THE ROLE OF SUPPORTED HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

The origins of this thesis lie in the proliferation of various forms of supported hostel accommodation which has accompanied the increase in homelessness, particularly over the last decade. The research has two central aims. The first is to ascertain the extent to which supported hostel accommodation is meeting the needs of the homeless people living in them, and the second is to consider how it might be possible to improve such accommodation in order that it might better meet those needs.

The main areas of interest relate to those issues not considered, or afforded only limited attention, by previous research. These include the outcomes of provision; the day-to-day experiences of hostel life (for example, what it means and how it feels to live in a supported hostel for homeless people); and the relevance and meaning of conceptual issues (such as needs, stigma, rights, power, control, choice, participation, dependence, and independence).

Stage one of the fieldwork was based upon the collection of general factual information (quantitative data) about the provision in a case study area. Stage two involved a pluralistic evaluation of four very different case study hostels. The latter comprised qualitative in-depth interviews with a mixture of residents, ex-residents, workers, managers, management committee members, referral agency representatives, volunteers, and others.

The thesis concludes that, for some individuals at some times in their lives, and for others more permanently, supported hostels can be an appropriate and very valuable form of housing. Indeed, it would be wholly inappropriate to residualise them in terms of quality or of standards or of their worth in general. Significant improvements to existing provision are, nevertheless, possible and desirable. Moreover, a sociologically and theoretically informed analysis can make an important contribution to highlighting how such changes might be effected.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degrees.

I certify that to the best or my knowledge any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

JOANNE S. NEALE.

GLOSSARY

Direct Access Accommodation
Accommodation which accepts homeless people on a self-referral basis - that is, without the involvement of any other agency. A bed can usually be offered that night or within a very few days.

Flexibility
Within the thesis, a fine, but important, distinction is made between *flexibility* and *inconsistency*. Both denote a movement away from rigidity and inflexible practices, but *flexibility* is used to imply careful forethought, good intentions, and an element of rationality. *Inconsistency*, conversely, suggests a lack of forethought, randomness, and a potential for biased motivations.

Homeless at Home
A way of providing temporary accommodation for households which have been accepted as homeless by the local authority. Arrangements are made for the household to remain in (or return to) the accommodation from which they are being made homeless, or in other accommodation found by the applicant, on a strictly temporary basis, until permanent accommodation can be found by the *housing authority*.

Hostelshire
The county within which the case study area was located.

Hostelville
The local authority case study area.

Inconsistency
See *flexibilty*.

Inputs
These are the resources required to provide a service (for example: buildings, staff, heat, and light). Inputs are usually associated with the objective of economy (cost per unit) (Klein and Carter, 1988).

Involved Other Professionals
The adult education tutor, the health visitor, and the community psychiatric nurse interviewed for the fieldwork.

Move-on
Many residents and non-residents used the term *move-on* interchangeably with the expressions *rehousing, rehabilitation,* and *resettlement*. Whilst all four denote a move to more independent accommodation, *rehabilitation* and, to a lesser extent, *resettlement* are imbued with certain additional assumptions. These stem from the historical use of these terms to mean restoring a person to a normal life by training after a period of illness or imprisonment. Accordingly, their usage

implies that hostel residents are somehow abnormal and have problems which can be 'cured'.

Non-residents
The 8 workers, 1 relief worker, 3 managers, 2 management committee members, 1 volunteer, 3 referral agency representatives, and 3 'involved other professionals' interviewed for the fieldwork (21 individuals in total).

Other Professionals
Individuals interviewed for the fieldwork who had some form of professional contact with the hostels, but were not directly employed by them. These were the 3 referral agency representatives and the 3 'involved other professionals'.

Outcomes
These are the impact of the service on the consumer (for example, that the person housed has been able to link into community resources and is leading a more fulfilling life). Outcomes are usually related to the organisation's aims and objectives. They tend to provide a qualitative indicator of performance, but are difficult to measure accurately because they are associated with effectiveness - that is, the relationship between the intended results and the actual results of a scheme or project (Klein and Carter, 1988).

Outputs
These are the measurable units of services delivered to clients (for example, the provision of an intensive housing management service to a specific number of tenants) (Klein and Carter, 1988).

Processes
These are the way in which a service is delivered. They relate to policies and procedures and involve some measurement of quality, perhaps by inspectorates or consumer complaints (Klein and Carter, 1988).

Project
A term often used interchangeably with the expression hostel.

Referral Agency Representatives
The individuals who were interviewed for the fieldwork because they had referred homeless people to the case study hostels. These were a probation officer (for hostel A), the line manager from the city council (for hostel B), and a representative from a local children's home (for hostel D).

Rehabilitation
See *move-on*.

Rehousing
See *move-on*.

Resettlement
See *move-on*.

Residents
The 23 residents and the 4 ex-residents interviewed for the fieldwork.

Respondents
All of the people interviewed for the fieldwork. These were the 23 residents, 4 ex-residents, 8 workers, 1 relief worker, 3 managers, 2 management committee members, 1 volunteer, 3 referral agency representatives, and 3 'involved other professionals' (48 individuals in total).

Scheme
A term often used interchangeably with the expression hostel.

Section 73
Section 73 of the Housing Act (1985) empowers the Secretary of State to give financial support (either a grant or loan) to voluntary agencies concerned with homelessness, or with matters relating to homelessness. Local authorities are also permitted to assist voluntary agencies by using these powers. Since 1990/1 the s73 programme has been targeted at projects helping single homeless people.

Silting up
An expression used to indicate that hostel accommodation has become blocked by residents who cannot move out as there is a lack of appropriate move-on accommodation for them.

Voids
These are empty bedspaces. High levels of voids are often assumed to indicate wasted resources and inefficient hostel performance. In practice, however, some provision (for example, direct access and emergency accommodation) needs a relatively high level of voids in order to function effectively. A low level of voids is thus a more appropriate indicator of performance in longer-stay than in shorter-stay hostels.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CHAR	The Housing Campaign for the Single Homeless
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
DOE	Department of the Environment
DOH	Department of Health
DSS	Department of Social Security
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GCSH	Glasgow Council for Single Homeless
GLC	Greater London Council
GMSC	General Medical Service Committee
HDG	Hostel Deficit Grant
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
HMII	Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative
HVA	Health Visitors Association
LBA	London Boroughs Association
MIND	The National Association for Mental Health
NACRO	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NFHA	National Federation of Housing Associations
NHS	National Health Service
OPCS	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys
RSI	Rough Sleepers Initiative
SHAC	The London Housing Aid Centre
SHELTER	The National Campaign for the Homeless
SHiL	Single Homeless in London Working Party
SITRA	The Specialist Information Training Resource Agency
SNMA	Special Needs Management Allowance
TSNMA	Transitional Special Needs Management Allowance

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This chapter sets the scene for the research which is to follow. Firstly, the aims, objectives, and reasons for the thesis are considered; secondly, various central concepts are introduced; thirdly, attempts are made to locate the study within its broader social, demographic, economic, and political context; and finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined.

Part 1: Aims, objectives, and reasons for the thesis

This thesis has two basic aims. The first is to ascertain the extent to which supported hostel accommodation is meeting the needs of the homeless people living in them, and the second is to consider how it might be possible to improve such accommodation in order that it might better meet those needs. The increase in homelessness, particularly over the last decade, and the proliferation of various forms of supported accommodation, which has accompanied this growth (see chapters 1 and 2), suggest that this is an important area to study.

Provision is investigated in terms of policy, practice, and theory. This involves considering past, present, and likely future relevant housing, social, and other policies. It also entails investigating what kinds of supported hostels are being provided, for whom, by whom, and why. The intention is then to locate both research aims within a broad theoretical framework.

Part 2: Understanding the concepts

In order to investigate the role of supported hostel accommodation in meeting the needs of homeless people, a general

understanding of various central concepts is required. Accordingly, definitions of *homelessness, supported hostel accommodation,* and *needs* are discussed below.

Homelessness

In Britain, the statutory definition of homelessness, as contained within section 58 of the Housing Act 1985 (Part III), states that a person or household is homeless if they have no accommodation in England, Wales, or Scotland or have no accommodation which they are legally entitled to occupy. The accommodation must be reasonable and it must be reasonable for the household to reside in it. A person or household is also considered to be homeless if they have accommodation, but cannot secure entry to it, or if it is probable that their occupation of it will lead to violence or to real threats of violence. If a person or household has mobile accommodation and there is nowhere available to place and to live in that mobile accommodation, then that person or household is also homeless.

This statutory definition is, however, vague and open to interpretation. For example, if a local authority can prove that a household has become homeless 'intentionally', it no longer has any obligation to accept that household as homeless. Likewise, a local authority has no duty to rehouse homeless people who have no local connection, or who fall outside any of the priority need groups[1]. From this, it is clear that the legislation operates as both a definition and a rationing device. That is, it defines homelessness, but subsequently delimits it to exclude important sections of the population who do not have a home (Clapham *et al.,* 1990). The changes to the homelessness legislation,

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[1] For the purposes of the 1985 Act, groups defined as being in 'priority need' are: (1) households containing dependent children or a woman who is pregnant; (2) people who are vulnerable in some way (for instance, due to age or physical or mental disability); or (3) people made homeless by an emergency such as a fire or flood.

proposed by the Government in a Green Paper in January 1994, seem to confirm this rationing function (DOE, 1994b). This is because such changes effectively sought to restrict the legal definition of homelessness even further.

According to Watson (1984), the elusiveness and narrow usage of the term 'homeless' is one reason why it has remained largely invisible as a major social issue over the years. Watson (1984) also argued that historically homelessness has not evoked great public concern because it has largely been considered a problem of the private sphere. Consistent with this suggestion, one reason why the growth of street homelessness in London generated considerable media attention towards the end of the 1980s was that such a public and highly visible manifestation of homelessness could not easily be relegated to a purely 'private' problem by government (Anderson, 1993a).

Broader interpretations of homelessness, encompassing situations beyond those narrowly prescribed within the British legislation, are nevertheless widely recognised and commonly used. For example, the United Nations' definition of homelessness, as defined by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1984, refers to affordable prices and accessibility to employment, education, and health care. The standards it considers important include adequate protection from the elements, access to safe water and sanitation, affordable prices, secure tenure, and personal safety. Interestingly, in the British legislation none of these is deemed relevant (Johnson *et al.*, 1991).

More wide-ranging definitions of homelessness can be used to describe the circumstances of those living in overcrowded or substandard accommodation, those forced into involuntary sharing, or those subjected to high levels of noise, pollution, or infestation. In addition to 'rooflessness' and 'houselessness', these can include 'insecure accommodation' and 'intolerable housing conditions' (Watchman and Robson, 1989). Thus Watson

with Austerberry (1986) proposed the notion of a home-to-homelessness continuum. At one end of this they placed sleeping rough and at the other they cited unsatisfactory and insecure forms of housing.

Whilst most people agree that sleeping rough represents homelessness, broader definitions tend to be more contentious (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). This is because more wide-ranging interpretations shift over time and depend upon whose standards and criteria are accepted. This makes the socially, historically, economically, and culturally relative nature of homelessness far more apparent. Furthermore, some people living in hostels, or in 'insecure accommodation', or even 'intolerable conditions' may not regard themselves as homeless. This then raises the issue of who defines or 'owns' the term 'homeless' and whose interests different definitions serve.

Supported hostel accommodation

The expression 'hostel' is also difficult to define concisely or precisely. One reason for this is the sheer diversity of provision covered by the term. Provision is often categorised as either specialist or non-specialist, supported or unsupported, direct access or referral only, large traditional or smaller purpose-built, short-stay (temporary) or long-stay (permanent). In practice, however, these many and various categories interconnect and often cannot be distinguished.

Furthermore, 'hostel' is frequently used interchangeably with the expressions 'housing project', 'housing scheme', and 'supported accommodation'. This is in spite of the fact that the latter extend beyond hostel accommodation to include also shared living schemes, cluster flats, group homes, sheltered accommodation, residential care homes, and crisis or 'asylum' housing. Many organisations, it seems, consciously use alternative labels (such as scheme or project) in an attempt to

distance themselves from the stigmatising stereotype of a traditional hostel (Harrison *et al.*, 1991). Given that 'housing project' denotes a form of heavily stigmatised public housing in the United States, this further illustrates the culturally specific nature of definitions.

According to the Housing Corporation, a hostel is:

> ...a building containing single or shared rooms which are not self contained (ie lacking exclusive use of bath/ shower, WC or cooking facilities) which has warden support to deal with housing management. The warden may be resident or non resident, full time or part time. (The Housing Corporation, 1993a, Appendix 5 of the Housing Association Annual Return Statistics Form)

Previous research has, however, adopted various definitions and criteria. Garside *et al.* (1990) used the term 'hostel' to refer to the whole range of accommodation provided for single people who were homeless. Canter *et al.* (1990), alternatively, defined a hostel as any facility which provided short-term accommodation at low prices (or accepted DSS claimants) and did not describe itself as a hotel. Thomas and Niner (1989), meanwhile, employed a useful but very general description of hostel accommodation.

According to Thomas and Niner (1989), hostels comprise organised short-term accommodation usually offered at reasonably low prices and targeted at a specific group (such as homeless families, single homeless people, ex-offenders, people with a mental handicap, or mothers and babies). Hostels imply a degree of sharing of amenities and perhaps some management presence, although not necessarily resident on the premises. They vary considerably in size and the degree of self-containment available to residents. Most are, however, offered on a fully or partly furnished basis and users are usually licensees (Thomas and Niner, 1989).

Generally speaking, specialist hostels accommodate people who

face discrimination or who have some identifiable requirement over and above homelessness. Specialist hostels can include drug or alcohol projects, leaving care projects, mental health projects, ex-offenders hostels, and housing for people with learning difficulties or physical handicaps (Harrison *et al.*, 1991). They may also include hostels for working people, student accommodation, therapeutic communities, and Women's Aid refuges. A relatively new addition to this group is the foyer. This is based on a French model and endeavours to help young people (16-25 years) to achieve independence by offering hostel accommodation linked to training and job search support.

Non-specialist hostels are conversely available to all homeless people and often fit a traditional hostel stereotype. That is, they tend to be large, long-established, and used by people who have been homeless for some time. Many still provide dormitory or cubicle accommodation, often on a direct access basis (Harrison *et al.*, 1991). Night shelters and resettlement units are examples of this kind of provision. They provide very basic temporary board and lodgings for people (usually for men) 'without a settled way of life'.

Needs

A range of basic human needs have been identified by various commentators (for example, Maslow, 1970; Bradshaw, 1972; Doyal and Gough, 1991). Human needs are not, however, easy to define, because they are not simple objective facts. Like homelessness, they are rather culturally and ideologically drawn, historically and socially relative. Similarly, they incorporate value assumptions which change over time and space.

In practice, social policies rarely endeavour to satisfy a full range of highly relative and contestable basic human requirements. Generally, strategies focus on more specific and precisely delimited needs which are, by virtue of their less

ambitious nature, potentially more realisable. For similar reasons, it is helpful to divide the needs of homeless people using supported hostel accommodation into two specific categories. The first of these is housing and the second support and care requirements. Whilst such a division is a useful analytical device, in reality these categories invariably interact and overlap with each other, but also with other basic sets of human requirements (for example, those relating to health or to income or to the need for training or education).

HOUSING NEEDS

Meeting an individual's housing needs involves more than simply providing shelter from the elements. Accommodation should be suitable in terms of location and design and should also provide access to other essentials of life (such as water, warmth, facilities for personal hygiene, and for the storage and preparation of food) (National Housing Forum, 1989; Pleace, 1995). Definitions of housing needs, however, reflect prevailing societal standards, assumptions, and priorities. That is, they reflect the availability of resources and general philosophies and societal attitudes about needs and about the responsibilities of the state and the individual (National Housing Forum, 1989).

Assumptions and criteria vary between individuals and between groups of individuals. Central or local government, pressure groups, or other organisations might thus seek to define housing needs in a certain way in order to make a particular point (National Housing Forum, 1989). For example, narrow definitions of housing needs can be used as a bureaucratic rationing device, where demand for accommodation is greater than its supply (Clapham *et al.*, 1990). Conversely, campaigning bodies and homelessness projects and agencies might adopt broader definitions of housing needs in order to stress the scale of the problem and to attract publicity and funding (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

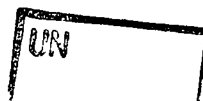
Housing needs, like homelessness, are difficult to measure. Indeed, changes in the level of need, as indicated by DOE homelessness figures, tend to reflect changes in local authority admittance policies or practices, as much as any explicit change in housing need itself. As Sir George Young pointed out, the DOE cannot make reliable national and regional estimates about applications and inquiries under the homelessness legislation:

> *The coverage of the data now collected depends on the administrative practices of individual local authorities. These vary widely between districts and over different periods of time making it impossible to provide reliable regional and national estimates.* (*Hansard*, 26/4/93 col 317-18)

Housing needs seem most likely to be understood where a range of different approaches to assessment are brought together and a variety of different forms of need examined (National Housing Forum, 1989). In addition to official homelessness statistics, quantitative indicators might include estimates of households who are sharing their accommodation involuntarily, housing waiting list figures, the numbers of users of supported hostel accommodation, and the likely number of future users. Qualitative indicators might discuss suitability and conditions (referring to aspects of design, location, security, freedom from harassment and discrimination, dwelling occupancy, suitability for meeting special requirements, overcrowding and underoccupation, the accessibility of provision, and the availability of alternatives) (National Housing Forum, 1989).

SUPPORT AND CARE NEEDS

Support and care needs refer to the assistance individuals with special needs may require. This assistance can include personal care, help in performing practical housekeeping tasks



or daily living skills, general advice or brokerage[2], assistance in forming and maintaining relationships, support in engaging in meaningful activity, or more intensive counselling. Such assistance may be required prior to, during, and/ or following a period of homelessness.

The level and kind of assistance required depend upon the various other resources available to any given individual at any given time. These resources might be financial, educational, social, emotional, spiritual, physical, or practical. They might be inherent to the individual or accessed through family, friends, neighbours, community, or professionals. Two people might thus have the same special needs, but very different support or care requirements in order to remain in the same kind of accommodation.

In many respects, support and care needs are distinct from housing or shelter requirements. The boundary between support and care services is, meanwhile, far less clear. Anderson (1993b) recognised this and suggested that 'support' and 'care' services may be defined according to who provides them, as much as by the actual nature of the services concerned. 'Care' services, she argued, are those provided following assessment by a local social services authority. Given that care is frequently provided informally by relatives, friends, or neighbours, without any professional involvement, this distinction does not, however, stand up to scrutiny.

For present purposes, it seems more appropriate to distinguish between support and care needs on the basis of the intensity of the need and the level of the assistance required. Thus, support needs can be interpreted as those which require only general advice or casual assistance. Care needs, conversely, are more likely to demand intensive, perhaps round the clock, input. To a large extent, it is, nevertheless, still possible to

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[2] Brokerage refers to negotiation and advocacy with other agencies.

distinguish between 'health' and 'social' care on the grounds that the former is provided by the National Health Service and the latter through local authorities (Oldman, 1991).

According to Clapham *et al.* (1990), the notion of public housing for general needs is rapidly being eclipsed by the view that only 'special needs' require or deserve the direct attention of the state. 'Special needs' are, however, becoming ever-more narrowly defined to encompass only those whose illness or frailty prevents them from generating sufficient income to compete in the private market. Additionally, gaining access to services on the basis of whether or not one can be ascribed to a special needs group can be a source of various contradictions.

Limited definitions of special needs implicitly suggest that special needs are the cause, rather than the consequence, of people's housing difficulties. This tends not to recognise that homelessness can create a need for emotional, social, or physical assistance that would not otherwise have been there (Watson and Cooper, 1992). Furthermore, some provision is marginalised or stigmatised on account of its special needs status. Indeed, in order to qualify for welfare provision, individuals increasingly have to submit to the imagery or stigma associated with labels like 'elderly' or 'mentally handicapped', even if their lifestyle, needs, and aspirations do not quite fit into the provision being offered (Clapham *et al.*, 1990). Additionally, unnecessary or inappropriately applied or misdirected support or care can actually create dependence and damage the people it purports to help (Illich *et al.*, 1977).

> ...the 'special needs' approach has brought some substantial material gains to the groups it serves but ...these achievements have been secured at the cost of inflexibility in service provision, the relative exclusion of 'special' groups from mainstream society and the increasing stigmatisation of such groups due to the stereotypical images their 'special' designation conveys. (Clapham and Smith, 1990, p.193)

To what extent is supported hostel accommodation benefiting

homeless people, guaranteeing their welfare, protecting their rights, and meeting their needs? Conversely, to what extent, and in what ways, is it detrimental to their interests or 'disabling' them? These are important issues for this thesis to consider.

Part 3: The context

Considering definitions helps both to set the scene and to delimit the parameters of the study. To further this process it is also helpful to locate the research within its broader context. A detailed exposition of all of the factors which might relate to the provision of supported hostel accommodation for homeless people is beyond the scope of the present investigation. A brief introduction to some of the more relevant social, demographic, economic, and political issues is, nevertheless, possible.

Trends in homelessness

Homelessness in Britain is neither a new nor a transient phenomenon. Indeed, observers now recognise that what was once taken as a largely local, marginal, and passing issue is, in fact, a national and more long-term problem (Greve with Currie, 1990). A notable upward trend in homelessness occurred from the late fifties and early 1960s, first in London and subsequently in other parts of the country (Greve with Currie, 1990). The number of households applying to, and being accepted by, local authorities then accelerated throughout the 1980s (Audit Commission, 1989).

The growth in homelessness during the 1980s was also accompanied by a change in its composition. By 1990 the rise in youth homelessness and the numbers of people sleeping rough were causing particular concerns (O'Mahoney, 1988; Thornton, 1990). At this time the government accepted that around 1,000 people

were sleeping out in central London on any one night and that 2,000-3,000 roofless people comprised a further floating population moving in and out of hostels and other types of temporary accommodation (Anderson, 1993a).

In spite of the Rough Sleepers Initiative, available evidence from the housing association movement and from the campaign organisation SHELTER indicated that in January 1992 substantial numbers of people were still sleeping rough in the centre of the capital (*Inside Housing* 1991; 1992). Youth homelessness and street homelessness persisted, but were also accompanied by an increase in the number of homeless women and people from minority ethnic groups (Anderson *et al.*, 1993; Randall and Brown, 1993; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994; Vincent *et al.*, 1994; SHiL, 1995).

More recently, the Government announced falls in the number of people accepted as homeless under the 1985 Act (DOE, 1991; 1992). Homelessness figures for the second quarter of 1994 confirmed that, in spite of an increase in acceptances in the first quarter of 1994, the general downward trend in the number of homelessness acceptances was continuing (DOE, 1994a). Given some of the limitations of DOE homelessness figures (discussed earlier), to what extent such statistics constitute a genuine and continuing reduction in actual homelessness inevitably remains open to question.

Social and demographic factors

Whilst a greater incidence of homelessness is a problem of inadequate permanent housing supply and unsuitable access to accommodation, it is also, at least in part, a consequence of excess housing demand. Household formation, particularly the growth in the number of smaller households, is the significant factor here (Gibb and Munro, 1991). Forecasts from the DOE indicate that the number of households in England will grow from 19.2 million in 1991 to more than 23.5 million by 2016 and this

will effect the need for nearly a quarter more homes (DOE, 1995). A greater incidence of divorce and separation, increased longevity, a higher proportion of young people living alone, more lone parents, and a higher average age at which young people marry are all helping to fuel this rise (Thornton, 1990).

Extra demand for supported housing has also been created by the growth of certain groups of people. These include older people, people who have AIDS or who are HIV positive, lone parents, or very young vulnerable single people who are not able or who do not wish to remain in the parental home. This demand has been boosted by recent social policies such as the Children Act (which places new statutory responsibility on local authorities to house and to support young people leaving care), the deinstitutionalisation programme, and Community Care (Watson and Cooper, 1992). These policies are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

Economic factors

Just as homelessness cannot be isolated from its broader social and demographic context, so it cannot be divorced from wider economic factors either. According to Greve with Curry (1990), the gap between low incomes and the price of housing is a central cause of much homelessness. The recession of the 1980s brought a rapid growth in unemployment, greater job insecurities, and a higher incidence of long-term low income for many individuals. This then contributed to the inability of many to secure and to sustain suitable housing. The financial circumstances of many have simultaneously been worsened by changes in social security policy - particularly the 1985 Board and Lodgings Regulations, the 1986 Social Security Act, the 1988 reform of Housing Benefit, and the replacement of board and lodging payments by Housing Benefit and Income Support in 1989. These are also discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

Political factors

In addition to the above, the provision of supported hostel accommodation cannot be separated from a range of factors which are essentially political in nature. These relate to current debates about citizenship, consumerism, user rights, empowerment, choice, and participation.

Recent policies in community care (see chapter 2) have opened up opportunities for the development of more responsive and flexible user-led services. In response, many social services organisations have developed a real commitment to involving service users in their decision-making processes and to ensuring that all those involved in planning and providing a service are accountable to those who use it (Morris, 1994). Other recent welfare initiatives have, meanwhile, interpreted the principles of rights, empowerment, choice, and participation in terms of the language of the market and consumerism. These have been more keen to emphasise the role of purchasers and providers and to stress privatisation, individual responsibility, and the withdrawal of state provision, rather than any notion of genuine power sharing or equality.

A more market-orientated interpretation of citizenship, rights, and participation is apparent in much New Right thinking developed since 1979. It is evident, for example, behind Conservative aims to reduce the role of local authorities in the provision of social housing, whilst expanding the role of housing associations, voluntary organisations, and the private sector in providing for homeless people. Likewise, it is reflected in the increasingly rigorous and narrow definitions of homelessness and special needs, discussed in the second part of this chapter.

A more market-orientated political philosophy is also evident in the Housing Corporation's current review of funding to special needs housing schemes. Proposals announced by the Minister of Housing on 15 February 1994 indicated that from 1995/96 onwards

there would be a system of competitive bidding, both for capital and revenue funding for new schemes. The proposals also suggested that there would be a three-yearly review of the level of revenue support received by existing schemes, taking into account their performance in meeting priority need (The Housing Corporation, 1994b).

Methods of evaluating and comparing the performance of special needs providers and their projects are accordingly being developed and, as a result, much of the hostel sector looks set to enter a new era of competitive bidding and performance indicators in the very near future. As housing associations are pushed into adopting more market-orientated principles and practices, it is, of course, possible that special needs schemes will find it difficult to attract private funding. Similarly, there is a danger that subjecting such schemes to competition will not necessarily assist those in most housing need. This, however, remains to be seen.

Part 4: The structure of the thesis

The intention of this introduction has been to set the scene for the research which is to follow. The remainder of the thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter 2 presents an historical overview of policy and provision relating to homelessness and hostel accommodation, chapter 3 comprises a literature review of other relevant research, and chapter 4 considers various theories of homelessness and welfare. Chapter 5 discusses the research methods employed during the fieldwork and chapters 6 to 11 record the findings which emerged.

In chapter 6 the pattern of homelessness and hostel provision in the research area is examined and in chapter 7 profiles of the four case study hostels are presented. Chapter 8 considers the

characteristics of hostel users, whilst chapter 9 evaluates some of the more tangible aspects of the accommodation. Chapter 10 focuses on various day-to-day, experiential features of hostel living (such as what it involves, how it feels, and what it means to live in a supported hostel for homeless people). Chapter 11 then assesses the value of provision and the potential for improving it. Finally, the implications of the findings for future policy, practice, and theory are discussed in chapter 12.

CHAPTER 2: A HISTORY OF PROVISION AND POLICY

Introduction

This chapter provides an account of the historical development of hostel provision and considers some of the policies which have influenced this. Part 1 discusses various trends in policy and provision, whilst part 2 introduces four related policy fields. These are housing policy, community care policy (broadly conceived to include also the deinstitutionalisation programme of the 1970s and the 1989 Children Act), social security policy, and hostel funding policy.

Part 1: Trends in provision and policy

> Homelessness is not unique to advanced capitalist societies; nor is legislation to deal with it a recent event. State action in respect of those who were both destitute and homeless goes back to medieval times, though it was not necessarily benevolent either in intent or in outcome. (Clapham *et al.*, 1990, p.115)

Before 1948, statutory provision for homeless people comprised the casual wards and workhouses, commonly known as 'spikes'. These were run by the Poor Law authorities and constituted primitive and punitive forms of shelter which espoused the principles of less eligibility and individual blameworthiness. Only meagre assistance for the destitute was provided and those who were not recognised as citizens of a particular parish could be evicted under the Vagrancy Acts and the laws of settlement (Donnison and Ungerson, 1982; Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Clapham *et al.*, 1990).

The non-statutory accommodation available to homeless people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included Salvation Army hostels, Rowton houses, night shelters, common

lodging houses, and commercial hostels. In 1888 the Salvation Army established its first cheap food depot and shelter for men and subsequently began a programme of converting old warehouses and store houses into large direct-access hostel accommodation. This model was later adopted by other private organisations and government bodies. By 1890, the Salvation Army had also established thirteen rescue homes for young women who had been prostitutes. These aimed to 'save', 'shelter' and 'reform' vulnerable young females and then to restore them to their friends and family or to train them for domestic service (Watson with Austerberry, 1986).

In 1948 the National Assistance Act abolished the Poor Law and most of the remaining casual wards were closed. A number were, however, maintained as short-stay 'reception centres' and managed by the National Assistance Board (Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Clapham *et al.*, 1990). The ethos of the reception centres tended to be less punitive than that of the casual wards, but provision still emphasised the deviant characteristics of homeless people, rather than issues such as housing shortage (Watson with Austerberry, 1986). Homeless people were, in the main, considered responsible for their situation and hence deemed blameworthy and deserving of little more than basic standards and amenities, coupled with support and supervision (Evans, 1991).

The Supplementary Benefits Commission assumed responsibility for the reception centres and the resettlement units when it replaced the National Assistance Board in 1966. In 1972 the Social Survey Division of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys carried out a national survey of hostels and lodging houses on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Security (Wingfield Digby, 1976). One of the main aims of this research was to up-date the information about hostels and lodging houses for single people previously collected by the National Assistance Board in 1965 (National Assistance Board, 1966).

The 1972 survey found that almost half of the establishments

included in the 1965 survey had closed down and a third of the beds from the 1965 survey had been lost. Of the 567 lodging houses and hostels included in 1965, 141 had been demolished, or were on the point of being demolished by 1972. Many of these were, however, believed to have been very old buildings which were often unfit for human habitation. Moreover, some of the loss of beds had been offset by the opening up of new hostels, particularly in the voluntary sector. The net loss of beds between 1965 and 1972 was 6,592, or 17 per cent, with by far the biggest overall loss occurring in the commercial sector (Wingfield Digby, 1976).

The 674 establishments included in the 1972 census provided 31,137 beds (25,561 for men; 2,273 for women; and 3,301 for either sex). Most of the buildings were very old and a very high proportion lacked adequate washing or toilet facilities or were in establishments where these were below the standard recommended by the Department of the Environment (Wingfield Digby, 1976). Women comprised less than 10 per cent of the hostel and lodging house population and only 11 per cent of the men were under 30 years of age. Of all the men, 20 per cent were aged 65 or over and 33 per cent had been staying in the same establishment for at least 2 years. Forty-seven per cent of the men said that they had been living in some sort of hostel or lodging house for at least 10 years, and only 8 per cent had started using them in the last 6 months. Less than 2 per cent of the men were non white (Wingfield Digby, 1976).

For many years, hostels were the most common form of temporary accommodation used by local authorities. Indeed, they were the traditional way of housing homeless families until the introduction of the Homeless Persons Act in 1977 (Evans, 1991). Because homelessness was largely seen as: (a) temporary, (b) a social work rather than a housing problem, and (c) likely to result in only short-term duties for authorities, provision for homeless people was not considered worthy of any great financial investment from housing departments. There was, moreover,

frequently no money to refurbish existing provision or to develop alternatives (Watchman and Robson, 1989; Evans, 1991).

In addition to being cheap, hostels afforded authorities control over when and how the accommodation was used. Likewise, they were a convenient way of providing support and advice, especially to vulnerable applicants. Units could be occupied quickly, which maximised rental income, and were located together, which enabled authorities to keep in close contact with residents. This made it possible to check that rooms were being used and that there were no changes in circumstances which would affect a homelessness application (Evans, 1991).

Canter *et al.* (1990) suggested that hostels continued to be used after the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act for two additional reasons. Firstly, voluntary organisations and the (then) DHSS continued to provide emergency accommodation for the thousands of single people who were homeless and not in 'priority need'. Secondly, the 1974 Housing Act made funding available to housing associations, via the Housing Corporation, to build new buildings or to modernise old ones on a large scale. Because housing associations were seen as providing a 'useful supplementary resource' to local authority housing departments and were particularly associated with the provision of 'special needs' accommodation, many smaller, more specialised housing projects emerged (Canter *et al.*, 1990; Watson and Cooper, 1992).

After the 1974 Housing Act, other initiatives pursued by central and local government brought further changes to the range of available hostel accommodation. The first of these was the 'Hostels Initiative', launched in 1980 by John Stanley, the then Housing Minister. Housing associations, funded through the Housing Corporation, were to implement this Initiative through their development programmes. Between 1980 and 1987 the Corporation invested approximately £300 million in hostel schemes (Garside *et al.*, 1990). The objective of this was to improve the standard of temporary accommodation available to single homeless

people by modernising or closing down the very large, traditional hostels and night shelters and replacing them with a more diverse range of smaller, higher quality hostel provision (Anderson *et al.*, 1993).

Historically, the large, traditional hostels had been both a resource and a problem. They had provided shelter for thousands of single people at any one time, but often only in poor quality, unhygienic, and unsafe conditions (GLC/LBA, 1981). The 'Hostels Initiative' resulted in some clear advances in terms of standards of provision, at least in the short term, but also effected a decline in the total number of bed spaces available, especially in London (Garside *et al.*, 1990). Furthermore, the policy did not expressly address the needs of homeless single people for permanent accommodation (Anderson, 1993a).

A further important change to hostel provision was revealed in 1985. This was the plan to replace the resettlement units, run by the (then) Department of Health and Social Security, by a range of smaller, less institutional accommodation to be managed by local authorities or voluntary agencies. In 1989 the resettlement branch of the Department of Social Security was succeeded by a newly-established Resettlement Unit Executive Agency, the remit of which was to manage the existing provision and to carry forward the disengagement policy. The programme became subject to extensive delay and in February 1992 it was announced that units in good physical condition would be offered to tender to interested bodies. Some units have now been closed and some replacement bedspaces are up and running (Elam, 1992; Anderson *et al.*, 1993).

In respect of the above, the Housing Campaign for the Single Homeless (CHAR) accused the government of 'shedding its minimal obligation' to the single homeless without outside consultation. It argued that the transfer of the resettlement units did not offer a long-term solution, but rather reflected a lack of political will to tackle single homelessness. CHAR was also

critical of the 'no cost' formula adopted by the Resettlement Agency and warned against the transfer to opportunist organisations with financial strength, but little or no experience of running such accommodation (CHAR, 1993).

During the 1980s local authorities began to make greater use of high cost, low quality bed and breakfast hotels to accommodate the rising numbers of homeless people (Audit Commission, 1989; Niner, 1989). One likely reason for this change in trend was that bed and breakfast accommodation had the advantage of being immediately available and was open to use on an 'as needed' basis. New hostel schemes, conversely, could not be provided cheaply or quickly and authorities were, in any case, often not prepared to invest in new provision unless they could be certain that the need for additional temporary accommodation would continue (Evans, 1991).

After it became clear that the demand for accommodation for homeless people was not just a passing phenomenon and that the use of bed and breakfast hotels was resulting in a poor standard of service at a much higher cost in many areas, attempts were made to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. This was done by diversifying into different types of temporary provision, such as private sector leasing, mobile homes, and homeless at home policies[1]. Efforts were also made to expand the existing alternatives, such as hostels (Evans, 1991).

Within the voluntary sector as a whole, the number of schemes providing housing with care and support grew dramatically during the 1980s. In 1980 there were 500, and by 1990 3,000, special needs schemes, developed by housing associations, often working in partnership with voluntary agencies (NFHA and SITRA, 1991). Additionally, there was an expansion in the number of different groups of people accommodated. Watson and Cooper's study of supportive accommodation and housing associations found that

[1] See glossary.

schemes established before 1970 provided for five groups, those established before 1980 for eight groups, and those before 1990 for fourteen groups. Watson and Cooper also found a higher proportion of women-only schemes (14 per cent) than men-only schemes (9 per cent) (Watson and Cooper, 1992).

Hostels which conform to the traditional Victorian image now represent just a very small proportion of bedspaces and are by no means typical of the services available (Harrison *et al.*, 1991). The number of beds in men-only provision has reduced (Garside *et al.*, 1990) and the proportion of women-only bedspaces increased (Watson and Cooper, 1982; Spaull and Rowe, 1992). According to Spaull and Rowe (1992), this is almost certainly a result of the continuing reduction in the number of bedspaces in large, direct access hostels in favour of increased provision in smaller, special needs projects, more likely to be geared towards the needs of women.

In contrast to the large shelters, many of the smaller hostels developed during the 1980s have fewer shared facilities and a more domestic atmosphere (Evans, 1991). Most range from between thirty or forty beds to four or five bed units and tend to cater mainly for specialist kinds of needs, often dealing with referrals only from one origin (GLC/LBA, 1981). These smaller hostels usually offer better quality accommodation than the more traditional hostels. Likewise, they provide more individual care and often place a greater emphasis on recognising residents' needs for privacy and independence (Harrison *et al.*, 1991).

Supported housing now includes some accommodation which is no different from that provided by housing associations for single people generally, and some which differs significantly from mainstream provision. The gap between these two extremes is widening and resulting in increasing diversity within the sector. There is, nevertheless, a discernible trend towards more self-contained and long-term accommodation (Watson and Cooper, 1992).

Towards the end of the 1980s, there was a sudden and dramatic increase in the number of people sleeping rough, particularly in central London. There was also a re-emergence of begging on a scale not witnessed for over a century (Anderson, 1993a). By way of an emergency response to this, the government launched the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI1). This was a package intended to reduce street homelessness in central London. Over a three year period £96 million was made available to provide emergency shelters and a follow-up programme of more permanent 'move-on' accommodation. The plan was that a second £86 million phase (RSI2) would concentrate on providing permanent move-on accommodation, but not fund any hostels to replace the 22 from the first phase due to close by 1995 (Anderson, 1993a; Anderson *et al.*, 1993).

Projects working with single homeless people in London welcomed the government's initiatives, but many questioned whether the measures went far enough - either in meeting the demand for temporary accommodation from single homeless people in the capital, or in meeting the even more crucial need for permanent homes. By not addressing the issue of street homelessness outside of central London, there was also a danger that more rough sleepers could be attracted into the centre from outer boroughs. Moreover, more hostel bedspaces, in the absence of adequate permanent move-on accommodation, would not solve the problem of people living for long periods of time in unsatisfactory temporary accommodation with little prospect of anything better (Spaull and Rowe, 1992; Anderson, 1993a).

Street homelessness in London has been reduced as a result of Rough Sleepers Initiative, but the objective of eliminating it entirely has not been achieved. By 1993, the 2,200 bed spaces in self-contained and shared permanent move-on accommodation, originally planned as part of the Initiative, had not all materialised and the rent deposit scheme had also proved less successful than had been hoped (Randall and Brown, 1993; Khanum, 1993). In many respects the package seemed to have been little

more than a short-term response to a very visible crisis which was a source of embarrassment to the government (Anderson, 1993a).

In July 1990, the government also announced the first stage of the Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative (HMII). This was in recognition of the high number of people sleeping out in the capital with mental health problems. A report commissioned by the Department of Health was submitted in the Autumn of 1994, but still unpublished at the time of writing (early June 1995). This attacked the Government for failing in its commitment to build 750 long-term or 'move-on' units under the Mentally Ill Initiative. According to the report (written by Professor Tom Craig, a community psychiatrist in Lambeth, south London) only 122 units had been provided in the five years since the Initiative was launched. There were, however, an estimated 2,000 mentally ill people without accommodation in London alone (Sunday Telegraph, 12 March 1995).

Whilst the closure of old sub-standard hostels and the expansion of semi-supportive projects and housing schemes is generally seen as a welcome development of the past ten years, there is a growing concern that the current level of direct access provision is insufficient to meet the demand for emergency bedspaces (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994; SHiL, 1995). This apparent shortage of emergency bedspaces may indicate a need for more direct access hostels, but may equally reflect insufficient move-on accommodation and a resultant silting up of special needs provision (SHiL, 1995). Furthermore, there is some suggestion that difficult clients can find themselves excluded from the newer, higher-quality and often smaller hostels (Liddiard and Hutson 1991).

The intention of this section has been to provide a broad overview of trends in hostel provision and policy. To complement this, a brief introduction to four related policy areas is now given. These are housing policy, community care policy, social

security policy, and hostel funding policy. All, in various ways, impinge either directly or indirectly upon the provision of supported hostel accommodation for homeless people.

Part 2: A history of related policies

Housing policy

The high levels of homelessness, which fuel the demand for hostel accommodation, cannot be divorced from past and current housing policies. This is because the existence of large numbers of homeless people suggest that the housing market is failing to provide access to sufficient appropriate and affordable housing.

In the United Kingdom, the sharp reduction in the supply of accessible and affordable public rented or 'council' housing is, in large part, a result of Conservative housing policies introduced in the 1980s and 1990s (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Since 1979, there has been a decline in local authority new building to its lowest peacetime level since 1921 and an actual decline in the amount of local authority stock to rent for the first time since 1919 (Malpass and Murie, 1990). Over a million council houses have been sold, but a number of restrictions prevent local authorities from using much of the money raised from these sales to replace the loss with new housing (Ginsburg 1989). Accompanying this, there has been a dramatic fall in Exchequer subsidies to housing costs and a real increase in rents (Malpass and Murie, 1990). The total number of local authority lets has, nevertheless, fallen by only 2 per cent for the period 1988/89 to 1992/93 (Maclennan and Kay, 1994).

For low income households and for migrants, the privately rented sector has traditionally provided access to the housing market (Clapham *et al.*, 1990). This sector has, however, been experiencing a long-term decline. In 1914 private rented

accommodation accounted for ninety per cent, but by 1989 only eight per cent, of the total housing stock (Malpass and Murie, 1990). The problem of affordability prevents many single homeless people from gaining access to the sector, especially in London where private rents are particularly high (SHiL, 1995). Recent government legislation and initiatives have helped to increase the supply of private rented accommodation, but for many there is still little or no choice and living in the private rented sector often means insecurity, poor living conditions, and a dependency on benefits (SHiL, 1995).

In contrast to the decline in public and private rented housing, owner occupation in the United Kingdom has been increasing throughout the century, particularly since 1979 when it became a cornerstone of the government's housing policy (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Throughout the 1980s, vigorous campaigning to compel local authorities to sell council houses, coupled with financial incentives to owner occupiers, such as the 'Right to Buy' scheme, made access to owner occupation easier for those with a reasonable and relatively secure income (Malpass and Murie, 1990). High interest rates and an insecure employment market have, however, meant that an increasing number of people have found themselves unable to keep pace with mortgage re-payments. As a result, a large number of people living in the owner occupied sector have also been confronted by homelessness over recent years (Greve and Currie, 1990; Ford, 1995).

One further important feature of changes in the tenure system in the last twenty-five years has been the development of housing associations. Whilst these have an important role to play in the provision of affordable accommodation, scepticism surrounds their ability to fill the enormous gaps left in the supply of affordable accommodation by the large decline in public rented and private rented housing (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

In January 1994 the Government produced a consultation paper announcing proposed reforms of the homelessness legislation (DOE,

1994b). These were subsequently amended with the intention of introducing legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allowed (DOE, 1994c). When implemented these seem likely to mean profound changes to the circumstances of many homeless people. Local authorities will no longer have a duty to provide permanent accommodation for those accepted as homeless, but will rather have only to provide temporary housing for up to a year. Additionally, people entering the United Kingdom on the understanding that they will have no recourse to public funds will not be entitled to any assistance at all.

Although councils' duty to secure accommodation will extend to people in refuges, direct-access hostels, and other short-stay places (such as bed and breakfast hotels), the planned changes will inevitably result in longer waits in various forms of temporary accommodation (including some hostels) for many homeless people. Furthermore, as policies put housing associations under pressure to assist councils in providing accommodation to the 'statutory homeless', this will impact on the amount of accommodation which associations will be able to make available to some of the groups they have traditionally housed. One such group will likely be single homeless people (Spaull and Rowe, 1992).

Community care policy

During the 1970s, the principles of 'normalisation' and 'ordinary living' were implicit in the deinstitutionalisation policies which set about closing the large long-stay hospitals. This resulted in an expansion of small-scale shared provision in the form of group homes, with an emphasis on shared living, protection, mutual support, and permanence. The demand for various forms of supported housing was subsequently boosted by the government's 1981 'Care in the Community' policy paper (Watson and Cooper, 1992).

During the 1980s, a philosophy more concerned with independent living and individual autonomy evolved. The health and social services authorities began to move away from the direct provision of accommodation and alternative agencies (such as housing associations) were increasingly expected to meet the housing needs of people who might previously have been accommodated in residential care or hospitals (Watson and Cooper, 1992). Likewise, the Housing Corporation began to expect schemes to offer more temporary supported housing. Accordingly, provision started to focus on assisting residents to develop or regain lifeskills, and on enabling tenants to sustain an independent lifestyle, and to make full use of general community services and amenities (Watson and Cooper, 1992).

Community care, as expressed in the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, meanwhile, had much broader goals than previous legislation. The objective of the 1990 Act was to enable people to live an independent and dignified life at home, or within the community, for as long as they were able, and wished, so to do. In addition to those leaving residential institutions, the new 'community care' population potentially included all those in institutions not scheduled for closure; those requiring additional support to live in the community, but currently living with parents or other relatives; those who were literally homeless or in basic hostel accommodation; and those living in temporary accommodation, but also needing long-term support. The housing needs arising from the 1990 Act were, thus, more difficult to quantify and potentially much greater than had previously been the case (Watson and Cooper, 1992).

To what extent greater numbers of 'vulnerable' people residing in the community would result in increased homelessness would largely depend upon the quantity, quality, and accessibility of the alternative services provided. There was, nevertheless, a concern among some organisations that any recent reduction in homelessness could be jeopardised by the government's inadequate resourcing of Community Care (Kelly, 1993). It was feared that

thousands of homeless people would not fall into the 'vulnerable' groups identified by the government under the 1990 Act and, as a result, many hostels (especially those providing for single homeless people) could be faced with funding problems as they applied to authorities for help, but were turned down (Kelly, 1993).

A further relevant policy in this context is the Children Act 1989. This, in theory, provided the opportunity for meeting the housing and support needs of one of the most vulnerable groups of homeless young people, those aged sixteen and seventeen. In practice, however, it seems that the impact of the Children Act 1989 has been limited (McCluskey, 1994). A recent study found that social services departments were, in the main, not fulfilling their responsibilities under the new legislation to homeless sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds. Indeed, the majority of social services departments stated that there would have to be factors, in addition to homelessness, for someone aged sixteen or seventeen to be assessed as being 'in need'. Additionally, the treatment of any given individual often depended on which social services office was attended and which worker was seen (McCluskey, 1994).

Social security policy

Various changes in social security policy, occurring in the 1980s, have had implications in terms of individuals' ability to pay for hostel accommodation and for housing more generally. These changes include the 1985 Board and Lodgings Regulations, the 1986 Social Security Act, the 1988 reform of Housing Benefit, and the replacement of board and lodging payments by Housing Benefit and Income Support in 1989. Single young people have been particularly badly effected by these reforms. This is because policies have persistently encouraged them to return to their parental home, regardless of whether or not this was, in fact, possible (O'Mahony, 1988; Anderson, 1993b; Hutson and

Liddiard, 1994; SHiL, 1995).

In 1985 limits were set on payments for board and lodgings and claimants under twenty-six (with some exceptions) ceased to qualify for board and lodging allowances at the householder rate after a fixed maximum period. These allowances were, however, abolished in 1989.

In 1989, direct payments to cover hostel and board and lodging charges[2] were replaced by Income Support at the ordinary rate for day-to-day living expenses and Housing Benefit to cover only the accommodation element of charges. Any other costs (for items such as food, cleaning, laundry, or heating) had to be met out of the claimant's other income. The new arrangements took effect from April 1989 for people living in board and lodging accommodation and from October 1989 for hostel residents. The changes resulted in some gainers and some losers, but younger people were particularly badly effected (Thornton, 1990; Smith *et al.*, 1991; Anderson *et al.*, 1993).

Since April 1988, single people under twenty-five years of age have been paid a lower rate of Income Support than those aged twenty-five or over. Furthermore, since September 1988 most sixteen- and seventeen year-olds have lost their entitlement to income support altogether (Anderson *et al.*, 1993; Anderson, 1993b). These changes resulted from the 1986 Social Security Act. The 1986 Social Security Act also abolished single payments for one-off essential items and replaced them with a system of loans from the Social Fund. This has reduced the resources potentially open to those wishing to set up home on their own and, consequently, seriously diminished the housing options of many.

Following the passage of the Social Security Act 1986, the

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[2] These had been payable to people on Income Support in recognition of the high living costs incurred by people living in hostels or board and lodging accommodation.

current Housing Benefit scheme was introduced in April 1988. Under this scheme, claimants under the age of twenty-five receive a significantly lower amount of Housing Benefit than do those in otherwise similar circumstances aged twenty-five or more. The 1988 Housing Benefit reform also raised the rent taper to 65 per cent of net income, so contributing to an increase in the depth of the poverty trap (Kemp, 1992).

Lower benefit levels mean that it is now more difficult for many, especially those under twenty-five, to secure and to maintain independent accommodation. For those who become homeless it is also more expensive to stay in hostel accommodation. The economics of accommodating homeless people, meanwhile, extend beyond individuals' incomes and their ability to pay for their housing. Policies relating to the funding of hostel provision itself are, consequently, considered below.

Hostel funding policies

The funding arrangements for community care and supported accommodation are complex and constantly changing. Additionally, they have many unintended as well as intended consequences.

> Current provision reflects the nuances of the financing system rather than the needs or wishes of users or what would be considered 'best practice' by many providers. (Clapham *et al.*, 1994, p.15)

The Housing Corporation provides both capital and revenue funding to housing associations providing housing for people with special needs. Housing Association Grant (HAG) is paid to meet the initial capital costs of providing accommodation, whilst revenue grants contribute towards the cost of providing a more intensive housing management service. Although the Housing Corporation does not prescribe the particular forms of accommodation to be provided, the funding mechanisms it adopts do influence provision type.

Until April 1991 Hostel Deficit Grant (HDG) covered revenue deficits in registered housing association hostels. Funding for accommodation which was not eligible for HDG, because it was not registered, was both complex and insecure. This resulted in a bias towards the registration of schemes and towards the provision of the kinds of accommodation which could be registered. The availability of HDG thus encouraged the development of shared living hostels with relatively high levels of support, rather than forms of housing which allowed less institutional, more independent living arrangements (Clapham *et al.*, 1994).

In 1991 a less generous Special Needs Management Allowance (SNMA) replaced HDG. Schemes receiving HDG before that date were progressively to transfer to the new allowance via a Transitional Special Needs Management Allowance (TSNMA). SNMA is a flat rate payment per bedspace. To qualify for the full rate, provision must have a minimum staff to resident ratio of one to ten. Lower care schemes can, however, receive fifty per cent of the full rate if they have a minimum staff to resident ratio of one to twenty.

Unlike HDG, SNMA is available on self-contained as well as on shared provision (Watson and Cooper, 1992). The combination of the introduction of SNMA in 1991 and the reduction in capital allowances for shared housing from 1992 encouraged the development of more individual accommodation. As a result, the recent funding bias towards shared accommodation has now been replaced by a funding bias towards more self-contained housing (Watson and Cooper, 1992; Clapham *et al.*, 1994).

Both Housing Association Grant and revenue grants are available only to meet the 'housing' costs of special needs housing. The provision of care and support (for example, nursing care, health services, counselling, or day centres) must be financed from other non-Housing Corporation sources. Considerable debate has, however, emerged in relation to the

boundary between housing management and care and, therefore, over what Housing Corporation allowances should cover (Clapham *et al.*, 1994).

According to Certification 10 (one of the SNMA eligibility criteria), the Housing Corporation will not consider applications for SNMA if social services authorities are sponsoring the cost of a placement under community care arrangements. This is because the Housing Corporation does not want to be financing what it perceives to be care costs. Housing associations, meanwhile, have argued that social services will not be willing to make up the loss of this revenue by paying for what are considered to be housing management tasks (Clapham *et al.*, 1994). Because many questions were raised in relation to who should pay for the accommodation costs of residents sponsored by local authorities under the 1990 Community Care Act, Certification 10 was suspended in 1993/94 and 1994/5 in order to allow the Corporation to continue funding such schemes for the time-being (Clapham *et al.*, 1994).

More new arrangements for financing the revenue costs of community care were introduced in April 1993 as part of the package of measures following the National Health Services and Community Care Act 1990. These new arrangements were intended to remove some of the barriers to flexibility which had been integral to the previous financial system. The continued funding of provision through a number of bodies, each of which has its own interests and sets its own regulations, nevertheless, indicates that the underlying financial structure of community care will remain service-led (Clapham *et al.*, 1994).

> ...inflexibility and the lack of user voice and choice remain as fundamental a part of the new system as they did of the one it replaced. (Clapham *et al.*, 1994, p.11)

Frail elderly people or people with physical or learning disabilities are the main priority for the cash limited resources

available for the implementation of community care services by local authorities. Projects which house people who are not in these main community care priority groups are, consequently, competing for extremely limited resources (Clapham *et al.*, 1994). Because of this, some organisations have found it necessary to reduce support services or to deregister projects in an attempt to make up the funding gap through Housing Benefit. Where the old funding arrangements encouraged registration and highly supportive accommodation, the new system thus again has the opposite effect of encouraging de-regulation and low support provision.

> In the short term this is likely to lead to a greater diversity of provision and to offset previous imbalances in favour of providing mini-institutions with high levels of support. However, in the longer term, there is a danger of merely replacing one set of biases with another, neither of which are related to user needs. (Clapham *et al.*, 1994, p.14)

The reliance on high levels of Housing Benefit to finance support costs are also problematic because of the ambiguity in the Housing Benefit regulations and the discretion available at the level of the local benefit office. These mean that the criteria used, and the levels payable, vary from one part of the country to another. Additionally, the payment of high levels of Housing Benefit is regarded by many in central government circles as a loophole which will probably soon be closed (Clapham *et al.*, 1994).

Financial uncertainties do not help projects to plan in advance and can place the future of some schemes in jeopardy (*Housing Associations Weekly*, 23 April 1993). The fragility and complexity of funding mechanisms for many special needs schemes, meanwhile, now seem likely to be compounded by further proposals for the future capital and revenue arrangements for special needs housing (as discussed in chapter 1).

Conclusion

Having set this thesis in its broader context, chapter 3 now moves on to review a range of previous studies. The objective of this is to establish the present state of knowledge about homelessness and hostels and to identify any gaps in that knowledge. The intention is then to address some of these gaps in the fieldwork which is to follow.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Introduction

This chapter reviews a range of previous studies which relate, directly or indirectly, to supported hostel accommodation for homeless people. The aim is to establish the present state of knowledge relating to hostels and to identify any existing gaps in that knowledge. The material considered includes existing research into homelessness, temporary accommodation, and hostel provision. Reference is also made to studies which have investigated the effects of various relevant social policies and programmes (such as the Rough Sleeper's Initiative, the Children Act 1989, and the closure programme of DSS resettlement units).

Part 1 introduces the studies to be reviewed, whilst parts 2 and 3 consider their findings. Part 2 discusses the characteristics of homeless people and service users (who they are, where they have come from, why they are homeless, what particular needs they may or may not have, and where they would hope or prefer to live in the future etc.). Part 3 then considers the quality and success of policies, services, and provision for homeless people (how good they are and how they can be improved). The latter yields a wealth of material which relates to a broad spectrum of policies and numerous forms of temporary accommodation of which hostel provision is but one type. Because a full review of this material is beyond the scope of this chapter, only the findings which relate most directly to supported hostel accommodation for homeless people are presented.

Finally, part 4 highlights issues and areas which have been less well explored to-date and considers the implications of such gaps in knowledge for the research to be undertaken by this thesis.

Part 1: An introduction to research on hostels

Government departments have commissioned several reports into homelessness and provision for homeless people. Whilst some have considered hostels in their own right (for example, Garside *et al.*, 1990), much important information about hostels can be gleaned from research which has had a broader homelessness remit. This accounts for the inclusion of a diverse range of studies in the present review. Although there have been some earlier inquiries, most have occurred since the late 1980s. This reflects the growth in the number of homeless people and the raised profile of homelessness as a social concern during recent years.

In 1965, the National Assistance Board undertook the first national survey of single homeless people in Britain (National Assistance Board, 1966). This study included people sleeping rough, people using reception centres, lodging houses, hostels and shelters, and people without accommodation seeking financial help from the local offices of the National Assistance Board. In 1972 Wingfield Digby, funded by the (then) Department of Health and Social Security, undertook a further national survey of hostels and lodging houses for single people (Wingfield Digby, 1976). One of the main objectives of this was to up-date the information which had been collected by the National Assistance Board seven years previously.

In 1976, the same year that Wingfield Digby's survey was published, the DOE commissioned the study "Single and Homeless" (Drake *et al.*, 1981). The aim of this was to estimate the proportion of single homeless people requiring primarily housing, rather than supportive services, and to provide information about the types of accommodation that would meet those needs. The role of hostel provision featured prominently within this research. The brief of a further DOE project, carried out independently by SHAC in London in 1982 (Randall *et al.*, 1982), was, meanwhile, to explore the process of being dealt with as homeless from first

contact with the local authority through to achieving permanent housing. It examined the housing histories of homeless families and the alternative accommodation solutions available to them.

Towards the end of the 1980s, a spate of DOE funded research focused on statutory homelessness and the characteristics and experiences of homeless households in 'priority need'. Reports by Evans and Duncan (1988), Thomas and Niner (1989), Niner (1989), the Audit Commission (1989), and the National Audit Office (1990) all had very similar objectives (see below). Whilst instructive, the findings from these studies were, nevertheless, limited because their focus on statutory homelessness meant that they failed to include the experiences of most homeless single people.

Evans and Duncan (1988) investigated differences in local authority policy and practice relating to homelessness and the range of interpretations applied to the homelessness legislation. Thomas and Niner (1989) (and the case studies provided for this study by Niner (1989)) studied variation between local authorities in relation to homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation. To this end, they examined the management of temporary housing, its physical conditions, and the characteristics of homeless people living in it. Complementing this, the Audit Commission's (1989) report considered the operation of local authorities' services for homeless people and the impact of government policies on that provision. The National Audit Office (1990) report, meanwhile, investigated the effectiveness of measures being taken to implement the Department's programmes for dealing with homelessness in England.

The dearth of national literature relating to single homeless people, existing since the publication of the report by Drake *et al.* in 1981, was not addressed until a DOE survey carried out in 1991 by Anderson *et al.* (1993). The aim of this 1991 survey was to establish the characteristics of single homeless people, the reasons why they were homeless, and their accommodation needs and

preferences. Again a substantial amount of material about hostel accommodation was produced in the process.

Regarding hostels more explicitly, DOE funded research in 1990 investigated the "Hostels Experience" (Garside *et al.*, 1990). The intention of this research was to establish how the decision to provide hostel accommodation was made, how the premises were chosen or built, what sources of funding were employed, what staffing was needed and how it was provided, where residents came from and moved on to, what the role of the accommodation was intended to be, and how far its aims were being realised. Subsequently, DSS funded research explored both the characteristics of people admitted to London resettlement units (Elam, 1992) and customer perceptions of such units (Smith *et al.*, 1992). A further DOE survey considered the characteristics of residents using accommodation provided by the Rough Sleeper's Initiative. Likewise, it investigated their housing histories, patterns of rough sleeping, support needs, and accommodation preferences (Randall and Brown, 1993).

Government sponsored research has been complemented by numerous other studies, produced, commissioned, or written by a diverse range of organisations and individuals. These have included work by special interest or campaigning bodies, as well as academic inquiries. Information produced by these has also tended to fall into two broad categories: the first relating to the characteristics of homeless people, and the second to the nature and success of policies and provision. Much of this non-governmental research has been quite focused, frequently concentrating on one particular aspect of homelessness (such as rehousing), or on the needs of one particular group of homeless people, and/ or limiting itself to a local rather than a national brief.

Within this literature London has attracted a substantial share of the research. This is largely accounted for by the scale and particular nature of homelessness there (Greve with

Currie, 1990). For example, in 1985 the GLC commissioned a broad-ranging study to examine all aspects of homelessness, including single homelessness, in the capital (Bramley *et al.*, 1988). A report by Canter *et al.* (1990) for the Salvation Army, meanwhile, sought to identify the number and variety of people who were homeless in London and to examine the conditions in which they were living.

In 1989 the single homelessness in London Working Party (SHiL) commissioned research to determine the need for, and shortfall in, permanent housing provision for single homeless people moving on from hostels and special needs housing projects in London (London Research Centre, 1989). This theme was continued in the sequel produced by Spaull and Rowe in 1992 entitled "Silt-up or move-on?. Housing London's Single Homeless". Subsequently, "Time to Move On", published by SHiL in 1995, examined what had been achieved, and what remained to be done, in terms of the provision of accommodation and services.

Other reports have concentrated on groups of people who may be at particular risk of homelessness (perhaps because of personal characteristics, such as race or gender or age). This has sometimes been in addition to focusing on one geographical locality or one particular aspect of the experience. In 1980 the Commission for Racial Equality investigated homelessness and racial discrimination in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, in 1987 Hendessi considered the housing needs and circumstances of migrants in London, and in 1993 Quilgars examined the housing situation of refugees in England. Supported housing projects for single people were considered by NACRO in 1982, shared supported housing was investigated by Cooper *et al.* in 1993, and supported accommodation for ex-offenders in the Grampian area of Scotland was the subject of research by McIvor and Taylor in 1995.

Austerberry and Watson (1983), Watson with Austerberry (1986), and Watson (1988) highlighted some of the particular issues facing homeless women, Hendessi (1992) examined the experiences

of young women who had become homeless because of sexual abuse, and Bull (1993) considered the housing consequences of relationship breakdown. In 1987 the Health Visitors Association and the General Medical Services Committee studied the problems of access to primary health care experienced by homeless families, whilst in 1994 Bines compared the health of single homeless people with the general population. Homelessness and temporary accommodation, including hostels, all featured prominently within these studies.

Liddiard and Hutson investigated the link between youth homelessness and changes to the benefit system in 1991 and followed this with an examination of the construction of youth homelessness as a social issue in 1994 (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). The connection between leaving home and homelessness in youth was studied by Jones (1994), whilst in 1993 Centrepoint Soho considered how young and vulnerable people, including homeless young people, might best benefit from the introduction of the Children Act 1989 (Strathdee, 1993). To this end, Strathdee assessed the progress made by London Boroughs a year after the Act came into effect. Subsequently, a similar, but national two year research project was completed by CHAR. This investigated how social services departments were implementing and interpreting the Children Act to meet the needs of young homeless people (McCluskey, 1994).

In 1988 Berthoud and Casey analysed the "The Cost of Care in Hostels". A major objective of this was to investigate whether a distinction could be made between the costs of accommodation and those other costs of running a hostel which should be attributed to care. The implications of funding policies were also considered by Watson and Cooper in their examination of the development of the provision of supported housing (Watson and Cooper, 1992). Clapham *et al.* (1994), meanwhile, assessed the revenue financing system of community care and, in the light of this, suggested ways in which the flexibility and responsiveness of the present system could be improved.

The deinstitutionalisation and community care policies and programmes of recent years have generated further relevant research. The National Federation of Housing Associations and MIND joined forces in 1987 and again in 1989 to produce a report arising from a shared concern to develop the best quality housing and support for people with mental health problems or with learning difficulties (NFHA and MIND, 1989). Similarly, the Glasgow Council for Single Homeless (a body which gives a forum to statutory and voluntary agencies involved in single homelessness in Glasgow) investigated the programme of rehousing people from the city's hostels and lodging houses (GCSH, 1985). The objective of this was to improve the service provided in Glasgow in order to benefit future users of it and, simultaneously, to provide guidance for other rehousing schemes. This was to be effected by analysing the programme's constituent elements and by considering how the people who had been rehoused felt about their experiences.

The effects of closing the resettlement units were studied by Walker *et al.* (1993), whilst the process of rehousing homeless single people was the subject of research carried out in Leeds by Dant and Deacon (1989). The latter aimed to increase understanding of how rehousing was experienced by those involved and to examine the factors which influenced whether or not those rehoused 'settled down' in their new home.

Further research in West Yorkshire by Jones (1987) investigated the structure and levels of provision for single homeless people within that region. This concentrated on the usage of provision, the gaps existing, and the problem of hidden homelessness. Vincent *et al.* (1994), meanwhile, provided an audit of provision, an assessment of need, and an exploration of the mis-match between the two in the City of Nottingham. Commissioned by Nottingham Hostels Liaison Group, the objective of this exercise was to inform statutory planning mechanisms of a city-wide strategy to tackle single homelessness.

There is one notable exception to the more localised and specific nature of these non-government commissioned reports. This is Evans' (1991) study "Alternatives to Bed and Breakfast. Temporary Housing Solutions for Homeless People". Produced by the National Housing and Town Planning Council, supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, its objectives were to collect information on the different types of temporary accommodation used nationally, to produce advice on their respective advantages and disadvantages, and to consider the various ways in which each might be provided.

Part 2: The characteristics of homeless people and hostel users

According to Drake *et al.* (1981), it is difficult to generalise about the kinds of people who become homeless or to disentangle cause and effect between individual problems and homelessness. For some people, difficulties precede and contribute to their inability to secure stable accommodation and employment. For others, the experience itself seems to exacerbate their difficulties.

> Homelessness is caused by processes occurring at many different levels: the individual level, the family level, the social group level and the societal level. Housing and labour market factors, migration, demographic and socio-cultural factors interact to create the preconditions of single homelessness in the mismatch of housing and job supply and demand. Social and health factors, life cycle and personal crises cause some people to be more vulnerable to these preconditions than others. (Drake *et al.*, 1981, p.12)

The studies by Wingfield Digby (1976) and Drake *et al.* (1981) contributed significantly to a then growing recognition that homelessness was not simply related to individual problems of illness or disadvantage, but rather reflected problems of access to, and scarcity of, housing. Since that time, the belief that homelessness is a social problem, created by a combination of circumstances, and households become homeless for a variety of

complex reasons, has become widely accepted (Thomas and Niner, 1989; National Audit Office, 1990; Anderson *et al.*, 1993). Research (to be discussed) has, nevertheless, also found that many homeless people do have problems and needs in addition to their lack of accommodation. Likewise, various personal factors can make some people more vulnerable to homelessness than others.

'Priority' and 'non-priority' homeless people

The legislative framework has clear implications in terms of the experience of homelessness. This is because local authority duty extends only to those in 'priority need' (that is, households containing dependent children or a woman who is pregnant, people who are vulnerable in some way, or people made homeless by an emergency such as a fire or flood). According to Evans (1991), the majority of residents in local authority hostels were families with children or pregnant women. Similarly, Thomas and Niner found that young women with children were particularly likely to be living in women's refuges and local authority hostels. Children or pregnancy were not, however, necessarily the reasons for their homelessness. They rather had other problems relating to poverty, unemployment, or violent experiences and some were homeless simply because there was no housing for them at a price they could afford (Thomas and Niner, 1989).

Local authorities only have a duty to rehouse single homeless people if they are deemed to be somehow vulnerable. As a result, single non-priority homeless people frequently resort to sharing accommodation with relatives, friends, or more casual acquaintances, or occupying squats and derelict buildings and other forms of temporary and insecure accommodation. Much of this is sub-standard or squalid (Greve with Currie, 1990; Liddiard and Hutson, 1991; Hendessi, 1992; Anderson, 1993). Where authorities do accommodate single homeless people in hostels, this tends not to be in the same accommodation as

families. Such a separation is largely based on the premise that the two groups rarely mix well and could be positively harmful for each other on account of their different needs and life styles (Evans, 1991).

Gender

Research has consistently shown that the majority of single homeless people are male and men are far more likely to sleep rough and to use hostel accommodation than women (Wingfield Digby, 1976; Drake *et al.*, 1981; Jones, 1987; Elam, 1992; Anderson *et al.*, 1993; Randall and Brown, 1993). There are, however, two important issues to be considered here. Firstly, the key to understanding the relative invisibility of homeless women is to understand more about the nature of their homelessness (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Secondly, there is evidence to suggest that this gender pattern is changing.

It is possible that women are less likely to become homeless than men. Austerberry and Watson (1983) and Watson with Austerberry (1986) have, however, argued that it is specious to conclude that fewer women than men are homeless simply because fewer women than men are to be seen sleeping rough or using hostel accommodation. Women may be forgotten or ignored by the statistics because they adopt different solutions to their housing problems (for example, making greater use of friends or relatives). Furthermore, there have, historically, been fewer beds available for women than for men and, where provision has been available, women have often found it threatening, unsafe, intimidating, or alienating (Cowen and Lording, 1982; Austerberry and Watson, 1983; Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Harman 1989; Gosling 1990; Greve and Currie, 1990; and Harrison *et al.*, 1991).

Such trends, nevertheless, appear to be changing. Indeed, there is now a higher proportion of women living in hostels in the younger than in the older age groups (London Research Centre,

1989; Randall and Brown, 1993; Anderson *et al.*, 1993; Vincent *et al.*, 1994). In the study by Anderson *et al.* (1993), for example, half of the women interviewed in hostels and bed and breakfast hotels, but only a quarter of the men, were under twenty-five years of age. Simultaneously, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of women-only bedspaces and schemes over recent years (Watson and Cooper, 1992; Spaull and Rowe, 1992). This could either indicate that changes in the gender and age balance of homeless people are resulting in changes in the composition of the population of hostel residents, or that changes in hostel provision are effecting changes in the gender and age balance of users. Alternatively, it could indicate both.

Ethnic origin

The relevance of race to the experience of homelessness seems to reflect the broader vulnerability of members of minority ethnic groups (including Irish people) in the tightening housing market (Greve and Currie, 1990). In Britain, the numbers of Black and Asian homeless people, especially the former, increased greatly in the 1980s, but as part of an accelerated longer-term trend which was first discernible in the late 1950s. Nowadays, Black, Asian and Irish groups are all strongly over-represented among single homeless people (Greve and Currie, 1990). Furthermore, the housing and welfare requirements of migrant communities and, within migrant communities refugees and asylum-seekers, are particularly marginalised (Hendessi, 1987; Quilgars, 1993).

The research of single homeless people by Drake *et al.* (1981) found that the numbers in their sample from Asian and New Commonwealth areas were negligible. Consequently, there was no mention of them in their report. Again, however, an important factor in understanding the relative invisibility of black people in some homelessness statistics is to understand more about the

nature of their homelessness (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Thus people from minority ethnic groups may be unwilling to use hostels which are in white areas with predominantly white staff. Similarly, black people, like women, may make less use of hostels and more use of relatives and friends when faced with homelessness (see Cowen and Lording 1982; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

More recent research, meanwhile, suggests that patterns of homelessness amongst ethnic groups and the usage of hostel accommodation by them may also be changing. The study of single homeless people by Anderson *et al.* (1993) found that there was a higher proportion of black and other minority ethnic groups in hostels than among the general population and this was more pronounced in the case of women than of men (Anderson *et al.*, 1993). Similarly, Vincent *et al.* (1994) found more women and more members of minority ethnic groups among the younger hostel residents of Nottingham.

The audit of rough sleeper sites in central London for the Randall and Brown study found that the great majority of people sleeping rough were white British, 12 per cent were known to be Irish, and only 3 per cent were observed to be Black. By contrast more than 20 per cent of hostel residents were black (Randall and Brown, 1993). In Elam's study of resettlement units, 14 per cent of users described themselves as belonging to 'black' ethnic groups. There were, however, far more black minority ethnic groups represented in London than in the provincial units. Indeed, in the latter only 1 per cent of residents said that they were from a minority ethnic group (Elam, 1992).

From the above, it seems that the impact of race on the experience of homelessness is complex. It has changed over time and differs between minority ethnic groups, interacting with other factors such as gender, age, geographical area, immigration status, and hostel type.

Age

The 1972 survey of board and lodging residents by Wingfield Digby (1976) found that only 11 per cent of the male residents were under 30 years, whilst 20 per cent were aged 65 or over. As with gender and ethnic origin, more recent research has, however, illustrated that the age profile of homeless people and hostel residents is not static.

The study by Anderson *et al.* (1993) found that there were more single homeless people under 25 years of age and fewer people aged 60 or over, compared with the general population of adults aged over 16. Young adults, and to a lesser extent elderly people, were more likely to be living in hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation than to be sleeping rough (Anderson *et al.*, 1993). This finding mirrored the slightly younger resident profile found in local authority hostels by Thomas and Niner (1989). Such a pattern, it was believed, probably reflected the use of hostels by local authorities to provide temporary accommodation for those who might benefit from a certain amount of supervision (Thomas and Niner, 1989).

About 8 per cent of the hostel residents in the Nottingham study by Vincent *et al.* were under 18 years, more than 33 per cent were under 25 years, and just under 10 per cent were over 60 years. Age was also found to be associated with other characteristics and patterns of use of the accommodation. As discussed in the previous section, there were more women and more members of minority ethnic groups among those under 25 years of age. That these tended to be recent arrivals also indicated a pattern of short stays and high turnover. Older people were most likely to be male and white and to have been in their accommodation for some while (Vincent *et al.*, 1994).

Elam's study of resettlement units found no significantly dominant age group. Respondents here were distributed across all

the ages from 20-60, although London respondents were younger than residents of the provincial units (Elam, 1992). This seemed to reflect the specific nature of resettlement units, as well as geographical variability and the rather distinct profile of homelessness in the capital.

In their November 1992 audit of rough sleeper sites in central London, Randall and Brown found that a significant minority (18 per cent) of those sleeping rough were aged 60 or over. It was believed that many of these would be considered to be in priority need if they applied to a local authority as homeless. Only 4 per cent were aged 18 or under and 13 per cent between 19 and 25. The proportion of young people had apparently dropped substantially since the earlier March 1992 audit. This, Randall and Brown concluded, was a reflection of the Initiative's particular success in accommodating people of a younger age range (Randall and Brown, 1993).

In terms of links between age and the type of support provided in hostels, Garside *et al.* found that residents living in hostels with minimal staff support were all young (under 30), but not very young (under 18) (Garside *et al.*, 1990). Cooper *et al.* (1993) found that older people tended to value the availability of staff support in shared supported housing, whilst younger residents placed more emphasis on living with others. According to Harrison *et al.* (1991), homeless young people expressed a strong preference for accommodation specifically for people of their own age. The reason for this seemed to be that young people saw other hostels as threatening, dominated by inappropriate rules and regulations, and hence not receptive to their needs. In recognition of this, many hostels have more recently been established exclusively for younger people with maximum age limits of between 19 and 25 years (Harrison *et al.*, 1991).

Employment/ benefit circumstances

Over the years, research has consistently shown a correlation between low incomes, unemployment, and homelessness. For example, Wingfield Digby (1976) noted the very high level of unemployment amongst men living in hostels and lodging houses. Only half of the men under the age of 65 had a job at the time of the interviews and, of those, half were doing unskilled work. Drake *et al.* (1981) also found a much higher level of unemployment amongst their sample of single homeless people than amongst single people generally. Becoming homeless, they concluded, was associated with worsening job prospects and loss of job.

More recently, Evans and Duncan (1988) reported that only 20 per cent of households accepted as homeless were in paid employment, whilst an average of 75-80 per cent of homeless heads of household were dependent on Social Security and Housing Benefits or State Pensions. Anderson *et al.* (1993) similarly found that the overwhelming majority of single homeless people in their study were not in paid work. Nine out of ten were unemployed and a very high proportion of these were either long-term unemployed or had never worked. The most common source of income for single homeless people was Income Support.

Hostels, it seems, often do not cater for those in employment (O'Mahoney, 1988). Berthoud and Casey (1988) found that the majority of residents of most hostels claimed Supplementary Benefit (now Income Support). Similarly, in the evaluation of the Rough Sleepers Initiative, only 2 per cent of people using hostels were working full-time (Randall and Brown, 1993). According to Elam's study, almost all the men and women users of resettlement units were unemployed or unable to work because of illness or disability (Elam, 1992).

Austerberry and Watson (1983) investigated why the women in their study found it so difficult to hold down a job whilst

living in a hostel. Reasons related to the poor living conditions within hostel accommodation; the difficulty of receiving telephone calls from potential employers or employment agencies; the stigma attached to hostel living (which made potential employers reluctant to employ hostel dwellers); and the lack of available employment in the area where the hostel was located. Additionally, Austerberry and Watson reported that high hostel rents, coupled with the fact that many women could only find low-paid employment, meant that many residents had little to gain financially from working.

Liddiard and Hutson (1991) found that young homeless people experienced very similar problems in securing and sustaining employment. Delays in reclaiming benefit after losing a job and the difficulties of affording rents, particularly hostel rents, were highlighted as especially problematic. Because of unemployment, most hostel residents had a very limited amount of disposable income with which to look for secure and more permanent accommodation. This was a particular problem where deposits or rent in advance for private rented accommodation were required (Liddiard and Hutson, 1991; Garside *et al.*, 1990).

Sexual orientation

The sexual orientation of homeless people and hostel residents was one characteristic largely not researched by most of the studies reviewed. Harrison *et al.* (1991) reported that the overall number of bedspaces targeted at lesbians and gay men was small and Spaull and Rowe's London research seemed to confirm this. Only one of the projects responding to their survey said that it provided services to gay men and only six said they provided services to lesbians. This did not reveal whether or not there were low numbers of gay and lesbian people within the homelessness population, but did highlight that there was scarce gay only provision, despite any additional problems which such groups might suffer on account of their sexuality (for example, prejudice in their access to mainstream housing).

Physical and mental health

Studies have consistently revealed a clear association between homelessness and ill-health (Wingfield Digby, 1976; Drake *et al.*, 1981; Randall *et al.*, 1982; HVA and GMSC, 1987; Elam, 1992; Anderson *et al.*, 1993; Randall and Brown, 1993; Bines, 1994). Randall *et al.* contended that the health of families and their children, and in particular the level of mental stress or anxiety reported, was one of the most striking findings of their study. More than two thirds of the families said that the health of at least one person had been affected since they first realised they might have nowhere to live (Randall *et al.*, 1982). Anderson *et al.* (1993) similarly found that the majority of single homeless people reported having health problems.

Two thirds of all hostel residents in the Rough Sleepers Initiative reported at least one health problem and over half reported two or more (Randall and Brown, 1993). Slightly less than one tenth of the total sample believed that their health had caused their housing problems, but one quarter of those in hostels said that their health was better since they had moved into their current accommodation (Randall and Brown, 1993). In Elam's (1992) study of resettlement units 59 per cent of respondents reported one or more conditions. The number of people with multiple problems seemed to increase both with their age and with the length of time that they had lived in temporary or insecure housing (Elam, 1992).

In both the Randall and Brown (1993) and Elam (1992) studies, the most frequently reported complaints were those associated with depression, anxiety, and nerves. Other common problems included heavy drinking, seeing and hearing difficulties, painful joints or muscles, and chronic chest problems (Elam, 1992). Whilst over one half of respondents reporting health problems in Elam's study were not receiving any medical treatment, a high proportion in the Randall and Brown study had seen a psychiatrist or other mental health professional at some time.

One limitation of the above findings is that they make no attempt to compare the health of homeless people with the health of the general population. Recent work by Bines (1994) has crucially helped to rectify this. By comparing data on the self-reported health of representative samples of single homeless people and the general population, Bines (1994) found that there was a high incidence of physical health problems among single homeless people, compared to the general population. Mental health problems were eight times as high among hostel and bed and breakfast residents and eleven times as high among people sleeping rough, compared to the general population.

According to Watson with Austerberry, mental illness and/or alcohol problems could be seen as one consequence of institutionalised and insecure hostel living. On the other hand, it could be argued that women who had such problems were likely to end up in hostels because they were unable to cope on their own or to secure their own housing. A third argument might be that women discharged from psychiatric hospitals who lacked material resources or social networks would probably approach hostels through necessity (Watson with Austerberry, 1986).

A study by Marshall in Oxford reported that many hostels were having to care for long term severely affected psychiatric patients discharged into the community. The conclusion drawn was that the suitability of the services offered to such subjects should be rigorously assessed (Marshall, 1989). Spaull and Rowe (1992) similarly reported growing numbers of homeless people with mental health problems living in the community. This, they also contended, was a result of the closure of a number of large psychiatric hospitals around London. Reports of the work of the HMII teams, meanwhile, found no evidence to support the common perception that many homeless people had previously spent long periods of time in now closed long-stay psychiatric institutions. They rather reported that homeless people had experienced multiple short admissions before being lost to services, most often through the failure of statutory provision to offer

adequate after-care (SHiL, 1995).

Social problems and support needs

Whilst Drake *et al.* (1981) concluded that the majority of single homeless people had no serious health or social problems and were not in need of any special provision, much subsequent research (discussed below) has found that very many single homeless people do have care and support needs in addition to their housing requirements and are likely to require additional assistance.

Niner (1989) identified concentrations of people with care and support needs in local authority temporary accommodation. Likewise, Evans (1991) found that many local authorities were reporting increasing numbers of homelessness applications from single people who were vulnerable, either because of their mental health, addiction problems, or youth (Evans, 1991). The study by Anderson *et al.* (1993), meanwhile, established that three fifths of non statutorily homeless single people felt that they would need some form of support in their own home (although only a minority wanted medical or social work support).

Hostel provision, in particular, raises the question of how to cater for homeless applicants who have very different needs (Evans, 1991). Elam found that the support required by people entering resettlement units ranged from food and warmth to medical and social support. Some entrants only required low levels of care, but a large group of people had high care needs. Those reporting multiple problems, including mental illness, frequently required prolonged treatment and assistance (Elam, 1992). The study by Berthoud and Casey similarly found that some hostel residents had only basic support needs whilst others required more intensive help or had particular needs not shared with other groups. The staff of hostels accommodating ex-prisoners, people with drug or alcohol addictions, mental health

problems, or young people (including young pregnant girls) were identified as having to spend particularly lengthy periods of time helping their residents learn to cope with basic aspects of daily living (Berthoud and Casey, 1988).

Thomas and Niner (1989) found that homeless applicants with severe behavioural problems, perhaps exacerbated by alcohol or other addictions, could be very difficult for local authorities to place. Likewise, Evans (1991) discovered that many local authority hostels were unable to provide the sorts of support required by vulnerable applicants. Indeed, local authority hostel staff seldom had the skills or experience to be able to cope with the increasingly dependent residents who were being accepted. Moreover, when such individuals were placed in hostels which normally catered for families, this arrangement rarely worked because the vulnerable residents often disrupted the lives of others (Evans, 1991).

The desire for continued assistance after moving from the hostel was identified by more than half of the sample in the study by Garside *et al.* (1990). In the study by Randall and Brown, hostel staff reported that almost four-fifths of residents accommodated in hostels under the Rough Sleepers Initiative (and particularly the younger residents) were in need of some resettlement support. Three quarters of the hostel residents, meanwhile, reported that they personally would desire help with problems, if they were rehoused. Their greatest demand was for advice on benefits and grants and on where to get furniture and household goods (Randall and Brown, 1993).

Most single homeless people in the study by Anderson *et al.* also felt they would need some form of support in their own home after rehousing. Again general advice and assistance (for example with welfare benefits, household management, and budgeting) and companionship in the early stages of independent living were most frequently mentioned (Anderson *et al.*, 1993).

Previous housing histories

There is little information about the previous housing histories of homeless families. There is, however, evidence to suggest that many single homeless people have previously spent a lot of time in institutions, such as children's homes, psychiatric hospitals, borstals, prisons, the armed services, or the merchant navy (Drake *et al.*, 1981; Elam, 1992; Randall and Brown, 1993; Anderson *et al.*, 1993). A substantial minority of single homeless people of all ages have also been in care at some time in their childhood (Liddiard and Hutson, 1991; Anderson, *et al.*, 1993).

Of the respondents in the Randall and Brown study, 17 per cent had been in care and 14 per cent had been in a children's home. Of the hostel users, nearly 20 per cent had been in care at some stage. The percentage who had been in prison ranged from 18 per cent of those in permanent housing to 30 per cent of those in hostels (Randall and Brown, 1993). A third of the resettlement users interviewed in Elam's study had past experience of prison or other penal institutions and a third had stayed in other hostels. Only 15 of the 747 people interviewed had entered units directly after living in their own home for over a year. All of the rest had experienced insecure, temporary housing during the twelve months preceding arrival and many had slept rough or stayed with friends immediately before booking in[1] (Elam, 1992).

Reasons for homelessness

It is now widely recognised that homelessness is a social problem which is likely to flow from a series of events and circumstances and to be affected by the housing market and other

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[1] This, in part, reflected the admission policy of the units. This specified that people were only to be accepted if they were without anywhere else to stay and had no income.

structural factors (Johnson *et al.*, 1991). Research by Anderson *et al.* (1993) found that affordability and an inability to find or gain access to suitable housing were the main reasons preventing most single homeless people from securing alternative accommodation (Anderson *et al.*, 1993). Spaull and Rowe (1992) and Smith *et al.* (1992), meanwhile, highlighted the decline in the availability of appropriate self-contained accommodation as a critical causal factor.

Much discussion about the reasons for homelessness has, nevertheless, focused on the immediate causes and circumstances preceding the loss of a home (Greve with Currie, 1990). Such precipitating factors have commonly included relationship breakdown, the failure of sharing arrangements, the death of a partner or parent, the loss of a job, eviction, mortgage or rent arrears, or some other major crisis.

In the study of local authorities and their use of temporary accommodation by Thomas and Niner, the most common reason given for leaving the last settled home was marriage break-up. This was mentioned by 23 per cent of the sample (Thomas and Niner, 1989). Other reasons included the break-up of another kind of relationship, housing costs (including mortgage arrears), eviction, domestic violence, arguments and rows with parents, parents asking young people to leave, a breakdown in living arrangements with friends, overcrowding/ no privacy, the start of a marriage or cohabiting relationship, pregnancy, the desire for one's own home, the poor physical conditions of existing accommodation, a landlord request to leave, and moving to look for work (Thomas and Niner, 1989).

Anderson *et al.* (1993) concluded that the main reasons single homeless people left their last home were related to personal or family situations, or to accommodation or employment circumstances. Likewise, respondents in resettlement units indicated that the main causes of their homelessness were marital breakdown or household disputes, break-up of the household

through death or eviction, unemployment, or drink problems (Elam, 1992).

The interaction between precipitating events and personal characteristics makes it likely that particular types of reasons are associated with particular groups of homeless people. Thus, the homelessness of young single people tends to be related to family problems, changes to the benefits system occurring in the late 1980s, the lack of employment opportunities, the lack of housing provision (especially affordable accommodation), abuse, leaving care, and discharge from prison or another institution (without adequate coping skills and with minimal support). Additional problems may also face certain groups of young people, for example young black people or young gay and lesbian people (O'Mahoney, 1988; Thornton, 1990; Liddiard and Hutson, 1991; Jones, 1994).

Housing aspirations and preferences

Investigating the housing preferences and aspirations of homeless people poses several complex methodological issues which it is useful to consider prior to the analysis of any research findings relating to the subject. Firstly, it is important to distinguish between satisfaction with present housing circumstances and preferred accommodation type. Secondly, expressed preferences tend to be confined to those possibilities which individuals consider to be available and realisable and will not necessarily reflect their ideal notions or goals. Respondents may also be unwilling to voice negative feelings about their present accommodation, especially if they are being interviewed within it. Moreover, when questioned as to their ideal accommodation, people who have been living in desperate circumstances may be inclined to set their sights very low (Drake *et al.*, 1981; Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Watson and Cooper, 1992).

Drake *et al.* (1981) found that 6 per cent of the interview survey respondents and several of the panel discussants in their survey either preferred to be in a hostel or felt it was the only place which could cope with them. Drake *et al.* also found that there were some people who would be willing to live in hostels, rather than independent accommodation, as a trade-off between costs, preference for the company available in hostels, and the provision of services, such as laundry, and meals.

Studies have, nevertheless, consistently found that the majority of homeless people report a desire to have their own independent and self-contained place - either a house, a flat or a bedsit (Drake *et al.*, 1981; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Smith *et al.*, 1992; Anderson *et al.*, 1993). In the Spaull and Rowe survey, 93 per cent of projects said that the majority of their residents wanted to move on to permanent, self-contained accommodation (Spaull and Rowe, 1992). Similarly, more than 80 per cent of single homeless people in the survey by Anderson *et al.* wanted to have their own flat or house, living alone (or sharing with their partner). Only a very small number of single homeless people said that sleeping rough was a preferred or chosen way of life. Moreover, because of previous bad experiences of hostel accommodation, even fewer people who were sleeping out said hostels were their preferred type of housing (Anderson *et al.*, 1993).

Watson and Cooper concluded that younger and older people tend to have different housing aspirations. They found evidence of a minority of people who wanted long-term shared housing and established that these were likely to be older people who had previously lived in institutions (Watson and Cooper, 1992). Similarly, Garside *et al.* (1990) argued that where hostel accommodation was preferred, it was most frequently chosen by the older white residents who were currently living in provision with a high degree of staff cover. This, they suggested, might be a result of familiarity with this type of accommodation, low expectations of their own capabilities, and limited knowledge of

the available alternatives.

Watson with Austerberry (1986) recorded that, despite its rarity as a form of housing provision, some women specified a preference for some type of shared living. This ranged from group homes (where most facilities and domestic arrangements were shared) to an individual unit of accommodation within a block of other such units with some communal facilities. Cooper *et al.* (1993) also concluded that sharing could provide particular benefits for some people who wanted security and informal support in addition to housing.

Finally in this context, it should also be recognised that the desire for independent self-contained forms of accommodation may on occasions reflect aspirations, rather than a realistic assessment. In the study by Spaull and Rowe (1992) projects estimated that 72 per cent of residents required permanent self-contained accommodation, but judged that only 68 per cent of these would be able to cope with it. This figure was considerably lower for direct access hostels, where staff thought that only 49 per cent of those wanting self-contained accommodation would realistically be able to manage.

The heterogeneity of homelessness

To conclude this section, a key finding of the studies considered was the considerable degree of diversity in the personal backgrounds, housing histories, support needs, and housing preferences of homeless people and hostel users (Drake *et al.*, 1981; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Evans, 1991; Watson and Cooper, 1992). As Elam (1992) argued, people booking into resettlement units often had immediate circumstances in common (unemployment, experience of rooflessness and temporary accommodation, and dependence on social services and welfare benefits for income), but their life histories, personal characteristics, housing experiences, and care needs were very

varied.

Several studies have proposed that this diversity should be reflected both in the type of accommodation provided and in the degree of support offered. This is because it is unlikely that any one model will be able to cater for the wide range of hostel users (Drake *et al.*, 1981; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Evans, 1991; Walker *et al.*, 1993). Although written more than ten years ago, the comment below seems equally relevant today.

> Overall, what is required is a choice between the various types of accommodation, combined with a sympathetic approach to the level of independence that those with problems can achieve. This points clearly to the need for much wider provision of ordinary accommodation for single people to enable the homeless who are able to do so to live independently and to free hostel places for emergency use or for those who most need or want them...There is a continuing need for general purpose hostels for the single homeless who prefer hostel type of accommodation, those who would be satisfied with them assuming an improvement in standards, and the minority who need a supportive environment. (Drake *et al.*, 1981, pp.106f)

Part 3: Evaluating aspects of supported hostel accommodation

A second broad category of information to arise from the studies under review relates to the quality and success of policies and services for homeless people. As suggested previously, a full review of this material is beyond the scope of this chapter. Part 3, therefore, focuses on issues which relate specifically to the provision of supported hostel accommodation for homeless people.

Funding

Research by Smith *et al.* (1991) concluded that there were unintended, as well as intended, consequences of changing benefits for socially vulnerable groups. For example, the 1989

changes for hostel and board and lodging claimants inadvertently favoured some groups more than others. In relative terms people under twenty-five and those in self-catering units fared much worse than those of pensionable age and those in full-board accommodation. Moreover, any gains resulting from the new arrangements were at the expense of the increased complexity of claiming benefit from two agencies and an undermining of the community care role played by hostels. This, Smith *et al.* argued, illustrated how income support changes could critically affect the capacity for care in the community.

According to Watson and Cooper, the limitations of revenue finance exerted a strong influence on the design of supported housing by encouraging institutional accommodation in higher care schemes. Concern over the financing of existing schemes also prevented the consideration or exploration of varied and imaginative 'packages' of care and support allowed for in the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 (Watson and Cooper, 1992). Similarly, Garside *et al.* (1990) concluded that the system of centralised capital and revenue funding resulted in a standardisation of provision, whilst uncertainty about future financing dominated management policy (Garside *et al.*, 1990).

More recently, Clapham *et al.* (1994) argued that the post 1993 financial system for providing housing and support for people in need of community care no longer had the same bias towards registered care homes, but was still inflexible and fragile and also resulted in forms of provision which were often not geared to the needs of users. Clapham *et al.* proposed that a more flexible and user-centred system could be constructed by adopting the principles of a direct payments system (either vouchers or payments direct to users rather than to providers) and by combining this with other reforms.

Regarding hostel charges, evidence has suggested that medium-care and high-care hostels in the public sector have been able to charge much less than their voluntary equivalents on account

of the large subsidies they receive (Berthoud and Casey, 1988; Garside, 1990). Berthoud and Casey concluded that this variation was not explained by levels of care, but because charges were being set to compensate for the vagaries of a grant-aid system which tended to deliver resources to projects with the greatest needs, but could not be relied upon to do so in individual cases. As a result of this, some hostels were generously funded, whilst others remained under-resourced (Berthoud and Casey, 1988).

In terms of how hostel charges should be treated, Berthoud and Casey (1988) argued that maintaining a theoretical distinction between housing and care was not very helpful. This was because funding for supported housing could not easily be compartmentalised under 'housing', 'social services', or 'health'. All hostels seemed to provide some basic care and it was often not possible to distinguish between those parts of the basic costs which were living expenses, and those which were care. Berthoud and Casey proposed that a better system would comprise two mechanisms: one providing basic income and the other providing additional income. Basic funding would be geared to meet the costs of housing plus basic care, whilst a system of additional income would meet the full costs of a low care hostel. Diverse sources of grant aid could then be used to promote flexibility (Berthoud and Casey, 1988).

Garside *et al.* recognised that the capital cost of hostels was a significant public investment and it was, therefore, reasonable to ask whether this money was being spent effectively. The diversity of provision and the fact that no single physical solution could be appropriate in all cases meant that it was not possible to say that one particular form of hostel was better value for money than any other. The investment in hostels, which provided a half-way house between residential living and independence, was, nevertheless, considered to be a worthwhile investment (Garside *et al.*, 1990).

Similarly, Berthoud and Casey concluded that although the

costs of services were often high, these should be compared with the even higher costs of hospitals, prisons, or residential care homes, as well as with ordinary housing. Many hostels, they argued, provided forms of sheltered care and resettlement which could make an important contribution to community care. This could, however, be enhanced, if the pattern of basic charges and directly assessed grants were improved (Berthoud and Casey, 1988).

Previous research has shown that hostel funding systems still leave much room for improvement. Any analysis of the role of supported hostel accommodation in meeting the needs of homeless people should, consequently, be carried out in full awareness of the limitations consistently shown to be posed by on-going inadequate and insecure resourcing mechanisms.

Standards: physical conditions, location and design

According to NACRO (1982), the standard of a building, its physical condition, location, and design are important factors which affect residents' self esteem and say something about the way the project and the wider society perceive the inhabitants. Unless accommodation is purpose built, or specially converted for the project, there is, however, likely to be a compromise between the physical properties of the building and the needs of the project (NACRO, 1982). This section considers such issues.

Regarding physical conditions, the study by Thomas and Niner found that the majority of temporary accommodation used by local authorities fell below an acceptable standard (Thomas and Niner, 1989). Moreover, Evans concluded that local authority hostels were kept to a basic level in order to keep homelessness applications down and to test the genuineness of an applicant's needs (Evans, 1991). Berthoud and Casey, meanwhile, found that some hostels occupied high-quality, purpose-built, or fully converted premises with single rooms and plenty of facilities;

others had only unconverted properties, shared rooms, and poor facilities. Hostels for the 'infirm' and for drug/ alcohol abusers often had better than average premises, whilst women's refuges had by far the worst (Berthoud and Casey, 1988).

The NACRO report argued that particular attention should be afforded to location. This included access to amenities (such as shops, bus routes, entertainments, DSS, social work agency, job centre, and educational and recreational facilities); the parent project (if applicable); and other support systems. If integration or re-integration into the community was considered important, a community where residents would have low visibility should be sought. Areas which become overloaded with projects, because of the particular type of housing stock, should not be used (NACRO, 1982).

Many of the studies reviewed commented on particular design features. In terms of size, Randall and Brown (1993) suggested that smaller hostels might be better for most people because they provided a useful step to independent living, but for some they could be too difficult to adjust to, after living on the streets. For these people, there might also be a need for larger hostels which could provide a degree of anonymity. In terms of sharing, Randall and Brown found that organisations which were experienced managers of shared housing identified a number of key factors in making this successful. These included:

* not seeing shared accommodation as permanent or even long-term housing (because most people would eventually want their own self-contained home)

* treating location as important

* building in specific design features to minimise some of the problems of sharing (for example, reasonably spacious, equal sized rooms; a reasonably sized kitchen with lockable storage space for each person; and a basic cleaning service for the kitchen and bathroom once a week)

* employing specific housing management skills and a management ratio of only forty to fifty lets per

housing officer

* spending time matching tenants, with some houses for women only sharers

Garside *et al.* (1990) highlighted the existence of two basic hostel models: the domestic model and the cluster design. In spite of certain respective weaknesses, these were both considered superior to the larger traditional hostels which they had replaced. The domestic model provided units similar in size to family housing and had a layout essentially based on a nuclear family home. Its weakness related to the fact that there was no reason why a group of strangers, thrown together, should interact like a nuclear family. The cluster model also attempted to provide accommodation on a domestic scale, but applied to larger hostels. It operated by dividing buildings internally to provide space of a more domestic scale for identifiable groups of residents. The weakness here was that the division of the interior could not disguise the physical and managerial institutional features which are inevitable in a large hostel.

Garside *et al.* (1990) argued that separate staff areas could make workers appear too remote, but total integration could, alternatively, make it difficult for them to exercise authority when required. Similarly, there was often a tension between providing a domestic setting and including institutional features which aided management. Garside *et al.* concluded that institutional characteristics were unlikely to help residents to feel at home, or to treat the accommodation as if it were their own. Where possible institutional features should, therefore, be avoided and those which were compulsory, such as fire precautions, should be made as unobtrusive as possible. A careful balance was, nevertheless, required between ease of management and maintenance and the comfort of residents.

Studies by NACRO (1982) and Garside *et al.* (1990) contended that the provision of good quality furniture and fittings was an important feature of hostel design. Although it might be

tempting to provide these cheaply, where facilities were subject to high levels of wear and tear, frequent repairs often cost more than the original item. It was thus more sensible to provide the minimum amount of good quality new or second-hand furniture that would stand up to the demands made of it (NACRO, 1982). Garside *et al.* (1990) also recommended that carpets should be easy to clean or easy to replace, wall surfaces should be washable or easy to repaint, and easy chairs should be comfortable, but strong with washable covers.

Noise was found to be a common cause of friction within shared residential accommodation and its minimisation seemed to warrant consideration at the design stage. In spite of the fact that many residents desired it, the use of communal space was also discovered to be a potential source of conflict. Its advantages and disadvantages, particularly the degree to which paid staff should be involved in its management, should, therefore, be considered carefully (Garside *et al.*, 1990). The NACRO report suggested that it was possible to minimise conflict over communal space if attention was paid to equipment and design. Accordingly, there should be enough space for residents to be able to pursue activities without bumping into each other or having to queue for the use of amenities (NACRO, 1982).

In practice, Garside *et al.* (1990) found that designers gave little real consideration to how communal places would actually be used. This frequently resulted in wasted space and resources. Communal areas, Garside *et al*. maintained, ought only to be provided if they were certain to be functional. Then they should be equipped and furnished to facilitate this function. If residents were unlikely ever to act as a community, the provision of space for communal activities would only be a waste of resources which might better be utilised by providing larger bedrooms. This would allow residents greater control over their living space, although it would simultaneously reduce management control.

Findings by Garside *et al.* suggested that designers could improve provision by adopting a more flexible attitude which would allow the layout to fit the users and not vice versa. In order for this to be effective, clear thought would need to be given to hostel function, objectives, and target resident group from the very initial planning stages. Closer communication between designers, managers, and renters at the developmental stage would also be required. Additionally, designers would need to allow sufficient flexibility to ensure that the building could be adapted to meet changing preferences about living arrangements and levels of support over time (Garside *et al.*, 1990). This would seem all the more important given that accommodation models can very quickly become outdated, especially now that supported housing may be taking on the last generation of long-stay hospital patients, and given that younger and older people tend to have different housing aspirations (Watson and Cooper, 1992).

Support services

The provision of day-to-day support for hostel residents has received some, but only limited, attention from previous research. Evans (1991) found that the type of support/service provided in the hostels she studied depended on the skills and experience of key staff. This resulted in some offering little more than a care-taking service, whilst others offered intensive counselling on social and personal problems. Garside *et al.* (1990), meanwhile, found that client needs were seldom addressed and planned for directly.

The study by Berthoud and Casey (1988) discovered that some forms of support were provided for almost all the residents of almost all hostels. This they termed 'basic' or 'general' care and it included such tasks as helping residents to find more permanent accommodation or dealing with the benefits system. Four additional or 'extra' kinds of support provided by some

hostels were also identified. These were physical help; support; resettlement (such as help with budgeting, finding work, and reestablishing contacts with the family); and rehabilitation (such as dealing with problems of addiction, with the courts, and with personal problems).

The literature has suggested that the distinction between services designed to meet the needs for support while living in a hostel and those designed to assist people with moving to more independent housing tends to be unclear. Likewise, the provision of support services for single people living in hostels often overlaps with both housing management and care services (Berthoud and Casey, 1988; Evans, 1991; Anderson, 1993b). Thus, Evans (1991) reported that many hostel staff were particularly confused about their role and felt that there were conflicting demands being placed upon them. This seemed to arise largely from the dual task of providing support, whilst simultaneously supervising residents, which workers felt they were being asked to perform.

Evans (1991) and Smith *et al.* (1992) both highlighted the problems experienced by many hostel staff in dealing with a growing number of very vulnerable residents. Smith *et al.* (1992) argued that rising support needs were a particular issue for local authority hostels because the Children Act 1989, combined with the closure of large hospitals, was likely to result in the extension of statutory duties to accommodate individuals with increasingly diverse problems. Spaull and Rowe (1992), meanwhile, pointed to an apparent lack of services for people with AIDS or HIV.

Evans (1991) proposed that authorities should give hostel staff a detailed job description and an outline of the aims and objectives of the project. The types and levels of support needed by residents should be reviewed and consideration given as to whether specialist agencies could better provide the services needed. Sufficient training, support, and guidance should then be provided in order to permit workers to effect

whatever responsibilities were decided upon for them. A clear strategy for accommodating vulnerable applicants was both in the interests of applicants, who should receive the support they needed, and in the interests of hostel staff, who had to cope with any crises that arose if that support was not provided. Evans found that very few authorities had, however, either systematically reviewed the types of accommodation and support needed by such groups or arranged appropriate provision for them (Evans, 1991).

According to Evans (1991), local authorities should develop some separate accommodation for vulnerable applicants, preferably in association with a specialist agency that could provide the intensive support that was often required. Randall and Brown (1993) similarly argued that separate provision was needed for some groups. Austerberry and Watson, meanwhile, suggested that statutory agencies should accommodate women whose behaviour disturbed others' lives as this would then allow voluntary hostels to be more flexible and to operate fewer rules. Women living in those hostels would then, they argued, have more control over the way the hostel ran or how they, as individuals, lived in that communal environment (Austerberry and Watson, 1983).

In sum, there has been little detailed consideration of the precise nature of support services in hostels or of residents' assessment of the benefits of such services. The little information that exists suggests that support services within provision are essentially haphazard, lacking in co-ordination, and in need of systematic review. This lack of material is in marked contrast to the broad body of research which has considered the support needs of hostel users, but only in relation to resettlement and move-on. By implication, this focus within the literature seems to suggest that hostel accommodation is essentially a second-best option and a relatively unimportant transitional phase en route to the superior goal of being rehoused within one's own 'independent' home.

Rehousing and move-on

It is widely recognized that rehousing policies and practices alone do not solve the underlying problems linked to homelessness (such as the lack of affordable permanent accommodation, unemployment, poverty, unhappy personal relationships, the lack of a family or friends, or simply the length of time that an individual has been without a permanent home) (Drake *et al.*, 1981; Audit Commission, 1989; Dant and Deacon, 1989; Greve with Currie, 1990; Garside *et al.* 1990; Spaull and Rowe, 1992). There is, nevertheless, a strong belief that, with the provision of appropriate support services (including financial support, as well as resettlement programmes for clients whilst in temporary accommodation and outreach support once they have moved on), the level of successful resettlement of hostel residents could be improved (GLC/LBA, 1981; Mullins, 1991; Spaull and Rowe, 1992).

The study by GCSH indicated the potential for success of such programmes. Five years after Glasgow District Council initiated its plan to allocate Council houses to men and women living in hostels within the City, 90 per cent of those rehoused reported that they were managing well or very well, 70 per cent were still in their own home, and less than 2 per cent had returned to live in a hostel. Very few preferred living in hostels and the need for the homemaker service among those who received it tended to vary significantly from individual to individual. From this it was concluded that such help should be made known and available to people, but not imposed upon them (GCSH, 1985).

In 1989 the report 'Move-On Housing' found that less than a quarter of the need generated from the special needs housing sector for move-on accommodation in London was being met. It also predicted that this proportion was likely to decline further in coming years (London Research Centre, 1989). Spaull and Rowe's more recent study seemed to confirm this.

In spite of the Single Homeless Programme, Spaull and Rowe found that all the difficulties associated with the inability to move people on to a home of their own as part of a planned programme of resettlement remained and some other problems had become noticeably worse. These included the demand for supported accommodation for particular groups, the lack of adequate resources to provide sufficient resettlement services to residents, and difficulties in securing the necessary welfare benefits to enable residents to be able to afford to move into permanent accommodation. Furthermore, over half the projects responding to the Spaull and Rowe survey reported particular difficulties in obtaining move-on accommodation for some client groups. Those mentioned most frequently included people with mental health problems and those who suffered discrimination because of the nature of their special needs (for example, people with alcohol and drug dependencies and ex-offenders) (Spaull and Rowe, 1992).

The Dant and Deacon study considered the rehousing process in greater detail still. It discovered that it was not possible to predict who would settle and who would not because there was no straightforward solution to the problems of homeless people. Some coped well with very little support; others responded well to the assistance of a rehousing scheme. The support of family and friends was desirable, but not essential. Material assistance provided by the rehousing project was a definite advantage, but the possession of domestic skills was not vital. Some might not settle the first time they tried, but might succeed the next (Dant and Deacon, 1989).

Dant and Deacon (1989) argued that because policies for homeless single people tended to be prepared by people who had a home, the architecture, and even the idea of 'home', was based on a lifestyle that usually involved living with others, having employment, or hope of it, and gathering possessions. For single people living in hostels, what might more often be needed was somewhere which did not require the level of commitment and

responsibility of having a 'home' and all that it implied, but somewhere more secure and independent than the lifestyle offered by the large hostels.

> Rehousing is a possibility for many people who live in hostels but it will not work for everyone. (Dant and Deacon, 1989, p.99)

Some people might need or desire communal living. Likewise, there is a danger in over-emphasising the importance of settling in one place. A diversity of accommodation is rather required, but also a willingness amongst policy-makers and service providers to recognise that what is effective as a home is different for different people according to their circumstances (Drake, 1985; Tilt and Denford, 1986; Dant and Deacon, 1989; Walker *et al.*, 1993).

Management and staffing

The management and staffing of hostels have received much attention within previous research.

MANAGEMENT

In the study by Garside *et al.* (1990), the majority of hostels providing accommodation for single homeless people were voluntary organisations in partnership with housing associations. Considerable variety in the arrangements for managing housing association projects which offer support has, however, been revealed.

Watson and Cooper found that almost all the schemes which opened before 1980 were managed directly by the association. Projects established in the early 1980s, conversely, tended to be run in partnership with a voluntary agency or, less commonly, in conjunction with statutory agencies. In the future, it seemed

that housing associations would be playing an increasingly pivotal role in the more 'mixed economy of care' which statutory agencies would be expected to provide (Watson and Cooper, 1992).

Evans (1991) argued that the actual management arrangements adopted by any particular hostel depended upon a number of different factors and there could, therefore, be no one correct way to structure a scheme. The report by the National Federation of Housing Associations and the Specialist Information Training Resource Agency (NFHA and SITRA, 1991) proposed that project structure was determined primarily by the size of the scheme in question and by its management philosophy. The pattern, they concluded, tended to be either a hierarchy with three or more levels, a hierarchy with two levels, a collective, or sole workers. Both collective organisational structures and hierarchically arranged schemes were prone to problems.

Garside *et al.* (1990) found that the management philosophy of most hostels tended to display a conflict between the need for controlling residents and encouraging them to be independent. Furthermore, overlapping funding arrangements, which were not conducive to clear lines of responsibility and accountability, often exacerbated already complex systems of management design (Garside *et al.*, 1990).

Whilst management committees may provide support for staff, they can often be remote and not very well informed. Consequently, they are rarely in a position either to monitor day-to-day practices or to give a lead in overall direction (Garside *et al.*, 1990). Although Garside *et al.* (1990) found that the majority of residents were satisfied to leave the management of the project to staff, it still seemed that resident involvement was valued by those who experienced it (Garside *et al.*, 1990).

The NFHA and MIND report maintained that management practices should be developed on the assumption that residents will be

offered the choice to participate, even though it should be recognised that not every resident will wish to do so (NFHA and MIND, 1989). The review of policies and provision for single homeless people in London by SHiL (1995), meanwhile, stressed that user participation, which enhanced safety, dignity, and self-responsibility, was a prerequisite for a good quality scheme.

STAFFING

According to Evans (1991), the type and number of staff for each hostel varied enormously depending on the resources available, the needs of residents, and the aims of the hostel (Evans, 1991). Berthoud and Casey (1988) discovered that the hostels in their study had informal staffing structures and this meant that tasks could not easily be divided into separate care, administration, or domestic services performed by different workers. Bines *et al.* (1993) similarly concluded that housing associations also often found it difficult to distinguish between housing management and care duties.

According to Berthoud and Casey, some voluntary sector hostels relied heavily on high levels of unpaid overtime and on volunteer workers to supplement the work of paid staff (Berthoud and Casey, 1988). Garside *et al.* (1990) suggested that volunteers were frequently not easy to recruit, or to utilise, or to sustain and their use was most successful where their role was well-defined and where their tasks were limited to a level appropriate to their skills and to the training and supervision available.

Policies and procedures

DAILY ROUTINES

Essentially only two aspects of hostel daily routines have been considered to-date. The first of these relates to the performance of domestic chores and the second concerns intake procedures.

According to Berthoud and Casey (1988), many high-care hostels involved their residents in housekeeping type chores. Smith *et al.* found that there was little objection in principle to such tasks amongst the resettlement unit users. Many, in fact, tended to feel that it was their responsibility to keep the building clean, that it passed the time, and was also good practice for the future (Smith *et al.*, 1992). Task work, nevertheless, seemed to pose a greater concern for some staff who felt that it reflected an out-moded philosophy of 'resettlement or therapy' indicative of a more psychiatric model of homelessness (Berthoud and Casey, 1988; Smith *et al.*, 1992).

Regarding intake, Garside *et al.* (1990) discovered that procedures varied quite widely between hostels. Most new arrivals were shown their bedrooms (although less were shown around the building) and the majority of residents appeared happy with their treatment on arrival. In the resettlement units, Smith *et al.* (1992) found that 88 per cent of the residents felt that staff were generally welcoming. There was, nevertheless, some criticism of staff attitudes - with 8 per cent of new arrivals complaining that staff were unfriendly, brusque, or off-hand. The booking-in procedure appeared efficient, although greater care seemed to be needed in the explanation of the rules and regulations (Smith *et al.*, 1992).

REFERRALS AND ACCEPTANCE POLICIES

The admissions/ acceptance policies and practices of hostels have received much less attention than local authority or housing association admissions/ acceptance policies (Anderson, 1993b). They have, nevertheless, generated a body of research which

merits some attention. Thus, Garside *et al.* found that resident selection tended to take three basic forms: (1) a priori criteria, (2) ad hoc criteria, and (3) post hoc criteria. In an *a priori system* criteria were either established directly by providers or residents were selected from a pool of pre-existing nominees already accommodated in other parts of the organisation. An *ad hoc system* left discretion to individual project managers, whilst a *post hoc system* allocated the definition of need to users themselves. This meant that those who took up residence were considered to be those who needed and/ or wanted it (Garside *et al.*, 1990).

The purpose of information gathered by hostels during the referral process is usually to assess the suitability of the prospective resident for the service offered. Harrison *et al.* (1991) commented that some projects asked very detailed questions on a whole range of issues, often involving a very high level of personal information. This was often the case, even when hostels were only offering low-support, semi-independent accommodation. Because it was not clear why organisations required this level of detail on prospective residents, Harrison *et al.* argued that this intensive process should perhaps be rethought.

Problems could additionally arise when selection criteria were not made explicit, or when criteria were not reviewed regularly, even though the pattern of demand, or the resources available, had changed (Garside *et al.*, 1990). McIvor and Taylor (1995) recommended that the projects in their study of supported accommodation for ex-offenders needed to make the process of referral, assessment, and admission clearer and more explicit. Moreover, NACRO (1982) argued that excluding certain groups of resident, particularly those who had problems with drink or drugs and those who had histories of violence or sexual offences, might be a valid policy for a particular project at a particular time. It, nevertheless, required very careful consideration which might usefully include seeking advice from other similar schemes. NACRO's experience was rather that 'high risk' offenders could

benefit enormously from living in supported housing schemes and did not necessarily present extraordinary management problems.

LENGTH OF STAY

Historically, many hostels limited the length of stay of homeless people, but as alternative sources of housing have grown increasingly scarce, time limits have frequently had to be reassessed and extended (Spaull and Rowe, 1992). Furthermore, because many households now spend considerable periods of time in temporary accommodation, it seems all the more important to ensure that provision is allocated on a basis that is appropriate to individual needs (Evans, 1991). According to the recent study of hostel accommodation in Nottingham by Vincent *et al* (1994), provision should be made in recognition of the different needs of people whose homelessness is, or ought to be, a brief episode in their lives; people who need support only in the short term; and people who need long-term, specialist services and assistance.

For the homeless person, meanwhile, the uncertainty of living in temporary accommodation can be one of the most negative aspects of it. Few respondents in a study of the housing consequences of relationship breakdown were given any idea of when, or even if, they would be made an offer, or where it would be, if they were. Although refuge accommodation provided invaluable support and breathing space for those respondents fleeing violence, many in the study still reported feeling great strain as stays became unduly lengthy because of the lack of move-on housing (Bull, 1993).

RESIDENTS' RIGHTS

The issue of residents' legal status is particularly complex. NACRO (1982) concluded that projects would benefit from clear

policies about whether they were offering tenancies or licences and should, in addition, have a clear eviction policy to cover all eventualities. Nearly all the authorities in Evans' study let their hostel accommodation on licence. Licensees, however, enjoy far less security than assured tenants. Furthermore, recent case law suggests that only residents who do not have exclusive possession of any part of the accommodation they are occupying will automatically be considered by the Courts to be licensees. Since all the hostels provided by the authorities in Evans' study gave residents exclusive possession of at least one room, it was likely that most users would, in fact, be assured tenants (Evans, 1991).

In terms of policies relating to residents' rights of access to their accommodation, Harrison *et al.* (1991) reported that London hostels operated a range of different policies. These reflected the physical design of the building or the nature of the accommodation offered. For example, a hostel which never locked the front door, because staff were present throughout the day and night, might not issue residents with keys to the building, but residents still had unrestricted access to their homes. Where policies and practices were more restrictive, for example involving curfews, the abnormality of living in such accommodation was emphasised. This was likely to be exacerbated when restrictions were imposed inconsistently by staff (Harrison *et al.*, 1991; Smith *et al.*, 1992).

The question of access extends beyond residents' own admittance to the building and includes also access by residents' visitors. NACRO (1982) argued that the formation of relationships was an important feature of ordinary life and should thus be encouraged in so far as it did not threaten the viability of the project or cause distress to the other residents. Unnecessarily restrictive policies regarding visitors indicated the extent to which hostel residents were expected to forego rights that people in independent housing could usually take for granted (Harrison *et al.*, 1991).

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Rules and regulations are a common feature of almost all hostels. Some operate in order to safeguard the well-being and safety of the majority of residents; others are essential in order to ensure the smooth running of the project. Exactly which ones are crucial, and how rigorously they should be enforced, is, however, a more moot point.

Austerberry and Watson maintained that rules resulted in everyone living at the lowest common denominator of the most disruptive or disturbed residents. This could deny the reasonable solitude and privacy afforded by a locked door in otherwise intolerably cramped conditions, or a drink or two which might mellow the harsh reality of hostel life (Austerberry and Watson, 1983). Rules which could not be enforced were not only a waste of time, but could damage the credibility of the project committee in the eyes of residents.

The NACRO report suggested that residents would usually establish and enforce their own rules on most day-to-day matters and, where this did not occur, users should be encouraged to participate actively in drawing up any house regulations considered necessary. This was because individuals were more likely to adhere to any set conditions, if they were not imposed by some external authority (NACRO, 1982).

Some recommendations have been made by existing studies regarding the formulation of rules and regulations (NACRO, 1982; NFHA and MIND, 1989; Evans, 1991). These suggest that conditions of occupancy should be written down, explained and accepted by prospective residents prior to their moving in. A copy of a signed acceptance of the rules should be given to the resident to keep, along with a complaints or grievance procedure and a policy for dealing with harassment (whether by other residents,

members of staff, or management) (NACRO, 1982; NFHA and MIND, 1989). House regulations should additionally be regularly revised as part of a continuous monitoring programme which would involve hostel staff and residents alike. Agreed conditions ought then to be applied consistently (NFHA and MIND, 1989; Evans, 1991).

Planning, monitoring, and evaluating hostel aims and objectives

The significance of the planning stage in developing a new initiative has been considered in some detail in both the study by Garside *et al.* (1990) and the report by NFHA and MIND (1989). Garside *et al.* (1990) highlighted the importance of spending time planning the objectives to be pursued by a new hostel, the client group to be targeted, the length of stay intended, and the type of support and staffing to be provided. Time spent preparing the local community in order to promote local acceptance was also highlighted as important (NFHA and MIND, 1989).

Planning could help to avoid both intentional and unintentional discrimination and help to clarify uncertainty among staff and residents about the aims of the project. Ideally, such matters ought to be clarified in the initial stages of the development process, but in practice this was not always possible and decisions would vary widely both in timing and in accuracy (Garside *et al.*, 1990).

One argument forwarded was that planning should move away from the traditional 'top-down' approach to more of a 'bottom-up' style which focused on local planning and individual need (NFHA and MIND, 1989). Involving users in planning would mean that services would more likely offer what consumers wanted and required. It would, however, mean that planning staff would need to have regular opportunities to meet and mix with the residents (NFHA and MIND, 1989).

According to the study of supported accommodation for ex-offenders by McIvor and Taylor (1995), expectations about what the projects could and would achieve differed markedly between funders, service planners, residents, referrers, and project staff. Consistent with this argument, Evans (1991) argued that, in addition to considering the needs and preferences of homeless households themselves, local authorities and housing associations might also benefit from taking into account the views of relevant statutory and voluntary agencies. Guidance might then still be sought from central government on a range of issues. These could include appropriate or minimum standards for safety, repair, hygiene, management, minimum room sizes, the ratio of sharers to facilities, and the type of facilities to be provided (Evans, 1991).

Garside *et al.* (1990) argued that the aims and objectives established at the planning stage would profit from subsequent regular and systematic assessment. This, they continued, would require the establishment of simple record-keeping systems which detailed the characteristics of residents, their length of stay, and their destination on leaving. Mullins (1991) argued that monitoring and evaluation should be an integral part of everyday work and workers at all levels should be involved in, and aware of, the importance of such processes.

Users' needs and their views of the service could also beneficially be incorporated into the monitoring system. This would, however, require an open and equal relationship with homeless people which would involve confronting the stigma and second class status which they often experienced (Mullins, 1991). The National Federation of Housing Associations and Mind argued that a range of other people might additionally be included in assessment. These might be managers; planners; friends; advocates; families; members of the local community; and 'outsiders', usually brought in to carry out a specific evaluation (NFHA and MIND, 1989).

Effective evaluation assesses the relationships between costs, resources, outputs, and outcomes against the criteria of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity (Mullins, 1991). Monitoring should thus help to ascertain whether services are achieving their objectives for the people who use them (NFHA and MIND, 1989). It should also help to ensure that services are run in a professional manner and to the highest standards possible within resource constraints (Mullins, 1991). Effective monitoring and evaluation can also be used to demonstrate where there might be a need for more facilities and resources (Mullins, 1991; Spaull and Rowe, 1992). There is, however, no ideal performance monitoring model applicable to all types of housing organisation. Performance systems rather seem more likely to be effective, if they are not externally imposed, but developed by each individual organisation to suit its local context (Mullins, 1991).

Service co-ordination

The need for increased service co-ordination has been stressed by many of the studies under review (GLC and LBA, 1981; Drake *et al.*, 1981; NACRO, 1982; Jones, 1987; HVA and GMSC, 1987; O'Mahoney, 1988; Niner, 1989; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Evans, 1991; Spaull and Rowe, 1992; Watson and Cooper, 1992; Strathdee, 1993; McIvor and Taylor, 1995). Research has consistently argued that co-ordination at the planning stage is a prerequisite for adequate policy-making, whilst subsequent inter-agency co-ordination at the local level is essential to ensure a coherent and efficient regional approach (Drake and Biebuych, 1977; Drake *et al.*, 1981; Jones, 1987).

Niner, nevertheless, concluded that close and good relationships between housing and social services departments were the exception rather than the rule. This was so even where housing and social services were functions of the same authority. In her study some housing officers were, by implication, arguing

that, just as before 1977 (1974 in some areas) homelessness policies had had an unrealistically small input from housing authorities, so now they had an unrealistically small input from social services (Niner, 1989). More recently, Strathdee reported that, since the implementation of the Children Act 1989, there had been an increase in schemes involving a degree of partnership between local authorities and the voluntary sector. Voluntary agencies had, however, generally not been involved as equal partners in the planning process and provision had mainly consisted of schemes for special needs groups (Strathdee, 1993).

Greve and Currie (1990) argued that immediate steps could be taken to improve co-ordination and operational links between departments and services. This, they suggested, would be possible both nationally and locally. The Departments of Social Security and Environment could work more closely on matters, such as income support and housing, whilst central government could take the initiative in attempting to effect greater uniformity in the way local authorities implemented the homelessness legislation. The goal, according to Greve and Currie, would then be to extend the fairest and most cost-effective forms of practice to all local authorities (Greve and Currie, 1990).

This concludes the review of issues which have generated the most research by studies to-date. The material presented next considers two aspects of hostel life which have attracted some, but notably less, attention. These are hostel relationships and users' views of hostel facilities. One possible reason why these topics have generated less research interest is that their less tangible and less easily measurable nature has made them appear less obviously relevant or useful to policy formulators.

Hostel relationships

Available information relating to relationships within hostel accommodation is limited. Cooper *et al.* (1993) found little

evidence of strong friendships between the residents of shared supported housing, although the presence of others in the house, providing company and sociability when this was wanted, was valued. There was considerable variety in the extent to which residents were integrated into the local community, but only a minority had well-developed links with others living outside the hostel. Evidence rather seemed to suggest that most people with a long history of homelessness had very low expectations of social relationships.

In their study of resettlement units, Smith *et al.,* (1992) discovered friction between different groups of staff and found evidence of resident criticism of some staff attitudes. Users considered certain workers to be unhelpful, rude, and inconsistent in their application of a dictatorial regime. By contrast, there was notably less criticism of staff in the benchmark hostels considered by the study. Relations between resettlement unit residents were rated as 'fairly' (65 per cent), rather than 'very' (25 per cent), good. Regarding everyday matters, there was evidence of an informal code of conduct operating between residents, but also evidence of some violence. Such behaviour was common both to the benchmark and to the resettlement unit samples.

Smith *et al.* found that staff attitudes were characterised by two extreme viewpoints: the 'traditionalist' and the 'reformist'. Staff holding the traditionalist viewpoint were inclined to see residents as somehow guilty and blameworthy. Some of these workers were even quite hostile towards users, labelling them as a problem to be contained and policed through the strict enforcement of a tight regime. Reformists were, conversely, prone to adopting a more lenient administration, adhering to a belief that residents were unfortunate individuals in need of support and help with resettlement.

Although, on balance, the reformist standpoint seemed increasingly to be becoming the more common, the majority of

staff occupied ground somewhere between the two perspectives. Indeed, many workers remained uncertain about numerous issues. These included the degree to which rules ought to be enforced, the best way to treat residents who were difficult, and the balance between self-help and intervention (Smith *et al.*, 1992).

The above information is clearly limited in comparison to the infinite range of possible relationships occurring between those involved in the daily life of any hostel. These might include management committee members, funders, visitors to the hostel (including residents' family and friends and relevant professionals), as well as residents, ex-residents, and staff. That none of the studies attempted to address the kinds of dynamics which might operate between and within these groups seemed to a particular lack in the literature to-date.

Users' views of hostel facilities

> In an age of 'customer care' the desires and aspirations of homeless single people should inform the policies of all agencies seeking to address their needs...All providers of services for single homeless people should seek to consult with the users of those services to ensure that needs are being met. (SHiL, 1995, pp.9f)

This section considers users' views of the facilities within hostels, but is also limited by the lack of material provided by most of the studies. Furthermore, as already suggested in relation to housing expectations and aspirations, subjective perceptions may be influenced or distorted by a range of factors and this may result in an under-criticism of provision. In spite of this, the material which is available is both interesting and instructive.

Garside *et al.* (1990) found that a lack of domestic facilities or poor equipment caused some problems for the hostel residents in their study. The most important of these were associated with

washing and drying clothes. Concerns about telephones and televisions were less common, although there were some complaints about telephones being out of order or only taking incoming calls. The lack of privacy when making calls was also found annoying (Garside *et al.*, 1990). When asked about facilities to which respondents currently did not have access, but would value, rooms for leisure or games and laundry equipment were most frequently requested (Garside *et al.*, 1990).

Berthoud and Casey found that hostels for men, and high-care hostels, were more likely to provide 'board' as well as 'lodgings' (Berthoud and Casey, 1988). Only the study of resettlement units by Smith *et al.* (1992) has, however, seriously investigated users' opinions about catering services and food provision. This study found that these were mainly favourable, although room for improvement was expressed, particularly in terms of choice, variety, and better nutrition.

Again, the study of *resettlement units by Smith et al. was the* only study thoroughly to investigate users' opinions on toilet and bathing facilities. Most resettlement unit users reported that they were satisfied with the level of provision of toilets and bathing facilities, but there was some criticism relating to cleanliness. Benchmark hostels in the same study were more highly rated in respect of hygiene, although they too were not immune from some similar criticisms (Smith *et al.*, 1992). Privacy of baths and showers, in the form of lockable cubicles with hooks or shelves on which to put personal belongings, was found to be the main area of potential improvement.

Sleeping arrangements also attracted little attention from the various studies. Garside *et al.* found that, in contrast to communal living areas, communal sleeping accommodation was not popular and the privacy afforded by a single room was valued by many residents (Garside *et al.*, 1990). Sleeping arrangements in the study by Smith *et al.* were generally viewed in a favourable light, although there was still a clear preference for more

private provision. Users of resettlement units also voiced some criticism of poor or dirty bedding and disturbance from other residents (Smith *et al.*, 1992).

The study by Smith *et al.* (1992) found that, as with many aspects of life in the resettlement units, there was general satisfaction with, and only some criticism of, the basic provision of medical facilities. Security of personal belongings and personal safety at night were, nevertheless, reported to be areas of concern. In the study by Garside *et al.* (1990), security was examined with reference to keys, storage facilities, and procedures for receiving post. Of the residents, 65 per cent did not have a key to the front door of their accommodation and 57% did not have a key to their bedroom door. Secure storage facilities for personal belongings were lacking in many hostels and problems with the method of postage collection were reported by 16% of respondents. When residents received their mail via a communal letter box, theft or letters going missing was a concern voiced by some residents. When they collected it from staff, restrictions on the time post could be obtained and the lack of privacy were the major complaints.

Finally in this context, McIvor and Taylor (1995) found that supported accommodation was providing ex-offenders in the Grampian region of Scotland with shelter, an opportunity to assess problems and needs, and time to begin to address offending behaviour. Residents appreciated the combination of privacy, structure, the company of other residents (if desired), and the immediate access to staff (if problems arose). The report concluded that, if judged by the number of people who left in a planned way, the projects studied achieved only very limited success. This was not, however, the most important, or even a useful, measure of their achievement. Residents valued the projects and their experiences within them highly. If the hostels were evaluated in terms of process, their success was then clearly much greater.

Part 4: The implications of existing research for the study to be undertaken

The summary so far

To-date, the literature relating to hostels has essentially been empirical rather than explanatory or theoretical. Existing research has produced a wealth of very detailed factual information about hostel accommodation and some very specific, practical policy-orientated recommendations for improving it. This material is, however, of a largely quantifiable nature and tends to relate to the inputs, processes, and outputs, rather than to the outcomes[2], of hostel provision.

Information relating to the inputs can, for example, say a lot about the number of staff and the level of SNMA provided; material relating to the processes can reveal much about policies and procedures and the way the service is delivered; and data relating to outputs can indicate the number of residents rehoused, the level of support on offer, or the number of empty bedspaces. None of these can, however, evaluate the benefits of these services, discuss their impact on the consumer, or measure their effectiveness. They can, in other words, say little about the outcomes of supported hostel accommodation.

The apparent subordination of outcome measures to outputs reveals an emphasis on economy and efficiency, rather than effectiveness or equity, and probably indicates a primary interest in cost-cutting, rather than performance evaluation. Simultaneously, it might reflect the enormous technical problem of establishing the causal relationship between outputs and outcome (Klein and Carter, 1988).

In sum, hostels have been recognised as an important source

[2] See glossary.

of temporary housing for homeless people and have generated a considerable amount of interest and research (Anderson, 1993b). In many respects the need is now for greater action based on the existing findings, rather than further investigation which will only be disregarded. There are, nevertheless, important issues which have been less well-researched to-date and investigation of these might usefully contribute to future policies and provision. Some of these are discussed in the next section.

Issues still to be addressed

Issues which produce findings of a slightly less tangible and less quantifiable nature (often relating to the outcomes of hostel accommodation) have attracted some, but very little, attention from previous research (for example, the effects of hostel relationships and users' views of hostel facilities). There has, however, been no systematic attempt to assess the extent to which supported hostel accommodation is actually meeting the day-to-day needs of users, or whether resources are being targeted effectively. If hostels are suitable and desired by only a minority, are they being targeted at that minority? If not, why not? Moreover, how might this be improved?

Little is known about the more conceptual and experiential aspects of provision. How, for example, do individuals feel about supported hostel accommodation? Is their quality of life improved because of it? Are they more or less independent after living there? To what extent do they sense that they have rights, control, and choice? Or do they rather feel stigmatised, disempowered, and excluded? How important are these issues and will investigation of them yield important information which might usefully inform future policies and provision? These appear to be important research questions deserving of further inquiry.

Additionally, evaluation has essentially involved considering

provision from the perspective of providers (usually local authorities). Much less is known about hostels from the perspectives of other relevant groups of individuals, such as residents, ex-residents, workers, management committee members, friends, relatives and advocates of residents, involved professionals, or those potential users who either do not gain access to provision or who choose not to take up a place.

The finance-led nature of supported hostel accommodation, with its emphasis on economy and efficiency, also seems to have been to the neglect of approaches which might have been more sociologically and theoretically informed. In an attempt to counter this, various theoretical approaches to homelessness and to services for homeless people are considered in some detail in chapter 4. Prior to this, two sources of literature which are more sociologically grounded, although also policy relevant, are introduced here. The first of these relates to recent community care debates about provision for people who are vulnerable or who have special needs. The second refers to a body of research concerning the concept of the total institution.

The community care debate

The white paper *Caring for People* (DOH, 1989) (which formed the basis of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990) stressed that services should respond flexibly and sensitively to the needs of individuals and their carers, should intervene no more than necessary to foster independence, should allow a range of options for consumers, and should concentrate on those with the greatest needs (DOH, 1989, p.5). Consistent with these principles, there is nowadays a general willingness to address and to promote the concepts of rights, choices, control, power, and participation and to confront the kinds of stigma which many people who are vulnerable, or who have 'special needs', face (see for example, Morris, 1994).

It is also widely accepted that people who have 'special needs' are still 'normal' and no different from the rest of the population. The principle of normalisation (Wolfensberger, 1972) has been thoroughly developed in respect of certain groups with special needs (particularly people with learning difficulties). Indeed, O'Brien and Lyle (1987) have identified five goals which a normalisation-based housing service should be aiming to achieve for its users. These resemble the hostel design features discussed earlier, but are clearly more wide-ranging and, in many respects, more radical. They include:

* *community presence* (that is, not developing accommodation near 'devalued places' and avoiding developing 'clusters' of services)

* *community participation* (accommodation should be within easy reach of shops, leisure facilities, places of entertainment, and places of worship etc. Notice boards and signs, or institutional features (such as identical curtains at all the windows) should be avoided because they advertise a house as being part of a 'service' and, hence, mean that the people who live in it will be seen as 'different')

* *promoting choice and protecting rights* (particularly the right to be treated with dignity and respect)

* *improving competencies and acquiring skills*

* *enhancing status and self-respect* (including being aware of the fact that an individual's sense of self-esteem is likely to be culturally determined)

Similarly, the Wagner Report maintained that residential care should cease to be a stigmatised 'last resort', to be accepted only when all other options have been exhausted. Residential care should be promoted as a 'positive choice' and, to this end, individuals should have a proper range of options from which to choose and full information on which to base that choice (Wagner Committee, 1988). Having entered supported accommodation, every effort should then be made to safeguard the individual's rights as a consumer (NFHA and MIND, 1989).

It is paradoxical that such principles are now commonly

accepted for certain groups (such as people who are elderly or who have disabilities), but not for others who may be vulnerable on account of homelessness. In this respect, the community care debate in general, and the 'special needs' sector in particular, may have much to teach housing programmes for homeless people about more sensitive and progressive approaches to provision.

The total institution debate

Another body of literature, which might usefully be applied to supported hostels for homeless people, relates to total institutions (Goffman, 1961; Mouzelis, 1971; Peele *et al.*, 1977; McEwan, 1980). In order to draw upon this debate, it is not necessary to prove that all supported hostels for homeless people are total institutions. The total institution debate can rather be related to the present research because it analyses 'processes', 'experiences', and 'interactions' within very diverse kinds of residential establishments.

Those establishments most traditionally considered within the total institution debate include prisons, psychiatric hospitals, monasteries, boarding schools, army barracks, and cruise ships. The debate has, however, broadened and developed over the years in line with the growing recognition that institutions themselves have diversified considerably. The literature also considers residential establishments from the perspective of users, as well as providers, and this affords a useful angle on provision which has hitherto often been absent from much research about hostels.

Goffman (1961) argued that an institution is total if it meets all of a resident's basic needs - food, shelter, warmth, work, rest, and play (sex excepted). Subsequently, the total institution concept became almost inseparably linked to Goffman's work on the subject and this tended to limit its more general usefulness and applicability. This is because Goffman's work is not a general theory of total institutions, but is rather limited

to only one particular type - that which is characterised by compulsory recruitment and whose 'inmates' are somehow 'stigmatised' by the wider society (Mouzelis, 1971). Goffman's work is thus essentially concerned with the more punitive regimes of the traditional 'asylums' and is based upon the assumption that total institutions inevitably involve power and control over some people by others.

Total institutions are not, however, all oppressive 'totalitarian' systems of administration which portray the negative characteristics associated with this Goffman ideal-type. Consider, for example, the public school, the Oxford College, or a cruise ship (Peele *et al.*, 1977). The decline of the asylum in recent years and the growth of more therapeutic and community based residential establishments further highlight this. Accordingly, the questions recently asked within sociological studies of total institutions have more usefully considered the features of institutional life which make it negative and even harmful for some individuals in some instances, but not in others. Such questions might also now be asked in relation to supported hostel accommodation for homeless people.

Evidence from the total institution debate has suggested that several organisational variables are likely to have deleterious effects on residents. These include a high degree of separation between the organisation and the external environment (that is, lack of participation); a lack of choice regarding membership of the institution; an imbalance of power and control in the staff/resident relationship (that is, lack of user control and power); and the stigma attached to belonging. Any organisation will, however, also affect its individual members non-uniformly. Thus, a combination of personal and socio-cultural characteristics (for example race, gender, age, or social class etc) further influence the way an individual experiences and responds to any institutional environment (McEwan, 1980).

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s the philosophy of

deinstitutionalisation remained largely unchallenged and all institutions and large residential establishments were considered inherently 'bad'. Now, despite the continuing strength of the 'anti-institutional' perspective, it is perhaps pertinent to stop and reconsider exactly what the negative features of such establishments are, and where any positive elements might lie. The total institution debate may make a useful contribution to any such analysis and hostels for homeless people might benefit from an improved understanding of this kind.

Re-examination might suggest how it might be possible to devise alternative methods of organising communal and supported living forms in order that their usefulness and value to some people in some contexts might be enhanced. This is not to argue that deinstitutionalisation should be reversed. Rather a greater understanding of the processes and experiences occurring within residential accommodation might lead to improved provision. This improved provision might then complement the deinstitutionalisation philosophy by providing a source of positive accommodation for some people in some contexts.

Implications for the present research

To conclude, this thesis can be underpinned by certain fundamental findings derived from the review of studies just presented. For example, research into the role of supported hostels in meeting the needs of homeless people can be based on the premise that hostel accommodation is not an appropriate form of housing for the majority of homeless people, but does meet the needs of a minority. In addition, existing provision could be improved significantly and might then better meet the requirements of many residents. Even if supported hostel accommodation is not the preferred option of the majority of homeless people, it might be all that many are offered, and this constitutes a further reason for attempting to effect improvements.

Existing investigations have failed to consider certain issues which could provide valuable information about how to improve and maximise the potential of services. Addressing such gaps would involve considering the outcomes as well as the inputs, processes, and outputs of provision. It would, for example, involve questioning the extent to which supported hostel accommodation is actually meeting the needs of homeless people. Likewise, it would investigate whether services are being targeted accurately, and debate ways of improving this, if not. To this end, future research could usefully focus on, and develop an understanding of, the actual day-to-day experiences and the more conceptual aspects of hostel living. This might involve seeking the opinions of diverse individuals and investigating issues of need, stigma, dependence, independence, user choice, control, power, and participation. The result of this would then hopefully be a more comprehensive and thorough pluralistic evaluation[3] of the hostel experience which might usefully inform future policies and provision.

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[3] Pluralistic evaluation is a research method specifically suitable for reflecting the multiple perspectives of a number of different actors in a given situation (see for example, Smith and Cantley, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Twigg and Atkin with Perring, 1990; and Bull, 1993).

CHAPTER 4: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

This chapter has three main aims. The first is to outline existing theories of homelessness and welfare; the second is to provide a critique of such theories; and the third is to explore the use of alternative theoretical perspectives for increasing knowledge and thus potentially improving supported hostel accommodation for homeless people in the future. To this end, the intention is not to attempt to devise a single new all-encompassing theory, but rather to highlight aspects of existing theories which might help to inform the research which is to follow.

The focus on theory presented does not imply a direct and linear relationship between theory and the provision of supported hostel accommodation for homeless people. The significance of the political and economic climate; history and culture; social, demographic, and numerous other intervening factors are neither disputed nor diminished by the discussion to follow. The contention is not that a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of the needs and circumstances of homeless people guarantees improvements in provision, but rather that good practice is more likely to result from good, than from poor or from no, theory whatsoever.

Part 1: Existing theories of homelessness and welfare

Existing theories of homelessness

The theoretical explanations of homelessness which have informed policies and provision for homeless people to-date have often

been implicit and contradictory rather than explicit and consistent. Certain common themes can, nevertheless, be seen to reoccur.

According to Johnson *et al.* (1991), two theoretical approaches have polarised the debate about the causes of homelessness. The first of these is structural and locates the reasons for homelessness beyond the individual in wider social and economic factors. An appropriate response, according to this model, requires intervention on a broad societal scale. This might include subsidies to the housing market or the direct provision of temporary or permanent accommodation. A second approach focuses on individual or agency explanations.

Agency explanations divide into two distinct strands. According to the first, individuals are considered responsible for their homelessness and, hence, guilty and blameworthy. This is a victim-blaming approach. The response frequently recommended for this form of homelessness has been minimalist, involving only the provision of basic accommodation. The stereotypes and images of deviants, dossers, alcoholics, vagrants, and tramps, prevalent until the 1960s, have often been associated with people deemed to be homeless for these reasons. The second strand of agency explanations maintains that people become homeless because of personal failure or inadequacy for which they cannot be held entirely responsible. These individuals are considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance, usually casework or psychiatric treatment, in order for them to function. A minimalist response is here usually assumed to be insufficient (Johnson *et al.*, 1991).

Two other commonly occurring themes in theorising homelessness have related to the concepts of 'deserving' and 'undeserving'. 'Structure' and 'agency', 'deserving' and 'undeserving' are not, however, unrelated. Where homelessness has been interpreted as a function of structural factors beyond individual control, homeless people have tended to be seen as deserving of

assistance. Where individuals have been deemed somehow responsible for their homelessness, they have frequently been considered less worthy of support. Historically, it seems that individual explanations of homelessness have predominated. As a result, responses have often consisted of minimal and punitive forms of support, which emphasise the concept of less eligibility and exclude all but the most 'deserving' and 'desperate' of people.

Existing theories of welfare

As a discipline, social policy has been inclined to approach issues from two broad theoretical perspectives. The first focuses on 'normative' theories of welfare and is concerned with values, such as social justice, equality, and liberty. The second is positive and empirical and emphasises explanatory and evaluative theory - that is, it considers the facts of what 'is', rather than what 'ought' to be (Williams, 1989). Accordingly, social policy has been concerned to explain and to quantify homelessness, but has also focused on normative concepts, such as deservingness and need.

Whilst opinions on these matters have not remained static or consistent, only a limited range of viewpoints have been in circulation. The discipline of social policy recognises these viewpoints in terms of a number of relatively distinct welfare perspectives. These form a continuum which spans the political spectrum. To the political right lies anti-collectivism. This comprises economic liberalism, neo-liberalism, and the New Right. To the left are divergent strands of social reformism: first non-socialist welfare collectivism (incorporating reluctant collectivism and welfare pluralism), then Fabian socialism, and finally radical social administration. On the far left lies the political economy of welfare (George and Wilding, 1976; Williams, 1989).

The logic of this continuum rests on the extent of commitment to state welfare provision exhibited by each perspective. On the extreme right there is minimum commitment and a market-based society is preferred. That is, people should provide their own accommodation without state intervention. On the extreme left there is maximum commitment and a needs-based society is advocated. That is, all people are entitled to have their housing needs met and the state should intervene to ensure this (George and Wilding, 1976; Williams, 1989). Those on the right are more likely to favour an absolute and minimalist definition of rooflessness; those on the left are inclined to accept more relative and flexible interpretations (Clapham *et al.*, 1990).

Not dissimilarly, Esping-Andersen (1990) has identified three basic approaches to welfare. These, he has argued, constitute three basic welfare state regime-types, which he labels conservative, liberal, and social democratic respectively.

A traditional conservative approach is characterised by hierarchy, authority, and paternalism, with entitlement built largely around demonstrable and abject need. There is frequently a religious input and the state tends only to interfere when the family's capacity to service its members is exhausted. A liberal approach tends to recognise that a minimum of collectivism is required to blend with individualism. Recipients of welfare provided on this basis are considered to have reduced rights and provision itself is often residual, of poor quality, lacking in choice, stigmatised, and means-tested. A more social democratic model of welfare, conversely, aims to maximise and institutionalise rights of the highest standards and is illustrated by easily accessible, non-stigmatising, good quality provision.

The influence of theories on provision

Many of the night shelters and refuges established during the

second half of the nineteenth century by various voluntary organisations were paternalistic, moralistic, and family-orientated. Indeed, their emphasis was on encouraging individuals to be responsible citizens, to stand on their own feet, to fight their weakness of character, and to return to their families. In this respect they reflected a more conservative approach to welfare as identified by Esping-Anderson (1990).

According to Evans, hostels which were basic in standards and amenities, but provided support and supervision, evolved in response to the common belief that homelessness was related to multiple social and/or personal problems and that homeless people were in some way responsible for their predicament (Evans, 1991). After the National Assistance Act 1948, the casual wards became the 'reception centres' and were administered by the National Assistance Board. This arrangement placed statutory responsibility for homelessness on the welfare department, rather than the housing department, so confirming homelessness as a welfare, rather than a housing, problem. In this way the traditional pathological social work approach to homelessness, with its emphasis on individual counselling and casework, was reaffirmed. Moreover, by only offering 'temporary' assistance, where circumstances were 'unforeseen' (that is unintentional), the principle of less eligibility was simultaneously retained (Clapham *et al.*, 1990). This can be seen as reflecting a more liberal approach to welfare provision as identified by Esping-Anderson (1990).

In 1966, screening of the television drama 'Cathy Come Home' helped to evoke homelessness as a media issue. Although it was still widely believed that disproportionate numbers of homeless people had personal problems, homelessness subsequently slowly gained recognition as a housing rather than a social problem. Indeed, throughout the 1970s and 1980s links were increasingly made between homelessness and the availability of housing. This promoted the belief that the answer to much homelessness lay in

access to housing, rather than social services, and many homeless households required little, if any, support, just a permanent home of their own (see for example, Drake *et al.*, 1981).

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 reflected this change in perspective by shifting responsibility for the housing of homeless people away from the welfare services and on to housing departments for the first time. Homelessness was, at last, officially recognised as a housing problem and the rights of homeless people simultaneously increased. Notions of 'deservingness' and 'less eligibility' were, and still are, nevertheless, enshrined in the legislation. Thus, people are still only accepted for rehousing, and hence implicitly considered 'deserving' of state assistance, if they fulfil the three criteria of being in priority need, unintentionally homeless, and have a local connection with the area. Moreover, such rationing criteria have recently intensified as the concept of public housing for general needs has progressively been eclipsed by the view that only 'special' needs require the direct attention of the state (Clapham *et al.*, 1990).

It is not possible, in other words, to identify many features of Esping-Anderson's more social democratic approach to welfare provision in existing forms of state provided supported hostel accommodation. The principles advocated by such an approach have, however, been fundamental to many refuges established by the Women's Aid Network and to a range of more progressive special needs provision developed over recent years, often in conjunction with voluntary agencies and housing associations. Hostels provided on this basis tend to be underpinned by a more egalitarian, co-operative, and mutually supportive ethic. Resource constraints, nevertheless, mean that the accommodation on offer is often not of a high material standard. For example, Berthoud and Casey found that women's refuges had particularly poor premises compared with the other provision in their study (Berthoud and Casey, 1988).

Today the poor conditions of much temporary accommodation provided by housing departments in response to housing needs frequently exacerbate and even generate health, work, and other personal problems for many individuals who previously were without them (Clapham *et al.*, 1990). Furthermore, recent research (for example, Niner, 1989; Evans, 1991; Elam, 1992; Anderson *et al.*, 1993; Bines, 1994) has shown that many homeless people do have needs for support in accommodation and, hence, do require more than just permanent rehousing. Accordingly, it is now perhaps time to question whether housing departments can deal with homelessness in isolation (Murie, 1988). The merging of some housing and social services departments in the early 1990s might suggest that defining homelessness as either a housing or a welfare issue is turning full circle. Alternatively, it might indicate that the problem is not so polarised after all. The discussion to follow considers this in more detail.

Summary

Existing theories of homelessness and welfare perspectives are useful in understanding and accounting for the development of various forms of hostel accommodation to-date. Such accommodation may not have evolved as a direct and unmediated response to theories, but theoretical influence has, nevertheless, been evident. Homelessness has tended to be explained simplistically and somewhat atheoretically, as either a housing or a welfare problem, caused by either structural or individual factors, with homeless people deemed either deserving or undeserving. If, however, such dualistic approaches are found to be less than adequate, any welfare provision (including supported hostel accommodation) influenced by such theorisations will also likely be less than optimal. A more comprehensive and rigorous theoretical understanding of homelessness and the needs of homeless people might then be a useful starting point for attempting to improve provision.

Part 2: Critiques of existing theories

This section begins a more critical analysis of existing theories of homelessness and welfare. Two particular lines of criticism are introduced. The first relates to the general sense of 'consensus' which appeared to inform much welfare provision until the 1970s. The second draws upon feminist analyses.

A critique of welfare consensus

The origins and development of social policy in Britain have been largely empirical and atheoretical (Williams, 1989). Throughout much of the post-war period there was a general consensus, sustained by a Fabian-dominated tradition of social administration, about the ability of government to manage the economy, and about the growth of a qualitatively new relationship between the state and the population (popularised in Marshall's (1949) notion of citizenship).

Faith in an underlying communality between all people provided a basis for critiques of social inequality and a logic for establishing potentially corrective and transformative policy. A prevailing welfare consensus meant that social and political progress was agreed as possible and this facilitated the making of grand schemes of social reform (Barrett and Phillips, 1992). It was assumed that changes could be effected unproblematically by ideas, or by the presentation of evidence, or by rational debate (Williams, 1989). Homelessness could thus be explained, the needs of homeless people quantified, and suitable accommodation provided in response (dependent only on the political will of those in power).

By the 1970s, however, many of the beliefs which had previously informed such consensus began to fade. Challenges to mainstream social administration were coming both from outside the discipline (because of the economic crisis and economic

policy failures of successive British governments in the 1960s and 1970s), as well as from within the discipline (because of the development of different perspectives on the welfare state). As a result, it no longer seemed possible to agree on normative definitions of values, such as 'truth', 'justice', and 'deservingness', which had hitherto supported the collective commitment to welfare (Hewitt, 1992). Likewise, it no longer seemed possible to quantify exactly what constituted 'poverty', 'need', or 'homelessness', or to explain precisely how such circumstances arose. The solutions to social problems were, accordingly, no longer so self-evident.

During the post-war period substantive knowledge, based on empirical findings and stressing instrumentality, utility, and efficiency, was often sought at the expense of consensually grounded truth. Bureaucratic statecraft and an emphasis on rational policy-making frequently stifled the democratic ideals and aspirations of social administration (Hewitt, 1992). Indeed, a criticism often levelled at social policy interventions was that bureaucratic insensitivity, professional arrogance, and political paternalism had 'ridden roughshod over the individual freedoms of those receiving them' (Clapham *et al.*, 1990, p.239).

The political climate of the 1970s and 1980s led to the easy exploitation of any anti-democratic features of social democracy (Hewitt, 1992). The New Right was, for example, able to present a critique of the welfare state which conceived of it as the problem, rather than the solution, to social ills. It then set about dismantling welfare institutions, such as social housing, gradually restricting social provision to residual groups considered unable to participate in the market. Increasingly these groups became those with 'special needs', segregated from the mainstream and stigmatised because of them (Clapham and Smith, 1990).

At the opposite end of the political spectrum, the emergence of a more left-leaning perspective led to a different kind of

reappraisal of the aims and effects of welfare policy. According to the far left, poor quality social housing had been incapable of solving housing inequalities, the strategy of equality had failed, social policy had proved undemocratic, and a more radical attack on inequality was consequently required (see for example, Field, 1981; Le Grand, 1982; Townsend, 1979).

Marxists, meanwhile, were arguing that social policy and welfare provision were not the product of enlightened altruism, but essential prerequisites for the survival of capitalism (see Clapham *et al.*, 1990, pp.6ff for discussion). According to such functionalist reasoning, any form of welfare was really only a means of social control for disciplining labour, and policing resistance. This would suggest that hostels for homeless people are established only to legitimate the state and the market and to ensure their continued authority, in spite of inadequate housing and extensive homelessness. Hostels, in other words, can amount only to an inexpensive means of accommodating people whose labour power is not valued.

As welfare perspectives have diversified and grown progressively more complex, the notions of collective welfare and consensus have simultaneously begun to dissipate. Where previously there was at least a measure of agreement among political parties about the need for the provision of social housing to compensate for the inadequacies of the housing market, such accord can now no longer be relied upon. Today rational responses to quantifiable problems no longer seem possible. Likewise, policies and provision for homeless people, based on simplistic distinctions of 'deserving' or 'undeserving', 'in need' or 'not in need', 'homeless' or 'not homeless' no longer seem adequate. Many of the theories, beliefs and principles which have influenced policies and provision for homeless people may thus have been less than satisfactory. Feminist analysis can now be used to expand upon this proposition.

Feminist critiques of social and housing policy

In the 1960s and 1970s the women's movement began to ask fundamental questions about the bureaucratic control and the professional authority which it saw throughout much of the welfare state (Wilson, 1977; Williams, 1989). Contributing to this debate, feminist critiques of housing policy and provision argued that women had frequently been neglected or marginalised in much contemporary housing-related thought, policy, and practice. In respect of this, access to housing, housing design, and the meaning of the home and homelessness elicited particular criticism (Watson, 1984, 1986a, 1987 and 1988; Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Banion and Stubbs, 1986; Pascall, 1991; Munro and Madigan, 1993).

The argument posed was that women had frequently been powerless to define their own housing needs or to house themselves independently from a man. This was because patriarchal assumptions were embedded in all the areas of production, allocation, and consumption and in each of the tenures (Watson, 1987 and 1988; Banion and Stubbs, 1986). Such inequalities were, moreover, underpinned by gender inequalities in income resulting from the labour market (Clapham *et al.*, 1990).

Feminists have also argued that within contemporary British society the meaning of home has tended to be bound up with ideas of companionate marriage, children, and shared activities (Munro and Madigan, 1993). This is, however, a socially and historically specific interpretation which stigmatises and ghettoises those who do not conform to this pattern (for example gay and lesbian families, lone parent families, single person households, and those who live in residential homes). Similarly, uncritical acceptance of a harmonious image of family-life fails to reveal the miseries of many housewives and the extent of family violence (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982).

The Finer Report (1974) first drew attention to the poor living conditions, lack of amenities, and poor standards of room occupancy of lone-parent families when compared with couples with children (Finer Committee, 1974). This is significant in terms of a gendered analysis of housing because lone mothers have become an increasing proportion of household heads, and an increasing proportion of lone parents (Clapham *et al.*, 1990). Moreover, even within the nuclear family home-owning household, men have more often actually 'owned' the property and 'controlled' the finances, whilst women have tended to be left to 'manage' often limited resources (Watson, 1988; Pahl, 1982; Graham, 1984).

According to Watson and Austerberry, women's domestic role results in a specific meaning of the home for women (Watson with Austerberry, 1986). Likewise, Munro and Madigan (1993) concluded that privacy, and by implication 'home', have very different meanings for different members of the household (men, women, and children). This, Munro and Madigan suggested, results from differences in work patterns, economic independence, and social expectations. Historically, women *have tended to spend more time* than men in the home and this, combined with domestic labour, has meant that women have been more likely than men to feel that their personal identity is inextricably linked to it.

If the sexual division of labour within the household effects a different relation to the home for different members of the household, by implication it also effects a different relation to homelessness. Accordingly, Watson with Austerberry (1986) argued that women's homelessness is more fully understood in the context of both the sexual division of labour and ideological pressures on women to conform to their role of housewife and mother. For some women the domestic and privatised sphere may constitute the only area of control and influence in their lives. The loss of accommodation considered to be home may, consequently, have profound implications in terms of feelings of lost control over life more generally.

As Watson also argued, women's domestic role and economic dependence within the family has also meant that a woman has been less likely to have the resources to make alternative accommodation arrangements than a male partner, if circumstances within the home are unsatisfactory. Likewise, if the house is physically in a poor condition, the woman, as domestic labourer spending most time in the home, has been most susceptible to any resultant problems. Accordingly, a woman may be located at a different stage along a home-to-homelessness continuum from her male partner and that stage will more likely be nearer the homelessness end of the scale (Watson, 1984).

Such theorising suggests that one individual in a household may be considered homeless, whilst another is not (Watson, 1984). Moreover, it is not possible simply to say that people are either homeless or not. As Watson (1988) argued, traditional definitions, which conceive of homelessness as a predominantly male problem, confined to male vagrants sleeping on park benches, are inadequate. Women's homelessness is frequently experienced, manifested, and tackled in different ways from men's and discourses of female homelessness must, therefore, also differ.

In this way, feminist arguments have revealed the need for a more relative and flexible approach to defining homelessness. This would bring a greater recognition of the plight of the many individuals whose homelessness has in various ways been less public and, hence, more concealed. Feminist analysis has thus drawn attention to many of the limitations of existing theories of homelessness and welfare and has highlighted some of the shortcomings of existing policy and practice responses. Such critiques are, however, not in themselves unproblematic, as is now discussed below.

The limitations of existing critiques

Welfare policy has often supported women and women have

frequently promoted and defended forms of state provision (Pascall, 1991). Indeed, public sector housing is the chief resource of women without male breadwinners and women, as mothers, have frequently been given a special claim to local authority housing (Pascall, 1991). Likewise, the provision of social housing, combined with housing benefit, has to a significant degree broken the link between earning money and securing accommodation. This has also increased women's chances of gaining access to accommodation, other than by joining households economically dependent upon a male breadwinner (Watson, 1986a; Clapham *et al.*, 1990).

Feminist critiques have additionally been in danger of producing a 'women and' approach to issues. This is the tendency to append women as a separate category which has different needs from everyone else. Implicitly this portrays men's lives as the norm and women's lives as all the same. Categorising homeless women together in this way, as one homogeneous group, ignores the diversity of women's experiences, but also assumes that specific characteristics are inherently male or female and not susceptible to change (Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Watson, 1988).

The position of women vis-a-vis state welfare provision varies between individuals and between groups of individuals (lone parents, single young women, older women etc.) across societies and across cultures. Women's lives, living arrangements, and accommodation patterns are also susceptible to change over time. Women have different experiences and that includes differing relations to the home, to the family, and to homelessness. Likewise, they have different relations to tenure forms and to tenure experiences in different social and spatial contexts (Banion and Stubbs, 1986). Because the feminist critiques presented in the previous section cannot account for such variations, they are in danger of being mono-cultural and of rapidly becoming ahistorical.

During the 1970s, feminist theorising based itself on the

notion of an essential 'we' of womanhood (for example, Daly, 1979, 1984; Spender, 1980; Mitchell, 1975; Gilligan, 1982; Chodorow, 1978; Baker Miller, 1973). This was on the grounds that essential differences existed between women and men and all women shared common interests, as women, oppressed by all men (Ramazanoglu, 1989). Just as social policy has been inclined to draw upon simplistic dualisms to explain complex phenomenon, so feminist theory has frequently attempted to explain women's diverse and complex experiences by drawing upon a range of rudimentary binary oppositions. These have included male and female, public and private, work and home, production and reproduction, subject and object.

A critique of welfare and housing based on essentialist notions of womanhood and simplistic binary oppositions may uncover many of the disadvantages and inequalities which women face, but can ignore the complexity and ambiguity of the relationship of individual women to welfare institutions and provision. It is also in danger of simply inserting women as objects of study and passive victims of circumstances beyond their control. This can be disempowering as it ignores the fact that women are active participants in negotiable processes. Likewise, it occurs at the expense of a systematic feminist analysis which would more effectively redefine and reconstruct issues (Watson, 1988).

Essentialist notions of 'woman' can, in other words, be seen as constituting a form of consensus politics which, like the consensus politics of the social administrators discussed earlier, has weaknesses which need to be confronted. A feminist critique of welfare based on such consensual notions of 'woman' and 'oppression' will likewise be problematic. Increasingly, feminism is recognising and attempting to deal with such issues and more recent advances in feminist analyses (for example, Segal, 1987; Weedon, 1987; Ramazanoglu, 1989) can, consequently, highlight important ways of moving the debate on.

Feminist theory reconsidered

Since the 1970s, differences between women have increasingly come to the fore. These have included differences of race, gender, age, class, nationality, imperialism, sexual orientation, values, culture, politics, and individual biography. Recognition of these differences, and of the diversity of women's experiences, has meant acknowledging the power which some women hold and exercise over others and the political and economic interests shared by some women with some men. As a result, the concept of women's shared oppression has been challenged and many women have begun to argue that their own lives have not been included in many feminist generalisations (Ramazanoglu, 1989).

Evolving recognition of the differences between women has required feminist theory to reconsider such simplistic dualistic analyses as male and female, public and private, work and home, production and reproduction, subject and object. Women are not, for example, passive victims constrained to the private sphere of the home, nor are all women oppressed by all men in all spheres in the same way. Their personal situations are, nevertheless, not impervious to public factors, such as laws, state policies, employment structures, and ideologies. Lives may, in other words, be circumscribed and channelled by ideologies and structural factors, but they are not necessarily predetermined or controlled by them and change is possible.

The universalisms of gender and of woman, or women, may be suspect (Phillips, 1992), but to rely on personal experience alone, and to leave women to define their own political priorities on the basis of the contradictory ways in which they are oppressed (including being homeless), leads to political fragmentation and divergence. This, somewhat problematically, ignores the many experiences which women do share and leaves feminism without any clear political strategy or force (Ramazanoglu, 1989). It, therefore, seems necessary to reconsider the issues of difference, individuality, subjectivity,

and personal experiences, but without losing sight of shared gendered experiences.

The task more recently for feminism has thus been to acknowledge the ways in which women's lives are structured by public factors, but without constructing women as homogeneous, powerless, unthinking, unquestioning victims and, hence, denying their agency. Simultaneously, this has involved recognising and avoiding the danger of allowing the emphasis on subjectivity and agency within feminism to be manipulated into victim-blaming and pathological explanations of circumstances. Individuals are thinking actors, capable of effecting changes, but this does not necessarily make them guilty and blameworthy, if they meet with unfortunate circumstances, such as homelessness.

Summary

In confronting issues of consensus, difference, structure, agency, and other simplistic binary oppositions and dualisms, the questions facing feminist analyses of society and welfare provision are no different from those facing any other analysis of society and its institutions. The discussion to follow, therefore, considers the possibility of developing a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of homelessness and service provision which would include all people, regardless of gender or other personal differences. To this end, part 3 focuses on post-modernism and post-structuralism[1], but also considers aspects of other relevant theory (structuration and

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[1]The terms post-modernism and post-structuralism are sometimes used interchangeably because the two have much in common. Both reject hierarchy whilst celebrating diversity and fragmentation. Post-modernism and post-structuralism are not, however, exactly synonymous. Post-structuralism can more accurately be seen as part of the broader range of theoretical, cultural, and social tendencies which constitute post-modern discourses. Post-structuralism, in other words, constitutes one part of the larger matrix of post-modern theory (Best and Kellner, 1991).

critical theory). Particular emphasis is given to the concepts of subjectivity, power, and language which are central to such approaches.

Part 3: New perspectives on homelessness and welfare

Post-modernism and post-structuralism

A structuralist approach to issues contends that underlying structures are known to cause events. As a result, it is believed that general conceptual frameworks can be discovered and analysed and, subsequently, integrated and coherent theory developed. As discussed earlier, classical liberal thought is premised on a belief in the possibility of such reasoned and rational theory and response. These assumptions have, however, now been questioned at some length. Post-structuralism and other theories expand upon this, *but also begin to contribute towards* the development of a more comprehensive and useful theoretical framework for understanding homelessness and welfare provision.

In practice, much post-modernist and post-structuralist theory has been deconstructive in character. It has emphasised fluidity and contingency and sought to challenge and override some of the hierarchical binary oppositions of western culture (Barrett and Phillips, 1992). Post-modernity argues that knowledge cannot be based on any sure foundations of reasoning. Knowledge is, rather, characterised by a plurality of rationalities and, hence, provides little basis for secure political and moral judgement and firm governance (Hewitt, 1992). Assumptions about causality are challenged because there can be no single oppressive force (neither capitalism nor patriarchy) and no single solution to any predefined social problem. Analyses of power should consequently proceed from a more localised, specific, and particular level (Pringle and Watson, 1992).

> The discourse of post-modernism is premised on an explicit and argued denial of the kind of grand political projects that both 'socialism' and 'feminism' by definition are. (Barrett, 1988, p.xxxiv)

Many feminists have now joined sympathies with post-modernist and post-structuralist projects in criticising the falsely universalising, over-generalising, and over-ambitious structuralist models of liberalism, humanism, and Marxism. This shift away from a search for binary power configurations and grand theory usefully helps to avoid the tendency of much theory, including feminist theory, to be mono-cultural and essentialist (Watson, 1988). It also helps to explain why many dualisms previously considered in this chapter (such as male and female, subject and object, public and private, structure and agency, in need and not in need, deserving and not deserving, housed and homeless) have proved less than satisfactory.

The significance of a post-modernist approach to understanding the role of supported hostel accommodation in meeting the needs of homeless people is now considered. This begins with an introduction to Foucault's post-structuralist analysis of 'regimes of truth', 'power/knowledge' relations, and 'micro-powers' (Foucault, 1979). The work of the feminist post-structuralist Weedon (1987) is then used to expand upon this.

FOUCAULT (1979)

Foucault (1979) does not accept that there is any one class using a particular ideology to dominate the rest of society. For him there is no global manifestation of power. Power is rather ubiquitous and diffuse and occurs at local points as 'micro-powers'. Given the rejection of 'sovereign' theories of control and authority, these ideas are unsympathetic to the objectives of social policy, as pursued by mainstream analysts (Hewitt, 1992). Social administration is not seen as guided by humanitarian concern, but by normalising and individuating

judgements which are established to maintain existing power configurations to sustain their own 'regimes of truth'.

In this respect Foucault's work exhibits shades of functionalism. Housing policy and welfare provision seem unlikely to benefit homeless people in any genuine sense. This is because explanations of homelessness and forms of housing provision will tend to focus on the need to 'normalise' homeless people (for example, by attempting to rehabilitate individuals 'without a settled way of life' or by endeavouring to 'treat' or to 'reform' them through social work intervention). Foucault, nevertheless, retains an optimistic hope that political 'resistance' can emerge. Change, he maintains, will not occur by transforming the whole at once, but injustices can be 'resisted' at the particular points where they manifest themselves. Hope for emancipation thus lies in resistance to local exercises of power (Hoy, 1986).

Although Foucault does not attribute unqualified agency to individuals, his emphasis on the possibility of resistance suggests that there is more scope for individual action, and hence change, than allowed for by a rigidly structural analysis. Furthermore, resistance can occur at different points, or levels, and this suggests that there may be a myriad of ways of challenging social inequalities. This helps to overcome the limitations of binary power structures and simplistic dualistic oppositions discussed previously.

In relation to homelessness, for example, greater 'resistance to local exercises of power' might result from increased user control of homelessness services. This might involve homeless people demanding and receiving a more efficient service which treats them with greater respect. Similarly, within hostels themselves, residents might demand, and be accorded, greater rights and control over the running of the accommodation or greater choice over their daily lives within it. In order to make any improvements in the lives of homeless people one does

not, therefore, have to begin by eradicating all homelessness. Smaller and more localised changes can also be highly effective.

WEEDON (1987)

In terms of relating these local resistances to wider structural issues, it is helpful to draw upon the work of Weedon (1987). She maintains that there is no single oppressive force, but structural concepts and objective definitions do exist and it is, therefore, important to avoid the impasse of allowing power structures and reasoned definitions to lose all connotation. Simultaneously, Weedon contends that subjective experience is an essential prerequisite to understand how power relations structure society.

According to Weedon (1987), the subject (for example, the homeless person) is a thinking, feeling, social agent, who is capable of resistance and reflection and is central both to the process of political change and to preserving the status quo. The subject cannot, however, be reduced to a conscious, knowing, unified, rational subject, the kind of sovereign individual which is commonly defended within liberal thought. This is because power relations, such as patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism are structural and exist in institutions and social practices (such as housing systems).

Subjectivity, according to Weedon, is more accurately understood as a site of disunity and conflict. This, she argues, may explain why people act in ways which appear contrary to their interests. The individual is socially constituted within a multiplicity of discourses and these compete for meaning and frequently conflict. At any given historical moment there are only a finite number of such discourses in circulation and the choices and innovations an individual is capable of are limited by the discourses which constitute her and the society in which she lives.

Because only a limited range of 'obvious' or 'natural' choices are offered to society's members, most forms of social control are able to operate on the principle of 'consent' and 'acceptance' as opposed to 'coercive power'. This also begins to transcend simplistic analyses of power structures and rudimentary structure versus agency explanations of personal circumstances and social problems.

According to Weedon, women and men do not have essential natures because gender is socially constructed through a series of multiple discourses. Women's experiences may, nevertheless, still be specific and different from those of men. The reason for this is that under patriarchy women have differential access to the discursive field, and to the material underpinnings of the discursive field, which constitute gender, gendered experience, and gender relations of power in society (Weedon, 1987).

Within contemporary British society, a range of possible 'normal' subject positions are open to women seeking accommodation. Each of these have degrees of power and powerlessness invested in them. Given the range of possible alternatives, the role of wife or partner to a home owning male would seem a rational and relatively powerful choice for many. Women seeking accommodation may share certain experiences, but, because there is no one all-powerful, all-embracing essential power relation, subjective experience will always be open to the plurality of meaning and the possibility of change.

Like Foucault, Weedon contends that resistance and oppression occur at numerous different levels. It is, therefore, possible, and in many respects more logical, to start from less ambitious, more localised centres of power/ knowledge, than from some general theory linked to a universal signifier, such as the capital-labour or the male-female relationship. Although more limited, smaller and less ambitious changes are frequently easier to bring about and yet can still be highly effective. Furthermore, such an approach does not mean losing sight of more

substantial guiding aims and objectives, such as eradicating housing inequalities more generally. Making less ambitious changes can rather be seen as an effective way of 'chipping away' at wider structural issues, such as homelessness, or wider power structures, such as the capital-labour or male-female relationship.

Language and the deconstruction of meaning

Complementing this more complex theoretical approach to subjectivity and power, the post-modernist and post-structuralist focus on language can also help to inform housing policy and provision. This is because a reconsideration of the meaning of 'supported accommodation', 'homelessness', and the concept of 'needs' helps to further an understanding of relevant issues. Simultaneously, however, the process of deconstructing meanings also reveals some critical weaknesses inherent in the post-modernist argument.

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

For the purposes of housing studies and housing policy, the meaning of supported accommodation tends to be accepted as relatively unambiguous. Indeed, supported accommodation is frequently used interchangeably with the terms 'hostel', 'group home', 'housing scheme', or 'project'. This does not, however, afford a particularly adequate understanding of the concept. Supported accommodation might, for example, also include hospitals, prisons, army barracks, university halls of residence, or nursing homes. Moreover, the meaning of supported accommodation becomes even less clear when the sense in which accommodation is supported is considered, or 'deconstructed', more rigorously.

Support might relate to financial, emotional, physical,

social, or mixes of assistance. If the role of financial support is emphasised, supported accommodation could also include homeowners, assisted by mortgages and various tax incentives (such as mortgage interest relief and exemption from capital gains tax). If supported accommodation is understood as housing which offers emotional, physical, or social support, it is then important to recognise that most living arrangements offer such securities:

> ...primary ties of dependence, nurturance, and mutual help are an inevitable part of the structure of any society, even one...ostensibly organized around individualism and independence. (Zaretsky, 1982, p.193)

Alternatively, the meaning of support might be related more directly to who is providing the assistance and at what cost. Frequently only formal assistance, provided at direct expense to the state, has been considered relevant for social policy purposes. In this context a feminist perspective is again enlightening. Much support (caring and nurturing) is provided informally by women within the home, but its historical invisibility has meant that recognising it as work has often not been automatic (Delphy, 1984). The cost of such labour should not, and cannot, however, be ignored. Indeed, its price is revealed in the myriad of ways in which women's unpaid work contributes to the creation of female poverty and, conversely, to the comparative comfort of others (Millar and Glendinning, 1987).

It thus seems that when the meaning of supported accommodation is rigorously deconstructed, it can lose all practical significance. This is because most accommodation is, to varying degrees, supported in some sense. A similar phenomenon occurs when home, homelessness, and needs are also subjected to more detailed analysis and deconstruction. The range of meanings which can be attributed to such concepts and the multi-dimensional complexity of those meanings are revealing, but can simultaneously begin to limit their explanatory or prescriptive

use.

HOME

Home implies more than just any kind of shelter. It is associated with material conditions and standards, privacy, space, control, personal warmth, comfort, stability, safety, security, choice, self-expression, and physical and emotional well-being (Watson with Austerberry, 1986). Such criteria change according to the household involved, according to the individuals within it, and according to the prevailing economic, social and political climate. No single definition of the home can be considered absolute, because meaning is relative and varies historically across different regions and/ or societies (Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Saunders and Williams, 1988).

The home is, however, more than a socio-spatial system. According to Watson with Austerberry (1986), there is an ideological content, as well as a material base, to the conception of a home. Thus, women who do not consider their present accommodation to be their home do not necessarily define themselves as being homeless, and women who do consider their present accommodation to be their home may also think of themselves as homeless. Gurney (1990) also sees the home as an ideological construct, located simply 'where the heart is'. Sommerville (1992), meanwhile, argues that there is no clear demarcation between real and ideal meanings of home and homelessness.

> Both home and homelessness have been found to be essentially ideological constructs, involving compounds of cognitive and emotive meaning, and embracing within their meaning complex and variable distinctions between ideality and reality. (Sommerville, 1992, p.537)

Home for each human being is shaped to some extent by that individual's ideal understanding of the concept or by their personal beliefs about what constitutes a home. Accordingly,

individuals can be roofless and yet maintain that they are not homeless because their home is on the streets. Similarly, people may have a very good material standard of accommodation, but nevertheless consider themselves to be homeless. Such vague definitions, focusing only on subjective experience and relativity, are in danger of ceasing to have any significance or any impact (Watson with Austerberry, 1986). It is at this point that deconstruction once more becomes unhelpful.

NEEDS

This chapter has already argued that social policy has traditionally adopted a predominantly realist and rational stance towards the definition of issues such as poverty, homelessness, and needs. Adherence to a welfare-meets-needs axiom involves believing that people have objective problems, experts have solutions, and scientists can measure imponderables such as needs through some form of empiricist methodology (Illich *et al.*, 1977; Hewitt, 1992).

In 1972, for example, Bradshaw proposed a typology of need comprising four measures[2]. Clayton (1983) suggested that such an approach was useful in terms of planning and distributing welfare services, but somewhat problematically only identified two dimensions of need - either 'in need' or 'not in need'. She contended that a scientific approach, such as Bradshaw's, helps to create the illusion that policies are founded on objective facts and not based on values and political considerations about which there may be much disagreement.

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[2] Bradshaw's four measures of need are *normative need* (what the expert, or professional administrator, or social scientist defines as need in any given situation); *felt need* (the equivalent of want); *expressed need* (felt need turned into action); and *comparative need* (a measure of need found by studying the characteristics of those in receipt of a service. If people with similar characteristics are not in receipt of a service, then they are in need) (Bradshaw, 1972).

Like supported accommodation, the home, and homelessness, needs are not absolute. They are culturally and ideologically drawn, historically and socially relative. To extend this argument to its logical conclusion is, however, again to suggest that all needs are inevitably experienced differently by each individual and all conceptions of need are ideological or imaginary representations of real need. Questions must then be posed. What exactly are needs? How can they ever be understood, other than through subjective experience? And what role does that leave for state intervention?

Some critical weaknesses

At this point, it clear that there are various critical weaknesses, inherent in post-modernist and post-structuralist arguments. The focus on deconstruction and language means that post-modernism can reveal much about the meaning of constructs, such as homelessness or needs, but far less about their causes, or about appropriate societal responses to them. Moreover, through the process of deconstruction, constructs are in danger of dissolving into total relativity and becoming irrational. For social policy such a phenomenon is clearly problematic.

A structural and rational response to completely relative and subjective notions of homelessness and needs is not possible. Indeed, if policy cannot even define homelessness and needs, how can it hope to provide for them? Furthermore, there is a danger that if experience is 'only' expressed in private and personal terms, without a public language or understanding, causes can lose their political force and social policy becomes divest of its collective 'raison d'etre' (Hewitt, 1992). This mirrors feminist concerns that to rely only on personal experience and subjectivity ignores shared experiences and leaves feminism without any clear political strategy or force (Ramazanoglu, 1989).

The post-modernist argument can, in other words, be taken too far (Walby, 1992). Definitions and meanings can be deconstructed so rigorously that they lose all significance and potential for practical action. Similarly, by focusing only on subjective experience and agency, the power of social structures (such as capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism, or even home ownership) can be dispersed so widely that all political force is dissipated. Potent social forces do exist and being homeless is to lose a stake in several of them. Likewise, in spite of definitional complexities, supported accommodation, home, homelessness, and needs are also real.

If post-modernism and post-structuralism are to prove useful analytical tools, they must be able to suggest ways of reconstructing meanings and social forces and of reformulating explanations of personal circumstances and social problems once they have been opened up to analysis. They should, in other words, be able to understand subjective experience and yet still relate it to structural factors.

The inherent tendency to total subjectivity, relativity, and irrationality and a primary focus on language limit the use of post-modernism and post-structuralism, but do not negate them entirely. Aspects of post-modernism and post-structuralism can usefully be retained and used in conjunction with other theoretical perspectives (such as structuration and critical theory) to important practical effect. Whilst in their raw forms such various theoretical perspectives (post-modernism, post-structuralism, structuration and critical theory) are intrinsically incompatible, this does not prevent each being used to inform the other. Nor does it prevent basic propositions being taken from each and used to expand theoretical understanding.

Meanings and power structures reconsidered

WEEDON (1987)

Weedon (1987) has emphasised that the plurality and constant deferral of meaning are basic principles of post-structuralism. Meaning, like subjectivity and power, can never be fixed once and for all. This does not, however, mean that meaning, or subjectivity, or power disappear altogether - rather that interpretation can only be specific and temporary and must inevitably remain open to challenge and to change.

Accordingly, it should be possible to retain the meaning of concepts (such as supported accommodation, home, homeless, and needs) and to retain an understanding of power structures (such as gender or race), as long as these are suitably contextualised. Simultaneously, it should be possible to change and to reformulate meanings and forces as required. The need, above all, is for flexibility and a willingness to combine reason with relativity according to circumstances. To this end, it is necessary to be aware of whose definitions are being used, where, when, and in what context.

A more thorough understanding of the meaning of supported accommodation for homeless people might, for example, result in hostels being accepted as a form of mainstream interdependent housing. They would then be considered 'normal' and 'unstigmatised', although equally they could remain 'different' in the sense that they might provide 'additional' forms of support. Unstigmatised forms of supported accommodation for students and sheltered accommodation for older people (which are considered 'normal' in spite of the 'special' support they offer) indicate that this is not necessarily an untenable proposition for other diverse kinds of supported accommodation in the future.

GIDDENS (1979; 1984)

Like Foucault and Weedon, Giddens (1979; 1984) also considers the relationship between structural and individual power relations and also attempts to overcome any simplistic division between the two. Thus, Giddens would also maintain that homelessness cannot be reduced unproblematically to either an individual or to a structural problem. Unlike Foucault and Weedon, Giddens does not, however, focus on the role of language and his approach cannot be classified as post-modernist. He rather proposes the notion of 'structuration' as an alternative way out of the structure versus agency dichotomy.

According to Giddens, society does not determine individual behaviour, but nor do individuals simply create society. 'Structure' and 'action' (agency) are rather intimately related, and neither can exist independently of the other. Giddens uses the concept of 'structuration' to describe the way that structures relate to social action and refers to 'the duality of structure' to suggest that whilst structures make social action possible, it is social action that creates those very structures (Giddens, 1984).

Giddens maintains that one way that structure affects human behaviour is through the 'mutual knowledge' (that is, 'discourses') that agents have about their own society. This is because much routine, mundane behaviour is carried out automatically with little thought or assessment. Giddens also suggests that humans have a basic desire for some measure of 'predictability' or 'ontological security' in social life. He argues that the existence of this need, in conjunction with the existence of 'mutual knowledge', causes patterns of behaviour to be repeated. As a result of such repetition, the structure of society, the social system, and institutions are all reproduced. The reproduction of predominantly home-owning nuclear family living arrangements may, at least in part, be explained in this way.

Giddens, nevertheless, maintains that individuals are constantly intervening in the world by their actions and hence have the capacity to effect changes. Through this, he highlights the dialectical nature of power relations. Power, he argues, is a two-way process and all individuals, even those who seem to be without much control and authority (such as homeless people), have some power and ability to resist (Giddens, 1979). Like Foucault and Weedon, Giddens accepts that humans are limited by the power relationships which comprise social action, but it is only in very exceptional circumstances that individuals are ever completely constrained.

Power structures operate not so much by controlling, as by placing limits upon the range of options open to an actor. Agents do not, however, have to behave in fixed ways. They are able to reflect on and to assess what they are doing and they may then start to behave in new ways which alter patterns of social interaction and the social structure. Likewise, individuals may also change or reproduce society in ways that they did not deliberately intend (Giddens, 1984).

More sophisticated theoretical analyses of power structures, such as those of Foucault (1979), Weedon (1987), and Giddens (1979; 1984), suggest that there are forces in operation which make it more likely that some people, and not others, will become homeless in any given set of circumstances. This can help to explain why people become homeless, without classifying them either as passive victims or as guilty individuals responsible for their own situations. Such theorising also suggests that individuals will likely have diverse, but also some shared experiences of homelessness and hostel living. Moreover, because personal circumstances are not predetermined, and because power structures operate at different levels, there will be various ways of effecting changes to human lives.

One potential way of retaining the meaning of concepts and structural forces without losing a sense of their relativity is

to avoid predefining issues and experiences for others. In order to show how this might operate in practice, the work on human needs by Doyal and Gough (1984; 1991) and the communication theory of the critical theorist Habermas (1970; 1991) are now considered.

DOYAL AND GOUGH (1984; 1991)

Recent work by Doyal and Gough (1984; 1991) usefully attempts to develop a way of identifying objective and universal human requirements whilst still respecting the relative rights and preferences of the individual. Doyal and Gough advocate the absolute centrality of the notion of needs to any meaningful discussion of human welfare, but have also insisted that the concept of needs must be formulated more rigorously than hitherto in order that it can be applied more fruitfully to various contemporary issues.

Doyal and Gough (1991) begin by stressing that certain basic human requirements do exist and that individuals have a right to the optimal satisfaction of these. They, nevertheless, contend that human needs are complex, being neither subjective preferences best understood by each individual, nor static essences best understood by planners or officials. Indeed, individuals may not always be the best assessors of their own needs. This may be because of poor education, or lack of expertise, or because the difference between individuals' needs and wants has been distorted by external influences. Likewise, the short-term concerns of some might be incompatible with generalisable interests or the preferences of certain groups may dominate to the detriment of others'.

Doyal and Gough (1991) maintain that the specification of need must, therefore, always appeal to a higher objective standard and this, they argue, demonstrates a definite role for the state in assessing and providing for its members. Any concept of need

should, however, be designed so that it cannot be used in authoritarian or paternalistic ways. This is because social principles can become 'dangerous abstractions' without respect for the rights of the individual. Participation and the expression of preference thus also have an indispensable role to play in determining specific 'need satisfiers'. Doyal and Gough's argument out of this impasse is to propose that a combination of institutions and principles (a mixed economy combining elements of central planning and democratic decision-making) assures the best possibility of optimising human welfare.

HABERMAS (1970; 1991)

The work of the critical theorist Habermas (1970; 1991) can be used to complement the work of Doyal and Gough. This is because Habermas also maintains that universal interests and ideals exist and his concern is similarly how best to pursue them. Against relativist thought, his writings are also a source of continuity which can sustain political and moral conduct and thus help to counter the limitations of total subjectivity and relativity discussed earlier. Again, like Doyal and Gough, Habermas does not suggest that needs can be categorically defined for all in the way that the basic needs theorists assume. He rather proposes that a universal morality of politics should not predefine the basic needs a welfare state should guarantee, but should instead provide the institutional forum to encourage consensus to form around such needs.

For Habermas, the ultimate goal is the integration of individual and collective needs so that the fulfilment of neither is thwarted by the other. Such a stage, he argues, can be reached through 'discursive' or 'collective will formation'. This approach is constructive in its recognition and acceptance of the centrality of human purpose and agency. The contention is that an awareness of universal interests will emerge, if debate is conducted on the basis of 'rational argument' founded

on 'communicative reasoning' between different involved parties (see Hewitt, 1992 for discussion).

Exactly how realistic the search for 'consensus' and 'universal interests' through 'rational argument' actually is, remains debatable (particularly following the accounts of fragmentation and difference introduced earlier). This does not, however, invalidate the process of endeavouring to work towards the goal of a 'more consensual position' on various issues. Habermas (1970) maintains that as long as open debate and unimpeded discourse prevail in human interaction, an 'ideal speech situation' will operate. 'Ideal speech', Habermas accepts, is an assumption underlying, rather than achieved in, all instances of rational discussion. Thus, the actual position of 'ideal speech' does not have to be attained for the process to be valuable and beneficial to all involved.

In terms of applying aspects of the theories considered in this section to residents of supported hostels for homeless people, the discussion suggests that the state will have a role in defining needs and providing for homeless people, but will not provide adequately without consulting the users of services. Furthermore, if understanding is to be optimised, it will also be necessary to engage other relevant groups (such as funders, managers, various professional bodies, voluntary agencies, and independent advisors) in the proceedings. Working towards informed and open debate between all involved parties appears to be crucial if the circumstances and needs of those homeless people using supported hostel accommodation are to be recognised, interpreted, and responded to as accurately and as effectively as possible.

Conclusion

Eight emerging propositions

To summarise from the preceding sections, eight basic propositions seem to emerge. These are:

1. 'Structuration' (Giddens 1979; 1984) is a useful analytical tool for overcoming simplistic notions of structure versus agency.
2. Universal truths do not exist.
3. The differences between individuals are multiple.
4. Shared experiences and beliefs are, nevertheless, common.
5. The role of language and meaning in understanding issues is fundamental, but not paramount.
6. Change is possible and inevitable.
7. Issues and circumstances need to be located within their broader social, historical, and cultural context, if they are to be understood.
8. Communication and consultation are crucial aspects of good service delivery.

The final section now suggests that the theoretical nature of this chapter does not divest it of political or of practical significance.

From theory to politics and practice

The limitations of separatist politics and the significance of working with each other's differences have now received detailed theoretical attention both from within and outside of feminism. The recognition is that men cannot be left out of

women's struggles, whilst by making connections between each other women can perhaps avoid getting bogged down in differences and begin to deal more effectively with the problems of living together (Ramazanoglu, 1989).

> Today the majority of politically active socialist feminists talk of struggle in and against the state, participating in and yet attempting to transform its existing sexist, racist and authoritarian social relations and practices. (Segal, 1987, p.224)

A less oppressive future for all seems likely, if struggles against all kinds of oppression are connected and, in spite of their differences, 'all' people work together to alleviate problems, such as homelessness. This will require building alliances and not simply working from personal needs and experiences. Engaging in such collective debate does not, however, mean losing sight of the diverse requirements and preferences of individuals.

> The social democratic model is deeply concerned with the integrity of the individual, and those who work to re-establish it are as keen to avoid the corporate socialism of the 1970s as they are to replace the supremacy of the market in the 1980s. (Clapham *et al.*, 1990, p.243)

In political terms, the possibility for change and improved provision has been accepted by a new vision of socialism. Such a vision maintains that public provision for need does not have to be oppressive or bureaucratic or inflexible (Segal, 1987). To this end, the principles of empowerment, choice, rights, and participation have increasingly been emphasised by various welfare-orientated initiatives over recent years. These have included a proliferation of self-help enterprises (ranging from neighbourhood watch schemes to personal therapy groups and tenants associations); charters for citizens, customers, claimants, patients, and others; plus recent community care legislation.

Some of these initiatives have been radical in their approach; others less so. Inadequate funding has sometimes impeded good intentions and on other occasions progress has been hindered by the interpretation of principles in terms of the language of the market (concerned with purchasers and providers), rather than the language of compromise and genuine power sharing. Very little is, however, completely immutable and where principles and concepts have been lost or co-opted, they are still capable of being reformulated and reclaimed.

Some issues will inevitably be more susceptible to alteration than others and a key issue must, therefore, be to identify those aspects of provision which are relatively easy to modify and those which are not. This may often mean effecting limited small scale changes at localised levels, but without losing sight of wider structural goals. One example of this could be attempting to improve aspects of supported hostel accommodation for homeless people, but without losing sight of the need to eradicate housing inequalities of all forms.

In 1982 Barrett and McIntosh argued that social policy should be judged in terms of two guiding aims. These were greater freedom of choice and the move towards collectivism (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982). Barrett and McIntosh stipulated that the promotion of genuine freedom of choice and real collectivity involved making alternatives to the existing favoured patterns of family and home life more realistically available and desirable. Patterns of accommodation and living arrangements have clearly changed over recent years. Co-habitation, divorce, separation, and remarriage have all produced a variety of different sorts of 'family'. Indeed, the 'standard household' of husband, wife, and children is now actually a minority formation (less than 40 per cent) (The British Household Panel Study, 1994). Whilst it is possible that the diverse range of hostel provision which has evolved over the last decade (see chapter 2) may have some positive contribution to make to widening the available pool of accommodation types and living

arrangements, research is required to confirm or to refute this.

Summary

To-date a rigorous and comprehensive theoretical analysis of homelessness and supported accommodation has been lacking from much of the literature informing policy and provision for homeless people. The discussion has, however, suggested that personal circumstances and social problems, such as homelessness, cannot be explained simplistically or atheoretically. Consequently, any helpful response in the form of welfare policy or provision cannot be simplistic or atheoretical either. By drawing upon a range of theoretical perspectives, this chapter has attempted to broaden the theoretical framework in an attempt to further understanding of homelessness and welfare and so begin to fill this gap.

To summarise, it has been argued that individuals cannot simply be seen as causing their own homelessness. It is, therefore, unacceptable, and indeed impractical, to leave homeless people to their own devices when housing and support networks fail. Homeless people are, nevertheless, not helpless victims devoid of all agency. Accordingly, they have rights and responsibilities in relation to their housing circumstances and these will include playing a fundamental part in defining their housing and support needs and in shaping the provision available to them.

Hostels, it seems, look set to proliferate and thrive for the foreseeable future. For some people, at some time in their lives, they may be an appropriate form of accommodation; for others not. Whilst there are not likely to be any utopian solutions which meet the diverse needs of all individuals, the theories considered in the third part of this chapter suggest that through increased co-operation and more democratic participation enhanced understanding and subsequently

improvements to hostel provision may result. If, however, hostels and supported accommodation continue to be used in an untheorised way as a response to uncritically defined concepts of homelessness and support needs, less than optimal use of such provision is likely to result.

In order to maximise the potential of supported hostel accommodation, it is argued that understanding of homelessness and welfare must be enhanced. Communication should, therefore, be increased and debate widened so that choices are expanded and reason combined with relativity to produce the best technical and experiential knowledge possible (Doyal and Gough, 1991). Engaging a range of perspectives which draw upon theory and practice should help to make change and improvement possible, although not of course inevitable. It is now the task of the ensuing research to embark upon such a project.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research topic, explains how the fieldwork was conducted, and introduces some of the methodological issues and complexities which arose in the process.

Part 1: The research topic

In order to develop the most appropriate design for the fieldwork to be undertaken, it was first necessary to define the research topic precisely. This involved re-establishing the main aims and areas of interest, reconsidering the research questions to be addressed, and deciding upon the working definitions to be employed.

The main research aims and areas of interest

As discussed in chapter 1, the thesis had two basic aims. The first was to ascertain the extent to which supported hostel accommodation was meeting the needs of the homeless people living in them, and the second was to consider how it might be possible to improve such accommodation in order that it might better meet those needs. As discussed in chapter 3, the main areas of interest related to issues not considered, or afforded only limited attention, by previous research. These included the day-to-day experiential aspects of hostel living (such as what it involves, how it feels, and what it means to live in a supported hostel for homeless people) and the relevance and meaning of various conceptual issues (such as needs, stigma, rights, power, control, choice, participation, dependence, and independence).

By focusing on the outcomes, as well as considering the inputs, processes, and outputs of provision, it was hoped that a sociologically and theoretically informed, policy relevant, analysis of supported hostel accommodation for homeless people might be produced.

The research questions

In order to address the central aims and interests of the thesis, the study employed two main research questions and five sub-research questions:

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(I) To what extent was supported hostel accommodation meeting the needs of the homeless people living in them?

(II) How might supported hostel accommodation be improved in order that it might better meet those needs?

SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(i) What kind of supported hostel provision was being offered to homeless people?

(ii) Were there any particular personal characteristics associated with people who preferred, or needed, supported hostel accommodation?

(iii) What (if any) characteristics or features tended to make supported hostel accommodation more positive or negative?

(iv) Of what relevance were the more conceptual and day-to-day experiential aspects of hostel living?

(v) How might supported hostel accommodation be improved?

The first sub-research question was designed to consider what facilities and services were being offered (for whom, by whom, and why); the second was intended to investigate what personal characteristics might make some people want or need supported hostel accommodation more than others; the third concentrated on the more tangible aspects of provision, which have, at least to

some extent, been considered by previous research (often the inputs, processes, and outputs); the fourth focused on the less tangible aspects of provision, which have largely not been considered by previous research (frequently the outcomes); and the fifth examined how resources might be targeted more effectively so that the best possible service might be provided.

The ambiguity of working definitions

The ambiguity and complexity of attempting to derive single all-encompassing definitions of concepts, such as 'homelessness', 'temporary accommodation', 'hostel', or 'supported accommodation' (although, interestingly, not the meaning of the 'needs' of homeless people) have been widely recognised within many of the studies of homelessness and hostel accommodation reviewed in chapter 3. Statutory denotations of 'homelessness' have frequently been considered limited (Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Evans and Duncan, 1988; The Audit Commission's, 1989). Likewise, the point at which homelessness actually occurs has been recognised as difficult to distinguish (Thomas and Niner, 1989; Anderson *et al.*, 1993). Furthermore, definitions which may have been appropriate at one time can subsequently become obsolete. For example, temporary housing can by default become permanent because there are inadequate move-on facilities (Thomas and Niner, 1989).

Whilst the heterogeneity and complexity of meanings cannot be dismissed, ambiguity can be minimised if working definitions are specified precisely and accurately. Accordingly, many previous studies have endeavoured to define their parameters carefully. To this end, the use of a list of the exact accommodation types or housing circumstances to be included in a study can minimise uncertainty (see for example, Wingfield Digby, 1976; Evans and Duncan, 1988; Thomas and Niner, 1989; Niner, 1989; Evans, 1991). Likewise, the meaning of homelessness can be developed if research allows individuals to incorporate their own perceptions

of their housing circumstances (Canter *et al.*, 1990; Anderson *et al.*, 1993).

A working definition of homelessness

The definition of homelessness adopted for the present study extended beyond any statutory delimitation. The main criterion was that the individuals concerned considered themselves to be without alternative permanent accommodation. This incorporated an element of self-definition and meant that the study included individuals who might not have been in a 'priority group' or who might have been defined as in some way 'intentionally' homeless under the legislation.

A working definition of needs

A broad and flexible interpretation of the needs of homeless people was accepted by the study. The intention was to focus on housing and support/care requirements, but other forms of need (for example, financial, health, and spiritual needs) were incorporated, whenever they arose. All definitions were accredited with equal respect, regardless of by whom they had been identified (providers or residents).

A working definition of supported hostel accommodation

An initial concern of the study related to how acceptable the term 'hostel' was, in view of the stigma so commonly identified with it. After careful consideration, it was decided that the expression 'hostel' would be employed, because it was the most widely used and accepted term for kind of accommodation being considered. Furthermore, the stigma frequently attached to the notion of 'hostel' is of a contingent nature and, therefore, need

not be present (for example, the term youth hostel evades such negative connotations).

Thomas and Niner's (1989) description of a hostel provided a useful starting point for the present research. As discussed in chapter 1, this depicts hostels as organised short-term accommodation which tends to be offered at reasonably low prices and targeted at a special group, such as homeless families, single homeless people, ex-offenders, people with a mental handicap, or mothers and babies. According to Thomas and Niner, hostels imply a degree of sharing of amenities and perhaps some management presence, although not necessarily resident on the premises. Provision varies considerably in size and degree of self-containment, but most is provided on a fully or partly furnished basis and residents tend to be licensees.

Although instructive, Thomas and Niner's description is vague and, therefore, requires further clarification. For example, it provides no clear or adequate definition of 'short-term accommodation', 'reasonably low prices', or 'special group'. Many hostels do provide accommodation for lengthy periods of time and many are prohibitively expensive for people not in receipt of benefits. Likewise, many provide for individuals who have no 'special needs', other than a lack of accommodation. Whilst the present study did not attempt to limit or predefine the accommodation period of a hostel, provision intended to be permanent was excluded. Both 'specialist' and 'non-specialist' hostels were included, providing homelessness was a sufficient reason for admittance. Direct access and referral only provision, as well as hostels of varying sizes, were all accepted.

A further essential criterion for inclusion in the present investigation was that the hostels offered support. This was defined as involving some on-site management (of a more intensive nature than general needs housing management, but not necessarily twenty-four hours). Schemes offering more intensive forms of

support or care, although not nursing care, were included. Likewise, dispersed hostels (that is, accommodation located on different sites) were accepted, providing there was some management presence on at least one of the locations. Commercial accommodation was also considered suitable, if it fulfilled all of the other relevant criteria.

In practice, the definition of hostel adopted by the thesis included refuges for people fleeing violence, but excluded probation and bail hostels, sheltered housing for elderly people, residential institutions (such as hospitals or prisons), group homes, cluster flats, and various projects catering only for people with 'special needs' (such as mental health or addiction problems). Night shelters were also omitted on account of their very temporary nature and the particular *transience of their* resident population.

Part 2: The research methods

Lessons from the past

A range of methodological issues, highlighted by the studies reviewed in chapter 3, were found to be both relevant and instructive to the design of the fieldwork and are consequently discussed below.

In general, previous research has found that statistically representative samples of homeless people were difficult, time-consuming and expensive to obtain. Furthermore, a single research method has frequently been considered incapable of providing data on the range of sub-groups and the diversity of individuals comprising the homeless population. A combination of different and complementary techniques (the combined methods approach) has, thus, often been employed. The use of diverse techniques reflects a general appreciation of the complexity of

homelessness as a research subject, but also a broad recognition that the wider the range of methods and perspectives included, the more thorough and comprehensive any findings are likely to be.

A combined methods approach might include any combination of quantitative techniques (such as surveys or secondary data analysis) and more qualitative research techniques (such as semi-structured, in-depth, or group interviewing). One reason why quantitative and qualitative methods can often beneficially be used in research to complement each other is that they tend to have different objectives. Whilst quantitative methods are more useful for discovering the common properties and general patterns of a population as a whole, qualitative techniques are more commonly concerned to analyse how causal processes work out in a particular case, or in a limited number of cases (Sayer, 1992). Quantitative research, thus, often provides answers to fact-finding questions such as what, where and when? Qualitative work, conversely, tends to be more helpful in assessing why? (Bell; 1992; Walker, 1985).

A further advantage of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches within one study relates to the concept of the 'duality of structure' (Giddens, 1976) (see also the discussion in chapter 4). According to this concept, there are both macro-structural and micro-structural ways of understanding society and it is not possible to dissolve the two. Whilst macro-structural approaches are concerned with the 'structural' features of social life and are often best illuminated through quantitative methods, micro-structural approaches emphasise more creative and interactive explanations and processes and tend to be examined most appropriately through more qualitative investigations. If, as argued in chapter 4, people's actions are a result of their interpretation of a situation, but their interpretations and their choices are limited by structural factors external to them and beyond their control, it can often make sense to bring the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods together

in a single study (Bryman, 1992).

Adopting a range of different techniques during one study frequently reveals interesting alternative perspectives on issues. A pluralistic approach to evaluation can contribute to this (see for example, Smith and Cantley, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Twigg and Atkin with Perring, 1990; Bull, 1993). A pluralistic approach involves evaluating services and provision from the perspectives of all involved parties or stakeholders. It not only considers objective criteria, as defined and analysed by others, but also gives value to the subjective experiences of homeless people themselves. Additionally, a longitudinal, or a time-series, approach can reveal further relevant perspectives (see for example, Dant and Deacon, 1989; Randall *et al.*, 1982). Whereas most research tends only to produce a 'snapshot' of a moment in a process, a longitudinal study conducts research in stages over time, so providing a more comprehensive overview of the process as a whole.

Designing the fieldwork

The fieldwork was designed to take place in two stages. The first involved gathering some general factual information (quantitative data) about provision, whilst the second comprised a qualitative in-depth investigation of a small number of case study hostels. The precise number of hostels to be considered was not determined prior to the completion of the first fieldwork stage, but it was initially anticipated that between four and six schemes would be sufficient.

Because the intention of the study was to focus on conceptual issues and experiences, rather than to compare institutions, the qualitative second phase was designed to constitute the main part of the fieldwork. The heterogeneity of homeless people and the diversity of supported accommodation (see chapter 3) further confirmed that a micro-structural analysis of causal explanations

would be more appropriate and illuminating in terms of addressing the research questions than a large, quantitative data collection exercise. Furthermore, a large quantitative survey of residents and provision would have been too costly, given the limited financial and time resources available.

The location

A case study of a single geographical area was considered capable of providing sufficient information. Because the study was aiming to reflect the heterogeneity of hostel provision, a very small locality, or an area with a relatively low incidence of homelessness, was judged incapable of supplying a sufficiently diverse sample of provision. The specific nature of homelessness and provision for homeless people in the capital (such as the Rough Sleepers Initiative), meanwhile, meant that London was not necessarily the optimal choice. London had, in any case, already attracted a substantial share of previous research (Greve with Currie, 1990). After some consideration, a metropolitan city, providing a broad range of supported hostel accommodation for homeless people, was selected. In the research, this city is referred to as Hostelville.

Stage one of the fieldwork

The first stage of the fieldwork involved building up a profile of the hostel mix in Hostelville and then selecting a small number of hostels for subsequent in-depth study. In order to ensure that the hostels eventually chosen reflected the range of resident groups catered for and the variety of accommodation types operating in the city, the selection process drew upon nine types of hostel characteristic (see appendix A) and incorporated a number of stages.

For the first stage, a range of secondary data sources were

used to provide relevant background data relating to the national, regional, and local picture of homelessness and hostel provision. For the second stage, a local accommodation guide, various project reviews, reports and information sheets, and contact with key persons working in the case study area were used to elicit basic information about the thirty-six supported hostels for homeless people found to be operating in Hostelville. Twelve hostels (one third of the total) were then selected to participate in a small postal survey. The design of the postal survey form (see appendix B) was based on the information gathered for the London Hostels Directory 1991 (Chandler *et al.*, 1991).

The objective of the postal survey was to clarify existing information about the hostels, to gather extra relevant details, and to ascertain whether the organisations would be prepared to participate in a further in-depth stage. By choosing twelve hostels, which collectively included all categories of the nine types of selection characteristic, it was felt that the sample suitably reflected the range of provision available in the city.

At this time, one hostel had to be excluded because it was apparent that the accommodation provided was not explicitly for homeless people (although homeless people were accepted and housed there). The remaining eleven hostels were then grouped according to similar characteristics. Four groups emerged and one hostel from each was chosen for the next stage. The most diverse four hostels were selected, again in order to ensure that the range of provision was reflected.

Stage two of the fieldwork

The aim of stage two was to provide a pluralistic evaluation of the four case study hostels. To this end, the views and experiences of various relevant groups of individuals were sought. Interviews were, thus, conducted with a mixture of

residents, ex-residents, workers, managers, management committee members, referral agency representatives, volunteers, and involved other professionals[1]. The mixture varied slightly between the hostels, but the general pattern for each was:

* 5 or 6 interviews with present residents
* 2 interviews with workers
* 1 interview with a manager
* 1 interview with an ex-resident
* 1 interview with a member of a referral agency
* 1 interview with an involved other professional

(or 1 interview with a management committee member, or 1 interview with a volunteer, as an alternative to any of the others)

Forty-eight interviews (twelve in each of the hostels) were conducted between February and June 1994. The interviews were tape-recorded and took place in a variety of quiet settings (such as empty offices, residents' bedrooms, or vacant hostel units). Each interview lasted between forty and ninety minutes and addressed a range of issues relating to the research questions. As it was not possible to predefine all of the topics which might be relevant, different, but co-ordinated, semi-structured topic guides were used for the different participating groups[2] (see appendix C for an example topic guide). Interviewees were encouraged to speak freely and to develop their own interests and thoughts, but attempts were also made to ensure that most of the

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[1] See glossary.

[2] Seven basic topic guides were designed. These were for residents, ex-residents, workers and managers, referral agency representatives, management committee members, volunteers, and involved others respectively. Essentially, the seven topic guides covered the same issues, but were adapted in order to address the particular areas of knowledge and interest of the different respondent groups. Each of the seven topic guides was also modified to make it relevant to the particular hostel concerned.

points on the guides were addressed by all of the respondents in order to facilitate comparison.

Initially, the intention had been to introduce a longitudinal element to the study by interviewing some residents just after they had moved in and then some months later. This was to ascertain whether, and how, opinions might have changed. In the event this proved impractical as it was not possible to predict who would stay. By way of compromise, it was nevertheless possible to ask respondents how their feelings towards the hostel had changed over time.

Part 3: Methodological complexities and ethical considerations

Certain methodological complexities and ethical issues arose in relation to the fieldwork. Whilst these did not invalidate or compromise the study as a whole, they require some elaboration and are consequently discussed below.

Selection

In spite of all efforts to provide a precise and unambiguous definition of supported hostel accommodation for homeless people, it was not possible to arrive at any single or absolute specification. The distinction between hostel, group home, and night shelter remained blurred. Furthermore, it was not always possible to ascertain whether homelessness, or some other need, such as mental health, was the main reason that accommodation was being offered. This presumably arose because homelessness and other personal problems are frequently inextricably linked.

It was also difficult to categorise hostels, or to make definitive statements about the kind of provision they were offering. Much accommodation was funded and managed by a mixture of bodies and this meant that the main providing agency was not

always apparent. Furthermore, 'provider' could be interpreted variously (for example, 'provider of revenue', 'provider of building/ facilities', or 'provider of staffing'). Likewise, stated hostel policies and actual hostel practices (particularly relating to referral criteria or length of stay) were not always consistent.

The study also proved lacking in a race dimension. Indeed, only three non-white individuals were interviewed. Whilst this reflected the predominantly white racial mix within the four case study hostels, it did not reflect the racial mix of homeless people city-wide. Rather than targeting non-white residents or an all black organisation (which, in any case, seemed unlikely to reveal the diverse experiences of race), it was considered more relevant and useful to investigate some of the reasons why the apparent under-representation of non-white respondents might have occurred. Possible explanations for this are discussed in chapter 8.

Access

In terms of securing access to the hostels, no organisation refused to co-operate, but some were clearly more enthusiastic than others. Interviews frequently had to be postponed for a variety of reasons, but only one or two had to be cancelled or abandoned. Gaining access to a balanced number and mix of respondents was not, however, always straightforward. Not all hostels had management committee members or volunteers and some only just had sufficient staff or current residents to meet the target quotas.

Respondents themselves differed in their willingness to participate. Involved other professionals were the most difficult group to engage. Many stressed that they were overworked, understaffed, or knew insufficient about the research topic to be of any use. In practice, however, none of these

objections proved insurmountable. Hostel staff were the most indifferent about being interviewed. Frequently, they could only be accessed via their management. Indeed, in many cases, the attitude of staff towards the usefulness of the research, and consequently their enthusiasm for it, seemed to be predetermined by the prevailing attitude of the managers of their particular organisation.

In three of the four hostels, staff clearly understated residents' willingness and ability to be involved. This seemed to constitute a certain degree of protectionism, given that residents were often the most amenable group of respondents and many residents stressed how nice it was to have something useful to do. For reasons of confidentiality, and because of the lack of a telephone, ex-residents proved the most difficult respondent group to contact and a third party often had to assist in the process.

The interviews

All respondents expressed views and opinions, but communication problems and the lack of understanding in the resident interviews were far greater than had been anticipated. Difficulties related to mental health problems (including distraction, agitation, extreme nervousness, depression, and hallucination); learning difficulties; limited english; limited verbal skills; deafness; and memory problems. Residents selected out for interview by staff tended to be easier to interview than those more randomly approached. This seemed to arise because staff identified residents whom they considered would be most willing to participate, would have lots to say, and the ability to express it. Whilst this kind of pre-selection made the interviewing easier, where possible efforts were made to persuade the staff to allow residents to be more randomly approached.

One particular concern in relation to the interviews was that

respondents were not always consistent in their level of criticism. Whilst unwillingness to criticise others was common, respondents sometimes became more critical during the course of the interview, as they appeared to relax. Likewise, they occasionally made more disparaging comments once the tape-recorder had been turned off. In an endeavour to counter this, confidentiality was repeatedly emphasised throughout all stages of the fieldwork.

A final methodological issue related to the need, on three occasions, to interview couples together. In all three instances this was deemed unavoidable, either because of the undue anxiety which appeared likely to result if one respondent was asked to leave, or because the respondents (all residents) made it clear that they would not be willing to be interviewed if separated. In each instance, the desire to be interviewed together was clearly the explicit wish of both partners, and not simply the effect of one dominating the other. One respondent from each pair was selected to answer the questions and the other asked not to participate until the end. In the event this proved relatively unproblematic as couples only very occasionally wanted to discuss an issue in order to come to an agreed response.

Conclusion

To conclude, the research methods adopted were underpinned by the theory advanced in chapter 4. The fieldwork was thus based on the premise that all homeless people should have a right to be seen, but simultaneously all homeless people should have a right to define and to interpret their own experiences. Indeed, only where individuals are treated as subjects, rather than as objects of inquiry, will research be done 'for' rather than 'on' them (Duelli Klein, 1983). The aim was not to seek simple causal explanations, grand theories, or easy answers to what were clearly complex issues. The intention was rather to build on collective knowledge. As discussed in chapter 4, this did not

mean accepting naive ideal notions of consensus or ignoring legitimate differences between individuals. The aim was simply to increase communication and to widen debate in order to expand choices and to produce the best technical and experiential knowledge possible (Doyal and Gough, 1991).

CHAPTER 6: THE HOSTEL MIX IN A LOCAL AREA

Introduction

Stage one of the fieldwork was designed to accomplish two goals. These were to build up a profile of the hostel mix in the case study area and to select a small number of hostels for subsequent in-depth study. Findings from this stage inform chapters 6 and 7 of the thesis.

The aim of chapter 6 is to locate the study within its broader local, regional, and national context. To this end, the chapter comprises three parts. These are an introductory profile of the research area, a national overview of hostel provision, and a more detailed analysis of the hostel sector in the case study area. Chapter 7 subsequently provides detailed profiles of the four organisations used in the second and more qualitative stage.

Part 1: The case study area

The research was conducted in a large metropolitan city hereafter referred to as Hostelville. Hostelville was located in the county hereafter referred to as Hostelshire.

Economic characteristics

Hostelville was a major commercial, industrial, administrative and cultural centre and a focal point for road and rail communications (Municipal Year Book, 1994). In spring 1993, the percentage of economically active[1] residents in the city was

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[1] *Economically active* - the percentage of the home population aged sixteen or over who are in the civilian labour force. The civilian labour force includes people who are either

about 64 per cent. This was similar to the economic activity rates of both Hostelshire and England (Central Statistical Office, 1994). In both Hostelville and Hostelshire the percentages of men and of women in employment[2] at sometime in the week before the 1991 Census were similar to the respective percentages of men and of women in employment in Great Britain as a whole (that is, 76.8 per cent of men aged 16-64 and 62.9 per cent of women aged 15-69) (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1992). According to the City Council Department of Housing Services (1994a), very high levels of unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment, persisted in the inner areas of Hostelville.

Population

Hostelville had a resident population of over half a million. Ethnic minority groups comprised about 6 per cent of the population of Hostelville, about 8 per cent of the population of Hostelshire, and about 6 per cent of the population of Great Britain as a whole (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1992).

Housing tenure

Hostelville had a lower percentage of owner occupied housing (61 per cent), but a higher percentage of local authority stock (27 per cent), relative to regional and national figures of 66 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. The percentage of households renting privately, from a housing association, or with a job, was similar to the regional and national percentages (see

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in employment (whether employed, self-employed, or on work-related Government employment and training programmes, but excluding those in the armed forces) or unemployed.

[2] Full-time or part-time employees, self-employed, or on a Government scheme.

Table 6.1). On Census night, the percentage of households living in shared dwellings was 0.4 in Hostelville and 0.2 in Hostelshire. Both of these were very similar to the national percentage of 0.3 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1992).

Table 6.1 : Selected tenure characteristics

	Percentage of households			
Area	Owner occupied (owned outright or buying)	Rented privately, from a housing assoc-iation or with a job	Rented from a local authority or new town	Total
Hostelville	61	11	27	100
Hostelshire	66	11	23	100
Great Britain	66	12	21	100

Source: *1991 Census*. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1992).

Percentages are rounded. Base is total households with residents - 1991 population base.

Housing need

During the late 1980s and early 1990s Hostelville had experienced sharp increases in homelessness enquiries and acceptances. These had peaked at 1992/93. Over 1993/94 there had been a slight reduction, but the number of homeless enquiries during that year was still 152 per cent higher than in 1987/88 and the number of households accepted as homeless 198 per cent higher. Accordingly, pressure on local authority and housing association provision remained high (City Council Department of

Housing Services, 1994a).

On 1 April 1994 (the time of the fieldwork), the total number of households on the city's housing waiting list was about 22,000. This included almost 1,500 (7 per cent) black and ethnic minority applicants. On 31 March 1994, 510 homeless households were resident in temporary accommodation in the city. Of these, 128 had been accepted as being in 'priority need' (City Council Department of Housing Services, 1994a).

Local authorities, regionally and nationally, use a variety of temporary accommodation forms to house homeless households during enquiries or awaiting permanent provision. These include bed and breakfast hotels; hostels (including women's refuges); private sector accommodation on lease or licence; short-life dwellings; other kinds of temporary accommodation (such as mobile homes); and 'Homeless at Home'[3] (DOE, 1994a). In Hostelville only a very limited range of temporary accommodation types were being used to this discharge this duty.

Of the 510 homeless households resident in temporary accommodation in Hostelville on 31 March 1994, 435 (85 per cent) were in hostels (including reception centres and emergency units); 26 (5 per cent) were in women's refuges; and 49 (10 per cent) were in short-life local authority/ housing association dwellings. Unlike more regional and national practices, no other form of temporary accommodation was being used (DOE, 1994a).

Over recent years the impact of care in the community had continued to bolster urgent housing need amongst many sections of the population of Hostelville (City Council Department of Housing Services, 1994a). Since 1989/90, homelessness acceptances on the grounds of mental ill health had risen by 773 per cent and households accepted as homeless with other special priority needs (including vulnerable young people and women

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[3] See glossary.

experiencing violence) had increased by 932 per cent. There had also been large rises in certain reasons for homelessness. These included women becoming homeless because of violence (99 per cent); persons leaving hospitals, hostels, or other institutions (347 per cent); and households losing private rented accommodation (90 per cent). The number of households accepted as homeless through mortgage arrears or repossessions had reduced over 1993/94, but still accounted for 25 per cent of homeless acceptances (City Council Department of Housing Services, 1994a)[4].

In 1993/94, the homelessness and advisory services provided by the city housing department had commenced major reorganisation. This involved the merging of services to single homeless people, family hostel facilities, and all centralised housing advice facilities. The aim of this was to provide a more unified and strategic approach to service delivery and to development. Priorities for the ensuing year included reviewing the function of the family hostels, increasing hostel facilities for women with children, and increasing emergency hostel provision for homeless young people. It was also anticipated that hostel services to homeless men in the city would require continual reassessment, given the proposed closure of three large direct access hostels and the planned opening of one male only move-on facility.

In its 1994/5-1996/7 housing strategy document, the city council housing department highlighted its own key role in identifying needs and influencing the allocation of resources and the nature of future housing provision in Hostelville. Simultaneously, this document maintained that the increasing number of vulnerable people seeking and gaining local authority and housing association accommodation would place a much greater strain on social housing providers in the city. Accordingly, it advocated joint working between caring and housing organisations

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[4] The usefulness of these percentages is limited because the source does not reveal any absolute numbers.

and the involvement of various sectors, such as social services, health care services, the private sector, voluntary agencies, and housing associations (City Council Department of Housing Services, 1994a).

Part 2: A national overview of hostel provision

The ability to relate the pattern of hostel provision in Hostelville to the broader regional and national pattern of hostel provision was hampered by a dearth of relevant, accessible, up-to-date secondary data. The collection of information about hostels is both complex and expensive. Hostel accommodation comprises a diverse mixture of local authority, housing association, and voluntary sector input. Indeed, even within individual schemes, management, funding, and the provision of facilities and services are frequently split between bodies and organisations. Additionally, the sector as a whole is prone to rapid changes in number and form, compounding all of which, there is, in any case, no precise or commonly accepted definition of what exactly a hostel is.

As indicated in the literature review (see chapter 3), information about hostel accommodation must frequently be gleaned from research which has a broader homelessness remit, or from small scale local studies, or from reviews of provision for particular client groups. The last national survey of hostels (and lodging houses) was conducted in the 1970s (Wingfield Digby, 1976); there is no national directory of hostel provision; and there has never been a census or national study of the local authority supply.

In June 1994, the Department of the Environment commissioned research to provide a national overview of local authority hostel accommodation and the ways in which it was being utilised by councils to fulfil their housing responsibilities. Whilst this should prove an invaluable project, it can only hope to provide

a very partial national portrayal of hostel provision, given the vast numbers of schemes which operate without any local authority input.

Although difficult and costly to compile and to maintain, many areas do produce their own local guides or directories of hostel and emergency accommodation. These guides and directories provide a vital (although not a regionally and nationally co-ordinated) source of information lacking in any other readily accessible form. By collating information about each scheme in a region, these handbooks enable homeless people and their advisors to assess the suitability of different projects and to exercise some choice. For the providers, meanwhile, having their service fully described can prevent inappropriate referrals and also helps them to attract the residents whom they particularly aim to serve (Chandler *et al.*, 1991).

Such a guide to accommodation for homeless people was available in Hostelville, but had been compiled in 1992. There were no more recent versions and the forum which had compiled it was, by the time of the fieldwork, defunct. In the absence of more detailed information, it seemed almost impossible to ascertain how provision in Hostelville reflected the wider regional and national pattern of provision, or how typical, or indeed atypical, the use of Hostelville as a case study area was. The 1991 Census (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1992) and the Housing Corporation's annual statistical survey (The Housing Corporation, 1994a) could, nevertheless, provide some additional, but very limited, context.

The 1991 Census

The 1991 Census enumerated persons present on Census night in a variety of types of communal establishment. On Census night, 1.2 per cent of the population of Hostelville, 1.1 per cent of the population of Hostelshire, and 1.5 *per cent of the population*

of Great Britain lived in communal establishments. The term 'communal establishment' included all accommodation providing some form of communal catering, and therefore many hostels.

Although useful, such information was limited in terms of the present study because much hostel accommodation does not provide communal catering, and so was not included in the categorisation. Furthermore, very different kinds of hostels occurred in many of the 18 categories which comprised the classification of 'communal establishment'. For present purposes, group 6[5] (housing association homes and hostels) and group 14[6] (hostels and common lodging houses - non-housing association) were considered the most relevant and are, consequently, considered in more detail below.

In Great Britain on Census night there were 1,233 non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses accommodating 23,009 people (including staff and non residents). Of these 15,680 (68 per cent) were males and 7,329 (32 per cent) were females. In Hostelshire there were 44 non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses accommodating 569 people (including staff and non residents). Of these 395 (69 per cent) were males and 174 (31 per cent) were females. In Hostelville there were 23 non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses accommodating 267 people (including staff and non

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[5] Group 6 included almshouses or Abbeyfield Societies registered with the Housing Corporation and Scottish Homes, residential homes registered with a local authority and managed by a housing association, and other homes and hostels managed by a housing association (except for housing association children's homes, which were included in Group 9).

[6] Group 14 included hostels not covered in other groups, such as common lodging houses and reception centres with resident staff, used by people as their main or only residence and run by religious institutions or voluntary organisations (for example, the Salvation Army), or by private individuals, commercial organisations, or local authorities. All housing association hostels were coded to Group 6.

residents). Of these 190 (71 per cent) were males and 77 (29 per cent) were females (see Table 6.2).

In Great Britain, on Census night, there were 1,496 housing association homes and hostels accommodating 23,635 people (including staff and non residents). In Hostelshire there were 45 housing association homes and hostels accommodating 586 people (including staff and non residents), and in Hostelville there were 12 housing association homes and hostels accommodating 215 people (including staff and non residents). Of those accommodated in housing association homes and hostels in Hostelshire 272 (46 per cent) were men and 314 (54 per cent) were women. Of those accommodated in housing association homes and hostels in Hostelville 91 (42 per cent) were men and 124 (58 per cent) were women (see Table 6.3).

Tables 6.2 and 6.3 highlight a clear gender difference between people resident in group 6 and people resident in group 14 accommodation. Housing association accommodation was more likely to cater for women, whilst hostels and common lodging houses of the non-housing association type seemed more likely to cater for men. In Hostelville on Census night there were nearly twice as many hostels and common lodging houses of the non-housing association type as of the housing association type and, overall, more men than women resident.

Table 6.2 : Gender of residents of non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses

	Hostelville	Hostelshire	Great Britain
Percentage of males accommodated	71	69	68
Percentage of females accommodated	29	31	32
Total	100	100	100
(Base)	(767)	(569)	(23,009)

Source: *1991 Census*. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1992).

Percentages are rounded. Base is total number of people accommodated on Census night (residents and non-residents) - 1991 population base.

Table 6.3 : Gender of residents of housing association homes and hostels

	Hostelville	Hostelshire	Great Britain
Percentage of males accommodated	42	46	-
Percentage of females accommodated	58	54	-
Total	100	100	100
(Base)	(215)	(586)	(23,635)

Source: *1991 Census*. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1992).

Percentages are rounded. Base is total number of people accommodated on Census night (residents and non-residents) - 1991 population base.

Further analysis of the non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses in Hostelville revealed that only 21 per cent of residents were in employment. This seemed low given that 86 per cent of males aged 16-64 and 70 per cent of females aged 16-59 were economically active in Hostelville at that time (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1992). Although residents of the non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses were spread across a full range of ages, there was a far higher ratio of men to women accommodated in the older, than in the younger, age groups (see Table 6.4). Consistent with previous research (as discussed in chapter 3), this seemed to reflect a changing pattern of use of hostel accommodation by age and gender.

Table 6.4 : Age and gender of residents of the non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses in Hostelville on Census night

	Male %	Female %	Total %
Under 15	1	3	2
16-17	8	19	11
18-29	23	45	29
30-44	20	17	19
45-pensionable age	32	11	26
Pensionable age and over	16	5	13
Total	100	100	100
(Base)	(171)	(64)	(235)

Source: *1991 Census.* Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1992).

Percentages are rounded. Base is all residents accommodated in non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses in Hostelville on Census night.

Individuals from minority ethnic groups, meanwhile, appeared to be over-represented in non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses on Census night. Accordingly, they constituted about 10 per cent of this hostel population, but only about 6 per cent of the general city population (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1992) (see Table 6.5).

Table 6.5 : Ethnic origin of residents of the non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses in Hostelville on Census night

	%
White	90
Black	7
Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi	2
Chinese and Other	1
Total	100
(Base)	(235)

Source: *1991 Census*. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1992).

Percentages are rounded. Base is all residents accommodated in non-housing association hostels and common lodging houses in Hostelville on Census night.

The Housing Corporation's Annual Statistical Survey

Further information relating to the pattern of housing association hostel accommodation was ascertained from the Housing Corporation's annual statistical survey (The Housing Corporation, 1994a). This showed that in 1993 housing associations owned 65,900 bedspaces in hostels. This was an increase of 10 per cent

since 1992, when the figure had been 59,900. In 1992, housing associations managed a further 11,000 hostel bedspaces on behalf of other organisations, including other housing associations and voluntary groups. In 1993, this figure had been 10,000.

Of those bedspaces owned by housing associations in 1993, over half (57 per cent) were in metropolitan areas, and most of these were in Greater London (36 per cent of the total). There was also a more general concentration of housing association owned bedspaces in the south-east. The North and Merseyside had 22 per cent of the bedspaces, the Midlands 17 per cent, and the West 13 per cent. In Hostelshire, the percentage of all housing association bedspaces nationally had remained fairly stable between 1989 and 1993 (see Table 6.6).

Table 6.6 : Number and percentage of housing association hostel beds in Hostelshire

	Number of beds	% of all beds nationally
31 March 1989	1400	3
31 March 1990	1700	4
31 March 1991	1700	3
31 March 1992	2200	4
31 March 1993	2400	4

Source: *The Housing Corporation's Annual Statistical Survey* (The Housing Corporation, 1994a).

Part 3: Hostel provision in the case study area

In order to provide a general overview of hostel provision in Hostelville itself, the study drew upon a range of secondary data

sources. These included information relating to other research in progress in the city, monitoring statistics, and the local guide to emergency accommodation.

Other research

At the time of the present investigation, Hostelville city council was, itself, undertaking a related piece of research. This had been initiated because two of its emergency women's hostels were 'silting up' (that is, becoming blocked by a stationary resident population) and this was felt to be hampering their main function as direct access facilities. The high level of support required by residents in those hostels, and the lack of suitable alternative provision for them, were believed to be the main reasons for such problems. It was also hypothesised that other agencies in the city were tightening their acceptance criteria because they did not have the staff or resources to deal with women with high support needs. Furthermore, where women with high support needs were referred on to other more suitable schemes, they were often leaving or being evicted prior to being rehoused. It was then common for them to return to the local authority emergency hostels, so repeating the cycle.

In addition to this research, a well-established voluntary sector organisation (providing housing, care, and support for 150 single homeless people in Hostelville) was also carrying out a local study of homelessness and services for homeless people. The organisation concerned hypothesised that the development of services in the statutory and voluntary sectors had greatly increased provision for homeless people in the city and this had been causing high levels of voids within its own schemes. Research was consequently being undertaken with a view to reconsidering the direction of the organisation's future services.

One issue to arise from these related pieces of research was

the lack of collaboration and co-operation between the concerned agencies and between other similar organisations operating in Hostelville. Because of this, it was not possible to ascertain whether the issue of high voids was only a problem to the organisation researching it, or of more general concern city-wide. Such information could have been assimilated easily, if good communication channels and effective monitoring systems had been operating.

Monitoring statistics

Within Hostelville there was no centralised monitoring of hostel provision nor of its use. Some organisations had developed their own record-keeping systems, but there appeared to be little inter-agency collaboration, and hence little consistency, between them. The lack of comparable data for schemes across the city limited the use of any statistics which were recorded and could even render them potentially misleading. This is discussed below.

A range of data relating to local authority hostel provision and its use was available from the city council (City Council Department of Housing Services, 1994b). Taking the information relating to the ethnic origins of hostel residents as an example, the statistics available from the city council indicated that the hostels in Hostelville were catering for a diverse range of ethnic groups (Irish, UK Asian, Afro-Caribbean, Asian, other European, and Chinese/ Vietnamese). Indeed, the percentage of residents from minority ethnic groups accommodated in each of the hostels for which data was secured was consistently greater than the percentage of non-white residents in the city (6 per cent) and the percentage of non-white applicants on the local authority housing waiting list (7 per cent) (see earlier).

When considered in isolation, such statistics, and any inferences which might be made from them, were problematic for

a number of reasons. Firstly, the onset of such recording had been quite recent and this made it impossible to trace any trends which could have contributed to a more comprehensive picture. Secondly, comparable data was not always available for other hostels in Hostelville and any findings could not, therefore, be related to the use of hostel provision and services by ethnic groups in the city as a whole. Thirdly, even within the local authority hostels for which information was available, the categories and time periods monitored were not wholly consistent, so further hampering reliable analysis and comparison.

Moreover, such monitoring statistics could only paint a picture of provision and services, without being able to explain, or to account for, why that picture might have arisen. As a result, potentially important explanatory factors could easily be overlooked. For example, the data recorded did not, and could not, consider what, if any, influence the presence of Asian language speaking workers, or non-white hostel staff and managers, or the location of the building might have had on the ethnic mix of residents. Likewise, it did not, and could not, consider what role less tangible features, such as culture or stigma, might have played in relation to such matters.

The local guide to emergency accommodation

Whilst the material presented in the preceding sections is helpful in terms of setting the scene and contextualising the fieldwork which was undertaken for this thesis, it provided little information about the kind of hostel provision which was actually available to homeless people in Hostelville. For this the research, as discussed in chapter 5, drew heavily upon the local guide to emergency accommodation.

Unfortunately, the information provided by this guide was not always wholly accurate or up-to-date. A few new hostels were not included, one or two had since closed, and others had changed

aspects of their provision. There was also little information about the use of hostel accommodation by minority ethnic groups. In spite of these limitations, the directory was still an invaluable and reasonably reliable source of information about hostel provision in Hostelville, which, given time and resource constraints, the research itself could not have bettered. Moreover, as the fieldwork progressed, material from the guide could be supplemented by information from various project reviews, reports and information sheets, and from personal contact with key persons working in the field.

One clear advantage of the data provided by the Hostelville guide was that it recorded similar information for most of the city's hostels. Because of this, it was possible to classify provision according to nine types of characteristic (referred to in chapter 5 and reproduced in appendix A). A simple, and relatively up-to-date, data base of hostel provision in Hostelville could thus be complied. This is shown in full in appendix D (i) and summarised in Table 6.7. An abridged version of the main data base (comprising only the twelve hostels participating in the postal survey) is provided in appendix D (ii) and summarised in Table 6.8.

Appendix D (i) enabled various characteristics of the thirty-six recorded hostels to be cross-compared. Provision was found to be very diverse, but pairs and groups of hostels with very similar characteristics (that is hostel types) were, nevertheless, apparent. These included:

> *Hostels 3, 4 and 19*: small to medium sized voluntary sector hostels providing for single men and women of any age group.
>
> *Hostels 1 and 23*: large local authority short-stay family hostels providing 24 hour staff support.
>
> *Hostels 16, 17 and 22*: small to medium sized voluntary sector hostels providing for young single men and women.
>
> *Hostels 20 and 21*: small voluntary sector hostels providing accommodation of an unspecified duration for

young single men and women who were ex-offenders or at risk of offending.

Hostels 6, 34 and 35: large hostels run by religious or charitable organisations and providing unspecified or long-term accommodation for single men and women.

Appendix D (ii) revealed that the sample of twelve hostels, used during the first stage of the fieldwork, were also diverse, but could again be categorised into groups (this was after the necessary exclusion of one organisation, as described in chapter 5). These groups were:

Group 1
Two hostels for single men, provided by religious or charitable organisations, one of which was a large hostel with dormitory-type accommodation (hostels 27 and 28).

Group 2
Two large, temporary, local authority family hostels providing 24 hour cover for residents of both genders (hostels 1 and 23).

Group 3
Two medium sized voluntary sector hostels catering for women and children escaping violence, one specifically catering for black women; and a further three hostels providing for single women only, one for women with ancillary problems, often mental health related (hostels 8: 10; 13; 24; and 33).

Group 4
Two small hostels, provided by religious or charitable organisations for single, young people (hostels 2 and 30).

Summary characteristics of the four hostels used in the main stage of the fieldwork are presented in appendix D (iii) and discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

Table 6.7 : Summary characteristics of the thirty-six supported hostels for homeless people in Hostelville

Characteristic	Number of Hostels
1. *The main providing agency*	
local authority	8
voluntary sector	17
religious or charitable organisation	9
mixed	2
2. *Marital/ family status of residents*	
single	31
family	2
mixed single and family	3
3. *Gender of residents*	
men only	8
women only	9
mixed gender	19
4. *Age group of residents*	
16-25 years	13
over 17 years	1
over 18 years	2
over 21 years	2
over 30 years	2
any age	16
5. *Any particular group/s catered for*	
none	26
women escaping domestic violence	1
black women escaping violence	1
people leaving care	2
offenders or people at-risk of offending	2
people with alcohol, or mental health problems, or learning disabilities	3
any	1
6. *Hostel size*	
10 or less bed spaces/ units	12
11-30 bed spaces/ units	13
over 30 bed spaces/ units	10
various (spread over different locations)	1
7. *Length of residence*	
less than a year	7
1-3 years	5
over 3 years	2
unspecified	13
unrecorded	9
8. *Sleeping arrangements*	
single sleeping spaces	25
mixed (shared and single) sleeping	7
dormitory-type (including cubicles)	2
unspecified	2
9. *Amount of support provided*	
24 hours	14
office hours only	3
office hours without of hours call	8
office hours with limited on-call	2
no resident staff	1
unknown	8

Table 6.8 : Summary characteristics of the twelve supported hostels for homeless people participating in the postal survey

Characteristic	Number of Hostels
1. The main providing agency	
local authority	3
voluntary sector	5
religious or charitable organisation	3
mixed	1
2. Marital/ family status of residents	
single	8
family	2
mixed single and family	2
3. Gender of residents	
men only	3
women only	5
mixed gender	4
4. Age group of residents	
16-25 years	2
over 17 years	-
over 18 years	1
over 21 years	-
over 30 years	2
any age	7
5. Any particular group/s catered for	
none	5
women escaping domestic violence	1
black women escaping violence	1
people leaving care	1
offenders or people at-risk of offending	-
people with alcohol, or mental health problems, or learning disabilities	3
any	1
6. Hostel size	
10 or less bed spaces/ units	3
11-30 bed spaces/ units	5
over 30 bed spaces/ units	3
various (spread over different locations)	1
7. Length of residence	
less than a year	4
1-3 years	2
over 3 years	1
unspecified	4
unrecorded	1
8. Sleeping arrangements	
single sleeping spaces	7
mixed (shared and single) sleeping	4
dormitory-type (including cubicles)	1
unspecified	-
9. Amount of support provided	
24 hours	5
office hours only	1
office hours without of hours call	4
office hours with limited on-call	2
no resident staff	-
unknown	-

Summary

This chapter has endeavoured to establish the broader context within which the fieldwork for this research took place. It was not possible to build up a comprehensive national, or even regional, picture of homelessness or hostel provision because of the many limitations of existing data sources. It was, however, possible to establish that Hostelville provided a large number of diverse kinds of hostel accommodation and, therefore, ample scope for more qualitative investigation.

A careful selection process also meant that it was possible to claim that the twelve hostels chosen for the postal survey, and the four hostels subsequently used for further in-depth study in the main stage of the fieldwork, reflected the diversity of provision in the case study area. Furthermore, the four selected hostels appeared to reflect common hostel types. Thus, each had at least one counterpart with very similar characteristics within the case study area. That the four selected organisations did not represent all possible forms, or types, of hostel accommodation was not a problem for the present research, given that the aim was to consider processes rather than to compare institutions.

CHAPTER 7: FOUR CASE STUDY HOSTELS

Introduction

Information from the postal survey and from various other documents produced by, and about, the case study organisations enabled profiles of the four hostels to be drawn up prior to the commencement of the interviews. These rather factual accounts could then be supplemented by more subjective material arising from actual contact with, and visits to, the accommodation itself. Both sources of data revealed important characteristics about the case study hostels. Accordingly, both are presented below.

The four case study hostels

Hostel A: a profile

Hostel A was part of a national network of hostels and other services provided by a large religious/ charitable organisation. Country-wide, the organisation had many hostels of various sizes, much of its newer accommodation being small and of a higher quality than A. A was one of its older, larger, more traditional buildings, providing only basic accommodation and amenities.

Located on the edge of the city centre, A catered for men over eighteen years of age. In emergencies it would accommodate those under eighteen, but only with the intention of finding them more suitable accommodation as quickly as possible. All residents were required to be physically and mentally able to cope with a hostel environment. Infirm men, those with a known history of violence, or those with a record of not paying rent were not accepted.

The hostel was direct access. This meant that men could arrive at the hostel and secure a bed for the night, without the need for any other agency involvement. Agency referrals (usually from probation, social services, hospitals, or the police) were accepted, but most residents referred themselves, having learned of the hostel by word of mouth, or having stayed there previously. Bedspaces were always available and the referral criteria were not rigidly applied.

The referral agency representative interviewed for the fieldwork reported good formal and informal communications with the hostel, but stressed that she had worked hard to establish these. To this end, she had initiated a referral system, which she had also encouraged her colleagues in the probation service to adopt. This involved issuing all individuals referred to A with a letter and a contact name. It also involved assessing the needs of individuals both before and after they had been accommodated.

Although A had originally been established to provide short-stay emergency accommodation, there was, in practice, no specific policy operating in relation to this. The minimum length of stay was one day and there was no maximum. There was an equal opportunities policy, but no disabled facilities. Funding came from Housing Benefit, residents' personal contributions, and an organisational fund. There was also some social services input.

The hostel was staffed seven days a week by nineteen paid workers, organised hierarchically. Staff included the manager and his wife (who lived on the premises); the deputy manager and his wife (who also lived on the premises); the assistant manager (male); the care assistant/ project worker (male); the toilet cleaner (male); the cleaner (female); the bedmaker (male); six kitchen staff (all male); and four nightstaff (all male). There were no volunteers.

A duty officer worked between 8:00 A.M. and 11:00 P.M. and was

on call on the premises at other times. The care assistant/ project worker provided support and personal care, mainly to the older residents, and a mobile health care team for homeless people held a weekly surgery on the premises. No languages other than English were spoken by the employees. A short church service was held every morning and there was a longer one on Sundays. In terms of move-on, the hostel enlisted the services of other organisations operating in the city.

The hostel had 104 bedspaces, located on two floors. These were arranged in small dormitories, mostly of four beds each. Previously, one floor had been used to accommodate the longer-stay residents and the other had been used by those requiring more temporary shelter. Recently, the whole of the top floor had had to be closed because of decreasing demand. At the time of the interviews, only about forty bed spaces were in use and there were rumours amongst the residents that the entire building might soon close. It later transpired that closure was, in fact, planned for October 1994. There were also rumours that another, more modern, building might eventually be opened.

The hostel was partly furnished. It had four baths (only one of which was in use), four showers, twenty toilets, a laundry, and two television rooms. One television room had been designated as a smoking area and the other as a non-smoking zone. There was a clothing store, a safe for valuables, and books and games were also available. Each bedspace had a locker for personal possessions and there was further storage space for items which could not be so accommodated. Rooms were charged at the rate of £93.70 per week, plus £15 for those requiring personal care. This included three meals a day in the canteen. Almost all of the residents claimed Housing Benefit, Income Support, or other State Benefits. Residents were only occasionally in work. Very occasionally, a resident's income could not be accounted for.

The doors to the hostel were locked by 11:00 P.M. Although

residents did not have keys, there was a late pass system. Access to sleeping areas was restricted between 8:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., Monday to Friday. There was also a list of rules and regulations, including no alcohol on the premises. Men were not admitted if, in the opinion of the duty officer, they were under the influence of alcohol. Guests were allowed, but visitors tended to be infrequent.

About two-thirds of the residents were over sixty years of age. Many had mobility and health problems and this made the size of the building, the number of stairs, and the lack of baths and adapted bathing facilities problematic. Some individuals had been resident since before record-keeping commenced (about eight years ago). There was no monitoring of residents' move-on patterns as this was not considered relevant to the work of the organisation.

Hostel A: a subjective account

Hostel A was situated on a main road leading out of the city towards the ring road. From the front exterior it was a fairly non-descript, newish looking building with dirty net curtains in all the windows and a minibus prominently parked outside. The older part of the hostel was more visible from around the corner. Essentially, the premises appeared bleak and uninviting.

On entering, the visitor was confronted by a set of iron bars. These separated the entrance passage from the office area. A permanent feature behind these bars was the manager's large, black labrador dog. Whilst the manager and his wife were 'around', they appeared remote. Callers were clearly to deal with the assistant manager and the care assistant, rather than those 'in charge'.

Inside, the building was spartan. Floors were polished, walls were whitewashed, a few essential notices were tacked up, and

many doors seemed to be locked. By the office there was a small secure room where medication was stored and where the visiting doctor conducted his surgery. Most of the beds had recently acquired duvets, but incontinence made carpeting infeasible. All of the chairs in the large communal sitting room downstairs were arranged in rows facing a television. This was mounted on the wall at the front and permanently on. Men tended to sit individually around this room and communication between them was virtually non-existent.

Down the corridor there was a large dining hall, which also had a television. This was more noisy and lively than the other communal area. Here the younger men gathered to play cards and two adult education workers conducted a weekly craft class. During class times the atmosphere was noticeably relaxed and welcoming and communication between the residents increased. Several men would sit around the far table with the workers, whilst others would continue to watch television as usual. At these times, there would be *friendly exchanges and bantering* across the hall and with the kitchen staff working in the adjacent room.

The assistant manager reported that the hostel had only had one long-term, non-white resident and this had been an Asian man. Occasionally the hostel had had non-white residents and these had tended to be West Indian men with mental health problems.

In hostel A interviews were completed with:

- 7 residents (several of whom were also ex-residents)
- 2 workers (one of whom was an ex-resident)
- 1 deputy manager
- 1 referral agency representative (a probation officer)
- 1 involved other professional (an adult education tutor)

Hostel B: a profile

Hostel B was a local authority hostel, funded by the housing department of the City Council. It catered for homeless families, including single pregnant women, but not single people who were not vulnerable, or children on their own (otherwise there were no age restrictions). The hostel had a female manager, a female assistant manager, and nine male and female hostel assistants. Together these nine workers provided twenty-four hour cover. There was no input from volunteers and no resident participation in the running of the accommodation.

Originally the hostel had been located in an old police station. It had then transferred to twelve maisonettes and six years ago moved to its present, purpose-built building. The manager had been the same person throughout these stages. The present hostel was a ten minute walk (or a short bus ride) away from the city centre. It had forty-six bedspaces arranged in different sized living units inside a courtyard. The courtyard was separated from the outside world by a seven foot high wall. People from various minority ethnic groups were often accommodated, although there was no official monitoring of this. There were no facilities for people with disabilities, although there was some speculation that an adapted unit might be developed.

There were six four-bedroomed houses, two three-bedroomed houses, four two-bedroomed houses, and a block of eight one-bedroomed flats. Families often shared the four-bedroomed and the three-bedroomed houses, but rarely the two-bedroomed houses or the one-bedroomed flats. There was also an office and reception, a boiler house, a laundry block, and a playroom (which could be used to house families in emergencies). There was no communal lounge. All the accommodation was self-contained and self-catering. Each living unit had a bath, a toilet, a cooker, a fridge, and cooking utensils. Residents could bring in their own televisions and videos, but not washing machines, driers, or

microwaves.

Accommodation costs varied according to the size of the unit, whether it was being shared, and residents' employment status. For those employed, a one-bedroomed unshared flat was £138.67, a two-bedroomed unshared house was £155.96, a three-bedroomed unshared house was £190.68, and a four-bedroomed unshared house was £208.04. Shared accommodation, regardless of size, was £132.37. For those on full Housing Benefit, a one-bedroomed unshared flat was £12.39, a two-bedroomed unshared house was £13.93, a three-bedroomed unshared house was £17.08, and a four-bedroomed unshared house was £18.62 (all plus Housing Benefit). Shared accommodation, regardless of size, was £11.76 (again, plus Housing Benefit). These costs included rent, heating, water, and furnishing. Almost all residents were claiming Housing Benefit and almost all were on Income Support, Sickness Benefit, maternity leave, or other state benefits. Only very few residents were ever in work.

During office hours referrals were made through the housing advice service in the city. After 6:00 P.M., at weekends, and during public holidays, referrals came through the emergency duty team run by the social services department. Bedspaces were usually available so there was no waiting-list. Hostel B was informed of who would be arriving either by the housing advice office or by the social services emergency duty team.

The maximum accommodation period was one year, but most people left after two or three months. This period had, however, been increasing recently, because of a lack of move-on accommodation. Between April 1993 and March 1994, only 16 per cent of those accommodated in B left to move into permanent local authority or housing association tenancies. Twenty-two per cent moved into other hostels, and a further 15 per cent moved into other forms of move-on accommodation or short-term lets (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 : Reasons for moving from hostel B

	%
Rehoused in local authority or housing association tenancy	16
Move-on/ short-term let	15
Other hostel	22
Found own accommodation	12
No forwarding address/ disappeared from hostel	20
Returned home	16
Total	100
(Base)	(328)

Source: City Council Department of Housing Services (1994b)

Percentages are rounded. Base is total number of residents discharged between 1 April 1993 and 31 March 1994.

In terms of resident access, there was only one key per house or flat. Where families were sharing, the first person in picked the key up and the last person out handed the key in to the office. Residents were not allowed to go out with the key. The locks were security locks and the keys were kept in the office so that staff could see at a glance who was in. Workers had access to residents' living areas at all times but did not always knock before entering them.

The hostel had fifteen conditions of residence. These related to the prompt payment of charges, restrictions on visitors, keeping the units clean, not leaving children in the care of other residents, keeping children under supervision, being in one's own unit by 10:30 P.M., and accepting responsibility for damage to the property and for television licences. A no male visitor rule had been implemented to protect families fleeing

violence, but also because of past experiences of male visitors abusing the accommodation. A copy of these conditions and an information sheet, including hostel and local services and facilities, were distributed to residents on their arrival.

During the first week of their stay, families were interviewed by a visiting officer from the council housing department. This was in order to assess whether a family was priority homeless or not, according to the homelessness legislation. Once accepted as being in priority need, families would then wait in the hostel for an offer of permanent accommodation. At any time during this period residents might be transferred to another hostel or to the city council's short-let scheme.

The role of hostel worker was to provide only general advice and practical support. Social work was deemed to be beyond the job remit and training of hostel workers. In practice, ninety per cent of residents had their own social workers and there was, in addition, a support worker, provided by the local authority, to work with lone mothers. Where more intensive input was needed, residents were directed to other more appropriate specialised services. Hostel B did not have any on-going contact with residents once they had left the accommodation. If someone was offered a tenancy, but refused a community care grant, the manager would, however, contact voluntary organisations in order to secure any available assistance. This was to enable residents to move into their new property as soon as possible, hence avoiding having to pay two rents and potentially accruing unnecessary debt.

Hostel B: a subjective account

Hostel B was located off the ring road in quite a deprived area of the city. There was a lack of local shops, although the city centre was within walking distance. The hostel was situated at the back of a little cul-de-sac, to the front of which were

various other local authority buildings: a housing office, a day centre, a health centre, and a children's nursery. From the outside, B was a new building of modern design. It did not, in itself, appear immediately institutional, but its location in this local authority enclave clearly indicated its 'council' origins. Within the units the furniture was basic and stolid, the beds crammed together (three to a double room, two to a single room, and bunkbeds to a box-room).

To enter the hostel it was necessary to pass through the reception area. Pinned to the walls were large warning notices, written in bold lettering. These included: 'NO MEN ALLOWED', 'NO EX-RESIDENTS', 'DO NOT...' etc. Behind a glass panel was a small, smoky room which was the office. Residents and visitors waited outside this panel, in the reception area, for staff attention. Although the building had clearly been designed to allow access only to those with a key, everything was relatively open and it was possible to wander through on invitation.

The manager tended to sit behind a desk in the office, attired in a smart navy blue suit, which resembled a uniform. Her appearance and demeanour seemed to reinforce the bureaucratic nature of her role and her rather official and formal approach to it. She was, nevertheless, welcoming and accessible. Indeed, she provided surprisingly ready access to the record cards of present residents and to the name and address of her line manager and to the hostel health visitor.

Tracing ex-residents, who had been rehoused by the hostel, proved more difficult. This was because most had moved into other temporary accommodation, sought private accommodation, left with no forwarding address, or returned home (see Table 7.1). Eventually, the address of a woman who had been rehoused by the council was located and supplied. Unfortunately, it later transpired that the disclosure of this had been a breach of confidentiality. Fortunately, the woman concerned was sympathetic to the research and so obliged with an interview

anyway.

The attitude of workers to residents at hostel B had an 'almost' derogatory feel to it. Indeed, the distinction between 'us' and 'them', made by many of the staff in respect of the residents, seemed to amount to more than simple professional distance. This was apparent from workers' statements, such as *'You'll find that a lot of them in here think...'*, *'A lot of them do...'*, and *'A lot of them won't...'*. Comments were also made about which residents would be 'better/ nicer' to talk to, and which might prove less responsive. In practice, all residents were equally polite and willing to assist with the research.

Both female employees interviewed were overtly critical of the residents. Likewise, they were cynical and scathing of residents' motives. Both were quite patronising and appeared to seek refuge behind jargon and a quasi policing role. Moreover, their impersonal and detached approach felt extremely defensive. Compounding this, the workers seemed preoccupied with their own needs. Thus, one spoke quite angrily about the local authority's emphasis on 'customer care', and yet its neglect of 'staff care': *'What, for example, happened to the new furnishings for the office when all the other units were being done?'*. In this respect, it appeared that certain staff were almost competing with the residents for limited attention and scarce resources.

In hostel B interviews were completed with:

- 6 residents (2 of whom were also ex-residents)
- 2 hostel assistants
- 1 ex-resident
- 1 assistant manager
- 1 referral agency representative (also the hostel line manager)
- 1 involved other professional (the local health visitor)

Hostel C: a profile

Hostel C was a registered charity and part of a larger city-wide parent organisation, introduced in chapter 6 because of a study it was, itself, conducting into high voids within its schemes. As discussed there, the organisation provided housing, care, and support to 150 single homeless people. To this end, it managed seven separate projects across the city and endeavoured to work in a 'person-centred' way, gearing support levels to the particular needs of individuals wherever possible.

Hostel C was the longest-established of the organisation's seven projects. It had been in existence for about twenty years and provided accommodation and support, of indefinite duration, to single women aged over thirty years. Most residents had more complex needs than simply somewhere to live. Indeed, many had mental health difficulties or ancillary problems which prevented them coping in their own tenancies. Conditions of residence for the hostel included being fairly mobile, being able to attend to basic personal needs, and being able to cook/ provide meals for oneself. The hostel did not accept women known to be excessively violent, involved with substance or alcohol abuse, or with a history of arson.

The hostel had a basic referral form, but no waiting-list. At the time of the fieldwork, there was an excess of bedspaces, which was causing concern within the organisation. Referrals usually came from other hostels and hospitals, but a need for greater publicity of C's work was recognised by the staff. Referral criteria were open to negotiation. Initial contact with the person being referred was always made outside of the hostel, that person then visited, a two or three day temporary stay would be offered and, if all was well, a permanent place arranged.

Within the hostel there were ten single bedspaces, but a further eight places were available in the group home facilities nearby. The group home facilities were for women needing less

intensive support. The hostel was easily accessible from the town centre by bus. Most residents were claiming Housing Benefit and either Income Support or other state benefits. Rooms were charged at the rate of £98.70 per week. This was full-board and included laundry facilities and laundry and cleaning materials, plus some items for personal hygiene (towels and soap etc.). Personal contributions were about £20, although residents themselves were not always sure of the exact amount.

The hostel had four baths, no showers, four toilets, two sitting rooms, two televisions, one laundry, and a shared kitchen-diner with two hobs, one oven, and a microwave. The accommodation was self-catering (either individually or in chosen groups) from the food provided in the fridge, freezer, and unlocked cupboards. Residents were asked to share household chores as there were no domestic staff. There were regular house meetings and resident input regarding issues such as new residents and household purchases was requested. This was in the belief that participation in the running of the house would be of use in later independent living.

The hostel provided an information sheet for residents. This included details about the facilities, the staffing, and the running of the house, plus some useful telephone numbers and a map. Common courtesy rules of a shared household applied. These were built into the licence agreement, along with a harassment policy, which forbade the harassment of other residents, neighbours, or staff. The residents had their own key to the front door and were free to come and go at will. They were, however, requested to notify another resident, or staff member, if they intended to be away overnight or longer. Overnight stays by men were not permitted and the women were discouraged from inviting boyfriends into their rooms at any time. There were no other restrictions on visitors, providing nuisance was not caused to other residents. The hostel was not a dry house, but excessive drinking was considered unacceptable.

In terms of equal opportunities, there was an organisational policy. The hostel did not, however, have any facilities to provide nursing care for someone with serious or prolonged illness or disability, and disabled access was limited. There was one ground floor room and bathroom, but steps went up to the front door and the doorways were narrow.

On site there were three workers of equal status. These were required to oversee the maintenance of the properties and to organise repairs and renewals where needed. They were also responsible for collecting weekly charges and handling petty cash for buying in food and other such items. This was done within specified budgets, over which there was frequent wrangling between the management and the staff. Workers offered help with practical tasks, benefits advice, and benefits claims. They also acted as advocates and would liaise with other agencies, where required. Staff had had counselling training, but no language other than English was spoken.

Printed information about the hostel specified that all residents were treated as individuals, with individual needs, and care was taken to work with them at their own pace. Residents were, however, also seen as part of the communal group and work was, accordingly, done within this group to enhance social skills and to enable the women to function more effectively together. Residents were also encouraged to use the community facilities (such as day centres and sports centres) and other outside resources (such as community psychiatric nurses, doctors, and social workers).

The Project was designed to provide a safe, supportive, and stable environment for women who had perhaps not experienced that for some time. The aim was to provide a comfortable space so that residents could assess their own needs and workers could assist them in that process. This was in the hope that residents would identify, and eventually acquire, the accommodation most suited to them. Whilst there was no time limit set, individuals

were encouraged to 'move-on' when they were ready.

Staff would support residents applying to housing associations and the local authority and would assist practically with the move. Occasional support and contact for an unspecified period were offered to residents who had moved on. Workers could also refer women on to a local agency which offered access and support to people in single tenancies.

The management of hostel C was via the hierarchical structure of the parent organisation. Staff in all seven of the organisation's projects were line managed by one individual in the central office. He was accountable to the organisation's director and they were answerable to the management committee. Again one management committee operated for all seven of the organisation's projects.

All management committee members were of equal status, although some were more involved than others. Committee members included representatives from housing associations, probation, the City Council, and other voluntary agencies. Being on the committee involved attending quarterly meetings and a number of sub-committees. The main time that the committee members became involved in much detail with the various individual projects was when a problem arose (for example, recently in relation to the high void levels).

Hostel C: a subjective account

Hostel C was a large, old house on the edge of a sprawling council estate. It was very close to a major motorway and several main roads. Inside, the house was clean, tidy, and quiet. On entering, one was immediately confronted by a broad stairway and high ceilings. The carpeting was threadbare and the walls were painted in a range of institutional pastel shades. The furniture was basic and the beds were covered with

regulation-style duvets. There were two large communal rooms downstairs and the office was situated on the first floor. The latter comprised two small rooms, a general area, and a spare room used for private consultations with the residents.

Whilst the hostel had ten bedspaces, only four women were resident at the time of the fieldwork. The hostel had had three or four voids for several months. This was considered unusual, but believed to be common to other women's hostels in the city at the time (hence the research being embarked upon by the parent organisation, as referred to in chapter 6). Three of hostel C's residents had recently been admitted to hospital, two into psychiatric hospitals and one onto a general hospital ward following an accident. The latter could not return to the hostel because she had a plaster cast on her leg and there were insufficient staff to assist her. As soon as the cast could be removed she would return.

The atmosphere in the hostel office was friendly and relaxed. There was no sense of urgency or rush and residents' confidentiality and privacy seemed to be respected at all times. Workers presented as professional, skilled, sensitive, and supportive of each other. Organisation did, however, appear to be more of a problem. There was no effective filing system and documents, such as the licence agreement, and even a recent annual review, could not be found. In respect of this, there was jokey, but embarrassed, muttering about the need for a 'good spring clean'.

On one occasion the relief worker went shopping, but returned amid chaos. There was a clear surplus of cheese, margarine, Alpen and dried spaghetti, but a deficit of milk. No one had told her that the extra margarine was in the freezer and she had not looked. Whilst everyone was busy being disgruntled, a resident came into the kitchen to make a drink. Everyone ignored her, revealing a worker/ resident divide which was a little unexpected given the professed egalitarian philosophy of the

organisation.

Planned fieldwork interviews at hostel C were frequently subjected to last minute postponements and cancellations. This was commonly instigated by staff, the reasons for which were not always clear. The most likely explanations seemed to be that workers were overprotective of residents, found it difficult to persuade people to participate, did not take the study seriously, and were generally somewhat apathetic. The delays also seemed to reflect the generally slow pace of life within a hostel for people with mental health support needs.

In hostel C interviews were completed with:

- 4 residents
- 2 ex-residents
- 2 workers
- 1 line manager
- 1 management committee member
- 1 relief worker
- 1 involved other professional (a community psychiatric nurse)

Hostel D: a profile

Hostel D was one part of a larger Christian organisation working with homeless young people in Hostelville. The organisation had been established in February 1987 when a group of eight people, connected to a local church, had become concerned about the number of individuals leaving care with insufficient support. They had set up a Trust, the aim of which had been to help homeless young people with behavioural, psychological, or psychiatric problems; those with moderate to severe learning difficulties; those with a history of offending; and those who had left care with nowhere to go or no one to whom they could turn. The belief was that such young people did not just need a 'roof over their head', but also required friendship,

support, encouragement, advice, and training to assist them in their progression towards independence, dignity, and self respect.

In the whole organisation, there were eight full-time and one part-time paid members of staff and numerous volunteers. Their work encompassed several distinct, but overlapping, areas. These included a residential project (hostel D); an agricultural and horticultural project (providing work experience, plus a formal employment action scheme); a day care project (offering social and recreational opportunities and assistance for young people who had been abused); and a resettlement project (providing independent living accommodation and on-going support for single homeless young people). Training and individual counselling were also available, as well as facilities for cooking a meal, washing clothes, or simply finding some company for a while. All parts of the organisation were designed to operate and to dovetail together. This was premised on the belief that it was the broad range of provision, combined with an underlying religious basis, which was the key to success.

Structurally, the organisation functioned as a hierarchy. At the top of this was the Trust. This comprised the chairman (who was a pastor); his wife (who was the secretary); the chairman's mother (who lived on the Farm and knew all of the young people and much about the financial side because she administered the covenants); another pastor (paid by the church, who visited once or twice a week, and who also knew all of the young people); and one further member (who had more distant contact). The Trust had ultimate responsibility for any decisions made and for the finances.

Because the members of the Trust were not all around on a daily basis, authority to run the organisation and to make day-to-day decisions had been given to an Executive Committee. The latter comprised two representatives of the Trust and two full-time employees. The Executive Committee was accountable to the

Trustees and reported either verbally or in writing to the chairman.

Below the Executive Committee in the hierarchy was the senior pastoral administrator. She line managed the senior residential supervisor at the hostel, who also worked full-time. Below the senior residential supervisor there was a part-time residential/ resettlement worker, but at the time of the fieldwork there were no resources to finance this post. The hostel was consequently relying heavily on volunteers and additional voluntary input from staff working in other parts of the organisation.

Being an independent charity, funding was derived from donations (churches and public trusts). The only statutory funding was from a section 73 grant[1] for the resettlement side of the work. This was scheduled to last until March 1994. The organisation had an equal opportunity, but no HIV, policy. The Farm had disabled access, but the hostel had limited facilities in this respect.

The hostel, referred to within the organisation as 'the home', was essentially the heart of the concern. It was deliberately referred to as 'the home', as this was felt to give it more appeal than 'the hostel'. Single homeless young men, aged between eighteen and twenty-nine years, with an average age of twenty-two, were accommodated there. There were no other referral criteria, although residents were selected to fit in with the group of the moment.

A waiting-list was operated wherever possible, but the demand for places was always far greater than the supply. Referrals from statutory and from voluntary agencies were accepted, but residents mostly came to the accommodation by word of mouth, through the project's employment scheme, through the local church, or via local newspapers in which the organisation

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[1] See glossary.

sometimes advertised. Occasionally people were accepted on a direct access basis, but most came to interview first. Vacancies were infrequent (perhaps two a year).

There was neither a minimum, nor a maximum, length of stay, but the average was two years. Accommodation costs were worked out on an individual basis, taking into account each resident's level of Income Support, Invalidity Benefit, Training Allowance, or wage. Most residents were claiming Housing Benefit and the average charge of a room was £120.13 per week.

The hostel was situated two miles from the city centre and several miles from the rest of the organisation. Town was accessible via bus, train, or by foot. There were eight bedspaces in the home. This had included two doubles, but since refurbishment and extensions had been completed in March 1994, all rooms had become single. There was one bathroom with a shower. A second shower room and additional toilets had also recently been installed. There was a laundry, a television, a video, a payphone, a garden, a patio, and a greenhouse. The accommodation was fully furnished, but residents also had their own belongings. There was a kitchen and a kitchenette. All meals could be provided and in general everyone ate together. Access to the kitchens and facilities for preparing one's own meals were, however, available at all times.

Residents were encouraged to see D as their home. They had meetings with the staff and were involved in day-to-day decisions, such as planning holidays and deciding who entered the building (including social workers). Whilst residents did not decide who moved in, they were always consulted about such matters. All residents had their own keys, including a front door key. There were no restrictions on resident access, unless there was a court order for a particular individual. No worker was allowed into the bedrooms without permission. The only visitors allowed were those wanted by the young people themselves. Residents were, however, asked to check and to

inform staff about visiting arrangements in advance. There were no rules and regulations, other than to live in a way which did not cause aggravation to those with whom one was living. This tended to work because of group pressure.

The young people were all out during the day, mostly at other parts of the organisation or on training schemes. Twenty-four hour cover was, consequently, not required in the home. Residents were mainly rehoused through the organisation's own resettlement project into independent accommodation. From here they could have on-going support, if desired. A particular concern for the Trust, at the time of the fieldwork, was the increasing number of homeless young people being encountered with varying degrees of behavioural, emotional, and psychological problems. Whilst it was believed that many of these would make significant progress towards independence, and might well ultimately live independently, it was still felt that many would need a great deal of help and support for the rest of their lives. Within the organisation this was felt to be an area which needed highlighting in order to influence future central and local government policy.

Hostel D: a subjective account

Hostel D was a large, oldish house in the centre of a suburb of Hostelville. At the time of the interviews there was still evidence of recent alterations. The building work was essentially complete, but the painting and decorating had not yet been finished. The house had a very 'lived in' feel to it. Some of the carpets were very threadbare and stained, but no part seemed at all institutional.

Next to the kitchen was the staff bedroom/ office and next to that a very homely sitting room. Most of the bedrooms were upstairs. These were all of different sizes and supplied with different kinds of second-hand furniture. Each room was

different in character, some much tidier than others, and this seemed to reflect the obvious differences in personalities of the residents. Rooms were treated as very private affairs and doors were studiously locked. Residents had their own televisions, videos, and personal artifacts in them. Outside, there was a large garden with patio furniture and washing hung out. The house had a very 'ordinary' and 'homely' sound and feel to it: the phone rang quite often, the men made lots of noise, and football was played in the garden after tea. Everything seemed very relaxed.

In hostel D interviews were completed with:

- 6 residents (one of whom was also an ex-resident)
- 1 ex-resident
- 2 workers (one of whom was a line manager and committee member)
- 1 executive committee member (who also worked as the organisation's accountant)
- 1 volunteer
- 1 referral agency representative (from a local children's home)

Summary

Profiles of the case study organisations revealed the diversity of hostel provision. Accommodation differed in form (appearance, size, standards, newness, facilities, the degree of self-containment, the provision of support services, and the arrangements for move-on), but also in terms of a whole range of other factors. These included referral criteria; staffing and management structures; funding mechanisms; rules; policies and procedures; organisational concerns, priorities and philosophies; staff attitudes; and inter-personal relationships. To what extent such diversity precluded the possibility of there being similarities between, and common concerns for, hostel accommodation is now considered in the following four chapters.

Material for this is provided by the in-depth interviews conducted in the four case study hostels during the main stage of the fieldwork.

Table 7.2 : Summary characteristics of the four case study hostels

HOSTEL A:	HOSTEL C:
Religious/ charitable	Voluntary sector
Single people only	Single people only
Men only	Women only
Over 18 years	Over 30 years
No particular needs targeted	Mental health needs targeted
Large hostel	Small hostel
Unspecified length of stay	Long-stay
Dormitory sleeping	Single sleeping arrangements
8:00 A.M.-11:00 P.M. duty cover with out of hours call	Office hours with call
HOSTEL B:	**HOSTEL D:**
Local Authority	Religious/ charitable
Families only	Single people only
Men and women	Men only
Any age	16-25 year-olds
No particular needs targeted	Any needs catered for
Large hostel	Small hostel
Temporary accommodation only	Unspecified length of stay
Single sleeping arrangements	Single sleeping arrangements
24 hour cover	24 hour cover

CHAPTER 8: RESIDENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction

The objective of chapter 8 is to investigate the characteristics of residents of supported hostel accommodation. To this end, the personal characteristics and the housing circumstances of the residents and ex-residents interviewed during the fieldwork are considered in detail and complemented by references to the characteristics of hostel residents in the case study area as a whole. The opinions of all interviewees are examined and, where possible, the findings compared with other similar research.

The chapter comprises three main sections and a summary. Part 1 investigates residents' personal characteristics, part 2 examines their housing circumstances, and part 3 considers whether hostel accommodation should be targeted at particular groups of homeless people (in the form of specialist provision), or rather aim to provide for them on a more generic basis.

Part 1: Personal characteristics

'Priority' and 'non-priority' homeless people

Much of the existing homelessness research (as discussed in chapter 3) has focused on those people considered to be 'in priority need' under the terms of the 1985 Housing Act. This is largely because local authority duty extends only to such individuals. Such focused concern has, however, frequently neglected those not considered to be a priority in terms of the law, particularly single homeless people.

The present study confirmed the significance of priority homelessness status in gaining access to local authority hostel

accommodation (such as hostel B), but found it to be far less relevant in terms of gaining access to hostel accommodation more generally. Indeed, hostels A, C, and D all accommodated people who were not in priority need as defined by the law. From this, it was clear that the hostels were catering for a more diverse range of individuals, and hence a potentially more disparate range of needs, than those recognised by the homelessness legislation. Likewise, it indicated that much existing homelessness research has not included the characteristics and circumstances of a large number of hostel residents.

Gender

Resident gender was found to be relevant, both in terms of gaining access to provision and in terms of the kind of accommodation available. Just under half of the hostels in Hostelville were single sex only. Consistent with previous research (Watson and Cooper, 1992; Spaull and Rowe, 1992), provision for men was often of the older, larger, more traditional kind, whilst women-only schemes tended to be smaller and newer. The relative merits and demerits of mixing and segregating women and men in hostel accommodation recurred at various points during the study and are considered in more detail later in this chapter.

Ethnic origin

Hostelville city council monitoring statistics (referred to in chapter 6) seemed to suggest that a high proportion of the residents of supported hostel accommodation in Hostelville were from minority ethnic groups. This was not, however, substantiated by personal observation or by informal communication with various individuals connected with the hostel sector in the city. The latter rather suggested that the use of supported hostel accommodation by minority ethnic groups varied

significantly between hostels.

All four case study organisations had very low proportions of non-white residents. There was one Asian man in hostel A, one Iraqi family in hostel B, no non-white resident in hostel C, and one resident of mixed race in hostel D. Whilst low proportions of non-white residents did not prove a low level of need, possible reasons for the lack of take up of some hostel accommodation by minority ethnic groups were difficult to ascertain from the interviews. Indeed, most respondents simply proclaimed mystification at this anomaly, given the hostels' policies to accept all individuals regardless of race.

Because of insufficient substantive evidence, this study could only begin to speculate about why the four case study hostels seemed not to be catering for individuals from minority ethnic groups. Such speculation was informed by additional personal communication with other key individuals working in Hostelville and by other related literature (for example, Cowen and Lording 1982; Law *et al.*, 1994; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). The following ten points appeared likely to be relevant:

1. The provision of specialist hostels for particular minority ethnic groups dilutes the remaining hostel population of non-white residents.

2. Some ethnic groups rely extensively on family and friends, rather than on the state or the voluntary sector, to provide accommodation in emergencies.

3. Close extended family structures and cultural and community pressures may deter some individuals from leaving home, even when circumstances have become intolerable.

4. Family pride and religious or culturally based notions of shame and stigma may discourage hostel residence.

5. The location of hostels in red light districts or in the heart of black or Asian communities, from which some individuals are trying to break away, may reduce usage.

6. Mixing people of very different cultures, religions, or lifestyles can heighten the potential for conflict. Many will seek to avoid this at all costs and, thus, eschew hostel accommodation. (Anecdotal evidence from the fieldwork suggested that this was more relevant in respect of the older than of the younger residents, as younger people often had more similar, westernised lifestyles).

7. Language and literacy barriers may prevent some individuals from gaining access to relevant information about provision.

8. Further problems of access may arise where self-referral is not accepted. Official referrals may be inappropriate, if agency workers are from the same close community as an applicant who is concerned about confidentiality.

9. Individuals from minority ethnic groups may be reticent to move into hostels which cater predominantly for white males, or which have no black workers. This is because such provision may make them feel isolated and different.

10. Cultural and religious factors may make the lack of privacy and the sharing of rooms (which tend to be integral features of most hostel accommodation) particularly problematic for some individuals.

Further anecdotal evidence from the fieldwork suggested that young Asian women were more likely than other Asian groups to use hostel accommodation. This changing pattern seemed to relate to an emerging culture of standing up for their rights. Young Asian men appeared to have more freedom than their female counterparts and were consequently considered less likely to be motivated, or indeed desperate enough, to move into a hostel.

Age

Supported hostel accommodation in Hostelville was catering for a broad spectrum of ages. The residents interviewed were between twelve and seventy-four years. Although many hostels targeted

particular age groups, evidence from the case studies suggested that referral criteria based on age were not always rigidly enforced. Hostel B had no age restrictions, whilst hostels A, C, and D all operated with a degree of flexibility[1] in relation to such matters. There were no residents aged sixteen or seventeen in any of the four hostels, one probable reason for this being the difficulty faced by this group in securing welfare benefits (as discussed, for example, by Anderson, 1993b).

Marital/ family status

Hostel accommodation in Hostelville was largely targeted at single people. Only two hostels in the city provided family accommodation and these were both local authority hostels, catering for those in priority need as defined by the 1985 Housing Act. One of these (hostel B) was included in this study. It, however, accommodated as many lone parent families as two-parent families. This imbalance of provision might have reflected a greater demand for hostel accommodation amongst single people and lone parents (perhaps because of the additional problems they faced in securing accommodation in other sectors of the housing market). Equally, it might have resulted because the needs of homeless two-parent families and childless couples were being ignored, or because such groups were being accommodated in places other than hostels.

Employment/ benefit circumstances

All residents in this study were claiming Housing Benefit and nearly all were claiming Income Support, Employment Action money or other state benefits. Consistent with previous research (Austerberry and Watson, 1983; O'Mahoney, 1988; Berthoud and Casey, 1988; Elam, 1992; and Randall and Brown, 1993), hostel

[1] See glossary.

accommodation appeared not to be catering for those in permanent paid employment. This did not mean that employed people did not want, or need, hostel accommodation, or that residents of hostel accommodation did not want to work. Evidence rather suggested that working whilst living in hostel accommodation often made little financial sense. The main reason given for this was the prohibitively high hostel charges for those in work and ineligible for full Housing Benefit (resulting in an unemployment trap). Respondents also referred to the prejudices of employers against job applicants with hostel addresses.

Class/ socio-economic group

Employment or previous employment (and, in the case of women, husband's or father's employment) are frequently used as class/ socio-economic group indicators. This practice has, however, been much criticised, particularly by feminist commentators (for example, Millett, 1971; Delphy, 1977). The use of employment status as an indicator of social group membership was, in any case, unsatisfactory for present purposes because most residents in this study were not in, and many had never been in, any form of permanent paid employment. Indeed, their economic prospects had frequently been reduced by more pertinent personal factors (such as gender, lone parenthood, poor health, or disability) and by structural factors (such as high rates of unemployment). Self-classification of social class or socio-economic group was, meanwhile, deemed unsuitable for the purposes of comparison. Accordingly, neither class nor socio-economic group was felt to be a particularly informative or reliable source of information about the hostel residents.

Sexual orientation

One characteristic largely unconsidered by previous research is the sexuality of homeless people and hostel users. The

present study was also lacking in material relating to this subject. Monitoring of sexual orientation did occur in some hostels in Hostelville, but not in any of the case study organisations. None of the latter targeted bedspaces at lesbians or gay people, but all had an equal opportunities policy and all had had gay and lesbian residents.

In spite of the above, several homophobic comments were passed by respondents (always other residents) during the course of the interviews. No individual referred to being on the receiving end of such prejudiced attitudes, but to elicit this would have been very difficult, given the sensitivity of the subject and the small number of respondents interviewed. In order to evaluate the significance of sexual orientation as an issue for hostel accommodation, further research was, thus, required.

Physical and mental health

Of the 27 residents and ex-residents, only 5 reported no health problems at all. Whilst some individuals were known to medical services, it was common for others not to be receiving any treatment. The high level of health, and particularly mental health, problems was consistent with the findings of previous research (Randall *et al.*, 1982; Elam, 1992; Anderson *et al.*, 1993; Randall and Brown, 1993; Bines, 1994). The referral criteria of the four organisations may have, in part, accounted for the high level of problems, but could not explain why residents and non-residents, especially from C and D, reported that users' health and support needs had increased over recent months, although there had been no change in the referral criteria.

Only 1 resident, a male from hostel B, reported that his health problem (depression) had arisen since he had been living in the hostel. All other residents reported either no change, or an improvement in their health, since moving in. Hostel

accommodation was often reported to be a safe and secure place which promoted well-being by helping people to settle and by alleviating some of the stresses and pressures which they had been experiencing previously. Whilst this did not mean that hostel accommodation was good for health, it did imply that the hostel environment was, for many, an improvement on their previous circumstances.

Social problems and support needs

Evans (1991) found that many local authorities were reporting increasing numbers of homelessness applications from single people who were vulnerable - either because of their mental health, addiction problems, or youth (Evans, 1991). Smith *et al.*, meanwhile, predicted that the Children Act 1989, combined with the closure of large hospitals, would likely result in the extension of duties (and particularly local authority statutory duties) to accommodate individuals with increasingly diverse problems (Smith *et al.*, 1992).

Consistent with the above, individuals from all respondent groups frequently stressed that residents had needs which exceeded the assistance which the hostels could reasonably offer. Indeed, support needs, like residents' health problems, were often believed to have increased over recent months. Residents and non-residents commonly attributed this to changes in, and the inadequate resourcing of, community care policies and practices. Only very few respondents (residents or non-residents) reported that residents had no support needs and, where such comments were made, these were mainly regarding occupants of hostel B. Whilst some residents (from all hostels) were felt to need, but not want, support, especially from those perceived to be in 'officialdom', only one reference was made to any resident having insufficient needs to warrant being accommodated in a supported hostel.

The kinds of resident support needs referred to were many and various. Across all four case study hostels, housing needs were mentioned most of all. A distinction was, however, made between the need for a roof and warmth (that is, something basic and immediate, for which a hostel was considered appropriate) and the need for a new home (for which hostel accommodation was largely not considered suitable). The need for the latter was mentioned more often than the former, particularly by residents and non-residents from hostel B.

After accommodation, the need for practical assistance (including help with cooking, washing, budgeting, and shopping) and emotional support (including company, care, befriending, trust, and respect) were mentioned equally frequently. Again, both of these types of need were common to residents from all four hostels. Support with mental health related problems was mentioned slightly more often than assistance with general health needs and was stressed particularly in hostels A and C. Financial needs were also emphasised, as were the requirements for safety and security (including anonymity, privacy, and respite). Assistance with resettlement, appropriate move-on accommodation, employment, education, and services from other professionals (including counselling and help with inter-personal skills and communication) were all also highlighted.

Needs were widely recognised by all respondent groups as varying with individuals, according to their personal histories, present circumstances, attitudes and aspirations etc.. There was some additional recognition (especially from hostel C residents and non-residents) that needs changed over time. The dangers of support needs increasing because of residents becoming dependent and institutionalised were discussed by residents and non-residents from hostels A, B, and C. Because of this, some respondents stressed that hostel accommodation should only ever function as part of a move-on process and that people who were ready to move-on should never be accommodated indefinitely.

Residents and ex-residents were more likely than other respondents to report that users had no needs, or only more tangible forms of immediate requirements, such as a roof, or warmth, or help with self-care. Non-residents were more prone to recognising general, and perhaps less immediately pressing requirements, such as the need for employment, or supportive relationships, or more long-term assistance with particular personal problems. Empowerment and advocacy were highlighted as needs by employees of both hostels C and D. This seemed to indicate that there was a greater awareness of such issues amongst those who worked with people with mental health problems or learning difficulties than amongst those who worked with people simply defined as homeless (see earlier discussion in chapter 3 relating to the community care debate).

The support needs of the residents in each hostel largely mirrored the referral criteria and the aims of the particular hostel concerned. Residents from *hostel A* had very diverse needs and this reflected the fact that A had very wide referral criteria. Some residents from A had only housing needs, whilst others had alcohol related problems, or required physical care, or counselling. Differences between the needs of the older and of the younger residents in hostel A were also apparent. Generally, it was felt by all respondent groups that the needs of the older residents were more intense than those of the younger residents, but there was no apparent consensus about what the needs of the younger residents were. Some reported that the younger men had no, or only few needs, whilst others felt that many required practical skills training or counselling and that these were being neglected by the hostel.

Residents of *hostel B* had the lowest support needs of all the four hostels, but this was unsurprising given that the aim of B was essentially only to meet the housing needs of residents according to the 1985 Housing Act. In *hostel C* respondents from all groups stressed that residents had needs for confidence building, therapy, asylum, and respite. This seemed to arise

because a major aim of this hostel was to meet the requirements of people leaving a long-stay psychiatric hospital. In *hostel D* residents' needs were relatively diverse, but also intense. This revealed D's aim to cater for those with serious emotional, psychiatric, and behavioural problems.

The support needs of residents clearly interacted with other aspects of provision, such as length of stay. Thus the short-term nature of the accommodation provided by *hostel B* appeared compatible with the low support needs of its residents. The long-term nature of accommodation provided by *hostels C and D*, conversely, matched the higher support needs of residents there. In *hostel A* support needs and length of stay were both variable.

All four organisations reported that they were struggling to cope with the high levels of support required by their residents. Problems were, however, felt to be more likely to arise if individuals were inappropriately referred, if residents' needs increased after they had been accommodated (for example, in hostel A, as residents grew older and more frail and in hostel C, if mental health problems became more acute), or if the accommodation itself began to institutionalise users and to create forms of dependence.

Residents and non-residents from *hostels A, B, and C* were all aware of the limitations of the support which could be provided by their respective organisations. Indeed, non-residents often referred to the need to establish boundaries and to set limitations on referral criteria. This was to prevent the hostels attempting to accommodate people with very intense needs, particularly those who might upset or disrupt others.

> *By putting people inappropriately into that place it has got a really profound effect on the others who are there.* (Hostel C, Community Psychiatric Nurse)

In *hostels B, C, and D* non-residents often argued that other hostels could provide more appropriate sources of accommodation

for individuals with certain kinds of needs. In practice, however, only *hostel B* was actively referring to other organisations on a regular and systematic basis. This indicated a gap between beliefs about the merits of effective referral procedures and actual working practices.

In relation to move-on, most respondents reported that most residents would need some on-going assistance after rehousing. Many residents and non-residents also stressed that some individuals would probably never be able to cope in their own tenancies. Consistent with previous research (Garside *et al.*, 1990; Randall and Brown, 1993; Anderson *et al.*, 1993), residents' and ex-residents' self-reported needs for support following move-on seemed to confirm that many would require accommodation with support on hand in the future (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1 : Residents' and ex-residents' self-reported support needs following move-on

Type of assistance requested	Number of times requested
None	6
Professional support	2
Practical help or care	8
Emotional support	8
General assistance	7
Medical attention	3

More than one answer is sometimes given by each respondent. Base is 27 residents and ex-residents interviewed.

Eight residents explicitly, although others implicity, highlighted a need for assistance in the process of finding new

accommodation in the first place. In addition, many residents, especially those from hostel B who felt that they did not require personal support, highlighted a need for financial assistance and particularly furniture.

Part 2: Housing circumstances

Previous housing histories

Table 8.2 : Previous accommodation forms experienced by the residents and ex-residents

Accommodation form	Number of mentions
Private tenancy (house, flat, or bedsit - rented or owned)	19
Other hostels (including bail hostels)	13
Staying with family	11
Sleeping rough	8
Children's home or foster parents	7
Hospital	6
Staying with friends	5
Staying with a partner	4
Council tenancy	4
Prison	3
Tied accommodation	3
Group home	3
Private lodgings or bed and breakfast	3
Caravan	1

More than one accommodation form is mentioned by most residents.
Base is 27 residents and ex-residents interviewed.

The previous housing histories of the 27 residents and ex-residents in this study were numerous and diverse (see Table 8.2). Many hostel residents had lived in multiple places and often in insecure forms of accommodation. This was consistent with previous research, particularly that which has shown that many single homeless people have been in care or spent a lot of time in institutions, such as children's homes, psychiatric hospitals, borstals, prisons, the armed services, or the merchant navy (Drake *et al.*, 1981; Elam, 1992; Randall and Brown, 1993; Anderson *et al.*, 1993).

Patterns in residents' previous housing histories appeared to relate to hostel type. This reflected the different entry routes into, and the referral criteria of, the four hostels, but also the housing preferences and the limited housing options of the residents who moved into them.

Residents from *hostel A* had experienced the most insecure forms of previous accommodation: many had slept rough, stayed in other hostels, or used private lodgings, or bed and breakfast accommodation; only very few had had their own tenancies. Residents from *hostel B*, conversely, had had the most secure forms of previous accommodation. Less respondents here had had multiple dwellings, more had had their own tenancies, and only very few had stayed in other hostels or slept rough. Many residents from *hostel C* had been in psychiatric hospitals, or had had private tenancies with partners or spouses. Residents from *hostel D* had frequently had unsettled childhoods and been in care or other institutions (such as bail and probation hostels or prisons), slept rough, or had flats in which they had not been able to cope alone.

The residents' housing histories also appeared to relate to personal characteristics, such as gender and age. Only men had previously slept rough, lived in bail hostels, prisons, children's homes, caravans, or private lodgings. This appeared consistent with the notion that homelessness is a highly gendered

experience (Austerberry and Watson, 1983; Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Younger people (that is, those under thirty years of age) were more likely to have been in prisons, bail hostels, children's homes or care, whilst older respondents, especially those from hostel A, were far more likely to have adopted an itinerant lifestyle some time ago. Age did not, however, appear to have influenced the number of dwelling places residents had experienced. Indeed, the younger residents had often had as many, if not more, previous addresses than the older residents.

Nine residents reported a previous stay in their present hostel (that is, were hostel returners). Every hostel had at least 1 returner, but this was particularly common in hostel A, where 5 of the 6 residents interviewed fell into this category. Reasons for returning (expressed by the returners from all four hostels) included a new reason for homelessness, inappropriate move-on accommodation, poor or inadequate preparation for resettlement, the desire for an itinerant lifestyle, an inability to settle down, or the hostel offering residents something positive and desirable to which they wished to return.

The post-hostel and between-hostel housing experiences of the ex-residents and the returners could not always be ascertained. Four described a period of successful move-on (2 into their own tenancies and 2 into Hostel C group home facilities). Two explained that they had moved into their own tenancies, but had had to return to the hostel because they could not cope with less support. A further 3 felt that their move from the hostel had been so recent that it was not possible to comment on the likely outcome. Of these, 1 had moved into a house and 2 into flats. The 2 who had moved into flats had on-going contact with the hostel from which they had moved.

No ex-resident interviewed wanted to return to the hostel. All ex-residents reported that they had wanted to leave, but all stated that at the time of their stay they had wanted, or needed,

to be in the hostel. On moving out, ex-residents reported that they had felt lost at first, but had soon settled into, and started to prefer, their new homes. They reported missing the hostel company, the security, and the good standard of the hostel building. The advantages of their new accommodation included more comfort and independence; feeling more relaxed; being more able to please themselves; and having more privacy and more access to other forms of support, such as friends or a new partner.

Reasons for homelessness

Consistent with previous research (Thomas and Niner, 1989; Johnson *et al.*, 1991; Elam, 1992; Anderson, *et al.*, 1993), it was often not possible to isolate a single cause of homelessness, but certain common situations, particularly relationship breakdown, tended to precede it (see Table 8.3). The high proportion of residents becoming homeless following discharge from psychiatric hospital was largely accounted for by the referral process into hostel C. For many of these residents, however, entry into psychiatric hospital was, itself, often preceded by relationship breakdown or by the death of a partner or spouse.

Underlying many of the reasons given for homelessness was an apparent general inability to 'cope'. This was particularly true for those who had experienced tenancy breakdown. Examples of this illustrated the very basic nature of many residents' support needs. Thus, one man had been living in private lodgings, but could not cope when the proprietors moved away. Another had moved from a children's home into his own flat, but found that he was unable to manage the domestic arrangements alone.

Table 8.3 : **Reasons for homelessness**

Reason	Number of mentions
Relationship breakdown or loss	12
Tenancy breakdown	5
Hospital discharge	5
Loss of other hostel accommodation	2
Loss of tied accommodation	2
Leaving prison	2
Itinerant lifestyle	2
Leaving care	1
Neighbourhood harassment	1
Fire	1
Political asylum	1

Only the most recent reason for homelessness is recorded, unless another is clearly more, or equally, relevant. Because of this two responses are sometimes recorded for one resident. Base is 27 residents and ex-residents interviewed.

Again, patterns in reasons for homelessness emerged according to hostel type. Again, this tended to reflect the entry routes into, and the referral criteria of, the different case studies. Reasons for homelessness reported by residents from *hostels A and B* were more diverse than those reported by residents from *hostels C and D*. This was unsurprising given that the referral criteria of A and B were broader than those of the B and C. Hostel C essentially provided accommodation only for people discharged from hospitals or transferred from other short-stay hostels, whilst hostel D targeted young people who had experienced family relationship breakdown or who had had difficulties managing in their own tenancies after leaving care.

Also consistent with previous research (Austerberry and

Watson, 1983; O'Mahoney, 1988; Thornton, 1990), precipitating events and personal characteristics tended to interact, as a result of which particular types of reasons for homelessness were often associated with particular groups of people. Leaving care (without adequate coping skills and with minimal support) was, for example, a common reason for homelessness amongst young people from hostels D and A and marital dispute or domestic violence was common amongst many women from B. Leaving prison and having an itinerant lifestyle were reported by men only.

Present housing circumstances

Table 8.4 : Residents' current length of stay in the hostel

Hostel	Current length of stay
A	Between days and 3 years
B	Between days and 1 year
C	All over 1 month, most between 1 and 3 years, 1 over 3 years
D	All over 1 year, 3 over 3 years, two over seven years

Base is 23 residents interviewed.

The length of time that residents had been living in the hostel (at the time of the interviews) clearly reflected individual hostel policies relating to length of stay. *Hostel A* had no predetermined time limit, *hostel B* was emergency only, *hostel C* was long-stay, and *hostel D* offered accommodation for as long as was desired. It was not surprising, therefore, to find that the length of time individuals had been resident ranged from days to seven years (see Table 8.4).

Residents' feelings about their present housing circumstances differed immensely. Some had wanted to move into hostel

accommodation; others had not. Some now wished to leave; others did not. A constant theme throughout, however, related to the importance of having the choice in relation to such matters.

Both residents and non-residents maintained that offering an individual a place in a hostel was a very limited kind of offer, if there were no, or only few, suitable alternatives. Thus, moving into a hostel in order to escape domestic violence may, in some circumstances, more accurately be classified as a necessity than a choice. The lack of suitable move-on accommodation in the case study area was frequently cited as a fundamental problem in this respect.

Residents and non-residents often reported that the accommodation alternatives open to residents were limited and essentially negative. They included returning home (or back to the situation just left), moving to another hostel, or sleeping on the streets. Both residents and non-residents also commonly recognised that choices about moving into, and staying in, hostel accommodation were constrained by other factors. These included residents' financial and emotional circumstances, their personal backgrounds, and their restricted support networks (professional, family, and friends).

Interestingly, workers and other professionals were more likely than residents to stress the limited nature of homeless people's options. Staff from hostels C and D were particularly conscious of this. They frequently emphasised that unlimited options could not be offered to residents, but efforts could still be made to enhance resident choice wherever possible. Examples of this included spelling out the available housing alternatives to any potential resident, refusing to accept referrals from other agencies if the individual concerned did not want to move in, and always taking into account the opinions of existing residents when a new resident was being considered.

Many residents, meanwhile, made a very fine and sometimes

seemingly semantic distinction between 'not having the choice' and being 'forced' to move into, or to stay in, a hostel. Accordingly, many stressed that residents often had no alternative, but simultaneously maintained that those people were, nevertheless, not 'forced' into living there.

> *I was given the choice. I was not given another choice, but I was told that if I did not want to come here, I did not have to, because nobody was making me. So I would have had to have gone back to X* [another hostel] *until something else had come up.* (Hostel C, Resident)

Respondents from D and some of the older residents from A were especially keen to emphasise that residents had 'complete' choice in relation to living in the hostel. Whilst this might have reflected the genuine freedom of some individuals (and their inability to comprehend the limited options of others), it might also have resulted from residents' low expectations or from their lack of knowledge of alternative accommodation. A further possible explanation could have been that the emphasis on choice was used by residents as an empowering psychological device to preserve an element of self-determination or pride in a situation where there was, in fact, very little room for manoeuvre.

Consistent with the above, Hutson and Liddiard (1994) found that agencies frequently emphasised the relative powerlessness of young homeless people, whilst some young homeless people were more keen to stress the opposite. By way of explanation, Hutson and Liddiard suggested that young homeless people might attach a more positive rationale to their situation in hindsight. Likewise, individuals might reinterpret or 'creatively redefine' threatening situations, such as unemployment and homelessness, in order to enhance their personal sense of power and control (Breakwell, 1986; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

The above qualifications aside, it was generally accepted by most respondents that most individuals were living in hostel accommodation either because of limited alternatives or because

of necessity. Reasons given for moving into hostel accommodation were, accordingly, more negative than positive. Having no alternative accommodation was most commonly mentioned, but the need for help or support was also very widely cited. The latter was, however, less commonly mentioned in relation to the younger men in hostel A or residents from hostel B. Not being able to return home, finding it too cold to sleep rough, and needing a rest or a warm were also reported.

> *At the time I needed to be there. I was very bewildered and upset and everything else with it and I needed someone to help sort me out and with which way I was going to go. And I felt safe.* (Hostel C, Ex-resident)

Less negative reasons for moving into hostel accommodation included the desire to speed up a homelessness application; being better-off in a hostel than in more independent accommodation (either financially or because of an inability to cope alone); being better off in a particular hostel than in any of the alternative hostels; or actually liking the provision. In respect of the latter, the security; the support; the company; and feeling that one belonged, was at home, and mattered were all discussed.

> *Some people do like these places, you know.* (Hostel A, Resident)

> *If I had known that this house was here, all that year and two months I lived with my brother and suffered for three months under that woman* [a neighbour] *up at ..., I would have been in here.* (Hostel C, Resident)

> *I am glad that I am here, because this place is right for me.* (Hostel D, Resident)

A distinction was also often made between choosing to move into, and choosing to stay in, a hostel. Both residents and non-residents reported that sometimes individuals did not choose to move in, but having done so, then did not wish to leave. Reasons

given for this included the accommodation being better than residents had expected (especially at hostel B) or residents becoming institutionalised. In respect of the latter, it was argued, again by all respondent groups (although more so by the non-residents than by the residents), that individuals could lose skills and become dependent upon the accommodation. Alternatively, they might begin to enjoy the security, the support, and the friendships afforded by the hostel and hence fail to see any urgency to move-on.

Interestingly, some of the less negative reasons for moving into, and staying in, supported hostel accommodation (that is, those which suggested an element of choice and positive action on the part of residents) were interpreted by some respondents (most notably non-residents from hostel B) as somehow immoral, or unacceptable, or an abuse of the system. This seemed harsh, given that making choices which maximise personal welfare in any given set of circumstances is common to most human beings, not only hostel users.

Suggestions were also made as to why people might want to leave, even where the alternatives open to them were extremely limited (see Table 8.5). Rules and regulations, hostel charges, sharing (particularly dormitory sleeping), and poor standards were stressed in relation to *hostel A*. Poor standards, sharing, stigma, and the shock of hostel accommodation after being a householder were emphasised in relation to *hostel B*. Poor first impressions, residents not having their needs met, and residents being unsure of what they wanted were referred to in respect of *hostel C*. That the accommodation might make individuals feel dependent was an issue in *hostels C and D* and that individuals might be scared of living with other people and of developing relationships was a special area of concern in *hostel D*.

Table 8.5 : Reasons for not wanting to stay in hostel accommodation

Reason	Number of mentions
A desire for something more stable/ permanent (a home of one's own or a new relationship)	13
A dislike of the communal/ sharing aspects	9
A dislike of the location/ poor standards/ overcrowding	7
A dislike, or fear, of the other residents	5
Hostel not meeting individual needs/ expectations	4
A dislike of the rules/ regime/ restrictions	4
The environment makes the individual feel dependent	4
An objection to the stigma and negative images associated with hostel accommodation	3
Too much of a shock to the individual's system after being a householder	2
Hostel charges too high	2
People have itinerant lifestyles	2
People are unsure of what they want	2

More than one reason is sometimes given by each respondent. Base is 27 residents and ex-residents interviewed.

Likely future housing circumstances

In *hostel A* there were between 25 and 30 older residents who had high support needs and who were likely to remain permanently in some kind of supported accommodation. Additionally, there was a smaller and more transient population of younger residents. Rehousing from A was without any real pattern, but differences between age groups were apparent. Only the older men were considered to be a priority for the move-on programmes operating

in the city. The younger men anticipated moving into other hostels, starting up homes with friends or girlfriends, or moving away to look for work in a different area.

In *hostel B* all residents moved out quickly. This was because the accommodation was emergency only and there was a maximum length of stay of 364 days. As discussed in the hostel profile (see chapter 7), few residents were rehoused directly, either into local authority or housing association tenancies. The local authority rehoused less of the hostel residents than previously because it no longer had the stock to do so. More residents now moved into the council's second stage, move-on accommodation and awaited permanent rehousing from there. Others moved into other hostels, left with no forwarding address, found their own accommodation, or returned to their previous situation.

Hostel C was not an emergency access hostel, but equally it was not intended to be a home for life. In the past it had provided long-stay accommodation for many residents who had grown old and died there. It had also accommodated a transient population who had stayed for a while and then moved on. Over recent years, it had worked with residents on planned leaving, usually into other forms of supported accommodation provided by the parent organisation or into properties managed with support by other voluntary agencies working in the city. Likely forms of move-on accommodation included hospitals, other hostels, group homes, and independent tenancies. There was, however, evidence that other professionals had removed clients from C because they felt that residents' needs were not being appropriately met there.

Residents from *hostel D* tended to stay for three or four years and sometimes longer. Most moved into their own flats, shared housing or bedsits, with on-going support provided by the organisation's move-on scheme. No one was ever asked to move-out. Leaving was normally planned with the project resettlement worker and nearly all ex-residents maintained contact with the

organisation afterwards. Some current residents would probably not be moving out at all. Indeed, two of the seven present residents would almost definitely need some kind of supported accommodation for the rest of their lives.

There were some similar, but also different patterns of move-on, according to hostel type. Moving in with a new partner, starting a new tenancy, moving to another hostel, or into another form of supported accommodation were common to all four case studies. Hostels A, B, and C described housing a transient population which tended to pass through and return later. Only hostel B reported residents returning permanently to their previous homes. Hostel D residents had the rather unique opportunity of remaining indefinitely in the hostel if they so desired. This possibility appeared to be highly valued by those living there.

Likely future housing circumstances also seemed to reflect resident support needs. Thus, more independent forms of move-on accommodation were anticipated by residents from hostel B and by the younger residents from A. A probable move to alternative forms of supported accommodation or no move at all from the hostel reflected the greater support needs of residents from hostels C and D and the older residents from A.

On the whole, residents presented as largely realistic, but also somewhat pessimistic, both about their own and about other residents' likely future housing circumstances.

> *They can leave now, if they wish. Nobody is holding them, but they would never be able to live in a house again, because they would never be able to turn the heating on, the price of it, and some would not cope now anyway.* (Hostel C, Resident)

> *They would not be able to survive out there.* (Hostel D, Resident)

Users from all four hostels reported a high level of uncertainty about their future housing. The majority did not

know for how long they would be staying in the hostel, or where they would go after they left. Of the 27 current residents, only 11 believed that they would eventually move into a new house or flat. Three reported that they would not be moving at all, 1 anticipated moving into another hostel (which would provide more assistance with move-on), 1 planned to share a flat with a friend, and 1 expected to move in with a partner. Most of the residents intended to remain in Hostelville.

Housing aspirations and preferences

As discussed in the literature review (see chapter 3), various factors complicated the investigation of the housing preferences and aspirations of the homeless people interviewed. Little knowledge of, and contact with, other hostels in the area were both relevant in this respect.

The non-residents generally knew more than the residents about other hostel accommodation, but even the non-residents' knowledge was scant (given that there were at least 36 hostels for homeless people in the case study area). Thirteen respondents (all residents) did not know of any other hostels; 16 respondents (11 residents and 5 non-residents) knew of only one or two; and 19 respondents (3 residents and 16 non-residents) knew of three or more. Most residents reported that they had come to hear about their present accommodation either by word of mouth or by default. This suggested that formal referral procedures and information systems about supported hostel accommodation in Hostelville were not as effective than they might have been.

Only few individuals had ever stayed in, and thus had actual experience of, other hostel provision. Thirteen residents and ex-residents had never stayed in another hostel, 12 residents and ex-residents had stayed in one or two, and only two residents had stayed in three or more. Although residents often knew that there were other very similar hostels to both A and B operating

in Hostelville, it was commonly believed that these alternatives provided a lower standard of 'disreputable' accommodation and thus did not actually expand residents' housing options in any genuine sense.

The present study found little evidence of residents being unrealistic about their housing aspirations or denying that they had certain support needs. Most users demonstrated a high degree of insight into their personal support needs, likely future housing circumstances, housing preferences and aspirations. Accordingly, there were only minor differences between residents' own opinions in relation to these matters and what other respondents, such as staff, reported about them.

Only 3 residents denied that they had, what appeared to be, very obvious needs for social and emotional support. All 3, nevertheless, referred to other forms of practical assistance which they did feel that they required. Similarly, a very frail resident from hostel A initially stated that he wished to move into his own flat, but later retracted this, asserting that he was actually too old for moving and was, in fact, quite happy where he was. Where it appeared that residents might be understating their support needs, pride, a desire to avoid stigma, a lack of insight, or an unwillingness to request assistance, or to be a burden seemed the most probable explanations.

Previous research has consistently reported that the majority of homeless people desire their own independent and self-contained place - either a house, a flat or a bedsit (Drake *et al.*, 1981; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Smith *et al.*, 1992; Anderson *et al.*, 1993). This argument was advanced on several occasions during the present investigation.

> *Residents don't want to be there. They want to be unhassled in their own place, leading their own lives, that is what they want.* (Hostel B, Health Visitor)

Overall, this preference for self-contained accommodation was not, however, the most commonly cited. When residents and ex-residents were asked about their preferred housing circumstances, 15 reported that they would prefer some form of supported accommodation (a hostel, shared housing, or a group home); 11 reported that they would prefer their own independent accommodation; and 1 resident felt that there was no choice, but to be in the hostel.

Of the 23 residents, 5 expressed a desire to stay in hostel accommodation for the time being, but hoped to move out in the future. An additional 3 did not envisage ever moving and 4 did not desire to move at all. This indicated that there was a role for supported hostel accommodation for some people at some periods in their lives and for some people more permanently.

> *I am happy being here, but I do want to leave eventually. I don't think that I am going to end my days here.* (Hostel C, Resident)
>
> *I don't want to leave at the moment. I am enjoying it so much.* (Hostel D, Resident)

That the study found such a high level of desire for various forms of supported accommodation (more than previous research has identified) was, however, perhaps not so surprising. This was because the hostel referral criteria, particularly of C and D, made it likely that those accommodated would have high levels of particular kinds of support needs and these would, in turn, increase residents' desire and need for forms of accommodation with assistance on hand.

The reasons why residents did not wish to move out were mixed. Some did not feel able to, some seemed unlikely to be able to, and others did not want to leave. Again such reasons appeared to relate to complex issues of ability, choice, and institutionalisation. Because residents exhibited an apparently high level of insight into their support needs and likely future housing circumstances, and because some residents wanted to live

in supported hostel accommodation for the present but could still envisage, and indeed desired, alternatives for the future, it seemed that ability and choice were perhaps playing a greater role than institutionalisation.

In respect of sharing, previous research has suggested that this is a minority preference, but with some evidence of a potentially much wider willingness to do so (Drake *et al.*, 1981; Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Watson and Cooper, 1992; Cooper *et al.*, 1993). This study found clear evidence of a willingness, and sometimes a preference, to share amongst many residents from all four hostels. Again, this inclination seemed to relate to residents' high support needs. Given the general trends towards smaller and more single person households in Britain over recent years (see discussion in chapter 1 and also The 1994 British Household Panel Study), this was a particularly interesting finding.

Regarding age and housing preference, Watson and Cooper concluded that younger and older people had different housing aspirations. They found that a minority of people wanted long-term shared housing and established that these were likely to be older people who had previously lived in institutions (Watson and Cooper, 1992). Garside *et al.* (1990) similarly argued that where hostel accommodation was preferred, it was most frequently chosen by the older white residents who were currently living in provision with a high degree of staff cover.

The above pattern of preference by age was evident in *hostel A*. Here all residents who wished to leave were young and all those who wished to stay were older. It appeared not to be the case, however, in respect of residents from *hostels B, C, or D*. In these three hostels residents' support needs seemed far more relevant than age in determining accommodation preferences.

Hostel type was also a relevant factor in determining individuals' housing aspirations. Residents from *hostel A* had

very diverse future housing preferences and expectations, so mirroring the diversity of residents' characteristics, support needs, likely future housing circumstances, previous housing histories, and mixed reasons for homelessness.

Residents from *hostel B*, meanwhile, were the most likely to desire their own place and to report no need, or desire, for on-going formal assistance. Given the generally low support needs of residents from B, this was likely to be realistic. Moreover, residents from hostel B more frequently reported that they would be able to secure help from family and friends. Consequently, they often stressed their need to be rehoused near their informal support networks, qualifying their preference for a new house by *'near family'*, *'near friends'*, *'near X school'*, *'in Y or Z areas'*. Hostel B was also the only hostel not to have a resident who wanted to stay permanently.

Hostel C residents appeared to have the most unrealistic assessment of their support needs and, simultaneously, the most uncertain and confused understanding of both their likely future housing circumstances and their housing preferences. Whilst this seemed to relate to poor mental health and limited comprehension, it was interesting to find that *hostel D* residents, who frequently had intense learning disabilities, conversely presented as very aware of their support needs.

None of the residents from hostel D expressed any dissatisfaction with their present or likely future housing circumstances and most appeared to be realistic in respect of their housing aspirations. A greater openness about and acceptance of support and care needs in hostel D than in hostel C seemed, at least in part, to explain this difference.

To summarise: it was clear that present housing circumstances did not match preferences for everyone. Many wished to leave hostel accommodation and, indeed, would have been able to leave, if only more suitable alternative housing had been available.

This was especially true of the residents from hostel B and the younger residents from A. There was, nevertheless, a sizeable minority of existing residents who were happy to, or needed to, remain in a hostel, either for the present or on a more permanent basis. This clearly highlighted the need for a range of diverse forms of accommodation, with and without support on hand (see also Drake *et al.*, 1981; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Evans, 1991).

Part 3: Supported hostel accommodation - generic or specialist provision?

Groups of hostel residents

When asked whether there were any particular groups of people who might particularly want, or benefit from, supported hostel accommodation, residents and non-residents alike emphasised that provision was most appropriate for people who, to varying degrees, 'needed' to be there. People needing care were mentioned more frequently than those needing support from time to time, whilst those needing support from time to time were mentioned far more often than those with only minimal support requirements (see chapter 1 for a discussion of the difference between support and care).

Respondents identified thirty-five particular groups as being likely to want, or benefit from, supported hostel accommodation. In practice this encompassed so many people that listing the groups in full only indicated that supported hostel accommodation had the potential to provide for a very heterogeneous range of individuals. Furthermore, the groups identified were not always consistent. Thus, sometimes women only, sometimes men only, sometimes families only, and sometimes single people only were highlighted. That identified groups tended to overlap, and even to conflict, suggested that whether accommodation should be provided through specialist hostels targeted at particular groups

of homeless people, or provided more generically, was likely to be a complex issue.

Sometimes opposite groups were mentioned by residents and non-residents in relation to the same hostel. Thus, in hostel A older people only and younger people only were both highlighted. Some groups (for example, those sleeping on the streets) were mentioned by all respondents in relation to all hostels. Most frequently, however, particular groups were identified by all respondents in a given hostel. In many cases those considered most likely to benefit were those actually being targeted by the hostel concerned. This suggested that, to an extent at least, targeting provision was an effective and efficient system.

In *hostel A* respondents from all groups reported that men, especially older men, and particularly those with an itinerant lifestyle, would be most suited to the accommodation. *Hostel B* respondents (residents and others alike) recorded that families, married couples, people fleeing violence, and people with only minimal support needs would be most helped by staying there. In *hostel C* respondents from all groups believed that the accommodation was most appropriate for people who needed rehabilitation and for people who wanted to, needed to, or could be helped by being there. In *hostel D* residents stressed that provision was suitable for anyone, whilst non-residents specified that it was most appropriate for those leaving care or for those with no one else to whom they could turn.

Many respondents (residents and non-residents) also emphasised that whether people were likely to want, or to benefit from, supported hostel provision would depend largely on the individual concerned. Non-resident groups particularly stressed the diversity and individuality of homeless people and the heterogeneity of their respective experiences of homelessness. They also commonly argued that the residents most likely to benefit from hostel accommodation were those individuals who chose, or really needed, to be there.

Particular groups of people for whom supported hostel accommodation was considered inappropriate were also identified. That there were only four such groups, compared with the thirty-five considered suitable, rendered this finding the more useful of the two. The groups considered unsuitable included people whose support needs exceeded the assistance which the hostels could offer; people who disrupted the lives of others; people who did not want to live in hostel accommodation; and people who desired hostel accommodation, but only because they had been conditioned by past experiences and could, with appropriate support, move on.

Separating versus mixing groups of hostel residents

The present study found arguments both for and against targeting groups of residents in supported hostel accommodation (see Table 8.6). Essentially these arguments could be summarised as a trade off between mixing groups (which treated residents as more 'normal') and providing more segregated, specialist forms of accommodation (which might better meet particular needs, but risked labelling and increasing residents' stigma).

The arguments presented in Table 8.6 supported Hutson and Liddiard's conclusions that defining homeless people as ordinary cast doubt on the need for special funding and intervention, whilst defining homeless people as problematic increased the likelihood that they would experience stigma (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Moreover, emphasising the vulnerability of homeless individuals implied that homelessness was not a general problem, but one that affected only a few and, by implication, only those who were inadequate in some way. As a result, agencies could often be caught in the dilemma of whether to subscribe to a targeted approach (which can bring resources, but tends to marginalise the problem) or to adopt a more generalising approach (which avoids the problem of stigmatisation, but tends

to make adequate resources more difficult to acquire) (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

Table 8.6 : Arguments for and against targeting groups of residents

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Targeting groups

Advantages

* Targeting a specific group might make it easier to meet particular needs.
* Accommodating residents with similar needs together might increase the likelihood that residents will help and empathise with each other.
* Separating groups with different needs might help to avoid conflicts.

Disadvantages

* Targeting groups can increase the danger of labelling and stigma.
* If people are segregated into 'unnatural' living environments, it can make resettlement and rehabilitation more difficult.

Mixing groups

Advantages

* Mixing groups makes for a more 'normal' environment and could reduce the potential of stigma, labelling, and difference.

Disadvantages

* Mixing groups can increase the potential for conflict and hence hostel managerial problems.
* Mixing groups can lead to residents being placed in situations with which they cannot cope (for example involving complex interpersonal relations). This might create further problems for them.

Some respondents (residents and others, but mainly from the smaller hostels, C and D) argued that whether or not residents should be grouped was less important than ensuring that newcomers fitted into the existing resident population, or would actually benefit from staying in the hostel. Others maintained that it

would depend more on the needs of the individual concerned, or on the client group. For example, mixing age groups might be more of a concern in a hostel for homeless ex-offenders than in one accommodating homeless people with learning difficulties. Other residents and non-residents highlighted the prior importance of resident choice in relation to such matters.

> *I think choice is the answer. I think that people should have the choice of whether they want to live in a single gender, age-grouped place...I think we are as guilty as anybody of seeing the norm as being somebody who lives in their own house.* (Hostel C, Worker)

Mixing certain groups of residents was found to be considerably more relevant than mixing others. For all respondent groups, mixing sexes was reported to be more of an issue than mixing age groups and mixing age groups was reported to be more of a concern than mixing races. On the whole, there was a clear preference amongst both residents and non-residents for separating sexes, but whether or not residents should be separated by age was less clear. The mixing of very old and very young residents was only really relevant to hostel A and here the differing needs and lifestyles of the two groups frequently caused conflicts. Where less extreme age mixing occurred, there appeared to be no major problems.

Garside *et al.* (1990) also found that the age mix of hostel residents was less of a concern than the gender mix. Slightly less than a half of the residents in their study expressed a preference for single sex accommodation, a third said they would like mixed accommodation, and the remainder reported that they did not mind. Garside *et al.* found that more women than men said they would prefer single sex provision. Mixed hostels, meanwhile, were least frequently preferred by residents aged between sixteen and eighteen years and by those over fifty. Single sex hostels were preferred by respondents who were used to segregation and liked it. Residents who preferred mixed accommodation felt that it was more sociable or natural and a number of men felt the presence of women could improve behaviour

and cleanliness (Garside *et al.*, 1990). The present study did not consider these issues in such detail.

Within the four case study hostels, no problems or reservations were expressed in relation to mixing races. There was, however, no consensus regarding whether or not other groups (for example, single people and families, or groups with high and groups with low support needs) should be accommodated separately or together. Opinions regarding such matters seemed to be informed by a mixture of personal experiences and beliefs, with no apparent pattern according to respondent group or to hostel type. Some individuals felt that people in similar situations or with similar needs might wish to be accommodated collectively because they might have a greater understanding of each other's circumstances (for example, women fleeing violence). Other individuals argued that residents were so preoccupied with their own needs that they had little time and energy left for helping others. One hostel manager also highlighted the managerial problems of mixing 'cultures' of homeless people (that is, people who had chosen itinerant lifestyles and those who had become homeless through more enforced circumstances).

The above findings reinforced the earlier suggestion that there were unlikely to be any clear answers to the issue of whether hostels should provide generic accommodation for mixed groups of homeless people or more specialist provision for separate groups. Consistent with previous research (Austerberry and Watson, 1983; Evans, 1991; Randall and Brown, 1993), it seemed that there was a need, and a desire, for some segregated accommodation. Equally, however, it was neither possible, nor desirable, to provide separate accommodation for every conceivable group of homeless people which might want, or benefit from, a supported hostel. There were rather clear advantages to be gained from mixing people wherever possible.

Summary

The hostels were catering for a very diverse range of individuals with an equally disparate range of needs. Residents had an extremely high level of health problems, and particularly mental health problems. Likewise, they were experiencing high, and increasingly higher, levels of other support needs. Frequently, these needs exceeded the assistance which the hostels themselves could reasonably hope to offer. Many residents also appeared to require on-going support after rehousing. Indeed, a small minority, especially some of the older residents, seemed to be in need of a very supportive environment for the rest of their lives.

Consistent with previous research, the housing histories of the hostel residents in the study were numerous and varied, often insecure and unsettled and frequently involving spells in other institutions. Although certain common situations were found to precede homelessness, often no single cause could be identified. A general inability to cope, often following some form of relationship breakdown, was, however, most commonly mentioned. Additionally, many residents were returners to *hostel provision.*

Reasons for moving into, and staying in, supported hostel accommodation were diverse. The role of choice was seen as crucial, but complex. Whilst choices were frequently recognised as constrained and limited, many respondents fiercely defended their decision to take up a hostel place. Others stipulated that the lack of alternative accommodation, or their need for support, had necessitated the move. Most had had very limited alternative housing options.

There was a high level of uncertainty about the likely future housing circumstances of the residents. Some anticipated, and desired, a move to more independent tenancies, but many expected, and wished, to move into other forms of supported housing. The desire for the latter appeared greater than might have been

expected from previous research into the preferences of homeless people more generally. Some residents wanted to remain in the hostel, but with a view to leaving later; others hoped to remain more permanently. Most individuals appeared to have a realistic understanding of their support needs in any new tenancy which they might take up.

On the whole, supported hostel accommodation was felt to be suitable for any individual who needed some degree of assistance, but in practice the number of groups of people this could include was so extensive that it became virtually all-encompassing. Mixing and separating residents with different needs was found to be a complex issue, with the segregation of some groups notably more important than the segregation of others. Frequently, it seemed more relevant to consider residents' needs on an individual basis. Whether, in view of this, supported hostel accommodation should be targeted at groups (in the form of specialist accommodation) or provided for homeless people on a more generic basis, was not possible to determine. A mixture of both, allowing for resident choice where possible, seemed to be the most promising suggestion.

One final, interesting finding to begin to emerge from this chapter related to differences and similarities of opinions between the respondent groups and across the hostels. Preliminary evidence suggested that there was a higher degree of consensus between all respondent groups within a given hostel than between similar respondent groups from the different organisations. It was thus quite common for all respondents from hostel A, or all respondents from hostels B, or C, or D to hold similar viewpoints which then differed from hostel to hostel.

Where differences of opinion between the respondent groups were evident, the distinction most commonly fell between the residents and the non-residents. It was then quite common for the residents from all hostels to hold similar perspectives and the non-residents to hold alternatives. Within the respondent

groups, similarities were commonly found between the experiences and opinions of the residents from hostel B and the younger residents from A. Additionally, there appeared to be some emerging evidence of an affinity between the opinions of the employees of hostels C and D.

CHAPTER 9: HOSTEL CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction

This chapter begins the process of assessing hostel provision. The focus is on those issues which have, at least to an extent, been considered by previous research. These tend to be the inputs, processes, and outputs, rather than the outcomes, of hostel accommodation[1] -that is funding; standards (for example, physical conditions, location, and design); support services; provision for rehousing/ move-on; management and staffing; policies and procedures; planning, monitoring, and evaluation; hostel aims and objectives; and service co-ordination.

Funding

This section considers the funding mechanisms of the four case study hostels and the implications of these for the residents.

Most resources for *hostel A*, including the building, were provided through its parent organisation via a combination of public donations and grants. The hostel itself generated some further revenue through room charges (usually met by Housing Benefit) and a contribution which residents paid out of their own income. This contribution varied, but was usually just over £25 a week (and £40 for those requiring personal care). According to the management, A's voids problem had worsened and its financial situation become more insecure since the abolition of board and lodgings payments in 1989. Many individuals could no longer gain access to the accommodation, because money for their accommodation could not be guaranteed by the state. Additionally, delays in Housing Benefit payments had resulted in more residents leaving with large debts.

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[1] See glossary.

The hostel is always losing money because people leave suddenly without paying what they owe. This makes it very difficult for us. (Hostel A, Worker)

The post 1993 financial system for providing housing and support for people in need of community care was also making it difficult to pay for the care of some of the older men. These legislative changes meant that A was increasingly having to compete against other agencies for scarce resources. This, management felt, was preventing necessary improvements to the building and facilities and inhibiting the development of essential training and resettlement programmes for the residents.

Funding for *hostel B* was from the housing department of the City Council, but attempts were constantly being made from within the hostel to secure more financial input. Although finances were more stable than those of hostel A, residents, workers, managers, and other professionals all argued that B did not have the resources (facilities, staff numbers, or staff training) to cope with residents' increasingly intense support requirements.

Hostel C was funded through its parent organisation, the major sources of income for which were resident's charges, grants (mainly from statutory agencies who supported the work of the organisation), and the city council housing and social services department. The parent organisation also claimed Transitional Special Needs Management Allowance (TSNMA) through a local housing association. High voids within C, and within some of the parent organisation's other women's provision, had latterly become critical to the funding of the whole concern. One potential response to this would have been to reduce resident numbers and to convert the property into more independent flats. This was not, however, possible because of the minimum number of residents needed by C to fulfil the requirements for TSNMA.

Because of TSNMA we can't convert the accommodation to more independent flats. It's to do with the numbers. (Hostel C, Manager)

Although C had been less than half full over recent months, residents, workers, management, and the involved other professional all maintained that the scheme was understaffed and underresourced and that workers were receiving insufficient training and supervision. The reasons given for this were a recent intensification in the needs of existing residents, additional support being required by a number of ex-residents, and one full-time staff member being on long-term sick leave.

> *We have got to go with our begging bowls for anything that we want, which I resent.* (Hostel C, Worker)

Funding for *hostel D* was received from its parent organisation and comprised a mixture of donations from individuals, churches, and public trusts. Donations were felt to be easier to secure from those who had seen the work being done with the residents, particularly the employment training. The organisation's only statutory funding was a Section 73 grant for its resettlement project. About £87 a week Housing Benefit was received for each resident, but there was no fixed personal contribution. The organisation simply deducted three quarters of an individual's income as a contribution towards their board and lodge. This left most residents with between £15 and £20 in their pockets each week. Some residents had recently joined an Employment Action Scheme and for this they received an extra £10 a week. For residents not on this scheme, the organisation provided a bonus system. This allowed those who arrived punctually and stayed all day to earn up to an extra £5 a week. It also provided an incentive to work and reduced income differences between residents. None of this additional money was ever deducted for accommodation costs.

Two years previously the parent organisation of hostel D had experienced a financial crisis and this had reduced seventeen paid staff to four and a half. Since then a more solid financial basis had been re-established, but funding was still a constant battle. Because of the availability of grants and donations, the financing of the actual work with the young people was less

problematic than the financing of salaries and capital. Indeed, at the time of the fieldwork, the organisation was highly dependent upon the assistance of volunteers. Volunteers, the management felt, should really be a useful topping up for staff, and not a replacement of them. With more resources, the organisation believed that it would be able to do more resettlement training and open a house for women. It would also be able to provide more staff for the hostel and thus offer residents more individual attention.

Consistent with previous research, the four case study hostels were deriving their income from several sources. These included charges to residents, deficit funding, and topping up from other public agencies. Voluntary sector hostels were particularly likely to be confronted by a multiplicity of grant sources, with managers obliged to look for financial assistance wherever they could find it (Berthoud and Casey, 1988; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Clapham *et al.*, 1994).

> *I think that we are at the mercy of so many changes in fashion, if you like, in terms of funds and the resources that are available to us.* (Hostel C, Worker)

The financial circumstances of all four hostels were straitened, but those of A, C, and D (non-local authority provided) were the most precarious. In A, the care of the older residents was particularly suffering from the limited revenue for care and support. Also, in A, as predicted by Smith *et al.* (1991), the abolition of board and lodgings payments had resulted in the increased complexity of claiming benefit.

Because of its multi-generic nature, funding could not easily be compartmentalised under 'housing', 'social services', or 'health'. All hostels were providing some basic care, but it was not always possible to distinguish between those parts of the basic costs which were living expenses, and those which were care (see Berthoud and Casey, 1988). Funding systems were, however,

clearly influencing the nature of hostel provision. Staff and managers from all four hostels were acutely aware of the greater contribution that their provision could have been making to community care, if funding mechanisms had been different (see Berthoud and Casey, 1988; Watson and Cooper, 1992; Clapham *et al.*, 1994). Likewise, uncertainty about future financing, including TSNMA, was effecting policy and provision, especially at C where the accommodation could not be converted because this would have reduced the number of residents (see also Garside *et al.*, 1990).

In terms of the effects of hostel funding mechanisms on the financial circumstances of those living within them, most residents reported that the accommodation costs and the money left in their pockets each week were acceptable. Indeed, more reported these to be good than bad. Given that hostel financial arrangements were not conducive to residents taking up paid employment (see chapter 8), this satisfaction seemed to reflect residents' low expectations and limited alternatives, rather than any lucrative resident income.

Standards

The meaning of standards was not defined for the respondents. This was to ensure that the issues discussed were those which the interviewees, rather than the researcher, considered important. In the event, standards were interpreted broadly to include warmth and security; staffing and support; washing, catering, cooking, and entertainment facilities; cleanliness; general repair of the building; design (including space and decor); sleeping arrangements; and location.

On the whole, standards were evaluated more positively than negatively by the majority of respondents across all four hostels. Of the 48 interviewees, 3 described the standards as 'excellent'; 17 felt the accommodation was either 'good' or 'very

good'; 18 maintained that it was 'basic' or 'reasonable'; 4 described it as 'value for money'; 2 as 'poor'; and 2 as 'better than nowhere'. A further 2 felt that they could not comment.

Across all four hostels residents were less critical than non-residents, but there were also clear differences between the hostels. Comments relating to *hostel D* were especially positive, whilst those about *hostel B* were the most negative. This was in spite of the fact that conditions and facilities at B seemed far better than those at D.

Residents and non-residents from *hostel A* tended to be highly appreciative of very basic features of the accommodation, such as the provision of a roof or a bed or that it was better than nowhere. At *hostel B* residents and non-residents reported that the positive aspects of standards included the newness of the building, the security, and the cooking and washing facilities. In *hostel C* the support and the single rooms were universally appreciated, whilst in *hostel D* all respondents were positive about almost all aspects.

In *hostel A* residents and non-residents were most critical about the poor state of the building and its design (the sharing of sleeping areas and the snoring in the dormitories being the main negative consequences of the design). The criticisms highlighted across all respondent groups in *hostel B* included the need for repainting, the poor state of the furniture, and the lack of cleanliness. In *hostel C* the negative features referred to by most residents and non-residents were the poor kitchen facilities, the lack of cleanliness, the overcrowding, and the location. In *hostel D*, meanwhile, only three criticisms were made. These related to the overcrowding, the fact that the house was too far from the town, and the institutionalising appearance of some of the recent refurbishment work.

Although the general level of satisfaction with the standards might simply have reflected the high quality of provision, a

number of other factors seemed likely to be relevant (see the literature review in chapter 3). These included low expectations of hostel provision; past experiences of poor quality accommodation; reticence to criticise; limited available alternatives; the intensity of residents' needs; and the definition of standards used (for example, value for money rather than quality of provision). Assessment might also have reflected the length of the accommodation period. Thus, what might have been acceptable for a short while might not have been so acceptable for an indefinite stay (or vice versa, if expectations adjusted downwards with time).

In the study, low expectations were apparent. Thus, many of the characteristics mentioned most frequently as positive (the beds, the hot water, the electricity supply, the television, a tea machine, and warmth) were very basic. The accommodation was rated more critically by residents of B and C, than by those of A and D, but this was also understandable, given that residents of B and C were more likely to have previously experienced better quality and more secure accommodation in their own homes.

> *Cleanliness is very lacking because everybody is so ill that nothing gets done very much and, if you have always had a home of your own and you are a very meticulous person, it does not come easy: it does not come easy living in a standard below your own home.* (Hostel C, Resident)

Likewise, those with least need of the accommodation (ex-residents and non residents) were more prone to criticise than residents who were more dependent upon it for a bed.

That hostel standards were not static was commonly acknowledged by residents and non-residents from all four organisations. Fluctuations in standards were reported to occur with changes in the availability of resources, variations in residents' needs, and different resident group mixes. Factors believed likely to militate against good standards included budget constraints, a high resident turnover, and the

unwillingness or inability of residents to care for the accommodation. There were more reports of observed or experienced improvements in the standards and facilities of hostel provision over recent years than there were of observed or experienced deterioration, but the scope for further improvements was still referred to on many occasions.

Only in *hostel B* did staff report that standards had worsened dramatically over time. Here the furnishings were considered to be a particular problem because of the lack of respect with which residents treated them. This was largely assumed to be because of a high resident turnover which meant that residents were not accommodated for long enough to perceive, and hence to treat, the property as their own. In spite of this, many residents and non-residents still stressed that B was far better than the available alternatives and that staff there were doing as much as possible to maintain quality.

Consistent with previous research, the standard of the building, its physical condition, location, and design were found to be important factors which both affected residents' self-esteem and conveyed something about the way the project and the wider society perceived the inhabitants (see also NACRO, 1982; Garside *et al.*, 1990). Residents and non-residents from all four hostels frequently argued that good quality accommodation helped people to feel that they were valued and mattered.

> *Physical conditions are important because I think that they are an indication of how you are valued. So, if you are placed in crap surroundings, say, you tend to think, "Well this is what I am worth."* (Hostel D, Referral Agency Representative)

> *If you walk into a house that is a tip with wallpaper peeling off the walls, you are not going to feel good about yourself being in there.* (Hostel D, Ex-resident)

> *I think that if somebody is sort of offered a home in a nice building, they feel that they are worth a lot more.* (Hostel D, Worker)

The relative importance of hostel standards, nevertheless, elicited a mixed response. Some residents and non-residents felt that the standards were the most important feature of provision; others argued that they were not relevant; a lot more referred to them as one of many important characteristics.

> *A settee is a settee. It does not matter if it looks fancy or not fancy. I mean, it is something to sit on.* (Hostel D, Resident)

Opinions about hostel standards were also often contradictory. Thus what constituted good or bad quality provision was not always clear. The cleanliness or the degree of sharing in a particular hostel was sometimes rated positively by some residents and negatively by others. Differences between the opinions of workers and of residents about particular issues were also common. For example, the design of *hostel B* and the level of space in *hostel C* were both considered largely good by residents, but bad by staff. The location of *hostel D* was essentially poor according to residents, but good according to workers. This suggested interesting differences between good and bad design and location from the point of view of managing a hostel and of living in it.

Non-residents were also more likely than residents and ex-residents to comment on, and to theorise about, the probable effects of poor or inappropriate design. Accordingly, non-residents were more likely to refer to the fact that institutional features (such as protrusive fire alarms, shared rooms, or large communal areas) did not help residents to feel at home and did not encourage them to treat the accommodation as if it were their own (see Garside *et al.*, 1990). Non-residents were also more likely to recognise that hostel accommodation needed to be of a particularly good quality because of the high levels of wear and tear that it endured (NACRO, 1982; Garside *et al.*, 1990).

Physical conditions are extremely important - that the property is in really good condition. I mean, in fact, they need to be of a better standard than most general needs accommodation that housing associations might provide, just because of the number of people who are in and out and the quite heavy wear and tear.
(Hostel C, Management Committee Member)

Some hostels were found to be occupying high-quality, purpose-built or fully converted premises with single rooms and plenty of facilities. Others had only unconverted properties, shared rooms, and poor facilities (Berthoud and Casey, 1988). There was, however, no evidence in this study to support Evans' contention that local authority hostel accommodation was kept to a basic level in order to keep homelessness applications down and to test the genuineness of an applicant's needs (Evans, 1991). Smaller hostels appeared to be appreciated by many residents, but some, especially the older men from A, seemed to require the degree of anonymity provided by a larger building (see Randall and Brown, 1993).

Communal space was a potential source of conflict in all four hostels, but the dormitories in *hostel A*, the laundry area in *hostel B*, and the large communal kitchen in *hostel C* were particularly problematic. *Hostel D* had recently been improved in this respect, following the installation of a new kitchenette. It was clear that some designers had given little real consideration to how communal places would actually be used and this had resulted in a waste of space and resources (see also Garside *et al.*, 1990). In *hostel B*, for example, the playroom was seldom used because there was no money to finance the supervision of children in it.

Garside *et al* (1990) reported that separate staff areas could make workers appear too remote, whilst total integration could make it difficult for them to exercise authority when required. This was particularly relevant in relation to the office at *hostel C*. Workers in C had previously spent time in the house with the women, but increasing amounts of paper work had meant

that staff had more recently become tied to the office. Relations between the residents and workers had correspondingly become more distant and more formal. Whether this was good or bad for work practices appeared to be a moot point between individuals within the organisation.

Staff and management from *hostel A* reported that their office was well located for spotting and preventing trouble. This was because it provided a good view of the entrance area and afforded easy access to the two communal lounges. Workers and managers from *hostel B*, conversely, felt that their office was not appropriately situated. This was because it did not overlook the premises, so making it difficult to maintain control. Garside *et al.* (1990) concluded that there was a need for closer communication between designers, managers, and renters at the developmental stage. Workers and managers from *hostel B* also highlighted this. They argued that, in spite of being purpose built, from a managerial perspective the design of B was disastrous.

Residents and non-residents in the present study were highly conscious of the difficulties of effecting improvements to standards, given limited resources. Many, nevertheless, recognised that there was greater scope for improving some aspects of provision (such as repainting or obtaining newer furniture) than for changing other, more structural, features (such as location).

Support services

Previous research into hostel support services has tended to focus on those provided for resettlement and move-on (see chapter 3). This thesis was, however, also keen to investigate what kinds of day-to-day support services being provided, how appropriate and effective these were, and how they might be improved. Although services designed to meet the needs for

support while living in a hostel were found to be difficult to distinguish from those designed to assist people with moving to more independent housing (see also Anderson, 1993b), this chapter endeavours to consider day-to-day support services separately from provision for rehousing and move-on.

Availability

Across all four hostels only a limited range of day-to-day assistance was available. Moreover, services were not always provided by, or within, the hostels themselves. This made access to support provided by other agencies a crucial resource. *Hostel D* professed and, indeed, seemed to be offering the most by way of support services, whilst *hostels A and B* professed and, indeed, seemed to be providing the least. The situation in *hostel C* was more confused. Here there was an apparent discrepancy between what the organisation claimed to be providing and what was actually evident or reported by residents and the involved other professional interviewed.

Hostel A offered its residents a weekly further education class and access to a peripatetic health care team, comprising a doctor, a nurse, and a community psychiatric nurse. Whilst some personal care was provided to the older men by the care worker, staff and management maintained that they did not have the resources to provide any additional assistance.

In *hostel B* support was both minimal and practical and included security, a route to priority homelessness status, and assistance with claiming benefits. Residents and non-residents both acknowledged that there were no resources or facilities within the accommodation itself for the emotional support of residents[2]. Health visiting, doctor, social work, and other

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[2] The term 'emotional support' is used to refer to various forms of non-practical assistance which might meet residents' emotional and social needs. Such assistance could involve

services were, however, available in the local community.

Staff and management from *Hostel C* maintained that their hostel offered its residents emotional and practical assistance, including advice and security. Likewise, staff and management claimed that hostel C liaised with, and referred to, other agencies operating in the city. This was vehemently disputed by the involved other professional; residents, meanwhile, appeared unsure of the kind or amount of assistance they received.

Staff and management from *hostel D* claimed to be providing practical and emotional support and care. To this end, the hostel offered a home for life for those who wanted it, an employment/ training scheme, counselling and therapy, day care, and resettlement training. Residents and non-residents both maintained that the hostel offered residents a sense of belonging, love, friendship, and encouragement, raised their expectations, and assisted them in keeping out of trouble.

Some basic support was provided for almost all of the residents in all the hostels, but other additional or 'extra' kinds of services (such as physical help, more intensive support, resettlement, and rehabilitation) were also provided by some projects (see Berthoud and Casey, 1988). To an extent, the kind and degree of support provided by each organisation reflected the intensity of their respective residents' needs.

In *hostel B* support services were few, but residents had only low support needs; in *hostel D* residents were provided with more support services, but also had greater needs; in *hostel A* a rather haphazard approach to provision reflected the diversity of residents' requirements; whilst in *hostel C* the situation was again more complex. Here staff and management seemed very

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listening; advising; or simply offering comfort, company, or solace at what might be particularly stressful times in residents' lives.

uncertain about the extent of help that could be provided, given the recent increase in the mental health needs of those accommodated.

Satisfaction

Residents and non-residents from all four hostels commonly argued that the support services provided by the hostels were insufficient.

Although residents and non-residents from *hostel A* reported that, on the whole, satisfactory assistance was available for those who wanted it, many, nevertheless, maintained that there were not enough facilities for the care of the older men. Additionally, some dissatisfaction was expressed by the younger residents, the adult education worker, and the referral agency representative because the older men received more assistance than the younger residents. Some staff and other professionals also argued that the emotional needs of residents were insufficiently catered for.

In *hostel B* residents and non-residents expressed a high level of satisfaction with day-to-day practical assistance, but a low level of satisfaction with the availability of emotional support.

In *hostel C* residents voiced general satisfaction, but some non-residents (staff and others) expressed a concern that workers might inadvertently create dependencies and deskill residents by doing too much for them. This, staff argued, was because workers did not have the time to motivate the women sufficiently, or to be more proactive, or to work with them at their own pace.

> *I think that the resources of the staff are worn so thin that they are reduced to just responding a lot of the time...I think that they are drained, so all their initiatives will be reduced.* (Hostel C, Relief Worker)

The involved other professional from C was, meanwhile, particularly critical of the support provided in the hostel.

> *I have had clients in there and I have felt that they were getting neglected, so I moved them on to other places, but they have not moved them on.* (Hostel C, Community Psychiatric Nurse)

In *hostel D* all respondents reported a generally high level of satisfaction with all aspects of support. Staff and managers, nevertheless, regretted that there were not enough employees to develop residents' practical skills or to do as much individualised work as the organisation would have liked.

Across all four hostels and all respondent groups, satisfaction was recorded more than dissatisfaction, but residents tended to be less critical and more satisfied than non-residents. Satisfaction was higher where services were good/ appropriate, but also where expectations were low, needs high, alternatives minimal, or respondents reticent to criticise. Problems seemed most likely to arise where changes in residents' needs were causing a particular hostel to provide a new form of 'extra' support (such as physical care in A, more intensive support in C, and more resettlement in all four hostels).

The dangers of hostel accommodation creating dependencies or institutionalising and labelling residents were referred to on several occasions by residents and non-residents from all organisations. In spite of this, only one respondent (the manager from hostel C) argued that individual needs could never be met in a hostel environment because of this.

Improvements

Although respondents expressed a high level of satisfaction with hostel services, most also felt that much more could be done for residents. Improvements included more individual work, more

group work, more advocacy, greater involvement of other professionals, more practical training in lifeskills, and more preparation for move-on. These suggestions were common to all four case studies, but some were more frequently stressed in relation to particular organisations.

Although more care was provided for the older than for the younger men in *hostel A*, residents and non-residents still argued that more physical care was needed for the older men. Some staff and other professionals also identified a need for more emotional support and counselling, particularly for some of the younger residents. In *hostel B* the need for a creche worker was recognised across all respondent groups, but workers also stressed the need for more staff training in providing non-practical and emotional support.

In *hostel C* residents made no suggestions for improving support services, but the non-residents highlighted a need for more proactive work with the residents, better management and support for the staff, and the creation of a role for volunteers. In *hostel D* residents and non-residents highlighted a need for more resident training in lifeskills, for example more budgeting and cooking.

In all four hostels the non-residents identified more potential for improving support services than did the residents themselves. This seemed to result from the staff's greater appreciation of the kinds of assistance which could be offered, but equally their greater awareness of their own training and support needs, and the limitations of their resources. Consistent with Evans (1991), this appeared to suggest that specialist agencies might better provide some services than the hostels themselves.

Frequently staff complained that their housing management roles conflicted with their support worker roles and that time which could have been spent with residents was being

disproportionately absorbed by practical and administrative tasks to do with the running of the accommodation. Additionally, some staff, particularly in B, felt that collecting rent and enforcing rules in one instant was incompatible with providing emotional support in the next.

Evans (1991) found that the type of support/ service provided in the hostels she studied depended on the skills and experience of key staff. This resulted in some offering little more than a care-taking service, whilst others offered intensive counselling on social/ personal problems.

This study also found that hostels varied in the amount and quality of the support they offered. Also consistent with Evans (1991), it found a recognised need for more staff training and supervision. A much broader range of factors were, however, identified as constraining support services. These included limited resources (financial and staffing); inadequate facilities; the lack of resident motivation and/ or interest; poor back-up support from other agencies; unsuitable move-on accommodation; too much bureaucracy and paper work; and a high staff turnover. The latter was considered likely to impede the provision of effective support, because it decreased stability and security amongst residents who often needed time and consistency in order to develop trust.

Provision for rehousing and move-on

Hostel A appeared to be one of only a few organisations of its size and generation which did not encourage its residents to consider resettlement or move-on. It had no move-on accommodation of its own, but some assistance with rehousing was available via other agencies operating in Hostelville. The involvement of other projects in move-on work with its residents was not, however, driven by the hostel itself. Indeed, hostel

A workers were not involved in, and seemed to have very little knowledge of, or interest in, the work other agencies were doing with their residents. Moreover, there was no independence training with the men living in the hostel, other than the Tuesday craft classes held by adult education. This could have been because the younger men did not need it and the older men did not desire it. Equally, there was some suggestion, from both inside and outside of the organisation, that the hostel itself was unwilling to facilitate move-on because of the fear that its voids would escalate and it would have to close.

At the time of the study, rehousing work with residents in *hostel B* was limited to arranging an interview with the housing department, assisting with any necessary form filling, and occasionally providing some furniture donations. There was no further contact once residents had departed from the hostel, but planned changes to staff roles seemed to indicate that hostel workers would soon be more involved in rehousing matters. This, it was anticipated, would make processes quicker and more effective. One particular change was likely to be the development of the role of support worker, who would continue to help residents after move-on. Staff appeared to welcome this as a counter to the revolving door syndrome - that is, residents repeatedly returning to the hostel because their needs were not being met after they had been rehoused.

In *hostel C* move-on work again tended to be more reactive than proactive. Increasingly, however, C had been working with residents on planned leaving. This was usually into other forms of supported accommodation provided by the parent organisation, or into properties managed with support by other voluntary agencies working in the city.

> *In many ways there are real successes with some people as far as independence and wanting to move-on, a real kind of will to do it. I mean, if we have encouraged that, then I think that is working.* (Hostel C, Relief Worker)

Over the years the parent organisation of *hostel D* had come to recognise that providing accommodation was only the first step in meeting residents' needs. Increasingly, efforts had, therefore, been made to develop the move-on and resettlement side of its work.

> *There is a whole need for supported living to get homeless people who are chronically dependent to adopt a more settled lifestyle. It is not good enough simply to shove someone in a bedsit who has got a drug problem. It does not work.* (Hostel D, Volunteer)

Residents of D were mainly rehoused through the organisation's own resettlement project, with assistance offered to them at the level of input that they desired. Once residents had left, they were welcomed back to the house and could continue to go on holidays and trips with the group. A resettlement worker was working in conjunction with the hostel worker to develop independence and lifeskills. Some residents were being given assistance in managing more of their own money and, recently, access had been gained to a kitchenette. This enabled residents to provide more of their own meals, if they desired, but with staff on hand to help and to advise. Whilst the organisation was keen to develop this side of its work more, it was limited by the availability of resources.

The four hostels were clearly at different stages in terms of developing policies and practices in relation to move-on. *Hostels B and D* were actively embracing move-on, *hostel C* was more ambivalent, and in *hostel A* rehousing was still a peripheral issue. Responses from both residents and residents indicated that, with the provision of appropriate support services, the level of successful resettlement of hostel residents could have been improved (see GLC/LBA, 1981; Mullins, 1991; Spaull and Rowe, 1992). Simultaneously, however, a need to question exactly how extensive such a resettlement process could ever be, was also revealed.

Don't set people up to fail, set them up to keep achieving. (Hostel C, Worker - said in relation to move-on not being appropriate for everyone)

Some residents did not yet feel ready to move on from the hostel; others did not feel that they, or some of the other residents, would ever be able to move to less supported accommodation forms (see chapter 8 for an overview of residents' likely future housing circumstances, accommodation preferences and aspirations). Consistent with previous research (for example, Drake, 1985; Tilt and Denford, 1986; Dant and Deacon, 1989), the high proportion of respondents in hostels needing some form of supportive housing seemed to indicate that an independent flat should not be the sole or even the dominant form of rehousing. Some people might need communal living and it would, therefore, be wrong to assume that people should inevitably move from hostels.

Management and staffing

Management

Hostel A had a hierarchical managerial structure which mirrored that of its parent organisation. The manager had become involved in hostel work through evangelism, rather than through any professional training in working with people who were homeless. Frequently, staff described him as an inflexible, old-fashioned autocrat who refused to delegate. Various members of the staff team maintained that hostel managers should be properly trained in hostel work and rehousing. Additionally, there was a general air of discontent within the staff team about the little control or decision-making power which many workers felt that they had. Residents, meanwhile, had a less negative opinion of the manager than of the other employees. Accordingly, they were less likely to direct their complaints at him than at workers with whom they had particular day-to-day grievances.

According to the referral agency representative from hostel A, the sharp managerial hierarchy was a functional arrangement which workers themselves reinforced. This, she hypothesised, was part of a process of allowing the manager to make, and to take responsibility for, unpleasant decisions. The staff, who had daily face-to-face contact with the residents, were then relieved of that burden. Likewise, they could avoid being reprimanded for making mistakes. The referral agency representative also believed that, of all the employees, the manager was the most flexible and, in many respects, the most amenable to argument, particularly in terms of allowing 'more difficult' residents access to the hostel. Again, she felt that this was because he did not have to work as closely with individual residents on a day-to-day or face-to-face basis.

Hostel B also functioned as a structured hierarchy. Workers here were accountable to the management, who were in turn obliged to abide by the homelessness legislation and the local authority's policies and procedures. The manager of B was also understood to be 'a bit of an autocrat who ran a tight ship'. In spite of this, she was generally respected and the feeling amongst the staff team was that she would support workers whenever there was a problem. As with hostel A, residents were far less conscious, and disapproving, of the control she exercised than were the other staff.

Although *hostel C* was closely bound to the more hierarchical structure of its parent organisation, it operated as a non-hierarchical staff team without an identifiable manager. According to the referral agency interviewee, this caused confusion in terms of accountability and continuity. Workers disputed this. They stressed that the structure allowed members of the team to communicate with, and to challenge, each other and this enabled them to move forward.

> *We are open to challenging each other and I feel that really helps us to move forward in the team, rather than just sitting on things.* (Hostel C, Worker)

Originally, the parent organisation of hostel C had operated more co-operatively, but three years ago there had been a review and this had resulted in management changes which were making the organisation increasingly hierarchical. Last year, another tier, the line manager, had been added. Workers in C reported that it was not always clear to whom in the parent organisation they were accountable: the management team, the management committee, or each other. This, workers felt, was worsened because the management team and the committee were not always conscious of what was going on in the hostels on a day-to-day basis.

> *When we are going in as project workers, you know, you are presenting reports, or, if we are arguing something, we have to prepare our own reports, but that can be quite hassly, because, if the committee members aren't in touch with what we are doing, you feel as though you are really having to go through everything to communicate clearly with them and have your say.* (Hostel C, Worker)

> *I think, if the meetings were more regular and we actually had a say at management committee meetings, and committee members coming out to visit the projects, which we don't at the moment, they would be more in touch with what was happening.* (Hostel C, Worker)

Within the organisation there was much internal wrangling between staff, the management team, and the management committee. Understanding of the issues was common, but interpretations and suggested solutions were very different. Workers and managers both agreed that arrangements for staff supervision were inadequate and both recognised that some staff felt that the organisation was not participative enough. Management, however, believed that there should be more of a hierarchy within each of the staff teams to improve support and supervision. Workers, conversely, felt that building up middle tiers simply distanced management still further. Top down pressure was, thus, in favour of increasing the hierarchy, whilst bottom up pressure was for decreasing it. Neither side, meanwhile, appeared happy about compromise.

Hostel D was part of a small hierarchical organisation which had a Trust and executive committee. It was the only organisation in the study where everyone seemed well-informed about, and accepting of, the managerial structure and the decision-making processes. Likewise, everyone was essentially happy with the mechanisms for raising ideas, discussion, involvement, and supervision. The organisation presented as largely conflict free and this, respondents maintained, related to a common religious philosophy and shared goals. Occasionally misunderstandings occurred, but management felt that this was only because staff were friends outside of work and so sometimes forgot that decisions had to be made formally.

> *We are all friends socially and we are all Christians and it is a very, very happy working environment in terms of the relationships...We see the task that needs to be done and we set about to do it as best we can together.* (Hostel D, Volunteer)

Consistent with previous research (Watson and Cooper, 1982; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Evans, 1991; NFHA and SITRA, 1991), considerable variety in the arrangements for managing supported housing projects was identified, but the actual management arrangements adopted by any particular hostel appeared to depend upon a number of different factors. These included the size of the scheme, its management philosophy, its history, the accommodation period, residents' needs, and the extent to which staff in individual projects reviewed and assessed practices and recommended changes.

Three of the four case study organisations (hostels A, B, and D) were operating as distinct hierarchies with an identifiable hostel manager who functioned as a key accountable figure. This seemed to be a relatively effective arrangement. Hostel C had a more mixed arrangement, but this appeared to result in a greater degree of confusion for residents and staff, particularly in relation to such issues as accountability.

Previous research has found that management committees could

provide support for staff, but tended to be remote, not very well informed, and consequently rarely in a position either to monitor day-to-day practices or to give a lead in overall direction (see Garside *et al.*, 1990). This was clearly true of the situation at hostel C, but not at D. Good relations with a management committee were thus possible, but not inevitable.

Regarding worker involvement in hostel management (that is, worker involvement in making decisions about hostel policies and operating procedures), the practices in each of the four hostels differed. Only in *hostel D* was the actual level of worker involvement in the formulation of policies and procedures considered to be appropriate by all involved parties. Here there were no complaints or any suggestions for improvements. In *hostel A* there was no staff input, but much desire for it; in *hostel B* some participation was apparent, but some staff desired more; and in *hostel C* channels were in place, but there was no consensus about how effective these were in practice.

> *There are different stage meetings, where workers have a forum to speak. Inevitably there are some difficulties around communication, but, in comparison to nursing, there is more of a forum for worker opinions. Workers might not get what they want at the end of the day, but there is the opportunity to stand up and disagree and so move forward with things.* (Hostel C, Worker)
>
> *A lot of the tone of the project is set by the staff, but they do not have that much control.* (Hostel C, Manager)
>
> *There are lots of decisions which workers are not allowed to make. Workers have to go with their begging bowls for everything.* (Hostel C, Worker)

Only one respondent (a worker from A who had previously been a resident there) argued that workers should not be involved in making decisions about the running and management of the hostel. His reason for this was that workers might make a mistake and then be told off for it. All other comments were in favour of, and many stressed the need for more, staff input. Reasons given

by both staff and managers for this included:

* Workers often have better knowledge about what is going on, because they have more day-to-day contact with the residents and are there at weekends and evenings when problems are more likely to occur

* If workers do not know what is going on, resentment builds up and then problems arise

* Workers are more trained for the job than management, who have old-fashioned ideas and are stuck in their ways

* Anything that gives greater involvement has got to be good all round

* Greater involvement is possible and works at other hostels

Some staff also argued that workers should be privy to more confidential information about residents because the more that is known about people as individuals, the easier it is to relate to them and to understand the reasons for their behaviour. The main way of effecting greater worker involvement was commonly believed to be through more regular meetings, which would prevent issues being lost. Interestingly, residents in all four hostels were essentially unaware of, and uninterested in, managerial issues.

Staffing

Consistent with Evans (1991), the type and number of staff for each hostel varied considerably and depended on such factors as the resources available, the needs of the residents, and the aims of the hostel concerned. Workers were all female in the women only hostel, mostly male in the men only hostels, and of mixed gender in the family hostel. Managers were of both sexes. All employees were white and their ages ranged between twenty-five and fifty-nine years.

Employees' backgrounds and previous employment experiences

varied. Some had had professional training, some had had similar life experiences to the residents, and some had haphazardly stumbled across the job. A high proportion had worked in related fields (nursing, caring, or other hostels) for many years; several had recently been students; and two had themselves experienced hostel accommodation as residents. Staff motivations were equally diverse. Most felt that it was an interesting and worthwhile occupation; some expressed a desire to care, or to work with people, or to use their existing skills; others considered that it was just a job (mostly hostels A and B).

Given that all hostel workers were white and only spoke English, it was perhaps not so surprising to find that the majority of residents were also white (see discussion of residents' ethnic origin in chapter 8). This might have arisen because non-white residents did not feel part of the organisation or did not feel that their needs would be understood or catered for there. The gender, age, and social class of workers were perhaps less of an issue, given that workers had more diverse personal details in respect of these.

Frequently, non-residents stressed the negative effects of a high staff turnover. Constant changes, they argued, unsettled residents, inhibited work with them, and hindered the process of developing hostel aims, objectives, and philosophies. Collectively, these were then believed to impede the continuity of care which could be provided. In spite of these concerns, there was no particular evidence of a high staff turnover in any of the four case study hostels. Even in C, where turnover was slightly higher, no worker had been employed for less than six months and only two had been working there for less than twelve months. Across all four hostels, the majority of the staff interviewed had been employed for over three years.

Of more general concern than the high staff turnover was the suggestion by all respondent groups that many paid hostel staff did not have, or did not feel that they had, the time, the

resources, or the training to deal with a growing number of very vulnerable residents. This was consistent with Evans' finding that many local authority hostels were unable to provide the sorts of support required by vulnerable applicants and hostel staff seldom had the skills or experience to be able to cope with the increasingly dependent residents who were being accepted (Evans, 1991).

Informal staffing structures (particularly in B and C) meant that tasks could not easily be divided into separate care, administration, or domestic services performed by different workers. Likewise, housing management and care tasks were often difficult to distinguish (see Berthoud and Casey, 1988; Bines *et al.*, 1993).

Consistent with Berthoud and Casey (1988), there was a high level of reliance upon unpaid overtime in each of the case study hostels, but especially *C and D*. The use of volunteer workers, to supplement the work of paid staff, was relevant in D, and discussed as a possibility in C. In C two residents and a worker argued that volunteers, who could listen and yet not be caught up with the nitty gritty of running the hostel, would be a valuable resource. Evidence from D, meanwhile, indicated that the use of volunteers was not straightforward.

Staff, managers, and other professionals connected to hostel D maintained that full-time staff were better than volunteers for providing stability and continuity. This was because residents tended not to discuss confidential matters with volunteers and some volunteers could be patronising and paternalistic. This appeared to support the argument that unpaid workers were frequently not easy to recruit, to utilise, or to sustain and their function was most successful where their role was well defined and where their tasks were limited to a level appropriate to their skills and to the training and supervision available (Garside *et al.*, 1990).

Policies and procedures

Daily routines

In *hostel A* residents had to be up by 8 o'clock so that staff could do a bed check. Following breakfast there were non-compulsory morning prayers which lasted from 9:45-10.00 A.M. On Sundays there was a longer service with morning coffee. The only other organised activity was a Tuesday craft class and occasional video nights. Attempts had been made to arrange games nights with other hostels in the parent organisation, but residents had not been interested. During the day the men mostly pleased themselves: some went into town or looked for work; others were more limited by their frailty. There were no domestic chores and those who could not get out reported that the days were long. Television, radio, papers, games, or cards were, however, available for those who wanted them.

The daily routine was repetitive and, in many respects, rigid and inflexible. Mealtimes were fixed and residents were not permitted back to their dormitories, except at weekends, until 5:00 P.M.. This related to the fact that the accommodation had originally been a working men's hostel and residents had been required to be out during the day. The reasoning behind this could not, however, be divorced from more moralistic overtones rooted in the organisation's religious underpinnings. These were concerned with the dangers to the soul of staying in bed all day. A few of the older residents seemed to appreciate the structure and the regime, but others found it highly unsatisfactory. The management felt that they could not operate a more flexible system because of insufficient staffing.

In *hostel B* workers performed a morning unit check to make sure that everything was in order and to inspect for any repairs. An evening check was carried out to establish that all residents had returned. In practice, these were not always undertaken.

In the office, the day was punctuated by duty changes, but these tended not to affect the lives of residents. Staff worked a rota and each shift had set tasks. Whoever was on duty undertook the admissions and the discharges, the inventories and the paperwork. The office did not have a fixed routine because it was not possible to tell what would happen each day. Sometimes workers were extremely busy and at other times there was chance for them to clean the units thoroughly, or even to pick up the rubbish in the yard.

For residents of hostel B there was no real routine. There were no organised activities and nothing was arranged for the children (although there was a large playroom). Many residents spent all day in their units, some unmotivated to go out. Some reported that the days were long and boring, especially as there was little to do by way of domestic chores. Several reported that they would have liked some organised activities; others appreciated being left to get on with their own lives.

Hostel C had no routine for residents or workers. Whether this had been a conscious decision to benefit residents or staff (or both), or whether this had simply evolved because there was no identifiable hostel manager, was not wholly clear. Previously, there had been more of a structure to the hostel day. At that time, residents had prepared their own breakfasts, but workers had often eaten lunch with the women and left a cooked meal on an evening. At the time of the fieldwork, the workers reported that they were absorbed by increasing amounts of paper work and tended to retreat to the office more frequently. In principle there was a cleaning rota, but residents (and workers) cleaned spontaneously, when, and if, they felt like it. This did not seem to be a satisfactory arrangement, given that most residents complained about the standard of cleanliness and the unwillingness of others to do their share.

In hostel C policies and practices relating to organised daily activities were fraught with dilemmas. On the one hand, staff

felt that hostel routines could be institutionalising and stigmatising and were in danger of encouraging workers to do more than was necessary for the women. In this sense routines were interpreted as a kind of patronising and intrusive interference. On the other hand, staff reported that the old, more organised daily routine had more positively enabled residents to be more involved and, thus, closer to the workers. Residents themselves expressed no clear opinions in relation to these matters.

On weekdays residents from *hostel D* left the house before 8:30 A.M.. They made their own breakfasts and then everyone either went to work on the Farm or to other work experience projects or placements. People were not permitted to stay in the hostel during the day as there was no staffing. On the whole, work at the Farm was seen as positive and valued by both residents and workers alike. Indeed, most perceived it as providing a beneficial structure to the day.

> *It gives them a tremendous sense of worth, coming up here to work and do stuff. Because I tell you, and I know from myself in the past, it is better than cabbaging and vegetating, sat in a room all day, getting depressed.* (Hostel D, Ex-resident)

In the evening, residents came home to eat and to relax. Some went out; others watched television, listened to music, retired to their rooms, or played games in the lounge. Meals were at fairly set times, but food would be saved, if residents did not want to be there. Alternatively, individuals could cook for themselves.

Residents were responsible for their own rooms and every Friday one individual (in rotation) took the day off work to help the residential worker with the hostel cleaning and the weekly shopping. That resident then chose and prepared that evening's meal. This practice appeared to be enjoyed by all. At weekends residents again pleased themselves. Usually every second Saturday a large meal was cooked and ex-residents were welcomed back. There were also organised outings and holidays to which

ex-residents were likewise invited.

Different daily routines were evident in each of the four hostels, but there were some similar patterns. *Hostel A* did not formally arrange much for the residents, but was perceived to be quite regimental. In part this reflected the hostel's size and staffing shortages. Equally, it reflected the organisation's history as working men's accommodation and its religious underpinnings. Similar beliefs in the beneficial effects of work and religion were operating at *hostel D*. The difference here was that an employment activity was arranged for the men. Furthermore, the residents were all aware that they would be working as a condition of residence and were all, consequently, happy with this. Residents in D also had the choice to opt out of the hostel daily regime by retiring to their own private rooms, cooking their own meals, or going out whenever they pleased.

Hostels B and C, conversely, left residents very much to their own devices. In B the short-stay nature of the accommodation partly explained this. In C, meanwhile, mental health needs frequently impinged upon the residents' motivations and, consequently, made organised activities difficult. Interestingly, in *hostels A, B, and C*, but not in *hostel D*, where employment was organised, there was a common problem of boredom. Whilst at first glance this might have suggested that arranged employment was beneficial to the hostel residents, any such assertion should be contextualised. Arranging employment might not have been possible for various reasons. These related to residents' health needs, the short-stay nature of the accommodation, the presence of children, or the lack of appropriate employment/ training in the vicinity.

Some organised activities and a structure to the day were desired by many residents, particularly by those who could not get out. Activities and routines were, however, likely to be difficult to arrange given residents' diverse desires and

interests, their other pressing problems (including low levels of motivation), and hostel constraints on time and resources. It would not, in other words, necessarily be possible to transpose a structure or a routine which was workable and beneficial in one context (for example, employment and training at hostel D) to another set of circumstances (such as those of A, B, or C).

Flexibility[3] was a particularly relevant issue in relation to daily routines. *Hostel A* had a highly rigid and inflexible system (for example, never serving food other than at meal times). In *hostel B* there were some occasional divergencies from policy in practice (for example, the unit checks were not always done and paper work was sometimes left at sensitive periods when residents had just arrived and were distressed). *Hostels C and D*, meanwhile, tended to be far less rigid in their routines. Whilst practice at hostel C was frequently inconsistent, routines and procedures at D tended to be more flexible in a well-considered kind of way. Although greater flexibility (rather than inconsistency) seemed to generate a greater degree of satisfaction to all concerned, the scope for operating a less rigid routine was closely related to a range of factors. These included the hostel's size, its history, philosophy, accommodation period, and residents' needs.

There was little objection, in principle, to the involvement of residents in the performance of domestic chores (see also Berthoud and Casey, 1988; and Smith *et al.*, 1992). Many, in fact, felt that it was the residents' responsibility to keep the building clean, that it passed the time, and was also good practice for the future. In practice, however, *hostel A* did not involve residents at all and *hostels B and C* experienced perennial problems in encouraging users to keep the accommodation in good condition.

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[3] See glossary.

In *hostel C* dilemmas were expressed by some staff who felt that a rigid rota system reflected an out-moded philosophy of 'resettlement or therapy', indicative of psychiatric care (see also Berthoud and Casey, 1988; Smith *et al.*, 1992). A case for a cleaner and occasional cook was advocated by some staff and residents from C, but rejected by the management, who felt that it was institutionalising and unnecessary.

In *hostel D* residents were responsible for some domestic activities (such as taking care of their own rooms). The provision of some services (for example, washing and cooking) was, however, felt to be necessary, because some residents could not perform certain tasks for themselves. Where residents from D could, or wished to, undertake domestic chores, they were so encouraged and workers would work with them to help develop their skills.

Only hostel D appeared to have developed an efficient and workable system for the performance of domestic tasks. This scheme largely met with everyone's approval and seemed to be based on an ethic of individual responsibility, but within a framework of mutual assistance. Each resident was required to make some contribution, but none was left to manage more than their abilities permitted. The mixture and flexibility of arrangements appeared to be crucial to the system's workability. Additionally, household chores were treated as a necessary, but potentially enjoyable aspects of a happy, normal life.

Referrals and admissions

Most residents in *hostels A and B* had an accurate understanding of the referral policies and procedures. Residents in *hostels C and D* were less likely to know the exact referral details, but this probably reflected the greater diversity of practices in the latter two hostels. On the whole, the residents were slightly less sure of the referral criteria than the non-

residents, although several of the involved professionals and referral agencies were also unsure of the details in full. Overall, knowledge about whom the hostels accommodated and how to secure a place was relatively well-known, although there was definite scope for some improved communication in relation to these matters.

In all four hostels, the necessity of limiting the referral criteria for practical reasons was widely recognised by staff, management, and other professionals. This was to prevent the hostels accepting residents who might not be able to cope in the environment, might be too independent, might harm themselves or others, might disrupt the hostel, might be better catered for elsewhere, might have needs which exceeded the help which the hostel could provide, or might leave with debts.

NACRO (1982) warned against unconditionally excluding certain groups of resident, particularly those who had problems with drink or drugs and those who had histories of violence or sexual offences. No evidence of this kind of blanket exclusion was found in the present investigation. On the whole, referral criteria were operated flexibly in all four hostels. Again, flexibly did not mean inconsistently or arbitrarily, but rather suggested that informed decisions were being made about individual referrals on the basis of changing personal circumstances and changing hostel environments.

Problems, nevertheless, seemed likely to arise if selection criteria were not made explicit, or if criteria were not reviewed regularly, even though the pattern of demand or the resources available had changed (Garside *et al.*, 1990). Thus, in *hostel* C policies and procedures had become confused as the needs of those being referred had increased. Simultaneously, financial problems, stemming from the high voids level, were in danger of prompting the hostel to take inappropriate referrals.

> *So, I mean, are they picking them for the right reasons, because it is appropriate for them to be*

there, or just to fill a bed to get fifty-five or sixty quid, or whatever it is that they get? (Hostel C, Community Psychiatric Nurse)

The unnecessary collection of personal information (as discussed by Harrison *et al.*, 1991) did not appear to be an issue in respect of *hostels A, C, or D*, but was more relevant in relation to *hostel B* (see below). In hostel A very few details were collected; in hostels C and D much personal information was gathered, but from a range of sources and over a period of time, so minimising any sense of intrusion.

Procedures for admissions also varied between the hostels. In *hostel A* simplicity and clarity lessened the likelihood of any problems: procedures for booking in were relatively straightforward, most residents appeared to know what to expect, and rules were pinned on the walls for all to see.

In *hostel B* procedures were more bureaucratic and this, in combination with the amount of information to be collected (see above), made them potentially more invasive and difficult. Accordingly, staff reported various problems in dealing with excess bureaucracy and paperwork, particularly at sensitive times when new arrivals could be distressed.

We book families in, take down information, which we then transfer to other different files: seven different bits of paper. Then we do an inventory for the family and, it depends on how the family is when they come in, I mean, some are upset so you can't always do everything at once...We give them a DSS letter and explain that they have got to go there, if they are on Income Support, or, if they qualify for Housing Benefit, we do fill in Housing Benefit for everybody, but we go into more detail with the form - try and explain so they don't get into a mess until we get it sorted out. Then we go through the rules.... (Hostel B, Worker)

In *hostels C and D* admissions procedures were also extensive, but less bureaucratic, more sensitive, more flexible, and less problematic than at B. In both C and D there were interviews and

trial visits before residents made commitments; rules and conditions were explained in advance; and in hostel C, as in B, there was also an information sheet. Staff from C and D also recognised that residents might be too confused or too distressed to take details in on arrival and information should, therefore, be repeated and clarified on subsequent occasions. Given that accommodation at C and D was for a longer period than at A or B, it was not surprising that admissions procedures at C and D were more thorough than those at the other two hostels.

Length of stay

Policies and practices relating to length of stay varied for each organisation. As found by Spaull and Rowe (1992), stays in some hostels (especially *hostels A and B*) had been lengthening because of the lack of move-on accommodation. The construction of some second-stage move-on housing by the local authority in Hostelville had relieved some of this pressure in B, but had not solved the problem. Indeed, this new facility was itself now 'silting up' (that is, was almost full of residents who were locked in the system, because there was nowhere for them to move next). Increasing levels of resident needs also appeared to be contributing to prolonged stays, particularly in *hostels A, C, and D*.

In *hostel C* staff, management, and involved other professionals expressed concerns about whether long-stay accommodation created unnecessary dependence or more beneficially provided security. In *A and D* this was considered less of a dilemma. Indeed, in D, a policy of unlimited length of stay for those who desired it was highly valued by both residents and staff alike.

> *It is not home if you get chucked out - if you know that it is just a moving-on thing. I mean, that must be incredibly unsettling for someone, particularly someone from a background who has been kicked out of home and has not had any measure of stability...and*

because they consider it their home, it is there for life, for as long as they need it, and that gives them stability, a foundation stone, from which they can grow in whatever areas they want. (Hostel D, Volunteer)

Because they like me, I have known them all me life, they have said that I can stay for as long as I want, so there is nowt pressing on me. I can go when I want...to me that is good. (Hostel D, Resident)

For the first time in their life someone can go there and feel that they are not pushed to move on. (Hostel D, Ex-resident)

I think that it is vitally important that they know that they can stay as long as they want, because then they have got one thing that should be stable in their lives and they have got something to sort of rest on or hold on to. (Hostel D, Management Committee Member)

If you have a time limit hanging over your head, you just would not put down roots and feel secure. (Hostel D, Worker)

As found in the study of the housing consequences of relationship breakdown by Bull (1993), few residents were given any idea of when, or where, they would be rehoused. For residents of B and the younger residents of A, this compounded the stress that many were already experiencing. For residents of C and D and the older residents of A, this was less of a problem, given that they had greater needs for support and were, in any case, under no pressure to move from the hostel.

Residents' rights

Previous research has found that the *legal status* of residents was a confusing issue relating to the complex legal distinction between a tenancy and a licence (NFHA and MIND, 1989). This study found that residents' legal status was not a well-publicised or well-considered matter. In *hostels B and C* residents appeared to be accommodated on a licence, whilst in *hostels A and D* no clear policy was apparent at all. Given that

residents in every hostel, other than A, had exclusive possession of at least one room, it seemed that few residents would be considered to be licensees in law. Eviction was not a major concern in *hostels C or D*, but did present as a contentious issue in *hostel A* and an occasional problem in *hostel B*. Again, in no hostel was policy or practice well-formulated.

Various policies and practices were also operating in relation to *rights of access*. These reflected the physical design of the building and the nature of the accommodation offered (see also Harrison *et al.*, 1991). Accordingly, residents in more self-contained, longer-stay accommodation without waking night staff, such as *hostels C and D*, were most likely to have their own keys.

In terms of access by residents' visitors, staff and managers in *hostels B, C, and D* acknowledged that the formation of relationships was an important feature of ordinary life and should be encouraged, in so far as it did not threaten the viability of the project or cause distress to other residents (see NACRO, 1982). Likewise, it was accepted that unnecessarily restrictive policies regarding visitors were an indication of the extent to which hostel residents were expected to forego the rights that people in independent housing could usually take for granted (Harrison *et al.*, 1991). In spite of this, the environments of the four hostels were not found to be conducive to receiving visitors. Indeed, where possible, residents tended to go out to see family or friends. Many reported feeling embarrassed or ashamed of the accommodation, whilst others stressed that the atmosphere was not welcoming, or that there were too many restrictions to negotiate, or too little privacy.

Most hostel staff and managers encouraged residents to go out, stressing that it helped users to maintain links away from the accommodation and so helped to prevent institutionalisation. Other professionals also appreciated the advantages of this practice, but simultaneously often recognised that this was equally to the advantage of the hostel staff and managers,

because it facilitated hostel management. More negatively, many residents, hostel employees, and others recognised that going out to visit could be difficult for those with high support needs or children, especially for those without transport or with limited finances. Likewise, it did not help residents to feel that the hostel was their home.

Rules and regulations

In *hostel A* there was a fairly rigid and inflexible set of rules in operation. These had been set nationally, but altered locally by the management team with very little worker, and no resident, input. Rules reflected the history of the organisation, the number of men accommodated, the short duration of some of their stays, and the tendency of many to drink alcohol. Because the manager was more accessible to informal comment by the older men, most respondents felt that the rules were more suited to the older than to the younger residents.

Although rules were a cause of some conflict, most respondents of A saw the benefits of, and advocated the need for, strictness (both strict rules and strict adherence to them by staff). Rules were well-publicised and this meant that there were few surprises or misunderstandings. Newcomers to the organisation were more critical than those who had used similar hostels previously and this suggested that residents' expectations and previous experiences were important in terms of how they reacted to the regulations.

In *hostel B* the rules had been set by the local authority, but in conjunction with the hostel manager. There was a procedure for worker input, but how effectively this worked in practice was a source of some contention between management and some staff. Reasons for restrictions were frequently explained to residents and this seemed to minimise the number of grievances. In spite of this, one or two residents still voiced a desire for more

input and many complained about specific rules which particularly affected them.

Rules in hostel B included keeping the unit clean, being in by 11:00 P.M., no overnight visitors, no babysitting, and not visiting other units after 10:30 P.M.. In hostel B residents had no influence over these conditions. Residents and non-residents argued that this was because those accommodated were not there long enough to warrant changing hostel policies for others. Workers and residents accepted that regulations were needed to keep things fair. Workers, additionally, emphasised the need for rules to prevent the abuse of facilities and to maintain control for reasons of safety and security.

> *If there was no staff here, half the furniture would go out of the window in the first half hour and the other half would go in the second hour. And you would not know who would be sleeping here, especially with the young lasses, the 16-year-olds. If there was a fire, you would not know who was in and who out.* (Hostel B, Worker)

In *hostel C* common courtesy rules of a shared household were operating. These were not rigidly enforced and a low turnover of residents seemed to facilitate this relaxed approach. The stated objective of such constraints was not to control, but to enable the staff and the residents to interact and to live more happily with each other. Rules had been formulated by the management committee and the workers, but workers stressed that they would have liked more input. Staff and management also felt that residents should have more involvement. Residents themselves seemed content with the status quo, reporting that the rules were not strict and many of the women were too ill to be involved anyway.

In *hostel D* there was no list of rules, although residents were obliged to leave the house during the day to go to work or to train. The house code of conduct was summed up by one statement. This was that residents should respect others and

live in a way that did not cause any aggravation to those around them. Again, this condition was not considered to be about regulation or control. It rather involved negotiations between residents and staff to develop mutual expectations regarding behaviour in the house. Group pressure, the small numbers of individuals involved, the long-stay nature of the accommodation, and the arbitration of the residential supervisor seemed to help this system to function effectively.

The four case studies were adopting very different approaches to the use of rules and regulations. Staff and managers from *hostels A and B* stressed the need to control and to know what was going on in order to prevent abuse/ misuse of the provision. The emphasis of staff and management in *hostels C and D*, conversely, was to try to devise mutual expectations regarding behaviour.

The differing approaches to the use of rules and regulations appeared to relate to various factors. Thus, the need for a more systematic and rigid system of rules seemed to increase with greater resident numbers, a higher resident turnover, more diverse and intense resident needs, and a lower staff to resident ratio. These factors then interacted with the organisation's history, its aims and objectives, its ethos and philosophy, and, more contingently, its general atmosphere, resident mix, the worker on duty, other events/ problems happening in the hostel at any given time, and residents' expectations. There was, in other words, not likely to be any single correct system.

Many interviewees had no knowledge of, or indeed interest in, who set the rules. Residents and ex-residents were less likely than others to recognise the complexity of, and the negotiation processes involved in, rule-setting. Users were thus more likely to identify just one key person (usually the manager) or one body (for example, the council) as responsible. There was evidence of workers both being and not being involved in rule-setting. Some workers felt that the level of staff involvement was acceptable; others felt that staff should have more influence;

a minority felt that it was not a staff job.

Resident involvement in rule-setting generated more interest than staff involvement, but again there was no consistency either between or within hostels, or between or within respondent groups. Some individuals felt that residents did have a say; some argued that they should have more of a say; and others felt that there was little, or no, user input. More reasons as to why residents should not, than should, be involved in rule-setting were advanced by both residents and staff from each of the four case studies. Such reasons included:

* It is not possible to cater for the individual preferences of everyone

* Only the most vociferous residents would be heard

* Residents are accommodated for too short a time

* Hostels are not hotels and residents should be grateful

* Residents are not capable of being involved

* Some residents would disabuse others or the property

* Residents would have unrealistic ideas and expectations

Sometimes residents emphasised problems with particular rules in certain hostels; at other times grievances were expressed in relation to regulations more generally. Some residents and non-residents felt that rules could inhibit rehabilitation[4]. This was because they potentially reduced residents' independence, limited their daily choices, inhibited their individuality, and even infantalised them. In spite of this, the positive aspects of rules were stressed as much as the negative.

Many regulations were felt to be fair and sensible and some residents even reported that there should be more rules,

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[4] See glossary.

particularly to force others to help more with cleaning. Where rules were mutually agreed arrangements there was some doubt as to whether the term 'rule' was appropriate anyway. The majority of staff and residents from all four hostels recognised that some regulations were inevitable and necessary to facilitate people living relatively harmoniously, to protect some residents from others, and for safety (particularly fire precautions).

> *You've got to have rules in a hostel or people please and do what they want and there would probably be no hostel left at all.* (Hostel A, Resident)

Whilst the need for flexibility in operating rules was highlighted on numerous occasions, it was widely believed that problems would arise where rules were inconsistently applied. Likewise, a difference between necessary and petty regulations was emphasised throughout. The manner in which rules were explained (caring as opposed to regimental) was also felt to be important.

Although there was not total satisfaction with hostel regulations, in no hostel was there any major discontent. This was interesting given that most previous research (for example, NACRO, 1982; Austerberry and Watson, 1983; NFHA and MIND, 1989; Evans, 1991) has focused on the problems and complexities of rule-setting and implementation. One possible explanation for this apparent success was that in all four case study hostels, policies and practice in respect of rules were relatively well-considered, thoroughly explained, and sensitively implemented. Careful explanation was considered crucial in helping people to understand and this, in turn, was believed to ensure co-operation, to make rules feel less constraining, and to enable residents to feel safer.

> *We explain that it is unfortunately not like being in your own home: "You are sharing with other people and would you like it if you had got your children asleep and someone started coming in at ten or eleven at night and creating and waking them up?"* (Hostel B, Manager)

Planning, monitoring, and evaluating hostel aims and objectives

The planning, monitoring, and evaluation of services and provision are not easily separated from hostel aims and objectives and are consequently considered together in this section. Hostel aims and objectives are also difficult to distinguish from hostel philosophy and ethos, as discussed in chapter 10.

In *hostel A*, planning and evaluating provision did not feature as a high priority. Aims and objectives were historically rooted in the core beliefs of the parent organisation and these had not been developed in any systematic or sophisticated way over the years. Such beliefs were Christian and evangelical and focused on saving souls and keeping individuals away from undesirable lifestyles. To this end, the aim of the hostel was essentially to provide short-term accommodation in order to keep people off the streets.

Alterations in funding and community care policies and practices had recently brought some fundamental, but externally imposed changes to A. From within the hostel itself there was, however, relatively little demand or pressure for change. In practice the provision of short-term accommodation frequently turned into more long-term provision, but this did not generate any anxiety or confusion within A. It was rather compatible with an underlying desire not to move people on, given that this could worsen the hostel's voids situation. For how long issues such as move-on could remain peripheral to the hostel, given the broader changing policy and practice climate, was becoming increasingly questionable.

The aim of *hostel B* was to provide only short-term accommodation in line with the homelessness legislation. Staff and management stressed that the large number of families accommodated and the relatively brief nature of many of their

stays meant that B required good planning and organisation in order to function effectively. Clear and concise aims and objectives facilitated this. Staff and management also recognised the need to plan, monitor, and evaluate services and this was done largely in conjunction with the wider organisational structure of the City Council. Ways of improving services were constantly being considered, extra resources were constantly being sort, and staff and management reported that some improvements had resulted. Indeed, at the time of the research, a review of staffing roles was being undertaken to test the feasibility of bringing the family hostel provision in the city in line with the single homelessness section.

In *hostel C* the need to monitor, evaluate, and change was a topical issue for both management and staff. The parent organisation had grown organically to meet the housing and support needs of single homeless people, but review was understood to be imperative. Staff and management were conscious of the significance of aims and objectives and also of their contradictory and frequently ambiguous nature. Accordingly, an extensive review and overhaul of services was underway at the time of the fieldwork for the present study. This had been prompted by various changes occurring internally and externally to the organisation. These included an apparent intensification of residents' support needs; alterations in funding policies; and the arrival of new staff and management with differing attitudes, aims, and philosophies.

As individuals, staff and managers at C had developed very diverse opinions about the kinds of aims and objectives which should be adopted by the organisation. In particular, there was unresolved disagreement about whether the intention was to provide short-term or long-term accommodation and this was resulting is some confusion about whether C was functioning as a 'residential home' or a 'rehabilitation hostel'. The involved other professional interviewed in conjunction with hostel C additionally maintained that the organisation, as a whole, was

becoming more fiscally driven, as opposed to needs-led, and this was operating to the detriment of its residents.

> *They have to state what it is there for and, if it is there for a purpose, then they should actually do the training and employ the staff that can meet that objective.* (Hostel C, Community Psychiatric Nurse)

> *If it is a mental health hostel, then they have got to define what kind of people who are suffering mental health is appropriate for that place. It is pointless shoving people who are floridly psychotic in with people who are still mentally ill, but they are basically neurotic and they are suffering from reactive depression or obsessional behaviour or an eating disorder or what have you.* (Hostel C, Community Psychiatric Nurse)

Hostel D, meanwhile, operated with some very simple, clear and universally accepted core aims and objectives. These were largely internally constructed and based on the organisation's religious ethic. Essentially, the aim was to provide a home for life, to love and to care, and to enable the young people to make friends. The organisation maintained that the pursuit of these was very successful in terms of generating an air of security amongst the residents. Only the referral agency respondent discussed the more negative, potentially institutionalising and patronising aspects of such objectives. Staff and management, nevertheless, recognised that there was a need to plan, monitor, evaluate, reevaluate, and modify provision on a constant basis. Examples of this included the organisation's recent development of resettlement services and increased efforts to co-ordinate and liaise with other agencies.

There were common themes, but also some definite differences, between the aims and objectives of the four case study hostels. One common intention was to provide a roof and to keep people off the streets. This was mostly stressed in relation to *hostels A and B*. To provide a home was not mentioned in relation to either of these two hostels, but was referred to once in relation to *hostel C* and was considered fundamental to *hostel D*. When the provision of care and support were mentioned as aims and

objectives of *hostels A or B*, they tended only to feature as peripheral issues and were usually qualified by 'if needed'. *Hostels C and D*, conversely, constantly emphasised the support side of their accommodation. They thus stressed their intention to provide for emotional, mental, and spiritual needs (stability, security, safety, and respite), as well as for basic housing related requirements.

The aim of providing something unique (and hence filling a gap in provision) was also highlighted within *hostels C and D*. In respect of this, both referred to the long-stay nature of their provision. Hostel C additionally emphasised its non medical approach to dealing with mental health problems. Thus, staff maintained that C provided a unique non-statutory alternative which could help to prevent unnecessary acute admissions to hospital (interestingly, a view not shared by the community psychiatric nurse interviewed). The increasing role which rehabilitation and move-on was playing as an objective of all four hostels was also clear.

To an extent, the different aims and objectives reflected the different needs of the hostels' respective client groups. There was, nevertheless, evidence of a mismatch of need and provision in care and support. Thus, some residents from *hostels A and B and C* were in need of more support than those hostels were intended to provide. Additionally, residents from C were not receiving a consistent service, because there were no consistent aims.

Whilst it seemed possible that *hostel D* might be aiming to provide too much assistance, in practice, this appeared not to be the case. This was because residents' needs were intense and no-one was obliged to accept unwanted support or attention. Whether D's objectives could have been so effective or appropriate in a situation where there were more residents, or where residents were accommodated more temporarily, or where some were less desirous of being in the hostel, was, however,

questionable.

Previous research has argued that aims and objectives established at the planning stage profit from subsequent regular and systematic assessment and this requires the establishment of simple record-keeping systems (Garside *et al.*, 1990). There was no indication of any systematic record-keeping or monitoring at any of the hostels, except for *hostel B*, where some statistics were required by the local authority. In spite of this, *hostels B, C, and D* were, to varying degrees, endeavouring to re-evaluate and re-formulate their aims and objectives. In *hostel A* such processes were far less discernible and, as a result, the hostel's future seemed particularly precarious.

The importance of maintaining appropriate aims and objectives was clearly revealed by the fieldwork and seemed all the more relevant given the many structural and external changes impinging upon the hostel sector. Where aims and objectives were in disarray (for example, in hostel C and equally, but perhaps less overtly, in A), problems appeared particularly likely to result.

Service co-ordination

In terms of liaison with other agencies, patterns of similarities, but also many differences between each of the four hostels were found.

Hostel A drew widely upon other services and agencies in the city, particularly the peripatetic local medical services, adult education, and resettlement workers from a local project. Consistent with A's rather unplanned, reactive approach to service provision, this had not been developed in any proactive, systematic, or co-ordinated sense. It had rather evolved as services were offered to the hostel and accepted as a matter of course. Liaison with the referral agency representative was more positive, but this had been instigated by the probation service

and not by the hostel staff.

Of all four case studies, *hostel B* was the most emphatic about the limited support that it could offer; its lack of resources to do more; and, hence, its need to involve other agencies. Accordingly, staff and management frequently liaised with, and referred to, other organisations and local facilities. These included other hostels, the local doctor's surgery, the health visitor, a local nursery, and even ex-residents for interpreting purposes. In spite of this apparent desire for active inter-agency co-operation, evidence still suggested that visits to the hostel itself, either by other professionals or residents' friends and relatives, were not welcomed by the staff team. Some respondents argued that this was because the hostel aspired to retain control. An alternative explanation, more frequently posited by the staff and managers, related to the benefits to residents of maintaining strong links in the community as a counter to institutionalisation.

In *hostel C* the need for support from other services and professionals was also emphasised, but staff felt that their working relationships with other professionals were very mixed. Contact with other workers in the parent organisation was high, but the amount of co-ordination with external services and agencies was limited. There was regular contact with several community psychiatric nurses, but this was not always harmonious. The one interviewed for the fieldwork was very scathing about the willingness of hostel C staff to work co-operatively or to draw in other services. He reported that communications were bad; there were often no staff around; and those who were about were not prepared to listen. Because of this, he indicated that he no longer had confidence in the workers there and, consequently, did not refer to the hostel any more. Staff and management from C, conversely, reported that assistance from other agencies was frequently not forthcoming.

Historically, *hostel D* had functioned as a part of a detached,

self-contained organisation, which had operated within the context of a local church. Recently, D had been striving to engage more proactively with other organisations and agencies. Because the organisation as a whole endeavoured to provide for so many resident needs, the role of other professionals was, however, often minimised. Sometimes this lack of involvement by other professionals appeared to be welcomed by the organisation's staff and sometimes not.

Limited knowledge of, and contact with, other hostels in Hostelville has already been highlighted as an area of concern in chapter 8. Additionally, although it was widely recognised that the four case studies could not provide for all resident needs, and referral to, and liaison with, other hostels and agencies was frequently cited as good practice, actual evidence of this was far less apparent. Indeed, it was clear that each of the four hostels, especially C and D, was to varying degrees functioning as an enclosed and self-contained entity. Given the emphasis within the study on the need for, and benefits of, inter-agency co-operation and service co-ordination, this was suggestive of an unhealthy level of organisational institutionalisation.

One important issue to emerge in respect of inter-agency co-operation was the existence of conflicting views between respondent groups. Residents were more likely than workers and managers to be satisfied with the help received from professionals outside of the organisation. Workers and managers from all four hostels often maintained that there was insufficient support from other agencies. Indeed, many argued that professionals were prone to neglecting and 'dumping' residents on them. Professionals from other agencies, conversely, reported that the hostels were not welcoming of other professional involvement and did not refer residents on to them.

All four hostels exhibited scope for improved inter-agency communication and service co-ordination. Many comments were also

passed about poor city-wide service co-ordination in the case study area as a whole. In this respect the findings were consistent with much previous research (GLC and LBA, 1981; Drake *et al.*, 1981; NACRO, 1982; Jones, 1987; HVA and GMSC, 1987; O'Mahoney, 1988; Niner, 1989; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Evans, 1991; Spaull and Rowe, 1992; Watson and Cooper, 1992; Strathdee, 1993; McIvor and Taylor, 1995).

> *I do actually feel that the whole of the sector, not just ourselves, but the housing department and social services, should be co-ordinating all the work that we do a little more closely, because I think that actually there is a lot of resources out there and a lot of it is that we don't actually talk to each other enough to make sure that they are as responsive as they could be. They could be much more effective than they are.* (Hostel C, Manager)

Summary

The findings from the present study relating to hostel funding were largely consistent with former research. Accordingly, there was widespread belief that resources were inadequate and problematically insecure. Residents, workers, and other professionals all maintained that existing funding mechanisms were limiting the potential of hostel provision in meeting the needs of homeless people.

On the whole, hostel standards were evaluated more positively than negatively by all respondents across all four hostels. This was in spite of the fact that the quality of the accommodation varied widely between the hostels and clear scope for improvement was recognised. Possible explanations for the generally high level of satisfaction included high actual standards, low expectations, reticence to criticise, desperate need for the accommodation, and the poor quality of residents' previous housing circumstances. Opinions were diverse and contradictory and it was, therefore, not always possible to determine what exactly constituted high standards. Consistent with NACRO (1982)

and Garside *et al.* (1990), however, the quality of a building, its physical condition, location, and design were found to be particularly important features.

Support services were in many respects minimal and insufficient. Frequently, they were geared towards move-on, with more everyday general support needs less likely to be addressed. Whilst respondents expressed largely positive opinions about the help and support available in hostels, there was also a strong contention that the hostels could do much more. Satisfaction seemed likely to be higher where services were good or appropriate to residents' needs, but also where expectations and willingness to criticise were low. The changing nature of residents' needs, the intensity of some of those needs, inadequate staffing levels, inadequate staff training, and the dangers of the hostel environment being institutionalising were all identified as hampering the provision of appropriate and effective support.

Each of the four hostels had adopted very different approaches to resettlement and move-on policy and practice. Some were engaging with this more proactively than others, but increasing trends towards community care meant that this was an area which was becoming more difficult not to address. Resettlement was, however, complicated by the lack of resources to provide move-on training within the hostels; the lack of available suitable move-on accommodation in Hostelville itself; the high levels of support likely to be required by many residents, if they moved into more independent tenancies; and a fear that encouraging residents to leave the hostel might worsen a pre-existing voids problem.

In terms of management and staffing, the findings from the fieldwork again largely supported previous research. The four organisations had very different managerial arrangements and these seemed to reflect a range of factors: hostel size, history, philosophy, average accommodation period, and the

intensity of residents' needs. Three of the four organisations were functioning as hierarchies and this appeared to be a relatively effective managerial arrangement. The organisational structure of the fourth hostel was less hierarchical, but also more confusing. Only one respondent thought that workers should not be involved in hostel management; all other comments were in favour of it. It was also hypothesised that workers' personal details were likely to impinge upon residents' personal details. Given that all workers were white and only spoke English, it was not surprising to find that the majority of residents were also white.

Hostel operating policies and procedures considered by the study included daily routines, referrals and admissions, length of stay, residents' legal status, rights of access, and rules and regulations. These were also found to reflect a range of complex interacting factors (such as residents' needs; hostel size; the availability of resources; staff to resident ratios; organisational history, aims, objectives, philosophies and ethos; as well as individual staff attitudes). Policies and procedures were sometimes best operated rigidly, sometimes more flexibly, but never inconsistently or irrationally. Problems relating to cleaning duties (particularly in hostel C) suggested that some responsibilities and obligations were in need of careful specification.

Regarding rules, for example, no conclusions could be drawn about which were necessary, which good or bad, or how rigorously they should be enforced. Likewise, it was not possible to ascertain to what extent workers or residents should be involved in setting them. Although previous research has tended to focus on the problematic nature of rules, this study found widespread acceptance amongst residents and non-residents that some regulations were inevitable and necessary and many rules were fair and sensible. A key issue here appeared to relate to the role of explanation. Explaining rules was widely felt to help people to understand, to ensure co-operation, and to encourage

residents to feel safer. The manner in which rules were explained (caring as opposed to regimental) was also considered important.

The planning, monitoring, and evaluation of hostel aims and objectives was an important, but complex aspect of provision. Indeed, where aims and objectives were in disarray (for example, in hostels A and C), problems appeared particularly likely to result. To an extent, objectives could be consciously shaped and directed by the hostel, but equally they were a function of various contingent factors which were less amenable to direct control. These included changes external to the organisation; the hostel's history, size, resources, and specified accommodation period; and residents' support needs. None of the four case study hostels was operating any systematic monitoring of its services, but hostels B, C, and D were to varying degrees endeavouring to re-evaluate and to re-formulate their aims and objectives. In the absence of such practices, the future of hostel A seemed especially precarious.

Consistent with previous research, there was clear scope for improved inter-agency communication and service co-ordination. Knowledge of, and contact with, other hostels in the area was limited. Likewise, effective referral to other hostels and agencies was frequently spoken of as common practice, but actual evidence of it was scarce. Liaison with other services generally appeared less than it might have been. Indeed, the alleged 'dumping' and 'neglect' of residents by other professionals was a particularly contentious issue which seemed to require immediate attention.

In conclusion to this chapter, one important finding was the extent to which many of the areas of investigation overlapped and interconnected. Thus, it was often not possible to separate the topics being considered in each of the sections. Previous research has, however, tended not to consider this. Moreover, former research has often concentrated on issues from a provider

perspective and this has meant that many other related and interconnected matters have not been as well researched to-date. Some of these are now considered in more detail in chapter 10. Interestingly, these tend to relate more to the outcomes, than to the inputs, processes, or outputs, of hostel provision.

CHAPTER 10: HOSTELS - THE INSIDE STORY

Introduction

This chapter considers various aspects of hostel provision which have been less well researched to-date. The objective of this is to further awareness about what it involves, how it feels, and what it means to live in a supported hostel for homeless people. This entails investigating some of the more conceptual and day-to-day experiential aspects of hostel living. These are frequently the outcomes, rather than the inputs, processes, or outputs, of provision.

Hostel relationships

Relationships have received only limited attention from previous research. Smith *et al.* (1992) considered relations between residents and staff in the resettlement units, but there has been little examination of the kinds of dynamics operating between, and within, the many other groups involved in the daily life of any hostel. This was felt to be an important omission from the existing literature and was, consequently, considered within the present study.

Relationships and their significance

The importance of interpersonal relationships was stressed across all respondent groups from all four hostels. Relationships between residents and those between staff and residents (that is, the relationships which were most apparent in the daily living environment) were emphasised as the most important. Whilst only two residents reported that interpersonal dynamics were not important, many residents and non-residents, particularly from hostel D, stressed that they were the most

important aspect of the accommodation. Most respondents recognised that some disputes were inevitable, but regular or more serious quarrels were generally considered to be distressing.

> *I think that friendships have been made which, I think, will probably last even when one or two move out, which is really one of the most important things.* (Hostel D, Worker)

> *It depends who you get on with. If you don't get on, it can be hell for you.* (Hostel D, Resident)

Resident/ resident relationships

Smith *et al.* (1992) found that relations between resettlement unit users were rated as 'fairly' (65 per cent) rather than 'very' (25 per cent) good. In the present study, some residents and non-residents reported that relations between residents were very good, but most described them as mixed. Problems of deceit and stealing were mentioned, but appeared to be minimal. Likewise, there were very few suggestions that residents did not get on at all.

Both residents and non-residents maintained that human nature; close proximity (especially a high level of sharing); the intensity of some residents' needs; instability and insecurity; and stress over noise and children made some problems between residents inevitable. Some residents and non-residents also reported that mixing groups of residents (for example, residents of differing ages, gender, or races, or people with and without children, or with or without mental health problems) was likely to increase the potential for conflict.

> *You can't really expect residents to get on, given their circumstances.* (Hostel C, Resident)

> *People argue. It does not matter where you live, people argue, don't they?* (Hostel D, Resident)

The fieldwork revealed some distinct patterns of inter-resident relationships. In *hostel A* rivalry existed between the older and the younger men and there were additional divisions between those with and those without psychiatric problems. In *hostel B* close friendships often arose from children playing together, whilst in *hostels C and D* residents and some staff referred to the quasi family nature of some associations. In all four case studies there was evidence of residents forming groups and cliques and of long-stay residents wielding a degree of territorial power over more recent arrivals. In hostel C, for example, there was a pattern of 'grande dames', each of whom was central to hostel life for a period.

In spite of the above interactions, there was still a high level of detachment between residents. Many tended to disassociate themselves from others and most had no idea about others' experiences, thoughts, opinions, or desires. Where residents had high support needs two patterns of behaviour seemed to result. Either residents withdrew into themselves (hostels A and D) or the potential for conflict increased (hostel C). In B, where support needs were lower, isolation seemed more likely to be a problem.

> *It is best to keep us own counsel.* (Hostel A, Resident)
>
> *I don't mix with many. If I want to speak with somebody, I speak; if I don't, I don't.* (Hostel A, Resident)

Workers, managers, and other professionals suggested various reasons for the high degree of insularity between residents. These included:

* Residents are all-consumed by their own needs

* Residents withdraw into themselves in order to avoid conflict

* Residents are not stimulated enough to engage with others

* The geography and layout of the building and the furniture isolates individuals (particularly *hostel A*)

* Residents are accommodated for too short a time to form close relationships (particularly *hostel B*)

* The tendency to work with residents in an individualising way (so that they are encouraged to take sole responsibility for themselves) detracts from any sense of group identity (particularly *hostel C*)

Given the high degree of detachment between hostel residents, it was unsurprising to find that mutual assistance between those accommodated was very limited.

In *hostel A* most residents (but especially the older men, who tended to be consumed by their own pressing needs) were detached and isolated. The younger men sometimes offered each other practical support (for example, lending money or clothes), but, on the whole, there was very little expectation from any respondent that residents would help each other.

In *hostel B* the situation was more mixed. Here, as in any community or neighbourhood, some residents became involved with each other and others did not. All respondents reported that lone female parents, who had often shared similar experiences, were the group most likely to offer each other company and support or to lend each other money etc.. Interestingly, a lone male parent from hostel B was one of very few respondents in the entire study to report feeling isolated.

The expectation that residents would assist each other was higher in *hostel C* than elsewhere. Although some residents did offer each other practical and emotional help, many felt that they had so many problems of their own that they had little resources left for others. Staff felt that the hostel environment had changed in this respect over recent years. Previously, the workers had encouraged the women to be supportive of each other and to function as a community. This had, however, resulted in some women being exploited and others not developing

their potential. As a result, there was now more of an effort to encourage the women to take responsibility for themselves.

Residents and non-residents from *hostel D* did not expect residents to help each other. Any form of mutual assistance was rather viewed as an achievement, given residents' personal needs and frequently troubled backgrounds. Staff, nevertheless, felt that some progress in this direction had been made over time as the resident group had begun to develop a more collective identity.

> *They are entirely different people with different needs and different backgrounds and yet they still manage to help each other and jolly along together. They have fights: OK, everyone has fights and disagreements, everyone, but the atmosphere in the house never ceases to amaze me. It is potentially explosive, if you look at each of the backgrounds of individuals there, and yet there has never been a major incident.* (Hostel D, Volunteer)

Of all respondents, residents and ex-residents were the most likely to report that residents did not help each other. Non-residents were more likely to explain or to attempt to qualify any lack of mutual assistance positively, for example: '*they do in an unwritten way*', '*they show tolerance and understanding*', '*it is amazing given their diverse backgrounds and needs*', and '*it takes a long while to get to that situation*'. This seemed to suggest that non-residents had lower expectations about residents' potential for self-help and mutual support, but simultaneously a greater recognition of the wider forms such assistance might take.

Resident/ worker relationships

Across all four hostels, most respondents reported that relationships between staff and residents were good and sometimes very good. As with relationships between residents, a certain degree of conflict was felt to be inevitable, but again there was

no suggestion that staff/ resident relationships were very bad. Interestingly, there was, nevertheless, a much higher level of conflict between workers and residents in *hostel A* than elsewhere. Given that A was more similar in type to a resettlement unit than any of the other case study hostels, this appeared consistent with the findings of Smith *et al.* (1992).

According to Smith *et al.* (1992), the level of friction between different groups of staff and the level of resident criticism of some staff attitudes was much higher in the resettlement units they studied than in their benchmark hostels. Criticisms of staff in hostel A were also for very similar reasons to those found by Smith *et al.* in the resettlement units. That is, some users considered certain workers to be unhelpful, rude, and inconsistent in their application of a dictatorial regime (Smith *et al.*, 1992).

The staff from *hostel B*, meanwhile, were more critical of residents than were the workers from any of the other hostels. One possible explanation for this was that residents in B tended to have low support needs and personal circumstances which were more akin to workers' own personal experiences. This then made staff more keen to differentiate themselves from, and thus more critical of, the residents.

Staff relationships

Most respondents reported that relations between staff members were good, although prone to the inevitable strains and conflicts of any work environment. Some differences between the four hostels were, however, apparent.

In *hostel A* respondents from all groups reported that relations between staff of similar status in the hierarchy were acceptable and the occasional disputes were soon forgotten. In *hostel B* staff identified two distinct camps. These were an

'official' housing management camp and an 'unofficial' supporting/ care camp. The former comprised workers who accepted that their role was limited to housing management, and the latter comprised staff who believed that this was inseparable from a more important supporting role. Conflict between these two sides was a divisive feature of the staff team.

In *hostel C* staff reported that the team worked co-operatively and endeavoured to cultivate an open and honest atmosphere so that they could challenge each other and move forward. In *hostel D* any negative relations between staff were unlikely to surface because of a shared emphasis on common values and the harmony of the organisation.

Worker/ management relationships

Although relations between workers and managers were very different in each of the organisations, problems between workers and managers were more common than conflicts between and within other groups. Whilst workers were most likely to report and discuss these problems, managers and committee members were more prone to minimising or dismissing them. Residents, conversely, tended to be largely unaware of their existence.

In *hostel A* the rigid hierarchy reinforced the distinction between the manager and the other members of staff. Here the manager seemed to function as a scapegoat, with the other workers united in their dislike of his autocratic managerial style. In *hostel B* the manager's authoritarian approach also resulted in conflict with some staff. In *hostel C,* meanwhile, problems between workers, the management team, and the management committee were many and complex. Committee members tended to be detached from the day-to-day aspects of provision, but communications between them and the staff team had not broken down. To the contrary, all involved parties reported that organisational meetings were lively and animated with plenty of

scope for heated debate. Indeed, the organisation encouraged the expression of dissenting opinions in the hope that this would further knowledge and understanding and hence create a more progressive working environment. Inevitably, this also created a more conflict prone atmosphere.

Disputes in *hostel D* occurred, but not often. Because D was a small concern with clear aims and philosophy, common values, and a clear organisational structure, this seemed to make conflict less likely. Furthermore, as with negative relations between staff, any conflict tended to be minimised in order to protect the harmony and the Christian spirit of the organisation.

Relationships with other professionals

Hostel employees referred to relationships with other professionals in a variety of ways: some good; some bad; some mixed. The 'dumping' of residents and the premature withdrawal of support by other professionals was highlighted as a problem by hostel employees, particularly in B and C. Other professionals often reported that the hostels themselves were hostile to other agencies entering their territory. As discussed in the service co-ordination section in chapter 9, there was clear scope for improving inter-agency relations.

Relationships with volunteers

In practice, relationships with volunteers only existed in *hostel D*. Although all respondents from D reported that these were good, staff and managers maintained that residents tended not to discuss confidential matters with volunteers and full-time staff were better in terms of generating stability and continuity within the organisation. More critically, the referral agency representative from D feared that some volunteers could be patronising and paternalistic.

Relationships with family and friends

One common characteristic of the residents seemed to be their lack of informal support networks outside of the hostel and, consequently, their greater reliance on more formal/ professional forms of assistance accessible from within it. Many of the older residents from hostel A had led quite itinerant lifestyles and now had few close personal contacts. Residents from B, C, and D and the younger residents from A were more likely to have on-going relationships with family and friends, but visits to the hostel did not necessarily follow from this.

As discussed in chapter 9, the environments of the four case studies were often not felt to be conducive to receiving guests. Some residents reported that they were embarrassed or ashamed of the accommodation; some felt that the atmosphere was not welcoming, or that there were too many restrictions to negotiate, or too little privacy. Restrictions on male visiting was a particular concern at *hostel B*, but also relevant at *hostel C*. Additionally, guests seemed less likely to visit where the accommodation was temporary (for example, in *hostels A and B*) than where residence was more permanent (as in *hostels C and D*).

Although more respondents reported that family and friends did not help residents than did assist them, the residents tended to be more positive about on-going family and friendship relations than were the non-residents. Non-residents more frequently maintained that ties with family and friends could be both supportive and confusing. Those who reported that family and friends were helpful usually qualified this with '*sometimes*', or '*a bit*', or '*some do*'.

Of the non-residents, the involved other professionals and the referral agency representatives were the most likely to stress the importance of maintaining links outside of the hostel. This was in order to counter isolation and institutionalisation.

Workers and volunteers were, conversely, more likely to emphasise the damaging nature of some family and friend relationships. The implications for hostel management of having extra, potentially disruptive, people on the premises seemed, at least in part, to explain the more negative attitude of the latter.

Hostel/ local community relations

Relations between the hostels and their local communities were again very different for each of the four case studies. Only in *hostel D* was the importance of good local/ community relations emphasised as crucial. Here the importance of being near the church community and wider family and friends was stressed, as was the fact that the hostel did not stand out as different from the other multi-occupied housing in the area.

Hostel A had no close neighbours, but reported good relations with local shops and traders; *hostel B* was both isolated and institutional in terms of locality and setting; and at *hostel C* the neighbours had moved away following various disputes with C's residents. In sum, it seemed that links with the local community were limited and this was reinforcing the institutional nature of much of the accommodation.

Hostel philosophies and ethos

Motivations for the provision of the accommodation, staff attitudes, working practices, and hostel atmosphere were considered to be four useful key indicators of hostel philosophies and ethos. These impinged upon hostel provision and services in multiple ways and in interaction with various other factors (for example, the hostel's size; its history; its managerial and organisational structure; residents' needs; their length of stay; the availability of resources; and worker awareness of often complex and ambiguous issues, such as

independence, user control, participation, and choice). Although many of these issues are considered in more detail in other sections of this thesis, they were, in practice, frequently inseparable from the philosophy and ethos underpinning each of the organisations.

Motivations

Although it might have been expected that *hostels A and D* would have had much in common, given their Christian and charitable underpinnings, this was not found to be the case. One reason for this seemed to be that in neither A nor D was religion to the fore, nor were residents obliged to participate in any religious activities. Likewise, charitable intentions, for example 'giving people a chance in life' or 'helping them to establish better ways of living', were rarely explicit or central to the functioning of the organisation.

> *It is their home and so we have to respect their beliefs, their lifestyles, their mode and code of behaviour. We are Christians in the way we care...Er, but in no way do we try and force any code of conduct or religion on them. You know, it is their home. This is the main thing.* (Hostel D, Volunteer)

Given that *hostels B and C* had no comparable philosophical or ethical underpinnings, it seemed that organisational motivations were not a particularly fundamental aspect of hostel provision. This appeared consistent with the findings of a recent study of independent organisations in community care by Taylor *et al.* (1994). The latter concluded that stereotypes about the motivations of the private and voluntary sectors did not do justice to the variety of non-statutory organisations. They rather speculated that other distinctions, such as the size of the organisation and whether it was run by service users or for them, were just as important (Taylor *et al.*, 1994).

The extent to which the motivations of individual employees

mirrored organisational motivations (and indirectly influenced hostel philosophy and ethos by impinging upon staff attitudes, working practices, and hostel atmosphere) was, however, more apparent.

In *hostel A* some employees professed themselves to be motivated by evangelism and a desire to save and to reform those less fortunate than themselves; others expressed a motivation to care; others simply to do a job. In practice, the work practices and the atmosphere at A tended to reflect the motivations of the particular staff on duty at any one time. This was most apparent during the Tuesday craft classes run by the two adult education workers. During these sessions, the whole hostel atmosphere was noticeably more relaxed and convivial.

In *hostel B* most staff adopted a very practical and almost detached approach to their duties and this reflected the bureaucracy pervasive to that organisation as a whole. In *hostel D*, meanwhile, the Christian motivations of all workers was an inherent feature of their attitudes, their working practices, and thus the house atmosphere.

In *hostel C* the impact of individual motivations was particularly complex. This was because neither individual nor organisational motivations, nor hostel philosophy, were clear. There were differences of opinion between the hostel workers, managers, and committee members, but also differences of opinion between individuals within these groups. Accordingly, it was not possible to determine whether the lack of proactive work with the women was the result of a well-considered, user-led, non-medicalised philosophical approach to provision, or a function of worker convenience, insufficient resources, unquestioned received wisdoms about the dangers of institutionalising residents by doing too much for them, or management pressure prohibiting workers from doing more.

Staff attitudes

Within the resettlement units, Smith *et al.* (1992) found evidence of a range of staff attitudes. These were characterised by two extreme viewpoints - the 'traditionalist' and the 'reformist'. Staff holding the traditionalist viewpoint tended to see residents as somehow guilty or blameworthy and were often quite hostile towards them (labelling them as a problem to be contained and policed through the strict enforcement of a tight regime). Reformists, conversely, adopted a more lenient administration and adhered to a belief that residents were unfortunate individuals in need of support and help with resettlement.

Although Smith *et al.* found that the reformist standpoint was the more prevalent of these two attitudes, the majority of staff in their study occupied ground somewhere in the middle. This resulted in a high level of uncertainty about many work practices (such as the degree to which rules ought to be enforced, the best way to treat residents who were difficult, and the balance between self-help and intervention).

Consistent with Smith *et al.*, there was evidence of 'traditionalist' attitudes amongst some of the staff in *hostels A and B*, but across all four hostels most workers held positions somewhere in the middle. Ambivalence about work practices was thus common, particularly amongst staff from *hostel C*. As found by Garside *et al.* (1990), staff from *hostels A, B, and C* additionally highlighted how difficult it was to control residents, whilst simultaneously encouraging them to be independent.

Whilst many residents stressed how important it was to them to be respected by staff, only staff and managers from *hostels C and D* emphasised the need to give residents self-respect, self-worth, purpose, and dignity. In *hostel A* many residents and non-residents felt that the older residents had preferential

treatment and this was unfair. In all other hostels, most respondents felt that residents were treated equally. In all hostels, except *hostel B*, most residents referred to the staff as caring and supportive. Only residents from *hostels A and B* referred to any workers or managers as unapproachable.

Working practices

> *You could have a place that was perfectly built and furnished, but if it was run in a way that was very regimented, or did not meet clients' needs, then that would defeat the object.* (Hostel C, Management Committee Member)

Hostels A and B were the most authoritarian, hierarchical, and bureaucratic of the four case studies. They also had more and stricter rules. One likely reason for this was the larger size of the accommodation and the shorter length of stay of the residents. *Hostels C and D*, conversely, advocated a more client-centred approach to their work. To this end, they stressed the need to increase resident participation and to enhance resident control and choice wherever possible (see later).

None of the four hostels was described by residents as strict and in no hostel did residents refer to the staff as interfering. On the whole, residents were allowed, and encouraged, to get on with their own lives as much as possible. Indeed, residents and non-residents frequently passed comments about the relative lenience of the hostels in comparison to other known similar accommodation in Hostelville.

Hostel atmosphere

The importance of the hostel atmosphere was referred to by residents and non-residents from *hostels C and D*. Both were described as relaxed and D was, in addition, almost invariably portrayed as warm, welcoming, accepting, and caring. In both,

although particularly in D, staff and residents emphasised the need for the hostel to feel 'homely'. In *hostels A and B* there was no comparable atmosphere. Likewise, there was no comparable emphasis on the importance of how the accommodation felt to the residents.

Summary

> *Basically, if the philosophy and the policy and the staff attitudes are wrong, then it can be Buckingham Palace, but it can still be a bad place to live in.*
> (Hostel C, Community Psychiatric Nurse)

Hostel philosophy and ethos were found to be complex, but important aspects of provision. Although there were clear differences between each of the four case studies, some similarities between *hostels A and B* and between *hostels C and D* were apparent. In spite of this, the philosophy and ethos at D were notably more positive and more highly regarded than those at C. Indeed, at C much confusion, ambiguity, and disagreement was apparent.

In sum, the study found that staff attitudes, working practices, and hostel atmosphere were more relevant to, and enlightening of, hostel philosophy and ethos than organisational motivations for the provision. Individual motivations were, nevertheless, indirectly influencing staff attitudes, working practices, and hostel atmosphere and thus also impinging upon hostel life.

Stigma

Do hostel residents feel stigma?

Across all respondent groups and all hostels, most individuals

reported that residents were unlikely to feel any sense of shame or embarrassment in relation to their accommodation. In spite of this, many residents maintained that, although they personally did not feel any stigma, other residents probably did experience some awkwardness. One possible explanation for this was that residents often differentiated themselves from other hostel dwellers in an endeavour to minimise any underlying sense of shame which they had. Indeed, the vehemence with which many residents, especially from D, dismissed the expression 'hostel' seemed to indicate evidence of at least some underlying discomfort.

> *You call them hostels, don't you?...Call it a house, not a hostel or a home. A home is like a children's home, isn't it, where people have been going there for badness?...I call it a house.* (Hostel D, Resident)

> *We should not say 'a home', it is not like that, not like when I say 'a home', I was living in a 'children's home'. I don't mean that. I mean a home which is theirs to live in.* (Hostel D, Ex-resident)

> *"Hostel D" is not a hostel, is it? It is a home.* (Hostel D, Ex-resident)

Respondents from *hostels A and D* were least likely to report that residents felt stigma; those from *hostel B* were marginally more likely to report that residents felt it; and those from *hostel C* the most likely. These differences seemed to reflect a number of factors. These included residents' personal characteristics and circumstances; the quality of the accommodation; the level of acceptance of the hostel by the local community; and the stigma attached to the other support needs which residents had - such as mental health needs in hostel C.

Nobody suggested that residents 'should' feel stigma at all. Indeed, most respondents implied that people 'should not' feel stigma. Residents and non-residents, nevertheless, gave examples of circumstances when people might feel ashamed. These included *particular situations* (for example, meeting a new partner, seeking employment, using a local service such as a library,

giving out one's address, getting a taxi home, and going out from the hostel 'en masse'); *on-going circumstances* (for example, if the hostel has a strict regime which affords residents no choice or individuality, even over meals); and *non-specific general feelings* (for example, when it is apparent that the local community does not accept the residents or when all hostel users are labelled/ grouped together and not seen as individuals).

Why do hostel residents feel stigma?

Across all respondent groups, biased, negative, outdated stereotypical images of what a hostel was like was the most common reason given for why residents might feel stigma.

> *I would just say, if you are homeless, and you have got nowhere to stay, come and stay in a hostel because it is alright. It is not as bad as you think it is.* (Hostel B, Resident)

Biased, negative, outdated stereotypical images of what hostel residents and homeless people were *like was the second most* stated reason for why residents might feel stigma.

> *To me a dosser is somebody you see at the back of the market, poor devils, with all those rags on and drinking meths. They think that you are all like that.* (Hostel C, Resident)

Other suggested explanations for stigma related to lost pride, lowered self-esteem, feeling degraded, having no security or permanent address, and a loss of individuality because of being labelled. (In hostel C there was also the mix with the stigma of having mental health problems).

> *When you say that you are living in a hostel, they tend to look down on you.* (Hostel B, Ex-resident)

> *There is a lot of stigma attached to group places, whether it be mentally handicapped or physically handicapped. I think there is always a stigma.*

(Hostel C, Resident)

It's labels; labels stick. (Hostel C, Relief Worker)

Reasons were also given for why residents did not, or should not, feel stigma. Across all respondent groups, these included:

* it is not residents' fault that they are homeless
* a hostel is better than being on the streets
* a hostel is not as bad as people assume
* residents have to be somewhere
* residents become used to the standards

The above reasons clearly reflected the low expectations and the limited choices available to many hostel dwellers. Only in *hostel D* did respondents from all groups stress that residents should not feel embarrassed because the hostel was their home. Such a belief highlighted the higher expectations and the generally more positive outlook and philosophy of those connected with hostel D.

How important an issue is stigma?

Although no respondent argued that stigma was a crucial or a fundamental concern to hostel residents, the topic generated much comment and many emotionally charged responses, so suggesting a deeper underlying significance. Indeed, stigma was more commonly alluded to than overtly discussed within the interviews. Possible reasons for this included the difficulty of expressing stigma in an interview context, residents' other more immediate and pressing concerns, and a belief that stigma was impossible to challenge and so energies would be better directed elsewhere.

How might stigma be challenged?

Most respondents maintained that stigma was extremely difficult to redress because it was entrenched and because most people did not care about homelessness unless it happened to themselves. Many respondents, therefore, argued that stigma had to be accepted, or could never be challenged in a hostel setting.

> *You just have to accept it; it is very hurtful.* (Hostel C, Resident)

> *It is always going to have that fixation in people's heads: "Oh hostel, homeless". I don't think that you are ever going to get rid of that fixation.* (Hostel B, Ex-resident)

> *You like to think that there may be some way of countering some of those labels, of breaking down those sorts of stereotypes, but it is so insidious in many ways.* (Hostel C, Relief Worker)

Others maintained that there ways of confronting stigma, but things could not be altered overnight; hostels could not effect change on their own; and a more societal response was, therefore, required.

> *Again it takes time just to try and educate people and to demonstrate to people that you should not treat them any differently from anybody else.* (Hostel D, Worker)

Possible ways of confronting stigma were more often suggested by the non-residents than by the residents. Whilst this might have reflected residents' greater appreciation of the depth and the intensity of many prejudiced attitudes, it might equally have resulted from a more pervasive sense of hopelessness or powerlessness amongst homeless people. In spite of this, the following suggestions provided at least some hope for the possibility of change:

* being wary of grouping and labelling and going out 'en masse'

* publicising the reasons why people become homeless (that is, communicating and explaining, because many non-homeless people do not understand)

* inviting people to come in and look around the hostel

* changing the word 'hostel', or using 'house' or 'home' or the address (although with time the stigma may transfer to the new name or to the address and another strategy will have to be considered)

* challenging stigma through work practices (for example, enhancing residents' choices wherever possible, treating everyone as equal, treating everyone as individuals, and enabling residents to feel at home, or as if they belong)

* advocating good hostel design and furnishings

* mixing resident groups whenever possible (especially gender and race groups)

Dependence and independence

Across all four hostels, residents and non-residents reported that supported hostel accommodation was more likely to promote than to reduce independence.

> *In many ways there are real successes with some people as far as independence and wanting to move-on: a real kind of will to do it. I mean, if we have encouraged that, then I think that it is working.* (Hostel C, Relief Worker)

> *Once they have been settled and are beginning to sort of develop their own character again and their abilities, I have found they actually feel more independent.* (Hostel D, Worker)

Only staff and residents from *hostel B* more commonly argued that a stay in the hostel was likely to reduce than to promote independence. One probable reason for this was that, of the four case study hostels, residents from B had the fewest support needs and were, consequently, the most independent prior to moving in.

Across all respondent groups, the ambiguity and complexity surrounding issues of dependence and independence were

recognised.

> *Most people don't want to be independent. You and I are not independent. We have ties and bonds and friendships which we require. I don't think that there is any such thing as independent living.* (Hostel D, Volunteer)

Residents and non residents stressed that whether or not hostels increased or decreased independence depended both on the individual and also on the particular hostel concerned. In terms of the individual, the relevant factors included residents' backgrounds, their mental and physical health, their support needs, and their previous housing circumstances.

> *Before residents live in "D" they have been in a complete mess. They may have had complete independence, but that means nothing to you if you are on the streets and you are not getting a meal or you are being abused.* (Hostel D, Volunteer)

In terms of the hostel, residents and non-residents reported that the factors influencing resident independence included the availability of resources (staffing and otherwise); the nature of services and facilities on offer (particularly move-on support and training); the furnishings and the hostel design (for example, having single rooms or space to cook for oneself); the hostel's aims, objectives, philosophy, ethos, and management style; the rigidity of the rules and the daily routine; and the length of the accommodation period.

Residents and non-residents argued that hostels might promote independence by providing any of the following:

* a roof
* relationships (friends and a family)
* stability and security
* a feeling of belonging
* a sense of happiness

* more freedom and choice than before moving in
* a routine
* time to settle down and to take stock
* encouragement to do things for oneself
* encouragement to make something of one's life
* assistance with move-on
* training in lifeskills
* encouragement to stand up for oneself and one's rights

In terms of reducing independence, residents and non-residents frequently maintained that hostels had the potential to deskill residents or to make them lazy by doing too much for them.

> *Some residents are very long stay and have really got into the way the hostel runs and, rather than the hostel perhaps running in the way that it should do for them, they have really adapted to the life in hostels.* (Hostel C, Management Committee Member)

Non-residents were more likely than residents to refer to the dangers of, and the need to avoid, the institutionalising effects of supported hostel accommodation at all costs. Some non-residents believed that hostels were institutionalising by definition; others argued that, by encouraging all residents to live like each other, hostels reduced individuality and choice, inhibited freedom, and impinged upon rights.

In practice, there was no evidence (reported or observed) of residents or workers overstating resident support needs, creating unnecessary dependencies, or giving residents excessive assistance. Responses rather suggested that people who were independent would not want to stay in the hostel. Indeed, all responses to the interview question about whether there were residents who did not need, or want, to be in supported hostel accommodation were negative.

It is not the sort of place where you would want to be, if you are of a sort who can be independent and live on their own. (Hostel D, Management Committee Member)

Residents who had low support needs (from B and the younger residents from A) were most vociferous about their desire to leave as soon as possible. Furthermore, the majority of non-residents stressed how difficult they would find living in a supported hostel, because they did not need the assistance and were used to more independence.

I mean, I know that I would not want to live with a crowd of people, but I don't suppose that I have any idea of what it might be like to feel dependent and I think that that is something that might bother me. (Hostel D, Worker)

That the aim of supported hostel accommodation should be to promote independence was stressed by all respondents across all hostels. Many, nevertheless, felt that hostels could be doing more to effect this. To this end, the need for more training in lifeskills and more move-on work were emphasised, particularly by staff and managers. Likewise, some staff and managers maintained that there were other models of accommodation which might be better than hostels at promoting independence for some residents.

Feelings and emotions

The experience of hostel living

Most respondents maintained that it was not possible for non-residents ever fully to understand how it felt to live in a supported hostel. Of those who believed that it was possible to imagine without actually living there, all but one were hostel employees. Most of these argued that they spent so much time in the hostel that it sometimes felt as though they were actually

residents.

> *I think that with working there, although we are only here during the week, you do get a feel of what is going on and the issues in the house, so you do get a sense of what it is like to actually live here.* (Hostel C, Worker)

Whilst workers' belief in their ability to empathise appeared consistent with a reformist staff attitude (see earlier discussion of work by Smith *et al.*, (1992)), it simultaneously seemed to indicate how limited an understanding of hostel life many workers actually had.

Across all respondent groups, the main reason given for why non-residents could not understand how it felt to live in a hostel was that a hostel was not the sort of place that people spoke about. Many residents and non-residents therefore argued that information about what hostels were like should be made more readily available. Likewise, the reasons why people became homeless should be given more publicity. To this end, many respondents concluded that there was a need to ask residents about their experiences more often. Additionally, because some residents might not be able to express their feelings, the importance of trying to imagine being in residents' circumstances was also emphasised.

> *I think that you can get some idea, but I don't think you can ever say "Oh, I know what it would be like to live there", because I think that it is very hard to know. Sometimes some of the young people cannot express what they really feel about it and so it is not just a case of living there, it is a case of putting yourself in their position as well.* (Hostel D, Management Committee Member)

In sum, it seemed that there were ways of increasing understanding about hostel living, but the extent to which non-residents could ever fully understand would necessarily remain open to question, given the widely held belief that residents had a unique perspective in relation to such matters.

Happiness

All respondents were asked to comment on the issue of resident happiness. Because the objective of this was simply to ascertain a general sense of the overall psychological well-being of residents, the meaning of happiness was not predefined for the respondents, but rather left open to individual interpretation.

Most respondents stressed that happiness depended on numerous factors. These mainly related to individuals' personality, age, previous life experiences, expectations, choice about being in the hostel, probable length of stay, and the extent to which needs were being met within the accommodation. Other factors highlighted as relevant *included the hostel atmosphere, the* extent of sharing, the staff, and the mix of other residents.

> *It is very difficult to generalise about whether residents are happy or unhappy. It depends very much on the individual and what their needs and expectations are about living in "Hostel C" and what their longer term expectations are.* (Hostel C, Worker)

On the whole, residents and non-residents more commonly argued that residents were happy than unhappy. Responses suggested that residents from *hostels A and D* were the most likely to be happy, residents from *hostel B* less likely, and residents from *hostel C* the least likely of all. Where residents were asked to comment on their own, and then also others' happiness, the two replies were often not synonymous. Again, one probable explanation for this was that many residents, consciously or subconsciously, differentiated themselves from other hostel dwellers in an effort to conceal any underlying feelings of shame or embarrassment which they had.

Across all hostels and all respondent groups, the main reasons given for why residents were likely to be happy in the hostel related to the safety and to the security of the accommodation,

low expectations, and the fact that residents would have left if they did not like it. Reasons stated as to why residents might be unhappy included loneliness, isolation, boredom, limited job prospects, having no family or alternative accommodation, and feeling degraded.

In spite of the fact that many non-residents reported that the accommodation was good, nearly all reported that they would not like, or would hate, to live there. The lack of privacy, choice, and freedom were highlighted as particular concerns in this respect. Whilst non-residents tended to emphasise that their different backgrounds and different levels of independence made them personally unsuitable for living in a supported hostel, it also seemed that many individuals had double standards in relation to such matters.

> *I don't know that I would want to live there. Not because of what, oh, perhaps I don't think that I would need to live there. Erm, and I think if I did, having said what I have said, I think that I would probably want more say in the running of it.* (Hostel D, Management Committee Member)

Only two workers reported that they would be happy to live in the hostel and both stipulated that they would make more of the accommodation than most residents did. That both of these were from *hostel B* seemed to reflect the more critical attitude of staff towards residents in that organisation (as discussed earlier).

At home or homeless?

In the study, nearly twice as many respondents (residents and non-residents) reported that the hostel was a home than not a home, but slightly more respondents (residents and non-residents) reported that residents were homeless than not homeless. Many individuals felt that the hostel was 'a home in part' or that residents were 'a bit' homeless. Some residents considered the

hostel to be their home, but also thought of themselves as homeless. Others did not consider themselves as homeless, but did not think of the hostel as home. In this way, the ambiguity and complexity of the meaning of home and homelessness (as discussed, for example, by Watson with Austerberry, 1986; Gurney, 1990; and Somerville, 1992) was clearly revealed.

Again, there were some minor differences between what residents said in relation to their own feelings about the accommodation and what they reported that others likely felt about hostel living. Given that there was no apparent pattern to the responses, it once more seemed that differences reflected detachment and disunity between the respondents, particularly between the residents. The extent to which this practice was conscious or subconscious was not, however, clear.

Whilst several residents and non-residents refused to speak for others, one or two individuals stated that a hostel could never be a home '*just because it was a hostel*'.

> *It's a hostel full stop, isn't it? Erm, and no matter what you do, you still can't make it home.* (Hostel B, Line Manager/ Referral Agency Representative)

> *It's not a proper home. It inn't your mother's cooking.* (Hostel A, Resident)

Most respondents, meanwhile, emphasised that whether or not residents considered the hostel to be home or themselves as homeless depended upon the individual concerned, the particular hostel, and individual interpretations of the meaning of 'home' and 'homelessness'. Feeling at home seemed likely to increase in conjunction with:

* resident choice about being in the hostel
* feeling safe, secure, and as though one belonged
* freedom within the hostel (for example, to paint or to garden or to decorate)

* having personal belongings and personal space

* being accommodated on a permanent, rather than a short-term basis

* being accommodated in an environment which was comfortable and not run regimentally

* being accommodated in an environment which was well-designed and suitably furnished

* having relationships in the hostel

* having no alternative family or home elsewhere

* having a friendly and stable staff team

* the hostel being an improvement on an individual's previous accommodation

> *Some residents are very long-stay and definitely consider it home...People make homes and people get used to places.* (Hostel C, Management Committee Member)

> *Any place is homely, even if it is only a little hut, if it is clean.* (Hostel C, Resident)

> *I think we are as guilty as anybody of sort of seeing the norm as being somebody who lives in their own house, whether they are on their own or with a partner or family or whatever...for some people hostel accommodation can be the nearest thing to home that they have ever had...I have lived in a home with violence and that is not a home.* (Hostel C, Worker)

Residents from *hostel D* were by far the most likely to think of the accommodation as their home and the least likely to consider themselves to be homeless. Given that providing 'a home for life' was fundamental to the philosophy of that organisation, this was not surprising. The longer accommodation period in D also made it more likely that residents would feel settled there. Furthermore, many residents in D had had unstable childhoods and the hostel was likely to be their nearest experience of a settled base.

> *It does not look like a hostel. I don't think that it is run particularly like some of these larger hostels. And they just regard it as home...they consider it*

> *their home, it is there for life, for as long as they need it, and that gives them stability from which they can use as a foundation stone to grow in whatever area they want to.* (Hostel D, Volunteer)

Residents from *hostels A, B, and C* expressed more mixed responses about feeling at home and homeless than those from *hostel D*. In *hostel A* the older residents were more likely than the younger men to consider the accommodation to be their home. This seemed to arise because the older men had usually been there longer and had often more actively chosen to be there. Moreover, many of the older residents had very minimal expectations of home and their definition of homeless was closely related to rooflessness. Thus, many declared that they did not feel homeless simply because they had '*a roof*', '*a bed*', '*food*', and '*a bob or two to spend*'.

Residents from *hostels B and C* were more likely to consider themselves to be homeless than those from *hostels A or D*. In *hostels B and C* many residents had previously had their own more independent accommodation and their feelings of home were often still attached there. In *hostel B* residents also stressed that they felt homeless because the hostel was very temporary. In *hostel D*, and to a lesser extent *hostel C*, residents maintained that they did not feel homeless because they had been told that the hostel was their home and that they could stay for as long they wished.

Summary

Feelings and emotions about living in supported hostel accommodation were diverse and complex and tended to depend upon a whole range of factors. Most of these were particular to any given individual resident, but the hostel environment was also capable of effecting some influence. Indeed, in D, where the importance of considering the hostel to be home was emphasised, all respondents agreed that residents' feelings had been

influenced to the good. This suggested that it would be difficult to prescribe a set of conditions for hostel provision which would be certain to improve all residents' emotional experiences, but it would not be impossible to effect some generally beneficial changes.

Resident control, participation, and choice

Within the study, issues of resident control, participation, and choice were often discussed in conjunction with the desirability, or otherwise, of person-centred working. In *hostels A and B* staff and management argued that their services were not designed to be person-centred because it was not realistic to attempt to meet the preferences of every individual accommodated. Staff and management from *hostels C and D*, conversely, stressed the desirability of a user-centred approach as a way of increasing resident control, participation, and choice wherever possible.

According to the staff and management from *hostel C*, client-centred working empowered residents by involving them in decisions about the kind and level of support they received. To this end, workers from C stressed that they explored with residents any available alternative housing options, aimed to facilitate moving-on where that was requested, and, wherever possible, encouraged the residents to do more for themselves.

To what extent efforts to encourage hostel C residents to do more for themselves represented an attempt to shift work burdens, under the guise of therapy or being helpful, was somewhat unclear from the fieldwork. This was because actual evidence of proactive work with the women was not forthcoming. In respect of this, hostel C management maintained that the residents frequently resisted doing more for themselves because the hostel had previously been run like an institution and the residents had become accustomed to having things done for them. Staff more commonly maintained that the residents often resisted

participation and involvement because they were incapable of doing more on account of their intense support needs.

In *hostel D* staff and management also stressed that a client-centred approach meant that support should reflect individual backgrounds and requirements and that residents should be involved in determining the kind of help that they received. Accordingly, staff from D highlighted how they tailored programmes of skills training to individual resident's requests. Interestingly, however, work practices at hostel D were based on the premise that services could not be solely user-led because it sometimes required a second party to point out a particular need to a resident.

Staff and management at hostel D thus made a subtle, but useful, distinction between user-led and needs-led service delivery. Whilst residents would be involved in both, a user-led approach meant that staff essentially responded only to resident demands (as at hostel C). A needs-led approach (as practised at hostel D), conversely, required more proactive work by the staff in determining the kind, and the nature, of support to be provided.

In order to investigate issues of resident control, participation, and choice in more detail, the study considered two distinct aspects of hostel provision. The first of these was resident involvement in the running and the management of the hostel and the second was resident control and choice over day-to-day aspects of their lives.

The extent of resident involvement in hostel management

Although there was very little evidence of resident control and participation in the running of any of the four case study hostels, residents from *hostels C and D* reported a higher level of involvement than those from *hostels A and B*. Examples of such

involvement included:

* being able to discuss things with the staff

* being able to complain

* having resident meetings

* being involved in, or responsible for, domestic tasks (such as cleaning and cooking or choosing menus)

* having control over who enters the house and, particularly, personal bedrooms

Factors inhibiting resident involvement in hostel management

Across all four hostels, residents and non-residents maintained that the factors most likely to constrain resident involvement in the running of the hostel included:

* limited hostel resources (financial and staffing)

* residents not desiring participation, because they had become institutionalised, lacked motivation, or because they did not believe that it would make any difference

* residents not being capable of extensive involvement because they were constrained by other pressing problems; their health or mental capabilities; their knowledge or ability to verbalise their opinions; or their financial, social, or emotional circumstances

* the diversity of residents' views, needs, and expectations, which made it impossible to suit everyone

* participation being unable to serve the purpose of the whole, because only the most vociferous would be heard

* staff, being staff and being paid, having to take responsibility for having the last word

> *Obviously there have been times when staff, being staff and being paid, have had to take the responsibility of having the last word and to recognising the sort of power that is vested in us by the fact that we are workers and by the fact that the women see us as having power.* (Hostel C, Worker)

Some additional inhibiting factors were discussed in relation to particular organisations. In *hostel A* some residents and non-residents reported that resident involvement had never been considered because it had never emerged as an issue. In *hostel B*, meanwhile, residents and non-residents stressed that residents were not accommodated for long enough to be involved. Some staff and management also maintained that residents were too untrustworthy to be given responsibility.

> *It is very difficult when you are in for a short time to be able to say "I want this, that, and the other."*
> (Hostel B, Health Visitor)

In *hostels A and B* some residents reported that they had been too afraid to make suggestions, whilst in *hostel C* staff and residents identified insufficient staff time and residents being too ill or too institutionalised as the main constraints to resident involvement in hostel management. In *hostel D* all respondent groups agreed that residents were constrained by their financial and emotional situations, their circle of friends, their mental capabilities, and their personal backgrounds.

Responses from both residents and non-residents suggested that there were many and various factors inhibiting resident involvement in the running of the accommodation. Some of these were clearly more difficult to overcome than others. Interestingly, however, the residents were more likely than the non-residents to argue that users were not capable or were too ill to take control or to participate. Non-residents, it seemed, had greater expectations of residents' potential to be more proactive.

The scope for increasing resident involvement in hostel management

In spite of the constraints considered in the previous section, residents and non-residents still identified a range of

ways that resident participation in the running of the hostel might beneficially be increased. Across all hostels, these included:

* more residents' committees and/ or meetings
* more residents' advocates or representatives, especially at management meetings
* more resident involvement in setting guidelines for running the house
* more resident involvement in considering ways to improve the building (in terms of furnishing and design etc.)
* resident representation on interview panels for staff
* a suggestions list or book
* more resident involvement in cooking and cleaning
* residents and staff doing more activities together
* more discussion with the long-term residents

Such suggestions were not, however, unequivocally accepted by all respondents.

Evaluating resident involvement in hostel management

There was little evidence to suggest that resident involvement in hostel management was good or that residents should be more involved. Amongst the residents, the opinion that user involvement in the running of the hostel was beneficial was highest in *hostel A*, although actual participation there was low. Conversely, resident control and participation were higher in *hostel D*, but generated little interest amongst those accommodated there. In all organisations, except *hostel B*, staff, managers, and other professionals were more keen to advocate resident involvement than were the residents themselves.

Across all respondent groups, there was widespread recognition

of the various grey areas and problems surrounding issues of resident control and participation in hostel management. Staff and residents sometimes reported that whether resident involvement was a good or a bad thing, of which there should be more or less, depended on a number of factors. These included:

* whether residents' ideas were realistic and could be implemented sensibly

* how many people were suggesting particular issues over time

* for how long residents were accommodated

* whether there would still be some basic guidelines to ensure the smooth running of the hostel

Across all hostels and all respondent groups, the reasons why resident involvement might be a good thing included:

* everyone should have a voice and the opportunity to use it as a basic human right

* residents should have more control, because it is their home

* some residents' ideas might improve the hostel

* it would help residents to realise their potential

* it would prevent residents from becoming institutionalised and losing contact with their lifeskills

* it would enable residents to take pride in the environment they were living in

* it is not possible simply to impose things on people

* user involvement works well in other settings

I think, in the main, that the residents do want to be involved. It is often like giving them some pride in the environment that they live in. (Hostel C Worker)

Across all hostels and all respondent groups, the reasons why resident involvement might be a bad thing included:

* residents do not have the right to be involved, they should just be grateful

* resident meetings are a waste of time because nothing gets done

* workers should tell residents what to do more because residents need stimulation

* residents cannot be trusted, so someone has to keep order

* some residents might control, bully, or harass others

* if residents do not like the hostel, they should leave

* sometimes the hostel may not have any power to effect changes (if, for example, the changes are funding related). There is then no point in involving residents

* the quieter residents do not get heard

> *If somebody sits there and says nothing, then there is no problem, they are just left to their own resources and I don't think that anybody acts as their advocate.*
> (Hostel C, Community Psychiatric Nurse)

In all hostels, except hostel B, residents were more likely than workers, managers, and other professionals to be satisfied with the existing low level of resident involvement in hostel management. Indeed, most residents expressed quite a high level of satisfaction with the low level of resident input. Where residents' support needs were low, there seemed to be a higher desired level of participation (for example, amongst the younger men at hostel A and amongst residents at B). Where needs were high, this did not, however, necessarily mean that users desired a low level of involvement. Thus, residents with higher support needs in C were content to be less involved, whilst those in D were happy with a much higher degree of participation.

> *What control can you get? It is being run and it isn't for us to run it. Staff and the Manager do it.*
> (Hostel A, Resident)

Garside *et al.* (1990) found that many residents of hostel accommodation were satisfied to leave the management of the

project to staff, but resident involvement was still valued by those who experienced it. Research into the provision of housing and support for people with mental health problems or with learning difficulties similarly argued that management practices should be developed on the assumption that residents would be offered the choice to participate, although it should be recognised that not every resident would wish to do so (NFHA and MIND, 1989).

The present study uncovered no universally accepted reasons for excluding residents from involvement in the running and the management of the hostel. Indeed, on balance, it seemed that services would more often offer what consumers wanted and needed, if users were involved in planning (see also NFHA and MIND, 1989). The findings from the present study, nevertheless, indicated that resident involvement in the running and the management of hostel accommodation was a complex issue. It had as many disadvantages as advantages, and therefore required careful consideration.

The extent of resident control and choice over their day-to-day lives

On the whole, most respondents seemed to agree that the level of resident choice over day-to-day issues was far higher than the level of resident control and participation over the running of the accommodation. The pattern across the four hostels was, however, the same for both issues. Residents from *hostel D* had the highest level of day-to-day choices and were most involved in the running of the accommodation. This was followed in descending order by residents from *hostel C*, then *hostel B*, and then *hostel A*.

Although many residents and non-residents reported that residents could '*do their own thing*' or '*please themselves*', these comments were often qualified by statements such as '*if*

they can get out', *'as long as they keep the place clean'*, or *'as long as they respect others'*.

> *They have a choice in the sense that we don't say to them, "You have got to get up"; "You have got to do this and you have got to do that". They have a choice which is limited by their income. Erm, so in theory they can do what they like. In practice, that may mean doing what I like when there is a worker to go with me, because actually I am frightened of going out of the home on me own.* (Hostel C, Worker)

> *Residents are really free to do what they want as long as they do respect other people in the house. But their choices are limited by the financial restrictions that they have and the circle of friends they have and by the sort of mental ability that they have.* (Hostel D, Worker)

Residents and non-residents tended to accept that shared living arrangements meant that some compromises and restrictions were unavoidable. General house rules, some bureaucratic procedures, and limited choices in respect of issues such as what to eat or when visitors might arrive, were generally considered inevitable. Moreover, in *hostel C* the community *psychiatric* nurse argued that where all restrictions were lacking, residents were actually being placed in danger:

> *They have every choice...If they want to slash their wrists or stop in bed all day or not take their tablets, then they are just left to do that.* (Hostel C, Community Psychiatric Nurse)

Other restrictions were, meanwhile, considered unnecessary or petty. In *hostel A* residents and other professionals felt that being told when to get up, not being able to go to one's own room during the day, inflexible meal times, not being able to watch the television late at night, and not being able to stay in bed late were pointless restrictions. In *hostel B* residents complained about not being allowed alcohol and having to leave each other's flats by 10:30 P.M. and in *hostel C* some residents were unhappy about the restrictions on male visiting. Only in *hostel D* were there no complaints.

Factors inhibiting resident choice over day-to-day issues

In general the factors inhibiting resident choice over the day-to-day aspects of their lives were found to be virtually identical to those inhibiting their participation in the running of the hostel. It, nevertheless, seemed that there was more scope for extending resident choice over day-to-day issues than for increasing resident participation in hostel management. This was because many of the suggestions for enhancing day-to-day choices (see below) appeared not to be difficult to effect in spite of the constraints. Furthermore, most respondents, both residents and non-residents, seemed to believe in the benefits of increasing residents' day-to-day choices, whereas many respondents, and especially the residents, were far more reticent to advocate resident participation in hostel management.

The scope for increasing resident choice over day-to-day issues

Residents and non-residents identified a broad range of ways that residents' day-to-day choices might beneficially be increased. These included greater choices over:

* menus
* trips
* the hostel furniture or decor
* the rules
* the cleaning rota
* when to get up on a morning
* whether or not to cook one's own meals
* when friends visit
* whether to have a drink on an evening when the children are in bed
* whether to sit and watch television with others late at

night

* whether to use resident advocates

* whether, and if so with whom, to share a room

* whether to live only with very similar people or with a more mixed group

* how long to stay/ when to move on

* what help/ assistance is received from staff (including after-care)

Whilst some of these seemed quite minor changes to effect, the importance accorded to them by some residents was great.

Evaluating resident choice over day-to-day issues

Across all hostels and all respondent groups resident choice over day-to-day issues was largely seen as good. Reasons for this included:

* having choices *helps to prevent institutionalisation*

* having choices makes it more like a home for the residents

* residents should have rights

* it is not possible to tell people what they want

* it is good for residents to articulate their opinions and desires and, hence, to communicate with the staff

Whereas comments about the positive aspects of resident control and participation in hostel management were frequently countered by more negative statements, residents and non-residents voiced only very few negative opinions about resident choice over day-to-day aspects of their lives. These included:

*residents need stimulation and leadership rather than choice

* if people had more choice, they would stay in bed all day

and not look for work

* there is no point in allowing residents to choose who they share a dormitory with, because when they arrive they do not know anyone

* flexible arrangements for having meals or baths do not work when staffing is limited

Whilst some workers recognised that giving residents more choice would make hostel work more difficult, others, especially from *hostels C and D*, maintained that one of the roles of hostel staff should be to enhance choices and to provide relevant imagination because this is often lost when residents have not known anything else or have been too ill.

> *So, I believe that we are there to present those things, to try to enhance the choice that they have, whilst actually allowing them, if need be, that safety for however long they need it, which might be years.* (Hostel C, Worker)

In sum, the study found that enhancing resident choice over day-to-day matters was far less ambiguous and controversial than increasing resident participation in the broader issue of hostel management.

Summary

Relationships featured as an important element of hostel life. Although a high level of detachment between individuals was identified, isolation did not seem to be a major problem. All respondent groups across all hostels reported that residents interacted in a mixed kind of way, as in any living environment, but frequent quarrels were distressing. The extent to which the residents did, or could, help each other on a day-to-day basis was, however, limited, as was the help and support available to them from friends and family external to the hostel. From this it was clear that one common characteristic of the residents was their lack of support networks outside of the hostel and,

consequently, their greater reliance on more formal/ professional forms of assistance accessible from within it.

Whilst resident/ worker relationships, inter-staff relationships, and relationships with volunteers were largely felt to be good, problems between workers and managers were mentioned more frequently. Similarly, staff relationships with other professionals and with family and friends external to the organisation were more conflict-prone. The hostel environment was not conducive to receiving visitors and poor inter-agency relations and communications meant that assistance from other professional sources was frequently not exploited to its full potential. Hostel relations with the local community also tended to be peripheral. This seemed to suggest that there was an unhealthy level of isolation, self-containment, and institutionalisation within some provision.

The study considered four key indicators of hostel philosophy and ethos. These were motivations for the provision of the accommodation, staff attitudes, working practices, and hostel atmosphere. These were found to be complex, but important, aspects of provision which impinged upon hostel life in multiple ways and in interaction with a range of other factors (often considered in more detail in other parts of the thesis).

Stigma also presented as a highly complex, but very personal emotion. Residents and non-residents argued that biased, negative, outdated stereotypical images of hostels, hostel residents, and homeless people were the most likely causes of shame or embarrassment. Although stigma was reported to be very difficult to challenge, some suggestions were advanced as to how it might be possible to begin to redress entrenched views. These included avoiding the word 'hostel', publicising the reasons why people became homeless, and remembering to treat residents as diverse individuals rather than as all the same.

Although residents and non-residents recognised that the aim

of supported hostel accommodation should be to promote independence, most also accepted that independence was an ambiguous concept which related closely to the personal characteristics and circumstances of any given individual, as well as to the particular hostel concerned. Supported hostel accommodation was generally considered more likely to promote than to reduce independence, but there were many suggestions as to how it might do both. Whilst some respondents concluded that hostels could do more to encourage individual autonomy, others maintained that other models of accommodation might be more effective for some residents.

Most respondents (although fewer hostel workers than residents) felt that it was not possible to imagine how it would feel to live in a supported hostel, unless an individual had actually experienced it. Many residents and non-residents, nevertheless, believed that greater communication could increase understanding. On the whole, residents professed themselves to be more happy than unhappy and more residents reported that the hostel was their home than reported that they were homeless. Residents' feelings were related to a range of very complex and personal factors, but hostel environment was clearly effecting some influence.

There was a relatively low level of resident participation in the running of the hostels and a relatively low level of belief that resident participation was a good thing or that residents should be more involved. Indeed, there was quite a high level of satisfaction with the existing low level of involvement and some clear reasons were stated as to why greater resident participation in hostel management might actually be bad. Interestingly, however, staff and other professionals were more in favour of promoting resident involvement than were the residents themselves.

The extent of resident choice over day-to-day aspects of their lives was greater than the extent of resident participation in

hostel management. Although it was not possible to tell whether there was more satisfaction with the level of resident participation in hostel management or with the extent of resident choice over day-to-day issues, it nevertheless seemed that there was more potential for extending the latter. This was because both residents and workers across all hostels appeared to believe in the benefits of resident choice over day-to-day matters, whereas it was essentially only workers (especially from hostels C and D), who were advocating greater resident involvement in hostel management.

Furthermore, many of the suggestions for enhancing day-to-day choices would not have been too difficult to have achieved. Such suggestions included being able to choose when to get up or when to have a bath (hostel A), and being able to sit and watch television with others late at night or to have a drink on an evening when the children were in bed (hostel B).

Evidence from hostels C and D also suggested that it was helpful to distinguish between user-led and needs-led service delivery. Both of these involved residents, but the latter also incorporated the opinions of various relevant others. Because an extensive range of factors seemed likely to constrain residents' ability to control, participate, and choose (most particularly the intensity of some residents' needs and limited resources), a needs-led approach (as practised at D) rather than a user-led approach (as practised at C) seemed to be the more useful of the two ways of working.

To conclude, the issues considered in this chapter revealed themselves to be complex mixtures of interacting variables. The tangible aspects of hostel provision were, in practice, largely inseparable from the more intangible, experiential elements. Likewise, the outcomes of supported hostel accommodation frequently interconnected and overlapped with the inputs, processes, and outputs (as considered in chapter 9), but also with residents' characteristics (as discussed in chapter 8).

Similarities and dissimilarities between the four case studies were apparent, but one particular pattern to emerge was the greater attention paid within D, and to a lesser extent within C, to the more intangible, experiential features. To what extent this or other factors were relevant to the success of each of the hostels in meeting their residents' needs is now considered in the remaining two chapters.

CHAPTER 11: SUMMARY

Introduction

This chapter provides a general assessment of the value of supported hostel accommodation, an overview of those features considered important, a review of the characteristics identified as positive and negative, suggestions for improving provision, a consideration of the kinds of factors constraining potential improvements, and a final summary section.

The value of provision

All respondents, except the line manager from hostel C, reported that supported hostel accommodation was either valuable or very valuable. Indeed, 'necessary', 'essential', and 'crucial' were expressions frequently used.

> *I thank God for them all, I really do.* (Hostel A, Referral Agency Representative)
>
> *I think they are valuable, certainly valuable, and, unfortunately, very necessary.* (Hostel B, Worker)
>
> *Without "Hostel C" I would not be here. That is the top and the bottom of it. They have progressed me from being very ill to this present day. Their help and their 24 hour call, which I did call once...and she* (a worker) *calmed me down, because I was hysterical that night...I was just ready to go out and go berserk.* (Hostel C, Ex-resident)

Although many respondents (residents and non-residents) stressed the need for more, similar hostel accommodation, appraisal was often qualified. For example, many residents and non-residents argued that hostels were valuable as long as they remained as one resource amongst other resources, were well run, of a good standard, or non-regimental.

I think that as a resource amongst other resources they are valuable and some are more valuable than others. (Hostel C, Worker)

Some respondents identified particular groups for whom they believed supported hostel accommodation was most valuable (see also chapter 8). Older men who had led itinerant lifestyles were most commonly mentioned here. Other residents and non-residents maintained that supported hostel accommodation was equally valuable to all groups of people or that it was only relevant to those who either wanted, or needed, to be there. Some individuals maintained that supported hostel accommodation was most valuable for some people at some times in their lives, but for others more permanently or for life.

Hostels are alright for when you need them, but not for somewhere to stay permanent. But it is always nice to know that they are there, because they definitely helped me out when I needed them. (Hostel B, Ex-resident)

They are very valuable for specific things, you know, at specific times in some people's lives. (Hostel C, Relief Worker)

On the whole, residents were more positive about the value of hostels than non-residents. Whilst this likely reflected greater satisfaction with provision, it also perhaps reflected residents' lower expectations, limited alternatives, reticence to criticise, or more desperate need for assistance.

The only respondent to express any serious reservations about the value of hostel accommodation (the line manager from C) referred to its institutionalising and dependence creating tendencies. Hostels, he argued, were becoming increasingly outdated and other models (such as core and cluster or the provision of peripatetic support to individuals in their own tenancies) were better geared to meeting needs. In spite of this, he still maintained that hostels were better than no provision and that, given the political and economic climate and

the limited availability of alternatives, it would be unwise to dismiss them completely. Anything, he maintained, that would reduce the few options open to individuals without a roof over their heads would be regrettable.

Several hostel employees and other professionals argued that supported hostel accommodation had become more important as a resource over recent years. The development of resettlement and move-on work and increasing professionalism within the hostel sector were identified as contributing to this. Many residents and other professionals also reported that hostel accommodation had proved itself to be more valuable than they had personally anticipated. Becoming familiar with a given organisation, learning about how and why it operated as it did, and getting to know those associated with it were all considered relevant to this.

Other residents and non-residents maintained that for them personally the value of hostels had remained constant over time. This was particularly true of the ex-residents, all of whom still valued the hostel and its work, although they no longer lived there. Only a few respondents reported that supported hostel accommodation had proved worse than they had expected or that their opinions of it had grown more negative over time. Interestingly, these were all respondents from *hostel C*. In respect of this, residents and non-residents referred to hostel C's increasing inability to meet residents' needs and its apparent loss of direction (manifest in confused aims and objectives, uncertain philosophy and ethos, inconsistent work practices, and high void levels).

Across all respondent groups, the provision of help and support, safety and security, reliability, and assistance with move-on were reported to be the most valuable aspects of the accommodation.

> *At the time I needed it. I was very bewildered and upset and everything else with it and I needed someone*

to help sort me out and with which way I was going to go. And I felt safe. (Hostel C, Ex-resident)

I think that there needs to be more of that sort of, I think that it is the support more than anything, I think that there needs to be more where it has got that support, where there is somebody there all the time. (Hostel D, Management Committee Member)

Hostel employees and other professionals also highlighted the value of accommodation which seemed to offer a unique service in the locality and, hence, filled a perceived gap in provision.

I just hope that we are bringing something different that is good. (Hostel C, Relief Worker)

Workers from *hostel C* maintained that their hostel was important because it provided a rare form of longer-stay, low-support, non-medicalised accommodation for older women with mental health needs. Interestingly, the line manager and the community psychiatric nurse from C did not value these characteristics. At *hostel D,* meanwhile, most respondents stressed that D was valuable because it offered the rare opportunity of 'a home for life' for those who desired it.

Across all respondent groups and all four hostels, it was commonly agreed that without hostel accommodation the result could only be negative: more sleeping on the streets, more tenancy breakdowns, more crime, more people self-harming or harming others, more people in bed and breakfast accommodation, and more domestic violence. One resident and one employee from *hostel B* also stressed that changes being proposed to the homelessness legislation at the time of the fieldwork (spring 1994) would reduce both the quality and the quantity of provision and, hence, also be negative.

In sum, the hostels clearly seemed to be filling an important slot in the range of provision between institutional or residential care and independent housing (see Berthoud and Casey, 1988). Likewise, the hostels were occupying an important

position in the range of accommodation forms spanning multi-occupied housing, bed and breakfast hotels, various other kinds of temporary accommodation, and the streets. Scope for advances in design and better understanding of resident needs was apparent, but this did not invalidate existing provision or make it any the less valuable (see also Garside *et al.*, 1990).

The important features

Respondents identified a diverse range of overlapping and interconnecting hostel characteristics as being important. Whilst some of these were emphasised by respondents from all hostels, others were stressed only by some respondents from particular organisations. Those issues considered important indicated aspects of provision which might usefully be adapted as performance indicators or quality criteria.

> *As long as you have got a roof over your head, you are OK.* (Hostel B, Resident)
>
> *The most important thing is the standard of cleanliness. The care and the people who work there is also important. Beyond that nothing else really matters. You can't really expect residents to get on, given their circumstances.* (Hostel C, Resident)

Across all respondent groups in all hostels, the characteristics most commonly highlighted as important were the standards and the design (cleanliness, security, privacy, and non-institutionalised appearance) and relationships (particularly staff/ resident relationships). Hostel policies and procedures (rules, length of stay, and daily routine); support services (day-to-day support and move-on); location (local facilities and proximity to town); and hostel atmosphere (that the environment was welcoming, happy, relaxed, and homely) were next most commonly identified.

Some staff, managers, and other professionals additionally highlighted the importance of resident participation, control,

and choice; the role of hostel aims, objectives and philosophy; the availability of reliable funding; the maintenance of residents' links out of the accommodation; the provision of services which were flexible to individual requirements; the need to ensure that costs did not make it difficult for residents to take up paid employment; and the need to reduce stigma.

In *hostel A* most respondents stressed the importance of the provision of a bed, a roof, food and relationships - that is, very basic aspects of provision. Some staff also emphasised funding, but no respondent highlighted the need for good standards, other than cleanliness. In *hostel B* many residents and non-residents stressed the importance of the safety of the hostel and the fact that the accommodation was for a temporary period only (that is, re-housing would soon follow). The hostel atmosphere, the support, and resident participation were, on the whole, considered peripheral, although rated more highly by residents than non-residents.

Whilst *hostel C* residents seemed indifferent to any particular important features, staff and managers stressed the need for services to be flexible to individual needs. No respondent from C suggested that the facilities, the location or the routine were important. In *hostel D* most respondents agreed that the most important features were the hostel environment, interpersonal relationships, the resettlement and move-on work, the employment training, and the routine. Little significance was accorded to cleanliness or to the hostel as simply providing a roof.

Interestingly, those issues considered important by respondents from particular hostels often matched the actual characteristics of provision in those hostels - for example, basic accommodation in A, temporary accommodation in B, a belief in user-led services by staff and management from C, and a homely atmosphere by all respondents from D. This might have occurred because services were meeting needs, desires, and expectations. Equally, it could have resulted because respondents were

unwilling to criticise or because existing provision reflected the services people knew about and, consequently, expected.

Given that respondents from *hostel A* identified very few important features, whilst respondents from *hostel D* identified many, this seemed to suggest that individuals had lower expectations of provision in *hostel A*, more medium expectations in *hostels B and C*, and much higher expectations in *hostel D*.

The kinds of issues stressed as important also tended to reflect the interests of the individuals and groups doing the assessing. Thus, there were some clear differences between the characteristics considered to be important by the residents and by the non-residents. The non-residents (particularly from C and D) were more likely to emphasise the importance of resident participation and choice; the need to make services flexible to individual requirements; the need for independent resident advocates; and the role of hostel aims, philosophy, and policies. The residents, meanwhile, were more concerned with more immediate features, such as sleeping, cooking, and washing facilities.

There were some similarities, but also some differences, between the issues considered important in the four case studies and those identified by previous research (see literature review, chapter 3). That previous research has essentially considered hostels from a provider perspective, and may consequently have missed issues valued by other groups, could help to explain such differences. Additionally, hostels and hostel populations are a rapidly changing field and previous research can soon become outdated.

Standards, location, design, and local facilities were identified as important in both the present study and in earlier research (NACRO, 1982; Garside *et al.*, 1990). Relationships, length of stay policies and practices, day-to-day support, staff attitudes, the hostel environment and atmosphere, and resident participation and choice were also valued in the present

investigation, but have received only limited recognition elsewhere. Issues considered important within the case studies, but not considered at all by previous research, included confronting stigma, providing services which were flexible to individual requirements, encouraging residents to maintain links out of the accommodation, and ensuring that costs did not make it difficult for residents to take up paid employment.

Rules, organised outings and activities, and food were all accorded notably little emphasis in the present inquiry, given that they have previously received much attention. The low priority attached to hostel aims, objectives, and funding in the four case studies, meanwhile, seemed to suggest that most respondents, both residents and non-residents, were detached from these issues on a day-to-day basis.

In sum, the respondents considered the outcomes and the more experiential and conceptual aspects of hostel living to be as important as the inputs, processes, and outputs, and the more material and quantifiable features which previous research has tended to emphasise. Given that earlier chapters (particularly chapters 9 and 10) have already revealed how highly interrelated and interconnected all such issues and aspects of hostel provision were, it seemed that these various spheres could not, and indeed should not, be separated.

The positive and negative features

Whilst this section compares closely with the earlier analysis of hostel standards, its wider brief also allows scope for considering other less tangible, more experiential, aspects of provision. Likewise, it provides some qualitative evaluation of the aspects of hostel accommodation deemed important above.

The positive features

> *I have got a job; I have got money for myself; I have got a place to live; I have got a place to sleep; a place to go downstairs in the living room to sit down and enjoy myself.* (Hostel D, Resident)

Across all four hostels and all respondent groups, the building and the facilities were most frequently identified as positive. This was, however, perhaps not surprising given that most residents had moved into hostel accommodation because they had no alternative housing. After the building and the facilities, most respondents highlighted the positive nature of the care and the support provided, the staffing, the safety, and the security. In terms of staffing, residents referred mostly to staff attitudes (that they were caring, friendly, polite, kind, respectful, genuine, and warm) and also that they were accessible. In terms of the safety and the security, residents and non-residents referred to having a place and a time space to deal with things and, in *hostel C*, having a woman only environment.

Having company, and yet also sufficient privacy, were the next most commonly reported positive features across the respondent groups and across the four hostels. Sharing, especially having someone to talk to, was likewise often appreciated. Location (particularly being in a 'nice' area and with easy access to town, bus routes, and essential services, such as the local social security office) was also seen as good.

Some respondents identified the positive nature of the meals and the food provided (*hostels A, C, and D*); the cleanliness (mostly *hostel A*); the rules and regulations (also mostly *hostel A*); the lack of staff interference in residents' lives (mostly *hostel B*); the provision of eligibility for priority homelessness status (*hostel B*); and the provision of employment/ training (*hostel D*). Organised trips were only mentioned as positive by three residents (one from *hostel C* and two from *hostel D*). This

seemed low given that three of the four hostels regularly provided a variety of arranged outings.

Whilst some respondents (mostly from *hostel A*) valued the hostel's mere existence (that it provided a bed, a roof, and warmth), as many (mostly from *hostel D*) stressed the importance of a family/ homely/ community atmosphere and good interpersonal relationships. In *hostel D* most respondents believed that the accommodation's unlimited length of stay was a positive aspect, whereas in *hostel B* the temporary nature of the provision was emphasised as good.

In *hostel C* residents and non-residents highlighted only few positive characteristics, but in *hostel D* the positive side of almost every aspect was discussed. Such differences likely related to variations in the accommodation, but also to respondents' different expectations and different degrees of willingness to complain. Reticence to criticise, at least in part, seemed to reflect the 'charitable' nature of some provision. Thus, *hostels A and D* appeared less easy to criticise than the more bureaucratic and impersonal form of statutory assistance available at *hostel B* or the more 'professional/ therapeutic' approach of *hostel C*.

Whilst different positive features were identified according to the hostel concerned, there appeared to be little pattern by respondent group. There was, in other words, more consensus of opinion between all respondents in a given hostel than between all residents or all staff or all managers across the four case studies.

The negative features

> *I think I, personally, would not want to live with so many people. I think that is the big problem that I would have.* (Hostel D, Worker)

Evans (1991) concluded that conditions and standards in local authority hostel accommodation were often very poor; most provision did not provide the intensive/ specialist support required by vulnerable/ dependent applicants; hostels were often stigmatising for residents because they were more 'visible' than other types of self-contained temporary accommodation; high service charges could cause problems for residents not in receipt of benefit or in instances where charges were ineligible for benefit; and rigid rules sometimes made it difficult for residents to lead 'normal' lives (Evans, 1991). Some of these issues featured as important negative characteristics in the present investigation, but others were notably less relevant.

Across all four hostels and all respondent groups, the most mentioned negative characteristics, as well as most mentioned positive characteristics, related to the building itself (its decor, furnishing, design, and facilities). Whilst the lack of privacy was often considered negative, sharing was referred to as both positive and negative. Conflict between residents was discussed as a problem more often than friction between residents and staff, but neither was highlighted as a major concern. Furthermore, criticism of staffing mainly related to inadequate staffing levels, leading to insufficient assistance, rather than criticism of staff attitudes or of actual working practices.

Across all four hostels, rules and regulations were considered to be far less of a problem than the standard of the accommodation or the inadequate staffing levels. Several residents referred to the problem of boredom, but only one felt that there were insufficient trips and organised activities. This suggested that residents did not want activities organised for them, but would have welcomed the opportunity to have been able to do more themselves. Various respondents, mostly residents, maintained that there was nothing negative about the accommodation at all.

The problem of personal security and the security of personal

belongings were discussed by residents and non-residents, but only from *hostels A and C*. Other features of hostel accommodation identified as negative included the poor meals (mostly *hostel A*); the insecurity of tenure (*hostel B*); no child supervision (*hostel B*); the inability to work on the side (one *hostel B* resident); unclear organisational aims and objectives (*hostel C*); too many voids (*hostel C*); paternalistic and protectionist staff attitudes (the referral agency representative from *hostel D*); not feeling like a home (*hostels A, B, and C*); the location (*hostels B and C*); the isolation (*hostels B and C*); and poor management (*hostels A and C*).

In all four hostels inadequate funding was identified, but not stressed, as a negative characteristic by some residents and non-residents. Again, this lack of emphasis seemed to result from the limited understanding of funding mechanisms and the lack of direct impact that these had on many of the respondents, particularly the residents. Stigma was also occasionally discussed by individuals from different respondent groups, but mainly indirectly in terms of the negative effects of labelling people, particularly limiting their aspirations and hindering their employment prospects.

Different criticisms were made in respect of each of the four case studies. Residents and non-residents from *hostel A* mostly criticised the oldness of the building and the very basic nature of its facilities. In spite of this, many maintained that the high standard of cleanliness compensated. Furthermore, although the accommodation was very shared and afforded very little privacy, there was little mention of this as a problem.

In *hostel B* the furniture, the decor, and the rules were all highlighted as negative features. High void levels seemed to be less of a problem for B than for any of the other organisations, largely because B received statutory funding from the local authority. Furthermore, being an emergency access hostel, B required a certain number of empty units in order to operate

effectively.

In *hostel C* residents highlighted excessive quarrelling between residents as the most negative aspect of the provision. That the women's mental health needs made them prone to volatility and that the hostel itself fostered an atmosphere in which it was considered healthy to criticise and to speak out about issues, in part explained the propensity for conflict within the house. Residents from C also had high expectations about forming close family-type relationships and this seemed to render them more susceptible to disappointment. Furthermore, residents and non-residents maintained that close living quarters, involving the sharing of facilities and a lack of privacy, were new and difficult experiences for most of the women.

Non-residents from hostel C additionally highlighted the problematic nature of insufficient and unstable funding, high voids, inadequate staffing levels, confusion over staff roles, and the problems of working effectively with a resident group whose needs were increasingly moving beyond those for which the hostel had been set up. Interestingly, many of these issues were also relevant to the other hostels, but not discussed by respondents from them. C thus, in part, scored highly in terms of negative features because the respondents there, particularly the non-residents, had high expectations, a high understanding of various complex philosophical and ethical issues, believed in the benefits of constructive criticism, and had a high desire to improve provision.

In *hostel D*, conversely, there was a clear resistance to criticise or to pass any negative comments. This related less to complacency than to a philosophy of being grateful for everything, whilst simultaneously emphasising the need to strive for improvements wherever possible. For example, the hostel D building was not of a particularly good standard, but was held in high regard by both the residents and the non-residents. The

unsettled previous accommodation experiences of the residents, the poor quality of the two previous hostels owned by the organisation, and recent improvement work at the house all appeared to be contributing to the generally high degree of satisfaction. The main problem mentioned in relation to D was inadequate staffing, but here too it was stressed that more staff could not improve the quality, just the quantity, of the work that could be done.

Although there was again more consensus about the negative features according to the hostel than according to the respondent group, some patterns of opinion did reflect individual differences in willingness to criticise and the particular interests of the individuals and the respondent groups doing the assessing. Residents were thus most likely to comment that there was nothing bad about the accommodation; the ex-residents were more critical than the current residents (perhaps that is why they had left or perhaps they felt more able to criticise having moved out); and the non-involved professionals were more critical than the involved staff and managers. Those more dependent on the accommodation were, in other words, less likely to criticise it than those with less vested interests.

Non-residents were also more likely than residents to refer to managerial and organisational problems, the lack of funding, inadequate staffing levels, and to stress that a negative feature of the accommodation was a lack of user control, participation, and choice. Residents, meanwhile, were again more likely to discuss more immediate aspects of provision, such as poor washing, cooking, and sleeping facilities.

Comparing positive and negative features

The study found that it was difficult to generalise about satisfaction or dissatisfaction with hostel living because opinions were diverse and contradictory and tended to relate to

various factors. These included the quality and the type of the accommodation provided, the particular housing needs of any one individual at any given time, and differences in willingness to complain (see also Austerberry and Watson, 1983; Thomas and Niner, 1989; Garside *et al.*, 1990). Indeed, as concluded by Thomas and Niner (1989), some residents seemed reticent to criticise simply because they were grateful to have a roof over their heads.

Many aspects of hostel provision were reported to be both positive and negative. Accordingly, very different opinions were frequently voiced in relation the same characteristic at a particular hostel. Thus, the design of B was reported to be positive by some respondents (mostly residents) and negative by others (mostly hostel employees). In spite of this, patterns of positive and negative features were still identified according to the hostel and, less frequently, according to the respondent group concerned. Some of these were similar to, but others different from, the findings of previous research.

Consistent with the Glasgow rehousing study, the facilities and the company of other residents were discovered to be positive features of hostel living (GCSH, 1985). Likewise, as found in the Glasgow study, negative comments focused on problems with other residents, the lack of privacy and restrictions on personal freedom, the way the hostels were run, the behaviour of the other residents, and the physical aspects of the building (GCSH, 1985). These also mirrored the negative comments about hostels found in Randall and Brown's evaluation of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (Randall and Brown, 1993). Good staff, meanwhile, clearly contributed to making a hostel pleasant (see also Austerberry and Watson, 1983), but the uncertainty of living in temporary accommodation was also a negative aspect of it for some residents (see also Bull, 1993).

The present investigation did not concur with Drake *et al.*'s assertion that the disadvantages of hostel living outweighed the

advantages for most residents (Drake *et al.*, 1981). According to Drake *et al.*, the negative features included the low standards of hygiene, comfort, and order in some hostels; the lack of privacy; having no secure place to leave one's possessions; having to leave the hostel daily; hostel rules; and being stigmatised by potential employers. Similarly, Dant and Deacon (1989) identified the negative features as the lack of privacy, the lack of freedom to come and go, to choose what and when to eat, and to move about when and where one wanted.

Whilst some of the problems identified by Drake *et al.* (1981) and by Dant and Deacon (1989) were evident in the present study, others were notably less apparent. One likely reason for any difference was that the negative features identified in the two earlier studies were typical of the large old-fashioned traditional forms of hostel accommodation, such as night shelters and resettlement units (and, in this study, *hostel A*). As discussed in chapter 2, much of this traditional accommodation has now been improved or replaced by other, very different forms of provision (such as *hostels C and D* and, to a lesser extent, *B*).

Moreover, the extent to which residents found aspects of the accommodation positive or negative also depended on other factors. These included their needs, the alternatives available to them, or where they were previously staying. The diversification of hostel provision, the changing characteristics of homeless people, and a much altered housing environment in general can thus make direct comparisons with older research, or with research which focuses on only one type of provision, potentially misleading.

Potential improvements

Although respondents suggested numerous potential ways of improving supported hostel accommodation, three main areas were

identified. These were the provision of more practical assistance, improvements to the management and to the running of the accommodation, and improvements to the building and the facilities. In addition to these, many respondents (residents and non-residents) emphasised that more funding and better inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination were essential prerequisites to effecting any beneficial changes.

The provision of more practical help was the most commonly suggested improvement across all respondent groups in all four hostels. This included more care and support within the hostel, but also more assistance in preparing people for move-on and more follow-up work after move-on. To this end, the need for more practical lifeskills training and also more assistance in finding suitable move-on accommodation were stressed.

Potential improvements to the running of the accommodation related to managerial issues, but also to worker and to resident involvement. Suggestions for improving hostel management included a new manager (*hostels A and B*); more trust and respect of workers by management (*hostels A, B, and C*); a more solid management group (*hostel C*); more support and supervision for staff (*hostel C*); and a need for management committee members to be more familiar with the accommodation (*hostel C*).

Across all four hostels, residents and non-residents identified a need for more staff, a change of some individual staff members, less administration and bureaucracy, more staff time to spend with the residents, and more worker involvement in hostel management. More choices for residents and greater resident participation in the running of the hostel were also advocated (but mostly by staff and managers from *hostels C and D*).

Suggested ways of improving the building and the facilities included a new building (*hostels A and C*); a different location (*hostels B and C*); better design (*hostels A and B*); more private

space (*hostels A and C*); smaller communal lounges (*hostel A*); the choice of not sharing sleeping arrangements (*hostel A*); a boiler for making one's own tea and coffee (*hostel A*); smaller individual units (*hostel B*); more vacuum cleaners and safety gates (*hostel B*); more children's play equipment (*hostel B*); and better furnishing and decor (*hostels A, B, C, and D*).

Other potential improvements across all hostels included more organised activities (trips, classes, or groups); a reformulation of some organisational aims, objectives, and policies (especially in relation to length of stay); less rigidity in the operating of some hostel policies and procedures (particularly the implementation of rules); a more responsive approach to individual needs; improvements to the food (better quality and more choice, but also more resident involvement in menu planning and the timing of meals); greater use of residents' advocates; a more interesting and varied daily routine; and better publicity to improve knowledge about provision. More links for residents outside of the hostel and more encouragement of visits to the premises (in order to widen residents' pool of support sources and to help to prevent institutionalisation) were also emphasised by other professionals.

Of the four hostels, the potential for effecting beneficial changes was emphasised most in relation to *hostel C*. Whilst this might have resulted because of a low level of satisfaction with the accommodation at C, it could equally have reflected higher expectations, greater awareness of the potential for effecting improvements, and little understanding of the factors which might constrain these.

Although suggested improvements most commonly related to the particular hostel concerned, they also reflected the interests of individuals and respondent groups.

> *I mean, for me, a major improvement would be to feel that there is trust and respect for the team, in terms of the work that we try to do.* (Hostel C, Worker)

The need for more practical help, improved buildings and facilities, more and stable funding, and an extension of resident choice over day-to-day issues were highlighted by all respondent groups. Residents were, however, more likely to be concerned with the sleeping, cooking, and washing facilities; workers with the general running and management of the accommodation; managers with void levels; and the health visitor with safety standards. Improvements to hostel aims, objectives, philosophy, and management (including greater resident participation in the running of the hostel) tended not to be suggested by residents themselves.

In spite of the above, there was frequently little agreement about ways of improving particular hostels. For example, some residents expressed an interest in arranged classes and groups, but others stressed that they would have no desire to participate in such activities. Several residents reported that more organised trips and outings would be welcome and yet no individual reported that they, personally, would desire to participate in these. More controversially, improvements suggested by some individuals were considered potentially harmful by others. More visits to the accommodation by residents' family was one example of this. In all hostels workers were often sceptical, and sometimes even scathing, of these. Residents and professionals external to the organisation, conversely, often advocated them.

Planned or recent improvements were mentioned in respect of each of the case studies. *Hostel A* was planning a new building; *hostel B* was renegotiating staff/ worker roles; and *hostel C* was reviewing its aims, objectives, philosophy, and organisational structure. *Hostel D* had recently upgraded its building, but was also involved in on-going attempts to expand and to develop all aspects of its work wherever possible. Making improvements was, in other words, something which all of the hostels were willing to consider.

Although some suggested improvements were more easily realisable than others, it was clearly important to address all aspects of provision (from the management style and structure to the building, location, design, and internal facilities) (see also Garside *et al.*, 1990). Furthermore, because many users had very clear views about what they felt worked or was appropriate, much could also clearly be learnt by consulting residents on these matters (Garside *et al.*, 1990). Whilst the present investigation did not find that the relaxing of hostel regimes, in order to allow residents more freedom, was necessarily 'the principle' change required to improve hostel provision (see GCSH, 1985), the importance of more flexibility and greater resident choice was stressed by a variety of respondents throughout.

The constraints to improvements

Across the four hostels the constraints to improving hostel provision were diverse, but mainly funding and resource related. Limited hostel budgets were most commonly cited, but residents' straitened personal financial circumstances were also often identified. Most respondents were aware of funding restrictions, even if they reported that they knew nothing of the way hostel financing mechanisms were actually operating.

> *Meals are like everything else, run on a budget, so you can't be having steak every day.* (Hostel A, Resident)

> *All the money goes into children's homes, they don't give two hoots for places like this.* (Hostel A, Resident)

After funding, staffing related constraints were next most frequently mentioned. These were mainly due to insufficient, rather than poor quality, staffing - that is, again often resource related. For example, many non-residents argued that the mixing of resident groups, especially gender and age groups, was beneficial because it reduced stigma and labelling. Such

mixing was, however, largely considered impractical. This was because mixing diverse groups of residents increased the potential for conflict and raised other managerial issues. These then required unavailable extra staffing input, if the hostel was to continue to operate smoothly.

In all hostels residents and non-residents frequently reported that staff were overworked. In *hostels B and C* workers stressed that there was excessive paper work and bureaucracy and this left insufficient time to spend with the residents; in *hostels C and D* staff and management maintained that their small staff teams were not flexible enough to allow for extra cover during holiday periods and sickness; and in *hostels B, C, and D* residents and non-residents argued that having only one member of staff on the premises was insufficient, because residents often required attention simultaneously.

Many non-residents stressed that insufficient staffing increased staff turnover, depleted staff energy, precipitated low morale, and militated against consistency. Together these were then believed to reduce the potential for effective work with the residents. Poor quality staffing, nevertheless, presented as less of a constraint to improving hostel accommodation than poor quality hostel management. Many non-residents from *hostels A and B* referred to the detrimental effects of the autocratic style of government in those two hostels. At *hostel C* workers and the involved other professional, meanwhile, identified a need for more top-down support for, and supervision of, the staff team, but also more trust in, and respect for, them by the management.

Across all hostels, individuals from all respondent groups reported that inadequate staff supervision, insufficient staff training, and limited staff roles were exacerbating the problem of under-staffing. In terms of limited staff roles, several non-residents maintained that support and rehousing work were inseparable from other aspects of hostel work, such as housing management. In spite of this, in *hostels A and B* the provision

of support, and in *hostels in A, B, and C* rehousing work, were essentially considered to be beyond the job remit of the hostel workers.

In all hostels, non-residents maintained that aspects of the building, particularly inadequate space and poor design, were limiting the work that could be done with the residents, especially the opportunity for group work or classes. At *hostel B* these limitations were felt to be exacerbated by the temporariness of the accommodation period. Likewise, some staff at B argued that it was because the residents abused the facilities that some services and amenities (for example, a free laundry and allowing male visitors) had had to be removed.

In all hostels some residents and non-residents maintained that the personal characteristics and the motivations of the residents themselves were constraining improvements to provision. For example, some staff and residents at *hostels A and C* argued that residents were too ill or too institutionalised for improvements to be possible. Likewise, in all hostels the potential for effecting improvements was felt to be hampered where residents did not vocalise suggestions (either because they did not feel that they could; or because they were not able to; or because they did not see any point, as nothing was likely to change).

Many non-residents additionally suggested that some potential improvements were constrained by various structural factors, largely beyond the direct control of the hostel. These included the lack of move-on accommodation city-wide, inadequate back-up support from other professionals, poor inter-agency co-ordination and co-operation, poor community facilities, recent changes in the city's hostel sector, insecure funding mechanisms, changes in community care policy and practice, a general increase in residents' support needs, and the likelihood of alterations to the homelessness legislation. Some non-residents also identified a need for changes to other aspects of residents' lives (such as

improvements to their personal relationships) and more long-term assistance (such as counselling).

As with many other issues, different kinds of limitations were identified in respect of each of the four case studies. In *hostel A* residents and non-residents agreed that the constraints were essentially financial. There was no particular recognition of other wider structural factors and no great problem of staff being too overworked. Indeed, it sometimes seemed that there was a general lack of drive to effect improvements at all at A.

In *hostel B* inadequate funding, excessive bureaucratic procedures, and a narrow definition of staff roles were considered to be the most serious constraints to improving the provision. At B, however, the high turnover of a large number of residents appeared to be restricting flexibility and generating the need for a rather regimental and controlling environment.

In *hostels C and D* staff and managers expressed very clear desires to effect improvements. In *hostel D* very few constraints were discussed and this seemed to be in keeping with D's overall optimistic philosophy. At *hostel C,* meanwhile, staff reported that they were overworked and hampered by managerial problems, as well as by wider structural factors (for example, the effects of community care and city-wide changes in hostel provision).

Again, the constraints to improvements identified within the study more commonly related to the particular hostel concerned than to the respondent group. In spite of this, there were some differences between the issues highlighted by residents and by staff. Thus, in the main, residents referred to inadequate funding and insufficient staffing, whereas hostel workers more commonly emphasised restricted staff roles, problems with management, inadequate back-up support from other professionals, and the need for more staff training.

The constraints identified appeared likely to inhibit many, but not necessarily all, potential improvements. Thus, it seemed that it would be difficult to improve services without a secure injection of resources that would allow for greater staffing levels, additional training, improved buildings and facilities, and more appropriate move-on accommodation city-wide. Some improvements could, nevertheless, be effected, in whole or in part, with minimal or even no financial input. These mainly related to the running and to the management of the accommodation and included:

* better communication within and without the organisation
* more and better inter-agency work
* greater opportunities for resident choice
* a refining of hostel aims, objectives, philosophy, and ethos
* changes to the general atmosphere of the hostel
* modifications to staff roles
* more management support of staff
* more flexible policies and procedures
* less paper work and bureaucratic procedures
* more face-to-face work with the residents
* improvements in some manager/ worker relations

Summary

The general consensus was that hostels were a very valuable resource. The provision of help and support, safety and security, reliability, and assistance with move-on were most frequently highlighted as fundamental to their overall worth. Without hostel accommodation, it was commonly agreed that the result could only be negative: more sleeping on the streets, more tenancy breakdowns, more crime, more people self-harming or

harming others, more people in bed and breakfast accommodation, and more domestic violence.

Consistent with previous research (NACRO, 1982; Garside *et al.*, 1990), standards, location, design, and local facilities were all identified as important hostel characteristics. More uniquely, this study also indicated that provision for day-to-day support, hostel relationships, issues relating to length of stay, the hostel environment and atmosphere, and stigma were also important. Indeed, the outcomes and the more experiential and conceptual aspects of hostel living were clearly considered to be as significant as the inputs, processes, and outputs, and the more material and quantifiable features. Furthermore, it seemed that these various spheres could not, and indeed should not, be separated.

No particular aspect of provision was highlighted as either unequivocally good or unequivocally bad. Assessment rather reflected the hostel concerned, but also the interests of the individual doing the assessing. This made the evaluation of provision complex and frequently contradictory. The use of quality indicators in assessing hostels thus seemed possible, but not likely to be simple or straightforward.

Given that planned or recent improvements were mentioned at all four hostels, it seemed that the need to adapt provision in order to effect beneficial changes was an issue which the case study organisations were willing to address. In spite of this, many further ways of improving supported hostel accommodation were suggested. In the main, these related to the need for more practical help, improvements to the management and to the general running of the accommodation, improvements to the building and to the facilities, more funding, and better inter-agency work. Although aspects of these were easier to improve than others, it was clear that all features of hostel provision should be considered (from the management style and structure to the building, location, design, and internal facilities). *Likewise,*

much would also be learnt by consulting residents themselves on these matters (see also Garside *et al.*, 1990).

The main constraints to improvements were funding and resource related. Staffing was also highlighted, but this was essentially in terms of insufficient, rather than poor quality, staffing (that is, again resource related). Indeed, poor quality management was more of a constraint than poor quality staffing. The poor quality of the building, inadequate space, the temporariness of the accommodation, and some of the personal characteristics and motivations of the residents themselves were also considered limiting. Some structural factors, largely beyond the direct control of the hostel, were likewise identified. These included the lack of move-on accommodation city-wide and the effects of inadequate back-up support from other professionals. The constraints identified would inhibit many, but not necessarily all, potential improvements.

Opinions about the positive and negative features of supported hostel accommodation, the potential improvements, and the constraints to those improvements frequently related to the hostel concerned. Such organisational consensus suggested that there was some scope for assessing provision and measuring performance at the hostel level. Differences of opinion between the respondent groups indicated that good evaluation should, however, include the perspectives of a diverse range of people (residents, ex-residents, workers, managers, involved others etc.). Differences of opinion between individuals within the respondent groups, meanwhile, indicated that total agreement would often never be possible.

In spite of such diversity, there were, nevertheless, many common themes and beliefs across all the hostels and all respondent groups (particularly in respect of the value of supported hostel accommodation and its important characteristics). This suggested that it should be possible to identify some common criteria and indicators of performance for

assessing supported hostel accommodation. In theory these should help to explain why, across a broad range of issues considered during this study, *hostel D* was consistently evaluated positively, *hostels A and B* in mixed ways, and *hostel C* notably more negatively. One important task of the conclusion is now to reflect upon this.

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The final task of this thesis is to elicit some of the implications of the fieldwork for future policy, practice, and theory. To this end, part 1 of chapter 12 highlights some conclusions and recommendations arising from the main and sub-research questions. Part 2 then discusses whether the focus on the more conceptual and experiential aspects of hostel living has helped to produce a more sociologically and theoretically informed, policy relevant analysis of supported hostel accommodation for homeless people. The chapter ends with six concluding statements.

Part 1: Conclusions and recommendations arising from the research questions

In order to address the central aims and interests of the thesis, two main research questions and five sub-research questions were devised. These were:

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(I) To what extent was supported hostel accommodation meeting the needs of the homeless people living in them?

(II) How might supported hostel accommodation be improved in order that it might better meet those needs?

SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(i) What kind of supported hostel provision was being offered to homeless people?

(ii) Were there any particular personal characteristics associated with people who preferred, or needed, supported hostel accommodation?

(iii) What (if any) characteristics or features tended to make supported hostel accommodation more positive or negative?

(iv) Of what relevance were the more conceptual and day-to-day experiential aspects of hostel living?

(v) How might supported hostel accommodation be improved?

Conclusions and recommendations arising from these research questions are now considered below.

An overview of provision

Although the four case study hostels differed from each other in numerous ways, each hostel was considered to be a necessary and very valuable resource. Moreover, the variety of provision available was clearly making a positive contribution to widening the available pool of accommodation types and living arrangements and to meeting the varied needs and desires of homeless people. In spite of this, all four hostels were experiencing problems coping with the increasingly intense support requirements of very many residents.

Because the case studies were catering for very different resident groups, it was difficult to compare the relative success of each in meeting residents' needs. In spite of this, *hostel D* was consistently evaluated the most positively and *hostel C* the most negatively. *Hostels A and B*, meanwhile, appeared to be meeting the needs of some of their residents far more successfully than the needs of others.

Given that the resources and the financial circumstances of all four hostels were constrained, other reasons seemed to account for these different relative performances. The most probable explanation emerging from the thesis related to the attention which each organisation afforded to those aspects of provision which could be improved without great financial input. As discussed in chapter 11, these largely related to the running

and to the management of the accommodation and included:

* better communication within and without the organisation
* more and better inter-agency work
* greater opportunities for resident choice
* a refining of hostel aims, objectives, philosophy, and ethos
* changes to the general atmosphere of the hostel
* modifications to staff roles
* more management support of staff
* more flexible policies and procedures
* less paper work and bureaucratic procedures
* more face-to-face work with the residents
* improvements in some manager/ worker relations

In *hostel A* efforts had made to meet the needs of, and to run the accommodation in accordance with, the desires and life-styles of its older residents. Likewise, attempts were being made to respond to the increasing frailty of some of the older men. The needs and aspirations of the younger users were, however, largely marginalised or ignored.

In *hostel B* only those requiring minimal support were well catered for. The aim of B was only to meet housing needs, as defined by the homelessness legislation, and residents were consequently left largely to their own devices. In spite of this clearly defined remit, hostel B was, however, increasingly accommodating residents with high support needs. When this occurred, the hostel did not have the staffing or the resources to offer sufficient or appropriate assistance. This then caused stress for, and conflict between, the staff, who adopted inconsistent and random work practices and attitudes towards the residents because they did not have any relevant guidelines.

In *hostel C* a combination of the inability to respond to a changing resident population, confused management practices, poor relationships within the organisation and between the hostel and external bodies, unclear aims and objectives, and inconsistent policies and practices seemed to account for a poor performance on numerous accounts.

Hostel D, meanwhile, had invested much time and energy in developing and improving the running and the management of the accommodation; emphasised the value of good communication within and without the organisation; had recently made efforts to increase its inter-agency work; recognised the need for consistent, but flexible organisational aims, objectives, and policies; and stressed the importance of hostel environment and atmosphere.

In light of the above, it was concluded that three crucial processes underpinned an organisation's success in meeting the needs of its residents. These were good communication practices, an ability to reflect diversity, and a willingness to respond to change.

Residents' characteristics

Although the four case studies were accommodating a diverse range of homeless people with a disparate range of needs, provision seemed not to be catering for those in, or for those seeking, permanent paid employment. For many of the residents, illness, old age, and childcare commitments were obstacles to engaging in paid work. For others, high housing costs and the rate at which Housing Benefit was withdrawn as earnings increased were additional work disincentives (see also Wilcox, 1993).

The hostel rents tended to be high because the charges comprised two elements. These were basic rent and additional service charges. All of the rent and some of the service charges

were eligible for Housing Benefit payments, but residents in work lost these along a sliding scale (or 'taper') as their income rose. The sharpness of this taper meant that those accommodated in the hostels were often caught in the unemployment trap. This was because Housing Benefit entitlement did not extend much above Income Support levels (Hills, 1991). As a result, the net income in work of many of the residents would have been little more (or, taking into account journey to work costs, even less) than their net income on benefits. This trap seemed to indicate the need for some basic alterations to the benefits system, for example some form of special board and lodging allowance or Housing Benefit for hostel residents, comparable to the old board and lodging system abolished in 1989.

Additionally, the hostel residents appeared to be disadvantaged in terms of securing employment because of the prejudices of employers against job applicants with hostel addresses. In the short-term, one way of alleviating this would have been to use street numbers rather than clearly identifiable hostel names. In the longer-term, a more fundamental attempt to confront entrenched stereotypes about hostel residents was required.

Because many of the hostel residents had had insecure and unsettled housing histories and because an inability to cope underpinned many of their reasons for homelessness, it was probable that many would return to supported hostel accommodation, if they were rehoused. Moreover, because many of the residents appeared likely to find it difficult, or impossible, to settle in one place or to acquire new skills or to form new sustainable relationships, returning to the hostel should not, necessarily, be seen as a 'failure' of move-on. Rather, for many of the residents interviewed, the overwhelming emphasis on providing independent dwellings was probably misplaced (see also Dant and Deacon; 1989; Walker *et al.*, 1993).

For most of the residents, the lack of suitable alternative

housing or the need for support had necessitated a move into a supported hostel; others had more proactively chosen it. Some individuals were, meanwhile, prevented from leaving supported accommodation simply because there was no appropriate move-on accommodation for them. Others, conversely, wished to stay, but were not able to do so as the rules of the hostel they were living did not permit long-term housing to be offered.

The above suggested that there was scope for the improved targeting of provision, particularly in relation to length of stay. Some supported hostel accommodation should, in other words, be designed for, and targeted at, those who actively desired or needed long-stay or even permanent accommodation. Other supported hostel provision should, meanwhile, be provided to cater for those individuals whose homelessness and need for support was, or ought to be, a brief episode in their lives (see also Vincent *et al.*, 1994). There was, furthermore, a need for a greater range of supported accommodation forms to meet the high demand for diverse kinds of on-going support after move-on. For those simply awaiting new tenancies, more information about likely future housing circumstances was also required.

Regarding the grouping of hostel residents, it seemed that mixing and separating individuals with different needs and characteristics required careful consideration by each individual hostel. Moreover, the decision reached ought then to be left open to on-going revision and review. A mixture of both specialist and non-specialist provision, allowing for resident choice where possible, appeared to be the most promising suggestion. Because generic provision was more likely to reduce labelling and stigma, there were definite advantages to be gained from moving away from specialist services wherever possible.

Hostel characteristics

Residents, workers, and other professionals maintained that

existing funding mechanisms were limiting the potential of hostel provision in meeting the needs of homeless people. There was little evidence of residents being provided with more assistance than they required, but insufficient support services were often reported. More funding, more secure funding mechanisms, and reforms to eliminate the inconsistencies caused by a lack of demarcation and co-ordination between systems all, therefore, seemed necessary (see also Clapham *et al.*, 1994). In practice, however, the availability of resources was constrained. It was not, in any case, possible to assess the extent to which greater financial input was required, without first considering how effectively and efficiently existing resources were being used. Moreover, there were many potential ways of improving supported hostel accommodation which did not require great financial input.

Hostel standards could be improved in numerous ways. Some of these (for example, greater cleanliness, repainting, or obtaining newer furniture) were easier and cheaper to improve than other more structural features (such as changing the hostel location). Both were important, but the former often made more useful starting points for effecting beneficial change.

In the present climate of community care, rehousing and move-on were pertinent issues for all four hostels. There was a clear need to provide residents with sufficient and appropriate assistance and training for move-on, but also a need to recognise that, for a minority of residents, move-on would either not be possible or not be desired. It was also important to acknowledge that hostels could not deal with rehousing in isolation. This was because of the broader problem of insufficient suitable move-on accommodation city-wide (particularly the lack of move-on accommodation offering diverse kinds of support).

In terms of staffing and management, the study hypothesised that it was important to have a racially mixed staff and management team, if non-white residents were to be accommodated. Following the discussion in chapter 8, changes which seemed

likely to make provision more accessible to individuals from minority ethnic groups included:

1. Improving the image of hostel accommodation and raising awareness about the high standards which do exist in some provision.
2. Employing more workers who speak relevant languages or who are, themselves, non-white.
3. Improving equal opportunities, both in terms of access and in terms of services (for example, avoiding an over-reliance on family and relatives to interpret).
4. Increasing awareness of, and sensitivity to, issues relating to confidentiality.
5. Being aware of, and sensitive to, the problems of locating hostels together in ghettos or in red light districts or in the heart of black or Asian communities.

These suggestions do not consider whether hostels are good or bad forms of accommodation (and, therefore, whether their use should be promoted, or not, amongst minority ethnic groups). They do, however, indicate that hostels are a resource to which there should be equal access regardless of ethnic origin.

A need for more staffing, more staff training, and increased worker involvement in hostel management were identified by the fieldwork. Consistent with previous research (Berthoud and Casey, 1988; Evans, 1991; Bines *et al.*, 1993), the potential for separating housing management and support services seemed limited. Whilst the high incidence of manager/ worker conflict warranted some attention, hierarchies emerged as a common and practical style of hostel management. Likewise, the identification of a key person in charge (who made unpleasant decisions and doubled as a scapegoat) appeared to be a welcomed and functional managerial arrangement.

If hostels were to meet the diverse and changing needs of their residents, it seemed that policies and procedures should be drawn up through consultation with a range of involved parties in each particular organisation and the decisions reached then

subjected to constant revision and review. The operation of policies and procedures sometimes required consistency and sometimes flexibility, but never inconsistency. In this regard, flexibility implied careful forethought, good intentions, and an element of rationality. Inconsistency, meanwhile, denoted a lack of forethought, randomness, and a potential for biased motivations.

Clarity also appeared to be a crucial factor in helping to ensure the smooth running of the accommodation and the happiness of the residents. Accordingly, careful explanation and communication of the reasons for policies and procedures should be given wherever possible. Any conditions of occupancy should be written down, explained, and accepted by prospective residents prior to their moving in. Likewise, house regulations should be regularly revised as part of a continuous monitoring programme involving both hostel staff and users. A copy of a signed acceptance of the rules should be given to each resident to keep, along with a complaints/ grievance procedure and a policy for dealing with harassment (NACRO, 1982; NFHA and MIND, 1989; Evans, 1991).

Clear aims and objectives, particularly regarding support and assistance with move-on, seemed likely to ensure that provision would be targeted at those most in need of the services on offer (see also McIvor and Taylor, 1995). To this end, aims and objectives should be specific to the organisation concerned, but should also relate to, and interconnect with, the aims and objectives of other related services operating in the area. Differences of opinion regarding the most appropriate aims and objectives for any given scheme would inevitably persist, but open and co-operative debate between the various involved parties appeared likely to reduce dissent and benefit any decisions made.

In Hostelville, the effective planning, monitoring, and evaluation of provision appeared not to be occurring. As a result, it was not possible to ascertain how widespread a problem

voids were, nor to what extent there was any overprovision or unnecessary duplication of services, nor whether there was an under-representation of people from minority ethnic groups using the city's hostels. Better planning, monitoring, and evaluation could have helped to locate and prevent gaps or over-supply of provision in the area. This would then have helped to maximise the use of scarce resources.

In spite of the above, a need to question the usefulness, or otherwise, of some monitoring practices was also identified. This was because the value of monitoring statistics seemed contingent upon a range of factors. These related to whether the data was reliable; whether the organisation had the time and resources to carry out the monitoring effectively; whether the monitoring was relevant; whether the findings would be used constructively, or even at all; whether the statistics could be related to statistics collected by other provision in the locality; and whether the monitoring was an unnecessary invasion of privacy (particularly the monitoring of sensitive subjects, such as sexual orientation).

The above issues should be considered and periodically re-considered by organisations prior to any actual data collection. Likewise, such issues have implications for the Housing Corporations' current plans to implement a competitive framework for allocating SNMA (The Housing Corporation, 1994b). The methods of evaluating and comparing the performance of special needs providers and projects adopted by the Corporation should, in other words, be sensitive to the uses, but also to the limitations, of various monitoring processes and performance indicators.

Improved inter-agency communication and service co-ordination within the hostel sector of Hostelville both seemed necessary (see also Drake *et al.*, 1981; Garside *et al.*, 1990; Spaull and Rowe, 1992; and Watson and Cooper, 1992). Moreover, the alleged 'dumping' and 'neglect' of residents by other professionals were

particularly contentious issues which required urgent attention. Better inter-agency relations could help to rationalise services, improve the use of resources, and contribute to more powerful campaigning. Service co-ordination could, nevertheless, be difficult, costly, and time consuming, given personal antagonisms and historical rivalries between different agencies. Likewise, more co-ordination might mean more bureaucracy and a reduction in the independence of smaller organisations (Johnson 1981; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

Outcomes and the more conceptual and experiential aspects of hostel provision

Relationships were reported to be one of the most important aspects of hostel living. Improved relations between residents and between workers and residents appeared unlikely, but improved relations between workers and managers seemed both possible and desirable. To this end, greater inter-personal contact, better communication channels, and more staff involvement in decision-making processes were required. In order to minimise inconsistency in work practices and in order to prevent the possibility of paternalism, careful attention to the relationships between volunteers and residents was also considered important. In respect of this, it was concluded that the role of volunteers should be well-defined and their tasks limited to a level appropriate to their skills and to the training and supervision available (see also Garside *et al.*, 1990).

Whilst increased contact with family and friends outside of the hostel was likely to have negative, as well as positive, consequences for some residents, there were clear advantages to be gained from making the hostel environment more conducive to receiving visitors. Indeed, improved relations with other professionals, family, friends, and the local community appeared able to counter some of the negative effects of

institutionalisation and isolation. Likewise, improved inter-agency relations and communications would mean that assistance from other sources would more likely be exploited to its full potential.

Philosophies and ethos were found to be varied and complex, but also important, aspects of the four case studies. Organisations should, consequently, afford careful consideration to issues such as organisational and individual motivations, staff attitudes, working practices, and the hostel atmosphere. In order to preserve consistency and clarity as far as possible, these should be cultivated to reflect the aims and objectives of the organisation concerned.

Stigma was believed to be a very difficult, although not impossible, issue to challenge. Increased general awareness about hostels and greater publicity about the reasons why people became homeless were ways of attempting to confront negative, outdated stereotypical images of hostel accommodation, hostel residents, and homeless people. Simultaneously, more immediate changes to stigmatising attitudes could be effected by avoiding the word 'hostel' or by treating residents as individuals, rather than as all the same.

The hostels appeared to have the capacity both to promote and to reduce self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Moving into a supported hostel would not necessarily decrease independence and moving-on would not necessarily increase it. The outcome rather depended on the particular circumstances of any individual resident at any given time, as well as upon the organisation concerned. Hostels, it seemed, should strive to increase self-sufficiency, but success in achieving this should be assessed and reassessed at the level of the individual concerned. Furthermore, any discussion of independence should recognise that ultimately all humans are essentially interdependent (Zaretsky, 1982).

Although feelings and emotions (for example, whether the residents were happy or felt at home) related mainly to very personal and individual factors, the hostel environment was capable of effecting some influence. If hostels desired to enhance the general well-being of their residents, they should consider carefully, and strive to achieve, the kinds of conditions and circumstances which would most likely improve the emotional experiences of their users. Better communication of feelings, experiences, and emotions seemed crucial to this process.

An important distinction between resident participation in the running of the hostel and resident choice over day-to-day aspects of their lives was also identified. Improvements to provision were more likely to result from promoting the latter than the former. Moreover, given that an extensive range of factors seemed likely to impinge upon the residents' ability to control, participate, and choose, needs-led, rather than user-led, services appeared to be the more practical and potentially more useful way of working.

In some respects the promotion of needs-led service delivery seemed to challenge various received wisdoms inherent in much contemporary community care debate about the supremacy of user-led services. The suggestion emerging from the research was, however, not that users' views should be dismissed, or that there should be a return to some form of unaccountable, professionally defined, needs-led service delivery. The point was rather that the views of users and professionals were both essential features of good provision. Accordingly, the call was for a better needs-led approach which would take more account of users' views than had previously been the case.

Consistent with SHiL (1995), it was concluded that providers of services should consult with the users of those services in order to ensure that needs are being met. To this end, the idea of a 'ladder' of participation, as proposed by Arnstein (1971)

and since advocated by others (for example, Wilcox, 1994) was considered useful. This ladder would have rungs which ranged from information and consultation to acting together and supporting independent community interests. Higher rungs would not necessarily be 'better' than lower rungs, because different rungs would be appropriate for different situations and interests. Effective participation would, however, be most likely to occur when the different interests involved in a project or programme were satisfied with the level at which they were involved (Wilcox, 1994).

Improvements

Suggested ways of improving supported hostel accommodation included both small modifications and much larger changes. Some of these appeared relatively easy to effect and others more difficult. Some improvements could be achieved in practice with individual residents; some required intervention at a broader hostel level; and others needed a community, or even a national, response. Increased financial input was often, but not always, required. Good communication practices, both within and without the hostel, and an ability to reflect diversity and to respond to change, nevertheless, seemed crucial.

There were no unambiguous right or wrong, good or bad features of supported hostel accommodation. Evaluation, opinions about improvements, and beliefs about constraints to those improvements rather varied over time, according to the particular hostel concerned, but also according to the individual doing the assessing. Such a finding did not negate the use of performance indicators, but did highlight the contestability of using predefined criteria as absolute measures of success. Likewise, it seemed to validate the need for a pluralistic approach to evaluation (as advocated, for example, by Smith and Cantley, 1985; and Bull, 1993).

In order to attain the most comprehensive assessment of supported hostel accommodation, provision should, consequently, be evaluated from the perspectives of various interest groups and individuals. These include residents, workers, managers, committee members, ex-residents, volunteers, and others associated with each particular organisation. Given the rapidly changing nature of the hostel sector and the homelessness population, it also seemed that evaluation should be an on-going process, rather than an isolated or occasional event.

Furthermore, the evaluation of hostel provision should consider the more experiential and conceptual aspects of hostel living, as well as the more material and quantifiable features. Likewise, it should include the outcomes, as well as the inputs, processes, and outputs (Klein and Carter, 1988). Indeed, frequently these could not be separated. Whilst evaluating outcomes (such as the effects of stigma, independence, user control, choice, and participation or the success of support services in meeting the diverse and changing nature of residents' needs) would inevitably prove more difficult than counting empty bedspaces or the number of residents rehoused, it need not be impossible.

The aim would not be to aspire to some form of concretely defined, externally imposed, objective criteria or performance indicators, but rather to judge performance on the basis of on-going review and discussion between the diverse involved parties. This would not mean abandoning local or even national guidelines, but would involve incorporating localised forms of discretion and analysis which would take account of the particular circumstances and context of any given organisation (for example, the 'degree of difficulty' involved in its task (Centre for Housing Research, 1989; Kemp, 1995)).

Part 2: Theory and sociology reconsidered

One of the main objectives of the research was to produce a more sociologically and theoretically informed, policy relevant analysis of supported hostel accommodation for homeless people. To this end, chapter 4 hypothesised that eight basic propositions, based on aspects of post-modernism, post-structuralism, structuration, and critical theory, would be enlightening. Chapter 3, meanwhile, suggested that the more sociologically grounded literature relating to community care and total institutions could also be instructive. To what extent this proved to be the case is now considered below.

Reconsidering theory

1. 'Structuration' is a useful analytical tool for overcoming simplistic notions of structure versus agency. Consistent with the concept of 'structuration' (Giddens, 1979; 1984), the residents of supported hostel accommodation interviewed for this thesis could not be defined as either deserving or undeserving, entirely responsible for their problems or victims of circumstances beyond their control. Likewise, their homelessness could not be reduced either to a welfare or to a housing problem, caused either by structural or by individual factors alone. The residents were, in other words, thinking, feeling, social agents, but were also socially constituted and, therefore, constrained in many ways. That is, they had options and choices, but these were often restricted.

Many of the hostel residents had problems in addition to homelessness and limited informal sources of support to assist them with their needs. As suggested in chapter 4, it was, therefore, unacceptable, and indeed impractical, to leave them entirely to their own devices when their housing and support networks failed. In spite of this, the hostel residents often recognised that they had rights and responsibilities and

frequently voiced their opinions and preferences. Likewise, they often wished to be involved in making choices, defining their needs, and shaping the provision available to them.

Most of the residents interviewed desired, and seemed able, to live in more independent forms of accommodation. For those individuals who either chose, or were obliged, to live in supported hostel accommodation, there was a myriad of other choices and responsibilities open to them. It was, therefore, concluded that if institutionalisation was to be avoided, efforts should be made to expand residents' choices and to extend their responsibilities wherever possible. Simultaneously, however, the more structural limitations and constraints facing those individuals would need to be recognised.

2. Universal truths do not exist. The hostel residents interviewed occupied a range of different and shifting positions in relation to a wide variety of power structures (such as gender, race, age, health, and the employment and the housing market). There was, in other words, no single oppressive force impinging upon their lives (Foucault, 1979; Giddens, 1979, 1984; Weedon, 1987). Likewise, there was no single agreed cause of, and consequently no single agreed solution to, any universally accepted definition of their homelessness. Total consensus over right or wrong, good or bad aspects of hostel provision was consequently unlikely. There were rather only a variety of changing responses to meet a variety of changing situations.

3. The differences between individuals are multiple. Consistent with the post-modernist and post-structuralist focus on diversity, subjectivity, and relativity, the personal characteristics and the housing circumstances of the hostel residents varied enormously. For some residents, hostel living was a temporary phenomenon; for others, a more permanent situation. Some desired it or considered it beneficial; others were desperate to leave. Opinions and beliefs depended not only on the characteristics and circumstances of any particular

individual at any given time, but also on the hostel concerned. The resultant heterogeneity indicated that to focus only on the opinions or experiences of particular individuals, or only on the perspectives and interests of one particular respondent group, would produce a partial and incomplete assessment of the overall picture.

4. Shared experiences and beliefs are, nevertheless, common. More resonant of Habermas (1970; 1991), evidence of some agreement or 'consensus' between individuals of particular respondent groups, and more commonly between all respondents of particular hostels, was apparent (and explored in relation to various issues in the empirical chapters). Moreover, there were some similarities between, and some common concerns for, all respondents from all four case studies.

The existence of some mutual concerns and beliefs suggested that some agreement about appropriate performance indicators and measures of hostel success would be possible. Indeed, because there was frequently more agreement within a given hostel than according to the respondent group, or between all individuals, it seemed that many decisions about provision would most beneficially and appropriately be made at the hostel level. Accordingly, it was necessary to reconsider the issues of difference, individuality, subjectivity, and personal experiences, but without losing sight of shared experiences. Likewise, it was often appropriate to build alliances and to function co-operatively, rather than simply to work from personal needs and experiences (Ramazanoglu, 1989; Hewitt, 1992).

5. The role of language and meaning in understanding issues is fundamental, but not paramount. For some, the hostel was a home; for others, it was not. For some, hostel living meant independence and happiness; for others, dependence and stigma. Consistent with the post-modernist and post-structuralist focus on language and meaning, the complex and diverse interpretations of issues (such as home and homeless, dependence and

independence, happiness, stigma, support, and needs) suggested that a more comprehensive and rigorous theoretical understanding of the meaning of homelessness and the needs of homeless people was an important prerequisite to improving provision. Likewise, the need for a flexible and relative approach to definitions was confirmed.

In spite of such diversity, some shared understanding of issues and concepts was apparent. For example, there was an implicit acceptance among numerous individuals that a hostel was not a '*proper home*' and that hostel residents would be stigmatised and dependent until they were rehoused into tenancies with less support. Such agreement suggested that concepts could not be totally deconstructed. The process of breaking down meanings could usefully enhance understanding, but to focus only on language and the relativity of interpretation was ultimately misconceived and impractical.

6. Change is possible and inevitable. According to this proposition, lives may be structured by public factors, but they are not predetermined by them and change is, therefore, possible. Consistent with this belief, the personal circumstances of many of the hostel residents were likely to change and they would move from supported hostel accommodation. Others could, meanwhile, learn new skills and extend their options in other ways. Definitions and interpretations of individuals' circumstances and experiences would likewise vary over time and place.

Hostels similarly had the capacity to change and to adapt. Provision did not, in other words, have to be oppressive, inflexible, and bureaucratic (Segal, 1987). Because some issues were more susceptible to alteration than others, it was, however, frequently necessary to begin by effecting limited small scale changes (Foucault, 1979). These might include allowing residents to sit and watch television with others late at night or to choose when to get up. Simultaneously, however, wider structural goals (such as challenging stigma or changing funding mechanisms)

could, and should, also be pursued.

7. Issues and circumstances need to be located within their broader social, historical, and cultural context, if they are to be understood. Personal circumstances and the meanings attributed to them varied between individuals and groups of individuals. This was because the hostels and their residents were located in particular social, historical, and cultural contexts. The meaning of issues and circumstances (such as homelessness and hostel living), and appropriate responses to them, could thus only be specific and temporary and would inevitably remain open to challenge and to change. If the most appropriate response to any given set of circumstances was to be formulated, the most comprehensive picture of all the relevant factors would have to be compiled. In order to achieve this, context was clearly fundamental.

8. Communication and consultation are crucial aspects of good service delivery. The diversity and changeability of personal characteristics, personal circumstances, individual opinions, beliefs, and interpretations meant that issues and experiences could not be predefined by one individual for another. Unsurprisingly, therefore, respondents frequently disagreed; misinterpreted each others' wants, desires, and needs; or felt that they had no idea of others' feelings or thoughts. Others, meanwhile, found it difficult to voice even their own opinions and interests (particularly those respondents who had very limited options or limited knowledge of those options). If issues could be better understood by all the relevant parties, residents' choices expanded, and efforts made to reach a more consensual position on various matters, it seemed that improvements to provision would be likely to result. In order to achieve this, more informed debate and open communication, both within and without organisations, was definitely necessary.

The community care debate

As discussed in chapter 3, contemporary debates about community care have emphasised a range of principles which have largely been absent from theory, policy, and practice relating to homelessness. These include the importance of providing rights, choices, control, power, independence, and participation, and of confronting stigma. In an age of 'customer care', there is no reason why residents of supported hostels should have fewer rights than those who use other welfare services. The desires and aspirations of homeless people should, consequently, inform the policies of agencies seeking to address their needs (see also SHiL, 1995). Likewise, provision should aim to achieve the five goals identified by O'Brien and Lyle (1987) for a normalisation-based housing service. As discussed in chapter 3, these are:

* *community presence* (that is, not developing accommodation near 'devalued places' and avoiding developing 'clusters' of services)

* *community participation* (accommodation should be within easy reach of shops, leisure facilities, places of entertainment, and places of worship etc. Notice boards and signs, or institutional features (such as identical curtains at all the windows) should be avoided because they advertise a house as being part of a 'service' and, hence, mean that the people who live in it will be seen as 'different')

* *promoting choice and protecting rights* (particularly the right to be treated with dignity and respect)

* *improving competencies and acquiring skills*

* *enhancing status and self-respect* (including being aware of the fact that an individual's sense of self-esteem is likely to be culturally determined)

The total institution debate

Individuals were experiencing and responding to the hostel environments non-uniformly, but certain organisational variables were clearly having negative effects on the residents. These

included limited and poor quality contact between the organisation and the external environment (that is, a high degree of organisational institutionalisation); lack of user choice; an imbalance of power and control in the staff/ resident relationship; and the stigma attached to hostel living. Other organisational variables (for example, the emphasis on feeling 'at home') were, conversely, having more positive outcomes. This was consistent with the total institution debate (as also discussed in chapter 3).

The conclusion drawn from the above was that there was a role for supported hostels in complementing the deinstitutionalisation philosophy, but, in order to capitalise upon this, there was a need to establish what the positive features of any organisation were, for whom, and in what context. To this end, it was necessary to recognise that hostels were operating as systems, but also as parts of systems. Many aspects of provision could, in other words, be consciously shaped and directed from within each organisation, but provision was also effected by a range of factors which were less amenable to direct control because they occurred externally. These included changes in the nature of the homelessness population and local and national alterations in policy and practice.

Summary

In the light of the previous two sections, six concluding statements can now be made:

1. A stay in supported hostel accommodation is appropriate for some, but not all, homeless people. Provision should, therefore, be targeted so that the services on offer meet the needs of the residents accommodated. Likewise, the services on offer need to respond and to adapt to meet the changing needs of the individuals accommodated.

2. It is possible to effect significant improvements to existing supported hostel accommodation. Although previous research has highlighted many possible ways of achieving this, these have tended to focus on the more material and tangible features (very often on the inputs, processes, and outputs, rather than on the outcomes). Important improvements can, however, also be made by addressing the more experiential and conceptual aspects of provision (such as power, control, choice, participation, stigma, independence, and the diverse and changing nature of many residents' needs).

3. By widening debate, increasing understanding, and broadening societal attitudes, a more sociologically and theoretically informed approach to supported hostel accommodation for homeless people can make an important contribution to improving existing policies and provision.

4. If the future capital and revenue arrangements for special needs housing are to take into account success in meeting priority need (The Housing Corporation, 1994b), any measures of performance employed should relate to the characteristics of the hostel concerned (particularly its objectives), reflect the interests and perspectives of a diverse range of involved individuals, and, simultaneously, remain open to constant negotiation and change. Assessment should incorporate the more conceptual and experiential, as well as the more material and tangible, aspects of provision. Likewise, it should include the outcomes, as well as the inputs, processes, and outputs.

5. Supported hostels should remain as one of a wide range of accommodation forms. Moreover, in view of the diversity of needs for which it is expected to cater, the category of 'supported hostel for homeless people'

should, itself, continue to comprise a diverse mixture of flexible forms.

6. Supported hostels can be an appropriate form of housing in their own right. They are not always a second-best alternative to other more individualised living arrangements. Accordingly, they should not simply be used as an easy stop-gap for an inadequate housing market. Indeed, their value in the present housing climate, as revealed by this thesis, would suggest that it would be wholly inappropriate to residualise them in terms of quality or of standards or of their worth more generally.

APPENDIX A: Hostel characteristics used in the selection stages of the fieldwork

Characteristic	Abbreviation
1. *The main providing agency**	
local authority	LA
voluntary sector	VOL
religious or charitable organisation	R/C
mixed	MIXED
2. *Marital/ family status of residents*	
single	SINGLE
family	FAMILY
mixed single and family	MIXED
3. *Gender of residents*	
men only	M
women only	F
mixed gender	MIXED
4. *Age group of residents*	
16-25 years	16-25
over 17 years	>17YRS
over 18 years	>18YRS
over 21 years	>21YRS
over 30 years	>30YRS
any age	ANY
5. *Any particular group/s catered for*	
none	NONE
any particular ethnic group	EG
women escaping domestic violence	DV
people leaving care	LC
offenders or people at-risk of offending	ExO
people with alcohol, or mental health problems, or learning disabilities	A/MH/LD
any	ANY
6. *Hostel size***	
10 or less bedspaces/ units	SMALL
11-30 bedspaces/ units	MEDIUM
over 30 bedspaces/ units	LARGE
various (spread over different locations)	VARIOUS
7. *Length of residence****	
less than a year	<1YR
1-3 years	1-3YRS
over 3 years	3+YRS
unspecified	UNSPECIF
unrecorded	UNKNOWN
8. *Sleeping arrangements*	
single sleeping spaces	SINGLE
mixed (shared and single) sleeping	MIXED
dormitory-type (including cubicles)	DORM
unspecified	UNSPECIF
9. *Amount of support provided*	
24 hours	24HRS
office hours only	OH
office hours with out-of-hours call	OWC
office hours with limited on-call	OLC
no resident staff	NRS
unknown	UNKNOWN

APPENDIX A CONTINUED

* In so far as was possible, the most dominant provider organisation was recorded for the data base.

** These sizes were selected simply to illustrate the range of sizes of accommodation available in the case study area. Whilst, for present purposes, they can be equated loosely with 'small', 'medium', and 'large' respectively, this is not meant in any definitive or absolute sense.

*** These time periods were selected simply to illustrate the differing lengths of residence available in hostels in the case study area. Length of stay was, however, difficult to establish for three main reasons. Firstly, many hostels did not record this information. Secondly, hostels measured the length of residence in very different ways (some guessed; some calculated an average without differentiating between mode, median, or mean; and others used maximum or minimum as indicators). Thirdly, some hostels operated policy flexibly[1] and some inconsistently. Because of this, residents often stayed beyond the specified time period.

[1] See glossary.

APPENDIX B: The postal survey form

NAME OF HOSTEL:	TEL.:
ADDRESS:	
	MALE[ ]/FEMALE[ ]/MIXED[ ]

TARGET GROUPS/ CATERING FOR	WILL NOT ACCEPT
AGE TOTAL SPACES	OTHER CONDITIONS
Min: Max: Ave: Singles: Doubles: Shared/Dorm: Total:	
REFERRAL PROCEDURE	VACANCIES LENGTH OF STAY
	Frequency: Waiting list: Arrangements: Min: Max: Ave:
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	DISABLED FACILITIES
RESIDENT PARTICIPATION	HIV POLICIES
ROOMS (Cost per week)	GENERAL FACILITIES
	Baths: Showers: Toilets: Laundry: TV: Other: Furnishing:
FOOD	COOKING FACILITIES

APPENDIX B CONTINUED

RESIDENT ACCESS (curfews/ key arrangements etc.)	
VISITORS (any restrictions)	
RULES AND REGULATIONS (brief outline only)	
MANAGEMENT STYLE (e.g. co-operative or hierarchical)	
FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF RESIDENTS: % OF RESIDENTS ON:	
1) Housing Benefit 2) I.S./Other State Benefits	3) In Work 4) Other
SPOKEN LANGUAGES, OTHER THAN ENGLISH	
SUPPORT AND ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS)	
ARRANGEMENTS FOR ACCESS TO FURTHER/ MOVE-ON ACCOMMODATION	
PROVIDER: (e.g. local authority or name of voluntary or religious or charitable organisation)	
TRAVEL TO/ FROM HOSTEL VIA TOWN CENTRE	
ANY FURTHER INFORMATION	

PLEASE TICK BOX IF YOU WOULD <u>NOT</u> BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN A FURTHER, MORE DETAILED, STAGE OF THIS STUDY [ ].

APPENDIX C: Example topic guide (used with hostel D residents)

SECTION 1
PRELIMINARIES AND INTRODUCTIONS: CONTEXTUALISING THE RESPONDENT

Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed. I am Joanne Neale, a post-graduate research student from the University of York.

The purpose of this meeting is for me to try to gather some information for my research. This is a study about hostels. D has agreed to participate and so I am interviewing a number of people connected with it (residents, ex-residents, workers, management committee members, volunteers, and other people). This is so that I get a range of views and opinions. My intention today is to ask you some questions about hostels in general and, in particular, about D. This should not take too long.

The interview will be treated in strict confidence, but it would be useful if I could put the tape recorder on as it will take too long to write down everything that you say. The recording will not be heard by anyone other than myself.

To begin, I should just like to ask a few general questions about yourself.

-(record gender and name of respondent - male/ female)

-First, could you tell me for how long you have been living here?

-Did anyone refer, or bring, you here?
Who?
PROMPT: a social worker, someone at the housing office?
Why?

-How did you first come to hear about this place?
When was that?
Why was that?

-How familiar would you say that you are with other hostels around here?
Did you consider moving into, or staying in, any of those?
Elaborate
Why/ why not?

-Have you ever stayed in another hostel (either in Hostelville or somewhere else)?
If so, when?
, where?
, why?

*****

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

-And can I ask how old you are?

-And how would you describe your ethnic origin?

-Are you married or do you have a partner?

-Do you have children/ pregnant (where relevant)?
Elaborate

-Are you employed?
If so, what?

-Are you on benefits?
If so, what?

-Are you claiming Housing Benefit? Is that full Housing Benefit or not?

-How much do you pay to stay here?
-Do you think that that is reasonable or not?

-How would you describe your health?
-Do you have any particular ailments or disabilities which limit your daily activities?
If so, what?
-Did you before you moved into D?

-Do you suffer from nerves, anxiety, or depression at all?
If so, how?/ what?
-Did you suffer from nerves, anxiety, or depression at all before you moved into D?
If so, how?/ what?

*****

-Can I ask how you actually came to be homeless?

(If not already clear, and to ascertain the extent to which this involved choice/ necessity ask:
-So how exactly did you come to move in here?)

-And what sorts of places have you lived in before you came here?

-Have you ever slept rough?
If so, when?
, where?
, how often?

-Have you any idea of how long you will be staying here?
If yes, for how long?

-Where are you likely to move to?
PROMPT:
Place and type of accommodation?

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

-What sort of accommodation would you prefer to live in, if you had the choice?

PROMPT:
Place and type of accommodation?

-Would you need any help or support to help you get by in that accommodation?
If yes, what sort of help or support?

PROMPT:
Housing needs and
Support needs:
health
care (personal care)
budgeting/ welfare rights
social work
befriending?

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

SECTION 2
INFORMATION ABOUT HOSTEL D

-How do you think that most people get to know about the accommodation here?

-Why do you think most people move in here (necessity/ choice)?

-Who would you say this accommodation is supposed to be for?
Are there any particular groups of people?

-Are those the groups of people who actually tend to live here or will the hostel accept other groups of people?
Who? / Under what circumstances?

-Why do you think people might be refused a place here?

-How long would you say that residents tend to stay?

-Could you tell me where residents tend to move on to after they leave?

-Why do you think that most residents tend to leave D?
PROMPT:
New accommodation, asked to leave, unspecified, return to former address?

*****

-How would you describe the standard or quality of accommodation at D?

-What do you think that the hostel is trying to do for the people living here? i.e. what would you say that the aims and objectives of the hostel are?
-Who would you say has set, or is setting, those?
-What part do residents play in setting those aims and objectives?
-Do you think that residents should have more or less of a role in setting the aims and objectives of the hostel?
Why?

-Would you say that the hostel is run with any particular philosophy or principles in mind? By that, I suppose I mean, does it feel as though the people running the place are very
PROMPT:
* Strict?
* Do they just let people get on with things?
* Do they seem religious?
* Are they feminists?
* Do they think that this is a kind of charity?
* Is everyone treated the same: residents, workers, visitors, and everyone - as equal?
* Do the people running the place interfere/ how?
* Do they treat residents like children or adults?
* Are they caring/ supportive?

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

-Who do you think sets the rules and regulations and policies for D?
-Do the residents have any say in deciding the rules and policies etc.?
-Do you think that residents should have more or less say in setting the rules and policies etc.?
Why?

*****

-How much say do residents have about the kind of help they want?
-Do you think that residents should have more or less say about the kind of help that they want?
Why/ why not?

-What sorts of needs would you say that the people living here have?

PROMPT:
Housing needs and
Support needs:
health
care (personal care)
budgeting/ welfare rights
social work
befriending?

-To what extent do you think that the hostel helps people?
How/ how not?
Why/ why not?
(-Do you feel that residents are having their housing needs met by living in hostel D?
How/ how not?
Why/ why not?

-Do you feel that residents are having their support/ care needs met by living in hostel D?
How/ how not?
Why/ why not?)

-How much do you think that residents are helped by the workers?
To what extent are residents helped by the volunteers?
To what extent are residents helped by each other?
To what extent are they helped by family and friends or other professionals from outside the hostel?

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

SECTION 3
OPINIONS ABOUT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF USERS OF SUPPORTED HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

-Do you think that there are any particular groups of people who might especially want, or benefit from, supported hostel accommodation such as D?

PROMPTS: Which and why?

* *People with children or a women who is pregnant*
* *Old or young people*
* *Women or men*
* *Any particular minority ethnic groups*
    Elaborate/ probe
    Do many Black/ Asian/ Chinese people stay here?
    Why do you think that is the case?
* *Employed or unemployed people*
* *People who are lesbian or gay*
* *People with particular mental or physical health problems*
* *People with any particular social problems*
* *People with any particular support or care needs*
* *People who have been made homeless by an emergency such as a fire or flood*
* *Or is it simply down to individual factors?*

-Do you think that the people living in hostel D fit any of those characteristics?
Which?
How/ how not?

-Do you think that there are people with those characteristics who want, or need, supported hostel accommodation, but cannot get a place?
Which?
Why?
Where do you think that they go instead?

-Do people often turn down an offer of accommodation after they have been accepted and offered a place?

-Why do you think that is?

-Where do you think that they might go instead?

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

SECTION 4
INFORMATION ABOUT THE MORE CONCEPTUAL AND DAY-TO-DAY EXPERIENTIAL ASPECTS OF LIVING IN HOSTEL D

-What is the daily routine here?

-Who would you say manages or runs the accommodation on a day-to-day basis?

-How much control do the residents have over the day-to-day running of the hostel?
Elaborate

-Do you think that residents in D have the opportunity to participate in the running of the hostel?
How/ how not?
Why/ why not?

-So would you say that residents in D have much choice about their lives within the hostel?
How/ how not?

-Do you think that residents in D feel stigmatised/ embarrassed/ ashamed/ somehow bad because of where they are living?
How?
Why?

-Do you think that living in D gives residents more or less independence than they had before they moved in there?
How?
Why?

-How well would you say that people in the hostel get along together?
PROMPT:
Workers and workers/ residents and workers/ residents and residents/ workers and volunteers/ volunteers and residents/ workers and visitors/ workers and management committee members etc. (as appropriate)?

*****

-How would you describe to someone else what it feels like to live in a place like this?

-Do you think that anyone, other than a resident, is likely to consider how it feels to live in a place like D?
Who?
Why?

-Do you think that it is possible for people who do not live in D really to know what it is like to live here?

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

-Do you feel that residents here consider this to be their home?

PROMPT:

All/ or some do/ or don't

Why/ why not?

-Do you think that residents here consider themselves to be homeless?

PROMPT:

All/ or some do/ or don't

Why/ why not?

-Do you think that many residents want to leave?

If so, why might this be?

If so, to what sort of accommodation might they want to move?

PROMPT:

Area/ type of accommodation?

-On the whole, do you think that residents are happy or unhappy about being here?

Why?

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

SECTION 5
OPINIONS ABOUT THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS/ FEATURES OF SUPPORTED HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION

-What kinds of features or characteristics do you think make supported hostel accommodation in general good/ bad?
HOW AND WHY?
PROMPTS:
** Physical conditions of the building (e.g. state of repair, standard of furniture)*
** Location of the building*
** Design of the building*
** Staffing and management arrangements*
** Funding arrangements (where the money comes from, by whom it is provided)*
** The daily routine*
** Hostel policies (such as rules and regulations)*
** Efforts to meet the day-to-day needs of residents?*

-What do you think about relationships within hostels (e.g. between residents, between residents and workers, workers and workers, volunteers and residents, workers and visitors etc.)? How important do you think that these relationships are in making hostel accommodation good or bad?
Why?

-For how long do you think that people should be allowed to stay in hostels?

*****

-How much control do you think residents should have over the running of a hostel (e.g. over the rules, the cleaning, or the cooking)?
Elaborate

(-Do you think it is a good idea for residents to have the opportunity to participate or join in the running of a hostel?
Elaborate
Why/ why not?)

-Do you think that residents of hostels should feel stigmatised/ embarrassed/ ashamed/ bad about where they are living?
How?
Why?
How important an issue is this?

*****

-What would you say are the best things/ more positive features or characteristics about D?
PROMPT:
sharing, privacy, company, rules and regulations, standards, staff, support, rehousing, company?

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

-What would you say are the more negative features or characteristics about D?

PROMPT:

sharing, privacy, company, rules and regulations, standards staff, support, rehousing, company?

-On the whole, do you enjoy or dislike living at hostel D?
Why?

-On the whole, do you feel that you are being helped by living here?
Why?

-Has your opinion about D changed since you moved in?
How?
Why?

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

SECTION 6
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

-You said earlier that you thought that D was trying to.......
Do you think that it would be possible for D to meet its aims and objectives better?

-Do you think that D could actually develop better aims and objectives?
How?
What?

-Do you think that the hostel could be run better?
How?

-Do you think that it would be possible to meet the needs of the residents in D better?
How?
PROMPT:
Housing needs and
Support needs:
health
care (personal care)
budgeting/ welfare rights
social work
befriending?

-Are there any other ways that you think that D could be improved?

*****

-Do you think that the people who live in supported hostel accommodation for homeless people are those who really want, or need, it?

-On the whole, do you feel that accommodation like D is helpful and useful, or not, for homeless people?
Elaborate.

*****

**END
That, more or less, is the end of the questions which I had planned to ask. Can you think of anything else that you would like to add or anything which I have missed off? Please feel free to suggest anything on your mind.

Many thanks for your help and time in answering these questions.
It's been very useful for me.

APPENDIX D (i) (see appendix A for key)

Data base of the thirty-six hostels in Hostelville

HOSTEL	PROVIDER	MARITAL /FAMILY STATUS	GENDER	AGE	SPECIAL NEEDS	HOSTEL SIZE	LENGTH OF STAY	SLEEPING ARRANGE- MENTS	SUPPORT LEVEL
1	LA	FAMILY	MIXED	ANY	NONE	LARGE	<1YR	MIXED	24HRS
2	R/C	SINGLE	M	16-25	ANY	SMALL	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	24HRS
3	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	ANY	NONE	SMALL	UNKNOWN	SINGLE	UNKNOWN
4	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	ANY	NONE	SMALL	UNKNOWN	SINGLE	UNKNOWN
5	LA	SINGLE	M	>17YRS	NONE	LARGE	UNSPECIF	DORM	24HRS
6	R/C	SINGLE	MIXED	>18YRS	NONE	LARGE	3+YRS	SINGLE	24HRS
7	LA	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	NONE	MEDIUM	<1YR	MIXED	24HRS
8	LA	SINGLE	F	ANY	NONE	MEDIUM	<1YR	MIXED	24HRS
9	LA	SINGLE	M	ANY	NONE	LARGE	<1YR	SINGLE	UNKNOWN
10	VOL	SINGLE	F	ANY	NONE	MEDIUM	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	OH
11	VOL	SINGLE	M	>21YRS	NONE	MEDIUM	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	OWC
12	LA	SINGLE	F	ANY	NONE	LARGE	UNKNOWN	UNSPECIF	UNKNOWN
13	VOL	SINGLE	F	>30YRS	MH	SMALL	3+YRS	SINGLE	OWC
14	LA	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	NONE	MEDIUM	UNKNOWN	UNSPECIF	UNKNOWN
15	VOL	SINGLE	F	>21YRS	NONE	MEDIUM	UNKNOWN	SINGLE	OWC
16	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	NONE	SMALL	UNKNOWN	SINGLE	OWC
17	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	NONE	MEDIUM	UNKNOWN	SINGLE	UNKNOWN
18	MIX	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	LC	MEDIUM	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	NRS

Data base of the thirty-six hostels in Hostelville

HOSTEL	PROVIDER	MARITAL /FAMILY STATUS	GENDER	AGE	SPECIAL NEEDS	HOSTEL SIZE	LENGTH OF STAY	SLEEPING ARRANGE-MENTS	SUPPORT LEVEL
19	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	ANY	NONE	MEDIUM	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	24HRS
20	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	ExO	SMALL	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	OH
21	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	ExO	SMALL	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	OH
22	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	NONE	SMALL	1-3YRS	SINGLE	UNKNOWN
23	LA	FAMILY	MIXED	ANY	NONE	LARGE	<1YR	SINGLE	24HRS
24	VOL	MIXED	F	ANY	EG/DV	MEDIUM	<1YR	SINGLE	OWC
25	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	ANY	A/MH/LD	VARIOUS	UNKNOWN	MIXED	OLC
26	R/C	SINGLE	M	ANY	NONE	SMALL	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	24HRS
27	R/C	SINGLE	M	>30YRS	A/MH	MEDIUM	1-3YRS	MIXED	24HRS
28	R/C	SINGLE	M	>18YRS	NONE	LARGE	UNSPECIF	DORM	OLC
29	R/C	MIXED	F	ANY	NONE	LARGE	<1YR	SINGLE	24HRS
30	MIX	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	LC	SMALL	1-3YRS	SINGLE	OWC
31	VOL	SINGLE	M	16-25	NONE	SMALL	1-3YRS	MIXED	24HRS
32	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	NONE	MEDIUM	UNKNOWN	SINGLE	OWC
33	VOL	MIXED	F	ANY	DV	MEDIUM	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	OWC
34	R/C	SINGLE	MIXED	ANY	NONE	LARGE	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	24HRS
35	R/C	SINGLE	MIXED	ANY	NONE	LARGE	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	UNKNOWN
36	R/C	SINGLE	F	16-25	NONE	SMALL	1-3YRS	MIXED	24HR

APPENDIX D (ii)

Data base of the twelve hostels selected for the postal survey

HOSTEL	PROVIDER	MARITAL /FAMILY STATUS	GENDER	AGE	SPECIAL NEEDS	HOSTEL SIZE	LENGTH OF STAY	SLEEPING ARRANGE-MENTS	SUPPORT LEVEL
1	LA	FAMILY	MIXED	ANY	NONE	LARGE	<1YR	MIXED	24HRS
2	R/C	SINGLE	M	16-25	ANY	SMALL	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	24HRS
8	LA	SINGLE	F	ANY	NONE	MEDIUM	<1YR	MIXED	24HRS
10	VOL	SINGLE	F	ANY	NONE	MEDIUM	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	OH
13	VOL	SINGLE	F	>30YRS	MH	SMALL	3+YRS	SINGLE	OWC
23	LA	FAMILY	MIXED	ANY	NONE	LARGE	<1YR	SINGLE	24HRS
24	VOL	MIXED	F	ANY	EG/DV	MEDIUM	<1YR	SINGLE	OWC
25	VOL	SINGLE	MIXED	ANY	A/MH/LD	VARIOUS	UNKNOWN	MIXED	OLC
27	R/C	SINGLE	M	>30YRS	A/MH	MEDIUM	1-3YRS	MIXED	24HRS
28	R/C	SINGLE	M	>18YRS	NONE	LARGE	UNSPECIF	DORM	OLC
30	MIX	SINGLE	MIXED	16-25	LC	SMALL	1-3YRS	SINGLE	OWC
33	VOL	MIXED	F	ANY	DV	MEDIUM	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	OWC

* 10 organisations had an equal opportunities policy or statement
* 2 organisations had no equal opportunities policy or statement

* 4 organisations had a HIV policy or statement
* 5 organisations had no HIV policy or statement
* 3 organisations were in the process of developing a HIV policy or statement

* 1 organisation had disabled facilities
* 2 organisations had limited disabled facilities
* 1 organisation was in the process of developing disabled facilities
* 8 organisations had no disabled facilities

APPENDIX D (iii)

Data base of the four case study hostels

HOSTEL	PROVIDER	MARITAL /FAMILY STATUS	GENDER	AGE	SPECIAL NEEDS	HOSTEL SIZE	LENGTH OF STAY	SLEEPING ARRANGE-MENTS	SUPPORT LEVEL
2	R/C	SINGLE	M	16-25	ANY	SMALL	UNSPECIF	SINGLE	24HRS
13	VOL	SINGLE	F	>30YRS	MH	SMALL	3+YRS	SINGLE	OWC
23	LA	FAMILY	MIXED	ANY	NONE	LARGE	<1YR	SINGLE	24HRS
28	R/C	SINGLE	M	>18YRS	NONE	LARGE	UNSPECIF	DORM	OLC

* all 4 organisations had an equal opportunities policy or statement

* 2 organisations (hostels 23 and 28) had a HIV policy or statement
* 2 organisations (hostels 2 and 13) had no HIV policy or statement

* 2 organisations (hostels 13 and 2) had limited disabled facilities
* 2 organisations (hostels 23 and 28) had no disabled facilities

(Hostel 28 = hostel A; hostel 23 = hostel B; hostel 13 = hostel C; hostel 2 = hostel D)

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