals that the researcher wanted to contact were dispersed into the community, and, in the majority of cases had taken a positive step to a settled way of life. Whilst support workers at particular projects were still in touch with a large proportion of people who had been resettled some no longer needed or requested visits from the support worker. It was these individuals who posed the greatest challenge to contact as the researcher could not ask the support worker to invite a service user to fill out a questionnaire on a routine support visit to the client's home. To access this group of people who had been resettled for the longest period of time it

relied on the good will of the support worker to distribute questionnaires (by post or hand delivery) to clients with whom they were no longer in contact. A number of support workers from various projects were very willing to carry out this task seeing it as an opportunity to re-contact previous clients and check on their well being. Some service users had moved on from their original resettled address and support workers no longer knew their whereabouts. These service users were impossible to relocate. The disadvantage of this method of contact was very evident as the researcher was only able to contact a minority of the service users who had been settled for a period of over two years<sup>6</sup>. Kraus and Graves (2002), who have attempted to create a methodology guide for researchers attempting to interview homeless or formerly homeless individuals, describe a number of methods that can be used to overcome the problems that the researcher encounters in recruiting those who had been formerly homeless. Kraus and Graves (ibid.) suggest in order to contact this group that researchers should advertise in social housing agencies where formerly homeless people may frequent, with such advertisements highlighting remuneration for taking part in the research. The researcher did not pursue this method of recruitment because of ethical implications highlighted by Liverpool John Moores University ethics committee regarding payment for interviews and it was unlikely that such advertising would generate a high response without such payments being offered.

This time-consuming process of contacting service users is also described by Douglas et al (1998:12), in their study of floating support. They describe how they were reliant on recruiting organisations which were prepared to pass details to service users to partake in research. Similarly, this research was reliant upon organisations being interested in partaking in the research and encouraging service users to do the same. It is evident that this process had flaws which could affect the sampling of the research. Aldridge and Levine (2001:92) suggest that relying on "intermediaries" to distribute questionnaires in this manner is flawed; either they will coerce individuals to complete questionnaires or they may not pursue the matter vigorously, meaning that few people will complete the questionnaire. Furthermore there could be considerable bias as only certain organisations may take part and then access to certain sets of service users could be denied. It also became apparent, as also highlighted in the pilot

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<sup>6</sup> Two years was the maximum amount of time that services offered resettlement support. In many cases support was not needed for such a long period of time.

study, that although the researcher negotiated access with particular managers, it was then the support staff who would become involved in distributing the questionnaire and helping to arrange interviews. The ability to access the service users depended on both the manager and support workers seeing the benefits of the research and subsequently allowing the researcher access to their clients.

A number of projects declined to take part in the research because of the extra work pressure which they perceived the research would place on support staff. The effect of this 'gatekeeping' process resulted in a low number of homeless people being involved from certain projects and closed off the opportunity for numbers of service users to participate. Barnes (1979) suggests that prior discussion with gatekeepers is appropriate when the researcher is trying to negotiate access to whatever it is that they guard (in this case service users). However, despite these attempts at negotiation by the researcher certain projects still highlighted objections and were reluctant to inform service users of the research project describing that service users would not be interested in taking part because of low motivation. This meant that some service users were not accessed by the researcher as it was difficult to get access to the client group without assistance from the key gatekeepers.

Furthermore, the sampling procedure was also influenced and determined by outside factors which could not be controlled by the researcher. The growth of interest in resettlement and Supporting People also posed a challenge for the researcher as one agency was reluctant to take part in this research after having recently been involved in research carried out by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The manager of this project voiced concerns that vulnerable service users would be 'over researched'. Punch (1986:47) argues that one ethical dimension of social research should be that "researchers should not spoil the field for others" yet it seemed that because of this previous research access to the research field had been closed. Despite reassurances by the researcher that the aims, objectives and outcomes of the two research projects were fundamentally different the manager's concerns could not be countered. This was not an isolated case with two other projects stating that they were constantly asked if their organisation and project service users would take part in research. Because these projects were asked to take part in multiple research projects they were able to be more selective regarding the research in which they chose to be involved.

These issues provided a number of contentious issues for the researcher. To comply with University ethics regulations she was unable to make payments for those filling out questionnaires or being interviewed, yet it seemed that there was almost a 'competition' to offer the best incentive for service users to take part. In both instances it was explained that no payment could be made for respondents to be involved in the research. This may go some way to explain the subsequent low level of returned questionnaires from one of these projects.

Some resettlement workers also pointed out that some of their service users had refused to fill out the questionnaire. A number of reasons could be suggested for this according to Aldridge and Levine (2001) and a number are particularly relevant here. Aldridge and Levine (2001) suggest that one of the main reasons why individuals do not complete questionnaires is because of their dislike of form filling and they suffer from they refer to as 'survey fatigue'. Most homeless individuals spend a high proportion of their time filling in forms to apply for housing and benefits and a questionnaire seemed to simply be another form that they had to complete. More importantly for some service users who were experiencing independent living for the first time after a period of homelessness it was understandable that they might not want to contemplate recent housing difficulties, in order to complete a questionnaire. Furthermore, some service users were genuinely concerned about the intentions of the research and how information they gave would be used in the project. This was despite the reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research process.

This highlighted that there were certain individuals who were likely to refuse to take part in the research. Moreover, there were also a group of individuals who were hard to reach who were not able to take part in the research. Whilst some individuals might have refused to take part in the study those who were not in contact with support services would not have the opportunity to take part and this illustrated that the method of recruiting through intermediaries had its drawbacks. Although efforts were made to overcome this difficulty with staff trying to contact past service users, a shortcoming of the sampling method is that those who have irregular contact with a resettlement worker may be excluded from the sampling frame. Also the group most likely to be excluded were those who had experienced resettlement but been

unsuccessful and moved on. This illustrates that there are a number of shortcomings of the methods of research adopted in this study with the potential for certain service users, particularly who may be socially excluded, to be omitted from the research. However every effort was made with the assistance of support workers to contact such individuals even if they were no longer using the resettlement service and had moved in to new accommodation. Nevertheless this may mean that there was a still an under representation of those who have failed at the resettlement process and are no longer accessing the key gatekeeping services.

### ***3.6.1 Sampling for interviews***

Sampling strategy for carrying out interviews was a much simpler process than the attempts made to get individuals to complete the questionnaire. All staff, (nineteen in all) that helped to facilitate questionnaires were asked to take part in an interview regarding their role in providing support. Of the nineteen, seventeen agreed to be interviewed, with work pressures being too demanding for the final two workers to take part in the study. The final sample provided a good range of workers from different organisations and included two senior members of staff. Recruiting service users to take part in interviews was more difficult and the same problems as those in the pilot study, in finding service users who were prepared to be interviewed became apparent (this is discussed in more detail below). Service users could give their personal details on the questionnaire if they were prepared to take part in an interview. However, when service users were contacted by the researcher to establish an interview date three were no longer prepared to take part, one was unwell and three were not contactable with the given details. Of the remaining thirty who gave their details twenty five interviewees were randomly selected and interviewed.

### ***3.6.2 Interviewing Vulnerable Service Users***

In the majority of cases the researcher visited the support workers to deliver and collect completed questionnaires. This gave the opportunity for the researcher to meet support workers and to identify staff who would be prepared to be interviewed for this particular strand of the research. The service user questionnaires were examined and those respondents who gave their details to be interviewed were

contacted and the researcher arranged a convenient time and place for this to be carried out. The potential interviewee was also asked if they would like their support worker to be present at the interview. A number of interviewees welcomed their support worker being present and, for a minority, it ensured that there was someone with whom they were comfortable was present at the interview. However despite the positive functions of having a support worker at hand this presented some more fundamental research questions regarding the validity of the data gathered. This was because it was difficult for service users to give totally unbiased responses about the support services that they received when the support provider was present in the room. This problem was easily overcome by interviewing individuals in a different room of the house. Most support workers were aware of the difficulties that his/her presence caused and gladly waited outside the room whilst the interview was conducted. When a support worker was not present and interviews were carried out within a service user's home, a second member of university staff was asked to attend the interview for safety reasons.

Despite these issues, surprisingly, many service users were prepared to provide constructive criticism about the services that they received even when the support worker was in the same room. A number service users were prepared to be very open about the service they had received even if this experience had not been positive.

### *3.6.3 Location of interviews*

Interviews took place in a number of locations with the large majority of these conducted at the home of interviewees and some being carried out at the hostel or housing project where the person had previously lived. Whilst the researcher was unable to provide remuneration for individuals taking part in interviews, most interviewees afforded the researcher considerable hospitality particularly when being interviewed in their own homes. This included offering the researcher a hot or cold drink or a small snack with a number of respondents buying extra groceries in anticipation of the researcher's visit. A number of participants were evidently distressed if these norms of hospitality could not be achieved because of low income or because his/her accommodation was not suitably furnished to receive a visitor.

The researcher was also invited to a 'resettlement course' which was run by one hostel. The course ran for six weekly sessions of three hours and included sessions on cooking, managing money and applying for socially rented housing. It also provided a tour of the local areas where housing was available for all the course attendees once they moved on from the hostel. The researcher actively involved herself in the group activities and discussions with the hostel residents. Service users were informed that the researcher would be present at the course sessions and were given the opportunity to oppose her presence, although no participant objected to her involvement in the course activities. Subsequently, one hostel resident who attended the course volunteered to take part in an interview. Whilst observations were not initially intended as part of the research design, they allowed the researcher to gain a wider understanding of the issues that a particular group of homeless people were facing whilst they were attempting the process of resettlement. Such observations provided a fuller picture of the research field as well as going some way to contextualising and deepening knowledge of particular aspects of the resettlement process. These observations also assisted the provision of rich qualitative data.

#### *3.6.4 Interview format*

In a similar approach to the pilot study two groups of individuals were interviewed the first being support workers who worked with service users, the second being service users, each group being interviewed using an appropriate interview schedule. The focus throughout the interviews was placed on understanding the interactions between individuals during the resettlement process and the meanings placed on being homeless.

A further objective of the interviews was to consider the role that support workers played in delivering resettlement services and to discuss the challenges and difficulties that were inherent in this type of work. There were various types of organisation that carried out resettlement work and workers had different job titles, which often made it difficult to understand what their job role involved. In order to discuss their job role further the opening question of the interview with staff was 'Could you tell me what your job entails within your organisation?' This was a useful way to start interviews as it allowed members of staff to discuss all aspects of their

job role. As this was a very general opening question a schedule was then used to ensure that prompts were given to discuss all relevant areas.

A schedule of questions was also devised to use during interviews with service users. Like interviews with staff members, interviews began with a very general question, 'Could you tell me how you came to be living in your current accommodation?' This gave service users the opportunity to describe their housing situation in their own terms and further questions regarding aspects of their housing career could be developed as the interview proceeded. Further questions were divided into two main areas considering housing and support experiences prior to resettlement and current experiences. Questions aimed to be probing but remained sensitive to the experiences of service users. The style of the interview remained as informal as possible with the overall aim for the interview to feel like a natural conversation, or as Robson (1993:228) describes a "conversation with a purpose".

Some service users were clear that they did not wish to give details of their prior living conditions or the reasons why they had become homeless, with a number refusing to answer direct questions regarding these issues. In these circumstances the interview schedule was adapted to ascertain as much detail as possible about a person's housing career whilst respecting their need for privacy regarding certain issues in their life. In order to be able to redirect the interview in this manner, Mason (1996:43) describes how it requires the researcher to be able "to think on their feet", to redirect the interview, whilst still gathering useful data to the research study. This was, at times, challenging to both redirect the interview and to redirect it in such a way to ensure that the resulting data was still relevant to the research study. This highlighted one of the difficulties of carrying out this style of interview with vulnerable service users. However, this approach ensured that the resulting data truly reflected the experiences of those who had been homeless as they directed the interview to discuss their experiences of homelessness and support in a relevant manner. This ensured that experiences and interactions described were seen through the eyes of those being studied (Bryman, 2001). This type of approach was also important in order to provide a "deeper" (Silverman, 2000:89) understanding of the issues involved in this social process.

The decision was made to tape record all interviews of both staff and service users, so that data from the interviews could be accurately recorded. However since the nature of the topic for some individuals was so sensitive, permission was sought from each interviewee to record. All support workers expressed that they were comfortable being tape recorded although they were concerned about the confidentiality of the data particularly when they were discussing the circumstances of individual service users. However during interviews most workers were careful not to give specific details of cases but spoke in more general terms about their experiences working in the support sector.

However, in contrast to support workers, a number of services users (five in total) commented that they did not like being tape recorded, although only three of these interviewees actually asked for the tape recorder not to be used. A further service user asked for the tape recorder to be stopped during the interview as he deemed that his personal information was highly sensitive. As Chatzifotiou (2000) describes, tape recording can often be off putting when the nature of the topic being researched is particularly sensitive to the respondents. In these cases permission was sought for the researcher to take notes which were then written up in a transcript style within hours of the interview. May (2001) highlights the risk of the occurrence of interviewer bias when not using a tape recorder, as words from interviewees could be substituted by the words of the researcher. However, it was hoped that the speed at which these were written up after the interview would assist the retention of the interview information and the resulting 'transcripts' accurately reflected what individuals had said. Tape-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim with notes added to each as major trends and themes began to emerge. Once transcribed all interviewees were assigned a pseudonym to assure anonymity. Interviews were all carried out between February and August 2004 with each interview varying in length between twenty minutes and an hour and a half.

### **3.7 Analysis of the resulting data**

A database was created in SPSS to assist the analysis of the questionnaire data. The results of the questionnaire data were entered into SPSS using guidelines suggested by Kinnear and Gray (1999). No difficulties became apparent when the data was being

entered into the statistics database. Statistical testing was then used to draw conclusions from the data collected. This included using chi-squared to measure associations between variables. The Mann-Whitney U test was also used to measure the differences between variables in different groups (such as men and women). This non parametric test was used as the data was shown to be unevenly distributed.

Analysis of the qualitative data was a more complex process as a multiplicity of methods for analysing qualitative data have been suggested by researchers favouring qualitative methods (see Glasser and Strauss (1967); Mason (2002); Miles and Huberman (1994) and Strauss and Corbin (1990)). Other more simplified methods have been suggested in order to easily classify and code data to produce accessible research reports (Lacey and Luff, 2001). Mason (2002) describes three approaches which can potentially be used to analyse the data of qualitative interviews, the most commonly used being cross-sectional indexing. This involves the use of a systematic indexing system which is applied to the data and index categories to form a series of sub headings which help to categorise the data. As this study was loyal to a pragmatic methodology, this meant epistemologically that both deductive and inductive methods were used to develop theory. In effect this meant that the mode of analysis of the qualitative data was to test as well as develop theory and concepts. Nevertheless, it was hoped that the data would also be used to develop new theories rather than simply testing ideas and concepts from previous research.

One way to develop an indexing system to analyse the qualitative data, is to use a computer programme (e.g. Nvivo). Richards and Richards (1994) suggest that one of the advantages of using a computer program to analyse qualitative data is that it can manage not only the data from interview transcripts but can also assist data management by linking concepts and theoretical ideas within a data matrix. It was decided however, that the process of analysis would be carried out without the aid of such software for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was questioned whether a novice researcher with no experience of this computer package would be able to develop enough expertise in the limited amount of time available to be able to analyse a considerable amount of interview transcripts. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, there was an epistemological question regarding the use of such a computer package. One of the main criticisms of computer-aided qualitative analysis

is that there is the potential for the researcher to lack a deeper understanding of the data. There is a risk that the qualitative data is reduced to a series of variables as in quantitative data and simply compared and contrasted rather than interlinking themes and concepts being developed. As Silverman (2000) highlights there is the risk that qualitative data will be reduced to analytic logic (similar to that in quantitative data analysis). Thus a deeper understanding of the data has the potential to be lost because the researcher has not developed the ability to become so deeply immersed in the data itself.

With the idea of using a computer package dismissed, cross sectional indexing was carried out using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) coding procedure. This involved adding codes and categories to the data looking for initial themes in the data and then, once this initial process was completed, recoding them should new themes constructs or relationships be identified. Following these guidelines each individual transcript was examined, with sections of the text being coded, as key themes emerge from the data and patterns and correlations with the pilot research examined. In the short quote below, for example, four key themes were highlighted. These were problems with social security, nature of support work, service users' need for emotional support and the need for practical assistance in order that service users could keep their tenancy.

*The majority of it is... just tenancy related issues... some of it is crisis intervention. We refer to counselling, but in theory we are supposed to provide support in relation to the tenancy; landlord negotiation, mediation. If there is any problem with the housing benefit claim, then we would certainly get involved. The practical kind of issues of setting up a home, making sure that the clients have benefit maximisation. ... I mean I don't think that anyone in the office could say that they solely offered tenancy support. I think it's always a bit more than that.*

Once any theme had been noted, further interview transcripts were analysed to establish whether this was a recurring theme throughout all the data. Initially the interview data for service users and service providers was examined independently, however there was incredible convergence on the topics discussed. This comparison helped to develop a series of main categories within the data with a number of subcategories also being developed. Care was taken, as Miles and Huberman (1994)

point out, not to develop too many categories as this can complicate the analysis process by making the categories difficult to remember whilst the interview material is being coded.

The development of subcategories helped with the coding of data as there was a considerable overlap of information between main categories, although it was still difficult to divide data between categories. Initially therefore, some data was put into multiple categories and then examined in the light of other relating data to establish where the data was best placed to establish relevant theories. This is what Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to as the bridging process within analysis and is similar to Glaser and Strauss' (1967) 'constant comparative method'. Both of these processes or methods refer to seeing and developing new relationships within given categories as well as developing new ones. Notes were also made about the relationships between these themes as they emerged. Care was taken to ensure that data was still examined contextually, as Mason (2002) suggests there needs to be particular attention to ensure that the meaning of text is not lost simply by removing it from its context. This process was carried out until there appeared to be saturation of the classified categories as all the data transcripts had been examined.

A further risk of examining qualitative data is suggested by Mason (2002) who highlights that analysis can be reduced to the comparison of data via particular variables, for example contrasting interview data of men with women. Although this criticism that data should not be analysed in such a dichotomous manner is accepted, it was necessary when analysing the data from this study to compare and contrast the experiences of those who had been living in various types of accommodation and receiving different types of support. Despite Mason's reticence regarding this type of analysis, Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that compare and contrast is a valid method to analyse data. This was a method adopted in this study, although care was taken to still examine the data categories in relation to their context.

To complete the analysis of the qualitative data a comparison was then carried out with the results of the quantitative data. This was useful to compliment the results found in the quantitative data and aided in the explanation of patterns and statistically significant results. This method of comparing results in this manner Creswell et al

(2003) describe as concurrent triangulation design. As well as examining evidence that was comparable, this process allowed for contradictory evidence to be examined and explained.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter has explored the possible methodologies which could have been used to explore the issues surrounding resettlement and homelessness. Because of the complexities of the issues involved, the study was based on pragmatist methodology which allows for a dual method to be used. This was the best method to engage service users, who, as illustrated by the pilot study were difficult to access in order to gain their participation in the study. Questionnaires were used to initially gauge general attitudes towards resettlement with semi-structured interviews being carried out with a sub sample of those who replied to the questionnaires. A number of service providers were also interviewed in order to gather a more rounded perspective of resettlement services. The combination of using these two methods created a rich base of data which the following two chapters describe. The next chapter (chapter 4) reports the findings of the quantitative research which explored the experiences of individuals whilst they were homeless and through the resettlement process via responses to a questionnaire, whilst chapter 5 examines the data collected as a result of the semi structured interviews.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Quantitative Results**

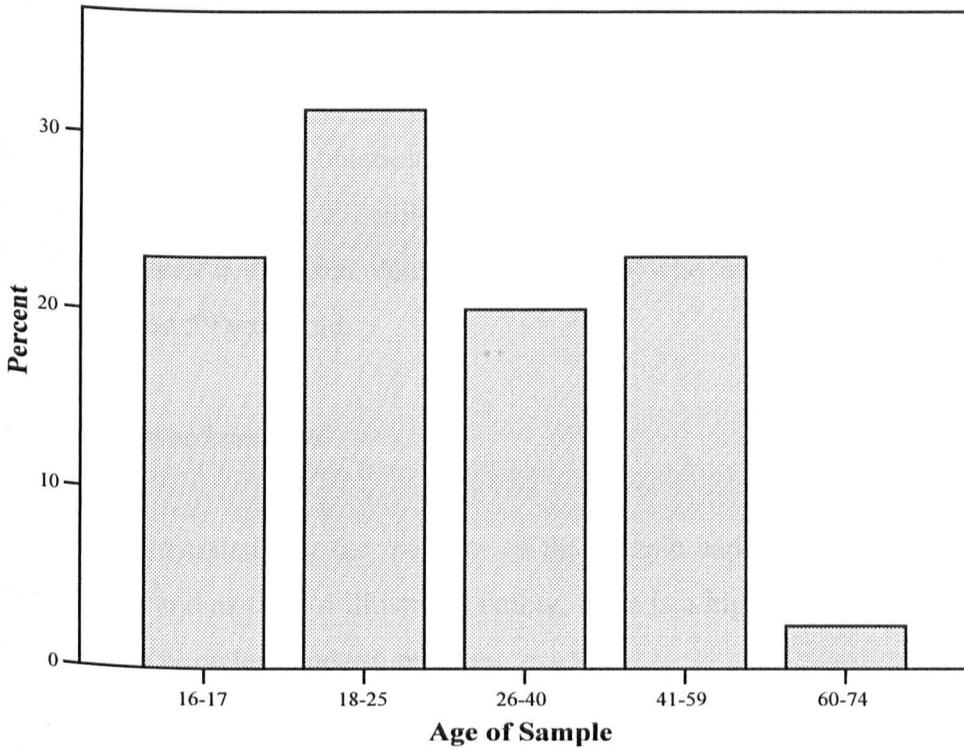
This chapter will outline the quantitative results recorded from the returned questionnaires. It will begin with a description of the participants in the survey and continue by examining the relationship between factors which affect the process of resettlement. This will include looking at the time spent homeless, examine individuals' experiences of support and consider how individuals perceived the areas to which they were resettled. The chapter will conclude by considering the effects of low income, education and training on individuals' prospects of resettlement.

#### **4.1 Description of the sample**

##### **4.1.1 Gender and age**

The sample consisted of 172 individuals of which 61% were men and 39% were women. The sample was almost equally divided between those who were under 25 with 54% being between 16 and 25 and 45% being between 26 and 74. Figure 3 below also illustrates the particularly low proportion of participants who were post 60.

**Figure 3: Distribution of age of sample**



(n = 169, missing = 3)

It was important to separate certain age groups within this analysis in order to establish if there were differences in experiences. There were a number of housing projects which were aimed at housing those aged between 18 and 25, similarly there were a limited amount of projects which only housed those between the ages of 16-18. These two age bands were therefore separated in order to identify any differences in experiences between these age groups. Further examination and a cross tabulation with gender revealed that all those who were over 60 were men, with the oldest woman in the sample being 53. The mean age of participants was 29 years old.

In order to further describe the sample a comparison of gender and age group was computed. The results of this are shown in table 3 below.

**Table 3: Comparison of gender and age of the sample**

Gender	Age Groups (%)				
	16-17	18-25	26-40	41-59	60-74
Male (n= 100)	13	30	28	25	4
Female (n= 66)	38	35	9	18	0

The results of this cross tabulation illustrate a clustering of homeless young women in the sample who are under 25, with only a very small percentage of women being over 25. This shows a different distribution to men who are more evenly distributed between 18 and 59 years old.

#### 4.1.2 Time spent homeless

The results illustrated that the majority of the sample had been homeless for a short space of time and as table 4 illustrates below, there is a high proportion of individuals who had been homeless under 6 months.

**Table 4: Frequency table showing the length of time individuals had been homeless**

Length of time in months	Frequency	%
1-6	72	56
7-12	22	17
13-24	18	14
25-36	8	6
37-48	3	2
49-60	2	2
61-72	0	0
73-84	1	1
85 and over	2	2

(n= 123 missing= 49)

A closer examination of the statistics revealed that of those who had been homeless for less than 6 months 15% of the sample had actually been homeless for a very short space of time, less than one month. Very few people experience a length of time homeless that exceeded 2 years. When compared to age, younger people were more likely to experience shorter periods of homelessness. The average length of time spent

being homeless was 13 months. However there were a few cases where there was an extended length of time homeless reported. This included cases of particular note who reported that s/he had been homeless for 12 and 16 years respectively. A cross tabulation when analysed with gender illustrated a general trend that men were more likely to experience longer periods of homelessness than women.

#### 4.1.3 Reasons for homelessness

It was important establish how individuals had become homeless as this may influence the type of resettlement support that he/she might need once living in independent accommodation. Table 5 below illustrates that the main reasons for homelessness within this sample were household conflict, relationship breakdown and family and friends no longer being able to accommodate.

**Table 5: Frequency table of the main issues with which individuals reported had caused them to be homeless**

	Frequency	% of all responses
Household conflict	61	25
Friends/family could no longer accommodate	60	25
Relationship breakdown	46	19
Asked to leave by landlord	15	6
Leaving prison	14	6
Evicted by landlord	14	6
Domestic violence	14	6
Leaving care	12	5
Property repossessed	4	2
Leaving armed forces	1	0.5

(NB Respondents were able to give more than one answer)

Statistical testing was carried out to measure association between the main issues that caused individuals to be homeless and the variables of age and gender. Crosstabulation was used to examine each of the factors and non-parametric testing (chi squared) was used to examine the association. When considering the effects of gender on the variables which cause homelessness, women were more likely to become homeless because of household conflict with a statistical significance recorded ( $p= 0.002$ ). Women were also more likely to report the main reason for homelessness as domestic violence, again this relationship showing a statistical significance ( $p=0.03$ ). Surprisingly, a number of men also reported that they had

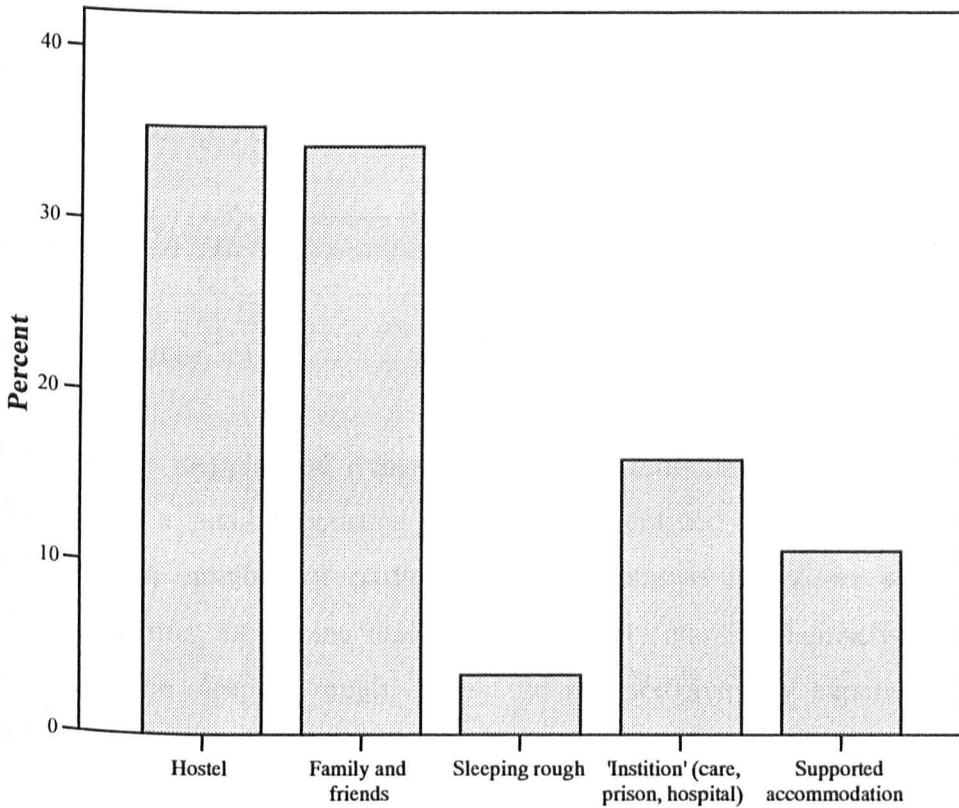
been victims of domestic violence causing their homelessness. The reasons for homelessness were also analysed in relation to age of the sample. One of the most common reasons for homelessness of those 29 and under was household conflict or family and friends not being able to accommodate (52 cases). Those over 30 were less likely to report these reasons as the main cause of their homelessness (9 cases). A statistical significance was recorded ( $p > 0.0001$ ). For those who were over 29 the most common reason reported for homelessness was relationship breakdown (41% or 29 cases of individuals over 29). This result also illustrated a statistical significance  $p = 0.001$ . Young females (>25 years of age) were slightly more likely to report that they were homeless because of household conflict than young men. Although this was not statistically significant, a distinct trend was noticeable.

Matters related to tenancies or previous accommodation including eviction, repossession, being asked to leave by the landlord and the end of a tenancy were reported to be the cause of homelessness by 33 cases. This indicates a sizable proportion of the sample already had experience of holding independent accommodation before they became homeless.

#### ***4.1.4 Prior housing experiences***

Figure 4 below shows the type of accommodation in which respondents had been living before being resettled. This was a factor that was important to investigate as prior accommodation could determine an individual's ease of access to resettlement support services. Resettlement support is more readily available to those living in hostels or supported accommodation.

**Figure 4 Type of accommodation in which previously resident**



(n= 172, missing= 3)

The evidence suggests that a high proportion may have access to resettlement support as a large percentage had been resident in hostels or supported accommodation. Many, however, were living with family and friends which may indicate that they may find it difficult to access support necessary to achieve support to overcome homelessness in the longer term.

#### ***4.1.5 Repeat homelessness and multiple tenancies***

Resettlement support aims to stop individuals from experiencing multiple incidents of homelessness and to prevent tenancy breakdown. Respondents were therefore asked if they had experienced many incidences of homelessness and details about the number of tenancies they had held. Results from the sample showed that the majority of

individuals reported that they had been homeless on only one occasion. Nevertheless, there was a considerable proportion of the sample who had experienced repeat incidences of homelessness as table 6 below illustrates.

**Table 6: Frequency table showing incidences of homelessness of respondents**

Incidents	Frequency	(%)
0	6	4
1	54	40
2	34	25
3	16	12
4	8	6
5	18	13

(n=136, missing= 36)

Over half the sample had experienced two or more incidences of homelessness. Interestingly, a small proportion of the sample defined themselves as never being homeless. A number of participants in qualitative interviews elucidated their responses to this, explaining that they would only classify themselves as homeless should they be sleeping rough. They did not perceive any experiences living in temporary accommodation as being homeless.

Despite a significant proportion of the sample having been homeless on a number of occasions, a significant proportion of individuals had not held a tenancy before (44%). However, almost as many (43%), had experience of holding one or more tenancies. Overall, there was a considerable proportion of individuals who had held two or more tenancies (26.9%). However, although not statistically significant (and a very small proportion of cases from the overall sample, 4 cases) all those who had been rough sleepers before they had been resettled had experience of multiple tenancies.

#### 4.2 Current accommodation

The survey aimed to collect evidence regarding the accommodation in which individuals currently resided to examine if individuals were housed appropriately for their needs and whether they were satisfied with the accommodation. The results of the study illustrated that since being homeless, the majority of respondents had moved

to areas in which they wanted to live with 79% reporting that they were happy with the area to which they had moved. A large proportion of the sample had moved to accommodation that was owned by housing associations.

**Table 7: Frequency table showing owner of accommodation of current property**

Owner	Frequency	%
Local Authority	16	9
Private Landlord	57	33
Housing Association	79	46
A charity	17	10
Other	2	1

(n= 172, missing =1)

The local authority had rehoused the least number of respondents from the sample (besides the 'other' category). Overall 88% of the sample said that their quality of life had improved since they had moved to their new accommodation.

#### **4.2.1 Length of time in current accommodation**

Measuring the length of time that individuals had been resident in their current accommodation was one way of determining how settled an individual was in their accommodation. The majority of respondents had been living in their current accommodation for a relatively short space of time of under a year. Further examination of these statistics revealed that there was a cluster of respondents who had been resettled 3 months, (33%, 56 cases).

**Table 8: Length of time respondents had lived in current accommodation**

Length of time (in months)	Frequency	%
1-6	89	53
7-12	43	26
13-24	23	14
25-36	3	2
37-48	4	2
49-60	3	2
85-96	2	1

(n= 172, missing= 5)

In order to examine if there was a difference between men and women and the length of time that they experienced homeless a number of statistical tests were used. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was carried out on this data to establish whether the data was normally distributed, this would determine whether parametric or non-parametric tests could be applied to the data. The result of this test illustrated that the data was not normally distributed and the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was carried out on the data. This test compared the medians of the length of time that a person was homeless and measured whether there was a statistically significant difference between the medians of the two groups, men and women. These statistical tests showed that there was no significant relationship between the length of time that individuals were living in their current accommodation, by gender (Mann-Whitney  $U=3116$   $p=0.861$ ). Similar tests were also used to examine age and again no statistical significance was noted (Mann-Whitney  $U=2848$   $p=0.107$ ). The length of time a person was resident in their current accommodation was also not affected by whether an individual was satisfied with the geographical area to which they were resettled (Mann-Whitney  $U=2113$   $p=0.646$ ).

#### 4.3 Perceptions and experiences of support

Because the positive effects of having a support worker have been so widely reported, the respondents to the questionnaire were asked if they had previously had a support worker in the accommodation prior to their current home. Despite a large proportion of individuals describing that they had previously lived in supported accommodation (either a hostel or other types of supported accommodation), there was only a

minority of service users who reported that they had previously had a support worker (33%) in their last accommodation. The chi-squared test of statistical significance was used to examine whether there was a statistical significance between the type of accommodation in which an individual lived and whether an individual had had a support worker (see table 9 below). The data indicted a statistical association ( $p=0.03$ ) between the type of accommodation in which an individual lived and whether an individual had previously had a support worker.

**Table 9: Cross tabulation of type of accommodation in which previously resident by having a support worker**

Type of accommodation	Support worker YES	Support worker NO
Hostel	26	31
Family and friends	11	46
Supported Accommodation	10	7
Institution or rough sleeping	9	21

( $n=161$ , missing =11,  $p=0.03$ )

The table illustrates that there was a large proportion of individuals, particularly coming from institutional backgrounds that previously did not have a support worker. Even those who described that they had previously lived in supported accommodation Seven reported that they had not had a support worker. The table illustrates that those who previously lived in hostel accommodation were the most likely to have experienced support via a dedicated worker.

In order to examine how individuals perceived the support they were currently receiving respondents were asked about their current experiences of support now that they were resettled. The evidence suggested that a support worker had been particularly helpful, with 73% of the sample reporting that they had needed the help of a support worker when they had initially moved into their settled accommodation. Moreover, 85% of the sample answered positively when asked if the service met their individual support needs with 93% stating that the support worker had been helpful or very helpful in assisting the service user to maintain their current accommodation. None of the respondents rated the service that they received as poor or very poor,

indicating that support services were going some way to meet the needs of the service users.

Results from the questionnaire also suggested a small amount of variance in the levels of overall satisfaction with support services although the majority of individuals expressed they were happy with service they received when asked to rate the support they had received from their support/resettlement worker. None of the respondents to this question responded negatively, with the majority (75%) expressing that they thought that the support worker had been very helpful in assisting them to keep their accommodation.

The value of having a support worker was also clearly identified by respondents. Table 10 below shows that 45% of questionnaire respondents reported that having a support worker would prevent them from being homeless on a further occasion.

**Table 10: Frequency table of the likelihood of being homeless again without the assistance of the support worker**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	78	45
No	40	23
Don't Know	48	28

(n= 166, missing = 6)

#### ***4.3.1 Types of support wanted***

It was clear that service users wanted a variety of different types of assistance in their current accommodation. Table 11 below outlines the type of support that service users reported they wanted (NB respondents were able to give more than one response).

**Table 11: The range of issues with which individuals reported needing assistance**

	Frequency	% of all responses
Someone to have a chat with	109	20
Crisis	95	18
Emotional support	76	14
Money	61	11
Accessing other services	61	11
Boredom	46	8
Mental health	37	7
Drink	29	5
Drugs	14	3
Mediate with other services	11	2

This table illustrates the emphasis placed by individuals on needing emotional support and need for someone 'to have a chat to'. It also highlights how highly individuals rated the need for support in a time of crisis.

#### 4.4 Prevention of homelessness

Individuals were also asked what type of services would have prevented them from being homeless before they were resettled. Table 12 illustrates the frequency of these responses.

**Table 12: Types of support which would have prevented homelessness**

	Frequency	% of all responses
Help to run your home	18	4
Education or Training	19	4
Help finding employment	25	6
Nothing was able to prevent it	25	6
Assistance with budgeting	25	6
Help with mental health	27	6
Relationship Counselling	27	6
Family mediation	35	8
Assistance from social services	37	9
Financial Assistance	39	9
Help with drug/alcohol problems	44	10
Help from a resettlement worker	46	11
Help with emotional problems	52	12

The results reiterate the high demand for emotional support, as well as illustrating a large proportion perceived that a resettlement worker was pivotal to preventing homelessness.

Despite individuals outlining support services that could have prevented homelessness, 25 individuals reported that their homelessness had been inevitable and there was nothing that could have been done to prevent this housing situation reoccurring. Further investigation revealed that those who were over the mean age of the sample (29) who were most likely to state that there was nothing that could have prevented them becoming homeless. The chi-squared test was carried out and a statistical significant result was recorded between these two variables (age and nothing could have prevented homelessness) ( $p=0.042$ ).

#### 4.4.1 Connections with family and friends

Having support within the local community has been identified as a critical factor to assist individuals to help themselves move out of homelessness. A large proportion of the sample reported that they were still in contact with friends and family (71%) as shown in table 13 below. It was also notable that despite 38% of the sample reporting that they had become homeless because of household conflict and 37% reporting that they had become homeless because family or friends could no longer accommodate, there was still a high proportion of the sample reporting that they were in contact with family or friends regardless of these factors.

**Table 13: Frequency table of those who were in contact with family and friends**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	121	71
No	50	29

It was significant that those who were older (post 29) had much less contact with their friends and family than those who were younger ( $p=0.002$ ). Further investigation of this variable revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between the age of the respondent and keeping in touch with friends and family. Table 14

below shows that it is those who are over 29 that are less likely to be in contact with family and friends than those who are under this age.

**Table 14: Cross tabulation of having family and friends with whom you keep in touch compared with age**

Age by mean	Yes, keep in touch with family and friends	No, do not keep in touch with family and friends
≤ 29	77	19
≥ 30	42	30

(n=168, missing=4, p= 0.002)

The data was examined to assess whether being in contact with family or friends had a positive effect on the length of time that an individual was homeless. As before, as the data was not evenly distributed a non-parametric test was used. However being in contact with family and friends had no positive effect on the length of time that an individual had spent homeless (Mann-Whitney U=1521 p= 0.307). Being in touch with family or friends also did not affect the length of time that individuals had been living in their current accommodation (Mann-Whitney U=2826, p= 0.886).

#### 4.4.2 Location of accommodation

The geographical location in which a person lives is thought to be critical to the success of resettlement and for this reason respondents were asked details about where they lived and whether they were satisfied with that area. The quantitative results indicated that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the area to which they had been resettled, with 80% saying that they were satisfied with the area. Respondents were asked to explain their reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the area in which they wanted live and responses fell into a number of distinctive themes. The two most commonly described reasons included explanations relating to family or friends and opinions regarding the local area with the latter being a more frequently cited reason (see Table15).

**Table 15: Frequency table of reasons for wanting to live in a particular area**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reasons related to friends/family	56	33
Perceptions of the local area	80	50
Wanted to move from trouble experienced in previous areas	8	5
Ready availability of accommodation	6	3.5
Other <sup>7</sup>	10	6

(n=160, missing=172)

Of those who reported that their reason for a particular choice was related to family and friends, dissatisfaction was usually highlighted because the location of their housing was too far from family or friends (8 individuals described their dissatisfaction with the area in which they lived because of this).

A number of individuals (18) made negative remarks about the area to which they had been resettled. Reasons included dissatisfaction with the quality of housing, problems with other local residents, in particular, areas which respondents described as full of 'scallies'<sup>8</sup>, druggies<sup>9</sup> and alkie<sup>10</sup>. The same data was also used to further explore if there were any determining variables which made individuals more or less likely to feel dissatisfied with the area to which they were rehoused. The chi squared test of statistical significance indicated that there was no association between satisfaction of the area of rehousing with gender or age thus highlighting that differences in gender or age of an individual these are not associated factors in determining satisfaction with the area an individual lives.

To investigate the causal factors determining satisfaction with the area of resettlement, the length of time that an individual was homeless prior to being resettled was considered as an influential factor. It might be assumed that there would be a significant relationship between these two factors for a number of reasons. The first assumption might be that the longer that an individual is homeless the more likely they are to be satisfied with the area to which they have moved because they are

<sup>7</sup> 'Other' responses given included a number of non-specific descriptions. Examples of these responses included 'circumstances', 'compulsory transfer' and 'it seemed ideal'.

<sup>8</sup> Colloquial term in Liverpool for a local individuals who are distinctive for their casual dress and anti social behaviour. The term is originally derived from the word 'scallywag'.

<sup>9</sup> Drug users

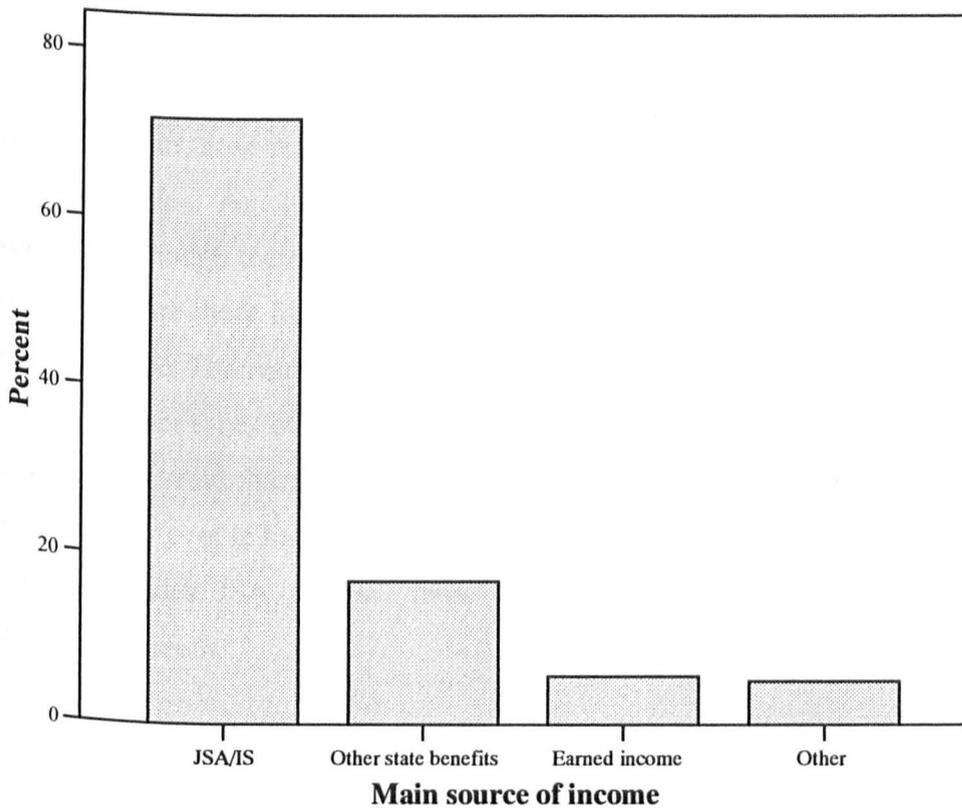
<sup>10</sup> Alcoholics

simply pleased that they have been able to find accommodation that has allowed them to move on from homelessness. Similarly, those who had shorter periods of homelessness may report that they were dissatisfied with the area in which they lived, choosing a speedy move into new accommodation regardless of the area. However, there was no significant difference between the length of time spent homeless with being resettled to an area where they wanted to live (Mann-Whitney  $U=1240$   $p=0.334$ ). This illustrates that satisfaction with an area of rehousing has no relationship with the length of time that a person has to spend homeless.

#### **4.5 Income**

The pilot study revealed that many respondents were living on a particularly low income with many reliant on means tested state benefits. Income could play a critical part in the success or failure of resettlement due to the inherent costs of moving and settling into a new home. The variable of income was therefore added to the survey to further explore the effects of income within the resettlement process. Figure 5 below shows the frequency of income types of respondents.

**Figure 5 Income types of respondents**



(n=171, missing=1)

Figure 5 illustrates the high percentage of individuals who were reliant on state benefits and how few respondents were actually in work. Nearly three quarters, 72%, of those resettled will therefore be receiving a particularly low income because of their reliance on state benefits with current rates of JSA/IS for a single person being £55.40. Consequently the housing costs of these individuals will be met in full by Housing Benefit<sup>11</sup>. When income was analysed by age a statistically significant relationship was found ( $p>0.0001$ ) (see Table 16).

<sup>11</sup> Housing Benefit is a means tested benefit used to meet the costs of renting accommodation. Usually those who claim JSA or Income Support are entitled to maxim Housing Benefit.

**Table 16 : Analysis by cross tabulation of income types by age**

Income type	Age $\leq$ 29 <sup>12</sup>	Age $\geq$ 30
JSA/IS	75	46
Other State Benefits	7	22
Earned Income/ other	14	4

(n= 168, missing= 4)

This table illustrates that those who are younger ( $\leq$ 29) are more likely to be claiming JSA or IS than those post 29, although a high proportion still claim these benefits in both age groups. Age has an inverse relationship with the likelihood of an individual working. Although there were actually a very small number within the sample who do work, these are more likely to be younger people with a very low frequency of these being post 29. The results also show that there are very few younger people who are reliant on other types of state benefits than JSA or IS. The high rate of older people (over 29) who said that their income was from other state benefits would indicate that perhaps older people had worked in the past, thus giving them an entitlement to other benefits besides JSA and IS, most notably contribution based benefits such as Incapacity Benefit.

#### 4.5.1 Budgeting and Income

It is evident from the numbers of people within the sample who are claiming benefits that the resettlement of the client may pose a challenge, because of the lack of available income that the individual may have. It was important to judge therefore whether the failure to be able to budget had played a critical part in the breakdown of previous tenancies and whether the type of income an individual received had an effect on the need for assistance with managing money and budgeting.

As reported above (table 12), 25 individuals reported that help with budgeting would have been important in preventing homelessness. However that leaves a large proportion of the sample who did not think that budgeting was an influential factor in causing their housing situation. Nevertheless, 80% of those who were receiving the means tested benefits of JSA or Income Support did want assistance with budgeting. Furthermore, of those who worked only 25% wanted assistance with budgeting. This

<sup>12</sup> 29= mean age of the sample

suggests that the need for assistance with budgeting is clearly linked to the type of income an individual has, with those who are earning being less likely to need assistance.

The evidence highlights that budgeting skills seem to play only a small part in preventing past experiences of homelessness (see table 12) with only 25 individuals stating that they needed budgeting assistance. Despite this, assistance with money issues were highlighted as the type of issue many individuals wanted help with from a support worker and 35% of respondents reported that they needed assistance in their current accommodation with money and bills. Further investigation was used to examine whether those who had particular types of income were more likely to request financial assistance. Table 17 below shows a cross tabulation to explore the relationship between income types and the need for assistance with money management.

**Table 17: Analysis by cross tabulation of need for assistance with money management by income type**

Income Type	Need for assistance with money management	Need for assistance with money management
	YES	NO
JSA/IS	51	66
Other State Benefits	8	20
Earned Income/other	2	16

(n= 163, missing= 9, p= 0.017)

The evidence indicates that some individuals do seem to want assistance with money matters when they have been resettled, and this is again particularly noticeable for those who are reliant on means tested benefits, with almost half requesting assistance with this. There is a clear need for assistance with money issues especially for those who are in the lowest income bracket and claiming means tested benefits. The relationship between these two factors (type of income and money management) was recorded as statistically significant (p=0.017) using the chi-squared test of statistical significance. The evidence therefore points to the positive effects of employment because of the lower necessity of individuals to need help budgeting or requiring

assistance with money issues. However it must also be noted that there was a considerable number of individuals who stated that they did not want assistance with money management regardless of their income type.

The evidence above suggests that those who have better incomes are less likely to require assistance with money management. It was critical therefore to consider how individuals were attempting to improve their opportunities to increase their income through training schemes and employment. A very small number of individuals (3 cases) highlighted that education or employment was important to them and their reasons for choosing the area in which they lived were related to being near an educational establishment (a local college or university) with a similarly small number reporting that they wished to live near their place of work. However, only 22% of the sample reported that they attended a local college and the data revealed that those who were involved in training or education were a minority. This is highlighted by the analysis of those involved in education or training shown in table 18 below.

**Table 18: Frequency of those involved in training or education**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Involved in training or education	69	41
Not involved in training or education	100	59

(n= 169, missing= 3)

The results illustrate that the majority of individuals were not in education or training which may be a good indicator of whether an individual has a realistic chance of gaining employment and thus may have a long term negative impact on future income.

As those who were claiming means tested benefits (JSA/IS) were those most likely to request assistance with budgeting and money management, it was important to consider whether there were any difference between an individual's income and whether they were involved in training or education. Table 19 shows a cross tabulation of these two variables.

**Table 19: Analysis by cross tabulation of income types by involvement in education or training**

Income Type	Are you involved in any training or education?	Are you involved in any training or education?
	YES	NO
JSA/IS	50	70
Other state benefits	8	21
Earned income/other	10	9

(n= 168, missing= 3, p< 0.05)

Although reliance on state benefits would mean dependence on a low income, table 19 highlights a high number of individuals who were not involved in education or training despite this being one step towards employment and overcoming the benefits trap. Perhaps what is more interesting is the percentage of people, who, despite being employed are still involved in education or training (60%). This is a much higher percentage than those who are without employment illustrating that those who are in work are undertaking further training where a substantial number without employment are not involved in training. Whilst results are not statistically significant, a trend is certainly detectable. Furthermore, those with earned or 'other' types of income are more likely to be furthering education compared to those who are on benefits.

Involvement in education was further explored to highlight which groups were more likely to undertake employment and training. The results of cross tabulation illustrate no statistically significant relationship with gender although a statistically significant result was illustrated with age (p>0.0001). The relationship between these two factors is illustrated in the table below.

**Table 20: Analysis by cross tabulation of age by involvement in education or training**

Age group	Are you involved in any training or education?	Are you involved in any training or education?
	YES	NO
16-17	30	15
18-25	19	28
26-59	18	53
60-74	1	3

Table 20 illustrates that there is a strong possibility that those who are very young (i.e. under 18) show a tendency to be involved in education or training where those who are post twenty-five will be far less likely to be involved in education.

#### 4.6 Summary

This chapter has highlighted some of the factors which could be perceived to influence the resettlement process. The majority of individuals were shown to have been resettled for a very short period of time, under 6 months, although there were particular individuals who had been resettled for a much longer period. Although a large proportion of individuals had only been homeless once, it was clear that repeat homelessness was common. Evidence highlighted that being resettled near to family and friends was influential in helping individuals to resettle, although being in touch with family or friends had no real impact on the length of time that a person would take to be successfully resettled. The data also indicated that a high proportion of service users see a value to having a support worker to help them overcome a housing crisis. Moreover, the evidence highlighted that service users were more likely to want emotional support such as someone to have a chat to than practical guidance with money management or help to establish their home. Unsurprisingly the results indicate that there are clear advantages to being employed with those reliant on state benefits more likely to need assistance with budgeting and money management.

The following chapter further explores some of the themes highlighted in the quantitative data, examining the qualitative interview data. It will further examine the experiences of homelessness, resettlement and support using interviews from both staff providing resettlement support and service users receiving support.

## Chapter 4

### Qualitative Results

This chapter reports the results of the qualitative interviews with staff who worked in resettlement, and service users who had experienced these services. It starts by considering understandings of resettlement work and continues by considering what was necessary for such support to be successful. It also examines the challenges that support workers faced with dealing with housing legislation and the new regulations which provided the funding for support services. The experiences of both services users and staff dealing with social security legislation will also be explored

#### 5.1 Prior to resettlement: individuals' experiences of homelessness and hostel living

Most service users described that they had previous experience of living in hostel style accommodation. The majority had lived in direct access hostel accommodation. One young woman described that she had lived in numerous housing projects across the city.

*I've lived in about every other hostel in Liverpool (laughs). Every hostel except (a particular hostel in Liverpool city centre). That's where you can stay if you are intentionally homeless. It's got all prostitutes in it... I went there for one day and they wouldn't let me stay there...because they intimidate you and I was only nineteen (Hannah, resident of a semi supported housing project, homeless three years).*

Another service user described his stay in a direct access hostel. He had to stay in the hostel even though he had wanted to live in a local foyer which was, at that time, full.

*It was horrible. It was like a homeless shelter...I was there for a month. I just couldn't stand it. I just used to dread going there. I'd just stay out on the street as long as I could and then sneak up to my room... the people there, they were the scum of the earth (David, resident of a young persons' housing project, homeless three months).*

A number of service users described how they had to be moved between different accommodations, because they had originally been placed in hostels when their personal circumstances did not meet the specific criteria of those establishments.

*I went to a semi independent place but I became too old for that. So I moved into a family supported project (Hannah, resident of a semi supported housing project, homeless three years).*

*I moved into a hostel but I had to move out of it because it was meant for single parents, and I wasn't one, and they need the room for someone else (Anna, user of resettlement service from a young persons' housing project, homeless nine months).*

There were certain negative consequences of moving between accommodation projects.

*I just moved in and out of hostels and from place to place. I'm sick of moving. It wrecks my head because I've moved that many times. I want to stay where I am now (resettled accommodation) (Sharon user of a floating support service, resettled six months).*

It was also frightening for individuals to have to move into accommodation for homeless people. One young woman described moving from her family home.

*It was scary but I did it (Helen, user of a young person's supported lodging scheme, threatened with homelessness).*

Another service user described his experiences of having to move into direct access accommodation when he first became homeless because he had to leave his family home.

*When I first mentioned to a couple of people that I was moving into (direct access hostel)...everyone was saying you're not moving in there, that's the roughest place ever. I was a bit distraught.*

He goes on to explain that the accommodation was also of a very poor standard.

*The settees that they had at the time were all horrible. I remember the residents' kitchen, that was all dirty and I remember, when I was being toured round, thinking this is nothing like it was at home, because at home it was always clean and tidy* (Richard, user of a floating support service, resettled one year).

Another woman described her experiences of living in the hostel. When asked whether she missed living in the hostel she stated:

*Not the fun and games I don't. I mean you get fire alarms going off at four in the morning. You're not going to miss something like that are you?*

She then described her experiences of the other residents of the hostel and the layout of the hostel.

*I was in the accommodation with the old people because I refused to go anywhere else. The first floor is full of girls, smackheads, the second full of lads, alcoholics, and the third floor is heroin addicts* (Alison, user of resettlement service at a hostel, homeless 2 years).

A further service user had a clear understanding of the type of accommodation that she might receive in a hostel and refused to move into a direct access hostel with her young child.

*I approached the council but they said that there was an eleven-year waiting list for housing. The only thing that they could do would be to put me in a hostel and I refused point blank to go into a hostel where there's junkies and alcoholics...I said I'd prefer to live in a cardboard box* (Jenny, homeless for three months, user of floating support service).

Residents all seemed to have unique experiences of trying to find settled accommodation so that they could move on from homelessness. One described how she had received little support from any resettlement staff in a hostel. She was keen

to explain that she had a very negative perception of the resettlement process and that she was only told after a prolonged stay in the hostel about a housing scheme that would help her housing situation.

*(The resettlement worker) said there's a form (to apply for the housing scheme) on the wall in the corridor...I just couldn't understand why she hadn't told me (before). Anyway, I got in touch with them and tried to do something but it didn't work out (Alison, user of resettlement service at a hostel, homeless 2 years)*

There also seemed to be a perception among some service users that they did not know where to go for help to find resettled accommodation in order to move on from homelessness.

One man described how he had had been caught up in a bureaucratic nomination system. After living for a period of time in a caravan, he had to get external help, to enable him to get new accommodation.

*I'd gone on the list for a housing association property but unknowing to me I should have been on the register with the local council. I went to the local council...they suggested that I went to (local housing advice service) to help me sort it out (Gary, user of a floating support service, homeless one year).*

Another young woman was directed towards a housing support service through support given to her by another service, while she was pregnant.

*I got in touch with (housing support service) through Sure Start. They recommended (a local housing association) or (housing support service) and they sent me a letter telling me what housing I could get (Nicki, homeless 4 months, user of floating support service).*

Another was helped to find housing support services through school.

*I used to have a mentor at school. They told me about (the housing project) I got another mentor when I left school. They also told me about it.*

However, some service users had received direct help from a resettlement support worker to help them gain accommodation, by approaching the service directly. These tended to be those who knew about the different housing support services available to them.

*I approached them in March. If you want accommodation round here with the council you need two references. The support workers here said they would accept references from my old support workers in Liverpool, and they were happy with that* (Darren user of floating support service, homeless two weeks).

Despite the negative views of hostels this was often where service users first came into contact with the support workers that could assist them to move on.

*They were really good and supportive, because I didn't understand the forms (for gaining housing with the local council). It's all new to me isn't it? Cos I've never lived on me own before* (Sharon user of a floating support service, resettled six months).

## **5.2 Perceptions of resettlement support work: providing a definition of resettlement**

Workers were asked to describe what they understood by resettlement work.

*It's, in essence, helping the clients maintain their tenancy, first and foremost. The involvement with the tenant usually starts with practical issues such as housing benefit and bits and pieces like that and the more time that you spend with them more issues will crop up, which don't necessarily relate to the tenancy, but things that we can assist with and refer on if necessary* (Roland, Floating support worker).

*Quite often to start with, (with a new client,) you're fire fighting. There's a lot of issues coming up, within the first couple of weeks, that need to be dealt with quickly. But after that I usually find that it settles down and you can do some more*

*constructive work with them, about planning and stuff* (Mark, Floating support worker).

One resettlement worker who was new to this type of work explained his misconceptions about resettlement work.

*I thought I'd be walking in 'right, lets get you a house'... all of a sudden, one young man's lost his job, another young man has a history of drug abuse and he's just started taking drugs again. Instead of it being straight and narrow, I've got to contact their key worker and get her to sit in on the review meeting and find out the background and all that...there's quite a lot more (laughs) to it than meets the eye, very much so* (Colin, Resettlement worker from a hostel).

Similarly a worker commented on the varied nature of the support work.

*The majority of it is... just tenancy related issues... some of it is crisis intervention. We refer to counselling, but in theory we are supposed to provide support in relation to the tenancy; landlord negotiation, mediation. If there is any problem with the housing benefit claim, then we would certainly get involved. The practical kind of issues of setting up a home, making sure that the clients have benefit maximisation. ... I mean I don't think that anyone in the office could say that they solely offered tenancy support. I think it's always a bit more than that* (Mark, Floating support worker).

### **5.3 Successful resettlement**

Some workers saw the length of time that a client had been resettled as the first indications that resettlement had been successful.

*Successful resettlement is not to see them (back in the hostel) in the next six months* (Brenda, Resettlement worker from a hostel).

However most staff considered that there were wider issues involved in resettlement than simply the length of time for which a service user was resettled.

*If a client can maintain a tenancy for 12 months and still be there, because a lot of them have never really had a place of their own (before)... the rewards sometimes can be small, but that's a success...I mean, you have done something that wouldn't have happened otherwise. You have been a catalyst to something that is positive...I think that we would have to say we are successful if, you can see that they are sorting their own problems out now, say housing benefit, they haven't come to you this time, they have gone and sorted it out themselves. Ultimately, what you want, is that they are able to sort it out for themselves (Roland, Floating support worker).*

A worker from the same service added:

*I think the greatest success recently has been .... to work with someone who is perhaps not in a brilliant flat; they're not very happy with things; there's lots of things going on in their lives, and you deal with some of those issues, you get them referred to the relevant people .... They prove themselves. We can nominate them for a housing association, and then the support is stepped right back from weekly visits to monthly visits, to once every three months and then eventually it's withdrawn because they can cope fine, everything is going well. So the aim of it really is for them to go off and live independently without input from us (Mark, Floating support worker).*

Similarly another worker commented:

*I don't know how we determine success, I mean obviously someone who maintains the property for the twelve-month period. I mean obviously in our eyes that is a success. I suppose. But that's only a small aspect of success. For example if you get someone who is an ex user, if they've maintained the property for twelve months, remained drug free, is now doing a college course, that is a very real success. I mean our view of success is sort of a selfish one. We view it as if they screw up in the first twelve months, we are still working with them (Erin, Floating support worker).*

*I'd say successful in the way that they receive support and that they have moved on, that they have settled and maintained a tenancy and it's helped them to ensure that their social life has improved, I would call that successful. If it's helped someone keep off the drug scene because they've got their own place now (Roland, Floating support worker).*

There needed to be a wider understanding of successful resettlement according to one floating support worker.

*There are so many ways of measuring success. I mean potentially you might have a success like that with one client and the next thing is he has gone and had a party in the flat and totally trashed it. So therefore he's lost his tenancy. That doesn't mean to say that it's a total lack of success, ok you've lost the tenancy, he still would have learnt some things in the meantime that make him think (Celia, Floating support worker).*

Two workers were critical of resettlement support and explained that it was not always the key to a successful tenancy. Asked if resettlement can be successful, this worker commented:

*Resettlement gives only a tiny percentage of the input of what say they've had in here (hostel). So you are only visiting say for one hour a week. I mean you might be able to sort some practical things out for people... more often than not when people face crisis on their own, and crisis can mean anything. Crisis can mean a giro not turning up; that to someone can mean, 'Oh my God', what am I going to do?' If someone is not there instantly to help them... it can throw people off, (they) just go off the rails. So resettlement isn't always useful, I don't think, maybe it is for that hour that you're there (Cynthia, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

Another worker when asked how successful he thought a bond scheme was in resettling people from homelessness he replied:

*Better than nothing I suppose. I don't think that it is necessarily the presence of the bond scheme which will make success. I think, whether or not a tenancy is successful,*

comes down to the individual. We provide the same service to those who have successfully maintained a tenancy and those who have failed a tenancy. So what we provide is constant. So it's the tenants themselves that provide the variability in it (James, Floating support worker).

### **5.3.1 Recognising a need for support**

There were a significant number in this sample who did not perceive that they had support needs. Asked if she thought that she had needed resettlement support one woman replied:

*No, but I'm glad that they were there, (support worker) came round and she'd sit and chat and I'd break down on her. I was just an emotional wreck (Jenny, homeless for three months, user of floating support service).*

Similarly a male service user initially felt unsure that he would need a support worker but had found the worker useful to deal with a number of difficulties that he experienced.

*There was a support worker and they did things like sort your gas, your electric, anything you needed to get sorted out, that you didn't think that you could get sorted out... because there's people out there who can't do it themselves.*

When asked whether he thought he needed that type of support he replied:

*I didn't know whether I did or I didn't at that point*

He goes on to add:

*There was so much going on in my life at that time, it was very difficult.... I think (support worker) was very good to be honest; he was more or less just there to listen to me moaning and groaning and me carrying on (Gary, user of a floating support service, homeless one year).*

Others also describe that they feel unworthy of any type of support, describing that in their opinion there must be cases where the support worker's time could be better spent. Gerard describes that his key worker must have some especially difficult cases, as his support worker is not always able to visit every week in accordance with his care plan. He seems very understanding of these issues despite him having chronic alcohol problems, with which he is battling.

*I had a support worker for the first 12 months. (Support worker) came to see me, officially every week but sometimes other people took priority I think (Gerard, user of a floating support service, threatened with homelessness).*

It was common for service users not to recognise that they had support needs. On a number of occasions in interviews it was a support worker, who would prompt the service user to discuss the extent of their needs. This illustrated that sometimes the service user had a poor awareness of their own support needs. When one service user was asked if she currently needed any support in her property she commented:

*I don't think there is any to be honest with you. (Anna, user of resettlement service from a young persons' housing project, homeless nine months).*

However her support worker comments:

*I know one. You get bored (Colin, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

Similarly one service user was able to identify the practical help he received from a support worker, but he was unable to recognize the emotional support that he also received. His support worker explained how he offered emotional support to his client.

*I think also I've helped Andy with his motivation. When Andy looks a bit unkempt I've said to him 'Andy get your hair cut' or 'sort yourself out' or whatever (Scott, Floating support worker).*

### 5.3.2 Motivation and engagement

Before a support package could be put into place, there had to be a desire for a person to want to have support. Without this it was difficult for a support package to have a successful outcome. Previous studies have also suggested that the motivation to be resettled is an important aspect of any support. It was evident from the interviews with staff that motivation to engage with support staff was critical to the overall outcome of successful support and ultimate resettlement. One member of staff commented:

*At the end of the day it has to be client lead, all of the assessment and support planning and trying to work to implement these support plans is not going to work, unless they engage and are motivated. I think some go through the motions of saying things that you want to hear (Original emphasis) (Lucy, Hostel manager).*

For those who experience homelessness finding such motivation can be difficult. This can be, as one worker described, because a person is entrenched in a certain lifestyle which they find arduous to overcome.

*If you've got someone who's been through the care system, in and out of prison, the criminal justice system, lots of exclusions, lots of sleeping rough...and in some cases drugs and alcohol and their life has been around "grafting", criminal behaviour to fund their drugs, then your starting point is quite low and one of the main issues is about trying to determine what they want to do (Lucy, Hostel Manager).*

Another support worker commented that the ability to get individuals to engage with support services was one factor in assuming a service was a success. When asked how she would judge the service as a success she commented:

*... I think because we work with other services, we meet people's mental health needs... We also have a good relationship with our client group. I think we are engaging with them (Celia, Floating support worker).*

It is clear that certain service users do recognise a point at which they feel ready to engage and want support. This was particularly noticeable with individuals who did have a history of drug or alcohol problems. Whilst embarking on a resettlement course at a hostel, one man described how he came to the realisation that he needed to move away from the lifestyle he had been leading. His own motivation, coupled with on site staff support, enabled him to take steps away from living in unstable accommodation where he had lived for a number of years. When asked about his motivation to move on Simon replied:

*I think a lot of it's come from myself, because I could have just totally ignored it, (the support). I didn't have to get involved ...but as I say they, (the staff,) have not forced me, but edged me towards (moving on), like giving me the odd little push here and there when I needed a push (Simon, hostel resident, homeless for 18 months).*

Being homeless and having an addiction could lead to a chaotic lifestyle as well as causing health complications. John commented:

*I was very ill in hospital...It was (member of staff from the hostel) in the canteen; she noticed I was going yellow. She told me to go to hospital but I ignored it. I was very, very ill...that was hepatitis B...I've got that for life now see. That's the reason why I'm getting off the drugs...having the hepatitis, that made me think (John, hostel resident, homeless for 2 years).*

This was a similar to the experience of Gerard, who was now receiving floating support. He described the realisation that he needed support to overcome an alcohol problem in order to return to a settled way of life.

*I think it's what they call bottoming out. I know a chap who was living under a railway bridge, with no shoes and he still hadn't bottomed out, so everyone has a different level. For me it was having horrible hallucinations, thinking I was going mad...that was my rock bottom (Gerard, user of a floating support service, threatened with homelessness).*

The above cases illustrate how a chaotic lifestyle coupled with homelessness can be linked. The decision to move away from addiction may lead to a decision to move on from homelessness and subsequently engage with support services.

Initial motivation to engage with support may come from a variety of sources. Describing how he hit a low point after sleeping rough for a year because of an alcohol problem, the ultimate turning point for the following client was approaching his family for help. They then assisted him to access further support services.

*I used to sleep in parks; I used to sleep in this big old house. I used to like it but then this couple moved in next door and they were junkies and I thought I'm not staying here. I was scared at night...I felt terrible (about sleeping rough), I felt ashamed really, when you reach that stage, I even contacted me oldest brother...when I called to his house he said, 'For Gods sake, get a shave.' I said I haven't got a razor. Me brother went out for a bit and then he (came back and) had all shaving gear and clothes for me...me brother came up with the idea of a hostel for me (Stephen, resident of supported housing project, previously homeless for 1 year).*

The desire to live a settled way of life after a period of instability was not unique to those who had drug or alcohol problems. One young woman described how settling and having a flat with support from a visiting resettlement worker represented a turning point in her life and a sign of her maturity.

*I think I've grown up a lot because it hits you. I mean you think, whoah, and then you think you've got to pay those bills and you can't act like a kid now. I mean at first I thought I'd get a flat and have a party in it all the time...but I haven't even had a party in this flat and I don't intend to (Sarah, homeless for 9 months, user of resettlement service from young persons housing project).*

Staff felt that there were direct consequences if a person did not wish to engage with support. Because of the difficulties of working with a person who does not want to receive help, support workers would be inclined to withdraw support reasoning that it was too difficult to work with a person who did not want assistance. A worker from a floating support service commented:

*If people don't open up and admit to the problems that they've got you can't really assist them, until they are willing to do something about it...If no progress is made then it (the support) will be stepped back a little bit (Mark, Floating support worker).*

A similar course of action was taken by a resettlement worker who described the difficulties of working with clients with drinking problems once they had moved into an independent tenancy.

*When it comes to... the drinkers having a lot of people in the flat, who aren't supposed to be there, we have to withdraw because it's such a volatile situation. If we go to someone's house and we've got a couple of people in there who are sitting there drinking or whatever, our policy is that we don't go into that property because you are going into an unknown...So what we'll do is we'll ask to speak to the individual outside...and try to arrange that next time they won't have all these people in...but if they refuse we have to withdraw our services (Cynthia, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

One worker considered a difficult case. She described the difficulties that one service user presented because he would not link in with the services that she offered.

*I don't know what's going to happen with him (service user) and I am at my wits end as to what to do...This gentleman is in his forties, he's very mild mannered, he doesn't complain, he doesn't stand up for himself. I have to do all the fighting for him but I am doing over and above my job but you can't see someone in that state. I mean I do have regular supervision sessions about this particular client with (manager) because I have to unload. I have got to the stage where I thought, 'What can I do? Nobody's going to help me here.' I'm a housing support worker, I'm not a nurse, I'm not a social worker, it just became a nightmare (Erin, Floating support worker).*

## 5.4 Characteristics of good support

### 5.4.1 Developing a working relationship between service user and service provider

The evidence from this study suggests how crucial it is that service users want to engage with support services for resettlement to function properly. Once this is established then there is a basis for positive interaction between the support worker and the client.

One young woman living in semi supported accommodation commented on the types of relationship she had with support staff. Contrasting it with the accommodation in which she now lived, she explained:

*I mean it's (support) better than any other hostel. The staff are dead, dead supportive...the staff are well better in here, they give you more leeway...I seem to have more of my own independence. They don't bug you or anything.*

When asked why this should be the case she adds:

*Because they don't give you support, where these do (Hannah, resident of a semi supported housing project, homeless three years).*

In order to cultivate a relationship between a client and worker, workers adopted a number of strategies. One service used psychological testing to assist a needs assessment. The manager from this service stated:

*We do a support plan and we do the rickter<sup>13</sup>...It makes us look at soft outcomes and it makes us look at how they are when they come to the housing need assessment... Once they've been through the process of the housing need assessment...then they get a support worker...and the support worker goes out and does a review of what they've said... We do a plan of what needs doing. Do you understand the tenancy agreement?*

<sup>13</sup> The rickter scale is a assessment and evaluation tool which was used by certain practitioners to measure soft outcomes such as gaining confidence, overcoming limiting beliefs and barriers to employment.

*Can you deal with your money?...So we are picking up on all the issues that stopped them succeeding last time (Pamela, Floating Support Manager).*

In practice this testing tool complimented more informal methods of assessing support requirements. A worker from this particular service stated:

*I find that sometimes sitting and doing the rickter scale with the client can be... impersonal, so that's why I like to go my own way first to see how they will respond. I mean everyone is different because we can see people anywhere from eighteen up to sixty-five (Erin, Floating Support Worker).*

A common practice amongst workers was to use the time organizing the initial practical issues of moving home to get to know their clients. Sourcing furniture and other household goods for service users was used as a good opportunity for a support worker to become acquainted with a service user.

*(Organising) the furniture helps you to bond a little bit with the clients in the early stages. You begin to build up a friendship, not a friendship in the strictest sense of the word. They know that we are not there to police them in the property, we are there to help them. The furniture makes a really good contact with them (Erin, Floating support worker).*

#### **5.4.2 Tailored support for an individual's needs**

There were a number of aspects that were considered to constitute examples of good support. The first and most crucial part of support work was identifying the level and type of support needed for each individual. There was a demand for both emotional and practical support although emotional issues were more often discussed than the need for practical support. One young woman described how she needed support solely for emotional issues.

*I became homeless because I had to leave my sister's place because my sister's friends did not like the fact that I was gay.*

Prior to this she comments on her life experiences which had left her emotionally scared and in need of psychological support.

*My dad died when I was twelve, I was in the ambulance when it happened. I still feel really angry (about father dying), I'm still trying to deal with the issue.*

She later adds:

*I was abused by my mother when I was young...I've got mental health problems now, I suffer with anxiety and depression. I started self harming and smoking pot on a daily basis (Georgie, user of floating support service, homeless six months)*

Whilst every service user had not endured the level of difficulties demonstrated by Georgie, her case illustrates the wide range of emotional issues that support workers often came up against and emphasised the complexities of providing support. The first aim of support was to establish the needs of the client. In order to front load support one worker described how she would offer a higher number of visits at the beginning of a tenancy.

*Because you know you can move someone into a tenancy and they can fail within the first week, because they've never lived alone, they're frightened, I like to give quite intensive support for my first (week.) I might see a new client two or three times that first week (Mark, Floating Support Worker).*

Workers needed to be adaptable to the needs of service users. This was especially apparent in one case described by a floating support worker. She discusses in some depth the challenges she had faced dealing with a case of a young Muslim women.

*I had a young lady, she's one of my clients, she's high support, she was a Muslim. She had a baby, we got her the flat just as she had the baby but what we didn't realise was (in the) Muslim culture and religion, the baby can't go out for 40 days. So she couldn't move (in).*

She then explained how she had to adapt her approach to provide the appropriate support for her service user. Usually she carried out a visit to a client's home to organise benefits or she accompanied them to the benefit office. However she described a different approach here.

*When I looked at her benefits she was only getting £48 per week (income support). ...She should officially have been on £103 per week. So I arranged for a home visit (from the benefits agency) because she had the new baby (Erin, Floating Support Worker).*

Service users were looking for support services to be individually tailored to their needs. It was when services are not focused to their needs that some service users made critical remarks. One resident described how support workers had presumed that he would be lacking in practical skills when he came to live in the housing project.

*I've always been pretty much independent and when I moved in they were talking down to me like I was a kid, like I didn't know how to iron or wash dishes or cook pasta. (David, resident of a young persons' housing project, homeless three months).*

David explains that once the support workers realised that he did not need this type of practical support he began to get the emotional support that he felt that he needed.

*They don't try and help me with that now. It's emotional support which is what I do need. ...It was about February this year and I kind of lost my way, so that I had to go to hospital and one of the staff took me and she must of told them (the rest of the staff) and from then on they've changed (David, resident of a young persons' housing project, homeless three months).*

Another woman was critical of the support services when they prejudged her and assumed that she was dishonest because she lived in semi supported accommodation. She described her conversation with the support worker.

*Why did you not believe me when I told you that? He (support worker) said well you've got to understand we get lots of lies in here, people do tell us a lot of lies, residents. So I said, so you automatically assume that someone's not telling you the truth? He said, well I suppose so (Original emphasis) (Sally, resident of a semi supported housing project, homeless 3 months).*

It also was important for a service provider to know the limitations of the support that they were able to offer. This was especially apparent when workers considered the limitations of the support they provided. One worker commented:

*On assessment we'll consider the (level of support)...and whether they have needs that we can't manage and if they have we'll refer them to somewhere else (James, Floating support worker).*

#### **5.4.3 Empathy and understanding**

What was noticeable, with some workers, was the empathetic way that they dealt with service users. Most staff described how well they knew their clients. For some workers it appeared that it was a personal as well as a professional aim to assist a service user. One worker commented about the help that she had given to a service user.

*So he had the basics (for his flat) and I was really pleased, really pleased for him and I helped him do this.*

It is important to also notice this worker's use of language. For this support worker, it is not just a professional aim to ameliorate the service user's environment. It is evident that she feels a personal involvement with her service user and her sense of achievement.

Showing empathy was an attribute and was a precursor to a support worker being able to understand the in depth needs of each particular client. Service users, especially those who used drugs, explained that they did not want to be judged by statutory

agencies because they had substance abuse issues and good support was able to overcome these problems. One service user stated:

*In one particular incident I faced a certain amount of prejudice from a housing officer. The housing officer would not believe things that had happened in the flats. It was comforting to know that (support worker) was there...Housing were trying to kick me out, but again (support worker) was able to help me out (Joe, user of housing support service, threatened with homelessness).*

On one visit to a service user at which the researcher was present, the support worker embraced both the service user and his partner. This use of physical affection illustrates the level of empathy and understanding of this service user as in this case this physical affection was reciprocated. In other cases such affection may be inappropriate. Here it engendered a better working relationship with a particular client.

It was noticeable from a number of service users that such dedication did not go unnoticed. One service user commented about his support worker.

*I've got no problems if I see (support worker) and I know that he can sort problems out. He provides some emotional relief and I think he does more than his job actually entails...it's encouraging to see people like (support worker) coming out from services and saying better yourself (Joe, user of housing support service, threatened with homelessness).*

### **5.5 Rejecting support services**

There were a number of cases where service users did not feel they wanted, or needed any additional support when they moved into new accommodation. One woman described her initial enquiries to find accommodation when she found herself homeless. She carried out an independent search for accommodation.

*I actually went into (name of hostel) and I was in there for eight weeks. It's mainly battered women who go in it to be honest, but it's emergency accommodation...*

*They're on you're back all the time to get out, because they're stressing it's only for emergency things. So I was writing to housing associations and going and sorting things out (Sally, resident of a semi supported housing project, homeless 3 months).*

Her strong emotional stability also explains how she was able to initiate counselling to deal with the death of her mother. Because of these factors she explains how she feels she does not need emotional support from others, not even close family.

*I mean me uncle just didn't have much room for me. I mean don't get me wrong, if I'd of gone to him cap in hand he'd have ...put me on the settee or something but I'm ...independent. It's just how I was brought up, to be independent. (Sally resident of a semi supported housing project, homeless 3 months).*

In a further case, a young male rejected any emotional support from his support workers. He explained that his support workers had failed to meet any of his needs and they had found him training, which he found unsuitable. He described how he felt self sufficient, because he had overcome a heroin addiction through his own will and determination.

## **5.6 Support from statutory services**

Support from a resettlement worker can be contrasted with the service that is offered from statutory services. A number of service users described their relationships with social workers. One man Stephen explained how his social worker would 'police' his property, rather than discussing his support needs.

*Social services are meant to come out and support me but all they do is come round and snoop round the house...They look in the cupboards and that, see if I'm looking after me son alright. Hopefully they're going to withdraw. (Stephen, user of housing support service, threatened with homelessness).*

Another young women, who had been in contact with social services since an early age, described how it was difficult to get her social worker involved in her housing

situation. She found it increasingly difficult with no point of contact at social services when her social worker went on long term sick leave. She commented:

*(Social worker's name) was supposed to get me the money for me washing machine. They (the leaving care team<sup>14</sup>) are supposed to help you out as much as possible. If you've got a problem then you phone up and they try and sort it out. He did get me, eventually, £90 for a washing machine, I'll give him that, but when I need him he's always off sick (Anna, user of resettlement service from a young persons' housing project, homeless nine months).*

A service user from a different project also commented how his social worker had taken very little personal interest in him.

*I don't like social workers...I don't know, there's something about them. I mean there used to be this one she used to take me out to Southport... every time she gets a receipt she'd go, don't throw it away, I need that, she'd say 'expenses'. I found out that she only used to take me to Southport because of one thing, petrol. It uses up more petrol (Stephen, resident of supported housing project, previously homeless for 1 year).*

Stephen and Anna's comments about the current support they are receiving from non statutory support services are phrased in a more positive manner. Stephen commented about the support he receives in the project in which he lives.

*In a dream you would dream about moving into a place like this and then you realise it's not a dream.*

Asked why it is so good he replied:

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<sup>14</sup> The leaving care team is a service run by the social services department at each Local Authority (LA). It aims to ensure that children who have been looked after by the LA until their sixteenth birthday are supported when they move on into independent living. Young people who have left care and are between 16 and 21 are entitled support from this service.

*The staff and everything, they help you out and they are not serious with you. I mean they can be serious if you step out of line but we have a laugh* (Stephen, resident of supported housing project, previously homeless for 1 year).

Similarly Anna describes how the resettlement worker is available when she needs him.

*When I am bored he just comes down and sees how I am and has a chat* (Anna, user of resettlement service from a young persons' housing project, homeless nine months)

Contrasting the support from a social worker as opposed to the support worker reflects the formality of approaches by the two professionals.

*My social worker seems to be just there to see when I have put a foot wrong, rather than to try and support me...I like (support worker), she's down to earth. She tells me things like when she's going to have a days holiday or when she's having her highlights done. I like her being down to earth, it makes it a lot easier for me* (Georgie, user of floating support service, homeless 6 months).

### **5.6.1 Flexibility of support**

Good support was often described as needing to be adaptable to the needs of the client. One support worker and client Nicki, explained how she was offered a high level of support. The client's needs were met by approaching support in a flexible way with the use of two different support workers. More practical support was offered by a male support worker and further additional support was offered by a different worker thus meeting all the needs of the client.

*Now I can really do everything on me own, it's just me budgeting that's all now. (Support worker) was helping me out at first with things like carrying all me shopping which I couldn't do with the baby...(Support worker) helps me remember stuff...like when I'm going to get me child benefit so it is dead helpful.*

Later she comments about the support she has received from a second support worker.

*(Second support worker) has been really lovely, she's really nice. She just comes round for a chat, just for a cup of tea and that's nice (Nicki, homeless 4 months, user of floating support service).*

The worker then explains:

*(Second support worker) comes about once a week for about an hour just so there's a bit of female support and because she's had kids, that angle is covered as well (Fred, Floating support worker).*

The flexibility was particularly marked at a project offering support which was run by a family. One service user described how this organisation had adapted his accommodation provision to help him deal with his mental health problems. He had lived in a number of projects owned by the same family but had been given accommodation whenever he had returned.

*I lived in (project 1) which is a flat, me own flat...I left there and I done a runner, I ran away...and then I went back to the hostel. Then I went to (project 2) and done a runner from (project 2). Then I came back again to (project 2).*

He later comments about how the organisation has treated him.

*The thing is they've been kind to me, they've respected me. They've helped me out tremendously and...I am proud of what they have done for me. I couldn't ask for anything more than that (Danny homeless three years resident of semi supported housing project.)*

## **5.7 Difficulties of resettlement**

The challenges of resettlement were evident in the narratives of both service users and service providers. These were caused by the structural constraints of both the housing and welfare systems and as well as the individual problems facing service users as they have to gain access to move on accommodation.

### 5.7.1 Availability of accommodation

Accommodation options for most homeless people were limited. In more affluent areas of Merseyside there was a shortage of accommodation. The most common reason for moving to a particular area was because accommodation was attainable.

One young woman described how she applied to live in certain area but was told by the local authority that she had no local connection to this area and was unlikely to be offered housing. She eventually found housing in a different part of Liverpool some distance from her first area of choice.

*I don't know why they weren't giving me a flat but I was on a few housing associations (lists), you know, waiting to get one. I was also putting down (area in Liverpool) because that's where me boyfriend's mum's from.... So I just thought it'd be better to go by me boyfriends parent's, you know where I've still got some support and stuff like that. But because I'd never lived in Sefton before they couldn't, they wouldn't get me a flat, so I had to stay in Liverpool (Anna, user of resettlement service from a young persons' housing project, homeless nine months).*

This young woman expressed how she felt lonely and bored during the day. It would seem that had she been able to live closer to her partner's family this may have gone some way to overcoming these problems.

*I get bored, yeah, sitting on me own everyday. Cos me boyfriend does twelve hour shifts everyday, from seven in the night to seven in the morning, or seven in the morning to seven at nigh,t so you're sitting on your own all the time.*

Instead she talked about how she wanted to move on again.

*My boyfriend keeps suggesting that we should move. The Lake District or Wales might be nice (Anna, user of resettlement service from a young persons' housing project, homeless nine months).*

Anna went on to explain how she felt lonely living on her own. As she was currently pregnant, she was not able to work, making her feel prone to loneliness. It seemed apparent that this young women's accommodation compounded rather than ameliorated problems of social isolation. In effect she becomes at risk of accommodation failure because of a problem of loneliness.

Limited availability of accommodation, due to various aspects of housing legislation, was deemed to be a factor for the declining stocks of suitable housing for homeless people.

*The council sold off a lot of their property through the right to buy scheme a few years ago so the council accommodation round here is pretty much few and far between* (Mark, Floating support worker).

Another hostel worker also stated that service users were likely to be housed in certain areas that had particular social problems.

*They (service users) are then only given 20 points on the (housing) register. I mean you can get a house in Clockface (area in St Helens) for 35 points but lots of people don't want a house there because it's where they've come from and they say they don't want to go back there to drugs or other problems, they say they want to start a better life and who can blame them. That's their choice* (Trisha, Hostel worker).

Similarly certain service users did not want to move to areas perceived as having a bad reputation.

*People don't want to go to Liverpool 8. There was a scheme, from (a local housing association). They approached us...we asked...residents if they would like to go, no way would they go near the area. Yet the area is all right* (James, Floating support worker).

Staff were wary of raising service users' expectations of what type of housing they may be likely to secure. One worker commented:

*I think our clients are aware that they are not going to be getting three bedroomed houses in Allerton (affluent area of Liverpool). (James, Floating support worker).*

Similarly another worker added:

*Allocating properties is a bit like means testing. You're likely to get a property if you are prepared to take a hard to let property. Many find that they are only offered one property, and are so desperate to move on so they would take the property even if it isn't suitable for them. In some areas like Allerton or Mossley Hill they've got no chance, I don't think it's popular to put homeless people in areas like these (Pauline, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

A further worker added:

*I suppose the difficulty is the shortage of properties available. There has to be rationing as to who gets the properties. There's lots of neighbourhood work going on, which has removed a number of properties, with properties being demolished (Celia, Floating support manager).*

As part of one hostel's resettlement training residents were taken on a tour of Liverpool showing the different available housing areas. The tour did not include parts of north Liverpool as the workers felt that it was almost impossible to be rehoused in these areas.

The limited availability of accommodation meant that there was little opportunity to find alternative accommodation should a service user be unhappy with any aspect of his/her accommodation. The consequence may be client dissatisfaction which serves to create further responsibilities for a resettlement worker. One resettlement worker described the circumstances of a client.

*(Service user) has moved over to Anfield but she's not happy in...the area that she chose. So basically I'm keeping in touch with her housing officer (at the housing association) on a daily basis to make sure that everything is ongoing and the housing association know exactly what's going on with her situation. (Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

There could be added complications to finding accommodation for some hostel residents.

*I mean we've had people here who've got them (anti social behaviour orders)... The council won't have them, the housing associations won't have them. You might touch lucky with a private landlord, but nowadays ... you'll see their face splashed all over the paper, so even private landlords are dubious about having people (with anti social behaviour orders) now (Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

Living in temporary accommodation can lead to serious consequences in terms of health and well being, as one woman explained:

*I was ill when I got in (the hostel)...I had to go on Prozac three months ago because I couldn't cope anymore...(Living in the hostel) was horrible, was just horrible. To look at me you'd think 'she's as tough as nails'... but that isn't the case. I used to go my room and cry and no one knew (Alison, user of resettlement service at a hostel, homeless two years).*

### **5.7.2 Access to specialist accommodation**

Those needing specialist<sup>15</sup> accommodation were more likely to have to move to an unfamiliar area in order to access the support that they needed. This had been the case particularly with a number of people with mental health problems. One man described how he had previously lived in the borough of Sefton but had moved to Liverpool to access a supported housing project. Whilst he did not discuss any ill effects of this move, clearly it was an inconvenience that he needed to access his

<sup>15</sup> Specialist accommodation here is referring to accommodation for those with specific support needs for example mental health support or support for those with drug and/or alcohol issues.

health care provision in a different health authority. He also stated that his family now live on the opposite side of the city, evidently making it a longer journey for them to be able to visit.

*Well me dad comes up once a week on a Saturday and I try to get there if I can once a fortnight, once a month* (Barry, resident of supported housing project, threatened with homelessness).

Resettlement workers explained how having complex support needs created particular difficulties in terms of availability of accommodation and support services.

*...people with dual diagnosis, the people who've got mental health issues and drug or alcohol, because there's lots of organisations for drug users and there's lots of organisations for people with mental health,... there's not so many for people who drink, but a combination of 2 of them or all 3 of them which is quite often..., there just isn't the resources out there for people to move on. (Local housing association)*  
*provide supported housing, they're one place that will take people but they've only got a limited amount of beds, as everywhere has* (Robbie, Resettlement worker from a hostel).

This problem was not specific to workers in one project, availability of specialist accommodation and support was a problem throughout the area.

*When people come to you and say that they want help with their alcohol problem, they mean that they want it now. I mean people have free will and when they come in (to live in the hostel) I can't just refer them in the hope that they will want a place, they have to come and want it for themselves. They don't realise that there is a 12 months waiting list for this type of thing* (Trisha, Hostel worker).

One project offered young homeless people lodgings with a volunteer host family. This had its own unique difficulties of recruiting volunteers to offer accommodation.

*It's always been difficult, and it will be difficult to recruit householders, for lots of different reasons. The main reason is people are wary of teenagers. Some people do see them as potential offenders, maybe not trustworthy. And when you say a homeless teenager they say why are they homeless?* (Victoria, Young person's project worker).

Another worker commented on the difficulties of the vetting process for volunteer households and how it sometimes created a less than ideal service. Although the project tried to match up suitable volunteers with homeless young people this was not always possible.

*We just need people sometimes. We vet them through the CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks...we get them (potential householders) to fill questionnaires in about themselves... there's been times when we've had four or five people waiting and no householders. We've got someone who is homeless. We've got someone (a householder) who isn't ideal, but at least they won't be homeless* (Catherine, Young person's project worker).

One user of this service explained the advantages of being matched with a suitable householder:

*They try to choose the household with what the young person is like. Because I had so many problems, the householders, that I'm with now, are experienced. They know what to do and how to explain things to me* (Helen, user of a young person's supported lodging scheme, threatened with homelessness).

### **5.7.3 Quality of accommodation**

As well as there being a shortage of appropriate accommodation to rehouse those who wanted to move on from homeless accommodation, it was also found that accommodation on offer was of a poor quality. This was particularly the case with two schemes who provided bonds for private renting. Staff at both of these schemes described how they often had to deal with issues of low standards of accommodation.

One worker commented:

*It's hard to let accommodation. It's not of a good standard...places where we house our clients are exactly the same as what is available to any housing benefit claimant, whether they come through us or not. So it's not special, it's no better no worse.*

The worker perceived that the quality of accommodation offered was directly attributed to the behaviour of previous service users in that landlords were only offering poorer quality options.

*I mean some landlords now because of the problems that our clients have caused, might now be offering us the stuff that really is bottom of the pile (James, Floating support worker).*

A worker at one bond scheme contextualized his comments, relating them to local cultural events and housing renewal.

*With Liverpool becoming the city of culture..., properties that would have previously been open to the DSS (housing benefit claimants) a lot of people are buying up and are waiting for compulsory purchase (orders)... so we are losing a lot of properties through that at the minute, lots of regeneration (Celia, Floating support worker).*

The acquisition of the Capital of Culture in the city of Liverpool for 2008 also had a particularly detrimental effect on the quality of another tenant's accommodation. One young tenant had been resettled into housing association accommodation that was due to be demolished because of redevelopment. When the researcher visited he was one of the only tenants left in a street of vacant, boarded properties.

It seemed that private rented accommodation had the poorest overall standards. One woman talked about her desperate search for accommodation for herself and her daughter. Despite living in holiday accommodation which was particularly short term, she explained her problems finding accommodation of reasonable standard.

*We were staying in a B and B night by night because I refused to go into a hostel. A landlord showed us flats but you wouldn't even put a cat in there. The wires were*

*hanging out from the sockets and it was dirty and it stunk. And half the kitchen was in one room and the rest was just scattered about. It was awful.*

Even though she had found the accommodation in which she now lived she explained how there were still a number of problems.

*That window still hasn't been fixed and that's over a year, (points to window that doesn't shut properly,) and I'm fed up with it and there's a leak in the bathroom. But they (support worker) keep chasing him (landlord) up, but he's not responding to anything (Jenny, homeless for three months, user of floating support service).*

One solution to these problems was to try and apply for socially rented housing which this particular woman was considering.

The experience of poor quality private rented accommodation was not uncommon in the Southport area. One man had experienced a flood in his flat which had been due to poor maintenance of the accommodation. The resident described the difficulties that he had encountered to try and get the landlord to accept responsibility.

*Whilst I was away the ceiling fell in, on to all my electrics, television, video player, hi fi, it was all destroyed and the landlord wouldn't accept liability.*

Because of this flood the man had also lost the majority of his furniture. For this reason when the researcher came to interview him, she was not invited inside as he stated that there was no longer anything to sit on.

*All I've got is a chair, a television and a bed (Gerard, user of a floating support service, threatened with homelessness).*

There had been some acknowledgement of the problem of poor quality private rented housing by one local authority. A local authority housing manager described a landlord accreditation scheme initiated by the council which may go some way to improving standards in private renting within the borough.

*The council is developing landlord accreditation. This will encourage landlords to develop standards of a certain level.*

When asked whether these standards would be the same as registered social landlords he replied:

*No these will not be as high as the decent homes standards, but they will be certain levels. They won't have a sofa that will go on fire. They will have to have a fire exit etc. They will also have to have a tenancy agreement; reasonable rent will also be part of this. This scheme is due to be introduced in about a months time, there are about 50 landlords who have been involved in this process (Duncan, Housing strategy manager).*

Although it seemed more common for private rented accommodation to be of a poor standard, there were examples where social rented housing, was, in varying degrees, poor quality. Resettlement workers in one hostel tried to view all accommodation before it was offered to their service users to ensure that it was of a high enough standard.

*Me and (other hostel worker) have been to see some places and they've been awful and we've thought, 'no' we're not letting anyone come out of here into that.*

The worker explained that accommodation suitability was vital to ensure the success of the resettlement process.

*We're going to end up with them coming back again (to the hostel) and they're not going to manage and they'll be depressed... in a tatty old room.*

Asked if she went to visit potential properties before they were given to hostel residents she replied:

*Yeah, nine times out of ten, we will and if we feel it's no good or too tatty then we'll say no (Pauline, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

One service user commented how she had been advised against taking a tenancy in accommodation which was deemed poor quality. This highlights how support workers can sometimes use their experience of previous failures to try and secure a successful outcome in the future.

*I went for another flat further down (the road). (The resettlement worker) sent one of her staff with me and they didn't think it was good enough (Sarah, homeless for 9 months, user of resettlement service from young persons housing project).*

The suitability of the accommodation was often judged not only on the quality of the home but also assessed was the immediate environment.

*Clients will take any properties because they are worried that they will only get one offer of accommodation. I went to see a property with one man, the property was nice and I could see how it would be nice to live in but the area was terrible. The street was full of rubbish, it looked like Beirut (Joan, Floating support worker).*

Despite there being some descriptions of poor quality accommodation one resettlement worker explained how a housing association had redeveloped some ex council properties to a particularly high standard.

*It was a scheme, from (a local housing association). They approached us. They'd bought so many houses in Liverpool 8, and they asked us if we could approach some of our older residents, to see whether they would be willing to go to a two bedroomed, three bed roomed house, because they'd painted it and done them all lovely (Pauline, Resettlement worker in a hostel).*

A worker in the Southport area contrasted the standards of accommodation with housing associations and private landlords.

*It's a fairer rent to start off with (housing associations); repairs are carried out, quicker and to a higher standard than with most of the private landlords. And it's just more secure for them (service users) really. I mean knowing that they've got the*

*security of my support but also knowing that the flats being provided by a big housing association with standards... there's a lot more protection for the tenant (Erin, Floating support worker).*

It seemed that there were quite varying standards of accommodation and there was often little guarantee as to whether a person would get good, well maintained accommodation. This was dependant on which housing provider was used, and whether the accommodation was in a suitable safe and acceptable environment.

#### **5.7.4 Choice based lettings**

The system of property lettings by social landlords has recently undergone a review process and a number of providers had changed to a choice based lettings system. Whilst only one service user had experience of this type of system (others had been allocated properties before housing providers had introduced these types of allocation schemes), support staff varied in their judgement of the effectiveness of such an approach in allocating housing to homeless people.

One support worker in a Liverpool based resettlement scheme described one service user's experience.

*Helen's moving out Monday, she just went on the internet, bid for three properties and the next week she got told she could go and see one, and she took it. (Pauline, Resettlement worker in a hostel).*

Liverpool City Council had recently introduced a joint allocations system with a number of housing associations. For prospective tenants this meant that they only had to fill out one application form to join the housing register. This staff member also found this application method beneficial for both the service user and resettlement staff.

*Well, before you had to apply to each association, you know separate forms but now it's one form...with them all linking in, it's the one website, you get a list of all the properties up. And you can bid for anything for any organisation and in any area,*

*that you want. Whereas before you had to fill your form in with every association and put down certain areas and you were on the waiting list then, until something came up. This is a much better system (Robbie, Resettlement worker in a hostel).*

Whilst this particular scheme in Liverpool had found such a method of applications beneficial, one resettlement worker on the Wirral highlighted the downsides of such a system.

*We used to have a points system here and the unified waiting list. I thought that it was difficult because our residents were always given 225 points and really to get into accommodation you needed to be up to 300...but we could actually talk to housing officers in various areas and we had a very good relationship with some of them. So we managed to bypass this 225 points and house people that way. Now they've changed it to this choice-based lettings it's nigh on impossible (Brenda, Resettlement worker in a hostel).*

Another worker from the Liverpool area commented:

*Most people we deal with are single people, many are men. We do have some women who have children but they (the children) will often be living elsewhere so they (service users) will be counted as single. This means that they will often miss out on getting properties, because they are way down the list of priorities...this way of dealing (choice based lettings) with this group (homeless people) is not very effective at getting people rehoused (Cynthia, Floating support worker).*

### **5.7.5 Nomination agreements**

One way to increase access to socially rented accommodation was to develop a working relationship between a hostel and a housing association. This could lead to a nomination agreement between the two partners. A nomination agreement meant that an organisation working with homeless people could bypass the choice based lettings system and nominate a resident for a property owned by a housing association directly. Some hostels had nomination agreements with local housing associations for

a set amount of properties per year. When asked to describe the relationship between the hostel and housing associations, the resettlement worker in one hostel commented:

*That's something that I'm really working on...we have gained nominations from (local housing association)...I made a contact over there... she's been really great and had a good look round (the hostel). I've been talking to a guy from (another local housing association) ...he's excellent. He's looking forward to coming over here...we've still got nominations with (name of housing association)...so you're talking about some of the big players in the city in the housing that we're looking at. My aim is, to keep involved with them and keep them involved with everything we're doing (Colin, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

Similarly another worker had also made efforts to develop nomination agreements, although doing this was described as fraught with difficulties.

*It has been very difficult to build up contacts with some of the housing associations and to get nominations. A number of them have written to me and said that they were not entering into agreements with the hostels. I had an interview recently with (two housing associations) to try to get nominations and I'll hear in six weeks as to whether we've been successful (Melanie, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

Such difficulties were also described by a different worker.

*We approached a couple (of housing associations) (to set up nomination agreements) and they got back to us and said we're really interested in it. So we sent all the information off, made quite a few phone calls and basically nothing happened. We never heard back from them, every time we called, they didn't seem to know what was going on. So basically we gave up with them (Robbie, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

Whilst some hostels had access to nominations, not all had been used due to the location and suitability for the service user.

*We've got nomination rights to properties owned by (name of housing association). The nominations weren't all used last year because they've mainly got properties in Kensington and not many young people want to go and live there (Melanie, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

## **5.8 Funding for resettlement services: Supporting People**

Introduced in April 2003, Supporting People is the main funding source for support services for homeless people. Evidence is beginning to emerge regarding its benefits in providing services for this group.

### **5.8.1 Services prior to Supporting People**

A number of workers explained the difficulties of trying to rehouse people before the Supporting People legislation.

*If you thought that they had a good enough chance of being rehoused then you'd fill out a rehousing form with them, if you didn't then you just wouldn't (Lucy, Hostel Manager)*

When asked what would happen to those who did not apply for housing the manager replied:

*They'd just stay in the hostel system (Lucy, Hostel Manager)*

Supporting People had a profound effect on some working practices.

*Supporting People has changed our work, in that we used to have massive caseloads. We used to have two or three support workers, and each support worker would have if they (the clients) were under twenty-five, .... 20/30 clients. The over twenty-five support worker would have 40/50, (clients.) And a lot of that was crisis management because you had such a massive caseload. Although you would try to put a plan of support in place and thinking what the person needed it didn't happen a lot of the time (Erin, Floating Support Manager).*

One project worker saw a number of disadvantages of the Supporting People programme. Supporting People removed some of the flexibility that they previously had. Now they were only able to offer accommodation, despite there being no other local projects that were able to offer housing advice to young people from the area.

*Over a couple of years, we will see the same faces and names. Often they come to us very briefly and go away again... Pre Supporting People, that used to happen a lot more because we were able to give advice, not just giving accommodation to young people. We would advise anyone who walked through our door that was under the age of 18. So, rather than having to say, go away we're not funded for that we used to carry some funding for that. Supporting People it's much more rigid. We are funded to support x amount of people (Catherine, Young person's project worker).*

#### **5.8.2 Homelessness support, post Supporting People**

Notably, according to staff, Supporting People seemed to have improved services available to some service users.

*I think that there have been huge, huge, improvements in the way that hostels do things with the Supporting People funding. They're able to bring in more staff and more staff means more support, you know, there is an emphasis on support, support planning and assessment and trying to work with those people who are more vulnerable to staying in the homeless cycle (Lucy, Hostel Manager).*

*I was absolutely delighted when floating support schemes, funded through the Supporting People initiative came about ... (they) can actually offer support with the main aim of helping people to sustain themselves in a tenancy (Lucy, Hostel Manager).*

*I mean before (Supporting People)... because you had so many clients you were just responding to the benefits, to electricity issues, all sorts of those types of issues that you never actually had the time to do the proper structured work with them. I mean for me, the job's completely different because you form a plan with the client and then*

*you are working on things. Supporting them about eating, nutrition, health issues, you've got the time to properly link in, if they've got mental health issues ...you really are offering a high level of support...it was crisis management (before Supporting People) and you didn't have the time to offer the support that you wanted to offer.*  
(Erin, Floating Support Manager).

*Well from our (organisation's) point of view it's (Supporting People) been good because it has allowed us to set up the floating support scheme ...in Liverpool its allowed us to offer support to 300 tenants through floating support (Carlos, Floating Support Manager).*

*For those who are in the system who want to take up the offer of resettlement and move forward and be supported by support workers and floating support, things have really moved forward...It's great that those people who really do need help to sustain their tenancy, particularly when they're at their vulnerable point, when they're moving into their tenancy...can be given more intensive support at that time (Lucy, Hostel Manager).*

Some negative points were also highlighted.

*Yes, I mean there's a lot that is good about Supporting People, it has made us look at our structures ...so there is a lot that's improved through Supporting People. I'm not saying that it's all negative but what I'm saying is, it has slowed down the processes... It offers young people better protection, and a better service once they are in supported lodgings but the speed at which we can offer accommodation isn't there anymore (Catherine, Young person's project worker).*

One worker felt that Supporting People had created unrealistic expectations.

*So Supporting People are saying, right you've got this person move them on, but it's like where do we move them on to, they've got a mental health problem, a drug problem and an anti social behaviour order, tell us where to put them (Cynthia, Resettlement Worker in a hostel)*

## 5.9 Issues with welfare benefits

### 5.9.1 Housing benefit regulations

The complexities of the housing benefit system were sometimes seen as problematic in the resettlement process. A service user with alcohol abuse and mental health issues explained:

*I had a flat in Oldham and when I went into care for the last time for seven months, Oldham council wouldn't...pay the housing benefit...so I had to abandon the tenancy and sell all my stuff, so then when I came out I didn't have anything (Gerard, user of a floating support service, threatened with homelessness)*

Housing benefit issues had also made it difficult for tenancy sustainment. On a visit to a service user by the support worker (observed by the researcher) housing benefit was discussed. The service user seemed baffled by the level of bureaucracy in resolving, what appeared him, to be a simple claim.

For the majority of homeless people wanting to move from homeless accommodation (i.e. hostels) affordability of rent was not an issue. If claiming income support or job seekers allowance as a main source of income, housing benefit would cover all rent for those moving into social rented accommodation. However, for those who had other sources of income, affordability was indeed an issue. One woman explained how she was unable to take accommodation because of high rents and lack of assistance from housing benefit.

*I was on incapacity benefit and because I was getting a pension, I did actually have to pay part rent...I'd been trying (other) places and the rents were out of my bracket...when they worked out what I would have to pay it was just too much for me to afford (Sally, resident of a semi supported housing project, homeless 3 months).*

There were further complications involved in receiving housing benefit in private tenancies. Often housing benefit would not meet the full cost of rent. Therefore a certain amount would need to be paid to top up the rent.

*Housing benefit will only allow up to a pre tenancy<sup>16</sup>. So then... usually before they've (service users) moved in, they say fine that's fine, I'll pay it (shortfall), but they get into the property, they realise how expensive it is for their gas, their electric, their food, they want to buy nice things for their home, so therefore very often the shortfall is the last thing (they will pay) (Floating support worker).*

Dealing with the housing benefit department of the local authority could also be problematic.

*I mean, I know that there is a law that says that within so many weeks you have to have an interim (housing benefit) payment. It is getting better but when I first started here I was horrified at how the (housing) benefits system was here.*

The worker described how she adapted her working practices to account for the difficulties in dealing with housing benefit.

*You might get housing benefit for twelve months but I prefer to work on the six months basis even if it means putting in a housing benefit form with a client after their fifth month. At least you know that housing benefit is continuous (Erin, Floating support worker).*

### **5.9.2 Social fund: Accessing household items**

Accessing items to enable a service user to move into a property was critical to the resettlement process. One option used to enable the purchase of larger items of furniture, was to obtain a community care grant through the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Both staff and service users often commented on the nature of the system and highlighted the difficulties gaining a positive award.

An ex-hostel resident talked about the limited amount of money that he had received in the form of a grant.

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<sup>16</sup> A pre-tenancy determination allows a housing benefit claimant to establish if his/her housing benefit would be restricted in private rented accommodation before they move into accommodation.

*The social (DWP) has given me a grant, but it was not enough for what I want. I can understand why, that they have limited finance but that is not my interest is it? I want the furniture. Of course I can understand where they are coming from but at the end of the day... I'm still short of things (Paulo, user of resettlement service, homeless 9 months).*

Despite meeting the criteria for a community care grant one young woman was initially turned down. Her support worker explained:

*We already put a support letter with Anna's (application) but it came back that she wasn't going to get it (community care grant (CCG)). So she appealed, it was a phone appeal...I spoke on Anna's behalf explaining what she'd been through and that and that's how you came about getting your three hundred pounds wasn't it? (Colin, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

Anna describes however that this wasn't enough for all the household items that she needed. Asked if she had much furniture she replied:

*No, I had a new cooker, a fridge freezer, what I got given off one of the staff (from the hostel) and a couch and the bed and me TV. I didn't really have much in me house (Anna, user of resettlement service from a young persons' housing project, homeless nine months).*

The same young women also commented on the different awards of CCGs.

*This girl who lives in Bootle...she didn't need nothing at all. She didn't need anything because her mum bought her everything. She applied for (the CCG) and she got £750 and she only lives in a one bedroomed flat. I got £350 and I live in a two bedroomed house. So I was a bit gutted over that (Anna, user of resettlement service from a young persons' housing project, homeless nine months).*

The inconsistencies and difficulties of the obtaining grants were noted by another worker.

*One young girl has been refused a community care grant even though the form has been filled out by a welfare rights officer...There is no fair way that people are allocated money for when they move into a property. Some young people are given up to £3000 which includes money from leaving care grants, a CCG, maternity grants. Another person might only be given a community care grant. (Colin, Resettlement worker in a hostel).*

CCGs were also misused as one woman explained.

*Another thing that I don't agree with, when you leave there (the hostel) and you put in for a housing grant (CCG) and you get whatever you get,... half of them get a place, get the housing grant and go and shoot up a load of stuff (drugs) on the corner (Lina, homeless two years, user of a resettlement service from a hostel)*

One support worker explained how her work was often centred around getting household items for those who did not qualify for help from certain parts of the social fund.

*He (service user) was on incapacity benefit, it meant that he wasn't entitled to a community care grant. He had no furniture. He took out a loan (social fund loan) for a bed...I got £85 off (manager, from a charitable fund) and I went round all the charity shops and I got curtains and picked up a big rug £5. I got friends to donate for him. And his flat was furnished, very basically (Erin, Floating Support Worker).*

One man discussed the challenges involved in finding household items for his flat. He had managed to acquire such items through informal support networks.

*I managed to get a fridge off a friend, a cooker off another friend, people just seemed to rally round which did me for that period of time (Gary, user of a floating support service, homeless one year).*

One woman identified that she would find it difficult to move on from her current accommodation because she did not own any of the furniture in her current accommodation.

*I love it round here but I can't see meself staying... another thing, when I do go I'd have to be saving and start all over again cos none of this furniture is mine, so that's another thing* (Lina, homeless twoyears, user of a resettlement service from a hostel)

### **5.9.3 Budgeting and money management**

Aside from deliberations surrounding buying initial items to furnish a flat, there was a great deal of discussion by staff regarding difficulties in affording the upkeep of a property. Many talked of the various difficulties that recipients of welfare benefits are faced with. This then influenced the nature of support work that was carried out.

*One of the main ones is budgeting, people find that they can't manage their money so they run up bills or get themselves into debt that they can't mangle to repay... that's one of the quite common things.*

When asked how the support worker would go about helping with this problem she replied:

*With the budgeting side of things, it's quite, well its not quite easy, but ... you can do practical things to help with that* (Brenda, Resettlement worker in a hostel).

Several service users discussed the difficulties they faced managing money. One spoke of the problems that managing money posed for her. Throughout her interview she came back to the subject three times.

*Once I get me money that's it, I just don't want to give it to anyone... we (client and service provider) are working on the budgeting and that first...I don't want me own flat and then cocking up again. I need to learn the budgeting and all that first.* (Hannah, resident of a semi supported housing project, homeless three years).

For another service user her low income was posing severe problems as she was she did not have enough money to buy formula milk for her six month old son. Despite the severity of her situation, she had been refused a DWP crisis loan. Because of this, her support worker was forced to advise her to skip payments on essential household bills, far from ideal, but the only solution available.

One hostel resettlement worker commented on the wider implications that living on low income could bring.

*You must think that you're stuck in a hostel forever, I mean how do you get out, how do you? The only other way is through private flats and they want a deposit, rent in advance. How do you on JSA (Job Seekers Allowance) save up that money?... I mean where do you keep it? I mean you just can't hold on to cash, you can't, it's too tempting* (Original emphasis) (Brenda, Resettlement worker in a hostel).

## **5.10 Location of accommodation**

Location of a property was an important dynamic in the resettlement process. Both service users and staff spoke of the different reasons for choosing to live in particular areas.

### **5.10.1 Living nearby to social networks of support**

Several people stated that they wanted to move into accommodation that was near to relatives. One man explained the difficulties that he and his partner had faced when they had moved into an area of Liverpool that they did not know. The couple had lacked the support they needed when expecting their first child.

*I mean the house was ok, the house was nice but being in Norris Green...we were far away from all me family, all her family. I had no friends round there and as I say the relationship at start was ok, but we had no one else to spend time with* (Simon, hostel resident, homeless for 18 months).

A man who had requested to live near his elderly father explained the reason for this.

*I grew up here and my father lives here, he's ninety-two next week. I mean I have a responsibility to him, which keeps me together to some extent, because I have someone to care for (Gerard, user of a floating support service, threatened with homelessness).*

Familiarity with an area was a concurrent theme cited by service users when requesting certain accommodation.

*Because I grew up around here and me granddad lives just over there. (Sarah, homeless for 9 months, user of resettlement service from young persons housing project).*

Conversely there was also a desire to break ties with an area of abode for various reasons. Some service users felt that because they had problems in the past living in certain areas that they did not want to return to those particular areas. One male service user, currently trying to resettle from hostel accommodation, explained that he wanted to move out of the local area because of his history of drug problems. Asked where he was hoping to live after moving from the hostel he replied:

*Anywhere, away from the area, because I know all the drug people round here. There's always that chance if I move into my own place, get bored one night and I think I'll just have a quick dabble, so I need to move away from the area where I don't know anyone (Daniel, hostel resident, homeless one year).*

A resident living in local authority housing with floating support described that he had moved from Liverpool to a neighbouring area because of intimidation.

*I got threatened and that's why I left Liverpool. I've been up here since Christmas... I knew that if I moved back there, it would all start again. That's why I got off (Darren user of floating support service, homeless two weeks).*

A support worker elucidated further on the reasons why people chose different areas.

*I think some of them have had families round Park Road (area in Liverpool) and they still won't go to the area. It's probably due to problems in the past when they've lived round there (Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

For one young woman family relationships were complex. In previous accommodation she had requested to live near to her parents but explained how this had caused difficulties for her. Asked whether she would like to live close to her family she replied:

*No, No. They'd be knocking on the door every five minutes, saying have you got this, have you got that... I didn't want what happened to me brother. They (her parents) found out where he was living and they kept on going over. And I don't want that (Hannah, resident of a semi supported housing project, homeless three years).*

## **5.11 Preventing resettlement**

### **5.11.1 Rent arrears**

Rent arrears were described as one the main barriers to people being rehoused. If a person had outstanding rent arrears from a previous property with the local authority or housing association, these organisations would not accept them on their waiting list. This narrowed down housing options and made it difficult for resettlement workers to find appropriate housing.

*Basically, what we (the housing association) found is for many, many years, tenancies were breaking down and the cause of those breakdowns was usually because of arrears (Carlos, Floating support manager).*

*The thing is though, if they're in rent arrears...they're treated like anybody else, they've got to pay the rent arrears to whoever they owe them to, pay them off and then approach them (housing association or council) again (Joan, Floating support worker).*

*There's people who can't move because they've got rent arrears and a lot of them have got no chance of paying that money back. Say they owe £80 and (with) the money they get, they've got to pay rent here (in hostel) then it's going to be really hard for them to pay them arrears off, and they have to stay here until they do*  
(Ursula, Floating support worker).

One worker highlighted the cause of these arrears:

*...it's based on the fact that they are on housing benefit. They don't fill in their renewal forms for when the housing benefit runs out, they don't take in a sick note or for whatever reason they don't complete a new form for the continuation of housing benefit. Consequently housing benefit stop paying rent...the next thing is that they're evicted which then makes it difficult for them to find move on accommodation*  
(Brenda, Resettlement worker in a hostel).

A hostel resident related this exact experience.

*I'd been on the sick all my life and then I got a job... it was £140 a week and I couldn't cope with it, I just couldn't cope with it. So I thought I better get sick notes. I was getting sick notes, not realising that my rent wasn't being paid. So I ended up in arrears ...they (the council) wouldn't have moved me or anything until I paid those arrears* (Lina, homeless two years, user of a resettlement service from a hostel).

Lina talked about how this affected her long term housing situation.

*They wouldn't accept me on anywhere (housing lists)..., I found that out about 9 months after I'd been there (in the hostel). So then I was dead upset, I was crying... Then someone told me about (local floating support and bond scheme)... because with me being in rent arrears, these were the only people, by rights, that could help me*  
(Lina, homeless 2 years, user of a resettlement service from a hostel).

Arrears were apparently a problem across all tenures. A worker from a bond scheme commented:

*I would say that 80% of ours (who are evicted) are evicted in rent arrears (Mark, Floating support worker).*

Similarly, another worker described that arrears were often related to housing benefit difficulties. It was common for access to certain types of property to be restricted because of outstanding rent arrears.

*One lad was evicted from one of our properties because he had a break from his housing benefit claim that had meant that he had run up arrears of over £1000. We allowed him a place in project only if he agreed to start paying off the arrears with us. These are some of the difficulties that we end up facing (Melanie, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

There seemed to be some misunderstanding by hostel residents as to the effects of outstanding arrears with the local council.

*You're not going to be rehoused by the council while you've got arrears. One way of doing it is to pay it (arrears) back and a lot of them say 'If I do that, will I get housing again?'...for a lot of them they've got these arrears, they've been evicted and they think that's it. And for some they think that the council might still house them somewhere else (Pauline, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

### **5.11.2 Institutionalisation**

For residents who had lived for a number of years in a hostel it could be particularly daunting for them to move on into independent living. This issue was of particular concern to a number of workers. In a direct access hostel, one service user had been resident in the hostel for nineteen years. The introduction of Supporting People meant that residents that had lived long term in the hostel, would have to move on. Workers in the hostel described the difficulties that resettling these residents could bring.

*When we first approached them (older residents) and explained the situation, ...(that) they would eventually have to move, we gave them a year, two years as a deadline and in that time they had to seriously think about moving on. We talked it through*

*with them and kept reassuring them. We won't just send them out of here (hostel) into any old accommodation, we'd make sure that it was decent and nice to move into. I mean they were a bit apprehensive at first and scared, which is understandable you know, God love them...I think they were a bit scared because they had nothing, no belongings and when we explained that we would give them what they needed ...they relaxed about that then, and we sorted the finance out for them. They didn't have to worry about doing things like that for themselves. It was just a smooth transition in the end (Robbie, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

Similarly another Liverpool hostel worker commented about resettling one elderly resident who had been living in the hostel for many years.

*Our biggest fear was we would be moving him on and what are we putting him into? I would never have slept. It was a big culture shock but he has settled in so well. Honestly, he has given us the courage to try other people that are elderly. I mean, I know we shouldn't have used him as the experiment, but he's fantastic. His support plan has just fallen into place, he's lapping it up. He's in his element. I'm sure underneath he's probably thinking I should of done this years ago, instead of being institutionalised...here (Pauline, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

Often the service user perceived that it would be harder to move on from the hostel than it actually is. According to this worker the route to independence need not be so traumatic if support works well.

*In some individual cases...in the minority of cases it's a situation of being institutionalised...they think they need the support more than they really do. So it's again educating them to sort of move on and not be so dependant (Pauline, Resettlement worker from a hostel).*

For some hostel residents, living in the hostel represented stability even if this did mean that they were institutionalised.

*Because of the rules, we find we get people here who have been chaotic for months and months even for years, and when they come to stay here, (hostel) they can become*

*stable and be stable for months. But as soon as they move on, it just all goes to pot, because those strict boundaries and guidelines and reassurance... have all gone, and they just can't cope on their own with no boundaries. ... They know not to use (drugs and alcohol) on the premises, whereas if they live in flats they can do what they like. They can get smashed out of their head twenty-four hours a day and spiral out of control, whereas here they've got to control their drinking, control their drug use. I just think that is reassuring for people (Cynthia, Resettlement worker in a hostel).*

Another worker commented about the effects of living in a hostel, where service users were provided with free meals and laundry services, which could lead to institutionalisation.

*When they stay here they have no service charge, they don't have to pay for food, they don't have to pay for laundry, everything, all responsibility is basically taken off their shoulders ... and we do deskill people ... It's a lot easier here ... they've got more disposable income when they live in here (Brenda, Resettlement worker in a hostel).*

## 5.12 Summary

This chapter has outlined that the becoming homeless can be a stressful and difficult time for individuals and the path to resettlement is not always an easy one, with many factors affecting its progression. One of the main problems highlighted by the results is the limited availability of accommodation owned by social landlords for individuals to resettle into after a spell of homelessness. Furthermore, local redevelopment has further decreased available accommodation meaning that many homeless people were forced into accommodation in areas which have a high number of social problems which may make resettled living more difficult. The results also indicate that developing a relationship between worker and service had an important effect on the resettlement process. Also important was the type of support that a resettlement worker could offer, evidence suggested that individuals needed emotional as well as practical assistance to resettle. The availability of funding from Supporting People was allowing services to develop in order to meet the needs of service users. The next chapter will discuss these themes highlighted by both the quantitative and qualitative

results. It will also discuss these results in the light of recent literature and policy documentation regarding homelessness and resettlement.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

As highlighted at the end of the last chapter, this chapter will discuss the results of the qualitative and quantitative sections of this research. This discussion will consider the challenges that individuals and workers face to establish resettlement. It will also highlight the effects that policies, both local and national have on the resettlement process. This will include a discussion of the new Supporting People policy as well as an examination of the new allocation policies used in the Merseyside area. The chapter will also examine the effects of social security policies which can also shape and influence the experience of resettlement.

#### 6.1 Initial experiences of being homeless

When initially experiencing homelessness, some service users seemed to be unclear as to the housing options available to them. This tended to be people who had experienced homelessness as a one-off experience whilst those who had experienced repeat homelessness had a greater idea of the services on offer because they had accessed different services throughout their homeless career. The lack of awareness of accommodation had also led to people being inappropriately housed as they directly approached services of which they were aware in their local area, that were not necessarily the most appropriate to their needs. In a minority of cases the evidence also illustrated that service users were not being advised by support/ resettlement workers about accommodation options that they could consider. This was a missed opportunity as the data suggests that certain individuals could have been prevented from being in the hostel system for a prolonged period of time. It must be highlighted, however, that it was a very small minority who stated that they had not received assistance despite living in a hostel setting where resettlement support was available. This was a very positive result considering recent research in Scotland (Rosengard et al, 2001) illustrates that 50% of hostel residents reported they were dissatisfied with the advice that they had received about resettlement options.

A number of people experienced temporary accommodation inappropriate to their needs because of the desperation of their housing situation. In most cases this meant

that they needed to find accommodation within a short space of time, ordinarily a few days. There were specific cases where service users simply wanted social rented housing, as they felt competent at being able to manage a tenancy having done so previously. Because of the immediacy of their need the only housing available was often direct access hostel accommodation. A number of women described how they had found temporary accommodation in a women's refuge and in projects for single parents despite this type of supported accommodation providing level of support too high for their needs. This problem was caused by a lack of available social rented accommodation in the area in which they wanted to settle. This issue was also highlighted by the Audit Commission (2004:20), an issue which they describe as 'bed blocking'. They point out "homeless hostels get blocked with people who could benefit from being moved on to permanent re-housing, but due to the lack of more appropriate accommodation they remain in the hostels receiving a more costly level of support than they need".

There was evidence of 'bed blocking' with this being a particular issue in Liverpool and the Wirral. A number of the sample experienced this type of problem as they were not able to access the accommodation that they needed for a number of reasons. In most cases the local authority (LA) had no statutory duty to find service users housing because they were not defined as statutorily homeless as they were single people. The LA advised service users on housing issues and directed them to particular accommodation projects, mainly hostels, although in other cases service users were directed to local housing support services. Even if the service user was statutorily homeless (as was the case of one single parent in the sample), the housing option (a hostel) was not satisfactory for the service user involved. When approaching the LA for assistance, for some service users the experience of the application process for housing was baffling and bureaucratic. Cummings et al (2000) in their study of homeless young people found that staff at the local authority did not explain clearly enough the processes of accessing accommodation and why service users were directed to particular services. Contrary to Cummings et al's findings, in this study service users did understand the reasons that they were directed to certain projects by the LA, however service users had no guarantee that they would be offered housing by the project to which they were directed.

The evidence suggested that there was no uniform manner in which people who were homeless found out about accommodation, most had heard of projects through word of mouth. Individuals therefore approached projects that they had heard of rather than ones that would be the best for their needs. The housing project that a person first approached could affect the progression of that individual's housing career. For example, if an individual accessed a hostel owned by a housing association there was a better opportunity for that individual to gain more permanent accommodation offered by that same housing association. This meant that access to more permanent accommodation was more easily obtainable for some people but it illustrated an ad hoc service which varied between providers, which also appeared to be different in different areas around the region. In contrast, however, instead of being able to climb the housing ladder when some individuals experienced homelessness they were vulnerable to being placed in accommodation which had the potential to worsen, rather than ameliorate their housing situation. Thus some individuals became at risk of being homeless longer than necessary as they were trapped into accommodation inappropriate to their needs.

Thus the study illustrated a critical point, that there was no one service that was informing individuals of their housing options. Whilst some individuals had approached the local authority for advice this was not standard practice and most individuals were deterred from approaching the local council because of the perception that they would not receive any assistance because he/she was a single adult with no dependants. Yet the 2002 Homelessness Act (part VII, section 192) states that individuals must receive advice and assistance regarding their housing situation even if they are not classified as being in priority need. Local authorities are not obliged to provide this assistance themselves but if they pass this responsibility over to another organisation, according to the local authority code of guidance for administering this legislation (ODPM, 2002b), the local authority is still obliged to monitor the provision that is being offered. This research showed that there were many voluntary organisations that were offering housing advice and assistance but this was not as a direct result of this legislation, and the organisations were not carrying out this advisory role on behalf of the local authority. In fact, no individual explained that this duty of advice or assistance had been carried out, although this could be explained because the legislation was still very much in its infancy when the

research was carried out. However, it was also evident that individuals did not know their rights and the obligations of the local authority to offer some support to find them new housing.

The evidence above suggests a critical new role for a resettlement worker who would be able to inform service users of their rights under this new legislation. This may involve some training of resettlement workers as during interviews several individuals stated that they were not knowledgeable of the homelessness legislation. However without such up-to-date training it is impossible for a resettlement worker to advocate fully for a homeless client. Nevertheless, adding this task to an already varied role to the remit of a resettlement worker may have its disadvantages as it has the potential to increase the duties of an already complex occupation. Moreover, this study also showed clearly that one of the key roles that service users wanted from a support worker was "someone to have a chat with" and someone who could offer emotional support (see table 11), adding extra duties would only detract from being able to offer this good quality support that was so needed by service users. Perhaps, therefore, there needs to be more referrals from resettlement workers to specialist housing services that give good quality housing advice and to ensure that individuals receive the services owed to them under legislation.

### *6.1.1 Perceived risks of hostel living*

For most people who experienced homelessness his/her first experiences of homeless accommodation were usually of temporary direct-access hostel accommodation. Quantitative evidence shows that 35% service users had been living in a hostel prior to being resettled. A number of people who were interviewed described their experiences of this type of accommodation, all agreeing that direct-access accommodation offered an unsatisfactory form of housing. Ex-residents complained of the poor quality of the accommodation but more frequently of the fear of intimidation by other residents. This was especially apparent with two young women one of whom described the direct access hostel where she had lived as "full of prostitutes and drug addicts". For those needing immediate access to accommodation, direct access hostels are ideal; however, they can make the process of resettlement more difficult. Direct access accommodation is often temporary;

although this type of accommodation can act as a stop gap, it means that a resident had to move on quickly as there were limits placed on the length of time a resident could stay.

Qualitative evidence seemed to suggest a number of problems with direct access accommodation. Firstly it seemed that a number of service users were simply sent to the wrong type of hostel because there was a lack of vacancies at a more appropriate hostel (as discussed above). Thus service users were forced to move more than necessary making the homelessness experience even more unsettling. As one service user pointed out the amount of moves between accommodation had a detrimental effect on her mental health. Staff in most direct access hostels seemed to be keen to move residents into other types of accommodation. However, this may be a move to another hostel rather than into permanent rehousing. Secondly, and perhaps more fundamentally, one of the main reasons why individuals were placed in the wrong type of hostel or housing initially was because of the lack of immediate access to certain types of housing or hostels. Where some service users described that they had needed to live for a certain period in hostel accommodation, a large proportion described that they had not wanted to live in hostel style accommodation, with some even applying directly for settled accommodation with the council or housing association. This presented the serious problem that instead of individuals initially gaining access to the accommodation that they wanted, homeless people find that they are moved around from project to project because, as previously noted, the accommodation they initially moved to is not appropriate to his/her needs.

A further issue with hostel style accommodation was that there was a possibility of residents becoming accustomed to the affordability of this type of accommodation. For all residents of a hostel who claimed income support or jobseekers allowance the rent for living in the hostel was paid for by housing benefit. In addition, four hostels offered a level of board with the accommodation which ranged from bed and breakfast to full board. In one hostel full board was provided free of charge with food being provided by charitable donations. Whilst in three of the four hostels there was a service charge levied to each resident for board which he/she was required to pay from his or her own income, the charge for this was considerably less than what it might cost to pay for groceries in independent accommodation. Hostel living had

become for some a trap from which it was hard to escape. One staff member explained how living in a hostel could become appealing when it offered such cheap accommodation and the opportunity for residents to have a greater amount of freedom with a low level of income. This theme had also been extremely prominent in the pilot study and this further research illustrated that it was a concern of staff in the majority of temporary accommodation projects.

However, despite the concerns of staff, quantitative results indicated that those who may stay for long periods of time in homeless accommodation are in the minority. Over half of the quantitative sample reported that they were homeless for a relatively short length of time (under 6 months), with only 27% showing a prolonged period of homelessness of two years and above. This evidence does illustrate that there is a need to ensure that homeless experience is a short one as once a prolonged period of homelessness occurs it could become easy for individuals to become trapped into the homeless way of life living in a hostel. Evidence from this study also illustrated that those who remained homeless for a longer period tended to be older men. This compares to older women who were less likely to experience a long period of homelessness. The statistics also illustrated that younger people are more likely to experience homelessness for a shorter period of time. This may mean that younger people are able to solve a housing crisis more easily and quickly which therefore has a positive effect on the length of time that they spend homeless. One explanation for these trends could be related to the types of social contacts that homeless people have. Older homeless people are shown to have less established social contacts with individuals who are not homeless (this point will be discussed in more depth a little later in this chapter) which may mean they become more entrenched in the lifestyle associated with homelessness. This compares to younger homeless people, who, despite frequently leaving home because of household conflict, manage to keep networks of social support whilst they resolve their housing problems. The evidence therefore highlights that the concerns of support workers that young homeless people prolong their period of time being homeless seem unfounded as most are able to resolve their homelessness within a very short space of time.

The further concern of staff working with residents resettling from catered accommodation was a deskilling effect caused by individuals not having to cook,

which could be detrimental to a resettlement plan. Staff showed concern that this was another factor which would influence and subsequently prolong the length of time spent in hostel accommodation. Hostel living removed the need to be able to cook or budget for food, clearly skills needed for resettlement. The problems were most pronounced when there was no charge made to the residents for food, making it easier for residents to have a fairly decent standard of living on a relatively low income. However, the decision to provide catered accommodation in one hostel had been given a careful consideration and there were a number of different issues that had been taken into account when the hostel had decided to offer half board accommodation. One hostel manager described that the senior staff in the hostel had decided to offer half board accommodation in order that the many drug users who used the project were given two nutritious meals a day, of utmost importance if a person had a substance misuse problem.

Whilst there was a need for the specialist support being offered in hostels, there was a fine dividing line between finding the support that service users needed and service users procrastinating in hostel accommodation as this could provide an easier living option than maintaining independent accommodation. Some hostels had a dual role, on the one hand there was a need to provide meals, whilst on the other they were also keen to develop the resettlement side of their function. The hostels surveyed had the difficult task of balancing these two functions. Whilst resettlement was an important issue, staff in hostels also felt that they had a duty of care to the residents who were living in the hostel to ensure that they were comfortable in the hostel. Two projects in particular (both direct access) placed a high emphasis on ensuring the well being of residents noting that this could be the first step to overcoming social exclusion and starting the resettlement process. Crane and Warnes (2000) also suggest that hostels may have a perverse financial incentive to minimise vacancies by retaining stable residents. However no evidence was found in this study to support Crane and Warnes' argument, as all the workers seemed to have genuine consideration for the accommodation needs of the service users. Wyner (1999) highlighted that there could be some positive results derived from hostel living; she suggested a period of hostel living for the homeless and socially excluded could be positive to achieving resettlement in the longer term. She stated that "It could be seen that for a significant section of the homeless population, there is a need to experience and enjoy a positive

period of dependence, in a reliable and secure environment where they can feel heard, and contained, before taking steps to move on into their own accommodation and for that move to be a successful one”.

For some homeless people hostel living may be a necessity to gain resettlement and could be considered as an important stepping-stone. In the light of this potentially negative housing situation, a homeless person can learn from the support on offer and gain some reassurance from the support staff available to assist them find the most appropriate housing options. The end result of this period, for some, resulted in a particularly positive outcome as individuals were able to return to previous accommodation as time away from the familial home had allowed individuals to make amends with family or other household members. For these individuals temporary accommodation was a purposeful way to resolve their housing difficulties.

However, the positive effects that hostel living can bring must be considered in the light of the risks that prolonged hostel living can bring. One of the quickest ways to settle into the hostel was to become acquainted with other residents who were also living at the hostel. Whilst it seemed only natural that residents would want to share experiences with other hostel dwellers and thus find social support for their difficult housing circumstances amongst their peers, this impeded individuals' ability to move out of the supported environment of the hostel. Grisby et al (1990) suggests that this is because homeless people come to develop a sense of affiliation with others in similar housing distress. This affiliation reduces anxiety whilst homeless people will seek to replace the loss of social bonds with friends and family by establishing social bonds with others who are facing the hardships of homelessness. Although Grisby et al's study (ibid.) refers to rough sleepers, the same parallel could be drawn with those who are resident in temporary accommodation such as hostel residents who are likely to seek the support of others experiencing similar life events. The risk of individuals becoming institutionalised becomes particularly high as residents become deskilled and reliant upon acquaintances that they have made in the hostel. Both the literature and the evidence from this study highlight a conflict of interest for those who are influential in the management of homeless hostels. Service users want and need hostel accommodation that is comfortable, in which they can feel safe, and some hostels seemed to also go beyond the minimum standard required. They provided

meals and a very welcoming environment in which residents could live comfortably. It is clear that there is no desire to return running hostels on workhouse principles and the principle of less eligibility as had been the case in the past (for example the resettlement units of the 1980s) but evidently there is a need to provide good quality accommodation with additional support to ensure that service users do not remain too long in hostel accommodation.

## **6.2 Availability, location and quality of accommodation**

Perceptions of the resettlement process of homeless individuals were influenced and affected by three key issues. These were a) the geographical location of resettled housing b) the quality of any accommodation gained and c) the availability of accommodation. These issues were interlinked and it seemed that the majority of service users found such factors critical when they were looking for accommodation. Similarly, support workers placed a high value on these factors and highlighted them as critical to the overall success of the resettlement process. Service users also rated friends and family living in the local vicinity as being critically important to begin to feel resettled.

### **6.2.1 Location**

Despite the importance of having friends and or family nearby, the quantitative evidence highlighted clearly that individuals were most concerned (over other reasons) about being resettled into a reasonable area and community. Service users had clear perceptions of which areas they felt were "rough", and, understandably, it was these areas to which service users expressed that they did not want to be resettled. However, these were often the areas where there were vacancies for social rented housing. In Liverpool, for example, evidence suggested that there are certain areas which received very few applications for social rented housing. Nevin et al (2001) illustrate that in the suburbs of Norris Green, Dovecot and Speke there is a surplus of properties to applicants. A study by Bratley and Hackett (2000) highlighted the reasons why these particular areas may be especially unpopular for rehousing. Describing Speke, they portray an area with a limited number of shops and other facilities available to local residents. They also perceived a general sense of apathy

by community members and feelings of social exclusion, with one person commenting "There are a lot of people who are so outside of the mainstream, very excluded. They are living in an alternative economy". Resettling service users who have previously been homeless into such an area may not be realistic especially with a homeless service user who is particularly vulnerable or who has few social contacts in the area. Bratley and Hackett (ibid.) also comment that in Speke there are more off licences and public houses than any other type of outlet thus presenting those who have alcohol addiction issues with a very difficult situation, having to manage a property in the close vicinity to readily available alcohol.

Support staff highlighted that areas of low demand could be the ones which were unpopular with service users because of their bad reputation as areas of high crime, poverty and social exclusion. Evidence suggested that despite individuals being homeless, most were simply not prepared to take accommodation in an area which had a poor reputation. There were actually few service users who simply took resettled accommodation because it was readily or quickly available (quantitative evidence suggested that there were only 6 individuals who were rehoused for this reason). Service users see the value of being rehoused to an area where they want to live and are clearly aware of the issues associated with having a poor local environment. Thus being homeless does not mean that individuals are prepared to accept poor quality accommodation. The consequences of this mean that resettlement of homeless individuals is not only about the experience of rehousing but it is also reliant on perceptions and experiences of particular neighbourhoods and one of the keys to successful resettlement is providing good quality housing in sustainable neighbourhoods with facilities and a developed infrastructure.

Evidence from the pilot study suggested that it was important for service users to be able to move to an area of their choice and particularly where they had family and/or friends to support them. An interesting result was shown in the quantitative data as 38% of the sample reported that they had become homeless because of household conflict and 37% reporting that they had become homeless because family or friends could no longer accommodate, yet 71% still had friends and family with whom they were in contact. Furthermore, despite respondents (particularly those under 18) leaving home because of difficulties with relationships with family, this had not

caused irreparable damage and a high proportion of this group still placed a high value on wanting to live in an area close to family contacts. For some people the reasons why they wanted a particular area seemed to be because they simply wished to stay in an area with which they were acquainted and this included having family and friends in the area.

A further reason for wanting to find housing in a particular location was simply a general familiarity with the area. For some, the suggestion that they should move to an area with which they were not acquainted seemed a particularly daunting prospect and one which they would not consider. Moving to an unfamiliar area can have an isolating effect as Todhunter and Rahilly (2000:47) found "Acquiring housing may result in people having less contact with acquaintances due to being moved to new areas within the city. Coping with isolation can be a serious challenge -former attractions and acquaintances may be too strong to resist". Evidence from this study highlights concurs with Todhunter and Rahilly and illustrates the importance of the geographical area to which a person was resettled. However, some of those interviewed for the study were keen to move away from family connections, but individuals wanting to move for these particular reasons seemed to be a sizeable minority.

### **6.2.2 Quality**

Individuals in this study wanted high quality accommodation and support workers were dubious about resettling individuals into accommodation that did not meet a certain standard. Despite the government's proposals aimed at raising the standards of accommodation (Decent Homes Standard<sup>17</sup>) a certain proportion of the stock offered to hostels residents was not meeting the criteria, with standards in the private rented sector worse than those of social rented accommodation. Resettlement workers cited many examples where accommodation had been of an especially low standard. The effects of residualisation of housing stock as a direct result of the right to buy are clearly evident with poor quality accommodation in less affluent areas often being the

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<sup>17</sup> The Decent Homes Standard was introduced by the government in 2000. It aims to ensure that social rented housing meets certain standards by 2010. All social rented accommodation by this date must have reasonably modern facilities and be in a satisfactory state of repair.

only form of accommodation available to prospective tenants. Evidence also highlights the limited availability of good quality private rented accommodation which could effectively plug the gap left by the shortage of social rented housing. This illustrates that the practical application of 1988 Housing Act, which aimed to revive the private rented sector to counteract the effects of the right to buy, has indeed failed those most in need of housing.

With limited availability of socially rented housing in high demand areas the only other option was to access private rented housing. This was not always the best choice as standards of private rented accommodation generally tended to be lower than those provided by social rented landlords. RSLs are also reputed to be better landlords than private landlords and more understanding of issues of vulnerable tenants. Whilst government recommendations now state that by 2010 all socially rented housing will have to reach a decent standard including being in a reasonable state of repair, having relatively modern facilities and a good level of thermal comfort (ODPM, 2004d), the decent housing standard has not been applied to private rented accommodation. Consequently, those who may not be able to access socially rented housing may still fall victim to poor standards of accommodation.

### **6.3 Accommodation for those with addiction issues**

Some staff indicated there was a call for specialist types of accommodation and talked at length about the need for housing and support services for certain vulnerable groups. The groups most widely discussed were those with drug and/or alcohol problems for whom there seemed to be a very limited amount of services. During the qualitative interviews five service users discussed having issues with drug and/or alcohol abuse. The workers who commented most frequently on these issues were staff involved with resettlement at direct access hostels and it seemed that direct access hostels had more service users with such problems. One worker described how this was because other hostels which had stricter admissions policies were able to 'cream off' less problematic service users leaving the most difficult service users concentrated in particular housing projects.

Evidence suggested that homelessness and substance abuse were intrinsically interlinked, with homeless people statistically more likely to have taken drugs. Wincup, Buckland and Bayliss (2003) suggest, for example, that 95 per cent of young homeless people will have used drugs in their lifetime as opposed to 51 per cent of young people reporting drug usage in the British Crime Survey. Smith et al (1998) also cite drug use as one of the major contributing factors for young people being asked to leave the familial home and thus initiating homelessness. For those living in temporary accommodation who wanted to overcome drug or alcohol problems they faced a difficult challenge. Wincup, et al (ibid.) suggested that a high percentage of drug users did want to tackle their drug issues, with half of homeless drug users wanting to give up, but 40 per cent thought that they would need help or treatment to do this. Despite the need for support services in this area, there was little specialist accommodation available, an issue also found in prior research (Kennedy and Lynch, 2001). A number of service users described how they had misused substances in their past, but they had come to a realisation that they wanted to move away from substance misuse and thus needed the motivation to move on from this type of lifestyle. Serious health problems were often the impetus individuals needed to overcome drug or alcohol issues. Personal difficulties of overcoming addictions were compounded by societal perceptions of those with drug and alcohol problems. For example some staff members and service users reported coming up against discrimination from housing providers not giving anyone with a drug or alcohol problem an opportunity of a tenancy. This meant that accessing accommodation in the first instance was particularly difficult. However once a person with an alcohol problem had been found new housing this presented a new set of issues for the resettlement process. It could be difficult for a resettlement worker to carry out visits to a person with an alcohol problem because of the lifestyle that this person may lead.

Before a resettlement worker would consider a misuser ready for resettlement they would have to show considerable efforts to overcome his/her addiction. According to resettlement workers it was unrealistic to place a person with addiction problems into independent accommodation. One of the reasons for this was that because of the chaotic lifestyle of drug users, housing and maintaining accommodation were a low priority compared to getting the next 'hit'. Those with substance abuse issues living in hostel accommodation needed enough motivation to want to overcome these issues

and also be able to cope with other hostel residents around them who were still using. For this sub-sample, accommodation in a hostel could offer a more appropriate form of lodging as it provided boundaries and routine which would not be available in independent accommodation. Hostels did not allow drug taking or the consumption of alcohol on the premises, this resulted in most people with substance abuse issues having limited opportunities to feed their habit. As discussed, a period of time living in a hostel could be beneficial for particular homeless people and those with addiction issues were no exception to this. For this group hostel living could represent a slow step to resettlement because it was able to curtail and control a substance abuse problem.

#### **6.4 Accessing social rented accommodation**

In order to access permanent accommodation the most common method was apply to join the waiting list of a social registered landlord, usually the local authority. The systems of allocating properties in the sample area of Merseyside had recently been changed. Instead of a traditional points system used to allocate vacant properties a new system of lettings for socially rented housing, choice based lettings, had been introduced. Previously allocation systems for the main providers (mainly the local authority but also major RSLs) assessed need and the length of time that a person had waited on the waiting list for a property. Those on the waiting list were then given an offer of a property when a suitable property became vacant. However the CBL system takes a different approach. It requires prospective tenants to register an interest in a vacant property. A person who has registered an interest in the property and who meets the allocation criteria of the housing provider is allocated the tenancy, with those have been registered the longest amount of time with allocation service at the LA being usually given first refusal. The 2000 Housing Green Paper (DSS and DETR 2000) 'Quality and Choice: A Decent Home For All' proposed a series of pilot schemes to test the concept of CBL. According to the ODPM (2004b) the aim of these pilots was to give new social housing applicants, or existing tenants wishing to transfer, more say in choosing where they live. This type of allocation system has now been adopted by a number of local authority housing departments. In the five local authority areas covered by this study, all had adopted a choice based lettings system. Whilst there were slight variations in the manner in which the authorities

determined successful bidders, all applicants were, however, required to register an interest in available properties by placing a 'bid'. The LA then used a priority system to allocate a vacant property with those deemed in highest housing need being allocated available properties.

During interviews individuals suggested that they had been faced with choice regarding rehousing, they had to decide whether they wanted to move quickly from temporary accommodation into an area they might not know or that they disliked or whether they were prepared to wait for accommodation in their preferred areas (areas which tended to have a higher demand and a general shortage of socially rented accommodation) where they were likely to wait longer for suitable accommodation. Yet despite the desire that some individuals might have to move out of hostel accommodation there were few individuals who took accommodation simply to shorten the length of time that they were homeless, illustrating there were wider considerations why individuals chose the areas in which they wanted to live. Nevertheless resettlement workers perceived that most of their clients would not be rehoused in more affluent areas and often explained that service users should not have unrealistic expectations of the housing that they would be offered. The results of this study concur with a study by Pleace (1995), who, in a study of single people reported that individuals were unlikely to get property in the location that they wanted because the local council only had a restricted range of property available.

The new system of property allocation, choice-based lettings, made property allocation very uniform. Prior to this system resettlement workers had used considerable effort to develop working relationships with local council housing allocation officers. There had been an advantage to these contacts with the local authority; the resettlement worker was able to contact a housing officer and give a personal recommendation for a hostel resident and describe how he/she may be a good tenant. Pawson and Kintrea (2002) suggested that LA lettings officers would often use all information available to ensure 'best fit' (p650) of applicant's characteristics and preferences with the vacancies available. On the Wirral one worker described how providing this extra information about hostel residents to the LA had been beneficial to obtain property and it proved a successful way to access accommodation for prospective tenants who may not meet a council's stringent letting

criteria. The new system of CBL removed any personal influence that a worker may have to assist a resident in the hostel to gain a property. Research by the ODPM (2004a) suggested that many people who applied to the local authority for housing perceived that being able to influence LA staff to gain a property was a sign of corruption; one of the advantages of the new choice based lettings system, was that it removed the opportunities for this type of practice. However some resettlement staff did not feel this type of practice was corrupt, but was an absolute necessity in finding housing for those moving out of the hostel system.

Opinions were mixed on the effectiveness of this new system of allocation. Workers on the Wirral seemed particularly critical. There were a number of restrictions placed on bidders concerning the properties for which they were allowed to bid. The effects of this meant that there was a very limited range of properties for which some hostel residents could apply, making the CBL system especially frustrating for both worker and resident alike. In contrast, a number of resettlement workers in Liverpool indicated that the new system was beneficial, with individuals being noted as having been found accommodation within a couple of days. However the high number of vacant properties in Liverpool could explain this. If a hostel resident was prepared to take a property in an area of regeneration, then this would accelerate the re-housing process. Furthermore at the time of research, the CBL system had been in operation for a longer period of time on the Wirral than in other local authority areas in the study making it more probable that staff on the Wirral would have had more chance to develop criticisms of such a system. Workers in Liverpool also commented positively about the transparency of the CBL system, an advantage also noted by other users of this type of system (ODPM 2004a, 2004b). It seemed that workers favoured the ability to see what property was on offer and available for hostel residents and where and how this was to be allocated. This is despite the fact that only 50 per cent of socially rented housing in the city of Liverpool is actually available for rent through the CBL system. The remaining property is classified as 'management lets' which are then allocated at the discretion of the LA to the statutorily homeless, either in specific needs or where a property is likely to be demolished and a tenant needs rehousing (Property Pool, 2004). It seems that although the CBL system may appear to be transparent to staff, a considerable amount of property may still be allocated through less open allocation systems.

This process of rationing social rented housing is not a new phenomenon, and, according to Lidstone (1994) is particularly prevalent in the allocation of property to homeless people. Mullins and Niner (1998) describe that there are two important dimensions of control which influence an individual's route into social rented housing. The first factor they describe is the interplay between central and local policies, the second is the impact of changing power relations at the local level, for example, between different providers of social housing and local professionals. Throughout this study, the impact of some national policies on the local housing infrastructure was clearly evident. The most noticeable was the impact of the 1980 Housing Act that introduced the right to buy which had reduced the numbers of properties in more affluent areas, leaving certain locations with no socially rented accommodation. This shaped some individuals experiences of homelessness, lengthening the period they experienced temporary accommodation. The lack of prioritisation of the majority of single homeless people within the homelessness legislation also had a similar negative impact. Furthermore, as Mullins and Niner (ibid.) describe it is not just national policy that affects a homeless persons route into social rented housing but also localised allocation policies.

It was clear that relationships between individuals working for housing providers and resettlement staff were of considerable importance in shaping the local dynamics of property allocations. When these relationships were developed there was more opportunity for access to social rented housing. This was demonstrated by a number of resettlement workers who had developed nomination agreements between a hostel/housing support service and a social housing provider. These agreements can be described as where housing provider gives a commitment to a housing project (such as a hostel) to rehouse a small number of individuals living at the project. If an individual is chosen for a nominated property this means that they are able to bypass the general allocation system and be given a property directly from the housing provider.

Staff from four organisations referred to setting up such agreements, with three having successfully done so. These could be fairly informal agreements but were given high importance by resettlement workers as they could be one way to bypass

the local authority allocation system. Furthermore, a number of workers described the difficulties of establishing nomination agreements with housing associations, which, in some cases, had taken a high level of negotiation between the resettlement worker and the housing provider. The difficulties of establishing these seemed to be fuelled by a lack of understanding by housing providers about the nature of clients who wanted resettling and there was a prejudice (from some providers) regarding housing prospective tenants who had been homeless and living in temporary accommodation. Nomination agreements seemed to be most successfully established when a representative from the housing provider was prepared to work closely with the resettlement worker, visiting the homeless project and gaining a wider understanding of the resettlement work.

Although such agreements could go some way to accessing accommodation, it seemed an unsuccessful solution to access housing for all homeless people. Many of the nomination agreements which were established between hostels and housing providers only gave nominations for properties in areas of regeneration and areas considered "rough". This meant that some nominations to properties were not used, or alternatively in a minority of cases, property in deprived areas was allocated to vulnerable individuals who did not want to live in those areas. Furthermore, such nominations were rationed to those who were perceived to be good residents and hopefully would make stable tenants. This illustrated that some of the examples of agencies working together were based on somewhat delicate relationships and were determined by the actions of their clients. The housing project often feared that they would lose their nomination rights should a service user's tenancy not be successful. Thus there was a process of careful selection to determine who would be given certain properties in order to maintain the rights to the nomination agreement.

This study illustrates that nomination agreements were also difficult to initially establish and could be fraught with bureaucratic difficulties. Changes in central government funding have forced housing associations to work in a more market-orientated fashion. Over time the Housing Association Grant for capital costs (e.g. housing building) has been reduced (Cairncross, Clapham and Goodlad, 1997) meaning that more funding for housing associations has to be found from private investment and loans. The overall affect of this could make it less likely that housing

associations will be interested in granting nomination agreements and housing potentially 'risky' tenants of which some homeless people may be perceived. This may be because of concern from the housing association of not receiving rental payments, thus requiring a higher level of management from a housing officer to deal with rent arrears, property abandonment and/or eviction. Such issues could have a considerable effect on the cost of property management and have negative consequences on the ability of resettlement workers to establish nomination agreements.

Despite these potential pitfalls and difficulties of establishing nomination agreement a number of housing associations did hold back a number of properties for allocations through this type of agreement. Although there was an express need for specialist types of accommodation, access to these types of schemes were thought to be particularly difficult. One hostel had managed to overcome this with a detoxification scheme by 'swopping' residents; those who were doing well in a detoxification scheme could be given a place in the hostel, freeing a place for a hostel resident who needed this type of intense supported accommodation. Nevertheless this study showed the powerful position that housing providers hold in allowing certain individuals access to property and they have become critical gatekeepers in accessing housing.

Thus evidence here reflects Pahl's (1970) theory of the distribution of power in an urban context. He argues that in major towns and cities there are social constraints on access to scarce urban facilities, in this case adequate housing for those in housing crisis. He argues that those who have power in any given urban context are social gatekeepers who help to distribute and control urban resources. Pahl (1970) suggests that patterns of access amongst urban space is dependant upon the "system managers" (p222), or gatekeepers. How these gatekeepers then exercise this power will depend on the locality. He argues that this will be influenced by the distribution of political, social and economic power and the values and ideologies of local technocrats in any given area. It is clear that gatekeepers played, as Pahl states, an important role in how accommodation to homeless people was distributed. This has an effect on, not only the individual who needs accommodation, but also the local community as local gatekeepers have the power to allocate persons with particular characteristics to each available property. Thus such decisions of local technocrats determine the

composition of all available accommodation of both a temporary and permanent nature.

There are a further number of observations that can be made about the allocation of property to homeless people. Firstly, whilst there may be allocation policies in place by a local authority, there is no uniform method of accessing accommodation. Even in a small geographical area there were differences between local authorities as to how to allocate accommodation. Access to permanent housing may also be influenced by the accommodation that a person first accesses when he/she first experienced homelessness. Although there is an option to obtain housing from the local authority, if a hostel has a nomination agreement with a housing provider, this may create an extra avenue to access housing. Again, however, this could mean that service provision for some hostel residents/ homeless people could be better than for others. The work of some resettlement workers was influenced by their attempts to build relationships with housing providers. Whilst this could be used as evidence to suggest positive joined up working between service providers, it could mean that resettlement workers become responsible to housing providers creating extra work to develop such agreements. Furthermore, the need for allocation schemes could also indicate that certain service users are still not able to access housing through the local authority allocation policies, perhaps indicating a failure of this system for certain groups.

#### *6.4.1 The effects of arrears on allocations*

This study suggested that there was competing evidence regarding the success of the new forms of allocation processes available in the region. However the evidence suggested that there was a certain amount of individuals who were not able to use the lettings services because they had previous rent arrears from other properties that they rented from the council. Each local council had an exclusion policy which prevented anyone who had rent arrears from previous tenancies held with the local authority from being given a new tenancy. Liverpool City Council also states in its suspension policy that those who have previously abandoned a tenancy<sup>18</sup> could also be suspended

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<sup>18</sup> An abandoned tenancy is usually described as where a tenant has not given the landlord notice that they have left the property.

from being allocated a new property (Liverpool City Council, 2006). It was common to find that service users of resettlement services had rent arrears from properties they had lived in during their housing career and/or had abandoned a property. Some individuals had accrued rent arrears because they had fallen victim to complex housing benefit regulations and were unaware that their circumstances did not allow them to have housing benefit cover all their rental charges. Reliance on low pay or other low income such as welfare benefits then made it impossible to pay rent owing and thus arrears occurred. It was a rarity for individuals to make an active choice not to pay the rent, indeed only one person stated that they had done this. Abandoning a property was common for clients with multiple issues (such as drug, alcohol or mental health problems) especially if they had not been afforded any resettlement support.

The consequences of these exclusion policies severely disadvantaged those who needed the secure types of tenancy that social rented housing could offer. Workers expressed unease at exclusion policies and concern was raised with the Council in a policy document reviewing the choice based lettings service within one authority's jurisdiction (Sefton Council, 2005b). In particular the report highlights the negative impact that these blanket exclusions have on homeless people. One of the most problematic results of this type of policy was that it forced vulnerable service users into tenancies with private landlords, all of which are let on an assured shorthold tenancy. Not only does the standard of accommodation tend to be lower in privately rented accommodation but also, as previously discussed, an assured shorthold tenancy does not afford a tenant a high degree of security of tenure, with such tenancies only usually being offered for six months. Indeed St Helens Borough Council reported that the ending of assured shorthold tenancies was one of the main causes of homelessness within the borough (St Helens Borough Council, 2004b). Such tenancies compare with a council or RSL tenancy which is usually given on a secure basis for an indefinite period.

Thus the evidence suggested there appeared to be a contradiction between allocation and exclusion policies. Local authorities were committed by law to having a strategic policy to address homelessness (a statutory requirement required by the 2002 Homelessness Act) (see Sefton MBC, 2002, and Liverpool City Council 2003 for examples of these) and the act states the authority must provide a strategy to assist

those who "have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again" (2002 Homelessness Act, Part VII, section 3,(c)ii). Yet those in extreme housing need were often denied access to a new property because of the difficulties that they had experienced in the past managing a tenancy which had accrued them arrears or forced them to abandon the property. Once an individual had resettlement support this may go some way to preventing arrears or abandonment and it appeared short-sighted that individuals with very difficult circumstances were not given the opportunity of a new property when they did have support in place to help with household management issues. It was possible to think more widely about allocating property to those with previous arrears problems. A good example of this was Sefton Council who were prepared to reconsider individuals who had arrears as tenants if they made an effort to repay debts (Sefton Council, 2005b). However there needs to be a greater consideration of the effects that exclusion policies can play in impeding resettlement of the most vulnerable service users who are likely to gain the most benefit from the allocation of a socially rented property. Moreover, outright exclusions of individuals from being allocated property contradicted the aims of the new homelessness legislation where local councils are forced to prioritise some housing for those who are in the greatest housing need.

## **6.5 Definitions and understandings of resettlement**

Resettlement workers were asked if they could define what was meant by the term resettlement and workers illustrated that resettlement work had no one defined role or definition. The role was focused on providing "tenancy support" but this term had a wide meaning because of the variety of tasks that this could involve. The evidence highlighted that there was some perception that this type of work would only involve matters to do with housing but in reality tenancy support required a holistic approach which meant offering whatever support necessary to ensure that a tenancy could be maintained.

The flexible nature of the work of resettlement workers meant that service users could rely on this as a form of assistance regardless of the issues and crises that emerged. Although the work of the resettlement worker was varied, most could explain the limits to their role. Documentation provided by organisations involved in the research

states clearly the tasks that workers would carry out with their clients and these included developing life skills, support with training and education and developing independent living skills (Stonham Housing Association, undated and Powerhouse, undated). Workers were not prepared to offer support which bordered on social care (for example cooking or cleaning) but were prepared to assist service users to develop skills to carry out these tasks for themselves. The Audit Commission Report reviewing the services with Supporting People funding in Liverpool was critical of resettlement services in the city centre for not helping individuals to develop these skills but instead offering support that was overbearing and did little to develop empowerment. They cite an example where a support service offered to homeless people offered support to develop kitchen skills but this simply involved the support worker cooking while the service user drank tea (Audit Commission, 2004). However, this research found that workers were particularly clear regarding the type of service that they offered and expressed that user participation was critical to the success of any resettlement plan. Despite this, some service users did not know where the boundary of the worker's support lay, with some workers expressing concern that they were overusing the worker, relying on them for a "taxi" service between various appointments or expecting assistance from their support worker to carrying out cleaning or cooking tasks. The work of the resettlement worker was to empower individuals with the skills to carry out these tasks rather than a support worker physically carrying them out.

One of the reasons why a small minority of service users did not understand the limits of the assistance of the support worker might be because some service users misinterpreted the relationship between themselves and the support worker as friendship. These service users therefore judged that it was acceptable to push the boundaries of this relationship as they felt that they were asking a friend, rather than a professional, to assist them in certain tasks.

Moreover this research also highlighted that often statutory agencies overused the services of support workers. This was evident in cases where the service user was in great need of multiple services, where perhaps, social services should have been co-ordinating service provision it was left instead, to the resettlement worker. For most

resettlement workers, this was unacceptable as they felt strongly that they lacked the specialist knowledge to co-ordinate such cases.

## 6.6 Initial experiences of support

Qualitative evidence suggested that for the majority of service users the resettlement process began when they wanted to move on from hostel accommodation into housing which was more permanent. The majority of the qualitative sample described that they had received support in their prior accommodation to assist them to resettle. Having a support worker in homeless accommodation (such as a hostel) allowed individuals to consider their future housing options. However quantitative evidence contradicted this evidence and illustrated that there were a certain number of individuals who described that they had not had a support worker (see table 9) whilst they had been living in a hostel setting. This was especially surprising as a high proportion described that they had been living in supported accommodation or a hostel, where qualitative results highlighted it was most common to receive support. Moreover, this result illustrated that there was a proportion of individuals who were made homeless by being asked to leave the property of friends and family. A very high proportion of these reported that they had not had a support worker whilst living in this accommodation. Whilst this does not appear to be a surprising result, it illustrates a possible shortcoming of the recent Supporting People policy. Government literature clearly highlights that the purpose of the Supporting People framework is to offer support to those who are vulnerable to housing crisis. The DETR (2001:10) state that Supporting People should "enable vulnerable people at risk but already living in the community to receive support to continue living in their own homes" and furthermore, such housing support should be non tenure specific. Moreover, unlike preceding homeless policy, the 2002 Homelessness Act aims to provide a framework for the prevention of homelessness. The government report *More than a Roof* (ODPM, 2002a) which outlined the homelessness problem before the introduction of the new homelessness act noted, that support should be provided to certain individuals (especially young people) to avert homelessness and possibly allow individuals to remain within the family home.

Despite these new policy initiatives it is clear that there are still a high percentage of individuals who are at risk of homelessness who are not receiving any housing support whilst they are living within a familial home. One possible explanation for this could be because some individuals are "hidden homeless" (for example, those 'sofa surfing' between friends and family) and it is difficult to locate them to offer support unless they themselves approach services for assistance. However there seems to be individuals who should be in contact with support workers (i.e. those living in institutional settings), of whom few were receiving support to avert a housing/homelessness crisis. This evidence seems to highlight that whilst the aims of these policies are laudable, there are still a large proportion of individuals who are missing the support that they need to avert homelessness. Interestingly, the ODPM report (ibid.) outlined the importance of support and the possible sources of this support. What is fundamentally clear from this research, however, is that there is no prescribed manner in which homeless individuals are able to access available housing support. Access to support was often reliant on a chance referral to a relevant agency or knowledge of the service by the support worker or service user through word of mouth. Like access to housing, there was not a clear route for individuals to gain support services. Thus chance played a large part in the overall experience that an individual could have of the resettlement process.

### **6.6.1 Existing networks of social support**

As discussed above, this study showed that almost three quarters of the respondents were still in contact with family or friends despite them experiencing a period of homelessness. This result concurs with other evidence (Eyrich, Pollio and North, 2003) which also suggests that homeless people have a wide range of individuals who they are able to ask for support with the majority of homeless people being able to name, on average, 12 family or friends on whom they could rely for social support. A key finding of their research however, was although individuals had a large quantity of family and friends who could offer support, they were more likely to only have a small number of individuals who could truly be relied upon. Like Eyrich, Pollio and North's study, it was clear in this study that a large proportion of this sample referred to one key relationship with a friend or family member who had been supportive throughout their experience of being homeless. However, although there was

evidently a high proportion of the individuals in contact with family and friends, a number of interviewees revealed that the quality of this contact was often superficial. Some individuals were keen to highlight that they required the assistance of a resettlement worker in order to try and re-establish better links with family and friends. This was especially the case with individuals who had previously been living in the care of the local authority.

This study showed that there was a difference between younger and older people in regard to connections with family and friends. Young people reported that they were more likely to be in contact with friends or family although this could be because younger people used a much wider definition of the word 'friend' than those over 25. This was a factor highlighted by the pilot research which concluded that young people were more likely to describe other homeless acquaintances that they had known for a relatively short period of time as 'friends'. These acquaintances may not be particularly useful to the resettlement process as they are also in difficult housing circumstances themselves and may be unable to offer positive support because they themselves are vulnerable. This illustrates that young homeless people may affiliate themselves with other people experiencing the same housing situation because of a perception that they might be able to understand their living situation. As described above, older homeless people stated that they were less likely to have contacts with friends and family, a pattern differing to young people. This result concurs with previous research (Crane, 2001) which illustrates that older homeless people have less social support from friends and family.

Although some resettled individuals have contacts with their families the evidence often showed that they did not want to "put upon" family members or friends and had avoided asking friends and family for accommodation or financial assistance whilst they had been homeless. There was a strong perception, especially from older individuals who were interviewed, that they did not want to be a burden to friends and family by asking them for assistance and advice. This is where assistance from a support worker was especially needed to offer the support that individuals thought they would not be able to get from existing support networks. It was noted by a number of interviewees that their family and friends did not know enough about

housing options for them to be able to offer them the specialist support they perceived themselves to need, or, indeed, the time needed to help an individual resettle.

A different result was noted for those who abused drugs or alcohol. Although drug and alcohol users seemed as likely to be in contact with family members, interview data revealed that most drug or alcohol users did not have particularly strong relationships with family or friends living nearby who could offer social support. This was generally because they had abused family relationships due to their addiction problems which had altered their ability to rely on family members for support. These results were akin to the findings of an American study by Shinn, Knickman and Weitzman (1991) who found that most people experiencing homelessness used up and drained their network of social resources during their journey into homelessness, forcing homeless people to rely on social networks of support built up during their time as homeless, rather than social networks established before they were homeless. The disadvantage of individuals relying on this type of support was that other homeless people often had personal, social and/ addiction issues themselves which made them poor sources of assistance to others when individuals were often dealing with their own complex issues.

### **6.7 Perceptions of Support**

The research evidence indicates that support can play an important role in achieving long term sustainable and successful resettlement. Support relies on the abilities of a support worker to develop a relationship with service users. Equally, service users need to be motivated to want to find both new accommodation and engage with the support on offer to them. Methods of offering support were subtly different between projects but all aimed to assist service users into more permanent accommodation.

Determining the meaning of successful support was a critical part of this research study. There seemed to be no standard definition of success in resettlement. Some resettlement workers considered that success could be determined by the length of time that a person had been able to stay in their own accommodation. However workers recognised that this was a very crude method of measuring resettlement outcomes and that there were more complex issues involved. Achieving resettlement

had to be related to the service user. For some individuals it may be realistic for them to resettle permanently into independent accommodation, however for other service users this may not be attainable because of the difficulties that they faced in maintaining such accommodation. This did not mean that these service users had failed in the resettlement process. Workers explained that resettlement had a wide understanding and its success or failure relied on the housing experiences of the service user. For some service users, resettlement could mean living within a hostel environment as this represented stable accommodation and this was particularly the case for those who had a history of rough sleeping. Other service users attempted resettlement, and while this would be successful for a short amount of time, it may not work out on a long-term basis. However even short attempts at independent living could be described as advantageous if the person was perceived to have learnt something from this housing experience. Resettlement was considered to be a process which involved finding the correct type of accommodation; however it did not necessarily mean that the accommodation had to be permanent and/or independent for resettlement to have occurred. Likewise, Kay (2004) suggests that the manner of understanding resettlement through 'hard outcomes' (such as the resulting housing outcome) only reveals part of the picture. Soft outcomes also need to be taken into account, those which consider improvements to quality of life and the positive effects of offering support.

Successful resettlement was also reliant on service users having motivation to want to move out of homelessness or an unsettled way of life. For most service users this could be difficult if they were entrenched in a lifestyle associated with living in temporary accommodation or being homeless. Service providers described that service users had to have an aspiration to alter their housing before a resettlement plan would be devised. Support staff could have an important role encouraging motivation to achieve this aim but this alone was not enough to persuade a service user to want rehousing, there also a need for personal motivation to want to move on. Service users described that there was often a key event or experience that was the impetus to this motivation. For substance abusers this was generally related to serious health problems while young people identified a need for permanent accommodation as part of their transition to adulthood, a sign that as one young woman described "I'm no longer a kid". This motivation that was so critical to resettlement could be very

fragile. Motivation could be negatively influenced by other residents in temporary accommodation. This could jeopardise a service user's licence agreement in their current accommodation as well as damage future housing opportunities. Drug users referred to the difficulties of living in temporary accommodation with other users who would encourage each other to maintain their substance abuse. Similarly, young people were often interested in making new acquaintances in temporary accommodation, rather than prioritising housing needs to move on. These factors had a demotivating effect and caused service users to remain in temporary accommodation.

Those who experienced extreme social exclusion were most likely to find it difficult to reintegrate into general needs housing. Workers highlighted that those who had experienced a prolonged history of rough sleeping or those who had become entrenched in a lifestyle associated with drugs or alcohol would find it the most difficult to move out of temporary accommodation. It was clear that support workers were concerned that this sort of affiliation would be an issue with those who had been homeless a long time. In such cases the role of a support worker was to encourage settled living in temporary accommodation in the hope of encouraging a longer-term resettlement plan. This could mean assisting a service user to overcome a host of personal difficulties before housing options could be evaluated. As discussed above however, a period of time spent in temporary accommodation could cause difficulties in itself as hostel living could become an attractive living option discouraging the need to find a long term housing solution. Nevertheless, a hostel could represent an opportunity to experience stability and access support services which would encourage settled living.

What is clear from this evidence is that dealing with those who have multiple issues and especially high support needs can pose a challenge for those offering support. Homeless Link (2004) suggest that those with complex support issues often suffer stigma and discrimination and subsequently become excluded from some mainstream services because of chaotic or anti social behaviour. Overcoming an individual's issues may require additional support to that available from a resettlement worker. Yet examples from this study illustrated that support workers reach a critical point with service users who have high support needs where a support worker removes

his/her services because the individual's behaviour becomes simply too challenging to be dealt with by a generic housing support worker. Support providers described such behaviour as a client avoiding visits by the support worker and not feeling it necessary to follow a support plan. Furthermore an individual, for a variety of reasons, may not want or be able to engage with the support on offer. With challenging behaviour and lack of engagement from the client, support becomes ineffective and delivery of services difficult. The overall effect of this is that those who have the highest need for support may experience further exclusion from housing support services. It is clear that motivation to engage with services is a key determinant of success however a number of circumstances can inhibit the aspiration of a service user to resettle after a period of homelessness. Service providers discussed how drug, alcohol or mental health problems could be especially difficult to overcome and it was difficult to encourage service users dealing with these issues to become interested in moving into permanent accommodation. The effect of this resulted in those who had complex needs being denied assistance to overcome the challenges of resettling.

Resettlement workers perceived that a further aspects of successful housing support work was resettling long-term hostel dwellers. This was described as challenging for support workers but examples suggested it had generally been effective despite the perception that this group would be difficult to rehouse. The aim for resettlement workers was to find the right type of housing for the resident, the majority of whom were older men who had been living in a hostel for upwards of five years. Before the introduction of Supporting People policy there was limited focus on resettlement in some hostels, some service users thus perceived hostel accommodation as home and had become institutionalised to living in a supported housing environment. It seemed that the introduction of the new policy had altered the focus of hostel work placing a high priority on resettlement of residents within a limited time frame<sup>19</sup>. In most cases staff described that this rehousing process had been successful, although it had been particularly challenging to assist this service user group to find new housing. Generally those who had lived in the hostel for a prolonged period were naturally fearful of moving into new accommodation. Overcoming this to achieve successful resettlement relied on an encouraging attitude from support staff to illustrate the

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<sup>19</sup> Supporting People limits the funding for housing related support to a maximum of two years.

necessity of resettlement to the service user. It also required the support worker to have an in depth knowledge of the local housing market in order to locate the most appropriate form of housing for each client. Furthermore, the work also involved explaining and offering assistance to access goods and services to sustain resettlement. Such cases illustrated that resettlement could be successful even with a difficult group of service user if adequate support was established. Moreover, it highlighted the success of Supporting People policy to encourage those who are capable of living independently into more suitable and appropriate housing.

### **6.7 Perceptions of available types of support**

Quantitative data emphasized that there was variance in the types of support that individuals wanted to prevent homelessness. It is important to note the high number of service users who perceived that a resettlement worker was key to preventing homelessness with this being ranked one of the top three responses as a factor to prevent resettlement. This evidence illustrates the importance that individuals placed on the assistance they could gain from a support worker. Furthermore, there was a high demand for emotional support from support workers which is highlighted by the quantity of individuals who stated that they wanted someone to 'have a chat to' or 'assistance in times of crisis'. Thus the needs of individuals were often very simple but clearly show the prioritised need for emotional rather than practical support (such as assistance with household management). This is a particularly important finding as some resettlement and support services have placed the emphasis on making service users aware of practical challenges that they will face when resettled rather than the emotional difficulties. Randall and Brown (1995) for example describe that support work with those who are moving into accommodation after a period of rough sleeping should be focused on money matters, helping individuals find work and dealing with difficulties that individuals face with mental health, drink and drug issues rather than providing emotional support. Randall and Brown (1995) do, however concede that workers needed to try to help individuals to overcome problems of social isolation and in order to do this agencies might "experiment more with developing a more active relationship (between worker and client), which asked more about client's needs" (p107). Where Randall and Brown (1995) place the emphasis on the practical aspects of support, the evidence from this study points out that there needs to be a

much greater emphasis on delivering emotional support than practical resettlement assistance. The value of emotional support has been shown in a number of studies (Tilt and Dentford (1986) and Douglas et al (1998)), although neither of these studies illustrated emotional support being needed over and above practical assistance. A greater emphasis on developing a working relationship may be needed between the worker and the client if the process of resettlement is to work efficiently, and this type of emotional support delivered.

Despite the quantitative data indicating the need for certain types of support, qualitative data highlighted that it was often difficult for service users to exactly pinpoint the types of support that they needed. It was common for service users not to recognise that they had particular more complex support needs. On a number of occasions during interviews it was a support worker who would prompt the service user to discuss the extent of their needs. Evidence therefore suggests that some support needs might actually be under reported and therefore not truly reflect the extent of support needs of questionnaire respondents, if, as qualitative data highlights, there is a tendency for assistance needs to be unrecognised by service users.

Although quantitative data stated individuals wanted assistance that centred around emotional support, in order to receive such emotional support of critical importance was being able to develop a successful relationship between the service user and a support worker. This concurs with Clapham's (2003) claim that services provided to homeless people are determined by the interaction between staff and prospective service users. As described above, the research evidence identified two different kinds of support which were offered by a resettlement worker to their clients. These could be described as practical and emotional support which were both needed for resettlement to be successful. Early research into rehousing (Duncan, Downey and Finch, 1983), suggest models of housing support where an importance is given to both practical support and support to give "encouragement or reassurance" (p37) which could be influential to the overall outcome of the resettlement process. Dant and Deacon (1988) also highlight the nature of the relationship between service user and support worker describing the role of the support worker as a 'counselling and support role' (p96). This 'counselling and support' model adopted by the rehousing staff in Dant and Deacon's study, put an equal emphasis on giving advice to finding

accommodation and offering counselling support to help people through personal crises that may threaten a person's chances of maintaining a home. It did appear that a similar approach to support had been adopted by workers interviewed in this study. In order to achieve resettlement a support worker first assisted a client to address practical issues associated with sourcing and settling into new accommodation.

Thus a critical observation can be made here. Often a prerequisite to emotional support was developing a relationship based on trust and understanding between a client and a support worker. When the relationship between a support worker and client evolved and practical problems were overcome, there was more opportunity for emotional support to be offered. Whilst quantitative evidence suggested that there was a high demand for emotional support, this type of support was often the end result of first offering practical assistance to aid resettlement. Therefore it was unlikely that a service user would receive emotional support without first developing a good relationship between the two parties (service user and support worker) which was matured through dealing with the practical issues involved in resettlement support.

It is clear that an important part of work with a service users was to assist service users to develop what psychologists have come to refer to as 'emotional intelligence' (EI). According to theories of emotional intelligence (see Goleman, 1995) individuals are able to achieve success in life if they are able to manage emotional states, be aware of the emotional states of others and have the ability to enter and sustain emotional relationships with others. Moreover, the theory states that individuals with high EI are able to control feelings and shift undesirable emotional states to more adequate ones. The evidence in this study suggests that those who had gained a higher level of EI by developing a successful relationship with the support worker were likely to be the individuals who were able to achieve sustainable resettlement. Workers described those who were more likely to be successful at resettling as those who were more likely to engage with them and any proposed resettlement plan. Furthermore, support work was often based around helping service users develop emotional stability. Support workers described that they tried to encourage service users to resolve household management issues (for example dealing with the DWP, LA or utilities companies) in a calm and collected manner which was more likely to

achieve a positive resolution. Thus support work encouraged EI to develop and those with a sustainable level of EI were those more likely to be successful at resettlement.

### *6.7.2 Perceptions of the relationship between service users and support workers*

Once service users had developed a working relationship with their support worker there were many ways in which service users could perceive this relationship. A substantial number of the sample discussed the relationship they had with a support worker with many considering this relationship was an integral part to their settled way of life. This was especially evident with some service users who highlighted the importance of this relationship by using the word 'friend' or 'mate' to describe the relationship that they had with a support worker. Conversely, however, workers seemed to be reluctant to portray the relationship that they had with service users as a friendship, one worker articulated this relationship as a "sort of friendship". Support workers perceived their role as helping a service user to overcome social isolation rather than forming a long lasting friendship. Nevertheless, it was clear support workers wanted to develop an understanding of their client's personality and problems during the initial support meetings.

This relationship was unique and was contrasted by service users to relationships with other professionals (eg social workers) and other available forms of social support (such as family and friends). Service users saw a support worker's advice and assistance as impartial which they were likely to respect and value. Often support workers were particularly blunt with their advice to service users which most service users seemed to appreciate. It seemed that the relationship between a service user and a worker needed negotiation and trust for a working relationship to develop. Such mutual respect formed the basis of good support, where this respect was lacking service users were unlikely to link in with available support as they did not perceive that there would be anything to gain from a relationship with a support worker.

Support workers placed a high value on developing this relationship with the client. From this, the worker and service user could establish a support plan outlining what assistance a service user may expect from his/her worker. A large proportion of clients had previous experiences of housing support prior to their current housing with

those who had been looked after by the local authority most likely to have experienced a plethora of types of support. The relationship between service users and service provider was developed informally, sorting practical issues such as welfare benefits or accessing furniture items for the property. Being able to provide this practical type of assistance allowed support workers to build up a relationship with service users to provide the type of support that individuals prioritised. A common occurrence was for workers to describe the informality of initial meetings with clients as 'having a chat and a cup of tea'. Such an approach helped to establish a support plan around which further support would be focused. Support workers were evidently meeting the needs of service users, as quantitative evidence highlighted, 64% of respondents requested that they simply wanted a support worker to simply have a chat to.

Integral to good support was informality and a grounded approach. Service users commented on his or her worker's ability to have a sense of humour or "to have a laugh". All service users deemed this grounded approach to be significant but young homeless people noted it as particularly important. An ability to develop an in-depth understanding of needs was also important in order to provide focused, individualised support which service users highly valued. It seemed if support was to be accepted by the service user there had to be an emphasis on person centred support. Service users did not want to be judged for certain behaviours (such as using drugs or abusing alcohol), but wanted a support worker to adapt to these issues and adjust support accordingly. There was a need for support workers to provide advocacy in order to access services required by a service user. Nevertheless it was apparent that support workers trod a fine dividing line between offering adequate support and making service users dependant on them. As Mc Allister (2000) highlights, support should be adaptable to the needs of the client but it should still allow for individuals to learn from their mistakes and have genuine control over their lives. It was critical therefore, that support was offered which gave freedom for individuals to make choices over their lifestyle even when these were decisions with which support workers did not agree, but to be prepared to support an individual with the consequences of any such decisions.

The approach to support by housing support workers could be contrasted to the support to the working practices of social workers, whose approach was interpreted by service users as invasive and impersonal. The majority of service users had experience of both support from statutory services (such as social services) and housing support. The advantage of housing support was that workers were easily accessible and prepared to become more emotionally involved with the client. Most social workers did not appear to have taken the personal interest in service users as housing support workers had done. Service users described that they were not being offered support that they needed from social services. For example social workers were able to assist service users to access grants for key household items, often however, social workers were very slow in issuing monies for this purpose.

There was also little evidence that the social services were working well with other support agencies (i.e. agencies offering housing support). Difficulties in contacting social workers were evident, as was an apparent lack of understanding of the severity of some user's needs. Although housing support workers recognised the advantages of interagency working, social workers did not seem to have the same approach. In their study of a floating support service, Sharples et al (2002) also describe that there was a high value given by workers to developing interprofessional relationships between agencies. Indeed the success of the Supporting People programme relies on agencies working together to provide successful services as the ODPM (2004e:6) states "there is a strong need for multi-agency working to develop and continue the successful delivery of the programme". In this study there was evidence of successful interagency working, however, this tended to be between voluntary organisations rather than between statutory and voluntary agencies. The Department of Health (1998) admitted that there was poor coordination between social services and other service providers and this study illustrates that there has been little done to redress these issues. There seemed many examples where resettlement workers did not receive the support promised by social services and there were some limitations to what voluntary services could achieve without some statutory intervention from the relevant social workers.

Despite this qualitative evidence which clearly criticises the work of social workers, surprisingly quantitative data illustrated that 24% of individuals stated that help from

social services would have been useful to them to prevent a previous incidence of homelessness. This evidence indicates that individuals perceive that assistance from this statutory body would have been useful to them at the time of their housing crisis but highlights that they did not receive the assistance that they feel they should have done. It also illustrates that the lack of assistance has been an instrumental factor in causing this sub sample's homelessness. It is also interesting to note more people perceived that assistance from a resettlement worker would have prevented them being homeless than help from social services and this was despite quantitative evidence indicating that a number of service users could have benefited from support from a social worker.

In the majority of cases having a working relationship between service user and support worker played a critical role in the success of the resettlement process. However resettlement was not solely reliant on this one factor, it could take place without this positive interaction. Furthermore, quantitative evidence suggested that a small minority of individuals had found that a support worker had been neither helpful or unhelpful (7% of the sample) perhaps also reflecting an apathy towards the support that they were being offered. A significant minority described that they had not developed a relationship with a support worker and subsequently had found their own accommodation, requiring little support to do this. Two different reasons for this became apparent. The first illustrated that there are certain people who only require assistance to find suitable housing, they have little requirement for emotional support, such support being maintained by a wide range of friends and family outside homeless accommodation, relationships which are continued throughout the time spent living in temporary accommodation. Sally, for example, felt that she had little need for any emotional support and had not approached the staff in the temporary accommodation in which she lived for assistance and whilst discussing her personal circumstances she highlighted how she had little contact with those living in the accommodation around her. In such cases there is only a need for practical support to locate suitable accommodation with support being focused on preventing procrastination in unsuitable supported accommodation (such as a hostel). Furthermore, there is little necessity for some individuals (such as Sally) to receive 'resettlement training' as they were already capable of managing a tenancy. Intensive

support was only needed to improve access to social rented housing rather than providing any type of emotional support.

A further group rejected support on offer because their experiences of support lacked a personal focus on their needs. Service users were abhorrent of stereotypes being applied to them, the most common being that a homeless person was lacking household management skills, or, in a few notable cases, that they were dishonest simply because they were homeless. This caused a service user to have a lack of regard for the support worker or interest in the support service on offer. Without this respect it was unlikely that a service user would be inclined to accept assistance from a support worker. There were a number of effects of not accepting such assistance the most critical being that service users risked being in temporary accommodation for longer than necessary and residents become institutionalised and/or demotivated to find more appropriate accommodation. A further consequence was that service users were more likely to want to continue an unsettled way of life as they were not interested in the support encouraging them to settle. Nevertheless evidence suggested that resettlement was possible without the assistance of a support worker as some individuals had managed to find housing without the assistance of a support worker. Thus resettlement could be achieved without the help of a support worker although evidence suggested that without such support the path to resettlement could be prolonged or could lead to service users being housed inappropriately.

Moreover, quantitative evidence suggested that there was a certain proportion of the sample who stated that nothing could have prevented them from being homeless. The evidence also highlighted that there was an age differential with those who were post 29 reporting that their homelessness would have been difficult to prevent. The qualitative data highlights that those who were post-29 were more likely to have multiple issues such as mental health issues and/or drug or alcohol problems. Because of these it may be understandable that they report that their homelessness is inevitable. This, however, then leaves a fundamental question as to what can be done to assist those who may have multiple issues if they themselves do not see that their homelessness was preventable.

### 6.7.3 *Approaches to Support*

The evidence suggested that all support workers developed a unique support plan for each individual which outlined each service users' personal development plan as well as their plans to improve and/or sustain their housing situation. It became apparent, however, that there were subtle differences in the types of support on offer which was dependant on the type of service provider offering the support. Workers from floating support services discussed how they developed a relationship with service users through a series of visits, most commonly when a service user had been allocated a tenancy. Initially these visits could involve a degree of crisis management especially if service users had moved into a property with little knowledge of household management. As described above, initial visits included dealing with practical issues such as acquiring household goods and ensuring income benefits were correctly awarded. Without providing support to deal with these issues a tenancy could be in crisis from its outset. Workers were able to become acquainted with service users and develop an action plan which would ameliorate a service user's living situation.

Staff working in hostel based resettlement services took a different approach to support because they had the advantage of getting to know service users while they were living in the hostel accommodation. All hostels had generic support staff who worked on a daily basis with residents. Such staff worked with a resettlement worker to develop a support plan establishing a service user's long-term accommodation needs. Thus hostel support staff and resettlement workers often liaised to assess the most advantageous housing outcome for a service user. Those providing hostel based resettlement services were also more involved in assisting service users to move into accommodation and arranging transportation in order to do this. The overall outcomes of resettlement were similar between services although the manner in which workers achieved these was subtly different.

A contrast was noted between the nature of support from organisations who offered accommodation with on site support (also referred to as 'tied support') to those offering floating support. Several agencies owned different supported accommodation projects which had tied support with the intensity of support ranging between

projects. Homeless people who used these agencies found that they were able to access accommodation with a level of support that exactly met their requirements. The advantage of such a range of schemes was both the flexibility of the support available and accessibility of the accommodation. As a service user's needs changed so could the type of accommodation making it beneficial to service users to be able to access different types of accommodation. In some cases it meant that the support worker could remain consistent, despite the type of accommodation changing. This gave an important opportunity for a relationship to develop between the service user and support worker, such a relationship also being identified as a critical part of the resettlement process (as discussed above). There was more likely to be a smooth transition if a service user moved between projects which were owned by the same organisation as there was no requirement for negotiation with a landlord (such as the local authority or housing association) to find a new source of accommodation.

The epitome of good support was illustrated by the support offered by a family run housing project. The reason that its service users reported that it was so successful was because of the integration between housing and support services. The service owned several types of accommodation between which service users could move should they require. Because the family had a number of different types of property all with varying levels of support, this support provider was able to tailor both accommodation and support needs to each individual. The quality of the support at this project was judged by how effectively individual needs were taken into account. As a person's needs changed, a service user's exact accommodation and support needs could be met. A number of residents had moved between projects as their support needs had changed. When a service had such flexibility they could more easily alter a support and accommodation package than other support providers such as those providing floating support, who relied on social rented housing as the main source of their accommodation. In effect, this provided a more seamless service of support and accommodation and this type of approach was well received by its service users. However, there were few examples in this study which illustrated this high level of flexibility. Most workers described their difficulties trying to find suitable accommodation as a service user's needs altered.

Although this section has outlined the different approaches by various service providers, one of the over-riding impressions of the support on offer was that support workers were flexible to offer assistance as, when and how the service users needed it. All the organisations involved in providing support clearly valued the professional knowledge of the support worker to adapt their working methods to meet the needs of the service users.

## **6.8 Perceptions and understanding of the social security system**

Whilst accessing accommodation was an important aspect of the resettlement process, such a process was also influenced by a service user's ability to access certain social security benefits and access to income can affect the overall outcome of the resettlement process (Dane, 1998). Quantitative evidence identified considerable problems accessing a whole range of social security benefits and fundamental to all service users was being able to access appropriate sources of income (usually welfare benefits) to be able to set up a home. The results showed that the majority of the sample was reliant on state benefits with the majority receiving the means tested benefits of jobseekers allowance or income support. A further proportion was reliant on other state benefits with only 6% living off earned income. As noted by Hall (2003), claiming benefits could be a time consuming task and form a large part of daytime activity for someone who is homeless and staying in temporary accommodation. However, even when individuals moved on from temporary accommodation claiming welfare benefits often shaped the nature of resettlement and support work.

One of the first challenges that faced a high proportion of service users regarding their income was that levels of income support and jobseekers allowance are very low with current rates of benefit for single people being £44.50 for those under 25 and £56.20 for those over 25 (rates for 2005-6) (rightsnet, 2005). The low levels of these benefits made it particularly difficult for individuals to save income in order to purchase goods for a new home when they were able to move on from homeless accommodation. Problems were identified claiming income support and jobseekers allowance, however what was more notably discussed was the interplay of receiving certain welfare benefits. Most discussed were the attempts at gaining Community Care

Grants (CCGs). These types of grants, administered by the Department for Work and Pensions, are given to individuals for a number of reasons including trying to resettle into the community after a period of unsettled living. Service users and support workers reported that on average awards of CCGs could be between £300 and £800, which could be a critical sum of money to assist an individual buy home furnishings and white goods to set up a new home.

The effects of the benefits system and the unemployment trap have been well-documented and qualitative evidence from this study also pointed towards a benefits trap created by particular benefits. Despite the low level of income that these means tested benefits paid it seemed that there was a perverse incentive for individuals to remain reliant on such benefits. If individuals were receiving the means tested benefits of JSA or IS it resulted in them being able to apply (and in the majority of cases) receive a CCG. This means that it becomes better for some individuals to keep receiving means tested benefits (such as income support and jobseekers allowance) in order that they will be 'passported' to receive other benefits. However because the criteria on which these are allocated was reliant on receiving these means tested benefits, those who are receiving incapacity benefit or are working do not qualify. Such individuals may qualify for some assistance from a social fund loan (also administered by the DWP), but such loans are generally less generous than a CCG, and unlike a CCG they had to be repaid from weekly income. For those who are in work this means that there is likely to be little assistance for them to buy necessary items for their new accommodation. Moreover, the qualitative evidence showed that those who are in work and trying to move from homelessness were in low paid or part time work where finding extra income may be difficult. This was also compounded by the expectation that they will make some contribution to rental charges as it would be unlikely that they would qualify for all of their rent to be paid by housing benefit. It seemed that there was therefore an incentive to remain in receipt of means tested benefits rather than take up opportunities to work where this would lead to difficulties to get a lump sum of income that was necessary to buy the goods that were needed to set up home.

The discretionary nature of the awards of social fund grants and loans was criticised by both staff and service users and the difficulties in initially gaining an award could

be problematic. This was especially pronounced in the case of a young single parent. She was living independently with support from two workers and despite the workers' best efforts she could not get a crisis loan to pay for extra baby formula for her six-month-old child. Vulnerable because of both her age (eighteen) and her history of homelessness, her resettlement worker pointed out that it was these sorts of difficulties that could inhibit the resettlement process. This young woman coped admirably despite these adverse circumstances, but the situation caused a high level of stress and worry about her young son. However, support workers had been influential in helping her to overcome these difficulties.

A considerable amount of time could be used by a resettlement worker trying to gain a social fund award or to help a service user to spend his/her award wisely. There was also little explanation as to why differing awards were given to various service users. Rowe (2002) in his study of the discretion of the social fund found that variations of award were common practice. He comments "the social fund... has created anomalies that make little sense. Service providers and applicants describe a game in which the rules are not always clear to both sides and those who know how to play it will access funds, regardless of the merit of their claim" (p24). Rowe's observations reflect the experiences of workers in this research. Workers seemed only to be able to guess as to why awards had been given, reasoning that they were affected by the area in which the service user lived but were unable to make any further understanding of grant award process. It was also noted that even when a welfare benefit officer filled out a community care grant application form with a service user it did not guarantee a grant would be made. Cooper (1984) also suggests that awards of means tested benefits are highly influenced by the administering benefit staff. The conclusions from Cooper's study indicate that social security staff make judgements as to the 'worthiness' of claimants receiving benefits, causing certain claimants to be treated with a lack of respect and access to entitlement denied. One can only speculate as to the reasons why social fund awards differed between clients but evidence suggests that a number of factors, as described by Rowe (2002) and Cooper (1984) above, could be in place which denied homeless people access to the income they need to purchase furniture and white goods that are necessary for them to set up home.

Because of the difficulties of meeting these inherent costs of moving on, this meant that there was a further perverse incentive for individuals to remain in supported or living in hostel style accommodation where the purchasing of furniture and other white goods was not required. Thus it became evident that the system of allocating benefits to people who are homeless could prolong the incidence and length of time that a person spent being homeless. Not only does this have a detrimental affect on the person who is homeless but this must also be considered in the light of the considerable cost incurred to maintain an individual in homeless accommodation. In general, rent and the cost for support (of projects involved in this research) were around £200 per week. Funding for this charge came from two sources; Housing Benefit paid for the rental charge whereas the funding for the support came from the Supporting People grant. This can be compared to rents for one bedroomed council properties in the Liverpool area which are generally priced between £45 and £60 per week<sup>20</sup>. It appears that whilst the government are calling for 'joined up' thinking, it seems that there has been little consideration as to financial implications to government that prolonging an individual's stay in temporary accommodation could bring.

In order to try and overcome the problems inherent in claiming Social Fund loans and grants, one project had tried to set up a savings scheme for individuals who were living in the hostel. The aims of this were to overcome some of the problems that they had found individuals faced when they wanted to buy items for a new home. However, the logistics of setting up such a scheme had been made very difficult because the project had been unable to find a suitable bank account which they could successfully use for the scheme. The consequences of this meant that it was difficult for service users to save any amount of money as most did not have bank accounts themselves in which to save. It seems that even when workers in housing projects did take some initiative to try to assist service users in this way, their efforts were stifled by bureaucracy beyond their control. One possible solution to this could be for resettlement and hostel workers to develop links with Credit Unions. This would mean that those wanting to resettle would be able to save money that can be put towards furnishing a new property.

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<sup>20</sup> Information taken from Liverpool City Council's property advertising service available at <http://www.propertypool.org.uk/Home.asp> on 15th October 2005.

The ad hoc services that were available for gaining income have the potential of leaving vulnerable service users prone to using poor sources of credit to enable them to buy items for a new home. Whilst few individuals discussed being in debt to financial institutions, significantly two young people (under 20) discussed how they had been approached outside college to take a credit card. One had been successful in being offered a card and had accrued a small amount of debt, although the prospects of her being able to pay this back seemed minimal on the low income that she was currently receiving. More worrying, however, was that she had been unaware at the time of taking the card of the amount of interest that a credit card might accumulate. According to Wallace and Quilgars (2005:43) there has been a large amount of studies into homelessness and the difficulties that homeless individuals face regarding their income, however they claim that homeless organizations continue to prioritise life skills training rather than placing an emphasis on developing financial awareness. This research illustrated a similar result as there seemed very little emphasis placed on developing financial skills beyond being able to budget income although one hostel invited a debt advisor to give a talk about debt management before resettlement took place. The evidence suggests that this would be an obvious place for the development of resettlement training because as this evidence and others (Big Issue, 2000 and Centrepoint, 2005) illustrates, homeless people lack knowledge regarding financial issues and without this can be vulnerable to developing uncontrollable debts.

### ***6.8.1 Inherent problems with Housing Benefit***

Housing benefit, like parts of the social fund, has also become known for its discretionary manner of awards and difficulties understanding and using the housing benefit system are well known and researched. Its administrative difficulties have been shown to have a detrimental effect on the lives of those who claim (Better Regulation Task Force, 2001; Hennessy, 2003b; NACAB, 1999; Social Security Select Committee, 2000). It is also reputed for having a considerable influence in creating both poverty and unemployment traps (Wilcox and Sutherland, 1997; Kemp, 1998). Two members of the sample commented on the difficulties of the unemployment trap caused by housing benefit. However comments regarding

housing benefit were more likely to be made about the bureaucratic manner in which it functioned. It seemed that a lot of resettlement work was focused on sorting out housing benefit claims and overpayments. Even for resettlement staff, the complex regulations meant that there was a lack of uniformity of awards between different clients who may appear to have similar circumstances. This presented challenges to resettlement staff and one worker described she had to find advice from other sources (such as welfare rights workers at a local advice centre) because the complexities of the system made it difficult for her to accurately advise every client. However where housing benefit seemed to function most efficiently was when resettlement staff had a named contact within the local authority with whom they could negotiate their clients' claims. On a more positive note, a number of workers described how sorting out benefits could be beneficial to try and 'bond' with clients creating a working relationship whilst sorting out such practical issues. Needless to say, however, working through housing benefit issues was not seen as a strict necessity to be able to develop these relationships with other informal methods of working with clients being discussed.

Housing benefit was also identified as being a critical negotiating tool to accessing private rented property and was also seen as a stumbling block to access private rented accommodation. Comments from the National Rent Deposit Forum (2004) epitomise this view:

"Alongside the low levels of (housing) benefit comes delays in payments. With mortgages and bills to pay, landlords are reluctant to wait for up to six months to start receiving any rent. This discourages landlords from letting to anyone on benefits, hence the number of adverts stressing "No DSS"".  
(National Rent Deposit Forum, 2004)

According to one worker from a bond scheme, private landlords would be more likely to want to be involved in the scheme if they could have housing benefit claims processed quickly by the local authority and prioritised over other housing benefit claims. The same support worker described that he knew of a number of schemes that had been able to introduce this type of system. Informal enquiries with the National Rent Deposit Forum confirmed that agreements between rent deposit schemes and

local authorities to fast track housing benefit do exist, however these are gestures of good will from the local authority between the LA and the rent deposit scheme and have no legal standing (personal correspondence from the National Rent Deposit Forum, 2005). The informality of these agreements means that there is little information available about how these arrangements function and which local authorities are involved.

Fast tracking had not been successfully established with the schemes included in this study. It appeared that this type of scheme could be beneficial to opening up access to new types of accommodation. What became apparent were the difficulties for staff at such schemes to negotiate access to private rented accommodation with landlords. Fast tracking housing benefit claims could be one positive way forward as landlords are 'rewarded' for taking certain benefit claimants because they would receive speedy rent payment from the housing benefit department.

### ***6.8.2 Budgeting advice***

A further type of support to which resettlement workers often referred was the assistance to individuals to help budget the low income that many service users were receiving. The quantitative evidence highlighted that those receiving means tested benefits especially needed this. Although service users identified that they wanted help with budgeting it was interesting to note that only 16% or 25 individuals perceived that this type of assistance would have prevented them from being homeless and when compared to other reasons which could prevent homelessness it rates fairly low. This was a surprising result as budgeting advice was a critical part of most support on offer and was a particularly important aspect of resettlement training courses offered to a number of individuals living in hostels. Indeed research by Jones, Wallace and Quilgars (2001) illustrates that 92% of agencies providing life skills support to those who are homeless and moving into new accommodation provided assistance with budgeting. Yet quantitative evidence in this study seemed to illustrate that there was a high proportion of individuals who did not want this type of assistance, although qualitative results appeared to contradict this result as there were numerous incidences where interviewees discussed the merits of having assistance to deal with low income.

Nevertheless, the qualitative evidence seems to provide a detailed explanation as to why some individuals might report that they did not need budgeting assistance. Those who needed this type of assistance tended to be reliant on means-tested benefits (as quantitative data also suggested) and young, this being a first experience of leaving home. However some older individuals who found themselves homeless were insulted by being given advice regarding budgeting. This was especially the case for those who had already held a tenancy and lived independently for a period of time. However, although it cannot be denied that there were individuals who needed this sort of assistance from support workers, support must be carefully tailored in order that it does meet the needs of individuals rather than simply offering training on aspects of resettlement that individuals simply did not need.

## **6.9 Training and Education**

It is important to note that there was a high level of economic inactivity within this sample. Figure 5 illustrates the low rates of economic activity of the sample and the large number reliant on means tested benefits. These rates are especially low when compared to the national averages. Between March 2002 and February 2003 the Labour Force Survey estimates that the employment rate for the working age population was 71.4% in the North West and 74% nationally. The average activity rate for Greater Merseyside for the same period was slightly lower at 66.2% (Labour Force Survey, National Statistics, 2006). However, the economic activity rate within this sample was only 6% with a high proportion of the sample economically inactive. This illustrates there must be substantial issues that prevent homeless people getting employment and this could be related to individuals not having the skills and/or training to enter/re enter the workplace. Singh (2005) suggests that there are multiple reasons why homeless individuals are prevented from entering employment with one of the main reasons being related to their housing situation. This prevents re-engagement in employment because of the high rental charges of some accommodation making it impossible to afford the accommodation because of the sharp reduction of housing benefit once back in employment. Singh (ibid.) also established that a further barrier to re engagement was that a proportion of individuals who stated that they did not have the education or training to undertake employment.

It therefore seemed critical for individuals to take part in training or education schemes to improve their chances of employment.

Despite the results of Singh (ibid.) which highlighted the important of training, this study illustrated that a large proportion of the sample were disengaged from education or training (59%). This was an unexpected result for a number reasons. Firstly, one of the main aims of resettlement has been described as helping individuals to move out of temporary accommodation by developing their training, employment and career choices (Bevan 1998). It appeared, therefore, that many resettlement schemes were not meeting these aims. Furthermore, research from Crisis (1998) also highlights that most accommodation for homeless people does not have adequate facilities for individuals to study, this gives one potential reason why individuals may not be able to take part in training or education programmes until they are settled into new accommodation. This illustrates that the aim to assist individuals into training or education may be fundamentally difficult whilst still living in hostel style accommodation. Indeed, although all hostels visited by the researcher had individual rooms (rather than shared rooms) for each resident, the hostels and housing projects, were on the whole, busy places which were not a conducive environment in which residents could undertake studying.

The results also illustrated that there was a difference between age groups of those who were involved in training or education with young people being more likely to be engaged with these. Although it could be argued that this may be because there is government policy aimed at getting young people into education and training (such as New Deal), this result could also be because of the approaches of housing projects which specifically dealt with young homeless people. In these particular projects part of the contract for accommodation relied on young people being involved in some sort of education or training. For example two housing projects who took part in the study were affiliated to the Foyer Federation, an organisation aimed at assisting young people into independent living. The Federation has two critical linked aims,

- 1) to develop a stable and secure community in which young people can support one another and achieve independence and

2) help with finding appropriate employment, training or education to make this possible (The Foyer Federation, 2006).

This strong emphasis placed on training and education goes some way to explaining why the younger members of this cohort were more likely to be in education than older individuals.

This approach contrasted with other accommodation projects dealing with older homeless people which housed individuals who had more complex needs. These projects illustrated an emphasis on encouraging individuals to take part in training but a practical approach was taken which encouraged individuals to be involved in training once more pressing personal issues were addressed (such as drug, alcohol or mental health issues). Gaining training for this group of homeless people could be one of the end products of a lengthy period of support. Moreover, evidence also suggests that older workers can face discrimination because of their age, a practice which, at the time of writing, has still not been outlawed in the UK. It appears that this could also impact on individuals trying to re-enter the workplace. Not only do they face challenges of learning the skills required by employers and developing the confidence to work but might face the difficulties of age discrimination which might also impede re-entry to the workplace.

Furthermore, evidence from a study by Crane and Warnes (2002) regarding the resettlement of older homeless people, indicated that few older homeless people actually became involved in training or education once they had been resettled. Nevertheless, their evidence does suggest that many were involved in purposeful activity including visiting family and friends, going to clubs and social centres, or pursuing hobbies. The qualitative evidence from this research study also highlighted that older individuals may not be involved in education or training but like Crane and Warnes study (*ibid.*), many were involved in pursuing hobbies or attending social clubs. For those older individuals who experience homelessness workers and service users alike perceived that achieving these smaller goals may be more realistic to achieve long term resettlement than encouraging individuals into training and education which may not be sustained.

The study evidence also highlighted that a significant proportion of the older age group were claiming 'other state benefits'. Qualitative interviews revealed that this type of income in the older age group was usually incapacity benefit. The results in this study concur with recent government findings that few individuals receiving incapacity benefit are in training. New government proposals aim to get individuals claiming incapacity benefit to attend work focused interviews and also include the introduction of employment and support allowance (ESA) from 2008 instead of incapacity benefit. With this new benefit claimants will be split into two groups - those assessed as permanently incapable of work, and those assessed as capable of work with help. (Weaver 2006). Although this type of scheme may be of benefit to those who simply have issues returning to the workplace, as the evidence above suggests some individuals may have more complicated personal issues which may prevent them from re entering the workplace and be a contributing factor to their homelessness. Any proposal for a new scheme should take these factors into account and support individuals through these issues rather than introduce benefit rate reductions which might have a consequential negative effect on long term housing and resolving homelessness issues. Proposals for the new scheme (DWP, 2005) do claim that this new benefit will be adapted to help each individual but close monitoring of these changes will be needed to observe how these affect the sensitive needs of homeless people who claim incapacity benefit. Therefore, although the quantitative evidence highlights that a large proportion of individuals (particularly older individuals) are not involved with training or education which would assist them gain employment, this should not be seen negatively. This could simply reflect the fact that individuals are not yet able to achieve this in their resettlement plan although they might still be actively involved in other purposeful activities which could encourage personal development.

### **6.10 Summary**

The evidence suggests that understanding the success of resettlement relies on having a complete understanding of the term 'resettlement'. Evidence from previous studies indicates that the term resettlement support refers to support offered to assist service users from hostel accommodation into an independent flat. This study highlights that this is only one-way in which resettlement occurs. Resettlement could be defined as

finding long term housing solutions that most suit the service user and then provide support so a person is able to maintain the accommodation in which they have chosen to live. For service users who have experienced extreme social exclusion (such as rough sleeping) resettlement may be represented by living in hostel accommodation. Independent accommodation is not a realistic housing option until the service user has some level of stability which can be achieved through a period of living in a hostel. This illustrates, for some service users, there are distinct advantages of living in a hostel as it may start the process of resettlement. The results also highlight the need to have a variety of housing options available which were sympathetic to a service user's individual needs.

There were several key factors on which resettlement relied. The first was the desire from a service user to want to move on from an unsettled way of life. This personal motivation was of critical importance as without this it would be unlikely that a service user would be interested in the resettlement process. Once there is a personal motivation to lead a settled way of life then there needs to be support available to create an appropriate support plan which is tailored to an individual's needs. It was highlighted that service users wanted support workers to take a personal interest in them and recognise the difficulties that they were facing to overcome homelessness. Good support relied on the provision of this and it was noticed by service users when this highly personalised service was not achieved. There were a small number of service users who required limited intervention to overcome homelessness. However such cases were in the minority and it is clear that there is a need for specialised support workers in order to encourage all aspects and stages of resettlement.

The evidence suggests that issues affecting the resettlement process are wide and complex. Because of the difficulties of accessing permanent accommodation resettlement staff had started to develop ways to overcome these difficulties. Developing nomination agreements seemed the most common method considered. Such agreements rely on considerable effort by resettlement workers to develop connections with housing associations. This can be time consuming and bureaucratic and mean that time is taken away from working with service users. However, nomination agreements may only provide access to a limited amount of property in less popular areas. The further disadvantage with such agreements is that only certain

types of individuals are likely to be offered a property through them. These tend to be more stable individuals who are likely to make good tenants. The effect of this means that those judged as slightly 'risky' potential tenants are not given the opportunity to attempt a tenancy through this access route, causing some individuals to be further socially excluded.

The need for nominations agreements illustrated the failure of the housing allocation system to meet the requirements of homeless people. The lack of available permanent, social rented accommodation highlighted the problem of 'bed-blocking' in hostels, a problem that is not only costly in financial terms but can have a detrimental affect on service users as they can be housed in temporary and/or suitable accommodation for too long. It can then become more difficult to move out of temporary accommodation and the resettlement process becomes more complex as homeless people are deskilled because of the length of time that they have been living in temporary accommodation. Such problems are then compounded by the difficulties of the benefit system, making a smooth transition into long term accommodation more difficult. Whilst having a resettlement or support worker does seem to help alleviate the extremities of these problems, complementary policy strategies need to be considered. Resettlement work is fraught with difficulties and it can be challenging working with homeless people who have experienced social exclusion. However it seemed that a considerable amount of effort was devoted to dealing with bureaucratic difficulties rather than focusing on personal difficulties a service user may face. Improved resettlement services would require support from local authorities as well as national policy initiatives which would look to ameliorate housing and social security provision for this group.

There is clearly a need for joined up working between organisations and this study illustrates some excellent examples of interagency working. However when cooperation between agencies is not evident then this is detrimental to those being resettled, it inhibits the resettlement process and puts vulnerable service users at risk of losing a tenancy. Only when all service providers from both statutory and voluntary agencies work together does resettlement begin to function most successfully. Resettlement workers play a critical role in bringing these services together and they often need the specialised knowledge of other workers and the advice of statutory

agencies to be able to coordinate services for their clients. There is still a need to develop working partnerships between a number of parties in order to improve the service that resettled individuals receive.

It is evident that although the difficulties with income could rarely be blamed for the cause of homelessness, issues with income caused individuals difficulties whilst they tried to resettle into their own properties, such problems were only compounded by the difficulties of trying to access welfare benefits to pay for rent and household items. However, it seemed that a considerable amount of effort was devoted to dealing with bureaucratic difficulties of gaining tenancies and benefits rather than being able to focusing on personal and emotional problems a service user may face overcoming homelessness. Whilst having a resettlement or support worker does seem to help alleviate the extremities of these bureaucratic difficulties, complementary policy strategies need to be considered which would aim to make it easier to gain a predetermined award of benefits which would be guaranteed to meet the costs of rent and setting up home in a finite amount of time. Achieving this would require a review of policy of both housing benefit and social fund but may radically improve and change the nature of support work which could be more easily focused on a service users' personal needs rather than simply dealing with the technical intricacies of the welfare benefit system.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

This chapter will draw together the main findings of this research and make a number of recommendations for both practice and policy. It will also re-examine the aims and objectives of the study and highlight how these have been achieved. It is hoped that the recommendations from this study will inform the direction of resettlement services in order to improve services for individuals who have experienced homelessness.

One of the objectives of this study was to determine the perceptions of resettlement and assess the impacts of such services had on the lives of those who used these services. This study illustrates the positive effects that resettlement support can have on individuals, assisting vulnerable service users to maintain new accommodation after being homeless. However the delivery of resettlement support is affected by a significant number of complex factors which can hinder the process of resettlement and impede successful rehousing of vulnerable individuals. The success of resettlement is therefore related to four significant factors: accessibility of accommodation, the availability of support, motivation from homeless individuals to want to resettle, and the ability to navigate a pathway through bureaucratic processes which can obstruct successful housing outcomes.

Availability of accommodation will always play a critical role in expediting the resettlement process. Even in the 1980s in a study of resettlement provision in London Cook (1983:2) suggested that "Boroughs should ensure guaranteed access to suitable permanent accommodation for all those temporarily housed in supportive accommodation". This illustrates the critical importance of easy access to accommodation for homeless people if they are wanting to embark on the resettlement process. What is also needed is a variety of housing opportunities available to homeless people as not all individuals will require or want a social rented tenancy but may require what Arnold et al (1993) refers to as "less than ordinary housing" which includes supported housing or housing which includes group living. They express concern about having a diverse range of housing as they state "any form of shared special accommodation makes clear negative statements about its occupants: they

cannot manage, or in some ways do not merit, what the rest of us see as central to our lives - a home of our own"(ibid). Yet despite these comments this study illustrates that a period in temporary or supported accommodation where an individual is able to take stock, assess their needs and gain support to move on can be far more beneficial than simply moving a person into independent accommodation when they do not feel adequately prepared.

Contrary to Arnold et al, there needs to be an acceptance that some homeless individuals may always need supported housing and the provision of such housing will provide a safe and secure environment in which certain individuals want to live. Thus 'successful' resettlement is not simply wanting to move individuals into independent accommodation but moving into housing which has adequate support in order to meet a service users needs. What can assist resettlement and can be beneficial is a period in temporary, supported accommodation (or what Kennedy and Lynch (2001) describe as "intermediate accommodation"). However, whilst wanting to establish and encourage resettlement there is also a danger that a prolonged period in temporary accommodation could have a deskilling effect. There is evidently a fine dividing line between establishing a step towards resettlement by settling an individual into hostel style supported accommodation whilst encouraging dependence of individuals, and remaining too long in temporary or supported accommodation.

For those who do wish to access social rented housing, the supply of available housing continues to diminish because of the effects of the right to buy. The effects of such policies are worsened by exclusion policies employed by landlords of social rented accommodation that make it difficult for some homeless individuals to gain access to particular properties. Thus overcoming homelessness on a long-term basis in the Greater Merseyside area involves addressing problems of low demand housing and regeneration of certain communities which would extend the current housing portfolio of social landlords. Addressing the high number of vacant properties within the region would mean that there were not only more properties available in communities but this would help to developed local infrastructures where individuals could begin to lead a settled way of life after homelessness. Thus a wider portfolio of types of property available in different areas would give the opportunity for homeless

people who were ready to move on from temporary accommodation to progress up the property ladder and establish a home of their own.

A further objective of this study was to determine the effects of national policy in the prevention of homelessness. One of the aims of the 2002 Homelessness Act has been for Local Authorities to develop strategies to prevent homelessness occurring. However, there needs to be some scepticism about the efficiency of homelessness strategies developed as a result of this act if there are no plans designed to increase the amount of housing available. Homeless strategies may go some way to impede crisis management of homelessness but they simply do not increase the impact on the overall numbers or types of accommodation available. The current direction of policy indicates that there will be little development of new build housing by social rented landlords, and there has been little done to reverse the selling of council houses to sitting tenants through the right to buy policy. To counter the effects of these developments in housing there needs to be efforts devoted to developing other schemes which may widen access to particular housing. Rent-deposit schemes in the private sector and priority nominations, specifically for homeless people, targeted at a certain number of properties owned by social rented landlords may form two paths which could provide a supply of homes to counter the effects of the continuing residualisation of social rented properties. This would mean social rented landlords abolishing exclusion policies which currently impede many homeless people from gaining new properties (Butler and Bacon, 1998).

One option to increase the availability of housing would be to house more individuals in the private rented sector. This may not be the ideal solution for rehousing vulnerable service users but in the light of the dearth of accommodation from the social rented sector this may be one available option. The evidence illustrates that the private rented sector can be a successful form of accommodation for homeless people if there is adequate support from support workers to assist settled living. However there still needs to be increased government legislation to ensure that there is an improvement in the quality of accommodation in this sector which, according to the evidence from this study, is a consistently lower level than accommodation provided by the social rented sector.

The crux of, and perhaps the wider success of resettlement lies in developing not only homelessness policy but housing policy which favours homeless people. Allocation policies, for example, need to allow homeless individuals attempting resettlement a choice of property in different areas in order that they can sustain relationships with family and friends living local to them. In many cases, as this study strongly indicates, there is no irreparable damage caused to relationships with family and friends when most people become homeless, yet accommodation options for those who are homeless are always limited. Moving individuals away from such social contacts risks tenancy failure which has both a financial implication to the housing provider and a social cost to the individual as their self esteem becomes damaged making further rehousing more difficult. This finding echoes opinions of those working in the social rented sector, as one chief executive of a large housing association in the north of England stated in the late 1990s, "people with high levels of need are not best served by coming to the top of some queue and ending up in a vacant property in the middle of an area where they don't know anybody and where nobody else wants to live" (quoted by Goodwin, 1999:20). Housing individuals who have been homeless in such areas of low demand only perpetuates social exclusion, something that the current New Labour government has placed high on their political agenda to diminish and expunge. Yet still, this study illustrates that, in some cases, the only properties that were available to homeless individuals were those in areas of low demand where people could be prone to isolation and vulnerable to loneliness.

This study identifies that there needs to be a greater emphasis on helping individuals develop a 'pathway' out of homelessness. This relatively new concept of homelessness pathways as discussed by Fitzpatrick (2000) and Clapham (2003) has been advantageous to reconceptualise homelessness and this has meant that the focus of understanding homelessness has changed from earlier studies and debates where the focus was aimed at understanding routes into, factors causing, and numbers of homelessness individuals (Lemos, 1999; Bramley 1988). Anderson and Tulloch (2000) highlight that there are a variety of pathways that individuals can take out of homelessness, there is a suggestion that this 'path' runs in a straight line and that individuals will have choices along this path that will lead them to suitable and sustainable housing outcomes. Jones, Quilgars and Wallace (2001) suggests that the understanding of the pathways out of homelessness is still limited but evidence from

this study gives a greater understanding of how individuals experience a 'resettlement pathway'. This study shows that the resettlement pathway could be fraught with difficulties resulting in a housing pathway being more like a game of snakes and ladders than a straightforward path. For every challenge and difficulty that a homeless person overcame and climbed up a ladder, there were many other problems that they would encounter that might send them back to the beginning of their pathway. Some of the difficulties could be made easier with the presence of a support worker, although difficulties were mainly caused by an inherently bureaucratic welfare benefits and housing system. Thus the role of support staff is critical for individuals to achieve resettlement and the resettlement process is often enhanced by the personal efforts of support workers determined to assist service users to be successful in their new homes. Despite this however, even with the positive effects that support workers can have to enable a smoother route through homelessness, the pathway to resettlement is a complex and difficult one, which can be problematic and time consuming to negotiate and achieve resettlement.

Support from specialist support workers for those who are homeless has been a welcome improvement to the sector through the development of the financial framework for Supporting People. Homelessness is demoralising and for many homeless people it is a time when people lose their self esteem making it difficult for them to face the complications which homelessness can bring. Offering support goes some way to countering some of these problems. The results of the research indicate that Supporting People has gone a long way in providing better support services for homeless people. Workers were able to highlight that Supporting People had allowed for an increase in funding, allowing for a greater number of support workers. This allowed workers to have a much smaller case load which had meant they were able to offer a better quality service, allowing them to spend more time with each particular client. Thus service provision was not just crisis management but about providing a sustainable solution to overcome homelessness.

The evidence highlights that what is critical however, is the type of support that is offered to the homeless service user. Previous evidence (Randall and Brown, 1995) shows that service users did not require assistance with practical issues such as cooking or household management although contradictory studies a decade later

(McNaughton, 2005) argued that there was a demand for service users to provide practical life skills training. Whilst it cannot be denied that some service users need some types of practical assistance in order to assist resettlement, this study illustrates that in order to overcome homelessness there is a greater need for support workers to provide emotional support to service users rather than practical help.

However, the delivery of different types of support are very much interlinked. Practical aspects of resettlement such as sourcing low-cost furniture and applying for appropriate welfare benefits, gives a focus which can be used to develop trust between a worker and their client thus allowing emotional support to develop. When so much progress has been made to develop a funding stream for such support services it is worrying that a recent financial review (Robson Rhodes, 2004) has illustrated that there should be less funding put into support services and local authorities should rein-in their spending. The author takes the view that spending on support services should at least be maintained and at best be increased in order that services are able to flourish. Resettlement workers have a unique role in filling a gap left by other professionals – where social workers can be limited in the type of support that they offer, housing support and resettlement workers enjoy flexibility in their support role which can truly meet the needs of the clients through offering both emotional and practical types of support.

Debates regarding homelessness have always been shaped and influenced by the political climate. The new Labour Government has also used the concepts of 'joined-up government' to go some way to try and bring together the agencies concerned with the issues of homelessness. The success of provision of support relies on there being joint working between organisations. Whilst there were some examples of good working relationships between some service providers, poor working relationships between statutory services (i.e. social workers, staff at the Department for Work and Pensions) and resettlement/ housing support staff continued to be evident. Some statutory services seemed to have a lack of empathy and a sense of cynicism towards individuals who were homeless, which does little to overcome the homelessness problem.

Trying to establish a pathway to resettlement was also made more difficult by the social security system which baffled service users and support workers alike, and this only detracts from the overall process of resettlement. As Cowan and Marsh (2001) point out, the current government have done little to change the housing benefit system and the housing benefit system remains a problem in causing and maintaining the poverty trap. Both support workers and support users maintain that the housing benefit system is one of the main barriers to overcoming homelessness. There is an urgent need to review the manner in which housing benefit is delivered and rates are awarded, this will evidently be of assistance to all individuals who claim housing benefit, but will be of particular benefit to those who are homeless if they are easily able to claim benefit. The benefit system needs to be not only more generous (although in the current political climate this is unlikely) but those carrying out benefit administration need to do so in a sensitive manner that takes account of the difficulties that homeless people face trying to resettle. This research concurs with previous studies (Cooper, 1984; Rowe, 2001) that illustrate that those who carry out the administration of welfare benefits can be judgemental and can make it difficult to claim benefits to which individuals are rightfully entitled. Access to benefits needs to be considerably more straightforward and there is also need for uniformity especially in awards of social fund. The evidence suggested that many individuals claiming grants from the social fund did not know or understand why they had been awarded a particular amount of money. The discretionary nature of these awards means that individuals, sometimes in desperate need of household items, do not get adequate finance to assist a move into unfurnished accommodation.

Without this sort of assistance for individuals to establish a comfortable home individuals are unlikely to see the benefits of moving into new accommodation. Moreover, homeless individuals are more likely to find it more attractive to stay in hostel accommodation where surroundings are comfortable and the price of the accommodation affordable. Review is therefore urgently needed to assess the effectiveness of the benefits system to ensure that the system adequately meets the needs of those attempting resettlement. The voluntary sector is successfully providing low cost and free household goods for those who have limited title to state benefits so that they can purchase these items. There is further opportunity for organisations to

have a greater role offering these services, which would allow individuals easier access on a limited budget to establish a home.

A critical result from this research is that one of the key parts of resettlement is that individuals need to have the personal motivation to want to settle and move on from homelessness and an unsettled way of life. Support workers could encourage homeless people to move on from a hostel or temporary accommodation but there had to be willingness from individuals themselves to achieve this. Often individuals initially had good intentions about moving out of the hostel and settling, but the process of resettling was long and arduous, and it was difficult for some individuals to see that there would be a positive outcome at the end. Previous studies of resettlement have been keen to outline the external factors that shape resettlement outcomes but this study shows that resettlement results can be shaped by an individual's determination and desire to complete the resettlement process.

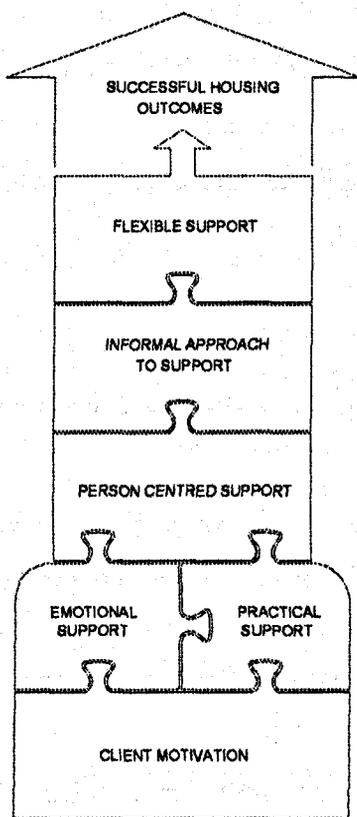
This study shows that some attempts to bring together service provision has been successful and having a support worker to co-ordinate services can be useful to mediate between services providers on behalf of a client. However, despite these attempts to bring services together, there has been little holistic vision to ensure individuals have an easy route to resettlement. Currently the evidence suggests that even if an individual is able to acquire housing they still may face many obstacles to establish a new home. Regulations and bureaucracy inhibit services working efficiently together. This illustrates that achieving the vision of joined up working is still some way off and this lack of co-ordination of services is seriously detrimental to homeless individuals trying to resettle.

Despite the evidence highlighting that resettlement services were successful for a large amount of people, there were a small number of individuals who did not feel ready to resettle and did not want to engage with the resettlement services offered to them. Workers reported that this was most likely to happen if service users had issues with drug or alcohol misuse. In such cases workers were likely to withdraw their services if there was no motivation from a service user to resettle. There is a risk that certain individuals, particularly those who have complex addiction needs, will be abandoned by a service provider if they do not immediately conform to a resettlement

plan. There is, therefore, a need to provide safe accommodation where those who are not ready to move into independent housing. Such accommodation should offer a safe refuge where drug or alcohol abuse is neither condoned nor encouraged but in which housing is available in a safe and supportive environment where individuals may be able to make small steps towards resettlement. Without availability of suitable accommodation some individuals with the most complex problems may otherwise be abandoned in favour of working with individuals who easily engage with the services on offer.

### 7.1 A model of best practice in housing support

The evidence from this study highlights that there are a number of key parts to successful resettlement. A model representing the important aspects of successful support is represented in diagrammatic form below.



*Figure 6 Model of Housing Support (Hennessy and Grant, 2006)*

Figure 6 as suggested by Hennessy and Grant (2006) illustrates that for a client to want to move on and improve their housing and life circumstances are the foundation to support being successful. Support, from a support worker, of both a practical and emotional nature is then required in order that the service users needs can be addressed. The support package is developed and fits around the needs of the client with the most successful support including all these 'jigsaw pieces' which then gives the client the best opportunity of successfully resettling.

Whilst this model might be appropriate for the majority of service users, there needs to be some separate consideration of how to achieve positive housing outcomes for those with substance and alcohol abuse issues. For these service users motivation to move on and escape from drug or alcohol abuse will no doubt be difficult. However, current practice tends to withdraw or not offer resettlement services if there is a lack of motivation to move on. This could expose those with the highest support needs, leaving them isolated with no long-term prospects of being resettled. The effect of this means many individuals with drug and alcohol problems were long-term residents in hostels or resident in the community with little resettlement support. Instead of support being withdrawn completely in these circumstances, links need to be maintained between resettlement workers and service users so that they have an available form of support should they need it when they are ready to attempt long-term resettlement.

## **7.2 Recommendations for developing best practice**

One of the aims of this research was to develop a model of good practice for those working to deliver homeless services a model which has been successfully developed by gathering users' perspectives of the services that they already receive. The model above shows the important factors in order for resettlement to be successful. The following recommendations suggest how this model of successful support can be best achieved and developed. To achieve resettlement, support will also need to be complimented by easy access to accommodation. It is clear that resettlement support requires an holistic approach where service practitioners from various occupations work together to deliver a successful service. Despite government rhetoric, this evidence from Merseyside illustrates that there is still a greater need for services to

work together in order to achieve sustainable housing outcomes for homeless people. The recommendations below can act as a guide for resettlement and support workers to develop good working practices although there will be a distinct need for positive practices from the Local Authority and Department of Work and Pensions to assist the delivery of best practice.

Support needs to have the following features:

- A person centred approach to support, with an equal emphasis placed on both emotional and practical support, with the aim to encourage individuals to develop a high level of emotional intelligence.
- Fluid, adaptable support services where workers are supported to work on their own initiative, providing flexible and tailored support which adapts to the needs of the clients.

The following are also needed to ensure good service delivery:

- Local housing allocation policies that provide housing options and alternative housing solutions. This would recognise the diversity of housing needs of homeless people and help to correctly identify the appropriate housing, this approach would also allow for flexibility between housing types which might be necessary to achieve a stable housing solution for particular individuals.
- Easily available information and education regarding housing for anyone in housing crisis from a nominated organisation. Misinformation causes individuals to be incorrectly housed, elongating the process of homelessness and increasing the financial cost of homelessness to local authorities. This also has a social cost for those who are homeless, causing individuals to be adversely affected by living in temporary accommodation.

There would be limited costs of implementing these policy recommendations as they simply would require a change of working practices for resettlement workers. The inherent costs of providing information regarding housing would easily be offset

against the savings that would be made preventing evictions and abandoned properties.

Whilst the evidence in this study highlights that the provision of support is making headway to improve the sustainability of a tenancy, many single people are still finding that they are not prioritised to gain a tenancy as they are not counted as vulnerable or in priority need according to the statutory definition of homelessness. This leads to a delay in gaining a tenancy as those who are prioritised gain accommodation before single homeless people. This means that individuals may be forced to stay for a longer period in temporary accommodation and a prolonged period in temporary accommodation can have a detrimental effect on the resettlement process. It is clear therefore that there is need for an urgent review of the homelessness legislation in order that single homeless people have greater rights to access social rented accommodation by being seen as priority for available social rented accommodation.

### **7.3 Final concluding remarks**

The evidence from this study shows that undoubtedly services for single homeless households have improved significantly since the 1970s, when provision was limited to large scale institutions which showed little recognition of the complex issues faced by single homeless people. The development of resettlement support is now shown to be one of the critical factors in overcoming homelessness, a service which users now find to be invaluable. This study reflects the growing realisation of the importance of service users' views as it has allowed a unique insight into the experience of resettlement from those who have struggled with such difficult housing and personal circumstances. Creation of Supporting People has allowed for the majority of individuals to be assisted and have improved prospects of escaping from the cyclical process of homelessness. What this study has illustrated is that individuals have to have the motivation to want to move on into their own accommodation. Individuals have to be active citizens in the resettlement process, this calls into question the ideology of the Supporting People funding which is aimed to assist the most vulnerable members of the community. Instead this research illustrates that most support services funded by Supporting People only assist those who have

the motivation and inclination to engage in the support process as active citizens with the support on offer (active citizenship being a concept actively pursued by the New Labour Government). This suggests that the current support arrangement is creating a two-tiered system, the most vulnerable with chaotic lifestyles, who perhaps have the greatest need, are left behind and have services withdrawn. This observation suggests that certain individuals are still judged because of their behaviour, meaning that this group of individuals may become further excluded from service provision. Whilst it cannot be denied that policy has been progressive in assisting the majority of homeless people, it is only when policy can address the needs of all homeless people that a sustainable solution to the homelessness problem will be found.

To accurately address the recommendations made above would need policy development and review on both a national and local level, as well as the development of interagency working, which will be flexible to ensure that service users obtain a person centred service in order to overcome and ensure sustainable housing outcomes. Resettlement of homeless individuals has been shown to go far beyond simply providing individuals with a house and it is only by establishing an holistic approach to address all factors which inhibit resettlement, that a long term solution to homelessness amongst single people can be truly addressed.

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## **Appendix A Questionnaire and information sheet for participants (service users)**

### **Resettlement Research**

I am currently carrying out research looking at resettlement services for people who have previously been homeless.

The research is being funded by the Comino Foundation (a registered charity) and the results of the research will form the basis of a PhD being supervised at John Moores University.

The aim of the research is to consider the perceptions of service users and staff involved in providing and receiving resettlement services in and around the Merseyside area.

To carry out this research I would be grateful if you could complete the enclosed questionnaire that you have been given by your support/ resettlement worker.

The research is independent of any service provider. Filling out this questionnaire does not effect in any way services that you currently receive or might receive in the future. The comments that you make will be confidential and will not be identified as being said by you. If you do not want your support/resettlement worker to see your comments please place it in the envelope provided and post it to me.

I am also looking for people who would be interviewed to discuss being homeless and your thoughts on resettlement services. This will give me a clearer picture of what you think of resettlement services. If you would like to take part in this please put your contact details on the back page of the questionnaire.

**Thank you for taking part in this research.**

Further details about this research are available from:

**Resettlement Survey**

**This survey is about services that you receive from a resettlement service, floating support worker or housing support worker. All answers that you provide will be confidential.**

**About your accommodation**

1. Is your current accommodation:

- Permanent
- Temporary  (temporary means you will have to leave this after 3 months or less)

2. Who owns your accommodation?

- The Council
- A private landlord
- A Housing Association
- I own it myself
- A charity
- Other (please state).....

3. How long have you been living in your current accommodation?

.....

4. Is your accommodation in an area where you wanted to live?

- Yes  go to question 4a
- No  go to question 4b

4a Why did you particularly want to live in this area?

.....  
.....  
.....

4b. Why did you not want to live in this area?

.....  
.....  
.....

5. Do you have family or friends who live nearby who you keep in touch with?

- Yes
- No

6. For how long were you homeless or living in temporary accommodation before you came to live in this accommodation?  
.....

7. What type of accommodation were you living in before you moved to this accommodation?

- A hostel
- Living with family or friends
- Sleeping rough
- In local authority care
- In prison
- Supported accommodation
- Hospital
- Other (please state).....

8. Do you use any of the following local facilities?

- Sports centre
- Community centre
- Library
- Local college
- Other (please state).....

9. Has your support worker helped you to access any of the facilities listed in question 8? (support worker means resettlement worker, floating support worker, or any housing support worker who may come and visit you)

Yes  No

10. What do you do in your spare time?  
.....  
.....

**Support services**

11. When you moved into your property did you feel that you needed the assistance of the support worker?

Yes  Go to question 11a No  Go to question 11c

11a. What assistance did you need at the time of moving into your property?  
.....  
.....

.....  
11b. Did you get this assistance?

Yes             Go to question 12            No             Go to question 12

11c. Why did you feel that you didn't need the assistance of the worker?  
.....  
.....  
.....

12. What are the main issues that you now need assistance with from your support worker? (tick all that apply)

- Help sorting out bills
- Help budgeting/ money management
- Help in times of crisis
- Assistance with accessing other services
- Emotional support
- Someone to have a chat to
- Help with drug issues
- Help with drink issues
- Help with mental health issues
- Dealing with boredom/loneliness
- Mediate with family members on your behalf
- Other (please state).....

13. Does the service meet your needs?

Yes             go to question 14            No             go to question 13a

13a. What else would you like the service/ worker to do?  
.....  
.....  
.....

14. How helpful has your support worker been in assisting you to keep your accommodation?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Neither helpful or unhelpful
- Not helpful
- Very unhelpful

15. Do you think you would be more likely to become homeless again if you did not have the services of the support worker?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**Your previous accommodation**

16. Before living in your current home, did you hold a tenancy or own a property elsewhere?

- Yes I have held a tenancy before
- Yes I have owned a property before
- Yes I have both owned a property and held a tenancy
- No I have neither owned a property or held a tenancy before  go to question 20

17a. If yes, how many:

Tenancies have you held? ... ..

Properties have you owned? ... ..

19. What were the main reasons for leaving your previous tenancies/owned properties?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

20. How many times have you been homeless? (Please include any times when you have been living in temporary accommodation, staying temporarily with family or friends or sleeping rough) ... ..

21. What were your main reasons for being homeless? (please tick all that apply)

- Relationship breakdown with partner
- Conflict with household members who you lived with
- Family or friends could no longer accommodate
- Asked to leave by landlord
- Tenancy of property came to an end
- Leaving prison
- Leaving local authority care/ foster home
- Leaving the armed forces

- Evicted by landlord
- Domestic violence
- Property repossessed
- Other(please state)... ..

22. When you lived in previous accommodation did you have a support worker?

- Yes
- No

23. Thinking about the occasions that you have been homeless, do you think any of the following would have *prevented* you from being homeless (tick all that you think that would of helped you from being homeless)

- Family mediation
- Relationship counselling
- Help from a resettlement worker/ housing support worker
- Financial assistance
- Help with drug/ alcohol issues
- Help with mental health issues
- Help from social services
- Assistance with budgeting
- Employment or help to find employment
- Education or training or help to find it
- Help to run your home
- Help to deal with personal or emotional problems
- Other (please state)... ..
- Nothing could have prevented me becoming homeless

24. Do you think that your quality of life has improved since you moved into this accommodation?

- Yes
- No
- About the same as before  go to question 25

25. Could you please give reasons as to how your life has improved/not improved in your current accommodation?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**General**

26. How old are you? ... ..

27. What is your main source of income?

- Jobseekers Allowance/ Income Support
- Other state benefits
- Earned income
- Other

28. Are you currently involved in any training or education?

- Yes  No

29. Are you: Male  Female

Questionnaires can give some valuable information as to what you think of support services and your experiences of being homeless. However it would be extremely beneficial to this research if you could take part in an interview to further discuss your experiences. Any information you give will be confidential and you will remain anonymous. The research is independent of any services you receive and will not affect your services now or in the future.

If you are able to take part in an interview please give your name and contact details below and I will contact you in the near future.

Name .....

Contact telephone number.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

If you have any questions about this research please contact:

**If you would like to add any further comments about support services or being homeless please feel free to do so below.**

**Appendix B Recruitment sheet for staff**

**Resettlement Research**

I am currently carrying out research looking at resettlement services for people who have previously been homeless.

The research is being funded by the Comino Foundation (a registered charity) and the results of the research will form the basis of a PhD being supervised at John Moores University.

The aim of the research is to consider the perceptions of service users and staff involved in providing and receiving resettlement services in and around the Merseyside area.

I am looking for staff involved in providing resettlement services who would be interviewed to discuss your thoughts on resettlement services and their provision in the local area. This will give me a clearer picture of resettlement services in the area.

The interview can take place at your place of work.

If you would like to take part in this please provide your details on the tear off slip below and post it to me in the envelope provided. Alternatively you can contact me (details below) to express your interest in taking part.

The research is independent of your service and anything you said would be confidential and would not be identified as being said by you.

It is clear that there is a need for such research in order to direct future areas of work to overcome the problem of homelessness. For that reason it is important the as many staff members working in this area as possible partake in this research

**Thank you for interest in this research and I look forward to hearing from you.**

.....

I would be able/ would not be able\* to take part in the resettlement research (\*please delete as appropriate)

Name.....

Contact Telephone number.....

Please return in the envelope provided or to Claire Hennessy at the address below address. Thank you.

**Further details about this research are available from:**

## Appendix C Example transcripts

### Partial interview transcript with a resettlement worker from a direct access hostel

I just wanted to ask you how you came to work here?

I started, I done, about 18 months before I started working here I done a years voluntary work living in a hostel as a live in volunteer, and I done that for a year and then when I came back to Birkenhead I done care for 18 months and then I seen this job advertised and I applied

What kind of care work did you do?

I did EMI, which is elderly with mental health problems and then I done learning disabilities and mental health problems as well so. What did I do? I think it was about five years I did all in all, I think it was 5 years.

And did you come straight into this job in resettlement?

No I started off as what used to called a project co coordinator which is responsible for the day to day running of the project, security of the building, basically the monitoring of the resident on a daily basis and I've been doing the resettlement for a year now.

How did the resettlement project come about?

I think it's been in place for about four years erm and I think it come about because people were moving on into accommodation and then there were problems with that, once, they were finding once people were moving into their own place they were quiet isolated because quite often people hadn't been in touch with family for years and years or hadn't made any contact in the local community or whatever so when they moved into their own place they were really isolated, couldn't manage their own money, or quiet often with drinkers, their flat would get took over by other drinkers sort of thing so it

would spiral out of control, and they were constantly coming back and presenting themselves as homeless because they couldn't manage. It was thought that if someone supported them in their own home that they might be able to maintain their tenancy better.

And with supporting people coming in, have you noticed any difference in the way that things have been run, do you have supporting people funding?

We do, yeah which my post is funded by. Or part of it is funded by that. There's a lot more agencies and housing associations that are offering resettlement support or floating tenancy support as some may call it. So it's got more recognised and there's a lot more people doing it. But I think in terms of us, we're just doing the same as what we've always done really.

So it hasn't actually changed what you do?

Not for the resettlement side, supporting people has changed what we do in the hostel because we have to prove that we are supporting people in the hostel. The money that we get given is to run the hostel, it's not for the resettlement side.

So they have to put a plan together to prove that they are moving people on?

Yeah

Rather than settle in the hostel?

Yeah

What would say the main problems are when you are working on the resettlement side, what are the main problems that people come across, that people have experienced?

Right, the main, one of the main ones is budgeting, people find that they can't manage their money so they run up bills or get themselves in to debts that they can't manage to repay back. So that's one of the quite common things. Isolation and loneliness is quite a big problem because they come from living with 24 people to living totally on their own so that can be a problem and then also people using their flats to either use drugs or to drink in. So anti social behaviour is a big thing as well.

How do you try and overcome that or work with people to try and overcome that?

With the budgeting side of things, it's quite well it's not quite easy but it's, you can do practical things to help with that. With loneliness and isolation we do try and get people involved with organisations and see if we can find alternative sources of support. Because there's often things out there that will offer a couple of hours a week. We try to get people to join in with clubs and whatever, not clubs that's a stupid word

No I know what you mean, things like that are going on in their community

Yeah like a luncheon club or

And are people prepared to take part in these type of activities?

Some are sometimes, sometimes people aren't prepared although they complain about being isolated and lonely and stuff some people aren't prepared to do anything about it and that can be because they're shy or because of mental health, you get people who are paranoid or sceptical about meeting strangers and some people are interested, some will get totally involved and they will get involved with the committee in if it's sheltered accommodation or supported accommodation, will get involved but it is down to the individual. When it comes to stuff like the drinkers having a lot of people in the flat who aren't supposed to be there we have to withdraw from that situation because it's such a volatile situation if we got to someone's house and we've got a couple of people in there

who are sitting there, drinking or whatever, our policy is that we don't go into that property because you are basically going into an unknown quantity basically.

Because it's dangerous?

Yeah. So what we'll do is we'll ask to speak to the individual ideally outside, away from the property and try and arrange that they next time they won't have all these people in or whatever but if they refuse and they what people to be in their flat or whatever we have to withdraw our services or try and encourage people to come here [to the hostel], you know if there were any problems or anything.

Does having all those people in the flat cause them to loose their tenancy?

Yeah because they are breaking their tenancy agreement. It wouldn't be practical for us to get involved with all those people. Like we couldn't go in and say right come on you lot out or whatever cos it, for one it would probably put the tenant at risk and obviously we would be putting ourselves at risk as well. I mean I don't know, we just advise them on the situation. I mean if people are there and they are unwanted then it's a case of phoning the police but if they continue to encourage people to go there then it's down to them really.

How do you go about talking to someone about that kind of issue? What sort of advice are you able to give to them?

I mean alls we can do is give them the information for them to make a choice for themselves really. And by all the information I mean the rules of your tenancy agreement are, you don't do this, blah blah and all that sort of stuff, and that again is about getting out and about in the community so that so that you're not always there for people to come to your flat or erm if there is a warden involved at the property, report it to them or ask them not to let them in if they don't want them there or call the police. All you can do is say what your options are, if something doesn't change then you are going to loose your

tenancy and are you going to do something about that? You can't force people to get rid of people or stop people coming back to the property or whatever it is.

Here [the hostel] do they accept people back who have lost their tenancies?

It depends really. We try to put a time limit on it of 12 months so if someone manages to maintain the tenancy for that long but if it's within a couple of weeks then it depends what's happen in the past and it's something we've advised on or it's something that we've tried to help out with but the tenant hasn't took their part, or their responsibility it then we can refuse to give them accommodation because they have intentionally made themselves homeless. So if someone lost their tenancy that quick and then wanted to come back, it would be a case of we've done everything that we can possibly do for that person and we don't think that it's fair to have them back here because someone else could take that opportunity were as they've already had their opportunity to do that and they didn't want to take part in that.

You mean that they've not actively engaged in trying to work their way through?

Yeah. It would have to be that they had done something pretty deliberate and pretty destructive for us to say no. If they were getting bullied or arson, or anything like that then we wouldn't refuse it on those grounds but if someone deliberately said well actually I couldn't be bothered paying me rent erm I don't think that I should pay me rent. And believe me people do say that sort of thing.

Why do people say that?

Well I think that some of it could be down to us really because when they come and stay here they have no service charge, they don't have to pay for food, they don't have to pay for laundry, everything, all responsibility is basically taken off their shoulders and we, do in a way, we do deskill people, but that's the only way that we can manage the chaotic people that we deal with. So when people move on. Moving on from here to (hostel 2) is

a prime example. So they've stayed here for what 2 months and they go to (hostel 2), its £23.83 a week to stay at (hostel 2). So they get to (hostel 2) and think well actually if I don't pay my rent here then I'll get chucked out and I can go back to the our project. So they deliberately won't pay their rent or their service charge as it's called so they think that they can get back here because it's a lot easier here and they've got more disposable income when they live in here. Which is why we started doing the savings scheme.

Yeah I remember you mentioning that to me. Do people actively engage in the savings scheme? Do they have a choice in it?

Yeah they do have a choice in it, yeah. They have a choice and they are encouraged and there is a bit of pressure put on them to say that if you are not willing to save money, if you're not willing to take part in that then your stay here will be shorter. We see that as one of the things of getting them into a place of their own. Cos 1 they are getting used to saving money because they are putting away a certain amount of money a week, erm and 2 they have got something to set themselves up with when they move. If they are not interested in those two things, practicing their budgeting skills and having money when they move out then they are not really, I don't think in getting a place of their own or they are certainly not going to be in the right frame of mind to maintain a tenancy if they can't simply same £20. How are they going to pay bills and stuff?

And do you think that there are a certain proportion of people who don't want to move on? Who want to stay in the hostel?

Oh yeah definitely because we come across quite a lot of people who from their early teens have spent time in prison and in young offenders units and that, their always been a routine and all the responsibilities been taken off them, that sort of thing and when it comes to living out their in the really world people really can't cope with it. They can't cope with not having those boundaries around them.

The rules laid down for them?

The rules, we find we get people here who have been chaotic for months and months even for years and when they come to stay here they can become stable and be stable for months but as soon as they move on it just all goes to pot because those strict boundaries and guidelines have, and I suppose reassurance has all gone. And they just can't cope on their own with no boundaries.

So is it reassurance that they're doing things the right way or?

No I think it's reassurance that, they know what time they're going to get their meals, they know what day they're going to get paid, they know what they've got to do with that money. They know that, they know that they've got to live within certain rules, don't they? They know not to use on the premises where as if they live in flats they can do what they like, they can get smashed out of their head 24 hours a day and spiral out of control whereas here they've got to control their drinking, control their drug use. And I just think that that is reassuring for people.

How do you think resettlement overcomes the boundary between the two? Or can it?

Erm I'm not entirely convinced that it does really, erm because resettlement is only a tiny percentage of the input of what say they've had in here. So you are only visiting say for one hour a week. I mean you might be able to sort some practical things out for people, i.e. checking that all their bills are up to date, that sort of thing, more often than not when people face crisis on their own, and crisis can mean anything, crisis can mean a giro not turning up, that to someone can mean oh my god, what am I going to do. If someone is not there instantly to help them to say right this is what we do right we phone blah, blah, it can just throw people off into, I don't know a don't know, just go off the rails sort of thing. And so resettlement isn't always useful I don't think. Maybe it is for that hour that you're there.

## **Partial interview transcript with from a user of a floating support service**

What I wanted to ask you how you've come to living here in this accommodation?

Yeah well, I was living up in Glasgow where I met my partner we moved down to my parents in Oxford but it was really expensive so we moved to my sisters in Chorley. I think I was, yeah I was pregnant with (daughter) at the time and we came through to Southport for my 26 birthday and he said do you fancy moving here so I said yeah that would be great.

So we moved here on the Friday with just three bags, was five and a half months pregnant and we found a flat that day up on A Road and I got my job on the Tuesday but I didn't tell them that I was pregnant because they wouldn't give me a job. Anyway towards the end of my pregnancy....

Describes, in length, a move to a new property in Scotland which falls through.

... So I just said right that's it I said I'm going back to Southport, so I come back to Southport, thinking that it was going to be really easy because last time I'd come here it was, I had a flat the day I got here and within hours I'd moved into. And I had £500 and it didn't work out that way unfortunately. (Local landlord) got hold of me. She's in property management and she's supposed to help you and I explained the situation that I had the £500 deposit but I needed a place right now and she said it's going to take 2 weeks to process the paperwork and she put me in a holiday flat and it used the money, the holiday flat. And she knew that my money was being used for the holiday flat, for the deposit. Anyway, by the end of the third week she goes, well I can't help you because you haven't got a deposit and I went to the social they wouldn't help me (starts crying), went to the council they wouldn't help me, they wanted to stick me in a hostel in Bootle somewhere and I just refused point black to go.

So you lived in a holiday flat?

It was a holiday flat for three weeks and it was right up on the third floor and I had to take the buggy up and I had to take her up and she weren't great with stairs then and it was absolutely torture. It was horrible as well because it didn't have a bath it only had a shower.

What did the council say, did you approach the council for housing?

There is apparently an 11 year waiting list for Southport and the only thing that they could do would be to go into a hostel and I refused point blank to go into a hostel where there's junkys and alcoholics with a two year old. But that's all the suggested and they said it would be years before we got you anywhere.

So they wanted you to move areas?

Yeah, palm me off on somebody else, over in Bootle but I still wouldn't go out there.

And they still wouldn't do anything? They said you still had to go into a hostel.

I said I'd prefer to live in a cardboard box out in the street than live in a hostel and they said well they wouldn't let that happen with a two year old. I said I don't care, you won't find me, I said I'm not going into a hostel. So I ended up staying at this cheap b and b. It was £12 a night and I kept getting a crisis loan (smiles) to pay for that but then it was like I was only in there for 2 nights or was it three nights? I moved in on Thursday and I didn't have a stick of furniture, I didn't have any pots, pans, nothing because I had left them all in the last flat.

(Daughter) was just 2 at the time. Well, my friend, she was actually made homeless the same weekend as me, she broke up with her boyfriend so she was just dosing on friends' floors otherwise I could of stayed with her, so she said well I'm with the (advice centre). I got an appointment and I spoke to (advice centre worker) and she goes well at the moment we've got a back up of people wanting properties but I'll see what I can do for

you. By this time I was staying in the B and B, we were staying in a B and B night by night because I refused to go into the hostel.

(Partner's employer) said that he could get me a flat but the one he showed us you wouldn't even put a cat in there. The wires were hanging out from the sockets and it was dirty and it stunk. And half the kitchen was in one room and the rest was just scattered about. It was awful. It was the luck of the gods that the landlords had just handed the keys to advice centre and I was given this one

Someone looking down on you?

Yeah, someone looking down. I think that was on the Tuesday and (advice centre worker) managed to push it through that I could move in on the Thursday because I was absolutely desperate. Because usually they wait for things from the landlord, I don't know, so you can sign all the agreements and that.

Paperwork?

Yeah, contracts, tenancy agreements but she'd actually pushed it all through that I could move in before it was all signed and all that and the landlord was happy with all that. That's the story basically. Then I was assigned a support worker, and I done all those what do you call those tests they do, ricktor scale.

They explained all those when I went to see them. Is it like psychological testing?

It just goes through all your stress levels and all that and I've never been stressed in me life before but I lost 2 stone in three weeks I was homeless. So they was doing the ricktor scale and it showed how the centre helped me and it was absolutely brilliant. That's this (looking through paperwork). That's how I got the floating support. They said that I needed it.

Are you still seeing (floating support worker)?

Er No, (floating support worker) stopped coming after 2 months because I didn't need her. I've never needed help like that before but she'd come round and I said you can come round (pauses) for chats (laughs) I said I don't mind, I thought she had more important people to see than us, you know messed up. she came round and sat and spoke to me, as I say she chased the landlord up but that window still hasn't been fixed and that's over a year, and I'm fed up with it and there's a leak in the bathroom. But they keep chasing him up but he's not responding to anything. They give me help with all the paperwork with the council benefit, they give me help with all of that, they get in touch with different associations and that.

How are you feeling now about your housing?

Better, because as I said I lost near enough two stone with the stress within three weeks, put it back on now mind but erm but and that's two others of what she does. If it wasn't for the (floating support worker) I'd be out on my ear somewhere because no private landlord was interested because I hadn't got a deposit.