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Ending rough sleeping: what works?

An international evidence review

December 2017

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About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. We are committed to ending homelessness. Every day we see the devastating impact homelessness has on people’s lives. Every year we work side by side with thousands of homeless people, to help them rebuild their lives and leave homelessness behind for good.

Through our pioneering research into the causes and consequences of homelessness and the solutions to it, we know what it will take to end it. Together with others who share our resolve, we bring our knowledge, experience and determination to campaign for the changes that will solve the homelessness crisis once and for all.

We bring together a unique volunteer effort each Christmas, to bring warmth, companionship and vital services to people at one of the hardest times of the year, and offer a starting point out of homelessness. We know that homelessness is not inevitable. We know that together we can end it.

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Disclaimer: All views and any errors contained in this report are the responsibility of the authors. The views expressed should not be assumed to be those of Crisis.
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Foreword

The fact that increasing numbers of people are still sleeping on the streets in the UK is unacceptable. This is not inevitable and is the result of a societal and policy failure. If nothing is done to address the issue, rough sleeping is predicted to rise by a further 75 per cent within 10 years.

Yet we know the problem can be solved. Previous policy interventions such as the Rough Sleeper’s Initiative and the Rough Sleepers Unit show what can be achieved with concerted effort.

To not do anything means thousands of people being left exposed to the devastating effects of rough sleeping. Rough sleepers are almost 17 times more likely to be victims of violence and 15 times more likely to have suffered verbal abuse compared to the general public. On top of this are the dire consequences for people’s health and wellbeing.

So whilst we welcome current action by governments in Westminster, Scotland and Wales to tackle rough sleeping, more needs to be done. This new research gives us the five cornerstones of policy, that if adhered to, can end rough sleeping across Great Britain.

The evidence shows that a housing-led response which takes swift action to get rough sleepers off the street and working with outreach services that have suitable accommodation offers, all underpinned by person-centred support which responds to local housing markets and individual needs, does and can lead to success. National action groups and taskforces need to put these key principles into the local context and recognise the robust evidence base behind them.

While this report is focused on interventions to help people already experiencing rough sleeping, it also recognises the central role prevention plays in ending homelessness. Any strategy on address rough sleeping must be integrated within a homelessness prevention framework and sit alongside good quality short term emergency accommodation to enshrine rapid response and early action within national policy and local authority and voluntary sector practice.

Crisis, in its 50th anniversary year, has committed to produce a long term plan to end homelessness for good, including rough sleeping. Crisis believes that homelessness cannot be ended unless interventions and solutions are based on a stronger evidence base of ‘what works’. Until now the evidence base on interventions was piecemeal and scattered. This new report shows us the way forward if we want to end rough sleeping for good and with partnership working and political will we know we can achieve this.

Jon Sparkes
Chief Executive, Crisis

Executive summary

Introduction

The ongoing need for people to sleep rough on the streets of the UK is indicative of an unacceptable societal failure and recent homelessness projections\(^1\) suggest that the scale of the issue is worsening. Ending rough sleeping is an increasing policy priority across the UK. Crisis, in its 50th anniversary year, has committed to produce a long term plan to end homelessness for good, including rough sleeping.

The existing evidence base on the effectiveness of interventions with rough sleepers is piecemeal and scattered, with key findings far from accessible to policy makers and practitioners. For this reason, Crisis commissioned this review of the existing international evidence base. The study aims to explore what works to end homelessness for rough sleepers. More specifically, it:

- identifies interventions designed to address the housing needs of rough sleepers
- assesses the impacts of rough sleeper interventions
- pinpoints key evidence limitations and gaps
- identifies key lessons for policy and practice

In this executive summary we briefly discuss the evidence review methodology and then present findings for each of the nine interventions examined, including: hostels and shelters; Housing First, Common Ground, Social Impact Bonds, Residential Communities, No Second Night Out, Reconnection, Personalised Budgets, and street outreach. The conclusions return to the core objectives of the review; identifying what works, what does not, the evidence gaps, and implications for policy and practice.

Research methods

This rapid evidence review combines two valuable traditions in assessing ‘what works’: the expert panel and the literature/systematic review. Interviews were conducted with 11 key informants – identified as experts in relation to their knowledge on

\(^1\) Whilst there has been an increase in the number of rough sleepers across Great Britain this hides regional variations. Most notably, there was a reduction in rough sleeping by more than 10% in Scotland between 2011 and 2016.
particular interventions or a particular country context – from the UK, US, Canada, Australia, Finland, Denmark, Germany, and France. Further to this, literature was identified through four main sources: academic databases (Scopus and Google Scholar), Grey literature websites (e.g. Crisis, Shelter, The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, AHURI), references within reviewed literature, and the key informant interviews.

Evidence was only selected for inclusion if it focused on rough sleepers and assessed the impacts of a housing intervention. Moreover, studies were limited to those focused on people already rough sleeping (i.e. homelessness prevention was excluded). Relevant studies from 1990 onwards were included, regardless of their methodology. Ultimately, more than 500 sources informed the review (the bibliography) and just over 200 were included in the reference list in the report.

Hostels and shelters

- Hostels and Shelters (H&S) are intended to fill an emergency or temporary function. They are the predominant accommodation-based response to street homelessness in most Western countries. H&S vary substantially in terms of size, client group, type of building, levels and nature of support, behavioural expectations, nature and enforcement of rules, level of ‘professionalisation’, and seasonal availability. In some contexts, H&S are located within a staircase model whereby residents move through increasingly more ‘normal’ forms of transitional accommodation until they are deemed ‘housing ready’.

- A substantial literature documenting homeless peoples’ experiences in and perceptions of H&S exists, but there is a major dearth of research evaluating their effectiveness as an intervention. The most comprehensive evidence on outcomes derives from RCTs which compare ‘treatment as usual’ (TAU) provisions (which typically involve some form of hostel or shelter) with Housing First. All of these have been conducted outside the UK and focus on one subgroup only (that being people with complex needs).

- As an emergency solution, H&S provide immediate relief from life on the street. Some rough sleepers successfully navigate their way through the H&S system and access independent accommodation, albeit a proportion subsequently return to H&S or street homelessness. H&S abandonment and eviction rates are typically very high.

- H&S protect residents from many of the risks associated with sleeping on the street, but present their own health-related hazards. The onset and/or escalation of drug misuse and post residents is widely reported, the risk of communicable disease transmission high, and deterioration in mental health common. The management of antisocial behaviour is an ongoing challenge for staff.

- Evidence indicates consistently that many (and perhaps the majority of) homeless people find H&S intimidating or unpleasant environments. Some choose not to use H&S due to fears around personal safety and/or pessimistic views regarding their helpfulness in terms of offering a route out of homelessness. That said, a (to date unquantified) minority express a desire to remain in congregate H&S or supported accommodation in the long term.

- Concerns about using mainstream H&S tend to be particularly acute for young people, transgender people, and women. Homeless people with complex needs rarely fare well in standard H&S given their inability to cope with the rules and environment. There is a consensus that specialist H&S, or alternative responses entirely, may be more appropriate for these subgroups (e.g. dedicated units with a training/employment focus for young people, or Housing First for individuals with complex needs etc.).

- Barriers to implementation include the high costs involved in running H&S, unstable funding streams, and a common dissonance between funding for housing and support which can make it difficult to offer residents the support they need. Moreover, a lack of move on housing strategies assessed the impacts of H&S from fulfilling their intended emergency or temporary functions and forcing them to operate as longer-term but unsustainable solutions to street homelessness.

- Key informants feel that H&S are generally ineffective interventions and their use should be avoided inssofar as possible, at least in their current form. They point towards three main issues: they can be dangerous places; they are not suited to a wide range of groups facing multiple forms of exclusion, and they can be difficult to staff due to the challenging work environment. They conclude that shelters should only have a role if stays could be limited to exceptionally short periods of time and these lead directly into permanent housing. Beyond conventional H&S, key informants could see a role for supported housing, claiming that when it is provided as a longer-term solution outside of a staircase model, it can work well, although it is currently often hampered by a lack of move-on accommodation. There is a lack of evidence on the impacts of supported accommodation.

Housing First

- Housing First (HF) provides permanent housing to rough sleepers without preconditions regarding recovery from (or participation in treatment for) substance misuse or mental health problems. Person-centered support is provided on a flexible basis for as long as individuals need it. HF was initially developed in the US and is being increasingly replicated in Canada, Europe and Australia, where it marks a significant departure from the traditional ‘treatment first’ or staircase approach. HF development in the UK has been modest to date, with only a limited number of small-scale projects currently operational.

- The evidence base on HF is exceptionally strong; far stronger than is true of any other housing-related intervention targeting rough sleepers in fact. The evidence includes a mix of large-scale Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) and smaller qualitative studies conducted in a range of international contexts. Further research is however needed to assess long-term impacts and effectiveness for subgroups. There is also scope to further understanding impacts on health and substance misuse, and influence of different programme structures on outcomes.

- HF is best known for its excellent housing retention outcomes, which are especially impressive given that the intervention targets homeless people with complex needs. Retention figures (measured in variable ways over different timeframes) range between 60-90 per cent, and typically coalesce around the 80 per cent mark. This is markedly higher than rates reported for Treatment as Usual (TAU) comparison groups.

- Other (non-housing) outcomes are much more modest. Improvements in physical and mental health are often documented, but tend not to be pronounced, nor significantly different from TAU comparison groups. Existing (slightly mixed) evidence indicates that HF may be equally and is sometimes more
effective than TAU in reducing levels of substance misuse, with many HF evaluations reporting overall reductions in alcohol and/or drug consumption. HF evaluations consistently report reductions in involvement in criminal activity. Many record improvements as regards quality of life, but these do not necessarily exceed those documented for TAU.

- Cost analyses, some of which have been conducted in the UK, indicate that HF is not a low-cost option, but creates potential for savings in the long term given cost offsets in the health and criminal justice systems in particular.

- Debates about fidelity feature significantly in the HF literature. Core to these have been assessments of the relative merits of scatter-site and congregate configurations. Comparisons of the two are few in number, but suggest that there are no significant differences in terms of housing retention or health outcomes. Involvement in substance misuse and/or criminal activity tends to be higher in congregate HF. Loneliness is more common in scatter-site HF, but the behavior of other residents in congregate HF can impede recovery. The majority of homeless people express a strong preference for scatter-site HF.

- HF has traditionally targeted homeless people with complex needs (that is, co-occurring substance misuse and/or mental health problems) and has proven to be highly effective as a housing solution for this group. There is limited evidence regarding outcomes for other subgroups of the homeless population, but adaptations have proven successful for young people and ethnic minorities.

- Key informant interviewees universally support HF. They echoed many of the literature review findings, concluding that the evidence base is strong and the approach has particularly positive impacts on housing retention. However, there are also raised several key points for policy makers to consider: 1) what constitutes Housing First and how loyal to the original model must a project be? 2) The absence of high quality, flexible, multi-disciplinary and intensive support can undermine effectiveness; 3) Suitable housing is not always available for Housing First to be delivered; 4) Homeless people prefer scatter-site rather than congregate programmes; and 5) there are questions about the applicability of the model with other groups and at an earlier stage.

**Common Ground**

- Common Ground (CG) is a form of congregate site supported/supportive housing which is said to target highly vulnerable rough sleepers and places them in accommodation alongside people on low to moderate incomes (who do not have a history of homelessness) in a mixed community. On-site health and social support, retail and leisure facilities are provided alongside a 24 hour concierge service. CG was first developed in the US, and has been adopted as a national model in Australia.

- The evidence base on CG is very limited, despite assertions from some quarters that its expansion is an example of evidence-based policy. There have been no independent evaluations of the model in the US and the number of studies in Australia very small, albeit steadily growing. The process of discarding the outcomes of CG is further complicated by the fact that CG projects are sometimes described under the banner of HF.

- Variable housing retention rates are documented, from one report of 99 per cent in New York, to 74 per cent in Tasmania. High rates of eviction and abandonment have been reported, and these attributed to poor fit between the model and the needs of certain (high needs) clients. Attrition rates appear to be declining over time in some projects, however.

- **Health outcomes for CG residents** show some signs of improvement, but the picture is mixed and more positive as regards psychological functioning than physical health. Mental health outcomes appear to be poorer in comparison to HF. Evidence on substance misuse is especially limited (restricted to one study) and suggests that this may not decline and may even increase in CG facilities, as compared with HF.

- Quality-of-life and social integration outcomes are generally positive for CG participants, with between 70 per cent and 90 per cent considering it their ‘home’. However, restrictive rules and surveillance can lead to feelings of ‘anti-community’ among residents. Indeed, some evidence suggests divisions between supported and unsupported tenants, with a lack of interaction between the two types of resident.

- **There is no evidence on different housing outcomes for subpopulations.** Some evaluations nevertheless note that older tenants and women are more likely to view CG as ‘home’, and women and young people more likely to complain about aspects of anti-community, particularly the behaviour of those under the influence of alcohol or illicit substances.

- The key barrier to implementation is ensuring the right cross-sectoral relationships between agencies so as to provide the correct level of support to tenants. However, a key strength is that CG facilities provide new accommodation and so ease pressure on housing. In Australia, this has been provided at a particularly low cost.

- **While key informants recognised the positive impacts of CG on housing retention and the important role played in support services in achieving this success, they held significant reservations about the congregate site model and the intrusive nature of support. Key informants did not support widespread development of the model.**

**Social Impact Bonds**

- SIBs are a new form of financing social programs that gather private investments to fund specific providers to deliver a service or program. They are increasingly being used, or at least being considered, in response to homelessness in a number of countries (including the US, Canada, Australia and Portugal), and have been trialed at a small scale in the UK.

- There is, as yet, limited evidence on SIB effectiveness. Further evaluation of their impact on outcomes in the homelessness field is needed. As literature points to an increasing number having started, there likely be a better evidence base in the coming years.

- The only available evidence on outcomes is from the London SIB where 64 per cent of those remaining in the cohort at the end of the programme had achieved stable housing outcomes. It also exceeded expectations in housing sustainment at 12 and 18 months.

- Whilst volunteering and part time employment outcomes were not as successful as hoped, the London SIB performed substantially better than initially thought on full time employment. It may be that this funding mechanism incentivises targets traditionally not focused on by homelessness service providers.

- Caution should be exercised as regards the stability of outcomes
over time, however, with the London SIB showing greater success in the first two years than in the final year. Long term evaluations are needed.

- The limited evidence shows that SIBs can be an effective funding mechanism, but complex agreements need to be put in place around the outcomes to be reached, and financial returns for different success rates.

- As SIBs generally fund existing, and usually evidence-based programs, it is reasonable to suppose that if they fund something such as Housing First or Common Ground they will receive the same, or similar results. However, it is possible that with a greater focus from providers on meeting predefined outcomes that performance may improve or decline in some areas.

- Key informants offered contradictory perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of SIBs. Positive impacts were perceived to include: good outcomes for entrenched rough sleepers, access to new funds in order to expand services, more personalised services in some cases, and increased clarity and transparency around outcomes monitoring. However, challenges and limitations include: high targets that compromise service quality, limited innovation in service provision, and difficulties accessing the necessary data for outcomes monitoring. Despite the fairly balanced view of SIBs, there was broad agreement that the model could not be replicated more widely because of its complexity.

Residential communities

- The term residential community covers a range of configurations which accommodate homeless people in a congregate (but usually geographically isolated) environment, wherein the primary focus is not resolving street homelessness per se but rather providing support relating to other areas of residents’ lives. Two key models include: a) residential Therapeutic Communities (TCs) which are based on a well-established therapy model that supports clients to recover from substance misuse; and b) Emmaus communities which are described as self-financing mutually supportive communities where residents live and work together. Modified TCs (MTCs) have been implemented in homeless shelters within the US, and Emmaus communities operate in a number of rural locations in the UK.

- The effectiveness of the TC (and MTC) approaches in dealing with addiction in the general population is evidence by a well-established body of evidence which includes rigorous (primarily quantitative) research, but it has been noted that further research is needed to be fully confident about the intervention’s effectiveness in homeless shelters. The evidence base on Emmaus communities or similar projects is weak by comparison, being limited to a very small number of small-scale (primarily qualitative) evaluations.

- Evidence on TCs consistently indicates that the model is effective in reducing levels of substance misuse, mental health problems and involvement in criminality, including when employed in homeless shelters. Evaluations of Emmaus communities suggest that they can improve residents’ quality of life by offering a sense of purpose, enabling skill development and enhancing feelings of self-worth but that the way of life is attractive to a fairly limited clientele. Evidence regarding the impact of either model of residential community on housing outcomes is negligible or non-existent.

- TCs have been shown to be effective in helping at least some homeless people with complex needs overcome addiction, but attrition rates are very high. Emmaus Communities appear to be particularly attractive to and/or beneficial for: people with little formal education or work experience, ex-offenders, individuals with mild learning difficulties, and those with experience of or a liking for communal living. They are considered less suitable for: women, young people, ethnic minorities, and the ‘most chaotic’ or chronic street homeless people.

No Second Night Out

- Currently operating in England only, NSNO aims to assist those new to rough sleeping by providing an offer that means they do not have to sleep rough for a second night. There is widespread variation in the way NSNO principles are practiced, but it typically consists of some combination of assertive outreach, public engagement, support to access temporary accommodation and/or reconnection. Service users’ needs are assessed in NSNO ‘hubs’.

- The evidence base on NSNO is limited, consisting of small-scale evaluations of NSNO services in particular localities, together with a broader review of 20 projects. With one notable exception, the evidence is primarily on short-term housing outcomes and draw on interview, administrative and survey data.

- NSNO is effective in quickly finding the vast majority of service users temporary accommodation, with only a minority recorded as returning to the streets in the short term (in that locality, at least).

- Some service users have praised the treatment received and report benefiting from the support offered. Others, however, have been dissatisfied with the type and level of support received, refused offers of what they regarded as substandard accommodation, declined offers of reconnection, and/or returned to rough sleeping or sofa surfing.

- Limited availability of housing can undermine the effectiveness of NSNO, with accommodative accommodation shortages being particularly acute in London and contributing to overly long hub stays. Long waits for rough sleepers to be ‘found’ and have their status confirmed by outreach workers also restrict its effectiveness in some contexts. Further to this, time-limited funding has been a key barrier to lasting implementation.

Reconnection

- Reconnection involves returning rough sleepers to their ‘home’ area. Some reconnections are ‘international’ in that they involve repatriating immigrants to their country of origin; others ‘domestic’ in that they relocate rough sleepers from somewhere they have no local connection to an area where they do have established connections within their home country. The level and nature of support involved with reconnections varies dramatically – from intensive assessment of needs and brokering of support in the recipient area at one extreme, to virtually nothing at the other.

- The escalation of reconnection in the UK, and England especially, has
Ending rough sleeping: what works? An international evidence review

Executive summary

Ending rough sleeping: what works?

• Personalised Budgets have only been implemented with homeless people in the UK and the evidence base is limited to a relatively small number of pilot project evaluations. Studies use administrative data analysis and qualitative interviews with service providers and service users.

• Housing outcomes are fairly well documented, with pilot projects generally securing and maintaining accommodation in around 40-60 per cent of cases, although this is potentially higher in Wales with most at least sourcing temporary accommodation. Significantly, the suitability of accommodation is determined by the rough sleeper, so housing outcomes are difficult to compare.

• Evidence of wider impacts is limited but qualitative data suggest many positive impacts beyond housing, including: health improvements and more appropriate access to healthcare; reductions in substance misuse, re-establishing positive social networks, improved self-esteem, increases in social welfare claims, and improved engagement with other services and agencies.

• There has been no analysis of whether the approach is more or less effective with particular subpopulations and the approach is yet to be trialled with the wider homeless population.

• Personalised Budgets are in their infancy in the homeless field and they agreed that the evidence base is relatively weak. Despite the limited evidence base, key informants were supportive of this person-centred approach and advocated wider implementation alongside housing-led solutions such as Housing First.

Street outreach

• Operating in some form in various countries, street outreach is an important component of many rough sleeper interventions (e.g. Housing First, Personalised Budgets etc.). In very broad terms, street outreach is the delivery of services to homeless people on the street. Assertive Outreach is a particular form of street outreach that targets the most disengaged rough sleepers with chronic support needs and seeks to end their homelessness. It can be defined by three distinctive facets: 1] The primary aim is to end homelessness; 2] Multi-disciplinary support; 3] Persistent, purposeful,

occurred in the absence of robust evidence regarding its effectiveness. Evidence regarding the impacts of reconnection is, at present, extremely weak – in large part because outcomes are recorded in only a very small minority of cases, and even then this is typically only to confirm that the individual involved has arrived in the destination area.

• The evidence which does exist (which is limited to a single study of reconnections within the UK) indicates that outcomes for rough sleepers vary dramatically. Some do access housing and re-engage with support services in the recipient area, but others sleep rough in the recipient area, return to the identifying area, or refuse the reconnection offer entirely. Most targeted individuals describe the process as distressing and bewildering, especially if they have no meaningful connection or believe they will be at risk of harm in the recipient area.

• Reconnections are most likely to be effective when targeted rough sleepers are newly homeless or recent arrivals to the identifying area (i.e. where they are first contacted on the street), have a (recent) history of homelessness; 2] Multi-disciplinary outreach is the delivery of services to homeless people on the street. Assertive Outreach is a particular form of street outreach that targets the most disengaged rough sleepers with chronic support needs and seeks to end their homelessness. It can be defined by three distinctive facets: 1] The primary aim is to end homelessness; 2] Multi-disciplinary support; 3] Persistent, purposeful,

• Barriers to implementation include: reticence or inability on the part of recipient areas to provide adequate services for reconnected rough sleepers; the actions of non-interventionist support agencies which are said to undermine reconnection policies; and resistance on the part of rough sleepers themselves which is often born out of unrealistic expectations or misinformation, negative experiences of services in the recipient area, and/or fear that they will be at risk of harm if they return.

• Whilst there is widespread consensus that reconnection is appropriate in some cases – notably where rough sleepers have made an unplanned move and abandoned ‘live’ connections or services in their ‘home’ area – the limits and risks associated with reconnection raise important ethical questions. These include: denial of services to rough sleepers with no recognised local connection; uncertainty regarding the legitimacy and/or severity of risk to rough sleepers in recipient areas; inadequate service responses in some recipient areas; and the fragility or lack of support networks in recipient areas. These dilemmas are most acute when reconnection is employed as a ‘single service offer’.

• Key informants were critical of the current reconnection model in the UK. There was no evidence of the positive experiences documented in the literature review, instead they highlighted concerns about the lack of support available in the receiving area and the lack of a focus on what is best for the individual. Informants were particularly negative about reconnections within the UK, whereas perspectives on international reconnections were mixed – largely because those who remain in the UK would have no recourse to public assistance.

Personalised Budgets

• Personalised Budgets have been used to support entrenched rough sleepers. Support workers have access to a budget for each rough sleeper (£2,000-£3,000) which they can spend on a wide variety of items (from a caravan to clothing) in order to help secure and maintain accommodation. Importantly, rough sleepers identify their own needs and help to shape their own support plan.

• Personalised Budgets are in their infancy in the homelessness field and they agreed that the evidence base is relatively weak. Despite the limited evidence base, key informants were supportive of this person-centred approach and advocated wider implementation alongside housing-led solutions such as Housing First.
assertive support. In some contexts enforcement is used alongside assertive outreach.

- There is relatively limited evidence on the impacts of assertive outreach, however much is known about the characteristics of more effective services. A handful of key studies have been published on the Rough Sleepers Initiative and Rough Sleepers Unit programmes in England and Scotland and on Street to Home in Australia, and these provide some insight into housing outcomes but nothing on impacts on wider support needs nor service costs.

- Assertive Outreach has proven to significantly reduce the number of rough sleepers, with numbers reducing by approximately two thirds within three years under the Rough Sleeper Unit Programme in England and by more than a third within two years in the Scottish Rough Sleepers Initiative.

- The type of accommodation provided following Assertive Outreach impacts significantly on housing retention. First, where outreach leads to permanent, rather than temporary, accommodation tenancy sustainment outcomes are better. Second, accommodating rough sleepers in shared or congregate housing appears to be less effective and less desirable than self-contained options. There is no evidence on the longer term impacts of assertive outreach.

- The (limited) evidence on the impact of enforcement on rough sleepers indicates that, when combined with sufficiently intensive, tailored and high quality support it can offer a ‘window of opportunity’ prompting targeted individuals to accept offers of temporary accommodation and/or engage more constructively with other services. It can, however, also displace rough sleepers, by ‘pushing’ them into areas that are more dangerous and/or where they are more difficult for outreach workers to find and assist. Positive outcomes are more likely when a personally tailored and staged approach is adopted (wherein enforcement is used as a last resort).

- There has been limited examination of the impacts of assertive outreach on different population subgroups, however studies do point towards a key concern regarding outcomes for those who have no connection to the area. Research finds that assertive outreach is sometimes used to move people on and return them to ‘home’ areas, occasionally with little consideration of the circumstances they are being returned to.

- Key barriers to effective implementation of assertive outreach include: 1) the absence of a suitable permanent housing offer; 2) the absence of suitable multi-disciplinary support; 3) overcoming negative perceptions amongst rough sleepers about outreach services.

- Many key informants offered their views on assertive outreach services. They felt it was an important intervention, especially for those with the highest support needs. Their views reflected findings of the literature review, that success is underpinned by the availability of suitable permanent accommodation and a wide range of support.

**Conclusion**

- This review provides a detailed insight into the effectiveness of key interventions with rough sleepers. Reflecting across all interventions reveals important lessons about what works, what does not and the policy implications. We are also able to identify the gaps within the evidence base.

**What works?**

- Housing First: Housing First (HF)

outreach is a key component of several interventions (e.g. NSNO, PB, HF), particularly those targeting homeless people with complex needs and entrenched rough sleepers. Significantly, assertive outreach alone is insufficient, indeed potentially unethical, if it is not accompanied by a meaningful and suitable accommodation offer.

- Meeting wider support needs: Impacts of interventions such as HF on wider support needs such as physical and mental health, substance misuse and criminal activity are often documented, although outcomes are often not significantly different from Treatment As Usual (TAU) comparison groups. Whereas, interventions such as residential communities offer good outcomes for wider support needs but housing outcomes are often unreported.

**What does not work?**

- Unsuitable hostels and shelters: Hostels and Shelters (H&S) are intended to fulfill an emergency or temporary function and thus vary substantially in terms of size and nature. The evidence base focuses on large-scale emergency accommodation, with limited support and often problematic move-on arrangements. Evidence indicates consistently that many (and perhaps the majority of) homeless people find H&S intimidating environments. Significantly, a lack of move on housing stymies the system, forcing H&S to operate as longer-term but unsustainable solutions to street homelessness. Beyond conventional H&S, there is a role for supported housing, on either a transitional or long-term basis, when it is provided as a solution outside of a staircase model.

- Unsuitable, absent or inadequate support: Providing the right support is a considerable challenge for homelessness services and the
Executive summary

The evidence review revealed multiple examples where support did not work effectively. Particular concerns have been raised about the ethicality and potential harmful impacts of single service offers, particularly the denial of key services to individuals with no local connection who refuse ‘poor’ single service offers of support (e.g. a poorly devised reconnection plan).

**Policy implications**

Current approaches to address rough sleeping are not as effective as they might (and need) to be. The development of an improved approach to ending homelessness must of course incorporate the views of rough sleepers and those who work with them, and take into account homelessness prevention, but the learning from this evidence review can play a key role in shaping a new approach. It suggests five key principles should underpin this approach:

1. **Recognise heterogeneity** – of individual rough sleepers’ housing and support needs and their different entitlements to publicly funded support. Local housing markets and rough sleeper population profiles will also vary across the UK.
2. **Take swift action** – to prevent or quickly end street homelessness, thereby reducing the number of rough sleepers who develop complex needs and potentially become entrenched.
3. **Employ assertive outreach leading to a suitable accommodation offer** – by actively identifying and reaching out to rough sleepers and offering suitable accommodation.
4. **Be housing-led** – offering swift access to settled housing
5. **Offer person-centred support and choice** – via a client-centred approach based on cross-sector collaboration and commissioning.

There are clearly still gaps in the legislative frameworks for England, Wales and Scotland that would need to be addressed if we were to adhere to the five principles set out for ending rough sleeping in this report. While there is a history of progressive changes to homelessness legislation across the UK, this is a major barrier to overcome. Making amendments to legislation requires significant political support, is time consuming, and technically challenging.

The study identifies several barriers to implementing the proposed improved approach, including: 1] A lack of suitable settled accommodation within existing housing stock; 2] Difficulties accessing funding which is secure for the longer-term and can fund sustainable interventions; 3] Tendencies towards commissioning of support services in silos when there is a clear need for collaborative approaches between sectors (e.g. health, criminal justice etc); 4] Insufficient understanding about the effectiveness of interventions with different subgroups (e.g. Does Housing First work effectively with people who have low level support needs?); 5] Ineligibility of some rough sleepers to access publicly funded services; 6] If legislation is to be changed, this requires significant political support, is time consuming, and technically challenging; and 7] A shift towards person-centred support may be hampered by overly bureaucratic and burdensome processes.

**Summation**

In the UK there is both an opportunity and a need for change in the way rough sleepers are assisted. The findings presented from this review should be used alongside the wider body of work being undertaken by Crisis with rough sleepers and those who work with them, to shape an improved approach and end rough sleeping. Moreover, we hope this synthesis will provide a reference point for policy makers, practitioners and researchers working with rough sleepers across the globe.
Introduction

1.1 Introduction
The ongoing need for people to sleep rough on the streets of the UK is indicative of an unacceptable societal failure. Bramley’s (2017) recent homelessness projections suggest that the issue is worsening: the number of people sleeping rough across Great Britain increased by nearly 50 per cent between 2011 and 2016 and is expected to rise by a further 75 per cent within 10 years. Rough sleeping is proven to detrimentally impact upon people’s lives, including but not limited to their health, substance misuse, education, employment, social networks, and involvement in criminal offending.

Crisis, in its 50th anniversary year, has committed to produce a long-term plan to end homelessness for good, including rough sleeping. Crisis believes that homelessness cannot be ended unless interventions and solutions are based on a stronger evidence base of ‘what works’. However, the existing evidence base on interventions with rough sleepers is piecemeal and scattered, with key findings far from accessible to policy-makers and practitioners.

In response to this challenge, Crisis commissioned this review of the existing international evidence base. The study will feed into the wider body of work being undertaken by Crisis in its 50th anniversary year and will inform recommendations to Westminster and devolved governments. While the review is intended for a UK audience, it also provides a key resource on rough sleeping interventions for policymakers, practitioners and researchers elsewhere.

1.2 Research aim and objectives
The study aims to explore what works to end homelessness for rough sleepers. More specifically, the research:

- Identifies interventions designed to address the housing needs of rough sleepers
- The evidence review first identifies the range of different interventions that have been developed to address the housing needs of rough sleepers across the globe.
- Assesses the impacts of rough sleeper interventions
- For each intervention, the review analyses the known housing impacts. Consideration is also given to impacts on a wider range of issues (e.g. health, offending, employment) and any cost impacts.
- Pinpoints key evidence limitations and gaps
- The evidence review identifies the key evidence gaps and limitations in relation to each intervention and also more broadly across international rough sleeping interventions research.

1.3 The UK policy context
This evidence review is timely as ending rough sleeping is an emerging policy priority across the UK. This section briefly introduces the homelessness policy and legislative context in each UK nation, with a particular focus on rough sleepers. We discuss the context in each UK nation separately as there is increasing recognition that ‘there is no such thing as a UK experience in the housing field’. Homelessness policy and legislation have diverged across the UK nations since the onset of devolution in 1999.

In England, the legislative framework, first introduced by the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, places a duty on local authorities to secure settled accommodation for homeless households deemed to be in priority need and unintentionally homeless. However, rough sleepers largely fall short of the vulnerability requirements that must be met in order to be deemed a priority, and are therefore offered limited statutory support. More recently, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 received royal assent and its commencement (April 2018) will change the duties placed upon local authorities. Local authorities will now be expected to take reasonable steps to help all households, including rough sleepers, albeit there will be no absolute duty to secure accommodation. While the legislation will have positive impacts on many single people, experiences in Wales...
where similar legislation already exists, suggest the impacts on rough sleepers may be limited.

In England, services for rough sleepers have often developed outside of the legislative framework, including: the Rough Sleepers Initiative in 1998, the Rough Sleepers Unit (1999) and No Second Night Out in 2011. Following the creation of the Rough Sleeper Unit in 1999, a specialist unit designed to drive cross-government co-operation and introduce new ways of tackling the problem, rough sleeping in Scotland has been reduced by two thirds. That reduction was maintained for most of the 2000s. Whilst the department was based in the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) it bypassed the ordinary structures, reporting directly to the Permanent Secretary and accountable for its performance to Number 10. The Unit was disbanded and numbers of rough sleepers remained fairly constant until the end of the 2000s when numbers began to rise rapidly.

This trend of non-legislative innovation persists, with a catalogue of recent commitments by the Westminster Government towards the end of 2016, including: £20m for Homelessness Prevention; £23m for Trailblazers; £20m in rough sleeping grants; £10m for Social Impact Bonds and further commitments at the end of 2017, including: £28m for three Housing First pilots projects and the establishment of a Homelessness Reduction Taskforce. One key challenge of non-statutory interventions is that they are often time-limited (e.g. Rough Sleepers Initiative) or fail to develop nationwide.

Scotland is the most progressive of the UK nations in relation to the rights conferred upon rough sleepers. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a duty on local authorities to provide temporary accommodation for all homeless households and in the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2010 extended that duty to end the priority need test by the end of 2012, entitling all unintentionally homeless households to permanent accommodation. Scotland also introduced a housing support duty which commenced in 2013. Taken together, these legislative changes mean that rough sleepers in Scotland have a stronger set of housing entitlements than almost anywhere else in the world. Notably, only in Scotland has there been a reduction in rough sleeping over recent years.

Despite positive developments in Scotland, the legislative framework is crisis-focused and it was clear that the abolition of priority need would be difficult to achieve without a more preventative approach. In 2010 the Scottish Government supported local authorities to work together across five regional Housing Options Hubs in order to develop services that more effectively prevent homelessness – learning from approaches already pursued in England and Wales. More recently, the Scottish Government has shown an interest in pursuing the Housing First model, whilst also exploring the potential for ‘preventative spend’ and savings across budgets at a national level, e.g. criminal justice.

1.4 Structure of the report

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the evidence review methodology. Chapters 3-11 then discuss the findings in relation to nine key interventions, albeit we recognise that there is often significant overlap between interventions and their associated literatures. The interventions include:

- Hostels and shelters
- Housing First
- Common Ground
- Social Impact Bonds

Until recently the legislative framework in Wales was similar to the framework in England but in 2015 the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 commenced, bringing into law a more prevention-focused approach and extending assistance to all households, not only those in priority need. The legislation does not extend an absolute right to housing to rough sleepers but local authorities are required to take reasonable steps to help secure accommodation. However, the absence of a right to temporary accommodation and support for rough sleepers, as there is in Scotland, has proven to limit any positive impacts on rough sleepers. More recently there have been several funding announcements to support the implementation of prevention efforts across Welsh local authorities and perhaps most notably the Welsh Government is expected to publish an Action Plan on Rough Sleeping, which is likely to include a focus on Housing First.

In Northern Ireland the Housing (NI) Order 1988 places a statutory duty on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (rather than individual local authorities) to provide interim and then permanent accommodation to households assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority. The legislation is largely the same as in England (at least until the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 commences in England). As is true in Scotland, homelessness prevention and housing options is a relatively recent development in Northern Ireland. The Housing Executive developed Housing Solutions and Support Teams tasked with attempting to prevent or relieve homelessness alongside the statutory homelessness assessment. Most recently in 2017, the Housing Executive published the latest five year homelessness strategy for Northern Ireland. The strategy continues to focus on Belfast and Londonderry/Derry where the majority of rough sleeping occurs. Significantly, the strategy also commits to examine the potential for Housing Led Pathway Models for chronic homeless people. This commitment builds on positive experiences of a Housing First pilot model developed under the previous strategy.

Reflecting across homelessness policy developments in the UK nations, three key points emerge. First, with the exception of Scotland, homelessness legislation has successfully failed to give adequate protection to rough sleepers – with no duty on local authorities to provide temporary or permanent accommodation. Second, targeted interventions with rough sleepers have generally been developed outside of legislation, particularly in England (e.g. The Rough Sleepers Initiative), with many failing to develop nationwide or coming to an end. Third, across the entirety of the UK rough sleeping appears to be a strategic priority, with particular attention being given to the expansion of Housing First. This report is timely and it is anticipated that the findings will feed into these emerging policy agendas.
• Residential communities
• No Second Night Out
• Reconnection
• Personalised Budgets
• Street outreach

In each of the findings chapters the discussion follows a similar structure. The intervention is initially described, before a reflection on the nature of the evidence base. The main content within each chapter is then a discussion of known outcomes and impacts – initially focusing on housing but also recognising any wider impacts (e.g. on health) that have been reported. The findings chapters also identify any known barriers to implementation of the approach. Before the final chapter summary, each chapter includes a synthesis of expert perspectives on the intervention.

Chapter 12 concludes the report. It summarises what is currently known about what works and what does not, identifies policy implications, and reflects on opportunities for an improved evidence base.
2.1 The research design
Evidence reviews take many different forms and reflect the needs of the end user, the available budget and timescale. This review is a rapid evidence review, assessing, in a fairly comprehensive and systematic way, the best available evidence on what works to end rough sleeping. The review is not a ‘gold standard’ full systematic evidence review – largely due to the short timeframe for the work but also because much of the most relevant homelessness research would fall short of the ‘quality’ threshold typically set by systematic evidence reviews. Additionally, we wished to supplement the evidence base with qualitative perspectives of experts from across the globe – this approach combines the valuable insights of two traditions in assessing ‘what works’: the expert panel and the unbiased systematic review. Throughout the discussion of findings we have kept these two evidence sources clearly separated and they are only considered collectively in the concluding chapter.

The evidence review consisted of four phases. This chapter provides an overview of the approach and the methods employed in each of these phases:

- homelessness expert interviews
- evidence search
- evidence selection
- analysis and reporting.

2.2 Homelessness expert interviews
While a review of published studies constitutes the primary method for the evidence review, we also included interviews with 11 experts in the field of homelessness from across the globe. Their views were sought for two main reasons. First, in the homelessness field some intervention evaluations may not be identified through traditional searches and experts can play a useful role in identifying these potentially important studies. Second, we see value in gathering the qualitative perspectives of experts – these views can help to explain findings in the literature and also raise awareness of strengths or weaknesses perhaps not documented in the evidence base.

In-depth telephone interviews, lasting between 30 minutes and two hours were undertaken with 10 homelessness experts and one additional interview transcript from a previous study was analysed as secondary data (with permission from the interviewee). In total we were able to draw upon the perspectives of 11 expert interviewees. Respondents were identified as experts in relation to their knowledge on particular interventions or a particular country context. Most (7) interviewees were academics, whilst others (4) were in government or the third sector. Interviewees were located across the following countries: UK (4), USA, Canada, Australia, Finland, Denmark, Germany, and France.

2.3 Evidence search
The evidence search identified literature from four main sources. Each of these is briefly discussed and the search terms used are also identified.

Academic databases: We initially anticipated undertaking searches using two different academic databases (e.g. Scopus and IBSS), however studies of evidence review coverage have pointed towards the potential importance of using Google Scholar. Exploratory searches using Google Scholar indicated that it identifies some studies not picked up by databases such as Scopus. Consequently, we searched Scopus and Google Scholar in this review. We searched for the time period 1990-present, which is perhaps a longer time period than other reviews might have considered, however we were aware of particularly effective interventions having taken place during the 1990s (the Rough Sleepers Initiative, for example) and we wished to capture this literature. The following 12 combinations of search terms were used:
**General search terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Term 1</th>
<th>Search Term 2</th>
<th>Search no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>homeless OR rough sleep</td>
<td>intervention OR program OR service</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homeless OR rough sleep</td>
<td>Systematic review OR evidence review</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intervention-specific search terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Term 1</th>
<th>Search Term 2</th>
<th>Search no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>homeless OR rough sleep</td>
<td>Hostel OR Shelter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitional housing OR Supported housing OR Staircase</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing First</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual budget OR Personal budget</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assertive outreach OR street outreach</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common Ground</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reconnection</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Second Night Out</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Impact Bond OR SIB</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Therapeutic community</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grey literature websites**: Recognising that a significant volume of homelessness research is not published by commercial academic publishers (classified as grey literature) and is unlikely to be identified through social science databases, the evidence search included a search of key UK and international housing and homelessness organisation websites, including: Crisis, Shelter, Homeless Link (UK), The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (Canada), the National Alliance to End Homelessness (USA), AHURI (Australia), and FEANTSA’s Research Observatory – including the European Journal of Homelessness (Europe).

**References**: Key references within reviewed literature, and not identified through other search mechanisms, were also searched.

**Key informants**: During interviews key informants were asked to identify any key studies on rough sleeper interventions, often within their particular country context. Again, where these had not been identified through other sources they were added to the evidence base for review.

2.4 Evidence selection

Our initial searches using the academic databases returned 493,078 results. In this brief subsection we describe the process and criteria used to select the literature for inclusion in the review. We followed three key stages in our selection process.

1. For each of the 12 searches listed above, results were sorted by relevance, then a maximum of 300 returns were selected from both the Scopus and the Google Scholar searches. Hence, under any of the searches the maximum number of papers to be considered would be 600.

2. For each of the 12 searches, papers were then selected/excluded on the basis of their titles. At this stage any duplication between the Scopus and Google Scholar records were removed.

3. Finally, papers were selected/excluded on the basis of abstracts or full text reviews where necessary.

The following table identifies the selection criteria used to identify relevant papers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Selection requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study group</strong></td>
<td>Studies must focus on people who are rough sleepers/street homeless. Studies of the broader homeless population were included only where the impacts on rough sleepers/street homeless could be clearly identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assess the impacts of an intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unless studies considered the impacts of an intervention they were excluded from the review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interventions must seek to address the housing needs of rough sleepers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>However, interventions that address housing needs alongside wider support needs (eg health, offending etc) were included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The timing of interventions is significant. Studies were limited to those focused on people already rough sleeping. This excluded homelessness prevention studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>Studies adopting either/both qualitative or/and quantitative methods were included. We did not exclude studies on the basis of research methods. Instead, a qualitative commentary was provided on the methods used when findings were reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practicalities</strong></td>
<td>Study reports must be available to the research team and published in English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 illustrates the evidence selection process and quantifies the number of papers selected and excluded at each key stage. Ultimately, more than 500 sources informed the review (the bibliography) and just over 200 were cited (the reference list) in the report. Significantly, in the academic databases searches we found only an 11 per cent overlap in the sources returned by Scopus and those returned by Google Scholar. This validates the decision to include Google Scholar in our search process.

2.5 Analysis and reporting
Evidence on each intervention was analysed separately, using the following broad framework to guide the analysis and reporting: i) a description of the intervention and any variations in implementation structures; ii) the nature of the evidence base, including methods used, scale of the study and geographical location; iii) impacts and outcomes on housing and wider support needs and any evidence on differentiated impacts for different population subgroups; iv) costs and cost implications; and v) any known barriers to implementation.

Key informant perspectives on each intervention were analysed inductively and reported separately within each thematic chapter. This structure is followed in each of the intervention-specific chapters that follow, beginning with hostels and shelters.

Many papers were relevant but added no further detail to the c. 200 papers already cited and were therefore not included in the report.
3.1 Defining the intervention
Hostels and Shelters (H&S) provide emergency or temporary accommodation. They exist in a wide variety of forms ranging, for example, from peripatetic volunteer-run emergency shelters which offer little more than a bed for the night on a first come first served basis in a building that normally serves another purpose (e.g. a church hall), to referral-only longer stays in high support units in purpose-built buildings run by professionally trained staff. H&S may be differentiated by the following key dimensions:

- number of beds – from small-scale with a few beds only, to several hundred beds
- type of building – from a single purpose built or converted building, to single room occupancy hotels, and dedicated apartment buildings
- form of accommodation – from large dormitories, to individual rooms, to congregations of individual self-contained units
- nature of support and services offered – from a bed (and possibly other basic subsistence such as food) only, to intensive personalised support addressing housing, health and other needs
- client group – from general needs to specific provision for subpopulations (e.g. young adults, women, or those with more or less complex support needs)
- behavioural expectations – from those operating on a relatively ‘unconditional’ basis, to those that actively encourage or even insist upon change in residents’ behaviour and/or lifestyle
- nature and enforcement of rules – especially but not solely in relation to alcohol and drug use
- level of ‘professionalisation’ – from shelters run entirely by volunteers (with varying levels of training) to units operated by professionally trained paid staff; and/or
- seasonal availability – from cold weather shelters operating in winter only, to projects open all year.

All H&S are, in theory at least, intended to provide accommodation on an emergency or temporary basis. In many contexts, H&S are located within a staircase or ‘continuum of care’ model, whereby homeless individuals move through different forms of emergency or temporary accommodation until they are deemed ‘housing ready’ and allocated independent settled housing.

In all such cases, moves from one stage to another are premised upon evidenced change in circumstances or behaviour. Some H&S operate independently of any such continuum or staircase, however.

3.2 The evidence base
There are a substantial number of academic sources that discuss H&S. These consist largely of qualitative studies focussing on the experience and perceptions of service users. Relevant literature includes a number of ethnographies which give detailed insight into experiences at the individual user or project level, but these and other qualitative studies of H&S tend not to assess data on housing, health or other outcomes. There are in fact few comprehensive or systematic evaluations assessing H&S effectiveness as an intervention, and this is particularly true of H&S assisted by professionally trained staff.  

Ending rough sleeping: what works? An international evidence review

with no move on provision. Even for H&S operating within a broader staircase system there is a paucity of evaluative evidence beyond RCTs that compare ‘treatment as usual’ (TAU) with other interventions (at least some form of hostel and/or shelter) with Housing First. The wide variety of programmes on offer also means it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about what does and does not work. Albeit, as stated above, the evidence base is heavily focused on H&S which are large-scale, offer limited support, and often face problematic move-on arrangements.

Research on programmes for homeless people that involved H&S can be divided into 4 categories, including those that focus on:

1. Function and approach of the H&S;
2. H&S as a stepping stone to social reintegration;
3. H&S as a place for other interventions around health, substance misuse etc.; and
4. Evaluations of specific H&S programs.14

The vast majority of this research comes from the North American, UK, and European contexts. It should be noted that all of the RCTs assessing TAU outcomes have occurred outside of the UK.

3.3 Outcomes
The outcomes measured in evaluations of staircase programs (in particular) can differ substantially from one another. Thus, it should be noted that direct comparisons are not possible and this review gives an overview of patterns and trends. Despite differences in measurement, housing outcomes are the most directly comparable outcome and may offer the greatest insight into the effectiveness of programs.15

Housing
Emergency H&S beds are not intended for long-term use, meaning that length of stay in housing in this context is sometimes capped at a certain number of consecutive days. Alternatively, individuals may stay in some forms of temporary H&S over the long term, marking a failure of the intervention to provide a link to more permanent services. In the case of H&S associated with the staircase model, stays are expected to be longer, but an individual is required to move on after a period of stability – ranging between 3 months and 3 years16 but depending on programme model, context, and commissioning arrangements.17 Alternatively, failure to comply with requirements (that often include sobriety and interacting with available support) may lead to an individual discharging from their journey to permanent housing. This may involve returning to emergency forms of H&S, or even to the street.18 Importantly, in recognition of these problems, evidence from the UK19 and rest of Europe suggests a general move from large scale provision to much smaller H&S,20 the establishment of dedicated resettlement teams,21 and efforts towards a harm reduction approach which does not require abstinence before someone can access permanent accommodation.22 Many studies and evaluations of H&S measure whether individuals returned to emergency H&S or to the streets. This shows there is wide consensus that emergency H&S should never be a long-term option. However, the distinction between emergency H&S services and transitional housing may become blurred when emergency H&S stays lengths, and with the wide variety of services on offer in some of these environments.24

Three evaluations following up the trajectories of those leaving emergency H&S/temporary accommodation are of note. One study with 70 participants in Georgia, USA found that 58 per cent were residing in stable housing situations at follow-up interviews one year after leaving.23 A more robust study from England interviewed 400 individuals moving from temporary (a range of types) to permanent accommodation in London before the move, and then at 6 months, and 15 to 18 months afterwards. 73 per cent of respondents remained housed in the original accommodation in which they were rehoused across the 18 month period, and 8 per cent moved to a new tenancy. Of the remaining, 3 per cent were staying temporarily with relatives or friends, and 5 per cent had returned to H&S or the streets.25 This suggests that move on from H&S can be successful, but is chronically underexplored – particularly in the long-term and in assessing who does and does not move on. The level of support provided to help individuals access permanent accommodation appears paramount to their move on.

success,\(^\text{27}\) as does the affordability of the accommodation secured.\(^\text{28}\) Thus, whether stays in emergency style H\&S contribute to finding long-term permanent housing solutions is hard to ascertain due to the poor evaluative evidence base.\(^\text{29}\) However, it is clear that many emergency H\&S do not provide support to find permanent solutions and can lead to a concentration of many of the most complex needs clients.\(^\text{30}\) It should also be noted that some H\&S specifically run in the winter, with studies noting longer stay for people in poor winter conditions.\(^\text{31}\) These sorts of shelter are less likely to be of a high quality.\(^\text{32}\)

The success of programmes is not always measured in terms of long-term housing retention. Instead, short-term outcomes may be compared with programmes that provide support, without housing or no support at all. One example in New York found 62 per cent of residents of a transitional programme went on to some form of long-term housing compared with 35 per cent of those that received similar support but no housing.\(^\text{33}\) Moreover, when housing outcomes and retention are taken into account, the type and quality is not always assessed critically and as in the previous study focuses on whether an individual returns to the street or emergency shelter often in a timeframe 12 months or less.\(^\text{34}\) Novak et al.\(^\text{35}\) report data from several USA studies of staircase schemes in the 1990s which showed significantly poorer housing outcomes for single people than for families and a distinct dearth of independent evaluations. Thus, it is important to question not only whether housing is achieved, but also whether the housing outcomes are desirable, particularly in relation to the person in question. For instance, moving in with friends and family may be a good outcome for some, but unsuitable for others. Similarly, overcrowded accommodation is not a good long-term outcome.\(^\text{36}\)

An alternative measure of programme outcomes can be to assess the success of those that completed the programme against those that dropped out. For instance, USA studies found that participants who completed transitional housing programs were more likely to obtain permanent housing than those who did not.\(^\text{37}\) Similar difficulties in comparability are illustrated by a study from Georgia, USA. Here, a programme of rapid rehousing (RRH) providing quick access to a private rental tenancy with limited support for up to one year was compared with a staircase programme. It found that 7.2 per cent of RRH clients return to shelter within 2 years, compared with 29.2 per cent of staircase clients. When controlling for several individual characteristics, the odds of returning to shelter were 2.5 times greater for staircase clients than for RRH clients. However, differences in eligibility criteria mean those receiving RRH generally had lower support needs.\(^\text{38}\) Finally, one evaluation reported that 92 per cent of residents who completed a staircase programme remained in the housing one year after discharge.\(^\text{39}\) However, as Novak et al.\(^\text{40}\) points out, more than half of the sample of 228 individuals failed to complete the programme and high attrition rates are common, particularly for highly structured facilities.\(^\text{41}\)

In the absence of large-scale, structured evaluations of emergency H\&S systems, classifications of different types of shelter user offer insight into their role in addressing homelessness, and the lengths of stay of different types of people. In a seminal study, Culhane and Kuh\(^\text{42}\) clustered shelter use patterns from 2 USA cities into 3 typologies: chronic, episodic, and transitional. The transitional homeless population experienced homelessness once, for a short period of time; episodic homeless are people with the most episodes of shelter use, moving between H\&S, jails, hospitals and other settings over time; and the chronic homeless population is entrenched in the shelter system, staying far beyond what can be considered temporary. Moreover, whilst transitional clients are more likely to be younger and have fewer physical disabilities, chronic shelter users are older and have the highest rates of behavioural health treatment and disability.\(^\text{43}\)
findings have also been found in Canada, 44 H&S in the UK,45 and studies in the EU.46 These studies show that, despite their temporary remit, episodic and chronic/longstay homeless populations generally use more than 50 per cent of available beds, with lengthy stays upwards of 4 years reported for some.47 In Finland, descriptive evidence suggests some hostel users remained in this accommodation for decades, before all H&S were repurposed into congregate site Housing First in an attempt to combat their ineffectiveness.48

Whilst some H&S concentrate individuals with complex needs, evidence from a number of sources laments that some H&S may turn away individuals whose needs are deemed too high. Alternatively, with the staircase approach those with high support needs are more likely to struggle with the requirements of the programme.49 While some H&S offer no or very basic services, those offered as part of a transitional housing service are generally better resourced, more comfortable, and provide a personalised approach to support. Thus, those sheltered remaining became fractioned with those able to convince officials that they will benefit from services gaining access to better quality centres, whilst those with the highest needs more likely to be left entrenched in emergency H&S, or to return to the street.50 However, there are some specialist H&S that work with people who have multiple and complex needs,51 but these are relatively new developments and demand typically exceeds supply, especially in the least in the UK context.52

Health

In reviewing (primarily Canadian) research on this issue, Hutubise et al.53 state that the health of people using emergency H&S presents a serious challenge. Indeed, poor health at the outset or beginning of a transition to supported housing has been associated with exiting the programme.54 Staying in H&S may have preferential health outcomes to living on the street. For instance, a study of sheltered and non-sheltered homeless women in LA found women on the streets were much more likely to have poor physical and mental health, and not access support.55 However H&S can also contribute to poor health and even exacerbate certain conditions. For instance, the mortality rate varies from 2 times to 8 times higher than the rest of the general population (based on studies from the USA, Canada, and Denmark).56 This is largely due to a combination of mental and physical health conditions that are prevalent amongst the homeless population, as well as a greater likelihood of problematic substance misuse. This may be further exacerbated by a sense of helplessness and loss of control in the H&S environment.57 Padgett et al.58 describe how early emergency H&S in the USA were crowded, unsanitary and dangerous often leading homeless residents to be preyed upon with AIDS, hepatitis and tuberculosis common along with usual respiratory problems, injuries, and skin infections. Indeed, one study suggests that routine exposure to blood in the H&S environment may explain the elevated levels of hepatitis C amongst homeless drug users.59

Staircase programmes often emphasise clinical outcomes for those with mental illness and may focus on moving individuals to post programme supportive housing and specialised residential care.60 One study reported that more than three quarters of mentally ill residents took their medication regularly; virtually all were receiving income assistance and other help; and two thirds had no psychiatric crises whilst in residence. Almost 1/3 moved to boarding care site; 1/4 retained independent living about 1/10 went to specialised care centres, back to family, or to other mental health

50 Y-Foundation (2017) A Home of Your Own Housing First and ending homelessness in Finland: Heaven’s Otava Book Printing Ltd.
60 A Home of Your Own Housing First and ending homelessness in Finland: Heaven’s Otava Book Printing Ltd.
facilities respectively. Despite health being a central focus of improvement for most staircase programmes, the lack of evaluative evidence outside of HF RCUs makes it difficult to draw conclusions on its effectiveness. However, a systematic review of housing and support for people with severe mental illness suggests there is little evidence of a difference in outcomes between residential care and independent housing with support. It thus recommends that individual choice may be the best way to determine the type of treatment a person receives.

**Substance misuse**

A high proportion of H&S users have substance misuse issues. Different H&S may apply different rules to the consumption of drugs and alcohol, but abstinence is generally a requirement of H&S forming part of staircase programmes, particularly those in the European Union. Nonetheless, within the UK there remains a shortage of accommodation that allows users to move to abstinence at their own pace. One study notes that individuals are required to address substance misuse in a relatively chaotic and unstable environment before they can access permanent housing. Indeed, a further qualitative study of the experience of drug using shelter users in England suggest users felt unsupported and wished for greater understanding from staff.

A key difficulty in addressing drug use is the effectiveness of its treatment as well as the temptation of being around other users. There is clear tension in the literature around whether maintaining sobriety should be given precedence over harm reduction. This is brought into question by two studies which suggest transitional housing outcomes vary little between those that do and those that do not. Indeed, despite not reaching sobriety, that made it to permanent accommodation generally see a downward trajectory in their substance misuse.

A qualitative study of drug users in Bristol and London found that H&S could be a safe haven for injecting drug users, characterised as a retreat from the chaos of the street. However, they also report that environments that facilitate drug use and risk individuals forming networks and transitioning to new patterns of use which may increase the frequency of injecting. Thus, for some, staying was a safer option than temporary housing with regards to managing their drug use. Similarly, a study of 31 homeless people staying in supportive H&S in Sheffield compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals. 87 per cent of the roofless people had injected drugs in the past month compared with only 13 per cent of those in H&S. When the four largest cities in Scotland compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals. 87 per cent of the roofless people had injected drugs in the past month compared with only 13 per cent of those in H&S. When the four largest cities in Scotland compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals. 87 per cent of the roofless people had injected drugs in the past month compared with only 13 per cent of those in H&S. When the four largest cities in Scotland compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals. 87 per cent of the roofless people had injected drugs in the past month compared with only 13 per cent of those in H&S. When the four largest cities in Scotland compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals. 87 per cent of the roofless people had injected drugs in the past month compared with only 13 per cent of those in H&S. When the four largest cities in Scotland compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals. 87 per cent of the roofless people had injected drugs in the past month compared with only 13 per cent of those in H&S. When the four largest cities in Scotland compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals. 87 per cent of the roofless people had injected drugs in the past month compared with only 13 per cent of those in H&S. When the four largest cities in Scotland compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals. 87 per cent of the roofless people had injected drugs in the past month compared with only 13 per cent of those in H&S. When the four largest cities in Scotland compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals. 87 per cent of the roofless people had injected drugs in the past month compared with only 13 per cent of those in H&S. When the four largest cities in Scotland compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals. 87 per cent of the roofless people had injected drugs in the past month compared with only 13 per cent of those in H&S. When the four largest cities in Scotland compare the group with 15 litre roofless individuals.

**Quality of life and social integration**

Living conditions in H&S vary, and large H&S have been particularly linked with poor health and well-being. Of concern is that large H&S are intimidating – especially for those with mental health difficulties or vulnerable to exploitation. Moreover, reports from the UK suggest people with high support needs are forced to go into large hostel accommodation because of a shortage of suitable private environs which exacerbate the problems they present for all service users. Numerous reports suggest that individuals would rather stay on the streets in many cases than access hostel accommodation, and this means that spare beds can exist alongside rough sleeping. As well as the issues with substance misuse stated in the previous section, the attitudes of workers and the structure of H&S may also create a context favourable to violent behaviour amongst users. This must also be considered alongside the stigmatisation that birth and can continue wider society from living in a hostel. As previously stated, most H&S set rules and regulations for what is appropriate behaviour of service users and staff, as well as conditions of acceptance to the hostel such as abstinence, length of stay and personal characteristics. Other rules upon entry may govern whether individuals can stay during the daytime, rules around guests, and curfews. Failure to adhere to rules may result in penalties such as temporary exclusion, or eviction. Thus, whilst necessary for maintaining safety and security for some, restrictive rules can exclude those with the highest support needs, lead to frustration around the surveillance imposed on the lives of homeless people, and also signify how difficult H&S can be to manage.

For H&S that comprise part of a staircase approach, there are more likely to be services that promote job readiness, health services, and are a key stepping stone to other interventions that can improve the

64 St Mungo’s (2009) Down and Out! The Final Report of St Mungo’s Call 4 Evidence: Mental Health and Street Homelessness. London: St Mungo’s.
quality-of-life and social integration of users. Indeed, a key indicator of success is a greater reliance from individuals on employment and earnings rather than income support programs.79 For instance, in Denmark, H&S have a duty to draw up a plan of a person’s stay and cover element such as health, financial circumstances and opportunities for employment, education or training. This then serves as a manual for the residency and as a basis for subsequent solutions and initiatives.77 In other contexts, the extent of the work plan may be highly variable and could be based on concrete steps towards a goal, or softer indicators particularly for those with more complex needs.78 Despite criticism of the hostel system in England, significant capital investment has been made into improving the physical conditions and creating stronger emphasis on work and learning.79 Better quality physical environment is likely to lead to better outcomes.80 Thus, whilst there is limited evaluative evidence on the success of H&S, they can be the site of a number of effective interventions that are often evaluated separately.81

The key issue for participants in the staircase model is that the variance in service offer means that only some benefit from this integrated approach. Indeed, there is evidence from the UK that many services may only address mental health issues and not health or vice versa, making progress unsustainable for service users with more complex needs.92 Worryingly, the scarcity of provision creates higher thresholds to access housing and mental health treatment, leading to the cycle of high needs individuals ending up in large H&S with no move on.93 Quality-of-life can also be compromised when individuals meeting certain goals are expected to move on. The stress of such a move may stunt an individual’s progress, and lead to undue stress.94 Moreover, failed attempts to move out of H&S can reinforce the feeling of failure for both service users and support workers and reduces the chances of individuals transitioning to leading an independent life.95 The lack of long-term outcomes research also calls into question the effectiveness of interventions around quality-of-life and social integration.96

Most fundamentally, critical views of H&S in some contexts suggest they can be total institutions, consuming all the time of the users and depriving them of freedom.97 It has been noted that the rules established about use of the hostel or shelter may control the identity of users, and keep them in a marginal position. These total institutions tend to alienate and depersonalise users, and can lead to a loss of autonomy that is then difficult to regain.98 This is often termed ‘Shelterisation’.99 This occurs because homeless people are having to compete for a limited/inadequate/inappropriate emergency resource. People are then either endlessly prepared for reintegration, or ‘stressed to their limit’ until eviction for bad behaviour than for arrears - the most important reason for eviction from London’s H&S. With this, 48 per cent of clients who are evicted and 47 per cent of those that are abandoned are seen subsequently to have rough sleeping. These people all have complex support needs.99

**Effectiveness for subpopulations**

Certain groups such as the elderly, those with mental health problems, addictions, or physical health issues tend to stay for prolonged and repetitive periods in emergency

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95 Ibid
Hostels and shelters

In the USA, research shows that Caucasian people stay around half as long in H&S as black people, and both Blacks and Hispanics are overrepresented. Meanwhile, women stay for shorter stints but are more likely to feel unsafe and victimised in this environment, and young people appear more likely to stay in H&S for short periods of time, and have a greater chance of moving to more long-term housing arrangements. In Canada, immigrants and aboriginal people are underrepresented in H&S.

All homeless and marginally housed people are more likely to have experienced/experience sexual or physical assault than members of the general population. However, women and transgender people are more likely than men to be victimised in a hostel environment. Mixed gender hostels can lead to tension, and potential victimisation. The same is true for young adults, who may put themselves at risk by interacting with older, and more entrenched homeless individuals, or in many cases choose not to use H&S at all given their fears about doing so.

With the above concerns, provision for specific communities such as women and youth has been documented across contexts. Many of the same issues come up as with the general population – pride in one’s own independence, lack of support for those with complex needs, restrictive rules, and avoidance due to fear for personal safety or health.

However, specific provision does alleviate some of the more extreme reasons for fearing exploitation, and can provide targeted interventions around employment and training preparation. For young people, some evidence suggests they are less likely to gain good housing outcomes, but in specific provision the communal living arrangements of transitional accommodation allows the time and space for women fleeing domestic violence to move forward, and provides a sense of community that aids in their feelings of safety and security, particularly as it does not allow men. Provision for these subgroups is seriously lacking in some contexts.

As noted above, it is now widely acknowledged that mainstream H&S are often poorly equipped to meet the needs of homeless people with complex needs (see also chapter on Housing First), as these individuals typically struggle to cope with the rules, expectations re engagement with support, and/or the communal environment. That said, there have been a few small-scale attempts to develop more ‘psychologically informed’ hostels for this particular group, which are said to update and make more flexible the principle of the therapeutic community. These have not yet been subject to detailed evaluation, but are said to broadly meet their aim of providing a different type of environment from standard hostels, albeit that it has been noted that it is difficult to put theoretical PIE (Psychologically Informed Environment) into practice in the current political and economic context in the UK.

Another particular group that lacks provision is transgender people who may be forced to accept a gender identity determined by others for the sake of allocation, face a lack of support and understanding from staff, greater chance of exploitation, and may ultimately not find a place due to prejudice from staff and potent


105 Moloko-Phiri, S. S., Mogale, R. S. and Hugo, J. (2017) ‘“A shelter is not a home”: Voices of women, some evidence suggests they are less likely to gain good housing outcomes, but in specific provision the communal living arrangements of transitional accommodation allows the time and space for women fleeing domestic violence to move forward, and provides a sense of community that aids in their feelings of safety and security, particularly as it does not allow men. Provision for these subgroups is seriously lacking in some contexts.’


114 Conduct a new qualitative study with potential tenants who may be forced to accept a gender identity determined by others for the sake of allocation, face a lack of support and understanding from staff, greater chance of exploitation, and may ultimately not find a place due to prejudice from staff and potent...
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Hostels and shelters

Ohle 116 therefore outline steps that can be taken to improve the provision for transgender people in H&S. Older people finding themselves homeless may also want a different kind of environment to younger people, and such provision can be limited.117

Service use and cost

Direct costs are available particularly from the USA context. Evidence suggests that H&S as an intervention reduces service use and cost versus rough sleeping,118 particularly as part of a staircase programme. However, evidence also suggests they are expensive to run both as emergency119 and as transitional120 and are unlikely to contribute significantly in reductions to service use if on-site services are not provided. For instance, research shows that the annual cost for a shelter bed for a single adult ranges from $4100 in Atlanta to $19,800 in New York City, with the median cost per bed $6500 per year being $9300.121 A Dublin, emergency accommodation costs approximately €28,000 per year, with beds in supported temporary accommodation costing approximately €29,000 per year. In this context, it is recommended that temporary accommodation be phased out in Ireland.122 Despite the lack of direct studies of H&S costs in other contexts, studies of Housing First tend to contemplate the cost of providing TAU versus Housing First, and concludes that in the medium to long term, H&S are a more expensive approach (see Housing First chapter).

3.4 Barriers to implementation

Funding for H&S generally comes either from the public sector, or charitable donations. As such, funding can be transient, fluctuate with political priorities, and vary substantially between different projects. Indeed, funding for accommodation and service provision may differ, and a UK report suggests this can lead to complex commissioning arrangements, and both variance and instability of the service offer.123 Such resource constraints and arrangements can lead to a lack of clarity regarding more complex needs.124 However, low threshold transitional schemes can better support these clients into permanent accommodation.125

Several reviews of housing as a route out of homelessness suggest there is consensus that long-term occupants of shelter should be found alternative solutions to both meet their housing needs and provide the space for rough sleepers in a genuine emergency situation.126 Moreover, a central debate is whether temporary housing is favoured in some communities due to a lack of ananoem, report, feanta_housing_final_en.pdf. As such, funding for H&S are not an ‘inevitable’ part of the homelessness response, as evidenced by their absence in Finland – one of the few countries where homelessness is decreasing.127

A report using data from 2016 in England shows that 34 per cent of projects reported that the main barrier to moving people into permanent accommodation is a lack of affordable housing. Indeed, 30 per cent were ready to move on, with 27 per cent of that group having been waiting for 6 months or longer.128 In different UK report suggests specific shortages of small units providing intensive support for those with serious mental health problems, units for women, drinkers, and people with substance misuse issues (that continue using).129 In fact, affordable housing provision is an ongoing problem across contexts.

3.5 Expert perspectives

Most key informants discussed hostels, shelters or transitional forms of accommodation. Perspectives covered the same diverse range of hostel and temporary accommodation types included in the literature review and key informants across all countries. H&S constitute a common intervention with rough sleepers in most western countries. And yet, there was broad consensus that these are generally not effective interventions and their use should be avoided insofar as possible, at least in their current form. One interviewee described H&S as the ‘worst kind’ of solution. Despite their widespread use, H&S are not an ‘inevitable’ part of the homelessness response, as evidenced by their absence in Finland – one of the few countries where homelessness is decreasing.

Key informants pointed to three main issues with H&S and these closely reflect the challenges identified in the literature review. First, H&S may be ‘dangerous places’ that ultimately cause harm to individuals who stay there. Several interviewees described how people were ‘choosing’ to sleep rough rather than access shelter provision. Second, there are concerns that the model is not suited to a significant range of groups, many of whom need more intensive support. Interviewees suggested that H&S are not suited to those with highly complex needs and who could

sometimes pose a risk to staff and other clients. Equally, the intervention is often not suited to groups facing multiple forms of exclusion such as ethnic minorities, young people, people on the autism spectrum and those from the LGBTQ community. A number of gaps in provision were also highlighted for couples and those with pets. Third, H&S can be difficult to manage from a staffing perspective with high turnovers of staff as a result of the very challenging work environment.

Key informants were more ambiguous about the potential role of H&S where intensive and integrated support is available. An example provided of this was in Germany where some projects include specialist psychiatric support being embedded within the provision, without requirements made of clients to engage or access this support.

Key informants could see a role for supported housing, claiming that when it is provided as a longer-term solution outside of a staircase model, it can work well. There was discussion around the quality of support and building, but there was general agreement that when support was intensive, flexible and long-term, and accommodation was adequate and homely this model provided a good solution. The caveat here is that supported housing is currently still often used as part of a staircase model and transitions out of the accommodation are restricted by the lack of appropriate move on properties. Moreover, our review of the evidence base found no significant body of work on supported housing. This is a significant evidence gap.

Interviewees clearly hold the view that H&S in their current form are problematic, whereas more permanent supported accommodation has a potential role to play in solutions to rough sleeping. Notably, key informants did concede there may be a role for shelters if stays are limited to exceptionally short periods of time and these lead directly into permanent housing.

### 3.6 Summary

- Hostels and Shelters (H&S) are intended to fulfil an emergency or temporary function. They are the predominant accommodation-based response to street homelessness in most Western countries. H&S vary substantially in terms of size, client group, type of building, levels and nature of support, behavioural expectations, nature and enforcement of rules, level of ‘professionalisation’, and seasonal availability. In some contexts, H&S are located within a staircase model whereby residents move through increasingly more ‘normal’ forms of transitional accommodation until they are deemed ‘housing ready’.

- A substantial literature documenting homeless peoples’ experiences in and perceptions of H&S exists, but there is a major dearth of research evaluating their effectiveness as an intervention. The most comprehensive evidence on outcomes derives from RCTs which compare ‘treatment as usual’ (TAU) provisions (which typically involve some form of hostel or shelter) with Housing First. All of these have been conducted outside the UK and focus on one subgroup only (that being people with complex needs).

- As an emergency solution, H&S provide immediate relief from life on the street. Some rough sleepers successfully navigate their way through the H&S system and access independent accommodation, albeit a proportion subsequently return to H&S or street homelessness. H&S abandonment and eviction rates are typically very high.

- H&S protect residents from many of the risks associated with sleeping on the street, but present their own health-related hazards. The onset and/or escalation of drug misuse amongst residents is widely reported, the risk of communicable disease transmission high, and deterioration in mental health common. The management of antisocial behaviour is an ongoing challenge for staff.

- Evidence indicates consistently that many (and perhaps the majority of) homeless people find H&S intimidating or unpleasant environments. Some choose not to use H&S due to fears around personal safety and/or pessimistic views regarding their helpfulness in terms of offering a route out of homelessness. That said, a (to date unquantified) minority expressed a desire to remain in congregate H&S or supported accommodation in the long term.

- Concerns about using mainstream H&S tend to be particularly acute for young people, transgender people, and women. Homeless people with complex needs rarely fare well in standard H&S given their inability to cope with the rules and environment. There is a consensus that specialist H&S, or alternative responses entirely, may be more appropriate for these subgroups (e.g. dedicated units with a training/employment focus for young people, or Housing First for individuals with complex needs etc.).

- Key informants feel that H&S are generally ineffective interventions and their use should be avoided insofar as possible, at least in their current form. They point towards three main issues: they can be dangerous places; they are not suited to a wide range of groups facing multiple forms of exclusion, and they can be difficult to staff due to the challenging work environment. They conclude that shelters should only have a role if stays could be limited to exceptionally short periods of time and these lead directly into permanent housing. Beyond conventional H&S, key informants could see a role for supported housing, claiming that when it is provided as a longer-term solution outside of a staircase model, it can work well, although it is currently often hampered by a lack of move-on accommodation. There is a lack of evidence on the impacts of supported accommodation.
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Housing First

4.1 Defining the intervention

Housing First (HF) developed in the 1990s in the USA, and has been widely developed elsewhere since the early 2000s. It began as an intervention specifically to meet the needs of chronic homeless persons experiencing severe psychiatric symptoms. Despite representing a small proportion of the homeless population, this group often utilise other services disproportionately, at significant cost to the public purse. Since its origins, HF is now also increasingly used in other international contexts and/or adapted for other homeless sub-populations.

In direct contrast to the Treatment First (TF) philosophy which underpins the staircase model (requiring individuals to show ‘housing readiness’ before they move to permanent housing – see chapter on Hostels and Shelters), HF provides permanent housing to homeless people without preconditions regarding recovery from (or participation in treatment for) issues such as substance misuse or mental health problems. HF is based around the principle of a human right to housing, and Assertive Outreach is generally employed as a key feature of programme design. This means outreach teams persistently target individuals on the streets that would benefit from the programme, as part of a broader and integrated response to end an individual’s homelessness (see chapter on Street Outreach for discussion of key elements and difference with traditional outreach). Person centred support is then available to tenants for as long as they need it, with a level of ‘stickiness’ not seen in other models. Indeed, key to HF is that clients do not lose their housing if they choose not to access support, and harm reduction is taken above any other goals such as sobriety or abstinence. This focuses on reducing the negative consequences of harmful behaviours rather than expecting them to stop completely.

Whilst HF first developed as Pathways to Housing in the USA, it has since been replicated to varying degrees of scale in Canada, Australia and Europe, albeit with differing degrees of programme fidelity and programme ‘drift’. A distinction can therefore be made between HF as a philosophy — providing housing as a first port of call above any other intervention — and a specific programme following key tenets set out by either the Pathways Model, or subsequent guides that have developed in different contexts.

- no requirement for consumers to demonstrate housing readiness

141 This sets out specific standards for Europe, but also note specific differences between individual projects and how Housing First should respond to its context.
Debates about fidelity feature significantly in the HF literature. Not all modelling tailoring themselves HF conform to what would consider the basic principles, with deviations potentially having negative effects on participants. Though some would argue that HF must stick with the founding principles to count as following this model, others suggest it is fidelity to the philosophy that offers most value. Thus, some commentators conclude that adaptations based on offering permanent housing without a need for demonstrating ‘housing readiness’, along with person centred support and choice may still be considered HF.

A further distinction can be made between scattered site HF (with homes dispersed across the geographic area), and single site or congregate HF (a single building offering many homes). The different outcomes reported in relation to each are discussed below insofar as the evidence base allows. The final major distinction is whether participants are provided one of two support approaches:

- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) where a team of multidisciplinary staff directly provide clinical and support services for clients with severe psychiatric disabilities and multiple needs.

- Intensive Case Management (ICM) where clinicians or other caseworkers take on a group of individuals (usually between 10 and 20) and coordinate a support

or

- a harm reduction approach is used.

Evidence of the Australian experience is also increasing. National funds were committed to a scattered site housing programme entitled ‘Streets to Home’ that focused on chronically homeless individuals based on vulnerability to premature death. Evaluations of these programs typically track individuals for one or two years. A number of small-scale studies have been conducted in the UK. These evaluations have included an evaluation of nine pilot projects in England, and a small-scale pilot project in Glasgow which focused on individuals with active substance misuse problems.

### 4.2 The evidence base

The quantity of evidence on HF for exceeds that for any other intervention targeting rough sleepers, and the quality is strong. A number of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in North America offer compelling evidence of its effectiveness in resolving the homelessness of people with complex needs. These include initial evaluations of the Pathways pilots in New York, with studies evaluating outcomes from between one and four years, and the At Home/ Chez Soi (Chez Soi) project, which is the largest RCT of any HF intervention worldwide. It explored a diverse range of local contexts in Canada and the outcomes of 2500 participants across 2 years. Evidence of the Australian experience would argue that HF must stick with the basic principles, with deviations potentially having negative effects on participants. Though some would argue that HF must stick with the founding principles to count as following this model, others suggest it is fidelity to the philosophy that offers most value. Thus, some commentators conclude that adaptations based on offering permanent housing without a need for demonstrating ‘housing readiness’, along with person centred support and choice may still be considered HF.

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This latter study is also included in wider literature on the European experience,156 whereby national government agencies such as Denmark139 and Finland113 have also rolled out HF. Most recently, Crisis produced a full cost feasibility study of rolling out HF across the Liverpool city region.166

In addition to RCTs and other evaluative studies, systematic evidence reviews draw out the outcomes associated with HF across contexts.160 It is notable that the strongest evidence is therefore concentrated within the North American context, with European and Australian evidence ever increasing through a variety of evaluative and descriptive study designs.

### 4.3 Outcomes

**Housing**

HF has been consistently proven to achieve high rates of housing retention. Studies report rates between around 60 per cent and 90 per cent across contexts, not factoring for the different scale of interventions, time periods measured, and often with some variance in fidelity to the core principles of HF,161 but tend nevertheless to coalesce around 80 per cent. Evaluations all argue that HF achieves superior retention rates to the dominant TF philosophy.162 In general, smaller scale projects rolled out in specific areas, usually by non-focal agencies have the highest retention rates. Importantly, few studies have yet evaluated housing retention over timescales longer than 2 years.

In their evidence review of quantitative studies, Woodhall-Melnik and Dunn166 point out that studies focus on a range of groups, but particularly those with psychiatric symptoms, addictions or concurrent disorders. Indeed, studies of the Chez Soi RCT in Canada found those with concurrent disorders experience similar levels of housing retention as those who display psychiatric symptoms alone.164 Over the two-year Chez Soi programme, HF service users spent 73 per cent of their time stably housed compared to 32 per cent of those receiving Treatment as Usual (TAU). Superior housing outcomes were found for HF in all 5 cities, and in the last 6 months of the study, 62 per cent of HF participants were housed all of the time, compared with 31 per cent of TAU participants.165 Additionally, USA studies report rates of housing sustainment between 80 per cent and 88 per cent,163 with one measuring housing retention across a 47 month period, providing the only medium-term outcomes published. It shows that approximately 68 per cent of HF clients retained housing across this period.167 USA evidence further suggests low attrition rates of the Pathways model, with 85 per cent participants remaining in the programme over a period of 5 years.168

Importantly, an RCT was conducted in France entitled Un Chez Soi d’abord, and whilst no official evaluation is currently available in English, existing grey literature points to high rates of success,169 reported to be 85 per cent retention after 2 years.170 Experiments in the rest of Europe report retention rates between 79 per cent and 97 per cent, compared to 32 per cent of varying sizes, with different populations, and variation in timing and design.171

A study of nine HF programs in England found 78 per cent of participants were still housed at the point of evaluation, but most of the HF services had been operational for less than three years and some for shorter periods, meaning assessment of long-term effectiveness was not possible. However, 74 per cent of current service users had been successfully housed for one year or more by five of the HF services. Whilst not quantified in the same way as other projects, the national scale HF approach in Finland has been attributed with effectively eliminating rough sleeping through drastically reducing the numbers of long-term homeless.172 Meanwhile, a national programme in Denmark (whilst recognising limitations in the data) reports retention rates between 76 per cent and 95 per cent.173

Two published studies on the Streets to Home project in Australia show that after one year 95 per cent of clients sustained housing in Brisbane,174 and after 2 years, 70 per cent of clients were housed, and 80 per cent had

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171 Y-Foundation (2017) ‘A Home of Your Own Housing First and ending homelessness in Finland‘. Kuurau: Otava Book Printing Ltd.


been housed for one year or longer in Melbourne. Overall, whilst studies vary in rigour and timeframe, they show consistently high housing retention.

Few studies compare the outcomes of scatter-site versus congregate configurations of HF, but on the basis of existing evidence there do not appear to be any clear differences between the two in relation to housing retention. An RCT comparing outcomes in both (congregate and scatter-site) configurations with TAU in Vancouver noted that the percentage of time in stable housing over 24 months was 74.3 per cent in congregate HF and 74.5 per cent in scatter-site HF (as compared with 26.3 per cent in TAU). In a similar vein, residents housed in congregate and scatter-site HF who were supported by the same ACT team in Copenhagen shared similarly high housing retention rates, but more of the former had moved from the initial congregate setting they were housed in to another congregate site or to scattered housing. Notably, participants in the Copenhagen project expressed a clear preference for scatter-site housing, and this preference has been reported in a number of other European countries.

On a related note, some scholars, including those in Australia where the majority of HF programmes have taken the form of congregate housing, have cautioned that congregate HF conflates entry programmes and outcomes and can lead to unintended negative consequences such as: undermining service flexibility and reducing the capacity of services to respond to the diversity of client needs and choices, and limiting pathways to independence, family formation and connection and long-term stability. For these reasons and in light of evidence that homeless people prefer scatter-site HF, whilst acknowledging that a small minority of homeless people may wish to be accommodated in communal environments, a number of commentators and campaigning organisations have called for congregate HF to be reserved for the minority of homeless people who express an explicit preference for this configuration.

Health

Indicators of health may be measured quantitatively through standardised clinical health measures, or qualitatively by reviewing self-reported perceptions of service users. RCTs have typically found no or minimal health improvements due to the general severity of health conditions upon admission to housing programs include many who are quite sick and a number die in housing shortly after moving in. It is important to recognise that HF clients are unlikely to see major health improvements due to the general severity of health conditions upon entry. Indeed, persons entering housing programs include many who are quite sick and a number die in housing shortly after moving in.

In examining quantitative outcomes for mental health, Woodhall Melnik and Dunn pointed out that in the original New York RCT there is some contradictory evidence. In one study, participants in HF experienced significantly greater perceived social and personal choice than those in continuum of care programming, with perceived choice significantly associated with reductions in symptoms of mental illness.

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another found reduced incidence of psychiatric hospitalisation at 24 months.192 In contrast, an analysis of the same data found no significant differences in psychiatric symptoms between those enrolled in HF and those receiving traditional housing support.193 Data collected at 6 and 12 month intervals in a different (non-RCT) study in a Washington DC project found positive impacts on mental health outcomes for persons with concurrent disorders194 whereas earlier findings from the New York study showed improvements for those with psychiatric symptoms only. Importantly, it should be noted that HF clients are unlikely to experience radical improvements in physical and mental health, due to the significant impact that prior experience of long-term homelessness is likely to have had.

The Chez Soi RCT found poorer outcomes in mental health for HF clients in a scattered site Canadian project than their TAU group, and no change in physical health either.195 Whilst the final report states participants showed greater improvement in average community functioning and quality-of-life at 12 months as compared to TAU, the differences between groups were no longer present at 24 months.196 In a report of nine services in England, there was evidence of improvements in mental and physical health amongst service users. 43 per cent reported very bad physical health a year before HF, and this fell to 28 per cent as those asked about current health. Slightly more than half (52 per cent) of the same group reported bad or very bad mental health before HF, falling to 18 per cent a year after housing.197

The Street to Home Melbourne evaluation states there was significant improvement in the participants’ psychiatric symptoms within the first 12 months (63 per cent said their general health was better, and 24 per cent reported moderate to extreme bodily pain after 12 months, as compared to 54 per cent at baseline), but in the following 12 months rate of improvement slowed. The number admitted to hospital in the preceding 3 months had declined from 32 per cent to 11 per cent, and no significant difference to 12 per cent in the final interview, 2 years after housing.198 In a study of five projects in Europe, improvements in mental health problems were reported for the majority of participants in HF, but in the following 12 months, a similar proportion of participants received HF or a more institutional service.199

However, it should also be noted that in a Copenhagen project HF and with congregate site provision, and moved to scatter site provision, staff reported positive changes of mental health for 25 per cent of service users, and negative changes for 29 per cent.200 Across the evidence base HF has a similar impact on health as TAU – there appears to be no discernible difference nor significant impact. Thus, for persons with severe mental illness individual choice may be the best way to determine whether a person receives HF or a more institutional form of care.201

The few studies comparing scatter-site and congregate configurations of HF have found minimal if any differences in health outcomes. In the Vancouver RCT, there were no significant differences in mental health problems were found in relation to changes in overall health or psychiatric symptom severity, but there were significant differences in the severity of disability wherein greater improvement was reported in congregate HF.202

A year-long longitudinal quantitative study comparing scatter-site and congregate HF in Sydney showed similar rates of improvement as regards psychological distress in each configuration.203

**Substance misuse**

Whether or not HF reduces substance misuse is a common question in the literature, but can be complicated by studies seeking to measure absolute reductions in use of drugs and alcohol, rather than the harm reduction philosophy that HF subscribes to. Thus, whilst reductions in drug and alcohol use are likely to point to harm reduction, it is not the primary goal of the intervention. RCTs provide the strongest evidence here, with a USA study that randomly assigned individuals to a range of treatment pathways finding that after 12 months participants in abstinence based housing had higher levels of drug abstinence.204 In contrast, in analysing the same New York data with individuals experiencing homelessness and psychiatric symptoms,205 another study found no difference in drug and alcohol use between those assigned to the control group and those who received HF. This finding is corroborated by similar results from the Chez Soi RCT.206 However, one study reports reductions in alcohol use,207 and another Canadian RCT found

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improvements for both TAU and HF clients, but slower progress for those in HF.210 That evaluation states that this is an area to improve upon in future.211 More recent USA RCTs complicate the picture, with showing a strong effect on substance use with HF clients over 3 times less likely to use illicit drugs or abuse alcohol in the year after being housed compared with TF clients.212 A 2013 RCT also finds HF increased treatment compliance of mentally ill methadone patients – 51.6 per cent versus 20 per cent in TF was still in treatment after 3 years.213

Woodhall-Melnik and Dunn214 find through reviewing (mostly USA) non-RCT studies that HF participants reported lower substance use than traditional modes of care.215 Larimer et al.216 report from a quasi-experimental study that collected data at 3, 6 and 12 months that the median number of drinks consumed dropped across the individuals with the study, with an approximate 2 per cent decrease per month in daily drinking while participants were housed.

In a review of nine HF services in England, there was some evidence of reductions in drug and alcohol use with 71 per cent of 60 service users reporting they would drink until they felt drunk a year prior to being housed, falling to 56 per cent when asked about current behaviour. When asked about illegal drug use, 66 per cent reported drug use a year prior to HF, falling to 53 per cent when asked about current behaviour. In-depth interviews found some progress away from drug and alcohol use, but not consistently for all service users.217 Similarly, evaluation of the Melbourne Street to Home programme finds the proportion of participants using alcohol and other drugs did not change markedly over the 24 months of assessment, but fewer participants were using on a regular basis. This suggests that the provision of housing and ongoing support helps somewhat to reduce problematic substance misuse.218

While the evidence discussed above is slightly mixed, it indicates, on balance, that HF may be equally and is sometimes more effective than TF in reducing levels of substance misuse. Abstinence-based TF programmes can be more effective in helping individuals with substance misuse, but these do not have any different remit (focusing on the treatment of substance misuse rather than the resolution of housing crises), and attrition rates in such RCTs are typically high. On this subject, proponents of HF emphasise that the provision of stable housing offers a secure platform which fosters clients’ recovery from addiction (and other issues such as mental health problems).219

On the issue of HF configuration, less favourable results regarding substance misuse have been found for congregate housing compared to scattered site housing, and this is generally attributed to the aggregation of individuals with substance misuse histories which can make a move towards lower consumption more difficult.220 In the Sydney longitudinal HF study, for example, the use of substances remained unchanged over 12 months in both configurations, but one third of congregate site participants reported greater than weekly injecting at follow up compared with 8 per cent of scatter-site participants.221 The Vancouver RCT noted no difference between congregate and scatter-site HF in levels of substance misuse, but that in 12 months, the TAU group (which is not defined explicitly) was greater in communal HF.222

Criminal activity and anti-social behaviour

Woodhall-Melnik and Dunn223 find in their systematic review that the quantitative evidence on the impact of HF on criminal activity is very strong and can therefore be considered fairly conclusive. The research shows reductions in participation in the criminal justice system for HF participants in both qualitative and quantitative analysis.224 However use of the criminal justice system was measured in a variety of different ways from jail stays and bookings to arrests. Despite this, reductions appear consistent, with stable housing significantly reducing criminal activity that was previously associated with precarious housing and substance misuse issues.

In a review of nine HF programs in England, antisocial behaviour (ASB) fell from 78 per cent of participants reporting involvement a year prior to

217 Larimer, M. E. (2009) ‘Health Care and Public Service Use and Costs Before and After Provision of Treatment after 3 years. RCT also finds HF increased the use of methadone patients - 51.6 per cent versus 20 per cent in TF was still in treatment after 3 years. 213

Housing First, to 53 per cent when asked about current behaviour. Whilst reductions were uneven across the populations, there was no evidence of increased engagement.225 This is reiterated in an evaluation of a small scale project in Glasgow, where antisocial behaviour was reportedly lower and far less problematic than had been expected by stakeholders of the client group.226 Evaluation of the Brisbane Street to Home programme note that ‘neighbourhood problems’ were the primary problems experienced by HF participants.227 Meanwhile, a Canadian study reports ongoing difficult behaviour is one of the greatest challenges to staff working with HF schemes.228 Thus, it seems that criminal activity largely declines with HF, with some variation between scattered site and congregate housing. ASB also seems to decline, but is far less studied in the literature.

When considering the influence of HF configuration, it is notable that residents living in scattered site housing seem to experience more significant declines in involvement in criminal activity than those in congregate housing.229 Indeed, the 12 month follow-up study of two HF programs in Sydney – one scattered site, and one congregate site – found significant decrease for scattered site participants, and significant increase for congregate site participants.220 There have been no such systematic comparisons in relation to ASB, but it should be noted that reports of disruptive behaviour (often fuelled by drug and alcohol abuse) were a significant source of complaint amongst residents in the congregate HF sites in Copenhagen.221

Quality of life and social integration
Social integration and community adjustment is less studied in the HF literature than other outcomes, yet there is some evidence in North American RCTs that HF enrolment was associated with greater perceived choice for individuals displaying psychiatric systems,222 and that choice is a predictor of increased psychosocial integration.223 Woodhall, Melnik and Dunn224 highlight a variety of studies that show improvements in participants’ perceived quality-of-life using a range of measures and scales. This includes RCTs in North America.225

Of note, a longitudinal Chez Soi analysis of perceived quality-of-life found significant improvements for both HF and TAU participants.226 A different study found no difference in community adjustment between HF and TF participants.227 An RCT in Ottawa found TAU clients had greater increase in total quality-of-life, particularly an increase in family relations. The final report of the Chez Soi RCT states that HF participants showed greater improvement in community functioning and quality-of-life when based on quantitative findings at 12 months, but no longer at 24 months. However, qualitative findings from interviews show superior experiences for HF clients as opposed to TAU clients. The analysis found that living in stable housing and having positive social and supportive contacts were key factors behind positive life courses, and HF was useful in providing these precursors.228

A study of nine HF programs in England found some positive evidence around social integration and with re-establishing links with family across the course of the study. It also shows participants’ views of HF were positive. They saw the freedom, choice and sense of security from having their own home as the key strengths. They also valued the open ended, intensive and flexible support they were offered.229 These findings are corroborated by two evaluations of Australian programs that found participants had started to feel at home in their new apartments230 and were beginning to improve ties with family. Overall, the participants’ social networks had improved significantly.231 Importantly, for the groups commonly housed using HF, whilst other outcomes improve they are still likely to be living in poverty and lack viable employment opportunities, generally due to ongoing high support needs and structural issues around

Housing First, 8(1), pp. 13–28.


Thus, on the basis of the evidence available it seems that both HF and TAU can improve quality of life and social integration. Further long-term study is needed before any firm conclusions on the sustainability of any such gains may be made, however.

Evidence regarding the influence of HF configuration is mixed and a little contradictory. The Canadian Chez Soi study found improvements in quality of life regardless of whether participants were assigned to congregate or scattered site HF (or indeed TAU). The same was true as regards both quality of life and ‘social connectedness’ measures for residents in both configurations in the longitudinal study in Sydney. In Vancouver, no difference between the two configurations was found in relation to overall quality of life or physical community integration, but significant differences were noted as regards psychological community integration, wherein rates of improvement were higher in congregate HF. The social experimentation project in Europe found lower feelings of social isolation and loneliness in congregate site facilities than scattered site facilities, but caution was noted as to whether reduced loneliness and difficulty integrating is likely to occur due to the complexity of participants’ lives. Indeed, congregate site facilities may reduce loneliness but may not contribute to recovery from drug and alcohol problems. The absence of loneliness does not, of course, equate with (or translate to) the development of positive social networks in environments where all residents share vulnerabilities associated with substance misuse and/or mental health problems. Many of the same problems reported in hostels and shelters (particularly disruptive and/or intimidating behaviour) are also reported in congregate HF. Busch-Geertsema et al noted that social integration is likely to take longer than the combined cost for an individual to live on the street and access the expected level of support.

HF studies generally find that participants use fewer emergency and criminal justice services than TAU clients, and are more likely to remain in treatment programs. This suggests there may be cost savings for HF over TAU, particularly for those experiencing chronic homelessness. Importantly, some USA studies find that the costs saved in some areas such as health services, are offset by higher costs in case management. Despite this, limited evidence in cost reductions from other areas means this should be treated with caution as all cost savings are dependent on the nature of the welfare state in the country studied. For instance, in Finland the HF approach saves money overall, but they have required large amounts of sustained national funding both to subsidise housing and provide welfare to individuals that may not have received it beforehand. As well as HF potentially increasing the services to which participants subscribe, costs of their support can be exacerbated as participants enter at points of particular crisis.

The final report on the Chez SoiRCT states that the HF intervention itself is costly at C$22,257 per person per year on average for the high needs
A report by the Centre for Social Justice states that a HF project in greater Manchester concluded via cost benefit analysis that for every £1 invested in the HF project, they have realised outcomes worth £2.51. They further suggest that delivering HF would be cost neutral over the course of a single Parliament.\(^2\)\(^3\) Moreover, a Crisis feasibility study on implementing HF at scale in the Liverpool city region points out that continued lack of supportive housing for the chronically homeless will likely only increase the costs of their support needs in the longer term. They suggest their proposed model of a HF solution would cost around £12,607 per client per annum. This includes the costs of a local letting agency to source housing; mental health support, and a 24-hour wraparound core team. They conclude that this is likely to be three to five times more cost-effective than TAU.

Whilst HF should not be considered a low-cost option, it creates the potential for savings in the long term. More long-term, context specific studies are needed to fully ascertain the likely benefits that these clients.\(^2\)^ However, the growing data pool of UK specific studies is increasingly helpful for making the case for likely cost savings to service commissioners.

**Effectiveness for subpopulations**

Findings reported so far in this review largely relate to populations of chronically homeless people without necessarily reflecting upon the experience of subpopulations based on race, age, and gender. For instance, evaluation of the Melbourne Street to Home programme finds that those who became homeless at an earlier age experienced poorer housing outcomes than those whose first homeless experience was as an adult.\(^2\)\(^6\) The authors concluded that this was accounted for by lower levels of cultural capital for those who entered homelessness younger.\(^2\)\(^6\) A study of the national HF programme in Denmark also highlights the specific difficulties of dealing with young people who have often been in receipt of state interventions beforehand, and have received less familial support across the life course.\(^2\)\(^6\)

The Chez Soi RCT provides the most robust evidence to date on how HF works for different subpopulations. Whilst quality-of-life improvements was found for both HF and TAU clients, one evaluation found greater difference in quality-of-life measures between HF and TAU for adults over the age of 50 with this age group more content when in HF.\(^2\)\(^6\) Meanwhile, poorer outcomes in housing stability have been observed for aboriginal Canadians, for men over women, and for youth. However, none of these variables were significant enough in their theoretical model to predict whether or not a specific individual would benefit from HF.\(^2\)\(^6\)

Concerns over the effectiveness of HF for younger populations can be somewhat reduced by finding that housing retention results for the under 24 age group are significantly better for the HF group versus TAU (65 per cent to 31 per cent of days housed across the 24 month period).\(^2\)\(^6\) Indeed, findings from Denmark also show that despite a different range of support needs; the person-centred, sticky support of HF can suit the younger client group better. More work on the youth population is picking up with Gaetz setting up a HF framework for youth, noting that as well as supporting the complex needs of young people, HF for this demographic must also look at supporting young people in making the transition to adulthood.

Veterans are another population that has received attention in the USA, with a national programme offering superior housing retention and access to housing rates than TF.\(^2\)\(^7\) Whilst one suggests TF works better for addressing the substance misuse problems of veterans,\(^2\)\(^7\) this has been contested on grounds of


poor quality evidence. 274

Finally, a Chez Soi trial report looks at the differences in outcome between Caucasian Canadians, and other subpopulations (non-Caucasian Canadians, and immigrants). It finds no difference in housing stability, probability of hospitalisation, and community functioning, between groups over the third of the 24 month study period, but non-Caucasian Canadians showed a worsening in the outcome of ‘amount of money spent on alcohol’, and immigrants to Canada who experienced a greater reduction in the number of days spent experiencing problems associated with alcohol use when compared with other study participants.275 A different Canadian study assessed the effectiveness of a HF intervention for ethnic minorities which included a greater focus on antiracism and empowerment. As compared with those staying in the TAU group, HF participants spent more time housed, and had greater improvements in community integration.276 The Chez Soi results point to a need for further development of the HF model for different subpopulations.277 The evidence base could be improved by conducting further studies of different subpopulations, including related to gender and sexuality where no studies were found. 278

4.4 Barriers to implementation

Barriers to implementation of HF can either be structural such as lack of appropriate housing, or due to attitudinal barriers of existing service providers, commissioners, or private landlords.279 In a review of nine HF services in England, Bretherton and Pleace279 highlight that the services were often in a precarious position as the funding was generally short-term and insecure. To secure better long-term commissioning, they suggest research may need to be brought up to a clinical level of proof. Kennedy et al.270 suggest housing retention and appropriate level of support could be improved by strengthening partnerships across agencies involved in HF programs, and supporting frontline staff – particularly to minimise staff turnover and improve the stability of the model. Crisis, in their feasibility study of implementing HF on scale in the Liverpool City Region corroborate a need for strong partnerships working and building, and lament that if HF is the only way to get good quality social housing with support then the system could become overloaded. Thus, HF needs to be part of a housing led system response to homelessness.281

4.5 Expert perspectives

All but one of the key informants provided perspectives on Housing First and there was consensus around the strength of the evidence base. Key informants echoed findings of the literature review, identifying geographical, commissioning, or private implementation: in the USA and Finland it is an integral element of government policy, whereas in the UK it is limited to several small scale projects.

Definitional debates pervaded much of the discussion about Housing First. It was suggested that the USA tend to enjoy an abstinence and recovery based approach as opposed to harm reduction. Moreover, some projects labelled as Housing First (in the USA but also elsewhere) were accused of simply being tenancy support projects, that is, of having poor fidelity to HF principles. Some key informants were concerned that movement away from the core principles of Housing First would negatively impact upon housing outcomes and indeed who gets supported. On this issue, a number expressed particular reservations about the appropriateness and effectiveness of congregate versions of HF. They emphasised that congregate housing is not what the majority of homeless people ‘want’, and that problems widely reported in relation to hostel accommodation (particularly antisocial behaviour) are, perhaps unavoidably, replicated in congregate HF settings.

Despite debates about what constitutes Housing First, key informants repeated findings from the literature review that the broad approach works effectively with typically ‘hard to house’ individuals and has achieved high tenancy retention rates. Key informants felt the approach was particularly successful in instances where the model had become an integral element of government policy and strategy, and where there had been a significant shift towards permanent housing and away from transitional housing was clearly visible. Moreover, its success was felt to lie in the fact that it is largely client centred, choice driven and viewed as providing clients with respect and dignity.

Despite overwhelming support for the model, key informants identified three key challenges. First, suitable support is not always available. There was a common view that one of the fundamental features of a successful Housing First model was the presence of high quality, flexible, multi-disciplinary and intensive support but this requires resourcing and effective collaboration. Second, suitable housing is not always available. Third, one informant questioned whether the model could be adapted to be more preventative and available to a wider group of people, as it currently only intervenes with the hardest to house at crisis point.

There appears to be universal support for Housing First and its underlying philosophies amongst key informants, albeit that they recognise implementation challenges.

4.6 Summary

• Housing First (HF) provides permanent housing to rough sleepers without preconditions regarding recovery from (or participation in treatment for) substance misuse or mental health problems. Person-centered support is provided on a flexible basis for as long as individuals need it. HF was initially developed in the USA and is being increasingly replicated in Canada, Europe and Australia, where it marks a significant departure from the traditional ‘treatment first’ or staircase approach. HF development in the UK has been modest to date, with only a limited number of small-scale projects currently operational.

• The evidence base on HF is exceptionally strong, far stronger than is true of any other housing-related intervention targeting rough sleepers in fact. The evidence includes a mix of large-scale...
Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) and smaller qualitative studies conducted in a range of international contexts. Further research is however needed to assess long-term impacts and effectiveness for subgroups. There is also scope to further understanding impacts on health and substance misuse, and influence of different programme structures on outcomes.

- HF is best known for its excellent housing retention outcomes, which are especially impressive given that the intervention targets homeless people with complex needs. Retention figures (measured in variable ways over different timeframes) range between 60-90 per cent, and typically coalesce around the 80 per cent mark. This is markedly higher than rates reported for Treatment as Usual (TAU) comparison groups.

- Other (non-housing) outcomes are much more modest. Improvements in physical and mental health are often documented, but tend not to be pronounced, nor significantly different from TAU comparison groups. Existing (slightly mixed) evidence indicates that HF may be equally and is sometimes more effective than TAU in reducing levels of substance misuse, with many HF evaluations reporting overall reductions in alcohol and/or drug consumption. HF evaluations consistently report reductions in involvement in criminal activity. Many record improvements as regards quality of life, but these do not necessarily exceed those documented for TAU.

- Debates about fidelity feature significantly in the HF literature. Core to these have been assessments of the relative merits of scatter-site and congregate configurations. Comparisons of the two are few in number, but suggest that there are no significant differences in terms of housing retention or health outcomes. Involvement in substance misuse and/or criminal activity tends to be higher in congregate HF. Loneliness is more common in scatter-site HF, but the behavior of other residents in congregate HF can impede recovery. The majority of homeless people express a strong preference for scatter-site HF.

- Housing First has traditionally targeted homeless people with complex needs (that is, co-occurring substance misuse and/or mental health problems) and has proven to be highly effective as a housing solution for this group. There is limited evidence regarding outcomes for other subgroups of the homeless population, but adaptations have proven successful for young people and ethnic minorities.

- Key informant interviewees universally support Housing First. They echoed many of the literature review findings, concluding that the evidence base is strong and the approach has particularly positive impacts on housing retention. However, they also raised several key points for policy makers to consider: 1) what constitutes Housing First and how loyal to the original model must a project be?; 2) The absence of high quality, flexible, multi-disciplinary and intensive support can undermine effectiveness; 3) Suitable housing is not always available for Housing First to be delivered; 4) Homeless people prefer scatter-site rather than congregate HF programmes; and 5) there are questions about the applicability of the model with other groups and at an earlier stage.
5.1 Defining the intervention
Common Ground (CG) is a congregate site, communal living arrangement that places ex-homeless individuals in purpose-built or converted housing alongside individuals on a low income (without a history of homelessness). It thus combines both ‘supportive housing’ for formerly homeless people with ‘affordable housing’ for members of the general population on low incomes. Developed in 1990 in New York City, since 2008 CG has been a national model adopted by the Australian government.²⁸²

CG aims to create a mixed community to facilitate strong neighbourhoods and social connection. In the original USA model tenants pay 30 per cent of their income towards rent, whether the source is paid employment or social security benefits. On-site health facilties are provided alongside a 24-hour concierge service.²⁸¹

Five key components underpin the Australian Common Ground Alliance (ACGA):

- rapid access to high quality, affordable and permanent housing;
- separation of support and tenancy services;
- service values that target the most vulnerable homeless people through the use of the health based vulnerability index, to identify chronically homeless people who have debilitating medical health conditions.²⁸⁴

A widely reported example, CG in Brisbane, is a purpose designed and built 14 story building comprising 146 apartments, 3 retail spaces, and office space for the tenancy manager, clinical nurse and support provider. It also has a variety of communal areas, and is deliberately located in an economically, socially and geographically privileged neighbourhood. Half the apartments are allocated to individuals on the basis of low to moderate income, whilst the others are allocated to those assessed as chronically homeless.²⁸⁵

Whilst a distinctive programme, CG does not require tenants to exhibit sobriety or maintain abstinence, but does expect them to commit to the community ethos of the model, and obey certain rules such as only having guests stay a certain number of nights per week.²⁸⁷ Moreover, individuals leaving the CG accommodation would no longer receive the support offered to residents, which in a HF model is provided for as long as individuals wish/require it, regardless of whether they move home. Despite this difference, a number of sources particularly outwith academic evidence, describe CG as a congregate site form of HF, and this can complicate the process of extracting


²⁸⁴ At the time of writing no website or official documentation can be found on the ACGA, but the principles are cited in Verdouw, J. and Habibis, D. (2017) ‘Housing First programs in congregate site facilities: can one size fit all?’, Housing Studies, pp. 1–22. doi: 10.1080/02673037.2017.1346192.


5.2 The evidence base

Whilst CG began in New York, no USA site has undergone independent evaluation, limiting the extent to which outcomes can be reported.291 NeverCG boasts an overall rate of 99 per cent292 – and independent evaluative evidence from Australia reporting significantly lower figures with a low of 74 per cent retention at 12 months or more, and some relatively high rates of abandonment/eviction.293

5.3 Outcomes

Housing

Reported housing retention rates vary across projects, with some reports suggesting exceptionally high rates – CG in New York boasts an overall rate of 99 per cent292 – and independent evaluative evidence from Australia reporting significantly lower figures with a low of 74 per cent retention at 12 months or more, and some relatively high rates of abandonment/eviction.293

Giving an overview of tenancy support programs and their success in Australia, one report states that in 2011-12 87.7 per cent, and in 2012-13 82.9 per cent of all CG tenancies for ex-rough sleepers were sustained and 1.8 per cent ended in eviction/vacant possession.294 Looking at specific programs, a report on the effectiveness of HF in Brisbane includes tracking the trajectories of 3 ex-homeless CG participants, of which two remained in the programme after 18 months. The report considers CG to be an effective part of the homelessness response, but the sparse evidence used offers no robust conclusions.295

More evidence is available for CG services in Tasmania which report that between June 2012 and 31st October 2015 79 supported tenancies have lived in the facility, with 39 of these individuals having current tenancies. 74 per cent of current ex-homeless tenants had a tenancy duration of at least 12 months, with 50 per cent of those with a start date of over a year ago having lasted the full 3 years of operation. When considering those that had exited supported tenancies, 66 per cent had a duration of under 12 months and 29 per cent had a duration of under 6 months. For the cohort with a tenancy duration under 6 months, their reason for leaving was put down to a poor fit between their needs and the support model. 46 per cent were vacated as a result of eviction or abandonment, while 37 per cent were vacated through mutual agreement. It is unclear what happened to the remaining 17 per cent, but 61 per cent of all exits involve the tenants securing another form of tenured accommodation in the community.296 An earlier evaluation suggests 2 out of 16 vacations in 2013 related to behavioural uses and clients left before securing alternative accommodation. This strong result suggests CG is not able to meet the needs of clients with more complex needs, despite national funding being allocated on this basis.297 However, the


300 Ibid

301 More evidence is available for CG services in Tasmania which report that


304 Ibid
High rate of attrition is reported to be declining modestly over time.\textsuperscript{301}

**Health**

Like other interventions, it is important to note that supported tenants in CG facilities have been specifically targeted for this intervention due to high levels of poor health. In Australia this is specifically related to likelihood of premature death, and therefore drastic health improvements are not expected.\textsuperscript{306}

One study of the wider housing led approach (CG and HF) in Brisbane included three participants in CG accommodation and nine in HF, and reports promising signs of improvements in both mental and physical health for the 12 participants in both schemes, with no breakdown of the difference between.\textsuperscript{307} Similarly, in a different study on supportive housing, that includes tenants from a CG site in Tasmania, 69.2 per cent of supported housing residents reported enjoying better health. This was a greater rate than for people in housing with outreach support and those allocated housing because of low wages, but there is no breakdown for CG residents in particular.\textsuperscript{303}

Reports from CG in Tasmania provide a better level of certainty, and show relatively minor health improvements from a poor baseline standard.\textsuperscript{309} One report states 34 per cent of tenants showed a moderate or major improvement in physical functioning between first and last interviews for their outcomes report, whilst 20 per cent showed a moderate or major decline. The data also suggests minor gains in fitness and mobility. 27 per cent of tenants showed a moderate or major reduction in the impact of non-chronic physical health conditions, while 12 per cent showed a moderate or major increase. Importantly, 66 per cent in the pre-and post sample indicated that living in CG had a fairly or very positive effect on their physical health.\textsuperscript{313}

In regards to mental health, the most robust report available from CG Tasmania shows very high prevalence of existing mental health conditions, and a clear mix in mental health trajectories for participants. In general, there was a clear trend towards more positive than negative outcomes and there is strong evidence of substantial reduction in impacts of high prevalence disorders such as anxiety and depression. The data shows a slight reduction in the daily impact of symptoms for those living with schizophrenia, but a small increase in bipolar disorder. Whilst clinical outcomes are mixed, greatest improvement was noted in tenants reporting a high level of self-respect, the belief and ability to make positive life changes. The risk of self-harm also decreased.\textsuperscript{311}

A comprehensive study of scattered site HF and CG in Sydney found that both CG participants reported similar rates of improvement for quality-of-life and psychological distress over the 12 months of being housed, but CG participants reported higher engagement with mental health specialists and emergency hospital visits for psychiatric reasons. The precise reason for this is unknown, but it could be that pressure to engage with services is higher in CG with more surveillance from staff, or that HF was more successful in stabilising participants’ mental health problems.\textsuperscript{312} Ultimately, clinical data on health improvements is lacking, but qualitative findings suggest a general trend towards better health.

**Substance misuse**

The taking of illicit drugs and alcohol is prohibited in the public areas of CG services, but abstinence and sobriety are not a condition of accommodation. One study of the wider housing led approach in Brisbane included 3 participants in CG accommodation and reports that in the overall sample substance misuse reduced when housed.\textsuperscript{313} No breakdown of the difference between CG and other participants is available.

A study comparing outcomes for HF with CG in Sydney found no between-group difference for the specific substances used, but there was significant increase over time in the proportion of CG participants who injected more than weekly.\textsuperscript{314} This suggests that CG, like congregate site HF may provide an environment that favours continued or increased substance misuse. However, no other available evidence makes claims about levels of substance misuse after entering CG programs.

**Criminal activity and anti-social behaviour**

An evaluation report of tenants living in Tasmania CG states residents participate less in criminal activity, and are less likely to be victims themselves than before they were housed. Fifty per cent of tenants in a pre-and post sample reported being a victim of crime in the 12 months prior to moving into CG, often on numerous occasions, whilst 18 per cent reported being a victim of crime in the 12 months prior to their last interview for the project.\textsuperscript{315} There is also suggestion that CG reduces the incidence of residents coming into contact with the criminal justice system, but this report does not make it clear whether or not it is referring specifically to CG or to providing any form of permanent housing to homeless people.\textsuperscript{316} That said, antisocial behaviour has been

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common ground and led to a sense of and failure to.

An evaluation of the Tasmanian facility with the program’s emphasis on supporting residents to improve their housing situation found that tenants’ perceptions of life from being housed in CG, but not in CG properties. However, exact levels of anti-social behaviour or criminal activity are not reported in existing evaluations.

quality-of-life and social integration

Due to the nature of the intervention, quality-of-life, social integration, and feelings of security and home are the focus of most evaluations. These suggest some positive findings, but also aspects of the community that tenants find difficult.

A study that included CG Tasmania suggests a positive impact on quality of life from being housed in CG, but does not make any direct comparison between that reported in CG and other forms of supportive housing. An evaluation of tenant experiences (both supported and affordable) in a Brisbane CG complex highlights that the vast majority of participants said they considered the complex to be their home (90 per cent), with a sense of control and autonomy integral to this feeling. The congregate form also meant that the majority had friends in the building, and many found the mix of activities available helpful in cultivating a sense of community and friendships. An evaluation of the CG reports similar findings with 70 per cent of supported tenant survey respondents considering the facility home and 75 per cent agreeing that they would like to live there in the long term, with supported residents appreciating the high level of security offered by the facility and enjoying the emphasis on community integration and family reunification. Meanwhile, staff were positive about the program’s structure in enabling both formal and informal support and interaction between staff and tenants. Despite the positive feelings explored above, over half of surveyed residents in Brisbane CG complained about aspects of anti-community, particularly related to the behaviour of those under the influence of alcohol and illicit substances. Feelings of anti-community were articulated more by younger people and females. Just over 25 per cent of surveyed tenants in Brisbane CG found the on-site concierge, CCTV and signing in and out of guests as markers of ontological insecurity. For instance, such rules were reported to make it difficult to maintain or establish healthy relationships, and led to a sense of embarrassment from some supported tenants about inviting guests over at all. There was a tension in the Tasmanian facility with the program’s emphasis on supporting residents to improve their housing situation, but not the one-bedroom apartments and restrictive guest policy meant residents could not exercise a choice to live with someone else without exiting the programme. It furthermore found evidence of a lack of interaction between supported and unsupported tenants, and a feeling from some supported tenants that they were judged negatively by those without a history of homelessness.

While CG also intends to improve work and study opportunities for residents, an evaluation from Tasmania suggests goals of increased tenants’ participation in education, training and work may not have been successful primarily because the outcomes are not costed. Feelings of anti-community are generally higher in CG than other forms of supportive housing. Whilst tenants were generally happy with their housing, survey data suggest 60 per cent would like further assistance to participate in community or work and study opportunities. It suggests CG can contribute to improved quality-of-life but not necessarily across every aspect of life, for every group.

service use and costs

It is unclear how CG compares to other interventions in terms of service use and cost. Official documentation for Breaking Ground in New York states that $10,000 are saved per person per year from their activities, in comparison to individuals remaining on the street and using services such as emergency shelters, health and criminal justice at the expected rate. Meanwhile, a report on the cost effectiveness of tenancy support programs in Australia states that in 2011–13 total spend for the Street to Home (assertive outreach) and CG programs was AU$13 million, at a cost of AU$10,618 per person supported. The only other analysis of costs is for Brisbane housing led services, which does not distinguish between CG and HF. A different report makes the vague assertion that CG in Brisbane has resulted in cost savings, but Parssel et al. comment that providing generous provision of cost can be costly to maintain, and yields no rental income. Importantly, congregate site facilities such as CG are often supported by philanthropists and politicians due to the headline appeal of providing all support on site versus a scattered provision. In Australia, costs were also saved as the construction company agreed to construct new facilities at cost price.
Effectiveness for subpopulations

To date, there has been no evidence focussing on CG’s effectiveness for subpopulations. One evaluation states women were both more likely than men to experience feelings of anti-socialisation and, value a sense of community in CG, and (particularly for women with a history of violent or dangerous housing contexts) to see it as their permanent home. Older people appear more likely to value the security of congregate site facilities and they may also be helpful for young people working towards specific goals. However, younger people appear more likely to see CG as a stable foundation from which to build on other aspects of their development such as education and training – not necessarily a long term home. It has also been noted that Australians identifying as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both are more likely to be homeless than the general population and that they be in CG facilities.

Recognising this, CG Port Augusta has been developed in Adelaide as the first programme developed specifically to address the needs of local homeless Aboriginal and Islander people. No further information about the effectiveness of the model, for instance on housing retention, with different subgroups is currently available.

5.4 Barriers to implementation

A key feature of CG in Australia that has been lauded as instrumental to its success has been its approach of increasing the supply of affordable housing within a tight market. Padgett refers to CG as following a ‘Business-model Lineage’ meaning it focuses on collaboration between state and non-state actors to meet its goals. This could have benefits for financing homelessness initiatives in a tight financial climate in the future. Indeed, the collaboration of public, private, and third sector organisations increased its attractiveness to the government, and a private developer built each site at cost price. Thus, CG can overcome the common barrier in housing led approaches of a lack of accommodation, provided parties are willing to make new construction affordable. However, a barrier to implementation may be the social mix required for CG, which can mean that those not in the supported accommodation category may see their accommodation as temporary in their transition out of affordable housing. This could have impacts on the concept of CG being intended for those with the highest support needs and tenancies should have the ability to live independently and in a community environment from the outset. Thus, those with the highest support needs have frequently been rejected and the wider homelessness sector has had to find space for them in unsuitable accommodation intended for those with low support needs. With this, some high needs tenants also reported not getting all of the support they need to live independently such as help with shopping. However, better collaboration between partners may resolve these issues by sharing expertise in supporting more vulnerable clients and providing greater transparency in the applications procedure. This need for improved partnerships is emphasised across the evaluation, particularly in regard to ensuring continuity of support for tenants.

5.5 Expert perspectives

Two key informants from the USA and Australia provided qualitative perspectives on Common Ground, providing useful additional insights into an intervention which has been relatively poorly researched.

While the literature review made no significant mention of variations in the Common Ground model, one key informant was keen to point out that in the Australian context interventions vary in their format between states and as a result of the alternative approaches pursued by different housing and support providers.

One of the perceived strengths of the model is that it provides permanent social housing. Key informants agreed with the literature review findings, suggesting that rough sleepers had managed to maintain tenancies for several years. They attribute the success of the model, not only to the availability of permanent accommodation but also the frequency of on-site intensive support. However, concerns were also raised about the appropriateness of this support – echoing literature review findings which highlighted the potentially paternalistic and intrusive nature of some of this support.

Key informants reiterated literature review findings that the intended ‘social mix’ between rough sleepers and low income tenants was not always achieved. One key informant suggested that there were difficulties finding and targeting low income households, albeit any lack of social mix within the congregate sites was not perceived to be a cause for concern.

While key informants recognised the positive housing impacts of Common Ground, significant reservations about the congregate site model and the intrusive nature of support, led them to conclude the model should not be established on a significantly wider scale.

5.6 Summary

- Common Ground (CG) is a form of congregate site supported/supportive housing which is said to target highly vulnerable rough sleepers and places

344 ibid.
them in accommodation alongside people on low to moderate incomes (who do not have a history of homelessness) in a mixed community. On-site health and social support, retail and leisure facilities are provided alongside a 24 hour concierge service. CG was first developed in the USA, and has been adopted as a national model in Australia.

• The evidence base on CG is very limited, despite assertions from some quarters that its expansion is an example of evidence-based policy. There have been no independent evaluations of the model in the USA and the number of studies in Australia very small, albeit steadily growing. The process of discerning the outcomes of CG is further complicated by the fact that CG projects are sometimes described under the banner of HF.

• Variable housing retention rates are documented, from one report of 99 per cent in New York, to 74 per cent in Tasmania. High rates of eviction and abandonment have been reported, and these attributed to poor fit between the model and the needs of certain (high needs) clients. Attrition rates appear to be declining over time in some projects, however.

• Health outcomes for CG residents show some signs of improvement, but the picture is mixed and more positive as regards psychological functioning than physical health. Mental health outcomes appear to be poorer in comparison to HF. Evidence on substance misuse is especially limited (restricted to one study) but suggests that this may not decline and may even increase in CG facilities, as compared with HF.

• Quality-of-life and social integration outcomes are generally positive for CG participants, with between 70 per cent and 90 per cent considering it their ‘home’. However, restrictive rules and surveillance can lead to feelings of ‘anti-community’ amongst residents. Indeed, some evidence suggests divisions between supported and unsupported tenants, with a lack of interaction between the two types of resident.

• There is no evidence on different housing outcomes for subpopulations. Some evaluations nevertheless note that older tenants and women are more likely to view CG as ‘home’, and women and young people more likely to complain about aspects of anti-community, particularly the behaviour of those under the influence of alcohol or illicit substances.

• The key barrier to implementation is ensuring the right cross-sectoral relationships between agencies so as to provide the correct level of support to tenants. However, a key strength is that CG facilities provide new accommodation and so ease pressure on housing. In Australia, this is been provided at a particularly low cost.

• While key informants recognised the positive impacts of CG on housing retention and the important role played in support services in achieving this success, they held significant reservations about the congregate site model and the intrusive nature of support. Key informants did not support widespread development of the model.
6.1 Defining the intervention
Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) are a funding mechanism for levying private capital to solve social issues. Whilst varying in structure, they involve securing private finance to support a (usually third sector) provider in delivering against predefined targets. Investors regain their investment from the public sector at agreed points when the target is reached, and receive an additional return on investment for performance beyond that target. SIBs are therefore a form of pay for performance financing and are increasingly used for projects that target social groups with more complex needs such as criminal offenders, chronically homeless people, and children in the care system. To secure private finance, proposed schemes are likely to follow an evidence based format and fund existing providers with a proven track record.

6.2 The evidence base
The evidence base on the use of SIBs in relation to homelessness services is limited. Most literature makes a case for trying SIBs rather than evaluating existing projects. An Australian report states only four SIBs globally have directly targeted homelessness, with one underway in Adelaide where an SIB is being used to fund Common Ground and associated services for 400 individuals. Another in Massachusetts seeks to provide 500 additional units of housing over six years to service 800 individuals in a Housing First approach. Other literature suggests SIBs are under consideration or in progress in Denver, Colorado, which is establishing an RCT around SIBs and supportive housing for chronically homeless people, and Queensland Australia. MSc dissertations suggest potential for SIBs related to homelessness in Alberta, Canada, and across Portugal to deliver Housing First.

The only project with an available evaluation is in London where charities Thames Reach and St Mungo’s were appointed to help a group of 813 named chronic rough sleepers between 2012 and 2015. The target population was split between the two service providers, and was designed to address a gap between two existing key initiatives, these being RS205 for rough sleepers with more complex needs, and No Second Night Out for those new to the streets (see chapter on No Second Night Out for discussion). It used a ‘Navigator’ model to provide a single link for participants to existing services. Navigators had a personalised budget (see chapter on Personal Budgets for discussion) for each individual to help in taking an assertive, tailored approach rather than to deliver any single pre-specified intervention.

6.3 Outcomes
The housing, health and employment outcomes described below are all reported in relation to the London SIB which aimed to:
• reduce rough sleeping;
• sustain accommodation;
• reconnect those with no right to remain in the UK;
• deliver Housing First.

Canada, and across Portugal to deliver Housing First.

353 Ibid
• promote employment, education and training; and
• improve health and wellbeing.

The payment structure of the SIB sets a baseline target for the service at which providers receive payment, and then further payment for outcomes reached beyond this figure. This section will therefore discuss the achieved outcome, and the extent to which it met targets for payment.

Housing
In total, just over half (53 per cent) of the 830 people achieved an accommodation or reconnection outcome, though this includes hostels for which no payment was made (20 of the 830). This figure rises to 71 per cent if those who lost contact or died during the service period are excluded from the calculation. 402 out of 830 were in stable accommodation – 64.3 per cent of those remaining in the cohort at the end of the programme.

Reduction targets for the number of individuals sleeping rough were 258 in year one, 132 in year two, and 92 in year three. Actual performance saw 175 in year one, 124 in year two, and 102 in year three. This shows successful year-on-year reduction and going beyond targets in year one and two. Reconnection was another goal, with targets of 104 in year one, 50 in year two, and 24 in year three. Actual outcomes were 45, 40 and 29 respectively, delivering only 114 of the expected 178. It further fell behind the target on sustaining reconnections for the most difficult clients into stable accommodation. Twelve month housing sustainment targets were 115 and 104 in years two and three with actual achievements of 146 and 95, totalling 241 overall – ultimately ahead of target, but more successful in year two than in three. Targets for 18 month sustainment were 41 in year two and 113 in year three with actual achievement of 78 and 106. Again, surpassing targets in year two and falling behind in year three but ultimately exceeding expectation with 184 achieving 18 months in stable accommodation. These are positive achievements for a group that have been historically difficult to engage.

Health
Though health was an important intended outcome of the London SIB, difficulties in gaining access to the appropriate data meant it had to be excluded from the performance framework. Thus, providers were paid in lieu for this outcome whilst negotiations on data access are ongoing.

Employment
Whilst the targets set for employment outcomes were low, reflecting the complexity of needs for the cohort, the final evaluation report shows underachievement for volunteering and part-time employment, but over achievement of full-time employment outcomes across the three-year programme. In total, they aimed for:

- 145 volunteering/self employed for 13 weeks, for which they achieved 33;
- 56 volunteering/self employed for 26 weeks, for which they achieved 26;
- 37 to be in part time work for 13 weeks, for which they achieved 7;
- 31 to be in part time work for 26 weeks, for which they achieved 3;
- 30 to be in full time work for 13 weeks, for which they achieved 53;
- and 25 to be in full time work for 26 weeks, for which they achieved 38.

Results were 77 per cent above the target for 13 weeks of full-time employment and 52 per cent above targets for 26 weeks.

Service use and costs
A feasibility study of the London SIB before it began estimated that the costs incurred by the cohort across 5 years totalled £24 million. £5 million was therefore allocated to fund the SIB, and over the three-year period 79 per cent of the ultimate payment target was reached – taking into account that some targets were reached, some exceeded, and some not achieved.

The SIB to fund Common Ground in Adelaide has seen the South Australian government make a AU$9 million commitment if service providers raise the initial capital to launch the programme. For the SIB in Massachusetts to deliver Housing First, a total of US$1 million targets in years one and two and US$2.5 million of private capital was raised, as well as leveraging existing government programs such as rental assistance payments to support housing and should therefore make cost savings overall.

6.4 Barriers to implementation
SIBs must have measurable and meaningful outcomes that the service provider, private investor and government stakeholders can agree upon. These need to be demonstrable within a reasonable timeframe, investors must have good reason to believe the SIB will succeed, and there needs to be a supportive political and legal environment to make them viable.

The immaturity of the market within the UK may also be a barrier at present, and a number of reports stress that setting too high a target on any specific element can lead to a disincentive for providers to focus on the most difficult of cases, and may lead them to cherry pick particular individuals for projects.

For instance, if employment outcomes are emphasised, but contingent largely on improving the health and housing stability of individuals first, then providers may abandon helping the most difficult clients into stable housing, and instead help those already housed to find employment. This is a key critique for the London SIB. This can be overcome by setting more considered, evidence-based targets. A scoping report suggests that before housing, the mean annual health cost for the targeted individuals in this program is around US$26,124 per year, dropping to US$8500 after housing and should therefore make cost savings overall.
outcomes and showing caution in setting high predefined targets. It may be better to focus on a few outcomes, rather than the raft of outcomes committed to in London.365

6.5 Expert perspectives
Social Impact Bonds are relatively new in the homelessness sector but four key informants still reflected in depth, often with contradictory perspectives, on the strengths and weaknesses of the model.

It is first worth noting that all informants were of the view that SIBs are a commissioning tool rather than an actual intervention. Moreover, some believe the outcomes focussed approach could be achieved through other means such as outcomes based contracting.

Despite these caveats, key informants identified four main benefits of SIBs. First, SIBs work well with entrenched rough sleepers, whose street lives are associated with high costs to public services. Second, SIBs enable new and increased funding to be leveraged that could not be accessed through other forms of outcomes-based commissioning. SIBs reportedly provide an opportunity to access funds that are tied up in trusts and foundations. Increased funds enable projects to be scaled up. Third, some key informants believe the outcome targets have led service providers to develop more personalised approaches in order to really understand what people need to get off the street. Fourth, there is a perception that paid for performance could be set very high and this raised concerns that the quality of solutions would be compromised. Second, informants questioned whether SIBs had led to significantly different and more effective approaches being taken. One informant felt strongly that a lot of ‘middle men’ benefited but the types of services being funded remained largely the same. Third, there were difficulties in securing the necessary consent and access to data which is key to any measurement of outcomes. Finally, and most significantly, key informants believed the model could not be replicated more widely because of its complexity.

6.6 Summary
• SIBs are a new form of financing social programmes that gather private investments to fund specific providers to deliver a service or program. They are increasingly being used, or are at least being considered, in response to homelessness in a number of countries (including the USA, Canada, Australia and Portugal), and have been trialed at a small scale in the UK.
• There is, as yet, limited evidence on SIB effectiveness. Further evaluation of their impact on outcomes in the homelessness field is needed. As literature points to an increasing number having started, there will likely be a better evidence base in the coming years.
• The only available evidence on outcomes is from the London SIB where 64 per cent of those remaining in the cohort at the end of the programme had achieved stable housing outcomes. It also exceeded expectations in housing sustainment at 12 and 18 months.
• Whilst volunteering and part time employment outcomes were not as successful as hoped, the London SIB performed substantially better than initially thought on full time employment. It may be that this funding mechanism incentivises targets traditionally not focused on by homelessness service providers.
• Caution should be exercised as regards the stability of outcomes over time, however, with the London SIB showing greater success in the first 2 years than in the final year. Long term evaluations are needed.
• The limited evidence shows that SIBs can be an effective funding mechanism, but complex agreements need to be put in place around the outcomes to be reached, and financial returns for different success rates.
• As SIBs generally fund existing, and usually evidence-based programs, it is reasonable to suppose that if they fund something such as Housing First or Common Ground they will receive the same, or similar results. However, it is possible that with a greater focus from providers on meeting predefined outcomes that performance may improve or decline in some areas.
• Key informants offered contradictory perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of SIBs. Positive impacts were perceived to include: good outcomes for entrenched rough sleepers, access to new funds in order to expand services, more personalised services in some cases, and increased clarity and transparency around outcomes monitoring. However, challenges and limitations include: high targets that compromise service quality, limited innovation in service provision, and difficulties accessing the necessary data for outcomes monitoring. Despite the fairly balanced view of SIBs, there was broad agreement that the model could not be replicated more widely because of its complexity.

Residential communities

7.1 Defining the intervention
The term residential community covers a range of configurations which accommodate homeless people in a congregate environment, physically isolated from outside influences, wherein the primary focus is not resolving street homelessness per se but rather providing support relating to other areas of residents’ lives. Two key models include: a) residential Therapeutic Communities (TCs) which focus on rehabilitation from substance misuse; and b) Emmaus communities or similar which have an employment (and to lesser extent social integration) focus.

With regard to the first, a residential TC is a well-established therapy model that supports clients to recover and abstain from substance misuse. The traditional TC model utilises a social, psychological and self-help approach to treatment. Both staff and residents are involved in development of a ‘caring community’ which challenges antisocial and problematic behaviours and aims to evoke psychological, social and behavioural change. TCs are typically characterised as ‘high-demand’ environments which are highly structured and where privileges and rules of conduct are well defined. Most aim for a global change in lifestyle including abstinence from illicit substances, elimination of antisocial behaviour, and evidence of employability, prosocial attitudes and values.

Specially adapted versions of TC, known as Modified Therapeutic Communities (MTCs), have been developed for particular populations, including homeless people, and these have been developed within some homeless shelters in the United States. MTCs tend to adopt a more individualised approach and make fewer demands of residents than traditional TCs. TC stays are typically quite long (between 15 and 24 months), but some MTC programmes, including those in at least some homeless shelters, operate over a shorter timeframe (e.g. six months).

Emmaus communities, in contrast, are described as self-financing mutually supportive communities wherein residents (known as ‘companions’) live and work together. The vast majority of companions are homeless (or about to become so) when they first join. Emmaus communities operate a social enterprise model, running businesses which are often based around selling second-hand furniture and goods. They aim to give formerly homeless people the chance to live and work alongside others, to learn to

live as part of a community, to develop work experience, and improve self-esteem. They are sometimes described in terms of having given homeless a bed and a reason to get out of it. Some companions forego welfare benefits and the communities operate a ‘dry’ policy regarding alcohol and drug use. The vast majority of Emmaus companions are single White men. There is no maximum length of stay, and it is generally accepted that some companions will not move on into independent living but remain resident in the long term. A similar model of community living and working is provided in some rural areas by Barka in Poland.

7.2 The evidence base

The effectiveness of the TC (and MTC) approaches in dealing with addiction in the general population is evidenced by a well-established body of research which includes rigorous (primarily quantitative) studies, but it has been noted that further research is needed to be fully confident about TC effectiveness in homeless shelters. The evidence base on Emmaus communities or similar projects operated by organisations such as Barka is weak by comparison. Only a very small number of small-scale (primarily qualitative) evaluations of Emmaus have been conducted; and these limited to a few projects in England only.

7.3 Outcomes

Housing

Housing-related outcomes are not generally recorded for TCs, albeit that one study in the USA noted that homeless people in the MTC experimental group were more likely to be placed into housing appropriate to their level of functioning after the programme than were the comparison group undergoing treatment in a general shelter. It is also worth noting that TC dropout rates are generally very high, with only 25-35 per cent of residents typically completing programmes, and no evaluations provide any detail regarding the post-exit housing status of those who drop out.

Rates of move-on to independent housing from Emmaus communities are not systematically recorded, but are reported to be low in the few evaluations conducted. Some commentators have pointed to a tension within Emmaus communities between the objective of supporting people to move on to independent living and recognising a companion’s decision to remain in the long term as a ‘valid life choice’ in situations where they feel unable or do not want to live in ‘normal’ society.

Health

The TC studies reviewed consistently identified reduced presence of mental illness symptoms amongst homeless residents of TC and MTCs as compared with those in standard treatment settings. Literature on Emmaus communities does not document changes in health status.

Substance misuse

A review of MTC literature concluded that significantly greater reductions in substance misuse have been found for homeless people with co-occurring substance misuse problems treated in MTC programmes than for those in treatment as customarily provided. Literature on Emmaus communities does not document changes in substance misuse status.

Criminal activity and anti-social behaviour

TC evaluations consistently document reductions in post-treatment criminality, and this is also true for programmes targeting homeless people. Literature on Emmaus communities does not make reference to changes in levels of criminal activity or antisocial behaviour.

Quality of life and social integration

TC literature does not offer commentary on quality of life and social integration outcomes. Evaluations of Emmaus communities in England indicate that living and working within these environments can add value to residents’ lives, offering a sense of purpose and enhancing feelings of self-worth. Some residents value the development of skills whilst they are resident in the communities, but they derive no direct

383 Runnel and Brown 2002
Some companions are reported to view the geographical isolation of Emmaus projects as beneficial, in that they offer distance from a harmful ‘scene’, where peer group influences encourage harmful drinking and drug-taking.\(^{392}\) That said, tensions amongst residents do arise, and ‘falling out’ with fellow companions is a common reason for individuals leaving.\(^{393}\) Some commentators have also questioned the extent to which Emmaus and other geographically isolated programmes can realistically foster social integration.\(^{394}\)

**Effectiveness for subpopulations**

TCs have been used with homeless people with complex needs, including co-occurring mental health problems and involvement in substance misuse and/or criminal behaviour, but it has been noted that the combination of such vulnerabilities adds to the challenge of simultaneously dealing with them in one therapeutic context.\(^{395}\)

Existing commentaries suggest that Emmaus Communities may be particularly attractive to and/or beneficial for: people with little formal education or work experience, those who have offended in the past and are at a high risk of re-offending, individuals with mild learning difficulties, and those with experience of or a liking for communal living.\(^{396}\)

The groups for whom Emmaus communities have been said to be less suitable include: women, young people, ethnic minorities and the ‘most chaotic’ street homeless people.\(^{397}\) Chronically homeless people in particular can be viewed as disruptive and as unable to make a positive contribution to the work that sustains the communities financially.\(^{398}\)

**Cost**

Whilst there is no evidence comparing the cost of TCs with other accommodation-focused interventions for homeless people, some reports do indicate that they cost no more to operate\(^ {399} \) and offer greater cost-benefit\(^ {400} \) than other forms of substance misuse treatment programmes.

An economic evaluation of an Emmaus village using figures for 2006-7 indicated that whilst the surplus from its trading activities was not sufficient to meet the full costs of accommodating and supporting its companions, additional income from other sources (of which statutory sources included Housing Benefit and Supporting People) enabled the community to produce a total surplus of £19,089 after companions costs had been met.\(^ {401} \) The same evaluation estimated that the community was responsible for savings and benefits to society of around £31,252 per companion per year.

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391 Ibid
392 Ibid
393 Ibid
398 Ibid

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7.4 Barriers to implementation

Existing literature does not provide commentary on the barriers to implementation of either TCs or Emmaus communities.

7.5 Expert perspectives

No key informant interviewees commented on the use or effectiveness of residential communities.

7.6 Summary

- The term residential community covers a range of configurations which accommodate homeless people in a congregate (but usually geographically isolated) environment, wherein the primary focus is not resolving street homelessness per se but rather providing support relating to other areas of residents’ lives. Two key models include: a) residential Therapeutic Communities (TCs) which are based on a well-established therapy model that supports clients to recover from substance misuse; and b) Emmaus communities which are described as self-financing mutually supportive communities where residents live and work together. Modified TCs (MTCs) have been implemented in homeless shelters within the USA, and Emmaus communities operate in a number of rural locations in the UK.

- The effectiveness of the TC (and MTC) approaches in dealing with addiction in the general population is evidenced by a well-established body of evidence which includes rigorous (primarily quantitative) research, but it has been noted that further research is needed to be fully confident about the intervention’s effectiveness in homeless shelters. The evidence base on Emmaus communities or similar projects is weak by comparison, being limited to a very small number of small-scale (primarily qualitative) evaluations.

- Evidence on TCs consistently indicates that the model is effective in reducing levels of substance misuse, mental health problems and involvement in criminality, including when employed in homeless shelters. Evaluations of Emmaus communities suggest that they can improve residents’ quality of life by offering a sense of purpose, enabling skill development and enhancing feelings of self-worth but that the way of life is attractive to a fairly limited clientele. Evidence regarding the impact of either model of residential community on housing outcomes is negligible or non-existent.

- TCs have been shown to be effective in helping at least some homeless people with complex needs overcome addiction, but attrition rates are very high. Emmaus Communities appear to be particularly attractive to and/or beneficial for: people with little formal education or work experience, ex-offenders, individuals with mild learning difficulties, and those with experience of or a liking for communal living. They are considered less suitable for: women, young people, ethnic minorities, and the ‘most chaotic’ or chronic street homeless people.
8.1 Defining the intervention
No Second Night Out (NSNO) aims to assist those new to rough sleeping by providing an offer that means they do not have to sleep rough for a second night. It began as a pilot project in London in 2011 and by 2014 all but two English local authorities had either committed to NSNO, or expressed a commitment to do so in the near future.402 The principles of the model are:

- new rough sleepers should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle.
- members of the public should be able to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough.
- rough sleepers should be helped to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed and they can receive advice on their options.
- rough sleepers should be able to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed.
- if people have come from another area or country and find themselves sleeping rough, the aim should be to reconnect them back to their local community unless there is a good reason why they cannot return. There, they will be able to access housing and recovery services, and have support from family and friends.403

Homeless Link (who oversaw the initial funding allocations for NSNO) encourages local authorities to customise their approach to meet the needs of their specific client group.404 Thus, NSNO can be delivered in a variety of ways – from consolidating existing services for rough sleepers,405 to establishing specific programmes to help homeless people find work experience and employment opportunities.406 Indeed, whilst NSNO is primarily aimed at new rough sleepers, some local areas have widened eligibility requirements to integrate help for entrenched rough sleepers,407 or established distinct new schemes for this group that they roll out alongside NSNO.408

NSNO typically operates through a mixture of Assertive Outreach (see Street Outreach chapter), a NSNO hub where staff can link individuals to accommodation and other support, and a telephone line by which members of the public and rough sleepers themselves can make a referral.409 The aim is that no rough sleeper should spend more than 72 hours at a hub, but these are able to offer emergency accommodation along with washing facilities and food where necessary.410 Those without a recognised connection to the local area may have their return home funded (see also Reconnection chapter).411 NSNO is one of the only rough sleeper services in the UK that can help destitute migrants. This may be to re-establish a right to reside in the UK, assess whether an individual is entitled to welfare benefits, or make an offer of reconnection to their place of residence.412

403 Ibid. p.6
404 Ibid.
405 Ibid.
of origin.412 In at least some locations, support is provided on a ‘single service offer’ basis, wherein refusal to comply with a specified plan (e.g. an offer of reconnection) renders a rough sleeper ineligible for support from all participating agencies in the area.413

### 8.2 The evidence base

The evidence base on NSNO is limited. It is based in England only and other than a few passing mentions in academic literature, comes entirely from grey sources which are primarily evaluations of the NSNO service in particular localities,414 and one review of 20 projects across England.415 These are based on administrative and survey data, as well as qualitative interviews.

As NSNO is primarily concerned with helping individuals access accommodation, there is no robust evidence on how the approach affects physical and mental health, substance misuse, nor criminal offending and antisocial behaviour. Consequently, this review can only assess impacts on access to and retention of accommodation, and reflect on what is known about users’ experience and quality of life whilst (and, where known, immediately after) using the service.

### 8.3 Outcomes

It should be noted that NSNO is not aiming at medium-term outcomes, and so all but one420 report focuses on the short term.

#### Housing

Reports state that in London 86 per cent of new rough sleepers known to authorities were secured accommodation after the first night, and 78 per cent percent did not return to the street (in that locality, at least). There is no data available on longer-term housing outcomes. Across the rest of England, Homeless Link finds accommodation access and retention rates to be slightly lower, with 67 per cent securing accommodation after the first night and 78 per cent not returning to the street.421

Reports of local schemes suggest a high level of flexibility in the service is helpful in resolving complex accommodation needs, such as in Salford where they will find accommodation for individuals and their dogs.416 Indeed for some, NSNO has helped them secure permanent accommodation to return to the street.423

There, service user interviews also consistently show high regard for the help and care they received and quick responses after the referral.420 More negative reports come from London where medium-term outcomes for service users suggest a much more mixed trajectory. There, some service users report their accommodation has been removed at a later stage when the local authority reported to them that they are not deemed to be in priority need (determined by local authorities to include families with children, 16 and 17-year-olds, pregnant women, care leavers aged 18 to 20, and other people classed as vulnerable based on a range of criteria), or choosing to sofa surf rather than stay in the temporary accommodation allocated to them.421

It is worth noting that NSNO has inspired development of a preventative programme which aims to reduce the number of people who sleep rough even for a single night. In London, an 18 month pilot entitled No First Night Out (NFNO) began in 2016. It uses the Local Authority Housing Options service to identify single people at imminent risk, and then refers them to the NFNO team to undertake intensive case work to prevent them rough sleeping. This includes mediating with accommodation providers, working on benefit claims, and providing access to emergency B&B accommodation, private rental access schemes and supported accommodation. Where appropriate, they are also referred to Crisis for learning opportunities. An interim report of the first 3 months of operation suggests 9 people have been helped to access medium to long-term accommodation through the NFNO project – 6 having moved to private rental accommodation and 3 into supported accommodation.422

#### Quality of life

Qualitative data from evaluations suggests that quality-of-life for those helped off the streets generally improved, with accommodation allowing some participants to return to education, recover from substance misuse, improve their relationships and enter employment and volunteering.423

However, evaluations suggest that placing some individuals in temporary accommodation was difficult, particularly hostels where service users were either hesitant, or outright refused to enter an environment they saw as detrimental to their well-being.424

A review of medium-term outcomes for service users in London suggests that the use of substandard temporary accommodation for some impacted on the health and well-being of individuals. This included overly long stays in the NSNO hub emergency accommodation. It also states that some individuals were dissatisfied with the level of support they received, citing that greater help in finding employment and managing money and benefits would improve their
chances of not returning to the street.\textsuperscript{425}

There is some evidence that NSNO workers were able to help individuals with more than housing needs, and help link some to health services they were not receiving before.\textsuperscript{426} In fact, one initiative in greater Manchester reports promising signs that an associated work experience and employment scheme is benefiting the client base.\textsuperscript{427}

**Effectiveness for subpopulations**

Across England, Homeless Link report that 17 per cent of clients were women, 20 per cent between ages 16 and 25, and the proportion of UK nationals was 75 per cent, with 20 per cent being from other European economic area countries and 5 per cent from outside Europe. In London the demographics of service users differed – they were more likely to be non-UK nationals and be male.\textsuperscript{428} There is little evidence on how NSNO works for different subpopulations, but it is limited in what it can offer those without recourse to public funds. This can mean that destitute migrants who do receive some offer either accept an offer of reconnection or return to the streets (see Reconnection chapter for exploration of the impacts of this).\textsuperscript{429}

**Service use and cost**

There is no specific evidence on cost of the service.

8.4 Barriers to implementation

Time-limited funding has been a key barrier to lasting implementation of NSNO. The Homeless Transition Fund initially supported NSNO projects across England but when this funding ended some projects had to reduce their service offer particularly in relation to temporary accommodation.\textsuperscript{430}

The availability of temporary accommodation has also been a barrier to full implementation of the service, with agencies that have access to such accommodation not always linked up with the NSNO service, meaning that space exists but is not used effectively.\textsuperscript{431} A further challenge has been the difficulty of securing permanent accommodation for people in receipt of housing benefit.\textsuperscript{432} This crisis of both temporary and permanent accommodation availability is most pronounced in London, where an evaluation of medium term impacts on service users highlights that a lack of accommodation means that increasingly, despite the remit of NSNO being greater than individuals in priority need, accommodation is still reserved for those groups.\textsuperscript{433}

Another concern is that rough sleepers being referred to NSNO outreach workers sometimes wait long periods before being ‘found’, and may have to put themselves in particularly vulnerable positions to be observable. This, along with the difficulty that outreach workers may have in confirming an individual was rough sleeping renders the service less effective than intended.\textsuperscript{434}

Local authorities have frequently identified problems with the eligibility criteria of NSNO, with many rough sleepers neither meeting the strict criteria of being new to the streets (and therefore qualifying for the service), nor having lived on the streets long enough to be considered entrenched and thereby qualifying for alternative programmes (e.g. Individualised Budgets or Housing First).\textsuperscript{435} In practice, many NSNO programmes have found themselves supporting clients with a longer history of rough sleeping, and higher level of support needs, than had been anticipated.\textsuperscript{436}

The survey participants in a Homeless Link report suggest that getting buy-in and agreement from all partners involved in the scheme was the single biggest challenge in delivering NSNO.\textsuperscript{437} A local example of Salford shows that a lack of a robust multiagency forum makes it difficult to deliver the holistic service that many providers feel is possible and necessary.\textsuperscript{438} In Manchester such a forum exists.\textsuperscript{439} In some areas, concerns have also been raised about the ethicality of single service offers and potential denial of key services to individuals with no local connection who refuse ‘poor’ offers of support (e.g. standard emergency accommodation or poorly devised reconnection plan).\textsuperscript{440}

8.5 Expert perspectives

NSNO is unique to the UK and not widely known, hence only one key informant provided a view on the implementation. The key informant felt there is sufficient evidence on the impacts of NSNO, largely in the form of individual project evaluations. The informant was positive about the impacts of NSNO on achieving its goal of enabling new rough sleepers to get off the streets and into accommodation. They described how NSNO combines an important mix of actions, including: assertive outreach, the identification of options including reconnections, and workaround where a solution cannot be found there is temporary accommodation available.

One interesting observation by the key informant was the very basic facilities


offered within the NSNO building. They explained how the service makes the setting uncomfortable by adopting a ‘sitting up’ service approach. The stand-out characteristic of the approach is perceived to be the speed of assistance, including early identification on the streets and then a very swift solution, sometimes within hours.

The key informant did not identify the weaknesses and concerns raised in the literature review, however they did critique the timing of the intervention, suggesting that the service could act earlier to prevent rough sleeping. They explained that No First Night Out is now being implemented in some areas – this approach adopts the principles of No Second Night Out and embeds them within housing options departments for people who are presenting as at risk of homelessness.

8.6 Summary

• Currently operating in England only, NSNO aims to assist those new to rough sleeping by providing an offer that means they do not have to sleep rough for a second night. There is widespread variation in the way NSNO principles are practiced, but it typically consists of some combination of assertive outreach, public engagement, support to access temporary accommodation and/or reconnection. Service users’ needs are assessed in NSNO ‘hubs’.

• The evidence base on NSNO is limited, consisting of small-scale evaluations of NSNO services in particular localities, together with a broader review of 20 projects. With one notable exception, these focus primarily on short-term housing outcomes and draw on interview, administrative and survey data.

• NSNO is effective in quickly finding the vast majority of service users temporary accommodation, with only a minority recorded as returning to the streets in the short term (in that locality, at least).

• Some service users have praised the treatment received and report benefiting from the support offered. Others, however, have been dissatisfied with the type and level of support received, refused offers of what they regarded as substandard accommodation, declined offers of reconnection, and/or returned to rough sleeping or sofa surfing.

• Limited availability of housing can undermine the effectiveness of NSNO, with accommodation shortages being particularly acute in London and contributing to overly long hub stays. Long waits for rough sleepers to be ‘found’ and have their status confirmed by outreach workers also restrict its effectiveness in some contexts. Further to this, time-limited funding has been a key barrier to lasting implementation.

• Service providers recognise that, in practice, a wider client group than first time rough sleepers needs to be addressed. There is limited evidence of how NSNO works for different subgroups. More research in this area would be helpful.

• Only one key informant offered a view on NSNO. They were positive about the model and its success rate in supporting new rough sleepers to get off the streets and into accommodation. The stand-out characteristic of the approach is perceived to be the speed of assistance.
9.1 Defining the intervention

Reconnection essentially involves returning rough sleepers to their ‘home’ area. Some reconnections are ‘international’ in that they involve repatriating immigrants to their country of origin; others ‘domestic’ in that they relocate rough sleepers within their home country from somewhere they have no local connection to an area where they do have established connections. For the purposes of clarity, in this chapter the area within which a rough sleeper is targeted for reconnection (that is, the place they are reconnected from) is referred to as an ‘identifying’ area; the place they are reconnected to is referred to the ‘recipient’ area.

Reconnection policies are generally underpinned by aspirations to: prioritise the needs of ‘local’ rough sleepers in the context of restricted resources; force source areas to take responsibility for ‘their’ rough sleepers; reduce the potential for rough sleepers to become involved in damaging street lifestyles; and improve outcomes for homeless people by supporting them to move to areas where they are assumed to have access to informal social support and/or formal support services.441

Whilst there has been no assessment of the scale of its use internationally, reconnection is widely used in the UK (England especially)442 and there are reports of it being employed in a number of cities elsewhere in Europe.443 Domestic reconnections (from one urban centre to another) comprise the majority of reconnections from some areas in the UK, but in London these are outnumbered by international reconnections (involving moves abroad).444 The policy emphasis on reconnection escalated rapidly after the inception and nationwide rollout of No Second Night Out principles in England.445

In the UK, reconnection is defined in policy as ‘the process by which people sleeping rough who have a connection to another area … are supported to return to this area in a planned way’.446 In practice, however, it is an umbrella term used to refer to a wide range of approaches including:

- ‘reconnection (proper)’ which supports rough sleepers to return to somewhere they have an established link;
- ‘deflection’ wherein they are advised to return ‘home’ but are not provided with support to do so.447

The balance of these approaches varies at the local level, as does the intensity of support provided. The provision of support does in fact range from intensive assessment of needs and brokering of support in the recipient area at one extreme, to virtually nothing (aside from the provision of a travel ticket) at the other.448 It has been noted that levels of support are often greater in the lead-up to international reconnections than is true of domestic ones, albeit that there is rarely much if anything in the way of follow-up after an individual’s return to their home country.449 In many cases, rough sleepers are denied access to local authority funded services (e.g. hostels and day centres) if they fail to comply with a reconnection offer (which is sometimes presented as a ‘single service offer’).450

9.2 The evidence base

Evidence regarding reconnection outcomes is, at present, extremely weak. Only one evaluation was identified in the review, and this focused on domestic reconnections (from one urban centre to another) within the UK only, albeit that it makes reference to (limited) data on international reconnections where this was available.451 The study involved...
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9.3 Outcomes

All of the evidence on outcomes referred to below is drawn from the study of domestic reconnections of rough sleepers within the UK referred to above. Given the limited evidence available, this is restricted to an overview of impacts on housing and quality of life.

Housing

While it was not possible to quantify precisely what proportion of reconnected rough sleepers experience specific outcomes, the study suggested that rough sleepers tended to follow one of four general response trajectories, in that they either: i) comply with the reconnection offer, move to and remain in the recipient area; ii) comply with the reconnection offer and move to the recipient area but subsequently return to the identifying area; iii) refuse the reconnection offer and remain street homeless in the identifying area; or iv) refuse to be reconnected and make accommodation arrangements independently (e.g. sofa surf).

A number of reconnected individuals did sleep rough in the recipient area, even if only for a short time, given the inadequacy or unpalatability of services they were referred to. Further to this, the ability of those whom made alternative arrangements was, inevitably, contingent on them having the capabilities, confidence and/or contacts (e.g. family) to do so. Also notably, all of the individuals who were ‘diverted’ (see above) questioned the logic underpinning the intervention, and whilst their immediate accommodation needs were met, they remained ineligible for settled accommodation given their lack of local connection in the recipient area.

Quality of life

Individuals reconnected to another urban area within the UK generally reported being confused, upset and/or angry at the prospect of reconnection, in part due to lack of clarity regarding local connection assessment criteria, but most commonly because of the primacy accorded to last place of settled residence and comparative lack of recognition given to the presence of family in local connection assessments. Levels of anger and anxiety were most acute amongst those who believed they would be at risk of harm if they returned but had no formal (police) evidence because they had not reported violence or threats thereof in the recipient area. There is at present no published evidence regarding the perceptions and experiences of people reconnected overseas.

Rough sleepers tend to interpret reconnections as an attempt on the part of local authorities to avoid taking responsibility for vulnerable individuals. This has had the unintended negative consequence of strengthening the resolve of many to ‘fight the system’ by refusing to engage with the reconnection process. That said, rough sleepers generally agreed that reconnection was justifiable in situations where rough sleepers had abandoned legitimate connections (e.g. positive family support and/or services in their home area), were returning voluntarily, were not at risk of harm should they return, and were provided with sufficient support before, during and after the reconnection process. They universally and resolutely believed that no-one should be forced to return to an area where they felt that they would be at risk of physical or psychological harm, however.

9.4 Barriers to implementation

Three main sources of barriers to reconnection have been identified. First, a number of challenges are associated with reconnection abroad, particularly their reticence to recognise and accept responsibility for rough sleepers who are deemed to have legitimate local connections but are resistant to the idea of returning; second, reconnection policies are reportedly undermined by other service providers who object to the approach in principle and are not signed up to associated protocol. Here, criticism is most commonly targeted at non-interventionist (and often faith-based) soup runs, night shelters and/or open-door day centres who continue to offer rough sleepers support even if reconnection had been presented as a single service offer and refused. Third, resistance on the part of rough sleepers themselves is highlighted as a major challenge. This is often said to be borne of unrealistic expectations or misinformation.
negative experiences of services in the recipient area, and/or fear that they will be at risk of harm if they return.

There is widespread agreement that reconnection is appropriate in some circumstances, most notably where rough sleepers have made an unplanned move to an identifying area and abandoned ‘live’ connections or services in that area. The limits and risks associated with reconnection raise significant ethical questions, however, especially as regards: denial of services to rough sleepers with no recognised local connection; uncertainty regarding the legitimacy and/or severity of risk to rough sleepers in recipient areas (especially when no proof in the form of police records exist); inadequate service responses in some recipient areas; and the fragility or lack of rough sleepers’ support networks in recipient areas. These ethical dilemmas are most acute when: rough sleepers are newly homeless or recent arrivals to the identifying area (i.e. where they are first contacted on the street), have a (recent) history of service use in the recipient area (i.e. where they are reconnected to), and/or have ‘meaningful’ connections in the recipient area. Conversely, reconnection appears least likely to work when: rough sleepers are resistant to the idea of returning; targeted individuals have a long history of homelessness; and/or recipient areas are geographically very distant from identifying areas. The provision of sufficiently intensive and tailored support is a critical ingredient in any successful reconnection.

9.6 Summary

• Reconnection involves returning rough sleepers to their ‘home’ area. Some reconnections are ‘international’ in that they involve repatriating immigrants to their country of origin; others ‘domestic’ in that they relocate rough sleepers from somewhere they have no local connection to an area where they do have established connections within their home country. The level and nature of support involved with reconnections varies dramatically – from intensive assessment of needs and brokering of support in the recipient area at one extreme, to virtually nothing at the other.

• The escalation of reconnection in the UK, and England especially, has occurred in the absence of robust evidence regarding its effectiveness. Evidence regarding the impacts of reconnection is, at present, extremely weak – in large part because outcomes are recorded in only a very small minority of cases, and even then this is typically only to confirm that the individual involved has arrived in the destination area.

• The evidence which does exist (which is limited to a single study of reconnections within the UK) indicates that outcomes for rough sleepers vary dramatically. Some do access housing and reengage with support services in the recipient area, but others sleep rough in the recipient area, return to the identifying area, or refuse the reconnection offer entirely. Most targeted individuals describe the process as distressing and bewildering, especially if they have no meaningful connection or believe they will be at risk of harm in the recipient area.

• Reconnections are most likely to be effective when targeted rough sleepers are newly homeless or recent arrivals to the identifying area (i.e. where they are first contacted on the street), have a (recent) history of service use in the recipient area (i.e. where they are reconnected to), and/or have ‘meaningful’ connections in the recipient area. Conversely, reconnection appears least likely to work when: rough sleepers are resistant to the idea of returning; targeted individuals have a long history of homelessness; and/or recipient areas are geographically very distant from identifying areas. The provision of sufficiently intensive and tailored support is a critical ingredient in any successful reconnection.

• Barriers to implementation include: reticence or inability on the part of recipient areas to provide adequate services for reconnected rough sleepers; the actions of non-interventionist support agencies which are said to undermine reconnection policies; and resistance on the part of rough sleepers themselves which is often borne out of unrealistic expectations or misinformation, negative experiences of services in the recipient area, and/or fear that they will be at risk of harm if they return.

• Whilst there is widespread consensus that reconnection is appropriate in some cases – notably where rough sleepers have made an unplanned move and abandoned ‘live’ connections or services in their ‘home’ area – the limits and risks associated with reconnection raise important ethical questions. These include: denial of services to rough sleepers with no recognised local connection; uncertainty regarding the legitimacy and/or severity of risk to rough sleepers in recipient areas; inadequate service responses in some recipient areas; and the fragility or lack of support networks in recipient areas. These dilemmas are most acute when reconnection is employed as a ‘single service offer’.

9.5 Expert perspectives

Four key informants provided perspectives on the reconnection approach and they generally agreed with the conclusions of the literature review that the evidence base is weak.

Key informants recognised that reconnections can be both domestic and international. Views on domestic reconnections were mostly negative. Key informants highlighted two key issues. First, there is potential for people to be returned to an area in which they have very little support, resources or access to services. This concern echoes findings from the literature review. Second, informants questioned the motivations behind the intervention, particularly whether it is intended to benefit the local authority, reducing costs that may incur, or is it really in the best interests of the individual. One interviewee went on to suggest that single offer reconnection services may be in conflict with a Human Rights based approach.

The position on international reconnections was more ambiguous. Key informants were more persuaded by the value of reconnections with individuals who would otherwise have no entitlement to public services or assistance in the UK. However, concerns remained about the potential quality of life a person may face on return to their country of origin. There was no clear consensus as to whether international reconnections should be promoted.

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Personalised Budgets

10.1 Defining the intervention

Personalised Budgets aim to support entrenched, long-term rough sleepers to move off the streets and into accommodation. Brown describes the ‘model participant’ as someone for whom all other attempts to help secure stable accommodation have failed. In very broad terms, the intervention works by ensuring entrenched rough sleepers are assisted by a named support worker who has access to a budget (usually between £2,000 – £3,000) to be spent very flexibly (ie. on a vast range of possible items) in order to help the individual secure and maintain accommodation.

Fundamental to the approach is the notion of choice and control – rough sleepers are encouraged to identify their own needs and to take action with ongoing support from a single support worker. Together, individuals and their support workers must develop a support plan and the support worker connects the individual with a range of existing services relating to accommodation, health, substance misuse support etc.

Individual budgets have been spent on items as varied as:

- a caravan and pitch licence for an authorised travellers’ site
- clothing to help with self-esteem
- college courses and pre-tenancy training
- mobile phones in order to stay in touch with workers
- travel to help reconnect with family
- furniture and televisions to personalise homes
- laptops and cameras to pursue meaningful occupation
- food and utilities when benefits were suspended.

To date, Personalised Budgets have only been implemented with homeless people in the UK, particularly in England and Wales. In 2008, the DCLG published its rough sleeping strategy document: *No One Left Out: communities ending rough sleeping*, which committed to pilot personalised support to long-term rough sleepers. Consequently, in 2009 four pilot projects were funded in London, Nottingham, Northampton, and Exeter/Devon. The London pilot project was subsequently extended beyond the pilot period. In 2011 the Welsh Local Government Association Homelessness Network funded five Personal Budget pilot projects in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, Bridgend and Anglesey/Gwynedd. All studies reviewed here relate to either the London or Welsh pilot projects.

It is important to recognise that the interventions in London and Wales appear to have targeted slightly different groups. In England, only one participant in the project was identified as having a substance misuse issue and, as we document later, this individual proved to be difficult to accommodate. By contrast, in Wales the participants were described as experiencing multiple exclusion, having very often spent periods in prison, were very heavy alcohol drinkers and significant drug users.

465 Ibid.
In the extension of the London pilot project 37 individuals were offered personalised budgets and slightly worse housing outcomes were achieved. Sadly, two participants died shortly after being offered support but 14 of the entrenched rough sleepers maintained their accommodation for between 3 and 18 months, with a further three individuals awaiting accommodation. Hence, the success rate was approximately 40–50 per cent. The types of accommodation accessed in both the pilot and the extension projects included: local authority housing, supported accommodation, a caravan on a traveller’s site, and Bed and Breakfast accommodation.473

Across the projects in Wales a total of 79 people were engaged and Brown474 estimates that at least 33 people (42 per cent) were in ‘stable’ accommodation, which he defines as: living in some form of low support accommodation, living with a partner or supported by their family, living in their own accommodation with no or little support etc. Brown concludes that a further 40 per cent of project participants were accommodated in temporary accommodation, which tentatively suggests fewer remain on the streets than was true of the English experience.

10.2 The evidence base
There are relatively few studies of Personalised Budget interventions with homeless people. However, the few available studies do provide useful insights into the housing impacts of a small number of pilot projects in England (particularly London) and Wales. The studies tend to use a combination of administrative data analysis and qualitative interviews with service providers and service users. Beyond the limited quantity of studies, there are two key limitations of the available data. First, whilst data on housing impacts are fairly good, data on other areas such as health and substance misuse are much weaker and never quantified. Second, the evidence base lacks longitudinal research – no studies have examined impacts beyond 18 months from the start of service provision. As Brown469 states; ‘long-term successes are, at this point, impossible to ascertain.’

10.3 Outcomes
Housing
The London pilot project attempted to work with 15 entrenched rough sleepers and after 18 months, 13 of 15 had accepted and engaged with the personal budget.470 The project evaluation concluded that 7 of 15 people had been in accommodation between four and 11 months and an additional two people were making firm plans to do likewise.471 Hence, the housing success rate is approximately 45–60 per cent. It is worth noting that in the London pilot 4 of the 15 people assisted had moved into accommodation but 3 subsequently returned to the street and another went to prison.472

Health: All studies commented on the positive impacts of Personalised Budgets interventions on physical and mental health.473 Moreover, it is claimed in the Welsh projects that individuals subsequently engaged more appropriately with health and support services. These conclusions are reached solely on qualitative data – no studies sought to quantify these improvements.

Wider outcomes
The focus of the quantitative evidence on Personalised Budgets is on housing outcomes. However, there is important qualitative data which points towards wider impacts. This brief section summarises the evidence.

Quality of life and social integration: Studies of the London and Welsh pilot projects made firm conclusions about the non-tangible impacts of the Personalised Budget interventions.475, 476 First, individuals developed more positive social networks, shifting away from those based around substance and alcohol use, and instead often reconnecting with family. Second, individuals experienced improved self-esteem and self-confidence, with many talking positively about their lives and making plans for the future. Third, people developed an increased ability to engage in personal care.

Employment and social welfare: The London pilot project led to 5 of 15 individuals starting new welfare benefit claims for the first time in many years and four of these were maintained.480, 481

Effectiveness for subpopulations
Personalised Budgets have only been trialled with a relatively small sample of rough sleepers, all of whom were entrenched in their street lives. Given the profile of rough sleepers assisted and the relatively small sample size, there has been no analysis of whether the approach is more or less effective with particular subpopulations. Within the studies of Personalised Budgets the only concern raised was the limited effectiveness of the approach with rough sleepers facing substance abuse issues in the London pilot study.482 However, substance misuse was a common issue for participants in the Welsh projects, hence it can be effective with this group. Significantly, Hough and Rice477, 478 raise the question as to whether the approach might

471 Ibid
477 Ibid
479 Ibid
486 Ibid
be effective with the wider homeless population but this is yet to be piloted or researched.

**Service use and costs**

Fairly good data is available on the cost of Personalised Budgets. In the London pilot project there was a budget of £3,000 per person and in Wales the budget was £2,000 per person, excluding any costs of the support worker delivering the Personalised Budgets programme. Evaluations found only £794 was spent per person in London, albeit additional expenditures were anticipated with some support plans. The average individual budget spent in Wales was £434, significantly lower than the amount spent in England and well below the sum available.

In addition to the personal budget, the main cost of the intervention is staff time. When staff time and expenditure per person are combined the total cost per individual in England was £4,437. Hough and Rice identify that this is approximately £1,300 greater than the cost of delivering standard outreach provision. In Wales, the projects were staffed by workers in existing support posts, who merged their work on the project with their existing caseloads. Therefore, staff costs were not recorded.

Qualitative data across the different studies suggest that there are wider cost impacts. Personalised Budgets interventions reportedly increase initial costs to the public purse in two main ways: first, more benefit claims are made and second, there is higher initial engagement with other services (e.g. health). However, interviewees in the studies suggest there are likely to be longer term cost savings as a result of reductions in engagement with outreach services, contact with police and the wider criminal justice system, and hospital admissions. To date, there has been no cost analysis of either short or longer-term cost impacts.

**10.4 Barriers to implementation**

The evidence base on Personalised Budgets makes few references to the barriers or challenges to implementation. However, five broad issues are identifiable. First, many support workers were unsure of what individual budgets could and should be spent on. They require guidance and support in addressing these uncertainties in order to ensure they are able to achieve their full potential impact. To some extent, the learning from the London and Wales pilot projects will have reduced these uncertainties for commissioners and support workers. The second issue also relates to the spending of budgets. It appears important to minimise bureaucracy, allowing immediate access to individual budget funds and autonomy for the support workers. The third challenge is to rethink the workload and working practices of support workers. The studies found that staff spent more time with Personalised Budget service users when compared to other service users – sometimes as much as 30-40 per cent more time per individual. Yet, workloads were not adjusted to reflect this reality. Fourth, Personalised Budgets interventions are reliant on strong collaborative working with other services and accommodation providers. Without access to accommodation and specialist support the approach cannot succeed.

Finally, the evaluations of Personalised Budgets in London and Wales concluded that budgets only be replicated and expanded across England and Wales if additional funding was made available. To date it seems this has not been the case.

**10.5 Expert perspectives**

Two key informants offered perspectives on personalised budgets and both explained that the model was in its infancy in the homeless sector, albeit it has been implemented more widely in the care field. Key informants explained there is a shortage of evidence on the outcomes of this model.

Informants generally agreed with the findings of the literature review and were not able to add a significant amount to the debate. Key informants suggested that Personalised Budgets enabled support workers to meet the needs of individuals that often fall outside of the typical range of provision and assistance. Examples were given of budgets being used to buy clothing for an individual who was recovering from mental illness and also for a veteran to visit their hometown and gain some closure from trauma they had experienced. Key informants were very positive about the person-centred approach which underpins Personalised Budgets as it enables people to overcome barriers that most professionals are unaware of or do not understand.

Key informants were supportive of wider development of Personalised Budgets, suggesting that they work best when they sit alongside housing-led solutions such as Housing First.

**10.6 Summary**

- **Personalised Budgets have been used to support entrenched rough sleepers.** Support workers have access to a budget for each rough sleeper (£2,000-£3,000) which they can spend on a wide variety of items (from a caravan to clothing) in order to help secure and maintain accommodation. Importantly, rough sleepers identify their own needs and help to shape their own support plan.

- **Personalised Budgets have only been implemented with homeless people in the UK and the evidence base is limited to a relatively small number of pilot project evaluations.** Studies use administrative data analysis and qualitative interviews with service providers and service users.

- **Housing outcomes are fairly well documented, with pilot projects generally securing and maintaining accommodation in around 40-60 per cent of cases, although this is potentially higher in Wales with most at least sourcing temporary accommodation.** Significantly, the suitability of accommodation is determined by the rough sleeper, so housing outcomes are difficult to compare.

- **Evidence of wider impacts is limited but qualitative data suggest many positive impacts beyond housing, including: health improvements and more appropriate access to healthcare, reductions in substance misuse, re-establishing positive social networks, improved self-esteem, and access to education and training.** In addition, in both London and Wales, the evaluations of Personalised Budgets found that staff time and expenditure per person were combined, reported costs were significantly lower in Wales than in England.

**487** Ibid.


**489** Ibid.

**490** Hough, J. and Rice, B. (2010) Providing personalised support to rough sleepers: An evaluation of the Personalised Budgets programme. Evaluations found only £794 was spent per person in London, albeit additional expenditure was anticipated with some support plans. The average individual budget spent in Wales was £434, significantly lower than the amount spent in England and well below the sum available.

Qualitative data across the different studies suggest that there are wider cost impacts. Personalised Budgets interventions reportedly increase initial costs to the public purse in two main ways: first, more benefit claims are made and second, there is higher initial engagement with other services (e.g. health). However, interviewees in the studies suggest there are likely to be longer term cost savings as a result of reductions in engagement with outreach services, contact with police and the wider criminal justice system, and hospital admissions. To date, there has been no cost analysis of either short or longer-term cost impacts.

**10.4 Barriers to implementation**

The evidence base on Personalised Budgets makes few references to the barriers or challenges to implementation. However, five broad issues are identifiable. First, many support workers were unsure of what individual budgets could and should be spent on. They require guidance and support in addressing these uncertainties in order to ensure they are able to achieve their full potential impact. To some extent, the learning from the London and Wales pilot projects will have reduced these uncertainties for commissioners and support workers. The second issue also relates to the spending of budgets. It appears important to minimise bureaucracy, allowing immediate access to individual budget funds and autonomy for the support workers. The third challenge is to rethink the workload and working practices of support workers. The studies found that staff spent more time with Personalised Budget service users when compared to other service users – sometimes as much as 30-40 per cent more time per individual. Yet, workloads were not adjusted to reflect this reality. Fourth, Personalised Budgets interventions are reliant on strong collaborative working with other services and accommodation providers. Without access to accommodation and specialist support the approach cannot succeed.

Finally, the evaluations of Personalised Budgets in London and Wales concluded that budgets only be replicated and expanded across England and Wales if additional funding was made available. To date it seems this has not been the case.

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increases in social welfare claims, and improved engagement with other services and agencies.

- There has been no analysis of whether the approach is more or less effective with particular subpopulations and the approach is yet to be trialed with the wider homeless population.

- Budgets available to individuals are between £2,000–£3,000, however the average budget spent on each individual (excluding costs of the support worker) was £794 in London and £434 in Wales. When staff time was included in the London pilot project, the total cost per individual was £4,437 - around £1,300 more than the cost of delivering standard outreach provision. Qualitative data suggests projects may increase initial costs to the public purse, however in the longer term there are likely to be cost reductions.

- Five barriers to implementation were identified: i] uncertainty about what individual budgets can and should be spent on; ii] bureaucracy surrounding budget payments needs to be reduced, allowing swift access to budgets; iii] the increased workload for support workers relative to standard outreach provision needs to be recognised; iv] without access to accommodation and other specialist support the approach cannot succeed; v] replication and expansion will only be possible if additional funding is made available.

- Key informants highlighted that Personalised Budgets are in their infancy in the homelessness field and they agreed that the evidence base is relatively weak. Despite the limited evidence base, key informants were supportive of this person-centred approach and advocated wider implementation alongside housing-led solutions such as Housing First.
11.1 Defining the intervention

Street outreach is an important component of many rough sleeper interventions (e.g. Housing First, Personalised Budgets etc.) and has therefore been discussed in several other chapters. However, street outreach has also received specific consideration within the literature, with studies focusing on defining the characteristics that make street outreach most effective at ending rough sleeping. This chapter particularly focuses on assertive street outreach as it is this form which lies at the heart of many other interventions and other forms of outreach are often not considered to be housing-focused interventions.

In very broad terms, street outreach is the delivery of services on the street, rather than requiring homeless people to attend a designated service centre.496 The definition of assertive outreach is far more specific and it is often defined in relation to more generic street outreach. Assertive outreach is generally defined by three distinctive facets:

1. The primary aim is to end homelessness

‘Traditional’ outreach programmes offer a huge range of services, from food provision to substance misuse support, but these services rarely have the primary objective of ending homelessness. Assertive outreach makes this the main priority and is therefore meant to have access to housing resources into which homeless people can be referred.497

2. Multi-disciplinary support

Assertive outreach adopts an integrated approach to support, drawing upon a multi-disciplinary team, including health professionals, substance misuse workers, housing offers etc.497

3. Persistent, purposeful, assertive

One of the key differences between assertive and traditional forms of street outreach is that assertive approaches involve persistently attempting to engage with people sleeping rough497. This marked a significant switch from what Randall and Brown499 termed a ‘social work’ approach, which sought to meet a wide range of needs on the street, to a more interventionist stance aimed at a very specific and limited goal of moving the client into accommodation.500

The target group of most assertive outreach programmes is chronically street homeless people.501 For example, in Canada’s Streets to Home programme, which includes an assertive outreach component, programme participants are expected to have failed to engage with less resource intensive programmes and have either severe substance misuse issues, a personality disorder, or untreated medical needs.502

Assertive outreach is used widely, with notable implementation and development in the UK, Australia, Canada, and the USA. Assertive Outreach arguably developed in its current form as part of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) in England during the early 1990s. RSI programmes included outreach

496 Ibid.
work with homeless people, the development of new emergency hostel places and a range of temporary and permanent accommodation. The RSI aimed to make it unnecessary for people to sleep rough and included targets for reductions in rough sleeper numbers.\textsuperscript{504} In Australia, like Canada\textsuperscript{505} and the USA,\textsuperscript{506} assertive outreach was introduced alongside Housing First. Street to Home is the most prominent programme and has been introduced in several Australian states and territories since 2008. The programme is modeled on the RSI but links rough sleepers into permanent accommodation.\textsuperscript{507}

In some contexts, including a number of cities in England and Wales, enforcement is used alongside assertive outreach in attempts to combat rough sleeping and/or activities associated with ‘problematic street culture’ such as begging and street drinking.\textsuperscript{508} Enforcement measures used by local authorities in England, in different combinations and with varying degrees of integration with street outreach services, include: arrest under the Vagrancy Act 1824; Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO), Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO), Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO), Injunctions to Prevent Nuisance and Annoyance (IPNA), controlled drinking zones such as Designated Public Place Orders (DPPOs), Dispersal Orders, and designing out via ‘defensive architecture’.\textsuperscript{509} It is important to note that of these, ‘harder’ measures involving penalties such as fines and imprisonment affect only a small minority of homeless people,\textsuperscript{510} and these are almost without exception targeted at individuals who are persistently involved in street drinking or ‘aggressive’ begging rather than rough sleepers.\textsuperscript{511}

The use of enforcement in conjunction with assertive outreach is highly controversial.\textsuperscript{512} There has nevertheless been in an increasing (but not unanimous) consensus amongst service providers in recent years that its deployment can be justified as a last resort if an individual continues to refuse offers of appropriate support and their activities are having a clear negative impact on other people (including other members of the street population).\textsuperscript{513} Homeless people tend to support its use in these circumstances also.\textsuperscript{514} Opinion remains divided, however, regarding whether its use is justified if an individual’s actions are harming themselves ‘only’ (for example, if a rough sleeper’s health is deteriorating but they are not obviously affecting anyone else).\textsuperscript{515}

11.2 The evidence base

There is relatively limited evidence on the impacts of assertive outreach which is to be expected given that it is a component of wider programmes such as Housing First and it is therefore difficult to disentangle the impacts attributable to outreach services. In their review of outreach services, Olivet et al.\textsuperscript{516} state that although there is a lack of quantitative research exploring the effectiveness of outreach services, much is known about the practice, so we are able to say more about the definition of assertive outreach and the barriers to implementation than we can conclude about outcomes.\textsuperscript{517} However, a handful of key studies have been published on the outcomes of the Rough Sleepers Initiative and Rough Sleepers Unit programmes in England and Scotland and on Street to Home in Australia and these provide the basis for our discussion of assertive outreach outcomes. The evidence base only discusses housing outcomes, so impacts on wider support needs and service costs are not discussed.

11.3 Outcomes

Housing

The primary measure of success in assertive outreach services in the UK has been the impact on numbers of rough sleepers and the evaluations of programmes in both England and Scotland suggest the approach has had a significant positive impact. For example, Randall and Brown\textsuperscript{518} concluded that between 1998 and 2001, during the implementation of the Rough Sleeper Unit, the number of rough sleepers reduced from an estimated 1,850 people sleeping rough on any single night in England to around 550 people. The impacts were less pronounced in Scotland but still very positive, with Fitzpatrick et al.\textsuperscript{519} concluding that the number of people sleeping rough reduced by more than a third between 2001 and 2003. While both studies recognize the limits of the quantitative data available, qualitative interviews with service providers support the broad quantitative trends.

An additional measure of housing impacts is the proportion of households assisted who go on to sustain their accommodation. Phillips and Parsell\textsuperscript{520} conclude that the type of housing individuals move into after assertive outreach support has implications for their tenancy sustainment. Two issues can be identified within the literature. First, where permanent accommodation is provided, as opposed to temporary accommodation, tenancy sustainment rates are far greater. For example, Street to Home in Brisbane Australia, linked rough sleepers with permanent accommodation and it is reported that only 7 per cent of tenancies broke down, and in most instances these tenancies were then transferred to alternative housing.\textsuperscript{521} By contrast, only 6 per cent of rough sleepers assisted by the Rough Sleeper Unit in England went straight from the street into permanent housing and this, along

\textsuperscript{520} Ibid.
with other factors, contributed to more than 40 per cent of those helped into accommodation returning to the street.521

The second issue is the form of housing provided to rough sleepers. Problems were reported on both the English and Australian programmes when rough sleepers were accommodated in shared or congregate forms of housing. For example, Randall and Brown522 discuss how shared properties resulted in high turnover of properties, re-let times of four months on average due to the unpopularity of the accommodation, and tenancy failure rate of 26 per cent - twice as high as the rate in self-contained accommodation.

The (limited) evidence on the impact of enforcement on rough sleepers indicates that, when combined with sufficiently intensive, tailored and high-quality support it can offer a ‘window of opportunity’ prompting targeted individuals to accept offers of temporary accommodation and/or engage more constructively with other services. It can, however, also displace rough sleepers, by ‘pushing’ them into areas that are more dangerous and/or where they are more difficult for outreach workers to find and assist.523 Positive outcomes are more likely when a personally tailored and staged approach is adopted (wherein enforcement is used as a last resort), but outcomes are highly unpredictable in any individual case.524

It is important to note that there is no evidence on the longer term housing impacts of assertive outreach programmes.525

### Effectiveness for subpopulations

There has been limited examination of the impacts of assertive outreach on different population subgroups, however studies do point towards a key concern regarding outcomes for those who have no connection to the area. This issue arises in both the UK and Australian studies. Research finds that assertive outreach is sometimes used to move or any indication to return them to ‘home’ areas, occasionally with little consideration of the circumstances they are being returned to. In the Australian context, this issue is apparently most pronounced with Indigenous rough sleepers.526 In England, the evaluation of the RSU found that homeless people were sometimes sent to other areas without any arrangements being made for them at their destination.527

### Service use and cost

Research provides no indication of service costs nor any indication of potential cost savings resulting from assertive street outreach.

#### 11.4 Barriers to implementation

Studies identify several issues that are likely to affect the success of assertive outreach interventions. Most significantly, if assertive outreach is not accompanied by a suitable housing offer, it will be of limited value.528 First, there must be a sufficient supply of housing. Australian Street to Home services advised that more people could have been helped to exit rough sleeping had there been a greater supply of housing.529 Second, the housing must be suitable. For example, in the UK assertive outreach often led to temporary accommodation which was less effective than the Australian permanent housing offer.530 In considering suitability, there are also debates about the appropriateness of congregate forms of housing.531

Assertive outreach must also be accompanied by suitable support. The limited capacity of assertive outreach services in Street to Home Brisbane, Australia was recognised as a limitation of the approach and was attributed to tenancy failures and indeed a reluctance of some housing providers to even allocate accommodation.532 Service providers are likely to have some difficulties overcoming negative perceptions of outreach services by the rough sleepers being targeted for support. Several studies that sought the views of homeless people found that they were often reluctant to engage with outreach services because services in the past had either tried to send them to undesirable institutional settings, or they had promised assistance and then failed to deliver.533

#### 11.5 Expert perspectives

Seven key informants from six different countries discussed assertive or street outreach interventions, providing useful additional perspectives on a relatively under-researched intervention with rough sleepers. The general consensus amongst interviewees is that assertive outreach is a mechanism to engage with individuals, before accessing other interventions, particularly Housing First. Informants felt it was very much needed, especially for those with the highest levels of support needs and some of the most entrenched and chronic rough sleepers who have not engaged with services previously.

Most notably, there was universal agreement from the informants that its success was underpinned and significantly dependant on the availability of permanent move on accommodation. Moreover, they suggested that outreach services work best when substance misuse, mental health and health services are embedded. These viewpoints echo the findings of the literature review.

Interviewees suggested that the approach builds relationships and trust with rough sleepers over a period of time and this helps to explain why services effectively engage those that have little involvement with

522 Ibid.
524 Sanders, B. and Albanese, F. (2017) An examination of the scale and impact of enforcement on different population subgroups, however studies do point towards a key concern regarding outcomes for those who have no connection to the area. This issue arises in both the UK and Australian studies. Research finds that assertive outreach is sometimes used to move or any indication to return them to ‘home’ areas, occasionally with little consideration of the circumstances they are being returned to. In the Australian context, this issue is apparently most pronounced with Indigenous rough sleepers. But outcomes are highly unpredictable in any individual case.
529 Ibid.
other services. The approach was also perceived to work particularly well at overcoming barriers including accessing the housing register, accessing health care and accommodation.

Specific examples of where it had worked well included outreach workers completing housing applications with the individual on a device on the street. Another example was the use of the Vulnerability Index Tool to measure and determine vulnerability in order to gain priority status within the housing system. The use of peers was also mentioned as being incredibly valuable in building trust and a relationship with rough sleepers.

There were few limitations or challenges to this approach, however all participants reiterated the point that the approach is seriously undermined when suitable accommodation is not offered or temporary shelter is the only option. There was a common view that the accommodation available had to be appropriate and of good quality otherwise the whole approach and method of actively targeting people could be deemed to be unethical and ineffective.

11.6 Summary

- Operating in some form in various countries, street outreach is an important component of many rough sleeper interventions (e.g. Housing First, Personalised Budgets etc.). In very broad terms, street outreach is the delivery of services to homeless people on the street. Assertive Outreach is a particular form of street outreach that targets the most disengaged rough sleepers with chronic support needs and seeks to end their homelessness. It can be defined by three distinctive facets: 1) The primary aim is to end homelessness; 2) Multi-disciplinary support; 3) Persistent, purposeful, assertive support. In some contexts enforcement is used alongside assertive outreach

- There is relatively limited evidence on the impacts of assertive outreach, however much is known about the characteristics of more effective services. A handful of key studies have been published on the Rough Sleepers Initiative and Rough Sleepers Unit programmes in England and Scotland and on Street to Home in Australia, and these provide some insight into housing outcomes but nothing on impacts on wider support needs nor service costs.

- Assertive Outreach has proven to significantly reduce the number of rough sleepers, with numbers reducing by approximately two thirds within three years under the Rough Sleeper Unit Programme in England and by more than a third within two years in the Scottish Rough Sleepers Initiative.

- The type of accommodation provided following Assertive Outreach impacts significantly on housing retention. First, where outreach leads to permanent, rather than temporary, accommodation tenancy sustainment outcomes are far greater. Second, accommodating rough sleepers in shared or congregate forms of housing appear to be less effective and less desirable than self-contained options. There is no evidence on the longer term housing impacts of assertive outreach programmes

- The (limited) evidence on the impact of enforcement on rough sleepers indicates that, when combined with sufficiently intensive, tailored and high quality support it can offer a ‘window of opportunity’ prompting targeted individuals to accept offers of temporary accommodation and/or engage more constructively with other services. It can, however, also displace rough sleepers, by ‘pushing’ them into areas that are more dangerous and/or where they are more difficult for outreach workers to find and assist. Positive outcomes are more likely when a personally tailored and staged approach is adopted (wherein enforcement is used as a last resort.

- There has been limited examination of the impacts of assertive outreach on different population subgroups, however studies do point towards a key concern regarding outcomes for those who have no connection to the area. Research finds that assertive outreach is sometimes used to move people on and return them to ‘home’ areas, occasionally with little consideration of the circumstances they are being returned to.

- Key barriers to effective implementation of assertive outreach include: 1) the absence of a suitable permanent housing offer; 2) the absence of suitable multi-disciplinary support; 3) overcoming negative perceptions amongst rough sleepers about outreach services.

- Many key informants offered their views on assertive outreach services. They felt it was an important intervention, especially for those with the highest support needs. Their views reflected findings of the literature review, that success is underpinned by the availability of suitable permanent accommodation and a wide range of support.
12.1 Introduction
This final chapter reflects on the findings across all interventions and draws conclusions about what works and what does not. Notably, as a consequence of the positive service innovations that have been implemented across the globe, there is much more to say about what works than what does not. This chapter also points towards areas for improvement in the evidence base, before finally identifying key lessons for policy and practice.

12.2 What works?
The evidence review points towards several clear messages about what works in meeting the housing needs of rough sleepers. In some instances, the review points towards wholesale adoption of an intervention, whilst in other cases it points towards key principles or characteristics of a particular approach that might valuably be adopted more widely.

Housing First: There is an exceptionally strong evidence base on Housing First (HF) and we know it works when the key principles are adhered to. It has particularly good housing retention outcomes, which are especially impressive given that the intervention targets homeless people with complex needs. Retention figures typically coalesce around 80 per cent. HF is not a low cost option, but it does create potential for savings in the long term given cost offsets in the health and criminal justice systems in particular. As yet, there is limited evidence on the effectiveness of HF with other subgroups of homeless people.

Person-centred support and choice: Across several interventions, but particularly Personalised Budgets (PB), person-centred support including choice for the individual, has proven to be particularly effective in supporting entrenched rough sleepers into accommodation. While the evidence base is still limited, there are also indications that this approach has positive impacts on wider support needs. In the case of PB, the cost proved to be more than standard outreach support, however in the longer term there are likely to be cost reductions. The PB approach is yet to be trialed with the wider homeless population but key informants advocated wider implementation of this person-centred approach.

Swift action: Interventions such as No Second Night Out (NSNO) and No First Night Out (NFNO) have highlighted the effectiveness of swift action in order to prevent or quickly end street homelessness. The vast majority of service users were found temporary accommodation by NSNO teams and it is likely this will reduce the number of rough sleepers who develop complex needs and potentially become entrenched. However, swift action alone is not sufficient; NSNO faced multiple challenges in relation to the lack of suitable move-on accommodation and problematic single-offers of reconnection.

Cross-sectoral support: Many interventions, including Common Ground, PB and HF, point towards the importance of developing effective collaborations between agencies and across sectors (e.g. housing, health, substance misuse, policing). This collaborative approach appears to be key to providing the correct type and level of support for rough sleepers but is rarely achieved in practice.

Ass Hortive outreach: Assertive outreach is a key component of several interventions, particularly those targeting homeless people with complex needs and entrenched rough sleepers. For example, NSNO, PB and HF all employ the approach – the key difference between these interventions is then the accommodation or service offer. Assertive outreach alone is insufficient, indeed potentially unethical, if it is not accompanied by a meaningful and suitable accommodation offer.

Meeting wider support needs: The impacts of interventions such as HF on wider support needs such as physical and mental health, substance misuse and criminal activity are often documented, although outcomes are often not significantly different from Treatment As Usual (TAU) comparison groups. Interventions such as residential communities appear to offer good outcomes on employment and substance misuse etc. but their housing outcomes are often unreported.

12.3 What does not work?
It is important to recognise what does not work in order to avoid ineffective interventions. The review identifies relatively few such interventions and approaches.

Unsuitable hostels and shelters: Hostels and Shelters (H&S) are intended to fulfil an emergency or temporary function and they vary substantially in terms of size, client group, type of building, levels and nature of support, behavioural expectations, nature and enforcement of rules, level of ‘professionalisation’, and seasonal availability. While there is a lack of research documenting their effectiveness in the UK,
there is a substantial literature documenting homeless people’s experiences. The evidence base is heavily focused on larger-scale emergency accommodation, with limited support and often problematic move-on arrangements. There was no significant literature on the outcomes of what would commonly be termed supported accommodation in the UK (This being referral-only, high support units in purpose-built buildings run by professionally trained staff). Evidence indicates consistently that many (and perhaps the majority of) homeless people find H&Es intimidating or unpleasant environments and this is particularly true for young people, transgender people, and women. Significantly, a lack of move on housing stymies the system, preventing H&Es from fulfilling their intended emergency or temporary functions and forcing them to operate as longer-term but unsustainable solutions to street homelessness. Beyond conventional H&Es, there is a role for supported housing, on either a transitional or long-term basis, when it is provided as a solution outside of a staircase model.

Unsuitable, absent or inadequate support: Providing the right support is a considerable challenge for homelessness services and the evidence review revealed multiple examples where support did not work effectively. First, over-intrusive support in accommodation settings can undermine service effectiveness – this was a particular issue within the Common Ground approach. Second, interventions such as NSNO and reconnections often lack adequate and suitable levels or types of support. For example, in some areas concerns have been raised about the ethnicity and potential harmful impacts of single service offers, particularly the potential denial of key services to individuals with no local connection who refuse ‘poor’ single service offers of support (e.g. a poorly devised reconnection plan).

12.4 Improving the evidence base
One of the research objectives was to identify key limitations and gaps in the evidence base. The review reveals a great deal about the quantity of evidence on each intervention, the geographical distribution of the study sites, and the nature of the research methodologies being employed. Several key limitations in the evidence base are highlighted.

Research rigour: Research, particularly outside of the USA (and to a lesser extent Canada and Australia), are often small-scale, project-specific studies. There is an opportunity for a step-change in UK homelessness research. Small-scale and qualitative research has an important role to play but this should be complemented by larger-scale RCT-type experimental studies.

Evidence gaps for common interventions: There is a serious lack of data on the effectiveness of a number of widely used interventions in the UK. It is particularly concerning that the outcomes of interventions as common as hostels and shelters, supported accommodation, and reconnections have hardly been examined. Additionally, further evidence is needed on many smaller scale innovations such as Personalised Budgets and Social Impact Bonds.

Longer-term impacts: Across all interventions there is a dearth of evidence on longer-term impacts and yet information on longer-term outcomes is key to assessing the strengths and limitations of different approaches.

Effectiveness with subgroups: There is scope to significantly improve our understanding of the effectiveness of interventions with different subgroups of the homeless population as differentiated by age, gender, ethnicity, level/type of support needs etc. There is a notable absence of evidence on what works with migrants and in particular those with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Impacts of different programme structures: Across most interventions there is limited evidence about how these fit into larger implementation models but only limited knowledge regarding the consequences of these differences. For example, more evidence is needed on the different outcomes and experiences of congregate and scattered site Housing First programmes.

Quantifying non-housing impacts: While this evidence review focused on interventions targeted at addressing the housing needs of rough sleepers, most also impact to some extent on wider support needs and these can be crucial to longer term housing sustainment. Beyond the robust Housing First and Common Ground studies, there are few attempts to quantify the impacts of interventions on wider support needs (e.g. Personalised Budgets).

12.5 Policy implications
This evidence review is timely, given that across the four UK nations approaches to address rough sleeping are being re-examined. Rough sleeping has reemerged as a policy priority because the problem persists and in most instances is growing. A key goal should be the prevention of homelessness, and this would need to take into account structural causes given evidence that welfare reform in particular is at least in part responsible for the recent rise in rough sleeping levels.554 However, this study focused on interventions targeting those already experiencing street homelessness. It finds that current approaches are not as effective as they might (and need) to be. Across the UK, unsuitable temporary accommodation still plays a key part in the provision for rough sleepers and in all UK countries, except Scotland, there is no entitlement to settled accommodation. This review tells us that aspects of the current system are not working as they were intended and that alternative approaches can be more effective. In this final section of the review we set out the principles of an improved approach and the barriers to implementation.

An improved approach
It is important to recognise that the development of an improved approach to ending homelessness for rough sleepers cannot be based solely on an evidence review – it must also incorporate the views of rough sleepers themselves and those who work with them. Moreover, it must examine the prevention of homelessness. However, the learning from this evidence review can play a key role in shaping a new approach. The evidence suggests five key principles should underpin this approach:

1. Recognise heterogeneity
Rough sleepers are a heterogeneous group, with varying housing and support needs and different entitlements to access publicly funded support. Moreover, across the UK there is variation in both the profile of rough sleepers and the profile of local housing markets. An improved approach must take account of this heterogeneity.

2. Swift action
Take swift action to prevent or quickly end street homelessness. This will reduce the number of rough sleepers who develop complex needs and potentially become entrenched.

3. Assertive outreach leading to a suitable accommodation offer
Many rough sleepers will not seek out services. Actively identifying and

reaching out to rough sleepers and offering suitable accommodation will significantly reduce rough sleeping.

4. Housing-led
Having swift access to settled housing has very positive impacts on housing outcomes when compared to the staircase approach. Housing First is particularly effective, most notably with homeless people with complex needs.

5. Person-centred support and choice
Person-centred support, including choice for the individual, and based on cross-sector collaboration and commissioning will impact positively on housing outcomes, particularly for the most entrenched rough sleepers. Personalised Budgets is a good example of this approach.

Homelessness systems across the UK will need to be revised to incorporate all these principles – embedding just some of these principles will almost certainly mean people are failed. This systematic change is likely to require legislative reform. In our review of the policy context we identified how interventions such as the Rough Sleepers Initiative and Rough Sleepers Unit in England significantly reduced the number of people sleeping rough but changes in government and policy priorities resulted in a subsequent rise. Homelessness legislation in the UK provides a unique route, in the global context, through which these principles can be embedded and their impacts sustained. Of course, the detail of any legislative reforms will vary across the UK given the very different starting points.

Barriers to implementation
In this final section we consider some of the key barriers to implementing a new approach based on the principles set out above. Here we draw upon the literature but also the perspectives of key informants and our own reflections.

4.1 Lack of settled accommodation
One of the recurring barriers across all interventions was the lack of affordable and suitable accommodation. Capital funding may be necessary to remove this barrier.

4.2 Funding
Three potential barriers were identified in relation to funding: 1) Increased sums required (in the short-term) - Effective interventions such as Housing First and Personalised Budgets are not low-cost options, but they do create potential for savings in the long term. 2) Cross-sector funding - Given that savings are often felt outside of housing, effective intervention may require funds to be released from health, criminal justice, and other sectors. 3) Long-term/secure funding - Time-limited funding has been a key barrier to lasting implementation of many interventions.

4.3 Effective collaboration and commissioning
The improved approach is premised on the availability of high quality, flexible, multi-disciplinary and intensive support. Some projects have not performed effectively due to this lack of support and collaboration. Ensuring effective collaboration between sectors will be a key challenge in a context where ‘silo’ commissioning arrangements predominate. Robust multiagency forums have improved the effectiveness of some interventions.

4.4 Addressing the needs of different subgroups
There has been little research on how interventions, such as HF or PB work or might work with different subgroups. For example, to date HF has been employed almost entirely with those with complex needs. There is no reason to believe that the principles would not ‘work’ with others but it is likely that the same level of resourcing will be unnecessary. Research is needed before widespread roll-out of any alternative approach.

4.5 Eligibility
Our proposals for an improved approach are premised on rough sleepers being eligible to access public funds. Where rough sleepers are ineligible to access public funds, alternative approaches may be necessary. Relatedly, some rough sleepers are denied services because they lack a local connection. Restrictions in entitlements to those with a connection to the area are understandable but have proven to be detrimental to the wellbeing of many rough sleepers. Alternative approaches to funding support for people who have no local connection exist and could be implemented to remove this barrier.535

4.6 Legislation
There are clearly still gaps in the legislative frameworks for England, Wales and Scotland that would need to be addressed if we were to adhere to the five principles set out for ending rough sleeping in this report. While there is a history of progressive changes to homelessness legislation across the UK, this is a major barrier to overcome. Making amendments to legislation requires significant political support, is time consuming, and technically challenging.

4.7 Bureaucracy
Some interventions, particularly those that encourage personalised support, can be hampered by overly bureaucratic processes and requirements. This is also a challenge affecting approaches underpinned by legislation. Every effort will need to be made to minimise bureaucratic hurdles.

12.6 Summary
In the UK there is both an opportunity and a need for change in the way rough sleepers are assisted. This evidence review has synthesised the evidence base on what works to meet the housing needs of rough sleepers and it points towards five key underpinning principles: recognize heterogeneity, swift action, assertive outreach leading to a suitable accommodation offer, housing-led, and person-centred support and choice. We suggest these principles should be embedded within the different legislative frameworks across the UK in order to ensure lasting change. These findings should be used alongside the wider body of work being undertaken by Crisis with rough sleepers and those who work with them, to shape an improved approach and end rough sleeping. Moreover, we hope this synthesis will provide a reference point for policy makers, practitioners and researchers working with rough sleepers across the globe.

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