



BEYOND HOMELESSNESS FINAL REPORT 2013

Developing Positive Social Networks:

Research into the Application and Effects of a
Networks Approach in Tackling Homelessness

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Research Fellow



ABOUT US

“The Rock Trust aims to prevent youth homelessness and to support young people to build better futures”



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GLOSSARY

HA	Housing Association
HO	Housing Options
ILS	Independent Living Skills
LA	Local Authority
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PR	Peer Researcher
PRS	Private Rented Sector
SI	Sessional Interviewer
SP	Support Provider
SU	Service User
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector

Housing Options

A Housing Options approach is the delivery of advice and information to those affected by or at risk of homelessness to help people understand the wider range of housing options available to them. Housing Options services focus upon preventing homelessness where possible and can involve social networks services such as mediation.

Networks Approach

A networks approach involves acknowledging the benefits derived from each relationship within an individual's network and the social capital they derive from these relationships. A networks approach in addressing homelessness would aim to balance informal and formal support networks as part of a holistic and sustainable care package.

Social Networks

Social Networks are the relationships with those we come into contact with on a regular basis. The quality of these networks can vary in frequency, proximity and intimacy but are generally seen to give support and open up opportunities for development. Networks can be either formal, with paid workers, or informal, between family, friends and wider community members.

Social Capital

The benefits derived from taking part in social networks, social capital refers to the benefits of network membership but capital can also be economic, cultural, and educational.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Beyond Homelessness research studied Scottish Local Authorities, service providers and those affected by homelessness over a three year period (2010-2013) to understand the impact of a networks approach on support delivery and the outcomes for service users. It aimed to demonstrate the positive impact supportive relationships can have for those affected by homelessness and how the use of a networks approach can help deliver sustainable support outcomes.

Literature and Policy Review

- Scotland has some of the most progressive homelessness policy in the developed world, which embraces a holistic and comprehensive understanding into the complex nature of homelessness.
- The duty to assess housing support need (June 2013) will require Local Authorities to assess a wider range of housing support issues as contributing towards homelessness.
- There are variations across all Scottish Local Authorities in their work to meet the 2012 Homelessness Target, there is an increasing focus upon prevention of homelessness.
- Through the introduction of the duty to assess housing support needs and the pre-existing acknowledgement of the positive impact of social networks there are significant opportunities to accommodate a networks approach into housing support needs assessments.
- Further research is required to gain in-depth understanding of the value of a social networks approach, however, current research would indicate that socio-economic, cultural and relationship issues all contribute towards homelessness.

2010 Survey of Support Providers

- 84% of local authorities and 80% of third sector organisation saw a link between promoting positive social networks and overcoming homelessness
- 68% of all organisations surveyed felt that supporting social networks offered best value in the delivery of housing services
- 62% of all organisations could evidence increased likelihood of tenancy sustainment resulting from receiving social networks based services
- Lack of housing stock was a key challenge (felt by approx 75% of the sample) in meeting the 2012 Homelessness Target
- The use of social networks based services remained low across the sample; mentoring 27%, befriending 35% and mediation 50%. Housing support (independent living skills) was the most common form of support available across 77% of the sample.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National Research Themes

In summary the key findings of the service user interviews and focus groups with support providers indicate that;

- Support networks were seen to directly impact upon an individual's resilience to homelessness, wellbeing and need for formal support whilst homeless. Accommodating these relationships where possible or providing formal support to assist where informal support networks could exist can help alleviate longer term negative impacts of homelessness and temporary accommodation
- Social networks (both formal/informal) were those felt to be trusted, un-judgemental and available. People turned to their social networks (both formal/informal) for help, advice, and friendship, those with a good balance of formal and informal social networks in place were seen to be more resilient, less isolated and had increased wellbeing.
- Informal relationships were seen to reduce during periods of homelessness, especially when individuals were placed into temporary accommodation. Those who engaged positively with support services indicated that they had subsequently rebuilt relationships (45%), saw an improvement in their wellbeing (85%), had more supportive people in their lives (74%), and were more able to support themselves (93%).
- Evidence from the research indicates a link between the need for future support when formal services fail to identify new/follow on support at the point of service disengagement. Isolation and not knowing where to go were two key themes identified as contributing towards repeat homelessness.

INFORMAL NETWORKS

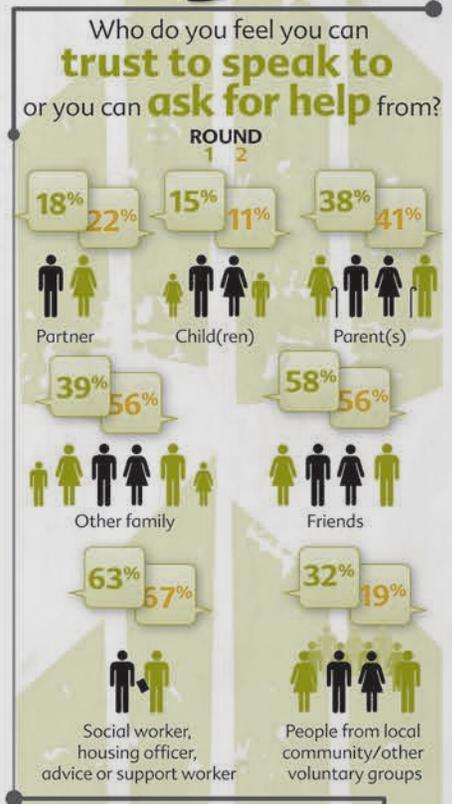
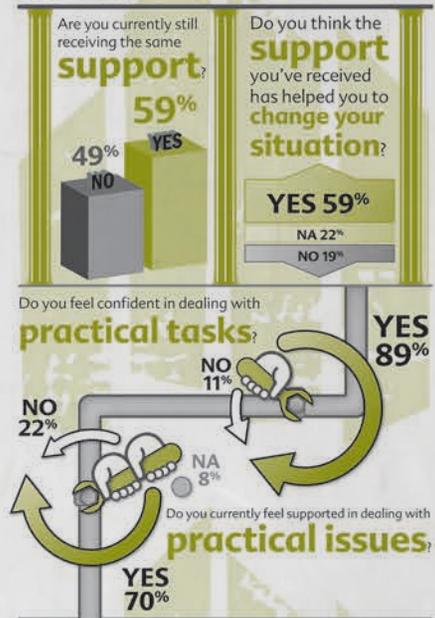


Diagram 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

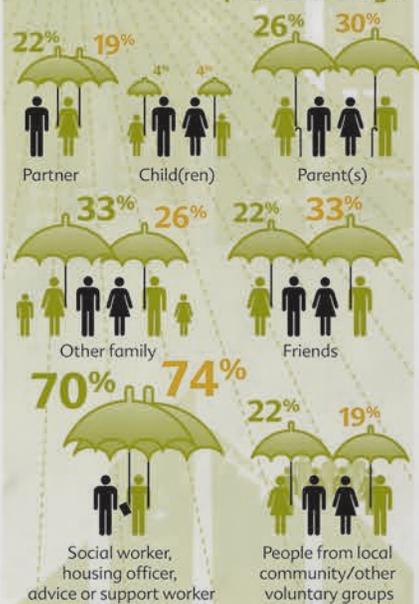
- Formal relationships were relied on throughout the homelessness journey, for those with fewer informal relationships there was a noted increase in need for formal support networks. Of those who engaged with support services 59% felt that their support had helped them change their situation, 74% felt that it had helped them work towards their goals and 70% felt more supported to deal with practical tasks.
- Examples of good practice in addressing homelessness using a networks approach were seen throughout the case studies with examples of; support plans and mediation work for young people, diversity in the role of housing officers to meet local support needs and a range of mediation, mentoring and befriending projects promoting increased informal support networks.
- Challenges in meeting housing need were tied closely to local housing markets and the ability of the local authority to allocate limited housing effectively. A gap in understanding between the housing expectation of those presenting as homelessness and the ability of the Local Authority to provide housing to meet this need was seen.
- Temporary accommodation was identified throughout the research as a key point of isolation and reduced informal networks in homelessness journeys. There was a need for increased work with formal services during this period to help overcome isolation.

FORMAL SUPPORT



ROUND 1 2

Who supports you with practical things?



Do you feel you are more able to support yourself than this time last year?

YES 93%, NO 4%, NA 4%

Diagram 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Conclusions

To what extent do local authorities and third sector organisations in Scotland prioritise the development of social networks within their existing housing support services?

Through the research there was an overall good level of understanding into the positive impacts a networks approach can have for those affected by homelessness. When support providers were surveyed, there was evidence to indicate that whilst a networks approach was widely felt to offer best value and promote tenancy sustainment, social networks based services were less prevalent than housing support. There was some evidence to indicate that a networks approach was being adopted to help prevent homelessness, however it was clear that this could be extended to include the impact of social networks on accommodation allocation and temporary accommodation.

What models currently exist for supporting and developing social networks within housing support services?

There was evidence that social networks services such as mentoring, mediation and befriending were available however, this was at a lesser level than general housing support. There was evidence to indicate that general support roles (housing/support officers) adopted a networks approach and there was evidence to indicate that in the preparation for adopting a preventative approach (through Housing Options) and in addressing the duty to assess housing support needs Local Authorities were growing increasingly aware of the importance of social networks.

From the research there was considerable evidence that a networks approach in meeting housing and support need would benefit from expanding the avenues through which support is offered, case study examples highlighted how addressing employment and addiction issues homelessness could also be prevented.

What are the key elements in developing and promoting social networks within housing support services?

From working with support providers and service users it is clear that a one-size-fits-all approach to homelessness support and social networks is not possible.

In working with service users it was evident that administering support which focuses upon supporting social networks requires an understanding of the points at which relationships breakdown, the reasons why relationships breakdown and how this can be prevented. Additionally a preventative approach in responding to homelessness requires a networks approach to be most effective, to ensure that the root cause of homelessness is addressed rather than merely responding to housing need.

Adopting a networks approach to overcome homelessness requires a clear picture of the homelessness journey; seeing the complex interaction of homelessness triggers, the long term impact of temporary accommodation and the support needed to overcome isolation once tenancies are secured. To ensure that housing and support outcomes are both sustainable and long term, a healthy balance of formal and informal support is necessary on an individual needs basis. Isolation impacts negatively on general wellbeing and confidence, a networks approach ensures that both housing and relationship needs are balanced. Positive formal and informal relationships are key to ensuring long term solutions to homelessness alongside promoting wellbeing and resilience.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Recommendations

In relation to meeting the stated outcomes of the research project, the research makes the following recommendations:

- Training is available to professionals working across the housing and homelessness sector to increase understanding and use of a networks approach
- Development of a framework by which social networks are assessed at a local level, measures for this could be incorporated into national policy by the Scottish Government
- Continued work and funding of the Scottish Social Networks Forum and other national programmes that promote services adopting a networks approach across Scotland.
- Assessments demonstrating the best value of social networks services should be conducted to provide strong evidence of best value, these assessments should be promoted across the sector to raise awareness of a networks approach.
- Development of adequate measuring tools to chart the development of 'soft outcomes' across the sector – this should be done collaboratively between local authorities, support providers and the Scottish Social Networks Forum.
- Provision of services focused on developing informal networks for service users and social networks to be considered in housing support needs assessments.
- Increased awareness into the value of engaging in such services amongst service users through education. Peer support models were identified as one way of encouraging such practice during the research.
- Planned service disengagement with assessment of both formal and informal network supports and appropriate follow on support offered.
- Signposting to a wide range of services throughout the support process.
- Increased knowledge amongst those presenting as homeless of the potential effects of homelessness (e.g. stays in temporary accommodation and negative impact of this on social networks). The affect upon social networks should be discussed during Housing Option interviews to help gain a picture of individual priorities.

INTRODUCTION

01



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The Beyond Homelessness research was a four year research and dissemination study examining the impact of social networks based support services (mentoring, mediation and befriending) for those affected by homelessness. It aimed to understand the impact of social networks at all stages of the homelessness journey and the role of local authority and partner agency support services in promoting a networks approach. The study highlights best practice examples of support services with a focus on (re)building social networks recognising their integral role in ensuring sustainable routes out of homelessness, and makes recommendations on how to adopt a networks approach in service delivery.

The research aimed to act as a resource for those working within the homelessness sector to develop an understanding and awareness into the integral role social networks can play in routes out of homelessness.

With the introduction of Housing Option Teams, and a preventative approach across Scottish local authorities, the role of statutory support services are growing increasingly important. By examining the dynamic policy and legislative landscape of support for those affected by homelessness across Scotland, including the 2012 Homelessness Target, the research outlines how the use of a networks approach can be used in future policy and service development.

The research demonstrates how, through an increased understanding of the social networks of those affected by homelessness, services can promote tenancy sustainment, ensure individual wellbeing and help reduce isolation amongst service users.

The Beyond Homelessness research has been conducted by The Rock Trust, an Edinburgh based charity working to support 16-25 year olds who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to build better futures. The research additionally benefited from partnership with The Glasgow School of Social Work at The University of Strathclyde and the Scottish Social Networks Forum.

INTRODUCTION

To highlight the relationship between homelessness prevention methods and social networks, the study will explore the importance of positive social networks in ensuring homelessness is not just viewed as a housing need issue. As the research findings illustrate, causes of homelessness are often more complex than just being in need of housing and by adopting a holistic response many local authorities and services have been able to evidence improvements in the outcomes of service users.

At an international level, Scotland currently leads the way in delivering a progressive legislative framework to address the needs of those in housing crisis. With the groundbreaking removal of the non-priority need classification as part of the Homelessness 2012 target¹ and the intention to ensure housing support need assessments for those at risk of, or affected by, homelessness the direction of homelessness policy across Scotland is encouragingly holistic.

Whilst not the initial aim of the research, the research has also tracked the progress of local authorities as they have worked towards meeting the 2012 target, focusing on the ways in which social networks or a networks approach is promoted at a service delivery level. Understanding the emerging policy framework was vital throughout the research to ensure the relevance of final recommendations, ensuring they are both informed and relevant to current service delivery models. As a result, the research has been able to identify what works well, where and why, and demonstrate the positive impact adopting a networks approach can have for those experiencing homelessness.

The central focus of the Beyond Homelessness research has been measuring the impact social networks have for those affected by homelessness. This has been achieved through working alongside support providers and local authorities in Scotland, interviewing those in receipt of support and developing the understanding of a networks approach to fit within the context of Scottish Homelessness Policy.

1. Scottish Government (2002) Helping Homeless People: An Action Plan for Prevention and Effective Response, Homelessness Taskforce Final Report. The Scottish Government: Edinburgh

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

02



AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The central research questions guiding the Beyond Homelessness research were focused on engaging a range of stakeholders and utilising a range of research methodologies and information sources. In answering the research questions, the

research has drawn on a range of literature, data, secondary research and primary evidence gathered throughout the research using a range of data collection methods (see Appendix A for full details).

Table 1 : Research Question 1		
Question 1:	Evidence/Methods	Stakeholders
To what extent do local authorities and third sector organisations in Scotland prioritise the development of social networks within their existing housing support services	2010 survey report of support providers ²	Local authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Housing Associations and Social Rented Sector
	Initial Case Study scoping information	Local Authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Housing Associations, Social Rented Sector and Service Users
	Case Study Service User Interviews and Support Provider Consultation	Local Authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Housing Associations, Social Rented Sector and Service Users
	Central and Scottish Government Policy	Local Authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Housing Associations, Social Rented Sector and Service Users

Table 2: Research Question 2		
Question 2:	Information Source	Stakeholders
What models currently exist for supporting and developing social networks within housing support services?	Current models used to measure service outcomes (outcome stars/matrixes)	Local authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Housing Associations
	Literature Review of evidence highlighting methods of support used to promote a networks approach	Local Authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Scottish Government
	Policy development across Scotland	Local Authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Central and National Government
	Best Practice Across Scotland	Local Authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Housing Associations and Social Rented Sector

Table 3: Research Question 3		
Question 3:	Information Source	Stakeholders
What are the key elements in developing and promoting social networks within housing support services?	Definition of social networks identified by support providers (2010 Survey Report)	Local authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Housing Associations
	Literature Review of evidence highlighting methods of support used to promote a networks approach	Local Authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Scottish Government
	Impact of Central and National government policies	Local Authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Central and National Government
	Best Practice Examples/Delivery Challenges from case study areas	Local Authorities, Third Sector Support Providers, Housing Associations and Social Rented Sector

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

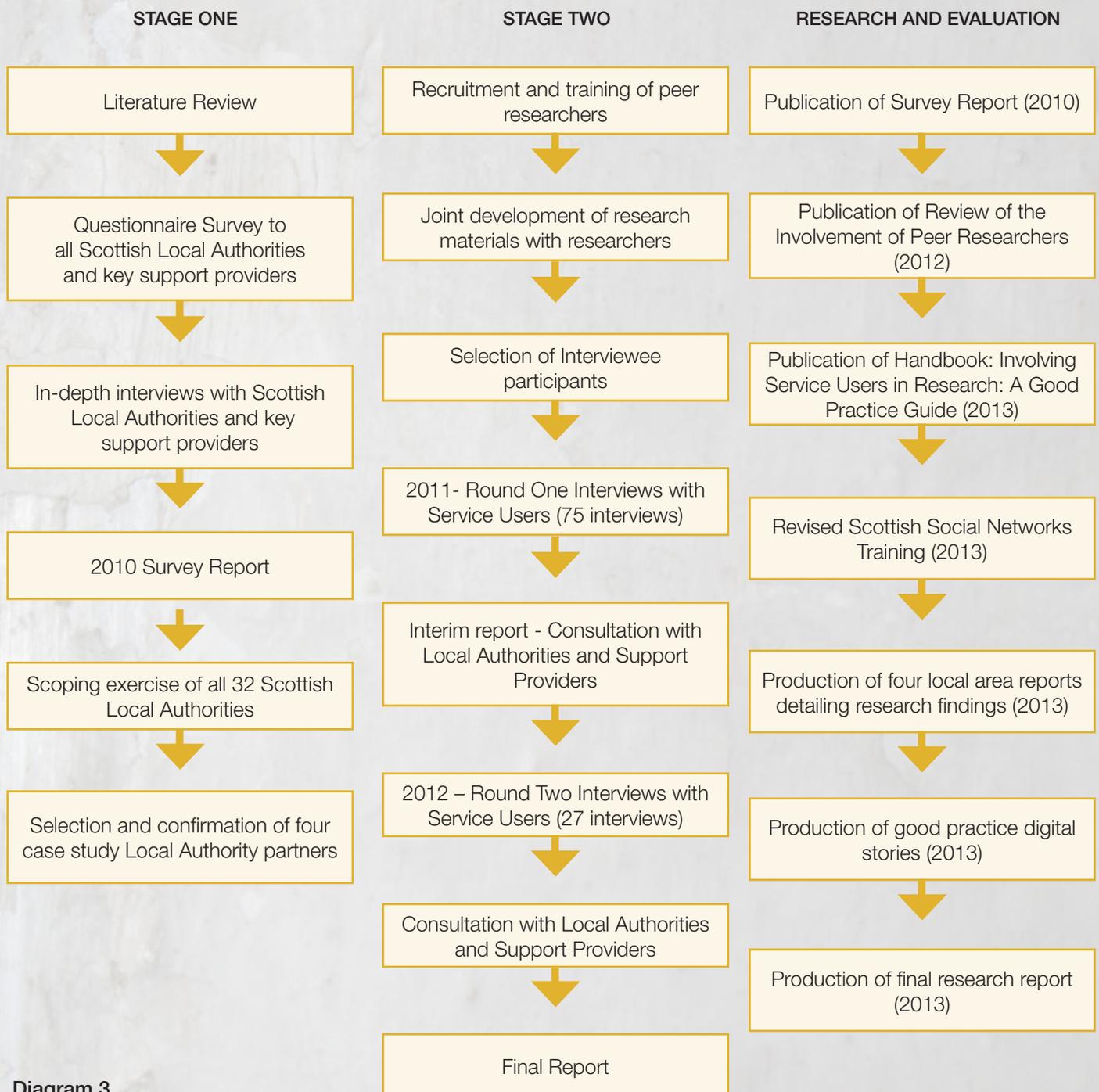


Diagram 3

2. Tabner, K (2010) 2010 Overview of 2010 Survey Findings. The Rock Trust: Edinburgh (<http://www.therocktrust.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/REPORT-FINAL4.pdf>)

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In answering the research questions the research objectives were:

For staff working with individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness to understand the models of support which best promote and maintain social networks.

Made possible through:

- Focus Groups
- Production of local reports
- Training delivered in case study areas, where requested, by Scottish Social Networks Forum Co-ordinator

For statutory and voluntary housing support services aimed at assisting those at risk of or experiencing homelessness to understand how to incorporate support which promotes social networks within their service.

Meeting these outcomes was possible through:

- Partnership working with LA's and the Third Sector across Scotland and in-depth across four case study sites.
- Raising awareness across the sector through national conferences and presentations at various industry events/publications of findings on an on-going basis.

For users of housing support services affected by homelessness to receive the support they need to develop and maintain positive social networks.

Evidenced through:

- Final research report
- Local area reports
- Development of Scottish Social Networks toolkit
- Training delivered by Scottish Social Networks Training Co-ordinator
- Contribution towards the research process by both interviewee participants and peer researchers.
- Planned service disengagement with assessment

03



The structure of the Beyond Homelessness research benefits from several methodologies aimed at ensuring the study addressed a wide range of stakeholders and that the data collected was triangulated promoting a pluralistic perspective. The research design also ensured the opportunity for both service users and support providers to participate in the research process (further details Appendix B)

The research adopted an iterative approach, ensuring both national and local perspectives were represented, and the research was triangulated through a range of information sources. In brief, the following methods were employed throughout the research:

Central to the research design was a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which involved the direct consultation and involvement of participants in the research process, with the intention of assisting change through a bottom-up approach. Foote Whyte (1991)³ discusses the development of PAR as involving key informants in what we are interpreting but also in how we contextualise research results; acknowledging the ways in which environment and structures (in Foote Whyte's case, technological structures) impact on the social actions of the individuals operating within them. PAR ultimately brings the participant into the research, opens space for their experiences but also utilises their knowledge and experience in contextualising and disseminating the results, ensuring relevance and benefit to those the research focuses on.

"It is useful to the researcher and more enjoyable to the key informant if we expand the social process to discuss with these individuals what we are trying to find out and also consult them about how to interpret what we study. Key informants thus become active participants in the research." Foote Whyte (1991:9)

This research benefited from the involvement of stakeholders through ensuring local authorities, support providers and service users were consulted on the design and review of the research and through training and employment of ex-homeless service users as peer researchers for interviewing current service users.

The research hoped to utilise the everyday experiences of service users and support practitioners throughout the interview and case study processes, to indicate the actual impact of support services and the wider application of homelessness policy. To achieve this, ethno-methodological techniques were employed in conducting and disseminating the qualitative data obtained through workshops with service users. This established an understanding into the everyday experiences⁴ of those accessing services. It also allowed the researcher the opportunity to contextualise the data and further understand the meanings service users apply in making sense of their everyday experiences⁵. It is additionally hoped that through employing this approach, the research is relevant to all stakeholders involved in the research as a useful resource.

In securing participation from local authorities, key contacts were approached in each council with an outline of the research, what would be required from participation and an explanation of how the research hoped to benefit those partner authorities taking part. The benefits of participation at a LA level included:

- Assessment of current service user satisfaction with support
- Profile of services currently offering social networks based support
- Feedback on what works well where and why, highlighting good practice
- Areas for improving services to promote social networks

3. Foote Whyte (1993) Street Corner Society: The Social Structure Of An Italian Slum. University of Chicago Press Ltd:London

4. See further theories of the everyday as discussed by Lefebvre, H (1990) Everyday Life in the Modern World. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction

5. Everyday experiences are seen as vital in understanding the effectiveness of social networks based services, by understanding these experiences it is hoped that improvements to wellbeing can be noted. "experience is not an authentic and original source of our being, but part of the process through which we articulate a sense of identity," Gray (2003:26) Research Practice for Cultural Studies. London: Sage

Securing agreement from all local authorities took longer than anticipated due to low engagement from one area and hesitations on how such research would impact on on-going internal assessments. Whilst this local authority did agree to participate in the research, collaborative working throughout the research period was low and at times impacted on the information available to the research. It was felt that inclusion of this local area was critical to the research outcomes, however, the research would have benefitted from a more open approach in collaboration with this partner authority.

In the remaining local authorities, good relationships were established with key staff in homelessness/housing teams that enabled easy access to third sector organisations and the influence of the local authority helped to encourage wide participation. When working with local authorities, the research provided a communications plan (outlining the requirements of all parties in the research) and ensuring the local authority partners were consulted at each stage of the research to ensure their views and experiences were represented equally. The same consultation approach was taken with third sector organisations to triangulate the research process.

Limitations of the Research

One central concern of the research resulted from the high number of interview participants who failed to return for a second round of interviews (see table 4). This resulted in certain limitations on the initially intended scope of the research. An original goal of the research had been to conduct longitudinal research, making it possible to draw conclusions on the homeless journey and access to support networks focused services for a generalised portion of those who experience homelessness. However, from the low return rate (36%) in the second round of interviews, the research will limit its conclusions to highlighting what has worked well, where and why as reflective of the homelessness journey.

The research also acknowledges that there may be a bias in the sample, as it is anticipated that those with a negative experience of the services they accessed, or of the research in general, would not return to discuss these experiences (they were also more likely to have disengaged with services and subsequently lost contact with the research). There were also examples of those who had moved away from homelessness and had not wished to discuss the difficult period. Our research results would certainly indicate that those returning for a second interview were more likely to have had a positive experience, as demonstrated by the high level of satisfaction with services received.

Table 4: Service User Interviewee Sample Size

	Round One	Round Two
Aberdeenshire	18	7 (- 60%)
Edinburgh City	20	6 (-70%)
Highland	16	9 (-44%)
West Dunbartonshire	17	5 (-70%)
Total	71	27

04



This chapter provides a brief overview of the academic and statistical literature surrounding the key themes underpinning the Beyond Homelessness research. Through exploring the themes of the research and drawing links to wider debates around policy, this chapter aims to highlight how social networks and an understanding of social capital can directly inform homelessness policy and the delivery of housing support services.

In reviewing the available literature this chapter will relate key themes to the principle research aims. The review of available literature explored eight sub-questions to highlight the relevance of the research to the wider study of homelessness and social policy (see Appendix C).

An extensive review of material was carried out by the research fellow between May and June 2010 reviewing over 200 publications. This developed during the research to include more recent publications, including accessing theoretical texts, online academic resources (journals), library catalogues, Scottish Government published resources, Scottish Social Networks recommended readings, publications from a wide range of third sector organisations and online search engines. Information was also gathered by accessing research cited in key texts.

It is acknowledged that whilst the following evidence is not conclusive of the themes and issues surrounding homelessness policy, it does attempt to bring together current debates and issues on the topic and to link this to social networks and homelessness theory.

Whilst the parameters of the literature review were broad, including terms such as homelessness, social isolation/exclusion and social capital, efforts were made to ensure reviews focused on homelessness services/studies of homelessness which adopted a networks approach or those discussing social capital from a support provision perspective. Research which examined associated factors of homelessness, such as addictions, mental health, poverty, unemployment or criminal justice, were not included unless they highlighted the impact of social networks or relationships on homelessness routes. Additionally, debates around social capital which focused primarily on economics were excluded as they addressed wider debates not possible to cover within the limitations of this study.

Definition and Causes of Homelessness

Central to understanding homelessness as a cultural phenomena is the need to acknowledge the complex nature of homelessness and that for many people the circumstances of being without a home is often the outcome of a series of 'triggers' (Ravenhill 2008)⁶ increasing the probability of homelessness.

Being without a home can be defined in a variety of ways such as roofless, homeless, rough sleeping, sofa surfing, staying with friends, or in temporary accommodation awaiting permanent accommodation. Homelessness can additionally leave individuals less visible, more likely to experience increased social exclusion and have a reduced ability to participate within wider communities. Without a home, or somewhere to wash and access privacy, it becomes increasingly difficult to function as a member of mainstream society. Acknowledging the social and spatial exclusion of homeless people⁷ alongside their right occupy the public sphere legitimately allow us to understand how homelessness is inextricably linked to social networks, participation within community groups and citizenship.

Understanding homelessness in such a way allows us to consider what actions are required to ensure that those affected by homelessness have the opportunity to participate and contribute to civic life. Not having a place to sleep without threat or carry out personal acts is one element of being without a home; the security and sense of self a home brings should be viewed as intrinsic. A home is a place whereby we can "introduce a sense of order to our lives"⁸. Stable housing is also the starting point for economic security, social cohesion, access to employment, education and training and also a base from which it is possible to begin building relationships and strong support networks.

Due to the complex nature of the term, defining a person as homeless and adequately providing support to gain and maintain stable accommodation becomes a difficult task which requires acknowledgement of the need for both housing and social support.

6. Ravenhill, M (2008) *The Culture of Homelessness*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd: London

7. Mitchell, D (2003) *The right to the city: Social justice and the fight for public space*, in *Ethics, Place & Environment: A Journal of Philosophy & Geography* Volume 6, Issue 3, 2003: 259-271

8. Daly, G (1996:149) *Homeless: Policies, Strategies and Lives on the Street*. Routledge: London

The Scottish Government currently defines any household (person or family) as homeless if they do not have access to suitable accommodation which meets their needs, if they cannot secure entry or access to their accommodation, the accommodation is not safe due to violence or the threat of violence, the household is at risk of eviction or threatened with homelessness, or is in overcrowded or unfit accommodation⁹. In Scotland, if a household is found to be unintentionally homeless, they will be allocated priority housing status and have the right to settled accommodation as of January 1st 2013.¹⁰

The legal definition of homelessness (in Scotland)¹¹ also includes those who are staying with friends and family on a temporary basis (such as sleeping on a friend's sofa) or when in temporary accommodation such as a hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation. The opinion that someone is only homeless if sleeping rough on the streets was often expressed by those participants involved in this research who had a history of homelessness (peer researchers). This serves to highlight the common notion that, in many cases, homelessness is only categorised as such when crisis point is reached.

Stable housing is recognised by the Scottish Government¹² as the starting point for economic security, social cohesion, access to employment, education, training and a secure base to begin to re/build relationships with others and strengthen support networks. Defining a person as homeless and adequately providing support often requires understanding the importance of stable accommodation alongside supporting the various social and economic aspects which interplay and impact on general wellbeing and security.

Homelessness 'triggers' (Ravenhill 2008:72)¹³ have been identified as likely to create a predisposition towards homeless. Fitzpatrick et al (2013) highlighted this by examining Multiple Exclusion Homelessness (a range of complex factors such as substance abuse, childhood trauma, history of abuse or limited employment history which all increase social exclusion). Using such analysis it was possible to link certain triggers (life factors/experiences) as being more likely to result in an individual becoming homeless.

"the causes of homelessness can operate on at least four levels—economic, housing, interpersonal and individual—which interact with each other through a series of complex feedback loops. Crucially, no one of these levels is assumed a priori to be more fundamental than any other. This theoretical approach therefore allows for economic or housing structures to be all important in some cases of homelessness (probably the majority), and for interpersonal or individual factors to be far more significant in others (probably the minority)"
(Fitzpatrick et.al 2013:151)

Social Networks and Homelessness Pathways

For the purpose of this research, homelessness is viewed as a journey with many twists and turns of no prescribed format. Such a view allows us to acknowledge the importance of routes into and out of homelessness¹⁵ in contributing towards homelessness pathways.¹⁶ Additionally, in any attempt to secure a sustainable route out of homelessness we need an understanding of how all the factors contributing towards homelessness, including, social networks, can help towards ensuring housing outcomes which are sensitive to individual circumstances and also sustainable.

Social Networks can be seen as the relationships between an individual and those they come into contact with on a regular basis. The quality of these networks can vary in frequency, proximity and intimacy but are generally seen to give support and open up opportunities for development. In much of the core literature¹⁷ it is acknowledged that one outcome of having varied social networks is the accumulation of social capital or relationships which act as assets for individuals in their day to day life.

Those experiencing homelessness often note that reduced social networks, relationship breakdown and disagreements with family and friends are common routes into homelessness¹⁸. Additionally, as we tend to build our social networks according to where we spend most of our time, it would follow that opportunities to develop new or existing relationships are reduced when socially isolated, as it the case with homelessness.

9. Scottish Government (1987) Housing (Scotland) Act and subsequent updates Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003

10. Scottish Government (2010) Housing (Scotland) Act 2010

11. Ibid

12. Scottish Government (2002) Homelessness Taskforce Report (2002:6)

13. Ravenhill, M (2008) The Culture of Homelessness – "The prevention-orientated focus changed the way homelessness was analysed. Attention moved from the causes of homelessness to factors that predisposed people to being vulnerable to or triggered their homelessness." (2008:72)

14. Fitzpatrick, Bramley, Johnson (2013) Pathways into Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in Seven UK Cities. Urban Stud 2013 50: 148

15. Anderson, I, Tulloch, D (2000) Pathways through Homelessness: A review of Research Evidence. Homelessness Taskforce Research Series: Scottish Homes

16. Ibid

17. Bourdieu, P (1984/1986), Coleman, J (1988), Putnam, R(2000) and Woolcock (1998)

18. Scottish Government (2012) Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland: 2011-12

Any attempt to critically assess the value of individual social networks must additionally acknowledge how relationships can have both negative and positive impacts. The impact of supportive networks which contribute to feelings of kinship, friendship, and provided assistance and advice were found during this research to promote confidence, wellbeing and resilience. Negative relationships were identified as those which were unsupportive, untrustworthy and contributing to more destructive lifestyle habits.

The compounded impact of social isolation when homeless can result in individuals becoming dependent upon the networks available when homeless (both positive and negative) and becoming entrenched in a culture of homelessness. This was explored by the Glasgow Homelessness Network (2003) in a study which identified one in five interviewees wished to remain homeless. The study states:

*“there are positive aspects of living in homelessness, such as staff support, company, safety and a sense of belonging and negative aspects of tenancies such as responsibility for paying for bills, loneliness, lack of support and low confidence about their ability to cope.”*¹⁹

For many access to both practical and emotional support - is needed in a move away from homelessness and is often lacking due to reduced supportive networks and relationships elsewhere. Demonstration of this need indicates that a lack of supportive relationships, and the subsequent lack of social capital available for use in day to day life away from the street, could hinder routes out of homelessness. Understanding the counterproductive impact that some social networks can have as important in any attempt to formalise support which aims to promote a wide range of support networks.

The shape and character of an individual's social networks and resulting social capital has additionally been seen as dependent on a range of socio-economic factors including social class, mental health and access to opportunities within our social networks. Additionally, in understanding the possible 'gaps' in social networks, a full range of relationships is not always possible and presumed

membership of networks should be avoided²⁰. Loss of a key figure in early childhood or adulthood, inability to access employment and frequent break downs in social relationships due to chaotic lifestyles can be seen to reduce the opportunities available to an individual and weaken their support safety net for use in crisis.

Social Networks and Social Capital

The use of social networks to understand the subsequent supportive relationships, social capital and opportunities can be seen originating in the Third Way²¹ welfare policies of New Labour. The Third Way primarily focused upon addressing poor access to opportunities and the subsequent social capital produced by opportunities. As a result of this policy shift, social capital has been widely adopted within the welfare framework to measure social exclusion. Additionally, the same welfare policies emphasised the rights and responsibilities of individuals in contributing towards self improvement and bettering their own situation which they were commonly viewed to have control over. This has been particularly evident in emphasising the rights and responsibilities of individuals who receive welfare support²².

Whilst the practical and financial terms defining the use of 'social capital' are widely debated²³, this research cannot fail to acknowledge that, regardless of the wider academic debate, social capital has emerged in the fields of both sociology and social policy as a key concept used by government, economists and welfare providers. Reflecting this, social capital will be discussed throughout this paper as a communal resource (unable to exist in isolation) made up of the social networks, relationships, norms, values and accepted behaviours constituting daily life.

Bourdieu (1986), one of the earliest theorists to discuss social capital, identified its formation from three elements; social factors (the key players in our networks), economic factors (access to financial stability and buoyancy) and cultural factors (our knowledge of social norms and acceptable behaviours).²⁴ Developing on Bourdieu's concept of social capital, Putnam (2000^{25, 26}) outlined two types of capital, differentiated by the type of connections

19. Glasgow Homelessness Network (2003:9) "Where will they go?" Glasgow Homelessness Network :Glasgow

20. Barker, J (2012) Social Capital, Homeless Young People and the Family, in Journal of Youth Studies, Vol 15. No 6 pp 730-743

21. Giddens, A (2008) The Third Way: A renewal of Social Democracy. Polity Press: London

22. Whiteford, M (2010) New Labour, Street Homelessness, and Social Exclusion: A Defaulted Promissory Note? Housing Studies: Volume 28, Issue 1, 2013: pp 10-32

23. Portes, A (2000) Pewar (2006)

24. Bourdieu P (1986) Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste. "The primary differences, those which distinguish the major classes of conditions of existence, derive from the overall volume of capital, understood as the set of actually usable resources and powers- economic capital, cultural capital and also social capital." (1984:114)

25. Putnam, R (2000) Bowling Alone

26. Putnam, R (2006) Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences. Canadian Journal of Policy Research Vol 2 (1): 41-51

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they were based on; bonding relationships - relationships based on proximity and shared experience such as our immediate relations with family and friends, and bridging relationships - the looser ties such as work mates or acquaintances. Putnam felt that these two kinds of relationships allowed an individual to generate social capital, depending on who they came into contact with on a daily basis. But only through access to both forms of relationship would support and new opportunities for development be possible.

Szreter and Woodcock (2004)²⁷ further developed the typology of social capital with the introduction of linking social capital - occurring through the collaboration of unlike people in dissimilar situations – which is useful in understanding the ways individuals access public resources and assistance.

To build understanding around the type of relationships social capital stems from (useful in any attempt to promote a balance of support networks) the following research will divide relationships along formal and informal lines²⁸. Both bridging and bonding relationships could be seen to act as informal relationships (those not administered by a formal institution) whilst linking social capital can be seen to stem from the more formal relationships, which for the purpose of our study can be seen to exist between a service user and their support worker.

A key proposal of this research lies in that any attempt to prevent, mediate or provide a sustainable route out of homelessness should promote social networks and personal relationships to increase individual social capital and the rebuilding of supportive networks, which have often been damaged in the process of becoming homeless. Additionally, through ensuring individuals have access to the right support and services through accessing supportive linking social capital (or formal support services), individuals are likely to develop skills of empowerment and capacity.

Table 8: Relationships Type and Social Capital

Relationship Type	Type of Capital	Nature of Relationship	Source
Bonding	Social Cultural	Informal	Family, friends, local community members
Bridging	Cultural Economic	Informal or Formal	Friends, community members, work colleagues, acquaintances
Linking	Social Cultural Formal	Formal	Agencies, support workers, local or national government

27. Szreter, S and Woolcock, M (2004) Health by Association? Social Capital, Social Theory and the Political Economy of Public Health. *International Journal of Epidemiology* Vol 3(44) pp:650-667

28. Pichler, F and Wallace, C (2007) Patterns of Formal and Informal Social Capital in Europe

Social Capital and Resilience

Homelessness, here viewed as a process, often involves the culmination of various homelessness ‘triggers’ which, individually, may not result in a direct case of homelessness. However, when these ‘triggers’ occur collectively, and at a time of vulnerability, there is an increase in the likelihood of an individual becoming homeless. Any attempt to look at how homelessness can be prevented involves understanding individual capacity to deal with adversity and the strength of supportive social networks – or the level of an individual’s resilience.

Resilience is currently understood as the ability one has to deal with the everyday adversities of life. Being able to ask for help if one finds it difficult, or being able to recognise when one is entering into a particularly difficult period, are key aspects of resilience. Resilience can be seen to have five contributing factors²⁹ including;

- a secure base
- learning and development
- friendships
- talents and interests
- positive values
- social competence.

Resilience levels can be affected by personal histories and experiences with abuse. Research additionally indicates that if resilience levels are low, those who have experienced abuse are more likely to experience homelessness or have difficulty finding a route back into housing³⁰.

Low levels of resilience, as relating to the reduction of members in a social network (arguably contributing towards a decline in feelings of having a secure base, friendship, positive values and social competence) are felt most acutely by those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. It has been found that existing social networks also have the potential to impact negatively by “*creating conflict, making demands, influencing relapses, being abused and functioning as reminders of past emotional trauma*”³¹.

This research would advocate that the triggers for homelessness can be reduced through empowering individuals with the tools and skills necessary to overcome issues which could lead back to homelessness and by

raising awareness of the potentially damaging nature of some relationships. Building life skills (the tools to deal with adversity on a day-to-day basis) and social networks for individuals experiencing homelessness requires addressing the individual’s ability to deal with adversity and understanding the individual’s capacity for resilience. Such an approach should also acknowledge the wider structural factors which can contribute towards adversity.

“We work with many people who face adversity because of oppressive attitudes and structural discrimination; it is much easier to work with the individual and try to change their circumstances than to try to change society”³²

One way of addressing the subjective nature of resilience is through accounting for factors of wellbeing, which the individual can understand to have wider health, economic, emotional, and happiness implications on their life.³³ Through assessing the wellbeing of a service user, it is possible to acknowledge that whilst their resilience levels may be high, and they may appear happy in dealing with the adversity which they face, their levels of wellbeing within the wider social setting indicate potential areas for improvement, asking “*Are they just OK? Are they coping or thriving?*” (Burgess, Daniels 2009:12)

Promoting Social Networks

Current literature³⁴ suggests that types of support which promote positive social networks include mediation, mentoring and befriending services – these services have recently been supported by the Scottish Government in their focus on homelessness prevention strategies which promote mediation services for young people and advice and support for those at risk of homelessness³⁵. Current statistics suggest that, for many, homelessness stems from relationship breakdown³⁶. As this research will explore, current provision of support to rebuild social networks is commonly delivered through general housing support (promoting independent living skills), followed by mentoring, mediation and befriending services (less frequent). It is important to note that the Scottish Government only makes recommendations for local authorities to provide mentoring,

29. Daniels, B (2010) Resilience Through Life: An exploration of Theory and Practice and how it applies to the transitions we face. Conference Report, The Rock Trust

30. 1GHN (2003) Disempowerment and Disconnection: Trauma and Homelessness

31. Hawkins and Abrahms (2007: 1)28. Pichler, F and Wallace, C (2007) Patterns of Formal and Informal Social Capital in Europe

32. Burgess C, Daniel B (2009:6) Report on the Resilience Knowledge Exchange Seminar

33. Ibid (2009:8)

34. Lemos G (2002) Centrepoint (2005) GHN (2006)

35. Scottish Government and COSLA (2009) Prevention of Homelessness Guidance

36. Scottish Government (2012) Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: 2011-12

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mediation and befriending, - whilst provision of housing support for those in need is a duty.

Mediation has been of growing interest across Scotland as a preventative measure, and the UK more generally; for its use in mitigating homelessness due to relationship breakdown. It is most commonly used for young people but has growing use between tenants and landlords.

A recent report³⁷ into mediation services in Scotland found that, whilst there was much progress in the field of mediation services, there was work to be done in ensuring that impartiality was paramount in the development of mediation within statutory services. The ideas of earlier intervention and working with under 16's to prevent homelessness were identified as vital in ensuring mediation services co-existed with other support. In attempts to rebuild existing social networks, mediators can work with service users to identify potential ways in which key relationships can be re-established. The benefit of using mediation services can also be seen in attempting to deliver support to individuals threatened by homelessness in a preventative way.³⁸

Mediation services also have potential to work in assisting tenants to communicate with housing providers. As a result of the introduction of the recent duty on landlords to notify local authorities of evictions³⁹, cases of homelessness can be successfully negotiated through mediation work with service users, housing providers and support services. For the purposes of this research, the research will define mediation along guidelines set out by the Scottish Mediation Network:

“Mediation is a process in which disputing parties seek to build agreement and/or improve understanding with the assistance of a trained mediator acting as an impartial third party. Mediation is voluntary and aims to offer the disputing parties the opportunity to be fully heard, to hear each other's perspectives and to decide how to resolve their dispute themselves”

Scottish Mediation Network (2008)

Mentoring and befriending services have most impact in assisting individuals build the social networks and support to cope with adversity often faced when moving on from homelessness into more settled accommodation. The use of mentoring and befriending services can encourage socially excluded individuals back into education and the workforce.

“Mentoring is a goal-orientated process that supports learning and is set in the context of learning and development. The goals are developed around the person's interests, abilities and aspirations and in line with the purposes and objectives of the mentoring agency”

Scottish Mentoring Network (2005)

“Befriending often provides people with a new direction in life, opens up a range of activities and leads to increased self-esteem and self-confidence. Befriending can also reduce the burden on other services which people may use inappropriately as they seek social contact.”

Befriending Networks Scotland (2010)

There has been considerable success with services which focus on building links within the community through befriending programmes, e.g. Pass The Baton⁴⁰ (Bethany Christian Trust) which develops a link between volunteers and those being housed ensuring informal support networks are available for the transition into new accommodation and communities.

However, despite the potential impact of services which have a social networks focus, our research, and research by the Mentoring and Befriending Network⁴¹, would indicate that the use of these services at a local level is often viewed as an addition to housing support, rather than an essential part of support packages. The low take up of social networks based services could have links with the difficulty in evidencing the 'soft' outcomes often produced, the lack of duty to support through such services or poor awareness into the potential benefits and holistic approach useful in overcoming homelessness.

37. Cyrenians (2011) Mediation and Homelessness Prevention in Scotland: A decade of mediation services

38. Lemos&Crane (2001) Mediation and homelessness: A review of the literature and the views of service providers in Scotland

39. Section 11 referrals Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003

40. Pass the Baton obtained 100% tenancy sustainment for those using the service 18 months after housing allocation. Bethany Christian Trust (2007) Pilot Study Report

41. Dore, E (2012) Mediation and Homelessness Prevention in Scotland: a decade of Mediation between young People and their families. Cyrenians: Edinburgh

05



SCOTTISH HOMELESSNESS POLICY

In understanding how homelessness support services currently operate across Scotland, it has been vital to explore the wider context of homelessness policy within Scotland. The impact of progressive policies, including the 2012 Homelessness Target and the duty to assess housing support needs, will dramatically impact the shape and delivery of homelessness support in Scotland over future years. Additionally, the relationship between the delivery and availability of social networks based services is directly impacted on by wider policy issues.

Social Networks and Value

The research acknowledged from the outset that social networks have a key part to play in rebuilding the lives of those affected by homelessness. This concept originated from the combined expertise of both The Rock Trust and the Scottish Social Networks Forum, the former with over 20 years experience in providing support and assistance to young people affected by homelessness and the latter having extensive knowledge of social networks support services across Scotland. This stance is additionally supported by the Scottish Government Homelessness Taskforce, who outline the value of social networks in supporting routes out of homelessness:

*“We recommend therefore, that the strength of a homeless person’s social network should be an integral part of the assessment of their needs and of the support offered to them in temporary accommodation and during permanent resettlement.”*⁴²

2012 Homelessness Target and Rationale

In their 2002 final report, the Task Force detailed the current duties of Local Authorities resulting from the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987; it identified the current gaps in service provision concerning the variety of circumstances found to cause homelessness. The report outlined 59 recommendations for local authorities to

assist those affected by homelessness, based around service improvements. Central to these recommendations was the acknowledgement that, whilst securing housing is important for those affected by homelessness, a wider range of support needs may be present and that supporting such needs was vital to ensure sustainable routes out of homelessness. The Task Force additionally acknowledged that, within the wider range of support needs, acknowledging the role of social networks was vital in ensuring individuals had a range of supports available to them:

“the strength of a homeless persons social networks should be an integral part of the assessment of their needs...all projects serving homeless people should pursue strategies to promote and support opportunities for positive social interaction” Article 55

“Local authorities, through their homelessness strategies, should develop practical means of enabling people affected by homelessness to (re)build social networks.” Article 57

These recommendations were accompanied by the high profile commitment to remove the category of non-priority need in homelessness assessments (also known as the 2012 Homelessness Target), which crucially increased the right to housing for all those found to be unintentionally homeless. In working towards this commitment, duty was later placed on local authorities to devise local homelessness strategies addressing how support and accommodation would be provided to meet the housing support needs of those presenting as homeless. Additional measures to mitigate homelessness resulting from relationship breakdown have been accounted for in the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003, and more recent Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. These call for improved communications between the parties involved in a potential eviction and a duty on private sector landlords to notify local authorities of intended eviction and potential homelessness.

42. Homelessness Taskforce (para 114:2002) Final Report

Prevention

The relationship between social networks and homelessness is demonstrated in national statistics released annually. For the period 2011-2012, 73% of homeless applications (40,651 applications) resulted from individuals having to leave current accommodation.⁴³ Of this number, 26% were asked to leave the household, a further 18% resulted from (non violent) disputes and 10% left due to violent disputes.⁴⁴ Current Scottish Homelessness prevention activities differ across the 32 local authorities, with services including housing advice, family mediation (often for young people but an increasing remit to other groups), assistance to access private tenancies, rent deposit guarantee schemes, tenancy sustainment schemes (CAB referrals, debt counselling) and referral to more specialist services. Earlier research examining this issue⁴⁵ outlined that, whilst around half of those in receipt of a rent deposit guarantee felt that the service had helped them secure their tenancy, there did appear to be a need to focus services on strengthening informal networks to ensure that supports were in place in close proximity to housing once formal services came to an end:

“Authorities need to prioritise family reconciliation rather than placing overwhelming emphasis on avoiding the need to re house the young person involved.”

Ensuring that the nature of relationships are taken into account at such a stage would provide an informal safety net outside of services, which could be relied on when formal services were not engaged, they would also reduce social isolation and tenancy breakdown.

Housing and Homelessness

Traditionally the provision of social housing in Scotland was needs based, with an allocation system awarding points to those seen as more vulnerable to the long term effects of homelessness. Those seen to be at high risk from homelessness were allocated priority need status, i.e. single parents, young people or care leavers. However as of January 1st 2013 the removal of the non-priority need category means that all those unintentionally homeless will have a right to accommodation. It has been suggested that such a move is more able to account for the large number of single homeless households. The 2008-9 figures⁴⁶ indicate that 61% of homeless applications were from single people who, before the introduction of the 2012 Homelessness Target, would only qualify for advice and assistance from their local authority.

Such a bold policy move, which is now being viewed by some as the intention to eradicate homelessness across Scotland by 2012, has obvious implications at a local authority level regarding how scarce resources are allocated in meeting the 2012 targets. This produces a knock on effect into how housing and housing support is allocated.

This study would suggest that within the already limited resources, local authorities have the potential to invest in services which directly impact on the personal lives of those experiencing homelessness through supporting social networks to avoid isolation and potential cases of repeat homelessness. This research advocates for the promotion of best practice examples which work on building social networks as a measure of reducing isolation and promoting interdependence through convivial relationships in local communities.

Of increasing importance in addressing the 2012 target is encouraging cost effective methods of working with homeless households via the delivery of housing and personal support as a means of prevention rather than cure at crisis point. In 2007, a Supporting People assessment⁴⁷ found that, whilst £107 million was spent on housing support services for homeless people, the financial benefit of these services was £129 million, taking into account the avoidance of support at the point of crisis. This figure does not account for benefits to health and wellbeing accrued through avoiding a situation of homelessness.⁴⁸

43. Reasons cited arguably related to a breakdown in relationships including; dispute within the household violent/non violent, fleeing domestic violence, harassment, overcrowding, asked to leave and other categorisation.

44. Scottish Government (2012) Operations of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland: 2011-2012

45. Pawson, Davidson, Netto (2007) Evaluation of Homelessness Prevention Activities in Scotland

46. Scottish Government (2009) Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland: 2008-2009

47. XXXX

48. Scottish Executive (2007b) Supporting People Client Statistics 2005-6 (Statistical Bulletin: Housing Series no HSG/2007/4) (Edinburgh: Scottish Executive).

Long term support services include effective gate keeping, comprehensive signposting of advice and information, assisting individuals to overcome situations of isolation and anxiety - commonly seen to exacerbate mental health problems, drug and alcohol dependency issues and anti social behaviours preventing routes out of homelessness being sustained.

More recent policy shifts, especially those in response to reduced resources at a local level, have additionally signalled the need for a change in attitudes concerning the provision of support. The reduction in available resources has led many within the sector to ask not what is needed but what can be done with the little resources available. – this has been acutely felt in the housing sector, with little commercially driven development and regeneration since 2008/9.

The wider economic climate has also impacted on the approach required to meet the 2012 Homelessness Target, which has adapted to the realisation that Scotland can not to build homes to meet all housing need. Instead, through adopting a prevention approach via the housing options model, the Scottish Government has promoted local area housing hubs of local authorities who have worked together to share skills and resources. The aim of such an approach is to, where possible, prevent homelessness and offer alternative housing options to those in housing need. This is increasingly important where the social rented housing sector is under strain. One of the benefits of such an approach is to avoid unnecessary routes into homelessness, especially for young people or those more able to access a private tenancy with assistance from the LA (through rent deposit schemes and loans).

However, this approach was criticised as a gate keeping exercise⁴⁹ in England and Wales, when it resulted in dramatic reductions in homelessness presentations. The reason for such reductions could be linked to the initial referral of homeless applicants to Housing Options team rather than through the more formal HL1 homelessness assessment. The impact of Housing Options teams work can be seen across Scotland where there has been a 19%⁵⁰ reduction in homelessness assessments (2010/11 – 2011/12) nationally and in some local authorities up to a 40% reduction in homelessness assessments.

Policy Review and Evidence

There is now a growing body of evidence across Scotland which aims to highlight the importance and impact of the wider issues beyond homelessness including an increased focus upon the value of individual support needs and access to opportunities on individual homelessness journeys.

The Scottish Parliamentary Enquiry by the Equal Opportunities Committee, into youth homelessness⁵¹ cautioned against the emergence of a subclass of young people, often entering adulthood with few skills and opportunities available to them.

The report identified that for those leaving homelessness accommodation/care there was a link between reduced opportunities and social isolation. The report outlined the emergence of young people with few skills and support networks leaving care with little access to opportunities resulting in increased likelihood of social isolation and continued need for formal support services. It recommended that support services which assist building support networks (mediation, respite and working within schools) alongside a sector wide acknowledgement of the importance of preventing youth homelessness to avoid longer lasting impacts of entrenched homelessness. Further to this, The Christie Commission (2011) report into the Future Delivery of Public Services highlighted the importance of supportive relationships and social networks through the promotion of preventative methods, to reduce the demand on already overstretched public services, and utilisation of community networks to help inform and direct services.

More recent work published by Shelter Scotland (2013)⁵² indicates that whilst there has been significant progress towards a person centred approach in meeting housing need, the development of a Housing Options approach across Scotland is not standardised and as a result gaps within good practice exist. In attempts to readdress any disparities existing across local authorities, Shelter Scotland recommends the monitoring and evaluation of both quantitative and qualitative outcomes and the on-going training of staff to enable them to deliver a sophisticated service which is ever evolving in light of new policy developments and the sharing of good practice across the

49. Pawson, H (2007:875)

50. Scottish Government (2012) Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland: 2011-12

51. The Scottish Parliament (2012) Equal Opportunities Committee 4th Report (Session 4) Having and Keeping a Home: Steps to Preventing Homelessness Amongst Young People.

52. Shelter Scotland (2013) Briefing: What are my Options? Delivering a person centred housing and homelessness advice service in Scotland.

Housing Option Hubs. In light of these recommendations this report would promote the training of staff in understanding the value of social networks and sufficient monitoring tools to measure the softer outcomes achieved using a networks approach.

Beyond Homelessness: A Networks Approach

In working towards meeting the 2012 Target, and to support the wider housing needs of those affected by homelessness, much progress has been made to improve access to a wider range of support across Scotland including the increasing use of mediation services and the introduction of the Homelessness support duty (2013). However, in meeting housing and support need and preventing homelessness using a Housing Options framework, a holistic approach is needed to provide long-term sustainable housing outcomes. Whilst promoting a preventative approach, existing research indicates that preventing homelessness is not enough to overcome the root causes of housing instability and that a more holistic approach is necessary to deal with the causes of homelessness.

Additionally, whilst the introduction of Housing Option teams may reduce the number of applications being processed through the formal housing route, there is still an ever present level of housing need across the population who, if not supported in finding sustainable, affordable and realistic housing options, may find themselves again at risk of homelessness. Supporting individuals with their housing support needs, helping them gain tenancy skills and ensuring that they have a range of resources and networks to get support from, we will ensure that the housing options of today are realistic sustainable housing solutions.

The incorporation of a networks approach within the current provision of homelessness support can be seen operating across many local authorities; however this does seem to be restricted in places by a lack of resources to accommodate both housing and support needs in housing allocations. There is a growing body of evidence that across the sector (at both government and practitioner level) there is a clear understanding into the value of social networks for individuals on their routes out of homelessness.⁵³

This is supported by the introduction of mediation services to help prevent homelessness and the pending requirement to include housing need assessments in homelessness applications.

The impact of national policy across Scotland to support both a networks approach in service provision and a holistic needs based assessment of the individual circumstances leading up to homelessness are positive indications that the building blocks to ensure social networks are accounted for exist. However, throughout the course of this research it was felt that all too often limited in capacity as a result of too few resources at a local level, the shortage of affordable accommodation and, in more recent developments, the anticipated impact of welfare reform from central government.

The policy framework to promote a networks approach across Scotland is present and would additionally enable Scotland to continue its progressive approach in meeting housing need beyond the 2012 Homelessness Target. Implementation of such an approach would, however, require that the value of social networks services be related to the costs and detrimental effects that not preventing homelessness would have. The following report aims to highlight how this is happening across Scotland and indicate, where possible, the wider benefits this is having for both service users and support providers.

53. Tabner, K (2011) Overview of 2010 Survey Findings: The Rock Trust, Shelter Scotland (2013)
What are my options? Delivering a person centred housing and homelessness advice service in Scotland: Shelter Scotland.

NATIONAL SURVEY OF SUPPORT PROVIDERS

06



NATIONAL SURVEY OF SUPPORT PROVIDERS

In addressing the aims of this research, a survey of all Scottish LA housing/homelessness teams and some of their commissioned support providers was undertaken. This survey aimed to measure the extent to which social network services were prioritised at the level of support provision, the current social network support models adopted and the fundamental understanding of what social networks are at the level of service delivery. This survey was undertaken between August-October 2010.

The survey obtained a 43% response rate on initial contacts and acquired an additional 34 responses through promoting the survey and accessing partner organisation mailing lists. In total 129 valid responses were obtained. 56.6% of the survey responses were from the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). The findings which follow demonstrate the views of those working within housing support, housing advice, commissioning and management of homelessness services and the direct delivery of homelessness services.

Response rates by job title indicated management responses were the most common (48.8%), followed by Support Workers (20.6%), Housing Officers (14.7%), Senior Management (10.1%) and Homelessness Officers (6.2%). Response rates by department show high returns from those involved in delivering support services (31.8%) and housing support (29.5%).

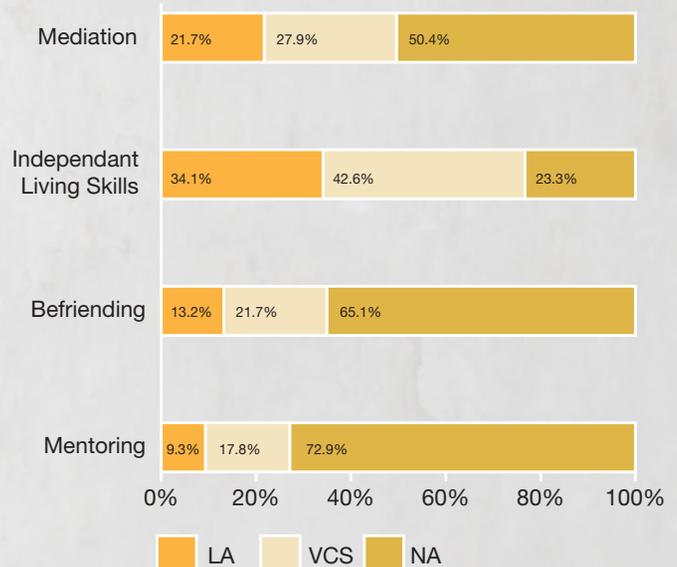
To what extent do LA's and support providers prioritise the development of social network services?

The results indicated that across the representatives taking part in the research there was a good level of awareness concerning what social networks were (as applied to homelessness and housing support) and the potential impact they can have for service users. However, importantly, there were relatively low levels of 'social network services' operating. From the evidence of the survey, it appears that, whilst social network services were seen to promote tenancy sustainment (64% of the sample agreed) and offer best value in the delivery of housing support services (68% agreed), the availability of social networks services was relatively low across those interviewed (Figure 2).

From discussions with support providers, there was evidence to suggest that whilst the importance/value of social networks (in maintaining relationships and helping to rebuild them as part of a support package) was realised, in reality prioritising these factors was difficult due to the need to prioritise more immediate issues such as access to temporary accommodation, safety and welfare, and accessing permanent accommodation.

It should be noted that this survey was conducted before the introduction of the Housing (Scotland) Bill in November 2010, which places a duty of care on LA's for assessing the housing support needs of those facing homelessness.

Figure 2: (2011) Survey Q11 Do you currently offer any of the following services to those affected by homelessness?



What models currently exist for supporting and developing social networks within housing support services?

The primary services for assisting with social networks were mediation, mentoring and befriending. Tenancy support or independent living skills (ILS) were the most common source of support and were acknowledged by those responding to also help to promote signposting to other agencies and help link up individuals to community networks.

Cross analysis of results indicated that levels of tenancy sustainment remained high amongst users of all four services.

What are the key elements in developing and promoting social networks within housing support services?

Social networks were seen to be supported by both LA's and the VCS who participated in the survey. For LA's, the emphasis was on utilising social networks to ensure support for the service user outside formal models of support. However, through this central part of the housing options model it was felt that more could be done to promote social networks in the provision of services. For VCS, social networks were important in the majority of support work, from service users organising social events to the choices service users made in managing properties or relationships with neighbours.

For both LA's and VCS, social networks, with the focus on informal support, were seen as invaluable in ensuring that adequate supportive relationships were in place when formal provision of support was removed thus reducing the likelihood of further periods of homelessness.

Factors to be considered in defining social networks included; informal and formal networks of support, positive and negative types of network, the reciprocal nature of social networks, the potential of social networks in efforts to overcome isolation, building awareness of the negative and positive impacts of social networks and acknowledging the impact of social capital as it relates to social networks

Findings concerning the acknowledgement of social networks during the assessment process indicate that, whilst social networks are viewed as important in achieving successful outcomes and best value, they are often given reduced priority during initial assessments in favour of practical issues, such as finding temporary/permanent accommodation, securing access to benefits or other services and reducing risk in current environment.

CASE STUDY MAPPING AND SELECTION

07



CASE STUDY MAPPING AND SELECTION

Building on the themes developed in the national survey and subsequent interviews with local authorities and support providers across Scotland the research shortlisted local authorities felt to reflect a range of issues relevant nationally. This included examples of socio-economic diversity, issues of rural/urban differences and, importantly, the leadership shown by local authorities in developing their Housing Options and prevention approaches - a central initiative in meeting the 2012 Homelessness Target.

The four case study sites chosen were Aberdeenshire Council, City of Edinburgh Council, The Highland Council and West Dunbartonshire Council.

Figure 3: Case Study Selection Sites



The selection of case studies was dependent upon securing local authorities who were happy to participate in the work and assist us in establishing networks to engage

a range of stakeholders. The selection characteristics for each area in brief included;

Aberdeenshire is a large rural local authority area with noted prosperity from local industry, especially in nearby Aberdeen. However, there are high levels of unemployment in rural villages. There was some reported access to services from Aberdeen City, however, on the whole, there were limited resources available in the Shire. The central problem faced across the local authority was high levels of drug and substance misuse related to lack of access to employment and affordable accommodation (also inflated due to local industry).

The City of Edinburgh has demographic challenges presented by both a growing population, over double that of population projections for Glasgow City, pockets of deprivation and an over stretched housing market. Edinburgh City is a Housing Options Hub leader and has the widest range of services designed to meet the needs of those affected by homelessness of all our case study sites.

The local authority covering the greatest geographical area in Scotland, **Highland** faces many issues in overcoming rural isolation and the challenges of rural homelessness. With pockets of deprivation and concentration of services around urban centres, such as Inverness, the area provided the research with an insight into issues of service development across an area where considerable regional variation in service delivery existed. Highland currently leads the North Housing Options Hub and exceeded their 2009 interim target by 3% (the only LA in the 5 leading Housing Options hubs to do so).⁵⁴

West Dunbartonshire provides an excellent case study area for examining issues faced by local authorities with high levels of deprivation located on the outskirts of large urban centres (Glasgow). The local authority has achieved its 2009 interim target and abolished priority need in December 2010. It represents a local authority attempting to deal with high levels of substance misuse and higher than average presentations from young women. Unlike the other case study areas, the local authority is not affected by a chronic housing shortage, however, it was identified by those interviewed that considerable housing stock existed in undesirable areas and that high levels of territorialism present across the LA could act as a barrier in accessing housing.

54. 2009) Operations of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland 2008-9, National Statistics for Scotland: Edinburgh.

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

Homelessness and Relationship Breakdown

This is acknowledged by the Scottish Government in their commitment to provide housing and housing support for those affected by homelessness and is reflected in statistics nationally, which highlight that 73% of presentations across Scotland (2011-12) result from relationship breakdown.⁵⁵

The introduction of a range of support services, including mediation, mentoring and befriending, across the third sector and at a local authority level indicate that there is a clear understanding of the positive impact a networks approach can have for those affected by homelessness. However, this research has highlighted that the use of specialist social networks (mentoring, mediation and befriending) services is relatively low in comparison to the provision of more general housing support. The evidence presented here indicates that the need to provide support and assistance for more urgent needs (access to housing and benefit or ensuring safety), when individuals present as homeless, takes priority.

Since the introduction of a Housing Options and preventative framework, it is possible to identify how, through attempts to prevent homelessness (especially in cases of family mediation and securing temporary accommodation with family and friends), the role of social networks in homelessness is becoming more pronounced. However, there exists a larger concern around preventing homelessness which identifies a need to address the causes of homelessness, and frequently relationship breakdown, rather than merely preventing homelessness.

The ability of an individual's informal networks to support them whilst homeless was explored through this research and results indicate that, for many interviewees, homelessness had occurred due to a relationship breakdown. However, these relationships were not necessarily exhausted and were still relied on for some degree of support. For some people, these relationships were important to maintain throughout their period of homelessness and securing accommodation close to these individual's was vital. However, it was identified by interviewees that maintaining relationships whilst homeless (especially during stays in temporary accommodation) was challenging. Reduced social networks, due to being unable to access them, were acknowledged by research

participants through the expression of feelings of isolation and depression and reflected in the number of those who relied/trusted/visited their informal supports. The impact of this for support providers was an increased need and demand for formal services to replace the support lost in the reduction of informal networks.

Homelessness Routes

With the recent changes to Scottish Homelessness Policy and the anticipated impact of these changes, the shape of support provided to the Scottish homelessness population, is set to change dramatically as the longer term impact of the 2012 Homelessness Targets are felt. A fundamental aspect of change brought about through the work of the last decade has been an attitudinal shift towards a holistic approach in meeting housing need and focusing on not what is needed but what can be done with the limited resources available. This is typified through the Housing Options and prevention strategy, which aims to find alternative housing for those entering into the homelessness system, and the introduction of housing support need assessments, to ensure individuals are supported back into the community.

The findings from this research indicate that the added impact of supporting social networks during this process increase individual wellbeing, promote tenancy sustainment and ultimately reduce the need for formal support services to replicate informal support networks. Additionally, acknowledging the role of informal support networks during individual homelessness routes could help to prevent social isolation and dependency on formal services. From understanding the dual role of social networks (demonstrated in Case Study examples), it is clear that, when homeless, informal networks can offer support in the absence of formal services and can be depended on by the individuals facing homelessness (as with children or those being cared for) and should be accounted for within housing need assessments.

One significant finding from the research indicated a disparity between the housing expectation of service users and ability of local authorities to provide accommodation to meet needs (due to a general lack of housing). The impact

55. Scottish Government (2012) Operation of Homelessness Persons Legislation in Scotland: June 2012 – table 4

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

of these housing expectations was highlighted by support providers and reflected in increased waiting times whilst in temporary accommodation. Increased awareness into realistic outcomes of homelessness applications was being explored through the work of Housing Options teams. This included, explaining to applicants the likely waiting times for such accommodation and, where possible, encouraging them to consider other options. It was acknowledged throughout the research that a lack of housing options was a key issue in many areas and caused strain during the housing options and homelessness process.

The use of temporary accommodation in Scotland emerged from our research as a key aspect of most homelessness journey's and, for many, a negative experience with increased risk of isolation, depression and exposure to drugs and alcohol. One of the key ways, suggested by service users, to overcome this isolation was through increased contact with formal support services during this period.

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

CASE STUDY – ELLA* 26 years old

*Name has been changed

Ella's story tells us more about the support and care that informal networks offer (she was sofa surfing with family and friends at the initial interview) and how maintaining these networks are important for individuals when being allocated housing. Additionally, Ella's story helps to highlight the contrast in accessing social rented accommodation, which has changed dramatically in a short period, and how often those in housing need are unaware of the shortage of accommodation and the long waits they can expect in temporary accommodation.

When we first spoke to Ella she was on maternity leave after having her first child, sofa surfing with friends and family. Ella was not receiving any formal support (she felt none had been offered - however did later state that she was in regular contact with her housing officer for help in finding accommodation) and relied on the support available from her family even though she didn't always get on with her parents. Ella identified being in long term housing need;

"I mean I've been on the waiting list for years now and I've always just stayed with boyfriends and friends and I've just, I've never really bothered, well it was more of a case when I was 16-19 I couldn't get a house because they didn't see me as priority and I didn't want to stay up in Westerhailles or Calder. I was being a bit picky and fussy and I know I could get housed no problem but I'm not going there just because of my past and things like that, I wouldn't want to go back to areas like that so I want to try and better myself and my life for my daughter."

In discussing the support available from her housing officer Ella felt that the available support failed to take into account her own personal needs and requirements and didn't feel comfortable discussing a wider range of problems such as personal/relationship issues, money or legal advice, or for support with mental health and wellbeing issues;

"She's (Housing Officer) always just really matter of fact and her answer is if you're homeless and if you're as desperate as you are you would take anywhere. I do kind of understand that but at the same time I'm wanting a home, I'm not wanting to be one of these people that move every six months, I want a home where I can send my child to nursery and primary, I don't want my child moving during primary school, I want somewhere I am going to stay for 15 years."

At the time of first round interviews Ella felt that due to the LA operating a Choice Based Letting's Scheme she would often have to bid on properties she didn't want and had to bid in order to maintain her priority status. Central to her choice of where she would like accommodation was access to her support networks. Elle felt that accessing council housing was difficult compared to the experiences of her parents and was not what she had expected;

"being my first house I really hoped that somebody would've helped me out a lot more, let me know what I'm entitled to."

"my mum and dad, they had the exact same problem as what I'm having, they had the same problem like 40 years ago trying to get housed and everything and it was a different system, you didn't have to bid and my mum used to walk around with me and my brother in the buggy looking at empty council houses, she would write them down, go into the council and they finally got a brilliant house doing that."

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

Ella also felt that due to her past issues with substance misuse she did not want to live in certain areas she identified as risky, due to being 'sucked back into' certain lifestyle factors. Ella was also sceptical of taking up accommodation within the PRS as she felt it was unstable and she wouldn't be able to make her house a home;

"I want to make it mine the house, and I want to do what I want to it. You know my brother is a joiner and my baby's Dad is a painter and decorator and I want to put my own stamp on it and with a private sector, I could just be there for six months and then booted out and I want somewhere proper, permanent. Being my first house I really hoped that somebody would've helped me out a lot more, let me know what I'm entitled to."

At the time of the second interview Ella had been allocated a permanent tenancy but had not received any support on allocation of her accommodation, she noted that she had fallen into difficulty with her council tax and being aware that she was entitled to council tax benefit.

"I fell behind with council tax and stuff like that because nobody helped me with any of it. It turns out I am entitled to get it paid for but they never helped me, they basically threw me into the house to get on with it kind of thing. I never really got any help and I'm kind of annoyed that I never got any help."

When asked if she felt the help from her support worker had helped her to change her situation, Ella expressed that she was not completely happy with her housing allocation and as a result of taking accommodation away from her social networks she felt isolated. When asked to reflect on how support could have helped her she felt that the LA should have taken into account her needs, she expressed that because of her age she felt her Housing Officer had assumed she didn't need support.

"I just feel that the council was aware that it was my first property and I feel like they thought because I was older I should know but I never knew, I never knew about council tax and stuff like that, somebody should have come and sat down with me and properly went through it all with me and said you're going to have to pay this a month to these people and that amount to those people."

When asked how she felt her social networks compared to the same time last year she felt that her social networks had reduced with her mum being her primary source of support. She reported that she didn't feel supported and that she would like more support in practically managing her tenancy. Additionally she reported that she felt isolated, lonely, depressed and in need of advice – ultimately Ella related these feelings to her housing situation. When asked what follow on support she would like she stated help with money and finances, housing, wellbeing/mental health, and relationship advice.

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

Social Networks – Informal and Formal Supports

Social Networks were identified throughout the research as comprising two main types; formal relationships (workers/advisors/housing officers) and informal relationships (friends/family or other relations). In the majority of cases, a positive relationship was one with a person who could be trusted, relied on, available to listen and didn't judge. Individuals also reported that they would turn to those they had positive relationships with for advice, in the expectation that it would be confidential. There was additional evidence that informal networks were used to overcome isolation once allocated accommodation, however, overall there was little differentiation between informal and formal relationships when seeking support; many interviewees used whatever the available networks were to them, indicative of their levels of isolation. Overall, interviewees with good support networks in place were less likely to talk about feeling depressed or isolated and displayed higher levels of resilience.⁵⁶

The majority of interviewees were dependent on formal support services rather than help from family and friends, this was particularly the case for seeking help with finances, housing, legal issues and wellbeing. Additionally, support from formal relationships was relied on before informal relationships. There was also an observed reduction in informal networks when homeless (notably friends) and a subsequent increased need for formal support services. However, after engaging positively with support services, many interviewees felt that they were more able to engage reciprocally in their relationships with others (offer support in return).

Informal relationships were seen as important in accessing resources and building skills, whilst others felt that their informal networks were useful for monitoring their progress and offering emotional support:

"She's just there you know, if things have been rubbish, with a bottle of wine you know a wee girlie night, a wee cry, a wee laugh that's better than anything if you ask me".

Sarah - Service User Interviewee 2011

"Well my mate put me up for 6 weeks and then take me back in again so could get my house ready, it had to be painted from top to bottom. I'm still in the process of bloody painting because I couldn't afford to get my mate to paint it otherwise I would have done that. So I'm still, I'm hoping to move in for the 20th of this month. I've got a lot of the carpets and all that and my mate is a carpet fitter and he's away on holiday at the minute so I'm just waiting on him coming back and once the carpets are down I will move in."

Alasdair - Service User Interviewee 2011

From both round one and round two interviews there was evidence that amongst those with high levels of resilience there was access to supportive relationships which ultimately allowed them to develop the following skills;

- Developed awareness of personal situation.
- Ability to talk about feelings/express concerns.
- Family/Friends to offer support.
- Knowledge of other services available.
- Self sufficiency.
- Someone to keep them motivated.
- Personal awareness of support needs.

56. Resilience here measured as outlined by Bridget Daniels, Resilience Through Life, Conference Report (2010), as the Building Blocks of Resilience.

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

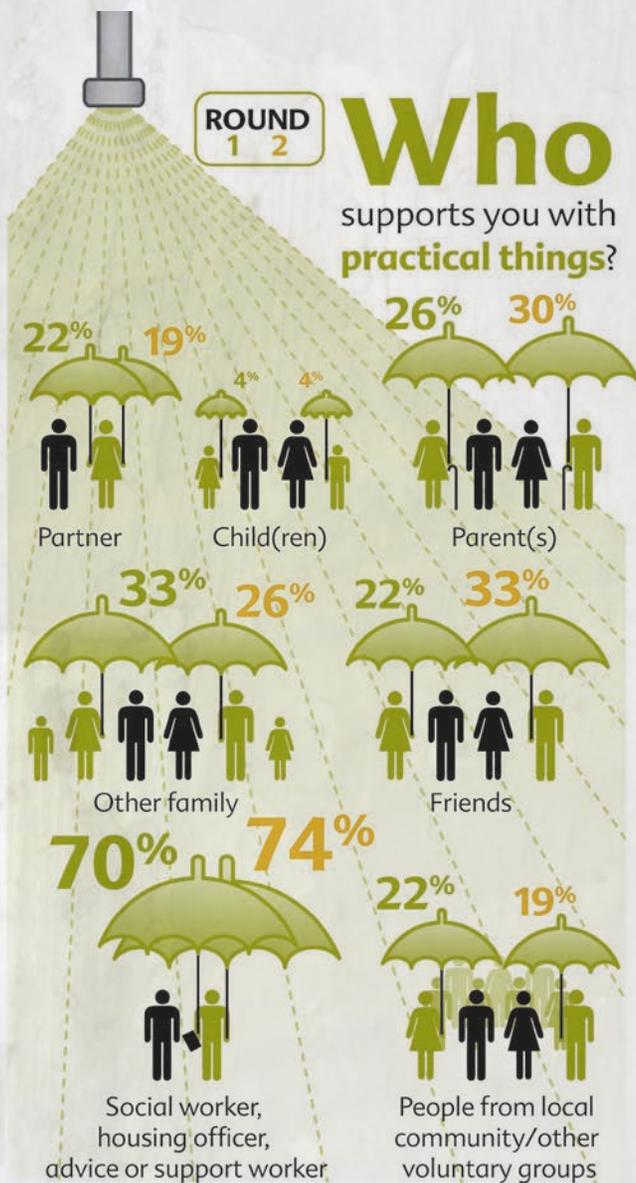


Diagram 4

There were high levels of dependency on formal support networks help with housing issues, physical health, depression and general advice whilst in many cases individuals were equally as likely to approach formal or informal networks for support. There was a more balanced distribution of sources of support concerning wellbeing, addictions and relationship issues however there was a large number of those interviewed who did not know where they would go to for help on a range of issues.

Similar themes emerged from focus groups with support providers who acknowledged the importance of both formal and informal social networks in moves away from homelessness, directly linking tenancy failure and repeat homelessness to a lack of mainstream support networks.

It was felt by those attending our focus groups the levels of reliance on formal support was representative. Additionally, understanding the nature of individual resilience and access to supportive networks was highlighted as key in any approach to address homelessness in a holistic way. Promoting a networks approach in offering such support allows services to gauge if individuals are coping or thriving in their routes out of homelessness.

Those who had successfully disengaged from services appeared to have more dependence on informal networks and the support available from family and friends, under the proviso that they knew they could return to a service for a one off piece of support/advice if needed. This type of 'safety net' was seen as important, especially for those moving into new tenancies and unsure of future housing issues.

There was little evidence of interviewees in receipt of support requiring further support - it was more likely that people were in need of support as they had not received it in the first place. Those who had successfully disengaged from services appeared to have more reliance on informal networks and the support available from family and friends, under the proviso that they knew they could return to a service for a one off piece of support/advice if needed. This 'safety net' felt important, especially for those moving into new tenancies and unsure of issues which may be presented

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

CASE STUDY – TIM* 44 years old

*Name has been changed

Tim's story highlights what can happen when there is a lack of formal support available and subsequently a low level of awareness into what support and help is available. In Tim's story he is dependent on being able to stay with his informal networks as he believes he will never be allocated accommodation due to the shortage of accommodation.

When we first spoke to Tim he was sleeping on the floor at his parent's house, with his partner. Tim was in employment at the time of round one interview and felt that to keep his job was unable to enter into formal temporary accommodation due high costs of such accommodation which he would be responsible for if he remained in employment. This had the knock on effect that to remain close by his work both Tim and his partner were living temporarily with family rather than entering into local authority sourced temporary accommodation.

Tim felt that due to the lack of affordable accommodation in the local area they had been waiting a long time to be allocated a permanent tenancy and other families would present as homeless to the local authority and receive an allocation before Tim as they were in more immediate housing need. From discussions Time felt that their situation had improved since his partner became pregnant as they were now being fast-tracked into accommodation.

Throughout this process neither Tim nor his partner felt that they had received support to assist them whilst homeless, the culmination of factors in attempting to access permanent accommodation had left Tim and his partner feeling frustrated in the lack of options available to them

"we got to the stage where we were trying everything that we could and every turn we were going was just walking into a brick wall, we couldn't get this because we didn't have that, and too able bodied and as soon as Joan falls pregnant and everything like that, now the wheels can go in motion. But we are still 2 able bodied people. But now we've got a child on the way they kick in and they start doing what they're supposed to be doing in the first place." 2011 Interview

At the time of round two interview (2012), Tim had been allocated a permanent tenancy with his partner and child however the relationship had broken down and he had been asked to leave. When we spoke to Tim he had returned to live with family but felt that in reapplying for housing there was still little support available to him and he had little chance in securing accommodation on his own (much lower priority). Difficulties in accessing support were exacerbated by other commitments such as work and securing visitation rights;

"But it's not, I work from 2 o'clock to 11 o'clock at night, every day, 5 days a week, and I work on a Sunday 8-5 that's my only short day, because we aren't open and my days off I am going to lawyers, it's hard to find time to go into the council, this takes hours. And it's not just, they're just, pap you off and oh yeah we will deal with that, we will phone you and that's all I get and that's all Joan and I got for years to try and get a house. And we got a house when Joan was heavily pregnant, that's the reason we got a house." 2012 Interview

In looking forward to accessing accommodation according to his current circumstances Tim felt accessing the private rented sector was too expensive. Whilst it was clear from interviews that Tim had a level of independence from support services; he felt able to do a lot of the practical administration, however he felt powerless in trying to meet the requirements of the LA. From the evidence provided in Tim's example it is clear that he experienced a lack of formal support networks which would have provided him with knowledge and skills in how to access support and that Tim's informal networks have prevented rooflessness on a number of occasions.

Available Support – Current practice and priority of social network support

From the research evidence, it would appear that there are relatively low levels of social networks support services, despite a networks approach being viewed as promoting both best value and sustainable housing solutions.

From our survey data it was clear that, for many LA's, the provision of social networks support services was a lesser priority than securing accommodation. This resulted in access to informal networks being a lower priority consideration in housing allocations compared to other factors. A clear lack of affordable accommodation was identified as impacting on the ability of local authorities to support those experiencing homelessness to be allocated accommodation to help maintain positive informal relationships.

The key challenges in overcoming homelessness identified by support providers throughout our focus groups included; lack of housing options, communities closed to accepting homeless households, high levels of presentations from young people, homelessness as a culturally embedded way of life, high levels of addiction and mental health issues and issues of multiple deprivations

Preventing homelessness was seen as a key objective at a strategic level, with many who attended the focus group recognising the entrenched nature of homelessness or how it had the potential to become a recurring pattern throughout generations of family. The key to overcoming this was felt to be through engagement, education and raising awareness within families.

There was strong evidence to indicate that those who received inadequate support when in temporary accommodation, or on moving into permanent tenancies, were more likely to require further support in maintaining tenancies. The importance of having a regular supportive contact should be acknowledged as helping to alleviate depression and isolation during homelessness - especially when in temporary accommodation. In more rural areas, it was identified that delivering formal support could be difficult to ensure those in more remote areas received support and could result in an inequality in the distribution of services.

The link between positive/reciprocal relationships and access to social capital was evident during service user interviews; with those who did not have access to formal support were prone to rely heavily on the support offered by informal relationships. Additionally those without informal networks needed formal support to help them through their homeless period and to acquire knowledge and skills for accessing opportunities such as employment, education, and other forms of support.

People with high levels of resilience and access to supportive relationships (both formal/informal), were more likely to develop strong social capital and develop awareness of their own personal situation. Additional benefits of supportive relationships included;

- Improved ability to talk about feelings/express concerns
- Increased ability to offer support to family/friends
- Improved knowledge of other available services
- Feeling self-sufficient/more able to support oneself
- Had someone to keep you motivated
- increased awareness of support needs

From interviews there was evidence that some interviewees were in need of formal support – however, this seemed to stem from a lack of informal support rather than an over dependence on one specific support worker. There were also clear links between those with few informal networks and their need for formal support services. Those who had successfully disengaged from services appeared to have more dependence on informal networks and the support available from family and friends under the proviso that they knew they could return to a service for a one off piece of support/advice if needed. Having a safety net of support service in place was seen as important, especially for those moving into new tenancies unsure of issues which may be presented

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

The importance in understanding reliance on formal and informal networks was discussed by those at round two focus groups, highlighting the way that a networks approach is prevalent in the services operating across some local authorities.



Diagram 5

Interviews with service users in round two demonstrated that for the most part formal support was focused on building independent living skills and helping with the transition of moving into a new tenancy. Interviewees in round two interviews felt that their confidence had improved as a result of support and subsequently relationships with others had increased however there did not appear to be a direct social networks based service focused upon improving relationships – a networks approach appeared to be employed on a more ad hoc basis across services.

There appeared to be an increase in the quality of relationships people felt they had, however there were no direct mentoring/mediation/befriending schemes operating across the LA. In the majority of cases, support focused on building independent living skills and helping with the transition of moving into a new tenancy.



Diagram 6

There was evidence of services which had a more general impact on relationships, such as an anger management course. Interviewees in receipt of support from workers also felt that having someone there impacted on their overall confidence and wellbeing, allowing them to feel supported when taking up new opportunities.

When service users were asked what could be done to improve support, the main response was to have better financial advice/interagency working across the LA to overcome financial issues. The most requested follow on support was to get help with money/finance or legal issues. There was a relatively low level of follow on support requested indicating that, where support was received, it was promoting sustainable solutions.

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

CASE STUDY – RACHEL* 40 years old

*Name has been changed

Rachel lives in a small town in a rural part of the LA; she is not originally from the area and became homeless after separating from her husband. Rachel felt unable to fill out forms without support. Rachel also cared full time for her mother, daughter and grandson.

When we first interviewed Rachel she was living in a one bedroom council property after being homeless for a year. Rachel's daughter, whom she also cares for, moved into her home with her own child due to relationship breakdown. Whilst not roofless, Rachel was at risk of homelessness due to overcrowding and in violation of her tenancy by having her daughter stay.

At the time of the first interview Rachel was receiving support from a local housing officer who she felt helped with a wide range of issues. Rachel felt isolated through living in a rural area and didn't have many friends and family to call on for help.

At the second interview (2012) Rachel had moved out of her council property into her previous marital home. As a result of moving back into the family home Rachel felt vulnerable and discussed how both she and her daughter had been attacked by associates of her ex-husband. Rachel was now able to accommodate the needs of her family including her elderly mother who could stay over when needed. She felt that she had very little choice about where she was living due to the needs of her daughter not being taken into account:

"So my daughter needs quite a lot of support so the council couldn't house us all together so I had to see a solicitor who said I can get into the marital home so that's what I ended up doing out of desperation"

Rachel still felt that she struggled with supporting herself and was upset that she had received very little help when moving accommodation.

"Yeah and I've got to admit I do feel rather abandoned just because I've moved doesn't mean I can now cope with all that sort of things...every time I try and fill in the forms they keep sending it back and saying it's not enough information so it's just like.. nobody can see the desperation as to why I had to move and where I moved to."

Rachel had access to a social worker and felt this was a great help. It is important to note that there was no referral for further support from her housing officer and the housing support was stopped once Rachel moved out of temporary accommodation. Rachel felt that the lack of support had impacted on her health and wellbeing.

"I think, yeah, getting help to make sure everything was smooth sailing. Before they ended the case because it just felt like you got instructions, do this, do that, do that and then that's it's bye. And then wait a minute. You know. Just, it did feel abrupt and then everything got moved around and I was lost".

From the interviews it emerged that Rachel did not feel aware of other services in the area and that getting back in contact for follow on support would be difficult.

"It's probably harder if you don't have that regular contact just to pick up the phone again"

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

What areas do you feel it would be useful to receive more support in?

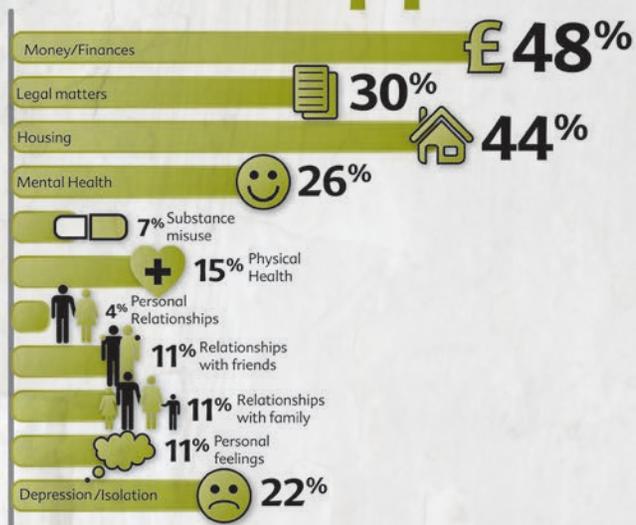


Diagram 7

There was significant positive feedback around the quality of formal support received by serviced users in round two interviews. Many indicated that without the help they received they would not have been able to progress away from homelessness to such an extent. The research would indicate that the more services an individual accessed, the more social capital and resilience they appeared to possess.

Moving On - Moves away from homelessness and social networks

The majority of interviewees aspired to move onto secure accommodation, find work and overcome addictions. Central to these aspirations were finding secure housing, becoming independent and developing life skills from formal support services.

A high number of those who had engaged positively in formal support services felt that they knew what to do if they found themselves at risk of homelessness again. Ability of an individual to recognise when they are at risk indicates was seen to indicate increased resilience resulting from formal support.

The key skills interviewees responding in round two felt that they had developed were confidence, self esteem, overcoming addictions, reducing their negative networks, better self awareness, better understanding of relationships, patience, money awareness, socialising/opening up, help to pick oneself up/keep going, door control and living skills such as cooking/cleaning/budgeting. Of those interviewed 85% felt that there had been an improvement in their wellbeing, 78% felt that they had been able to make good use of the support offered and 93% felt more able to support themselves compared to year prior.



Diagram 8

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

Developing an interdependent attitude towards their future appeared vital in understanding sustainable routes out of homelessness. The inability to identify their support needs was key in promoting self-confidence, understanding and resilience amongst those in receipt of support. Those who displayed strong levels of resilience were often those with access to formal and informal support to meet their needs:

“So right now because my head is full of options, which is brilliant because my life was never full of options, the only option was to get a drink and that was it so it’s great to be in this position but I’m staying in [supported accommodation]. I’m just hoping that it’s not changed that drastically that once you do the two years in [supported accommodation] you go back.” Megan – Service User Interviewee 2011⁵⁷

There was evidence to indicate that those with access to social networks and those who had received a full package of support were more likely to feel comfortable in and maintain their tenancy. Interviewees felt that through positive relationships they were able to develop skills or knowledge (social capital) such as learning about available services, how to manage a tenancy or how to ask for help from friends and family. Those who had higher levels of social capital were also found to be more resilient and better able to cope with adversity.

In accessing opportunities (training/volunteering/education/employment) It was highlighted by those taking part in round two focus groups that changes to benefits were putting people off volunteering – examples were given of people being told that they were fit to work because of their previous volunteering commitments. This would

it was additionally noted by service users that involvement in work or volunteering was challenging unless accommodation circumstances were secure. This finding resonated across the case study area and is reflected in the low numbers of those engaging in such opportunities. It is important to note that both interviewees and support providers during consultation acknowledged the negative impact of temporary or supported accommodation in accessing employment.

Are you currently **working, volunteering, in training** or in **education**?

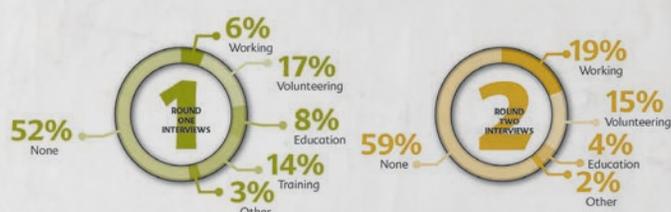


Diagram 9

There was an overall good level of awareness in how to get help if needed, this was especially the case for those who had successfully received formal support and successfully disengaged as they felt they could return for ad-hoc support if needed.

The lack of housing across many local authorities was seen as a key issue in accessing move on and temporary accommodation.

Such a shortage can be seen to directly impact on the ability of those in receipt of support to move on and achieve their goals. One unintended outcome of this is a reduction in informal networks, as individuals are unable to secure accommodation close to their existing support networks were subsequently at risk of isolation when placed in temporary accommodation. It is this isolation which was seen to increase the need for formal support services.

57. All names have been changed

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

CASE STUDY – KARL* 22 years old

*Name has been changed

Karl's story tells us about the value placed on informal networks by those in receipt of support and the value of such support when available. Karl's story demonstrates how, after formal support ended, he had experienced isolation but through rebuilding a relationship with his family he had once again been able to overcome this.

When we first spoke to Karl he was living in supported accommodation after leaving prison and had a history of moving around. In describing his route into homelessness Karl highlighted a pattern of staying with family and friends until these relationships were exhausted and he was asked to move on, Karl identified that he used drugs and this may have contributed towards why he had been 'chucked out'.

Karl identified that he had previously experienced aggressive behaviour which has caused issues with a previous partner and the police, he highlighted that he was working to overcome this with the help of his support worker and had found it increasingly beneficial;

"Well it's working, I've not been angry for a while, I've not lashed out or anything so it's been a good experience and a good insight because I find out what tweaks me and what doesn't. Just the noticeable signs before I get into anybody."

At our first interview Karl noted that he felt isolated as his family lived far away but he was able to see friends in the local area. When asked he was not able to identify how he had been supported by others apart from his formal support worker and appeared to be reliant upon formal networks for practical advice and assistance.

When we returned to interview Karl in round two he had returned to live closer to his family and since secured a temporary flat and was awaiting a permanent allocation;

"There were a few situations that made me make up my mind to come back to the town. Like when I was staying up the road and the house got robbed and also I kind of felt that my mum and dad's support would help me a bit more and I moved back closer to the family."

"I've got a better relationship with my mum and dad, I'm closer to them and I feel I've got a lot more support, rather than when I was staying in supported living."

When talking about his experience of formal support he described being allocated permanent accommodation in which he was isolated with little support. Karl felt that follow on support would have helped him maintain his tenancy and that the lack of support contributed towards moving home and his tenancy breakdown;

"I think what would have been the best thing if they sent someone out once a week to come out and check that you are doing well for a wee extended period for maybe six months after you had moved out...a wee bit extra support just after you move out that accommodation into your own living environment and that situation."

At the time of round two interviews it was clear that Karl was still in receipt of formal support to help with managing his tenancy and practical advice, however the regular contact with his parents (daily) was significant with him classifying his family as his closest relationships who had been able to help finding employment and he had been able to offer help and assistance to in return. In reflection Karl was able to identify the supportive relationships he had as vital in turning his life around;

"there's a light at the end of the tunnel now and it's been a long haul dragging myself through but I eventually managed to do it with all the help and support and I couldn't have done it without the help and support I've received."

NATIONAL RESEARCH THEMES

Meeting Aspirations - Social networks, wellbeing and achieving goals?

In the majority of cases, meeting aspirations involved moving towards independence (building skills or improving confidence), securing work and managing a tenancy. Very few interviewees discussed how they would sustain their independence through accessing other services or support from social networks. This highlights how support services could work towards building resilience through promoting the unseen support that informal networks can offer, or improving knowledge of the support available to prevent future housing crisis.

From accessing support many people felt they had been able to improve their practical skills, 70 %felt more confident with practical tasks, 45% had rebuilt relationships, and 74% felt that they had more supportive relationships since receiving support.

There was also evidence of service users who demonstrated high levels of self awareness around feeling ready to move on and building their own personal capacity and resilience. Such responses highlight the good practice of support which helps individuals understand the challenges they may face and help them feel confident in overcoming adversity.

Other beneficial outcomes from receiving support included establishing a work plan to work towards (setting goals for the future), having someone to talk to, having someone to keep you focused and not feeling so unstable.

The most requested follow on support was to get help with money/housing/wellbeing. Whilst the numbers requiring such help was relatively low – many felt they could approach services for advice if needed.

In looking towards routes out of homelessness, two key challenges identified by service users were overcoming addictions and maintaining independent tenancies. Many service users felt that the support they received was useful, however some indicated that more needed to be done to help signpost them onto other agencies.

ASPIRATIONS AND WELLBEING AFTER SUPPORT



What areas do you feel it would be useful to receive more support in?

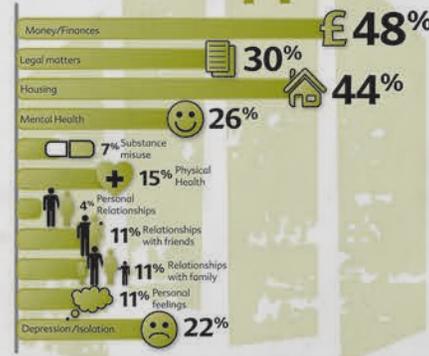


Diagram 10

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

09



Local Area Context

- Aberdeenshire is a large rural area with several small towns in which there is a concentration of homelessness support services and resources. Those experiencing homelessness in outlying rural areas reported having to move areas to secure temporary accommodation or access support.
 - There is a 'chronic' shortage of affordable accommodation across the LA. The local housing market is not in line with local employment opportunities and wages. The challenges of the local housing market were found to impact on accessing move-on accommodation for those leaving temporary/supported accommodation.
 - For the period 2011/12 there were 1,590 homeless applications made, an 11% decrease on the 2010/11 figures. This reduction in applications would indicate that the work of Housing Option teams across the LA is impacting on the number of homeless assessments being carried out. From discussions with support providers there was no indication that housing need had decreased, especially at the time of benefit reform. This would indicate that other housing options are being found to meet housing need.
 - Discussions with support providers highlighted concerns over the ability of the LA to provide housing in the face of stricter Housing Benefit reforms considering the high rents and too few employment opportunities across the LA.
- From the interviews, it was identified by participants that there was a need for greater transparency and communication on what services were available across the LA. Several interviewees raised concerns that they didn't know where to go to for help on a wider range of issues, such as finances, relationships or depression/isolation.
 - There were some instances in which those leaving supported and temporary accommodation (at the end of their support package) needed to represent as homeless due to lack of move on accommodation. It is unclear if people lost their place on housing waiting lists because of this and the LA has recently taken steps to ensure this is avoided, however it highlights the impact of a lack of affordable accommodation can have.
 - Rent deposit schemes for entry into the private sector were available, supported by the LA, but both service users and support providers felt these were often not taken seriously by landlords. It was felt that landlords were not willing to take on housing benefit tenants and, as a result, the PRS was not a realistic housing option. People were also reluctant to enter into private tenancies as they felt they would not be able to afford them if they were to find full time work and that such tenancies did not offer a secure housing solution. There was hope amongst support providers that promoting positive stories of tenants within the private sector would help to distil the negative perceptions held by landlords.
 - Support providers interviewed did identify a gap between the local area allowance and the current price of tenancies in the private sector and felt that due to the shortage of local authority housing stock this would become an issue in the near future. It was also identified through the focus group that with the changes to housing benefit allowance for under 35's there would be little scope for this group to take up individual tenancies and that there was very little shared housing available in the PRS, as may be anticipated in larger cities. It was acknowledged across the group that supporting shared accommodation models would be difficult, time consuming and require further investment.

Local Authority Strategy

- Those who participated in our focus group felt there needed to be more support for those moving into tenancies in the form of starter packs or increased funding to support individuals to set up home. It was felt that tenants frequently had little time to prepare for a new tenancy and needed support to ensure new homes were as habitable and welcoming as possible.
- The LA had previously trialled a mediation programme however found it unsuccessful due to the low number of successful outcomes (4/55 cases ending in a successful mediation) and confusion around the mediation referral process within services.

Social Networks

- All those interviewed in round two felt that they had seen an increase in their social networks (both at an informal and formal level). Of those interviewed only one person described themselves as isolated/lonely and two felt they were depressed and in need of advice. Overall there was a good balance between the nature of relationships people possessed; of the returning interviewee's 42% felt they had more formal relationships, 29% felt they had more informal relationships and 29% felt they had a 50/50 balance between formal and informal relationships.
- When asked who they would turn to for help and advice on a range of subjects the findings indicated that for issues concerning money, legal or housing people were more likely to access formal support but for issues around wellbeing, addictions, and relationships people were more likely to turn to family and friends.
- The ability of those interviewed to offer and receive support had increased across the interviewee sample by round two interviews. Of those interviewed 71% felt that they were supported by family and friends, but that they were also able to offer support in return. One of the barriers to accessing support was reluctance to burden family or friends (they often had problems of their own) and as a result lower support was available. Practical skills (DIY and childcare) were offered by interviewees to friends and family whilst for others being able to share experiences and offer support to those in difficult situations was one way of ensuring relationships were mutually beneficial.
- Of those interviewed three people were involved in volunteering or employment, whilst a further two participants were about to enter education. Of the remaining interviewees one was a full time career and the other was experiencing health issues. It was felt by the focus group that these occupation rates were representative of the homeless population across the local authority. It was seen by support providers that there were high levels of participation in education/employment/volunteering or groups across the LA. It was felt that engagement in additional activities could

be difficult for some service users but that once housing circumstances began to improve engagement with services increased. It was felt that overall there was a definite sense of people wanting to access employment, especially amongst young people, but that there was a distinct lack of employment opportunities.

Available support

- The range of support differed across the area, often depending on the availability of services in the local proximity. For those in more rural areas the role of the housing officer was more significant as there were fewer services to refer clients onto. In these areas, the role of housing officers was varied and could include helping to fill out forms, offering lifts into town and officers were also available on the phone if any problems were to arise. In more urban areas housing officers played a less significant role as service users were often referred on to other agencies for complex support needs. There were higher levels of satisfaction from service users whose housing officers played a more significant part in their lives, with many valuing someone who just 'checked in' to see how they were or to keep them informed of waiting times in temporary accommodation.
- It was recognised in round one consultations with support providers that there was a lack of support for those with mental health issues or mental health services for those with addictions. In the second round of consultations with support providers, participants did not feel mental health support had been developed to fill this gap. During the period of the research, the LA introduced a mediator to work with those at risk of or affected by homelessness - this was seen as fitting into the wider Housing Options approach being rolled out across homelessness services.

Access to Accommodation (Moving On)

- From the research it was clear that there was a lack of move on accommodation, especially problematic for those coming out of temporary and supported accommodation. At the time of round two interviews all those interviewed had been allocated accommodation which would indicate that both the local authority and support providers were working to overcome this issue well.
- Scottish Short Secured Tenancies (SSST's) were used 'very sparingly' across the LA, where possible, longer term allocations were preferred. It was identified by support providers and LA representatives that using SSST's was problematic as often those in need of a tenancy were those least willing to engage with services and such disengagement could lead to an eviction and repeat homelessness. In place of using SSST's, permanent tenancies were allocated alongside housing support where necessary. Overall the use of SSST's was seen as counterproductive as eviction could result in repeat homelessness and the use of additional resources.

Meeting Aspirations

- Around 71% of those interviewed in round two were satisfied with the service they had received – of those satisfied with support 29% rated their support as 10/10 and 29% rated it 9/10. When asked what could be done to improve support the main response was offering support for a longer period of time, especially when individuals were moving into tenancies. Responses from other questions would additionally indicate in such cases full-time support would not be deemed necessary however having somewhere to go for advice was a helpful way to access support.

"A lot of support when I was moving into my house here, they helped with decorating grants and getting grants for furniture, etc and just quite a lot, just the kind of support I needed at the time really." Charles Round Two Interviewee

"Has been change actually yes, because I've got really difficult situation with housing benefit where the situation was really difficult because it effect my health, I'm obviously I am looking for my baby, myself, so that was really hard to look after my baby and stop worry about" money and about staying on homeless accommodation so support what I've got from housing officer was really, really important for me." Paula Round Two Interviewee

- Following on from round one interviews all those interviewed in round two felt that they were more able to support themselves, had improved their wellbeing and had been able to make good use of the support available. Additionally all interviewees felt that they knew what to do if they were homeless or at risk of homelessness and would know where to get support if needed.

Conclusions

- *To what extent do the LA and the third sector in Aberdeenshire prioritise the development of social networks within their housing support services?*

It is clear that there is awareness of the importance of social networks for many affected by homelessness. The multifaceted role of some workers reflects that in many instances the LA promotes a holistic approach in supporting individuals to move away from homelessness. However, due to limitations in housing stock and availability of services it is not always possible to provide accommodation and services which compliment the range of an individual's existing informal social networks.

- *What models currently exist for supporting and developing social networks within housing support services?*

Alongside more general housing support, the LA has recently introduced a mediation service. There is currently no formal mentoring/befriending service however the LA is exploring the option of a mentoring service provided by a third sector organisation. It is clear that more could be done to promote the value and impact of social networks for those looking to sustain their tenancies; however it is clear that much work between service users and support workers embraces a networks approach. Sustainability of formal support and the promotion of more informal support networks is currently not a major feature of the services available and this is reflected in the high levels of dependence on formal services.

- *What are the key elements in developing and promoting social networks within housing support services?*

From our interviews with service users and consultation with support providers it is apparent that an individualistic approach is needed when attempting to support existing social networks. Any efforts which can be made to ensure these networks are maintained are vital and offering additional support to those at risk of isolation would help reduce the problems encountered by those with few family and friends.

Local Area Context

- Edinburgh City is Scotland's fastest growing city with an increasing demand on the local housing market, there is a shortage of affordable accommodation which is impacting on individual's routes out of homelessness.
- From consultation with LA representatives and support providers it was felt that providing social housing or affordable accommodation was challenging due to a shortage of appropriate housing stock. Throughout the research it was identified that Edinburgh has a larger than average private rented sector (22% of all households)⁵⁸ and that this sector is not readily accessible to those in receipt of housing benefit due to high prices. The housing climate was resulting in those vulnerable to homelessness and in need of affordable accommodation being squeezed out of the housing market.
- For the period 2011/12 there were 4,400 homeless applications made, a 5% decrease on the 2010/11 figures or 256 less applications. This reduction in applications would indicate that the work of the Housing Options teams across the LA is impacting on the number of homeless assessments being carried out. From discussions with support providers there was no indication that housing need had decreased, especially at the time of benefit reform, this would indicate that other housing options are being found to meet housing need.
- Prevention teams have been established at both a local authority and third sector level including welfare advice. There is a range of preventative, mediation, befriending and mentoring services available across the LA.
- Support providers identified a gap in services for young people with mental health issues.

Social Networks

- When asked to reflect on their social networks 34% of the sample felt that they had seen an increase in their supportive networks since receiving services. Through having access to positive social networks, interviewees felt that they had been able to build skills and increase their access to other services/opportunities.
- There was a balance of interviewees possessing mostly formal or mostly informal relationships amongst the interviewees. When asked who they felt supported them practically, a majority felt that they were supported by their support worker (both round one and two interviews) with a much lower number receiving support from informal relationships. This would indicate that people were less likely to turn to informal networks for general support.
- On return in round two interviews half of the sample was involved in volunteering or employment, however it was noted that involvement in work or volunteering could be challenging unless accommodation circumstances were secure. It is important to note that both interviewees and support providers acknowledged the impact of being in temporary or supported accommodation in accessing employment. Half of our interviewee's were additionally involved in various groups and activities with 34% of interviewees feeling that they did more than the same time last year (2011). A number of interviewees felt that they were unable to think about long term commitment to employment/education until they felt secure in their housing circumstances.

58. Edinburgh City Council (2011) City Housing Strategy

Available Support

- From interviews with service users in round one 80% of interviewees had access to a housing officer/support worker. When we returned to interviews in round two 50% were still in receipt of support (which reflects the number still in supported/temporary accommodation). A follow on/drop in service was felt to be needed when support ended formally.
- From round two focus group LA representatives outlined that housing officers in Edinburgh currently offer a unique service, it was outlined that housing officers would work with service users and refer them to neighbourhood support teams or other agencies for specialist support. There would not be a set time that cases were left open for – a post allocation visit would happen 4-6 weeks after housing allocations had been made and then an assessment would be made around support needs. A high percentage of services users were felt to access services on an on-going drop in basis – this may be years after support packages are finished - but people appeared to know where to go to get support if needed.

Access to Accommodation (moving on)

- When we returned to interview service users in round two interviews, half had been moved onto settled accommodation (of the others, one person remained in supported accommodation and two were still in temporary hostel accommodation), 50% of the interviewees were happy with their current support/accommodation situation. When providers were asked if such waits in temporary accommodation were representative, they responded that a 9-11 month waiting period (for those with priority need) in temporary accommodation was not unusual.
- From discussions with support providers it was felt that SSST's were not really used and were seen as unsuitable for those associated with Anti-Social Behaviours. It was acknowledged by some that the allocation of housing was at times a subjective process with housing officers and housing associations 'vetting' potential clients via a referencing system, this was felt to have negative implications for some service users who could be bypassed.
- A large proportion of interviewees felt that the LA was not sympathetic to their needs when allocating accommodation, whilst from a LA perspective it was identified that housing aspirations of those presenting as homeless were not always possible in relation to the available housing stock. During round two focus groups the LA identified that it was hoping to develop (in line with the third sector) a matching service to help pair up and support young people enter into shared accommodation.

Meeting Aspirations

- From our round two interviews 50% of interviewees were unhappy with their current support – in most cases this resulted from not enough support. Where individuals felt happy with the removal of services it could be linked to successful disengagement of services. When asked what could be done to improve support, responses from interviewees included; improved interagency working across the LA and partner providers, better support from housing officers to educate people with independent living skills for those going into tenancies, and to improve the living accommodation standards at a temporary hostel (cleanliness etc).
- Half of our sample felt that they had been able to achieve their goals. Challenges in meeting aspirations centred on financial issues (e.g. difficulties in fund education/training courses), mental health issues and the difficulties in setting up home could made it difficult to focus on other things
- From round one interviews over half of our interviewees (55%) were involved in volunteering, training, education or employment. On return in round two interviews half of the sample was involved in volunteering or employment, however it was noted that involvement in work or volunteering could be challenging unless accommodation circumstances were secure.
- Half of our interviewee's were additionally involved in various groups and activities with 34% of interviewees feeling that they did more than the same time last year (2011). A significant number of interviewees felt that they were unable to think about long term commitment to employment/education until they felt secure in their housing circumstances.
- When asked if there had been an improvement in their wellbeing 67% answered yes, and 67% felt they had been able to make good use of the support available to them, overall 83% felt that they were more able to support themselves compared to the previous year.

Conclusions

- *To what extent do the LA and the third sector organisations in Edinburgh City prioritise the development of social networks within their housing support services?*

The research was able to identify a comprehensive range of networks based services available across the LA including mentoring, mediation, befriending and preventative services. There was good availability of these services and the benefits of such services were reported by many interviewees and support providers as taking a holistic approach to supporting those affected by homelessness. Issues in accessing accommodation and allocating accommodation present challenges with a shortage of housing often resulting in the social networks of individuals not being able to be taken into account.

- *What models currently exist for supporting and developing social networks within housing support services?*

A range of services exist across the LA including mentoring, mediation, befriending, flat share co-ordinators, homelessness prevention and welfare advice.

- *What are the key elements in developing and promoting social networks within housing support services?*

From our study in Edinburgh it would appear that there is a good range of services in operation across the LA. Additional acknowledgement of the support needs of individuals at the time of homelessness presentation would allow the LA to support individuals through their homelessness journey and reduce future support needs.

Local Area Context

- Highland Council is Scotland's largest geographical local authority (LA), with 222,370⁵⁹ inhabitants dispersed across a total of 22 local wards. The local population of Highland is expanding at a slow rate however despite the slow population growth, there is a disproportionate rise in household numbers.
- From discussions with support providers, the key challenges in meeting housing need and working towards the 2012 Homelessness Target included: lack of permanent affordable accommodation, inequality of services due to the rural character of the LA, poor uptake within the PRS, lack of specialist accommodation in the right area - where it does exist the turnover is slow, low income and high unemployment across the LA and a reduced workforce due to an aging demographic
- Between 2011 and 2012 the LA assessed 1,285 individuals as homeless a 40% reduction in the number of applications made on their 2010-11 figures of 2,149 applications. Whilst the LA continues to award 87% of those classified as homeless priority status, the number of individuals receiving priority need has reduced dramatically (547 less cases awarded priority status). As there is little way of tracking the outcomes of those who are not assessed as homeless, it is unclear if there has been an overall reduction in housing need or less people experiencing homelessness.
- The LA has also introduced mediation services, provided through the Highland Mediation Team (Relationship Scotland), offering services specifically catering to those experiencing homelessness, young people and intergenerational mediation. Additionally, the LA is working to promote interagency working and had recently released £70,000 of funds to provide emergency loans, short term mediation and emergency transport costs.

- Multiple needs assessments are being carried out to examine both the housing and support needs to prevent homelessness and to offer sustainable solutions to instances of homelessness. This is leading to those tenants who would not be suitable for mainstream accommodation being offered interim accommodation with additional support. A programme of staff training into prevention, assessment and co-ordinating multi agency work is being rolled out across the LA. The LA has also developed a support needs assessment matrix which accounts for the importance of personal motivation, wellbeing/mental health, education/employment/volunteering and household composition

Social Networks

- When asked, 55% of those interviewed in round two felt that they had more supportive relationships (both formal and informal) than the year previous and when asked who they felt closest to, informal networks were most commonly cited.
- The majority of those interviewed had regular contact with their informal networks; in round two interviews 78% of interviewees saw family and friends at least once a week (an increase from 63% in round one interviews), with 11% seeing friends and family once a month and 11% being at risk of isolation, seeing family and friends less than once a month.
- The majority of interviewees (66%) in round two felt that they were able to engage in their relationships in a reciprocal way through being able to offer support to those in their networks. In the majority of cases this was achieved by using their experiences to support others going through trauma or addictions and often involved exchanging skills or exchanging social capital:
- On return in round two interviews half of the sample was involved in volunteering or employment, and half of interviewees were involved in various groups and activities with 34% of interviewees feeling that they did more than the same time last year (2011). A number of interviewees felt that they were unable to think about long term commitment to employment/education until they felt secure in their housing circumstances.

59. National Records of Scotland (2012) Mid 2011 Population Estimates Scotland

Available Support

- From interviews with service users in round one, 80% of interviewees had access to a housing officer/support worker. When we returned to interviews in round two, 67% were still in receipt of the same support. A large majority of people were satisfied with the service they had received in round two interviews – 22% of individuals rated their support 1/10 whilst the remaining interviewees rated support as 7/10 or over. Of those unsatisfied with the level of support (22%) most lacked formal support initially and were seen to have a gap within their informal networks. Additionally none of the interviewees who had received support for the duration of their homelessness and transition into permanent accommodation felt they needed further support.
- At the time of round two interviews it was felt that 78% knew where to get support if they needed it. From our round two interviews, The key skills interviewees had gained by accessing support included increased confidence, improved relationships, feeling more secure and able to manage a tenancy, felt emotionally supported and were regaining trust.

Access to Accommodation (moving on)

- The majority of interviewees had been able to secure permanent accommodation at round two interviews; there was one case of repeat homelessness and another individual being placed into supported accommodation. At the time of round two interviews, 100% of interviewees felt that they were more able to support themselves than the same time the previous year.
- It was felt that restrictions around employment/volunteering when in temporary accommodation stopped people moving on from homelessness and a long wait in temporary accommodation exacerbated this.

Meeting Aspirations

- In round two interviews, 44% people felt that the support they had received had helped them to change their situation, based on their 2011 aspirations. All those interviewed felt that they were more able to support themselves in 2012 compared to the previous year. Additionally, 33% of people felt they had achieved their goals, 22% felt they were half way towards them and the remainder of interviewees did not feel that they had achieved their goals. 55% of interviewees felt that the support they had received had helped them work towards their goals.
- Improvements to services identified in round two included regular updates on where people were in the housing waiting list and improved interagency working, especially the case when transferring between services - was felt services could 'bang up against each other'.

Conclusions

- *To what extent do the LA and the third sector organisations across Highland prioritise the development of social networks within their housing support services?*

It is clear from the evidence gathered across Highland that for both interviewees and support providers a holistic approach was being adopted across the LA in line with a preventative agenda. The introduction of a housing needs assessment and the development of a needs matrix to assist staff in conducting assessments demonstrated the LA's approach to understanding the variety of factors contributing towards homelessness.

- *What models currently exist for supporting and developing social networks within housing support services?*

Whilst there were less specific social networks focused services there was evidence that social networks were improving as an outcome of general support indicating that supportive relationships were being promoted. There were also best practice examples which demonstrated the relationship between securing employment and sustaining a tenancy.

- *What are the key elements in developing and promoting social networks within housing support services?*

From the research in Highland there is some disparity in delivering (thus offering support and promoting supportive relationships) services according to the rural nature of the LA. It is also anticipated that allocation of accommodation according to social ties to an area would be difficult due to the shortage of housing across the LA. Whilst a comprehensive support assessment is being implemented across the LA it is anticipated that sustaining informal supportive relationships will be difficult without the access to accommodation suited to individual networks of support.

Local Area Context

- West Dunbartonshire is a semi-rural local authority (LA) west of Glasgow with an estimated population of 90,360⁶⁰ inhabitants dispersed across a total of 6 local wards. The key challenges facing the area are an increase in older people and a decrease in those of working age, presumably due to leaving the area to look for work in neighbouring, larger cities such as Glasgow. High levels of unemployment were noted, with 10.6% of the population unemployed (compared to the national average of 8%) and only 68% in employment compared to the national average of 71%.⁶¹
- From discussions with support providers during round one focus groups, it was felt that there was a high level of those with addictions across the LA and that young women were more likely to present in West Dunbartonshire than in other LA areas (as was reflected in our sample). Territorialism was also identified as an issue, especially for younger generations, and was seen to exist across the local area. The impact of this often affected engagement with services, outcomes of housing allocations and the ability to maintain social networks across a wider geographical area.
- Between 2011 and 2012, the LA assessed 1,161 individuals as homeless. Of that figure, 100% of those classified were awarded priority status. Prior to removing the non-priority need category, the LA has had a consistent number of homeless presentations (1,263 in 2009/10; 1,187 in 2010/11).

Social Networks

- In round one interviews 60% felt they were not able to support others but were supported, in the second round on interviews 80% felt that they were able to offer support to others and received support.
- All those interviewed in round two felt they had more supportive (positive – both formal and informal) people in their lives compared to the year previous. 80% of our sample saw their friends and family on most days whilst the remaining interviewee saw friends and family once or twice a month. When asked, no interviewees felt isolated, 20% felt lonely, 20% felt depressed and 40% people felt in need of advice. Taken together these two factors contribute towards our understanding that access to support and levels of isolation/depression may be linked. All those interviewed in round two felt that there had been an improvement in their overall wellbeing.

- There was a slight increase in the number of interviewees whose relationships with their parents had strengthened whilst homeless. One person felt that they had less contact with friends indicating that such relationships may not be as resilient to the chaos of homelessness and another person felt more networked with other organisations/agencies for support.

Available Support

- Across the interviewees in round one, 94% (all but one interviewee) were in receipt of support from a key worker or housing officer, depending on their current accommodation. Overall, people who received the support stated that they were happy with the support on offer and 53% of those interviewed felt the relationship with their worker was close and that they could talk to their worker about a range of issues.
- During round one interviews it was felt by some service users that communication within services could be improved. One interviewee expressed frustration at not having a familiar face at the housing office who knew about their needs. Another interviewee cited that they had failed to find support from various housing/homelessness agencies and had had to approach their probation worker for assistance.
- Apart from access to housing support or a key worker, there did not appear to be any mentoring or befriending services available across the LA at the time of round one interview. Discussions with support providers indicated that a mediation project was being piloted with young people and families which aimed to raise awareness about alternative housing options for those no longer able to stay in the family home.
- All of our interviewees in round two were still in receipt of the same support which they all felt to be needed - no one expressed a direct dislike for the support they received, additionally there were additionally the highest levels of satisfaction with services across all of our case study sites: 40% felt their support was 10/10 in quality, 40% felt it to be 9/10, and 20% felt it to be 8/10 in quality.
- There did appear to be high levels of dependency on support workers with all interviewees feeling that they could approach their worker about all issues listed and all five interviewees stating that they could turn to their support worker (would trust them to speak to) family and friends were turned to less often (other family 80%, parents 80%, friends 40%).

60. National Records of Scotland (2012) Mid 2011 Population Estimates Scotland

61. ONS (2012) LI01 Local labour market indicators by Unitary and Local Authority, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/datasets-and-tables/index.html?pageSize=50&sortBy=none&sortDirection=none&newquery=west+dunbartonshire>

Access to Accommodation (moving on)

- During round two focus groups with support providers it was highlighted that a new one stop shop for advice and information recently opened in Dumbarton - via the LA, it was also noted that a mentoring service was being introduced across the LA in the coming months and a young person's mediation service had also been introduced.
- From the return rates of our interviewees it would appear from the data that the LA has a longer wait in temporary accommodation than other areas - it has the greatest percentage still in supported accommodation. The long time in supported accommodation (over twelve months) demonstrated in our sample did not appear unusual, confirmed by our support providers taking part in round two focus groups, however it was highlighted that the LA does not apply a maximum time in supported accommodation and service users have the opportunity to stay in temporary accommodation until they feel ready to move on.
- It was additionally identified that the LA was looking towards establishing a way of working with the third sector to establish a shared tenancies model for young people. It was felt across the group that shared tenancies are very difficult to administer – getting the dynamics right in managing the allocation and support would be required.

Meeting Aspirations

- Of those interviewed 60% felt that they had been able to achieve their goals in full, one felt that they hadn't been able to achieve their goals and one person felt they were halfway there towards achieving their goals. Challenges identified in achieving goals were felt to be committing to work with SW, realising that they needed help, mental health issues, relationships with others and addiction issues.
- When asked about their future aspirations (mostly employment/tenancy related) all but one were able to identify the sources of support to assist them in realising their goals. There was an overall good level of awareness in how to get help if needed, this was especially the case for those who had successfully received formal support and successfully disengaged as they felt they could return for ad-hoc support if needed.

- When asked if there had been an improvement in their wellbeing 100% answered yes, and 80% felt they had been able to make good use of the support available to them, overall 80% felt that they were more able to support themselves compared to the previous year.
- A high number of those interviewed were not in any form of additional training/education/ employment or volunteering in round one interviews: 53% were engaging with opportunities, 6% (one person) was working, 12% were volunteering, 6% (one person) was in training whilst the remaining 24% were in education. At the time of round two interviews none were involved in any activities.

Conclusions

- *To what extent do the LA and the third sector organisations in West Dunbartonshire prioritise the development of social networks within their housing support services?*

Across West Dunbartonshire it is clear that there is a good awareness of the positive impact a networks approach can have for those affected by homelessness. The LA is developing a range of tools and services to facilitate this and there appears to be a clear way of acknowledging the impact of networks support in service outcomes.

- *What models currently exist for supporting and developing social networks within housing support services?*

Currently the LA alongside partner providers offers housing support, supported accommodation and is developing a mediation and mentoring programme. Additionally it is clear that a networks approach is adopted in the delivery of support across a range of services.

- *What are the key elements in developing and promoting social networks within housing support services?*

The findings suggest that the LA is making good progress towards promoting social networks support services, a follow on service for those moving between supported accommodation and permanent accommodation may be useful alongside a clear framework for measuring social networks within any assessment process.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

10



CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The work of the Beyond Homelessness research has followed Scottish Local Authorities, support providers and those affected by homelessness to gain a clear understanding into how the application of networks focused services impact on both services and service users.

Overwhelmingly the evidence indicates that where adopted a networks approach, acknowledging the importance of both formal and informal support networks, leads to increased wellbeing, confidence and ability to maintain tenancies independently. Additionally the research has been able to highlight examples of good practice which uniquely meet local needs in line with Scottish Government recommendations and guidance.

Literature and Policy Review

To ensure relevance of this research an extensive literature and policy review was undertaken examining the theoretical understanding of social networks and homelessness alongside the current policy climate in Scotland. The central themes of this review highlighted;

- Scotland has some of the most progressive homelessness policy in the developed world, which embraces a holistic and comprehensive understanding into the complex nature of homelessness.
- The duty to assess housing support need (June 2013) will require Local Authorities to assess a wider range housing support issues as contributing towards homelessness.
- There are variations across all Scottish Local Authorities in their work meet the 2012 Homelessness Target, there is an increasing focus upon prevention of homelessness.
- Through the introduction of the duty to assess housing support needs and the pre-existing acknowledgement of the positive impact of social networks there are significant opportunities to accommodate a networks approach into housing support needs assessments.
- Further research is required to gain in-depth understanding of the value of a social networks approach, however, current research would indicate that socio-economic, cultural and relationship issues all contribute towards homelessness.

2010 Survey of Support Providers

This survey examined the application of social networks services (mentoring, mediation and befriending) and understanding of social networks across support providers in Scotland. Key findings from this survey indicate the following;

- 84% of local authorities and 80% of third sector organisation saw a link between promoting positive social networks and overcoming homelessness
- 68% of all organisations surveyed felt that supporting social networks offered best value in the delivery of housing services
- 62% of all organisations could evidence increased likelihood of tenancy sustainment resulting from receiving social networks based services
- Lack of housing stock was a key challenge (felt by approx 75% of the sample) in meeting 2012 Homelessness Target
- The use of social networks based services remained low across the sample; mentoring 27%, befriending 35% and mediation 50%. Housing support (independent living skills) was the most common form of support available across 77% of the sample.

National Research Themes

From interviewing service users and consulting widely with support providers in focus groups and interviews the research tracked the experiences of those affected by homelessness and also identified the challenges of delivering housing services between 2011 and 2012. In depth study of four local areas allowed for the diversity and local character of each area to be represented with the hope that these issues would be reflected nationally.

In summary the key findings of the service user interviews and focus groups with support providers indicate that;

- Social networks (both formal/informal) were those felt to be trusted, un-judgemental and available. People turned to their social networks (both formal/informal) for help, advice, and friendship, those with a good balance of formal and informal social networks in place were seen to be more resilient, less isolates and had increased wellbeing.

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- Informal relationships were seen to reduce during periods of homelessness, especially when individuals were placed into temporary accommodation. Those who engaged positively with support services indicated that they had subsequently rebuilt relationships (45%), saw an improvement in their wellbeing (85%), had more supportive people in their lives (74%), and were more able to support themselves (93%).
- Formal relationships were relied on throughout the homelessness journey, for those with fewer informal relationships there was a noted increase in need for formal support networks. Of those who engaged with support services 59% felt that their support had helped them change their situation, 74% felt that it had helped them work towards their goals and 70% felt more supported to deal with practical tasks.
- Examples of good practice in addressing homelessness using a networks approach were seen throughout the case studies with examples of; support plans and mediation work for young people, diversity in the role of housing officers to meet local support needs and a range of mediation, mentoring and befriending projects promoting increased informal support networks.
- Challenges in meeting housing need were tied closely to local housing markets and the ability of the local authority to allocate limited housing effectively. A gap in understanding between the housing expectation of those presenting as homelessness and the ability of the Local Authority to provide housing to meet this need was seen.
- Temporary accommodation was identified throughout the research as a key point of isolation and reduced informal networks in homelessness journeys. There was a need for increased work with formal services during this period to help overcome isolation.
- Evidence from the research indicates a link between the need for future support when formal services fail to identify new/follow on support at the point of service disengagement. Isolation and not knowing where to go were two key themes identified as contributing towards repeat homelessness.

Research Conclusions

To what extent do local authorities and third sector organisations in Scotland prioritise the development of social networks within their existing housing support services?

Through the research there was an overall good level of understanding into the positive impacts a networks approach can have for those affected by homelessness. This was evidenced through the increased understanding of supporting those affected by homelessness in a person centred holistic way. When support providers were surveyed, there was evidence to indicate that whilst a networks approach was felt to offer best value and promote tenancy sustainment social networks based services were less prevalent than housing support.

Evidence from our case studies would reinforce these findings, with few interviewees in receipt of specific social networks based services. There was however, evidence that housing support needs were being met in a variety of responsive ways through the work of housing officers and the third sector. Both sectors demonstrated supporting individuals in a way that acknowledged the importance of a networks approach. This was evidenced in the increase of supportive relationships and ability to self support seen by those who had received support services.

What models currently exist for supporting and developing social networks within housing support services?

There was evidence that social networks services such as mentoring, mediation and befriending were available however, this was at a lesser level. There was evidence to indicate that general support roles (housing/support officers) adopted a networks approach and several examples of addressing homelessness holistically were identified, these included supporting routes into employment, increased opportunities in volunteering/education/training, and programmes to overcome associated issues such as addictions or mental health.

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Additionally there was evidence to indicate that in the preparation for adopting a preventative approach (through Housing Options) and in addressing the duty to assess housing support needs Local Authorities were growing increasingly aware of the importance of social networks. This was evidenced in examples of housing support matrixes, mediation programmes and shared housing projects for young people.

What are the key elements in developing and promoting social networks within housing support services?

From working with support providers and service users it is clear that a one-size-fits-all approach to homelessness support and social networks is not possible. This was seen in action as local areas responded differently to homelessness and the roles of key workers such as housing officers differed across the case study sites.

In working with service users it was also clear that to administer support which focuses upon supporting social networks requires an understanding of the points at which these relationships breakdown, the reasons why such relationships breakdown and how this can be prevented. Long stays in temporary accommodation and moving individuals away from their informal support networks was identified through the research as adding to isolation, additionally making allowances for the support role those presenting as homelessness may play was vital in ensuring networks remained in tact and reciprocal.

Additionally a preventative approach in responding to homelessness requires a networks approach to be most effective in preventing homelessness; one example of this is mediation services to avoid individuals becoming homeless will only be successful in the longer term if support is available to help work through relationship issues. Adopting a networks approach to housing support services requires a complete understanding of the homelessness picture; seeing the complex interaction of homelessness triggers, the long term impact of temporary accommodation on those affected by homelessness and how individuals can be helped to link into communities once tenancies are secured.

Research Recommendations

In relation to meeting the stated outcomes of the research, we make the following recommendations:

Statutory and voluntary housing support services for individuals who have experienced or who are at risk of homelessness understand how to incorporate support to promote and maintain social networks within their services.

From the research, it is clear that there is a good level of understanding into the impact of social networks (including best value and tenancy sustainment outcomes) and the need for a holistic approach to supporting those affected by homelessness. The need for an increase in social networks services is likely to be challenged by the lack of resources across welfare services in Scotland however, the findings presented in this report advocate promoting and building on the existing practices of holistic housing support.

Where unable to offer specific social network services, it would be possible to increase awareness and assessment of social networks within housing support need assessments and in training staff to recognise the wider impact homelessness can have on social networks and also the impact of social network breakdown on isolation and link to longer term support needs.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended Actions:

- Training is available to professionals working across the housing and homelessness sector to increase understanding and use of a networks approach.
- Housing support need assessments used to assess available social network supports
- Development of a framework by which social networks are assessed at a local level, measures for this could be incorporated into national policy by the Scottish Government

Staff working with individuals who have experienced or who are at risk of homelessness understand the models of support which best promote and maintain social networks.

There is a good level of awareness across Scotland into the benefits of support which promotes a networks approach. However, with the introduction of the Housing Options and prevention framework it is important to ensure that services do not merely avoid homelessness but also look to stabilise the root causes of homelessness. Evidence presented in this research and from the broader literature suggests that, where deployed successfully informal social networks can help overcome isolation and reduce the risk of repeat homelessness.

Recommended Actions:

- Training of support staff to ensure a basic level of understanding into a networks approach
- Continued work and funding of the Scottish Social Networks Forum and other national programmes that promote services adopting a networks approach across Scotland.
- Assessments demonstrating the best value of social networks services should be conducted to provide strong evidence of best value, these assessments should be promoted across the sector to raise awareness of a networks approach.
- Development of adequate measuring tools to chart the development of 'soft outcomes' across the sector – this should be done collaboratively between local authorities, support providers and the Scottish Social Networks Forum.

Users of housing support services who have experienced or who are at risk of homelessness receive the support they need to develop and maintain positive social networks.

One of the key issues in supporting those affected by homelessness to develop and maintain positive social networks can be seen as the lack of affordable and temporary accommodation. Without access to accommodation in their local area individuals' face being housed away from their informal support networks and as a result require more support from formal services. Additionally, delivering support to maintain and promote social networks was viewed by many in support services as a much lower priority when attempting to support more immediate issues. It is clear that further research exploring the impact and value of helping to promote and maintain social networks would be useful in helping ensure social networks are assessed and preserved where possible with equal importance.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended Actions:

- Demonstrate and evidence best value of a networks approach through social return on investment assessments (or similar).
- Planned service disengagement with assessment of both formal and informal network supports and appropriate follow on support offered.
- Signposting to a wide range of services throughout the support process.
- Increased with the knowledge of those presenting as homeless of the potential effects of homelessness (e.g. stays in temporary accommodation and negative impact of this on social networks). The affect upon social networks should be discussed during Housing Option interviews to help gain a picture of individual priorities.
- Support focused on developing informal networks for service users and increased awareness into the value of engaging in such services amongst service users. Peer support models were identified as one way of encouraging such practice during the research.
- Provision of services focused on developing informal networks for service users and social networks considered in housing support needs assessments
- Increased awareness into the value of engaging in such services amongst service users through education. Peer support models were identified as one way of encouraging such practice during the research.

APPENDICES



APPENDICES

Appendix A – Detailed Research Breakdown and Evidence

Detailed Research Breakdown			
Research Stage	Evidence	Data Type	Outcome
Stage One Summer 2010	Literature review of existing evidence and homelessness policy	Qualitative and Quantitative evidence from existing studies	To inform of existing research, develop key conceptual terms and provide evidence base
Stage One Autumn 2010	National survey of Scottish LA's and support providers	Qualitative and Quantitative evidence from representatives in all 32 Scottish Local Authorities	Develop understanding into definition and use of social network services across Scotland
Stage One Winter 2010-11	In-depth interviews with 1 support provider representative and one LA representative in all 32 LA's	Qualitative evidence gathered from approx 64 in depth interviews	Clear snap-shot into support delivery issues presented at a local level
Stage One Spring 2011	Scoping exercise of all 32 Scottish LA's	Using collected data, developed profiles of all 32 Scottish LA's in relation to homelessness population, current services and housing market	Selection of four case study sites suitably representative of key issues faced in many LA's across Scotland
Stage Two Summer 2011	Round One service user interviews in four case study areas conducted by Peer Researchers (max 20 interviews per case study area)	Qualitative and Quantitative evidence from service users	Established baseline evidence on interviewees for follow up in Round Two interviews, snap-shot into issues faced by service users
Stage Two Winter 2011	LA and support provider consultation events in case study areas	Qualitative evidence to triangulate data from service user interviews	Further evidence to support themes emerging from service user information to ensure service user evidence is representative of issues faced across larger population
Stage Two Summer 2012	Round Two service user interviews in four case study areas conducted by Peer Researchers (27 interviewees returned for Round Two interviews nationally)	Qualitative and Quantitative evidence from service users	Followed baseline evidence to plot development of service users in receipt of support, gathered developmental evidence on the service user journey

Detailed Research Breakdown

Research Stage	Evidence	Data Type	Outcome
Stage Two Winter 2012	LA and support provider consultation events in case study areas	Qualitative evidence to triangulate data from service user interviews	Further evidence to support themes emerging from service user information and ability to ensure service user evidence is representative of issues faced across larger population
Evaluation and Reporting	2010 Survey report data	Qualitative and Quantitative	Publication of Survey Report (2010)
Evaluation and Reporting	Peer Researcher experience and feedback	Qualitative	Publication of report into service user involvement (2012)
Evaluation and Reporting	Peer Researcher experience and training	Training documents and feedback	Peer Researcher Handbook (2013)
Evaluation and Reporting	All research evidence and conclusions	All research recommendations and conclusions used to inform Scottish Social Network Trainer Practice	Revised Scottish Social Networks training (2013)
Evaluation and Reporting	Evidence from each case study site	All evidence and locally specific recommendations	Four local area reports; Aberdeenshire, Edinburgh City, Highland and West Dunbartonshire (2013)
Evaluation and Reporting	Production of digital stories to highlight local area best practice	Evidence drawn from case study specific research	Three digital stories (2013)
Evaluation and Reporting	All research evidence and conclusions	All research recommendations and conclusions	Publication of final research report (2013)

Appendix B - Research Stages and Methods

- Literature review of existing research, policy, data and academic materials on the subject topic.
- Stakeholder consultation through steering group meetings and service user membership at such groups.
- Short questionnaire (quantitative and qualitative questions) distributed electronically to local authorities and support providers across Scotland using Survey Monkey - an online survey tool.
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of survey results (Nvivo and SPSS).
- In depth interviews with local authorities across Scotland and key support providers (two per LA area).
- Overview and scoping exercise of Scottish local authorities for case study purposes.
- Selection and agreed participation from four key local authorities – Aberdeenshire Council, City of Edinburgh Council, The Highland Council, and West Dunbartonshire Council.
- Recruitment and training of peer and sessional researchers alongside Ann Rosengard Consultants – two whole day workshops and one half day workshop held locally.
- Development of interview schedules, promotional material and development of local networks of support providers in partnership with peer and sessional researchers.
- 2011 Round One Interviews with 75 service users across the four case study sites.
- Production of Interim Report for each case study area
- Consultation/focus group/interviews with support providers and local authority in each case study area discussing interim report themes
- 2012 Round Two follow up interviews with service users (27 interviews).
- Consultation with support providers and local authority in each case study area on final themes and findings.
- Production and publication of final report, toolkit and local case study reports.

Appendix C – Literature Review Sub-questions

Research Sub-questions			
Research Area	Sub-Question	Search Item	Source
Definition and Causes of Homelessness	Q) What are the key causes, identified by the literature, of homelessness?	Homelessness	Government Publications, Academic Literature
Social Networks and Homelessness Pathways	Q) What part do social networks play in routes into and routes out of homelessness?	Social Networks, Social Isolation	Academic Literature, Third Sector Publications
	Q) How are social networks seen to impact on routes out of homelessness by Scottish homelessness policy?	Homelessness, Social Capital, Social Networks, Housing Support	Government Publications, Academic Literature
Social Networks and Social Capital	Q) What is the relationship between social capital as it is produced by social networks?	Social Capital, Social Networks	Academic Literature
Social Capital and Resilience	Q) How can social networks be used to overcome social isolation and build resilience?	Social Capital, Resilience, Social Isolation, Social Networks	Academic Literature, Government Publications, Third Sector Publications
Promoting a Networks Approach	Q) How do mentoring, mediation and befriending services promote/support social networks?	Mediation, Mentoring, Befriending, ILS, Social Networks	Third Sector Publications, Academic Literature
	Q) Are there any additional factors identified as contributing towards a networks approach?	Social Capital, Social Networks, Housing Support	Academic Literature, Government Publications, Third Sector Publications
	Q) What is the value of adopting a social networks approach to overcome homelessness?	Homelessness, Social Capital, Housing Support, Mentoring, Mediation, Befriending	Third Sector Publications, Government Publications

Appendix D - Review of Peer Researcher Involvement

As part of involving peer researchers within the research process, an evaluation was commissioned and conducted by Ann Rosengard Associates. The evaluation⁶² detailed how the project involved service users at various stages and also evaluated the feedback and comments of peer researchers. Additionally, the report made recommendations for future peer research projects.

The study provided a thorough review of available literature on service user involved projects and the benefits of conducting research using a participatory action research model.

Its central recommendations for involving service users in research projects were:

- Consider the range of possible levels and forms of service user involvement, e.g. project design, consultation about research tools/ schedules; interviewing; analysis.
- Recognise that doing peer research properly is time and resource intensive - e.g. it takes time to involve staff from relevant agencies and to ensure that appropriate information about the research reaches the right people.
- Selection processes require consideration of targeting, reach and accessibility.
- Investment in selection, training and resources for peer researchers is critical.
- Training should be coupled with written resource materials.
- Training should clarify roles and interaction in interviewing; communication and reliability; good practice re confidentiality.
- Interview practice sessions can be worthwhile.
- Longer research require refresher training on key principles and practice.
- Training should develop awareness and approaches to challenging issues and feedback on interviewing vulnerable people.

- Training/ review sessions should build on peers' interviewing experience.
- Training and the best methods for doing so should be identified.
- Some projects may gain from involving an external consultant or trainer with experience of user involvement in research to contribute to training and review and act as a sounding board throughout the research.

Thanks to the involvement of the research consultant throughout the recruitment, training and employment of service user researchers, the evaluation was also able to make best practice recommendations about the working relationship with peer researchers.

These recommendations included:

- Interviewees should be clearly briefed about the peer research approach and have the right to refuse participation on this basis. It is important to ensure that a straightforward, brief information note reaches intended participants.
- On-going communication is important with Peer Researchers throughout. Recognising that addresses etc., may change, multiple methods of contact may be helpful e.g. Facebook, telephone, written, and email contacts. Local links with key personnel and liaison systems can be a key resource and there needs to be time available to develop these as well as time to sustain contact.
- Consider how to maximise equity of participation e.g. in terms of numbers of interviews peers can participate in. Reasons for unequal allocation should be transparent e.g. timing, availability and preference reasons.
- In establishing project budgets, it is important to take account of cost implications of the various factors that can impact on costs of peer interviewing, particularly the potential rate of 'no shows' of interviewees, but also travel and subsistence costs.
- A considered approach is required to resolving payment of Peer Researchers, recognising that this may impact on individuals' welfare benefits. Welfare benefits advice may be helpful.

62. Rosengard, A (2012) A Review of the Involvement of Peer Researchers in the Beyond Homelessness Interview Programme. The Rock Trust: Edinburgh.

In reflecting on the involvement of peer researchers, through interviewing both peer and sessional researchers, the final evaluation was also able to comment on how the development and experience of service users could be captured during the research project.

Recommendations were:

- Participants should be consulted on their experience of having a Peer Interviewer as well as on the collaborative approach to the interviews.
- Feedback should be sought on Peer Researchers' experience and gains.
- Professional (Sessional Interviewers) should be consulted on their experience of the collaborative interviewing process and the support role that they played.
- It is important for participants and for planning at different stages that opportunities are established for on-going review, reflection and learning from experience.
- A review should be conducted towards the end of the research to discuss what people feel they have learnt, what skills they have developed and how they think they may apply and develop these further in the future - in sum to maximise the benefits to Peer Researchers from their involvement.

Overall the evaluation of service user involvement in the research project was able to embed best practice and added value to the commissioned research. Additionally, the research team were able to track the development of peer researchers involved in the project and capture 'soft' skills development. From taking part in the project, several of our peer researchers have gone on to further employment, education and skills development alongside reporting an overall increase in wellbeing and confidence.

"After the first round of interviews, it gave me confidence to be able to talk to someone that is in this situation, as you are aware I managed to get a job for 6mths on a government scheme and because I had done the first round interviews it gave me the experience to deal with clients on a one to one basis. Had I not have done this it would have took me longer to do this as part of my role."

Peer Researcher 2001

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