UNDERSTANDING SINGLE HOMELESSNESS:

THE VALUE OF THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

During the 1990s, the term 'socially excluded' was increasingly applied to those who were most marginalised in British society. People who experienced street homelessness were characterised as among those most excluded from aspects of well-being taken for granted by the majority in society. This thesis seeks to evaluate the potential of the concept of social exclusion for improving our understanding of social issues and for the development of social policies, through the case study issue of single homelessness in Britain.

'Social exclusion' was a contested concept and a range of perspectives were identified, from which a framework for analysis was developed, and utilised to reflect on single homelessness during 1987/8-1997/8. The study then employed secondary analysis of qualitative data in order to apply concepts associated with social exclusion to empirical data on single homelessness. The data included group discussions with homeless single people and depth interviews with staff from local housing and support service providers.

The concept of social exclusion was most useful in acknowledging the links between different dimensions of well-being and social policy; in highlighting the importance of process and dynamic analysis; and in considering how the interests of powerful groups excluded those less able to compete. The analysis demonstrated the need for an understanding of the multifaceted nature of single homelessness; a comprehensive approach to developing solutions; and the potential for empowering single homeless people in the policy process.

The value of the concept of social exclusion was limited by the simplistic polarisation of 'exclusion' versus 'inclusion' and the lack of conceptualisation of a 'cohesive society', within contemporary policy making. The diversity and complexity of experience among individuals and across dimensions of welfare was not fully recognised within the policy process. Local responses to social exclusion were constrained by local social and economic circumstances as well as dominant ideologies which shaped national and international paradigms of welfare.

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The contents of this thesis are entirely the original work of the author. None of the material has peviously been presented for any degree examination.

Isobel Anderson
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CHAPTER ONE

SINGLE HOMELESSNESS AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION: AN INTRODUCTION

Introduction: the age of exclusion?

During the 1990s, debates on social policy in the United Kingdom increasingly embraced the concept of 'social exclusion' as a focus for analysis, as well as the more traditional notions of poverty and inequality (Silver, 1994; Room, 1995a). Along with expressions like 'alienation' and 'the underclass', the term social exclusion came into increasingly common usage among politicians, social scientists and those in the media who commented on social issues. Working definitions of social exclusion are given later in this chapter and Chapter Three contains an extensive review of the concept. Essentially, however, the debate on social exclusion has revolved around the question of whether a significant group of people experienced sustained, multiple deprivation to the extent that they were, effectively, excluded from the 'mainstream' of society. Further, if social exclusion could be identified, what should governments and other welfare agencies do about it?

Some academics (for example, Williams with Pillinger, 1996) had suggested that social exclusion might actually offer a new paradigm for social research. Therefore, there was a need to appraise the evolving debates in order to establish whether a new analytical framework for social policy analysis was emerging. Single homelessness was selected as being an appropriate case study social issue for a critique of the value of the concept of social exclusion.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the issue of homelessness was one of Britain's most enduring social problems (Drake, 1989; Burrows, Pleace and Quilgars, 1997). For much of the 1980s, research and debate had concentrated on the experience of homeless families (Conway and Kemp, 1985; Bramley, 1993; Lidstone, 1994). The 1990s, however, saw an escalation in homelessness among non-family households, mainly single people of working age, without

dependent children (Anderson, 1993; Burrows, Pleace and Quilgars, 1997). Most particularly, the rise in street homelessness in central London around 1989/90 drew the issue to the attention of the media and central government (Anderson, 1993). It is the experience of this group of people, 'single homeless people' or the issue of 'single homelessness', which has been the focus for the critique of social exclusion in this thesis. The policy and legislative contexts for 'family' and 'single' homelessness are discussed later in this chapter.

As the thesis will demonstrate, the experience of homelessness touches or interacts with virtually every dimension of social well-being and was, in many ways, an ideal case study for social exclusion. Indeed, the experience of homelessness has been described as the 'leading edge' of social exclusion in Europe (Daily, 1993; Council of Europe, 1993). At its most extreme, street homelessness became a highly visible problem which was shocking to the public and indicative of the extent of exclusion in contemporary British society. Homeless people often lacked not just an adequate home, but a job with a reasonable income, good health, and a secure basis for family and social life (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993; Anderson, 1997). An analysis of homlessness needed to take account of how these factors interacted in the contemporary policy process and in the life experiences of homeless people.

The aims and objectives of this study

The principal aim of this thesis was to assess the value of the concept of social exclusion in understanding the experiences of those who were marginalised in society. If the concept was to be of value in social policy formulation, implementation and analysis, then it should be generally applicable to a range of social issues and should facilitate a greater understanding of the nature of social problems and the development of appropriate policy responses. In appraising the value of the concept of social exclusion through its application to the case study issue of single homelessness, the study also sought to shed new light on our understanding of the latter issue and on the effectiveness of policy responses.

Within the above broad aims, further research objectives were identified. The thesis sought to clarify and compare the meanings of the term social exclusion and to review the evolution of contemporary debates. It was also considered important to identify the ideological traditions from which the concept of social exclusion had developed and to explore the influence of these on the policy process.

Using single homelessness as a case study social issue allowed the examination of that issue in the broader context of social change, facilitating explicit consideration of the links between housing and other aspects of well-being, and between housing policy and other dimensions of social policy. Analysing single homelessness in relation to the wider sphere of social policy allowed issues of poverty and inequality in society to be brought to the centre of discussions. Finally, setting the analysis of single homelessness and social exclusion within the wider framework of policy analysis facilitated consideration of how single homelessness was treated in the policy process.

The research programme

The approach to the research and the methods adopted for this thesis are explained, in full, in Chapter Two. This section summarises the research programme undertaken. The analysis in this thesis has reflected upon single homelessness in Britain and welfare policies during the two terms of Conservative Government from 1987 to 1997, and considered the early impact of the New Labour administration since the May 1997 election.

A framework for applying key concepts associated with social exclusion to the case study issue of single homelessness was developed from a review of the contemporary debates on poverty, inequality and social exclusion. The framework was then applied to a broad review of the evidence of single homelessness and policy responses during the study period. The same framework was utilised for the substantial new analysis undertaken for this thesis. Secondary analysis of qualitative data from two policy-oriented empirical research projects on single homelessness, *Single homeless people* (Anderson,

Kemp and Quilgars, 1993) and *Social housing for single people* (Anderson and Morgan, 1997)[1] was undertaken.

Both research projects incorporated a substantial element of qualitative data collection, in the form of group discussions with homeless single people and depth interviews with housing and support service providers, respectively. In the original reports, the qualitative data was primarily used to illustrate and illuminate the findings from quantitative surveys carried out for the two studies. The richness of the qualitative data sets, was such that considerable scope remained for further analysis, while the breadth of the discussions in both studies facilitated a re-interpretation of the data in the context of evolving debates on social exclusion.

The secondary analysis conducted for this thesis facilitated a fusion of the two studies, which investigated the two 'sides' of the single homelessness problem: consumers (single homeless people) and producers/providers (local housing and support agencies). Moreover, the constraints of the original reports had limited the scope to consider the conceptual and theoretical implications of the studies. Consequently, the distinctiveness of this thesis lies in both the secondary analysis of qualitative data and in the exploration of the data at a conceptual, theoretical level. The thesis sought to locate and understand the data in the context of contemporary scholarly and policy debates on social exclusion. The remainder of this section briefly summarises the two primary research projects.

Single homeless people (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993).

The study was commissioned by the (then) Department of the Environment in order to collect information on the characteristics of single homeless people in England; their experience of homelessness; and their needs and preferences for housing and support in the future. The study combined a large-scale quantitative survey of single people who were sleeping rough or living in hostel

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[1] Throughout the thesis, the two studies are cited by their titles, as well as by author citation.

or bed and breakfast accommodation with 20 qualitative discussions with small groups of single homeless people from a range of housing and social circumstances.

The report of the study was published by HMSO and, according to the brief set out by the Government Department, presented a factual analysis of the data collected. Interpretation of the data in relation to any ideological or theoretical concepts would have been beyond the remit of the commissioned study. The study thus provided a rich data set which would remain available for further analysis and scholarly interpretation. Secondary analysis of the qualitative group discussions was conducted specifically for this thesis, with a view to refining the interpretation of the experience of single homelessness in relation to the notion of social exclusion.

Social housing for single people? A study of local policy and practice (Anderson and Morgan, 1997).

The findings of the survey of single homeless people raised a number of issues in relation to the opportunities for single people to gain access to social rented housing. Central Government's policy response to the growth in single homelessness was well articulated and widely publicised (Chapter Four), but little was known about policy and practice at the local level. *Social housing for single people* investigated local responses to single homelessness through a quantitative survey of local housing authorities across Britain and pluralistic case studies in five local authority areas in Scotland and England. Secondary analysis of a sample of qualitative interviews with housing and support service providers was conducted specifically for this thesis. As with *Single homeless people*, the data was re-interpreted according to the concepts associated with social exclusion.

Researching social exclusion and single homelessness: some concepts and definitions

The definition, meaning and understanding of terminology in the social sciences is rarely straight-forward. No single definition exists for 'social policy', let alone 'social exclusion' or 'single homelessness'. These are all contested terms, the precise meanings of which will vary according to ideology, social context and individual experience. The complexity of language and labelling in the analysis of social issues has been taken into consideration throughout the thesis, but it is important to introduce some 'working definitions' for the key concepts which are used in the study. The reviews of policy, research and literature in Chapters Three and Four discuss these concepts in greater depth.

Social exclusion

The contemporary concept of social exclusion emerged from sociological and social policy debates on poverty, inequality and the role of the welfare state. The evolution of the concept of social exclusion, from its origins in France in the 1970s, has been documented by Silver (1994). The term was first used by a French Government Minister, with reference to various groups of people who were unprotected by social insurance and characterised as 'marginalised' or 'social misfits' (Silver, 1994, p532). During the 1980s and 1990s, economic and social upheavals brought about a shift from an emphasis on poverty and unemployment, to new conceptions of social disadvantage such as 'the underclass' and 'social exclusion' (Silver, 1994, p531).

From its roots in France, the term social exclusion became more frequently used within European bureaucracies in preference to poverty and with reference to policies to bring about greater social cohesion (Room, 1995b). The term has also been associated with the debates as to whether an 'underclass' of marginalised or excluded individuals can be identified in the developed nations in the late twentieth century (e.g. Murray, 1990; 1994).

In the collection of papers in Room (1995a) social exclusion was characterised as a comprehensive set of circustances which amounted to 'more than poverty' and also as a dynamic process. The evolving debates recognised the importance of interaction across different policy areas and different experiences of disadvantaged groups. While poverty was characterised as mainly reflecting *distributional* issues (access to resources) social exclusion was viewed as a much broader concept, reflecting *relational* issues of inadequate social participation (Room, 1995b).

Berghman (1995) developed the concept of social exclusion further, by considering the comprehensive and dynamic nature of the process and outcomes of social exclusion. The concept was argued to be *comprehensive* in that it embraced a range of social experiences, beyond work and income, including democratic participation, work, social welfare, family and community (Berghman, 1995, pp18-19). Social exclusion was also *dynamic* in nature, in that, for individuals, poverty or disadvantage need not be a fixed, unchangeable state (Berghman, 1995, pp21-22).

Following the election victory in 1997, the New Labour government in the United Kingdom rapidly adopted the language of social exclusion and triggered an escalation in references to social exclusion across policy areas and in the media. The government stated its own definition of social exclusion as:

> *a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environment, bad health and family breakdown.*

(Social Exclusion Unit, 1998a).

This thesis sought to incorporate exclusion from housing provision (the experience of homelessness) into mainstream debates on social exclusion. As a basic human need, adequate housing was considered integral to any notion of social inclusion. The value of the concept of social exclusion for understanding single homelessness and developing social policy will be closely related to the way in which social exclusion is defined. The working definition of social exclusion adopted for this thesis was exclusion from aspects of well-being and

social participation (including housing) taken as 'usual' among the majority within society. The notion of 'comprehensive exclusion from society' is challenged within the thesis. The dynamic nature of social exclusion was acknowledged and is discussed throughout the thesis. The definition and operationalisation of social exclusion is developed further in Chapter Three, tested against data on single homelessness (Chapters Four to Seven) and refined in the conclusions to the study (Chapter Eight).

Single homelessness

There can be no single, simple definition of homelessness, beyond 'being without a home' (Anderson, 1993), yet the meaning of home is often neglected in discussions of homelessness. Similarly, contributions such as Gurney (1990) on the meaning and experience of home have tended to exclude any reference to those who are not householders in the main tenures. Watson with Austerberry's proposition of a continuum of housing needs from absolute rooflessness to outright ownership was influential in much of the subsequent literature on homelessness (Watson with Austerberry, 1986, p9) and homelessness has become widely regarded as a relative concept which is socially constructed according to the norms of specific societies and groups within societies (Clapham, Kemp and Smith, 1990; Sommerville, 1992).

Definitions of homelessness, then, need to be sensitive to the notion that perceptions of home and homelessness are socially constructed in relation to the accepted norms of any particular society and the views of any individual about their housing situation. For example, people living in hostels may consider only those sleeping rough to be homeless, while some people who are 'housed' may not necessarily consider their accommodation to be a 'home'. Similarly, wider social attitudes towards homelessness are shaped by prevailing and individual ideologies and social mores. It is not, therefore, a straightforward matter to distinguish between homelessness and a range of circumstances of housing need.

In Anderson (1997, pp114-115) it was argued that, in Britain, where the concept of social housing was well developed, social norms and expectations could embrace a definition of homelessness which encompassed some or all of the situations listed in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Potential homeless situations.

- absolute rooflessness (sleeping rough, street homelessness)
- living in hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation
- having no fixed address, moving around between different accommodation
- living in overcrowded conditions
- living in intolerable physical conditions, lacking basic facilities
- lacking security in accommodation
- threatened with the loss of accommodation
- living in shared accommodation involuntarily.

(After Anderson, 1997, p115).

The notion of hidden or concealed homelessness would include those people living in overcrowded or inadequate circumstances or with a high degree of insecurity. From another perspective, only those who were without any shelter whatsoever might be considered as homeless, and this was very much the perspective of the Conservative Government in the early-mid 1990s (Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1995, pp5-6). In Anderson (1997) it was further argued that imposed definitions, failed to take account of the perceptions of individual people in those circumstances as to whether they considered themselves to be 'homeless'. The importance of the 'consumer' perspective has been considered more fully in this thesis.

The legal and policy framework determining access to council housing and housing association accommodation, with particular reference to single people, has also been considered in detail in earlier work (Anderson 1993, 1994). Unlike many advanced industrial countries, Britain has had specific legislation to prevent homelessness among certain households and any consideration of the meaning of single homelessness must acknowledge that legal framework. For most of the study period, the statutory definition of homelessness was that laid

down in the 1977 legislation and later consolidated in the Housing Act 1985 (for England and Wales) and the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. A person or household was 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 continue to occupy the accommodation. A person or household is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it; if occupation of the accommodation carries a threat of violence; or if the accommodation is of a mobile type and there is nowhere available to place and live in the accommodation.*
>
> (Anderson, 1994, p2, after Housing Act 1985, s58).

The above definition was used by local housing authorities (councils) when making decisions on applications for council housing from households who considered themselves to be homeless. The local authority had a duty to secure housing for a household which met the following criteria:

* was homeless according to the above definition
* contained a member deemed *in priority need*
* had a local connection with the authority to which they were applying (e.g. through current or previous residence, employment or family ties)
* *had not* become homeless *intentionally* (i.e. due to a deliberate act or omission on the part of a household member).

Households deemed to be *in priority need* under the legislation included:

* those where there were dependent children in the care of the household
* those with an expectant mother in the household
* households made homeless due to an emergency such as a fire or flood
* households where at least one member was deemed to be *vulnerable,* due to old age; physical or mental health problems; a threat of violence; or, for young people aged16-17 years, the risk of sexual or financial exploitation.

Until the mid-1990s, it was broadly accepted that, provided a household fulfilled the above conditions, local authorities had a duty to provide secure/permanent housing, usually in their own council housing or by nomination to a housing

association. This notion of a 'right' to 'housing for life' was, however, challenged with the implementation of the Housing Act 1996. The process of policy review which culminated in the 1996 Act is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Notwithstanding the impact of the Housing Act 1996, for many years, access to council housing for homeless households in Britain has been determined by *household composition* as well as *housing circumstances* (Anderson, 1997, p116). Local authorities were not obliged to assist homeless households who did not fall within the priority groups and it was largely *single* people (without dependent children) who were excluded from the safety net provisions. Consequently, most single people of working age received little priority for access to social housing in the event of homelessness. The position of single people in relation to the wider processes of access to social housing is discussed fully in Chapter Four and the remainder of this thesis.

The division between *priority* and *non-priority* homeless households was a crucial element in the process by which non-family households were excluded from social housing, and a key factor in explaining why street homelessness, in particular, was almost exclusively experienced by single people (Watson, 1986; Drake, 1989; Anderson, 1997). Drake (1989) described the distinction in the homelessness legislation between priority and non-priority need groups as a 'fundamental definitional parameter' which was 'central to any discussion of homelessness' (Drake, 1989, p120). That distinction continued to apply throughout the study period.

A number of working defintions of homelessness were developed from the above analysis and utilised throughout the study. Firstly, *homelessness* is taken to refer to a broad range of housing circumstances where individuals lacked secure, habitable and affordable accommodation, ranging from street homelessness (absolute rooflessness), through various forms of insecure or temporary accommodation such as emergency hostels, bed and breakfast accommodation, and moving between short term or unsatisfactory sharing arrangements.

The terms *statutory homelessness* and *single homelessness* or *non-priority homelessness* are used to convey the legal status of households with reference to the homelessness legislation contained in the Housing Act 1996 and Housing (Scotland) Act 1987:

- *statutory homelessness* refers to households accepted by a local authority as non-intentionally homeless and in priority need, (local authority has a duty to offer accommodation)

- *single homelessness or non-priority homelessness* refers to single people (and sometimes couples) who are acknowledged as being homeless under the terms of the legislation, but who do not fall into a priority need category (local authority only has a duty to provide advice and assistance).

However, these terms are not completely watertight. Strictly speaking, they would only apply to households who had made formal applications for local authority assistance under the homelessness legislation, but this information is not always known about, say hostel residents or people sleeping rough. There may be individuals within the single homeless population who are vulnerable under the terms of the legislation but either have not applied for housing, or whose applications have not been fully and appropriately assessed.

Pleace, Burrows and Quilgars (1997, p6) distinguished between *single homeless people* and *people sleeping rough*, but there is no legal distinction between these groups. As a consequence of the homelessness legislation outlined above, many single homeless people experience street homelessness and most of those who experience a period of sleeping rough are single at the time. Moreover, some single homeless people may well be vulnerable (and, therefore in priority need for housing) due to the special reasons within the legislation, but may not have applied for assistance or may have been inappropriately rejected by a local housing authority. In this thesis, the terms *rooflessness* and *street homelessness* are used to convey the situation where homeless individuals are literally without even the most basic accommodation. This would include, for example, situations such as sleeping in shop doorways, underground car parks, cars, derelict buildings or 'makeshift' accommodation.

A key policy initiative launched by central Government in the 1990s to tackle street homelessness quickly became known as the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative or

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'RSI' (Anderson, 1993) and the term 'rough sleeper' subsequently became commonly used in the debates and literature on single homelessness. The term 'rough sleeper' is considered an inappropriate label to describe individuals who experience street homelessness at some point in their lives, and one which, at worst, could be stigmatising and damaging to the individuals concerned. Throughout this thesis, use of the term has been avoided where possible, and when used in citations or quotations, it is set in inverted commas.

Conceptions of households and families have also been central to the discussions of homelessness and housing need in this thesis, with the main focus being on single person households. The terms *single person* and *single people* refer to individuals of working age (taken as 16-59 years) who live or wish to live as a one person household at a particular point in their life. Individuals aged below 16 are considered as children/minors, while adults aged 60 years and over are considered as older people and their position in the housing system is different to that of working age single people. It is acknowledged however, that such dividing lines are rarely watertight and that a small proportion of single homeless people may be below 16 years of age (termed 'runaways' , see Liddiard and Hutson, 1991) or over 60 years of age.

The use of the term *single* does not imply any particular marital status. Single people may be 'never married', 'formerly married', or have experienced a range of relationship/household situations. The thesis makes no judgement on those circumstances, but neither does it imply that relationship status is not important or has no bearing on housing circumstances. For example, couples without children are similarly excluded from the homelessness legislation and may face different constraints in finding accommodation, compared to single people. Where relationship status is central to any particular part of the analysis, this is clarified within the discussion.

Social policy

It is possible to distinguish between 'social policy' (Hill, 1996) as a field of academic enquiry, and the somewhat broader field of 'public policy' (Parsons,

1995; Hill, 1997). Both Parsons (1995) and Hill (1997) have traced the growth of policy studies within a range of academic disciplines during the post-war period. Parsons (1995) listed the key disciplines associated with public policy as political science, public administration (social policy), political theory, sociology, psychology, economics and management. As with public policy, social policy also draws upon theoretical concepts from the other social sciences (Hill, 1996).

Hill (1996) argued that 'social' policies were those which impacted upon all groups in society and that any analysis of those policies needed to deal with interactions between social and economic policies. In practice, however, the social policy agenda has often been narrowly focused upon 'recipients of welfare' in terms of direct assistance from the state. Most obviously, social policy has been concerned with aspects of the welfare state in Britain, such as health, education, income maintenance, and social services.

Hill (1996) included housing and employment policy in his analysis of social policy, arguing that although most people were provided with work and shelter through the market mechanism, both were vital to individual welfare. The position of housing in welfare and social policy has been ambiguous, but this thesis will argue that basic shelter should be a fundamental element in any consensus for adequate welfare provision and that the housing dimension of social policy merits much more attention than has traditionally been the case. The neglect of the housing dimension in social policy was addressed by Clapham, Kemp and Smith (1990) while Robertson and McLaughlin (1996) argued that housing research should engage with the wider debates in social policy research.

In its narrowest definition, public policy has been mainly concerned with 'public problems' and the goals, decisions and actions of governments. While the welfare of individuals is not exclusively determined by the state, a policy emphasis is likely to concentrate on the role of the state. However, policy development has also been characterised in terms of a web of decisions and actions emanating from a policy network or community of policy actors, which is very much wider than the local, national or international structures of government (Hill, 1997). While Hill (1997) argued that special claims could be

made about the primacy of state policy, a range of private sector and voluntary sector agencies, as well as pressure groups and lay people could all be characterised as actors in the policy community. Levels of influence upon policy would vary, however, in relation to the power dynamics between policy actors. An exploration of the relationships between actors in a 'housing policy community' and a wider 'social policy community' has underpinned the analysis in this study.

Networks can be extremely complex with policy evolving over a long period of time. The intentions of policy actors may also change over time. Policy and policy making must, therefore, be examined as a dynamic process with mechanisms for feedback and review or refinement of policy. Indeed, the analysis of policy is often facilitated by examining a 'staged' process of policy formulation, implementation and review and a variety of models of the stages in the policy process have been developed (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984; Parsons, 1995).

The policy process is concerned with how policies are determined, implemented and evaluated. Two key models of the policy process developed in the USA during the 1950s were the rational and incremental models of Simon (1957) and Lindblom (1959) respectively. The rational model of the policy process started from the assumption that, within limits, planned, rational policies could be implemented and desired outcomes could be achieved. The rational model assumed a logical sequence of events and was also the starting point for the incremental model which incorporated considerable scepticism as to the scope for rational policy planning and implementation. Rather, the incremental policy process was characterised as 'muddling through' with change implemented incrementally and at the margins (Lindblom, 1959).

Accepting that an incremental model of policy development may be more accurate in the 'real world' (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984), the rational model may still be a useful starting point for the analysis and understanding of inter-relationships in the policy process. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) developed a linear model of the policy process while a circular model of the housing policy process was advocated by Malpass and Murie (1994, p218), although the two

were not necessarily mutually exclusive. A particular attraction of the circular model was that it incorporated the process of change, as well as feed-back, review and the influence of research at different stages of the policy process. The attraction of a staged model of the policy process for the analysis of social exclusion was that it might assist the dynamic analysis of *process* which was taken as central to most interpretations of exclusion.

Research within the fields of social policy and public policy is often characterised as 'policy-oriented' research. Robertson and McLaughlin (1996, p27) raised the concern that by the 1990s, housing research had become the servant of the housing profession and the policy community, rather than helping to set policy agendas. They suggested that housing research rarely challenged the constraints in which policy operated. Some concern was also expressed that the theoretical basis of housing research may have been weakened as a consequence of the policy focus and the dominance of contract research in the post-1980 period (Robertson and McLaughlin, 1996).

Kemeny (1992) argued that the theoretical underpinning of housing research had always been weak, with both sociology and social policy in Britain having developed in an empirical, rather than a theoretical tradition. Robertson and McLaughlin (1996) asserted that in developing a distinct profile, housing studies had become cut off from the debates and discussions in other academic disciplines but that scope to re-engage with broader debates emerged from the development of multi-disciplinary housing research. The consideration of the value of social exclusion in understanding single homelessness offered an opportunity to engage in those debates.

In summary then, policy analysis can be taken to imply the study of the complex interactions of the ideologies, goals, decisions and strategies of actors in the policy community. The influence of different actors will be determined by power relationships within the policy community and the dominant role of the state is acknowledged. While a common sense definition of social policy is best related to the functions of the welfare state (including aspects of housing policy), this need not exclude the notion that 'social' policies can contribute to all dimensions of well-being (or disadvantage) within society.

Policy, ideology and theoretical perspectives

Social policy must also be seen in relation to politics and ideology. Hill (1997) evaded discussion of matters of philosophy and ideology, as beyond the scope of his book. However, this thesis argues that policies evolve from ideologies and policy analysts need to address ideological issues, in order to fully understand the nature of policy. The thesis draws on sociological theory, but is particularly concerned with the broad, political ideologies which drive social policy.

Contrasting interpretations of poverty, inequality and social exclusion are associated with differing political ideologies and associated social theories. Theoretical perspectives may be developed at the macro-level, often labelled as 'grand' theories. Alternatively, micro-level theories or theories of the middle range may be developed to explain outcomes in the social world (Kemeny and Lowe, 1998). Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed the idea of grounded theory, where concepts and explanations were explicitly developed from data analysis. The notion of grounded theory underpinned the empirical analysis for this thesis, which also set out to make connections between micro- and macro-level ideological perspectives (Sullivan, 1994).

This thesis has been primarily concerned with understanding single homelessness and social exclusion in Britain. Nevertheless, comparative social research has increasingly influenced debates on welfare and social exclusion in Britain. For example, Esping-Andersen (1990) argued that cross-national variations in welfare were were clustered by regime types. A typology of 'three worlds of welfare capitalism' - the liberal welfare state, the conservative/ corporatist welfare state and the social democratic welfare state - could be discerned (Esping-Anderson, 1990). The welfare state regimes of European countries, including Britian were influenced, over the long term, by the prevailing ideologies which shaped society, government and welfare provision.

A similar typology, with specific reference to social exclusion was developed by Silver (1994). Silver viewed the discourse on social exclusion as a 'window', through which to view political cultures. As will be demonstrated, it is in that sense that social exclusion was found to be most useful in this thesis. Silver

argued that since social exclusion was a contested concept, it must be accepted that the term had different meanings from different ideological perspectives or paradigms (Silver 1994). Silver developed her paradigms for social exclusion, based on Kuhn's definition of a paradigm as 'a constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community' (Kuhn, 1970, cited in Silver, 1994, p536).

Silver (1994) developed a three-fold typology of paradigms for social exclusion which distinguished between different theoretical perspectives, political ideologies and national discourses. The three paradigms of solidarity, specialisation and monopoly were associated with republicanism, liberalism and social democracy respectively. Each was associated with an interpretation of exclusion which encompassed theories of citizenship and racial-ethnic inequality, as well as poverty and long-term unemployment. Silver also identified 'organic' and Marxist paradigms which were less amenable to the conceptualisation of social exclusion. The paradigms for social exclusion developed by Silver (1994) are considered in more depth in Chapter Three.

For most of the study period (1987-1997), the prevailing ideology of Conservative Governments in Britain was explicitly derived from New Right ideas associated with liberalism, the dominance of the free market and minimal intervention by the state (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). During the same period, however, policies of local authorities controlled by other parties could have been framed in either a social democratic model of a mixed economy of welfare capitalism or a more marxist concept of state intervention. Ideological conflicts between central and local government were particularly intense in Britain during the 1980s (Stoker, 1991). The thesis traces the influence of both central and local policy responses to single homelessness in respect of the explicit or implicit ideologies which shaped those policy responses. The following section presents a broad overview of trends in housing policy during the study period.

Housing policy in Britian: 1987/8-1997/8

The study period covered the third and fourth terms of Conservative Governments which had been in power since 1979, and concluded with the change of political power following the New Labour victory in the 1997 election. While the thesis focused on social exclusion and single homelessness, the housing opportunities and outcomes for single people on low incomes needed to be considered within the context of the broad goals for economic and social policy and the full range of housing policies implemented during the period. Marsh and Rhodes (1992) compiled a detailed critique of Thatcherite policies of the 1980s and early 1990s, while comprehensive reviews of housing policy have been incorporated in Birchall (1992), Malpass and Means (1993) and Williams (1997). An overview of Conservative policy, from these and other relevant sources is presented in this section, followed by a summary of New Labour's housing policies.

The Conservative Governments of 1979-1997 subscribed to a neo-liberal philosophy which encouraged economic competition and free-market provision of goods and services. Strategies sought to 'role back the frontiers of the welfare state', reducing state intervention and public expenditure in many long-established areas of public policy. From 1979 to 1987 the key focus of housing policy was the expansion of home ownership, primarily through the discounted sale of council houses to sitting tenants under the 'Right to Buy', introduced in the Housing Act 1980 (Malpass and Murie, 1994). The 1980 Housing Act also created secure council tenancies and introduced associated housing management measures, but there was relatively little policy change for the rented sector during the early-mid 1980s.

The period up to 1987 saw some expansion in social rented provision through housing associations. However, the impact of Right to Buy sales, combined with significant and sustained cuts in local authority capital expenditure on housing (including barring re-investment of capital receipts from council house sales in England) meant that overall investment in social housing declined, squeezing the opportunities for low income groups to gain access to affordable rented housing (Greve, 1991; Wilcox, 1993). In 1987, the Conservative Party was returned for a third consecutive term in office, on a manifesto which included a radical 'shake-

up' of housing and social security legislation. A policy programme for the rented housing sectors was clarified with the publication of a White Paper on housing in 1987.

Three broad aims of housing policy emerged from the 1987 review: to reduce public expenditure on housing; to revive private renting; and to minimise the role of local authorities as landlords (Kemp, 1992). Policy aimed to encourage the private provision of rented housing and to expose the social rented housing sector to the disciplines of the market. The housing role of local authorities was increasingly viewed by central Government as that of enabler, rather than provider (Goodlad, 1993, 1994). A series of measures designed to achieve these aims were introduced through the Housing Act 1988 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

The Housing Act 1988 introduced provisions to privatise local authority rented housing through Housing Action Trusts and Tenants Choice. Although a small proportion of social housing was transferred to the private sector through these mechanisms (Karn, 1993), large scale voluntary transfers (LSVTs) to housing associations were much more substantial (Mulllins, Niner and Riseborough; 1992, 1995). Changes to revenue and capital funding of local authority housing were introduced in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which increased central Government's leverage on council house rents. A similar range of policy initiatives were introduced for Scotland through the Housing (Scotland) Act of 1988 (Roberston, 1992).

For housing associations, the Housing Act 1988 abolished the fair rent system and introduced assured tenancies for all new lettings. A new capital funding regime required new developments to be partly funded by private finance and grant rates were steadily reduced over subsequent years. Higher rents were inevitable as a result of these changes, placing pressure on the affordability of housing association tenancies for low income workers (Randolph, 1992; Kearns, 1992).

The 1988 Housing Act also aimed to revive Britain's privately rented housing sector by deregulating all new lettings (allowing 'market rents' to be agreed

between landlord and tenant) and introducing new assured and assured shorthold tenancies which facilitated easier repossession by landlords. Tax incentives to private landlords were also introduced under the Finance Act 1988 which extended the Business Expansion Scheme to rented housing for a five year period (Crook, et al, 1991).

Throughout the 1980s, the owner occupied sector continued to expand and prices boomed for much of the decade. Although many home owners made substantial capital gains, high interest rates and falling prices at the turn of the decade forced increasing numbers into mortgage arrears and the number of repossessions increased dramatically (Kemp, 1992; Ford, 1993). During the same period, tenants faced substantial rent increases in the council, housing association and privately rented sectors. Despite reductions in the scope and generosity of Housing Benefit (Kemp, 1992), the scale of rent increases and the growing proportion of tenants in receipt of benefit meant that the overall budget for Housing Benefit increased substantially, taking the strain of the shift in subsidy from 'bricks and mortar' to individual tenants.

Moreover, a growing crisis of access to social rented housing emerged during the 1980s. Most notably the number of households accepted as homeless by local authorities doubled during that decade (Greve with Currie, 1990), although by the end of the 1980s, no new policy measures had been introduced to tackle the problem. Similarly, the subsequent escalation of single homelessness during the late 1980s/early 1990s was widely associated with the impact of policy and legislative changes, implemented from the late 1980s onwards (Greve, 1991; Hutson and Liddiard, 1991, 1994; Anderson, 1993). Successive 'Rough Sleepers' Intitiatives were implemented by the Conservative Government during the 1990s (Chapter Four) but the problem persisted.

The national policy environment in which housing providers operated continued to evolve in a similar direction under the Conservative government of 1992-1997. The 1995 White Paper for England and Wales (Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1995) contained a wide range of housing policy proposals. Further measures towards privatisation included compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) of housing management; consideration of Local Housing

Companies; and the replacement of housing association grant by social housing grant which would be available to a wider category of registered social landlords. Perceived problems of anti-social behaviour were to be tackled through the introduction of probationary tenancies. Importantly, the 1995 paper contained a major review of the homelessness provisions and procedures for allocating social housing, discussed fully in Chapter Four. Following consultation and some refinement of the proposals, these changes were implemented through the 1996 Housing Act for England and Wales.

While the Labour Party remained in opposition, its Commission on Social Justice made a number of recommendations for housing policy (Commission on Social Justice, 1994). The report called for increased investment, a mix of tenures and a more flexibile system in order to match housing choice and security with people's aspirations in the face of changing economic and employment realities (Commission on Social Justice, 1994, pp340-350). Key recommendations included assistance for low income home-owners; rebalancing of housing finance to support bricks and mortar rather than individuals; and re-investment of the receipts from council house sales in refurbishment and new house building.

In the 1997 election, a New Labour Government was elected to power with a manifesto commitment to 'stop the growth of the underclass' (Scottish Labour, 1997, p19). With respect to housing policy, New Labour pledged to encourage flexibility in mortgage finance and a three-way partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors to promote social housing and the phased release of English and Welsh councils' existing capital receipts from the sales of assets (Labour Party, 1997). Both the re-investment of capital receipts and New Labour's 'flagship' welfare to work policy were cited as strategies which would tackle youth homelessness (Labour Party, 1997). Soon after the 1997 election, the New Labour government restored some of the priority to homeless households which had been removed by the 1996 Housing Act (Chapter Four).

During 1997 and 1998, the New Labour government increasingly adopted 'the language of social exclusion' and explicitly linked single homelessness to social exclusion. In August 1997, Peter Mandelson (then, Minister without portfolio)

announced the launch of a Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit, charged with effective co-ordination of policy and implementation across Whitehall Departments and agencies outside of central government, although the unit had no additional budget (Mandelson, 1997; Lloyd, 1997; Blake, 1998). Street homelessness was among the three top priorities set for the unit later in the year (*Observer*, 1997; *Independent*, 1997).

For the first two years in office, the New Labour government adhered rigidly to the spending plans set by the previous Conservative administration. During this period, a comprehensive review of all government expenditure was undertaken, which resulted in some increased capital expenditure for social housing provision during the final three years of the Parliament (*Times*, 1998). By the end of the study period, a comprehensive strategy for reducing street homelessness in central London had also been announced (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998b).

Housing policy during most of the study period was characterised by an emphasis on the expansion of home ownership and reviving the privately rented sector at the expense of the contraction and residualisation of the council sector (Malpass and Murie, 1994). While the housing association sector expanded for some of the period, trends of residualisation were also identified (Page, 1993; Lee *et al*, 1995). The broad trends of expansion of home ownership and private renting concealed increasing differentiation and marginalisation of low income households within those tenures (Forrest, Murie and Williams, 1990; Lee and Murie, 1997).

For most of the study period, the demands upon the social housing sector from low income households remained consistently high and levels of statutory and single homelessness increased significantly. Towards the end of the study period, however, commentators were reporting evidence of 'lack of demand' for social housing in some parts of Britain, most notably in Northern English cities (Lowe, 1998).

Understanding single homelessness: previous approaches

While homelessness has long been recognised as a critical social issue, Neale (1995, 1997a, 1997b) asserted that explanations of the problem often lacked a rigorous analytical, conceptual or theoretical framework. As the review in this section will demonstrate, however, a range of theoretical perspectives have been applied to the issue of homelessness. The perceived lack of analytical rigour in research on single homelessness may, at least partly, be attributed to the way in which much research during the study period was funded: that is, as policy relevant, but not necessarily theoretically informed, empirical studies.

Two key shortcomings can be identified in relation to 'policy-oriented' research. Firstly, the parameters of the research may be constrained by the policy focus of the Government of the day or the funding agency. Secondly, 'policy reports' may not fully exploit the potential for the associated data sets to contribute to theoretical and scholarly debates. Many of the most significant empirical studies of homelessness during the study period were commissioned by central government, quangos, housing providers or independent research trusts which were more concerned to inform housing policy and practice in the short term than to reflect upon the long term implications of social change. One of the aims of this thesis is to reconsider such empirical data in the light of conceptual and scholarly debates (Chapter Two).

Neale (1995, 1997a, 1997b) explored the potential of a number of theoretical perspectives (feminsm, post-structuralism, postmodernism, structuration and critical theory) for increasing our understanding of homelessness, concluding that no single theoretical framework provided a conclusive explanation of homelessness. Nevertheless, Neale (1995) argued that the formulation of policy responses would benefit from a more theoretically informed approach.

Within the extensive literature on homelessness, detailed historical accounts of policy and legislation in Britain can be found in Watson with Austerberry (1986); Murie (1988); Drake (1989); Karn (1990), Clapham, Kemp and Smith (1991), Sommerville, (1994) Robson and Poustie (1996) and Burrows, Pleace and Quilgars (1997). Much of the policy literature, with respect to single

homelessness is reviewed in Chapter Four. The remainder of this section seeks to identify key themes in understanding single homelessness from earlier literature.

Approaches to understanding homelessness have often been linked to the ideological perspectives outlined above, most notably neo-liberalism and social democracy. For most of the study period, British national governments clearly subscribed to a neo-Liberal ideology, while much of the scholarly literature advocated a social-democratic perspective as a critique of contemporary policy developments. For example, a common theme in the literature on homelessness has been reference to conceptions of *deserving* versus *undeserving* poor people in the allocation of welfare resources, including access to housing. In Britain, these notions, which are fundamental to debates about social exclusion, have been closely associated with the neo-liberal ideological perspective and have been identified in the analysis of policies from the inception of state intervention in social welfare up to the present day (Lowe, 1997). In contrast, the social democratic approach has advocated a universalist, rather than a selective, approach to welfare (Clapham and Smith, 1990; Clapham, Kemp and Smith, 1990).

The inequalities experienced by 'non-family households' in a housing system dominated by the neo-liberal ideological perspective were explored by Watson (1986). Watson presented a historical overview of single people's exclusion from social housing and other tenures, despite demographic trends towards an increase in single-person households which were already established by the late 1970s/early 1980s. The needs/merits of nuclear families (two parents and children) dominated policy and practice and single people became labelled as a 'special group' (Watson, 1986).

Watson developed a Marxist/feminist approach which recognised the importance of capitalist and patriarchal relations, concluding that:

> *it is now essential that a recognition of changing demographic and social structures begins to be incorporated into housing policy and provision. New initiatives are needed to accommodate the changing needs of households at different stages of the life cycle. In a society where 70%*

of all households do not fit the traditional nuclear family model, it is time
we recognised those existing and inappropriate ways in which our
housing stock is both produced and allocated.

Watson (1986, pp24-25).

Watson's conclusion remained applicable throughout the study period, and the issues raised are revisited and developed throughout the thesis.

Sommerville (1992) also attempted to construct a detailed theoretical framework for analysing home and homelessness. Homelessness was not simply the 'opposite' of home, but had many dimensions of meaning and a seven-fold conceptual classification of the meanings of home and homelessness signified by indicators of shelter, hearth, heart, privacy, roots, abode and paradise/ideality was developed (Somerville, 1992, p533).

Moreover, Sommerville argued that homelessness needed to be considered within the wider context of the social and political relations of home and homelessness. Sommerville (1992, p537) concluded that class relations and class organisations were crucial in determining the social order, of which homelessness was one dimension. Sommerville advocated further application of class theory as a new sociology of housing which could more accurately explain homelessness. Sommerville argued that it made little sense to talk about the *causes of home,* hence analysis of the *causes of homelessness* represented nothing more than tautology (1992, p536). Notwithstanding the pure logic of Sommerville's case, however, homelessness is usually problematic for those affected and is commonly constructed as a 'problem' which must have some causes.

The debates between social democratic and neo-liberal interpretations of homelessness have also characterised explanations of homelessness in terms of 'structure' versus 'agency' (respectively) and the interplay between the two, or, structuration theory as developed by Giddens (1984). Among studies which have analysed the causes of homelessness, there has been a degree of consensus that explanation lies in Britain's social, economic and housing market structures, rather than any personal inadequacies of those who cannot gain

access to appropriate housing (Greve, 1991; Johnson *et al*, 1991; Bramley 1993).

Figure 1.2 Statutory homelessness statistics: reasons for leaving last home

England and Wales Homeless households: reasons for leaving last home (Housing Act 1985) (Source: Wilcox, 1994, p179, Table 75).	Scotland Homeless households: reasons for leaving last home (Housing (Scotland) Act 1987) (Source: Scottish Office, 1998, p17, Table 7d).
- parents, relatives of friends no longer willing or able to accommodate - breakdown of relationships with partner *loss*[2] (*sic*) of private dwelling, including tied accommodation - mortgage arrears - rent arrears - local authority dwelling - rent arrears - private dwelling - other	- Friends or relatives no longer willing or able to accommodate - Dispute with spouse or cohabitee - violent - non-violent - Court order - rent arrears - mortgage default - other - Loss of service tenancy - Fire, flood, storm etc - Discharged from institution - Other reasons - action by landlord *lost*[3] (*sic*) accommodation in hostel - gave up secure accommodation - overcrowding - other

Explanations of homelessness in Britain have also been influenced by the way statutory homelessness statistics were collected. For example, causes of homelessness have been interpreted in terms of the reasons why people moved away from their previous place of residence. The notion of why homeless households 'lost their last home' has become entrenched in British debate as a

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[2] Emphasis added.
[3] Emphasis added.

39

result of the stautory returns from local housing authorities, to central government, which required authorities to record 'reasons for homelessness under headings listed in Figure 1.2.

The 'reasons for homelessness' published by Government reflected standard recording practice rather than any rigorous evaluation of the root causes of the problem. Over the years, the proportions of homeless applicants recorded under the various headings varied very little, with around 40 per cent of acceptances becoming homeless because friends or relatives could no longer accommodate them (Wilcox, 1994; Scottish Office, 1998).

The 'causes' of homelessness were attributed to factors which could equally be construed as 'normal' life processes of household formation and dissolution, and failed to take account of the opportunities for households to gain access to alternative housing at the times when they needed to move on from a particular place. That is to say, statutory homelessness statistics reflected an emphasis on the agency of individuals in a crisis situation, to the neglect of wider structural processes which influenced their housing circumstances over the longer term. In Anderson (1994, p10), it was argued that the explanation of homelessness lay as much in the *reasons why people could not gain access to alternative housing* as in the reasons why they had to move on from particular addresses at particular times in their lives.

Rather than focusing simplistically on why homeless households left their 'last home', Anderson (1994, 1997) emphasised the need to view homelessness as an outcome of the processes by which low income households gained access to, or were excluded from, housing which met their needs. The process of gaining access to housing was characterised as involving several stages: expressing demand; negotiating access in different housing tenures; and maintaining a home (Anderson, 1994). This notion of process was central to many interpretations of social exclusion and to the development of this thesis.

Sullivan (1994) also conceptualised housing outcomes in terms of a dynamic process of housing access within the broader dynamics of housing consumption. According to Sullivan, defining the processes of housing access in

any specific context involved the identification of the sets of social relations that consumers entered into and the formal and informal conditions of negotiation surrounding access (Sullivan, 1994, p679). The point at which consumers interacted with the wider structures of housing provision, to produce a particular range of housing outcomes allowed analysis to explicitly address the micro-macro interface (Sullivan, 1994, p680).

In other words, the access process revealed the interaction between structure and agency (Anderson, 1994). For Sullivan (1994), the moment of negotiation of housing access provided the crucial interface between individuals and wider structural processes:

> It is at this point that the relations of power underlying social interaction in specific contexts are concretised and existing structures of disadvantage are reproduced.
>
> (Sullivan, 1994, p683).

Sullivan (1994) acknowledged the interaction between consumers and the social agents of housing provision, as well as broader social structures, referring to the structuration debate. However, she maintained that processes of access to housing predominantly reflected structural effects, by virtue of the constraints imposed by the differentials in consumers' power (Sullivan, 1994, p684). Sullivan's model of the processes of housing outcomes encompassed the actions of consumers, producers (providers) and the wider structural relations which impacted on the housing system (Sullivan, 1994, p691). The model was designed to be sufficiently general for the purposes of comparative analysis across all housing tenures. However Sullivan's detailed analysis focused on home ownership. This thesis develops the concept of processes of housing access in relation to rented housing for lower income groups, within a broader framework associated with the concept of social exclusion.

Throughout this thesis, it is argued that the social situation of being without a home may be best conceived as an outcome, but that any coherent analysis of homelessness as a social issue needs to take account of the social and economic processes which result in such an outcome. Drawing on the structure versus agency debate, individuals' aspirations and ability to resolve their housing

needs may well be as important as any given criteria for physical housing conditions in defining homelessness.

For example, someone who moves into poor quality, temporary accommodation (for example on first moving to a new area for work) may do so in the expectation that sooner, rather than later, they will have the financial means to move to improved accommodation. In contrast, some one with fewer financial resources may percieve the same accommodation very differently, if they cannot envisage a time when they will be able to move on to something better. As with other aspects of welfare or consumption, the choices which individuals may make about their housing situation will be constrained by wider economic and social circumstances, as well as their own preferences and this must be taken account of in conceptualising homelessness.

Over the years, a range of theoretical perspectives have been applied to the issue of homelessness. Analysis in relation to neo-liberal and social democratic ideologies have reflected the prevailing political values which have shaped British social policy and critiques of those policies. The remainder of this thesis seeks to explore whether concepts associated with social exclusion can further aid our understanding of single homelessness in Britain.

The structure of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, the detailed research method for the thesis is set out in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, the literature on social exclusion is reviewed, tracing the development of key debates and theoretical interpretations; and analysing these in relation to housing policy and provision. Drawing on the concepts identified from the review, a framework for the analysis of single homelessness in subsequent chapters is developed. Chapter Four presents an overview of single homelessness during the study period (1987/8-1997/8), drawing upon published research, policy documents and scholarly literature to assess the nature of the problem and the developing policy responses at the national level. Chapter Four then begins to consider to what

extent interpretations of the problem of single homelessness and proposed policy solutions 'fit' with the notions of social exclusion and/or inclusion.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven present the secondary analysis of the two empirical data sets which informed the critique of social exclusion and single homelessness. Chapter Five revisits the Department of the Environment's 1993 survey of single homelessness (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993) in order to examine social exclusion in relation to the perceptions of single people who had experienced homelessness. The chapter incorporates a re-analysis of qualitative group discussions with homeless single people living in a range of housing and social circumstances.

In Chapter Six, the analysis is extended to the policy and practice of local housing and support service providers, focusing on the *process* of access to housing for single people of working age. Depth interviews across three local case study areas are analysed to compare policy and practice towards single people in different housing circumstances, including those who had experienced homelessness. Chapter Seven presents further secondary analysis of depth interviews with local housing and support staff, in relation to a wider range of concepts associated with social exclusion, beyond the process of access to housing.

The final chapter draws together the preceeding analysis and presents conclusions on the value of the concept of social exclusion in understanding single homelessness and the extent to which the debates around social exclusion can inform and improve social policy analysis. Chapter Eight also reflects on the limitations of policy analysis based around the notion of social exclusion and responding to crises such as the escalation of rooflessness. The case is made for a more comprehensive approach to policy development based on acknowledgement of the structural constraints imposed by dominant ideologies and a preventative approach to policy planning across aspects of welfare, emphasising housing and social cohesion, rather than homelessness and social exclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Introduction: the reflective approach

In the concluding remarks to their text on housing research, Robertson and McLaughlin stated:

> *This book has been about viewing research as a process, about seeing the research task not as a collection of stages that you need to pass through, but as a complete operation which needs to be considered as an entity.*
>
> (Robertson and McLaughlin, 1996, p177).

This thesis set out to assess the value of the concept of social exclusion in aiding our understanding of single homelessness and, thereby, other social policy issues. Rather than simply presenting the methods for empirical data collection and analysis, this chapter seeks to provide a discussion of the research process which embraces the entirety of the thesis. In considering research planning and design, Robertson and McLaughlin (1996, p30) argued that the process should always be thought of as a whole, but too often was not.

Like the policy process, research needed to be viewed in dynamic terms, and eleven potential stages in the research process were identified, with feedback and review ongoing at all stages (Robertson and McLaughlin, 1996, p30). The importance of process and a dynamic approach to analysis are central to this thesis. Dynamic approaches to social policy and social research were refined during the study period, notably by Leisering and Walker (1998), who have asserted that:

> *Approaches to 'thinking dynamically' have triggered the beginning of an intellectual revolution, one that blends insights from across the social sciences, merges quantitative and qualitative methodologies, combines*

macro and micro views of society and exploits the power of international

comparisons.

(Leisering and Walker, 1998, p*xiv*).

Drawing upon Robertson and McLaughlin (1996), the research approach for this thesis can be characterised as a dynamic, reflective research process, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 The reflective research process

1. establish a broad area of inquiry
2. identify key research issues and projects, embracing agendas set by the policy community
3. conduct 'short term', policy specific, research projects
   - select appropriate research method
   - develop and pilot data collection instruments
   - collect and analyse data
   - interpret data, write up and disseminate findings
4. review conceptual, analytical debates in initial and related areas of inquiry
5. refine key research issues and questions to reflect longer term conceptual debates
6. consider scope for re-analysis of primary data in relation to longer term debates (or consider collection of new data)
7. select appropriate research method for secondary analysis of existing data (or collection of new data - following steps within stage 3)
8. Analyse or re-analyse empirical data
   - in relation to conceptual debates
   - reflecting upon longer term policy and social change
9. Write up findings and conclusions from the reflective research process.

[Developed with reference to Robertson and McLaughlin, 1996, p32.]

The thesis evolved from a programme of policy oriented work on single homelessness. The influence of the housing research community (in particular of funding agencies) was significant in determining the type and nature of primary research which received funding and in determining the scope of the policy reports of the research findings. The research questions for the thesis (as outlined in Chapter One) were more significantly influenced by much wider policy and scholarly debates on social change, principally the emerging debate on social exclusion, which appeared to offer a new paradigm for the analysis of social issues, such as single homelessness.

Undoubtedly there were other empirical data sets on single homelessness which could have been analysed (or re-analysed) in relation to social exclusion. The

data sets used in this thesis were selected because the researcher's[4] role in the primary studies had led to the hypothesis that there would be a degree of 'fit' with concepts associated with social exclusion. Nevertheless, the value of other studies in the field is acknowledged and this research represents just one contribution to the wider debates on single homelessness and social exclusion.

The relationship between research and the policy process (see, for example, Bulmer *et al*, 1986) was crucial to the research method adopted for this study. Research may interact with policy in a number of ways, including: describing policy content; analysing the policy process; explaining policy outputs; evaluating the impacts of policy; providing information for policy making; and seeking to improve policy-making systems (Hill, 1997, pp2-5). Some aspects of the interaction between research and policy were more pertinent to the primary research which preceded the thesis, while others were more relevant to the reflective approach of the thesis.

For example, the primary data sets utilised in the study were collected in order to inform the policy process. Policy advocacy was not within the remit of *Single homeless people*, but suggestions for better policy-making emerged from *Social housing for single people.* For this thesis, it was considered essential to incorporate some description of policy content in order to contextualise the qualitative secondary data analysis and any deeper analysis of policy (Chapter One, Chapter Four). The particular concern with the policy process and the influence of different actors in a policy community was emphasised in Chapter One. Overall, the thesis was more concerned with the broad outcomes from policy, rather than mechanistic outputs.

The potential scale of the project was vast and some selectivity had to be exercised in reviewing the literature within policy studies, social policy and housing studies, which was potentially of relevance. Chapter Three concentrates on the key contributions from the debates on social exclusion which were found to be of value in developing an analytical framework for qualitative secondary data analysis. The scale of policy activity and research in relation to single

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[4] Throughout this chapter the author of the thesis is referred to as 'the researcher'.

homelessness since the late 1980s has also been substantial. In adopting a broad approach which seeks to understand 'the big picture', there was necessarily some trade-off on the level of detail which could be included in the analysis in Chapter Four.

The remainder of this chapter explains the research approach and methodology with reference to the reflective research process illustrated in Figure 2.1. Firstly, the initial area of inquiry (single homelessness) and the primary research projects are considered (stages 1-3). Then the process of reviewing policy debates in relation to social exclusion and the secondary analysis of qualitative data (stages 4-8) are explained in detail. Finally, conclusions on the approach to the research are presented. The remainder of the thesis presents the findings from the reflective research process (stage nine).

Single homelessness and the primary research projects

The initial broad area of inquiry for the researcher was single homelessness in Britain. As indicated in Chapter One, homelessness was an enduring social issue throughout the study period and academic analysis increasingly focused on single homelessness, in relation to the growing visibility of street homelessness.

From 1990-1994 the researcher was engaged in a programme of research in the broad field of single homelessness, within a research centre which sought to illuminate the interactions between housing and other dimensions of social policy. Homelessness and access to housing represented one theme within the research centre. From 1994-1998, the researcher was engaged in teaching housing and social policy, as well as ongoing research into single homelessness. During the course of the study period, a number of policy relevant, empirical projects were undertaken, two of which were selected for further analysis for the purposes of this thesis. Over the same period, conceptual and theoretical ideas were developed in response to changing debates and policy developments (Anderson, 1993, 1994, 1997).

As indicated in Chapter One, this thesis drew upon two empirical studies, for which the researcher was joint author:

1. *Single homeless people*, by Isobel Anderson, Peter Kemp and Deborah Quilgars, published in 1993 by HMSO (London)

2. *Social housing for single people*, by Isobel Anderson and James Morgan, published in 1997 by the Housing Policy and Practice Unit, University of Stirling.

The research methods used for the two studies were separate and distinct from the methods utilised for this thesis. It should be noted, however, that the researcher was fully involved in the research design, implementation, analysis and reporting for both studies, and that this involvement underpinned the conceptual development of this thesis. The researcher was joint project director for *Single homeless people* and project director for *Social housing for single people*. Appendices A and B set out the research aims and methods for the primary studies. The remainder of this section discusses those aspects of the studies which were re-analysed for this thesis, clarifying the contribution of the researcher in the primary research. The precise secondary analysis undertaken specifically for this thesis, and the detailed approach to that analysis, are set out in the following sections.

Single homeless people

The principal aim of *Single homeless people* was to collect comprehensive information on the nature of single homelessness in England. Specifically, the study sought to establish the characteristics of single homeless people; the reasons why they became, and remained, homeless; and their accommodation and support needs and preferences for the future.

The definition of homelessness adopted for the survey broadly comprised those homeless people outside of the priority need categories of the homelessness legislation in place at the time (Part III of the Housing Act 1985 for England and Wales). The survey specifically excluded people who had dependent children in their care and people in temporary accommodation who had been accepted for

permanent housing by a local authority. The survey included single people who were homeless and living in temporary accommodation such as hostels and Bed and Breakfast hotels, as well as those who were literally roofless and sleeping rough on the streets, at the time of the study.

The study combined both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In the structured, quantitative survey, interviews were conducted with 1346 single homeless people living in hostels or bed and breakfast accommodation and 507 people who were sleeping rough (defined as having slept rough on at least one night out of the previous seven nights).

A series of 20 qualitative group discussions were also conducted and these were the focus of re-analysis for this thesis. The researcher took a lead in the research design for this part of the study, although the actual moderation of the discussion groups was conducted by a freelance consultant (Hedges, 1992). The decision to appoint a consultant for this part of the study was taken in view of the substantial scale of the overall study and the particular expertise of the consultant in qualitative group discussions (Hedges, 1985). The 'expertise' on the substantive research issues, however, rested with the research team.

The group discussions were conducted between May and August 1991. The researcher took responsibility for contacting the agencies concerned, securing consent and arranging the timetable for the discussion groups. Discussion groups took place in a range of establishments which catered for single homeless people: ten hostels, two day centres and one bed and breakfast hotel. These were selected from the sampling frame compiled for the quantitative survey. The group discussions were held in London, Nottingham and Manchester, a subset of the areas selected for the quantitative survey.

The venues for the group discussions were selected to reflect different characteristics and living circumstances of single homeless people. Hostels varied in size, usual length of stay, target client group and the nature of the accommodation (e.g. single rooms, shared rooms and dormitory accommodation). Day centres, in particular, enabled the inclusion of people who were sleeping rough. Specifically, women, young adults and people from

minority ethnic groups were included in the discussion groups. The 20 discussion groups, in the 13 establishments, involved 86 single homeless people, an average of four people per group. The consultant took responsibility for recruitment of respondents in the different venues. Appendix A shows further details of the composition of the discussion groups.

The group discussions were semi-structured, and moderated by the consultant using a topic guide prepared in conjunction with the research team. Group discussions lasted for around 1.5 hours. Issues discussed included:

• the meaning and nature of homelessness

• housing and homelessness histories

• the experience of being homeless and sleeping rough

• temporary accommodation and facilities for homeless people

• mobility among homeless people

• the impact on health

• income and benefits

• work

• availability of advice and help

• aspects of lifestyle and social life

• relationships with statutory and voluntary agencies

• needs and preferences for housing in the future

• issues in relation to gender, age and ethnic group were explored further in some discussion groups.

All of the discussion groups were recorded and transcribed. The data was analysed by the consultant, who produced a report for the main research team which was used as a source document for *Single homeless people* (Hedges, 1992).

Social housing for single people

The second study, *Social housing for single people* was developed by the researcher, in response to some of the issues raised by *Single homeless people*, and was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The research aimed to

provide an overview of the opportunities for low income single people to gain access to social housing in the mid-late 1990s. *Single homeless people* had provided extensive information on the nature of single homelessness and, in 1990, central Government had launched its 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative aimed at reducing the extent of street homelessness in central London. Very little was known, however, about the policy responses to single homelessness outside of central London. *Social housing for single people* aimed to fill that gap in information.

The researcher was solely responsible for the design of the study and the formulation of the research questions. Building upon existing knowledge of the relationship between homelessness and housing policy, it was considered important to attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of the opportunities for all single people to gain access to social housing. To this end, the study examined local authority and housing association responses to single homelessness within a wider consideration of their housing policies and practices towards all single people, not just those who became homeless. The notion that the issue of *homelessness* required to be contextualised and analysed in relation to *housing*, has been central to this thesis and is developed in subsequent chapters.

Two broad research questions were addressed in *Social housing for single people*:

1. How did single people fair in the social housing system, relative to other household types?

2. How were single people with different housing needs and circumstances prioritised: which single people were more or less likely to gain access to social housing?

The project aimed to establish whether progressive practices were being developed in response to the acknowledged growth of single person households and the continuing problem of single homelessness. Social housing was taken to include accommodation available to rent on a permanent or long-term basis in the council and housing association sectors.

In order to answer the above research questions, data was collected from three main sources (as set out in full in Appendix B). First, a qualitative analysis of

homelessness and housing allocation policy documents was conducted on a 10% sample of local authority housing departments and housing associations in Scotland, England and Wales. This aspect of the study was conducted by a research fellow, under the supervision of the researcher, and the results informed the subsequent stages of the research.

Second, quantitative data was collected through a postal questionnaire survey sent to all local housing authorities in Scotland, England and Wales. The questionnaire sought information on four main policy areas in relation to housing opportunities for single people: allocations, homelessness, nominations to housing associations and other special initiatives. The questionnaire survey was administered by a research fellow, under the supervision of the researcher. The researcher was fully involved in the questionnaire design and undertook most of the analysis and reporting of the questionnaire survey for *Social housing for single people.*

The third element of the empirical work was the collection of qualitative data through pluralistic case studies of policy and practice in five local authority areas:

- a London borough
- an English non-metropolitan district
- an English metropolitan borough
- an English non-metropolitan district which had transferred its housing stock to a housing association
- a Scottish district which was a large city authority.

The case studies aimed to build upon the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire survey, by examining the relationships between policy and practice at the local level. By conducting pluralistic local case studies, it was possible to study the processes of policy formulation, implementation and review within a local policy community and to compare and contrast agreed policy with day to day practice. The five case studies also facilitated comparison between local authorities operating in differing local housing markets and with differing approaches to housing provision and to single homelessness. The researcher was fully involved in the case study aspect of the project, taking responsibility for

the final selection of case study areas; the design of research instruments, and supervision of fieldwork.

Up to ten days of fieldwork was conducted in each of the five case study areas, all of which had already provided some policy information for stage one of the project. The researcher undertook the fieldwork interviews in one of the five case study areas (The London Borough), with two research fellows conducting the fieldwork in the other four case study areas. For each case study area, broad agreement for participation was sought through the head of the local housing service and a day to day contact person was nominated for each case study. Data collected in the area case studies included statistical information; updated policy documents; and depth interviews with key staff at policy and front-line levels in housing and support organisations in the area.

The contact person for each area was able to provide information on the range of agencies working with single people and from this it was possible to select individuals for interview. Broadly, the study aimed to interview staff at senior, middle management and front-line levels in local housing services. In addition, interviews were also conducted with staff in local housing associations, social services/social work departments, and voluntary sector agencies. A total of 60 interviews were carried out, with a greater number being conducted in the London and Scottish city authorities, than in the other three case study areas.

The case study interviews were semi-structured, lasting between one and two hours. An interview schedule was designed by the research team which set out the broad areas for discussion. The research team members adapted the basic interview schedule as appropriate to each interview and allowed for exploration of issues which came to prominence during individual interviews. Across all topic areas, the interviewers paid particular attention to the policy process and to comparing policy and practice.

The main areas of policy and practice covered in the case study interviews were:
• the characteristics of the local area (geographical, political, economic and social)
• the organisation of the local housing service

- the organisation of other housing-related services (including social services and voluntary sector agencies)

- local housing needs and demands (including housing needs assessment and the scale of the local homelessness problem)

- the housing circumstances of single people in the area

- local housing provision - stock profile and availability

- access to housing and barriers to access

    - the housing waiting list

    - homelessness

    - other routes

- single people and Care in the Community

- young single people, the care system and leaving care

- tenancy allocation and management

- support for single people in managing their tenancies

- special initiatives for single homeless people.

The case study fieldwork was undertaken during 1995 with analysis and reporting of the full study completed by 1997. The researcher undertook analysis of two case study areas (the London Borough and the Stock Transfer District) for the report *Social housing for single people*. A research fellow conducted the initial analysis of the remaining three case study areas. The researcher was solely responsible for writing the final report of the study, although this was jointly authored as an acknowledgement of the research fellow's contribution to the data collection and preliminary analysis[5]. While some case study analysis was incorporated into *Social housing for single people*, the report focused mainly on the findings from the questionnaire survey, leaving considerable scope for further analysis of the case study material.

Qualitative methods in the primary research

Qualitative methods were heavily employed in the primary and secondary analysis for this thesis, but the merits of quantitative methods were also

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[5] The second research fellow undertook four weeks of fieldwork (acknowledged in the report) but did not contribute to analysis or writing.

recognised. The approaches have been viewed as complementary, the most appropriate to be used according to the nature of the research task, and often combined in any one research project (as in the primary research studies). Nevertheless, there were a number of reasons why qualitative methods were usefully employed in the primary studies, and produced data which was amenable to secondary analysis for this thesis.

It has been asserted that qualitative methods are of particular value in understanding the complexity of a particular subject (Finch, 1986) and in exploring sensitive subjects (Walker, 1985a). The experience of being homeless fitted both those criteria. Renzetti and Lee (1993) defined sensitive topics as those which were potentially intimate, discreditable or incriminating, or which raised challenging technical and ethical issues. Further, the potential consequences or implications for participants may influence the reliability and validity of the data. Examples included child abuse, the underground economy, AIDS and marital rape (Renzetti and Lee, 1993). In comparison, the discussions with homeless people re-analysed for this thesis could be characterised as moderately sensitive, rather than highly sensitive.

Qualitative techniques also offered a way of 'getting research subjects to do the thinking', for example, because they were directly involved in a policy area and could bring a wide range of knowledge and experience to bear upon the research issue (Walker, 1985a). This was the case with *Social housing for single people.* In other instances, qualitative methods are useful in order to gain first hand experience of a problem, as in *Single homeless people.*

Since qualitative techniques are less structured than quantitative ones, they can be more responsive to the respondent or the nature of data (Walker, 1985a). That feature was particularly important in *Social housing for single people,* where the case study areas were all very different and the policy environment changed during the study period. Similarly, qualitative methods allowed the researcher to exploit the context of data gathering to enhance the value of the data. Again, this was particularly relevant to this thesis, where the researcher's close involvement in the primary data collection, and ongoing research interests,

facilitated a thorough knowledge of the changing policy and practice context for single homelessness.

Two of the main techniques in qualitative research are group discussions and depth interviews (Walker, 1985b) and both of these were employed in the primary empirical projects re-analysed for this study. Walker (1985a) and Jones (1985a) both argued for the use of minimally structured topic guides in qualitative research, to allow maximum flexibility to explore issues of concern to the respondents or participants. This is not always appropriate in policy relevant research, however, as there may well be particular topics, upon which the researchers and those who commissioned the research require specific information. The group discussions and depth interviews re-analysed for this study were best characterised as 'semi-structured'.

Hedges (1985) considered group interviewing to be most useful where the researcher sought to uncover areas of agreement or disagreement, and where the group situation could enhance the data through drawing out reactions and diversity of opinion. For Hedges (1985), the optimum group size was usually around 6 people and several groups were needed to be able to draw meaningful conclusions, say 4-12 groups or 20-100 people (which was relatively close to the sample for *Single homeless people*). Group discussions were characterised as a 'steered conversation' rather than an interview, moderated using a topic guide which mapped out the purpose of the exercise and a broad outline for the order of events, but which was not overly prescriptive.

A key weakness of group discussions was that there was less time available for each individual and Hedges (1985) cautioned against using group discussions on grounds of reducing costs (i.e. including more participants for a given budget). Researchers also needed to be aware that social and peer pressures may influence participation in discussion groups. Consequently, groups may sometimes be less suitable for highly sensitive topics, but were used to successful effect in *Single homeless people* (Hedges, 1992).

Jones (1985a) identified key pitfalls in depth interviewing, including the potential for interviewer bias, according to preconceptions about the research issue. The

interviewer's ideas needed to be acknowledged and used creatively where possible. Further, the interview process was not perfectly replicable, especially where there was more than one field researcher, as was the case for *Social housing for single people.* The processes of briefing and de-briefing before and after fieldwork were utilised to minimise the impact of these issues on the quality of the data collected.

The interview process could also be influenced by the status of the respondent (for example, front-line staff, compared to senior managers). Jones (1985a, p52) also raised the issue of the relevance of the research to participants and their likely commitment to the study. Respondents may well feel exploited or feel the research is not relevant to them, or that it will have little eventual impact on their lives. All of these factors could have influenced the attitudes of respondents towards taking part in research. The case studies for *Social housing for single people,* involved a large number of interviews and there was likely to have been a degree of variation among respondents in terms of their 'commitment' to the research. On the whole, however, few people declined to take part in the research and the majority of respondents appeared to fully understand the aims of the study and to be prepared to offer honest and comprehensive responses during interviews and discussions.

Jones (1985a) also highlighted the limited nature of a one-off interview in terms of the degree of familiarity which can be achieved with the material. For *Social housing for single people,* researchers familiarised themselves with background information, before spending a concentrated two week period in the case study areas. The fieldwork period allowed a reasonable opportunity to get to know both individual staff and organisational cultures, and to assess inter-relationships within the case study areas.

Qualitative methods in the reflective research process

As the researcher's work on single homelessness progressed, the prevailing debates in social policy were increasingly influenced by the evolving discourse on social exclusion. The question arose as to how valuable the concept of social

exclusion was in understanding social issues and developing policy responses. As indicated in Chapter One, the issue of single homelessness represented a suitable case study for the exploration of the value of the concept of social exclusion (others may well have been equally valid).

In evaluating the concept of social exclusion, the thesis aimed to 'integrate and contextualise' data collected over the study period, drawing upon the 'policy orientation' (Lasswell, 1968, 1970, 1971), summarised by Parsons (1995) as: multi-method; multi-disciplinary; problem-focused; concerned to map the contextuality of the policy process; and where the goal is to integrate knowledge into an overarching discipline. A substantial element of the thesis comprised secondary analysis of qualitative data, but the wider review of existing knowledge drew upon research based on both quantitative and qualitative techniques and methods. While the thesis was grounded within the broad field of social policy, it was multi-disciplinary in as much as it also drew upon theories, concepts and debates in, political science, sociology and economics.

For the most part, the study was problem focused, concentrating on the issue of single homelessness. Some analysts (for example, Silverman 1993) have been critical of approaches which focus exclusively on 'social problems', an issue taken on board within the study. Indeed, the conclusions suggest that a move away from problem-focused policy development would assist 'social cohesion' (Chapter Eight). Nevertheless, the 'problem-focus' for the research was fundamental to the development of the 'non-problem-focus' of the conclusion. The thesis was very much concerned to map the contextuality for the policy process and to integrate existing knowledge into an overarching discipline, by setting the analysis of single homelessness within the wider context of the evolving debates on social exclusion.

The thesis sought to examine single homelessness and social exclusion through a reflective approach, which re-conceptualised policy and research developments during the period 1987/8-1997/8. It was considered that the secondary analysis of qualitative data might have particular value as a tool for reflection on, and conceptualisation of, the subject matter. There was no guarantee of 'success' and the thesis effectively experimented with the research

methodology and the scope for secondary analysis of qualitative data, as well as endeavouring to answer the research questions posed in Chapter One. The discussion below summarises key debates on the explanatory value of a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Developments in the secondary analysis of qualitative data and limitations of the approach are discussed in the following section.

In considering the explanatory potential of qualitative data, Walker (1985a) concluded that although the analysis of qualitative material was more explicitly interpretive, than for quantitative analysis, it was no less careful or systematic. Insights into the social world came from a full engagement with the subject(s), rather than a stance of uncommitted neutrality (Walker, 1985a). Qualitative analysis allowed the researcher to understand the respondent's perspective, and from this to develop concepts at a higher level of abstraction which constituted the basis of explanation (Walker, 1985a, p13) . Such an approach underpinned this thesis.

Widely regarded as pioneers of qualitative analysis, Glaser and Strauss (1967), developed the concept of grounded theory, that is, theory developed directly from the interpretation of empirical data. They argued that such theory should fit the substantive area in which it would be used and be understandable to concerned lay people. Additionally, grounded theory should be sufficiently general to be applicable to a multitude of diverse daily situations in the substantive area and allow the user partial control over the structure and process of daily situations as they change through time (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The principles of grounded theory were further developed by Strauss and Corbin (1994). Referring to the earlier work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory was characterised as a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data which is systematically collected and analysed. Grounded theory aimed to close the gap between empirical research and theory. Strauss and Corbin (1994) emphasised the continuous interplay between data collection and analysis, which fitted well with the notions of process and dynamic analysis which were central to single homelessness and

social exclusion (see Chapter Three and analysis in subsequent chapters). In grounded theory, interpretations must also involve the perspectives and voices of people being studied (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p274), and the thesis sought to interpret the perspectives of homeless people and housing providers.

Strauss and Corbin asked the important question, 'what does theory consist of?' and concluded that 'theory consists of *plausible* relationships proposed among *concepts* and *sets of concepts* (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p278). This was compared to the dictionary definition of theory as a coherent group of general propositions used as principles of explanation for a class of phenomena. Grounded theories were interpretive, rather than 'scientific truths' but they were also limited in time and related to contemporary social reality (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p279). Grounded theory is a principal output of qualitative research which can be used by policy makers and practitioners, as well as in academic scholarship and the qualitative analysis conducted for this thesis followed these broad principles.

As indicated above, qualitative research methods were considered most appropriate for the reflective approach of the thesis. Finch (1986) critiqued the early dominance of quantitative methods in social research and set out the case for greater use of qualitative methods. Finch argued that qualitative research encompassed not only a particular set of techniques, but also that it was founded upon an interpretivist epistemology which emphasised understanding the meaning of the social world from the perspective of the actor (Finch, 1986, pp7-10). Walker also argued that qualitative research was particularly valuable in offering 'a theory of social action grounded on the experiences - the world view - of those likely to be affected by a policy decision or thought to be part of the problem' (Walker, 1985a, p19).

For Finch, the prior dominance of the quantitative tradition in social research was closely associated with a rather straightforward, rationalist model of the policy process where empirical data fed in at appropriate stages to guide the course of policy-making (Finch, 1986). Finch was critical of this 'rational' notion that research fed into a linear policy process at some pre-determined stage and one of her key arguments was that the findings from research may influence

policy more indirectly, over a long period of time (Finch, 1986, p149). An alternative, 'diffuse' or 'enlightenment' model of policy research was developed in which there was the potential for research input at different points in the policy process and where different actors in the policy process may be differently influenced by research (Finch, 1986, p151).

An important element of Finch's model was that it de-emphasised fact-finding and accepted the potential for research to influence the conceptualisation and frames of reference of those who were involved in policy-making. According to Finch, qualitative research could offer conceptual reorientations which may raise questions of a more fundamental kind about existing policies. Finally, qualitative research was well suited to examining the policy process from the grass roots level upwards and was amenable to the involvement of practitioners in the policy process (the bottom-up model of policy making, after Lipsky, 1979). As Finch (1986, p174) concluded, 'at the very least, qualitative research can remind policy-makers of the complexity of the social situations they seek to manage'.

The environment for policy-oriented research has been continually evolving since the publication of Finch's book in 1986 and Bulmer (1986) cautioned against sole reliance on the enlightenment model. Nevertheless, Finch's ideas remained informative for the reflective approach adopted for this study, which sought to examine 'the big picture' rather than the fine detail of one particular policy programme. Qualitative research was considered particularly valuable as it offered flexibility in the research process; examined social life in context; and was concerned with process, as well as outcome (Finch, 1986). As the researcher had been involved in two studies which had collected substantive qualitative data sets which were relevant to the thesis (*Single homeless people* and *Social housing for single people*?), the decision was taken to utilise this available data and to develop a framework for the secondary analysis of these data sets. The following section discusses the advantages and limitations of this approach.

The secondary analysis of qualitative data: methodological advantages and limitations

Definitions of secondary data analysis emphasise the use of existing data in order to pursue a research question or interest which is distinct from the primary analysis of the original, empirical data (Hinds, Vogel and Clarke-Steffen, 1997; Szabo and Strang, 1997). While secondary analysis of quantitative data has been long established in the social sciences (Hakim, 1982; Procter, 1993), the secondary analysis of qualitative data is a relatively new development in social policy research (Hinds, Vogel and Clarke-Steffen, 1997). During most of the study period, secondary analysis of qualitative data remained an underdeveloped technique in terms of method and application, which had been the subject of only limited discussion in research methodology books and journals.

In their appraisal of qualitative social research methods, Bryman and Burgess (1994a) commented on the general lack of attention to *analysis* in existing literature, but their edited volume (Bryman and Burgess, 1994b) contained virtually no reference to the secondary analysis of qualitative data. The contribution entitled 'Second-hand ethnography' (Porter, 1994) focused on joint working, and the chapter on linking qualitative and quantitative analysis made only passing reference to the potential re-use of coded data after the main report was written (Mason, 1994). Even in their concluding note, which sought to identify 'issues not yet addressed', no reference was made to the issue of secondary analysis of qualitative data (Bryman and Burgess, 1994c).

Evidence that secondary analysis of qualitative data was becoming a legitimate and expanding area of social research, was demonstrated by the establishment of the Qualidata project at Essex University, which was specifically set up to catalogue qualitative data for the purposes of secondary analysis (Corti, Foster and Thompson, 1995; Hammersley, 1997; Qualidata, 1997; Corti and Thompson, 1998). However, direct correspondence with the Qualidata project revealed that staff knew of little published material on the secondary analysis of qualitative material (Fink, 1998). So far, those who had worked on data held in the Qualidata archive had mainly been social historians, but staff were in the

process of writing about the possibilities and problems in the re-use and re-analysis of particular projects (Fink, 1998).

Nevertheless, a small, but growing literature on secondary analysis of qualitative data has begun to emerge. Heaton (1998) has reviewed conceptual and empirical developments, raising various methodological and ethical issues and concluding that further work was still required in order to fully appraise the possible benefits and limitations of the approach. It is hoped that this thesis offers a useful additional contribution to that debate.

For this thesis, it was considered that there were a number of potential benefits from reconsidering existing empirical data in the reflective research process, most of which coincide with ideas put forward in support of secondary analysis of qualitative data by other authors (Hinds, Vogel and Clarke-Steffen, 1997; Sandelowski, 1997; Szabo and Strang, 1997).

First, social researchers often collect more data than is actually required, or could possibly be analysed for the initial research reports. It is not unusual to find that a substantial body of valuable data cannot be fully incorporated into a focused policy report. The collection of data is invariably a costly process and re-using the data increases the 'value for money' from the research. As indicated in Chapter One, the qualitative data collected for *Single homeless people* and *Social housing for single people*, was not fully exploited in the primary policy reports (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993; Anderson and Morgan, 1997). The secondary analysis of the data represented 'value added' to the primary analysis, without embarking on further (costly) empirical data collection.

Secondly, social research is often concerned with sensitive issues and makes considerable demands upon those being researched in terms of their time and intellectual/emotional energy. This was the case for the qualitative data sets from *Single homeless people* and *Social housing for single people*. If secondary questions could legitimately be answered from the existing data, then it made sense to return to that data set rather than place further demands upon the subjects of the research.

Finally, policy research is often conducted in fairly pressurised circumstances with a focus on the immediate policy and research issues. This was certainly the case for both primary studies. A period of further reflection is almost inevitably required in order to set the findings within a wider policy and theoretical context and so 'get the most' from the data. It is, of course, incumbent upon the researcher to be realistic as to the scope for reflective analysis of policy-related data.

Secondary analysis can involve the use of single or multiple data sets, as well as both quantitative and qualitative techniques (Heaton 1998). A typology of possible approaches according to the main focus of analysis (additional in-depth analysis; additional sub-set analysis or new perspectives/conceptual focus) and the nature of the original data (single qualitative data set, multiple qualitative data set or mixed qualitative and quantitative data set) was devised by Heaton (1998). The secondary data analysis for this thesis is best characterised as focusing on new conceptual development, drawing on multiple (two) qualitative data sets. However, the secondary analysis of qualitative data was set within a long-term reflective approach which drew upon the body of existing knowledge through systematic literature and policy reviews.

To date, most secondary analysis of qualitative data has been conducted by researchers who were closely involved in the original collection and primary analysis of the data under scrutiny (Heaton, 1998). This was the approach adopted for this thesis and it is considered that the researcher's long-term experience of the subject area, as well the detailed knowledge of the data sets selected for re-analysis were crucial to the reflective approach of this study. In other circumstances however, it may be perfectly valid for other researchers to re-analyse qualitative data from a 'fresh' perspective. Indeed, Bines (1994) previously conducted secondary analysis of the survey data and group discussions from *Single homeless people*, in relation to health issues. In contrast to this thesis, however, Bines (1994) did not employ new research questions to re-interrogate the qualitative data and Heaton (1998) remained cautious about the use of qualitative data for secondary analysis in this way.

A number of methodological and ethical issues raised by Heaton (1998) can be usefully discussed in relation to this thesis. Perhaps the most fundamental is the degree to which secondary analysis of qualitative data is tenable as a method in social research. While it could be argued that qualitative analysis reflects the subjective nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, Heaton suggests that this criticism could be equally applied to all social research and is not distinctive to qualitative analysis. In this sense, the secondary analysis of qualitative data should be as tenable as the secondary analysis of quantitative data. What is important is that individual researchers recognise the constraints of both their primary data sources and their own secondary analysis.

It has also been suggested that the boundary between primary and secondary analysis of qualitative data is not always clear, and that secondary analysis is not always recognised as such (Heaton, 1998). For this thesis, the secondary analysis of the two qualitative data sets has been made explicit, with the primary data collection and analysis being outlined above and in the appendices. Furthermore, the secondary analysis is distinguished by the application of a new framework for analysis (Chapter Three), quite different from those applied in the primary analysis.

An ethical question arises in terms of the re-use of data collected for a specific purpose. Permission to conduct qualitative secondary data analysis was granted by the funding agencies for the two primary studies (the Department of the Environment/DETR and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation), but the permission of participants in the studies was not sought. It would not have been possible to have re-traced the single homeless people interviewed for Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars (1993). However, their contributions are entirely anonymous and no individual could be identified from the thesis. The contributions of housing providers have also been anonymised for this thesis (as was the case for *Social housing for single people*) but it is more difficult to protect the identity of local authorities and officers effectively in a detailed case study within which some features of the housing system may be unique to that area.

With hindsight, it would have been feasible to have requested permission to re-use the data from senior managers in the case study areas, although it would not have been practical to check with each individual interviewee. The key question is whether permission from funding agencies is sufficient or whether it is appropriate to seek permission for secondary analysis directly from the subjects of the primary research. As secondary analysis of qualitative data becomes more highly developed, the answer would seem to lie in flagging up the possibility of secondary analysis at the time of the initial study. Research participants would then be able to give (or refuse) in-principle consent to further analysis.

Corti and Thompson (1998) reported that the Qualidata project was working with the ESRC to produce guidelines on data collection and preparation, as well as on confidentiality and copyright. The issue of the consent of participants should also be addressed with respect to the archiving process. The Qualidata archive could usefully produce a code of guidance on secondary analysis, to which those analysing data stored in the archive (as well as other qualitative data sets) would be required to adhere. Within such a code, boundaries could be established which clarify the likely nature and scope of subsequent secondary analysis and interpretation of data for research participants at the stage of primary data collection. The data re-analysed for this study had not been formally archived with the Qualidata project.

The issue of originality of interpretation with respect to secondary analysis of qualitative data is crucial to this thesis and is of wider relevance in considering the limitations to the approach. Although the primary studies re-visited for this study were jointly authored, all of the secondary analysis was conducted solely by the researcher, within a framework for conceptualising social exclusion which was devised by the researcher (Chapter Three). The reinterpretation of all of the data by the sole researcher ensured consistency in the secondary data analysis and was essential to the integrity and originality in the development of the ideas and conceptions for the thesis. Indeed, it is the re-interpretation of the data, combined with the reviews of debates on social exclusion and on policy development which underpin the distinctive and original contribution of this thesis. Others conducting secondary analysis of qualitative data would need to

be similarly confident that their analysis had produced new insights or interpretations, compared to the primary analysis.

The secondary data analysis was conducted some time after the original data collection (six years in the case of *Single homeless people*, and two years in the case of *Social housing for single people*). Some concern may be raised as to the continuing validity of the data for secondary analysis. However, it must be emphasised that this particular thesis adopted a reflective approach covering the period 1987/8-1997/8. Single homelessness has been evident throughout British social history and early debates on social exclusion also predated the beginning of the study period. An important dimension of this thesis has been to carefully situate the secondary data analysis in the context of the dynamics of single homelessness and policy development during the study period. Throughout the analysis, care has been taken to reflect the policy and legislative context within which the data was collected, as well as the stage of development of debates on social exclusion at the time of the two studies. The combination of the secondary data analysis with the wider literature and policy reviews, within a reflective approach, facilitated the overall evaluation of the value of the concept of social exclusion with respect to the changing nature of single homelessness in Britain during 1987/8-1997/8.

The issue of the extent to which the data sets utilised were sufficiently broad in relation to concepts associated with social exclusion identified in Chapter Three had to be addressed in the study. Heaton (1998) also referred to the issue of compatibility of data with the focus of secondary analysis, arguing that the scope for secondary analysis will depend on both the nature of the original data and the degree of structure applied during interviews. The nature and origins of the primary research on which the secondary analysis was based (including the contribution of the researcher to the original studies) were discussed in Chapter One and earlier in this Chapter. Appendices A and B set out the research methods for these studies in full. The broad areas covered in the discussion group/interview topic guides for the two studies were also outlined above. Both studies sought to address broad social issues and to collect comprehensive data on single homelessness and related social processes. Both studies combined qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The value of the data sets utilised for this study was that they were broad-ranging discussions of the general problem of single homelessness and, as such, were amenable to secondary analysis in relation to social exclusion. This is not to suggest that the data sets could provide comprehensive evidence on every possible dimension of social exclusion. Indeed, that degree of 'fit' would be very unlikely in any secondary data analysis and complete coverage was never anticipated. What is considered valuable about the data is that, together, the two studies provided reasonably comprehensive data on the *issue* of single homelessness, which was sufficient to allow an *exploration* of the concept of social exclusion.

The review of the literature on social exclusion in Chapter Three identifies a range of issues and conceptual approaches associated with the analysis of social exclusion, which could be applied to the issue of single homelessness. Some policy and theoretical issues raised in Chapter One and in this chapter were also incorporated into the analytical framework. In addition, the framework sought to allow sufficient flexibility to take account of the emergence of new ideas or conceptual approaches 'grounded' in the data. The perspectives of successive national governments are considered in the policy review in Chapter Four. The data sets analysed for Chapters Five, Six and Seven facilitated analysis from the perspectives of both individuals who had experienced homelessness and agencies providing housing and support services to low-income households.

Chapter Five incorporates the secondary analysis of the twenty group discussions conducted for *Single homeless people.* The research participants were single homeless people living in a range of housing circumstances, in 1991. The data set facilitated analysis of their experience of homelessness and other aspects of welfare/well-being, early in the study period.

The secondary analysis of qualitative data collected for *Social housing for single people* is reported in Chapters Six and Seven. Housing and support service providers included managers and front-line staff working in local authority housing and social work services, housing associations, and some voluntary sector agencies, in 1995. The data set allowed investigation of the dynamic

processes which governed single people's opportunities to gain access to housing (Chapter Six) in the mid-1990s. The secondary analysis of qualitative data also allowed some investigation of wider practical and conceptual issues related to housing and social exclusion emerging at that time (Chapter Seven).

The data sets could not provide answers to all of the potential questions about the application of the concept of social exclusion, and were more relevant to some issues than others. Conceptual and theoretical issues were not always discussed explicitly, but often emerged in an implicit way through the course of the discussions and interviews. On the whole, however, the analysis produced valid pointers towards the value of the concept of social exclusion in understanding single homelessness. Further discussion of the degree to which different aspects of social exclusion could be explored in the secondary analysis of the qualitative data is presented below, in a detailed overview of the process of analysis, and in the conclusions (Chapter Eight) following presentation of the analysis.

The process of data analysis

Subject to the limitations outlined above, the researcher was satisfied that the primary data selected for re-analysis for this thesis was sufficiently robust and of sufficient breadth to facilitate secondary analysis with reference to the concepts associated with social exclusion. The remainder of this section sets out the detailed method for the secondary data analysis. Given the lack of published debate on approaches to secondary analysis of qualitative data, the method adopted for this thesis was to draw upon established procedures for the primary analysis of qualitative data (Walker, 1985b; Silverman, 1993; Bryman and Burgess 1994b; and Miller and Dingwall, 1997) and to amend these as appropriate for secondary analysis.

The contributions by Hedges (1985) and Jones (1985b) on analysis of group discussions and depth interviews, respectively, were of value in considering the secondary analysis of qualitative data for this study. Both authors emphasised the importance of recording group discussions or interviews and producing

transcripts for analysis. All of the group discussions and interviews for the primary studies were recorded. For the secondary analysis, tapes were listened to again, and new transcripts were produced as part of the process of re-familiarisation with the data.

Two key analytical problems were identified by Hedges (1985): coping with the sheer volume of data and interpreting what it meant. Hedges recommended listening to tapes of discussions with a copy of the transcripts and making notes, organised under topic headings. These could then be synthesised across the range of discussion groups. Hedges (1985) also identified some interpretation problems such as deciding what people *mean* from what they *say*; and assessing the *implications* of what was said for the problem in hand. The interpretive process was summarised as using the 'same techniques as are used for analysing conversation in ordinary life, but more intensively, more systematically, and more consciously' (Hedges, 1985, p89). This broad approach guided the secondary analysis conducted for the study.

The analysis of depth interviews has been described as both 'highly personal' and a 'hard slog', involving 'processes of interpretation and creativity that are difficult and perhaps somewhat threatening to make explicit' (Jones, 1985b, p56). Following the established model for grounded theorising from qualitative research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), analysis was viewed as a process of making sense of the data, of finding structure, meaning and significance, although the analyst must be careful to avoid undisciplined abstraction (Jones, 1985b). The approach to the analysis of qualitative data involved 'structuring through categories', devised according to the purpose of the research and the key research questions (Jones, 1985b). For Jones, the goal of qualitative analysis was the breaking down and rebuilding of the data into an analytic structure (Jones, 1985b, p69). Both of these techniques were employed in the secondary analysis conducted for this thesis.

Cognitive mapping (mapping interviews in diagrammatic form) was the preferred analytical technique for Jones (1985b). However, that approach was not considered to be the most appropriate method for this thesis, which was more concerned to analyse responses thematically across the discussions and

interviews. Instead, the approach to analysis drew mainly upon the 'Framework' method advocated by Ritchie and Spencer (1994). For Ritchie and Spencer, qualitative data analysis aimed to provide coherence and structure to cumbersome data, while retaining hold of the original accounts and observations from which it was derived. Qualitative data analysis was essentially about detection, and the tasks of defining, categorising, theorising, explaining, exploring and mapping were fundamental to the analyst's role (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, p176).

The key features of Framework were that it was grounded in the data (generative), dynamic, systematic and comprehensive (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, p176). As such, the approach was considered appropriate to a thematic analysis of the concepts associated with social exclusion. Framework also relied on the creative and conceptual ability of the analyst to determine meaning, salience and connections in the data (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994) which could only be borne out by the quality of the final product.

The framework approach involved a systematic process of sifting, charting and sorting material according to key issues and themes and five key stages were identified: familiarisation; identifying a thematic framework; indexing; charting; and mapping and interpretation (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, p178). For this thesis, there was an extended period of familiarisation with the data due to involvement in the primary studies. In many senses, the researcher was 'immersed in the data', and the general field of study for a number of years, an experience which was influential in the development of thinking on single homelessness and social exclusion within social policy.

Identifying a thematic framework is a process of abstraction and conceptualisation from the range of responses. Key issues, concepts and themes are identified, according to which the data can be examined and referenced and a thematic framework is set up within which the data can be sifted and sorted (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). Normally, the researcher would draw upon the research aims, topic guide and emergent issues in the data, to develop analytical themes. The approach for this thesis was different, as the concepts and categories for the secondary analysis emerged from a review of

literature and debates on social exclusion, housing and homelessness (Chapter Three). New concepts which emerged directly from the data were incorporated into the framework, but, compared to the primary analysis, there was much less of a focus on the original research questions from the primary studies. The coding framework for the secondary analysis of the qualitative data sets is presented at the end of Chapter Three.

During the indexing stage, the thematic framework is systematically applied to the data, usually using transcripts (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). Transcriptions were available for *Single homeless people.* However, as indicated above, it was considered essential to re-listen to the recordings of the 20 discussion groups directly and new 'mini-transcripts' focusing on the secondary framework, were produced by the researcher specifically for this thesis.

Transcripts had not been produced for *Social housing for single people*, as the qualitative analysis was conducted directly from the taped interviews. It was not feasible to re-analyse all of the interviews from the five case studies for this thesis and three case study areas were selected for secondary analysis: the London Borough, the Scottish City and the semi-rural Stock Transfer District. The first two case studies experienced the highest incidence of housing stress and homelessness, and provided the most appropriate comparisons for the data from *Single homeless people* which was collected in London and five English cities. The third case study provided a comparison of responses to single people's housing needs in an affluent part of the south of England. Twenty depth interviews were transcribed and analysed in order to examine the relevance of the concept of social exclusion to single homelessness policy and practice at the local level. The selected interviews included senior managers and front-line staff from the local authorities, and a selection of interviewees from social services, housing associations and voluntary sector agencies. Much of this material had not previously been analysed for *Social housing for single people.*

The forty transcripts, from the two studies were indexed, according to the conceptual framework set out in Chapter Three and analysed thematically. During charting, the researcher builds up a picture of the whole data set by

rearranging the data according to thematic categories (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). For this study, charting was conducted, via the word processor, from the indexed transcripts (effectively producing summary transcripts across key themes). This method was sufficiently flexible to facilitate the necessary sorting and sifting of data and allowed the analysis to be 'built up' directly into a textual form for interpretation. While verbatim quotations are used to illustrate the analysis presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, the depth and rigor of the exposition was dependent upon the systematic and thematic analysis across the group discussions and interviews.

The final stage of the Framework procedure is mapping and interpretation of the data. A number of functions were potentially involved: defining concepts; mapping the range, nature and dynamics of phenomena; creating typologies; finding associations in the data; seeking explanations; and developing new ideas, theories or strategies (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). These tasks were made more complex as the secondary analysis applied a new set of questions to the data. For example, people interviewed in the primary projects would not have been asked directly about 'social exclusion'. Nevertheless, homelessness was discussed at length, and in relation to many other aspects of welfare which later became identified with the notions of inclusion and exclusion. The data was interrogated for themes and patterns associated with social exclusion which would enhance the understanding of single homelessness.

The interpretive process involved reviewing the re-categorised data; searching for patterns and connections; making comparisons and contrasts within and between different types of respondents; and seeking explanation for those patterns within the data. Most writers on qualitative analysis agree that the final process is extremely difficult to describe and Ritchie and Spencer (1994) similarly concluded that the process was ultimately reliant on intuition and imagination.

As with the qualitative analysis for the primary studies, the approach adopted for this thesis was to conduct a thematic analysis of the data (rather than a case by case analysis). The data sets were analysed separately (but using the same coding framework) and the findings were written up as Chapters Five, Six and

Seven[6], in order to draw conclusions on each data set. The process of interpretation could be characterised as piecing together the 'jigsaw' of social exclusion and single homelessness, taking account of the range of perspectives expressed in the two data sets. An overall synthesis was incorporated into the concluding chapter of the thesis (Chapter Eight).

While the growth in the use of computer packages for the analysis of qualitative data is acknowledged, none were utilised in the analysis for this thesis. Rather, the method was developed from techniques which had been used successfully in previous research (Crook *et al* 1991; Anderson and Quilgars, 1995; Anderson and Morgan, 1997; Anderson and Douglas, 1998). Jones (1985b) concluded that the process of analysis was not dependent upon using computerised techniques, emphasising 'intense immersion in the data' as a key tenet of qualitative analysis which was satisfactorily achieved through 'manual' coding and manipulation of the data. Similarly, Mason (1994, p108) conceded that while computers could help with the indexing and retrieval of data, and to some extent in exploring relationships, they could not perform creative, intellectual tasks or generate appropriate research propositions with which to interrogate the data. As (Hedges, 1985, p88) put it, 'the real data processing goes on inside your own skull'.

Governance of the UK and the research process

The dynamic, reflective method adopted for this study necessitated responsiveness to change during the research period. Developments in policy formed a substantial element of the analysis for Chapters Three and Four, but important changes in governance also influenced the research. Indeed, the structures for governance in the UK have not facilitated straightforward social research across the nation and UK-wide studies have been relatively rare.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland comprises Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales, governed nationally from Westminster in

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[6] *Social housing for single people* generated sufficient data for two chapters, Six and Seven.

London. The existence of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices of the UK government meant that, during the study period, some aspects of policy developed in a unitary fashion across the UK, while others varied to a greater or lesser extent across the four provinces. The research was conducted prior to the 1997 referendums on the establishment of a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly and the 1998 referendum on, and elections to, the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Historically, legislative and administrative procedures for England and Wales have developed in tandem, while Scotland has had a separate legislative system (Midwinter, Keating and Mitchell, 1991). These three countries together comprise Great Britain, and have been referred to as Britain, throughout this thesis. Whenever it is important to distinguish that evidence, information or analysis refers only to a particular part of Britain, this is made clear in the text. For example, official statistics for Scotland are often collected separately from those for England and Wales and direct comparisons were not always possible. Every effort has been made to report facts and information accurately and with clarity.

While the legislative and administrative procedures for the housing system were reasonably comparable within Britain, this was not the case for Northern Ireland, where the historical and political complexity surrounding its relationship with mainland Britain and the Republic of Ireland led to a distinct set of procedures being set up. Consequently, Northern Ireland has not been included within the scope of this thesis.

The collection of the primary empirical data utilised in this thesis was also influenced by issues of governance. As a study commissioned by the (then) Department of the Environment, *Single homeless people* was restricted to England. By the end of the study period, no similar, 'national' studies had been conducted in Scotland or Wales. Since England has almost 90% of the total population of Britain, for the purposes of this thesis, it was considered that the data set provided a suitable comparison with the case studies of local housing and service providers in *Social housing for single people*.

Social housing for single people was funded by an independent research foundation and was able to embrace Scotland, England and Wales. The pluralistic case studies re-analysed for this thesis were conducted in Scotland and England. All of the research design, sampling and data collection for the primary studies was conducted prior to local government reorganisation in Scotland and Wales, and some parts of England, in 1996 (Barnett and Carmichael, 1997). Throughout the report, reference is made to pre-reorganisation structures, essentially:

- unitary local government in London boroughs and metropolitan districts in England (no change in 1996)

- two tiered local government split between counties and districts in the remainder of England and Wales (replaced by unitary councils in Wales and a mixture of unitary, district and county councils across England in 1996)

and

- two tiered local government in Scotland split between regions and districts, except for the three unitary islands councils (replaced by unitary councils across the whole of Scotland in 1996).

Conclusion

The aims of this thesis, as set out in Chapter One, were relatively ambitious. The key question was whether the concept of social exclusion could be of value in understanding social problems, such as single homelessness. In examining the debates around social exclusion through a case study of single homelessness, the research also sought to clarify whether the policy focus on social exclusion and social inclusion following the 1997 election was likely to result in improved policy responses to important social issues.

It was intended that by setting a re-analysis of the two data sets on single homelessness within the wider theoretical and conceptual debates on social exclusion, some additional contribution to the understanding of those issues would be achieved. The issues were challenging and complex. However, as Hill (1997) concluded, analysts must continue to attempt to understand the policy

process, not least because of the impact which the actions and decisions of those with influence over policy have on the everyday lives of ordinary people.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUALISING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter begins by reviewing the context for social and economic change during the study period, before tracing the evolution of debates around social exclusion in order to identify the key concepts and processes associated with the idea. The housing dimension to social exclusion is then explored through a review of related debates within housing studies. The chapter then begins the process of bringing the analysis of single homelessness into the debate on housing and social exclusion. Finally, the chapter concludes by building the analytical framework used for the review and analysis of single homelessness and social exclusion in subsequent chapters.

Inequality, poverty and social and economic change

The concept of social exclusion has arisen as the latest 'phase' in debates on poverty and inequality which are centuries old (see, for example, Alcock, 1997). There is no single, completely objective approach to measuring or analysing poverty and social scientists have developed a range of absolute and relative measures over the years (Nolan and Whelan, 1996). While poverty can be taken as an indicator of the proportion of any population deemed to be living below a given threshold for an acceptable quality of life, inequality provides a measure of the distribution of income and wealth across the entire population. The remainder of this section examines some of the social and economic changes during the study period, which influenced the scale and nature of both poverty and inequality.

Patterns of poverty and inequality

Much of this section draws upon the patterns and processes associated with inequality of income and expenditure in Britain through the 1980s and early 1990s conducted by Goodman, Johnson and Webb (1997). However, the developments have also been charted by Hills (1993, 1995, 1998) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1995).

The increase in income inequality during the 1980s dwarfed the fluctuations in inequality seen in the previous two decades, with the incomes of the richest tenth rising twice as fast as those of the poorest tenth (Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997, p112). The rise in inequality appeared to have begun towards the end of the 1970s, but to have been virtually unprecedented in the second half of the 1980s. As at 1992/3, the poorest decile of the British population (by household) had just 3% of total equivalent income, while the richest decile had more than 25% (Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997, p86).

Goodman, Johnson and Webb (1997) used two official data sets to estimate poverty in the UK: Households Below Average Income (below half the mean, after housing costs) and Low Income Families (families that were receiving Income Support or had incomes below Income Support level). For the early 1990s they identified some 14 million individuals living in poverty on either measure (Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997, p253). Following a period of relative stability during the 1960s and 1970s, the scale of poverty in Britain had increased rapidly during the 1980s, with pensioners, lone parents and those who were unemployed at greatest risk of experiencing poverty.

Becker (1997, pp28-31) also used data for Households Below Average Income to examine poverty in Britain. However, Becker supported the notion that that the 'poverty line' (defined as the income level at which people only just had the minimum socially defined necessities) was somewhere around two-thirds, rather than half, of average incomes in the UK (Veit-Wilson, 1994, p25). The proportion of the population living on incomes below half the national average peaked at over 20% in 1991/2 (Hills, 1998), coinciding with the escalation of street homelessness in central London and other parts of Britain. The most

recent available evidence suggested that the growth in income inequality had begun to slow by 1994/5, but income inequality was still greater in the mid-1990s than at any time in the previous 40 years (Hills, 1998).

The importance of examining the dynamics of poverty was emphasised by Goodman, Johnson and Webb (1997, pp254-273). Although Britain was only just developing longitudinal data sets (e.g. the British Household Panel Survey) which would facilitate such analysis, a dynamic typology of poverty had been identified using longitudinal data in the USA (Walker with Ashworth, 1994). From a preliminary analysis of the British Household Panel Survey, Goodman, Johnson and Webb (1997, p259) found that income mobility was most marked amongst the lowest income groups. A significant proportion of those in the poorest income group in one year were not to be found in that poorest group the next year, although around 10% of the population appeared 'stuck' in the bottom quintile over three years. The idea of dynamic analysis has also been emphasised in the debates about social exclusion discussed below.

Assessing the impact of changing patterns of poverty and inequality on single people is not straightforward. However, in 1989, single persons without children[7] (the focus of this study) accounted for just over half of all households in receipt of Income Support and more than two thirds of all households not receiving Income Support, but whose incomes were below Income Support level (Ford, 1994, p37, Table B).

There was little commitment on the part of successive Conservative governments to combat poverty as a social problem during the 1980s and early 1990s (Becker, 1997, pp1-2). 'Central Government' viewed poverty as a series of discrete problems (e.g. including single homelessness) rather than as one fundamental issue (Becker, 1997). The increased reference to 'social exclusion' in the late 1990s challenged that view which had prevailed for nearly two decades.

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[7] These households were likely to include pensioners, as well as single people of working age.

Changes in work and earnings

During the study period, labour market policies were directed towards increasing flexibility within the workforce, resulting in growth in the relative levels of part-time work, temporary and casual work and in self-employment (Ford, 1994). The increasing proportion of part-time jobs and temporary jobs were disproportionately taken up by women and low paid employment (calculated at £5.75 per hour, or less, in 1993) also increased, particularly for women workers (Ford, 1994, pp33-4). Changes in the age structure of those in work also occurred during the study period (Rosewell, 1996). Work was increasingly concentrated in the middle years of 20-55, with increasing numbers of young people staying longer in education or training, and a trend towards earlier retirement (Rosewell, 1996, pp21-22).

During the 1980s, the unemployment rate had peaked at 11.1% in 1986, before falling back to 5.7% by 1990 and rising again to 10.6% in 1993 (Ford, 1994 p35). The mid-late 1990s saw a sustained downward trend and by March 1998 the unemployment rate had fallen to 5% as measured by claimants, or 6.4% by the ILO measure of the number of unemployed people who were looking for, and ready to start work (*Labour Research,* 1998, p28). Further, as the level of unemployment fell, the number of claimants receiving Income Support stopped growing, contributing to the slowing of income inequality identified by Hills (1998). The broad trends in the labour market over the study period had, nonetheless, resulted in higher male, compared to female unemployment (Ford, 1994).

Key changes in the nature of available work were associated with the decline in manufacturing and increase in service sector activities. This long-term structural shift, was reinforced by cyclical economic downturns in the early 1980s and early 1990s. Those jobs which were lost were mainly held by males, while new jobs were largely taken up by women, such that the number of female employees was set to exceed the number of male employees (Ford, 1994). Technological advances and the impact of globalisation resulted in a decline in the demand for unskilled workers and a rise in demand for skilled workers.

Unless workers were able to acquire new skills for the contemporary labour market, they risked long- term unemployment.

Changes in the distribution of earnings were an important factor in changing patterns of income. Male wage inequality declined over the 1970s when income inequality was declining and rose in the 1980s when income distribution became more unequal (Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997). During 1993-1995 however, earnings differentials and the difference between earnings and benefits did not widen as quickly as during the 1980s (Hills, 1998).

Inequality was also linked to changing patterns of participation in the workforce (Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997, p169). During the 1980s, unemployment and falling male participation were mainly concentrated amongst households in which there were no other workers. Increased labour force participation among married women tended to be among those whose husbands were also working. However, the expanded supply of female labour was expected to slow down resulting in a general slowing in the growth of the labour force (Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997).

Sources of income other than earnings became increasingly important for certain groups, during the study period. For example, social security was a major source of income for those at the bottom of the income distribution. The 1980s saw social security as a share of total income rise as the number of people entitled to benefits increased. However, the continued linking of benefits to prices, rather than earnings caused poorer groups to fall further behind (Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997). Citing the budget standard approach of Bradshaw (1993), Becker concluded that 'the findings of academics, and others indicated strongly that social assistance was too low to provide for a minimally adequate level of living in Britain in the 1990s' (Becker, 1997, p27).

As will be shown in Chapters Four and Five, the single homeless people who were the focus of this study were largely working age males likely to have been particularly disadvantaged by the structural changes in the labour market during the study period.

Inequality and Demographic change

Looking at the association between demograhphic trends and inequality, Goodman, Johnson and Webb (1997, pp203-204) found that, in the UK over the three decades 1961-1993, income inequalities *within* different household types were more significant than those *between* different household types. For example, couples with children experienced a large rise in in-group inequality over the period, according to whether the family had two, one or no earners. In comparison, younger childless couples were a prosperous group, with relatively homogeneous living standards. Among single people with no children, there was a relatively wide diversity of individual circumstances, but the group's proportionate contribution to total inequality rose during the study period. Single people in non-worker households had become increasingly numerous, but the main rise in inequality was among one-worker households (Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997). Patterns of demographic change, with particular respect to single person households are explored further in Chapter Four.

From poverty and inequality to social exclusion

The widespread use of the term social exclusion in the British context is a much more recent phenomenon compared to the debates on poverty and inequality. Silver (1994) traced the evolution of the term social exclusion from its roots in France in the 1970s and 1980s, where it came to refer:

> *not only to the rise in long-term and recurrent unemployment, but also to the growing instability of social bonds: family instability, single member households, social isolation, and the decline of class solidarity based on unions, the labour market, and the working class neighbourhood and social networks*
> (Silver, 1994, p533).

For Silver, the original, French conception of exclusion was deeply anchored in French revolutionary history and Republican thought, described as a 'third way' between liberalism and citizenship, (solidarity, rather than socialism) which sought to reconcile individual rights with state responsibility (Silver, 1994, p537).

As outlined in Chapter One, Silver developed a comparative approach to the analysis of social exclusion linked to three 'paradigms' of welfare: solidarity, specialisation and monopoly . The three paradigms were respectively associated with the ideological traditions of republicanism, liberalism and social democracy.

For each of the three main paradigms, Silver identified associated conceptions and sources of integration, ideologies, common discourse, seminal/associated thinkers, and a model for political economy (Silver, 1994, p540, Table 1). The *solidarity* paradigm was based on [French] republicanism and a discourse of exclusion. Integration came from group solidarity, cultural boundaries and moral integration. Seminal thinkers were the French philosophers Rousseau and Durkheim and the economic model was flexible production and *insertion* of excluded groups.

The *specialisation* paradigm was associated with economic liberalism, and the common discourse was that of discrimination and the 'underclass'. The sources of integration were specialisation and exchange in the market place. The specialisation paradigm can be broadly equated with the ideology of the New Right in the UK during the 1980s and early 1990s, and with American writers such as Murray (1990, 1994). The economic model relied on the development of appropriate labour market skills and work incentives.

Silver's *monopoly* paradigm was based on social democracy, where those within certain social entities enjoyed a monopoly over scarce resources. Exclusion arose from 'social closure' when institutions and cultural distinctions created boundaries that kept others out against their will and perpetuated inequality. Integration was to be achieved through citizenship rights. The common discourse was new poverty, inequality and the 'underclass' and the economic model was linked to labour market segmentation. The paradigm was substantially influenced by Marx and Weber, as well as Marshall (1950). Silver associated Townsend (1979), Room (see, for example, Room, (1995b), discussed below) as well as herself with the monopoly paradigm (Silver, 1994).

Of the three main paradigms described by Silver (1994), the analysis in this thesis is most closely associated with the monopoly paradigm, although other ideological perspectives are considered. For the most part, this thesis has been concerned with the specialisation and monopoly paradigms (and variants of the latter) as, during the study period, there was relatively little reference to French Republicanism or its influence on British social policy in the English language literature.

Silver also identified Marxist and 'organic' paradigms of welfare. As indicated in Chapter One, Silver argued that Marxist and Neo-Marxist conceptions of the capitalist social order denied the possibility of social integration, and hence could not constitute a paradigm of social exclusion (Silver, 1994, p539). Organic approaches constructed a social order based on groups which may be functional, regional or primordial (e.g. ethnic, linguistic, and religious). The organic paradigm was linked to authoritarianism and fascism, but also to Christian Democratic approaches which sought to preserve differentials between classes (with Germany cited as a contemporary example of the latter). While the organic paradigm recognised the exclusion of those who were not organically integrated into the various, smaller, autonomous units of society, Silver argued it was less cognisant of gender and economic inequality as causes of exclusion (Silver, 1994, p546).

Each of Silver's three main paradigms presented exclusion as a social relationship between the included and the excluded. Since there was no simple political consensus as to the causes or explanations of exclusion, there could be no consensus on achieving 'inclusion'. It was also important to distinguish between patterns at the macro-level, and the micro-level experiences of individuals or groups. Silver argued however, that there was an important question as to whether some permanent boundary between the 'ins' and the 'outs' had become established in European society (Silver, 1994, p545). However, drawing on the monopoly paradigm, Silver argued that broad social structures which created exclusion were more significant than the changing experiences of individuals :

> The action of exclusion becomes structural when it is repeatedly
> confirmed through social relations and practices. Turnover among the

individuals who are excluded does not alter the structural existence of the social boundary.

(Silver, 1994, p545).

Silver cautioned against over-generalisation with respect to the 'exclusion' of certain social groups. The analysis of qualitative data on single homelessness presented later in this thesis leads to a similar conclusion. A wide range of 'disadvantaged groups' who have been the subject of research on social exclusion were listed by Silver, who argued that:

> *the disproportionate representation of people with these social characteristics among 'the excluded' does not imply that these characteristics determine whether any given individual is excluded. One needs to examine the incidence of these attributes in the included population as well. Some individuals with such characteristics do make their way into secure, well-paid employment, stable families, political participation and the like*
>
> (Silver, 1994 p549).

In reviewing poverty studies in Europe, Room (1995b) concluded that the cross-national literature on poverty had largely failed to engage with wider debates about welfare regimes (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1990). In their overview of recent poverty research in Britain, Williams with Pillinger (1996) also argued that work on poverty had not been sufficiently connected to research on theories of social divisions, social change and social movements. Equally, however, the authors also argued that theoretical work had been neglectful of empirical evidence and of the role of policy (Williams with Pillinger, 1996, p14).

Two European traditions in poverty research were identified by Room (1995b): Anglo-Saxon and continental/French. The Anglo-Saxon tradition was most closely associated with the work of Townsend (1979, 1993) and was viewed as focusing on *distributional* issues, or a lack of access to resources in a liberal market economy. The Anglo-Saxon approach was contrasted with the (mainly French) *relational* approach which focused on inadequate social participation, lack of social integration, and lack of power, which influenced status/hierarchy

and moral order in a conservative (in the non-party-political sense) society (Room, 1995b).

The Anglo-Saxon tradition as described by Room (1995b) was influenced by the specialisation paradigm of Silver (1994). That is to say, poverty research was conducted within largely liberal economies, although many researchers did not subscribe to neo-liberal ideological perspectives. For Room, the continental approach was associated with the social democratic tradition of rights and obligations associated with an egalitarian notion of citizenship, although the two traditions were not viewed as being entirely exclusive of each other (Room, 1995b). No direct reference to the Republican or solidarity model was incorporated in Room (1995b).

Silver (1994) argued that the three paradigms of social exclusion should not be confused with institutional classifications such as welfare state regimes (Esping-Anderson, 1990), as the latter were influenced by more than one paradigm over a long period of time (Silver, 1994, p545-546). However, Cousins (1998) argued that Silver's typology focused on the relationship between individuals and society and could, therefore, be linked to the debate on welfare regimes. For example, Cousins characterised France as an example of the solidarity paradigm, Germany as 'neo-organic', the UK as the specialisation paradigm and Sweden as following the monopoly model (Cousins, 1998). Much of the UK academic research into poverty was also characterised as subscribing to the monopoly paradigm (Cousins, 1998).

According to Cousins (1998, p140), much of the EU discourse on social exclusion was borrowed from the French solidarity paradigm. However, Silver (1994) associated the European discourse with the monopoly paradigm and Room (1995b) linked European developments with the corporatist/'organic' tradition. The lack of consensus highlights the limitations of 'models' of welfare regimes, as well as the dynamic, changing nature of individual welfare states and cross-national trends.

The growth of comparative housing research and changing approaches to comparative analysis were examined by Kemeny and Lowe (1998). Three

distinct perspectives were identified: particularistic (juxtapositional), universalistic (convergence), and middle range (divergence). Particularistic approaches were characterised as being based on large-scale quantitative empiricism and emphasising the unique rather than similarities. Universalist approaches (e.g. Marxism, Liberalism) attempted to apply generalised theories across all countries, assuming they were basically alike and that differences were the exception rather than the rule.

Theories of the middle range attempted to discern patterns and typologies of housing systems or housing regimes (compared to Esping-Anderson's welfare state regimes) and were considered to be the most valuable approach (Kemeny and Lowe, 1998). As with grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), middle-range theories could be applied to variation within a country, as well as at the cross-national level. Arguably, it is the approach, rather than the scale of inquiry which is important in explaining variation.

> *Theories of the middle range require that the researcher craft a typology that fits the evidence as best as possible and devises a theoretical explanation of these differences that is convincing.*
> (Kemeny and Lowe, 1998, p171).

While the 'grand' debates on welfare state regimes and paradigms of exclusion provided a broad conceptual framework for the analysis of social issues, this thesis was primarily concerned with single homelessness in Britain and with local, as well as national, policy responses. To that end, the framework for analysis incorporated conceptual ideas which could be applied at the micro-level, as well as the macro-level, and drew mainly upon those which had been most influential in the British context. In the following sections, the evolution of the concept of social exclusion is traced with specific reference to key strands of thought, allowing conclusions to be drawn as to the potential of the concept for enhancing social policy.

Firstly, the tradition of the New Right, influenced by neo-liberalism, which emphasised individual responsibility and attitudes and became closely associated with the notion of an 'underclass' is considered. As discussed in Chapter One, in British literature, the ideology of the New Right has often been

juxtaposed against the politically left of centre ideology of social democracy. In the British context, social democratic ideologies have focused on social and economic *structures* such as developments in the labour process, trends in household formation and family life, and social policies (Taylor-Gooby, 1991). The literature on social exclusion has, however, been influenced by the international debates described above and no singular 'social democratic' perspective on social exclusion was readily identified. However, detailed consideration is given to the continental European debates and policy developments within European Union programmes (Room, 1995).

A number of other approaches which moved beyond the traditional paradigms were also identified, where the agency of excluded individuals was emphasised in a much more 'constructive' way than in the social pathology of neo-liberalism. Jordan's theory of poverty and social exclusion is considered in detail (Jordan, 1996) and the work of Williams with Pillinger (1996) and Becker (1997) would also come into this category, characterised as an *empowerment* approach. Finally, the ideology of 'New Labour' is explored, in an attempt to identify whether a distinctive conception of social exclusion was developed by the Government in the late 1990s.

Social exclusion and the New Right: is there an 'underclass'?

The notion of an identifiable, excluded 'class' of marginalised individuals, has been prominent among neo-liberal ideas on poverty and was closely associated with Charles Murray's essays on the emerging 'underclass'[8] in Britain (Murray, 1990, 1994). The debates have been highly publicised and have had a degree of influence on the discourse around social exclusion which necessitates detailed consideration, although Murray, himself, did not use the term social exclusion in either essay. The origins of the term 'underclass' pre-dated Murray's work and the term has been used in different ways by different writers. For example, the work of Wilson (1987) on the racialised nature of inner city

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[8] As with the term 'rough sleepers', the term 'underclass' is enclosed in inverted commas as it is considered an inappropriate generalised label for those who experience disadvantage or exclusion.

disadvantage in American cities adopted a structural perspective, while Murray focused on behavioural explanations and definitions.

Murray's first essay, *The emerging British Underclass* was originally published in the *Sunday Times Magazine* and then by the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) in 1990. His second essay, *Underclass: the crisis deepens* was first published in the *Sunday Times Magazine* and then by the IEA in May 1994. Both of those essays, along with a series of commentaries, were reproduced in Lister (1996a). In the discussion below, references to Murray's work are cited from Lister (1996a) as Murray (1996a, 1996b and 1996c).

Murray's thesis on the emergence of an 'underclass' in Britain was set out in his first essay (Murray, 1996a, pp23-53) in which he referred to a *type* of poverty, rather than a *degree* of poverty. Murray directly related poverty to the behaviour and decisions (agency) of individual poor people. In particular, he referred to the deterioration of poor communities associated with drugs, crime, 'illegitimacy', homelessness, dropping out of school and the labour market, and casual violence. In asserting that an 'underclass' was emerging in Britain by 1990, Murray focused on three specific indicators of an 'underclass': motherhood outside of marriage (viewed as qualitatively different from other variants of lone parenthood); violent crime; and 'drop-out' from the labour force. In examining lone parenthood, Murray deliberately used the term 'illegitimacy'. The notion of the married couple as the only appropriate model of parenthood was central to his ideas about families, communities and social roles. Murray was dismissive of counter-arguments about the stability of co-habiting relationships and the diversity of family formation in the 1980s and 1990s.

Drawing upon census data and other official national statistics, Murray (1996a) demonstrated that 'illegitimacy', crime and long term unemployment were all closely associated with class, although he did not present any rigorous evidence on individual attitudes. At the neighbourhood level, Murray argued that 'the key to an underclass is not the individual instance but a situation in which a very large proportion of an entire community lacks fathers, and this is far more common in poor communities than in rich ones' (Murray, 1996a, p33). Crime was viewed as an outcome of a lack of 'socialising' role models, again, argued

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to be most common where there had been a lack of a father as a positive role model. A detailed review of the evidence on lone parenthood and crime in relation to social class and social change is beyond the scope of this thesis, but significant counter-evidence was presented by Alcock (1996), Brown (1996), David (1996), Deakin, (1996), Slipman (1996) and Walker (1996).

Of more direct relevance to this thesis was Murray's use of unemployment as an indicator of membership of an underclass. Again, Murray's arguments were behavioural, 'the definitive proof that an underclass has arrived is that large numbers of young, healthy, low-income males choose not to take jobs' (Murray, 1996, p37). Young, idle rich people were seen as a separate problem. By his own admission, however, the decrease in labour force participation was the most elusive of Murray's three key indicators. Murray suggested that the attitudes of young men towards work were different from those of their fathers in that they did not subscribe to a 'traditional work ethic', but, in neither of his essays (Murray, 1996a, 1996c), did he undertake any analysis of labour market data which was sufficiently robust to prove his case.

While Murray argued strongly that there was an emerging 'underclass' in Britain, he admitted that quantification was complicated by definition (Murray, 1996a, p41). Nevertheless, for Murray, the makings of the 'underclass' were rooted in the social and political changes of the 1960s and 1970s which led to more generous welfare entitlement, particularly for lone mothers. By his interpretation (Murray, 1996a, pp43-46), lone parenthood and youth unemployment were made economically viable by the benefit system and crime was made 'safer' by changes in sentencing policy towards community rather than custodial sentences.

Consequently, Murray's main policy prescription (Murray, 1996a, p50) was to curtail the scope of Government intervention so that poor people's behaviour and decisions were more constrained by economic reality. Importantly, Murray also admitted that he had no simple answer as to how to change the social attitudes of those who had grown up in an 'underclass culture'. Indeed. Murray suggested that a small but manageable 'underclass' may actually be tolerable if it was spatially segregated and did not impinge upon the mainstream of society.

In Murray's second essay (Murray, 1996c, pp99-135) he re-considered his thesis in the light of updated statistical information for 1994. He concluded that Britain's underclass still existed, was still growing and that the public mood was more sympathetic to his ideas. Murray's second essay concentrated almost exclusively on lone parenthood and failed to maintain any rigorous argument, often descending into unsubstantiated conjecture and disparaging language. By the end of the second essay, Murray's lack of analytical rigour had eroded any credibility which could realistically be afforded to his thesis, to the extent that it is difficult to understand the influence of his ideas. Nevertheless, the commentaries contained in Lister (1996a) set out coherent responses to many of Murray's ideas and arguments.

Lister (1996b, p3) pointed out that definitions of 'the underclass' tended to reflect whether the writer subscribed to a structural or behavioural/cultural explanation of causes, such that definitions and explanations easily became entangled. Studies of the impact of unemployment by Smith (1992), Buck (1992) and Gallie (1994) all questioned the evidence of a 'distinct underclass', as did qualitative studies of households on low incomes (Bradshaw and Holmes, 1989; Kempson, 1996). Taylor Gooby (1991, p43) also argued, that there was a lack of empirical research which could identify a socially excluded 'underclass' distinguished by attitudinal and behavioural characteristics.

Although Murray's work was firmly embedded in neo-liberalism, some commentators of the left also adopted the language of the 'underclass'. For example, the Labour MP, Frank Field, wrote about the concept of the 'underclass' while in opposition (Field, 1989, 1996a). While disagreeing with Murray's behavioural analysis, Field accepted that Britain did have a group of poor people who were so distinguished from others on a low income as to constitute an 'underclass'. Field identified frail elderly pensioners who lacked private pensions, single parents who depended on welfare and those who were long term unemployed as being within Britain's 'underclass' (Field, 1989).

Walker (1996) criticised Murray's methodological failure to test the permanence or otherwise of 'underclass' status as distinct from general patterns in inequality,

citing established evidence (Rutter and Madge 1976; Brown and Madge, 1982) that there was no simple continuity of social problems between generations, and those on low incomes retained 'ordinary' aspirations and values, despite poverty. Slipman (1996) took on board some of Murray's arguments about male youth, suggesting that changing patterns of women's employment had represented a challenge to male identity, such that men had lost their traditional role, but had not found an appropriate alternative role.

The title of Slipman's (1996) contribution - *Would you take one home with you?* - suggested its potential relevance to the problem of single homelessness as experienced by white men of working age (Chapter Five). Slipman's analysis of the changing role of women and the failure of some men to find or adapt to any potential new role may reveal a little-discussed process which contributed to the rise in male single homelessness. The extent to which such a hypothesis could be tested in this thesis was, however, constrained by the nature of the available data.

Alcock (1996) argued against Murray's simplistic economic analysis of decision making, pointing out that decisions on marriage and child-bearing were structured by a range of social, cultural and economic forces. Alcock acknowledged the very serious problems of extreme poverty in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s and advocated the term social exclusion as one which was much less pejorative than the term 'underclass':

> *Encapsulated in the term social exclusion is the problem of the interplay between the social and economic forces which are marginalising large groups of people who are more or less permanently outside of the labour force (including, but hardly exclusively, many lone parents) and the experience of this process by those who are the primary victims of it. It is a problem of class polarisation, of economic inactivity and disappearing opportunities, of demographic and cultural upheaval, and of the pressure to adapt social policy to meet the rapidly changing circumstances of people whose past expectations, and hopes, no longer meet their current needs*
>
> (Alcock, 1996, p148).

Murray's only reference to single homelessness in Britain was in relation to unemployment, throwing down a gauntlet to those who would challenge his views:

> the Government or some private foundation may easily try this experiment: go down to the Bull Ring near Waterloo Bridge where one of London's largest cardboard cities is located. Pass over the young men who are alcoholics or drug addicts or mentally disturbed, selecting only those who seem clear-headed (there are many). Then offer them jobs at a generous wage for unskilled labour and see what happens. Add in a training component if you wish. Or if you sympathise with their lack of interest in unskilled jobs, offer them more extensive training that would qualify them for skilled jobs. Carry out your promises to them, spend as much as you wish, and measure the results after 2 years against the experience of similar youths who received no such help. I am betting you will find 'no effect'. It is an irretrievable disaster for young men to grow up without being socialised into the world of work
> (Murray 1996a, p40).

The above quotation is indicative of Murray's substitution of conjecture for rigorous empirical analysis. The weaknesses in his argument will be demonstrated by the analysis in subsequent chapters in this thesis, particularly Chapters Four and Five.

Social exclusion in the European Union

The papers in Room (1995a) set the concept of social exclusion within the context of European policy development and have been among the most influential contributions to the emerging debates on social exclusion in Britain. The collection arose from a seminar sponsored by the European Union and the British Department of Social Security, which was designed to conceptualise social exclusion, discuss its measurement and suggest indicators for monitoring the effectiveness of policies for combating social exclusion. Social exclusion could be analysed in terms of the denial (or non-realisation) of social rights, for example, to a certain basic standard of living and to participation in the major

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social and occupational institutions of society (Room, 1995b, pp6-7). Room argued that such rights were implied in European policy statements rather than enshrined in legislation.

Reflecting on EU research programmes, it was evident that poverty had been at the heart of the first (1975-80) and second (1986-89) European social research programmes, while the third (1990-94) was concerned with 'integration' of the 'least privileged' and the term social exclusion had become the fashionable terminology (Room, 1995b). Room suggested that the investigation of patterns and processes of generalised disadvantage might lead researchers to investigate whether a separate sub-group of the population was dislocated from the normal living patterns of the mainstream of society (Room, 1995b, p7). Although such a definition of social exclusion touched on the notion of a separate 'excluded class', the papers in Room (1995a) did not engage with the debates on the 'underclass' discussed above.

Berghman (1995) considered the precise definition of, and the potential for the analysis of, social exclusion. Berghman maintained that social exclusion was still a rather new concept, which required a European frame of reference, since that was the policy-making context within which it had emerged. For example, the European Union's Observatory on social exclusion had defined the term with reference to multidimensional disadvantage, which was of substantial duration and which involved dissociation from the major social and occupational milieus of society (Room et al, 1992).

Social exclusion was understood to be closely associated with the labour market process, particularly the long term, high levels of unemployment of the 1980s and early 1990s (Room et al, 1990; European Commission, 1994). The acceptance among European Governments that the long term unemployed group would require practical, as well as income support to secure insertion in society meant that the measurement and analysis of social exclusion became increasingly policy-relevant (Berghman, 1995, p16). Berghman accepted there may well have been political reasons for the shift to discussions about social exclusion in the EU. Member states with minimum incomes deemed sufficient to cover basic needs had reservations about acknowledging 'poverty' in these

countries. However, while social exclusion seemed less accusing, Berghman (1995) suggested its association with dynamic process and the multidimensional aspects of exclusion also seemed more useful than the notion of poverty.

The term social exclusion was used increasingly within European bureaucracies with reference to poverty and deprivation and policies to bring about greater social cohesion (Room, 1995b). For example, the Maastricht Treaty and the objectives of the European Structural Funds both made reference to social exclusion and social cohesion (Council of the European Communities, 1992; Room, 1995b). Two later European White Papers also gave a central place to combating unemployment and promoting 'reinsertion' into work as the most important single element in combating social exclusion (European Commission, 1993; 1994).

However, Room cautioned that EU policies on labour market flexibility and reduced social support were in conflict with promoting secure employment and, along with public spending cuts required to meet conditions for monetary union, may actually increase social exclusion. The prospect of European integration thus held threats of, as well as opportunities for combating, social exclusion (Room, 1995b). Indeed, throughout its history, the European project has been associated with the free-market orientation of economic liberalism (McCormick, 1996).

The continued influence of social exclusion on the European agenda was reflected in high profile conferences such as that organised for the Spanish Presidency of the EU in 1995 (Leigh-Doyle and Mulvihill, 1996). Social exclusion was identified as an endemic phenomenon, stemming from structural changes which threatened the 'cohesion' of the Union and the conference sought to clarify the potential role of public welfare services in the European member states. The impact of mass unemployment was seen as the most significant cause of social exclusion. However, other, influential, structural factors were also acknowledged, including changes in housing, education, training, health, discrimination, and lack of integration in local communities. Proposed strategies to combat social exclusion through public welfare services included institutional reform and cultural change in public welfare service organisations; the

increased involvement of users of services; improving access to services and strengthening economic integration (Leigh-Doyle and Mulvihill, 1996).

A comprehensive and dynamic concept?

For researchers, the question remained as to whether social exclusion was a useful concept for research and how it could be distinguished from established core concepts such as poverty and deprivation (Berghman, 1995, p16). Two main features of social exclusion were identified as being distinctive: its *comprehensiveness* and its *dynamic* character (Berghman, 1995).

The comprehensive nature of social exclusion was outlined by Commins (1993) in terms of the success or failure of the democratic/legal system; the labour market; the welfare state; and family and community systems. Social exclusion was taken as a comprehensive concept that referred to a breakdown of the major social systems that should guarantee full citizenship. In one of the few clear statements as to what might be understood by social *inclusion*, Commins stated:

> One's sense of belonging in society depends on all four systems. Civic integration means being an equal citizen in a democratic system. Economic integration means having a job, having a valued economic function, being able to pay your way. Social integration means being able to avail oneself of the social services provided by the state. Interpersonal integration means having family and friends, neighbours and social networks to provide care and companionship and moral support when these are needed. All four systems are therefore, important. In a way, the four systems are complementary: when one or two are weak the others need to be strong. And the worst off are those for whom all systems have failed
> (Commins, 1993, p4).

In contrast, the concept of poverty would be seen in much more restricted terms as a lack of adequate disposable income. Social exclusion was likely to encompass poverty but that would not necessarily always be the case. Poverty

and social exclusion were complements rather than substitutes (Berghman, 1995, p20) with *relative deprivation* as a middle-range concept, slightly broader than poverty but not as broad as social exclusion. Despite the broad definition put forward by Room (1995b), exclusion from the labour force was viewed as a key indicator of social exclusion. For example, there was much less debate about housing (or other policy areas such as health) in the wider collection of papers on measuring and analysing exclusion in Room (1995a), although this narrow focus on exclusion from the labour market was challenged by Levitas (1996).

Berghman (1995, p20) argued that both poverty and social exclusion could be understood in terms of *process* and *outcome*, although social exclusion may be more complex because of its multi-dimensional nature. The outcome meaning of social exclusion emphasised comprehensiveness, while the process meaning emphasised the dynamic nature of social exclusion (Berghman, 1995, p21). Drawing on evidence from the Netherlands, Berghman demonstrated how a relatively stable total number of poor households concealed important processes of mobility in and out of poverty. Two 'trampolines' out of poverty were identified: finding employment and changes in household composition. To develop work in this area further, researchers would need to develop dynamic, rather than static indicators of exclusion (Berghman, 1995, pp21-22).

By the mid-1990s the analysis of the process of social exclusion remained underdeveloped while more progress had been made regarding its comprehensiveness. Berghman asserted that 'we remain far removed from a comprehensive empirical analyses of the process of social exclusion', but identified multidimensionality, partnership and participation as three principles for research and policy (Berghman, 1995, p25-26).

A note of caution in embracing the comprehensive nature of social exclusion was sounded by Whelan and Whelan (1995). These authors argued that clear conceptual distinctions must be made in using the term 'multidimensionality'. Simply combining the dimensions of poverty into an overall measure may not be fruitful in improving understanding of the processes underlying social exclusion. An insistence on multidimensionality could obscure the distinctive influences of

specific policies or processes. For Whelan and Whelan, it was crucial to develop a more differentiated of understanding of poverty. The need to understand different dimensions of social exclusion together and separately was central to the analysis conducted for this thesis.

> simply identifying several dimensions ....does not per se enable us to decide the importance that should be attributed to particular dimensions. Indeed the inclusion of determinants and outcomes in the same analytic schema may well hinder our capacity to understand the dynamics of social change and the processes by which certain social groups are excluded. If the identification of distinct dimensions of exclusion is to be fruitful we must direct our attention to the somewhat different factors that are involved in producing the different types of deprivation and consider the variable consequences of specific types of exclusion
>
> (Whelan and Whelan, 1995, p37).

Walker (1995) sought to take forward the methodological debate on the dynamic analysis of poverty and social exclusion arguing that the failure to take account of time led to confusion as to how many people's lives were touched by poverty, for how long, and how they moved in and out of poverty. Such issues had important implications for policy in terms of identifying those experiencing or most at risk of sustained poverty and/or exclusion (Walker, 1995; Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997). Whelan and Whelan (1995) suggested that, as well as panel studies, retrospective techniques could be used to gain insights into longer term processes.

Berghman (1995) concluded that the concept of social exclusion could lead to a real improvement in the conceptual framework for the analysis of poverty and relative deprivation, provided it could encompass a multidimensional set of living conditions and the process or processes that led to poverty and deprivation. The concepts of comprehensiveness and dynamic process are utilised in the subsequent analysis of single homelessness in Britain.

Jordan's theory of poverty and social exclusion

In his book *A theory of poverty and social exclusion,* Jordan (1996) took a different approach to the analysis of poverty and social exclusion from those discussed above. Jordan (1996) assumed a *definition* of social exclusion broadly in line with Berghman (1995), but his starting point for analysis was that neither economic individualism, nor welfare state collectivism offered a satisfactory *analysis* of poverty and social exclusion. Jordan argued that previous analyses had dealt mainly in the dynamic between markets and states, to the neglect of a more comprehensive view of how groups formed, organised and acted collectively, and how vulnerable individuals came to be excluded and marginalised in such interactions.

In a challenge to the liberal (or New Right) paradigm, discussed above, Jordan (1996) set out to develop a theory of poverty and social exclusion rooted in an economic perspective, developed from public choice theory and theories of groups and clubs. Jordan's theoretical framework drew on Olson, (1965), Buchanan (1965), and subsequent work by those authors, as set out in detail in the second chapter of his book (Jordan, 1996, pp40-79). Essentially, public choice theorists argued that the collective action of groups (e.g. cartels or trade unions) restrained the free operation of markets by providing additional benefits ('job rents') for members, to the detriment of non-members. The public choice prescription was 'aggressive free market policies', but Jordan adapted the theoretical framework to investigate how the operation of groups or clubs, and the strategic actions of individuals, resulted in the marginalisation of those less able to compete.

Jordan analysed groups as *clubs* which were defined as a group 'whose interdependency is not simply market related' (Jordan, 1996, p63, after Breuer, Faist and Jordan, 1994). Clubs were distinguished by collective action, based on agreement, and the mutual commitment of members over time. Jordan argued that club theory offered a tool for analysing the processes of collectivisation and fragmentation in welfare states, giving the example of social insurance, where the benefits to club members outweighed the wider costs of not having such collective provision.

Jordan further argued that club theory offered a coherent general theory of poverty and social exclusion which provided a potential linkage between the methodologically individualistic study of poverty in the liberal tradition, and the group oriented study of social exclusion in the continental tradition (Jordan, 1996, p70). Welfare states were characterised as large, multi-product clubs within which members also joined internal, overlapping clubs. At the other end of the spectrum lay informal clubs with no written rules or clear structures, which often came into being as a form of resistance, by excluded individuals, against the collective action of other groups.

Jordan (1996) argued that all groups were exclusive in some sense, even nation states as they excluded non-citizens. The strongest groups in society had members who were like one another, for example, in terms of status and tastes. Social heterogeneity weakened collective action, tending to exclude poorer or vulnerable individuals simply because they were different (unless there were economies of scale to be realised). Some vulnerable individuals may be protected by membership of a club, but it was difficult for a heterogeneous population of poor people to organise and apply the selective incentives as exploited by collusive groups - most poor people were not in 'organisations for the poor'.

In considering the actions and strategies of individuals and households, Jordan characterised the mainstream/dominant lifetime strategy as that of the nuclear family based around a male career which could achieve 'job rents' in the same way as trade unions or cartels in classical economic theory. Conversely, the defining characteristic of poor households was that this mainstream strategy was not available to them. Although the most 'economically successful' households tended to be 'couples without children', Jordan (1996) utilised club theory and the theory of collective action in groups to examine how prioritising nuclear household units had resulted in exclusion of the poor.

An essential component of Jordan's thesis was that the poor, as rational actors, had opportunities for countering the costs of exclusion from formal clubs by semi-organised, informal collective actions of their own. Jordan argued that strategic action by poor people could subvert the aims of policy makers, leading

to higher social costs, for example, resulting from migration and informal economic activity. For Jordan, the importance of club theory was that it allowed vulnerable people to appear as *actors* rather than simply as victims. Jordan argued that poor people could, and did, act rationally and strategically, by taking collective action through forming or joining informal clubs.

For example, Jordan discussed 'hypercasualisation' of the labour market (which was argued to be a product of globalisation) and the resultant situation where the rewards from low-paid formal employment were so low that the optimal strategy for a poor individual was to claim public assistance and work on informal terms at the same time. Informal clubs formed which included such workers, as well as employers for whom the costs of formal employment were equally prohibitive. The parties shared the risks and costs of the informal bargain, but externalised the costs of the workers' subsistence and both parties' tax liabilities.

Jordan further asserted that the poor made strategic assessments of the risks and rewards from various strategies resulting in flexible, mixed, changing strategies combining: participation in the labour market; claiming through the benefits system; working in the informal economy; and making use of community/mutual support. An important element of the argument was that resistance to exclusion was unlikely to take the form of isolated, individual action. Rather, in deprived communities, informal activity, including undeclared work, became co-ordinated in club-like ways. Such strategies allowed some compensation for exclusion from mainstream benefits, although informal work also contributed to the further casualisation of the labour market.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the divergent strategies of mainstream and marginal households produced costly social conflicts, as well as resulting in rising poverty and social exclusion. Jordan characterised the state's response to perceived social unrest as the politics of 'enforcement'. The policy response of both the New Right and New Labour had been tougher enforcement, and moves towards 'compulsory inclusion' (Jordan, 1996, p205). In contrast, Jordan argued that:

> *intelligent policy assessment eschews moral judgements and addresses economic realities*
>
> (Jordan, 1996, p242)

and further that:

> *Policy should not necessarily seek to 'integrate' the poor and excluded into mainstream employment, civic responsibility or suburban culture. Policy should instead study how poor people survive (including their illegal activities) and look at ways of legitimating, enhancing or supporting these activities, while minimising the social costs associated with them*
>
> (Jordan, 1996, p243).

Jordan concluded that there was a need to address the fundamental causes of poverty and social exclusion by redistributing income in ways that guaranteed basic security and opportunity to members of society. His analysis led to his main policy prescription for the introduction of a *Basic Income* as the 'only feasible, inclusive institutional structure for balancing the market-oriented interests of the better off with the protection of the poor, and thus linking efficiency with social justice' (Jordan, 1996, p149). Jordan maintained that a basic, unconditional income, guaranteed to all citizens, irrespective of work or marital status, would reduce institutionalised traps and barriers to labour market participation, rather than enforce formal work. This would facilitate flexibility through the life course (e.g. for re-training, child-care etc), while leaving individuals a degree of personal autonomy and consumer choice.

While *A theory of poverty and social exclusion* drew on a wide review of theoretical and policy-oriented literature, key elements of Jordan's theoretical framework appeared to have been developed from an empirical study of the strategies of low-income households (Jordan, *et al*, 1992). Given that Jordan asserted that he had developed a general theory of poverty and social exclusion, it seemed reasonable to consider how that theory might apply to different data sets, reflecting the constraints and opportunities faced by people on low incomes. The situation of single homeless people was considered an appropriate comparison.

A number of ideas from Jordan's (1996) theory of poverty and social exclusion can be adopted for subsequent analysis. The influence of a wide range of groups of social 'actors' was central to Jordan's thesis. Combined with the notion of a policy community (Chapter One) Jordan's theory of economic groups or clubs had the potential to enhance our understanding of single homelessness in the wider housing and social system. For example, could housing providers be modelled as exclusive clubs and could the rehousing process can be analysed in terms of competition between groups? These ideas are tested in Chapter Seven.

Jordan's notion that the heterogeneity of the poor precluded them from organising into powerful groups or clubs fitted with an interpretation of the heterogeneity of single homeless people and contrasted sharply with the notion of an 'underclass' as a homogeneous group. The notions of strategic collective action by single homeless people and the legitimisation of their informal activities had the potential to illuminate the analysis of single homelessness and social exclusion. Subject to the limitations of the data sets, an attempt is made to test these ideas in subsequent chapters.

The importance of empowerment

During the study period, the dominance of the neo-liberal and social democratic (or individualistic and structural) perspectives, was challenged by the emergence of perspectives which recognised the 'agency' of individuals in a much more positive and constructive way than the individualistic 'victim-blaming' mode of neo-liberalism (for example, Commission on Social Justice, 1994; Jordan, 1996; Williams with Pillinger, 1996; Becker 1997). The ideas of Williams with Pillinger (1996) and Becker (1997) are explored in this section.

A new research paradigm?

Williams with Pillinger (1996) considered the potential for social exclusion to form the basis of a new research 'paradigm' for social policy. They concluded

that new concepts, theories and debates could offer fresh insights and approaches to social policy (Williams with Pillinger, 1996, p1). In line with the European debates outlined above (Room, 1995a), Williams with Pillinger argued for a shift in the conceptual focus of research on poverty towards the dynamics of social exclusion and social polarisation in order to provide clear theoretical links to aspects of social and economic change.

The need to take account of the increasing complexity of the processes of division, differentiation and stratification of society, as structured through class, gender, race, disability, age, sexuality, etc, was highlighted by Williams with Pillinger. A trend towards increased emphasis on subjectivity, identity and agency was also identified. In research terms, this implied a shift away from researching social groups as categories of researchers' making, towards integrating people's or groups' own agency, experience and understanding of their situation (Williams with Pillinger, 1996, p3).

Three possible themes for future research were suggested: the citizenship of poor people; the relations between poor people and officials in the restructured welfare state; and the social relations of the irregularly employed Williams with Pillinger (1996, p14). In developing a conceptual framework for research, Williams with Pillinger (1996, p16) suggested a need to find 'some concepts in the middle range' which helped to make links between empirical data on poverty and broader theories of inequality and social and economic change. Social exclusion was viewed as such a middle-range concept, which offered the possibility to focus upon the dynamics of poverty creation.

Taking forward the definitions of Berghman (1995) and Room (1995b) the distinctions between inequality, social exclusion and poverty were further refined by Williams with Pillinger (1996). Inequality was taken as the key, overarching, structural dynamic in society. Social exclusion was viewed as a process which was a consequence of inequality (though not a necessary one). Poverty was conceived as a state or condition linked to inequality and social exclusion (again, not a necessary one). Thus, 'whilst inequality can be our *frame* and poverty our *concern*, our *focus*, needs to be on the dynamics of poverty-creation within social and economic change' (Williams with Pillinger, 1996, p17).

A second focus of research suggested by Williams with Pillinger (1996, p18) was *social polarisation*. How far did the process of social exclusion widen the gap between the comfortably off and the less well off, and by excluding greater numbers of poor people? Such a focus could usefully draw upon a body of housing studies literature in which analysis of the processes of *tenure polarisation*, along with *residualisation* and *marginalisation* were already well established (Forrest and Murie, 1983, 1991; Hamnett, 1984; Lee and Murie, 1997).

A research strategy for social exclusion would involve the development and testing of indicators of social exclusion against available and newly collected data (Williams with Pillinger, 1996). Their overview was summarised in the form of a model for a new research paradigm embracing agency (subjectivity, identity and social position); the social topography of enablement and constraint (risks, opportunities, resources); the discursive context for policy; and the contextual dynamics of social and economic change (globalisation, demographic change, etc). All of those factors were held to influence life chances (Williams with Pillinger, 1996, p24). Some of these ideas were incorporated into the framework for the analysis of single homelessness and social exclusion.

The importance of agency and empowerment were further developed by Williams 1997). In practice, Williams was sceptical about terms like integration, equality and citizenship which signified inclusion for all but resulted in exclusion for some (Williams, 1997, p5). Williams questioned the extent to which the shift of focus from poverty to social exclusion recognised those who experienced poverty as creative agents in their own lives, rather than as the objects of policy. Neither poverty nor social exclusion had, so far, resulted in a significant discourse of resistance in the manner of, for example, the disability movement (Williams, 1997).

A social reaction model?

Becker (1997, p4) criticised major enquiries such as the Commission on Social Justice (1994) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1995) as being primarily

'top down' and failing to give a voice to poor people. He concluded that disagreements over the nature of cause and effect were still largely polarised between structure versus agency and that the dominant paradigm of the 1980s and early 1990s primarily located the causes of poverty with the family, household or individual (Becker, 1997, p36). Although some shift in debate towards enabling poor people to speak out for themselves was identified during the 1990s, Becker questioned whether it had been effective, concluding that the voices of the poor still went largely unheard (Becker, 1997, p37).

Becker (1997) argued that poverty and exclusion needed to be understood as the consequences of *social reactions.* Drawing upon research in the fields of social security and social care, Becker developed a *social reaction* model of poverty and social exclusion (Becker, 1997, pp157-166). According to Becker's analysis, social and individual attitudes, policies, practices and structures acted as barriers to independence and security for citizens on low incomes. Further, welfare policy and practice had become part of the problem of, rather than the solution to, poverty and social exclusion.

Becker saw exclusion in the context of power and powerlessness, and dignity or loss of dignity, not just in relation to financial resources. Becker's view still alluded to the comprehensive nature of social exclusion, but he argued for an increased emphasis on the 'agency of the poor' rather than describing them as passive victims, the challenge being to combine agency with a structural analysis of the causes of poverty. Becker argued that poor people were best able to articulate the barriers to a reasonable income and life-style and that they needed to play a strategic role in developing a social reaction model of poverty and exclusion and in formulating anti-poverty responses (Becker, 1997, pp163-164). Becker argued that:

> the cultural, ideological and political environments in which social policy is formulated by politicians and others, and implemented by welfare professionals, determines strongly the kind of response that poor people receive from social security and personal social services
>
> (Becker, 1997, p160).

Becker's approach had some similarities to that of Jordan (1996). Both advocated a minimum income for all citizens. Going further than Jordan, Becker advocated adopting the criteria set out by Viet-Wilson (1994) whereby a minimum income standard would be set by surveying the general population and calculating an income required for generally agreed necessities of life (including adequate participation as well as physical needs). It would thus be possible to alleviate and prevent poverty by establishing a 'non-pauperising benefit level', thereby ending long standing debates about the adequacy of benefits and the culpability of the poor (Becker, 1997). The framework for the analysis of single homelessness incorporates some of Becker's ideas on a social reaction model of poverty and social exclusion.

New Labour - new exclusion?

The debates on social exclusion took a new turning in 1997, when the newly elected Labour Government set up a Social Exclusion Unit, attached to the Cabinet Office (Lloyd, 1997; Mandelson, 1997). Before drawing conclusions on the potential impact of the Government's Social Exclusion Unit, however, it is important to review the earlier influences upon, and development of, New Labour's economic and social ideology.

Social exclusion or social justice: between New Right and Old Labour?

In the early 1990s, the then Leader of the opposition Labour Party, John Smith set up the Commission on Social Justice, Chaired by Sir Gordon Borrie, with a mission 'to develop a practical vision of economic and social reform' for Britain in the 21st century (Commission on Social Justice, 1994). While the policy recommendations of the Commission were never adopted as official policy of Tony Blair's 'New' Labour Party, the influence of the report upon subsequent debates, and ideological and policy directions, was not insignificant (for example, see Blair, 1996). The report of the Commission on Social Justice acknowledged the need to modernise the British Labour Party and to develop a new welfare settlement in a modern era of capitalism.

The introduction to the Borrie report set out the values of social justice as 'the equal worth of all citizens, their equal right to be able to meet their basic needs, the need to spread opportunities and life chances as widely as possible, and finally, the requirement that we reduce and where possible eliminate unjustified inequalities' (Commission on Social Justice, 1994, p1). The Borrie report cited extensive evidence of increasing inequality, referring directly to street homelessness as one indicator of the deterioration of British society (Commission on Social Justice, 1994). The Commission acknowledged the economic implications of the globalisation of finance; technology and labour market changes; and demographic changes, particularly the changed role of women in society.

The Borrie Report referred to the 'unwelcome' process of social exclusion (Commission on Social Justice, 1994, pp81-82). The report discussed exclusion from work, transport, politics, education, housing, and leisure facilities as increasingly obvious features of British society. Accumulated disadvantages of unemployment, bad housing and poor schooling were understood to combine to produce areas where there was simply 'no economy'. The Commission remained unconvinced by descriptions of the 'underclass' but recognised that there were people who were alienated and disaffected. Social viability would depend upon building a society based on *inclusion* in terms of an end to structural unemployment, a sustained attack on the accumulated disadvantages of deprived parts of the UK and effective support for families of all kinds (Commission on Social Justice, 1994).

The economic analysis of the Commission on Social Justice argued that inequality held back economic growth through costs to government and deterring investors from whole areas which were seen as disadvantaged. In contrast, social justice and investment in people could contribute to economic growth. The report recognised that markets were not created by natural or divine forces, but were the product of the values, institutions, regulations and political decisions that governed them, calling for 'intelligent regulation' to make markets work better for society (Commission on Social Justice, 1994, p98).

The Commission on Social Justice viewed work was viewed as central to life. The possible conditions for full employment in a modern economy included high and sustainable growth; low inflation; reintegration of the long term unemployed into the labour market; a tax and benefit system which provided incentives (not disincentives) to work; and a new balance between employment and family across people's lives (Commission on Social Justice, 1994, pp155-157). Such a strategy would sit comfortably with many of the European Union ideas on social integration through labour market policies discussed above.

The Commission on Social Justice, and subsequently New Labour, argued for a future which combined the dynamics of a market economy with strong social institutions, families and communities. This was contrasted with the alternatives of 'Thatcherite' free-market deregulation or 'old Labour' mechanistic redistribution. The Borrie Commission's acceptance that social justice would be built upon economic success was indicative of the degree to which New Labour had converged with the political right in embracing capitalism and a mixed economy of welfare (Becker, 1997).

In the run up to the 1997 election, the New Labour party, campaigned on a small number of specific policy commitments, rather than a set of broad, ideological principles (Labour Party, 1997). The clear priority areas would be education and health, with specific commitments on reducing class sizes and hospital waiting lists. The Welfare to Work initiative would also receive a high priority, funded through a windfall tax on privatised utilities, but this would be linked to a comprehensive reform of welfare provision. With respect to housing policy, there would be support for both owner occupation and the rented sectors through stability, flexibility and partnerships to meet needs. In implementing a welfare programme, there would be no increase in the basic or top rates of income tax and a New Labour government would seek to manage the economy so as to maintain stable economic growth and low inflation. Welfare spending would be funded through the benefits of steady economic growth (Labour Party, 1997).

Once in government, work, training and education were firmly at the centre of New Labour's plans for the poor as the routes to social inclusion (Lloyd, 1997,

p16   New Labour's 'flagsh p We fare to Work initiative was rapidly mp emented w th the a m of ass sting 250 000 unemployed young people in to emp oyment Fnn 1997 F emm ng 1997; Labour Party, 1997). Subsequently the New Dea was expanded to other groups who were marginalised in the abour market

New Labour's proposa s for we fare reform were set out in a Green Paper pub shed n 1998 Department of Social Security, 1998). Although, the approach was charactensed as a 'third way' between neo-liberalism and social democracy as w th the e ect on manifesto, the eight 'key principles' set out in the Green Paper were pragmatic, rather than ideological. For example, a reformed welfare state wou d encourage work', 'encourage openness and honesty' and be easy for peop e to use'. Besides the broad Prime Ministerial statement refernng to a 'th rd way' there was l'ttle in the Green Paper which cou d dentify New Labour as be ng specifically aligned with, say, the Repub can/So danty parad gm which S lver (1994) characterised as the third way between neo- beral sm and soc alism. Nevertheless, the direction of New Labour's we fare reforms and the emphasis on 'reintegration through work' was more reflect ve of the cont nenta European welfare tradition (Room, 1995), than the soc a democratic approach previous y associated with the British political left.

Social Exc us on: a unit for ana ysis

New Labour's interpretat on of social exclusion became more clearly articulated following the setting up of a high profile Social Exclusion Unit (Dwelly, 1997; Lloyd, 1997; Mandelson, 1997; Wicks, 1997). Announcing the creation of the Social Exclusion Un t, Peter Mandelson asserted that New Labour had to succeed in 'tackling the plight of the excluded' (Lloyd 1997, p14) and described the unit as 'the most important innovation we have made since coming to office' (Dwelly, 1997, p21).

The Social Exclusion Unit was to report directly to the Prime Minister, indicating the Government's substantial commitment to the initiative (Dwelly, 1997;

Lloyd,1997). The unit was expected to have staff drawn from the civil service and non-government agencies Lloyd (1997) and would initially have a two-year life span, from Autumn 1997 (Dwelly, 1997, p22). Early reports also indicated that that the unit would primarily target three million people living on 1,300 of the country's 'worst' housing estates, as measured by crime levels (Dwelly, 1997). The focus would be on housing estates, if not on housing policy.

The Social Exclusion Unit was formally constituted and launched in December 1997. Writing in the *Independent,* the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, stated that social exclusion was about more than just financial deprivation. It was about the damage done by poor housing, ill health, poor education, and lack of decent transport, but above all, lack of work (*Independent,* 1997). As well as tackling current problems, the Government intended to invest in order to prevent poverty and social exclusion happening. Further, problems would be resolved across departments and in ways that made life easier for clients. The key point about the Social Exclusion Unit was the recognition of the interactions between policy areas. The strategies of the Social Exclusion Unit would, in turn, be linked to the Government's wider programme, including Welfare to Work, the national child care strategy, and the phased release of housing capital receipts.

In an interview for the magazine, *Roof,* Peter Mandelson was asked how the Social Exclusion Unit was going to measure its success. The reply suggested a a clear vision of 'social inclusion' had not yet been agreed:

> *Homelessness, levels of crime, persistent juvenile offending, exclusions from school and truancy. Those are the measures of social breakdown. When we start reversing these trends, then we will know we are on the right course.*

(Peter Mandelson, quoted in Blake, 1998, p19).

Further information about the Social Exclusion Unit was posted on the Internet (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998a), including a discussion of the concept of social exclusion and the role of the unit, and relevant speeches given by the Prime Minister. The reduction of street homelessness was one of the first three priority areas for the Social Exclusion Unit and a consultation exercise on tackling street

homelessness was conducted in February 1998. The direction of the exercise and the subsequent strategy are discussed further in Chapter Four.

Early in 1998, the Scottish Office launched a Social Exclusion Network (initially confined to Scottish Office civil servants), and a consultation paper, with the aim of developing comprehensive strategies to tackle social exclusion in Scotland (Scottish Office, 1998b). The consultation exercise sought views on how best to tackle social exclusion in Scotland and was very broad ranging in its agenda. In general, however, the Scottish network appeared to have a strong focus on area regeneration, rather than street homelessness. This perhaps reflected the fact that the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative for Scotland had only been introduced in 1996 and was still in its first phase of implementation. No further policy statement was announced by the end of the study period, but in July 1998, the network was expanded to include agencies outwith the Scottish Office.

A number of issues arose in relation to New Labour's interpretation of social exclusion, within it's ideological perspective of a third way between social democracy and neo-liberalism. New Labour appeared to place much more emphasis on the *comprehensive* nature of exclusion than on the *dynamic processes* which sustained inequality and exclusion. The initial policy focus was very much on joint working, as a solution to multidimensional problems, although there was discussion of the need for *preventative* strategies, which tackled the root causes of social problems.

As with other analyses, emphasis was placed on re-integration through moving from welfare to work. If 'integration' is simplistically equated with working/having a job, however, the other dimensions of multi-faceted social exclusion may be neglected. So far as was feasible, New Labour conceptions of social exclusion were incorporated into the framework for analysis. New Labour's specific policy developments on single homelessness and social exclusion are considered further in Chapters Four and Eight.

Housing and social exclusion

During a period when politicians and commentators on social issues were increasingly concerned about the 'breakdown of the fabric of society', it is perhaps surprising that weaknesses in housing policy and the housing system were not more central to the evolving debates on social exclusion and social integration. Those involved in housing policy and research, did, however, gradually enter the debate on social exclusion. Building on the policy overview set out in Chapter One, this section reviews some of the contributions linking housing and social exclusion. A detailed review of the nature of single homelessness and national level policy responses, in relation to social exclusion, is presented in Chapter Four.

For most of the twentieth century, council housing owned by local authorities represented the principal form of 'welfare' housing in Britain and in Anderson (1997) it was argued that early debates on housing and social exclusion focused primarily on poverty and social inequality in relation to the changing role of council housing. Malpass and Murie (1994, pp146-151) summarised the main debates on housing and social exclusion up to the early 1990s. Although British council housing had always been considered 'housing for the working classes', for many years this mainly included the 'better off' working classes and the tenure housed tenants with diverse socio-economic characteristics. The social role of council housing in Britain changed over the long term as a result of a number of inter-related processes, which included demographic change and increasing social inequality as well as the impact of housing policy.

From 1980, much of the highest quality and most desirable council stock was transferred into owner occupation through sales to sitting tenants. The 1980s and 1990s also saw sustained disinvestment in the building and repair of council housing and the targeting of the allocation of vacant council dwellings to households considered to be in the greatest need of subsidised housing. The outcomes of these processes meant that by the 1990s, the overall quality of the remaining council sector (relative to the 1960s and 1970s) had declined substantially in terms of age, design, type, condition and desirability of properties. The characteristics of council tenants had also changed from 'the

affluent, employed working-class family to a low-income, benefit dependent group including disproportionate numbers of elderly persons and lone parent families' (Malpass and Murie, 1994, p147).

The term residualisation was used to describe the pattern of change in the council housing sector, while the term marginalisation conveyed the degree of social exclusion experienced by the residents of council housing:

> The consequences of this pattern of change are now widely accepted. The increasing concentration of low-income households in council housing represents a key element in patterns of urban social stratification and in the residualisation process affecting council housing (Malpass and Murie, 1994, p147).

Drawing on earlier work by Forrest and Murie (1991), the key features of the changing social profile of council housing were listed by Malpass and Murie (1994, p148). Some indicators were mainly applicable to the condition of dwellings, for example: a declining dwelling stock and rate of new building; an ageing dwelling stock; a declining proportion of 3-4 bedroom houses and an increasing proportion of flats and small houses. These factors could be said to be indicators of residualisation. Other features listed by Malpass and Murie (1994) were more related to the circumstances of council tenants. These could be viewed as indicators of marginalisation or social exclusion, for example: a decline in the proportion of economically active heads of households; a declining level of car ownership; an increase in the proportion of households with older persons; and an increasing proportion of lettings to homeless persons.

In Anderson (1997) it was argued, however, that the application of the above factors as 'indicators' of social exclusion was limited to those households who had accessed housing in the social rented sector, to the neglect of most single homeless people. Similarly, conventional indicators of poverty applied to 'households', such as having access to various consumer goods (Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997, p241) bore little relation to the circumstances of single homeless people who are the main focus of this thesis, as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters.

From the 1960s, council housing was increasingly complemented by the growth of housing associations. During the mid-1980s, government policy greatly encouraged expansion of the housing association sector, particularly in the provision of new rented housing for low-income groups. Although associations provided only around 3% of the total housing stock by 1994, the sector continued to expand rapidly through new building and transfers of dwellings from the council sector. By that time, however, research evidence was accruing that the housing association sector was facing similar issues of residualisation and marginalisation as identified in council housing (Page, 1993).

Summarising the 'housing' dimension to social exclusion, Malpass and Murie (1994) referred to the interaction of wider processes in the labour market, education, social security and other social/welfare services, as well as the housing system; together with discrimination on grounds of race or gender which combined to trap people in disadvantaged situations. In line with the 'European' strand of thought outlined above, social exclusion was seen to result from multiple deprivation and a causal process in which different elements in exclusion reinforced one another. The housing dimension to social exclusion was particularly evident in the increasing polarisation between the main tenures of renting and owning and in the spatial concentration of patterns of exclusion at regional and local levels.

Goodman, Johnson and Webb (1997, pp84-85) concluded that the concentration of social tenants at the bottom of the income distribution was relatively recent. Their analysis confirmed that where social tenants lived in large concentrations this was likely to result in local geographical concentrations of poor people, probably combined with poor quality housing resulting in a concentration of deprivation. Moreover, taking into account the effects of housing costs greatly affected the assessment of changes in real living standards. Real incomes of the poorest tenth of the population after housing costs, fell from a peak in 1979 of £75 per week to just under £60 per week in 1993 (both in 1995 prices). According to Goodman, Johnson and Webb (1997, p112) 'this represented a return to the living standards of more than a century ago'.

It was broadly accepted by the mid-1990s, that the residual role of social housing had become that of a safety net for the poorest, most disadvantaged households in society, including many who had experienced homelessness. Even among these marginalised groups, however, important demarcations could be identified and the processes by which council housing was allocated dictated that certain individuals had fewer opportunities to gain access to even this residualised tenure. Single homeless people were one group who tended to be excluded from access to social housing, as explored throughout the remainder of the thesis.

A number of studies in the mid-1990s investigated the management and community issues associated with the residualisation of social housing, without explicitly entering the debate on social exclusion (Page, 1993; Power and Tunstall, 1995; Cole et al, 1996). Power and Tunstall studied 20 unpopular council estates, all of which had been the subject of intensive and imaginative management initiatives, but where conditions had subsequently deteriorated. The operation of the housing system was a key element in the cumulative disadvantage experienced by people living on estates where a multiple and mutually reinforcing pattern of persistent deprivation affected health, education and job opportunities (Power and Tunstall, 1995).

Among the first explicit considerations of housing and social exclusion were a review conducted by Lee et al (1995) and an empirical analysis of poverty and housing tenure by Lee and Murie (1997). Lee et al estimated some 3-5m people in Britain experienced social exclusion (Lee et al, 1995, p21). The widening divisions in income and expenditure were held to be directly attributable to changes in the economy and employment patterns; changes in welfare; and changes to the structures and needs of households. Although the problems facing the social housing sector were not all new, a number of new elements could be identified, including:

- high unemployment and a changing labour market
- concern about lawlessness on estates
- homelessness and rough sleeping
- the implications of social divisions for the economy

and

- geographical concentrations of social divisions, reinforced by housing policy Lee *et al* (1995, p1).

Adopting a definition of social exclusion after Room (1995), Lee *et al* accepted that a perspective based on the idea of social exclusion meant recognising the importance of the ways in which housing policy and the housing market interacted with other social systems. The housing dimension to social exclusion was characterised as being *compound, persistent, concentrated* and *resistant to change* (Lee *et al*, 1995, p41). Lee *et al*'s study confirmed that the housing association sector was affected by trends towards social exclusion. Existing stock was being affected by incremental residualisation while new estates tended to have a narrow social mix (though life cycle changes and household decisions could gradually alter the initial uniformity). Nevertheless, the narrow social base of tenants was likely to remain as it reflected the realities of tenure advantages in Britain more than simply the operation of allocation policies or the homelessness legislation (Lee *et al*, 1995, p28). Consequently, breaking out of a residual role would involve fundamental action to affect the choices and alternatives of a wider range of people. Housing management may have an impact on neighbourhoods but the underlying pattern was not simply a matter of management. The process of changing estates would be a long-term one requiring a review of the financial measures, stock characteristics, services and facilities on estates, and wider measures to influence tenure choice (Lee *et al* 1995, p33).

The empirical analysis of housing and social exclusion conducted by Lee and Murie (1997) was also influenced by the approaches discussed in Room (1995). Demonstrating the significant differentiation within tenures in Britain, the study showed that in some areas, concentrations of deprivation were found within the owner occupied and privately rented sectors, as well as on council housing estates. Consequently, policies which exclusively targeted council housing may neglect excluded groups in other tenures (Lee and Murie, 1997).

The housing dimension to social exclusion has also been identified outwith the United Kingdom (Schmitter-Heisler, 1994; Kristensen 1995; Sahlin, 1995). Schmitter-Heisler (1994) drew on the conceptualisation of the urban 'underclass'

according to Wilson (1987), but concluded that exclusion was much less racialised in Europe, compared to the USA. The role of housing in patterns of spatial segregation and social exclusion in the United States, was compared with the situation in the Netherlands, Germany and England. While housing policy had been influential in determining residential patterns, outcomes could not be viewed in isolation from other dimensions of welfare which were more extensive in Europe than in America. Housing for low income populations had been a significantly more important policy concern in all three European countries compared to the United States. In addition, European cities became multi-ethnic much later than the USA, after their welfare states were put in place. While there was some spatial concentration of poor and minority populations in the European countries, the neighbourhoods in question remained ethnically heterogeneous and were far removed from the US 'hyperghetto' (Schmitter-Heisler, 1994).

In the Danish context, Kristensen (1995) emphasised the importance of home in the process of social exclusion. While the principle reason for exclusion may lie in the labour market, a home provided some security against social exclusion. Kristensen identified physical, spatial and visible changes on Danish housing estates which reflected processes of social exclusion, but absolute destitution was reported to be rare in Denmark (Kristensen 1995). In contrast, Sahlin (1995) cited evidence of people sleeping rough and living in night-shelters in Sweden. Sahlin examined strategies for controlling access to social housing and found that judgements were made about clients' needs and capabilities resulted in the exclusion of certain groups in a similar manner to the implementation of the homelessness legislation in Britain (Sahlin, 1995).

During the study period an increasingly sophisticated literature on housing and social exclusion was beginning to emerge, the most recent of which could not be fully integrated into the review for this thesis, as a result of time constraints. Most notably a special issue of the journal *Housing Studies*, published in November 1998, carried a series of articles on the theme of housing and social exclusion. Contributions by Marsh and Mullins (1998) and Somerville (1998) examined the broad conceptual issues around housing and social exclusion while Taylor (1998) focused on combating exclusion on housing estates and the

articles by Harrison (1998) and Ratcliffe (1998) considered issues to do with race, housing and exclusion. The concept of social exclusion had become firmly embedded in contemporary housing policy and scholarly debate.

Bringing single homelessness into the debate

It was argued, in Anderson (1997), that the emphasis on the residualisation of social housing in debates about housing and social exclusion neglected the experience of those who could not gain access to this tenure. Single homeless people were identified as a key excluded group along with the poorest households in other tenures including privately rented housing and, to an extent, home ownership. As indicated above, Lee and Murie (1997) also concluded that a narrow focus on the residualisation of council housing neglected other important dimensions of housing exclusion. Lee and Murie made the valid point that since most households registered as 'officially homeless' in Britain were eventually housed in the social rented sector, they experienced the process of social exclusion in much the same way as other marginalised tenants (Lee and Murie 1997, p6). As demonstrated in Chapter One, however, this argument was much less applicable to non-priority homeless households, including low-income single people.

Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars (1993) confirmed that young people aged 16-24 were over-represented among single homeless people in England. Indeed, much of the British and comparative literature on homelessness has been particularly concerned with the situation of young people (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994; Jones, 1995; Ruddick, 1996; van der Ploeg and Scholte, 1997). Youth homelessness has also been interpreted in the context of the changing nature of the transition from youth to adulthood (Jones, 1995; Roberts, 1995; Coles, 1995). Youth homelessness was analysed in terms of a *continuum of risk* for young people entering the housing market (Jones, 1995), a concept which could equally apply to older single homeless people and which was incorporated into the framework for the analysis of single homelessness and social exclusion.

As with Berghman's (1995) contribution, Jones (1995) emphasised the notion of process, rather than an 'underclass' of disadvantaged young people in a fixed state. The process of leaving home in Britain in the 1980s and 90s was much more complex, compared to the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Young people were not always able to choose the time or circumstances of leaving their childhood home and many returned home for periods after first leaving. Consequently, leaving home could no longer be seen as a linear, 'one-way' process for young people (Jones, 1995).

A re-examination of the *quantitative* findings from *Single homeless people* in relation to the concept of social exclusion demonstrated that, while some of the characteristics of single homeless people were shared by marginalised low-income groups in council housing, the living circumstances of the former were much more acute than for those who had gained access to council housing, even in its residualised role (Anderson, 1997). While all marginalised groups faced relative poverty and disadvantage, single homeless people faced the additional barrier of not being deemed *deserving* of the limited safety net of state housing provision.

Pleace (1998) has also examined single homelessness as an outcome of the process of social exclusion, and was critical of analyses which focused on single/street homelessness as a 'unique and extreme problem'. Pleace argued that homelessness needed to be seen within the wider picture of social and economic exclusion, rather than as a discrete social problem. The subsequent chapters of this thesis present a detailed consideration of the potential value of the concept of social exclusion in understanding single homelessness.

Social exclusion: operationalising a contested concept

From the review of contemporary debates it was evident that social exclusion remained a contested concept which eluded accurate quantification (two characteristics which are also reflected in the debates about homelessness in Chapters One and Four). Despite the efforts of Berghman (1995) and others to provide clear definitions, no simple consensus on the meaning and application

of social exclusion emerged. Malpass and Murie (1994, p149-151) argued that the lack of a specific definition allowed the term to encompass a range of processes and experiences which may occur in different contexts, but had the common effect of *locking people out of society.*

The main areas where some consensus could be identified were that social exclusion was 'more serious' than poverty (that it was comprehensive, embracing all aspects of life, not just material resources) and that it was a dynamic concept, concerned with process as much as outcome. Divergence in views arose in consideration of possible explanations of both the nature of, and the contributory processes to, social exclusion.

Levitas (1996) was critical of the analytical potential of the concept of social exclusion. In particular she highlighted the problem that the 'European' conception of social exclusion, obscured fundamental inequalities (e.g. relating to gender, class and race) which were inherent in capitalism. Conceptualising social exclusion within ideological frameworks or paradigms enabled explicit acknowledgement of those limitations (e.g. Silver, 1994). However, since definitional problems are endemic in social science, it will continue to be difficult for researchers to operationalise social exclusion in an unambiguous way. Confusion may be minimised by individual researchers being clear about their own conception and definition of social exclusion for the purposes of their investigations, within the context of broader debates.

As indicated in Chapter One, from the literature review conducted for this thesis, it was hypothesised that a working definition of social exclusion should emphasise *separateness from the life experiences common to the majority within society,* rather than some notion of being *outside of society.* It is a key argument of this thesis that those people who experience exclusion from various aspects of welfare remain very much a part of British society, and are in fact *a product of* that society. The better off and least well off groups co-exist in a form of *interdependency,* albeit with a highly differentiated experience of life. Social exclusion, then, is viewed as exclusion from aspects of well being and social participation taken as 'usual' among the majority within society and the comprehensive and dynamic nature of social exclusion is acknowledged.

An evident weakness in much of the discussion about social exclusion is the lack of detailed articulation of the concepts of *social inclusion, social integration* or *social cohesion.* The terms are widely used, most apparently to refer to the 'reverse' of social exclusion (multiple privilege?). However, there have been few rigorous attempts to provide a clear definition of these concepts, apart Commins (1993), quoted above (p97). The question arises as to whether any society would ever expect to attain 'perfect' or 'total' social inclusion and how that outcome would be identified, defined or measured. Without a conception of social inclusion, it is very difficult to see how 'policies to combat social exclusion' could be effective or how their impact could be rigorously evaluated. The final chapter of the thesis reconsiders the notion of social inclusion, in the light of the full analysis.

Building on the working definition proposed above, policies to combat exclusion - or to promote a cohesive society - would need to be comprehensive and dynamic in nature. That is to say, to be effective, policies would need to tackle the multidimensional nature of social exclusion, with the aim of moving people from an excluded, to an included position. However, policy intervention is likely to be influenced by prevailing attitudes as to the 'degree of inequality' which can be acceptably tolerated at any particular time. Despite the sophistication of contemporary sociological theory, much of the discussion on poverty, inequality and homelessness still revolves around 'the state versus the market', or neo-liberalism versus social democracy. Describing what could be characterised as an 'inverted' notion of social exclusion, Goodman, Johnson and Webb (1997) suggested that where enough higher-income people were divorced from the experiences of the poor, then their political concerns may be less likely to focus on income redistribution. In such circumstances there may be relatively little public support for political strategies which would reverse trends in inequality.

Jordan (1996), Williams with Pillinger, (1996) and Becker (1997) all sought to develop theories or research methods which moved beyond the simplistic notion of structural or behavioural explanations by incorporating a more sophisticated analysis of the agency of poor (or homeless) individuals. In the housing system, the ways in which individuals and households move through the bureaucratic and market processes of gaining (or not gaining) access to housing may

indicate the key points where individual strategies meet structural barriers. Anderson (1994) set out a preliminary analysis of the process of access to housing for low income single people which is incorporated into the framework for analysis and further developed in this thesis.

The papers contained in Room (1995a) were concerned with the measurement and analysis of social exclusion in Europe. There were valuable discussions on the limitations of national data sets and debates on appropriate measures and indicators. Much of the analysis was quantitative in nature, relating to large-scale national and international data sets. This thesis analysed qualitative data collected at the local level, relating to individuals or organisations. Consequently, the concepts associated with social exclusion were applied at a much smaller scale of analysis than in most of the papers in Room (1995a). The potential transferability of concepts between different scales of analysis is acknowledged in other sources, however. For example, Jordan (1996) applied his theory of poverty and social exclusion at global, national and local levels.

The preceding review of evolving debates on social exclusion demonstrated the diversity of definitions and approaches to the concept. This thesis has attempted to encapsulate that diversity in the subsequent analysis and to compare the value of alternative approaches to social exclusion in deepening our understanding of the nature and dynamics of single homelessness.

Building a framework for analysis

The proposed methodology for evaluating the concept of social exclusion through the case study issue of single homelessness was set out in Chapters One and Two. The review of the literature on social exclusion in this chapter identified a range of issues and conceptual approaches associated with the analysis of social exclusion, which could be applied to the issue of single homelessness. Some policy and theoretical issues raised in Chapters One and Two were also incorporated into the analytical framework, ensuring sufficient flexibility to take account of the emergence of new ideas or conceptual approaches 'grounded' in the data.

A generalised framework for the analysis of social exclusion and single homelessness is presented in Figure 3.1 and the detailed framework for analysis, effectively a coding frame for the qualitative secondary data analysis, is presented at the end of this chapter.

Figure 3.1 Generalised framework for the analysis of social exclusion and single homelessness

Data re-analysed for evidence of:

- Ideology (agencies, individuals)
- Aspects of exclusion or well-being (comprehensive)
- Processes of exclusion or inclusion (dynamic)
- Influence of / impact upon policy formulation and implementation.

The coding frame is set out according to the main schools of thought on social exclusion and there is some overlap between the different sections, which was taken into consideration in the analysis. Some of the conceptual ideas were drawn from literature published during the mid-late 1990s, after some of the primary data was collected, while other concepts were much longer established. In some instances, new concepts were, therefore, 'overlaid' upon data which reflected the prevailing policy and ideological context of the data collection period. The reflective research process allowed for such constraints to be taken into account in the analysis (Chapter Two).

Following the Framework approach to qualitative analysis described in Chapter Two (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994), concepts and approaches associated with social exclusion were reformulated as a series of questions with which to re-interrogate the qualitative data. The coding frame includes differing types of questions utilised in qualitative analysis:

- contextual - to identify the form and nature of what exists
- diagnostic - concerned with examining the reasons for, or causes of, what exists
- evaluative - to appraise effectiveness
- strategic - to identify new theories, policies, plans or actions.

(Ritchie and Spencer, 1994).

The coding frame was used to systematically map and re-interpret the empirical data sets, as well as some of the policy material reviewed in Chapter Four, focusing on the key objectives and research questions for the thesis. The process of analysis enabled the exploration of key concepts; mapping of the nature and dynamics of single homelessness; the creation of models and/or typologies; and the development of associations and explanations from the data, resulting in the formulation of new ideas and concepts relating to policy and individual agency (Chapter Eight).

Coding framework for secondary analysis of qualitative data[9]

Key questions:

1. Is the concept of social exclusion of value in understanding social problems, such as single homelessness?

2. Would a policy focus on social exclusion/inclusion result in improved policy responses to a range of important social issues?

Poverty

To what extent does single homelessness reflect 'poverty' ?

- distributional?
- (lack of) access to resources, mainly low income?
- 'lack of shelter'?

Comprehensive exclusion?

To what extent does single homelessness reflect a condition more comprehensive than poverty - social exclusion?

- relational - lack of (or restricted) wider participation in society
  - economic - the importance of work
  - political/democratic - voting, representative organisations
  - welfare - health, education etc (whole range of dimensions)
  - family - contacts, support
  - community - contacts, networks.

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[9] Reproduced as developed for the purposes of secondary data analysis, rather than according to the final structure of this chapter. Alpha-numeric codes were applied to the questions for the purposes of indexing and analysing the data. In the interests of clarity, these have not been reproduced. The coding frame and coding system were applied flexibly, rather than rigidly, in the analysis process.

Evidence of individuals' perceptions of exclusion?

- alienation/ disaffection

What is the evidence that single homelessness is

- compound?
- persistent?
- concentrated?
- resistant to change?

Or - is their evidence of varying *degrees* of integration/exclusion?

- housing
- other dimensions/indicators of exclusion
- continuum of risk?

Differentiating the analysis

How do homelessness and the housing system relate to other dimensions of exclusion?

- issues specific to discrete policy areas
- interactions between policy areas
- conflicting or complimentary?

What evidence is available regarding

- differentiation between / within tenures?
- excluded groups in privately rented and owner occupied housing (as well as the social rented sector)?
- significance of informal / non-tenured living arrangements?

Process

Can the *dynamics* of single homelessness be identified?

What processes can be identified which cause, or are associated with, single homelessness?

What are the range of potential indicators of single homelessness and outcomes in the housing system?

Can routes out of homelessness be identified?

How does the *process of gaining access to housing* operate for single/homeless people?

- Social rented sector
    - bureaucratic
    - housing need/circumstances (physical)
    - household type/needs (social)
    - homelessness provisions
    - waiting lists / housing registers
    - allocation process
    - maintaining a tenancy

- Market/private sector
    - demand/supply
    - costs/affordability
    - subsidy/support mechanisms

- Non-tenured sector
    - informal (family, friends, squatting, sleeping rough etc)
    - bureaucratic (hostels)
    - market (hotels, B&Bs)

How do access processes determine housing outcomes?

How do access processes interact with other policy areas?

Exclusive groups/clubs

How do agencies form and operate as exclusive clubs?

- strategic action?
- outcomes?

What evidence is there of strategic/rational action by single homeless people in informal groups? Or as *individuals*?

- labour market
- benefits system
- informal economy
- community support

What evidence is there of constraints upon single homeless people forming informal groups?

Ideologies, values and attitudes

To what extent can values and ideology be discerned from the data?

- Perspectives of organisations (staff, elected representatives)? To what extent do values / ideologies drive policy and practice?
- Perspectives of individual homeless people / service users / clients? To what extent do values / ideologies drive or constrain actions and decisions?

Is there any evidence of attitudes/behaviour/values among single homeless people, which would distinguish them from 'housed' people? ('underclass' thesis)

- perceptions of single homeless people
- perceptions of agency staff

Evidence of Murray's suggested indicators?: illegitimacy, crime, unemployment, homelessness, drug use, violence?

What evidence is there that the collective/individual attitudes of (housing and related) agencies create barriers to independence for poor (poorly housed/ homeless) people? (Becker)

- cultural, ideological, political

Policy responses

Can policies of enforcement be identified?

- by clients / individuals?
- by/within agencies?

Can any assessment be made as to the implications for single homeless people of implementing a universal basic income?

- universal right to adequate housing?

Can any assessment be made as to the likely implications for single homeless people of implementing New Labour policies for social exclusion/inclusion?

- full employment
    - welfare to work / new deal
- service co-ordination

Can any assessment be made as to the implications for single homeless people of implementing policies for empowering them in the policy process?

To what extent can the analysis of social exclusion / single homelessness be incorporated into the policy process?

To what extent can the idea of the policy community aid the analysis of social exclusion /single homelessness?

Towards conclusions[10]

To what extent has a re-analysis of the two data sets on single homelessness, within the wider theoretical and conceptual debates on social exclusion, contributed to a deeper understanding of the issue?

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[10] Mainly utilised for Chapter Eight

To what extent has the qualitative secondary data analysis helped develop an understanding of the problem of single homelessness from the perspective of the actors (individuals, agency staff)?

To what extent are the processes associated with social exclusion in housing, also associated with single homelessness?

- or are there different processes at work?

What barriers to achieving social inclusion can be identified from the data?

- housing and other dimensions/indicators of exclusion

How could housing relate to / contribute to *social inclusion* as:

- civic integration - equal citizens in a democratic system
- economic integration - job/valued economic function
- social integration - ability to use state provided social services
- interpersonal integration - family, friends, social networks?

To what extent can the data / analysis:

- advance knowledge / understanding of the conception social exclusion?
- help explain the specific problem of single homelessness?
- offer practical / policy prescriptions?
    - participative - involving individuals / clients
    - participative - involving practitioners

What is the value of the concept of social exclusion?
Strengths and weaknesses/limitations for analysis?
New paradigm for policy and research?

CHAPTER FOUR

SINGLE HOMELESSNESS IN BRITAIN 1987/8-1997/8

Introduction

Chapter One introduced the nature of the single homelessness problem in Britain and set out the legislative framework which has excluded most single people from access to social housing through the homelessness procedures. This chapter reviews the changing nature of single homelessness at the national level, during the study period. Firstly, the analysis considers the concepts of housing need and demand, and the key demographic and social trends among one person households. The detailed legislative framework for access to social housing is then set out and policy development during the study period is reviewed. Developments in related policy areas which impacted upon single homelessness are also reviewed.

Evidence of the scale and nature of single homelessness during 1987-1997 is then presented, followed by a critique of specific policy initiatives designed to tackle the problem. The concepts associated with social exclusion are then applied to the analysis of the problem of single homelessness and the policy responses at the national level.

Household formation and housing needs

Trends in household formation

Any analysis of single homelessness needs to be considered within the wider context of household formation and housing needs among single people. This is because the housing requirements for single people arise from a combination of trends in household formation and available housing opportunities. The scale of

single homelessness at any time will be a function of these two factors. That is to say, homelessness results where individuals who wish to live as an independent household are unable to secure and/or retain appropriate accommodation in one of the main housing tenures.

Difficulties arise in looking at trends in the formation of single person households, as they are not always identified in major national data sets. Holmans (1995, pp9-10) cited the Government's official definition of a household as 'either one person living alone with his or her own housekeeping or two or more people who share a common housekeeping or share a living room or sitting room'. This definition was not, however, universally adopted and would not necessarily identify 'single, childless people of working age'. Some data sets focus on marital status - distinguishing between those who are never married, widowed, or divorced - irrespective of whether they have children.

Similarly, it is not always possible to differentiate between single people who are over and under retirement age. For example, Dyer (1993) reported that 44% of waiting list applicants in Scotland wished to move as single people (while only 16.5% of current tenants lived as single people) but did not distinguish between those over and under retirement age. Such criteria were, however, crucial with respect to the homelessness provisions and other access routes into social housing.

Despite these limitations, it can still be concluded that one of the most significant features of population trends in Britain since the 1950s has been the large increase in the number of people living alone (HMSO, 1995, p65). The increase resulted from two principal trends: an increase in the number of people choosing to live alone, and growth in the number of people remaining on their own following the dissolution of a relationship or a bereavement. By 1991, more than a quarter (27%) of households in Great Britain were one person households - a near doubling of the proportion since 1961 - most of whom were over pensionable age (HMSO, 1995, p74). In sharp contrast, *Single homeless people* demonstrated that, in 1991, almost all homeless single people were below pensionable age, with young people aged under 25 years significantly over-represented (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p8).

The proportion of single/unmarried adults in the population (as opposed to independent households) also increased by around 50% between 1961 and 1991 (HMSO, 1995, p72). Although there was a simultaneous increase in independent living among single adults, the period also saw a growth in the proportion of men and women in their mid-late twenties who remained in the parental home (HMSO, 1995, p73). This trend was attributed partly to the move away from formal marriage, with young men more likely than young women to remain in the parental home for longer.

The Department of the Environment's survey of Housing in England 1994/5 (Green et al, 1996) also identified a rise in the number of never-married men and women living alone and continuing high divorce rates, resulting in an overall increase in the number of households relative to population size. For example, the period 1984-1994/5 saw the proportion of households headed by people who were divorced or separated rise from 4% to 10%, and the proportion of men and women aged 20 to 34 who lived with their parents increased between 1991 and 1994/95, in contrast to a period of stability during the 1980s (Green et al, 1996).

The increase in the proportion of single people in the British population has been predicted to continue into the next century. The total number of households in England is expected to rise by 4.4million (23%) over the period 1991-2016, increasing from 19.2million to 23.6million and one person households (including those aged over 60 years) are expected to make up 80% of this anticipated increase (House of Commons Environment Committee,1996; Town and Country Planning Association, 1996). For Scotland, the total number of households was predicted to increase by 11% between 1994 and 2008 (although the total population was projected to fall slightly), with the proportion of one person households expected to increase from 29% to 34% (Scottish Office, 1997).

Among single person households, growth in household formation will mainly take place in the 30-59 years age group, with the number aged 20-29 likely to decline due to the fall in the birth rate in the late 1960s/early 1970s (Holmans, 1995, p43). A simple decline in numbers of young people does not, however,

necessarily equate with a decline in household formation, as social trends and individual preferences also need to be considered. The debate on the housebuilding implications of the household projections has been explored further in Barclay (1997) and rapidly emerged as a key planning issue for the New Labour Government.

In their review of patterns in inequality, Goodman Johnson and Webb (1997, pp202-203) found that single childless non-pensioners made up around one-sixth of the UK population in 1991. They included young adults living in their parents' home and students, as well as single people of all ages who were living independently. Looking at the period 1961 to 1991, two important trends were identified:

1. the number of economically inactive single people had risen markedly over 1961-1991, reflecting growing numbers in full-time education and those not active in the labour market, either due to sickness or because they had given up looking for work

2. the number of single people who were unemployed (and looking for work) varied considerably over the economic cycle but the number unemployed at the economic high point of successive cycles was considerably higher in the 1980s than in 1960s.

(Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997, p200).

One-worker households containing single people experienced a marked rise in income inequality, with a particular rise in the inequality of earnings. Single people living in two-worker households formed a diminishing group, but one which had relatively uniform living standards. Single people in non-worker households were a rapidly growing group, principally because of rising unemployment and increased participation in full-time education (Goodman, Johnson and Webb, 1997).

Housing need

Where Government intervenes in the housing market, it could be argued that providing assistance for those deemed in housing need may result in additional

household formation. Conversely, restrictive policies may prevent household formation. Based on a long-term review of outcomes, however, Holmans (1995) concluded that there was no evidence that housing shortage suppressed household formation, it merely resulted in increased sharing. Household formation and the resultant housing demand or need was found to be largely autonomous from policy on housing provision (Holmans, 1995, p11).

Policies could, however, have a significant impact upon the housing opportunities available to newly forming households. For example, if single people on low incomes were excluded from the social rented sector, an increase in single homelessness could be a likely consequence. It was, therefore, essential to consider the nature and assessment of housing need, as well as patterns of household formation.

Anderson (1994) identified the neglect of single people's requirements in successive national estimates of housing need (Niner, 1989a; Bramley 1990; Wilcox, 1990; and Whitehead and Kleinman, 1992). Although different methods were employed, most of these studies concluded that, for England, around 100,000 units per annum of new social rented housing would be required throughout the 1990s. This was nearly twice the level of (mostly housing association) production of the early 1990s. There was, however, a lack of consensus as to how to treat single people when estimating housing need and differing assumptions as to their needs significantly increased the overall requirement. The widely adopted figure of 100,000 units per year did not take adequate account of the needs of one person households of working age.

Holmans (1995) described housing needs as:

> the housing needs of people with insufficient income or access to credit
> to obtain satisfactory housing by buying or renting it on the market with
> their own funds

(Holmans, 1995, p3).

Meeting such needs was taken to imply:

> sufficient dwellings to provide to households the privacy that comes from
> self-contained accommodation; sufficient space for the people who live
> there; and satisfactory physical conditions and equipment. Also implicit is

that households will not have to spend so much of their income to obtain decent housing as to leave themselves too little for the other necessities of life

(Holmans, 1995, p3).

The matter of whose housing needs should be met through some form of state intervention has evolved in parallel with the development of social housing, reflecting prevailing social trends and ideologies. Holmans (1995) noted that successive central Government policy and legislative statements since 1971 emphasised the state's responsibility to *families* in housing need - rather than to all citizens. Referring directly to single people, Holmans (1995, p5) pointed out that where they had sufficient funds to obtain housing in the market, no practical question arose as to whether single people really needed to live independently. If, however, they could not provide for themselves, questions were raised as to whether they had a legitimate claim to social rented housing, irrespective of need.

The House of Commons Environment Committee (1996) followed the logic of Holmans (1995) in suggesting that a definition of housing need would incorporate those who could not afford market prices and 'had a claim to be housed'. This was contrasted with 'demand' which was seen to reflect the number of households who were financially able to rent or buy their accommodation in the private market.

The Environment Committee also discussed the emphasis of housing policy on prioritising the needs of 'families' (House of Commons Environment Committee, 1996). A number of expert submissions to the committee argued that the term 'families' did not adequately reflect changing social patterns and was unnecessarily restrictive, leading to the exclusion of other groups of people who may also be in housing need. The Committee agreed that while the concept of housing need involved an element of judgement, covert 'moral judgements' should be avoided in determining those needs (House of Commons Environment Committee, 1996), suggesting some movement towards a change in prevailing attitudes.

Holmans (1995) updated the assessment of housing needs in England, up to the year 2011, using the Department of the Environment's household projections. Housing needs were identified in two parts:

1. A requirement of 510,000 socially rented dwellings was identified to meet the backlog of unmet needs at the base date of 1991

2. A need for 90,000 additional social rented dwellings, per annum (1991-2001) and 100,000 per annum (2001-2011) to keep the backlog of unmet need at its 1991 level

(Holmans, 1995).

In order to eradicate the measured backlog of housing need at 1991, some 117,000 homes per year, over the 20 year period would be required (Holmans, 1995), illustrating the severity of the impact of disinvestment in social housing since the 1970s. In contrast, the Department of the Environment (1996a) cited its own estimates for new social lettings at around 60,000 dwellings per annum, a figure which did not allow for tackling any backlog of unmet need and which was much closer to the actual levels achieved in the first half of the 1990s. Part of the Government's argument for providing affordable lettings at the lower end of the estimates was that the provision of additional social housing might crowd out the revival of the privately rented sector and suppress the growth in home ownership (Department of the Environment, 1996a).

The treatment of single people in Holmans' (1995) housing needs estimates was not straightforward. For example, Holmans excluded single adults living as part of their parents' households, or in flat-shares, (and who would like to live independently) on the grounds that there was no consensus about their having a legitimate expectation of access to subsidised rented housing. However, 'would-be couples, living apart' were included in the estimates. Although a broad estimate for single homeless people was included in the overall calculation, single people living in lodgings and hostels could not be included with concealed/sharing households due to the lack of a robust estimate of their number.

The Government's estimated requirement of 60,000 dwellings per annum, as cited above, did not include homes for would-be couples or individuals who

would like to live independently instead of in the parental household (Department of the Environment, 1996a). While the Government, quite legitimately, argued that young adults sharing with friends did not automatically require social housing (Department of the Environment, 1996a, p5), that position would not justify their total exclusion from housing needs estimates, as social housing may well be appropriate for some lower-income single people.

During the study period then, single people accounted for a high proportion of actual and projected household formation, yet the needs of low-income single people for social housing were substantially underestimated. The notion that single people were adequately housed in shared accommodation remained inherent in Government policy, as demonstrated by policy on Housing Benefit in the privately rented sector. In 1996, housing benefit for young single people in private sector tenancies was restricted to an amount which would pay for shared accommodation and proposals were published which would extend this to all single people of working age (Social Security Advisory Committee, 1996). Following the change in Government in 1997, the latter proposals were withdrawn.

The notion that young and middle-aged single person households 'need' only shared accommodation or small flats has been challenged by research which has shown that this is rarely the accommodation occupied by single people if they have sufficient purchasing power to choose for themselves (Holmans, 1995, p24; Town and Country Planning Association, 1996). While individuals may move in and out of relationships and family situations during their lives, the increasing proportion of people who need or need or wish to live on their own at some point, became a fact of modern living during the study period.

Homelessness and access to housing: policy and legislative change

This section reviews the changing legislative and policy framework which determined access to housing in the main tenures, during the study period. The pattern of housing tenure was not constant during the study period as illustrated in Table 4.1. The three years 1981, 1987 and 1995 were selected for comparison as

they respectively indicated the position early in the post-1979 Conservative administration, at the beginning of the study period, and near to the end of the study period. Table 4.1 also illustrates the variation in housing tenure patterns within Britain.

Table 4.1 Housing tenure in Britain: 1981-1995

Housing tenure as % of total housing stock	Home ownership	Privately rented	Housing Association rented	Council rented	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Scotland					
1981	36.4	9.7	1.8	52.2	100
1987	44.6	7.1	2.6	45.6	100
1995	57.9	6.9	4.0	31.1	100
England					
1981	58.2	11.3	2.3	28.1	100
1987	64.3	10.0	2.7	23.1	100
1995	67.7	10.1	4.5	17.7	100
Wales					
1981	62.6	9.4	1.1	26.9	100
1987	68.4	7.7	1.7	22.3	100
1995	72.1	7.5	3.5	16.9	100
Britain					
1981	56.4	11.1	2.2	30.3	100
1987	62.7	9.6	2.6	25.1	100
1995	67.0	9.7	4.4	18.9	100

Source: Adapted from Wilcox (1996), Table 16b, p96 and Table 16d, p98.

Since 1981, home ownership has been the dominant and fastest expanding tenure, increasing from just over half of the total housing stock, to just over two thirds. However, a slightly higher proportion of the Welsh housing stock was owner occupied, compared to England, while in Scotland owner occupation remained significantly lower than in the rest of Britain. Despite policies to

encourage expansion, the privately rented sector remained relatively stable at around 10% of the total stock, slightly lower in Scotland.

The housing association sector more or less doubled in scale between 1981 and 1995, though it still comprised less than 5% of the total housing stock at the end of the study period. The continuing decline in the council rented sector is evident from Table 4.1. In Scotland, council housing was the majority tenure in 1981, but accounted for less than one third of the housing stock by 1995. For England and Wales, the proportion of the housing stock in the council sector declined from just over a quarter to less than one fifth. These trends resulted from new provision in the housing association sector, transfers from the local authority/public sector to housing associations and from the sale of council houses under the right to buy. Nevertheless, local authority housing remained the main provider of affordable rented housing throughout the study period, and was the focus for much of the empirical analysis for this study.

Access to local authority housing

Much of the discussion in this section sets out the policy and legislative context for the more detailed analysis of local housing practice in subsequent chapters. At the commencement of this study, housing provision in Britain was governed mainly by the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 (England and Wales) and the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. Local authority responsibilities with regard to homeless households were identical across Britain but the procedures for the allocation of council housing through housing waiting lists in England and Wales differed from those for Scotland.

For England and Wales, the Housing Act 1985 placed a general duty on local authorities to consider housing needs in their areas. Where they provided housing for rent they had a duty to give reasonable preference to persons occupying insanitary or overcrowded houses; having large families; living under unsatisfactory housing conditions; or found to be homeless.

For Scotland, procedures for the administration of housing waiting lists were governed by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (sections 17-21). The Act stated that in deciding on admission to the housing waiting list, local authorities should *not* take account of:

- age, provided the applicant was over 16 years
- income of the applicant/family
- whether the applicant owned property
- outstanding debts on properties for which the applicant is/was not the tenant at the time the debt accrued
- whether joint applicants were living together at the time of application.

In addition, the act defined certain employment and social circumstances in which admission to the housing list should not be dependent upon residence within the area.

In the selection of prospective tenants, Scottish local authorities were to give reasonable preference to persons who were occupying houses below tolerable standard; occupying overcrowded houses; had large families; were living in unsatisfactory conditions; or persons to whom they had a duty under the homelessness provisions. In allocating their council houses, Scottish local authorities were to take *no* account of:

- length of time resident in the area
- outstanding debts on properties for which the applicant is/was not the tenant at the time the debt accrued
- any of the factors listed above regarding eligibility for the waiting list

  and must *not* impose any requirements that::

- an application has been registered for a minimum period
- a divorce or judicial separation be obtained

or

- that an applicant must already be living separately from another person (e.g. a former partner).

Under the 1985 and 1987 Housing Acts then, local authorities in England and Wales were more free than their Scottish counterparts, to impose restrictions on eligibility for council housing with respect to local residence or employment, and with respect to an applicant's age. Across Scotland, England, and Wales, the

legislative constraints within which local authorities allocated their council housing traditionally prioritised family households and those in poor housing circumstances. Legislation never overtly discriminated against single people and the priority afforded to them was largely at the discretion of the individual local authority.

The legislative provisions for local authorities to deal with homelessness, which were in place for most of the study period, were set out in Chapter One. The majority of single people who became homeless had no priority for council housing, due to their exclusion from the main priority need groups. The same situation applied to childless couples where neither person qualified for a priority need category. In contrast to provisions for allocations through the housing waiting list, the homelessness legislation directly discriminated against single people and couples without children.

Within the category of vulnerability due to 'special reasons', local authorities had considerable discretion in making decisions about single people who became homeless. Although the legislation and associated codes of guidance provided a framework for assessing vulnerability (e.g. Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1991), that guidance did not clearly stipulate the circumstances in which single people should be deemed vulnerable.

Homelessness was known to be steadily increasing throughout the 1980s, but it did not become a priority for central government until the end of the decade. When a policy review was eventually carried out in 1989 (Department of the Environment, 1989), no major changes to the homelessness provisions were proposed. The 1989 review contained no specific reference to street homelessness and very little reference to single homelessness more generally. Some new initiatives to reduce family homelessness were introduced following the 1989 review. Reports by the Audit Commission (1989) and the National Audit Office (1990) had been highly critical of the record of the Government and local authorities on homelessness and cited an increase in permanent affordable housing as the evident solution, though neither study made any specific reference to single homeless people.

The 1990s saw a major review of the procedures for access to social housing. Two consultation papers were launched in 1994 by the Department of the Environment (1994) and the Scottish Office (1994). The consultation papers drew heavily upon some of the key findings of a Government funded study of access to council housing in England (Prescott-Clarke, Clemens and Park, 1994). The policy review preceded the publication of other key Government funded studies of homelessness (O'Callaghan and Dominian et al, 1996; Mullins et al, 1996). Consequently, the proposals in the 1994 consultation papers did not draw upon a comprehensive analysis of the housing waiting list and homelessness procedures in operation at the time.

The main proposals set out in the Department of the Environment's (1994) consultation paper were:

- to confine the duty towards homeless households to the provision of accommodation for a limited period only
- to make waiting lists the sole route by which people may be allocated a secure tenancy

and

- to encourage the development of accommodation services such as common waiting lists and housing advice services.

No changes to the priority need groups in the homelessness legislation were proposed, the main proposal being that those accepted as homeless would be offered temporary, rather than permanent accommodation. However, the paper did contain an explicit statement that local authorities had a strategic responsibility towards meeting the housing needs of single people and that local housing strategies should reflect measures to meet the needs of that group (Department of the Environment, 1994).

Unlike its English counterpart, the Scottish Office's (1994) consultation paper, Tackling Homelessness, was based on an up-to-date, published analysis of current practice (Evans et al, 1994). Much of the paper concentrated on good practice in implementation of the homelessness legislation, but a number of issues were raised which clearly drew upon the approach of the Department of the Environment, rather than the Scottish situation. For example, the paper raised

the possibility of replacing the established duty to provide secure accommodation, with one of providing only temporary accommodation (following the House of Lords Judgement in Awua) and raised concerns about possible collusion between homeless applicants and those with whom they had been staying on a temporary basis (Robson and Poustie, 1996). As with the English proposals, there was little in the Scottish Office review which would improve the treatment of single homeless people in the housing system.

The Department of the Environment received more than 10,000 responses to its 1994 consultation paper. Monitoring by housing campaign agencies established that the majority of opinion did not support the Government's proposals (London Housing Unit, 1994; Somerville, 1994; CHAR, 1995 and widely reported in the housing press). Nevertheless, for England and Wales, policies were taken forward in a White Paper (Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1995) and finalised in the 1996 Housing Act, which was implemented in 1997.

In Scotland, no new legislation was brought forward, although a draft revised code of guidance on homelessness was issued in March 1996 (Scottish Office Development Department, 1996a). Taking account of the research by Evans *et al* (1994), responses to the consultation paper, *Tackling homelessness* (Scottish Office, 1994) and statute and case law as at February 1996, the draft revised code incorporated important changes in *interpretation* of the existing legislation. For example, the 1996 draft revised code proposed that local authorities *need not* provide permanent accommodation for homeless households, and should make increased use of private sector accommodation. The consultation period for the draft code ended in September 1996 but no further announcements were made by the Conservative administration in Scotland prior to the 1997 election.

The Housing Act 1996 (Part VII) repealed the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act for England and Wales and set out the new procedures as indicated in the 1994 consultation paper and amended during the parliamentary process. Following the implementation of the Housing Act 1996, the homelessness provisions for England and Wales differed from those operational in Scotland.

The main implication of the Housing Act 1996 was that statutorily homeless households would no longer be 'automatically' rehoused directly into local authority or housing association tenancies. Rather, they could be placed in alternative, temporary, housing and required to wait for an allocation of social housing through the housing register. An authority could discharge its duty by providing accommodation itself; by securing accommodation for the applicant from another person/agency; or by giving advice and assistance which would enable the applicant to secure other accommodation.

Guidance on the new act stated that 'the two year period of duty did not pre-empt immediate allocation of long term housing if the applicant had the necessary priority under the local authority's allocation scheme' (Department of the Environment, Department of Health, 1996, p64). While this would suggest that authorities would retain a discretionary power to continue to prioritise homeless households in the allocation of their stock, it still represented a diminution in the rights of homeless households (including vulnerable single people), relative to the earlier position.

The new Act did not incorporate any substantial changes to the groups considered to be in 'priority need'. Although some further guidance was given on the special vulnerability of young people aged 16 or 17 years, there was still no automatic entitlement to priority for this age group. The new homelessness provisions did not increase the priority for housing awarded to non-vulnerable single homeless people.

In addition to amending the homelessness legislation, the Housing Act 1996 (implemented in 1997) substantially amended the criteria by which English and Welsh local authorities could allocate their housing. Housing waiting lists were replaced by housing registers, which became virtually the sole route into a local authority secure tenancy or a nomination for a housing association assured tenancy. The act allowed for special provisions for lettings associated with the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and the Children Act 1989 (discussed further below).

Section 161 of the 1996 Act required English and Welsh authorities to allocate housing only to people who were defined as 'qualifying persons', including persons over 18 years of age owed a duty under the homelessness provisions. Housing authorities were required to give preference to the following groups;

- people occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- people occupying housing accommodation which is temporary or occupied on insecure terms
- families with dependent children
- households consisting of or including someone who is expecting a child
- households consisting of or including someone with a particular need for settled accommodation on medical or welfare grounds

and

- households whose social or economic circumstances are such that they have difficulty in securing settled accommodation.

Authorities retained discretion in the structuring of schemes, for example, in setting relative priorities through points systems for allocations.

Some of the changes introduced in the Housing Act 1996 (for example, the requirement to give consideration to people occupying temporary or insecure accommodation) were potentially helpful to single people (Anderson and Morgan, 1997). However, the impact of the new legislation had not been evaluated in depth at the time of writing. Preliminary findings from a study by Pawson and Third (1997) suggested that, in practice, many authorities were awarding substantial rehousing priority points to applicants threatened with the loss of accommodation or living in insecure accommodation. In some instances, this meant that homelessness in the sense of the previous legislative regime was actually avoided. That is to say, local authorities could amend their points systems so that homeless families still went to the top of the list. The use of temporary accommodation was avoided through increased firmness with regard to choice of areas for permanent housing. Pawson and Third acknowledged that their early conclusions would require confirmation through a more rigorous, representative study (Pawson and Third, 1997).

In May 1997, the newly elected Labour Government announced proposals for amendments to the Housing Act 1996 (*Inside Housing*, 1997a) and for a revised Scottish code of guidance on homelessness (*Inside Housing*, 1997b). The Government proposed to introduce new regulations to include households accepted as statutorily homeless within the groups to be given priority on the housing register. The Government also proposed to specify that accommodation would not represent 'other suitable accommodation' unless the authority was satisfied it would continue to be available for a period of at least two years. These amendments were implemented later in 1997 and went some way towards restoring the position which had pertained under the Housing Act 1985, but did not alter the disadvantageous position of single homeless people.

The new code of guidance on homelessness for Scotland was published in 1997 (Scottish Office Development Department, 1997a) dismissing the changes proposed by the previous administration. A new category of priority need (vulnerability) was to be introduced from January 1998, for young people aged under 21 who had been in care or looked after by a local authority at age 16 (Scottish Office Development Department, 1997b). This marked an important departure from the discretionary position in England and Wales. The new Scottish code of guidance also emphasised prevention of homelessness (particularly rooflessness) through detailed strategies and provision of adequate emergency services. For other potential dimensions of vulnerability which could apply to single homeless people, Scottish local authorities were encouraged to take expert advice and exercise sympathetic discretion (Scottish Office Development Department, 1997a).

Access to housing association tenancies

During the study period, housing Associations in England, Wales and Scotland were regulated by the Housing Corporation, Tai Cymru and Scottish Homes respectively. Allocation policies and practices were influenced by these regulatory bodies, as well as by central government policy and legislation. During the 1970s and 1980s, housing associations in England were expected to provide for the housing needs of those given a low priority by local authorities, including: single

people; some special needs groups; and people moving for employment reasons (Parker, Smith and Williams, 1992; Garside, 1993). Associations were also expected to assist local authorities by offering at least 50% of their vacancies to nominees from the council. Similar procedures applied in Scotland and Wales.

During the 1990s, central government (through its regulatory agencies) encouraged associations to house increasing numbers of statutorily homeless households (Withers and Randolph, 1994), a change in emphasis likely to result in a squeeze on housing opportunities for single people. Following the change of Government in 1997, the priorities for housing associations and the remit of their regulatory bodies were subject to further review, though no formal policy announcements had been made by mid-1998.

As indicated on Table 4.1, while the housing association sector expanded significantly during the study period, this was from a very small starting base. Although many housing associations implemented positive policies towards single homeless people, the limited scale of the sector (just over 4% of the housing stock) meant it could not reasonably accommodate the majority of low income or homeless single people.

Access to private sector housing

In Britain, access to housing in the 'private' sector (whether owning or renting) is largely determined by market forces. Following the expansion of home ownership since 1979, the tenure housed increasing numbers of lower-income households (Forrest, Murie and Williams, 1990; Spicker, 1996) but the costs of access largely remained prohibitive for single people on low incomes. The main alternative to social housing was, therefore, privately rented accommodation.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the key barriers to obtaining such accommodation were the high access costs of deposits and rent in advance required to secure such accommodation. While subsidy in the form of Housing Benefit was available to cover rental costs in the private sector, after 1988 the Department of Social Security provided virtually no assistance to low-income

single people for initial access costs. Jenn (1993) produced a guide to the development of locally based schemes to assist single people's access into privately rented housing, and Rugg's (1996) evaluation of such projects found that they proved reasonably effective in overcoming initial barriers to access.

As indicated above, however, during 1996 the Conservative Government restricted the housing benefit entitlement of single people aged under 25 to the average local rent for shared accommodation and announced proposals to extend these restrictions to all single people of working age (Social Security Advisory Committee, 1996). The proposals were directly designed to minimise any increase in the costs of Housing Benefit resulting from household formation among single people (Social Security Advisory Committee, 1996).

The proposed reductions in the availability of Housing Benefit for private tenancies were widely expected to result in single people living in poorer housing conditions or becoming homeless, as well as a further increase in their demand for social housing (Allard with Dunn, 1997; Rugg, 1997). The planned changes represented a new legislative mechanism which would directly discriminate against single people, for no reason other than that they were not living as a 'couple' or a 'nuclear family'. Following the 1997 election, the New Labour Government withdrew the proposals to extend the restrictions to all single people although the regulations continued to apply to those aged under 25 years.

Given the Conservative Governments' policy objective of reviving Britain's privately rented sector, a considerable amount of research into the operation of the sector was conducted throughout the study period (Best *et al*, 1992; Kemp and Rhodes, 1994a, 1994b; Bevan, Kemp and Rhodes, 1995; Crook, Hughes and Kemp, 1995; Bailey, 1996). The consensus which emerged from these studies was that while a stable private rented sector had a valuable role to play in the 1990s, particularly for single people, it was not generally suited to providing accommodation for the poorest and most vulnerable in society. By the end of the study period, the privately rented sector still provided only around one tenth of the British housing stock, and could not realistically accommodate all, or even a majority of, low income single people.

Hostels and other forms of transitional housing have been viewed as a key element in meeting the accommodation needs of single homeless people (Neale, 1996) although many residents of hostels, bed and breakfast hotels and informal housing would be considered to be homeless within the definition adopted for this study. Garside, Grimshaw and Ward (1990) estimated that only around 3% of single people of working age lived in communal establishments, but Britain saw an expansion in provision of a wide range of supported accommodation projects (both transitional and longer term) during the 1980s and 1990s. Projects were associated with facilitating independent living through care in the community policies, as well as the prevention and relief of homelessness. The diversity of provision was illustrated by Munn (1996) who identified some 13 different categories of 'non-ordinary' housing in Scotland.

The housing options for single people in the hostel and informal sectors were reviewed in Anderson (1994). Research on the hostel sector had mainly focused on surveys of hostel residents, with relatively little attention given to the access process. The sector was characterised by diversity in terms of the size and quality of hostel accommodation, target client groups and the nature of accommodation and support services provided. Many hostels received financial support (both capital and revenue) from central or local government and the funding regime became increasingly stringent during the study period, often resulting in high levels of charges, sustained through the Housing Benefit system. The incorporation of service charges as part of hostel 'rent' and eligibility for Housing Benefit was under review at the end of the study period.

More recent studies by Neale (1995) and Ham (1996) have added to our knowledge of hostels for homeless people. Neale's (1995) detailed study concluded that hostels could have a legitimate and specific purpose in meeting the needs of homeless people. In particular, some specialised hostels could provide supportive and constructive medium- and longer-term living environments. Ham's study of short term direct access (emergency) hostel accommodation raised a number of issues for improved provision and practice

(Ham, 1996). The need to further involve intended clients in policy development and practice, in order to better meet the needs of clients was a key recommendation (Ham, 1996), while the problem of 'silting up' of projects was linked to the wider problems single homeless people faced in obtaining more secure housing.

For much of the study period, relatively little research had been conducted on the Bed and Breakfast and informal housing sectors, possibly due to the practical difficulties in studying these tenures (Anderson, 1994). More recently, Carter (1997) has estimated that some 76,680 individuals were 'self-placed' in Bed and Breakfast hotels in England and Wales in 1996, 88% of which were single people. Vulnerable groups were found to be over-represented, including people with drug, alcohol or mental health problems, ex-prisoners, care leavers, young people, refugees and asylum seekers. Bed and Breakfast accommodation was still seen as housing of the last resort, used by those who could not gain access to other tenures. Standards of accommodation were patchy and generally poor and costs were very variable, with most residents in receipt of Housing Benefit (Carter, 1997).

An overview of the, limited, legal rights of roofless people to accommodation and other key services has been conducted by Campbell (1998). Campbell concluded that while destitution could be construed as vulnerability under the homelessness provisions, there was no clear case for priority. Similarly, there was no guarantee that people sleeping rough would be a priority for the care in the community services of social work departments. Applicants should be entitled to assessment, but legal judgements of the House of Lords had allowed local authorities to take account of overall resource constraints in assessing individual needs. Health authorities had some responsibilities for roofless people who had previously been in hospital. The 1983 Mental Health Act placed a duty on health and social work authorities to provide after care services for as long as they were needed, although there had been a lack of attention to accommodation provision (Campbell, 1998).

During the study period, the supply and quality of affordable rented housing steadily diminished. Growth in the proportion of single people who wished to live alone was accompanied by a squeeze on the opportunities for access to housing and outright exclusion of many low-income single people from the homelessness procedures for access to social housing. Towards the end of the study period, some local authorities (mainly in the North of England) were reporting high vacancy rates in 'low demand' areas (Lowe, 1998), although the problem of single homelessness persisted (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). The possible impact of the recent trend towards 'low demand' or 'high availability' of social housing, in some parts of the country, on the issue of single homelessness could not be fully tested in this thesis.

Housing and social policy

Access to housing is not solely determined by 'housing' policy. Other policy areas such as employment, social security, and health and social care, and immigration policy have also influenced single people's housing circumstances, as discussed in this section.

Employment

As indicated in Chapter Three, Britain experienced long term and substantial changes in the labour market during the study period. Long periods of sustained high unemployment had become a norm by the 1990s and the Government's 1995 Housing White Paper referred to *people with permanently low incomes,* (Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1995, p26). For many of those who were working, low pay was a significant problem. Webb, Kemp and Millar (1996) found that one in five employees was considered to be low paid (earning less than two thirds of the median hourly rate) in 1994/5, and the majority of these were young single people or married women.

The interaction between homelessness and unemployment became characterised as a 'no home, no job' trap. For practical reasons, it was difficult for people with no settled accommodation to secure or retain employment (Carter, 1992; Metcalfe *et al*, 1992). The impact of unemployment on the ability to find and maintain accommodation was, however, more complex. Under different regulations for assistance with housing costs or access to social housing, it could be perfectly feasible for unemployed single people to obtain adequate, long term accommodation.

Social Security

Most individuals who are unemployed, or otherwise excluded from the labour market, have relied on social security provisions as their main (often only) source of income. During the study period, Conservative Government policies consistently, though unsuccessfully, sought to contain expenditure on social security by imposing successive reductions in the value and scope of a range of welfare benefits (Becker, 1997).

Important policy changes implemented in the 1988 Act had disadvantageous implications for the housing and welfare of single people. Supplementary Benefit was replaced by Income Support which was paid at a lower rate to single people aged under 25 years (Becker, 1997). The entitlement of 16 and 17 year olds to Income Support was replaced by a 'guarantee' of a training place although there was much debate as to the failure of this government guarantee (Social Security Advisory Committee, 1992; National Association of CAB, 1992; Chatrik, 1994).

The 1988 Act also introduced the Social Fund, which replaced the former system of single payments for setting up home. Subsequently, single people claiming social security were no longer able to receive assistance with deposits or rent in advance to help them secure privately rented accommodation. They were also likely to have low priority for grants or loans to help with setting up a new home, in the social or private sector (Thornton, 1990; CHAR, London Homelessness Forum and Homeless Network, 1994).

In 1989 the system of providing board and lodging payments, which had recognised the high personal costs associated with hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation was abolished. Claimants became entitled to receive housing benefit and income support in the same way as those living in ordinary housing. Hostel and board and lodgings residents made up a relatively small proportion of total benefit claimants at the time, but most were single people of working age and claimants aged under 25 years lost out significantly in cash terms (Smith and Noble, 1991; Smith et al, 1991).

A clear consensus emerged from subsequent research that the changes in social security provision of the late 1980s were closely associated with a squeeze on the ability of low income single people to gain access to suitable housing and that a substantial increase in homelessness and hardship was experienced, especially by young people (Burns and Bronzite, 1991; Hutson and Liddiard, 1991; Social Security Advisory Committee, 1992). The early 1990s saw further review as the costs of social security escalated and a sweeping public spending review sought to identify areas for better targeting (Becker, 1997). As the largest departmental budget, social security was perceived to have the greatest scope for cuts. This period saw the introduction of Job Seekers Allowance to replace Income Support and the implementation of stricter tests of availability for work (Finn, 1997).

Although fundamental to the housing situation of many low-income tenants, Housing Benefit remained within the jurisdiction of social security policy throughout the study period. That is to say, policy on assistance with housing costs was developed by the Department of Social Security, rather than the Department for the Environment (or the Scottish and Welsh Offices) which had primary responsibility for housing policy.

The costs of Housing Benefit grew from £4.2billion in 1983-4 to £9billion in 1993-4 (Becker, 1997, p76). Much of the policy debate focused on the extent to which claimants may be 'over-provided for' in housing terms, or sought to manipulate the system in order to move up-market (Kemp et al, 1994). During 1995-1996, a number of further restrictions on the payment of housing benefit were introduced. A limit was placed on the period for which prisoners could

claim Housing Benefit for their home while they were in prison and limitations were introduced for others absent from home (Becker, 1997). As discussed above, for single people aged under 25 years, payment of housing benefit in the privately rented sector was restricted to the average rent for shared accommodation in the area.

Becker (1997, p70) concluded that under the Conservative administrations between 1987 and 1997, the social security agenda was dominated by measures to cut expenditure, increase efficiency of targeting and reduce fraud, rather than tackling poverty. These objectives were not all compatible with each other and the barriers to getting off benefit and into work (the poverty and unemployment traps) were not equal for all groups (Becker, 1997). The system remained complex, and became increasingly costly and increasingly exclusive (Becker, 1997, pp81-86).

In 1997, the Labour Government embarked upon a full-scale review of social security and welfare provision, the full implications of which remained unclear at the end of the study period. A Green Paper on Welfare Reform was published (Department of Social Security, 1998) but the consultation process was still ongoing at the conclusion of this study.

Social Work and Health Care

Single people's access to housing during the study period was also influenced by policy and legislation in the fields of social work and health care. Two key pieces of legislation are outlined below and subsequent chapters explore the links with housing and single homelessness in greater depth.

The Children Act 1989 expanded the opportunities for some young single people to gain access to social housing (McCluskey; 1993, 1994). Within a comprehensive piece of child care legislation, the Act gave local authority Social Services Departments in England and Wales increased responsibility for the welfare of children in need and young people leaving care (up to the age of 18, and to 21 years in some cases). Welfare included the housing situation of young

people and Social Services Departments were empowered to request assistance from Housing Departments, both agencies being encouraged to work co-operatively by central Government.

The Social Work Services Group of the Scottish Office commissioned an influential study of the potential role of social work in relieving youth homelessness (Bannister et al, 1993). In Scotland, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (a similar piece of legislation to the 1989 Children Act) was implemented from April 1997. Despite the lag in legislation, social work services in Scotland did play a role in working with young homeless people earlier in the study period. An early evaluation of the impact of the Children Act (Scotland) concluded, however, that while progress had been made on joint planning between housing and social work, much work remained to be done on implementation (Corbett, 1998).

The NHS and Community Care Act 1990, which applied to Scotland, England and Wales, formalised the policy of closing down institutions and providing care to clients in more independent accommodation. The 1990 Act transferred responsibility for the implementation of community care from the Department of Health to local social services authorities (Castle, 1991; Department of the Environment and Department of Health, 1992). Social Services authorities were given responsibility for assessing clients for community care services, but local housing authorities and housing associations were seen as key providers of the necessary accommodation.

A high proportion of community care clients have been frail elderly people, but people with mental health problems, particularly those leaving long stay psychiatric hospitals were also a key client group. The prevalence of mental health problems (as well as drug and alcohol dependency) among single homeless people became of increasing concern from the late 1980s, resulting in debate as to the effectiveness of community care services for this group (Leigh; 1993, 1994). A detailed study of the specific needs of single homeless people with both mental health and dependency problems, and appropriate strategies to meet their needs can be found in O'Leary (1997).

For most of the study period, there were no specific procedures within the homelessness legislation for households which included refugees or asylum seekers. However, the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and the Housing Accommodation and Homelessness (Persons subject to immigration control) Order 1996 (both of which applied across the UK) introduced new restrictions on access to social housing for those seeking asylum (Scottish Office Development Department, 1997a).

Persons under immigration control who had been granted refugee status, exceptional leave to remain (without a condition requiring provision of own accommodation) or leave to remain (not time limited) would be eligible for assistance if they met the 'tests' of the homelessness provisions. New asylum seekers were required to make their claim at the time and place of their arrival in the United Kingdom. All other groups of people subject to immigration control were excluded from the homelessness provisions on implementation of the 1996 Act (Scottish Office Development Department, 1997a).

During 1998, the New Labour Government announced plans to speed up asylum and immigration procedures, but there were no proposals to lessen the restrictions with regard to either immigration status or eligibility for social housing.

Single homelessness 1987/8-1997/8: the evidence

This section reviews the evidence as to the scale and nature of single homelessness in Britain during the study period. Analysis was constrained, however, by the continuing lack of reliable data on single homelessness, particularly at the national level. Estimates of homelessness and housing need are inextricably linked with definitions of these terms and constrained by the availability of data on persons who fall within given definitions. There are substantial practical difficulties involved in counting people living in all types of temporary situations who may not be recorded in official statistics and may

move between addresses more frequently than people who have more permanent homes.

Since the implementation of the 1977 homelessness legislation, local authorities have maintained records of homelessness applications and outcomes. For the most part, attempts to quantify homelessness in Britain (e.g. Greve, 1991; Wilcox, 1996) have relied on these homelessness statistics, collected by local authorities and submitted to the Department of the Environment, Scottish Office or Welsh Office. The statistics recorded enquiries under the homelessness legislation and subsequent action taken by local authorities. The limitations to this data set have long been acknowledged (Bramley, 1988; Statistics Users Council, 1991).

Using the official statistics, Greve with Currie (1990) demonstrated that the number of households accepted as homeless in England doubled during the 1980s. While this statistic indicated the increasing scale of the problem of homelessness, it did not, represent a rigorous measure of homelessness. The official homelessness statistics actually measured the flow of applicants through an administrative procedure who were accepted for housing, rather than the number of households who remained 'homeless'. Moreover, as most single homeless people did not qualify for housing under the homelessness provisions, the national homelessness statistics were of limited value as a measure of single homelessness.

Over the long term, homelessness acceptances across Britain rose from around 70,000 households in 1979, to a peak of around 178,800 in 1991; total acceptances then declined slightly during the 1990s, to a figure of 134,500 in 1995 (Wilcox, 1996, p177, Table 83). In Scotland, trends appeared to lag behind those in England somewhat, with applications peaking in 1993/4 and falling slightly in 1994/5, for the first time since 1987/8 (Scottish Office 1996).

It is difficult to determine precisely what proportion of households accepted as homeless were single people of working age. By the late 1980s it was known that only about half of all households who applied to local authorities as homeless were accepted under the legislation, and that about 80% of

acceptances were families, with the remainder comprising vulnerable households (Evans and Duncan, 1988). During 1990-1995, the proportion of all homelessness acceptances who were households with either dependent children or a pregnant woman was around 70% with around 5% categorised as vulnerable due to old age (Wilcox, 1996, p180, Table 87). In Scotland, the number of households in priority need due to vulnerability for 'other special reasons' increased during the 1990s, to 22% of all priority applicants in 1994/5 (Scottish Office, 1996), a proportion of which would have been single homeless people.

A survey of homeless applicants in six local authority areas in Scotland demonstrated that some 22% of all applicants were single adults, with the proportion varying between 13% and 40% in different districts (Evans *et al*, 1994, p70). A similar study in England found that almost 35% of applicants were single people, and that most of these were of working age (O'Callaghan and Dominian *et al*, 1996). In contrast, only 3% of homelessness acceptances in England, in 1995, were in the non-priority need category (Wilcox, 1996, p87). The broad trend confirmed by official statistics and research has been that single people have comprised a high proportion of homeless applicants and a much lower proportion of acceptances, in keeping with the nature of the homelessness legislation (Evans *et al*, 1994; O'Callaghan and Dominian *et al*, 1996).

Despite the limitations of official statistics, there was sufficient evidence (for example on hostel residents and the incidence of street homelessness) to establish that single homelessness increased substantially during the late 1980s (Greve, 1991; Anderson, 1993). There had been a very visible and substantial increase in the number of people who were roofless and sleeping rough on the streets, particularly in central London, during the late 1980s. People were known to sleep in a variety of circumstances including 'bashes' made from cardboard boxes and other materials, derelict buildings, underground car parks, and literally on the streets and in shop doorways.

By 1990, the phrase 'Cardboard City' had become an established description for the larger concentrations of single homeless people in parts of London such as

Lincoln's Inn Fields and Waterloo underpass (both of which were subsequently cleared). The rise in street homelessness was accompanied by the re-emergence of begging on a scale not seen for decades and there was particular concern about the high proportion of young people sleeping rough (Anderson, 1993).

Perhaps because of its visibility, considerable effort was put into quantifying the incidence of street homelessness. The 1991 census incorporated a specific count of people sleeping rough for the first time. The co-operation of voluntary sector agencies was sought in order to achieve as accurate a count as possible, but the census office acknowledged that the recorded figure of 2,703 persons sleeping rough in England was an underestimate (OPCS, 1991).

For London, the 1991 census had counted 1,275 roofless people (OPCS, 1991), and this figure was estimated to have dropped to below 500 by Autumn 1992 (Randall and Brown, 1993), following early implementation of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative (discussed below). Some 1,428 people were enumerated as sleeping rough outside of London in the 1991 census (OPCS, 1991). The census method was challenged by Adamczuk (1992), who examined the evidence of rooflessness in Birmingham where the census count had been nil, but up to 60 people were found to be sleeping rough in the local study. Looking at rural areas, Lambert et al (1992) concluded that statutory homelessness had tripled in the four years up to 1991. While Lambert et al (1992) found it impossible to quantify non-statutory homelessness in rural areas, the incidence of rough sleeping was widely reported in their case studies and young people appeared to experience particular problems.

During the 1990s, there were continuing efforts to improve estimates of single homelessness. Unfortunately, these tended to focus almost exclusively on counting 'people sleeping rough', at the expense of the undoubtedly much greater number of single homeless people living in inadequate and insecure accommodation. Estimates by non-government agencies suggested that around 8,600 people were sleeping rough in England at any time; and between 500 and 1000 in Scotland (Shelter (Scotland), 1994). More recent efforts by the Scottish Office to obtain an accurate estimate of rooflessness in Scotland were thwarted

by methodological difficulties (Shaw, Bloor and Roberts, 1996). Nevertheless, the Scottish Office was sufficiently convinced of the extent of the problem to announce a Rough Sleeping Initiative for Scotland (Scottish Office Development Department, 1996b), discussed below.

Using wider definitions than rooflessness, the extent of single homelessness outside of London has been highlighted by a number of studies, particularly by voluntary sector agencies (e.g. Randall, 1992). A National Inquiry into the prevention of youth homelessness, commissioned by a number of voluntary sector agencies, calculated that at least 246,000 young people were homeless in the UK during 1995 (Evans, 1996, p24). Smith *et al* (1996) estimated that between 3.5% and 7% of 16-25 year olds were homeless in seven cities of over 250,000 population. Despite the implementation of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative in central London, single homelessness remained a national problem throughout the period of this study and an accurate national measure of homelessness among single people was never achieved.

Although it has proved extremely difficult to determine the total number of single homeless people in Britain, it was possible to focus on people in specific situations and to conduct a survey of their circumstances. Chapter Five of this thesis looks in detail at the experiences of single homeless people surveyed in the 1991 study *Single homeless people*. While this remains the only 'national' (England-wide) study of single homeless people, a very large number of smaller scale surveys were conducted during the study period.

Historically, resettlement units, managed by the Department of Social Security have been the only statutory accommodation provided for single homeless people. A series of surveys of users of resettlement units (large, government run hostels) were conducted by the Resettlement Agency which managed the hostels on behalf of the Department of Social Security (e.g. Elam, 1992; Rudat and Bronzite 1992). A programme of closure of the resettlement units and provision of replacement accommodation was ongoing throughout the study period (see Deacon, Vincent and Walker (1995) for a detailed case study of the closure and replacement process at one resettlement unit).

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Some surveys of single homeless people have focused on particular client groups or types of accommodation. For example, Randall (1988, 1989), Strathdee (1992) and Nassor and Simms (1996) profiled the users of specialised agencies for young homeless people in London. Many studies of homelessness and single homeless people have been conducted by, or for, campaign groups and voluntary sector housing providers working on behalf of single homeless people. Such work has been conducted at both the national and local levels (e.g. Carlisle, 1993; Homeless Network, 1993).

The study period was characterised by a lack of robust data on the scale of single homelessness, though the problem of rooflessness was widely acknowledged. Much better information became available on the characteristics and experiences of single homeless people. Chapter Five draws on the national study of single homeless people in England (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993) for a broad picture of the characteristics and experience of single homeless people.

Policy initiatives to tackle single homelessness

During the course of the study period, a number of central Government initiatives were launched to tackle the problem of single homelessness. The main response was the implementation of 'Rough Sleepers' Initiatives (Anderson, 1993; Randall and Brown, 1993, 1995, 1996; Scottish Office Development Department, 1996b; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998b). Local responses to single homelessness have been evaluated by Anderson and Morgan (1997) and McCluskey (1997), and three local case studies are analysed in depth in Chapters Six and Seven.

The 'Rough Sleepers' Initiatives

An initial critique of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative was set out in Anderson (1993). During 1989/90, media attention increasingly focused on London's escalating rooflessness problem. The central London business community also

began to lobby for action to be taken on begging and rough sleeping. Simultaneously, the voluntary housing sector in central London launched a co-ordinated campaign to lobby central government for additional resources to relieve the problem of street homelessness.

The 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative, which was subsequently announced by the, then, Conservative Government, was very much an emergency response to the specific crisis of street homelessness in central London. The sum of £100m was initially committed over three years to a programme which aimed to eliminate street homelessness from the city centre by providing additional hostel, privately leased and permanent accommodation. Implementation was to be co-ordinated by voluntary sector agencies which already worked with homeless people, an approach strongly emphasised in Ministerial statements (Anderson, 1993).

During the early phase of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative (1990-1993), relatively little detailed information on the housing and support needs of people sleeping rough was available to the Government. *Single homeless people* was not published until 1993 and the Government looked to voluntary sector agencies to provide information on the needs of people sleeping rough. While it was important to acknowledge the urgency of the situation and the experience of the voluntary sector agencies, there was virtually no involvement at all of homeless people themselves in the planning and implementation of the initiative. Statutory agencies were also excluded from the early stages of the initiative, reflecting the Conservative Government's wider philosophy that the role of local authorities in the provision of housing and other services should continue to contract (Anderson, 1993).

While the first 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative was reasonably successful in providing additional accommodation it did not result in the disappearance of street homelessness (Randall and Brown, 1993). The policy response had failed to acknowledge either the true extent or the root causes of single homelessness in Britain at the time.

A second phase of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative was launched in 1993 (Department of the Environment, 1993a; 1993b). The emphasis in the second

phase was more on the provision of permanent accommodation with appropriate support for single people being rehoused. This policy change represented a positive response to some of the shortcomings of the first phase. However, rather than being widened to include homeless single people in other circumstances, the second stage was even more closely targeted on people with very recent experience of sleeping rough (Department of the Environment, 1993a, 1993b).

For the first six years of operation then, the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative targeted resources exclusively on people who were, literally, sleeping rough, in a small area of central London. By March 1996, £182million had been allocated to the central London initiative, funding permanent accommodation, hostel places, a winter shelter programme and outreach and support workers (Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1995). Notwithstanding the above criticisms of the narrow focus of the initiative, independent evaluation suggested that the programme was reasonably successful in reducing the numbers of people sleeping rough in central London (Randall and Brown, 1993, 1995, 1996; Drury, 1995).

One of the housing policy targets set out in the 1995 Housing White Paper, was 'to ensure that there is no necessity for people to sleep rough' (Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1995, p10). In March 1996, plans were announced to continue funding for the London 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative and to extend the scheme to Bristol and to some other English cities (Department of the Environment 1996b), with the Scottish initiative also announced at the end of that year (Scottish Office Development Department, 1996b).

Anderson (1993) raised two questions regarding the transfer of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative model outside of London. Firstly, would voluntary sector services outside of the capital be sufficiently well developed and resourced to take on board the responsibility of planning and implementing such an initiative? Secondly, could the initiative be effective outside of London where rooflessness was likely to be even less well quantified and much more dispersed in nature? These issues did indeed prove problematic once resources were available for initiatives outside of London. The third phase of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative

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was extended outside of London in two phases, owing to local difficulties in quantifying the scale of rooflessness (*Hansard*, 1996).

A further £73m was made available for the third phase of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative (National Homeless Alliance, 1997). Up to £20m was to be spent outside of central London over two years. In June 1997, the New Labour Government announced that £17.2m of this was to be spent in 12 areas outside of central London and Bristol (the first area funded outside central London). The 12 selected areas were Brighton, West London, Bath, Bournemouth, Cambridge, Ealing, Exeter, Leicester, Manchester, Nottingham, Oxford and Richmond upon Thames. Resources were to be used for a mixture of additional hostel bed spaces, permanent homes, specialised hostel provision for people with drink problems and resettlement and outreach services (National Homeless Alliance, 1997).

To qualify for funding, areas had to demonstrate that they had a major rough sleeping problem (following a full evaluation of rough sleeping using central Government guidelines) and had compiled an effective strategy to tackle rough sleeping. For the third phase of the initiative, local agencies also had to have a clear commitment from the local housing authority to setting aside an annual quota of council lettings for 'rough sleepers' as part a comprehensive strategy, demonstrating a wider and longer term approach to the problem (National Homeless Alliance, 1997). In November 1997, the Government announced that, a further £1m had been allocated to six new areas to support rough sleeping strategies (mainly outreach and resettlement services) in Birmingham, Blackpool, Canterbury, Chester, Southampton and Tower Hamlets and that further bids could still be made, up to 31 December 1997 (National Homeless Alliance, 1997).

In Scotland, the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative was to be administered directly through local housing authorities, albeit in partnership with housing associations and voluntary sector agencies (Scottish Office Development Department, 1996b). Some £16m of funding was to be made available over three years. Financial guidelines were published in February 1997, and an advisory group

(comprising representatives of statutory and voluntary housing agencies) was established to assist the secretary of state with implementation of the initiative.

The need for a co-ordinated approach was recognised, with needs best identified at the local level. A methodology for quantifying street homelessness was set out in the circular to local housing agencies (Scottish Office Development Department, 1996b). Implementation of the initiative continued, with little amendment, following the election of the Labour government in 1997. In October 1997, £11m of funding was awarded, with £4.9m and £4.4m going to the two main cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh respectively. Of 16 councils which applied, 13 were successful and £5m was held in reserve while some bids were developed further (Scottish Office Development Department, 1997c; National Homeless Alliance, 1997).

In July 1998, the Social Exclusion Unit published its report on how to further reduce street homelessness, and plans for a co-ordinated strategy (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998b). At a high profile launch (attended by Ministers from four government departments) additional resources for a London initiative were announced. A co-ordinator was to be appointed to oversee the cross-departmental, multi-agency approach (*Guardian*, 1998). While homelessness campaign agencies broadly welcomed the plan, many had reservations about the possibility of 'forcibly removing' homeless people from the street if hostel places were available (*Guardian*, 1998). However, the proposals were subject to a further consultation exercise, with a view to implementation in March 1999 (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998b).

Other initiatives

The early 1990s saw increased attempts to utilise the privately rented sector to meet the needs of homeless households. In the HAMA (Housing Associations as Managing Agents) initiative, associations acted as intermediaries between private landlords and homeless clients. Evidence from the London Research Centre's (1995) evaluation of the HAMA initiative found that only 6,000 places had been let, compared to a target of 10,000. The majority of schemes provided

accommodation for statutorily homeless households, although there was a gradual widening of scope, to include single homeless people. By December 1996, many schemes offered a rental guarantee to landlords and their satisfaction with the scheme was generally high. Most schemes also relied upon some financial subsidy from local authorities. From the tenants point of view, rents tended to be high (causing dependency on benefits and disincentives to take up work), and three quarters said they would feel more settled in more secure accommodation (London Research Centre, 1995).

In 1990, the Department of Health launched the Homeless Mentally Ill initiative which aimed to provide homeless people who had mental health problems with temporary accommodation offering suitable care and assistance, leading to longer term solutions through care in the community (O'Leary, 1997). The London based initiative funded a range of programmes including outreach and resettlement work, hostel accommodation and winter shelters, specialist mental health teams working with homeless people and longer term accommodation. By 1996, £20m had been spent through the Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative and a further £2m was committed to those needing long term, high care accommodation with specialist support staff (Hansard, 1996). In 1991, a separate initiative announced by the Department of Health committed £3m to new projects, outside of London, working with young people at risk of becoming homeless and moving to the capital (Department of Health, 1991).

Outside of central London, the Department of the Environment provided funding for voluntary sector projects working to prevent or relieve homelessness in England under the provisions of section 73 of the Housing Act 1985. Resources were concentrated on projects assisting single homeless people and more than £6m was committed to the programme in 1993/4 (*Inside Housing*, 1993). However, until 1996, the broad policy for the rest of the country was that local authorities (in partnership with other agencies) should develop strategies to tackle single homelessness at the local level.

In Scotland a number of initiatives to tackle rough sleeping had preceded the 1996/7 'Rough Sleeping Initiative'. In 1990, the Social Work Services Group of the Scottish Office launched a Rooflessness Initiative, which made £150,000 available

over 1991-1994 (Connor and Headrick, 1993). Grants were made available to eight voluntary sector groups to develop projects which supported young people at risk of homelessness, and, in particular at risk of moving to London. In 1992, Shelter (Scotland) (1992) reported on a pilot project to assist young Scots who were homeless in London and wished to return to Scotland.

During 1991-1994, £29m of additional capital allowances were awarded to Scottish local authorities, for homelessness projects, a proportion of which were targeted at roofless people (Scottish Office Development Department, 1996b). An evaluation of the effectiveness of the additional capital allowances found that non-priority single homeless people had been among the beneficiaries of the additional accommodation made available (Dyer, 1997). The projects funded stimulated useful partnerships between local authorities, housing associations and other agencies which provided management and support services. However, the competitive bidding process and tight timescale for expenditure were very resource intensive and did not necessarily result in best value for money, conflicting with attempts to develop more strategic approaches to meeting the needs of homeless households (Dyer, 1997).

During 1996, more than £400,000 of grants were awarded to Scottish voluntary sector organisations under housing and social work legislation, again including some projects for roofless people. Scottish Homes had also committed £3.1m in grants to a homelessness initiative covering Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Stirling (Scottish Office Development Department, 1996b).

The role of hostel accommodation in meeting the needs of homeless young people was discussed above. During the 1990s, the development of *foyers for young people* emerged as a specialised 'hostel' initiative in response to the twin problems of youth unemployment and homelessness (Shelter, 1992). Based on the French model of *Foyers pour jeunes travailleurs* (housing for young workers) foyers provided transitional accommodation and additional support services in areas such as education, training, employment and self-development (Anderson and Quilgars, 1995). Foyers were closely associated with government policy responses to youth homelessness and unemployment, and received public funding. The initiative was, however, very much a grass roots

innovation emerging from the voluntary sector, rather than a formal government programme.

Foyers adopted a structured, interventionist approach to working with young people involving individual assessment, action planning and guidance as young people worked through their action plans. Seven pilot foyers were established early in the 1990s (Anderson and Quilgars, 1995) and by 1998, there were more than 60 operational foyers in Britain (Foyer Federation for Youth, 1998).

Since their introduction to Britain, foyers have been the focus of ongoing research and debate (e.g. Snape, 1992; Carey-Wood, Smith and Little, 1993; Annabel Jackson Associates, 1996; and Ward, 1997). Conclusions as to the value of the foyer approach have ranged from highly supportive (Ward, 1997) to entirely dismissive (Gilchrist and Jeffs, 1995). Criticisms ranged from the fine tuning of foyer management through to questioning the fundamental appropriateness of foyers as a model of transitional housing and support for young people. Foyers were most notable for their holistic approach to working with young people and for the speed with which the movement grew within Britain and across Europe (Quilgars and Anderson, 1997). The comprehensive approach of foyers found favour with both Conservative and New Labour Governments and had much in common with New Labour's evolving approach to tackling social exclusion.

Social exclusion and single homelessness: 1987/8-1997/8

In his critique of Conservative policy of the 1980s, Kemp (1992, p80) described street homelessness as the 'most visible legacy' of Thatcherite housing policy. This chapter has reviewed the context for, and evidence of, single homelessness during the extended period 1987/8-1997/8. Single homelessness remained a significant, national problem throughout the study period, with street homelessness the visible part of a much larger, though poorly quantified problem. The analysis considered the significance of household formation and demographic trends, as well as public policy and prevailing ideas about need and legitimacy in creating and sustaining the single homelessness problem.

This section will consider to what extent the concepts associated with social exclusion can enhance our understanding of that problem.

The review presented in Chapter Three established that social exclusion was regarded as more comprehensive than poverty and that analysis emphasised the dynamic nature of social exclusion in relation to causal processes (Room, 1995b; Berghman, 1995). In this chapter, the comprehensive dimension of social exclusion/inclusion was most applicable to the interaction between single homelessness, the wider housing system and other dimensions of social policy. Initially, policy responses focused very narrowly upon street homelessness, in isolation from the wider context which had created the problem. During the study period, policy development did begin to embrace a more comprehensive approach to tackling single homelessness, although few changes to the wider housing system and other areas of social policy were identified. The extent to which homelessness was one element of a comprehensive experience of poverty and social exclusion among single people is considered further in subsequent chapters.

The dynamic nature of single homelessness was also considered and two key processes: household formation and access to housing were identified as being crucial to the housing outcomes experienced by individuals and households. The latter process has been the main focus for this thesis as it offers the most scope for influence through public policy intervention. Even as a residualised tenure, local authority housing continued to account for a higher proportion of the housing stock than housing associations and the privately rented sector together, and this study focuses mainly on access to the council sector. During the study period, the direction of housing policy tended to contradict or refute, rather than complement, demographic and social trends.

Further analysis of the dynamics of single homelessness is constrained by the lack of any longitudinal data sets on this group. Craig et al (1996) conducted a study of mental health problems among young homeless people, which included follow up interviews after one year, but there have been few other examples where a cohort of homeless single people have subsequently been re-interviewed. Consequently, the commonly used indicators of single

homelessness have been fairly crude, for example snapshot 'head counts' of people sleeping rough on specific nights, and surveys of hostel occupancy. There remains scope for much more sophisticated assessment of the housing needs of single people and a broader range of indicators of homelessness.

While the homelessness provisions constituted a safety net for many homeless households in Britain, the differential treatment according to household type, as well as housing circumstances directly discriminated against most single homeless people. The homelessness procedures were representative of the divisive approach to welfare provision inherent in neo-liberal political ideologies which limited access to welfare by prioritising one group of disadvantaged households over another.

The review of the legislation governing other access routes into social housing confirmed the broad emphasis on provision for families and 'vulnerable' households, at the expense of ordinary single people, although explicit discrimination was not evident in the same way as for the homelessness procedures. English local authorities had greater scope for discretion than their Scottish counterparts, although the criteria for housing allocations introduced in the 1996 Housing Act could be argued to be more inclusive. Single people were also largely excluded from national estimates of housing need during the study period.

Overall, the entrenched emphasis upon families in British housing policy served to exclude single people, in conflict with long term social trends in household formation. In line with this long-standing policy emphasis, the Department of the Environment (1994) consultation paper made repeated references to families and married couples as 'ideal' potential council tenants, to the exclusion of other household types. The consultation paper (and subsequent legislation) focused on the administrative procedures for assisting homeless households, rather than addressing the underlying causes of homelessness. Despite stating that the Conservative Government's overall policy goal was that a decent home should be within the reach of every 'family', the paper contained no objective criteria by which progress towards that goal could be measured. In the absence of proposals to tackle inequalities in access to social housing and shortage of supply, the

Government simply proposed to change the priority within the queue for social housing.

Linking the problem of homelessness to wider housing policies, the ideological emphasis on the expansion of home ownership and privately rented housing, was at the expense of the contraction of the social sector which was best able to meet the needs of lower income households. Central government policy did not take adequate account of the requirements of those on low incomes for affordable rented housing. Indeed, long-term disinvestment in social housing was in direct contradiction with preventing or alleviating homelessness amongst the poorest in society.

During a period of contraction in the social rented sector, and expansion in household formation, low-income single people were most vulnerable to exclusion from affordable housing, resulting in the increased experience of homelessness. The impact of housing policy was exacerbated during periods of economic recession when increased unemployment further restricted single people's options in the private sector.

The switch away from 'collective' subsidy through bricks and mortar, towards 'individual' subsidy through Housing Benefit, represented another contradictory dimension to housing policy which resulted in higher rents and increasing dependency on Housing Benefit, further demonstrating the shortcomings of the lack of a comprehensive housing policy (Malpass, 1996). Throughout the study period, Housing Benefit remained a function of social security policy, somewhat removed from housing policy, such that the reliance of the social housing system on Housing Benefit merely increased the expenditure of another government department. The role of Housing Benefit emerged as absolutely crucial to the affordability of accommodation and to people's ability to take up work, yet the procedures remained restrictive and punitive towards those seeking to move off benefit and into work.

The evidence reviewed suggested that the rise in single homelessness in Britain resulted from inequalities in access to housing, coupled with broader trends associated with retrenchment of the welfare state; cuts in housing investment

and increases in housing costs; and high, long-term unemployment. The failure of housing policy to respond adequately to these trends exacerbated the housing problems of single people, resulting in the crisis of street homelessness.

A similar degree of contradiction was inherent in central government's approach to single homelessness. Despite the paucity of reliable data, the extent of single homelessness in Britain was widely acknowledged, as evidenced by special initiatives to tackle the problem. Ironically, despite available evidence, there was much less explicit acknowledgement of the links between population change, disadvantage in the social housing system, and the wider housing and homelessness problems experienced by single people.

Special initiatives to tackle rough sleeping failed to deal with single people's wider exclusion from the social housing system. Despite the practical value of additional resources, the programmes were narrowly focused on limited geographical areas and addressed only the immediate problem of rooflessness, rather than the fundamental inequalities in the housing system. The street homelessness initiatives represented a responsive, fragmentary, short-term approach to mitigating the most severe consequences of housing inequality. Had Government policy adopted a preventative, inclusive approach to housing, which recognised the dynamics of household formation and the access process, as well as the legitimate needs of low income single people for fair access to social housing, there might not have been any requirement for special initiatives.

Notwithstanding the above criticisms, the rooflessness initiatives instigated by the Conservative government did represent a more comprehensive approach to joint working within the field of single homelessness. The 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative in England was commended for effective joint working between central Government and voluntary sector homelessness agencies (Randall and Brown, 1993, 1995, 1996), while the Scottish Office initiative demanded comprehensive local strategies involving statutory local authorities, as well as the voluntary sector.

Although the approach of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiatives can be argued to be comprehensive in terms of agency partnerships, it was exclusionary in terms of its emphasis on the personal characteristics of individual homeless people. In a speech to the House of Commons in 1996, the then Housing Minister, David Curry, emphasised the links between rough sleeping and complex problems associated with mental ill health, alcohol and drug misuse (Hansard, 1996). However, there is a fine balance between recognising that rooflessness is not simply a housing problem and that many homeless people have other needs, and the view that street homelessness is hardly a housing problem at all.

Using the example of Leicester, Barker (1998) argued that, in an area with an adequate supply of permanent housing and emergency accommodation 'it was clear that the problem in Leicester wasn't one of housing supply but of clients' inability to live independently' (Barker, 1998, p16). A minority of homeless people were deemed unable or unwilling to use services - or were excluded from them. While it may be appropriate for policy and debate to focus on the most 'extreme' circumstances, this has the unfortunate consequence of detracting attention from the wider, structural problems, which remain in the housing system.

For much of the study period, the single homelessness problem was exacerbated by the lack of acknowledgement of the interaction between policy areas. Employment policies which essentially let the market dictate outcomes failed to create jobs or manage the labour market in ways which addressed issues of inequality in employment opportunities. Similarly, social security policy was concerned with policing the system and minimising costs, rather than tackling poverty and inequality (Becker, 1997).

Nevertheless, some movement towards a policy approach which fitted with a concept of social inclusion could be discerned during the study period. Both the Children Act and the NHS and Community Care Act were founded upon principles of comprehensive assessments of need and joint working to offer a 'seamless' service to clients. Yet, the provisions of both the Children Act and the NHS and Community Care Act, focused upon 'special groups' rather than

universal, inclusive provision according to needs for housing and social support as advocated by, for example, Clapham and Smith (1990).

Detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of policies such as care in the community was beyond the scope of this study, but research by Watson (1997) demonstrated fundamental weaknesses in the implementation of community care in relation to housing. The Conservative Government responded to criticisms of community care implementation by issuing revised guidelines for practice (Department of Health and Department of the Environment, 1997), but there was no simultaneous increase in resources.

Drawing upon Lee *et al*'s (1995) analysis of social exclusion among social housing tenants, single homelessness was seen to be a persistent issue throughout the study period, in the same way as other dimensions of housing exclusion. The notion that social exclusion became spatially concentrated (in run down social housing estates) was much less applicable to single homelessness. Although the initial response to street homelessness was undoubtedly triggered by substantial concentrations of people sleeping rough in certain parts of central London, the scale and nature of the issue was very different to that of marginalised social housing tenants. Outside of central London, both street homelessness and other dimensions of single homelessness were much more dispersed in nature as became clear in efforts to extend the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiatives to other parts of England and Scotland.

Whether the problem of single homelessness has been resistant to change is very closely tied to the resultant policies and strategies of Government, as well as the practice of local agencies (Chapters Six and Seven). The impact of special initiatives must be acknowledged in that where resources and assistance were made available, many street homeless people were able to move into settled accommodation. As argued above, however, the problem was not totally resolved as the fundamental inequalities in housing policy meant a steady stream of low-income single people continued to become and remain homeless.

The lack of comprehensive and robust data on the wider housing needs of single people made it difficult to identify or quantify varying degrees of housing exclusion (or a continuum from exclusion to inclusion) at the national level. Again, this weakness resulted from an over-emphasis in debate and policy development on street homelessness, to the exclusion of a much wider analysis of housing needs. While it is important to acknowledge the urgency and importance of directing emergency resources to those in greatest need, effective preventative policies would require a much more sophisticated approach.

The overview of the national policy context in this chapter offered only limited scope for application of Jordan's (1996) ideas of the operation of exclusive groups and clubs, and the rational resistance of vulnerable groups. These concepts are more applicable to the empirical data considered in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. The 'Rough Sleepers' Initiatives can, however, be interpreted as polices of 'enforcement' (Jordan, 1996). As early as 1990, the then Housing Minister, Michael Spicer announced that,

> The Government are determined that there should be no excuse for sleeping out on the streets. Emergency accommodation will be made available. Sleeping rough is unacceptable. It is unhealthy and often dangerous. We must see an end to concentrations of people sleeping out in city centres
>
> (Spicer, 1990, p3).

The 'blame' for the problem was directed at those who experienced exclusion from the housing system, rather than the political and social structures which caused and perpetuated that exclusion. The policy response was aimed at getting people off the streets rather than meeting their needs. Although the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative gradually became more sophisticated as it evolved in phases II and III, the elements of enforcement and 'blaming individuals' continued to underpin Conservative government thinking.

The politics of enforcement were equally evident in New Labour's approach following the 1997 election. The 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative continued in more or less the same framework established under the Conservatives and no

amendments to wider housing and social policies were proposed in the early months of office. Further, the 'flagship' policy of the new government, the New Deal for young unemployed people, (part of the Welfare to Work programme) contained significant elements of enforcement (Finn, 1997).

The national policy context, during the study period, was dominated, by the prevailing New Right/neo-liberal philosophy of successive Conservative governments. Welfare resources were concentrated on those seen as most 'deserving' and single people received little priority until a crisis of street homelessness emerged. The New Labour government elected in 1997 also embraced free-market provision of goods and services as far as possible, although it placed greater emphasis on partnership across the public and private sectors.

The New Labour Government launched a major programme to reform welfare provision in Britain (Department of Social Security, 1998). The early consultation paper indicated a model whereby individuals made maximum provision for their own needs, with state provision as a limited safety net, rather than a return to the broader principle of collective provision. New Labour did, however, adopt the 'rhetoric' of an 'inclusive society', and tackling social exclusion was a manifesto commitment. The key function of the Social Exclusion Unit, established in 1997, was to improve policy co-ordination across government departments, although some progress towards cross-departmental working had taken place under the previous Conservative administrations.

In applying the concept of social exclusion to the national perspective on single homelessness, it is helpful to consider the nature of the policy process and the roles of various actors in the policy community. Clearly, central Government had a very strong influence over the national context for the policies and procedures implemented at local level. In particular, central Government set the financial constraints upon local service provision and dictated the prolonged period of disinvestment in council housing. The role of local authorities and housing associations in responding to single homelessness is explored in depth in subsequent chapters.

During the study period, key voluntary sector agencies working with single homeless people became increasingly pragmatic in their relationship with Conservative governments, towards which they had traditionally been antagonistic. The voluntary sector became relatively influential, especially in securing the additional resources for the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiatives and in implementing the successive programmes. To some extent, this may have been at the cost of accepting the Government's refusal to support wider investment in social housing and wider provision for all single people, rather than just those who became roofless.

For much of the study period, little attention was paid to the potential role of individual homeless people in the policy process. Procedures for consultation and participation were vastly underdeveloped in comparison to the emphasis on 'Tenants' Choice' for those who were housed. Information from evaluations of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiatives (Randall and Brown, 1993, 1995, 1996) and other studies, such as *Single homeless people*, have enabled increased consideration to be given to the needs and preferences of those to whom policy initiatives are directed. Empowering homeless people in the policy process is not a straightforward matter, though some voluntary sector agencies have developed participative or self-help strategies (e.g. The Big Issue, and 'Speakout' events). Nevertheless, there remains *much* scope for increased involvement of 'clients' in homelessness policy and practice.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to incorporate an overview of single homelessness during 1987/8-1997/8 into the broader analytical framework of social exclusion and inclusion. Social exclusion was found to be a helpful concept in so far as it allowed analysis to move beyond the notions of poverty or lack of shelter, to embrace the comprehensive, dynamic and inter-related nature of a set of social processes which combined to prevent certain individuals from experiencing the quality of housing taken for granted by the majority in contemporary British society. Policies for determining access to housing could not be described as inclusive. Despite extensive debate as to the nature and scale of housing needs

there was no overall goal that policy should ensure adequate housing provision for all citizens.

The principles upon which one individual or household is rendered more or less 'deserving' of welfare support than another are integral to both ideological concepts of social exclusion and the actual processes by which people are integrated or excluded from the mainstream of housing provision. The neo-liberal ideology of a minimal welfare state and the inherent requirement to exclude some groups in order to reduce the state's commitment to public expenditure offered a partial explanation of the discrimination against single people in the homelessness legislation.

However, as indicated above, policy and legislation were also rooted in long-standing social and political mores which prioritised traditional, nuclear families. Policies determining who was given priority in the provision of welfare rested on a combination of acknowledged *need* and some criteria of *legitimacy* for assistance. The role of the family in providing welfare and the importance of family values were also key tenets of neo-liberal attitudes to welfare provision, often resulting in policies founded on moralistic value judgements, as well as free-market principles.

As Garside (1993) has argued, the perceived 'lack of family and other desirable social ties' allowed the state to portray single homeless people as a group with no legitimate claim on state housing. Similarly, hostel projects designed as solutions to single homelessness attempted to restore surrogate family values to this group, while denying them the independence they desired (Garside, 1993). In the 1990s, it was only the public pressure of a visible crisis of street homelessness which led to some policy priority towards single people.

In responding to single homelessness with measures focusing solely on street homelessness, the policy approach was exclusive and fragmentary, rather than inclusive and comprehensive. Special initiatives to tackle street homelessness dealt with the effects after the problem was manifested, rather than taking preventative action or tackling the root causes of the problem. Such strategies failed to explicitly acknowledge the much wider problems of inadequate housing

supply and inequality in access procedures, which resulted in street homelessness among single people. Perhaps, then, it was not surprising that the objective set by the Conservative Government in 1990, of eliminating street homelessness, was not achieved by 1997.

The study period saw progress towards recognition of the importance of the interaction of different policy areas (e.g. employment, health, social care and social security) with housing and homelessness. However, there remained a need for a more finely differentiated analysis of these interactions, if co-ordinated policy approaches were to be effective. Moreover, exclusive processes needed to be examined both within and across policy areas. The analysis of the single homelessness problem, at the national level, during the study period was enhanced by the application of key concepts associated with social exclusion. The comprehensive and dynamic nature of the problem and the shortcomings of policy responses at the national level were demonstrated. Much could be gained from a more comprehensive, dynamic and sophisticated approach to the analysis of single people's housing problems and the development of policy responses.

CHAPTER FIVE

SINGLE PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Introduction

In this chapter, the key concepts associated with the debates on social exclusion, are tested through their application to the experience of single homeless people. The chapter draws upon the quantitative data from *Single homeless people* (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993) and presents the new secondary analysis of the qualitative data from that study. As outlined in Chapters Two and Three, the qualitative data set was re-analysed using the coding frame produced from the review of the literature on social exclusion presented in Chapter Three.

In Anderson (1997), single homelessness was conceptualised as an outcome of people's experience of the housing and labour systems, as well as being influenced by their individual personal and social circumstances. Their exclusion from housing was explained both in economic terms and in socio-political terms. Their extreme poverty was linked to exclusion from the labour market and resulted in exclusion from accommodation in the market sector due to their lack of financial resources and weak bargaining power. They were also excluded from state-subsidised housing because their household characteristics were not deemed to merit priority, even where their physical housing circumstances were worse than those of family households. This chapter extends the analysis of single people's experiences of homelessness in relation to debates on social exclusion.

The data analysed for this chapter reflected the period of data collection (1991), rather than the whole of the study period. The survey of single homeless people was conducted at a time when public and political opinion had acknowledged the escalation in street homelessness amongst single people, and the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative was in its early phase of implementation. The data sets for

Single homeless people were collected and analysed quite separately from the evaluations of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiatives (Randall and Brown, 1993, 1995, 1996).

In the tables in this chapter which refer to the quantitative data from *Single Homeless People*, the 'Day Centre' and 'Soup Run' columns indicate the two samples of single homeless people who were sleeping rough at the time of the survey. A detailed explanation of the research method employed for the survey is contained in Appendix A. In the narrative of the chapter, the term 'respondents' refers to those who took part in the quantitative survey, while the term 'participants' refers to those who took part in the group discussions.

The chapter begins by setting out the characteristics of respondents in terms of age, gender and ethnic group. The secondary analysis of the data on single homeless people is then set out in detail. A range of concepts drawn from the debates on social exclusion are tested against the empirical data. Conclusions on social exclusion and single people's experience of homelessness are presented at the end of the chapter.

Single homeless people: gender, age and ethnic group

The reviews in Malpass and Murie (1994) and Anderson (1997) indicated that social exclusion in council housing was associated with an increase in the proportion of households headed by women, older people and young persons aged under 25 years. In addition, analyses from the United States (Wilson, 1987) emphasised racial segregation as an aspect of social exclusion. Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 show the composition of the survey samples for *Single homeless people* by gender, age and ethnic group.

In common with previous surveys of single homeless people (e.g. Drake, O'Brien and Biebuyck, 1981) the majority of respondents were male. The data set excluded people with children in their care and homeless women who were pregnant would be expected to receive priority for access to council housing. Nevertheless, the proportion of males in the sample of single homeless people

substantially outweighed that of women. The sample may have been affected by the nature of the sampling points (hostels, soup runs and day centres) which could be argued to reflect a 'white male' culture. Writers such as Watson with Austerberry (1986) and Webb (1994) have argued that the experience of homelessness among single women is likely to be more significant than suggested by Table 5.1, but that their homelessness tends to be more concealed in nature.

Table 5.1 Gender of single homeless people

	Hostel and B&B	Day Centre	Soup Run
	%	%	%
Female	23	7	13
Male	77	93	87
Total	100	100	100
Base	1262	347	154

Source: Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p7.

Table 5.2 Age of single homeless people

	Hostel and B&B	Day Centre	Soup Run
Age (years)	%	%	%
16-17	5	2	3
18-24	25	13	16
25-44	36	47	46
45-59	18	28	28
60+	14	10	7
Don't know	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100
Base	1262	347	154

Source: Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p8.

The age distribution of single homeless people is shown on Table 5.2. Young people aged under 25 years were over-represented compared with the general population and among the under 25 age group, women outnumbered men (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). Thus young people, and especially young women, were particularly vulnerable to homelessness.

Although most single homeless people were white (Table 5.3), people from minority ethnic groups were over-represented in hostels and B&Bs, relative to the proportion of black people living in the survey areas (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). This was especially the case for women from minority ethnic groups.

In contrast, respondents in the rough sleeping samples were almost exclusively white people. To some extent, the findings again reflected the 'culture' of the sampling points. For example, while specialised hostel provision existed for women, young people and people from minority ethnic groups; individuals from those groups who were roofless may have felt insecure or intimidated about using services for people sleeping rough which were more likely to be dominated by older white males.

Table 5.3 Ethnic group of single homeless people

	Hostel and B&B	Day Centre	Soup Run
Ethnic group	%	%	%
White	73	96	99
Black - African	11	--	--
Black - Caribbean	5	--	--
Black - other	--	--	--
Indian	1	--	--
Pakistani	1	1	--
Chinese	1	--	--
Other	7	1	1
Rather not say	1	1	--
TOTAL	100	100	100
Base	1270	347	154

Source: Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p9.

In terms of the quantitative sample then, single homeless people were a largely male, middle-aged population, although young people aged under 25 were over-represented in the hostel population and women and black people were over-represented in the young age groups.

The composition of the group discussion participants differed from that of the quantitative survey sample. Group participants were recruited in order to achieve a set of discussion groups which reflected a range of characteristics and living situations as indicated in Chapter Two, Appendix A and Table 5.4. Relative to the survey sample, women, young people and people from minority ethnic groups were (deliberately) over-represented among the discussion group participants. The sampling strategy aimed to ensure that those groups whose homelessness may be concealed were effectively represented in the group discussions.

Table 5.4 Composition of sample for group discussions

Sample characteristic	Number	%
Male	59	69
Female	27	31
Age 24 or less	40	46
Age 25 or more	46	53
Ethnic group - white	63	73
Ethnic group - non-white	23	26
Base	86	100

Source: Hedges, 1992, Annexe A.

Poverty and single homelessness

This section examines single homelessness as a manifestation of poverty in the distributional sense (Room, 1995b). That is to say, it considers to what extent single homeless people lacked the financial resources required for a reasonable standard of living. The notion of 'housing poverty', in terms of lack of adequate shelter is also considered. To ask the question of whether homelessness is equated with poverty may appear rather obvious, yet in much of the homelessness literature and policy, the connection is not always explicitly made. The experience of poverty was a common characteristic of single homeless people which closely reflected their experience of the labour market and the welfare system.

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 show the sources and amounts of income received by single homeless people surveyed in 1991. The most common source of income for single homeless people was Income Support, the basic level of welfare benefit in operation at the time (subsequently replaced by Job Seekers Allowance). Across the total sample, average incomes of single homeless people were just under £40 per week which roughly equated to the average level of Income Support at the time (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). Young homeless people aged 18-24 years received benefit at a lower rate than their older counterparts and those aged 16 and 17 years were excluded from claiming Income Support except in circumstances of severe hardship (homelessness alone would not necessarily constitute 'severe hardship').

Table 5.5 Income sources of single homeless people (previous seven days)

Income source	Hostel and B&B	Day centre	Soup run
	%	%	%
Wage/salary	10	7	5
Unemployment benefit	10	5	12
Income support	55	40	39
Other state benefits	21	17	12
Asking people in the street	2	29	19
Busking	1	3	3
Other sources	8	7	6
No income	8	20	22
Base	1261	346	153

Source: Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p15.

Percentages add up to more than 100% as some respondents were receiving income from more than one source.

Table 5.6: Average (median) income in last week by income source

Source	Hostel and B&B	Day Centre	Soup Run
	£	£	£
Wage/salary	72	60	55
Unemployment			
benefit	40	40	39
Income support	35	39	39
Other state			
benefits	53	40	56
Asking people in			
the street	10	20	11
Busking	20	25	20
Other sources	38	23	20

Source: Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p16.

According to Becker (1997, p30), using incomes of less than half the average for the same household type as a measure, a single person could be considered poor if their income in 1992-3 was £61 per week or less, a figure significantly higher than the average incomes of single homeless people in 1991. Only a small proportion of single homeless people (10% in hostels, less than 10% of those sleeping rough) received any income from wages or a salary in the previous week. Those who were working and living in hostels received the highest average incomes at £72 per week, taking a minority of single homeless people above Becker's poverty threshold.

Begging or asking for money on the street was an alternative source of income for a minority of respondents (2% in hostels and 20% of those sleeping rough). The reported incomes received from begging were much lower than either Income Support levels, or Becker's (1997) 'poverty level' at between £10 and £20 per week. Among the rough sleeping samples, a fifth of respondents said they had no income in the previous week, not even state benefits (although it was possible that some people were paid fortnightly). A high proportion of people in the rough sleeping samples (75% and 84%) had received free food, clothes or other free help during the previous week, although only 16% of those

in temporary accommodation, had received this type of free help (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993).

The experience of poverty, in the sense of lack of adequate income and access to basic resources, was commonly discussed by the single homeless people who took part in the group discussions. Most participants had no income other than social security. It was evident, however, that homeless people did not always claim the social security benefits to which they were entitled, often because of the perceived complications and frustrations of making a claim when they had no address.

Those interviewed in day centres, who were street homeless at the time of the study talked about having only a few, basic possessions. Young hostel residents, who had recently slept rough, similarly had few possessions and talked of obtaining sleeping bags and blankets from charities. Some participants talked about stealing as, at times, the only way to get food and some clothes. Many participants were able to get free food from charities, although this depended on having some knowledge of availability through informal networks (including homeless people and voluntary agencies). Such facilities were much more widely available in London, than outside of London.

Some of those who had recently slept rough, but had subsequently moved into hostel accommodation, spoke about how little spending money was left after paying charges direct to hostels. There was a common view that it was very hard for single homeless people, living on state benefit to pay for and maintain a place to live. For example, some felt they would not be able to afford to pay bills, buy furniture or decorate a home.

Some of the young participants were enduring extreme poverty. The very youngest participants (16-17 years) were excluded from benefits and some were having to get by on amounts as low as £15 per week (Bridging Allowance, between training placements). Similarly, a group of young female students in one hostel were experiencing particularly severe financial problems as the grant system was designed for the situation where people were living at home and supported by their parents.

On the whole, both the survey and qualitative data demonstrated the extreme poverty experienced by single homeless people, whose access to employment and income, and hence to material possessions, was severely limited.

Housing poverty

In terms of indicators of poverty or social exclusion, it was their lack of any secure home which fundamentally distinguished single homeless people from, say, marginalised groups living in the social rented sector. While the overall quality of council housing may have declined as a result of the residualisation process (Chapters One and Three) much of the remaining stock did at least represent habitable and affordable accommodation. In contrast, single homeless people were living in highly precarious and uncertain housing situations. The vast majority reported that they had nowhere else where they could stay - even for a short time - other than their present situation (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). The conditions endured by single homeless people were described in detail during the group discussions.

Living conditions in some hostels were thoroughly unpleasant and many participants complained about the quality of hostel accommodation, regulations and support services. For example, they often had to be outside all day and queue up nightly for places in some night shelters. There was little disagreement, however, that the experience of sleeping rough entailed significantly more hardship.

Some participants had been sleeping out around the west end of London for considerable periods of time, sometimes years. Many who had slept rough spoke about the difficult conditions they endured, such as being out in the cold at night and taking hours to warm up in a day centre the next day. A young woman in one hostel had slept out on the streets all winter. One young man recounted how some very young people (14-15 years) were known to be sleeping rough. People sleeping rough felt vulnerable in all sorts of ways and were aware of the vulnerability of others. For example, concern was expressed

about people in their 70s sleeping out, and about sexual approaches to people on the street. Consequently, many had regular spots where they slept.

I: What was it like sleeping rough?

M2: Any place I could find - bench, doorway, anywhere really. Had no alternative at that time. It was just bad, you know. No money - you had to beg for money all day. I didn't like it but I had no choice in the matter. No benefits. Didn't really make enough money to live on from begging - just enough to eat once a day. Walked around - no money for transport. Worst feature was the fear at night, really. That someone might come up and knife you.

(Hostel E)[11].

Comprehensive exclusion?

Having established the poverty of income and shelter experienced by single homeless people, this section considers to what extent single homelessness reflected a more comprehensive condition which could be described as a state of 'social exclusion' (Berghman, 1995). The data sets were examined for evidence of relational indicators reflecting a lack of (or restricted) participation in wider society. The economic, political, welfare, family and community dimensions of exclusion/inclusion were considered (Commins, 1993). In addition, the analysis searched for evidence of individuals' perceptions of exclusion in terms of expressions of alienation and/or disaffection from society.

Economic exclusion: the importance of work

Table 5.7 shows that only around 10% of single homeless people were in paid work during the week prior to the survey, with some 90% of respondents effectively outside of the labour market. The range of reasons why single homeless people were out of the labour market is shown on Table 5.8.

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[11] For verbatim quotations, I denotes the interviewer, M denotes a male respondent, and F denotes a Female respondent. The specific group discussion is denoted by Hostel, Day Centre or Bed and Breakfast, plus a letter, corresponding to the list of establishments in Appendix A.

Table 5.7 Whether single homeless people were in paid work

	Hostel and B&B	Day Centre	Soup Run
Employment status	%	%	%
In paid work	10	7	6
Away from a job	1	1	1
Not in work	89	91	93
Don't know	1	--	--
Total	100	100	100
Base	1280	351	156

Source: Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p10

Table 5.8 Economic status of single homeless people not in work

	Hostel and B&B	Day Centre	Soup Run
Economic status	%	%	%
Waiting to take up a job	1	--	6
Looking for work	43	43	38
Temporarily sick	4	7	5
Long term sick/disabled	15	13	18
Not looking for work	15	27	26
Full-time education	3	--	--
Government training scheme	2	--	--
Retired	12	3	4
Other	5	7	3
Total	100	100	100
Base	1143	321	144

Source: Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p11.

Only a very small proportion of respondents were waiting to take up a job, on a training scheme or in full-time education (around 5-6%). Around 40% of those not working were actively looking for work, but unable to secure a job. Another

fifth of respondents were either temporarily or long term sick or disabled and more than 10% of the hostel sample were retired. A proportion of respondents in all three samples, who were out of work and not in any other category, said they were not looking for work (15% in hostels and around one quarter of those sleeping rough).

Besides their current economic status, survey respondents were also asked about their employment history. Around one fifth of survey respondents had not worked in the last 10 years or had never worked. In the temporary accommodation sample, about half of those who had never worked were in the 16-25 age group. Thus, not only were the overwhelming majority of single homeless people out of the labour market, but a high proportion had very little or no positive experience of working. More than half of those interviewed had no formal qualifications and low levels of education and training meant that single homeless people would be disadvantaged in competing for any available jobs, relative to those with higher educational attainment (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993).

Exclusion from work and the labour market was a dominant theme in the discussions of single homeless people. Many individuals articulated the crucial link between homelessness and unemployment and many felt that their homelessness, in particular, was a barrier to getting back into work. This applied to a diverse range of participants, for example, young women as well as older men. People again differentiated between hostel living and street homelessness, the latter being much more of a barrier to employment. Young people in one hostel group had found it very difficult to work while sleeping rough, although one young woman maintained that being homeless did not necessarily mean you could not get a job.

There was a degree of confidence among many participants about making the transition to a settled life. With a flat, there would be a chance of getting a job. A number of participants had previously worked at some time and had paid National Insurance and income tax, some of whom felt they should be entitled to more generous assistance in their current circumstances.

Although very few people who were sleeping rough held down a job, some did manage to gain casual employment, for example, one participant was working at a market on the weekends. In one hostel group, three out of four people were working and the fourth had recent work experience. One working hostel resident was thankful he had never slept out:

> *I couldn't imagine it. I would end up losing my job. If you are working 8-9 hours a day, you need your rest and a comfortable place to sleep. You need to bath and keep clean, do your laundry etc. You couldn't hold down a job under those circumstances. It's a vicious circle - no job, no place to live, no money. There was a time I thought it might come to that.*
> (M, Hostel F)

Another hostel resident commented, however, that he would not be able to afford the hostel charges if he was working. The issue of the high costs of hostels was also raised in the contemporary literature, as well as by interviewees in Social housing for single people (Chapters Six and Seven).

There was a feeling among many participants that employers discriminated against people living in hostels, particularly if they recognised the address. One young man had applied to join the Armed Forces but said he needed a permanent address to confirm the application. Another, however, felt that a hostel address was fine and that if it sounded like an ordinary address, employers would not know any different. Having no address at all was considered to be a much more severe barrier to employment, than living in temporary accommodation.

Political/democratic exclusion

The notions of citizenship or democratic participation were not raised explicitly in either the questionnaire survey or the group discussions. Secondary analysis of the qualitative data did, however, reveal some limited insight into the views of single homeless people on political participation.

Some of those sleeping rough mentioned that they were 'not eligible' to vote, probably alluding to the fact that their names did not appear on any electoral

register. More commonly, people talked about political issues in terms of their 'rights' or lack of rights. This covered many issues such as lack of security for their personal possessions and loss of proof of identity. With respect to citizenship rights, many participants made reference to their treatment by the police, especially during periods of street homelessness. Attitudes of the police towards those sleeping rough were variable. Sometimes the police were helpful, but many participants talked about harassment, intimidation and continually being moved on or even arrested for sleeping rough or begging.

Exclusion and welfare

Single people's discussions about a whole range of welfare issues further revealed the extent of their exclusion from the mainstream of welfare state provision.

The impact of rooflessness on the mental and physical health of single homeless people was particularly significant. Although there is a substantial body of literature on health and homelessness, and on poverty and health, the issue of health was not prominent in discussions about housing and social exclusion, until relatively recently. This may be viewed as somewhat surprising when the findings of the survey of single homeless people are considered.

Although most respondents were registered with a doctor or knew of a doctor or medical centre where they could go, a very high proportion reported medical problems and many were not receiving treatment. There was a higher reported incidence of health problems among those sleeping rough and many reported conditions which would be exacerbated by sleeping out. In a detailed analysis of the health of single homeless people, based on the survey data Bines (1994) demonstrated that mental health problems were eight times as high among hostel residents and eleven times as high among those sleeping rough, compared to the general population. Robinson (1998) found that single homeless people with health problems often failed to gain access to social housing, even when they might be deemed vulnerable under the homelessness legislation.

Survey respondents were asked whether they had experience of a range of institutions dealing with health related problems (Table 5.9). It can be seen that significant numbers had spent some time in psychiatric care or had a long stay in hospital. Those who were currently sleeping rough experienced more severe health problems than those living in hostels. The reported incidence of stays in drug units was very low across all three samples although this may reflect both under-reporting and the lack of specialist provision.

Table 5.9 Single homeless people's experience of health-related institutional care

Institution	Hostel and B&B %	Day Centre %	Soup Run %
General hospital - more than 3 months	10	22	20
Psychiatric hospital or unit	12	20	17
Alcohol unit	7	18	14
Drugs unit	3	4	4
Base	1267	345	152

Source: Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p23.

In addition to institutional experiences, survey respondents were also asked about various health conditions or problems. The most commonly reported problem was depression/anxiety/nerves. About one third of those sleeping rough reported health problems with heavy drinking, but only 13% of those in the hostel sample reported this as a health problem and less than 10% of the total sample reported dependency on drugs as a health problem. Other key health problems included: chronic chest problems/breathing problems; wounds and skin complaints; difficulty in walking; frequent headaches; and painful muscles and joints (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993).

In the group discussions, people talked about very obvious health and hygiene problems associated with sleeping rough. People actually found it very difficult to 'sleep' on the street due to the physical conditions and sometimes being

woken up by groups delivering food and drinks. People's diet was affected, both in terms of their poverty and in the quality of food available from day centres and soup runs.

Among the participants, there was an awareness that many homeless people experienced mental health problems, but there was resentment, in one hostel group, that staff thought almost all homeless people were 'a bit mad'. Three young men in one hostel talked about experiencing depression, especially if they thought about things too much. One defence mechanism for this was that they did not see themselves as homeless in the same way as those sleeping out in the streets. Participants in another hostel agreed there was a lot of depression and addiction linked to homelessness. Some individual participants were very vulnerable and one woman had attempted suicide by cutting her wrists on the night before taking part in the discussion group.

Health problems appeared to be less severe among some groups of participants. In one hostel, young people suggested that boredom might lead to drinking or taking drugs but none present felt they had a dependency problem. While some participants attended specialist clinics for homeless people, those in one group reported that there was an 'ordinary' clinic just around the corner from the hostel where they had experienced no problems with registration.

The difficulties faced by single homeless people did not necessarily mean that their lives were entirely negative and some people talked about leisure activities. Day centres helped young homeless people pass their time by doing art, using computers, watching television and playing games. For some, however, boredom was a problem and when they sat in coffee shops or sheltered in doorways they were often moved on by proprietors or police.

Exclusion from family and social relations

The use of the term 'single' in the study did not imply any formal definition of marital or relationship status. However, since just under 90% of respondents said they considered themselves to be a single person, rather than part of a

couple, the use of the term 'single homeless people' was not inappropriate (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). No detailed data was collected on people's relationship histories, although some basic indicators of family background were gleaned from the survey. Estrangement from immediate family ties was cited by many participants as a feature closely associated with single homelessness.

Very few people became homeless directly on leaving care, a children's home or foster parents. However, almost a quarter of those in the rough sleeping samples and some 15% in the hostel and B&B sample said they had stayed in a children's home at sometime, with about 10% overall saying they had spent some time with foster parents (Table 5.10).

Table 5.10 Single homeless people's experience of children's homes or foster care

	Hostel and B&B	Day Centre	Soup Run
Care experience	%	%	%
Children's home	15	24	24
Foster parents	10	9	12
Base	1267	345	152

Source: Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p23.

While family problems emerged as a factor very closely associated with homelessness, single homeless people were not totally estranged from their families. For example, during the previous 12 months, nearly half of those in the hostel survey sample had stayed in the home of a friend or relative at some point (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). Across the three samples, a significant proportion of respondents said their last home had been with their parents (27% in hostels, 23% in day centres and 20% at soup runs). Younger people were more likely to give their parents' home as their last home.

However, quite a high proportion of respondents also gave family or relationship reasons as their final reason for leaving their last home (29% in hostels, 35% in day centres and 24% at soup runs). This included relationship breakdown,

domestic violence or abuse, conflict with parents and leaving the parental home for positive reasons (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993).

Problematic family relationships were also a common feature among group discussion participants. Many said that they could not cope with living with their families or had been badly treated in the family home. However, one of the reasons why some of those who were sleeping rough received little family support was because they deliberately concealed their homelessness from their families. They did not want their families to know about their circumstances and saw this as an issue of personal privacy.

Young women in one hostel group had all come from problematic family situations which had led to their homelessness. Nevertheless they retained some links with home and expressed a desire that the same thing would not happen to their children in the future. They talked about lack of communication in the family home and a failure by their parents to acknowledge that they were growing up. They felt hurt, let down, and that their parents had turned against them. Two young women in another hostel recommended that other young people in their circumstances would be well advised to stay at home or with friends if they possibly could, as there was a very thin line between becoming independent and becoming homeless.

Some homeless people retained positive links with their families. For example, participants in one hostel thought their families would help with the costs of setting up home and some women felt they would never be roofless as they did have friends who would put them up. Some men talked about having children, with whom they wanted to keep in touch. However, being homeless did militate against retaining family and social links. The young women in one hostel felt that their social life was very limited and they were unable to see their old friends and their families. Although other hostel residents were friendly, it was felt that some did not know how to socialise. Similarly, residents in another hostel felt there was not much interaction between residents. One participant captured the views of many:

> *You can quite easily become alienated from your friends and family because, I mean, who wants to go and visit somebody who lives in a*

hostel? I know my family will never come near me. I've got to do all the
visiting now. Destroys your social and family life - I've got two sons. I
can't bring my sons to come and live with me for a week.....I mean it
destroys the basic fabric of family life and social life.
(M, Hostel F).

Expressions of exclusion: alienation and disaffection

Discussion group participants were not asked directly whether they felt 'socially excluded' but there were many pointers to their interpretations of their circumstances within the discussions. For example, one hostel resident stated 'there's a terrible sense of being lost, belonging to nobody and feeling that nobody cares'. A few participants recognised, however, that having your own place could also be isolating.

Many participants certainly felt a loss of dignity or self-respect when they became homeless. For example, people often had to queue for facilities in cold weather:

> *They tell somebody they've got to queue up for a bloody meal when*
> *they're absolutely starving and they've nothing to eat. It's just criminal.*
> *You wouldn't do it to your pet bloody hamster let alone a flipping human*
> *being.*
> (M, Hostel B).

Sleeping rough was also associated with feelings of 'hurt' - waking up in the morning and seeing other people go off to work - something from which homeless people were largely excluded. One participant who had been homeless but kept his job told how he spent nine months in a shack at work because he didn't want people to find out. After some time his sense of degradation began to diminish but he now didn't want to get back to that. Nor did he want to get used to a hostel. He argued that a house or flat should be a basic privilege of working people.

Some participants talked about having lost their self-respect, but others said that had not happened. Some also managed to keep a sense of humour, although the sense of alienation tended to prevail:

> *M1: I've resigned myself to the fact that I'm homeless now and probably will be for quite a considerable time. I'm trying my best to find a place. Other people are helping, social workers, whatever. But I don't see much in the future. Not unless the Government changes their policy.*
>
> *M4: Sometimes we think there's no hope - absolutely no hope.*
>
> *M2: It's the publicness of homelessness - people can see and know about your situation. If you don't get any accommodation you can't really survive.*

(Hostel, F).

However, one young man explained how he remained discerning as to which hostels he would use: 'just cause you're on the street - you don't need to let yourself go. There's places to get cleaned up and wash your clothes etc'.

Most participants viewed street homelessness as significantly more degrading than living in temporary accommodation. Some people living in hostels did not consider themselves to be homeless, that was a term which they applied to people who were literally roofless. In particular, four males who were working in the construction industry considered their B&B to be their home and were very accepting of their way of life at that point in time. In contrast, one participant described 'home' as security, independence, somewhere 'you can get your head down at night and know you are going to be safe'. For others, the distinction between home and homelessness was not always clear cut:

> *I: have you ever thought of yourself as homeless?*
>
> *F1: no*
>
> *M2: well I did when I was on the street begging*
>
> *M1: when I was staying with my friend - obviously it wasn't going to be permanent - so in a way I considered myself homeless, 'cause it wasn't my home.*

(Hostel E).

Young women in one hostel felt confused about leaving home and didn't necessarily feel good about being free, but they also thought that people sleeping rough on the streets were in a much worse position. Living in a hostel

had made them much more sympathetic towards those who were roofless. A few hostel residents were less charitable about those sleeping rough, and viewed them as a group who had often been banned from hostels for bad behaviour.

There were disagreements over the extent to which begging represented a state of alienation. Some said they would never do it while others suggested it was an act of desperation. Some young hostel residents admitted that they had, inevitably, become hardened through their experience of homelessness, in order to survive. A group of young women said homelessness had made them grow up much more quickly. The young women also described their feelings of being unsettled, having to constantly move their belongings around or leave them with friends.

The attitudes of the general public towards homeless people varied. Some 'treated you like dirt' while others appeared to feel sympathy. Many participants felt they were often (wrongly) judged only by their appearance and that the public had little understanding of their situation. One participant explained he had a smart suit in a locker in a day centre but passers by would never know that. There was a sense that people who didn't know about day centres thought it was not possible to be homeless and keep yourself clean. There was also resentment that the public thought all homeless people just begged for money to buy drink or drugs. Young men in a Manchester hostel said they felt stigmatised as a group because of the way the hostel was perceived locally, despite their efforts to undertake constructive activities in the neighbourhood.

Single homeless people often felt businesses and public services discriminated against them. At one time, shop owners threatened to hose doorways in the Strand while homeless people were asleep. Participants also reported that hospitals treated you badly if you were homeless. Similarly, restaurants could discriminate against homeless people. The social security system, in particular, was frequently reported to be very demoralising and unfriendly to homeless people who felt they were continually filling in forms and having to make fresh social security claims. A number of the discussion groups either included, or were wholly comprised of people from minority ethnic groups. Some participants

had experienced racial discrimination, but they also mentioned positive attitudes of some service providers.

The dynamics of single homelessness

Identifying the dynamics of single homelessness

Although *Single homeless people* was essentially a cross-sectional, snap-shot survey of single homelessness in 1991, the research method did allow some examination of the dynamics of single homelessness. A number of structured interview survey questions were designed to give an indication of process and the qualitative discussion groups were able to reflect upon the dynamics of the housing and homelessness experiences of participants.

Survey respondents had been homeless for varying periods of time, but around two fifths considered they had a home one year before. The most common type of accommodation mentioned as 'last home' was someone's own house or flat or a parent's home. A small minority of hostel/B&B residents considered their current accommodation to be their home and a smaller proportion said they had never had a home (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). Having, or not having a home, at any particular time was not a 'given' status for single homeless people, but the outcome of a dynamic process.

As single homeless people discussed their housing situations in more depth, the dynamics of homelessness became apparent. A number of indicators of process could be identified and the discussions revealed that many single people interpreted their homelessness as a dynamic process, rather than a fixed, static state. Although the group discussions were not able to probe individuals' circumstances in sufficient depth to fully elucidate the causes of homelessness for individuals, the data provided general indications as to the processes involved.

People talked about the reasons why they moved between different places of accommodation at different times. For example, among those who were sleeping rough, one participant lost his flat when he went to prison, in his view the council just changed the locks and took out all the furniture. Others who had been sleeping rough for some time felt there was little point in going to hostels for a few nights if they were going to end up back on the streets. Even among very young participants, some had experienced becoming homeless more than once, having obtained more secure accommodation but subsequently experienced another episode of homelessness.

Discussions about moving out of homelessness and getting by in new accommodation were generally well informed. Living in hostel accommodation was often clearly perceived as part of a wider process, somewhere to sort yourself out, before moving to a settled place. There was an awareness that supported accommodation was available and that homeless people had some degree of choice in the housing process. Single homeless people were aware that many of them had difficulties in coping after rehousing, though some exhibited a degree of confidence that they could get by.

There was limited discussion about geographical mobility as part of the dynamics of homelessness. In the London discussion groups, it was evident that a number of people had moved from outside of the capital and many individuals made comparisons between the situation inside and outside of London. For example, one young man commented that he was from the north of England, but most of the temporary accommodation was in the south. There was a widely held view that services for homeless people in general, and those who were roofless in particular, were much better developed in London, compared to other parts of the country.

Identifying causal processes

This section explores some of the reasons why people became homeless and remained homeless for varying lengths of time. As indicated in Chapters One and Three, the causes of homelessness and social exclusion, have often been

categorised as either structural or individual. Explanations of homelessness have tended to focus the on reasons why people 'left their last home', a notion which has been heavily influenced by the composition of the national homelessness statistics (Chapter One).

Survey respondents in *Single homeless people* were asked to say why they left their last home. A diverse and complex range of reasons were given, and these were grouped into five broad categories: family/relationship reasons; accommodation related reasons; employment related reasons; institutional related reasons; and other specific reasons (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p71).

The diversity of reasons precipitating the move from the previous home demonstrated the comprehensive nature of the issue of single homelessness, in that the experience was closely associated with problems in employment, health and family/social life, as well as with housing difficulties. However, individual respondents tended to give only one or two specific reasons why they had left their previous home (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, pp70-71). That is to say, while individual crises which resulted in moving from accommodation were precipitated by a wide range of factors, there was usually one main factor which influenced individual circumstances. Individual people did not become homeless because of a 'comprehensive' package of factors.

However, within the qualitative group discussions, there was evidence that, for some people, there had been a range of contributory factors which resulted in homelessness. The complexity involved in teasing out the variety of causal factors was articulated by one participant:

> *Well all sorts of reasons you know - you've just got to break it down, how people become homeless, you know.*
>
> (M, Hostel B).

Many of the reasons given, such as relationship breakdown and employment need not necessarily have resulted in homelessness. For example, where individuals had sufficient income or savings, or met the criteria for social housing, they might have been able to move to suitable alternative accommodation. It was therefore important to consider why it was that some

people were unable to secure alternative housing when circumstances dictated that they had to leave their accommodation.

Most survey respondents said they were looking for other accommodation but their opportunities were severely constrained. Either their financial circumstances prevented them from renting in the private sector, or they did not meet the legislative criteria for access to council housing. On the whole, the problems in finding accommodation were more closely related to affordability and availability of suitable housing, than to the personal characteristics of the respondents (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993).

Single homeless people talked about factors which could be interpreted as structural or individualised causes of homelessness, or as an element of both structure and agency. For example, factors which could be interpreted as mainly structural processes were commonly associated with the social security system, which emerged as highly significant in creating and sustaining homelessness. Problems included the introduction of the Social Fund; the withdrawal of assistance with deposits or rent in advance for private tenancies; and the failure of Housing Benefit levels to meet real rents. Social security levels were widely considered to be inadequate live on. There was some acknowledgement that structural changes in the housing and social security systems meant that young people were prevented from becoming independent and this was a factor in youth homelessness.

Unemployment was a key issue associated with poverty and homelessness. Most participants clearly viewed this as a structural problem, reflecting the wider economy and the functioning of the labour market, rather than a lack of skills or effort on their part. Their homelessness was also viewed as a structural barrier to getting back into work.

It was more difficult to identify processes whereby single homeless people interpreted homelessness as the outcome of their own agency. Although many participants did relate their situation to personal or family circumstances, arguably, these were also determined by wider structural constraints. However, single homeless people frequently described relationship breakdown and

difficulties in living with their families as a factor associated with their homelessness.

Young people, in particular, tended to associate their homelessness with leaving home due to family problems. This was very often just described as 'not being able to take it any more', though some gave more detailed accounts of problems, including abuse.

> I didn't know I was going to be homeless but I couldn't have stayed at home any longer
>
> (F, Hostel C).

Participants in one hostel described a range of 'individual' problems associated with homelessness, including gambling, alcohol, relationships and mental health problems. One participant who said he lived on the streets through alcohol and drug abuse also said that he came 'from a dysfunctional family'.

The links between structural and individualised processes were apparent from some participants' experiences. For example, one young woman talked of her experience of being in the residential care system, where she had been abused by staff. She ran away from care, which resulted in her becoming homeless. Often, homelessness appeared to result from what had appeared to be a rational course of action, such as moving to take up an educational course, but which had not worked out as planned. The young women in one hostel had become homeless virtually on first leaving home, despite having asked for help through their schools/colleges and local councils.

Possible routes out of homelessness

This section identifies actual and potential routes out of homelessness, including the preferences of single homeless people for future accommodation. Despite their difficult housing circumstances and associated experiences, many homeless people were able to articulate possible routes out of homelessness. Many also indicated a degree of optimism about obtaining their own place and some already had more secure accommodation fixed up, to which they were about to move.

Young people in one London hostel had a sense that a reasonable proportion of people were finding flats, possibly linked to early stages of the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative. Despite their severe financial problems, the young female students in another hostel felt quite confident about sorting things out for the future, finding a home and getting a job. A similar degree of confidence or optimism was apparent in other groups.

Participants talked about the need for improvements to temporary accommodation and opportunities to settle in secure, long term accommodation. Strong feelings were expressed about the quality of some hostels and there was a call for improved hostel provision from many participants. As indicated above, single homeless people demonstrated an awareness of the process of moving through hostel or other temporary accommodation and into more secure housing.... 'you've got to co-operate with them to get somewhere'. One young man remarked, 'it's a medium stay hostel until a permanent place comes up'.

Hostel B specifically provided accommodation for people who had recently slept rough and participants largely expected to remain there until a permanent place became available. They appeared to assume that this would be taken care of by the hostel management. It was likely that this would be through referral procedures agreed with local authorities and housing associations although this was less clearly identified by the residents. For the meantime that particular hostel was viewed as being quite comfortable.

A constant theme of discussions about routes out of homelessness was the need to restore some assistance with rent deposits for the privately rented sector, coupled with improved administration of the Housing Benefit system to reduce delays. One participant asserted that '90% of the problem would be resolved by paying rents in advance'. There was also a need for housing benefit to be paid in advance, instead of in arrears.

The failure to make use of empty buildings/homes was another source of frustration to many single homeless people. This appeared a very straightforward solution to many, though they did not tend to articulate whether

their comments were directed at government, councils, housing associations or private landlords or some combination of these. Rather there was a general awareness that the number of empty properties was unacceptable and resulted from poor management. The need for the government to spend more money on housing, generally, was cited as a requirement for resolving homelessness, as was the need for local authorities to set appropriate priorities and spend money effectively.

A number of participants referred to the need to improve the employment position of homeless people. The need for education, training or qualifications in order to secure work was recognised. For many participants the process of moving out of homelessness remained closely associated with finding a job.

When asked what would be their preferred accommodation, if available, most survey respondents (80%) said they wanted to have their own independent accommodation (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). Among group discussion participants, some said they would like to share a house, but again, most wanted their own place. Peoples' expectations tended to be modest - typically a one-bedroom flat.

It was not always easy to distinguish single homeless people's preferences by tenure and there were differing views on the merits of furnished or unfurnished accommodation. The key issue was that most people wanted secure, private (to the individual), affordable, ordinary accommodation of a reasonable quality. Some young people who expressed a preference for their own place in the longer term were prepared to share in the immediate future.

Given their circumstances of extreme poverty, many participants anticipated financial problems associated with furnishing flats. The chances of obtaining grants (e.g. through the Social Fund) were perceived as minimal and the likely amounts were described by one participant as 'diabolical'. Financial problems were a main reason why many homeless people wanted furnished accommodation, at least in the short term. Others, however, including some young people, felt they would get a place furnished somehow. For some participants, choosing their own furniture and having the freedom to do up their

own home was an important part of the process of moving out of homelessness. Some hostel residents who were working had quite specific preferences as to the area where they wanted to live.

Despite their preference for independent housing, two thirds of survey respondents said that they thought they would need some help to get by in their own accommodation (Anderson, Kemp and Quiigars, 1993). Similar caution was expressed by some group discussion participants who acknowledged that they would need some help once they had more permanent accommodation, 'someone to keep a check on us'. For some participants this was expressed as a need for social work support.

However, other participants did not feel that they would need help in the transition to running their own home. Many participants had had a place before and managed fine. They were looking forward to being able to develop their own interests and get on with their lives. The residents in hostel B viewed their time there as preparation for looking after themselves in their own place.

Access to housing: an exclusionary process?

The process of gaining (or not gaining) access to housing emerged as a key influence on the housing opportunities of single people (Anderson, 1994) and is explored further in this section. Across the discussion groups, the level of detailed understanding of the access process was variable. Moreover, the process by which people had gained access to their current accommodation was not examined in detail in the group discussions, more emphasis was placed on how they might find more permanent accommodation. As indicated above, some participants acknowledged the importance of temporary accommodation in the longer term process of finding a permanent home. Others identified a 'supply problem' in that they felt there simply wasn't enough accommodation to go around.

Chapters One and Four set out the main legal procedures which governed access to housing for single people during the study period. The following

sections examine how participants perceived the access process in different tenures (except for home ownership, which was not a realistic option). Some cross-tenure issues are then discussed. Chapter Six analyses the process of gaining access to social housing from the landlord's perspective.

The social rented sector

The group discussions revealed a mixture of impressions about the chances of being allocated council (or housing association) housing. Some participants were acutely aware of their low priority for housing in the social rented sector and a few were particularly well informed as to local authority procedures. Some resentment was expressed at times. For example, one hostel resident felt she should have been housed when her relationship broke down. She had never had a council or housing association tenancy before but felt that assistance should have been available at that point.

In another group, however, young men who had applied for council or housing association housing felt it was just a matter of waiting until an offer came up. Others felt they risked losing their place on the list if they had to move around and that when offers came up they were, inevitably, offered undesirable properties.

Despite their awareness of their lack of priority for housing, many participants expressed a general preference for social housing in the long term. They viewed social housing as more secure and more affordable than privately rented housing. There was a general feeling that the homelessness situation had deteriorated in the last few years. People talked about the sale of council houses and the lack of investment in repair and building new homes. There was general agreement that local authorities were underfunded and government policy needed to focus on providing more social housing, rather than more hostels. One young woman argued that local authorities needed to take account of everyone's need to have their own place. Some had heard of housing associations and thought they were more helpful to single people than local authorities.

Some participants were familiar with the operation of the homelessness legislation. Young women in one hostel, for example, were very aware that they would get priority if they were pregnant, but felt that single people always came last. Similarly, one male hostel resident who had experienced long term problems with alcohol and drug addiction explained how he was not classed as 'needy'. One participant referred to the inaccuracy of homelessness statistics, which did not count the situations of most single homeless people.

In one group, a vulnerable young woman expressed the despair and frustration experienced by many single homeless people:

> Do you know, I went to the housing three times in the last week, and I have told them, I can't cope, I am suicidal with the problems I have had. For a 17 year old - most people don't leave home until they are 23 - and they kick you out when you are 16 from a children's home, it does not make any sense. They think, you are 16, the police said 'you can look after yourself', now you are old enough to look after yourself. If you get raped, molested, strangled, murdered, it is your problem, you are on the street. And they say you don't do sod all - they call us lazy and everything. I have spent months trying to find a job. I would give anything to have a job.
>
> (F, Hostel G).

The market/privately rented sector

As is already apparent from the preceding discussion, there was a very significant degree of consensus, among single homeless people, regarding the problems they faced in gaining access to privately rented accommodation. In almost every group, people talked about the problems in paying the deposit for a flat or paying a month's rent in advance (or both). There was an enormous sense of frustration that they could not gain access to accommodation, which was available, because of a combination of their personal financial circumstances and social security regulations. Some participants felt that the privately rented sector was also too expensive for working people, who would not have enough money left over to live on after paying their rent. Some felt

they would only be able to afford the very cheapest places in the private sector, and that they would not feel settled in such accommodation.

As well as the financial constraints on privately rented housing, many participants were generally sceptical about private landlords. Some felt that landlords discriminated against those who were unemployed and claiming social security, while others had experienced racial discrimination.

The non-tenured sector

The non-tenured sector included hostel and bed and breakfast accommodation (B&Bs), as well as a range of informal accommodation such as staying with friends, squatting or sleeping rough. The study did not expressly examine the access process with regard to the non-tenured sector but it did give an indication of the types of short term accommodation used by single homeless people and some impression of the nature of the processes involved. Analysis of the group discussions about non-tenured accommodation builds upon the premise that access to the non-tenured sector is likely to reflect exclusion from the more secure, tenured housing sectors.

From the quantitative survey, staying with friends and relatives emerged as an important option for hostel residents. Nearly half of all respondents had stayed in such accommodation during the previous 12 months. Other types of accommodation used were: other hostels (40%); sleeping rough (35%); their own flat or house (27%); and their parents home (22%) (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). Respondents in the rough sleeping samples were also asked about their previous accommodation. However, the most striking feature of their housing experience was the long periods of time spent sleeping rough. A third of respondents had been sleeping out for the whole of the previous 12 months without spending any time in accommodation. The two-thirds who had used accommodation, tended to have stayed in hostels, night shelters and B&Bs, although other types of accommodation were also mentioned (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993).

From the group discussions, it was evident that the process of access to informal accommodation was determined by personal relationships (staying with family or friends) or individual decisions and actions (squatting or rough sleeping) or a combination of both. A number of participants had some experience of squatting. While access may have been on an 'activist' basis, exit was often dictated by external circumstances, such as being cleared out by the police. One participant said that his squat had been burned down.

Hostels usually provided temporary accommodation with only minimal security of tenure. In most cases, however, access was determined by bureaucratic processes in a similar fashion to the main social rented tenures. The group discussions did not reveal a sophisticated knowledge of access procedures among participants, but a number of issues were raised.

One woman described how she had been given a list of hostels to go through and had found the agency where she was currently staying to be very helpful. She had been interviewed prior to admission. One young man had been sleeping rough and was directed to hostel D by a police officer. Some homeless people found it difficult to understand why additional shelters opened specially at Christmas time when they were needed all year round. Other participants felt that night shelters were not fair in their decisions on admissions and that they should give everyone an equal chance. There was a widespread view that there was much greater availability of hostel places in London compared to outside of London.

The problem of being evicted or excluded from hostel accommodation was highlighted in a number of discussion groups. Often this related to breach of regulations but some participants felt that either the rules were unreasonable or they had been unfairly treated. Rules about sexual/loving relationships (effectively preventing them from taking place) were resented by some young people. Such regulations made access to hostels particularly difficult for any homeless people who wished to live as a couple.

Discussion of hostels more often focused upon the poor quality of much accommodation and the experience of living in hostels than on the access

process. There were many criticisms of the poor quality of hostel accommodation, much of which was viewed as unacceptable. This tended to refer to larger, longer established hostels, especially in London. Some participants preferred sleeping rough to using the worst hostels, which were viewed as filthy and carrying a risk of violent assault. Concerns were also expressed about poor sound insulation between rooms/cubicles; feeling people were watching you all the time; over-bearing rules; unpalatable food; lack of cleanliness; inadequate concern for the welfare of residents and the lack of availability of advice and support.

Despite the poor quality of much hostel accommodation, the diversity of hostel provision was recognised. Some participants complimented particular hostels on the quality of accommodation and services provided. For example, young women in hostel D thought it was better than other hostels and felt safe and secure there.

Cross-tenure issues

The two main issues, which affected all tenures, were the role of advice agencies and the possible need for support in longer-term accommodation. Participants' experience of advice agencies was mixed. Some found them unhelpful while others felt they were given good or accurate advice but it did not necessarily lead to them finding secure housing.

As indicated above, despite the broad preference for ordinary housing, and irrespective of any tenure preferences, respondents were also conscious of their own support needs. A majority of survey respondents felt that they would need some kind of support in their own home. This included social work or medical support as well as the needs for general advice on managing a home and for companionship (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). There was relatively little detailed discussion about support needs in the discussion groups, beyond acknowledgement that some people would need assistance. Arguably, it would have been more appropriate to discuss such issues with formerly homeless people once they had moved into their own accommodation.

Interaction with other policy areas

There were three key policy areas which single homeless people described as interacting closely with the process of gaining access to housing: social security, employment and social work.

The most commonly discussed policy area, apart from housing, was that of social security. Issues revolved around both the rates of benefit and (particularly) the administration of the service. Benefits were generally felt to be too low. Although some DSS staff were said to be helpful, the group discussions contained many stories about delays in payments and difficulties in making claims. Some had problems providing identification. The social security regulations were very clearly seen as having a crucial and negative impact on the process of gaining access to housing. Single homeless people also identified differential experiences of claiming social security for those sleeping rough compared to those in hostels or more secure accommodation.

As indicated above, the link between homelessness and joblessness ran throughout the group discussions. There was a strong feeling that having a hostel address counted against single homeless people when applying for a job and that one policy option would be to give preferential treatment to people who were street homeless or living in hostels. Being unemployed did not necessarily preclude access to housing, though being on a low income created obvious problems for financing accommodation (including furniture and running costs, as well as rent).

Social work services were most often referred to by young participants. One young man explained he had been 'under a care order since he was 5'. He was now 18, no longer under a care order and felt social services expected him to just go back to where he came from.

Responding to exclusion: the strategies of single homeless people

It was possible to consider whether single homeless people responded to exclusion from housing in the same ways in which Jordan (1996) suggested other low-income households may react to poverty. Jordan suggested that poor people adopted rational strategies in the face of adverse social and economic circumstances, which created and sustained their exclusion. A key argument was that poor or disadvantaged people would come together in groups or clubs in order to implement rational strategies. Jordan argued that strategic responses were likely to focus on activities such as informal working, claiming while working, crime, and community/voluntary activity (Jordan, 1996).

Informal housing

Some evidence emerged of group behaviour among people sleeping rough. For example, people sometimes stayed together in order to enhance personal security on the street. People slept in busy places, such as the West End of London where they be could seen. Dark, isolated places were perceived as dangerous. In one discussion group, however, there was some talk of protection rackets among 'rough sleepers' where people were 'charged' for sleeping in a particular doorway by other homeless people.

Squatting in empty/unused accommodation is a strategy which would fit Jordan's (1996) model of rational responses in the informal sector. Indeed, some participants appeared to have quite a sound knowledge of the legal procedures relating to squatting and eviction. One young person felt strongly that squatting was a sensible option and that people could do up properties, making them a decent place to stay. The perceived response of local councils (eviction and keeping properties empty) made no sense to this young person.

The informal economy

Group discussion participants often had experience of the informal economy, including begging as well as informal work. One participant talked (though partly in jest) about opening a tearoom for homeless people in a squat. Other examples of casual work included washing cars and placing advertising cards in telephone boxes. Some participants had been paid for appearing on television.

As with people who are well housed, however, single homeless people expressed differing views about society and about informal economic activities. Young women in one hostel, for example, were very critical of people who worked and claimed at the same time, something which Jordan (1996) would characterise as a rational response to poverty. The notion that employers would collude with unemployed or poorly paid workers emerged in one group where a participant said an employer had insisted he sign on at the same time (in order to facilitate tax evasion). The respondent had refused to do so and was sacked.

Begging

At the time of the study, street homelessness was closely associated with the re-emergence of begging, an activity which would constitute informal labour market activity according to Jordan (1996). As indicated on Tables 5.5 and 5.6 above, begging (or asking for money on the street) was an alternative source of income for only a minority of survey respondents. Among those living in hostels, only 2% said they had received income from this source, although 20% of those sleeping rough had done so. The survey could not test what proportion of people who were begging lived in particular housing circumstances, but the results indicated that among homeless people, it was those who were destitute and sleeping on the street who were most likely to beg for money from the public. Reported incomes received from begging were typically very low at between £10 and £20 per week (Table 5.6).

Participants in some discussion groups were able to articulate subtle distinctions between actively 'begging' and passively sitting in a public place where people

might sometimes give them money. Many told stories of surprising generosity. Some frustration and anger was directed towards people who begged but had never been homeless. While there was discussion about the notion of 'fraudulent' beggars who made large sums of money, participants in the study had not made much money from begging. One young man in hostel C said he would make £10 a day if he was lucky. Two young people who were getting money through begging commented that while begging sometimes provided enough to live on, this was by no means always the case. As with many other participants, they also knew of places to get free food and drinks and they received luncheon vouchers from their hostel.

There were varying views as to the 'ethics' of begging. Some participants felt ashamed of having begged and some said they never did so. Sometimes those in hostels gave money to young people begging on the streets, or at least took time to talk to them.

Community and voluntary sector support

Among those who had experienced street homelessness, many talked about a sense of community where friends stuck together for support and security. The men in the Bed and Breakfast group drew solidarity and support from the Irish community in London and young males in one Manchester hostel talked about a sense of community within their project:

> *We all have different skills such as music, cooking, carpentry, first aid.*
> *Even though we're homeless, we've all got our own skills and we use*
> *them, and help each other. We have a football team, which plays*
> *regularly on Sundays. That might seem minor to someone on the*
> *outside, but to us it's everything. Because we are doing something*
> *together.*
> (M, Hostel H).

Although not a key focus of this study, homeless people made use of the substantial network of specialised voluntary sector services, particularly in

London. Among street homeless people interviewed in a London day centre, there was some agreement that voluntary services were well publicised through informal networking. Day centres facilitated a range of constructive activities, as well as providing cheap services such as food and clothes, though some were viewed as being 'a bit rough'. Single homeless people also displayed an awareness of specialist provision, for example, day centres for people with mental health problems.

Crime

Jordan (1996) also suggested that crime may be a rational response to poverty. Survey respondents were asked about having been in custody (Table 5.11) rather than being asked directly about criminal activity. Nevertheless, Table 5.11 gives an indication of previous crime-related activity among single homeless people.

Although a high proportion of respondents had some experience of a stay in prison, remand or a young offender's institution (Table 5.11), this was not usually within their recent experience (the previous year). Further research would be required in order to explore the nature of the relationship between crime and homelessness. For example, the survey could not identify criminal convictions which arose directly from begging or sleeping rough.

Similarly, there was relatively little discussion of criminal activity among group discussion participants, although a number did mention having been in prison at some point in their lives. One hostel resident admitted to stealing at times and said he thought it was quite common among homeless people, as was working while claiming benefit. Such activities appeared to take their toll however, the same respondent said resorting to crime could contribute to depression, even nervous breakdown.

Table 5.11: Single homeless people's experience of custody

Crime indicator	Hostel and B&B %	Day Centre %	Soup Run %
Last accommodation was prison or remand	3	6	1
Stayed in prison or remand in last 12 months	8	14	n/a
Stayed in young offenders' institution in last 12 months	1	1	n/a
Stayed in prison/ remand at some time	25	49	46
Stayed in young offenders institution at some time	9	18	21

Source: Composite table from Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993.

The secondary data analysis revealed that while single homeless people did respond to homelessness in a rational fashion, there were differences of opinion as to the morality of informal income generation, especially through crime. Similarly, while there was some evidence of group-based strategies, single homeless people were more likely to act on an individual basis.

Ideologies, values and attitudes

The analysis of ideologies, values and attitudes of single homeless people was very much a matter for interpretation from the secondary analysis, rather than an explicit topic of the primary study. Nevertheless, some participants were able to analyse their situation objectively, with reference to the structural constraints they faced.

Much of the language used by single homeless people indicated a 'structural' interpretation of the problem: 'it's the contempt the actual social structure has put upon these people, whether they deserve it or not'. Similarly, the notion that the government wasn't doing anything about homelessness came through strongly, as did the notion that people had no choice about their situation (for example in leaving home). A young woman in Hostel D, articulated how her situation felt beyond her control. The tone of her language suggested her sentiments were genuine, rather than that she was denying responsibility for herself:

> *I have thought that if I hadn't done this or if I had gone this place, well I wouldn't be homeless, and stuff like that. I think of things, but it's not my fault. When I sit down, and you think, like me, but then it's nothing to do with you. In the end, it's nothing to do with you.*
>
> (F, Hostel D).

In contrast, others revealed a very individualised attitude towards their own situation, with one participant saying it was 'all self-inflicted'.

The complexity of attitudes towards homelessness was illustrated by a short discussion as to who was to blame for homelessness, among young people in hostel C. The conversation revealed disagreement and confusion as to the causes of their situation in relation to their personal ideologies. In particular, F3 took considerable responsibility for her own situation, despite having been beaten by her father:

> *I: Who's to blame?*
>
> *M4: Not the government - it's my own fault. I should have saved when I was working.*
>
> *F2: Mainly the people themselves - they've done something wrong. For example - shouldn't have run away from children's home.*
>
> *M4: Some people have had to run away, for example, because of abuse.*
>
> *F3: In a way it's my fault, but I had to run away. I wanted to go out, etc, and dad wanted me to stick in at school. So in a way it was my fault - but he was beating me up a lot.*
>
> *I: Should someone else have helped?*

F3: Friends were helping me. You don't always want formal help. [She had kept her experience of violence to herself for a long time].
(Hostel C).

Some participants talked about the ideological influence of religious organisations. Many of the voluntary sector organisations working with homeless people had religious (particularly Christian) origins and some were described as being overtly evangelical in their approach to 'helping' homeless people. Participants said this could feel intrusive at times and some thought religious organisations viewed homeless people as vulnerable and easily susceptible to conversion to their particular faith.

A number of single homeless people commented on the manner in which the attitudes of the media influenced how their situation was portrayed. One street homeless person in London, who had been interviewed for television, complained about coverage which just showed his 'misery' and cut all of his comments on the wider political background to the problem. Others commented that they were not impressed by sleep-outs staged for the media, despite good intentions about raising awareness of the problem.

One respondent from the Bed and Breakfast group, who did not consider himself to be homeless, expressed his moral position on the problem and the hope that the research would result in some positive policy development:

I wish, I wish the homeless the best of luck. I mean, at the moment, try and get a few houses for them. Try and get a few digs for them. It's wrong for them to be living in cardboard city. That's no good for any person.
(M, B&B M).

Evidence of an 'underclass'?

Murray's essays on the growth of an underclass in Britain (Murray, 1990, 1994) suggested that such a group could be differentiated by their attitudes and behaviour towards, work, family life and crime. However, a very clear picture

emerged from the group discussions that, *in common* with the majority in society, single homeless people greatly valued the notion of having their own place to live. Similarly, most survey respondents had had a settled home in the past. The state of homelessness was not a 'given' set of affairs, nor was it a situation in which people 'chose' to live. The data suggested a need to be cautious in making generalisations about single homeless people, especially with reference to an 'underclass'.

The quantitative survey was not able to test the attitudes to work of those respondents who were excluded from the labour market. Rather than having some aversion to work, however, people may have been put off job searching by disillusionment and the difficulties homeless people faced in finding and keeping work. The qualitative data suggested that single homeless people were not 'work shy' and many wished to work if they could.

The preceding discussion also indicated that a substantial proportion of survey respondents had some experience of prison or remand. Since no survey data was collected on the nature of any crimes or the detail of convictions or stays in prison it is not possible to hypothesise as to the nature of the link between having stayed in prison and becoming homeless. However, sleeping rough remained a crime under the vagrancy laws in Britain and a person could be arrested and detained merely for sleeping rough or for begging.

Discussion group participants also talked about their experiences of crime though it was still not always a straightforward matter to determine cause and effect. One day centre user told about his experience of arrest and charge for vagrancy and begging. He felt strongly that it served no purpose to lock people up or fine them for being homeless. Young people in hostel C articulated much the same viewpoint and said that they saw arrest for begging as part of life.

While some participants admitted to having been imprisoned for violent crime in the past, the study suggested that those leaving prison faced severe problems in trying to find accommodation, rather than a being part of some inherently criminal underclass. Further, many homeless people had been victims of crime, rather than perpetrators.

Barriers to 'inclusion'

This section tests the social reaction model in which the collective or individual attitudes of agencies created barriers to independence for excluded groups (Becker, 1997) against the data from *Single homeless people*. From the discussions, a range of barriers to single homeless people's independence and achievement of adequate housing could be discerned.

Central government was a key target for the criticisms of single homeless people who felt very little was being done to improve their situation.

> *I just hope that at the end of all this* [the research] *the Government will sit up and do something.*
>
> (M, Hostel E).

Some were able to articulate structural barriers attributed to central government departments:

> *We don't want to live the life we're living right, we wanna change our lives and we can't change our lives because the DSS will not allow us to change our life*
>
> (M, Day Centre A).

Many single homeless people expressed outright hostility to the housing system and the Government of the day:

> *M1: Politics - homeless people are caught up in a political football between central and local government. The Tory Government is in power and is responsible.*
>
> *M2: There's discrimination against young people and single people - they are really suffering and the Government needs to review this.*
>
> *M1: Homelessness is a completely demoralising situation - it's obnoxious, selfish and downright immoral of the Tory Government to put me in this situation.*
>
> (Hostel F).

> *I think if John Major and the rest of them come down to this level and try to live homeless for about two months, I think they wouldn't be too long*

about changing the situation. If they had to live that way themselves for
a while.

(M, Hostel G).

There was some evidence of statutory agencies assisting homeless people, as well as putting up barriers. One young woman was referred to her current hostel accommodation by a London council. In her words 'they did it all for me'. Within hostels, domineering staff were sometimes viewed as a barrier to independence by some participants. One hostel resident felt that hostel staff tended to believe that people couldn't live on their own and consequently made little effort to assist their search for independent accommodation. Some hostel residents were sceptical about promises regarding future accommodation, which might not be delivered.

Constraints in the labour market were also seen as barriers to individuals achieving their potential. The widely held perception was that there was an inadequate supply of jobs and that unemployed people were expected to accept poorly paid, menial jobs. Some participants accepted the idea of the psychological benefits of work, including part-time work. However, they also said there was little or no incentive to take up part-time work as it yielded such a small increase in disposable income after paying hostel charges.

The particular barriers faced by very young homeless people (16-17 years) were discussed in some hostels. One young man felt you couldn't get your own place at 16 as nobody thought you were reliable and the council didn't class you as an adult until you reached 18 years. Similar problems were encountered at the benefits office.

A complex assortment of barriers to independence was revealed in some discussions, for example:

> *I: who do you blame?*
> *F2: The system, kids, home and my parents.*
> *F1: The system - housing, benefits, the lot. My husband.*
> *F3: Parents.*
> (Hostel G).

Policy responses to single homelessness: the users' perspective

The policy-related discussions of participants revolved much more around critiques of the contemporary systems for housing allocations and social security, than around specific government policy responses to single homelessness. Some older single homeless people felt that their situation had been given much less emphasis than that of young people. Beyond this, the feeling was more one of despair that there was no discernible policy response from government:

> You could have the same conversation in twelve months time, I think you'd have the same sort of discussion, the same sort of problems. There's no solution to the problem really, as such, at the moment.
>
> (M, Hostel G).

Empowering single homeless people

Among some single homeless people, there was a strong sense that there was almost no opportunity for their knowledge and experience to feed into the policy process, while people with no direct experience of homelessness determined the nature of service provision:

> I really believe that someone who lived off the streets for years should open a place up around the West End, because he knows what the down and outs needs are - not cubicles, just rooms.
>
> (M, Day Centre A).
>
> It's a very good hostel, ...but it's a very bad system of helping homeless people. Because staff don't have any experience of homelessness and hardship...they don't understand.
>
> (M, Hostel B).

Similarly, young people in another hostel felt that some agencies were ineffective, because they did not have sufficient understanding of homeless people's experiences.

The idea of self-help was put forward in several groups, though most participants had so far found very little support for their suggestions. Users in a day centre outside of London said they had wanted to do things for themselves to improve facilities. However, staff responses had been negative, with promises to 'think about it' but nothing ever happening. One young participant suggested that young people should have more opportunity to help each other out, for example, by doing up flats, as they would then feel good about themselves. A respondent from another hostel put forward a similar view:

> They make the excuse that they're not habitable. I'd move into an uninhabitable place and I'd do it myself.
> (M, Hostel F).

Young men in a Manchester hostel said they had not really considered approaching an elected councillor or MP for help with their situation. The discussion continued, revealing that they felt that politicians did not understand about homelessness because they were secure in their housing. It was suggested that people in authority needed to find out how homeless people really lived. The discussants pointed out that it was extremely unlikely that a homeless person could get elected as a councillor, but recommended that the authorities should set up a team of young people, who had been homeless, and listen to their point of view about the situation.

Conclusion

In 1991, single homeless people were among the poorest in society in a distributional sense, with the vast majority having incomes below the poverty line and some having no income at all. Additionally they experienced severe housing poverty in terms of lack of a reasonable, secure home, from which to participate in wider society. Many lacked any form of adequate shelter.

Analysis of the characteristics and experiences of single homeless people indicated that they were a diverse and complex, rather than a homogeneous, group. Discussion group participants were able to articulate the diversity they saw among homeless people. They felt that they were all lumped together in

one category, but that this was inappropriate. Everybody had their own experience or tale to tell. Single homeless people could not be characterised as a distinct 'underclass' as advocated by Murray (1990, 1994).

Beyond single homeless people's evident lack of income and housing, there was no doubt that being homeless was often combined with exclusion from other aspects of welfare. They were largely excluded from the labour market and from the political process. They commonly experienced severe health problems and many were estranged from their families, often following conflict or abuse.

The data also revealed, however, that while homelessness was one dimension of a more comprehensive set of circumstances, homeless people were not totally excluded from social life. Some did work and others had previous work experience. Despite their health problems, most did have access to some health care. Many reported positive relations with their families and thought they would receive family support in the future. The picture was a diverse and fluid one.

Many single homeless people expressed feelings of loss of dignity and self-respect, alienation and despair. That is to say, they *felt* excluded from the rest of society. Others, however, expressed optimism for the future and seemed quite robust as to their situation. Participants commonly distinguished between living in temporary accommodation and sleeping rough, which was generally viewed to be a much more serious, problematic and alienating experience. Homeless people's feelings of alienation were often exacerbated by the negative attitudes of government agencies, businesses and the general public, although again there was diversity of experience and some evidence of sympathetic attitudes.

On the whole, the reasons for homelessness and the associated processes were more closely linked to structural factors than to personal/individual ones, although it was possible to discern a combination of the two. The data clearly indicated that homelessness was part of a dynamic process influenced by the procedures and opportunities for gaining access to housing, as much as by crisis situations which necessitated leaving accommodation at certain points in the life cycle. Many participants were able to construct their current

circumstances as part of a wider process and articulated the constraints which prevented them moving to more secure accommodation.

The evidence from single homeless people substantiated the earlier proposition that they were largely excluded from private sector housing on economic grounds, and from public sector housing on bureaucratic grounds. These constraints were compounded by barriers to gaining employment and by the operation of the social security system.

Many single homeless people were able to suggest routes out of homelessness and a substantial number felt that this was a realistic prospect, usually with the assistance of temporary accommodation agencies. There was less clarity about likely support needs and mechanisms for provision of support in more permanent accommodation, an issue which would merit further investigation.

Single homeless people largely responded to their situation in a rational fashion, albeit within the constraints of their limited financial resources and housing and labour market opportunities. Some engaged in informal or illegal economic activities to increase their income or improve their housing, while others disagreed with that approach on moral grounds. There was evidence of community support and community spirit among some groups of single homeless people. However, they did not appear to come together in groups to develop resistance to exclusion in the fashion suggested by Jordan (1996) There may well be other evidence of such activity, but it did not emerge from this study.

Single homeless people did not discuss political ideologies at length. However, their interpretations of their circumstances revealed an awareness of individual agency combined with a robust articulation of the structural constraints against which they struggled in trying to move out of homelessness. They clearly identified a series of political, ideological and cultural barriers to their independence, which were erected by central government and gatekeeping agencies such as housing and welfare providers.

During the course of the study, there was relatively little discussion about the Government's 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative, which was in the early stages of implementation at the time. On the contrary, many participants felt that the authorities did not fully understand the nature of homelessness. They thought that very little was being done by government to tackle the problem. A number of participants advocated self-help initiatives and there was substantial support for greater empowerment of homeless (and formerly homeless) people in the policy and decision making processes.

Despite the complexity of the analysis, there was little doubt that access to secure housing would have made a significant impact on the lives of many participants, and would have represented a starting point for more full participation in many dimensions of society and social life:

> *F1: When you have your own home you can do what you feel.*
>
> *M2: If you haven't got a permanent address, you are not really independent, are you? When I was on the street I couldn't get a job. But now I've got a place, I've got a starting point in life.*
>
> (Hostel E).

CHAPTER SIX

ACCESS OR EXCLUSION? THE DYNAMICS OF SINGLE HOMELESSNESS IN THREE LOCALITIES

Introduction

The debates on social exclusion, reviewed in Chapter Three, emphasised exclusion as a *dynamic process,* in contrast to previous analyses of poverty as a static concept. Chapter Five illustrated the perceived pathways out of homelessness from the perspectives of homeless single people. In this chapter, the complexity of the rehousing process, from the perspectives of providers is considered. The *process* of gaining access to housing is analysed as a vehicle, by which the dynamics of single homelessness and housing exclusion could be identified.

The responses to single homelessness in three local authority areas are examined. The chapter presents a re-analysis of qualitative data collected for *Social housing for single people* (Anderson and Morgan, 1997). Three case study areas were selected for analysis: a London Borough, a Scottish City and a semi-rural English District, which had transferred its housing stock to a housing association. The case studies included interviews with senior managers, middle-management and front-line staff in housing, social work and voluntary sector services.

Social housing for single people aimed to set local responses to single homelessness within a broader consideration of housing opportunities for single people. The data set was sufficiently comprehensive to facilitate secondary analysis with respect to the key concepts associated with social exclusion. The data was collected during the period 1994-1996, some time after the data collection period for *Single homeless people*, and prior to implementation of the Housing Act 1996 for England and Wales (discussed in Chapter Four). Chapter Eight contains some further comment on the scope for secondary analysis of the qualitative data set.

Chapter Five demonstrated single homeless people's exclusion from housing in different tenures. Although not the only explanatory variable, the process of access to housing emerged as being central to whether or not single people were able to secure adequate housing. This chapter focuses on the process of gaining access to housing, from the perspectives of local housing and support service providers. Chapter Seven considers other dimensions of social exclusion in relation to single homelessness.

The main focus of the analysis is on the process of gaining access to housing in the social sector, which has been characterised as being mainly bureaucratic, rather than market-led. The access process in the privately rented and informal sectors is considered towards the end of the chapter. The process of access to housing is characterised as commencing with the expression of need or demand for housing and moving through various routes (for example a waiting list or the homelessness procedures) to the point of securing occupancy of suitable accommodation. However, securing 'suitable' accommodation was by no means straightforward. Issues relating to the sustainability of tenancies and tenancy management are considered in Chapter Seven, as part of the wider analysis in relation to well being and social exclusion.

In order to inform the secondary data analysis, the chapter begins by presenting an overview of the broad, national-level findings from *Social housing for single people*. The secondary analysis of the data on the process of access to housing in the three case study areas, demonstrating the differentiation in local policy and practice, is then set out in detail. Conclusions on the process of gaining access to housing and 'housing exclusion' are presented at the end of the chapter.

Social housing for single people: a summary

This section presents a summary of the main findings of the study of local responses to single homelessness, contained in *Social housing for single people* (Anderson and Morgan, 1997, pp*i-v*).

Housing needs

A high proportion of housing authorities (73%) attempted to identify single people's housing needs, although this was found to be problematic in practice. Many local authorities used the housing waiting list as an indicator of need, and, on average, single people accounted for more than a third of applicants. Authorities also recognised that there may be substantial numbers of single people whose housing needs were not reflected in waiting list statistics. To counter this problem, many councils made separate attempts to obtain more accurate estimates of single people's needs, including conducting local housing needs surveys. The most significant aspect of housing need, which differentiated single person households from other household types, was the likelihood that they lived in particularly insecure housing circumstances. They were more often living in hostels, bed and breakfast, or insecure lodgings, or moving around or sleeping rough.

Local authority housing lists

Single people were disadvantaged by certain criteria which determined eligibility to the housing list and/or tenancy allocation. Discrimination was most evident with respect to age. In England and Wales, young people aged 16 and 17 years experienced the most severe disadvantage. Moreover, commonly used indicators of housing need and systems for prioritising applicants on the list also tended to operate to the disadvantage of single people. A key issue was the failure to take account of the insecure housing situations often experienced by single people. This resulted in two dimensions of disadvantage:

1. the housing needs of substantial numbers of single applicants were not properly measured and taken into account

2. priority schemes failed to adequately distinguish between the relative needs of different single applicants.

Some single people were also disadvantaged by administrative mechanisms, which did not adequately take account of circumstances where people had no fixed address.

Homelessness

The homelessness legislation directly discriminated against single people and the research uncovered evidence that some local authorities failed to meet even their statutory duties towards vulnerable single homeless people. Across a range of special needs criteria where single people might be considered to be vulnerable, a substantial degree of discretionary decision making was evident.

- On health criteria, little priority was awarded to applicants' self-reporting of illness or disability, and problems resulting from drug and alcohol use were given very low priority by local authorities.

- There was some evidence of positive responses towards youth homelessness, particularly with respect to 16 and 17 year olds leaving care. For young people aged 18-24, however, the chances of being accepted as vulnerable on age alone or because of a care background declined significantly. This could mean that where care leavers found difficulties on first leaving care (for example in coping with a tenancy) the appropriate 'safety net' may not operate a second time.

- Although high priority was generally awarded in situations of domestic or racial violence, there were some authorities who never awarded priority for racial harassment.

- People leaving prison were among those least likely to be given priority need status by local authorities.

Additionally, case study data indicated that single homeless people who may be vulnerable could still be wrongly filtered out of, or diverted away from, the statutory decision making procedures, through informal gatekeeping by staff. Some decisions on vulnerability were influenced by the expectation of 'problem' tenancies, and the likely availability of support to vulnerable single people once housed. For non-priority single homeless people, local authorities were more likely to provide advisory and information services based around prevention of homelessness than services aimed more directly at providing accommodation for people who were already homeless.

Housing associations

Although housing associations accounted for only a modest proportion of social housing, their policies were generally sensitive to the needs of single people; many specifically aimed to provide accommodation to those whose alternatives were limited. This outcome reflected their traditional role in complementing the priorities of local authorities. Typically, associations operated needs based allocation schemes, which took reasonable account of the insecure housing situations commonly experienced by single people. Associations often prioritised non-statutorily homeless applicants and roofless applicants. There was some evidence that an increasing proportion of local authority nominations were being used to meet the needs of statutorily homeless households, which would reduce opportunities to assist non-priority single homeless people.

Allocating tenancies

Overall, the availability of housing for single people did not match demand. On average, single people made up 36% of council housing waiting lists, and for many areas the proportion was as high as 50%. However, single people were allocated only 26% of annual lettings, despite higher than average vacancy rates for 1 bedroom properties. Local authorities made very limited use of stock conversion as a means of expanding the supply of accommodation available to single people.

Allocation practice could increase or decrease housing available to single people depending on the household types considered for different types and sizes of vacant dwellings. Generally, fairly strict bedroom standards were applied, although there was some evidence of flexible practice for low demand vacancies. There was only limited evidence of single people being allocated larger properties on account of special circumstances such as having access to children.

Alternative referral routes into social housing were also examined. Some of these were favourable to low-income and homeless single people, but they did not

account for a substantial proportion of lettings. Referrals mainly came from social services departments and voluntary sector agencies. Young single people, including care leavers, appeared to be favoured in the referral process and there was some, limited, evidence that implementation of the Children Act had increased access to social housing for young people leaving care. Single people with drug or alcohol problems, ex-prisoners/offenders, and refugees were less successful in the referral process.

A high proportion of council housing departments had been consulted in the production of strategic community care plans, and in about half of authorities a quota of community care related allocations had been designated, some of which may have been allocated to single people. Only a quarter of housing departments provided support to tenants rehoused under care in the community policies. This was mainly furnished accommodation and intensive housing management.

Tenancy management

The research revealed that housing officers increasingly perceived single people as potential 'problem tenants', especially young people and those in need of support. Some described problems experienced in the management of individual tenancies - such as rent arrears, inability to manage in the tenancy, and anti-social behaviour. Practice based on such experiences had important implications for both individual tenancy management and wider policy review.

Two fifths of local authorities provided support to some vulnerable single people to assist them in their tenancies. In the main, the nature of support provided seemed to be in the form of housing managers liasing with other agencies on *behalf of tenants.* Few authorities reported employing specialist resettlement or support workers and few provided furnished tenancies. More than half of local authorities sometimes offered tenancies only on condition that support was available. Circumstances where tenancies might be conditional upon support included: where prospective tenants had mental health problems; lettings under the Children Act or for young people leaving care; and for tenants leaving institutions or being rehoused under care in the community procedures. More

than three fifths of authorities in England and Wales who allocated tenancies to applicants under 18 years of age, said they would require a guarantor for rent or other tenancy matters in order for the allocation to be made.

Initial conclusions

The study revealed that low income and homeless single people continued to experience disadvantage in the systems for gaining access to social housing. Characteristics which were commonly found amongst single homeless people, such as being a refugee, having alcohol or drug problems or having been in prison, correlated with the groups who were most severely disadvantaged. That is to say, the population of single homeless people in the early-mid 1990s largely reflected the groups who were most likely to be excluded from social housing. The remainder of this chapter examines, in depth, the process of access to housing for single people in three case study areas.

Firstly, the assessment of housing need and the nature of single homelessness in the three areas are considered. The administration of the homelessness procedures in operation at the time of the study, are then compared across the three case studies. Next, the other access routes are examined: housing waiting lists, nominations to housing associations and agency referrals. Consideration is also given to the allocations process, the point at which people are matched to properties in the social sector. Finally, opportunities for access to privately rented and informal housing are considered, prior to presenting the conclusions from this chapter.

Housing needs and the nature of single homelessness

This section explores the perceptions of interviewees as to the nature of single homelessness and the housing and support needs of single people in the three case study areas.

The London Borough

Interviewees from a range of agencies all described the London borough as an area of high housing stress. Although it had a high rate of statutory homelessness, single homelessness was less well quantified. However, front-line staff reported a high level of housing need among single people. The approach to single homelessness in the Borough minimised both the recording of the problem and action under the legislation (discussed further below). The pressure of statutory homelessness, particularly family homelessness, was given as the reason for the approach taken with single homeless people. The borough contained a high proportion of 'minority' ethnic groups. In some districts non-white households formed the majority of the community and racism and racial harassment were among the most frequently mentioned 'housing' problems. The council received a significant proportion of housing applications from refugees.

The London Borough had commissioned a housing needs survey in 1992 which had been augmented from internal records. The housing strategy document was updated annually but the senior policy officer commented that the nature of local housing problems was not changing significantly, hence the same policies and practices remained relevant. The main priority was dealing with the sheer volume of statutorily homeless households. However, there was recognition of wider issues and other priorities such as stock condition, housing advice, the privately rented sector, the hostel sector and single homelessness projects.

There was no specific strategy for single people. Although some additional *resources had been directed* to single homelessness, the impact was thought to have been limited. For some time, single homelessness had been considered to be a significant issue within the borough, though it was no longer thought to be increasing. The problem was highlighted through the housing advice service which 'brings you face to face with the literally thousands of people that walk through your door every year' (Senior Policy Officer, London Borough[12]).

Front-line interviewees thought that the majority of single people in housing need did contact the local authority, for assistance. While there may have been some people who did not register due to low expectations, this was not thought to be a general trend. Indeed, it was suggested that many single people had unrealistic expectations as to the ability of the council to help and the quality of available accommodation. Problems in quantifying the housing needs of single people were identified by interviewees. For example, there was a lack of accuracy in monitoring enquiries to housing advisors and hostel applications.

The main housing problems among single people in the London Borough, were seen as overcrowding and an overall shortage of housing, despite some availability of cheap privately rented and owner occupied accommodation. The housing needs of young single people were summarised as being largely to do with security and harassment. As a result of high unemployment and low income, it was thought that young single people stayed at home until an older age than elsewhere - especially among minority ethnic groups.

At senior management level the needs of most single people were seen as being adequately accommodated in the lower end of the privately rented sector, in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) and bedsits. Single people competed with students and people moving from other parts of London and beyond, for the available cheap rented accommodation. Some front-line staff felt strongly that there was not a sufficient supply of cheap, privately rented accommodation to meet demand. Consequently, the types of problems that created housing demand, easily resulted in acute need, or homelessness.

Single people who were likely to be considered homeless (though not statutorily homeless) included those who were thrown out by family or evicted from privately rented accommodation, but not those in poor accommodation or living with their families. There were a number of hostels for single homeless people, but not enough to meet demand, as indicated by a housing advisor (the first point of contact for single people with housing problems):

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[12] Job titles, and the case study area, are given after all quotations from depth interviews. In order to preserve anonymity some precise job titles have been amended to a more general description.

R[13]: single homeless people in this borough are simply in an almost impossible situation....there are some hostels for those aged 18-25 years...if you are outside that age range, it's just dire. Demand outstrips supply - that is beyond question....

(Housing Adviser, London Borough).

Although there were a number of people sleeping rough in the borough, most interviewees said there was not considered to be a high level of street homelessness, particularly in comparison to central London. The interviews indicated the emphasis placed on a visible problem of street homelessness as an indicator of extreme housing need and a range of attitudes to those experiencing street homelessness. There was a degree of scepticism among some interviewees, which suggested a lack of detailed information on street homelessness, despite its visibility in some parts of the borough. Contradictory statements were also made, for example, that if interviewees did not know where people slept rough, then the situation probably didn't arise, despite the visibility of people begging during the day-time.

I: Are there places where you know people sleep rough?

R: I don't know of any. There are sort of drunks in the shopping centre who congregate down there. They tend to be in their early 30s. There are some people around the tube stations. A colleague reports a gang of dossers who doss around another district office.

(Housing Adviser, London Borough).

R: There would certainly be more pressure if you were tripping over a large number of single homeless people as you walked down the high street. And clearly, visibility inevitably moves something up the agenda. Given the constraints there are on local authority housing - I think we do probably as much as we can. But that doesn't mean the situation is good.

(Housing Manager, London Borough).

R: You don't get the same sort of street homelessness here that you get in the city centre. I've lived here 5 years and I've yet to see anybody

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[13] In *verbatim* quotations, R denotes Respondent (interviewee) and I denotes Interviewer.

sleeping rough. In a traditional sense like central London. It just doesn't happen. You obviously see a lot of homeless people if you go into the town centre [i.e. locally, within the borough] *and around the bus and train stations. You see people begging. If they sleep rough they hide it quite well. I've no idea where.*

(Hostel Manager (voluntary sector), London Borough).

The demand for temporary accommodation in the London borough was high. One hostel project for 18-25 year olds considered 'non-priority homeless' by the council was always full. The hostel worker confirmed that there were very limited housing opportunities in the borough for those aged over 25 years: 'I wouldn't know where to send them.....possibly central London'. A second hostel project which catered for more vulnerable single people had a higher vacancy rate and a less effective referral procedure. However, its location also made it less attractive in terms of both transport links and the nature of the surrounding area. Nevertheless, over the long term, demand for the accommodation was high.

Across the interviews, there was considerable discussion about the wide range of personal and social characteristics of single people in housing need, which meant that while some simply needed housing, others also needed support services.

The Scottish City

The Scottish City, despite enjoying a degree of economic recovery, and having a high level of public sector housing, was also characterised by severe housing stress. The nature of single homelessness in the city was more severe than in the London borough. Rough sleeping was a visible problem, particularly in the city centre. Single people were the fastest growing client group for the housing department, and made up over 40% of new applicants to the waiting list. Single people's needs were varied and, especially among young people, accommodation was often only one component of need. The main causes of homelessness in the city were considered to reflect the high level of poverty in certain areas. In contrast to the other case study areas, a shortage of affordable

accommodation was much less significant than the wider economic circumstances and the poor quality of housing in some neighbourhoods.

Besides street homelessness, the key circumstances which affected homeless single people included relationship breakdown; friends and relatives no longer being willing to accommodate people; poor quality of accommodation; and insecurity of tenure. There was a perception that the average age of single homeless people was lower than it used to be, although there had been a drop in presentations from 16 and 17 year olds following implementation of a youth housing strategy (discussed further in Chapter Seven). Single homeless people who presented in the City were overwhelmingly men, although local research had suggested that hidden homelessness among women was an issue within the city.

The senior homelessness manager gave an overview of the needs of single homeless people, and the difficulties faced by the housing department. The support needs of low income and homeless single people were emphasised even more strongly that in the London Borough.

R: *Single people now make up more than 50% of the waiting list and we are seeing approximately 10,000 people through the door here. That includes some duplication/repeat visits, but there is still a level of need to develop more options for single people in the city. And I think housing support is one of them. Probably we have a lot of empty houses but they are not in suitable areas. A housing scheme[14] is not really an option for a lot of single people. For the people in hostels, three-apartment[15] housing isn't popular. They prefer smaller houses that are easier to manage and easier to look after. What I think is needed is a variety of options for single people. Ranging from emergency accommodation to some supported tenancies. For a variety of reasons - related to drugs and alcohol. And to have services providing outreach support.*

(Single Homelessness Manager, Scottish City).

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[14] A housing 'scheme' is a Scottish term for a housing estate, usually a large, local authority estate.
[15] Among Scottish housing providers, the term 'apartment' is commonly used instead of bedroom. A lounge is counted as an apartment, hence a three-apartment house or flat has two bedrooms, etc.

The Scottish City conducted a sophisticated assessment of the requirement for special needs housing and support. There was a difficulty, however, with the integration of single people's housing needs into these processes, as they did not tend to fall within 'special needs' or 'community care' client groups. Consequently, their support needs were not adequately measured.

A representative of a voluntary sector agency offered an alternative perspective on the general situation in the city for low-income single people, which acknowledged the dynamic nature of housing demand, the limitations of existing provision, and the evolving response of the local authority.

> R: The whole shape and location of housing in the city is wrong. The size of housing, the location of it, schemes, the way it's accessed is not geared to single people at all. It's geared to the traditional family. And because of the physical investment in stock - that's not easy to change. I think there are issues around about changing it - but it's a longer-term process than the demand allows. People whose demand just comes from a housing requirement - those same people have changing needs over time. As their needs change there becomes a more pressing demand for smaller units - whether for special needs groups or other small households. So that there is a whole range of unmet need which I think is contingent upon the existing stock and the way it is supplied.
>
> (Voluntary sector worker, Scottish City).

As with the London Borough, there were varying interpretations as to the severity of street homelessness in the City.

> I: Is there much in the way of rough sleeping in the city?
>
> R: No - there is not a great deal of rough sleeping. If you went to a certain organisation, they would lead you to believe that there are thousands of people sleeping rough on the streets of the city. There's not. The Salvation Army and the soup run would probably see in the city centre..... 20-25 seems to be the number that they get. Every winter for the last 2 or 3 years we had a 'rough sleepers' initiative[16]. This winter, the number of people that came through was greatly increased - but we

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[16] This reference is to a local authority initiative and pre-dated the Scottish Office 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative which awarded a substantial allocation to the City in 1997.

found it was the same people coming in time and time again and that
shot up the numbers. So there is not a great number out there.

(Single Homelessness Manager, Scottish City).

A contrasting view emerged from an interview with a homelessness case worker:

I: *Is the volume of homelessness rising?*

R: *I think it has over recent years. With the closure of institutions, there's a bigger proportion of people with mental health problems coming through. Also - just society in general. I'm guaranteed I'm always going to be in a job because I'm in a growth industry. There is always an increase in homelessness.*

I: *Are there many people sleeping out?*

R: *Yes - quite a lot. Tends to be older guys. 40s, 50s. Long term homeless. That have been sleeping rough and come in. Occasionally you will get someone who says I spent the last couple of nights in the bus station. Been moved on. We get the police bringing people in - we've found this guy, can you take him. And we'll say yes.*

I: *Do you have any idea of numbers?*

R: *Not really. I couldn't guess. I don't know whether we have a figure.*

I: *Are there any major gaps in provision?*

R: *The main area lacking is for people with mental health and drugs problems. The two seem to go together.*

(Homelessness case worker, Scottish City).

The representative from the voluntary sector agency argued that the nature of street homelessness was changing. For example, following the impact of the Council's youth housing strategy, some people were assisted, but others remained excluded.

R: *The policy .. has left a more intractable baseline of people who it is then very difficult to deal with. I would say that around the city there are say 25 people who are just at this point, not able to be helped. They will be sleeping rough. They will be presenting but not being taken on board.*

And who everybody has experience of and everybody knows. And who nobody will take.

(Voluntary sector worker, Scottish City).

Although the voluntary sector worker's estimate of rooflessness was close to that of the council's single homelessness manager, the former continued to explain that there were others who were sleeping rough, but not known as 'on the circuit'. For example, there were a lot of people who were less well known to homelessness agencies and who were, perhaps, sleeping rough temporarily. Although some research was underway, no reliable estimate of the number of people sleeping rough was available at the time. Other research had indicated that young people who became homeless often stayed in their local neighbourhoods, rather than using city centre services. Consequently, there may have been significant numbers of single people who were homeless or sleeping rough in more peripheral parts of the city, who never presented to statutory or voluntary agencies.

Notwithstanding the substantial evidence of single homelessness in the Scottish City, the perspective of a neighbourhood housing officer illustrated the irony of having a surplus, though poor quality, housing stock, in the face of extreme housing need.

> *R: We can always house someone - because of the large housing stock we have, and unfortunately most of it is in difficult to let areas. There is never really a case where you would say to someone 'we can't house you'. Whether someone will want to live in that area is another matter.*
>
> (Housing Officer, Scottish City).

The Stock Transfer District

Despite being a generally affluent area, early in the 1990s, the authority had become concerned about the number of young single people presenting as homeless, for whom there were very limited options. Some were directed into the privately rented sector and some into social housing. It was broadly accepted that there was a significant number of people living in insecure

accommodation. The majority of single people in housing need were thought to be living at home or living on a semi-permanent basis with friends or relatives, but wanted to achieve greater independence. As with the urban case study areas, the authority identified a proportion of single homeless people who needed support, as well as accommodation.

The Council's senior housing manager (a post-transfer, strategic role) considered that the prospects for meeting the housing needs of single people were significantly better than they had been pre-transfer. This was because the finance raised through the transfer of stock to the Stock Transfer Housing Association (STHA) had allowed new development by the association which had resulted in more vacancies.

Furthermore, the council had been able to focus more on its strategic role, including a rent deposit scheme to assist single people into privately rented accommodation. There was also a reasonable amount of accommodation for single people provided by housing associations other than the STHA. Nevertheless, a significant degree of housing need among low-income single people was identified in the district. The housing waiting list was held by the stock transfer housing association, and the largest group of applicants (50% of the total) were single people.

The Stock Transfer District had recently conducted a housing needs survey which indicated that 62% of those who expressed a housing need were single people. Over half were in the 16-24 age range and most were not in a position to purchase property on the open market. For some, it was questionable whether they could afford to rent in the private sector either. However, a follow-up survey indicated that a high proportion of those in need had resolved their own housing problem within 12 months, although new households in need had emerged. The study highlighted that, even in an affluent area, there was a core of single people who were not in a position to provide housing for themselves.

Since the stock transfer had taken place, research had found that a proportion of single people in housing need had not registered on the STHA's waiting list. The main reasons given for non-registration were that either they were not

looking for housing association accommodation, or that they did not think they would get assistance, as others were in higher priority need. In contrast, the senior manger in the STHA considered that the association's waiting list was the best representation of people who actually wanted housing and was sceptical about the value of the local authority's housing needs survey. This may explain the lower priority given to single people's housing needs by the association, compared to the local authority.

> R: *Single homeless people tend to be a difficult group to identify with - they haven't been identified in the same ways as homeless families.*
> (Senior Manager, STHA, Stock Transfer District).

The local authority retained its statutory homelessness duties and the homelessness officer confirmed that nearly half of all homelessness applications were from single people. Single people were more likely than families to be literally homeless on the day they presented to the authority. However, it was considered that the introduction of a rent deposit scheme for the privately rented sector had contributed to a rise in enquiries by single people, as they became more aware that the local authority could actually offer some assistance. Nevertheless, the homelessness officer considered that single people faced particular problems in the local housing system.

Sleeping out was not regarded as a major issue in the Stock Transfer District. Although street homelessness was not highly visible, nevertheless, there were a limited number of people who were sleeping out. Occasionally, single people who presented as homeless said they had been sleeping rough. However, when the authority had opened a winter shelter two years earlier, usage had been minimal. A number of interviewees suggested that homeless single people tended to move to larger towns, or even London, where there was more accommodation available. The homelessness officer suggested that the fact that the district was a rural area contributed to the lack of visible homelessness. Moreover, since little attempt had been made to estimate the scale of the problem, no definitive assessment could be given.

Single people's housing needs in the three areas

The three areas varied substantially in terms of their socio-economic circumstances and local tenure patterns. The London Borough was an area of low employment, poverty and poor housing on the 'boundary' between inner and outer London. Levels of street homelessness were lower than in central London, but accommodation and facilities were also severely limited. The housing system in the London Borough was influenced by the wider London housing and jobs markets.

The Scottish City functioned more as a 'city centre' housing and labour market. There was a visible problem of street homelessness and relatively well developed service provision for homeless single people. Despite economic regeneration, parts of the city were characterised by severe poverty and poor housing conditions. The Stock Transfer District was situated in an affluent area with high employment and a relatively high quality housing stock across all tenures. While single homelessness was not insignificant, the scale of the problem was much less severe than in the two urban case study areas.

Despite the variation in socio-economic characteristics, similar trends in the *nature* of single people's housing needs were identified in the three areas. For example, low-income single people typically experienced poor quality, overcrowded or insecure accommodation. Nevertheless, a visible problem of street homelessness was considered to be a much more significant indicator of housing stress. The majority of interviewees, in all three areas, identified a proportion of single homeless people who had a range of support needs in addition to housing need. Support needs were not well quantified in any of the case study areas, but the issues raised are explored further in Chapter Seven.

Single people and the homelessness provisions

This section explores implementation of the statutory homelessness legislation as set out in Chapter One, across the three case study areas. Although single homeless people were largely excluded from the legislative provisions there

were important considerations around vulnerability and priority need for single homeless people. Local authorities also had a statutory duty to provide advice and assistance to non-priority homeless single people.

The broad administrative structures for implementing the homelessness legislation in the three areas are set out. The various 'stages' of the homelessness procedures are then considered in turn: assessing homelessness; assessing vulnerability and priority need; local connection; intentionality; and advice and assistance. Finally, conclusions on the implementation of the homelessness provisions in the three localities are presented.

Approaches to implementation and administrative procedures

In the London Borough, the first point of contact for any homeless or potentially homeless household was with a Housing Adviser in a local office. The adviser would make an initial assessment and refer applicants who were potentially homeless and in priority need to a centralised homelessness service. Applicants could not make direct contact with the homelessness service, access was only by referral from the housing advisers. Because of the general pressures on housing, the London Borough operated a very tight policy on homelessness, strictly to the letter of the law. Consequently, single homeless people were only accepted for permanent rehousing if they were deemed to be vulnerable and in priority need.

Where housing advisers in the London Borough did not consider single homeless people to have a case for assessment as vulnerable, they offered alternative advice and assistance. If an applicant was literally roofless, the first priority would be to secure some temporary accommodation. There was a difficulty, however, that few hostels in the borough operated on a direct access basis. If the applicant was living in some form of accommodation, however temporary, they would be given advice on the housing waiting list, the privately rented sector and local housing associations. The 'firmness' of the borough's approach to implementing the legislation was confirmed by officers who worked

at different stages in the process. There was less agreement as to the fairness and effectiveness of the approach.

> R: *If single homeless people are referred to the homelessness service on the grounds of vulnerability, they are generally rejected. It's as simple as that. They have to be quite vulnerable to qualify - if they can read a newspaper and find their own accommodation they are not vulnerable. Strictly speaking I would say that is outwith the housing act, the code of guidance is not really fully implemented. Housing Advisers sometimes try to challenge the homelessness service but the staff there are seen to have significant administrative power.*
>
> (Housing Adviser, London borough).

> R: *We only see the statutory single homeless and we have a very tough policy. The numbers are minimal in terms of the single people that we accept. We don't get many applications from single homeless people because the district offices do the filtering out. The system works well. Everyone is very clear about who they can refer.*
>
> (Homelessness Manager, London Borough).

> R: *The homelessness service has a different ethos to here. They are the police force of housing, they conduct investigations. The homelessness service is seen as being hard and harsh. Our service is seen as being reasonable (by our staff...).*
>
> (District Housing Manager, London Borough).

In contrast to the London Borough, the Scottish City implemented a much more liberal interpretation of the homelessness legislation and offered a service to all single homeless people, not just those in priority need. The City operated a centralised homelessness service, which provided a 24-hour reception centre for enquiries and emergency accommodation, pending assessment and a decision on permanent housing. The Council also operated a youth housing strategy and had developed a range of supported accommodation for single homeless people. Neighbourhood offices were also able to deal with homelessness applications, and, in theory, the service was the same as in the centralised service.

The voluntary sector representative indicated that most voluntary sector agencies in the city would refer single homeless people directly to the central service. There was a view that local offices were not as well versed in the homelessness procedures as they should be, and that people were quite often inappropriately dealt with. Further, staff in local offices were not always aware of the range of housing and support services provided for single homeless people across the city.

The voluntary sector representative also pointed out that while the centralised homelessness service was quite well known, there were some access difficulties as it was not located in the city centre. However, the operational benefit of a centralised service might be diluted if there were more access points. The view was also expressed that some homeless single people simply did not wish to present themselves to the service:

> R: I think it is widely known that people can go to the centre. I think there are lots of people who wouldn't present there. But that's different. It's not that they don't know about it. It's just that they either have experience of not having been well treated or have a view that presenting to a statutory body is not what they want to do.

(Voluntary Sector Representative, Scottish City).

The homelessness service included a team of twelve caseworkers who worked on single homelessness, two of which dealt exclusively with 16-17 year olds. In addition, caseworkers had specialised briefs linked to other agencies. For example they would deal with a particular hostel, or with social work or with people coming out of prison. This helped ensure consistency of policy implementation across homeless single people in similar circumstances and other agencies always knew who to contact about an applicant.

Caseworkers would conduct a fuller assessment of applicants' needs once they were settled in temporary accommodation (usually local authority hostel accommodation) and would then work with the applicant through to long term rehousing. The homelessness case officer would look to ascertain whether the applicant was homeless, in priority need, and to assess intentionality and local

connection. The four tests were usually conducted in the precise order set out in the legislation.

The approach to implementation of the homelessness legislation was different again in the Stock Transfer District. Following the stock transfer, there was a very clear distinction between housing waiting list applications and homelessness applications. The Council had retained all statutory responsibility regarding homelessness and had a nominations agreement with the STHA which had taken on the former council stock. Prior to the transfer, people who applied for council housing may not necessarily always have been appropriately identified as potentially homeless. Since the council transferred its housing stock, the waiting list was held by the STHA and homelessness was dealt with by the Council. Consequently, everyone who approached council was recorded under the homelessness procedures, as distinct from the housing waiting list, which had resulted in improved recording of the extent of homelessness.

The view of the homelessness officer was that it was not possible to have a comprehensive 'homelessness policy' which covered all eventualities. Officers had fairly wide discretion in terms of the decisions they made. So far as the council had a general policy, it was to apply the homelessness code of guidance in the broader spirit of the legislation rather than strictly to the letter. The possibility that officer discretion could be used constructively, in a way that benefited applicants, was described at length:

> R: In terms of interpretation of legislation and case law - yes you do need to maintain a fair degree of discretion. Each case is different in its own way and if you don't maintain that discretion it is difficult to reflect the nuances of different circumstances. It is almost impossible to define a specific policy for every person's individual circumstances. You risk - if you try and do it - ending up with policies which debar people from assistance, who might otherwise get it. There is always a risk around discretion, about the way it is exercised, and that it can be influenced by the way individuals relate to interviewing officers - personality type issues. We endeavour to monitor that. Most cases where there is anything borderline are talked through so it isn't just one person's view. Including myself or the principal officer, who may not have seen the

individual. One has to be aware of the risk. What the staff are looking for is the factual information that people can provide. Inevitably though, there is a degree of interpretation. Possibly one of the best ways of avoiding undue influence is to be aware that it is a possibility and can arise.

(Homelessness Officer, Stock Transfer District).

Assessing homelessness

The legislation in place at the time of the research required that, where any household applied to a local authority under the homelessness provisions, the first duty was to assess whether the household was in fact homeless. Guidance on what constituted homelessness was contained in both the legislation and the associated codes of guidance for Scotland and England. In practice, decisions were often determined by a combination of officer discretion and a judgement of the individual circumstances relative to the wider housing situation in the locality.

In the London Borough, housing advisers acknowledged that officers interpreted the definition of homelessness in different ways. For example, the pressure on the service meant that some were more rigorous in demanding evidence of homelessness while others were more accepting of an applicant's word.

R: *We could, if we had more time and a few more resources, go and check out all the addresses - cars, friends etc. We could check out their stories, but there is no time.*

(Housing Adviser, London Borough).

There was some disagreement as to whether living in a hostel constituted homelessness or was, in fact, an acceptable solution to homelessness. Residents of one hostel had assured tenancies, which meant they had more security, but could actually be disadvantageous, as they could not then claim to be 'threatened with homelessness'. With regard to street homelessness, one adviser stated that it was not unusual to judge someone by their appearance in

that a person claiming to be roofless would be expected to look unkempt, rather than clean and tidy.

In the Scottish City, there appeared to be a reasonably consistent approach to the assessment of homelessness. If an applicant was asked to leave by relatives (which was often the case), staff would try and get confirmation of the circumstances and whether the applicant could return. However, if, say, a young person said they were being abused and they did not want the homelessness service to get in touch with their parents that would be respected. Similarly, if there was violence involved, no contact would be made. Otherwise, contact would be made by telephone or visit. A homelessness caseworker explained how it could be difficult to prove or disprove whether an applicant was homeless and that unless they could disprove the case, they would accept the applicant's word. The single homelessness manager explained that some applicants who were assessed as being homeless and were offered hostel or B&B accommodation did not want to accept those options and they sometimes returned to the accommodation from which they had been made homeless. They were then advised to make a housing waiting list application.

In the Stock Transfer District, there was little discussion as to the assessment of homelessness, although one interviewee stated that single applicants were often literally homeless on the day of application.

Assessing vulnerability and priority need

The qualitative interviews explored the decision making process with regard to priority need for single homeless people. Interviewees were asked to assume that the applicant had already been assessed as being homeless.

In the London Borough, one housing adviser said he would always look for any information on which a case for vulnerability could be made, but that often it was impossible: 'they've got no medical problems, no social work involvement, haven't committed a crime - perfectly normal, healthy individual'. If a client was successfully referred to the central homelessness service, documentary

evidence or confirmation of any circumstances which related to vulnerability would be required. Within the homelessness section, vulnerability decisions were always referred to a senior officer. In order to ensure consistency in the procedures, one officer made decisions on mental health related vulnerability and a second looked at all other aspects of vulnerability.

In the Scottish City, a homelessness case officer would ask about any social or health problems which might relate to vulnerability. Applicants were also asked whether they had access to children who they did not look after all of the time. A similar interview process in a neighbourhood housing office should also have revealed any circumstances which might mean the applicant was in priority need. The voluntary sector representative agreed that the Scottish City authority was generally progressive in its approach to single homelessness and vulnerability, although there were thought to be some problems around people with mental health problems or offending/custody records.

The homelessness officer in the Stock Transfer District thought that prior to the stock transfer, a lot of single homeless people were dismissed who should have been in priority need. Post-transfer, homelessness was one of the most important remaining local authority housing roles, and it was thought that more careful consideration was given to vulnerability. The Children Act and the NHS and Community Care act had also ensured that certain needs were given a higher priority.

The homelessness legislation and the codes of guidance set out a range of criteria for assessing vulnerability. During the qualitative interviews, it was possible to explore whether authorities fully met, or went beyond, their statutory duties to single homeless people.

Despite the efforts of campaigning agencies, age alone did not entitle young homeless people (aged 16-17 years) to be considered as in priority need at the time of the study. In the London Borough, the homelessness service had a very strict practice on vulnerability according to age and most of the time housing advisers did not consider young applicants to be in priority need. Assessment of vulnerability on grounds of 'sexual or financial exploitation' (as set out in the

code of guidance) was particularly difficult as it was a very sensitive matter to obtain evidence of, say, a young person's involvement in prostitution.

Staff in the London Borough's central homelessness service said that circumstances such as having no income, having been in care, not being able to cope because of educational abilities, or evidence of past sexual abuse were all examples of vulnerable circumstances. The council's referral arrangement with social services for young people leaving care meant that very few immediate care leavers applied as homeless.

In contrast, the Scottish City council had a policy to deal with all single people aged 16-17 years as being in priority need. Those aged 18-21 years were sometimes accepted as vulnerable on age alone, depending on how 'mature' or 'immature' they were judged. Homelessness caseworkers could then refer young homeless people on to a youth support worker, under the youth housing strategy, (which provided furnished accommodation in local authority flats, across the city). Where single homeless people applied to a neighbourhood housing office, those aged 16-17 years would be referred to the central homelessness service and then the youth support team. However, there appeared to be a danger that where those aged 18-25 approached a district office, they were likely to be advised they had no priority and recommended to apply on the waiting list.

As in the London Borough, young care leavers in the Scottish City would usually be housed through direct arrangements with social services. Where a young care leaver did become homeless, they would be accepted as being in priority need, although there would still be an expectation of social work support.

The legislation and code of guidance also made reference to vulnerability on grounds of mental ill health and learning disabilities. In such assessments, the London Borough would seek a recommendation from health or social work professionals on locally agreed criteria. Many cases were direct referrals, usually from a local hospital. There was also a specialist outreach team in the borough, which worked with homeless people with mental health problems. The

homelessness service required detailed background reports on applicants who may be vulnerable because of mental illness.

In the Scottish City, applicants with a learning disability were generally accepted as being vulnerable, with 'borderline' applicants usually 'given the benefit of the doubt'. One caseworker said they would ask for the advice of the local Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) team, which was highly praised. In the case of single people with mental health problems who had been discharged from long-stay hospital, the usual experience in the Scottish City was that they were referred for housing directly by health or social work professionals. Single people with mental health problems who were discharged from acute hospital wards were more likely to present as homeless in an emergency situation. Again the opinion of a CPN would be sought, although applicants would often, ultimately, be assessed as being vulnerable.

In the Scottish City, if an applicant was deemed to need hospital or social work supported accommodation they would still be classed as being in priority need, but the housing service would only offer short term supported accommodation until more suitable arrangements could be made. The support needs of single homeless people are discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Across the three case studies, there was less discussion about the vulnerability of people with physical medical conditions. The London Borough had a sophisticated procedure for medical assessments and always accepted homeless people with HIV/AIDS as being vulnerable. In the Stock Transfer District, staff looked at all of the facts of an individual case. For example, leaving hospital may be a contributing factor in someone's vulnerability, rather than a sufficient condition. Someone who had a heart condition may be at risk if they were sleeping rough, but equally might be able to find their own accommodation. In contrast, someone who was mentally ill may be at less physical risk if they were sleeping rough, but may also be much less able to find accommodation for themselves.

An aspect of people's health and well being which crossed the boundary between physical and mental health was the question of abuse of, or

dependency on, alcohol or drugs. In the London Borough, one housing adviser explained that applicants were generally quite open about revealing alcohol and drug related problems. A single homeless person would not necessarily be considered vulnerable because they had a problem with alcohol or drugs, even if there was a referral from a social worker or psychiatrist saying that a more serious mental health condition had developed. However, at the time of the study, practice with respect to drug-related problems was under review.

In contrast to the local authority view within the London Borough, voluntary sector workers referred to a case where an applicant had gone through a programme of detoxification and rehabilitation, to find that once she was 'clean' she was not accepted as vulnerable. This sort of decision was very demoralising for a homeless person who had made every possible effort to improve their circumstances.

There appeared to be a degree of discretion in the way case workers in the Scottish City managed alcohol and drug dependency related problems. Drug use was viewed as a serious problem throughout the city and on council estates and the behaviour, or lifestyle, of the client would be as important an element in the decision-making process as the nature of any drugs-related problem or illness. However, the process of rehabilitation was taken account of in a more positive way than in the London Borough.

Some homelessness caseworkers in the Scottish City would offer advice and referral to relevant support agencies and would provide accommodation if they judged that the applicant could live safely with other people (usually in a hostel environment). For example, it was generally considered that clients in receipt of prescription drugs could be offered hostel accommodation. Where clients were known to be, say, injecting street drugs, hostel accommodation may still be offered but hostel staff would be warned of the possible dangers to the client and to staff and other residents. There was an expectation that a person should be 'tackling the problem' prior to any permanent rehousing. The complexity of the decision-making process was described by one caseworker.

R: *They would remain in a hostel as long as they've got the problem - as long as they don't do anything to get put out of the hostel. But I wouldn't*

deal with people for rehousing unless they are willing to address their problems. If someone has a drink problem - paralytic every week. To put them into a tenancy and subject neighbours to somebody coming in pissed out their head (pardon my French) ....you don't know what somebody's like when they are drunk or under the influence of drugs. So really, to subject neighbours to that, is not fair. If they successfully completed a rehab programme, we would try to get them a furnished flat - rather than put them back in a hostel. That would just be going back to problems again - and getting back into drug using.

(Homelessness case worker, Scottish City).

The approach in the neighbourhood housing offices in the Scottish City appeared less supportive than that of the central homelessness service. Those with alcohol or drug problems were unlikely to be considered to be in any more need than anyone else. Similarly, in the Stock Transfer District, the fact that an applicant was an alcoholic or drug addict would not, *per se*, mean they would be accepted as vulnerable.

The code of guidance on the homelessness legislation stated clearly that single women who became homeless as a result of domestic violence should be treated as vulnerable and in priority need. This was one situation where the London Borough always accepted the case for vulnerability and, in fact, accounted for by far the most frequent reason for priority need among single homeless people. Similarly, the other two case studies also awarded priority need in circumstances of domestic violence. The evidence required of actual violence or threat of violence was not discussed in detail but all three case studies appeared to take sympathetic approaches to such applications.

Refugees and asylum seekers could apply for assistance under the homelessness legislation at the time of the research, although their housing and welfare rights were subsequently restricted (Chapter Four). The London Borough had the greatest experience of applications from refugees and asylum seekers. Again, an assessment as vulnerable would not be automatic for single people, although it was acknowledged that some people were fleeing extreme situations, including torture. Under a separate system of direct referrals, the

London Borough provided a quota of lettings each year to local refugee agencies.

The Scottish City also received a significant number of housing and homelessness applications from people who were refugees or asylum seekers and also worked closely with local refugee agencies. Refugees who were single people were usually assessed as being in priority need. However, this would normally result in an offer of hostel accommodation in the first instance, which was acknowledged as being far from ideal from the client's perspective.

Chapter Five demonstrated that a record of offending or custody was a common characteristic amongst single homeless people, but the homelessness code of guidance did not specifically encourage awarding priority to this group. Notwithstanding the offences committed, it could be argued that secure housing on discharge from court or prison would be fundamental to any process of rehabilitation. The London Borough had a policy of awarding priority need status where offending behaviour was clearly linked to homelessness and a case could be made that rehousing would prevent further offending. Otherwise, no priority was awarded.

In the Scottish City, caseworkers were assigned to work with local prisons and applications were dealt with on a referral basis, co-ordinated by social work teams in the prisons. Priority need was usually awarded where applicants had been in prison for six months or more and where there was a clear association between having previously been in prison and homelessness. As with other circumstances, leaving prison of itself would not be a criterion for priority need in the Stock Transfer District, where decisions were based on all of the circumstances of any individual applicant.

Local connection

Once a local authority had assessed whether an applicant was homeless and in priority need, they should then determine whether the applicant had a connection with the area. The homelessness code of guidance and agreements

between local authorities set out criteria for decision making, and this part of the procedures caused little difficulty in the case study areas. Only in the Scottish City was there perceived to be a problem with a high number of applications from outside of the city. Single homeless people who were aged under 25 years were offered temporary accommodation pending the process of referral to another authority.

Intentionality

The final 'test' of the homelessness procedures was that applicants had not made themselves 'intentionally' homeless, but this was not a test which had a substantial impact on single homelessness decisions in the three areas. About 10% of applicants to London borough were found to be intentionally homeless in the year of the research.

In the Scottish City, the number of presentations to the central homelessness service found to be intentionally homeless was 'extremely small'. The single homelessness manager readily acknowledged that 'people are not coming here because they want to'. Where an applicant was considered to be intentionally homelessness, hostel accommodation might still be offered if there was a vacancy.

Advice and assistance for non-vulnerable single homeless people

All three case study authorities made some provision to offer non-priority, single homeless people advice and assistance with their housing problems. In the London Borough housing advisors would offer advice on alternatives to council housing. In contrast, the Scottish City offered a rehousing service to all single homeless people, although in practice this usually meant a period in hostel accommodation followed by an offer of 'difficult to let' accommodation. Once in hostel accommodation, single people would be rehoused via the housing waiting list, but they would be awarded additional points to reflect their status as

homeless. In practice, this seemed to make little difference to the final outcome of their application.

One neighbourhood housing officer in the Scottish City acknowledged that non-priority single homeless people would be considered for housing through the waiting list, but had a less positive view of the rehousing service:

R: *As I said - I think single people do get a raw deal. They may well have nowhere to stay - no relatives or friends. All we can do is put them down and go through the areas they would qualify for. Because of availability we can get them a quick offer. But not in a desirable area. Indeed - in a very undesirable area.*

(Neighbourhood Housing Officer, Scottish City).

Staff in the Stock transfer District felt that they provided advice and assistance beyond the statutory requirements. For example, they had developed a rent deposit/guarantee scheme to assist access to privately rented housing. There remained some areas where better links could be developed with other agencies, but the authority endeavoured to provide all applicants with advice or at least direct them to where they could get help with their particular problem.

Implementing the homelessness legislation in the three areas

The findings from Anderson and Morgan (1997) set out at the beginning of the chapter illustrated the broad patterns of local responses to single homelessness at the national level. This first stage in the secondary qualitative analysis has demonstrated the extent to which individual case studies varied from the 'average'.

Although some inconsistencies and contradictions were identified within each case study, a distinctive 'approach' could be identified for each area. In the London Borough practice sought to minimise the duty to single homeless people and could be characterised as *defensive.* The Scottish City adopted the most *proactive* approach, having developed a comprehensive service for single homeless people. Practice in the Stock Transfer District was more liberal than in

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the London Borough, but less structured than the Scottish City and could be characterised as *responsive*. The three approaches corresponded with a *continuum* in terms of the degree of discretion in implementing the procedures, with officers in the London Borough having least scope for discretion, intermediate scope in the Scottish City, and considerable discretion in the Stock Transfer District.

The remainder of the analysis in this chapter demonstrates how these broad patterns permeated all aspects of the process of access to housing for single people. The possible explanations for the differing approaches are considered further in the concluding section of this chapter and in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Local authority housing waiting list applications

Only two of the case study areas operated council waiting lists as the third had transferred all of its stock to a housing association, which then held the list. While there were opportunities for single people to gain access to housing through the waiting lists in the London Borough and the Scottish City, in practice these avenues were severely limited. The sheer pressure of the number of applicants in comparison to the availability of stock limited access to any housing in the London Borough, while the nature of the housing stock in the Scottish City limited access to only the least desirable properties.

The London Borough had moved away from a 'traditional' points scheme for housing allocations. Members had wanted to plan allocations more precisely so that specific needs could be met. The borough also wanted to be more open with applicants about what could realistically be achieved. A third of all social housing in the borough comprised one bedroom properties, and there was a chronic shortage of family-sized accommodation. Consequently, a decision was taken that families could not be rehoused from the waiting list, due to the pressure from homeless families. Further, all properties of two bedrooms or more were only allocated to priority cases or transfer applicants. A detailed quota system with lettings targets set for different priority groups had been

implemented in an attempt to plan for the outcomes of the lettings process in a way which would best meet housing need in a situation of excess demand and scarcity of resources.

The waiting list only operated for one bedroom properties, for which single applicants were in competition with priority homeless cases (including pregnant women and sometimes small families) and single elderly applicants. A senior policy officer explained that the outcome of a recent review of priority within the one bedroom list would be that more elderly people, and consequently fewer single people, would be rehoused from the waiting list.

The borough had, however, implemented a 'rooflessness' policy, whereby single people who were of no fixed abode were awarded 100 points on the one bedroom waiting list, which significantly increased their chances of receiving an offer of housing. Relatively few single people were actually rehoused by this route as the quota of lettings was only a small proportion of vacancies. For example, in one district office, there were 68 one bedroom vacancies anticipated in a year, but the quota for single non-elderly waiting list applicants was just six.

Interviews with staff in different parts of the Scottish City council revealed that there was relatively little difference in the outcomes for single people rehoused through the waiting list, compared to the homelessness route. The composition of the points system meant that single people were always in a relatively low position in housing queues, compared to other household types. A number of interviewees confirmed that the system generally resulted in offers of low demand accommodation for single people. A further award of social points could be made in certain cases, which might result in an offer of housing in a more 'desirable area. For example, successful completion of a drug rehabilitation programme could be taken into consideration.

> R: *Rehab may be lengthy and costly - so there is no point in going back to a hostel. We would put them in a furnished flat. But people in furnished flats only get the same points as a hostel dweller for permanent housing. When you come to rehouse them - if they were from one of the schemes - they would only get one of the schemes. To put*

them back into a scheme wont solve their problems. They would go back to where they grew up, and their friends might be still there. They have tried to cut those ties and you stick them in a situation where they will get sucked back in to that lifestyle. We can make a case for extra points to try and get them a better offer of housing, where they can make a fresh start. They could be awarded another 50 social priority points. The caseworkers don't make that decision. We plead the case but it's the senior caseworker or manager who makes the decision. It means they get a chance of many more areas.

(Homelessness Caseworker, Scottish City).

The London Borough and Scottish City case studies demonstrated how very different approaches to managing access to housing for single people through the housing waiting list made relatively little difference to the final outcomes. In the London Borough's *defensive* strategy, access was strictly limited through the quota system for waiting list allocations as other groups were given higher priority. In the Scottish City, the outcome of the waiting list points system meant that, despite the *proactive* strategy where single people had a better chance of being offered accommodation, this was almost always restricted to the least popular areas of the city. The analysis suggested that a progressive local strategy towards single homelessness was limited in the extent to which it could overcome the entrenched disadvantage experienced by low income single people, as identified in Chapters One and Four.

Housing associations and other agencies: nominations and referrals

All three local authorities had nomination rights to housing association vacancies in their areas, including the STHA in the Stock Transfer District. Councils were able to nominate applicants for a minimum of 50%, and sometimes up to 100% of housing association vacancies within their areas.

In the London borough, housing association nominations were treated in exactly the same way as local authority dwellings for the purpose of allocations. That is to say, the predicted number of nominations were incorporated into the quota

system for the varying groups and allocated accordingly. The council's policies towards single people, relative to other groups, impacted in a similar way upon most other housing providers in the borough: 'we are very much acting as an agent of the local authority' (Housing Association Manager, London Borough).

Within its quota system for allocations, the London Borough operated a series of direct referral agreements with outside agencies. A set number of vacancies were allocated to each agency, which had full discretion as to the individual nominees to the local authority. For example, 40 allocations per year were set aside for young care leavers nominated by Social Services. The arrangement was considered to work effectively by both housing and social work staff.

The London Borough also had a quota of allocations for move-on accommodation from hostels in the borough, which was an extremely important access route for single people. However, the quota was unevenly distributed across hostel projects and this was a cause of some conflict and resentment. One hostel for young people received 40 nominations per year. Hostel staff usually prioritised clients on the basis of length of stay in temporary accommodation. A second hostel, which catered for an older age range and for people with special needs, received only a few nominations to permanent council tenancies. The hostel worker explained how a single homeless person's chances of a permanent tenancy were greatly influenced by which hostel they moved into:

> R: *Ex-offenders often fall through the net. They might get a route through a project like this. They would have more chance through Hostel X. They have billions of nominations. It's completely bizarre. They have 45 nominations a year and everybody else has 3.*
>
> I: *Do young people know that?*
>
> R: *I think a lot do - yes. They also have nominations to other housing associations and their own developments. So I think it does get about. If people come here, or if they phone up and say 'I'm homeless now'. If they are under 25 - I tell them to go to Hostel X.*
>
> (Hostel Worker, London Borough).

The Scottish City also treated housing association nominations in the same way as council vacancies for allocation purposes. The single homelessness manager was trying to promote allocations to single homeless people throughout the housing association sector but a homelessness case worker, felt that single people's chances of a nomination to an association were 'slim to negligible'. Some housing association nominations were made from district offices and a quota was allocated by the central homelessness service.

In general, housing associations were more likely have to have smaller vacancies, more suitable for single people. One association, which operated its own waiting list within the Scottish City, did not differentiate between single people and couples without children, in its policy or practice. Both household types were awarded the same number of points for homelessness or overcrowding.

In the Stock Transfer District, the council would prioritise homeless households for nominations to the STHA and would then nominate applicants from the STHA waiting list, including single people. The STHA awarded additional points to non-priority single homeless people, so that in many cases, although they were effectively homeless, a sizeable proportion of single applicants were housed from the STHA waiting list.

> R: *That waiting list is not a vain hope for those people. We are looking to go through them. We have got quite a lot with 40 points who are registered homeless - they have no real fixed place, they are lodging with someone. If somebody sits and waits on our waiting list and they've got housing need, then they are going to get a reasonable opportunity to be housed because we've got one-bedroom units and a reasonable proportion of accommodation. The points system is pretty neutral re single people. OK - if it's a family unit sharing they would get more points - but they would not be competing with singles for the same properties.*
> (Manager, STHA, Stock Transfer District).

Single people also had a reasonable prospect of being housed through the waiting lists of other housing associations which had properties in the Stock Transfer District. Some had a high proportion of stock which was one bedroom

properties. Additional points were awarded for homelessness, and providing people kept in touch with the association and their circumstances did not change, they should get housed. However, the total number of dwellings provided by other associations was 'very minor' compared to the STHA.

Overall, housing association nominations and waiting lists, and special referral arrangements appeared to offer the best prospects for single homeless people to gain access to housing. However, these types of arrangements applied to only a small proportion of the social housing stock in the London Borough and the Scottish City.

The allocations process

The process of matching housing applicants to vacant properties determined the quality of accommodation offered to the applicant, which in turn could determine their quality of life for the foreseeable future. The variations in allocation procedures across the three case study areas followed the broad patterns identified in the analysis of earlier stages in the rehousing process. The London Borough operated a tightly controlled system, which left very little scope for officer discretion. Evidence of informal discretion was more apparent in the other two case study areas.

The London Borough

Each district office had an allocations officer responsible for the allocation of all voids within that district. The allocations quotas for each financial year were set by a centralised allocation policy team, based on the outcomes for the previous year, adjusted for current priorities. The system of managing allocations through a quota system was acknowledged to be complex but was also widely perceived as both fair and effective.

> R: *Everyone is clear and it is fair. It may be hard, but it is hard for everybody and it can be explained by officers. People in the same circumstances get the same treatment.*
>
> (Homelessness Manager, London Borough).

R: *By and large - yes they are clear. They might be harsh, but they are clear. They are adequate in terms of administrative efficiency and selecting people in the most need. The system is very good, very fair.*

(Housing Adviser, London Borough).

There was very little scope for discretion on the part of individual allocations officers. The main decision was which access queue to prioritise in line with the quota targets for the district. Apart from any special circumstances relating to the type of property (for example a requirement for ground level accommodation), allocations officers should select the top person on that list. Although the quotas for single non-elderly waiting list allocations were small, the anticipated turnover of one bedroom properties was often exceeded and so a slightly higher number of single people could be housed.

The London Borough also implemented a firm policy on refusal of offers of accommodation and this was linked to pressure to reduce rent loss on void properties. Applicants were required to select eight rehousing areas within the borough including some of the less popular districts. Although local allocations officers had virtually no discretion in making offers, they still had an awareness of the 'lettability' of stock and the likelihood of refusal.

Despite the rigour of the system, the possibility that homeless applicants were offered and accepted the least desirable properties could still arise, due to the urgency of their circumstances and the turnover of suitable properties.

R: *The target system works, but a lot of the time we are faced with clients who don't really want the property they are offered.*

(Allocations Officer, London Borough).

According to the homelessness manager, once households were accepted as homeless and in priority need, there was a lengthy wait in temporary accommodation (commonly, two years) prior to permanent rehousing. However, vulnerable single people tended to wait the shortest period of time (less than a year) for permanent rehousing, due to the more favourable availability of one-bedroom properties.

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The Scottish City

Allocations practice in the Scottish City appeared to be largely driven by the sharp contrasts in demand for stock in different parts of the city and the high proportion of vacancies which occurred in 'less desirable' areas. Properties which became available in the very stable and popular parts of the city were almost invariably allocated to transfer cases with long-standing tenancies. Many of the problems of large housing estates were directly associated with poverty and deprivation, as well as the lack of resources for housing investment in the city.

As with the London Borough, the selection of applicants for properties in the Scottish City was carried out at district office level. However, generic housing officers allocated dwellings on their patches, rather than a specialised allocations officer. Selection was again 'fairly automatic' according to priority on the list. The majority of offers to single people were classed as 'medium demand', but the housing officer on a 'medium demand' estate described the area as 'difficult to let'.

In some instances, if it was thought that a single homeless person 'would not cope' with a likely offer, case workers were able to present a case for a higher demand area to a senior case worker. Because most single homeless applicants were currently living in city centre hostels, many hoped for a permanent offer in a central location, though this was rarely realistic. Security was also an issue, with applicants tending to prefer blocks of flats with door entry or concierge systems. In particular, younger single homeless people often had unrealistic area preferences.

Housing management staff in district offices in the Scottish City had some flexibility in making decisions about allocations, and sometimes homelessness officers could make a case for a quick offer. For example, someone who was working and living in a furnished temporary flat may find the rent quite high, compared to an ordinary tenancy. Homeless applicants received only one 'reasonable' offer of housing and the authority was quite firm in implementing

this policy. Once rehoused, it was not possible to apply for a transfer for three years, unless there was a substantial change in a household's circumstances.

For housing officers, the main priority was to get vacant properties relet as quickly as possible. One interviewee explained the constraints within which she worked.

> R: *I think if everyone was being honest - they would say - everyone is trying to keep their own patch reasonably good. My own is not that good You can either pull it back or it can tip right down to demolition. I'm trying very hard to keep it from going that way. But having said that - when you go to check the queue to select on the house - well - there's hardly anyone on it who wants to go and live on that scheme. The pressure is on us to let the house and not lose rent. So you have to take whoever is available.*
>
> (Housing Officer, Scottish City).

In contrast to the London Borough, the Scottish City had much greater availability of two bedroom properties than one-bedroom properties and some smaller properties were designated for elderly people. Single people were considered for two bedroom vacancies, for which they competed with couples and lone parents with one child. The latter two household types virtually always had higher points. Consequently, single people would be most likely to be offered the least popular properties.

The voluntary sector representative commended the council for offering single people two bedroom properties, but raised the question of community with respect to single people. It was argued that where people were located inappropriately, because that was the only house they could get, then their ability to participate in the community, and to build up their social life, was constrained.

In the Stock Transfer District, the local authority had a nominations agreement with the STHA for 100% of vacancies (though it did not always take up 100%) and weekly meetings were held to agree allocations. There was agreement among interviewees that the number of single people housed since stock transfer was probably higher than when the council managed the stock. There was a reasonable turnover of one bedroom properties and single people had been rehoused through the waiting list. When the council had owned the stock, very few single people had been housed. No clear explanation for the changing trend was evident. It was possible that the council had used more small units as temporary accommodation for homeless people or for lone parents with one child, due to the overall shortage of accommodation. Links had also been developed with other housing associations more systematically since the transfer, allowing better access to their stock for single people.

At the weekly allocations meetings, staff from the local authority and the STHA would go through the list of vacancies coming up for allocation. The officers would discuss individual properties and applicants. Despite the nominations agreement and the joint meetings, the STHA allocations manager had the final say on matching applicants to properties. Nevertheless, there was a good working relationship.

In matching people to properties, priority would be given to homeless households, often according to the length of stay in temporary accommodation. The council did not always use all of its 100% nominations and, in the previous year, only a quarter of vacancies had been allocated to homeless households. The STHA manager described how, in the early days of the STHA, there had been concern that homeless households would crowd out waiting list and transfer applicants. In practice, however, there had been a reasonable distribution between the three groups.

Single people were eligible to be considered for one bedroom flats and houses and for bedsits. For one-bedroom properties, single people would be in competition with couples. The local authority representative maintained that the

two household types were treated in exactly the same way and there was no discrimination in favour of couples. In comparison, the STHA representative did think that one-bedroom units went mostly to couples, with bedsits (of which there were relatively few) going to single people.

The council also made nominations to other housing associations. Again, statutorily homeless households would be given priority, and then the council would look to the STHA waiting list. By and large, the nominations and allocations processes worked smoothly. There were however, some occasions when the STHA did not want to accept particular nominations, for example where the applicant owed rent arrears on, or had caused damage to, a previous tenancy.

New developments and stock conversion

Most vacancies arose through turnover of existing properties, but the total number of vacancies was also influenced by any new developments or conversions of existing properties. Due to the shortage of family dwellings in the London Borough, new housing association developments comprised mainly larger properties, but the recommended mix included 20% of one-bedroom units. The local authority had not considered conversion of larger units into smaller units. This would have been an inappropriate strategy, given the profile of housing need and housing availability in the borough.

One strand of the youth housing strategy in the Scottish City had been to develop smaller accommodation (bedsits and one bedroom flats), using existing stock. Research had indicated the need to develop accommodation which was small, easy to heat and easy to manage.

The Stock Transfer Housing Association had had a development programme of several hundred units since the transfer had taken place. Prior to the transfer about 35% of the housing stock was in bedsit or one-bedroom units and the proportion remained about the same. New developments usually had a mix of

property types from one to four-bedroom accommodation, and included barrier free or specially adapted properties for people with disabilities.

Allocating properties in the three areas

The allocations process was revealed as a crucial stage in the rehousing process for single people in all three areas. Although allocations were 'controlled' to some extent, by the systems for prioritising applicants, outcomes were influenced by the pattern of vacancies and the discretion of officers. The *defensive* formal policies of the London Borough allocated only a small proportion of available vacancies to single people and individual officers had virtually no discretion at the point of implementation.

In the Scottish City, the *proactive* approach to meeting the needs of single people was constrained by the nature of available vacancies and the discretion which generic housing officers had with regard to allocations on their patches. The allocations process was most 'personalised' in the *responsive* approach of the Stock Transfer District where officers discussed individual applications and matched them to particular properties.

Access to privately rented housing

Although the semi-structured interviews focused mainly on access to long term social housing tenancies, it was recognised that the privately rented sector often provided an important alternative to social housing for single people. Interviewees were therefore asked about the opportunities for low-income or homeless single people to gain access to housing in the private rented sector in the case study areas.

The London Borough

There was quite a large private rented sector within the London Borough, which had expanded during the early-mid 1990s. In much of the borough, the owner occupied housing market was very flat at the time of the study and negative equity was a significant problem. This had contributed to the expansion of the private rented sector and had allowed the development of Private Sector Leasing (PSL) schemes, where either the local authority or a housing association leased properties from private landlords and managed them on their behalf. However, the London Borough prioritised statutorily homeless households (mainly families) rather than single people for its PSL properties.

The London Borough took a broad policy stance that lower priced privately rented housing was appropriate for young single people. However, within the borough, the 'lower end' of the sector (HMOs and bedsits), varied widely in quality. The authority was active in developing links with landlords who were prepared to work in partnership to assist lower income groups. There was also a policy of ensuring Housing Benefit claims were processed effectively. In its interventions in the sector, the council was mainly concerned to ensure that properties were not 'death traps', to avoid Housing Benefit fraud, and to encourage reasonable rents and adequate management.

There was considerable discussion about the relationship between rent levels and the administration of Housing Benefit. The issue of paying costly deposits in advance before a single person could gain access to a private tenancy also emerged in a number of interviews. The particular problems of single people who were working, but on low incomes, were highlighted by a front-line housing adviser. Rents for bedsits and one-bedroom flats were often too high in relation to earnings, because average rent levels were affected by determinations for Housing Benefit purposes. The market was also thought to have been affected by inner London Boroughs leasing properties within the borough for homeless households, and paying premium rents which were still cheaper than in the centre of London.

Concern was expressed about poor housing conditions within the cheaper part of the sector. The council operated an HMO inspection system and housing advisers worked with private tenants who were experiencing problems (for example, harassment, security issues or repairs issues). Similarly, advisers worked with landlords who wanted to check correct legal procedures, for example, on regaining possession of a property. Staff readily acknowledged the legal rights of landlords but sought to ensure legal proceedings were conducted fairly and properly.

Hostel workers tended to make only limited use of the privately rented sector as move-on accommodation for their clients. It was acknowledged, however, that some people chose the private sector in preference to social housing, often those who were very independent and did not want to stay in a hostel. In contrast to the view put forward by the council housing adviser, one hostel worker suggested that clients who opted for the private rented sector were usually working and were able to save up for a deposit on a flat. However, *another* hostel worker thought that the high cost of deposits remained a key factor which constrained single people's access to the private sector. While relatively cheap privately rented housing was available in the borough, this was still expensive to homeless and low-income single people.

The Scottish City

Despite there being a significant private rented sector in the Scottish City, there was only limited discussion of the sector among interviewees who took part in the study. It was likely that the sector was seen much more as catering for the large student population, and for young professional people, than for low income and homeless single people. Additionally, as the local authority provided a range of temporary hostel accommodation and had some availability of lower demand properties among its own stock, there was, perhaps, less incentive to divert applicants to the private sector. For clients who wished to live in certain parts of the city, however, the private rented sector was the only realistic alternative. It was acknowledged that there may be a need for an advice centre,

although there were independent agencies operating in the city which offered advice on the private sector.

The Stock Transfer District

The best-developed private sector strategy occurred in the Stock Transfer District. As in the London Borough, the sector had expanded in the early-mid 1990s, as a consequence of the slump in the owner occupied market. Much of that expansion had taken the form of two or three bedroom houses, but there was thought to have been a knock-on beneficial effect for single people. Rents had stabilised and even begun to fall from 1990, but at the time of the research, the market was tightening up again. The home ownership market was improving and temporary lets were being sold while demand for privately rented housing was on the increase, particularly among young single people.

Over the previous three years, the local authority had developed a deposit guarantee/rent in advance scheme to assist non-priority *homeless people* gain access to privately rented accommodation. Take up of the scheme was considered more than satisfactory, with about 270 households assisted over the three years. There had been a proportion of 'defaulters', which had cost the council some £13,000 over three years and there was a suggestion that single people were over-represented among defaulters. Nevertheless, the scheme was expected to continue as the authority wished to see the expansion, rather than the contraction, of the private rented sector.

Despite the thriving private rented sector, the homelessness officer maintained that there was a clear shortage of bedsits or flats suitable for single person households. Moreover, while most lettings agents would assist single people, staff perceived a growing prejudice against single young men. Agents were becoming being increasingly selective, and were excluding potential tenants who were aged under 21 years or who were in receipt of housing benefit.

Private renting in the three areas

The nature of the privately rented sector and the practice of local authorities towards the sector varied in the three case study areas. In the London Borough, privately rented housing was the main or only option for the vast majority of low-income single people who were not deemed vulnerable under the homelessness legislation. The local authority was moving towards strategic intervention in the sector but potential tenants faced constraints in relation to quality, affordability and security in the private sector. In the Scottish City, the homelessness and housing management teams were primarily concerned with managing the council's hostels and housing stock and had not developed private sector policies or practice as a direct response to single homelessness. The Stock Transfer District had successfully developed a scheme to assist access to the private rented sector, which had benefited many single people, as well as other household types.

The role of hostels and B&B accommodation

The appropriate role of hostel and B&B accommodation for single homeless people has been contested in recent debates (Chapter One, Chapter Four). This section considers the role played by these sectors in the housing systems in the three case study areas.

The London Borough

There was recognition, at senior management level, of a need for emergency hostel accommodation for single homeless people. Although there were a number of hostels within the borough, provision was not considered sufficient to meet demand. Further, in setting hostel charges, providers appeared to assume that residents would be in receipt of Housing Benefit, with the result that charges were often excessive for homeless people who were in employment.

Concerns were raised by housing advisors about the quality of some of the hostel accommodation in the borough, which was described as 'barracks style': 'people just don't want to go into those hostels, not if they can help it' (Housing Adviser, London Borough). Chapter Five indicated that most homeless single people expressed a desire for ordinary housing, rather than any kind of shared accommodation. The same sentiment was echoed in the views of the applicants approaching the housing advisers in the London Borough:

> R: *What they fundamentally want - and at every interview this comes out - is a place of their own. They are willing to pay rent, But they want some security.*
>
> (Housing Adviser, London Borough).

The reservations of some single homeless people about hostel accommodation were also acknowledged by hostel staff: 'some prefer to carry on sleeping on a friend's floor than move into a hostel' (Hostel Worker, London Borough).

Interviews were conducted with workers in two hostels in the borough. The project for young single people with low support needs implemented a policy to move residents on to second stage accommodation within eight weeks and had broadly achieved this goal over its four years of operation. The interviewee felt strongly that hostel accommodation was most effective as short-stay accommodation. More traditional hostels, where residents stayed for months, or even years, were perceived as outdated and inappropriate. It was argued that people could quickly become institutionalised if they stayed too long in a hostel environment. The short stay hostel was able to maintain a steady turnover of clients, assisted by the pool of second stage shared housing and the nominations arrangement with the housing service for permanent accommodation.

In the second hostel project, accommodation was provided on a medium-term, rather than a short stay basis. The majority of residents heard about the project through friends or other informal contacts. There was some concern that the high proportion of 'self-referrals' constrained the allocation of accommodation to those most in need and frustrated equal opportunities targeting with respect to gender, ethnicity and disability. There was little doubt that the majority of

residents had been in severe need prior to moving into the project, but it was felt that allocations needed to be made in a more strategic fashion.

Most of the accommodation in the second hostel was provided in single bedrooms, but a proportion was let as shared flats. Staff tried to allocate the shared housing as sensitively as possible, but problems arose from time to time. Some people just could not get on together and occasionally there were serious disputes, threats, and violence. Some people had been evicted because of problems within flats. However, most of the time people were able to get on reasonably well in the flats and the experience could sometimes be very positive. For example, one young woman who arrived as a refugee from Iran was able to build up a social network during her stay in the hostel.

There was very little reported use of B&B accommodation in the London Borough. One interviewee commented that B&B had sometimes been used for young care leavers as an interim measure, for example, if foster care arrangements had not worked out and long-term housing had not yet been arranged. In such situations, the young person involved would receive ongoing social services support.

The Scottish City

The housing service in the Scottish City operated seven hostels (five for single males and two for women) offering places for 1200 people. Each hostel had an allocated homelessness case worker who dealt with the housing applications of residents. Homeless single people were placed into temporary hostel accommodation pending further investigations of their application and circumstances. Once resident in hostel accommodation, applicants could also pursue permanent housing through the waiting list, as explained above.

The council's supported accommodation network included a further 600 places provided by private and voluntary sector agencies, many of which received financial support from the local authority. If the local authority hostels were full, staff would refer clients to non-council hostel accommodation, but would

continue to deal with their housing or homelessness application as appropriate. Use was also made of specialist projects for young people or for people with special needs.

The voluntary sector representative explained that some clients who were barred from the main city centre hostels, then went to one of two large-scale hostels outside the council sector which accepted 'the people no one else will take'. Apart from those direct access projects, if homeless single people approached voluntary sector projects, they would usually be referred to the council's centralised homelessness service. Some concern was expressed that where the local authority provided funding for independent projects, this gave them unreasonable power over the management of the project and the client referral process.

The scale of hostel provision meant that there was a population of fairly long-term hostel residents in the Scottish City and there were different needs within this group. For example, there were care needs simply associated with old age and there was a care team within the social work department, which provided care to those in hostels who did not want to move out to other accommodation. The wider strategy, however, was to move away from large scale, long term hostel provision and to develop other projects which provided the same amount of accommodation, but in a different design.

Young single people represented an increasing proportion of homelessness presentations in the Scottish City. One aim of the youth housing strategy was that those aged 16-25 years were not placed in local authority hostels, but were temporarily accommodated in furnished flats or specialised youth projects. Nevertheless, it was difficult to meet demand for flats and the view was expressed that many, who did not relish hostel life at all, simply 'disappeared'. A homelessness case worker explained that staff had to prioritise access to furnished flats 'for those who wouldn't survive in the hostels'.

A number of interviewees referred to social problems which frequently arose in hostels and were a contributory factor to the reluctance of some homeless single people to take up the accommodation:

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R: *Those in hostels - they just want to get out of the hostel scene. Because of the problems in hostels. Drugs, drink, mental health.*

(Homelessness Caseworker, Scottish City).

R: *Most people to whom you suggest the option of a supported hostel would reject it - due to perceptions about drug use.*

(Support Worker, Scottish City).

R: *A lot of the hostel accommodation is not nice and we get a lot of decent people coming in - and you feel quite bad. It could be myself, it could be you. You just feel - it's not fair.*

(Housing Officer, Scottish City).

Only one interviewee commented that B&B accommodation was available as an alternative to temporary hostel accommodation and staff made every effort to avoid using B&Bs. Although it was acknowledged that hostels did not represent ideal accommodation, they did at least have 24 hour staffing, offering some 'protection' and support to residents. This would not be the case in a B&B.

The Stock Transfer District

There was only very limited hostel provision within the Stock Transfer District. A partnership project between the council, a housing association and the YMCA had produced a new, supported accommodation project for eight young homeless people. The project was viewed as a pilot initiative, which might be developed further across the district. However, the homelessness officer intimated that the project was not hugely attractive to young people.

R: *If they have come from home, they don't want to live in a YMCA hostel regime. It doesn't really solve the problem for a young person. They need something much looser really.*

(Homelessness Officer, Stock Transfer District).

With respect to future developments, the need for an emergency or direct access hostel was identified.

Hostels and B&Bs in the three areas

The role of hostels varied significantly across the three areas. However, the variable quality of hostel accommodation and the reluctance of single homeless people to take up hostel places was reported in all case studies. In the London Borough, hostels for single homeless people were provided and managed by voluntary sector agencies or housing associations. While there was reasonable provision for the 16-25 age range, there was a lack of emergency accommodation for older homeless people. The lack of intervention in the hostel sector on the part of the housing authority matched with the defensive approach already identified. In the Scottish City, local authority owned hostels played a major role in the proactive management of single homelessness, as did private and voluntary sector provision. Hostel provision in the responsive Stock Transfer District was limited to one new development for young people, although further developments were being considered.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out the detailed qualitative analysis of the processes which controlled access to housing for low income and homeless single people in three case study areas. As with previous studies of statutory homelessness (Chapter One, Chapter Four), the analysis demonstrated the variation from the generalised national-level findings, which occurred at the local level. The case study interviews focused very much on the process of applying for social housing and gaining access to housing, and the dynamics of single homelessness were revealed from that particular perspective. For example, the discussions revealed more about routes out of homelessness - and barriers to becoming housed - than about the causes of homelessness and routes into homelessness.

The approaches of the three case study local authorities towards the housing needs of low income and homeless single people were characterised as defensive (London Borough), proactive (Scottish City) and responsive (Stock Transfer District). These broad approaches were identified at each stage in the

rehousing process and reflected what could realistically be achieved given the established housing and social characteristics of the localities. Local policy and practice towards single people was very much influenced by the socio-economic and housing characteristics of the local authority areas. The conceptualisation of the three 'regimes' is developed further in Chapter Seven.

The defensive approach of the London Borough resulted in procedures which were very tightly controlled, leaving virtually no scope for officer discretion on individual cases. The proactive approach of the Scottish City also restricted officer discretion but this was in the context of a service to all single people and a clearly set out policy of providing temporary and long-term housing. In the Stock Transfer District, the responsive approach allowed a great deal of flexibility and officer discretion with respect to individual cases. The approach in the London Borough was acclaimed as being both transparent and fair to all applicants. The discretionary approach of the Stock Transfer District was acceptable in a situation where most people's housing needs could be met, but would have been much more controversial if implemented in either of the other two localities which faced much more severe housing pressures.

Single people's opportunities to gain access to social or privately rented housing were greatest in the affluent, semi-rural Stock Transfer District. Resources raised from the transfer of a high quality housing stock had enabled new development, which had a significant impact on waiting lists and homelessness, including opportunities for single people. The transfer of housing management to a separate agency meant that the local authority was more focused on its homelessness responsibilities and enabling role. This had resulted in a more considered approach to implementing the homelessness procedures with respect to single people, the development of a supported accommodation project for young people, and a successful scheme to assist access to the privately rented sector. Although single homelessness was identified as a problem and single people remained disadvantaged relative to other groups in many ways, solutions to housing problems were available.

Single people faired much less well in the rehousing process in the London Borough and Scottish City which were both characterised by high levels of

poverty and housing stress, though these features were manifested in different ways in the two localities. In the London Borough there was an acute shortage of family-sized social housing and extreme pressure from statutory homelessness, which resulted in single people's access to social housing being severely constrained. In the Scottish City, there was more availability of social housing, but this tended to be in areas which were 'difficult to let and difficult to live in'. Single people's chances of access to quality housing in more desirable areas were remote. In both areas, homeless single people could expect to spend a significant period of time in hostel accommodation (of variable quality), or some other temporary situation, prior to any offer of permanent rehousing.

Across the three case study areas, there were evident associations between the characteristics of homeless single people and the criteria for access to (or exclusion from) social housing. The difficulties associated with wider social issues such as drug dependency, mental health, and other characteristics which influenced people's ability to manage in their own tenancies were also evident in all three case study areas. Despite widespread recognition of the issues and sincere attempts to improve services to homeless single people, local housing providers were constrained by a lack of resources and by the policy and practice of central government and other agencies (Chapter Seven).

A number of different routes into housing were examined: the homelessness procedures, housing waiting lists, housing association nominations and referrals from voluntary sector agencies. In the London Borough, referrals from hostels into council and housing association tenancies offered a valuable route into secure housing for homeless single people.

Beyond this example, however, final outcomes, in terms of the locality and quality of offers of accommodation, did not seem to vary much according to which route a single person took. Moreover, applicants could be considered for different routes simultaneously and there was considerable overlap between 'homelessness points on waiting lists' and being accepted as 'homeless but not in priority need' (reflecting the limitations of differentiating between homelessness and acute housing need).

While access routes into social housing could be identified, low income and homeless single people continued to experience disadvantage in the housing system. Relative to other household types, they often waited longer for appropriate accommodation or remained excluded from the most desirable social rented housing. These outcomes were not, necessarily, deliberate on the part of the housing authority as their diverse strategies reflected the constraints within which they operated.

Across the three case study areas, the 'problem' of single homelessness was recognised as a changing and fluid phenomenon which was one dimension of a wider process of the expression and identification of housing need and the efforts of individual households and providers to meet housing needs effectively. Nevertheless, it was clear that everyone's housing needs could not be met, and were not being met. Moreover, the process of meeting needs did not necessarily end when a low income or homeless single person obtained secure accommodation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOUSING EXCLUSION OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION?
THE PERSPECTIVES OF LOCAL AGENCIES

Introduction

This chapter analyses the policy and practice of local housing and service providers, in the three case study areas, with reference to some of the wider dimensions of welfare or wellbeing, which contribute to social inclusion or exclusion of low-income or homeless single people. The analysis draws on depth interviews conducted for *Social housing for single people,* as explained in Chapter Two. The discussions revealed a substantial amount of information on the wider social issues relating to single homelessness, and concepts (later) identified as being associated with social exclusion. Further reflection on the limitations of the data set with respect to concepts associated with social exclusion is contained in the concluding chapter (Chapter Eight).

The chapter begins with an *examination of poverty in relation* to the rehousing process. The extent to which single homelessness reflected 'comprehensive' exclusion is then considered. The dynamic nature of single homelessness was demonstrated in Chapter Six and that analysis is extended to the process of sustaining a tenancy in this chapter. The conceptual ideas associated with competing groups and exclusive clubs are then explored, in relation to single homelessness. Finally, the chapter examines ideological issues and the nature of the policy process in relation to single homelessness, before presenting the conclusions from the analysis.

Poverty and the rehousing process

The low incomes and severe housing circumstances of single homeless people were demonstrated in Chapter Five. Although it has been widely acknowledged

that social housing increasingly provided for those on the lowest incomes, income has rarely been an explicit criterion for access to housing. Indeed, in Scotland, the Housing Act 1987 stated that local authorities should *not* take account of the income of an applicant on deciding on eligibility for the housing waiting list or for a tenancy allocation (Chapter Four). Rather, for most of the 1980s and 1990s, social housing providers used a range of indicators of 'housing need' in assessing housing applications, some of which were, effectively, proxy indicators of poverty, low income and lack of bargaining power in the market.

The quantitative survey for *Social housing for single people,* found that only a small minority of English and Welsh housing authorities used a direct measurement of income or savings as a criteria for access to the housing waiting list. Just over one tenth excluded applicants whose savings were too high from being allocated a tenancy (Anderson and Morgan, 1997, p27). Similarly, the homelessness procedures made virtually no direct reference to income, although assessment of an applicant's ability to provide for themselves in the private sector may be part of the decision-making process on a homelessness application.

Nevertheless, interviewees in the three case study areas clearly recognised that they were working with an impoverished client group, including homeless single people, and that this tended to reflect the diversity of social and economic characteristics of the local authority area. Poverty was a common experience of tenants, as well as applicants and the poor quality of available housing (particularly in the Scottish city) meant that an offer of housing was by no means a complete solution to the wider problems experienced by low income households.

A senior policy officer summed up the broad circumstances in the London Borough: 'the fundamental underlying problem is a structural problem of poverty and lack of resources, and the impact of this on the community'. An interviewee from the voluntary sector talked in similar terms: 'it is a very poor borough, very underprivileged, a lot of poverty'. In another hostel, the interviewee remarked,

'most of the people who want to move are on very low incomes or not working at all - they can't afford the privately rented sector'.

The particular problems of young people on low incomes, especially those aged 16 and 17, were highlighted by interviewees who worked with that particular client group. This included social services staff who provided support to young care leavers.

I: What do they [16/17 year olds] live on?

R They can get benefits under the Severe Hardship route. Then they have to go on to YTS. It's a minefield - I've been on two training courses and I'm still trying to sort it out. Some would qualify on grounds of being estranged from their parents. But Severe Hardship is discretionary, only paid for 8 weeks and there's a load of bureaucracy. It's the hardest way to claim, for the least experienced group. So the chances of failing are high.

(Social Worker, London Borough).

I: What resources do they have?

R: Very limited. I'm amazed any actually survive. Most are living on £36.80 [per week]. They face tremendous bureaucracy. They often get into debt - rent, electricity, gas, catalogues, crisis loans. Their disposable income is often minuscule and there is no way out of it. It's a cycle of debt. Some have to borrow money to buy food. They are trapped. One young man had over £1000 in crisis loans and his repayments were so high they broke DSS guidelines - he was living on £10 a week. It took 10 weeks to get the decision changed. But young people are very resilient and I'm sure a lot goes on that I'm not aware of.

(Social Worker, London Borough).

The problem of debt emerged, in a number of interviews, as a poverty-related issue, which had implications for the rehousing process. Interviewees referred to the problem of existing debt as a barrier to offering tenancies, and to the situation where debts accrued quickly following rehousing, resulting in problems in sustaining the tenancy. The interaction between debt problems and the

operation of the benefits system (and Housing Benefit in particular) was referred to by many of the interviewees.

In contrast to the London Borough and the Scottish City, the Stock Transfer authority was acknowledged to be one of the most prosperous districts in the country, with an above average rate of owner occupation and a housing stock in fairly good condition. Beneath the surface however, there was housing need and a relatively high level of homelessness. It was suggested that being poor in that district was reinforced by the stark contrast between those on low incomes and the wealthy majority.

There was some discussion about affordability in the Stock Transfer District as rents on new tenancies had more than doubled (relative to those of the council) in the four years since stock transfer. Existing tenants had a rent guarantee for four years, but that period was coming to an end and substantial rent increases were likely. Rising rents in the social sector created poverty and unemployment traps, and were thought to be a particular problem for single people who were working, but on low incomes.

Poverty also affected the process of moving out of homelessness. A homelessness case worker in the Scottish City explained how single homeless people rehoused into unfurnished tenancies would then have to apply to the DSS for a community care grant or budgeting loan, but were rarely successful. This often meant that the housing department had to try and help them out with the basics needed to move into their own tenancy.

Across the three case study areas, there was widespread recognition that single homelessness was very much a problem of poverty, in the sense that the incomes of those affected were inadequate to allow them to 'purchase' reasonable accommodation in the market place. There was relatively little direct discussion as to the role which social housing could play in tackling poverty and supporting low income households, although these issues have subsequently been addressed within the housing profession (Anderson, 1998; Chartered Institute of Housing, 1998). Nevertheless, there was widespread recognition that

many tenants of social housing providers remained on low incomes, often caught in the poverty and unemployment traps.

Comprehensive exclusion?

Chapter Five demonstrated that while single homeless people experienced exclusion from a range of aspects of well being often taken for granted by the majority in society, their circumstances could not be characterised as 'total social exclusion'. Among local housing and service providers, interviewees were also conscious that single homeless people experienced a range of problems that went beyond housing need and lack of adequate income.

> R: Benefit doesn't cover all of the rent. It's partly that, and partly periods of slipping in and out of work. When benefit stops, they don't tell us, and don't pay their rent. Then Income Support and Housing Benefit want their overpayments back. Also there are issues around alcohol use and education. At least one resident is functionally illiterate and can't understand anything which is sent to him - he ignores a lot.
>
> (Hostel Worker, London Borough).

Discussion about unemployment and the importance of work in securing an adequate income was less explicit, compared to the acknowledgement of widespread poverty. Some interviewees referred to the problems of affordability in the privately rented sector, which affected single people who were working, but earning low incomes. Others acknowledged that charges for hostel accommodation often assumed that residents would be claiming housing benefit and so were beyond the means of those in employment, creating a disincentive to take up work.

One homelessness caseworker in the Scottish City described how becoming homeless could have a very negative impact on someone who was working. For example, it made it more difficult to be effective at work and could change the employer's perspective of the worker. The officer explained that efforts would be made to secure an offer of a tenancy for a working person as quickly as possible, in order to minimise any negative impact on their employment.

The residualisation of local authority housing emerged as an issue for staff in the London borough and the Scottish City. Indeed some talked more about the difficult conditions on their housing estates, than the housing circumstances faced by homeless single people. The management task on some estates was nothing short of daunting and demoralising, as expressed by one housing officer in the Scottish City.

> *R: There are a lot of problems in the area. Drug addicts, a lot of social problems. When we are out of the office, we deal with a lot of neighbour complaints and anti-social complaints. My own scheme - because of the type of scheme, it has security on it - meshed windows, steel doors. ....You'll be watching your back as you walk up the stairs, to see who sees you going into an empty house, 3 stories up with a steel door on.*
> (Housing Officer, Scottish City).

> *I: People often use the word 'survive'? What would prevent them from surviving?*
> *R: The fact that they weren't brought up there, they don't know the area. They might just feel fear of living in the areas because of a lot of incidents that happen at night. It's difficult to say, it's a whole mixture. There could be fights going on every night of the week. Or a lot of people in the close[17] don't take their turn at doing the stairs. The place gets into a mess. It gets them down if they are used to having a nice place that's looked after. Or they may be picked on because people see them as not being tough enough to stand up for themselves. It really gets them down. I've seen it happen.*
> (Housing Officer, Scottish City).

Although interviewees did not explicitly talk about 'comprehensive social exclusion', the need for a comprehensive response to a multiplicity of problems was recognised. Two important areas of policy and practice emerged in relation to achieving the wellbeing of low income or homeless single people: sustainability of tenancies and joint working across services. These issues are explored in depth in the following sections.

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[17] A 'close' is a commonly used Scottish term for the communal entrance and stairway in a block of flats.

Comprehensive inclusion? Maintaining a tenancy and management issues

'Successful' rehousing implies a degree of stability in a tenancy and the opportunity to engage with other dimensions of life and well being, to achieve some kind of 'social inclusion'. In the three case study areas, a number of issues emerged around the ability of formerly homeless single people to sustain their tenancies and the associated housing management issues for staff.

The London Borough

Some management problems with blocks of flats where a high proportion of tenants were single people had been identified at senior management level. Those rehoused tended to be the more vulnerable applicants, which was considered appropriate, but this did create management problems. This was described by a senior policy officer as 'an aspect of the general residualisation of social rented housing'. Local authorities, in particular, were being expected to manage 'increasingly poor and vulnerable *people*', not just properties, with fewer and fewer resources.

From the perspective of housing managers in district offices, neighbour problems associated with single, vulnerable people (for example, with mental health problems) were becoming a crucial area of estate management. Some interviewees, however, maintained that single people were no more or less likely to be associated with management problems than other household types. Issues directly related to single tenants were difficult to quantify and managers accepted they were more likely to hear about problems than stable tenancies. Front-line housing advisers (who did not have estate management responsibilities), had much less awareness of any management problems associated with single homeless applicants who they may have recommended for rehousing.

Nevertheless, the level of evictions due to a lack of support was increasing and policy managers were concerned about single people who were nominated for tenancies and then did not get appropriate support. Within the housing service,

senior management also held the view that a lack of priority to housing issues in the community care assessment process contributed to management problems associated with inadequate tenant support services. The need for better communication and improved referral arrangements, for example, in matching social work clients to specialised accommodation, was acknowledged.

The homelessness manager felt that there was a significant gap in the provision of supported accommodation for vulnerable 16-17 year olds within the borough. It was clear that the offer of accommodation alone was not necessarily helpful for them, but, within the homelessness service, there was very little opportunity to offer any support. Discussions with social services about the provision of support under the Children Act legislation were underway at the time of the study.

The homelessness service also liased with the outreach team which provided support to homeless people with mental health problems. The team was set up because health authority research had established a 'revolving door' pattern of clients becoming homeless again after having been rehoused. The project was still relatively new, but seemed to be working well. However, the team was not able to continue to offer support after rehousing. Liaison was then transferred to district office social work staff, who were unable to give the same attention to vulnerable tenants.

In one housing association which operated in the borough, although there were some cases of inadequate support or tenants not being ready to live independently, the manager generally felt that support services were good. The association had a resettlement team who dealt with people who needed initial assistance. The association was sensitive to the relationship between allocations and support availability, but did not refuse to rehouse people because of perceived housing management difficulties that might lie ahead. There was an acceptance that if the association rehoused a single person, there could be a level of vulnerability and more intensive housing management than usual might be required.

The two hostel projects, which took part in the research, had different approaches to offering support. One was expressly targeted at young homeless people with low support needs. Once clients received an offer of permanent rehousing there was some (minimal) assistance with moving in to the tenancy and very little subsequent contact. The second project catered for a more vulnerable group of single homeless people and offered a slightly higher level of support within the hostel. However, there were insufficient staffing resources for intensive 'key working' and support was 'client-led', in the sense that residents could approach staff for help if it was needed. Hostel staff made referrals to other agencies, for example, money advice, alcohol and drugs advisory agencies and social services.

One example of effective provision of support services was the Social Services Leaving Care Team. As indicated in Chapter Six, the team was allocated a quota of local authority lettings each year for young care leavers. There were three dimensions to the associated support service. First of all, the team ran preparation groups for young people, prior to leaving care. These aimed to raise awareness of independent living, the housing process and budgeting and finances.

Second, there was a 'moving in' service once young people were allocated a tenancy. This involved assistance with sorting out the rent and obtaining furniture. The support worker would also give general advice and information, particularly on money and budgeting. They would view the flat with the client and make a plan for the move. The involvement of any family or other social contacts was encouraged. The support worker would sometimes introduce the client to their housing officer and other local services. The amount of support depended on how capable the young person was, what other support was available, and how receptive they were to the service.

Third, most of the work was concentrated on supporting young care leavers in the early stages of their tenancy (for a minimum of six months). This involved regular visits to discuss progress. Although there were often problems around money and decorating, most clients were happy with unfurnished council tenancies, rather than furnished accommodation. While the service was

perceived as being relatively effective, there were some limitations to maintaining links with young people after they left care. Although there was a statutory duty to offer support, participation by young people was voluntary on their part. They could opt out of the service and there was a concern that the most vulnerable clients were least likely to accept support.

The Scottish City

Virtually all of the interviewees in the Scottish City commented on the difficulties that arose in relation to the support needs of single homeless people. In addition, there was considerable discussion about the increasingly challenging nature of the housing management task in the most disadvantaged areas of the city.

Although the support needs of some *single people* were widely discussed, this did not necessarily mean that single people were seen as 'more problematic tenants' compared to other household types. The *single homeless*ness manager acknowledged that some prejudices remained towards homeless households in general, whether single or not. Rather, the support needs of single homeless people were identified as the most significant issue for policy and practice. Particularly, there were gaps in support for clients described as having 'chaotic' behaviour, which was too 'difficult' for housing services to cope with, but not a priority for social services or care in the community. There was a common concern about the difficulty of obtaining appropriate medical and social support for single people rehoused through care in the community procedures. Issues to do with joint working are discussed further in the next section.

A number of interviewees in the Scottish City talked about the management problems and support needs associated with drug dealing and drug use. Homelessness caseworkers were often reluctant to rehouse clients who were using street drugs if they were not prepared to address their problem. Interviewees felt strongly that rehousing someone who was a drug user into a block of flats constituted a potential risk of tenancy failure. Those using street drugs were considered likely to attract other users and dealers, although clients

receiving prescribed drugs (e.g. methadone) were considered a more manageable risk. Drug users were also likely to be excluded from the council's furnished accommodation.

> R: *No housing officer in their right mind is going to give a furnished house to somebody who is abusing street drugs, because all they will do is sell that furniture. It has happened in the past. We've learned the hard way about it and we're not willing to repeat it.*
>
> (Homelessness Caseworker, Scottish City).

According to one front-line housing officer, dealing with 'anti-social' complaints was a routine part of her job and she sympathised with many of the tenants who were affected by neighbour disputes and nuisance. As indicated above, there was no perception that single people were more or less likely to cause management problems than couples or family households. There was, however, a real concern that the problems encountered on some estates meant that some people literally could not 'survive' in new tenancies. This resulted in some subjective selection of those applicants who it was thought could withstand the lifestyle in certain areas.

> R: *Yes it sounds as though you are making judgements on people. And possibly that is what we are doing. But you just know instinctively that some will get by and others won't. And it's a waste of time, because it will cost us a lot of money to fix up the house and then they move out and we have to go through it all again. So its best to get someone who can sustain a tenancy for a number of years, rather than just a couple of weeks. It's really down to common sense a lot of the time. If it was someone who needed any support at all I would not put them into my scheme.*
>
> (Housing Officer, Scottish City).

An interviewee from a housing association operating in the Scottish City also took the view that it was important to be sure about support needs and services prior to rehousing an applicant. If someone appeared to be vulnerable, the association would approach other agencies to discuss how well they could manage on their own. Again, there was a view that it was not helpful or fair to individuals if they were rehoused and support services were not available. Every effort was made to try to ensure some support services were put in place, with

the recognition that, through time, support services could be withdrawn if the tenant was managing well on their own.

One of the most significant innovations in practice in the Scottish City was the youth housing strategy and the development of furnished tenancies supported by specialist workers. The scheme was developed and financed from within the housing service, partly through an additional service charge on the flats used in the scheme. The youth support workers received specialist training including money advice and debt counselling, drug awareness and police liaison, and social security and employment rights.

The housing service used 250 flats ('scatter flats') selected from its own housing stock in different parts of the city for the youth housing strategy. Young people who were accepted were initially granted a temporary tenancy for a minimum of six months. Scatter flats were furnished, one or two apartments, with special security doors. Only flats in good repair were used, and there was an attempt to select energy efficient properties. White meter heating and power cards were installed in the flats to help with budgeting.

Once young people were allocated a scatter flat, a youth support worker provided 'light housing support', described as 'basically how to be a reasonable tenant and a reasonable neighbour'. Basic housekeeping skills such as budgeting, cooking, cleanliness of the stairs and close, and benefits advice were all included in the support. The support could also cover health issues, social activities and training and employment. If the young person had an allocated social worker, they would be contacted and the housing service would seek a written commitment to social work provision of financial help and practical support.

Support workers would visit a new tenant about once a week, for the first month, reducing the frequency of visits as tenants became settled. Support workers made it clear that the service was not intrusive, for example, that no one would go into a flat without the tenant's permission, apart from in an emergency situation. Rather than encourage young people to move on to unfurnished accommodation at a later stage, the expectation was that they

would settle into that property as a long term tenancy with the furniture and support services being withdrawn as appropriate.

At the time of the research more than 800 young people were on the waiting list for scatter flats, which had proved popular, with most young people seemingly glad that some support was available. There were plans to expand the strategy to assist older single homeless people who had lived in hostels for a number of years.

The Stock Transfer District

As with the first two case studies, interviewees in the Stock Transfer District identified management issues relating to both the support needs of single people in new tenancies and the general conduct of their tenancies. According to the housing manager in the stock transfer authority, there would always be a number of people who needed more than just housing, who also needed support. In addition, there were a number of applicants who were not really in a position to accept and sustain tenancies, either because of their financial position, or because they lacked the experience to get by on their own.

> R: *But I think everybody recognises young single people are difficult to manage. It's a prejudice, but it's based on evidence. It's very sensitive. We know from experience that if we nominate someone to the STHA who is alcoholic or a drug abuser - we get a lot of flack. And we have to be able to justify it.*
> (Homelessness Officer, Stock Transfer District).

As mentioned in Chapter Six, the local authority, in partnership with the YMCA and other agencies had recently developed a supported accommodation project for young single people, which incorporated a programme of life skills training. The project was seen as a pilot, which, if successful, might be developed further across the district. A year after completion, the project was thought to be operating satisfactorily.

The STHA manager had mixed views about the support needs and tenancy management issues associated with low-income or homeless single people. Difficulties included previous failed tenancies, as well as psychiatric problems or a known history of violent behaviour. Young people, in particular, were said to have caused management problems, sometimes drug-related, but also through non-adherence to the tenancy conditions. While it was made clear that not all young single tenants were problematic, single people were described as 'transitory' compared to households with children who were characterised as being more 'rooted' to their homes.

Where potential tenants had severe support needs, for example those who received support through care in the community, the STHA manager argued strongly that there needed to be clear procedures for agreeing support packages prior to rehousing. On occasion, it was felt that the association was often left to pick up the pieces of a failed tenancy, in extreme circumstances, which could be very destructive for a vulnerable client.

> R: *We would press for that sort of thing to be in place. If we know that someone is vulnerable, we would have severe worries about them being able to maintain their tenancy. We would say, 'we don't think it's fair if you are going to discharge them from a mental hospital, you are going to put them in this flat and they are going to kill themselves in 6 months time. Is that community care? So where's the Community Psychiatric Nurse? Where's the support'? And we would be quite resistant, in some cases, to actually accepting the nomination, unless there was a written care plan. We would be quite firm about that.*
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> *We have had a number of cases - suicides, or being evicted, dying or just totally falling by the wayside because they couldn't cope. Because somebody couldn't put the support package together. I know that they are not infallible - but lets at least recognise at the beginning of the tenancy that it should have been there. It's quite distressing for us to have to pick up the pieces or to find somebody who's totally 'do-lally', who's crapped all over the walls, who's not paid the rent, who wouldn't know a tenancy condition from their elbow, abuses the neighbours, is acting with extremely odd behaviour, and basically just can't function as*

a tenant. And there is no support for them either - so what's the point - it doesn't help.

(Manager, STHA, Stock Transfer District).

[Originally cited in Anderson and Morgan, 1997, p65].

Sustaining tenancies in the three localities

Across the three case study areas, interviewees described the fragility of tenancies allocated to single homeless people and the complexity of their support needs. The requirements for social support and the lack of adequate provision appeared to be a more significant issue, compared to estate management problems caused by 'anti-social' behaviour. The analysis of issues by housing providers could be characterised as structural, rather than individualised. Efforts to prepare single homeless people for rehousing, and to support them in their tenancies raised crucial issues about joint working with other services which are explored further in the following section.

Joint working with other agencies

The review of debates on social exclusion in Chapter Three identified a conceptual focus on the complexity of social issues and the consequent requirement for comprehensive or multi-agency policy responses. This section examines the extent to which housing services worked jointly with other agencies in responding to the needs of single homeless people. The key partner agency was local authority social services, although relationships between housing and social work were not always smooth. Housing providers also worked in partnership with a range of other statutory and voluntary service providers. The following sections examine Care in the Community, working with young people and the wider requirements for joint working.

Care in the Community

The procedures for rehousing single people who were former residents in long stay hospitals, and for the provision of support for others who had care needs, were contentious in all three case study areas. The implementation of care in the community services by local authority social services departments, as set out in the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 (Chapter Four), commenced from April 1993. Consequently, implementation of the procedures had been ongoing for only two years at the time of the research.

In the London Borough, housing officers wanted to see more support for single people from social services, but acknowledged that community care services for other client groups were already under immense pressure. There was constant tension between housing and social services since the latter were not often able to provide support for single people with care needs. In the Stock Transfer District there was little detailed discussion about community care in relation to single people, beyond the frustration expressed by the STHA Manger in the quotation at the end of the previous section.

The most extensive discussion of community care issues occurred in the Scottish City. A particular issue which was raised by senior and middle management, as well as front-line workers, was that the main thrust of care in the community, for the health board and social work services, was the hospital closure programme, to the exclusion of the care needs of single people who were already living outwith long term hospital care.

> R: *The housing department persistently make the point that the majority of people who need care in the community are not in hospitals and we find it extremely difficult to secure appropriate input to people who have been tenants for years.*
>
> (Senior Manager, Scottish City).

The voluntary sector representative also concluded that community care planning appeared to be primarily about assessing new need in relation to hospital closures. Further, the neglect of existing needs in the planning process could undermine the financial stability of existing support projects which were not recognised as delivering care in the community.

The types of problems faced by the housing service in the Scottish City included tenants causing nuisance or danger to neighbours, or to themselves, including fire risks. The exasperation of housing staff, who were constantly working with an increasingly 'challenging' client group was expressed by the single homelessness manager.

R: *This is an issue that has become increasingly obvious. It's almost every day. It used to be the occasional case. It's not the long term people being discharged from hospital. It's people who are in and out of acute hospital wards, chaotic drug users. They are very difficult, in fact, impossible for us to manage.*

There was a recent example of someone in our emergency accommodation. The hospital staff were saying that, despite periods of schizophrenia, they were no longer mentally ill - they had a behavioural disorder. The person also drank heavily and had been evicted from a council tenancy. This person was running about the hostel without clothes on. They were then found outside the hostel, crying and sucking broken glass - a pretty chaotic picture. Social work brought them back to the hostel and said that they didn't fall into any community care category, so therefore, it was over to housing.

And that's not an example that came up once in a year and gets quoted all the time. That's actually fairly typical. We are trying to deal with that. But there needs to be some sort of acceptance that a lot of these people have more than accommodation needs. They would have to leave the hostel. There comes a time when we have to say that we can't cope any more.

(Single Homelessness Manager, Scottish City).

The voluntary sector representative acknowledged that there was some service provision for existing community care needs among single homeless people, but it was not sufficient and many people did not get assessed at all. Again, the experience was that particular problems arose around the boundaries between mental illness, personality disorder and behavioural difficulties.

R: *Whatever label you choose determines whether you have access to services. If health officials are not diagnosing mental illness, then social work can't provide community care services. If there is no support, the*

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housing service may not offer a tenancy. People will be stuck in hostels, or not even able to get in to hostels.

(Voluntary sector representative, Scottish City).

Homelessness caseworkers described similar experiences of working with clients who were marginalised in terms of community care services and who suffered the consequences of the lack of a clear division of responsibility between housing and social work services. However, the housing service was in the process of developing a number of projects jointly with the health board and social work department. For example, there was a specialist social work team which supported single homeless people in hostel accommodation and specialist community and psychiatric nursing services to hostel residents were also being developed.

Homelessness caseworkers also raised issues with respect to procedures for discharge from long stay hospital care. Usually, hospital social work staff contacted housing services several months prior to a patient's discharge date. This allowed both agencies to ensure the rehousing process could be handled smoothly, including agreeing support services. However, there had been instances of people being discharged at very short notice and the housing service being expected to offer suitable accommodation immediately. Housing staff also felt there was a lack of consistency in referral procedures. They were sometimes contacted directly by doctors or nursing staff who had unreasonable expectations of the housing service, which possibly reflected a lack of knowledge and training about rehousing procedures. The voluntary sector representative was concerned that while there had been better progress with regard to discharge protocols, compared to meeting existing needs, there had not been appropriate development of 'fall-back' procedures to respond if initial arrangements broke down.

Some concern was expressed about the inadequate inclusion of the housing service in the mechanisms for community care planning, and housing staff were anxious to ensure that housing did not become marginalised by social work and the health board. Senior staff in the central homelessness service had some direct input into the joint planning process for community care. Consideration

was given to the care needs of homeless people and there was evidence of recognition of the need to develop services for people with alcohol and drug problems although these were not among the community care needs explicitly set out in the legislation.

The voluntary sector representative had also been involved in the community care planning process within the Scottish City. The agency was to be a member of a joint working group which was being set up, but still felt that it was very difficult to ensure the views of the voluntary sector were fully taken on board by statutory agencies. The value of the joint planning process for housing staff was in emphasising the need for health and social work services to accept some responsibility for meeting the support needs of homeless single people. Similarly, the process acknowledged that the housing service could not provide adequate support for clients with particularly chaotic behaviour. As well as working to improve liaison between the housing and social services departments (which were in separate authorities at the time of the research), there was also a wider, pressing need to ensure that care in the community was adequately resourced. The issue of determining the boundary between the housing management service and other services was raised in a number of interviews across the case studies.

Young people

Services to young people represented a second key area for joint working between housing and other services. The successful arrangement within the London Borough for direct rehousing of young care leavers was discussed above as an example of an initiative which had prevented youth homelessness among the most vulnerable young people. The leaving care support team was based within social services and worked closely with other support agencies such as an independent counselling service for young people and the local drugs project which had a youth drugs awareness programme and also provided individual counselling.

Nevertheless, there remained some gaps in support service provision for young people with more severe support needs. The example was given of a 19 year old woman who self-harmed. Her support needs were beyond the resources of the leaving care team, but was she was not receiving appropriate care from mainstream social services. It was acknowledged that wider services for young people under the Children Act legislation were underdeveloped.

As discussed above, in the Scottish City, the housing service had developed its own support strategy for homeless young people who were rehoused by the council. Special procedures were also in place for meeting the accommodation and support needs of young people leaving care. One youth support worker reported that positive working relationships existed between housing and social work and that there was no serious problem around social work expecting housing to take over their responsibilities to support vulnerable young people. These procedures pre-dated implementation of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

While it was acknowledged that the Children Act had raised the profile of youth housing and support issues, there was little detailed discussion about joint working on youth homelessness issues in the Stock Transfer District. The main initiative had been the development of the supported accommodation project discussed earlier.

The wider requirement for joint working

Perhaps because of the existing legislative framework, at least some progress had been made towards joint working procedures for care in the community and to meet the needs of young people. However, other issues which required joint working between statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies were identified, as were many gaps in service provision.

As already indicated, a key area for concern was support needs which did not fall within the remit of community care services. In the London Borough, social services had no resources to expand support beyond their statutory duties and

the housing service was equally constrained in the provision of intensive housing management services. While support needs were recognised, there was no agreement as to where funding should come from.

There were numerous other examples of joint working within the London Borough. One major housing association worked effectively with specialised managing agents to provide supported accommodation for special needs groups. The short stay hostel for young people with low support needs had been set up as the result of a local authority led, multi-agency working group and the project continued to receive strong support from the local authority.

Homelessness case workers in the Scottish City reported an increasing number of people with mental health problems presenting to the service and housing staff were very conscious of the complex needs of clients and the limitations to their own expertise. Housing officers and hostel staff felt their jobs increasingly seemed to overlap with health board and social work responsibilities. To an extent it was accepted that, with homelessness, there was rarely just a problem of lack of accommodation and most case workers accepted that their duties incorporated provision of a degree of social support. However, it was suggested that it might be more appropriate to employ social workers directly within the homelessness and hostel service, than to expect housing workers to offer social work support.

Problems associated with the misuse of drugs were also a recurrent theme in the Scottish City. Housing officers would liase with specialist drug support agencies and refer clients to those agencies. Despite best efforts at co-ordinated working however, there were regular reports of, for example, specialist mental health or drugs services, playing each other off if a client experienced both problems.

> R: *Everybody is only dealing with the one problem. There is nobody who is going to deal with the two problems at the one time. That's where I feel there is a shortfall in the system.*
> (Homelessness Caseworker, Scottish City).

The specialisation of case workers in the Scottish City homelessness service allowed them to develop working relations with a wide range of agencies across the city who provided services for homeless single people. Some agencies were thought to have unrealistic expectations about what could be provided for their clients and this sometimes caused friction. There were a range of events such as informal seminars and workshops which allowed housing, social work and voluntary sector workers to come together, to get to know each other, and to talk through issues of policy and practice. These types of events were thought to be very helpful in developing better joint working relations.

> R: *At the end of the day we all have to understand we are all working for the same goal - to get the person rehoused.*
> (Homelessness Caseworker, Scottish City).

Single homelessness: competing groups and exclusive clubs

This section considers the extent to which Jordan's theory of exclusive groups (Jordan, 1996) could be applied to the strategies of those who provide housing, as well as those who experience homelessness.

Jordan (1996) placed considerable emphasis on the importance of the informal strategies of low income households in the face of structural disadvantage and exclusion from an adequate standard of living. The possibility of tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit, opting not to declare a 'non-dependent' resident in their household (thereby avoiding deduction from their benefit entitlement), could be posed as a 'housing' equivalent of Jordan's example of low-income people who worked and claimed social security benefits at the same time. While such incidents were not widely reported during the research, increasing emphasis was subsequently placed on tackling Housing Benefit fraud.

Nevertheless, in the Scottish City, one housing officer revealed how the risk of being discovered as a 'non-dependent' forced single people who were staying with relatives or friends to inform the housing service that they were of no fixed abode. The non-dependent deduction served as a deterrent to low income tenants supporting friends who were in housing need. The benefit regulations could also

deter low income single people from making their own, informal arrangements to meet their housing needs, if only on a temporary basis.

> R: *Most single people tend to be living with their parents. Or they come in and say they have no fixed address and give a correspondence address. But 9 times out of 10 they turn out to be still actually at their parents'. But they don't want to be put on their parents' Housing Benefit. A non-dependent charge would be made, even if their parents were on Income Support, so they quite often say it's just a correspondence address. But we can't prove anything, unless we're watching the houses 24 hours a day. Given the types of housing I have to let, I'm not too bothered. If I can get someone who I think will be ok to take a house and not cause problems, then I wouldn't delve too deeply into the truth.*
> (Housing Officer, Scottish City).

Jordan (1996) also suggested that welfare agencies acted as *exclusive clubs.* Applying Jordan's club theory of poverty and social exclusion to the interview data from the three case study areas offered some possible explanations for the lack of a coherent response to single homelessness from local housing and welfare agencies. The notion of 'groups' has long been central to procedures for allocating council housing (Clapham and Kintrea, 1986; Prescott-Clarke *et al,* 1988; Prescott-Clarke *et al,* 1994). Rationing systems have prioritised some housing needs and circumstances above others, such that some groups have gained access to housing at the expense of others (Henderson and Karn, 1987; Lidstone,1994; Smith and Mallinson,1996).

The groups who have competed for access to social housing cannot, however, readily be characterised as groups of individuals who join together to act collectively, in the sense of Jordan's informal networks among low-income households. Rather, groups within housing queues have been the 'creation' of local bureaucracies as part of a mechanism to categorise and prioritise individuals, in order to allocate vacant housing. Competing groups reflected the *characteristics* of households (e.g. single, couple, family, elderly) as well as their *housing circumstances* (e.g. sharing with relatives, overcrowded, lacking basic amenities, living in insecure accommodation).

As well as being a disadvantaged *group*, single people were further disadvantaged in allocation systems because the *circumstances* in which they were more likely to live (e.g. insecure lodgings or sleeping rough) were awarded lower priority than circumstances more likely to apply to family households (e.g. overcrowding) (Anderson and Morgan, 1997; Chapter Six). Further, it was possible to distinguish between groups of homeless single people awarded high or low priority by local housing authorities (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 Single homeless people: higher and lower priority groups

Higher priority groups

Half or more of local authorities would always or usually award priority in the event of homelessness:

- people with a mental handicap/learning difficulties
- people who were registered disabled
- people leaving long stay mental/psychiatric hospital
- 16-17 year olds, on leaving care
- young people referred under the Children Act
- people at risk of domestic, racial or other violence

Lower priority groups

A quarter or fewer local authorities would always or usually award priority in the event of homelessness:

- people with mental or physical health problems - self-reporting
- people with drug problems
- people with alcohol problems
- young people, age alone (16-17 and 18-24)
- care leavers, applying some time after leaving care
- people leaving prison
- people leaving the armed forces
- people who were refugees or asylum seekers
- people who were roofless

Source: Anderson and Morgan, 1997, p71.

Figure 7.1 illustrates which 'groups' of homeless single people were more or less likely to be considered vulnerable and in priority need by local housing authorities. Those groups afforded least priority tend to correlate with those most likely to experience street homelessness (Anderson and Morgan, 1997; Chapter Five; Chapter Six). The process of gaining access to council housing

can, therefore, be modelled in terms of competition between single homeless people and other groups, and competition between differing groups of single homeless people. The secondary qualitative data analysis in Chapter Six supported the notion that outcomes did affect 'groups' rather than isolated and/or unfortunate individuals.

While it was a relatively straightforward matter to identify groups who were consistently excluded from social housing, it was more difficult to explain *why* some groups fared better than others. Could Jordan's economic perspective help explain entrenched practice and the persistence of discrimination against single people in the social housing system? If councils allocated their dwellings according to economically rational principles, they would seek to maximise profits by offering properties to those who could pay the highest rent. Given that rents were set bureaucratically, and councils were charged with meeting housing need, economically rational allocations could still be made with respect to other costs and benefits such as property management costs. Such costs included potential rent arrears and costs associated with abandonment, damage to property, or disruptive behaviour which caused nuisance to neighbouring tenants.

The concerns of social housing providers with respect to the support needs of single homeless people and associated tenancy management issues has been demonstrated above. While tenancy management problems were not exclusively associated with single people, housing providers had much more *discretion* with respect to housing single homeless people, than with families to whom they had a statutory duty to provide housing. In the 'economic' sense, it was in the interests of local councils to use their discretionary powers to avoid housing potentially disruptive tenants. This could at least partly explain the low priority given to single homeless people who had been in prison or who had drug or alcohol problems and were most likely to be perceived as 'potentially problematic tenants'. Nevertheless, many interviewees also voiced social imperatives for such discretion, in that they believed it was unhelpful to both providers and tenants if vulnerable people were rehoused into tenancies in which they were not able to cope.

Jordan's economic-based theory of poverty and social exclusion did not fully explain value judgements about the non-legitimacy of single people's housing needs. Jordan did, however, address the neo-liberal emphasis on family values, putting forward economic arguments to explain the continuation of both patriarchy and racism. Anderson Kemp and Quilgars (1993) and Chapter Five demonstrated that single homelessness in Britain was largely (though not exclusively) experienced by men. Jordan's economic analysis of the labour market suggested that globalisation and hypercasualisation of the labour market had created a pool of long-term unemployed males unable to 'provide' for a nuclear family through a well-paid secure job. The outcome for many was poverty and exclusion from the labour market. For a minority, homelessness was one extreme dimension of economic exclusion, which may simply have reflected the fact that they could not compete in the private housing market while the social sector had not responded adequately to their needs.

Taking Jordan's theoretical framework a stage further, local housing authorities could be characterised as clubs in the same sense as Jordan (1996) characterised welfare states as exclusive clubs. Councillors, officers, the electorate, local businesses, tenants and applicants could all be construed as club members. Individual members could also form internal and overlapping groups within the local authority area, as within a nation state. Following Jordan's theory, we would expect welfare clubs to compete with each in order to maximise the benefits for their members. In so doing, however, they would face many conflicting interests among groups with differing levels of economic or social power, from the influence of the central state, through to direct action by disenfranchised citizens.

A wide range of welfare agencies engaged in the provision of housing or support required by low income or homeless single people could also be characterised as exclusive clubs. The notion that such clubs seek to maximise the benefits for their members (or for particular users) would help to explain the 'competitive' nature of inter-agency working and the weaknesses in collaborative working, discussed above. Such friction often resulted in detrimental housing and support outcomes for single homeless people.

The study period was characterised by significant change in the organisation, ownership and management of social housing (Taylor, 1996; Taylor with Wainwright, 1996). Although it would be beyond the scope of this thesis, there could well be substantial scope for the application of club theory to the wider activities of councils, housing associations and other public sector agencies in relation to changing structures for service provision and the reform of welfare.

Ideologies, values and attitudes towards single homeless people

This section considers the evidence of ideological and attitudinal influences on policy and practice towards homeless single people, drawing upon the debates reviewed in Chapter Three.

In party political terms, both the London Borough and the Scottish City had substantial Labour majorities on the local council, while political control of the Stock Transfer District Council had recently changed from Conservative to Liberal Democrat. There was, however, relatively little discussion of party political ideologies among the interviewees, although reference was made to elected members and their views about problems and policies. Rather, interviewees, whether consciously or not, used the depth interviews as an opportunity to express their own personal beliefs about the nature of single homelessness and wider aspects of housing policy and practice. The vast majority of interviewees revealed a strong personal commitment to the housing service and to meeting housing needs, although there were some exceptions. Nevertheless, many were aware that despite their own personal convictions, a range of institutional barriers prevented agencies from responding adequately to the needs of homeless single people.

Legitimacy and fairness: single people's needs and the homelessness legislation

Where housing providers or individual workers acknowledged single people's housing needs as legitimate, their ability to respond was often severely

constrained by other pressures and scarcity of resources. No matter how sympathetic to the needs of single people providers might be, other groups (particularly families and older people) were almost always considered to have a greater moral claim to social housing. As indicated in Chapter Four, the emphasis on prioritising other groups above single people had evolved over many years and had been particularly evident in central government policy statements and legislation (Holmans, 1995), which had a strong influence on local policies and housing outcomes. A number interviewees in the three case study areas were asked directly whether they thought single people had a legitimate claim to social housing and whether it was fair that they were largely excluded from the homelessness legislation.

In the London Borough, a senior policy officer was one of the few interviewees who expressly stated that single people were adequately catered for in the privately rented sector and did not merit the same priority for social housing as family households. While it was accepted that the council had a role in assisting those single people who had difficulty coping in the private market, it was expected that working single people should be able to find privately rented accommodation. No similar explicit statement was made with respect to families where one or more members were working, despite the fact that a housing adviser reported a high proportion of family-sized homes among vacancies in the private rented sector. It was not entirely clear, how far the senior policy officer's view was personal or reflected what was seen as the realistic situation within the local authority.

A housing adviser in the London Borough clearly found it very difficult to have to explain single people's exclusion from the homelessness provisions to homeless clients on a daily basis. Sometimes, an attempt was made to conceal the harsh truth by saying things like, 'it's just a question of waiting'. Advisers were often anxious about the circumstances of clients who they knew they couldn't help, although they did use avoidance tactics to minimise their own stress levels. The following extract from a London Borough interview demonstrates how one housing officer questioned and rationalised his work within the defensive ethos of the local authority-wide procedures.

R: *If you just simply sit there and say 'this is the situation', the applicant is likely to say to you 'but I'm homeless'. And they all do. They sit there and say 'but I'm homeless'. And if housing advisers are pushed to say, basically they have no hope, 'yes you are homeless but you are not in priority need'. Then the next proposition from the applicant is 'but surely the council is there to help us?' Or help me, 'I'm in a dire situation - why can't the council help'. And you try and explain that demand exceeds supply and they simply just don't have a chance. The quickest way of doing it is when they telephone us and ask for advice. It's much easier to tell them on the telephone, very quickly, 'look, this is the situation - you've got no chance. You need to look in the local press and find your own accommodation.'*

I: *Do you think that's right?* [the law]

R: *I'm indifferent to it. The government passed it and I think a lot of housing advisers hide behind that shield. I certainly do. 'The government has implemented it and we are here to apply it'. Privately, I'm disgusted at the whole situation. Because we are concealing the truth from the public. We really are, and the public is getting more and more angry - because they don't understand, because its not explained properly. The rehousing process is so narrow, its not worth it for single people.*

(Housing Adviser, London Borough).

In contrast to the experience of the frontline housing adviser, the homelessness manager in the London Borough had very little direct contact with homeless single people and was able to maintain a much more distanced perspective on their needs and the fairness, or otherwise, of the homelessness procedures. Moreover, she thought that while there was some concern about single homelessness among elected members, much more emphasis was placed on meeting the needs of families, although sometimes members found it difficult to stick to the harshness of the policy. In addition, much of the concern about homelessness was connected to the costs to the authority of meeting its statutory responsibilities. Even clients were thought to accept the terms of the homelessness procedures.

R: *People may question the legislation - but not in a formal sense - they just give up.*

(Homelessness Manager, London Borough).

A housing manager in the London Borough made direct reference to the policy position of the then Conservative Government and the White Paper (Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1995) which was published around the time of the research and discussed in Chapter Four. She evidently disagreed with the general thrust of central government housing policy and the specific proposals of the White Paper, as well as the inherent discrimination against single people in the housing system.

R: *Who knows what's going to happen to local authority housing? The White Paper is grim - to be frank. I guess single people.....and obviously part of the grimness of the white paper are the proposals around homelessness, which are outrageous, frankly. So the claims of single people are not going to become stronger - but then the claims of anybody who isn't married with 2.5 children are not going to become stronger. The road the white paper seems to want to go down, it's unclear to me how its going to work. Because you are talking about short term tenancies in the private sector. And, you know, government policy over the last 15 years has been geared to ending local authority housing and this is a logical extension of that - and one which is to be deplored.*

So, the future of local authority housing in the long term is hard to know. There will always be some. Housing associations are obviously going to become the providers of social housing, whether through new build or transfers or CCT. They are providers of housing to single people at the moment as well, through nomination arrangements with voluntary agencies. I think single people will remain in social housing but it will become much harder for everybody.

(Housing Manager, London Borough).

Within the Stock Transfer District, there was a difference of opinion between the manager of the council's remaining strategic housing service and the homelessness officer who directly managed services to homeless single people. The housing manager explicitly stated that single people's housing needs were

not, generally, perceived to be of the same level or extent as for example families, the elderly and other special needs groups. It was recognised however, that special needs groups such as people with physical disabilities or mental health problems included a significant proportion of single people

> R: *I would say that the housing needs of single people as a single group are not perceived as being particularly high up the agenda, but what is perceived as being high on the agenda are the housing needs of different groups, many of whom may be single. We would not look at single people as a group on their own. Single people are made up of lots of different groups and a number of those sub-groups, the council would consider to be a priority. The fact that someone is single is not of itself a qualification for accommodation.*
>
> (Housing Manager, Stock Transfer District).

When asked directly whether single people had a legitimate claim to social housing, the manager's response was that the policy of the council would be that everybody should be encouraged to resolve their housing in other tenures Consequently, no one had a 'right' to social housing.

> R: *Certainly that would apply to single people and very often they are in a better position to resolve their housing difficulties than families.*
>
> (Housing Manager, Stock Transfer District).

In contrast, the homelessness officer felt that, within the authority, single people's housing needs were perceived to be as serious as those of other groups and were not readily dismissed. For example, it had been relatively easy to persuade members to extend the private sector rent deposit scheme to single people, at a time when the council was Conservative controlled.

> R: *I think the majority of elected members are actually surprised that we don't have responsibility for those people. I think there is a general feeling that we should be doing what we can for them, despite the lack of legislation. It's quite a good authority, not a minimalist approach. I think they would like to see us doing more.*
>
> (Homelessness Officer, Stock Transfer District).

The homelessness officer felt that the split between priority and non-priority groups in the homelessness legislation had become entrenched since 1977, though it could not be justified by any rational argument. Moreover, the ethos of the homelessness legislation had filtered through into other routes into housing.

> R: *If there was a statutory duty to house single people we would have to develop more one bedroom accommodation. I'm sure.*
> (Homelessness Officer, Stock Transfer District).

The manager of the STHA was also asked whether the housing needs of single people were considered as serious as those of other household types.

> R: *I think anybody who's in housing need ....it's a problem for anybody. If you haven't got a fixed place, its likely to be a problem. And I think that the homelessness legislation didn't really help anybody from that point of view because of this business that you had to be priority homeless and immediately single people were seen as somebody who was non-priority. It's always been the homeless persons act and that sort of priority for families - but never the same thing for single people. So there's never been some other agency having to talk to us about getting their single people housed. So the pressure isn't on from the district council to say - lets get these single people housed. It's always been - lets get these families housed. Lets get these vulnerable people housed. So single people haven't been identified in the same ways.*
> (Manager, STHA, Stock Transfer District).

Finally, the wider disadvantage experienced by single people, through the housing waiting list, as well as the homelessness legislation was criticised by a housing officer in the Scottish City.

> R: *Personally I think they are quite hard done by in general. Their points are going to be very basic. A single person without children is only always going to qualify for a difficult to let area. Unless there was something like a mental health problem. If it was myself, for instance, going for a house, I would only qualify for basic points (105) and would only qualify for areas slightly worse than here, or here. They might keep their application on for a future safeguard, for building up points. I've interviewed people and explained what their options are and they are*

quite taken aback with the areas they are offered. There is no way they are going to move in there. Or they take a look at it and realise they wouldn't want to live there or couldn't survive. They refuse and ask for their application to be kept on so they can build up date points. That takes a long time. But I do feel that single people get a rough deal when it comes to the allocation of points.

(Housing Officer, Scottish City).

Attitudes towards single homeless people

Despite the fact that most interviewees were highly committed to their work with single homeless people, this did not preclude some from making value judgements about the behaviour of homeless people or relying upon stereotyped depictions of their characteristics. No interviewees actually used the term 'underclass' though a few did make reference to residualisation of social housing and marginalisation of tenants and applicants. Nevertheless, comments of interviewees reflected a range of attitudes towards some, or all, homeless and low-income single people.

For example, the single homelessness manager in the Scottish City confirmed that neighbourhood offices showed no particular reluctance to rehouse single people, although there was probably a reluctance to rehouse applicants who might present anti-social behaviour problems, irrespective of the household type.

R: *I think we have moved away from people having a stereotype of a single homeless person. Because these same people are going through the neighbourhood offices and they are seeing that they are not a person with serious drink problems or failed tenancies. They are seeing a lot of people where it's just a housing need.*

(Single Homelessness Manager, Scottish City).

In contrast, a youth support worker in the Scottish City indicated that there was a degree of reluctance, in some neighbourhood offices, to allocate a sufficient number of scatter flats for the youth support strategy. It was also considered

that the views of local tenants' associations sometimes influenced such practices. The youth support worker saw it as part of his job to go to various meetings in order to explain the strategy and to reassure them and fellow officers that the initiative was in everyone's interests as the alternative was likely to be vulnerable young people living in unsupported tenancies. In some neighbourhood offices, the involvement of senior staff was considered necessary in order to ensure that the necessary quota of flats was allocated to the youth housing strategy.

The potential influence of the personal commitment of staff to the cause of single homelessness was revealed in the Stock Transfer District. The officer also felt that single people's access to housing had improved since the stock transfer as staff changes had resulted in a team which were more sympathetic to their needs.

> R: *Myself and my staff are very keen on that category. We spend a long time giving housing advice and helping them with the private rented sector, etc. Where other authorities may filter such people out at a very early stage, that's not our policy. Nothing is written down, it has evolved through practice. It comes down to personalities - how keen you are. We are all from sympathetic backgrounds. We think we should be helping people who legally we might not have to.*
> (Homelessness Officer, Stock Transfer District).

The same interviewee was critical of the perceived attitude of central government towards homeless people, which was considered to be unfair and an over-generalisation of the true situation.

> R: *We've only had a quarter of nominations for homeless allocations. If you listen to the government, they are saying homeless people are jumping the queue. It's not the case here.*
> (Homelessness Officer, Stock Transfer District).

In the London Borough, a hostel worker's description of the admissions process revealed how it reflected value judgements about the circumstances and housing preferences of single homeless people. The hostel accommodation was

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all in shared bedrooms and preparedness of applicants to share was taken as an indicator of 'real need' and 'true homelessness'.

R: *Sometimes they have a look round and they don't like the place. It's quite interesting that sometimes when we show them the shared room (does have a use), they say 'oh, I'm not interested'. So not everyone is genuinely homeless by any stretch of the imagination. You get all the chancers. You can't blame people.*

(Hostel Worker, London Borough).

Similarly, the hostel worker admitted to his own, as well as others', stereotyped and generalised images of older homeless people.

R: *There are some misconceptions about older people who are homeless. You tend to think they have more care needs, tend to be alcoholics, etc. Those sorts of things. Having worked in a hostel for older men, you wouldn't think about filling a form in within 8 weeks, never mind moving them on. It takes a year. It's completely different. This sort of place wouldn't work for them. Those are people who might never have rented a place before and they are 45 years old. Split up from their wife, etc. It's just different. That's my conception, as a young person worker, knowing absolutely nothing about middle-aged people in this borough.*

(Hostel Worker, London Borough).

In contrast, the interviewee in another hostel held subjective, generalised, personal views about young homeless people.

R: *Young people think they are invincible. They have attitude problems. Think they don't have to pay their rent. It drives me up the wall.*

(Hostel Worker, London Borough).

Some interviewees also talked about the negative attitudes of the general public towards single homeless people. In Chapter Five, young residents in one hostel described how they felt local residents made unfair and inappropriate judgements about them, simply because they were homeless. A similar situation was described by a hostel-worker in the London Borough. When the hostel project was first proposed, a local action group was set up to campaign against the development. A public meeting was held and there was a great deal of

opposition from local residents. It was considered that the support of some influential people within the local authority had been important in reassuring local residents, so that the project was able to go ahead. Nevertheless, local resentment and suspicion continued for quite some time.

> R: *For the first 6 months they used to throw dog shit over the wall - into the back garden out there. But we employ a few people who live around here now. One woman, who works here, her husband worked on the building as a bricklayer. But he was a member of the action group. He still has the same attitude - talks about the 'fucking drug addicts' that live here. But they work here. His wife doesn't take that view. She just ignores him. Yes - there's quite a lot of that - it is a problem.*
> (Hostel Worker, London Borough).

Finally, the attitudes of single homeless people, towards each other, were discussed by another hostel worker in the London Borough. The hostel operated an equal opportunities policy and sometimes had to reject the applications of people who could not accept sharing with different groups of people. There were also firm policies on harassment within the hostel, which could result in eviction.

> R: *You don't have to be best friends with flat-mates but you have to be able to live with them. We don't tolerate harassment.*
> (Hostel Worker, London Borough).

Barriers to housing for single homeless people

The discussion throughout the thesis has demonstrated a range of barriers encountered by single homeless people, which resulted in their continued exclusion from social or privately rented housing. To an extent, their disadvantaged position was deeply embedded in the systems for allocating social housing. The interviews with agency staff revealed some further specific barriers to rehousing for some low income and homeless single people: debt (usually relating to former tenancy arrears); a history of unacceptable behaviour; and prejudice.

The problem of previous housing debt as a barrier to rehousing emerged in voluntary sector projects, as well as local authorities and housing associations, across the three case study areas. Workers in both of the London hostels, which took part in the study, confirmed that they would not recommend any resident for move-on to secure accommodation if they owed arrears to the hostel.

> R: *We won't move anyone with rent arrears or who has breached their tenancy, no matter how much we might want to. We only move people who have kept a good tenancy. Then we prioritise them on how long they have been here. We have several people who have lived here for quite a long time, but who have arrears. I keep explaining that they can't be moved until the rent account is clear. If they went to the council and got behind they would just be evicted, whereas we are lenient. They don't respond well - they are fed up being in shared housing and want to move. But the reality is we can't move them if they owe £500.*
> (Hostel Worker, London Borough).

In the Scottish City, the single homelessness manager referred to arrears on previous tenancies as a crucial barrier preventing homeless single people moving from hostel accommodation into permanent housing. There were a substantial number of applicants with arrears from former tenancies which had not been cleared. In the worst case this would prevent applicants being rehoused, and at best it would influence the quality of property they were offered. Because of the extent of former tenancy arrears, it had become common practice among housing officers that applicants who owed more than £100 would not be offered a property at all. However, it was acknowledged that, in some cases, people were in priority need under the homelessness legislation. The council then had a duty to house them, although the debt would still affect the precise property they were offered. Where young homeless people owed a debt on a former tenancy, they could be put in touch with a youth support worker who would work with them to come up with an arrangement to pay back the arrears.

In the Stock Transfer District, the STHA had recently introduced a policy of refusing to house anyone who owed them rent from a previous tenancy. The

local authority interviewees expressed concern that this could affect the rehousing prospects of statutorily homeless households, but the policy had not been formally challenged at the time of the research. The manager of the STHA also acknowledged that rent levels in the transferred housing stock presented a barrier to some nominated households. However, despite steep rent increases post-transfer, the manager made the highly subjective comment that 'really - if somebody doesn't want to pay the rent, then you have to query housing need'.

A homelessness caseworker in the Scottish City revealed how the known behavioural history of some homeless single people could result in their total exclusion from local authority temporary and permanent accommodation. Similarly, a youth support worker confirmed that even with young people, if furniture had been stolen from a previous tenancy or there had been anti-social behaviour, there may be a time limit on rehousing or a ban on putting the person into a furnished let again.

> R: There may be an instruction not to accommodate them, for previous behaviour or they could be barred for a whole host of reasons. We know about the case and it would be inappropriate for us to take it on. It would be a social work case.
>
> (Homelessness Caseworker, Scottish City).

A few interviewees mentioned prejudice as a barrier to single people's access to housing, most particularly with respect to the privately rented sector in the Stock Transfer District. Previous debts and a record of 'bad behaviour' could not only become barriers to individuals' housing prospects, but could lead to wider prejudice against all low income or homeless single people.

> R: I think they are severely disadvantaged because of the homelessness legislation and because of the prejudice in the private rented sector. That is definitely true. I don't know what we can do about it. There is quite an active group of estate agents who will accommodate single people. But there is a growing prejudice against single young men. Probably through experience of having them as tenants. The rent deposit scheme has removed the financial barriers to the private rented sector. Initially estate agents were happy to house them. After a number of years - they now tell us they have had bad experiences with single men and with benefits

generally. Prejudice is the main barrier - we have removed the financial
barrier. Providing we haven't already lost a deposit on them.
(Homelessness officer, Stock Transfer District).

Ideologies, values and attitudes in the three localities

Interviewees were more likely to articulate their personal views about single homelessness, than to refer to distinctive ideologies. This did not necessarily imply that they did not hold political views, merely that they were not explicitly discussed during the research. The majority of interviewees were sympathetic to the circumstances of single homeless people, and felt that their exclusion from the homelessness procedures was unfair. On the whole, agency staff did not view single homeless people as a distinctive 'underclass' and they recognised the structural processes that contributed to their disadvantage in the housing system. Nevertheless, there was some evidence of less sympathetic attitudes and adherence to stereotyped images of homeless people.

Interviewees identified debt, 'previous behaviour', and prejudice as immediate barriers to rehousing for single people. Some staff made the connection between these issues and structural constraints such as poverty, unemployment and a lack of adequate support services. Few, however, acknowledged the role of the organisations in which they worked in creating and sustaining barriers to housing and inclusion in the manner described by Becker (1997). Rather, they saw their organisations as constrained by wider structural forces, largely driven by central government and wider economic circumstances.

Single homelessness and the policy process

Finally in this chapter, the policy process within the three case study areas is examined, analysing the implications for the review of policy and practice in relation to single homelessness and social exclusion at the local level.

The London Borough

In the London Borough, the senior policy officer described the policy process as 'reasonably sensible, on the whole'. It was admitted, however, that there was an element of 'deciding on the solution and then using evidence to justify it', which was viewed as a realistic part of working life in local government. It was considered that within the authority there was a sound knowledge of the problems which needed to be addressed by the housing service and detailed research was used to facilitate fine-tuning of policy and practice.

The housing service had sophisticated procedures in place for policy review, which ensured that a range of staff and councillors were involved in the policy process. For example, senior officers held 'policy portfolios' in addition to their main responsibilities. The influence of elected members, in terms of the direction they gave to officers and their specific interests, was also acknowledged. From time to time, working parties were set up to review specific aspects of policy and these could include officers and members. Working groups recognised the different skills and expertise across the housing service and the various contributions that could be made to the policy process.

Some front-line interviewees in the London Borough felt they had much less of an insight into the policy process. Despite the 'all embracing' policy process described by the senior policy officer, some staff felt intimidated about participating, either because they were nervous of senior management or because they felt they did not know enough about the issues involved. Other front-line staff considered that 'junior' officers had important first-hand knowledge of problems and ideas about what procedures would improve day to day practice.

The Scottish City

A senior manager in the Scottish City explained that the director of the housing service approved all key policy documents, which were developed by specialists within the organisation. Sometimes the process of policy review was generated

by officers, and sometimes by politicians. The distinctive policies of the city on access to housing and single homelessness were considered to have been fairly evenly influenced by both officers and members. There was a broad understanding that the councillors did not wish to see a minimalist approach to policy implementation which was rigidly defined by statute and where 'you only do what you have to and you try to find ways not to do that'. The overall policy approach was described by senior staff as providing 'a sympathetic, caring framework for meeting people's needs'. The details of how this was achieved were often the result of officer recommendation.

The changing nature of single homelessness and the changing needs of the client group were cited as driving forces behind policy review, for example the development of a range of supported hostel accommodation. The single homelessness manager in the Scottish City also described clear mechanisms for single homelessness policy review (for example, on former tenancy arrears and the boundaries of community care and single homeless people with high support needs). The policy process gave a range of staff the opportunity to comment on proposals prior to reporting to the housing convenor[18] and then to the housing committee and council for approval.

The homelessness management team also worked with the housing planning team in the production of relevant sections of the housing plan. Homelessness staff had the opportunity to identify areas which should be prioritised for future funding. The management board then had to negotiate the prioritisation of a whole range of pressing needs. Front-line staff in the homelessness section were less directly involved in policy development and review. Nevertheless, one homelessness caseworker was very supportive of the efforts of management. It was felt that the council was continually trying to develop new initiatives and to improve the accommodation available to homeless single people, within the obvious financial constraints of the public sector.

The Stock Transfer District

The policy process was less clearly developed in the Stock Transfer District. The day to day ethos, in which front-line staff had a high degree of discretion in homelessness decision-making, was associated with a culture in which policy often developed from practice, rather than being formalised in reports which then influenced practice. Nevertheless, some issues were addressed in a formal policy review process which tended to be triggered by problematic issues which were flagged up by officers. The Homelessness Officer in the Stock Transfer District confirmed that there were few written internal policies, but that the policy review process was generally officer-led, rather than member-led.

> R: *Policy emerges from our team and we try to be consistent. We discuss cases and try to maintain consistency.*
>
> (Homelessness Officer, Stock Transfer District).

The policy community

The qualitative data revealed how a range of agencies within a local authority area interacted within a policy community, in relation to single homelessness. In the London Borough, while it was considered that the authority took a rational approach to housing, a senior policy officer cited the 'whims' of central government as the main inhibition to sensible local planning.

The low support hostel for young homeless people in the London Borough had been developed through a multi-agency forum, but the local authority had taken the lead in identifying the gap in provision and supporting the project through the planning and development phases. After a number of years of operation, the legacy of local authority support still influenced practice. Positive working relations had been sustained over a number of years, and the housing service was still represented on the hostel management committee.

> R: *We never get any complaints about the housing office. We have some misunderstandings now and again. But generally we have a very*

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[18] 'Convenor' is a commonly used Scottish term for a chair of a committee or group.

good relationship. I have no complaint about the local authority
whatsoever. They give us lots of nominations.

(Hostel Worker, London Borough).

In the Scottish City, a senior manager cited the need to improve single people's access to housing association properties as an area for policy development within the local policy community. Traditionally, many associations in the city had been 'community based' and had focused on meeting the needs of existing local communities, often through refurbishment programmes. It was argued that there was a need for their role to embrace a wider perspective on meeting housing need. The development of three-way forums involving the local authority, local housing associations and Scottish Homes was cited as a useful mechanism for policy review and development. Within the city, there was also a multi-agency working group on young people, which attempted to co-ordinate policy across a number of areas of welfare, including housing. The housing service was represented on the group and took an active interest in the youth strategy.

The interviewee from the voluntary sector presented an alternative perspective on the role of the local authority in the housing policy community in the Scottish City. Although it was acknowledged that the council had been creative in developing strategies to meet the needs of homeless people, it was also argued that the authority had retained significant control over the policy process.

R: *I think the council is seen as a monolith. The authority can be quite*
innovative and flexible, but it's at its own discretion.

(Voluntary Sector Representative, Scottish City).

It was further argued that organisations in the voluntary sector, were constrained by the influence of the local authority in their efforts to meet the needs of single homeless people. In particular, since many voluntary organisations received funding from the local authority, this gave the authority considerable leverage over their activities. It was felt that one consequence of this arrangement, was that the impression was given that all innovative ideas and activities were developed by the local authority. Agencies recognised the

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importance of working in partnership with the council, but, inevitably, there were conflicts from time to time.

In the Stock Transfer District, the local authority housing staff reported that they had relatively little input into the policy review process of the STHA. However, the original policy of the STHA had, effectively, been that of the local authority at the time of the transfer. There had been some subsequent amendments to that policy and council staff had had some informal input into the review process. One of the proposals of the White Paper, *Our future homes* (Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1995) was to encourage the development of common housing registers and it was acknowledged that this could have a significant impact on the current arrangements between the local authority and the STHA. The manager of the STHA described the policy process within the association.

> R: *I will decide on what needs to come forward on policy. Issues come up through officers in the field and my three managers (property, housing and allocations). I will also keep an eye on current legislation. Together we formulate committee reports. There is only one committee and I'll take any policy issues to them. In my absence, it would be the housing manager.*
>
> (Manager, STHA, Stock Transfer District).

Empowerment of service users in the policy process

The primary research was not expressly concerned with the empowerment of users in the policy process and the issue was not widely discussed within the interviews. In the London Borough, one front-line housing adviser made the connection between the increased emphasis on 'customer service' and the service to single homeless people.

> R: *There is a lot of talk about customer care and customer service. But for single homeless people, what does customer care mean? It means 'okay, tell me the truth'. But the truth is - you've got no chance. Somebody needs to go away and define what customer care means in*

that area. We need to sit down and say - look the client is changing.
Things are changing.

(Housing Adviser, London Borough).

The notion of resident participation in hostel management was discussed in one of the London hostels, but there were no mechanisms for clients to feedback into policy or practice.

R: *To the best of my knowledge, there is at present no way that residents can influence the decisions that are made in terms of current policies of the association or future development of the association. This is very much a top-down managed organisation.*

(Hostel Worker, London Borough).

The housing association that developed and managed the hostel had, however, commissioned a consultant to look at developing a wider strategy for tenant participation in the association. The consultant had organised meetings in the hostel but the turnout of residents had been very low. The level of interest had also been low at previous meetings organised by the hostel manager. It was suggested that facilitating participation was particularly difficult in a hostel environment as people did not identify with it as their 'home'.

Finally, in the Stock Transfer District, the manager of the STHA cited an increase in tenant involvement as one of the benefits of transfer. The manager had previously worked in the local authority housing department and had been very much in favour of the transfer. At the time, some opponents of the transfer had criticised the process as being undemocratic. The counter-argument to this, however, was that there were now four tenant representatives on the housing association's management committee, where there had been no direct representation on the council's housing committee. However, no mechanisms for empowerment of waiting list applicants or homeless people in the policy process were discussed during the interview.

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The policy process in the three areas

Mechanisms for policy review and development were most clearly articulated in the London Borough and the Scottish City and interviewees were able to indicate how policy and practice had developed in relation to single homelessness. The London Borough and the Scottish City could be characterised as adopting a 'rational' approach to policy development where issues were raised and debated, possible solutions considered and tested, and practice implemented from formalised recommendations. To an extent, the *defensive* and *proactive* approaches identified earlier, could be discerned within the rational approach. That is to say, the London Borough took a rational approach to developing defensive policies. The Scottish City sought to develop systematic, comprehensive policies, but was criticised by the voluntary sector representative for imposing a 'monolithic' approach to the policy process.

While the rational policy process could also be discerned in the Stock Transfer District, it could be characterised as being closer to an 'incremental' model of policy development, with policy and practice often becoming entrenched from day to day decisions, rather than major policy reviews. Such an approach was in keeping with the *responsive* approach of the authority, identified earlier.

The activities of a range of agencies interacting within a policy community were identified in all three case study areas. The differing perspectives held by statutory and voluntary agencies were most clearly depicted in the Scottish City. While the need for multi-agency working to tackle single homelessness and associated welfare issues was widely recognised, conflicts continued to arise between organisations with differing ideologies, different interests and different degrees of power within the policy community.

Issues of user empowerment in the policy process were not explored in depth in *Social housing for single people*. However, other research (e.g. Anderson and Douglas, 1998) confirmed that workers in the field of single/youth homelessness often considered that it was significantly more difficult to develop empowering procedures with homeless people, compared to residents of secure tenancies. Nevertheless, agencies such as the National Homeless Alliance (1998) have

been active in promoting the empowerment of homeless people in the policy process and this remains an area where there is considerable scope for further research and practical development work.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to apply a range of issues and concepts associated with welfare and social exclusion to the qualitative data collected in the three case study areas. The term 'social exclusion' had not yet infiltrated the vocabulary of interviewees at the time of the empirical data collection (1995). By the time of writing, however, it was likely that the increased political and media attention given to the issue of social exclusion would have greatly raised awareness among housing and service providers. Nevertheless, in 1995, interviewees debated a range of issues, which subsequently came to be closely associated with the concept of social exclusion.

The problem of single homelessness was widely recognised as a consequence of the wider problems of poverty (including debt), the residualisation of social housing and the marginalisation of particular groups in the housing system and in society. Although the conceptual link between poverty/low income and poor housing/homelessness was widely acknowledged, it was rarely made explicit in allocations policies or procedures (in contrast to means tested Housing Benefit, which falls within social security policy).

There was relatively little direct reference to inequality within the interviews, except in terms of unequal access to social housing (Chapter Six). Many interviewees linked poverty and homelessness to wider 'social problems' (for example, misuse of drugs), which were manifested as a range of unmet support needs. The consequences of these issues, which went beyond housing requirements, for the sustainability of tenancies, were articulated in all three case study areas. Nevertheless, the need to be cautious about over-generalisation was also clear from all three case studies. Not all single homeless people experienced problems maintaining tenancies or had ongoing

support needs and a need for improved quantification of support needs and appropriate services was identified.

From the perspectives of housing and support service providers, single homelessness could be characterised as a multi-faceted issue, rather than an example of comprehensive exclusion. It was not possible to draw a straightforward conclusion that all single homeless people were socially excluded. Nevertheless, the case study material raised important issues in relation to the development of multi-faceted or multi-agency responses to single homelessness. However, the discussions were more focused on health and social issues which directly impacted upon housing management, than on other policy areas, such as exclusion from educational and employment opportunities.

The analysis confirmed the complexity of the single homelessness problem for local housing providers. The multi-faceted nature of the problem, its causes, and the constraints upon possible solutions meant that housing agencies could not offer a comprehensive response without effective joint working with other agencies. Even where effective collaboration with partner agencies was achieved, national level constraints, most particularly upon funding and resources, often mitigated against achieving housing and social 'inclusion' for homeless and low income single people.

There were examples of good practice in joint working in all three case study areas. The Youth Housing Strategy in the Scottish City and the Leaving Care Strategy in the London Borough came closest to achieving a comprehensive approach to meeting particular needs. Equally, however, there were examples of significant gaps in provision and conflict between agencies with different interests and different degrees of power in the policy community. For example, the support needs of single homeless people tended to be excluded from social work priorities and conflicts were identified where clients had support needs which crossed the service boundaries of different specialised agencies (for example, mental health and drugs issues). Housing and support service providers could be characterised as exclusive clubs (Jordan, 1996) which collaborated or competed at varying times in order to achieve their strategies and to meet the needs of their clients.

There was some discussion of ideologies, values and attitudes towards single homeless people within the interviews. All of those interviewed could be characterised as 'professionals' and, overall, the discussions revealed strong personal commitment to the housing service and to meeting the needs of single homeless people. Some interviewees made direct reference to party political ideologies driving central Government policy and, to a lesser extent local politics. On the whole, however, their views tended to express much broader conceptions of fairness and justice, rather than clearly articulated political ideologies.

Practical barriers to rehousing for homeless single people were identified (for example, debt and behavioural issues/support needs). However, most interviewees viewed the most significant barriers as being linked to much wider, structural issues such as under-investment in housing and the operation of the homelessness legislation. Such factors were usually viewed as a function of central government and outwith the remit of the local providers.

The dynamic nature of single homelessness was examined in Chapter Six. In this Chapter, the notion of dynamic process was also examined in relation to policy development and review. There were variations in the operation of the policy process across the three case studies but efforts to include a range of actors, both within housing organisations, and across the wider policy community, could be identified in all three areas. However, those who experienced exclusion from social housing were also excluded from the processes by which policy and practice was formulated, implemented and reviewed.

The notion of a *dynamic* approach to policy development which took account of changing social trends and the changing nature of single homelessness, was best developed in the Scottish City. This compared favourably with the broader, national-level trends identified in Anderson and Morgan (1997) which indicated only limited progress towards such an approach.

The London Borough and Scottish City had clearly articulated policy review mechanisms, which were characterised as following the 'rational' approach to

policy development. However, the policy process had been used to control single people's access to housing in the London Borough (described as *defensive*), and to develop a strategic response to single homelessness in the Scottish City (previously described as *proactive*). Policy development took place on more of an 'incremental' basis in the Stock Transfer District, which was previously described as being reactive, or *responsive* in it's approach to dealing with single homelessness. The typology of local responses is considered within the broader framework of 'welfare regimes' in Chapter Eight.

The evidence presented in this chapter supported the conclusions of Chapters Four, Five and Six on the relationship between housing and social exclusion. Single homeless people experienced persistent disadvantage in the housing system, which was directly related to *housing* policies that excluded some groups, in order to prioritise others. Patterns of housing exclusion both reflected and reinforced patterns of exclusion across other policy areas, such as social work, social security, health, education and employment.

Since distinctive processes could be identified within the housing system, it could be hypothesised that distinctive processes could also be identified within other policy areas. Comprehensive policy responses would need to take account of exclusive processes *within* discrete policy areas, as well as the requirements for joint planning and implementation *across* policy areas (Whelan and Whelan, 1995). Housing policies can provide the solution to housing exclusion, but not to multi-faceted social exclusion. Nevertheless, housing provision remains central to any comprehensive strategy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AN UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION
AND SINGLE HOMELESSNESS

Introduction: meeting the aims and objectives of the study

The principal aim of this thesis was to test the value of the concept of social exclusion in understanding the experiences of those who are marginalised in society. It was hypothesised that if the concept was to be of value in social policy formulation, implementation and analysis, then it should be generally applicable to a range of social issues and should facilitate a greater understanding of the nature of social problems and the development of appropriate policy responses. The thesis set out to appraise the value of the concept of social exclusion in social policy analysis, through its application to the case study issue of single homelessness. In so doing, the study also sought to shed new light on the understanding of the issue of single homelessness and on the effectiveness of policy responses.

Using single homelessness as a case study social issue allowed the examination of that issue in the wider context of economic and social change and the development of social policy. The thesis considered the issue of single homelessness within 'the bigger picture' of wellbeing or 'quality of life' (Seed and Lloyd, 1997) in contemporary Britain. Chapter Three set out a framework for the analysis of single homelessness and social exclusion, developed from a review of contemporary scholarly and policy debates. This final chapter draws together the conclusions from that analysis, as applied to a national policy review (Chapter Four); secondary analysis of group discussions with single homeless people (Chapter Five); and secondary analysis of interviews with housing and service providers in three case study localities (Chapters Six and Seven).

The thesis adopted a qualitative approach, which aimed to develop a conceptualisation of single homelessness and social exclusion grounded in the

review of literature and policy and the analysis of empirical data. The focus of the thesis was on developments in social policy, rather than sociology. The conceptual framework was best characterised as 'middle range' theory (Kemeny and Lowe, 1998), although the thesis was also concerned with the forces which drive policy and change in society. Concepts in the policy process enabled the development of links between macro-level and micro-level theory (Silver, 1994; Sullivan 1994; Parsons, 1995).

The qualitative secondary data analysis helped to develop a deeper understanding of single homelessness by comparing the perspectives of single homeless people with those who determined and implemented policy responses. The analysis shed light on the processes which created and sustained homelessness and facilitated some re-conceptualisation of key issues associated with single homelessness. Qualitative analysis also allowed consideration of the issues behind the statistical output of the quantitative surveys associated with each data set. The study recognised, however, that both methodological approaches were necessary and, indeed, were complementary. The thesis adopted a long term, reflective approach, as a complement to previous short-term policy oriented evaluations. Further reflections on the research method are set out in a later section. This final chapter sets out the conclusions from the study.

Poverty and single homelessness

Much of the contemporary literature characterised the debate on social exclusion as moving beyond, though building upon, historical developments in the analysis of poverty. The review of contemporary literature and policy, together with the empirical evidence analysed for this study, left little doubt as to the close association between single homelessness and poverty. By established indicators of absolute or relative poverty, virtually without exception, single homeless people were living in poverty. The vast majority were out of work and lived on incomes around or below state social security levels. Single people aged under 25 years, and most particularly those aged 16 and 17 years, were directly discriminated against in the social security system on account of their

age and household type. Some single homeless people were outwith the state safety net of the social security system, with a few reporting that they had no income. The study also incorporated a wider group of people, termed 'low-income', who were working for low earnings (around benefit levels and substantially below average incomes).

The income-related poverty of single homeless people was reflected in their inadequate housing circumstances which included insecure, informal arrangements (such as staying with friends or relatives or squatting); temporary and medium-term hostel accommodation; living in bed and breakfast accommodation; and street homelessness (including makeshift shelters). During the study period, many academic commentators and campaign groups increasingly embraced a definition of homelessness which included a range of inadequate living situations. In contrast, central government policy increasingly focused on 'homelessness as rooflessness', with policy initiatives directed towards reducing street homelessness and visible 'rough sleeping'. Media and other public attention similarly focused on rooflessness, rather than the much larger number of households living in inadequate accommodation.

The study acknowledged that a significant proportion of 'housed' households, living in all tenures (though concentrated in social housing) also fell within standard definitions of poverty. Moreover, there were substantial numbers of family and elderly households who lived in unsatisfactory and insecure accommodation, though their experience of hostel living, bed and breakfast accommodation and street homelessness was much less significant than that of single homeless people. The notion of a continuum of housing experience from outright ownership to rooflessness (Watson with Austerberry, 1986) remained of value in identifying the diversity of housing experience in relation to income and poverty.

Comprehensive exclusion?

Much of the literature reviewed (Berghman, 1995; Room 1995; Williams with Pillinger, 1996) characterised social exclusion as a set of circumstances which

were 'more than poverty'. Social exclusion was described as comprehensive (Berghman, 1995) or compound (Lee *et al*, 1995) in that it incorporated disadvantage across a whole range of dimensions of welfare. Exclusion from the labour market was a key feature, but *comprehensive* exclusion also embraced health, education, democratic participation and family support.

The comprehensive nature of social exclusion meant that while poverty was characterised as being largely distributional, social exclusion was argued to be *relational* (Berghman, 1995). Excluded groups did not participate fully in ordinary activities such as work, leisure, and family and community relationships. Exclusion from housing was notably absent from much of the broader social policy literature, and was addressed primarily by housing specialists (Lee *et al*, 1995; Lee and Murie, 1997). The thesis sought to examine the extent to which single homelessness reflected a condition more comprehensive than poverty, which could be described as social exclusion.

The analysis confirmed the relationship between homelessness and changes in the labour market and economic restructuring. The close association between homelessness and exclusion from the labour market was clearly established in the group discussions among homeless single people, although some were in work and many had previous work experience. Nevertheless, single homeless people tended to have poor educational qualifications and may have lacked appropriate skills for the contemporary labour market (in common with many unemployed people who did not become homeless).

Unemployment was less explicitly discussed by housing and service providers, although many made reference to the poverty and unemployment traps which resulted from high rent levels in the hostel and privately rented sectors, and in some social housing. The sustained high unemployment levels of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the residualisation of social housing appeared to have resulted in a culture in which housing and social work staff assumed that the majority of their clients would be outside of the labour market. Clients who were in employment were considered the exception, rather than the rule.

Family problems were commonly associated with homelessness, but the secondary data analysis revealed that it was not accurate to assume that all homeless people were totally estranged from their families. Certainly, many experienced a whole range of pressures, including abuse and violence, but there was also evidence of ongoing family support. Pride meant that some homeless people concealed their circumstances from their families. Family relationships were fluid and could change over time. Housing and service providers tended to interact with individuals at times when family friction coincided with a housing crisis, rather than when they engaged in household formation or reconciliation.

Similarly, while single homeless people were excluded from the types of community contacts and networks associated with a residential neighbourhood, they were sometimes part of alternative social networks. Such networks could be established through street life or mediated through voluntary and statutory services, such as day centres and hostels. There was some evidence of single homeless people's exclusion from the democratic process, mainly through non-registration on the electoral register. Other issues to do with citizenship included unfair treatment by the police and public services as well as criminalisation of activities such as begging and sleeping out.

The health problems associated with single homelessness were widely reported by homeless people and by housing and support agencies. While a majority of single homeless people acknowledged that they might need some support to get by in long term accommodation, their care and support needs were given much greater emphasis by housing and service providers. Though it would be counter-productive to minimise the impact of homelessness on health, it was *not* the case that *all* single homeless people had severe health problems or needed intensive support services.

The majority of single homeless people also faced disadvantage in the housing system which served to reinforce and perpetuate other dimensions of social exclusion related to employment opportunities and a lack of income for the basic necessities of life. However, single homeless people's experience of exclusion from aspects of wellbeing was variable and differentiated. The

analysis conducted for this study indicated that single homelessness was better characterised as *multifaceted* or *multidimensional*, rather than comprehensive.

In common with the quantitative surveys for *Single homeless people* and *Social housing for single people*, the qualitative data revealed the diversity of circumstances experienced by single homeless people. To characterise single homeless people as being comprehensively excluded across all dimensions of welfare was an extreme, and unnecessarily negative, over-generalisation, even for those who were literally roofless. The notion of comprehensive exclusion failed to encapsulate the diversity and complexity of circumstances experienced by single homeless people and also conflicted with another concept widely associated with social exclusion, that of a dynamic process. Drawing upon the concepts of a continuum of housing need (Watson with Austerberry, 1986) and a continuum of risk of homelessness (Jones, 1995), it may be more fruitful to think in terms of varying *degrees* of integration/exclusion along a range of continuums across different aspects of welfare, than a simplistic duality between inclusion and exclusion from 'society'.

Notwithstanding the limitations noted, the analysis concluded that the comprehensive dimension to the social exclusion debate was valuable in that it allowed for the acknowledgement of links across components of wellbeing and welfare policy. While the comprehensive approach to acknowledging the links between, for example, poverty, lack of educational attainment, unemployment, poor housing and poor health was constructive, it was equally important to disentangle the separate and combined roles of different policy areas (Whelan and Whelan, 1995). With respect to single homelessness, this meant keeping sight of the inadequacies and inequalities in the housing system, as well as the other social and economic factors which contributed to homelessness. For example, there would be little point in providing health care and employment opportunities for homeless people, without simultaneously addressing their housing needs.

The notion of comprehensive exclusion fitted well with the policy trend towards partnership working and comprehensive approaches to tackling social problems which emerged during the study period. Most notably, area economic and

physical regeneration was developed within the multi-agency partnership approach (Foundations, 1998). Tenancy support issues associated with single homelessness also reflected the multidimensional nature of exclusion. Issues to do with the provision of care and support were identified as being particularly dependent on joint working across policy and practice areas. While the notion of multi-agency strategies to tackle multidimensional problems was attractive, it also carried the risk of conflict and competition rather than partnership and co-operation. Single homeless people were often left stranded between such conflicts, most particularly in relation to the delivery (or non-delivery) of care in the community.

Despite the recognition of the multifaceted nature of single homelessness, for some people, their housing problems were primarily a reflection of poverty and exclusion from social housing. For example, exclusionary allocations and property management procedures fell within the remit of social housing providers. Further research might usefully attempt to quantify the housing and non-housing dimensions of exclusion associated with single homelessness.

A number of the contributions in Room (1995) made reference to the need to develop indicators of exclusion. A range of indicators across aspects of wellbeing would require to be developed to reflect the multidimensional nature of exclusion[19]. The range of indicators would have to be sufficiently sophisticated, for each dimension of welfare, to take account of the range of potential circumstances along a continuum. It may be possible to identify 'thresholds' of exclusion on each dimension which equated to minimum/relative acceptable standards of welfare. Only where a household's or individual's circumstances were below the threshold on all dimensions of wellbeing would a situation which could be described as 'comprehensive' exclusion be identified.

With respect to housing, a set of indicators of inclusion or exclusion could be developed in relation to quality, size, price and security of accommodation, relative to the requirements of the household. Individuals' applications for social housing or other expressions of housing need could also be taken into

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[19] The likelihood that further work in this area was ongoing, but not yet published, during the study period is acknowledged.

consideration. If a consensus on acceptable housing standards for all citizens was established, then all housing circumstances which failed to meet that consensus would indicate exclusion from adequate housing (housing need). Social and economic factors (for example in relation to neighbourhoods), might be included in such a set of indicators. Where appropriate, indicators of access to, or exclusion from, appropriate support services could also be developed. Indicators of housing exclusion could be equally applicable across all tenures, as well as informal or non-tenured living arrangements. This would avoid over-generalisations with respect to concentration of exclusion, either spatially or according to tenure.

The importance of *process*: towards a dynamic analysis of single homelessness

The notion of process and the need for a dynamic approach to analysing exclusion was central to much of the literature (Berghman, 1995; Room, 1995; Walker, 1995; Williams with Pillinger, 1996). A dynamic approach to analysing single homelessness was developed on two levels, the individual and the collective. The thesis sought to examine the *dynamics* of single homelessness for individuals. What processes could be identified which caused, or were associated with, single homelessness and could routes out of homelessness be identified? At the collective level, was the nature of single homelessness, as a broader social issue, changing over the study period?

In the quantitative survey conducted for *Single homeless people,* most respondents had been homeless for more than a year, but there was substantial variation in the duration of homelessness across the sample (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). Moreover, the majority of respondents had had a settled home in the past and the state of homelessness was not a 'given' set of affairs, nor was it a situation in which people 'chose' to live (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). Secondary analysis of the qualitative group discussions with single homeless people confirmed the dynamic nature of their experience of housing and homelessness.

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Building upon earlier work (Venn, 1985; Anderson, 1994), Chapter Six explored the process of access to housing in depth, demonstrating the disadvantage faced by single people in both the homelessness and housing waiting list routes into social housing. Despite some innovative strategies and referral routes, the complex bureaucratic procedures, which governed access to social housing, tended to exclude single homeless people. Some practices had become deeply entrenched over many decades. In contrast, a straightforward means test would have greatly benefited many homeless single people who could not otherwise gain access to social housing.

Financial barriers to accessing accommodation were identified in the privately rented sector. The availability of housing benefit meant that access to privately rented accommodation was not determined on a purely free market basis and local schemes to assist single people with access costs were developed during the study period (Rugg, 1996). However, the evidence from Chapters Four, Five and Six suggested that supply, quality and value for money in the privately rented sector remained highly variable.

Routes out of homelessness were identified, but they were subject to a range of constraints. Chapter Five demonstrated that many single homeless people saw their circumstances as one, difficult, stage in a longer-term process which could have a posit've outcome. Similarly, Chapters Six and Seven illustrated that housing and service providers often talked in terms of a 'staged' transition from homelessness to housing, utilising emergency accommodation and medium term supported or shared accommodation, before moving on to secure accommodation. Nevertheless, it was often the most vulnerable or disadvantaged groups among homeless single people who found it hardest to move out of homelessness (for example those with alcohol or drugs problems). Some of those who experienced the greatest degree of housing exclusion owed money to former landlords, had been in prison, or were known to authorities as have 'challenging' behaviour. The question arose as to whether such experiences meant that people should be excluded from any form of secure housing. Resolving such conflicts was likely to remain a key task for social policy and practice.

The key processes identified with social exclusion in social housing (disadvantage, impoverishment, residualisation and marginalisation) were also associated with single homelessness. The analysis focused primarily on access to social housing, and to a lesser extent on access to the privately rented sector and non-tenured housing situations. Access to home ownership was not considered a realistic option for low-income single people. Nevertheless, evidence in Chapters Six and Seven demonstrated that the long-term process of tenure polarisation had an impact on the housing options available to homeless single people. For example, the outcomes in the Scottish City case study revealed how the residualisation of social housing determined that an offer of council accommodation was by no means a solution to exclusion from welfare for homeless single people.

Some longitudinal analysis of movement in and out of poverty has been conducted (Walker, 1995; Leisering and Walker, 1998). There have been no large-scale, longitudinal surveys of movement in and out of homelessness in Britain, although it is known that a high proportion of new social housing tenants have previously been homeless (Malpass and Murie, 1994). Life-history interviews, as used, for example, by Bowes, Dar and Sim (1997) can provide an insight into the dynamics of housing careers, but there remains a lack of large-scale, longitudinal analysis of pathways in and out of homelessness, across household types.

Lee et al (1995) characterised social exclusion among tenants of social housing as persistent, spatially concentrated and resistant to change. The evidence considered in this thesis, suggested some caution in applying those notions to single homelessness. Single homelessness was certainly a persistent social issue throughout the study period and, indeed, over a much longer time scale (Digby, 1976; Drake, O'Brien and Biebuyck, 1981). While single homelessness could be characterised as persistent, it was not necessarily unchanging, or resistant to change during the study period. Single homelessness, and particularly street homelessness, escalated in the late 1980s and remained significant throughout the 1990s.

Access to suitable housing was determined by a combination of household formation and housing availability. Notwithstanding the significance of the process of access to housing, the process of household formation also influenced the nature of single homelessness. Long-term demographic and social trends resulted in an increase in single people living alone (either long-term, or between relationships). The failure of national and local policy makers to predict and respond adequately to these social trends compounded the problem of increased demand, contributing to the increase in single homelessness in the late 1980s and early-mid 1990s.

The housing and labour markets and changes in social security policy were also important influences on the scale and nature of single homelessness during the study period. A key conclusion of this thesis is that housing and other aspects of social policy need to respond to long term social changes, rather than try to manipulate social structures (for example, by favouring one type of household over another, or making value judgements about idealised lifestyles).

Rigorous longitudinal data would be required in order to comment accurately on the changing characteristics of single homeless people, but the qualitative evidence analysed for this thesis suggested that those who experienced homelessness were an increasingly vulnerable group in terms of their health and support needs. The interviews with housing and service providers were conducted four years after the discussions with single homeless people and revealed a significantly greater emphasis on the support needs of single homeless people. Evaluations of the impact of the central London 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative also identified a trend towards an increasingly vulnerable street homeless population (Randall and Brown, 1993, 1995, 1996). Single homelessness was not necessarily resistant to change, but the appropriate policies and provision to ensure a long-term solution to the issue had not been sufficiently developed by the end of the study period. As roofless people were assisted, new cohorts of single people experienced exclusion from housing.

While social exclusion was argued to be concentrated in social housing, (Malpass and Murie, 1994; Lee et al, 1995) this was much less the case for single homeless people, who were largely excluded from access to social

housing. Some spatial concentration of single homelessness could be discerned in terms of street homelessness in central London and other city centres, but that perception may well have reflected public visibility and efforts at quantification of the problem, as much as the reality of low income single people's housing experience. At both national and local levels, there remained a lack of accurate data on the wider problem of single homelessness, including homelessness in rural areas or small towns which received much less media and policy attention. Local strategies and housing needs assessment were identified as having the capacity to improve data collection (Anderson, 1994; Anderson and Morgan, 1997; McCluskey, 1997).

Structure and agency in the dynamics of homelessness

Drawing upon the work of Anthony Giddens (1984) explanations of homelessness have often been developed in terms of the interaction between structure and agency (for example, Johnson *et al*, 1991; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). The evidence considered for this thesis demonstrated that, on the whole, the reasons why low-income single people became, and remained homeless, were more closely linked to structural factors than to personal or individual attributes or actions. It was, however, possible to discern the interaction between structure and agency in the dynamics of homelessness.

Homelessness was part of a dynamic process influenced by the procedures and opportunities for gaining access to housing, as much as by crisis situations which necessitated leaving accommodation at certain points in the life cycle. Many participants in *Single homeless people* were able to construct their current circumstances as part of a wider process, and articulate the constraints which prevented them from moving to more secure accommodation. Secondary analysis of the qualitative group discussions supported the proposition that low-income and homeless single people were largely excluded from private sector housing on economic grounds, and from public sector housing on bureaucratic grounds. These constraints were compounded by barriers to gaining employment and by the operation of the social security system.

The analysis in Chapters Six and Seven demonstrated the variation from nationally set guidelines on homelessness which occurred at the local level. Although local variations in homelessness practice had been established in earlier studies (Evans and Duncan, 1998; Niner, 1989b), this study has incorporated the first comprehensive analysis with specific reference to low-income and homeless single people (Anderson and Morgan, 1997). The case studies revealed that local policy and practice towards single people was influenced by the socio-economic and housing characteristics of the local authority areas, as much as by local policy objectives. Local housing and service providers also faced structural constraints in their efforts to tackle single homelessness and meet the wider housing needs of single people.

Process and policy

The notion of process emphasised in the literature on social exclusion was also helpful in integrating concepts in policy analysis and the policy process with the development of policy responses to single homelessness (discussed further below). Together, the recognition of process and the multidimensional nature of homelessness highlighted the interaction across social policy areas and the processes by which *the income and* quality of life for individuals and households were determined.

Single homelessness: exclusive clubs and rational responses

Two key concepts from the work of Jordan (1996) were incorporated into the framework for the analysis of single homelessness and social exclusion. Firstly, Jordan characterised formalised agencies (whether welfare services or businesses) as exclusive clubs which acted to preserve their own interests (or 'job rents'). Secondly, Jordan argued that low-income people developed rational strategies in response to their exclusion from powerful, formal groups or clubs.

Chapter Seven indicated that local housing and service providers could be characterised as exclusive clubs in the sense used by Jordan (1996). While

agencies aimed to meet strategic objectives and to meet the housing and support needs of their clients, they also required to defend their own specific interests. Consequently, the extent to which truly effective partnerships could be meaningfully established in a competitive environment must be questioned. Housing workers, in particular, commented on the changing, and less than clear, boundaries between housing management and other services such as social work or youth and community work. Conflicts arose with respect to pressurised budgets and disagreements over responsibility for the co-ordination and delivery of support services for homeless single people. The idea that housing and social support agencies operated as exclusive groups conflicted with the notion of a rational policy process. Consequently, the breaking down of organisational protectionism would be a prerequisite for more effective joint working to meet commonly agreed goals.

Housing agencies also used the concept of groups to categorise housing applicants living in different circumstances. Prioritisation of scarce resources inevitably resulted in the exclusion of some groups, in order to make provision for others. In other words, there was a strong element of competition between groups of clients for access to housing and welfare services. Social work services also focused on groups deemed as a priority for resources. Such groups were, however, constructed by bureaucrats, rather than formed by individuals with common interests. Single homeless people were often the most disadvantaged household type within these systems for prioritising resources.

The limitations of welfare procedures which classified potential clients into 'need groups' were also articulated by Clapham and Smith (1990). The application of the concept of 'special needs' to social housing in Britain was deemed problematic because 'special needs' were a group attribute, and only a limited range of groups were deemed to merit the label (Clapham and Smith, 1990, p195). Further, the term 'special' was viewed as a euphemism for 'abnormal' and resources were targeted at *groups* which were constructed from presumed stereotypes, rather than in direct response to individuals' needs for housing or other types of welfare support.

Moreover, Clapham and Smith argued that conceptions of special needs largely excluded from state assistance those who were disadvantaged by industrial change, racism and/or patriarchal relations which were integral to the organisation of modern society. This study has demonstrated that homeless single people were excluded in the same way. Clapham and Smith (1990, pp200-203) argued for a re-orientation of policy towards a strategy of *normalisation,* seeking to facilitate a lifestyle as close as possible to that of mainstream society, and emphasising spatial and social integration, rather than exclusion. In the language of the late 1990s, they promoted strategies for inclusion.

Jordan's theory of poverty and social exclusion hypothesised that the poorest households were excluded from formal clubs, but often came together in their own informal clubs to implement rational strategies in the face of poverty and exclusion (Jordan, 1996). From the evidence presented in Chapter Five, it was concluded that most single homeless people made rational choices within the constraints which they faced, but a diversity of strategies existed. Informal activities undertaken by single homeless people included begging for money from the public, working while claiming benefits and squatting. However, some single homeless people had ethical objections to informal *or illegal* activities. The strategic, rational strategies were more accurately characterised as *coping* strategies, than the subversive strategies suggested by Jordan (1996).

Further, while there was some evidence of informal group behaviour among single homeless people, it appeared that many adopted individualised strategies. Although not explicitly tested in the study, it was likely that homeless people faced practical constraints on organising activities on a group basis. Nevertheless, some single homeless people did describe group activities within the homeless population, sometimes mediated through charitable or voluntary sector agencies.

Jordan (1996) put forward the idea of legitimising the informal activities of low-income groups as a policy prescription which would build upon their own endeavours to enhance their wellbeing. Applied to the issue of single homelessness, this would imply acknowledgement that activities such as

begging and squatting represented legitimate methods of improving well-being, rather than offensive or anti-social activities. If formally adopted, Jordan's approach of 'eschewing moral judgements' and building on the informal strategies of disadvantaged groups had the potential to be beneficial to many homeless single people. Such an approach would acknowledge the inter-dependency of groups in society, rather than exaggerate the 'dependency' of those who were poorest. Poverty and exclusion would be acknowledged as being costly to society as a whole (for example in terms of crime and urban decay), not just to those who were most directly affected.

The importance of ideologies, values and attitudes

The thesis considered a number of issues around the relationships between ideologies, values and attitudes towards single homelessness and social exclusion. The extent to which values and ideologies could be discerned from the data was limited by the focus of the primary research projects.

Political ideologies and welfare paradigms

As discussed in the early chapters of this thesis, Esping-Anderson (1990) identified a three-fold typology of welfare regimes (Conservative, Liberal and Socialist). In contrast, Silver (1994) identified three ideological paradigms of social exclusion (solidarity, specialisation and monopoly) which did not necessarily coincide with the organisation of welfare states at the national level. During the study period, British economic and social policy was dominated by the New Right ideology associated with the specialisation paradigm. While social policy analysis in Britain has traditionally focused on the neo-liberal and social democratic ideologies, the evolving debates on social exclusion have been influenced by comparative analysis and the continental tradition (Room, 1995) or the solidarity paradigm (Silver, 1994).

By the end of the study period, Britain's New Labour government had embarked on a programme of welfare reform founded on the vision of a 'third way'

between old-style Labour and the extreme liberalism of the previous Conservative governments. However, it was not yet possible to assess how far New Labour's approach would match, say, the solidarity paradigm (Silver, 1994), as opposed to merely representing a re-positioning of the specialisation paradigm, albeit with a higher priority on social justice than that of the prior Conservative administrations.

The prevailing ideologies of national governments (the macro-level of analysis) influenced and constrained the practices of local agencies, including the local state (the micro-level of analysis). It would have made little sense to attempt to correlate local strategies with the 'grand' paradigms of welfare and exclusion, as they were all operating within the prevailing, overarching specialisation paradigm.

Nevertheless, the three local housing authorities which were the main focus of the case study analysis in Chapters Six and Seven adopted distinctive responses to the housing needs of low-income and homeless people. These were characterised as *defensive* (a minimal or evasive response); *proactive* (a strategic or comprehensive response) and *responsive* (a reactive, but not evasive response). Local strategies were determined as much by the broad socio-economic characteristics of the area and the resources at the disposal of the local authority as by prevailing local ideologies, which were mostly in conflict with the national government. Ultimately, the scope for creative initiatives to meet housing needs at the micro-level was severely constrained by prevailing ideology and policy at the macro-level.

In the group discussions analysed for Chapter Five, some single homeless people expressed political views which were highly critical of the Conservative Government of the day. Although local policy and practice was less ideologically driven (in a party political sense) than central government policy, local politics were at variance with national government and interviewees were conscious of the tensions created by having to work within national legislative constraints.

Some of the interviewees made direct reference to party political ideologies driving central Government policy and, to a lesser extent, local politics. On the

whole, however, their views tended to express much broader conceptions of fairness and justice. Many individual interviewees expressed a strong sense of personal commitment to public service and, specifically, to meeting housing need and improving housing conditions in their localities. The pressures they faced in their work, however, sometimes resulted in rationalisation and acceptance of regulations which, personally, they considered to be unfair.

The 'underclass' debate

It was argued in Chapter Three that the term 'underclass' was not particularly helpful to the analysis of poverty, homelessness or social exclusion, as it represented a label which in itself served to reinforce notions of exclusion. Nevertheless, the influence of the work of Murray (1990, 1994) was acknowledged. Neither the quantitative data collected for *Single homeless people*, nor the secondary analysis of qualitative data conducted for this study supported the theory of Murray (1990, 1994) that an 'underclass' of low-income individuals could be identified as having attitudes which conflicted with the 'majority' in society.

Single homeless people were a heterogeneous group of people in terms of their housing histories and socio-economic characteristics. Notwithstanding the diversity of opinions and experience, many expressed attitudes towards work, a stable home and a social life which would be in keeping with many lay people's views. It was homeless people's differential experience of the housing system and labour market, rather than any individual attitudes, which distinguished them from those who were better housed and better off.

Commenting on *Single homeless people,* Deacon, Vincent and Walker (1995, p346), stated that 'only the lack of a home, a job and money were features shared by the vast majority of single persons who are homeless'. From their research on single homeless people who were rehoused from one specific hostel in England, they cited evidence that many displayed a desire for a lifestyle nearer to that of the mainstream of society:

The men who stayed in their accommodation all wished for a decent and clean place to live, in congenial company, and to be able to choose and control their way of life....... Many stressed the importance of occupation to combat boredom and to give purpose and structure to their days.
(Vincent, Deacon and Walker, 1995, p357).

On the whole, attitudes of professional interviewees towards homeless single people were sympathetic. While there was some evidence of over-generalisation and stereo-typing with regard to their circumstances, homeless people were not regarded as an 'underclass' by housing and support service providers. Nevertheless, many interviewees made reference to social characteristics which influenced the housing opportunities of single homeless people, such as having criminal records, misusing alcohol or drugs, or behaving violently. The risk of homelessness may have been associated with those other risks, without indicating any causal process in terms of personal attitudes or moral values.

Social reaction and barriers to inclusion

Becker (1997) argued that the collective or individual attitudes of agencies of the state created cultural, ideological and political barriers to independence for poor people. This study found evidence to support Becker's ideas with respect to single homelessness. Most notably homeless single people faced long-standing cultural norms which dictated that they had a less legitimate claim to social housing than other household types. Such structural disadvantages were deeply entrenched in housing systems, reflecting dominant social attitudes which prioritised elderly and family households over single people. Moreover, changing social trends which resulted in an increase in the number of single person households (for example, in relation to household formation, dissolution and re-formation) have often been characterised as negative, rather than simply different household arrangements (for example, Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1995).

Nevertheless, some progress towards sympathetic approaches to, and creative strategies for, tackling single homelessness was identified at the local level. In Chapters Six and Seven, a high proportion of interviewees acknowledged the inherent unfairness and inequality in housing systems. In the London Borough and Scottish City case studies, agencies struggling to overcome entrenched barriers to providing housing for single people expressed considerable frustration at the lack of available resources and the inflexibility of their existing dwelling stock.

The disadvantage experienced by homeless single people reflected the long-term dominance of a neo-liberal ideology of a minimal welfare state and the inherent requirement to exclude some groups in order to reduce the state's commitment to welfare. Historically, decisions as to who was given priority in the provision of welfare rested on a balance between acknowledged *need* and some criteria of *legitimacy* for assistance. The latter was principally determined by prevailing social attitudes towards different groups within society. In contrast, in Sweden, where the dominant ideology over the long term had been one of social democracy, the goal of central Government housing policy was a decent home for *every citizen* (Turner, 1996, emphasis added). After the May 1997 election, the New Labour Government prioritised reducing 'rough sleeping' but, by the end of the study period, no changes to housing policy or legislation which would significantly enhance the position of low-income single people in the wider housing system had been implemented.

Social exclusion, single homelessness and the policy process

The policy process

The analysis of single homelessness and social exclusion can be incorporated into the policy process at various levels, taking account of the changing use of the term and differing conceptualisations of exclusion. For example, the process of policy formulation, implementation and review within a policy community or network can embrace the multidimensional and dynamic nature of complex

social issues such as single homelessness. However, some caution is required in integrating the concepts associated with social exclusion into the policy process. For example, if poverty is characterised as *relational*, rather than *distributional*, the logical policy outcome might be that there was no requirement for 'redistribution' of resources from the better off to the less well off. From the case studies undertaken for this thesis, local policy development was partly dependent on national constraints and partly defined by local priorities. Strategies and targets often reflected what could realistically be achieved, rather than any ideal goal.

The study highlighted some limitations to the traditional models of the policy process (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984, Hill, 1997). Most notably, concepts in policy analysis did not always take explicit account of the role of ideologies in shaping the basic principles which drive policy. An expanded model of the policy process would take account of the prevailing ideology, developed from a 'vision' for society or the local community. The vision would set the parameters for policy intervention: the conception of 'what makes a good society' would determine policy across a whole range of issues, including housing and homelessness.

Incorporating a clear vision for society into the policy process would overcome the weakness in 'problem' based policy analysis which only responds to 'problems' which are identified and are placed on the policy agenda. It cannot be denied that homelessness is a problem for many citizens and that street homelessness is a severe and damaging experience. The point is that there is a need to move away from the narrow, over-emphasis on street homelessness, towards a conception of what is an adequate and appropriate housing standard for contemporary society. Policy should seek to achieve that standard for all citizens, rather than merely to ameliorate the worst outcomes by providing something which is only slightly better (hostels for single homeless people).

A comprehensive, inclusive policy process then, would start from a clear vision for wellbeing, from which a strategy (or set of strategies) to achieve that vision would be developed. Local policy making would also benefit from incorporating a vision for the local community, which would drive local policy towards proactive, rather than defensive strategies.

A comprehensive overview of the policy process must also acknowledge that the process takes place both within, and between, a range of actors in a policy community or network. Jordan's work on exclusive groups and clubs (Jordan, 1996), aided the analysis of the housing policy community where different actors had varying degrees of power and influence over the policy process, and helped explain housing outcomes at the national and local levels. A comparative study would, no doubt, reveal the same types of interactions at the international level. Different policy actors may have varying goals, decision-making processes, strategies and programmes of action which may complement each other or produce conflict.

The concepts associated with social exclusion helped illustrate the complex interaction of social processes, the need for sophisticated policy responses, and the potential contributions of a wide range of actors from the statutory, voluntary and business sectors, as well as communities and individuals. Co-ordination of policy across the wide range of potential policy actors and spheres of welfare will remain a major challenge for central and local government in the foreseeable future.

Since the 1980s, policies to develop tenant participation in housing policy have been widely advocated (Cairncross, Clapham and Goodlad, 1997). Subscribers to the New Right philosophy advocated freedom of choice, while those on the left recommended empowerment of users in the decision-making process. To date, relatively little consideration has been given to the empowerment of homeless people and those in housing need in the processes by which housing policies are formulated and implemented. Single homeless people who took part in the group discussions identified the potential for self-help and participation in the policy process, and this is an area where there is scope for substantial further empirical work and policy development.

The potential for conflict in an empowerment approach to policy also needs to be borne in mind. For example, community-based strategies can (and have) resulted in prejudice, discrimination and vigilante activities. Some safeguards against such outcomes would require to be built into strategies to empower citizens in the policy process on an equal basis.

A further weakness in much social policy analysis has been the failure to take full account of the role of business interests in the policy process. Although private businesses may not be directly involved in the development of specific welfare policies, they hold tremendous power in determining global and national economic conditions and exert powerful influence over national government decisions (for example, on interest rates, taxation, and public borrowing and expenditure). Influential business interests in the sphere of housing policy include the construction industry, financial institutions and mortgage lenders, and private landlords. The interests of capital must be incorporated into the policy process in order to fully understand the constraints on welfare. Jordan's thesis was enlightening in its theoretical approach which modelled both private and public agencies as exclusive clubs (Jordan, 1996).

The potential exists for comprehensive, inclusive policies to have a significant impact on the nature of society. Nevertheless, there are limits to the sphere of influence of policy intervention. Other processes, particularly social and demographic trends, also influence outcomes. This thesis has suggested that the policy process should respond to social trends, rather than attempt to prescribe 'ideal' social behaviour. The failure of housing agencies to respond to social change emerged as an important element of the single homelessness crisis of the 1980s and 1990s.

Policy responses

Jordan (1996) suggested that the state's response to growing poverty and social exclusion could be characterised as implementing 'policies of enforcement'. The state responded to exclusion through stricter enforcement of, for example, eligibility for benefit and inducements to 'conform' to what was perceived as 'mainstream' behaviour. Single homeless people in many of the group discussions recounted their experiences of being moved on or arrested by the police for sleeping out on the streets or for begging. Throughout the study period, there was an ongoing debate as to how best to tackle street homelessness, much of which focused on enforcement, rather than prevention.

Most notably, Edinburgh City council considered implementation of a bye-law outlawing 'aggressive begging' (*Inside Housing*, 1998) and the Social Exclusion Unit's strategy for reducing street homelessness retained the option of forcing homeless people into hostels, if places were available (*Guardian*, 1998). These strategies mirrored a wider trend in housing policy towards tackling 'anti-social behaviour' in social housing through punitive mechanisms such as introductory tenancies and court injunctions (Scott and Parkey, 1998).

The approaches to tackling single homelessness in the case study areas examined for this research were less punitive and could be characterised as policies of *containment*, rather than enforcement. The *defensive, proactive* and *responsive* practices in the three local authority case studies suggested a continuum of local approaches to tackling single homeless, from minimalist to comprehensive, although a much larger number of local authorities would require to be classified in order to draw any generalised conclusions.

The successive 'Rough Sleepers' Initiatives introduced by Conservative governments could also be characterised as policies of containment, in that they served only to alleviate the most extreme housing conditions, rather than to build a comprehensive housing policy or tackle the other welfare dimensions of single homelessness. Moreover, special initiatives to reduce street homelessness failed to question the fundamental inequalities in the access process. Despite the practical value of additional resources for a marginalised group, such a programme represented a responsive, rather than a preventative approach to tackling single homelessness. Focused initiatives may be valuable in times of crisis and it is likely that a combination of targeted and comprehensive strategies would be most effective. The complex nature of single homelessness and other dimensions of exclusion from welfare suggested that policy responses needed to be comprehensive, even if exclusion was not comprehensive for all marginalised individuals.

The revised strategy for reducing 'rough sleeping', proposed by the New Labour government in July 1998, pledged to tackle the wider issues commonly associated with single homelessness, for example the care and prison systems (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998b). A target to reduce the number of people

sleeping out in central London by two thirds by the year 2002 was set and a co-ordinator was to be appointed in London (and some other cities) to oversee the initiative (*Guardian*, 1998; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). The strategy appeared to represent a development towards a more comprehensive approach to tackling street homelessness, the outcomes of which would become evident in due course. However, the report of the Social Exclusion Unit made only cursory reference to the broader housing policies which perpetuated street homelessness (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998b). As with the initiatives of the previous Conservative administrations, the policy response focused exclusively on street homelessness (containment) rather than the much wider problem of single homelessness and inadequate housing provision (comprehensive provision).

As well as prioritising street homelessness, New Labour placed enormous emphasis on re-integration through the labour market and its Welfare to Work initiative. The close association between social exclusion and unemployment reflected sustained, high, structural unemployment during the 1980s and early 1990s. In comparison, the mid-late 1990s witnessed a significant and continuing decline in Britain's unemployment count (*Labour Research*, 1998). The strength of the economy and the labour market situation could be expected to have a positive impact on the ability of the government to tackle social exclusion, although some time lag might be expected between falling unemployment and any quantifiable impact on 'social cohesion'. The favourable economic conditions would preclude any 'test' of implementing integrative strategies in more adverse economic circumstances, although by August 1998 some economists were forecasting an economic downturn.

Acknowledgement of the multidimensional nature of single homelessness implied that policies to promote social inclusion advocated by the New Labour Government, such as better service co-ordination and Welfare to Work, *could* have a beneficial impact on disadvantaged groups, including single homeless people. Better employment prospects would only be helpful, however, if they offered economically competitive incomes, which allowed single homeless people to compete in the private housing market. Otherwise, they would still face disadvantage in access to social housing. Higher incomes would certainly

facilitate fuller enjoyment of homes, through the ability to adequately furnish and maintain a home. Service co-ordination could ease the process of gaining access to housing and support services, but, without additional resources, would be unlikely to offer a satisfactory solution to the fundamental inequalities which create exclusion.

From his theory of poverty and social exclusion, Jordan (1996) developed the policy prescription of a universal basic income to ensure integration of all citizens. While a basic income would certainly go some way to reducing poverty, it would not necessarily result in a more equal income distribution. Jordan did not advocate 'equal incomes' or a 'maximum income'. Translating Jordan's policy prescription to the specific case of single homelessness would entail the introduction of a universal right to 'basic' housing. From the analysis presented in this thesis, it can be concluded that a right to *adequate* housing would be required in order to overcome the inequalities in the current homelessness legislation and procedures for access to social housing. The evidence of care and support needs among many homeless single people suggested that a right to housing would need to be augmented by a right to an adequate income and support network to get by in that housing.

Research and policy

During the study period, a vast amount of research into homelessness, single homelessness and housing need was conducted at the national and, particularly, local levels (Chapter One, Chapter Four). Increasingly, policy-oriented research was commissioned, funded and undertaken by a wide range of policy actors, including government and agents of government. The influence of policy makers on research placed constraints on the research agenda and the use of research findings.

The context and constraints for *Single homeless people* and *Social housing for single people* were set out in Chapters One and Two. Other narrowly focused evaluations of specific policy initiatives, such as the foyer initiative (Anderson and Quilgars, 1995; Anderson and Douglas, 1998), were similarly constrained

by the contemporary direction of policy. That is to say, the studies were focused on whether foyers were meeting their objectives, rather than whether they were an appropriate response to single homelessness. Moreover, such studies reflected a short-term approach to developing 'quick fix solutions', which looked for evidence of success within a very short time scale (12-18 months), from initiatives which endeavoured to tackle deeply rooted social issues. Nevertheless, such studies have provided valuable 'micro-level' data on policy and practice.

There remains a need, however, for decision-takers to take account of (and fund) more long-term, reflective research which charts major social change and the long-term impacts of ideologies, policies and strategies. There also remains considerable scope for evaluation of the impact of research on the policy process. Arguably research on single homelessness has been marginalised in relation to 'big research', for example on housing and the economy; the home ownership market; national household and housing need projections; and the debate over green/brown-field sites for future housing developments. The concepts associated with social exclusion could help draw different strands of research together. Both scholarly and policy-oriented research have the potential to contribute to the development of strategies for social cohesion.

Reflections on secondary analysis of qualitative data in the reflective research process

A detailed discussion of the research process which underpinned this thesis was set out in Chapter Two. The explanatory value of qualitative analysis and recent developments in the secondary analysis of qualitative data were also discussed in Chapter Two, along with the advantages and limitations to the approach taken for this study. This section reflects on the detailed output from the analysis, as presented in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven, and as synthesised in this concluding chapter. In particular, this section evaluates the extent to which the data sources facilitated an assessment of the value of the concepts associated with social exclusion as set out in the framework for analysis (Chapter Three).

Figure 3.1 (Chapter Three) identified a generalised framework for the analysis of social exclusion, focusing on: ideology; aspects of exclusion or well-being; dynamic processes of exclusion or inclusion; and the process of policy formulation and implementation. Figure 8.1 presents an assessment of the degree to which these dimensions of social exclusion were satisfactorily examined in the study.

Figure 8.1 Assessment of degree of coverage of dimensions of social exclusion in the data sets analysed for the study

Dimensions of Generalised Framework for Analysis of Social Exclusion	Coverage: Literature/ Policy Review	Coverage: *Single homeless people* Secondary Analysis	Coverage: *Social housing for single people* Secondary Analysis	Coverage: Overall Thesis
Ideology	Well covered in housing and social policy literature.	Limited discussion. Focus on personal values rather than political ideologies.	Limited discussion. Focus on personal values rather than political ideologies.	Scope for further specific research on political ideologies among single homeless people and housing and service providers.
Aspects of wellbeing (Comprehensive)	Adequate, but emphasis on labour market, and neglect of housing until towards end of study period.	Adequate in most areas. Greatest emphasis on housing and least on democratic participation.	Particular focus on housing and policy areas most closely related - health, social work, social security. Less adequate with respect to employment, community and democratic participation.	Sufficient to draw conclusions on multi-faceted nature of single homelessness and challenge notion of comprehensive exclusion. Scope for further research on relations between housing and certain aspects of wellbeing.
Processes of exclusion (Dynamic)	Developmental. Debates and dynamic research methods evolving during study period.	Satisfactory. Construction of single homelessness as a dynamic process (access to housing) rather than a 'given' state of affairs. Identification of exclusionary processes and barriers to securing adequate housing.	Satisfactory. Construction of single homelessness as a dynamic process (of access to housing) rather than a 'given' state of affairs. Identification of exclusionary processes and barriers to securing adequate housing.	Satisfactory / developmental. Integration of dynamics of single homelessness into debates on dynamics of social exclusion.
Policy process	Developmental. Significant literature on policy process had not fully incorporated concepts associated with social exclusion (and vice-versa) by end of study period	Limited, but some insights into homeless people's perspectives on the policy process.	Satisfactory with relation to local policy process. Again concepts associated with social exclusion not integrated into debates at time of data collection.	Satisfactory / developmental. Synthesis combined concepts in policy analysis with concepts associated with social exclusion.

Coverage of each dimension of the analytical framework is assessed in relation to three sources of information: the literature and policy review (Chapters Three and Four); secondary analysis of group discussions from *Single homeless people* (Chapter Five); and secondary analysis of *Social housing for single people* (Chapters Six and Seven). An overall assessment is then made of the degree to which the synthesis of all information sources (Chapter Eight) has resulted in adequate coverage of the different dimensions of the generalised framework for the analysis of social exclusion (Figure 8.1).

It can be seen that while no single data set offered comprehensive coverage on all dimensions of social exclusion, the combined analysis enabled the development and refinement of our understanding of single homelessness and social exclusion. Nevertheless, there remains scope for further research on key aspects of social exclusion and single homelessness, most notably the operation of the labour market and democratic integration (Figure 8.1).

It is worth considering the coverage of some specific aspects of the detailed framework for analysis (set out in Chapter Three) in more depth. A two-fold classification of 'coverage' of issues in the detailed framework can be identified: *policy areas* (health, housing, employment, etc) and *conceptual areas* (e.g. dynamic process, existence of an 'underclass', exclusive groups and clubs). The following sections consider the strengths and limitations of the secondary analysis of the two qualitative data sets with respect to these dimensions of social exclusion.

Single homeless people

With respect to policy areas, the data provided clear evidence of poverty and lack of shelter among the participants. In terms of the multidimensional nature of exclusion, the data provided evidence with respect to the importance of work/lack of work and the impact of homelessness on people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. There was some discussion about the importance of family and community. There was least discussion with respect to democratic participation and political ideology. There was evidence that single

homeless people *felt* excluded although there was also diversity in their perspectives. The data also facilitated identification of both housing and non-housing policy issues which affected the well-being of participants, particularly with respect to access to housing, social work and health care, and social security. While the importance of work was emphasised, there was little detailed discussion of employment policy or the operation of the labour market.

The data was helpful in illuminating the *processes* by which participants were excluded from housing and other aspects of well being. The focus of the study was on housing/homelessness and the main strength of the analysis lay in what has been characterised as 'the dynamics of homelessness'. Within this framework, data with respect to the social rented housing sectors was more comprehensive than for other tenures. Some analysis of the operation of *exclusive clubs and rational responses to homelessness was uncovered in the* analysis, although a more focused empirical study could have tested these ideas more rigorously. Similarly, while the data contained some evidence of the values of single homeless people and the attitudes of agencies and the public towards participants, a more focused empirical study could have collected specific data on ideological perspectives. Nevertheless, the data was valuable in adding to the critique of the notion of an 'underclass' and in supporting the notion of structural barriers to inclusion and the disempowerment of disadvantaged groups in the policy process.

Social housing for single people

Again, the data set provided clear evidence of the poverty and poor housing conditions experienced by low-income and homeless single people. While the data was helpful in illuminating the multifaceted nature of exclusion, discussions focused on those policy areas most closely related to housing: health, social care, income and social security, and the management of communities. While the importance of work/unemployment was acknowledged, there was little detailed discussion of the operation of the labour market. Indeed, most interviewees appeared to take it for granted the vast majority of their clients would be excluded from the labour market, with little consideration given to the

possibility of re-integration into work. Given that the focus of the interviews was on access to housing, there was little discussion of issues to do with family and social networks, or political and democratic integration. Nevertheless, the data gave a clear insight into the multidimensional nature of single homeless and housing management.

The data allowed a detailed analysis of the dynamics of single homelessness although there was more information about routes out of homelessness (and barriers to achieving adequate housing) than on the underlying causes of homelessness. Similarly, data was more comprehensive with respect to access to council housing, in comparison to other tenures. As with *Single homeless people*, while some analysis of the operation of exclusive clubs and rational responses to homelessness was uncovered in the analysis, a more focused empirical study could have tested these ideas more rigorously. Similarly, while the data contained some discussion of the political process and ideological attitudes towards single homelessness a more specific empirical study could have collected more comprehensive data. Nevertheless, the data was valuable in identifying structural barriers to inclusion for single homeless people and the disempowerment of disadvantaged groups in the policy process.

Conclusions on the research process

Taking account of the constraints set out above and in Chapter Two, it can be concluded that the framework for the analysis of social exclusion was usefully applied to the case study of single homelessness. The approach has worked satisfactorily as part of a reflective approach, which also drew upon an extensive review of policy development and scholarly research over a ten year period. The reflective approach allowed the bringing together of two complimentary data sets (offering the contrasting perspectives of 'clients' and service providers) which had previously been analysed separately. However, with respect to the wider development of secondary analysis of qualitative data the cautious position of Heaton (1998), as discussed in Chapter Two, is acknowledged.

Again, taking account of all of the constraints discussed, it would be feasible to apply the research method developed in this thesis to other social policy issues (say, crime or drug misuse). However, the proposition of Strauss and Corbin (1994) that theories or interpretations grounded in qualitative analysis are limited in time and related to contemporary social reality, must always be borne in mind. In addition to working within the empirical limitations of the primary data set, secondary analysis must always take account of the context for data collection, in comparison to the context for the secondary analysis. Any subsequent analysis of social exclusion in relation to any social issue would need to embrace continuing developments in empirical research, policy development and scholarship. More generally, applied with caution and rigour, secondary analysis of qualitative data can provide a useful addition to the range of techniques available to researchers seeking to understand the social world.

Conclusion: on housing and social cohesion

The value of the concept of social exclusion

The application of the concepts associated with social exclusion to the policy and empirical data on single homelessness revealed a number of limitations to the term 'social exclusion', as well as its potential value to the policy process. Social exclusion remained a contested concept. Consequently, rather than thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of 'social exclusion' as a singular concept, the analysis revealed the need to evaluate the varied approaches to defining and tackling social exclusion.

This thesis has questioned the notion that 'social exclusion' can be identified as a distinct phenomenon whereby excluded citizens are somehow 'outside of society'. The evidence has supported the proposition that social exclusion is better understood as exclusion from important elements of social life, rather than exclusion from society *per se*. As with other disadvantaged groups, single homeless people were integral to contemporary British society. Their disadvantaged position in the housing system resulted from the prioritisation of

others as having a more legitimate claim upon available social housing, in a wider housing system which did not address issues of inequality of access to reasonable accommodation as a basis for a cohesive society.

Although a range of dimensions of exclusion could be identified, 'social exclusion' may not be the ideal term to describe the patterns of inequality and disadvantage in the housing system or other dimensions of welfare. Rather than debating a phenomenon termed 'social exclusion' it might be more helpful to talk in terms of the *social consequences of exclusion from welfare*, whether that be housing, education, employment, health or any combination of the many dimensions of welfare.

The analysis of social exclusion highlighted the linkages across dimensions of welfare policy. Exclusion was re-conceptualised as multidimensional, rather than comprehensive. Analysis needed to take account of the individual and combined effects of exclusive processes within and across policy areas. Single homelessness was not solely a housing problem, but it remained, substantially, a housing problem.

The notion of process from the literature on social exclusion was valuable on two levels. Firstly, it drew attention to the dynamic experience of individual single homeless people, which changed over time in relation to their life experiences and was constrained by the processes by which they could gain access to housing. Secondly, the changing nature of the wider picture of single homelessness over time was identified. Though a constant social issue, the scale and nature of single homelessness changed in relation to social, demographic and economic trends, as well as trends in housing provision. The identification of routes into homelessness indicated the need for preventive strategies, while the identification of routes out of homelessness indicated the benefits of responsive strategies.

There remained scope for the further development of a dynamic analysis of homelessness and housing careers. New research instruments such as large scale, longitudinal data sets similar to those for 'housed' households could be developed. Preferably, however, existing panel data sets could be augmented to

include non-tenured accommodation sectors such as B&Bs and hostels, and could incorporate a more rigorous range of indicators of homelessness. This would facilitate the analysis of a range of housing situations, along a continuum from rooflessness to 'luxury' housing, across all household types in the population.

The analysis highlighted the possibility that concepts associated with social exclusion could be readily incorporated into concepts in policy analysis. The empirical analysis highlighted the importance of analysis across a range of actors in national and local policy networks. Single homeless people were disempowered in policy networks and there remained substantial scope for the development of mechanisms to empower homeless people in the policy process.

The literature review in Chapter Three highlighted the lack of debate on the concepts of social inclusion, social integration or social cohesion. The incorporation of a 'vision' for an inclusive society and ideological principles into the policy process model would embrace the notion of social inclusion more effectively. Nevertheless, the question remained as to whether any society would realistically expect to attain 'perfect' or 'total' social inclusion, and how that would be defined, identified, and measured. The notion of a continuum of welfare from an exclusive to an inclusive (or unequal to egalitarian) society would facilitate comparisons according to agreed indicators of inclusion/exclusion.

The thesis also identified the influence of prevailing social attitudes on ideology and policy. Given the limitations to the concept of social exclusion, a re-focus on the concept of inequality may offer greater potential for stimulating debate as to the degree of disadvantage which is tolerable or 'socially acceptable' in contemporary British society. Williams with Pillinger (1996) suggested that their conceptualisation of social exclusion could offer a new paradigm for social policy and research. In their analysis, however, inequality was taken as the overall structural dynamic within society. Social exclusion was cited as one of a number of process which contributed to inequality. Poverty was characterised as the outcome of inequality and exclusion and the target for improved policy.

The evidence from this study would suggest that the concepts associated with social exclusion are better understood as a valuable refinement of existing approaches to social analysis, rather than a distinctive new paradigm.

It could be hypothesised that the very visible increase in street homelessness was one of the trends which represented a key threshold or breaking point for public sympathy towards the least well off, and intolerance of the extremes of inequality which had taken root in British society. A broad public consensus on the need to eradicate street homelessness does not, however, equate with a consensus for 'equal citizenship' or any broad notion of 'social inclusion' (or a right to housing for all citizens). Arguably, the majority of the nation's citizens would need to be persuaded of the benefits to the better off, or to society as a whole, in order to gain majority support for comprehensive policies to combat social exclusion.

Notwithstanding the above constraints, the analysis of single homelessness and social exclusion indicated that there were a number of ways in which housing could contribute to *social inclusion*. Social housing providers have been at the front-line in dealing with the social consequences of exclusion from a wide range of dimensions of welfare. Arguably, they have been at the cutting edge of the development of policy and practice to respond to exclusion (Anderson, 1998; Chartered Institute of Housing, 1998). The development of multi-agency responses to exclusion and strategies for more cohesive communities could herald a changing role for the housing profession. They may have much to contribute to the development of wider strategies.

Whelan and Whelan (1995) referred to civic, economic, social and interpersonal integration as basis for social inclusion. Decent, secure, habitable and affordable accommodation for all citizens, would provide a solid base for civic integration. Quality in housing provision would contribute to economic integration as a basis from which to engage in the labour market more effectively, while also producing employment opportunities. Access to housing would also facilitate effective take up of other welfare services (social integration) and interpersonal integration by offering a base from which to nurture relationships with family and friends, and build social networks.

Implications for housing and social policy

Many of the manifestations of exclusion in contemporary British society reflected the impact of Conservative ideology and policy between 1979 and 1997, and the predominance of neo-liberalism in the world economy. Long term industrial restructuring resulted in sustained, high unemployment. Associated inequalities were compounded by lack of investment in the basic fabric of society (housing, education, health, and transport) in the drive to reduce taxation. The ideological adherence to resource allocation through market forces, diverted energy and creativity towards competition rather than developing a strategic approach to delivering welfare. Local housing authorities and housing associations were confronted with the consequences of the sale of council houses and sustained disinvestment in housing, as well as the wider social consequences of growing economic inequality.

Policies for determining access to housing in Britain could not be described as inclusive. Despite extensive debate as to the nature and scale of housing needs there was no overall goal that policy should ensure adequate housing provision for all citizens. The study period saw progress towards recognition of the importance of the interaction of different policy areas with housing and homelessness. However, there remained a need for a more finely differentiated analysis of these interactions if co-ordinated policy approaches were to be effective. Moreover, exclusive processes needed to be examined both within and across policy areas.

Jordan (1996) developed a theory of poverty and social exclusion which embraced global, national and local circumstances. This thesis has been confined to the policy process within Great Britain. Nevertheless, the constraints which a globalised economy (particularly, multi-national business interests) place upon national governments are recognised as a barrier to radical policy reform. Social exclusion has been portrayed as a 'European' idea (Berghman, 1995; Room, 1995) but, across the rest of the world, there may have been much less attention paid to debates on social exclusion. Moreover, the European Union conception of social exclusion was embedded firmly in the structures of a mixed economy of welfare which supported rather than

challenged, the market (Room, 1995b; McCormick, 1996). The rhetoric of social inclusion within the European Union stands in contradiction to it's underlying free-market economic principles.

A number of implications for housing and social policy emerge from the analysis of single homelessness and social exclusion. The analysis in this thesis demonstrated the need for both transitional accommodation (emergency hostels, supported housing) and secure, affordable long-term accommodation to meet the needs of low-income, single person households. Fairness in the access processes across all tenures would help to overcome the entrenched disadvantage experienced by low-income single people. Particular emphasis should be placed on delivering quality in temporary and permanent accommodation, along with affordability, to ease the employment and poverty traps faced by many low-income households.

Many single homeless people will need help to get buy in their own home and some may not behave as ideal tenants. These difficulties should not, however, be used as a justification to deny single homeless people fair access to social housing, without which they have no secure base from which to even try to rebuild their lives.

Further, housing policy must take account of process and the dynamics of household formation and homelessness. More flexible mechanisms, which can react to social and economic change, are required in order to support households in times of crisis, and bring stability to local communities. There is also a need for improved exchange of practice and understanding across the relevant professions, most notably housing and social work. Most importantly, the experiences and views of single homeless people should be incorporated into mechanisms for policy development and service delivery.

The analysis also highlighted the limitations of policy analysis based around the notion of social exclusion and responding to crises such as the escalation of rooflessness. The logical conclusion is the requirement for a more comprehensive approach to policy analysis which acknowledges the structural constraints imposed by dominant ideologies and social attitudes, and

incorporates a rational, preventive approach to policy planning across aspects of welfare. The emphasis would be on achieving housing and social cohesion, rather than ameliorating homelessness and social exclusion.

In conclusion

The notion of social exclusion is potentially useful but is also vulnerable to abuse. It is likely to remain a contested concept, possibly resulting in confusion, not to mention dismissal as simply a fashionable 'bandwagon' which looses any meaning if it is relentlessly reproduced in every social comment. Despite the conceptual limitations, the high political profile of the debates on social exclusion could provide a valuable platform from which to raise more radical questions about social policy and society. The notion of *inclusion* could, conceivably precipitate a re-orientation of prevailing ideologies towards equality and collectivity, and away from 'free-market' competition and individualism. The danger, however, is that unless there is explicit recognition of the interdependency that creates the extremes of wealth and poverty, the rhetoric of social exclusion will again fail to challenge the worst excesses of capitalism. Notwithstanding these limitations, concepts associated with social exclusion aided the analysis of single homelessness within the 'bigger picture' of social policy and the provision of welfare.

The key conclusion from the analysis, however, was that future debate needs to move away from social exclusion and homelessness towards a vision of social cohesion underpinned by quality in housing provision. Seven years after the empirical research was conducted, the comment of a participant in *Single homeless people,* remains one of the most poignant expressions of the centrality of housing to social well-being:

> *I think it's everybody's worst fear, getting thrown out of your house. You grow up with the idea that your house is your home....that is your base. And as soon as that's taken away, it's like everything you ever hoped or wished for has been taken away. If you don't have a house, your chances of a decent life in the future are completely gone. How can you*

plan your future and your work or your family life and your social life if
you don't have a place to live?

(Originally cited in Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993, p78).

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APPENDIX A

SINGLE HOMELESS PEOPLE: RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODS

The survey of single homeless people aimed to establish the characteristics of single homeless people, the reasons why they were homeless and their accommodation needs and preferences. The study consisted of structured interviews with three distinct samples of single homeless people and a series of qualitative group discussions. The definition of single homeless people used for the survey was described in the introduction[20]. This Appendix provides further information on the selection of the study areas, the construction of the interview samples and the design of the qualitative part of the research.

The interview surveys

Selection of case study areas

The survey was conducted in ten local authority areas. Five of these were in London, including four inner London boroughs and one outer London borough. The other five areas were local authority areas outside London. The target number of interviews to be achieved was 2000. This was to include 500 interviews with people sleeping rough (to be conducted in London and two local authority areas outside London).

The survey aimed to select the ten local authority areas with the highest incidence of single homelessness. However, as there was no existing comprehensive data on single homelessness, it was necessary to select the areas using the limited data that was available. The data sources used were:

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[20] Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars (1993), pp3-4.

1. The Department of the Environment statistics on local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of Part III of the 1985 Housing Act (DOE homelessness statistics).

2. The 1981 census data on persons living in hostels and lodging houses.

3. The London hostels directory, 1990[21]

Each of these data sources had its limitations. The DOE homelessness statistics was the main up-to-date national data set on homelessness available for analysis. The statistics related to households accepted for rehousing, about 80% of which were households containing either dependent children or a pregnant woman, not single homeless people (Greve with Currie, 1990, p8). In using this indicator, therefore, an assumption was made that the incidence of homelessness by local authority area among single people and those in priority need was broadly similar. The 1981 Census data on persons living in hostels and lodging houses was more closely related to the survey definition of single homelessness but would also have included people who were not homeless (for example, people who were on holiday or away from home on business. Moreover, the data was ten years old. Finally, although the London Hostels Directory provided comprehensive information about accommodation provided for single homeless people in London, it obviously gave no information on other areas of the country.

Subject to the above limitations, the ten local authority areas were selected as follows. Using the DOE homelessness statistics, local authorities were ranked according to the number of acceptances for housing and number of acceptances per 1000 households under the homelessness provisions. These criteria were chosen as the most accurate indicators of homelessness. Local authorities were also ranked according to the number of persons living in hostels and board and lodging houses in the 1981 Census. London boroughs were ranked according to the level of provision of relevant accommodation using the London Hostels Directory.

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[21] Chandler, R., Crockett, T., Green, G. and Harrison, M. (1991) *The London Hostels Directory 1991*. London: Resource Information Service.

The authorities which consistently exhibited the highest incidence of homelessness, according to these data sources, were selected. As a geographical spread of authorities outside of London was required, where two or more authorities from the same region were both highly ranked, the one with the highest incidence of homelessness was selected.

The areas finally selected by the above procedures were:

London: Brent, Camden, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets, Westminster

Outside London: Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham.

The samples of single homeless people to be interviewed

Structured interviews were conducted with three distinct samples of single homeless people:

1. users of hostels and bed and breakfast hotels providing accommodation for single homeless people
2. users of day centres for single homeless people, who had slept rough on at least one night out of the previous seven
3. users of soup runs who had slept rough on at least one night out of the previous seven.

It was possible to construct a representative sample of each of the above groups.

Two separate surveys of people sleeping rough were conducted in order to obtain as wide a cross section as possible. It may have been the case that the people who slept rough and used day centres were very different from those who slept rough and used soup runs. In fact, the results from the two rough sleeping samples were very similar across a wide range of characteristics and a high proportion of people in each rough sleeping sample used both types of facility, but this could not have been assumed at the design stage of the survey.

It was also recognised that, as people may move between hostels, B&Bs and sleeping rough, it was possible for someone to be selected more than once in each sample, or in more than one sample over the fieldwork period. To counter

this possibility, a check question was incorporated in all three questionnaires to ensure individual homeless people were not interviewed more than once. The technical report of the interview surveys considers the question of overlap in more detail (Lynn, 1992).

The hostel and B&B sample

To be included in the sample frame, hostels and B&Bs had to meet two basic criteria. They had to be providing accommodation which was essentially temporary in nature (accepting that some people had effectively become 'permanent' residents by default). That is, occupation was on the basis of a licence, rather than a tenancy. They also had to be providing accommodation for single homeless people, that is single people or couples without dependent children who did not have any permanent accommodation to which they could return, and had not been accepted as homeless under Part III of the Housing Act 1985. For specialist accommodation, occupation had to be principally on the basis of being homeless, rather than some other characteristic such as being young, female, an ex-offender or someone with an alcohol problem.

These criteria did not have to be met in respect of every bed space within every establishment, but where establishments accommodated a range of client groups, only the bed spaces normally or currently provided for single homeless people were included in the sample frame. That is to say, the sample frame was a comprehensive list of bed spaces for single homeless people in the ten selected local authority areas. Only establishments with at least five eligible bed spaces were included in the sample frame. This was the minimum number which was considered practical for interviewing and costs purposes.

To construct the sample frame for the hostels and B&Bs, comprehensive information on accommodation was obtained from a range of statutory and voluntary sector agencies operating in the ten local authority areas. Details of each establishment were checked in order to establish eligibility for the sample frame and the number of bed spaces provided for, or normally used by, single homeless people.

The sample frame included hostels, resettlement units, night shelters, and bed and breakfast hotels known to accommodate single homeless people. Squats and insecure accommodation with friends or relatives were not included. Whilst a broader definition of homelessness may have incorporated them, it would not have been possible to systematically sample a cross-section of single homeless people living in these circumstances. Moreover, it could not have been assumed that everyone living in a squat or with friends or relatives considered themselves to be homeless. Although, to an extent, this was also the case for hostel and B&B residents, the definition would have been more problematic with other types of accommodation.

Women's refuges were also excluded from the survey. Women's refuges accommodate women with and without dependent children in their care. Also, women without children who have become homeless as a result of domestic violence should have priority for housing under the homelessness legislation and therefore would not fall within the survey's definition of single homelessness. Whilst some women in refuges may have been eligible for the survey, discussions with Women's Aid Federation of England revealed that it would be difficult to ascertain the exact proportion in each refuge for inclusion in the sample frame. In addition, it was felt that the very broad nature of the questionnaire meant that some questions would not have been appropriate to women living in refuges while other issues of particular significance to them would not be covered.

A short follow-up study was conducted to find out whether the decision to exclude women's refuges had significantly affected the sample. This revealed that 19 out of 20 refuges in the ten local authority areas would not have qualified for inclusion in the sample as less than a minimum of five single homeless people, who had not been accepted by the local authority, were resident. The remaining hostel catered solely for women without children and 12 women residents had not been accepted by the local authority for rehousing. This refuge would have qualified for inclusion in the sample frame. If included in the sample frame, the refuge would not automatically have been selected for the final sample and it is unlikely that the final results of the survey would have been significantly affected by the small number of people concerned.

A two-stage probab lty samp ng scheme was used to ensure that each s ng e home ess person n the samp e frame had an equa chance of be ng se ected for nterv ew Hoste s and bed and breakfast hotels were strat fied accord ng to the number of bed spaces prov ded for s ng e home ess people and a representat ve samp e of estab shments was drawn for each oca authority area W th n estab shments random numbers were used to generate the requ red samp e of bed spaces for the number of nterv ews to be ach eved. The samp e was effect ve y a representat ve samp e of bed spaces prov ded for home ess s ng e people n each of the ten areas.

For each loca author ty area, hoste s and bed and breakfast estab ishments were samp ed separately as hoste s catered argely for home ess peop e and other spec a needs groups wh st bed and breakfast hotels catered for a w de range of groups, many of whom were not homeless, includ ng tourists and peop e away from home on business. Often, only a minority of hotel beds were used by home ess people, although some hotels had arrangements with loca author t es to temporarily accommodate homeless fami es. YWCAs and YMCAs were ncluded w th n the bed and breakfast sample as they catered for a s m arly d verse range of users. A checking question was used in the hostel and B&B quest onna re to exclude any residents who had a permanent home e sewhere (for example, students or those who were working away from home).

The number of available places in hostels and B&Bs for single homeless people varied considerably across the ten areas. To take account of this, the survey results were weighted accordingly. This did not alter the results significantly. Table A.1 shows the actual and weighted number of interviews achieved in each area. For the hostel and B&B sample, 1346 successful interviews were achieved, corresponding to a 76% response rate.

Table A.1 Achieved and weighted number of interviews in hostels and B&Bs by area.

	Achieved	Weighted
Brent	127	76
Camden	116	197
Lambeth	153	122
Tower Hamlets	151	136
Westminster	137	192
Birmingham	132	158
Bristol	109	131
Manchester	136	150
Newcastle	157	63
Nottingham	128	55
Total	1346	1280

Base: total hostel and B&B sample

The day centre and soup run samples

The samples of people who were sleeping rough were restricted to those who used soup runs and day centres for single homeless people. This was because it would be possible to draw a representative sample of users of these facilities in any one area. Day centres and soup runs were used to sample people sleeping rough because it would not have been feasible to construct a sampling frame of the whole population of people sleeping rough. 'Currently' sleeping rough was defined as having slept rough on at least one night out of the previous seven. It was recognised that not all users of day centres and soup runs necessarily sleep rough. Only users who had slept rough within the last week were interviewed at soup runs and day centres, as the purpose of these surveys was to collect information on people sleeping rough.

The day centre and soup run surveys were conducted in the five London boroughs and in Manchester and Bristol. The last two were selected on the basis of information on the level of service provision for people sleeping rough outside of London, collected at the design stage of the survey. As with the

hostel and B&B sample, information on day centres and soup runs operating in the ten local authority areas was obtained from all relevant statutory and voluntary sector agencies in the selected areas.

A day centre was included in the sample frame if it fulfilled the following specific criteria:
1. it was a day centre for homeless single people
2. it was located within the selected local authority areas
3. a significant proportion of users were sleeping rough
4. it was possible to achieve a minimum of five interviews.

A soup run was included in the sample frame if it fulfilled the following criteria:
1. it was a 'mobile' soup run or a food distribution point (e.g. outside convents or single site soup runs)
2. it operated within the selected local authority areas
3. a significant proportion of users were sleeping rough
4. it operated on a regular basis
5. it operated at least once per week
6. it operated between 6.00am and 12.00 midnight
7. it was possible to achieve a minimum of five interviews.

All day centres and soup run operations were visited to check eligibility for the survey sample frame and details of operation, and to secure co-operation with the survey. A small proportion of soup run organisers declined to take part. Because of the limited provision and the need to obtain 500 interviews with rough sleepers, the final sample for the day centre and soup run surveys comprised all the day centres and soup runs in the five London boroughs and in Manchester and Bristol, which fulfilled the above criteria and were willing to participate.

The numbers of interviews to be achieved were apportioned on a pro-rata basis according to the level of provision in different areas and the actual usage of individual day centres and soup runs by people sleeping rough. A representative sample was achieved by selecting every *n*th person using the facility as it was not possible to generate a random sample in advance in the same way as for

the hostel and B&B sample. For each site it was possible to determine a sampling interval to be used at each location, which took account of the average daily number of users and the estimated average proportion of users who would have slept rough on at least one night out of the previous seven. Interviewers counted users entering the day centre or using the soup run, and sampled every nth individual until the requisite number of interviews was achieved.

Table A.2 shows the achieved number of interviews with people sleeping rough in the relevant local authority areas. No weightings were applied to the day centre and soup run samples as the number of achieved interviews broadly reflected the level of provision in different areas. For the day centre and soup run samples, 352 and 156 successful interviews were achieved, corresponding to response rates of 83% and 79% respectively.

Table A.2 Achieved number of interviews at day centres and soup runs by area

	Day centres	Soup runs	Total
London	309	112	421
Bristol	21	24	45
Manchester	21	20	41
Total	351	156	507

Base: total day centre and soup run samples

Fieldwork and interviewing

A pilot study was carried out in two local authority areas, Leeds and Southwark, in May 1991. The fieldwork for the main interview surveys was carried out between July and October 1991. The majority of interviews (89%) took place in July and August.

Interviewers were asked to fill in an assessment form at the end of each interview. This was designed to give an indication of the reliability and completeness of the responses given. Analysis of this data showed that the survey results had not been affected significantly by factors such as: other

people being present, English not being the respondent's first language, confusion/memory problems or respondents being unable to complete interviews because of drinking or taking drugs.

The interviews were carried out by the survey firm Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) on behalf of the Centre of Housing Policy. Further details are contained in the technical report of the interview surveys produced by SCPR (Lynn, 1992).

The group discussions

The hostels, day centres and bed and breakfast hotel sampled for the group discussions were not selected at random. Rather they were chosen to reflect different characteristics of single homeless people who were living in different types of temporary accommodation or who were sleeping rough. Single homeless people from a range of ages and backgrounds took part but, specifically, the groups included women, young adults, and people from minority ethnic groups. They also included people living in hostels of different sizes; short stay and medium stay hostels; dormitory, single room, cluster flat and bed and breakfast accommodation; and people who were currently or had recently been sleeping rough.

In total, 20 discussion groups were held between May and August 1991, with 86 single homeless people, in 13 establishments. On average, four people took part in each discussion group. They took place in a sub-sample of the local authority areas selected for the quantitative interview surveys: Camden, Westminster, Brent, Tower Hamlets, Manchester and Nottingham.

The venues for the group discussions were selected from the sampling frames compiled for the hostel and B&B and day centre samples. Ten of the thirteen establishments included were hostels (seven in London, three outside London), two were day centres (one in London, one outside London) and one was a bed and breakfast hotel (in London).

Within establishments, individuals were recruited by specialist recruiters who were given specific instructions for selecting people at each site, usually identifying the age range, gender and ethnic balance of the group. However, within these quotas the recruiters were instructed to select a cross-section of people.

A topic guide was devised at the Centre for Housing Policy. The group discussions were essentially informal and conversational, and therefore worked loosely from this guide, rather than attempting to cover every issue in each group. The people who took part in the group discussions were generally willing to talk openly and frankly about their experiences of homelessness. Verbatim quotes have been used in the report to illustrate and further explain what it means to be homeless in England at the beginning of the 1990s.

Venues and composition of discussion groups

The verbatim quotes identify the gender (M, F) of the person quoted and the venue of the discussion group (e.g. Hostel C). A brief description of each venue and the composition of groups is set out below.

Day centre A, London

> Large day centre in central London. Most clients were men aged over 25 years who regularly slept rough or in night shelters. Two groups were recruited. These were restricted to males who said they slept rough 'every night', ' most nights' or 'quite often'.

Hostel B, London

> Hostel for single homeless people who had formerly slept rough, particularly those who had been sleeping out for some time. One group recruited, males and females, mix of ages.

Hostel C, London

Short stay hostel/shelter for young men and women (16-25 years) who had very recently slept rough. One group recruited, male and female participants.

Hostel D, London

Short stay hostel/shelter for young men and women (16-21 years) who had very recently slept rough. One group of male residents and one group of black female residents were recruited.

Hostel E, London

Medium-stay accommodation in bedsits for single homeless people over 25 years, with some support needs. One group recruited (mix of age, gender and ethnic group).

Hostel F, London

Large (more than 100 beds) medium stay hostel for single homeless people. Most residents were male and only males were recruited (one group).

Hostel G, London

45 bed short stay hostel for single homeless people. One male and one female group recruited from dormitory accommodation.

Hostel H, non-London

12 bed hostel mainly accommodating ex-offenders (male and female). Two groups recruited, males only.

Hostel I, non-London

25 bed medium stay hostel catering mainly for young black people. Two groups recruited, both included males and females.

Day Centre J, non-London

Large day centre in a provincial city, used by homeless people living in a variety of circumstances. Three groups were recruited, as follows:

- under 25 years, male and female
- 25-45 years, male and female
- over 45 years, male.

Hostel K, non-London

12 bed medium stay hostel for young single homeless people. One group recruited, mix of gender, age and length of stay.

Hostel L, London

Small hostel for young (16-19 years), vulnerable, single homeless women. One group recruited.

Bed and breakfast hotel M, London

One group recruited, all males.

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APPENDIX B

SOCIAL HOUSING FOR SINGLE PEOPLE: RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODS

Introduction

The study set out to examine the opportunities for single people to gain access to local authority and housing association accommodation. The research method undertaken was developmental in nature with the initial stage designed to inform the sampling and design of the subsequent elements. This allowed the research to be responsive where either subject matter or methodological issues emerged as important or problematic and to adapt the research questions and methods to take account of the evolving policy and practice environment. The study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The research focused on social housing providers. A different method would have been required to take account of the perspective of low income single people and other research has provided information on the client perspective with regard to homeless single people. The study was concerned with access to permanent (or, at least, long term) housing rather than hostel or other temporary accommodation. The study built upon the existing research and literature in the field, taking account of new developments during the course of the project.

The research methods adopted in order to meet the objectives of the study were as follows:

1. Collection and analysis of published (publicly available) policy and procedural documents, from a sample of local authorities and housing associations in England, Scotland and Wales

2. A postal questionnaire survey of all local housing authorities in England, Scotland, and Wales

3. Case studies of policy and practice in five local authority areas in England and Scotland.

All of the research design, sampling and data collection was conducted prior to local government reorganisation in April 1996. Consequently, throughout the report, data analysis and tables refer to the pre-reorganisation structures.

Analysis of published information on allocation policies and homelessness procedures.

Before proceeding with the collection of new data from agencies, a study of published information from a sample of local authorities and housing associations was undertaken. This had the benefit of making maximum use of available data to inform subsequent stages of the research. In 1994, 60 local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales were asked to provide copies of allocations policies and allocation summaries, along with any other documents relating to single homelessness and housing strategies for single people.

Table B.1 Local authority responses: allocations and homelessness policy documents

Type of Local Authority	Response rate %
London Borough	71
English Metropolitan District	88
English Non-metropolitan District	57
Welsh District	80
Scottish District	90
Total	70
N	42

As this stage of the research was, essentially, qualitative in nature, it was not necessary to construct a statistically representative sample of local authorities. Rather, a stratified random sample was drawn, using a small number of key characteristics, mainly available from the 1991 census (population; size of local authority stock; political control; geographical characteristics). The sample size

was around 10% of each local authority type and responses were received from 42 authorities, giving an overall response rate of 70%, (Table B.1). The response rate from non-metropolitan districts was lower than for other types of authority.

Given the very different nature and composition of housing associations, a separate sampling strategy was developed for these agencies. In England and Wales, associations with fewer than 250 units were excluded from the study, leaving some 359 associations in England (covering 94% of housing association stock) and 33 in Wales (96% of stock) from which to sample. In Scotland, associations with less than 100 units were excluded, leaving 110 (96% of stock) within the sampling frame. The sampling strategy aimed to achieve a 10% sample from the agreed sampling frame. The final sample composition and response rates are shown on Table B.2. A response rate of 78% was achieved.

Table B.2 Housing association responses: allocations and homelessness policy documents

Type of association	Sample size	Response rate
English: 250-2,500 units	22	73
English: 2,500-10,000 units	8	63
England: 10,000+ units	5	100
Scotland	10	90
Wales	5	80
Total	50	78

Detailed coding frames were developed to facilitate a systematic analysis of the published information leaflets and policy statements. This allowed broad patterns to be discerned as well as areas of conflict or contradiction for comparison with the research issues identified above. This stage of the work then informed the design of the postal questionnaire survey and the case studies, as well as providing a valuable empirical data source, independently of the subsequent stages.

Postal questionnaire survey of local housing authorities

The purpose of the postal survey was to collect quantitative data on local authority lettings and homelessness policies and practices towards single people, as well as on any special initiatives to tackle single homelessness. Consideration was given to an appropriate sample of local authorities. However, given the need to ensure coverage of different local authority types and geographical areas, it was decided to include all local authorities in Scotland, England and Wales in the survey.

Postal questionnaires were sent to all 457 local housing authorities in England, Scotland and Wales during the summer of 1995. A total of 190 completed questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 42%. Response rates by local authority types are shown in Table B.3.

Table B.3 Postal questionnaire survey: response rate by local authority type

Local authority type	Number of LAs	Number of questionnaires returned	% response rate
London Borough	32	10	31
English Metropolitan District	36	18	50
English non-metropolitan district	296	112	38
Scottish District	56	35	63
Welsh District	37	15	41
Total	457	190	42

It can be seen that Scottish districts and English metropolitan districts were relatively over-represented, while the response rates for London boroughs and English non-metropolitan districts were below the average response rate. The response rate for Welsh districts was very close to the overall average response

rate. No adjustments have been made to the results to take account of this variation in response rate in the different local authority types (Table B.3).

The postal questionnaire covered four main areas:

1. Allocations

2. Homelessness

3. Other initiatives

4. Nominations to housing associations.

The questionnaire requested that all data provided related to the year ending 31 March 1995, or the nearest possible date. Local authorities were able to provide up to date information in almost 100% of cases and no adjustment to the analysis was required. Returned questionnaires were edited and analysed using the computer software package SPSS.

Stock transfer authorities

Some 12% of local authorities who returned questionnaires had transferred the majority of their housing stock to one or more housing associations or other bodies. These stock transfer authorities comprised 23 English non-metropolitan districts and one London borough. By January 1996, some 50 completed stock transfers had taken place in England, made up of 49 English non-metropolitan districts, one London borough and one Scottish district (*Inside Housing*, 26 Jan 1996, p31). This meant that among stock transfer authorities the postal survey response rate was 100% for London Boroughs (there being only one case) and 45% for non-metropolitan English Districts, which was close to the overall average response rate, but higher than the response rate for that local authority type. The Scottish transfer took place in August 1995, after the end of the survey period. Stock transfer authorities were asked to complete all sections of the questionnaire, as appropriate to their organisational framework. *Survey* results reported in the main report include or exclude these authorities as appropriate to particular questions. For example, one stock transfer authority retained some 3800 dwelling units and, therefore, could complete those sections of the questionnaire on dwelling stock and lettings.

Housing associations

A pilot postal survey of housing associations was also conducted but was not successful, in that associations were unable to provide the detailed level of information requested. This was partly a function of the nature and diversity of associations as housing providers. Information on housing associations was, instead, obtained from published documents, the local authority questionnaire, and case study interviews.

Local case studies

The preceding stages of the study primarily, but not exclusively, produced information on *policies* towards single people. In order to find out more about day to day *practice,* qualitative research at the case study level was also conducted in five local authority areas. This gave sufficient scope to include a range of local authorit es of different size, profile and political complexion. These were selected on the basis of the analysis of information contained in published policy documents, as the case studies and postal survey were conducted simu taneous y. The characteristics of the case study areas selected were as fo ows:

1. London borough. The borough was on the border of inner and outer London and was characterised by a high degree of hous ng stress and high levels of econom c and soc al deprivation across a range of ind cators.

2. Eng sh metropolitan borough. The borough was an ndustrial town w th n a major conurbation 'n the north of Eng and.

3 Eng sh non-metropol tan d strict The d strict included an ndustria town and a sem -rura h nterland in the m d ands of Eng and.

4. Eng sh non-metropolitan d strict (stock transfer authority). The stock transfer authority was ocated n the South East of England

5. Scottish d stnct city). A arge city with a var ed socio-econom c profi e but with h gh eve s of hous ng stress and s ng e home essness

The ba ance of the case study fieldwork was we ghted towards loca authorit es rather than hous ng assoc at ons on account of the r w der respons b t es and

much larger dwelling stock. Housing associations operating in the selected areas were included in the case studies together with voluntary sector agencies working with single people in housing need.

Case study data collection included:

- Collection of statistical and policy data. This included strategy statements; homelessness and allocations policies and procedures; profiles of waiting lists, homelessness enquiries/applications, lettings and dwelling stocks; staffing structures and details of any specialist services for single people.
- Depth interviews with key staff at policy and front line levels in local authorities, housing associations and voluntary sector agencies.

Fieldwork was conducted during the Spring and Summer of 1995. Case study material was coded and analysed according to a detailed coding frame of policy and practice issues.

Reproduced from Anderson and Morgan (1997, Appendix A).

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
B&B	Bed and Breakfast hotel
CCT	Compulsory Competitive Tendering
CHAR	Housing Campaign for Single people (now National Homeless Alliance)
CPN	Community Psychiatric Nurse
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DOE	Department of the Environment
DSS	Department of Social Security
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU	European Union
HAMA	Housing Associations as Managing Agents
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office (now The Stationery Office)
HPU	Homeless Persons Unit
IEA	Institute for Economic Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LSVT	Large scale voluntary transfer
NCH	National Childrens Homes (Action for Children)
NFHA	National Federation of Housing Associations (now National Housing Federation
NHS	National Health Service
PSL	Private Sector Leasing
RSI	'Rough Sleepers' Initiative
SNMA	Special Needs Management Allowance
STHA	Stock Transfer Housing Association
US	United States (of America)
USA	United States of America
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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