groundswell
inclusive solutions

A Participatory Research Study

Creating an evidence base of the critical success factors that have enabled people to successfully move on from homelessness

Groundswell UK
1st Floor Lesley Court, 23-33 Strutton Ground, London SW1P 2HZ
Tel: 0207 9760111 Fax: 0207 2333 674
E: info@groundswell.org.uk W: www.groundswell.org.uk

CONTENTS

7. The Escape Plan Recommendations

1. Executive Summary

Traditionally with research into homelessness, the people experiencing homelessness who are the 'subjects' of the research, the 'reason' for the commissioning of the study and are the ones who will be most affected by the outcomes, find themselves marginalised in the research process. The Escape Plan turns this tradition inside out; a research project by people who have experienced homelessness specifically for currently homeless people.

The aim of this research is to create an evidence base of the critical success factors that have enabled people to move on from homelessness and its outputs are twofold. The primary output is the booklet 'The Escape Plan', which presents the findings by posing a series of questions, prompting people experiencing homelessness to develop their own paths out of homelessness. Secondarily is this, the report, an analysis of the findings to tease out good practice for practitioners, service providers and policy makers.

The research was conducted by two peer researchers under the guidance of Mike Seal, Head of Youth and Community work, and Principal Lecturer, at Newman University College, who led on the analysis of the work. In addition to the 25 formerly homeless people, 'Escapees', who participated in the research we asked them to identify up to two 'Significant Others', people who had an insight into their journey out of homelessness. They were mostly one 'professional' contact and another 'personal' contact; resulting in a further 30 interviews with friends, partners, children of Escapees and their workers.

Of course we did not uncover a single magic formula for escaping from homelessness – every individual had their own unique story, with a range of factors impacting in different ways on each person involved. Some critical incidents had opposite effects on people – for example gaining a hostel bed after a period on the streets was the exact point of positively turning lives around for some, whilst a push further along the downward spiral for others. However, we were able to identify seven key themes which, if addressed, we believe will significantly support people on their journey out of homelessness. As our Escape Plan notebook states, **"*We know that we do not have all the answers, but we think we have uncovered the right questions*".**

1.1 Being involved in a group activity

If we combine training, volunteering and group work, 21 of the 25 Escapees found engaging with these to be critical incidents on their journeys out of homelessness. Participating in groups gave people an opportunity to begin to look out, engage with things that were beyond the day-to-day existence that the homeless and drug-using experience can be. Other essential gains from group activity were seen as increasing self worth, giving back, developing confidence, finding structure, escaping boredom and gaining a sense of belonging.

1.2 Changing your attitude towards yourself and others

Positive turning points were very often related to a significant change in the way an individual felt about and related to themselves and others. Escapees talked about overcoming pride in asking for help, learning to trust people, being honest with themselves and with others - especially with workers, forgiving themselves and fostering hope. Importantly, people talked about starting to take responsibility for making positive things happen and for 'feeding' the positive side of themselves.

1.3 Hitting rock bottom

It was common for Escapees to talk about getting to a place where they could not continue from in the way that they had. Some specifically talked about this point as "rock bottom", a moment, an

epiphany, a realisation that things had become out of control and they "broke down" and looked for a way out. Ten participants reported hitting rock bottom as being one of their significant turning points.

1.4 Workers and Services

12 people felt that a good worker had made a big difference to them. Participants identified characteristics of a good worker and service as one that will go the extra mile, stick with people, utilise their personal experience, challenge, encourage, believe in, value and care.

1.5 Peer perspectives and client involvement

Ten people specifically mentioned that having the perspective of peers was a critical factor in them escaping homelessness. Both through formal channels such as peer mentor schemes or more informally from people they knew on the streets or in hostels. Many participants said that participating in client involvement initiatives was important, both as a means of developing oneself but also to fulfil a sense of duty to give back.

1.6 Recognising the importance of social networks, friends and family

Twelve people felt that the support of friends and/or family was vital. For some they provided support throughout, for others it was the making of new friends that made a difference. Significant others, particularly those who are or had been clients, also saw the worth of creating new or rebuilding old social networks, with many, despite acknowledging some of the difficulties, strongly recommending some link with family.

1.7 Coming to terms with the homeless experience

Some Escapees saw their homeless experience as an entirely negative one. However, other participants expressed positive memories of their homeless experience, particularly when recalling the unique camaraderie of street life. The idea of recognising some skills – such as an increased resourcefulness – gained through homelessness came through strongly, with a case for building on these as a starting point for moving on. What seemed key to people coming to terms with their experience of homelessness was the ability to reflect back and consider what was lost, but also what may have been gained through their experiences. This reflection appeared vital in helping people gain the resolve to rebuild their lives.

The challenge now is how to best utilise these significant findings to positively impact as many currently homeless people as possible. Groundswell are piloting some Escape Plan Peer Support Groups, training peer facilitators to run groups who will meet regularly to go through the Escape Plan notebook together, and commit to one small action each week towards moving on from homelessness.

This way we not only disseminate the findings but do so in a way that enacts some of the key recommendations in the process: engaging in group activities, volunteering, changing attitudes to oneself and encouraging peer support and peer perspectives.

2. About This Study

2.1 Derivation

In 2007 Groundswell ran the peer research element of a study which was building the case for an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) programme into multiple exclusion homelessness. The study looked at the gaps in homelessness research, and one of the gaps identified was 'an evaluation of what works'.

Groundswell explored this question further in a workshop with a group of staff, volunteers, researchers and clients, who were all in varying stages of moving on from homelessness. There was a clear appetite to get to the bottom of the question, 'how do you actually move on from homelessness?' and the name "The Escape Plan" was born. Both Thames Reach and Homeless Link then contributed further thinking through a series of meetings to refine this idea into a full research project, introducing the added element of the multi-dimensional approach - not just interviewing formerly homeless people, but other significant people in their journeys too, to gain as full a picture as possible.

After making it through the initial stages of funding bids, two further workshops were then held, one with a group of peer researchers and one with a group of people who had moved on from homelessness, to further flesh out the methodology, and begin defining key terms such as what constitutes 'moving on'.

The Trust for London (known as the City Parochial Foundation at the start of the project) and the Ashden Trust showed considerable open-mindedness in their decisions to fund this non-traditional research, significant patience in maintaining their offers of support until the project was fully formed and impressive vision in their ability to work together. Without their support, this study would not have been possible, and great credit is due to their staff and Trustees, in particular Mubin Haq of The Trust for London and Mark Woodruff of the Ashden Trust.

2.2 Partners

2.2.1 Groundswell UK is the leading client involvement organisation working in the field of homelessness, which exists to enable homeless and vulnerable people to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on the services they use and to play a full role in their communities. They operate from a set of core beliefs:

- **Inclusive solutions!** The only way to genuinely tackle homelessness and social exclusion is by utilising the knowledge and expertise of people affected by these issues.
- **There is no Them & Us – only Us!** Groundswell brings everyone together to create effective solutions.
- **Involvement works!** When everyone is involved, the process creates more effective services and enables people to regain their independence.
- **We believe in people!** People are society's most valuable resource, and everyone has the capacity to make a contribution.
- **The whole community benefits when we effectively tackle homelessness and social exclusion.**

Groundswell was created in 1996 as a project within a larger charity, becoming an independent organisation in 2001. They run peer education and peer advocacy projects on health and homelessness, offer training and consultancy to support client involvement in homelessness and drug and alcohol services, operate the Homeless People's Commission to enable homeless people to utilise their experiences to influence policy and specialise in peer-led research.

2.2.2 Newman University College. The Community and Professional Development Research Centre at Newman University College primarily works through the established subject areas of Early Years, Education and Professional Studies, ICT, Youth Work and Working with Children, Young People and Families. It has undertaken a range of externally and internally funded research projects. Importantly, research outputs from the school have been concerned to explore how applied research can be proactively used to significantly improve professional practice. Staff from the centre bring both academic and professional expertise of how rigorous research can add to our understanding of educational, social and economic issues from local, regional, national and international perspectives.

2.2.3 Thames Reach is a London-based charity who work with 3,500 homeless people each year, whose ultimate goal is ending street homelessness. They help homeless and vulnerable people to live in decent homes, build supportive relationships and lead fulfilling lives. They created the GROW programme which supports former clients to gain employment with the organisation, and 19% of their staff have personal experience of homelessness.

2.2.4 Homeless Link is the homelessness sector's leading second-tier body, supporting organisations working directly with homeless people in England. They represent homelessness organisations among local, regional and national government. As the national collaborative hub for information and debate on homelessness, they seek to improve services for homeless people and to advocate policy change. Through this work, they aim to end homelessness in England.

2.2.5 The Funders. The Escape Plan was funded with grants from two independent charitable trusts – The Trust for London and The Ashden Trust:

The Trust For London is a charitable organisation that exists to reduce poverty and inequality in London. They do this by funding the voluntary and community sector and others, as well as by using their own expertise and knowledge to support work that tackles poverty and its root causes. Trust for London is the new name following the amalgamation of City Parochial Foundation and Trust for London in July 2010.

The Ashden Trust is a grant-making charity established in 1989 and is one of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts. They primarily support programmes focusing on climate change, sustainable development, or improving the quality of life in poorer communities. In order to make lasting changes both internationally and in the UK, they make grants to organisations with a track record of delivering innovative and effective projects.

2.3 The primary researchers

2.3.1 Mike Seal is the Head of Youth and Community Work, and Principal Lecturer, at Newman University College, Birmingham. He is also a tutor on a post-graduate certificate in Health Issues for People Experiencing Homelessness at Oxford University. He designed and delivers the Advanced Professional Certificate in Working with Homeless People for the YMCA George Williams College in London, and is tutor and resource manager for the Engage to Change programme in conjunction with Homeless Link and the Chartered Institute for Housing. He has been involved in 18 major homeless research projects for agencies such as Groundswell, the department of Communities and Local Government, FEANTSA and the Centre for Urban Studies, as well for councils and PCTs. He has conducted over 20 major pieces of consultancy work with a variety of homeless and community agencies. He has spoken at over 30 professional and academic conferences on homelessness and related topics all over the world. He worked in the supported housing field for 18 years as a front line worker, manager, trainer and development worker, in Liverpool, London and Birmingham. He is the author of *Resettling Homeless People: Theory and Practice* (RHP 2005), *Working with Homeless People: A Training Manual* (RHP 2006), *Understanding and responding to homeless experiences, cultures and identities* (RHP:2007) and *Not about us without us: client involvement in supported*

housing (RHP:2008) and the forthcoming *Core competencies in Supported Housing* (RHP: Forthcoming) and *Philosophy and Youth and Community Work* (RHP: Forthcoming).

2.3.2 Michael 'Spike' Hudson is a former homeless service user with extensive knowledge of housing, regeneration and related issues from a service user perspective. Qualified with a Foundation Certificate in Qualitative Research, he has also been an active committee member and service user representative on a number of housing associations and homelessness support agencies.

Spike runs a social enterprise called Community Consultants (South Kilburn) Ltd and has worked as a field interviewer for the Office for National Statistics. He has an Advanced Diploma in Business Management and holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Community Leadership with Middlesex University. In 2008 he completed a Masters in Business Administration at Cranfield University School of Management.

2.3.3 Andrew Campbell has wide-ranging experience as a peer-educator and peer-researcher. He has performed several service user involvement audits for local authorities and housing associations. He was instrumental in establishing Outside In, a service user-led involvement initiative, for homelessness service provider, St Mungo's.

Andrew is qualified with a Foundation Certificate in Qualitative Research from the Association of Qualitative Researchers and has completed various training courses i.e. NVQ level 2 in Health & Social Care, Enterprise Solutions training course with Groundswell. The latter enabled Andrew to become self-employed as a researcher/consultant.

2.4 Defining the terms

2.4.1 Defining Homelessness

In the context of a participatory peer research project we grappled from the beginning with defining some of the terms we were dealing with. In defining **homelessness** we recognised that the term is contested[1]. We were keen to distinguish between those people who had had a housing issue, or a period of homelessness for which the exit plan is largely attaining new housing, and those for who the term is more problematic. While the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) has recently coined the phrase 'multiple exclusion homelessness', there is no agreed definition of it but it points to homelessness that is a manifestation of deep social exclusion rather than an outcome simply of housing market pressures. We developed criteria for selecting participants on the research that reflected this. All escapees had experienced either: **Sleeping rough for at least 6 weeks**, **living in a hostel for at least 6 months** or s**ofa surfing without prospects of stable accommodation for at least 6 months and could say that their homelessness was also associated with other issues such as drug and alcohol, or mental health problems.**

We did not include people who had been roofless short term, or those who had an alternative or cultural lifestyle including travellers and squatters.

2.4.2 Defining "successfully moved on from homelessness"

Where is the place where one has **"successfully moved on from homelessness"?** We found this to be a surprisingly difficult question to answer. The question is a crucial one, as one of the homeless significant others noted. It is encoded (not always accurately) in the language the sector uses around 'independence'.

> *"I mean, one of the bullshit things that you hear in the homelessness and housing sector is about independent living. I still don't know what it means, because I don't know anybody who lives independently."*

[1] Veness: 1993; Jones & Pleace: 2005

The literature was not very helpful, tending to define moving on in practical terms, such as having amenities, paying bills, or having sustained a tenancy for a set period of time, which for various reasons, personally in the experience of the peer researchers, and theoretically[2] we thought did not hit the mark. We held a focus group with ex-homeless people on the question, and the group identified the following tentative criteria, saying that participants should fulfil at least four of these to have moved on:

1) People feel they have control of their personal finances;
2) People want to be a part of a community outside of the homeless community and have taken steps towards achieving this;
3) People feel their accommodation is now their home and have made some kind of investment in it such as decorating or buying new stuff for it;
4) People feel some kind of stability in their accommodation and not that it is going to fall apart or be taken away from them imminently;
5) When people have issues they face them and if they use services, they are not homeless ones;
6) People feel they are not longer just surviving, but involved in things that go wider than themselves;
7) People no longer see the worst in others and expect others to see the worst in them.

[2] Brandon: 1998; Bevan: 1998; Seal: 2005

3. Method

3.1 Peer Researchers

Groundswell recruited two Peer Researchers, who were employed part-time for nine months. Both had significant personal experience of homelessness and excellent track records in professional social research. The research methods employed were developed with them over a five day training programme in participatory research methods. A wide range of participatory methods was used, many drawn from developing world contexts and adapted to new needs and settings.

The researchers began the project by attending The Warrior Programme run by Business Action on Homelessness. This teaches skills in self-reflection using neuro-linguistic programming and cognitive behavioural therapy. This was designed to better equip the researchers to cope with the issues raised by revisiting many of the issues connected with their own episodes of homelessness. Both fed back very positively on the programme, and continue to be involved in the opportunities it offers for alumni of the programme.

Additionally, as part of the project, the researchers studied to gain a Foundation Certificate in Qualitative Research from the Association of Qualitative Researchers.

3.2 The Escapees

We advertised for Escapees in two Big Issue advertisements, an interview on Radio 4, through homelessness services, and other Groundswell networks. Applicants to be involved completed a phone interview (Appendix II) to assess their eligibility considering our definitions of 'homelessness' and 'moved on from homelessness' and our sampling expectations, and from this 25 were selected.

Groundswell would like to extend our enormous respect and appreciation to The Escapees for their extensive involvement in this work: AM, Andrew Coleman, Dean Johnson, Dennis Rogers, DM, FA, Francois Greeff, Joanne Rootham, John Brannan, KK, LA, Martin, MB, MJ, MS, Paul, Paul Wilson, Prakash Mandalia, Robert, SK, Steven Mullins, Terry Murtagh, TO, Tunde and Ulisses.

We piloted techniques for interviewing the Escapees by conducting test interviews with the peer researchers and five others. Through this we discovered that, while some people needed to work through their period of homelessness more, or less, sequentially in terms of time, others started with the key incidents. Also, some people found that they thought about the events, and recalled them visually, and for others, key incidents produced associations with songs and or other events.

People's learning styles seemed to be a factor here, echoing ideas of visual, kinaesthetic and aural learning styles[3]. Piloting also found that, unless prompted, some people, particularly men did not talk about people who were significant, only events and the group thought this was not representative. It depended on what people thought was accompanied by the idea of significant events. Also this was needed because we were going to ask them for people who had significant insight into their journey – prompt questions were therefore developed. We also wanted to get people's idea on how they knew they had moved on from homelessness – this was both to refine our ideas, but also to ensure reliability that we were talking to people who had moved on from homelessness, given our stated concerns. With this in mind we developed different versions of a script to use with people. This script is included as appendix III. A final question that was added, again given our concerns for homeless people to inform other homeless people going through the process, was for participants to identify three tips, or pieces of advice, that they would give to other homeless people regarding exiting homelessness.

[3] Bandler and Grinder: 1981, 1988; Bandura: 1977; Grinder: 1998

The average length of each interview was 90 minutes and most participants completed a timeline in addition to an audio-recorded interview, which were then transcribed, as were interviews with Significant Others and Verification Focus Groups.

3.3 Significant Others

Another unique feature of this research is that it involved up to two people connected to each Escapee to corroborate, verify and gain a different perspective on their accounts. These people were identified by participants at the end of the interview as people with some significant insight into their journey out of homelessness. What was meant by 'significant' was largely left to them, but was put in terms of the aims above, in that it was intended to deepen the research and give a perspective that would make their views deeper, but not to give a different account necessarily.

It was decided to interview Significant Others by telephone. This was largely because it was felt that interviewees would not want to come into the office to be interviewed as they were not being given incentives, and the researchers did not have to capacity to go out and interview them. A prompt script is included in appendix IV. These interviews were also transcribed.

3.4 Verification Focus Groups

Following the interviews and provisional analysis a series of three Verification Focus Groups were conducted to review and hone the findings. One with Escapees, one with Significant Others, including people known to the Escapees in both professional and personal capacities and one final mixed group including Escapees and Significant Others.

3.5 The Project Team

This refers to the two peer researchers, the lead researcher, and additionally Groundswell's Director of Training, Simone Helleren and Chief Executive, Athol Hallé who both contributed to the project design, supervision of the researchers and the project management.

3.6 The Escape Plan Notebook

The designer, Dylan Byrne of BogStandard[4], won the commission to design the 'item for dissemination to homeless people'. He developed the concept of creating composite characters from real photographs of Escapees and Significant Others, attended the Verification Focus Groups and supported The Project Team to develop the idea that the findings were best presented by a notebook involving asking questions, the text of which was edited by Athol Hallé.

3.7 The DVD

Through the Media Trust's[5] Volunteer Film, a 5-minute film ***The Making of The Escape Plan*** was created. This was directed by Rachel Harvie of Love Productions[6] and was then broadcast on the Community Channel in February 2010.

[4] www.bogstandard.org
[5] www.mediatrust.org
[6] www.loveproductions.co.uk

3.8 The Workshops

Following the production of the notebook, the researchers then delivered 10 workshops to over 200 homeless people in London at a range of hostels and day centres. These involved showing the DVD, a presentation, a facilitated discussion and giving participants copies of the notebook. Additionally, two workshops were run for professionals working in the homelessness sector at the Homeless Link Annual Conference and presentations were made at two client conferences.

3.9 The Report

The analysis and literature review contained within this report was written by Mike Seal, with input from the peer researchers and the Advisory Group. Additional material and editing was completed by Simone Helleren and Athol Hallé.

3.10 The Advisory Group

The Advisory Group met five times during the project to provide advice and guidance to support the successful delivery of The Escape Plan Evidence Base Research Project. Advisory Group's members were asked to share their expertise and opinions on how to best deliver the work, and were not expected to manage the project or staff. The Advisory Group members included experienced homelessness researcher Geoffrey Randall, of Research and Information Services, a representative from Thames Reach – first Kyla Kirkpatrick, then Debra Ives, a representative from our funders – Mubin Haq of Trust for London and Homeless Link's Head of Innovation and Good Practice, Lisa Reed.

4. Demographics

Participants in the research included 25 people who had been homeless and had moved on, referred to as participants or **Escapees**. In addition we asked them to nominate two people who had a significant insight into their journey out of homelessness, referred to throughout the report as '**Significant Others'**, we conducted interviews with 30 Significant Others.

Considering the small sample, we recognised from the outset that recruiting a representative group would be hard to achieve. We also noted that as this group is under researched, their precise demographics are not established[7].

4.1 Gender

According to several profiles of rough sleepers and hostel residents[8], 80 to 88% of single homeless people are male. Among *young* homeless people, however, a lower proportion (60 to 70%) are male.

Our initial target in terms of gender was a cohort of 8 to 15 women and 10 to 17 men. We recruited 5 women and while this is below our target, this could be seen as a reasonable percentage of women. Considering the cohort was a predominantly older group (between 40 and 65 years of age), this sample is largely representative.

4.2 Age

Research by Broadway[9] showed that the average age of rough sleepers has increased to 39, with decreasing numbers of the very young and very old. Others[10] similarly found that younger people were under-represented in multiple needs homelessness, with 33% of young people being multiple need compared to 58% of over 40 year olds. We aimed to recruit a minimum of 2 from each of age group categories 16-18, 19-25, 26-40, 41-64 and 65+. Of those interviewed, the average age was 47, with one over 65, five between 26-40 and the majority, twenty, between 41-64. How representative this is of the population of the entrenched homeless group is hard to estimate. However, the lack of anyone under the age of 25, defines the scope of this research as representing the older age group. The Centre for Housing Research at York University is currently undertaking research into the demographics of multiple exclusion homelessness, which may cast light on how representative this research is – until this we will limit our claims.

4.3 Ethnicity

We aimed to recruit more that 10 but less than 15 people from a non-white background, between 40% and 60%. Two people chose not to respond to the question on their ethnicity, so of the 23 respondents we had nine people who were non-white – 39%, with the breakdown as follows: Asian/Indian 1, Asian/Pakistani 1, Black British 2, Black Caribbean 3, Mixed Race 2, along with White Irish 4 and 10 White/British. Studies[11] find that the nativity and ethnic groups of local rough sleepers and hostel residents reflect to some extent those of the local community. At the same time several reports and surveys suggest that homeless people from minority ethnic groups are more likely than

[7] DFES: 2007
[8] Crisis: 2003
[9] Broadway: 2009
[10] Bevan: 2002
[11] Warnes: 2003

white British people to stay with relatives or friends or in hostels, and are less likely to sleep rough[12]. On the other hand, in December 2002, the Homelessness Directorate reported that *'black and minority ethnic communities continue to be over-represented among those accepted as homeless'.* However, many of the people we interviewed were not likely to be accepted as statutorily homeless, and none were families, although some were in relationships and some had children.

All told, this sample seems a high representation of black and minority ethnic communities, with an over-representation of black communities over Asian communities. Again, we would not see this as a bad thing as the perspectives of these groups are often under-reported.

4.4 Personal Issues

To verify that we were including participants who had experienced 'multiple exclusion homelessness' as opposed to 'rooflessness' they indicated whether they had experienced any of the following issues: mental health issues, substance misuse, personality disorders, borderline learning difficulties, physical health problems, offending behaviour, presence with challenging behaviour, vulnerable because of age, experiences of domestic violence or sexual abuse, became homeless because of their sexuality, or others' reactions to their sexuality, institutional experiences (particularly local authority care, prison or the armed forces); involvement in sex work; and participation in 'street culture' activities, such as begging, street drinking, and street-level drug dealing; the impact of their migrant status; relationship breakdown; lack of a social network outside of the homeless community and having significant number of agencies involved in their lives. Of the 21 who answered, 7 had the presence of one issue, 7 had the presence of two and 7 had the presence of more than two.

4.5 Other demographic considerations

In our initial considerations we wanted to interview a mix of those who were employed and not employed. While figures do not exist on this for ex-homeless, we found that a third of people were either employed or retired, with a further third putting themselves down as volunteering, with an aim to gaining employment. We will come back to this significance later. Also of significance was people's relationship status. Although there were no families, seven people described themselves as in a partnership, which the research saw as significant in people's journeys out of homelessness.

[12] Davies et al: 1996; Gervais, M. and Rehman, H: 2005

5. Literature Review

Research in this area is minimal, and mostly conducted in the United States. Early research did not really look at homeless people's pathways out of homelessness, and certainly not homeless people's accounts of the process. One of the earliest pieces of research, by Blasi (1990) saw no obvious patterns that determined which individuals are able to get off the street. Sosin, Piliavin, and Westerfelt (1990) conducted a longitudinal study of exits and returns of homeless people, largely looking at duration of the homeless experience. They found that many who were homeless for an extended period of time had periods of being housed, or achieving respite. This has had resonance in more recent research in Oxford by Butchinsky (2007). They also found that previous episodes of homelessness had no bearing on future stability. Significant in terms of methodology they criticise previous quantitative studies as providing little information regarding the homeless lifestyle and how it changes when people get off the streets.

Moneyham and Connor (1995) researched the meaning of homelessness from the perspective of previously homeless substance abusers. The sample involved 8 adult males recruited from a substance abuse treatment programme. The road out of homelessness described the recovery process and included turning points, experiences of caring relationships, and a new way of viewing the world. While a limited and older study, it casts some light on the subsequent experience of our participants who had been drug users.

Piliavin et al. (1996) studied the exits from and returns to homelessness, seeing recent employment, early receipt of vocational training, and identification with other homeless people, as related to temporary exits from homelessness. Wong and Piliavin (1997) built on this research and focused on two things, the role personal problems played in hindering homeless individual's opportunities of attaining a stable dwelling and the relevance of material resources for becoming stable in new accommodation. They found that women, especially female family heads, exited homeless spells much faster and much more often than did males. However, the findings failed to distinguish where this was due to personal deficits or material resources.

The most comprehensive and relevant study pertinent to this research, and in terms of themes and methodology, was by MacKnee & Mervyn (2002) in the States called '*Critical Incidents that Facilitate Homeless People's Transition off the Streets'.* It examined self-reports from 17 participants who successfully exited from the street lifestyle to mainstream society. Their research revealed 314 incidents that helped or hindered their transition. The incidents were sorted into 19 facilitating categories and 4 hindering categories. Results were discussed in light of the following themes: (1) establishing supportive relationships; (2) discovering some measure of self-esteem; (3) accepting personal responsibility; (4) accomplishing mainstream lifestyle goals and (5) changing perceptions.

The other piece of research that had significant bearing on this research, particularly the section on hope and forgiveness, was another American study by Raleigh-DuRoff (2004) called *'Factors that Influence Homeless Adolescents to Leave or Stay Living on the Street'.* She studied 10 former homeless people's experiences. She found that the help of people—family, friends and professionals—was universally cited as the most important factor. She also found that youth-focused organizations played a key role in helping participants leave the street scene. Some participants believed that personal strengths were central to their success. Several described hope as the stepping-stone to get started toward achieving what they wanted, rather than just wishing. She also placed emphasis on the importance of dreams, as coming out of hope, *'Dreams are an expression of hope for the future, and participants' dreams provided that hope.'* Their recommendations for agencies had a bearing on that section in this report. They recommended workers (a) show compassion; (b) teach skills; (c) give information; (d) instil pride; (e) fulfil needs; (f) show the bad side of street life; (g) have a structured environment and (h) get more education.

More recently Heuchemer & Josephsson (2006) produced a paper called *'Leaving Homelessness and Addiction: Narratives of an Occupational Transition'* in Sweden. The findings identified homelessness as 'a life of high intensity lived within a limited time perspective'. For these women homelessness was related to drug use, which was experienced at first as a solution to life situations that seemed impossible to handle. Second, the analysis showed how social relationships can strengthen or change the lived plots of the participants. Third, the transition out of homelessness was accomplished through the development and enactment of new lived plots. Finally the analysis showed that life as formerly homeless women was experienced as less intense and as a life that can only partly be controlled. However the piece was only based on the life experiences of two women, but it serves as a reference point.

An interesting Australian study was conducted in 2008 by Johnson et al, based on a longitudinal study of 103 homeless households across Victoria examining pathways of homelessness 'getting into it, being in it, and exiting from it'. The research used a biographical approach and semi-structured interviews to develop a complex picture that focuses on the interaction between personal and structural factors. They made several recommendations including: The importance of listening to homeless people and connecting their past with the present circumstances. Funding bodies must accept that getting people out of homelessness is often a lengthy and complex process. Policy makers must develop, and appropriately fund, better approaches to ensure that young people leaving care do not continue to 'graduate' into the homelessness service system. Early intervention not only reduces homelessness, it has benefits in avoiding the 'effects' of being homeless, including substance abuse, and reducing the negative impact on people's self esteem, confidence and physical health.

UK-based research has looked at the subject of resettlement, but rarely from the homeless person's perspective, and where this has been done it has often focused on those who need re-housing, rather than entrenched homelessness, making for a consequent focus on accessing affordable housing[13]. While entrenched homelessness has been investigated it has tended to focus on people's conceptions of their needs, rather then how they found solutions to those needs, leading to a focus on how services can meet these needs, tending to lead for calls for more flexibility, or greater agency co-ordination[14]. More recent research, particularly by Crisis and others, has emphasised people's resilience and their use of informal networks[15] and the importance of respect for clients[16], but have not looked at the subject in a comprehensive way.

It seems therefore that this report is timely, and while it has similar research from the States and Australia to build on, no research has looked at this subject in this way from a UK perspective, or been conducted in a participative way with homeless people, and using the perspective of significant others to deepen this. In this way, this research should significantly add to the literature.

[13] Klinker and Fitzpatrick: 2000; Hennesey and Grant: 2004; McNorton: 2005
[14] McNorton: 2005; Reset: 2007; Scottish Executive: 2003
[15] Crisis: 2008
[16] Gorton: 2007

Prochaska and DiClemente and the process of change

The Prochaska and DiClemente model of change proved significant in this research. They developed a model in the eighties that offers us some insight into the process of change. There are several versions of their model[17], but broadly there are six stages: pre-contemplation (not thinking about it); contemplation (thinking about it); decision/determination (deciding on a course of action); action (starting off); maintenance (where you have changed but have not got used to it) and the final stage where you have either changed or you have relapsed (evaluation). If you relapse then you go to the beginning of the process and start it again.

The pre-contemplation/contemplation stage emerged as particularly important in this research as a client will probably go through this stage several times before making changes stick. DiClemente (1991) sees it as one of the most crucial stages that often sets the tone for people's reactions in later stages. Operationally this stage is often when someone is starting to re-engage with the project after a failed attempt or when a client engages with an agency having been through a different one. The latter case would seem to need particular sensitive handling as the worker will be inheriting legacies from the client's previous engagement with services, about which they will have little if any knowledge and will take some time to gain a picture of. In the former it would be worth reflecting on practitioner's feelings about clients' re-engagement with their service. Workers may feel anger, sometimes feeling that they let the client down, and sometimes at the client for letting the worker down. Even if we accept that a person may not succeed in their goals the first time round we may still find this difficult. As the client hopes that each time will be successful so may workers, feeling that a 'failure' is a reflection on them, and the effectiveness of their interventions.

Bevan (1998) re-enforces this perception, for while he acknowledges the reality of needing a safety net (one of his identified stages) he still portrays it as a crisis situation, an unfortunate occurrence, rather than a natural part of the process. That our clients are first-time successes is something we are judged on by our funders. The numbers of people 'successfully resettled' is a criteria for Supporting People (2002) as it was for the Rough Sleepers Initiative before it (DoE: 1997). It is justifiable to measure us by the impact of our interventions. However, we need to argue for a subtler approach and criteria that are more reflective of the nature of change and the fact that statistically, many people are not likely to make it first time.

[17] Miller and Rollnick: 1993

6. Findings

6.1 Group Activities

Group activities, training and volunteering together positively impacted on 21 of the 25 participants who found engaging with these activities to be critical incidents in their escape from homelessness.

Participating in groups, volunteering and engaging in training or courses gave Escapees an opportunity to begin to look out, engage with things that were beyond the day-to-day existence that the homeless and drug using experience can be. Crucially it was about starting to regain self worth, which meant looking beyond their own needs, giving back, developing confidence, finding structure, escaping boredom and regaining a sense of belonging.

6.1.1 Groups in general

One way of looking at the general positive aspects of engaging in a group is 'social capital'. Robert Putman in his 2001 book *'Bowling Alone'*, rekindled the debate about the role of social capital, the positive effects of the interactions of individuals in bonding societies together[18]. He had found that many Americans were not engaging in social group activities any more, they were literally 'bowling alone', and he wanted to assess the impacts of this. As part of this research he did a cost/benefit analysis in terms of the impact on health of being involved in group activities. He found that to become involved in such an activity had health benefits on a par with giving up smoking.

Despite the nature of the group activity, there were a number of positive experiences participants gained from being together with others. For some, group activity in general was the key thing that opened up the possibility of having positive things in their life.

> *"I just got myself involved in volunteering and from there its just kind of … not spiralled out of control, but it has in a good way, it's just opened so many doors."*

This thought concurred with some of the workers who were identified as Significant Others, they saw that it was a positive spiral that people were engaging with.

> *"But if you are going to meet other people, you want to make relationships, if you could start somewhere, you know, either volunteering at St Mungo's or go out to college, you've got something to talk about and that takes you into a bigger world."*

6.1.2 Gaining a Sense of Belonging

Over half the group talked about group activities in general giving them a sense of belonging. Raleigh-DuRoff[19] writes about the importance of belonging, initially as a reason for becoming homeless in the first place, because people do not feel they belong in the community they were brought up in. One of the Significant Others brought this home distinctly, albeit talking about another homeless person he had known.

> *"He didn't go on the streets till he was very old. Bizarrely he was probably kept on the streets because I don't think he had ever had as much status and kudos as when he was the king of that little street behind Holborn Tube station. And in some ways for him that was his community, because people trusted (name), he was a good guy."*

[18] Smith: 2005
[19] Raleigh-DuRoff: 2004

Raleigh-DuRoff also writes about the sense of community that adolescents get from the street and hostels and that if workers are going to get people away from this community they have to offer and build viable alternatives. Precisely what the homeless experience gives people, or not, was an issue of contention as we have a whole section dedicated to it. Suffice to say that group work, training and volunteering seem to have the potential to offer some sense of belonging to people as well.

> *"You've got to be part of a team or part of a family or part of a body of people, or part of a country or part of an army or part of a … you know, even in prison you've got to part of something. You can't expect to survive on your own. You need a part of people."*

> *"I went to rehab, I did 6 weeks. She gave me a sense of belonging in the human race that I lost somewhere. It is not just about work or food or a place to live, it was being part of something."*

> *"The volunteering as well that I do, it's kind of given me a sense of belonging to the community and people come up to me and, you know, I feel like I am somebody again and it's really nice."*

6.1.3 Gaining Direction and Structure

Significant Others, both workers and other clients, were illuminating about how the homeless experience can make people lose a sense of direction.

> *"He had done six months treatment and he was trying to go to the fellowships and was completely lost and had no direction. He was on the verge of… as he says, going back out there again."*

Significant Others underlined the importance of the social group context in helping people regain a sense of direction and staying on track.

> *"I think using his experience to help other people that have been in his situation. And being able to have like a positive impact in their process. I think that has been a crucial thing for him in sort of maintaining his change, change of direction."*

Participants and Significant Others linked gaining direction with having some kind of structure and the engagement in structure; managing time, routinely accessing activity, as key incidents to developing self confidence. The structure was most often achieved through participating group activities.

> *"I think she had a routine. She was being able to have a routine because I think she was living in the hostel where Cardboard Citizens[20] were running their workshops. So she had something to do every night, you know. Something to become involved in."*

> *"I am in a different time in my life now and confidence is so much… er… it's there now basically because I have a structure."*

This need for direction and structure can be linked to the human need for people to have a sense of control in their life[21], which can include things like feeling powerful, that we have influence, can make decisions, have real choices or are listened to by others who are relatively powerful[22]. The hostel experience itself can be disempowering in this respect[23]. As one Significant Other worker

[20] Cardboard Citizens is a theatre company working with homeless people.
[21] Brandon: 1998
[22] Seal: 2005
[23] Hutson: 1994, 1998

noted when looking at the philosophy of his agency, many organisations take away people's sense of control and responsibility.

> *"Our remit was to help people to help themselves, not do it for you… If somebody said, 'will you do this for me?' our reply was a matter of routine, 'We'll help you do it for yourself'. Which I think initially [name] found very frustrating because she had been used to a system which was sort of come in, we'll look after you."*

6.1.4 Escaping Boredom and Avoiding Previous Habits

For others, engaging in group activities was more a case of doing things and escaping boredom or, avoiding slipping back into previous habits and routines.

> *"(I) got more involved with Cardboard Citizens partly because of something to do and partly because I was really aware now that if I didn't do something else I would end up probably with a lot more problems than what I had."*

> *"Just to be active and not sit around because… I mean when you sit around and you get bored that's the time when things… your mind can start… the other head starts coming in again, do you know what I mean?"*

Several authors[24] talk about how hostels can be dull places, even taking away or allowing to fade the skills that people have initially. Many Escapees seemed to have taken an active involvement in trying to counter this tendency.

6.1.5 Gaining Confidence

Gaining confidence from group activities was a big factor for some.

> *"It was sort of like where you can gain your confidence back and attend workshops and like in the past."*

> *"They gave me a list of a few things that I could do, you know, course and college and all that, and er... confidence is coming back. You know I've been off the methadone… you know, it's coming back and I want to get out there and do things."*

Both MacKnee and Mervyn[25] and Raleigh-DuRoff [26]see regaining of confidence as crucial, although neither identifies how this can be gained. Significantly, Macknee and Mervyn distinguish confidence from self esteem in that it pertains to people's '*understanding that they had talents and gifts that could be used to give something back to society.*'[27]

6.1.6 Volunteering

Volunteering gave people the opportunity to 'give back', becoming a contributor and, through this experience, regain dignity and self worth. Interestingly in the research design this was identified as a sign that someone has moved on from homelessness. Volunteering also enabled many to put their own experience in context and was regularly a pathway to employment.

---

[24] Neale: 1998; Brandon: 1998; Seal: 2005, 2007
[25] MacKnee and Mervyn: 2002
[26] Raleigh-DuRoff: 2004
[27] MacKnee and Mervyn: 2002, p299

The significance of losing and gaining dignity in the experience of people who have been homeless is not a surprising finding as many before us have recognised *'…that dignity is an important variable to consider in understanding the experience of homelessness [and] policies and programs that support validating the dignity of homeless persons are encouraged.'*[28] A significant number of people talked specifically about the dangers of losing dignity, some used the term 'self worth' .

> *"You see, once you lose your own dignity, that is when you are the one who will end up with nothing."*

Perhaps what is less widely understood is how opportunities to give back through volunteering are so linked to regaining dignity.

> *"Why I got interested in doing this…* (participating in the Escape Plan) *was because this is part of what I do. It is to try to help, or to facilitate people to make changes that can be beneficial not only for them but for society at large so that is my goal and I feel good about it. It gives me a sense of, yes it's good I am not that bad. You know."*

> *"Like I need to be recognised as a contributor to doing something within my community. If I can't contribute something to my community, then what am I doing sitting back waiting on a Giro?"*

Escapees talked about volunteering giving them an opportunity to make use of their experiences and create something positive; turn it into a positive experience by showing that to younger people, by expressing to younger people these are the outcomes that could happen if you don't do this or don't do that. For some, volunteering was a way of putting their own experience in perspective.

> *"I think the whole giving back, the volunteering side of things has been a good way of kind of… you know, that kind of puts your stuff in perspective. Because sometimes you kind of realise that you are not the only one with problems and like I said, on the other side of the world some people have to walk miles for water, and they don't have electricity at the press of a button and to kind of… For me…makes me realise that oooh maybe my stuff isn't that much to stress about so…"*

> *"If you want to call normality, but it's a good way of giving back, not being a taker, being a bit of a giver…realising you re not the only one with issues, and your issues probably aren't even half as big as some other people."*

For others it was the opportunity to have a positive impact on another, seeing others change, or not having to go down some of the roads that they had. This is a theme we will return to in the section on client involvement.

> *"I am achieving other things with other people and supporting people, that's kind of a… it kind of balances out. I get a buzz from that, just to know that I might have effected change in someone."*

Additionally, many of the Significant Others talked about Escapees' experiences with volunteering and how it enabled them to recognise their abilities and personal qualities, the amount they had to give back, as well as acting as a driver for change. On occasions it seemed that the individual did not recognise this in themselves, at least for some time.

> *"He has got a strong sense of what happened to him and wanting to give something back. And that's been a driver for him as well."*

[28] Keys and Miller: 2001, p1

"I think it's a fantastic thing that he has and he is very able, very well able to communicate and sympathise and understand, so a lot of empathy for other people."

Many authors[29] have written about how the experiencing homelessness can actively take away people's sense of dignity, and about how hostels and day centres can re-enforce this in the way they treat people. Interestingly one person saw that their experience had necessitated them being selfish, and that this was something they wanted to change.

"Getting clean you have to be selfish. Because as a user I am selfish so I am kind of looking at my … where I am going and there's points where you have to be kind of selfish for your own sort of self preservation."

Volunteering was clearly a pathway to employment with five of the seven Escapees who were employed, directly obtaining work after a stint of volunteering. Actually being offered paid work following an experience of volunteering has to be the most concrete way to recognise an individual's skills, abilities and contribution.

One danger is potentially around organisations clarifying the employment prospects of volunteering opportunities, as illustrated by one Significant Other who pointed to a situation where an individual had an expectation of employment and when that was not offered, the experience became a negative factor.

"He volunteered at one service for three years. And every time he never let them down. He was regular, he was stable. But every time there was a job that came up within a charity they would go to somebody else. Nobody ever thought of him… [name] has been here for three years, look at what he has done, let's give him a chance. And he got quite upset about it."

6.1.7 Training and courses

For some, training was about learning new skills, while for others it was about exploring their own values.

"So yeah I ended up going to college to study City and Guilds in Homeless People, developing and supporting the needs of homeless people at City Lit College. So I went there and me and courses didn't really meet before, but I actually completed there as well. So having that foundation of completing everything it just made me want to be like that, just keep completing things and not giving up half way through basically."

For many this was a new experience of learning that they found to be very different from earlier, negative experiences of formal education.

Friere[30] believes that people need to be educated to develop consciousness of their situation, to understand what has happened to them and why. You cannot just ask people what they want, people have to learn how to ask, analyse and question. It is a dialectical process rather than an information-giving one. It would seem that this form of education was valuable for Escapees and Significant Others who discussed this at Verification Focus Groups. The new 'Outcomes Star'[31] being adopted by agencies, recognises wanting to learn as one of the later stages of becoming self-reliant.

[29] Seal: 2005, 2008; Somerville: 2001; Neale: 1998; Smith and Wright: 1992
[30] Friere: 1968
[31] Homeless Link: 2010

Meeting new people was a factor mentioned by many as a positive incident contribution to their move out of homelessness. It was discussed frequently in relation to training and undertaking study. Participants talked specifically about the value of meeting and working with people who were not homeless, but may have an understanding of, or sympathy for, their situation.

> *"Doing course work, doing this and meeting new faces, meeting new friends."*

This kind of normalisation also seemed to be important, giving a message that doing courses, in particular ones that are not exclusively for homeless people, might bring people into contact with people from different strata of life. We want to come back to this issue because it seems to be a key one, and one that was contested amongst both homeless people and Significant Others. Suffice to say that expanding one's social network was seen as a generally positive experience.

6.1.8 Group Work

Many participants talked positively about their experiences with therapeutic group interventions. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy was mentioned specifically.

> *"And it wasn't until four months into the therapy that I felt safe and confident in the group. Then, I started to get everything off my chest, started to unpack my bag, you know, all the rubbish I was dragging with me. And once I had done that… great, I felt free, you know."*

Most people who had participated in therapeutic groups had done so as a part of drug and or alcohol treatment.

For 13 people, groups were the space where they faced their issues and developed critical abilities; several felt they preferred this environment to one-on-one work that hostels traditionally offer[32]

> *"I met some amazing people in there and stuff and the group therapy stuff and all that kind of really started helping me to look at myself."*

> *"The penny dropped for me about half way and I just started to learn more, get more involved in groups, learn more about myself, core beliefs, core values, things that make the mind tick, you know, pendulums swings and you know."*

Significant Others, both homeless people and workers also saw the worth of group work.

> *"I think one of the really interesting things for me about the formation of the group of coaches was that there was a real sense in which people kind of… relationships were kind of transformed within the workshop and that continued over time. I think the mutual support from peers was the most powerful thing."*

However, it should be noted that both participants and Significant Others who were clients or ex-clients were far more enthusiastic about group work than workers, who often did not mention it. Those who did, like above, tended to be client involvement workers where it was a part of their work. As noted above, hostels do not traditionally undertake group work, and when they do it is often without the training and support needed to make it effective. Given this it is not surprising that they do not see its worth.

While groups are not a panacea, they can be useful with particular issues. Godfrey et al[33] developed a similar list of the positives of bringing groups of clients together, summarised below.

- ***Personal development*:** increased confidence, self-esteem, and problem-solving capacity and negotiating skills, including confidence that services are more responsive to client-expressed needs and reducing social isolation.

[32] Seal: 2008
[33] Godfrey et al: 2003

- ***Practical skills development*:** that not only reduces dependence on other people, but has the potential to offer more adventurous activities and expand employment options.
- ***Expanded knowledge and trust*:** pooling skills and experience and knowledge, increasing trust and confidence between clients and staff.

Tellingly, it is the personal development arena that studies[34] have shown is so crucial in escaping homelessness, and this can be hard to achieve through individualised interventions[35].

6.2 Changing your Attitude Towards Yourself and Others

Turning points or outcomes of critical incidents were very often related to a significant change in the way an individual felt about and related to themselves and others. Escapees talked about overcoming pride in asking for help, trusting people in order to be honest, especially with workers, forgiving themselves and fostering hope. Importantly, people talked about taking responsibility for making positive things happen for them and for 'feeding' the positive side of themselves.

In the analysis of transcriptions the research team discussed the fact that several people reported having two voices inside of them, a good side and a bad side. '***You're body has got two heads', 'The enemy in your head'*** and, ***'the little bird on my shoulder'*** are a few examples of how people personified this duality. In trying to understand the significance of these quotes one of the researchers recounted an old Chereokee tale of two wolves.

> *"One evening an old Cherokee Indian told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, 'My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."*
>
> *"The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: 'Which wolf wins?' The old Cherokee simply replied, 'The one you feed.'"*

6.2.1 Taking Responsibility

Many participants talked frequently about a recognition that they were responsible for both themselves and their situation; they were the ones that could make a difference in their own lives both internally and externally. This, as a realisation, marked a significant turning point.

> *"It's not the system that is not going to give you anything, it is you who is denying that"."*
>
> *"That's your self worth, that's yourself. You don't have to go and tell everybody that you've done this to seek acceptance. You should know within yourself that you've done what you've done for you. For yourself."*
>
> *"I think it's taking responsibility, I think it's that being responsible. I think it's that I could have slept on another sofa, you know I could have continued on that same as it ever was and not really caring about it, but then just moving on and saying this has got to stop, do you know what I mean?… I think that lesson is taking responsibility, being responsible for myself, rather than irresponsible."*

[34] MacKnee and Mervyn: 2002 and Raleigh-DuRoff: 2004
[35] Smith: 2006; Seal: 2008

The other side of taking responsibility is about re-addressing blame. Many participants talked about needing to re-route their attention and energies, away from past incidents and people they felt were responsible for their situation.

> *"Not blaming somebody else, not blaming my father for having got killed, or not blaming my mother for having committed suicide or not, it's like there is no blame out there, it's actually taking responsibility."*

Significant Others who identified as workers tended to see individuals taking responsibility more in terms of clients having ownership of the process of the support they receive; becoming active participants in their development.

> *"For me, what the difference that was there for [name] was that he took ownership of a process of… you know, recovering from the stuff that brought him into homelessness and how to kind of get out of that."*

Some authors[36] think that homeless services have historically created a culture of dependency that clients have internalised, which can be an obstacle to people taking responsibility for themselves. Participants reflected this, seeing the need to be proactive, and developing awareness, that motivation to change is only going to come from themselves.

> *"I realised that I am in the driving seat and no one else. Rather than say 'Oh I've done this' and now I am waiting for them to do it, and come back to me. No. I am the one who has got to push."*

Some talked about this in terms of 'working the system', taking responsibility for getting the best and the most out of what is on offer, both in reaching out to agencies, and to seeking out information and help.

> *"The services are obviously very important, for there you've literally got everything covered as long as you have got the motivation to sort of stick with the information that they give you."*

6.2.2 Being Honest with Yourself and Others

One aspect of taking responsibility that all parties put an emphasis on, was to face things and stop hiding. For many Escapees, being honest with themselves and staff was a crucial and difficult step essential to overcoming issues and moving forward.

> *"I was just living this lie and they knew, the staff knew, the residents knew."*

> *"It was bloody tough to be honest because … I wasn't used to it."*

> *"You've got to be honest with yourself and honest with the people that are helping you or trying to help you. I think that's mainly… I kind of try and live by that. Because from that kind of spirals everything else, you know if I am honest with the services then they know how to help me properly."*

Significant Others also recognised this change in people and saw the positives that happened when people did face things.

> *"He took the knocks and dealt with it not by running away into himself… he just went right yeah. This is what I've got… I can do this, I can do that."*

[36] Seal: 2005, 2007; Brandon: 1998; Ravenhill: 2008

Where this tendency to self deceive, or more generally deceive comes from is a moot point. One study[37] charts how aspects of a homeless person's identity can be the creation of fictitious histories and current narratives about their lives that do not add up, as a way of making sense of a fractured life. Some authors[38] show this to be a common phenomenon with people who have a history of care or abuse, perhaps just an exaggeration of how any person makes sense of their life[39]. Whilst four studies[40] would take this further and say there are many aspects of homelessness provision that encourages, and even needs deception on the part of the clients, particularly about issue like drug use, and where they are taking those drugs. More insidiously, this has meant that clients are generally regarded as being dishonest[41], which means they are treated as such, and their deceptions are re-enforced.

One person saw this as a symbiotic relationship, whereby if he was honest, and people treated him as such, then this would develop into a virtuous circle.

> *"Yeah and I am chipping my own wall down. As well as other people chipping my wall from the outside, I am also chipping it from the inside."*

6.2.3 Trust

Several of the participants talked of the importance of learning to trust people again as a critical stage in their journey out of homelessness.

Authors[42] have talked about lack of trust in others being common across homeless people, normally based on feeling let down or exploited by previous workers and others, with one[43] noting that because of basic survival needs, relationships among homeless people are frequently characterized by distrust and suspicion. Breakey and Fischer[44] point out that many homeless people's, '*level of alienation from the mainstream is such that extraordinary efforts are needed to gain a level of trust that will permit them to accept help'.*

One of the Significant Others commented on how the homeless experience did engender mistrust.

> *"That takes an awful long time and I would be honest with you it takes a lifetime to start building relationships – learning to trust."*

Participants also saw it as something they had developed, but had to learn to get over.

> *"You see it's a matter of trust. You know, if I can't trust you, then I don't have anything to hold onto. In a sense of like… people who say they don't trust anybody and they get on with their own life. It's all rubbish."*

One person made a distinct link between self esteem, self belief and trust:

> *"Trust, you know, and I am still having issues with trust, but basically I have started trusting people again. I believed that she believed in me and she thought I was worth it. So I started believing that too."*

As well as being a message for clients to overcome their reservations and extend this trust to workers, it places a responsibility on workers to prioritise building trusting relationships. While this is

---

[37] Snow and Anderson: 1987
[38] ORioradan et al: 2003
[39] Miller and O'Byrne
[40] Seal: 2007; Flynn: 2007; Cain & Van Doorn: 2007; Butchy: 2007
[41] Smith and Wright: 1992
[42] Prentis: 2003; Rowe: 1999
[43] Dordick: 1997
[44] Breakey and Fischer: 1990, p. 37

the practice for many, the practical emphasis of many agencies in the UK means that such trust-building seems less relevant[45]. Rowe identifies this as particularly important early on in the relationship and that it can be the essential component between being a worker who makes a difference, and one who re-enforces a homeless person's lack of trust in others. As he writes[46]: "*Trust is a thread that is stretched and loosened and wound through the many moments of a relationship and it can break at various points. When the worker and the client have known each other for some time, trust is tied to an investment in the relationship and negotiations over long-term needs. In early encounters, though, trust is more of an all-or-nothing proposition.*" Significant Others frequently recognised this as being a crucial stage, in this instance, understanding that it can be a slow process that both parties need to invest in, in order to earn that trust.

> *"She would come to regularly join the workshops and then she would take responsibility for some very small projects we would do and she would sort of trust us and we would depend on her more and more. And that trust was won."*

6.2.4 Pride

Some Escapees saw in hindsight that their pride had stood in the way. It hindered them in developing the sort of honest, trusting relationships that would help them to move on, and in asking for, or accepting help.

> *"I think the pride thing, especially for me can be our downfall."*
>
> *"It's a pride thing - knuckle down and say please give me a hostel, please give me a flat. You have to swallow your pride because if you don't do that you'll get nowhere."*

Some talked about trying to 'do it on my own'.

> *"I was like no I can do it. I can do it on my own. But I tried on my own. I tried to do it that way, just to get away for a few weeks, but I always came back and did the same thing."*

This would seem to be a distinct message to clients, but also to agencies. It is well documented[47] that many people experience difficulties in asking for help, but that this is particularly the case with people who are institutionalised.

Prochaska and DiClemente therefore place particular emphasis on being there during the pre-contemplative stage[48] when people may be 'saying' that they do not want help. Work is on moving them towards the contemplative stage, or even just being there to encourage them when they are on the cusp of this move. Unfortunately, funding regimes such as Supporting People often place too great an emphasis on people being 'ready' and 'engaged', when there are many stages before this and this may not be realistic for people who are entrenched homeless.

Other research[49] has shown that people with multiple issues, and in the pre-contemplative stages, do not respond well to fixed keyworking systems, set appointments and intense interventions, preferring shorter, more anonymous and more frequent interventions. Unfortunately, many agencies still operate the key-working systems on an appointment basis, often for an hour a week with a set

[45] Seal 2005
[46] Rowe: 1999, pp 82-83
[47] Miller and Rollnick: 2002; Prochaska and DiClemente: 1984; Lamb: 1984
[48] Prochaska and DiClemente and the process of change is discussed in the Literature Review section above.
[49] Seal: 2004; Lehman et al: 1997; Morse et al: 1997

person[50]. Good significant workers recognised this, that people take time to get over the pride of asking for things, but that we need to be there at the time when they are ready.

> *"Everybody plateaus at comfort, and then they want to move, and if they don't know how to get out of that comfort zone that they've put themselves into. And then they'll go searching."*

> *"Er… him personally, he was hungry. He believed that there should be something better out there for him. He was hungry to take on any support and guidance that he could get."*

More generally one worker recognised that clients generally go through the stage Prochaska and DiClemente recognise, and that workers need to have patience with this and work people through the stages.

> *"That was the first time. And his expectations back then were quite unrealistic. He wanted a quick fix. He wanted to salvage everything through this quick fix. And he had gone too far to be a quick fix. Er…. the second time, he was drug free. He was in a programme. And he was looking for more stability. He was still not stable with his housing, not stable with the focus. And the third one was he had his tenancy, it was super secure tenancy. But he was in limbo of no forward movement. He was doing some volunteering but wasn't really being appreciated."*

6.2.5 Hope

Escapees placed a strong emphasis on not giving up on themselves, of fostering hope. Hinds [51]defined hope as believing that a personal tomorrow exists.

> *"Don't give up… you will turn that corner. Hang tight. And no matter what people say to you, if they try to put you down – because I had a lot of put downs."*

Multiple studies[52] have focused on how vital hope is in making change from a difficult situation. One[53] views hope as a powerful coping mechanism to decrease despair and make changes, while another[54] describes hope as a prerequisite for action and an expectation of something desired.

Significant Others tended to see hope as important because people had lost a sense of direction, and even of who they were. They saw hope in terms of having a future, which people might have lost sight of.

> *"I think he got back in touch with what he wanted to be and who he could be and I think that was… that was the thing. So, you know, there's something about seeing the future yourself and you've seen a different future for yourself."*

Once they had that they would be able to set others goals for themselves, and develop a momentum in their lives.

> *"He has goals and aspirations. Things that he would like to be able to achieve. He'd like to be able to carry on with current work but going for further training. That will enable him to establish a good working life as well as provide for his family."*

---

[50] Seal: 2005
[51] Hinds: 1988
[52] As discussed in Raleigh-DuRoff: 2004
[53] Herth: 1996
[54] Stotland: 1969

"She just kind of found momentum when she finally managed to do what she loved. And you know in her house, spending the time doing what she liked. And you know, I think she found herself complete in a way."

Some significant workers saw the importance of hope, and also that as workers they might have to hold that for people. In the middle of talking about the pressures of the job they said:

"We need to keep an understanding (that) at the heart of this is an individual and we've got to get them back in touch with their hopes and dreams again. And sometimes they can't do that. But that's our job, is to be those… the holders of the hope, keep the flag alive."

One significant other, who was the daughter of the participant, thought that this hope could also be given by other homeless people, in the form of a living example:

"I think he gave my Dad a lot of kind of hope because this person had been through so much in his life, I think hearing stories from other homeless people and what they've been through and how they've survived and how they are still respectable."

This seems to be an important message to agencies and policy makers, to be a beacon of hope, but to encourage clients to seek such hope in others. At least agencies should not be a negative influence on people's sense of hope, feeding the negative wolf, if you will. We will cover in the agency section how historically agencies have often worked to deficit models of homeless people, a trend that needs to be countered.

6.2.6 Forgiving oneself

Forgiveness seemed to be a significant issue, three people seeing it as one of their key critical incidents.

"You are worth being happy, because a lot of times there is a lot of feelings of guilt, a lot of feelings of, you know, that can lead you to that kind of cycle and for me it was the fact that I felt that I wasn't worth it. I done things in the past that I am not proud of… so I never felt that I was worth it, so any pain that was coming to me I deserved it."

"You made mistakes and you hurt people then some people may never forgive you or never ever see you as a different character to what they see you know. And that's just how it is and I've had to swallow that."

Other's didn't feel that it factored for them at all:

"Because I am homeless, it doesn't mean I've done something wrong."

Bowpitt, & Harding[55] note how, particularly when working with substance users, support programmes should focus on a restoration of people's identity, self-worth, and that a part of this is enabling people to become willing to forgive themselves their early failures. Other authors[56] concur that this is an essential ingredient of care, and a starting point for change.

[55] Bowpitt, & Harding: 2009
[56] Brent and Belcher: 2006

6.2.7 Spirituality

Developing a belief in God, or a wider spirituality, something beyond, was a significant incident for seven participants. For Escapees who talked about something 'higher' it was regularly related to a 'sign' pointing them in a different direction.

> *"Then one day I woke up after 16 months and it went 'today you must leave' and I felt lifted. It's strange to say I felt my body being lifted up saying you've got to get out, you're not welcome here."*

For others it was linked to being given another chance, linking back to that sense of hope but additionally a final opportunity to set things straight,

> *"Chance, he gave me that chance and he wouldn't give me a chance like that again, so I wouldn't mess about with that."*

Others saw faith as the last chance to get out of the situation they found themselves in.

> *"All I know is that this is my life, that's the way I lived it, I made bad choices and at the end, it's just me, myself and I, I had to resort to this. And I had to pray. I had to pray and say dear God please get me out of this mess."*

This concurs with Russell's[57] findings that experiencing a supportive spiritual connection or 'trust in God' facilitates street people's commitment to mainstream lifestyle. Others saw it as more of a spiritual awakening within themselves, or even having a more simplistic naturalistic approach to life.

> *"I kind of just brought myself down to earth a bit and started appreciating the simple things in life. Started realising the things that I really like, like nature you know. All sorts of things I'd got in touch with again basically."*

> *"I started to… a bit like the twelve steps, but have like a higher power in my head. A person up there. An overlooker of my thinking and stuff and that sort of progressed over the time I was there and it just got me out of that anxiety thing."*

Interestingly, in their study, MacKnee and Mervyn[58] saw a link between forgiveness and developing a sense of spirituality, seeing that individual's needed some spiritual forgiveness before they could forgive themselves.

6.3 Hitting Rock Bottom

It was common for Escapees to talk about getting to a place where they couldn't continue on in the way that they had. Some specifically talked about this point as 'rock bottom', a moment, an 'epiphany', a realisation that things had got out of control and they 'broke down' and looked for a way out. Ten participants reported hitting rock bottom as being one of their significant turning points.

> *"It's hit me, like this is an epiphany, this was my moment, this was my rock bottom, just looking round and that. I mean I did cry. Not there and then in front of them, I went to the toilets and I did cry. I thought fuck this is bullshit what am I doing to myself?"*

> *"I had lost the plot. Absolutely hit rock bottom. And yeah, I went to the doctors. I hit rock bottom, wanted help. I wanted help – I just couldn't do it anymore. So I went to the doctors and…. this thing in my throat, frog in my throat, now; just thinking about it. I went to the doctors and I just had a break down. I just broke*

[57] Russell: 1991
[58] MacKnee and Mervyn: 2002

down in front of her. In the end it just got the point where I said, 'You know what I can't do this no more.'"

Others said it was the point where they were left with a stark reality, and could not hide from themselves anymore.

"You start saying the same things over and over to people, and making the same promises. I just realised it like. It was like almost my gig is up, it's like I've been rumbled, it doesn't work anymore you know."

"You reach the point … although you might not admit to yourself, but you reach the point that you can't go on."

Some of the Significant Others concurred with this:

"...until that person decides that they want the help, there is absolutely nothing you can do... until that person recognises – I can't do this. I don't want to do this. I don't want to do this anymore."

For others it was the point where they realised that if they did not do something, they probably would not survive.

"So, It's either you sort it out, like, you say you can or, you just piss off and die somewhere, because at the end of the day… either it's put up or shut up."

"I think one of the milestones and wanting out… was waking up on a Monday morning and realising I had been smoking heroin all weekend. And thinking I had the flu while the other half of my head was going, 'Don't' be so ridiculous, you haven't got the flu, what you've been doing is sitting smoking heroin.' So that was a really big wake up call. And that was it. I didn't touch it again."

Again, some of the Significant Others concurred with this, both clients and workers.

"I think he had been drinking on some kind of medication that you shouldn't drink on, and it caused him some serious complications and it nearly killed him. And I think that scared him a lot. I think that really scared him."

Others 'rock bottom' was a point that pushed them to make a grab for some inner strength, or even a realisation that they deserved another chance.

"There was something inside me that told me that I am bigger than this. But I couldn't grab hold of it. I knew it was there but I could not grab it."

"I was desperate. I needed to change. I felt that my life couldn't get on like that anymore, I was unhappy, I was miserable and I realised that why on earth can't I give myself a chance? Give yourself one opportunity."

Trying to find commonality between these accounts is difficult, but perhaps they concur with MacKneel and Mervyn[59] who termed the phenomena 'bottoming out'. They found that it took some people to 'hit rock bottom' before they could change their lives. Although each person described 'the bottom' uniquely, the general sense of bottoming out was *'a rejection with one's self and one's lifestyle, and a desire to have more and do more in life.'*

One of the peer researchers described that he needed to, and almost forced himself to reach this 'rock bottom'. Such a perspective concurred with some Significant Others.

"He had to find his rock bottom. He had to find the end of his tether."

[59] Mackneel and Mervyn: 2002

"It's just got to a stage where he's hit rock bottom. Basically everyone's got their rock bottom – I think we both hit ours. You've got to hit rock bottom to start to get better and that's what happened to me. I realised that I couldn't go any lower, he realised the same thing around about the same time."

Others were worried about the idea of 'rock bottom'.

"I am usually a bit worried about the view that you've got to reach rock bottom because I think, God, why do you have to go to that place in the first place?"

"I mean some people don't need to hit rock bottom. Some people are you know… that have got a lot more insight. It depends if you are talking to someone… you know, what they've got around them so [name] really always had his… I mean he knew his mum was there. Er… and I think he would probably say actually that he didn't ever lose that relationship. So he didn't hit rock bottom. If he had lost that, that would have been a rock bottom he wouldn't have come back from it."

Some authors[60] view the idea of 'rock bottom' as one linked to a particular view of substance misuse as a disease, typified in 12-step programmes, where abstinence is the only solution. As 19 of the Escapees had been in drug and alcohol services, including all who talked about 'rock bottom', they will have encountered such views, perhaps internalised them, and may have made them into self-fulfilling prophesies.

Positively, some significant workers recognised the phenomenon, and were also those who said that clients do not have to hit rock bottom, but that if they do, a worker needs to be there for them.

"You know, he was spiralling out of control and you had to let him spin out completely and then grab him when he stopped."

"I think he was just lucky that we were all… you know, they kept phone numbers. And that we were all there to help him, because he could have also gone the other way that if when he needed the support, there was nobody at the other end of the phone."

Finally, both Escapees and Significant Others talked about the individual nature of 'rock bottom'; it would never look the same for two people.

"16 years on the streets working with people. No limbs, maggots growing out of sores, resuscitating people on a daily basis, you know on the brink of death, bring them back and it's still not rock bottom."

6.4 Workers and Services

Unsurprisingly, many participants talked about a powerful experience with a worker or a service that made the difference for them in moving out of homelessness. 12 people felt that a good worker made a big difference to them.

Participants identified characteristics of a good worker and service as one that will go the extra mile, stick with people, utilise the worker's personal experience of homelessness, challenge, encourage, believe in, value and care.

[60] Sprizer: 1989

This finding resonates with the MacKnee and Mervyn research:

> *"Participants experienced respect, encouragement, value, and trust when other people offered a drive to a safe place, a place to stay, or a job. Because someone reached out, participants felt 'cared for', 'special', 'accepted' and 'trusted'."*[61]

More fundamentally, what all parties had to say asked foundational questions about the way in which boundaries and working relationships between clients and workers are formed and the basis upon which they operate. Similarly, this section raises questions about the working cultures within many organisations, and the degree to which they work with or compound people's loss of self worth, efficacy and dignity.

6.4.1 Crossing Boundaries

Much of what people valued could be viewed as going beyond what 'professional boundaries' say workers should do; loaning money, taking calls out of hours, allowing the relationship to move beyond the boundaries of the service.

> *"So bless them, the hostel manager did loaned me the money, loaned it, put trust in me, loaned me it, they loaned me this, a cheque from the hostel, I went to Uni as soon as my loan came through I paid them back."*

> *"Busy as these people were if I just said... picked up the phone and says, 'it's not my turn…' I used to only go three days for my therapy, but any other time including the weekend, I had her home number. Including weekends. All I had to do was pick the phone up and say I need a chat. And if she… if it was work time or if she was in meetings or... She would definitely get back. And even if it meant 9 o'clock at night or something like that, if she was busy all day or whatever, she was always at the end of the line for me."*

Similarly, significant workers identified key events that some agencies would view as being beyond 'professional boundaries'.

> *"We had set a trust and a bond from right at the beginning that he would be able to find me… If he had something to celebrate or something that he was at risk with. So it didn't matter how many years or what position I was in, he could at any point pick the phone up to say hello."*

> *"But actually since he's gone on and gone through into… through being supported and into permanent accommodation and followed his journey of recovery through, I guess our relationship has changed over time now. And he does a lot of stuff with me outside… I think there is a friendship there, definitely."*

One study,[62] talking about how rough sleepers use services, tells of how a measure of a worker's being seen as worthwhile or not, is when they are seen to break their professional boundaries. This asks some interesting questions about homeless services' notions of professional boundaries.

Interestingly, many of the significant workers talked about such blurring or questioning of boundaries with the participants, particularly in the opening question where Significant Others were asked to explain the relationship they had with the Escapee.

For others this shift of boundary was associated with the relationships moving from one of client-worker to volunteer-worker or even colleague-worker. Positively, some workers took active steps to acknowledge this shift.

---

[61] MacKnee and Mervyn: 2002, pp298
[62] Buchy: 2007

"I suppose it moved from professional to personal, since she was a member of staff, a paid member, then it seemed to become a personal relationship."

For others, the marking of a shift was in acknowledging that someone was becoming an ex-client rather than a client.

"Over time, it became the equality showing. You know, when you move away from being the worker who always buys the coffees, and suddenly you meet an ex-client on an equal par and you know you either buy a coffee each or they turn round and say no, for all your help, let me buy you this coffee. That sort of shows some sort of financial independence, from that person. And the recognition that you know… that they are now of an equal basis. That you are not the victim, you are not the client, you are not the needy one."

One study[63] states that acknowledgement of such shifts is important for the client, and agencies should take note of this. Interestingly, however, is the questions that this passage begs. It acknowledges that the relationship is not equal, that workers do have both practical and psychological power over clients, and that they can make people into victims. Other workers found that their relationship with the client had questioned fundamentally their notion of boundaries.

"It completely sort of bent all those traditional-shaped relationships of service provider and client completely out of all recognition."

Positively, one organisation[64] recognised this, creating a client group who have formal responsibilities within the organisational structure, facilitating a change in relationship between workers and clients.

"So the traditional distinctions have blurred. And we had this group in mind, it became a common effort."

It seems that traditional notions of boundaries are not working for homeless people and need to be questioned. We will come back to this at the end of this section, as it would be useful to consider what participants found to be good in workers and services to inform new notions of boundaries.

6.4.2 Sticking with People

Sticking with people, irrespective of where they are at or the crisis they experience, was the second-most important characteristic people mentioned when valuing workers.

"Backing me, they supported me so much because I had needed support all the way through this journey, you know by somebody and there has always been somebody that supported me all the way even when I wasn't ready for it."

Many of the Escapees talked about one particular worker who saw them through. For the individual quoted below, this significant worker had supported him off the streets into accommodation, detox and rehabilitation programmes and training. At a stage when he was quite stable he learned that he might need to have one of his legs amputated.

"I rang my Outreach worker again and told him the story. He said, 'Don't worry, I'm there for you, don't matter what.'"

Sticking with people largely manifested as being there at the right time, and having someone consistent to turn to. However, to have this consistency, particularly of people, could challenge many 'stage' models of agencies, with people moving every six months or so, within an organisation and getting new workers.

---

[63] Meyersohn and Walsh: 2001
[64] Outside In, St Mungo's

6.4.3 Clients Becoming Workers

Both Escapees and homeless Significant Others respected workers that they felt had had experience of homelessness, or some related issue, and saw them as a role model, as a reminder that there is something beyond; and, as staff, more able to develop an honest relationship with clients.

> *"You know there are project workers who exceed managers in ability, by far! Because they've got the personal experience, they know."*

> *"The key workers in the hostel where we were – they were ex-alcoholics and ex-drug addicts as well. And that to me was very significant because then I realised there is life after drink and drugs you know?"*

Significant Others also saw the importance of staff with experience of homelessness.

> *"She looked to members of staff that had been in those kind of circumstances before because we have residents that actually work for us, um or ex-residents that work for us, so they were perfectly good role models to say, that if you do carry on this way– there is a life after."*

> *"If you take on former service users, you actually then get a very honest staff team that can actually work with residents in a very positive way, and I think ex-residents are probably the best people that work for us, and they make a significant difference in the way we work."*

A 2007 survey[65] of workers found 16% of people had previously been users of care services. This also found a generally negative culture in services towards employing ex-clients, uncovering an attitude where admitting that you are an ex-user is still taboo for many workers. It highlighted the need for further research in this area as, unfortunately, there is little comparative data on the extent of ex-service users becoming workers in other fields. In a related field, National Treatment Agency guidelines value people with experience of drug misuse and drug treatment, where it could be argued the issues are more acute about using ex-users as volunteers, counselling against policies that discourage volunteers coming back to volunteer or work. At the same time, the survey identified many homeless agencies are still operating policies saying ex-users cannot become workers or volunteers for one or two years after using the service.

Jeremy Swain, Chief Executive of Thames Reach, talking about the GROW programme, through which the organisation has recruited and trained more than 70 members of staff who are former or current service users, sees the value of such initiatives. He saw the impact of this change:

> *"Most importantly, we saw the added value they brought in terms of experience – they were inspirational role models with built-in bulls*** detectors."*

Other organisations are now running similar apprentice schemes aimed at those with experience of homelessness working in the field. One Escapee recommended for clients to seek out organisations that actively recruit ex-homeless people as workers.

6.4.4 Encouragement and Challenge

Participants saw both encouragement and challenging people as important. Encouragement often seemed to be aligned to the idea of believing in people, sometimes seeing the worth in them that they could perhaps not see for themselves.

> *"I passed. He said come round and show me your certificate and stuff. So I showed him it, and he was like, that's the man."*

[65] Seal 2007

"They were encouraging you to find something to do basically, to get involved with something, maybe to study, to go back to college, even going to the gym and stuff like that."

"And like the staff always encourage me… I was never encouraged before."

Most importantly it seemed to be a proactive process on behalf of staff. This would again contest notions that clients need to show motivation by coming to ask for help. Some agencies see waiting to be asked for help as an empowerment model. However, this study points to an approach which sees the workers taking that first step, and not expect the clients to. Conversely, where workers and organisations do not, clients must take the leap of faith and ask anyway. Positively, Significant Others who had been homeless seemed to recognise when workers did this, and saw the value in it.

"He really was one of those people that did really well with encouragement, so if he did something, say he tried to stop drinking. And then was you know… really positively treated by the staff for that... it really did do something for him."

On the whole, participants also felt they needed to be challenged more.

"The woman in the detox, she put a stop to that straight away. She's like you need to take responsibility for yourself."

"She just said to me one day, look you're a really nice guy, you articulate yourself very well but… don't think you are going to run any of that shit by me. And that was like another wake-up call because for once I actually met a key worker that just kind of knew where I was coming from, and knew that I could talk the talk and I was very clever, but was I really engaging in the services, or was I just saying what I needed to say? And that kind of made me sit up and you know and thought wow!"

This may call for workers to be trained in more challenging intervention techniques, while remaining supportive of people. However, the nature of the challenging that people valued, as mentioned above, seemed not to be told that they were wrong, but perhaps a gentle challenge when someone was at the point to hear it.

"Half way through the rehab I got itchy feet. I thought I am getting better now, I don't want to stay here. I rang my key worker I thought, that's the least I could do because she'd done so much for me, and I thought. And so she said give me one good reason why you want to leave here? Could I think of a good reason? Couldn't think of it."

Others recognised it as being a part of an honest relationship, which meant the participant being honest with themselves, as illustrated above, but also that the worker is honest with them.

"You know if someone is trying to bullshit then you kind of pick up on it and that means that you don't engage as much as if somebody tells you the truth then you know don't you? You know what the situation is and you kind of respect that."

For others it was about giving out information at the right time, or even just having clarity about the process.

"I didn't think I even had a problem to tell you the truth until they told me that I was drinking like 4 or 5 times more than I should be drinking you know. Then I realised."

"I remember him coming out of the meeting being very happy, because the key worker was really a very determined woman. And she kind of highlighted his problem, and she kind of made a plan, and she kind of stuck to it. And you know, she was saying we're going to do this, we're going to that, that, that… At the end

of it you will get a flat. And that's what actually happened. And so she was very clear and she was talking to him very directly."

6.4.5 Care, Belief and Respect

On a more general note, people valued when someone seemed to care.

> *"There are people there that really do care, really believe in it, and know it can work… they come out and they are clean… this can happen and this does happen."*

Most importantly here, would seem to be that the worker actively showed that they cared, perhaps to counter the opinion that the person had of themselves. Again, pro-activeness and showing that the worker cares for that individual, rather than homeless people in general, would seem to be a key factor. Linked to this is the participant's valuing that someone believed in them, perhaps when they did not believe in themselves.

> *"He obviously saw something and tried to develop it. That has really, really helped. His belief in me helped me to believe in myself quite a bit."*

> *"Because I believed that she believed in me, and she thought I was worth it. Help, so I started believing that too, because she believed in me, so I don't know how this could come as something that I could say to somebody in that situation."*

> *"Gaining people who can believe in you and give you the opportunity to become something, I think is the best thing."*

Significant Others, particularly those who had been clients, saw this as vital and identified its impact in clients' journeys.

> *"Now one of the powerful things is he never felt that [the service] lost faith in him. When he got off to get his detox and he comes back and he was welcome back, you know. I think it is a very powerful thing."*

Closely linked to this was respect, which again, Significant Others who had been clients saw as crucial to recovery.

> *"Actually you know… being treated as a human being by people and treated with a certain amount of respect and stuff… being actually kind of … he responded very well to that."*

> *"She was treated with a lot of respect from a lot of staff, and I believe her – her friends around her who, within the unit, helped her an awful lot."*

> *"When you started receiving respect, you started respecting yourself."*

6.4.6 Praise & Dignity

Another strong impact that clients reported was being praised when they had achieved things.

> *"The single most important event in my emancipation and rehabilitation was when people started saying 'well done' to me."*

Looking back at people's lives they had often had someone, a worker or a family member, who had put them down, and were not used to people saying 'well done', but found it immensely powerful when they did.

> *"The woman that done it said 'you are really good at this and you should respect that and you are really good', and she didn't even know me, but that is one of the*

boxes I ticked... It made a massive difference. That made a massive difference to my self esteem, which really had taken a huge knock."

"I think for years I didn't pat myself on the back for the stuff I was achieving. And it's nice to actually hear someone say you know,' you are actually doing well'."

It was noticeable that many of the workers, and even other clients who were Significant Others, were often extremely positive in their praise for the participants, particularly where they had stated giving back and becoming workers or volunteers. However, these positive views were not necessarily reflective of how people viewed themselves, showing that people still had relatively low self esteem. It would seem that this congratulatory aspect of the work is paramount. Finally, and perhaps as a stage on from this, people felt a turning point was when a worker valued their opinion on something.

"I've actually become… not a staff member as such, but the manager… a very lovely lady, she is forever emailing me asking me for help and suggestions and stuff like that and as I say, all this is making me realise that I have actually got a lot to contribute."

However, many authors[66] have noted that homeless services do not have a developed history of involving clients, and as such are not versed in asking them their opinions. However, note the positive impact being asked your opinion can have on your self esteem, self-efficacy and general confidence. This continues the theme discussed in the boundaries section above of breaking down of traditional barriers, between worker and client.

"She was a significant person in my life. And when she used to talk to me she never talked to me as if I was a patient. It was on equal footing. And I was treated as if I was… I was intelligent if you want to call it that."

There is also a link back to the issue of dignity, as having one's opinion asked, and gaining belief that your opinion is valuable is another sign of someone regaining dignity[67]. As has been noted[68], it is essential that services develop client consultation strategies, and train workers to regularly elicit clients' opinion, not only to gain information, but as a strategy for developing self esteem and dignity.

[66] Godfrey: 2007; Seal: 2008; Valasco: 2001
[67] Keys & Miller: 2001; Somerville and Chan: 2001
[68] Seal: 2007

6.5 Peer Perspectives & Client Involvement

Ten people specifically mentioned that having the perspective of peers was a critical factor in them escaping homelessness.

Recent research[69] has found that that service users of homeless organisations often prefer to speak to someone who has a history of homelessness. Aligned to this is the aforementioned general mistrust that homeless and multiply-excluded people have towards perceived authority figures[70]. This seemed to be particularly important in the case of drug use. A distinction needs to be made between formally getting perspectives, in the form of talks, structured group sessions or mentoring schemes and more informal mechanisms that encourage peer exchange.

6.5.1 Getting peer perspectives formally

A critical factor in the formal involvement of peers is that participants felt there was someone who had experiences to share that they could relate to.

> *"Yeah people that have been like 10 years clean, 15 years clean and they came in… once a week someone would come in from somewhere and just give us a talk on 'their life'. Because that's what recovery is about - sharing experiences. If you are in a detox, the best thing for you to do is, I think, for people to come in that have been in your situation. And then they could talk about things and you will be like, 'oh my god, that's me, that's me'."*

> *"It's quite difficult for some because they probably never experienced that, so to have somebody who had actually been through that system, done the journey that you've done and then the express it how you express, it is very, very powerful. Absolutely powerful and it can touch that emotion in someone certainly."*

Significant Others echoed this sentiment, seeing others could be a source of inspiration.

> *"It's getting identification from someone who has come from a similar position. With the same thoughts, feelings… and realising you are not on your own in this. And that's the kind of thing that gives us all that inspiration to go forward."*

Some thought that this experience alone could be enough for someone to turn a corner.

> *"Sometimes when someone has got serious drugs misuse or alcohol misuse, what they want is someone that they can talk to, that understands, their peer, that has been through that. And that is enough to turn someone away from what they are going on, from what they're doing, be it drugs or alcohol. It's just something that's missed because everybody seems to believe that I need to speak to a doctor or I need to speak to a professional."*

Others saw this in terms of role-modelling, or more simply that a person could be an example that issues can be overcome, this strongly relates to the above discussion on the importance of hope.

> *"Him sharing his past whatever with the group… was enlightening… to see someone else could… it kind of really made me sit up and once again think wow you know, just confirms what I didn't think before but I do believe now, which is you can beat this thing if you want to."*

Another factor is that peers would be more challenging of people, echoing a thought we will come back to when considering agencies and friendship networks, that agencies do not challenge people

[69] Health Development Agency: 2000; Seal: 2007
[70] Rowe: 1999; Tavachio et al: 1999; Seal: 2007

enough. Conversely, people thought that the right to challenge had to be earned and having been through a similar experience was one way of earning it.

> *"Yeah that's another thing and I think that's the difference with peers. Peers will give it to you very straightforward… whereas someone, a professional would tiptoe round it, so many tiptoeing, tiptoeing. For me it's like you know what I don't want to hear tiptoeing. That switches it off. In fact that would make me use. I need someone to tell me straight. This is what you re doing and that's your consequence. And if you carry on this way, that's what's going to happen. That's what I want to hear."*

Significant Others, both workers and homeless people, also saw peer groups as sources of support and simply that peers have more insight into the experience.

> *"I would regard things like that as… you know, for people who have moved through as being tremendously supportive."*

> *"For some people the homeless… getting involved in the homeless thing is a really, really good thing because people who use services have got a much better insight."*

One of the Significant Others, who was both a client and someone who had been involved in peer work for years, had particular insights into the process of getting peer perspectives, but also of some of the limitations and pitfalls of such enterprises:

> *"I think the American homeless services can be a bit like, well if you want to be like me you can recover and that's all right, but you don't have to be like me, you can be all kind of other bloody different things… And that's my kind of philosophy."*

> *"You can stray into this… Well I did it, you can do it. Well yes, and some things are more organic than that. Its just trying to basically… the issue for me with people who are stuck in whatever, in an addiction or on the streets or whatever is, how narrow their horizons have become. And what you've got to do is broaden their horizons and give them the tools, the opportunities, the skills to take advantage of those things. It's no good giving people opportunities if you know they are going to be crushed…"*

This would seem a good set of principles for peer schemes - that they are not trying to tell you what to do, but are there to give you another perspective that might resonate with your own, and then support you in looking at your own story. This Significant Other also felt that peer work was something that not everyone could do, and also not something that should be done lightly, as it can perpetuate dependency.

> *"You know, it can become limiting as well because it's a bit like you know… some ex-footballers become great managers and pundits and all those kind of things. And some don't. And some end up kind of crushed and end up… you know, as being sad ex-footballers."*

Many authors[71] have talked about how peer schemes, and client involvement in general, can become quite tokenistic, just asking clients to tell their tale, but not giving them the tools to analyse it, and perhaps even learn another tale. Agencies would be advised to carefully consider other examples when they are setting up formal peer support schemes.

[71] Chambers: 2006; Groundswell: 2007; Seal: 2008

6.5.2 Informal peer support

Perhaps most tellingly some participants felt that they had got peers' support in more informal ways, sometimes finding this more valuable than the official help.

> *"It wasn't the organisation that helped me. It was my peers in the group that helped me."*

> *"Find some worker or whoever, some organisation who work with homelessness obviously but has got the necessity of dealing with it, preferably ex-homeless themselves."*

Significant Others also could recount when such informal mechanisms had made all the difference.

> *"He was at a low ebb and for me, for me, the most important thing was the assistance with which our guys* (other clients) *in particular committed to him and even when he was saying no, kind of I am not worth it, they were saying,' no you are mate.'"*

However some Significant Others saw the influence of peers as negative.

> *"You create those kind of hostel relationships that aren't real friendships and he was actually realising these aren't friendships. It's just, you know, you are in whoever's room is whose giro day it is….I think that was difficult to ostracise himself from, people like that because that's not… that's not what's kind of… you know, that's not the culture is it?"*

One report[72] considers that homeless people may be limited in their ability to provide peers with companionship, advice and emotional support. However, this is a contested view.

Various authors have identified the value of peer support, with Neale[73] seeing development in this area as neglected, noting that in the absence of support in hostels, clients provide it to one another. Positively, the report on client involvement commissioned by the then ODPM, 'Supporting People' [74] also recognises the benefit of clients' mutual support:

> *'Clients develop self-esteem and derive support from each other. They also learn how to deal with conflict and tackle problems.'*

Beresford and Branfield also note that we need to encourage and facilitate mutual support and exchanges between users, as this is what they value most. However, Seal[75] examines how the supported housing sector tends to see the influence of peers on each other as a negative thing.

Agencies therefore seem to have a duty to promote both forms of involvement. In terms of formal involvement this will involve the careful setting up of peer support mechanisms, trying to develop people's horizons rather than being directive. In terms of informal networks it is to recognise that it goes on, and needs to be encouraged while acknowledging that negative aspects can arise, and need to be taken account of.

6.5.3 Client Involvement - Impact on Individuals

We have put this as a separate section to getting involved in a group because it was not just about group work, but could involve individual mechanisms and more structural ones like sitting on a management committee. However, many of the personal benefits people got were similar to the first

[72] Solarz and Bogat: 1990
[73] Neale: 1997
[74] Godfrey et al: 2003
[75] Seal: 2007

section, namely regaining self worth, looking beyond their own situation, developing confidence, finding structure, escaping boredom and regaining a sense of belonging. Many participants said that participating in client involvement initiatives was important, both as a means of developing oneself but also as a duty to give. Others felt they had something to give back, echoing earlier comments about being able to understand people's situations

> *"I know where people are coming from when I see someone in pain basically… this is why I knew this job would be perfect of me basically."*

> *"Because I wanted to educate younger people or people in the same position as me. People who are good. Because some people come out of really good families and fall off the plot. So yes. That's where my focus was."*

Client involvement for them was a source for their personal development, either to develop skills, or to stop them being involved in things that could take them backwards.

> *"Getting in client involvement was a big massive influence, made me a lot more confident in myself. I wasn't perfect after that but it raised my self-belief. That was a massive step, even though I thought I had loads prior to it."*

> *"It was the same kind of thing because we both went to* [name of project] *at that time not knowing what it was about or why you are involved. But we just got so much out of that and… in our own personal development , about setting up work shops… and delivering them and research and stuff around the homeless field."*

Such views are well supported by the literature[76].As an example, Cameron[77] cast some light on why involvement can be so beneficial to clients. *'Contributing to a collective activity may bring major benefits... They are gaining on many fronts: a sense of enterprise, responsibility, experience, self-confidence and, often, real pride resulting from an original and shared achievement.'*

Other authors link participating in client involvement activities with being able to deal with conflict and learning negotiation skills[78], to the skills of becoming independent[79] or more simply that care programme approaches have been found to be more effective if clients are involved in the planning and implementation of the programme[80].

6.5.4 Client Involvement – Impact on Services

One aspect of client involvement, providing insight into the homeless experience, is what some authors[81] call the 'consumerist perspective'. Bryant expresses it thus: *'The client's active involvement is an asset which increases the chances of success at each stage of the operation: at the time of design, in order to fit the objectives to the client's needs and expectations; during implementation, to assist the professionals work, possibly to ensure a better framework for evaluation, which cannot be complete, or perhaps significant, without the clients' own opinion[82].'*

Ultimately clients have direct experience of what works and what doesn't; what they experience as positive, and also what is essentially demeaning or unhelpful.

---

[76] Seal: 2008
[77] Cameron: 2005, p5
[78] Godfrey et al: 2003
[79] Edgar et al: 1999; Welsh Assembly: 2004
[80] Bryant: 2001; Carpenter and Sbarani: 1997
[81] Seal: 2008; Wilcox: 1995
[82] Bryant: 2001, p23

Some Escapees saw their motivation as a mix of these things, that while client involvement can be daunting, it is ultimately rewarding, and that they have things to share, and again, have a duty to share things.

> *"Providing I can stay focussed positively and I am surrounded by positive people and I can use a negative experience and turn it into a positive experience by showing that to younger people, by expressing to younger people these are the outcomes that could happen if you don't do this or don't do that."*

> *"Eventually I feel I have to say something, I don't want to be somebody who sits there and doesn't say something. I like to push myself and challenge myself… these were all staff members and I didn't know if I was going to get laughed at. So I swallowed ever so gently and started speaking…"*

One person saw the education as being for both clients and for staff, and that staff had things to learn about the processes that clients go through. Similarly, some saw client involvement as important because they thought services have something to learn from clients.

> *"I was mentoring staff to try and help them to understand the process and to train staff in the process, mentoring my peers, other coaches and then making other clients aware of the, what they should be doing or can be doing or, you know, just a sounding board if that's a better expression."*

In previous studies, Groundswell[83]has found that clients can often have something to offer on utilising their insights in homelessness to develop staff, which can help to lessen the 'them and us' attitude that can happen between clients and workers and serve to ameliorate boundaries.

For a service to focus on supporting people, to move on from homelessness, it seems important that client involvement is encouraged, because it is often valuable for the personal development of clients, offers indispensable insights for service providers in improving services and also provides an opportunity for strengthening the vital relationship between clients and workers.

6.6. Social networks, family and relationships

6.6.1 The Importance of Relationships

'A positive relationship with another human being is a prerequisite for a successful exit from homelessness.' [84]

Twelve people felt that the support of friends and/or family was vital. For some they provided support throughout, for others it was the making of new friends that made a difference.

> *"Support from people around you makes a massive, massive difference as well."*

> *"So always keep that support network because it's vital to you, because you might think you are strong but there is issues there that can come up and I'm not saying you will use again, but you can be tempted and it's nice to phone someone up and say, 'listen' and you know they will listen."*

Significant Others, particularly those who are or had been clients, also saw the worth of having a social or family network.

[83] Groundswell: 2006
[84] Rowe: 1999, p86

"Most people have a web of relationships that give their life meaning, whether they are friendships, work relationships, sibling relationships, and stuff like that. And they can be with workers and stuff like that. And it's one of these things that essentially support people and enable them to have some degree of happiness and fulfilment in their lives. And that's much stronger."

"I mean we are social animals, you know. Speak to a psychologist, they say what defines our attachments and you know, and we have been in to particular sorts of counselling and psychotherapy. I think it's a fairly plausible way of looking at people."

One Significant Other thought that it was the key to other things:

"I think if they can do that in a health way, a lot of the other stuff tends to follow, whether it is employment and things like. And I think it's a bit chicken and egg stuff."

One study[85] found that experiencing the sustenance gained through healthy relationships bolstered homeless people's ability to exit the street lifestyle, whilst another[86] found support from family, friends and professionals to be the most significant factor in homeless adolescents leaving homelessness. This is reflected in some European models of homelessness intervention, particularly in the Netherlands, where particular emphasis is placed on developing social networks. For instance, they see having two positive relationships outside of the worker as the prerequisite for ending an intervention.

Bayley says that human contact, '*fulfils our social needs for attachment and intimacy, social integration, nourishment, reassurance of worth and reliable assistance*.'[87] These ideas are supported by recent research[88] that identifies loneliness as the most common cause of tenancy breakdown. This was echoed in some of the participants' reactions, particularly when they got their own accommodation and were suddenly alone for, perhaps, the first time in years.

"I couldn't cope with the loneliness. It was a big flat. I just couldn't… I have never lived on my own before because I have always either been in boarding schools, relationships, or hostel and then on the streets with people hearing noise… there was no noise, nothing."

Other studies[89] found family breakdown and estrangement from family to be one of the biggest causes of homelessness, with Crisis[90] identifying family conflict to be the main immediate cause of homelessness amongst at least two thirds of homeless young people.

Some of our participants had no contact with family for very good reasons, or had bad experiences when they tried to reinitiate contact, as a Significant Other recounted:

"The dad's disappeared off into the distance again… He just had this kind of idea I think that he was going to find his dad and it was all going to be lovely."

In such cases the emphasis would then seem to be on supporting clients to develop social networks, a point made well by Lemos[91], who highlighted the importance of social networks and also to attending to the emotional side of homelessness. Whilst several authors[92] note how homeless

[85] MacKnee and Mervyn: 2002
[86] Raleigh-DuRoff: 2004
[87] Bayley: 1995, p 35
[88] Dane: 1998; Randall & Brown: 2003
[89] Raleigh-DuRoff: 2004
[90] Crisis: 2001
[91] Lemos and Crane: 1998; Lemos: 2006
[92] Crane: 1999; Randall & Brown: 1996; Rog and Holupka: 1999; Seal: 2005, 2007

organisations in the UK have neglected this area, tending to overemphasise the practical aspects of the work, reinforced by some narrow interpretations of supporting people's definitions of housing-related support.

By far the most common way that Escapees created new friendships was by engaging in group activities, particularly volunteering, and courses where they meet new people, outside of the homeless community. Participants saw such experiences as powerful in building a new social network.

> *"I started making friends, I was popular for the first time in my life. I had friends. I was like, people loved me and it was new for me. I had, I was on the table and I was one of the popular kids. It was weird, it was really weird, it was really lovely though."*

6.6.2 Family

A strong recommendation of many, despite some of the difficulties, was to maintain some link with family. One Significant Other saw this as important even when the person could not go back to the home

> *"I know [name] also got back in touch with her mother and her family and I think that was very nice for her. She was homeless and she obviously didn't want to go home and there wasn't the possibility anyway for her to go home but still she managed to establish a relationship with her family."*

Some of this linked to when a person is feeling weak or vulnerable, or even when they are at the point of admitting that they cannot cope.

> *"Try and keep in touch with your family… that's very important for me… Like I said when the family were sort of around the hospital bed and stuff like that. I mean, if I was in contact with them every week, maybe I might not have..."*

For others, in the absence of workers who would stick with them, family may do this.

> *"But they have always stuck by me and gave me inspiration and hope that I am a good person and, like, you know, I just need to find myself basically."*

Mercier and Racine (1993)[93] found that homeless people with at least one family member, friend or acquaintance that *'diligently offered acceptance, hope, money, shelter and social activities'* had more success in separating from street life. For some, having family re-enter their lives is what made them realise that they were worth it. As one Significant Other homeless person said about both himself and a participant:

> *"I think… he ended up in hospital as well. And er… yeah that was all kind of… his mum's side of the family appeared and he kind of realised, 'what have I been doing?' Do you know what I mean? These people are actually… they haven't abandoned me at all. It's me that's wandered off. Gone walkabout."*

Some saw that this support did not have to be family, as friends could be a non-professionalised form of support. Being challenged, sometimes bluntly, seemed to be important to some, often where they did not get this from workers.

> *"They might not give you back what you want, but they might say, 'Don't be a bloody idiot', but that is actually what you do want because that is why you have*

[93] Mercier and Racine: 1993

kept their number and you phone them for, because they are going to talk to you dead straight."

Others found that they could get material things from friends and family that workers were not in a position to provide, such as respite.

"She definitely did and she was the least judgemental when I came out of rehab, I was still not housed. Er… she gave me the key to her house, she'd go to work, leave me there in the day. No questions asked. Not worried about anything. And she was a good… it was the crutch I needed at the time because I was just coming out and I needed some support which my parents couldn't or didn't know how to give me. I would say, they just didn't know how to... But she's kind of understood and she was able to kind of prompt me."

Buchy[94] emphasises the importance of respite for homeless people, particularly for rough sleepers. She found that they may use accommodation and hostels in this way, although they would have to pretend to the accommodation provider that they wanted to engage and change, when in fact what they wanted was respite.

Others valued someone who doesn't want something back from them, or where they could be completely open, something that is not really possible with a worker who has certain obligations if given certain information[95].

"So he was a significant part of my journey as well I would say and he has always sat there and listened to me as a person, as a friend like you know. And he's never wanted anything out of me basically... we're very open, I am very open with him, he knows me inside out, so I don't have anything to hide from him basically."

Whether organisations are able to change their procedures to be able to offer this kind of support is a moot point. This became particularly apparent when we talked to Significant Others. A strong theme emerged that families often did not know how to help participants, or were not in a position to do so.

"You do try to help, don't you? And obviously when it's family you – you – you don't want to see anything happen to them and you – you only want the best for them, but then, you know, sometimes when they take advantage of that, then you have to put your foot down."

"We would liked to have helped him, and you know at this point I was moving house, I didn't have anywhere, I was staying at friends' houses. So it was very difficult for us, and having your dad homeless is not a very nice position to be in as a daughter. Er… and so with us not being able to help him, I think it was nice him knowing that there was people out there."

Some people mentioned the importance of family as a motivator to change. This can present a danger of people falling into patterns of doing things only for other people. Nevertheless, some people found family's reactions as an important wake up call.

"She was like, the only way she will give me chance to get back is like, if I go into detox or treatment basically, because she is like, you need help basically."

"Yeah, my son as well. It was kind of painful, all the letting down and stuff. There was times I'd be late to pick him up from school and stuff. And that sort of stuff

[94] Buchy: 2007

[95] Seal: 2005; Park: 2003

didn't sit right with me you know? It's kind of really tough. An innocent child and me being selfish, you know."

"Family, being there for my son and stuff like that. Yeah I really think that that gave me so much, so much."

This issue of facing the responsibilities of parenthood as an important factor in inspiring change is echoed in one study which found that some of their participants stated that they managed to exit the streets, empowered by the desire to do well by their children and to make a better life for them. *'As these participants managed to take charge of their lives and take responsibility for their children they found their way off the street.*[96]*'* Significant Others found family and participants, children in particular, as a strong motivating factor.

"He wanted to… especially for the children, he wanted to be able to have some sort of relationship with the children."

"Yeah I suppose… his son was motivation for him wasn't it? For everything he was doing – I want to be sorted out for my son."

"There was always the motivation that… there was always something there for him which was the idea that he could get back with his daughter."

One Significant Other noted that when that reconnection was made, the person became an even bigger motivating factor.

"Once [name] got to a place where he was open, he could make that relationship with his daughter and, having the confidence to do that, and to be able to get into the position where he could do that, it was a fantastic thing."

Family mediation would seem to be able to offer an important place here, and supporting clients to be in touch with family needs to be seen as an essential part of a worker's role.

6.6.3 Personal Relationships

Only one Escapee explicitly referred to the importance of creating a personal relationship as a critical factor in escaping homelessness. However, Significant Others placed more emphasis on the role of new personal relationships.

"She had a partner who I think also decided to get off the street and get clean and that was important. Er… I think the pair of them –although they split up – I think the pair of them were really good support for each other in that time. And [name] and her partner are now both, sort of, in stable relationships."

"He was in and out of meaningless relationships and getting nothing emotional from them, and then he met the one girl who he was with for several years which kind of unfortunately didn't work out. But … but also showed him that he is capable of holding a relationship together and a monogamous relationship at that. I mean she played an enormous part."

Several authors[97] emphasise the significance of engaging in personal relationships as a means of recovery, both from homelessness and drug use, with Dodson and Lemos both noting that, in drugs and homeless services, couples are often viewed as 'trouble', with assumptions of co-dependency, and that consequently couples are discriminated against and relationships discouraged. One significant worker recognised this, and that many clients are not used to engaging in relationships:

[96] MacKnee and Mervyn: 2002
[97] Dodson: 2007; Fals-Sewart et al: 2000; Lemos: 2006

"That's the one taboo at the moment is… around long-term relationships and er… you know, physical sex, physical… How can I put it to you? Physical intimacy. He hasn't… he hasn't come to terms… he hasn't started to look at it."

"But dealing with intimate issues with other people he is quite… he is a teenager and he responds like a 15 or 16 years old. And it's a type… you know, my children are teenagers and sometimes I feel like I am talking to them or talking to him, you know into what comes out of his mouth or the mess that he gets himself into."

Several of the Significant Others people were ex-partners. For some, re-building relationships, even as friends, was crucial.

"But he's managed to get to a point where his former partner and he are able to trust each other and stuff. I mean it doesn't happen that regularly, you know what I mean?"

"He is the father of… we've got a child together… but we don't live together but… he plays a significant role in our son's life."

Again it would seem that working with homeless people on their personal relationships is crucial. However, this takes a whole new skills base that workers often do not feel they have. While investigating the subject recently, Thames Reach found that workers avoided the subject, despite it being a feature of the new 'Outcomes Star', mainly because they were embarrassed to bring it up and did not feel they had the skills to work with it if the client brought it up themselves.

6.7 Coming to terms with the homeless experience

Participants had often-conflicting views on what the homeless experience had given them, how much it was still a part of them and the impact the label homelessness had had on them. We have covered aspects of this above, looking at the positive and negative influence of peers, but in this section we also explore the sense of belonging people get from the street, the understanding that some people gained value from their experiences and whether people need a new social network beyond the homeless community.

6.7.1 The homeless experience

Some Escapees saw their homeless experience as an entirely negative one.

"Disconnect yourself from anyone that you used to know, anybody. I was lucky enough I moved away and stuff, you can't hang around with those people, you can't be mates with them."

"Try and get themselves to a nice shelter or hostel as soon as possible because the longer they're on the streets they are going to be inevitably hanging around with the wrong sort of people. I am just talking from my point of view and what happened to me. I wish if somebody would have told me, 'Oh listen mate, come with me, blah blah, you'll get a nice shelter, you don't want to be on the streets mate because seriously it's going to fuck you up. It happens to everyone.'"

However, some participants expressed positive memories of their homeless experience, particularly when recalling the unique camaraderie of street life.

"There was a lot of horrific things happened obviously, like there always will be. But for me it was very liberating. I mean people are very astounded about homelessness because I speak about it with a very positive turn on it. And for me it was quite positive because it gave me a sense of myself and who I actually am.

And I couldn't honestly tell you that I would have the same confidence now had I just gone on to carry on the way I was."

"Within two days of being homeless, I was in a hostel, and within 24 hours of being in that hostel, I had a bunch of friends. And I couldn't quite fathom that."

"I loved my time on the street."

"I was amazed on how each… everyone looked after each other."

"I never knew that sort of friendship."

There are authors who support this view, one explains how *'the cultural milieu of life on the street becomes a means of redefining home*[98]*'*, with the camaraderie experienced on the street being a surrogate family they never had anywhere else. Another[99], identifies a 'street norm' of reciprocity and a connection with other people experiencing homelessness.

6.7.2 The Homeless Identity

One of the earliest pieces of work on homeless identities, an ethnographic study by Snow and Anderson (1987, 1993), may cast light on both these negative and positive perspectives. They identify three progressive stages of identification amongst homeless people. The first is ***distancing***: either from the '*association'* of themselves from other homeless people - *'I'm not like so and so'* from the *'role'* of the homeless person - 'I'm not a typical homeless person'. The second stage is ***embracing***: again of association with other homeless people - *'we're all in it together'* from the role of a homeless person - *'I'm a bum'* or of an ideology, taking on religious, spiritual beliefs. One quote seemed particularly reminiscent of the first position, another, but perhaps more knowingly, of the second:

"I never, ever called the hostel home, never, ever. That is why that homelessness label, I know for a long period of time I didn't compare myself or deem myself to be the same as everybody else, maybe because I didn't consider myself to have any dependencies."

"No ties. No responsibilities. That's how I saw it and I suddenly realised that there was more liberty to be had, that I just had not been aware of. The liberty of not having to sit and take somebody else's crap. You know, or not sitting out and freezing. And being able to lock your door and leave others outside. The liberty of owning things and being able to keep them in one place."

Building on the insight of the last quote the homeless experience, and the way a person relates to it, is complex, and the person escaping homelessness needs to work this through, and agencies and worker need to help them in doing this.

Positively, some participants had started to do this. Some people felt that the term 'homeless', or even 'ex-homeless' was not a helpful label, but it was one that they found hard to shake.

"They call themselves the Homeless People Theatre Company, but once you are inside it's all about the work and its not that kind of endless… having to describe yourself as homeless, ex-homeless."

"You didn't want to put yourself in those social settings where you would have to reveal that actually you were homeless and living in a hostel."

[98] Sommerville: 1992, p530
[99] Zufferey and Kerr: 2004

Others felt that the label meant that they were treated differently, particularly in terms of employment.

> *"I was thinking about applying for jobs and I suddenly realised I was probably a bit too close to it and I was still hiding behind my ex-homeless badge. And I was still calling myself ex-homeless."*

Some Escapees saw 'homeless' as a label that they had placed on themselves, perhaps useful at some point, but now something they had to move away from. Others, also recognising it as a label, saw it as a certain view, perhaps one of not taking responsibility that again had to be moved away from.

> *"But only my housing situation changed… I didn't change very much else at that point. Continued with drugs for a good couple of years. It's like I was saying I continued to behave like a homeless person even once I was in the flat."*

One of the Significant Others cast some light on the process, seeing it not that people dragged you down but that it was easier to remain on the streets where you did not have to face yourself:

> *"A lot of people find it difficult to understand actually how tough it is to make those changes, in fact it is easier to stay on the street than to go inside. So for most people that's lunacy isn't it? And from what I understand the courage it takes to make those changes, you know because in a funny kind of way there is a mad comfort zone they end up in – they are not making decisions, they are not doing stuff, they are living… and that was kind of where I was - this needs a rewrite!"*

6.7.3 Building on experience gained through homelessness

One participant noted how you need to look at, and build on, the skills that homelessness has given you, and not to see it all negatively.

> *"I kind of look back and I think, 'Well jeez, I've come through all of that' … there must have been things in me that I could draw upon, strengths and abilities and skills. And when I look aback and I think, 'Well if only I can tap into those skills and use them for something positive.' And I kind of have."*

MacKnee and Mervyn[100] agree, putting 'realising own abilities and developing confidence' as their eighth most important critical incident in moving on from homelessness. This contrasts with the 'deficit model' that authors[101] have noted many homelessness agencies use - identifying what people cannot do rather than what they can.

Some of the Significant Others also saw the street experience, in terms of the skills it demonstrates, in positive terms.

> *"It is an incredible knowledge that you could live on the streets and survive and cope. I mean it's really… it really is because it is such an extreme thing to go through especially initially, mentally and emotionally."*

Two Significant Others identified that people who know how to survive on the streets actually give themselves options, knowing that they have the genuine choice of flight, when faced with difficult situations:

[100] MacKnee and Mervyn: 2002
[101] Park: 2003; Brandon: 1998

"I was having a good discussion with somebody the other day about sort of flight and fight sort of instinctive. And I am like that. I would just get up and say, Well … sod this I will go and do something else.' And now like you say that I can survive you know. So it is brave to make that choice."

"A lot of clients who we call the returners and things like that, they are people that know that they can survive on the street. And it's never quite left their DNA somehow and when push comes to shove they are quite capable of just getting up and walking out. And not staying and fighting for what's their right but maybe to just go - I can't be bothered with this. I would be better off without this responsibility."

As Rowe says, *'Many homeless individuals are geniuses of contingency, mixing and matching scant resources and changing strategies at the dictates of chance*[102]*.'* The term 'life skills', still commonly used in services, can therefore be patronising. Surely a better starting point for skills is to see what people can do rather than tell them what they cannot.

However, identifying skills is not as easy as asking people what skills they have, as they may not recognise them in themselves. Friere[103] points out that it is because they are told by society, and agencies, that either these roles are not skilled, or that they are not the skills that they need. This is a perspective that they then internalise. We need therefore to find imaginative ways of getting people to recognise how much they can do: a skills inventory of being homeless is perhaps a start.

6.7.4 How much should you move on?

All this bring us to a crucial question of whether the homeless community is something to move away from, or to embrace. Three people focused on 'not letting others have a negative influence on you'. Interestingly this applied equally to other clients and negative workers.

"Those people that are sent to 'off side' you or whatever, just let them get out of your life. Don't have anything to say, don't get involved with them, just pass on the other side. Don't even let them know that you've worked them out."

MacKnee and Mervyn (2002) also list as hindering factors to people getting off the street as 'loyalty to the street lifestyle' and 'bad experiences with support providers'. But when someone has experienced a community that was not available elsewhere, is this something to escape?

Perhaps it is just something to work through and incorporate to different degrees, like anyone will do with any protracted experience in their lives. Going back to the question of whether people should create a new social network or rebuild the one they have, some Significant Others were measured in their responses. They saw that the homeless lifestyle can narrow people's social circle, and that a narrow social circle is probably not healthy for anyone.

"That's the problem with homelessness, is it can be a funny little world. With people who have either lost relationships, who have stopped making new ones outside of that world."

"Now the final stage is his resocialising. He is quite lonely. He doesn't have… friends who are not from the same… path. So that's the bit we are working on now."

[102] Rowe: 1999
[103] Friere: 1968

"Most of us, if we are healthy, have a range of different relationships and that's what we need to help people to be able to do, so that they can choose and make their relationships with different people."

In the meantime, by definition, we are working with homeless people who have been through the system, or rather different systems and experiences, many times, and for whom these experiences become a part of how their sense of who they are. As workers and agencies we need to help people work through this experience, and our part in it, and help them recognise and build on the strengths they have gained from it, and confront the difficulties it has caused.

7. The Escape Plan Recommendations

7.1 For People currently experiencing homelessness

Our recommendation is to go through a copy of The Escape Plan notebook and find your own answers to the questions it raises. This is available online at www.groundswell.org.uk, where you can download a copy, or a limited number are available from the Groundswell office – call 020 7976 0111 and if copies remain we will post one to you.

The notebook includes quotes from participants, images created from photographs of Escapees and the text below:

> *"We have all been homeless. We have all moved on. It was tough, the hardest thing we have ever done, but we did it. You can do it too.*
>
> *Each of our stories is individual, separate, our own, but when we compared our journeys we found shared experiences, common themes, threads that bonded us together. We realised we are not alone.*
>
> *The Escape Plan captures our experiences, what we learned, our mistakes, our realisations. We put this all together, some might call it accumulated wisdom, we call it lived experience.*
>
> *We know that we do not have all the answers, but we think we have uncovered the right questions. There is no one single path out of homelessness, but by finding your own answers to these questions you might find your own way.*
>
> *We are hoping that you find The Escape Plan inspiring and useful, and most of all, we hope you escape too."*

7.1.1 Changing Attitudes towards Yourself

We found that taking responsibility for ourselves and for our situation was the starting point. Only you and you alone can start the journey, but when you do, others will help you.
What do you take responsibility for?

Self-esteem, self-worth, pride – these are essential. But it's a balance. Most of us did not have enough of it, but some had too much, and we're too proud to ask for help. It can be the bravest thing you will ever do if you ask for help.
What are you proud of?

Sometimes we found it difficult to be honest. Especially when others around us, including services sometimes, were encouraging us to be deceptive. Mostly, we found it easier to move forward when we were finally being honest.
What are you honest with yourself about?

You may well have trouble trusting people, like most of us. Part of the reason you came to be where you are now is that probably someone, or many people, have let you down… badly. But it is important to learn, or re-learn how to trust. People have to earn that trust, but you need to give them a chance to earn it.
Who will you give a chance to trust?

Don't give up hope. Remember your dreams. Don't give up hope. Don't give up hope.
What are your hopes and dreams?

Some of us found strength in a higher power, embraced different kinds of spirituality that helped us to forgive ourselves. Some spotted 'signs', that helped us start again. That stuff did not go down well with all of us. Each to their own. But please find a way to forgive yourself.
What gives you strength?

7.1.2 Get Together and Get Busy

Getting involved in a regular activity was vital for a lot of us, things like training, education, arts or sports. These helped give us a sense of belonging, of direction, structure to our day, got rid of boredom, re-built our self-esteem and our confidence.
What would you like to be doing with your day?

A lot of us did volunteering. This was a chance to give something back, show people that we had something to offer, that we were needed. You are needed.
How would you give something back?

We also found groups really useful. Some of us were cynical about group work and then found it better than we expected. It is not for everyone, but it worked for enough of us to recommend it.
Are there any groups you might join?

7.1.3 Making the Most of Workers and Services

For those of us that found a good support worker, that relationship was really valuable. You may well not find one person who has everything, but maybe you can get what you need between a few different people.

If you are using a service that you rate – make the most of it, give something back, get involved. But if a service is making your situation worse, making you feel bad about yourself, remember you can always walk away.

7.1.4 Rock Bottom

Quite a few of us felt we hit rock bottom before we started turning things around. Not all of us needed to hit rock bottom, so don't feel you have to, but if you are there – draw strength from it and see it as a starting point for making changes.
How can you start to make changes?

7.1.5 Peer Perspectives and Client Involvement

Seek out the advice of people who have had similar experiences to you. Listen when you are challenged by them, but also take care not to be preached at (we hope we're not doing that now!).

7.1.6 Recognising the importance of Family and Friends

If you can, try and keep in contact with family and old friends. Some of our relationships with our families were too far gone, but most of us found a lot of strength by rebuilding these.
Who are the family and friends you want to be in touch with?

Some of us made some new really strong friendships and relationships whilst we were homeless. People you can turn to, be there for you, challenge you, but who you can be open with. Watch how you can lift each other, but take care not to pull each other down.
Who do you want as your friends?

7.1.7 Coming to Terms with Being Homeless

Do not be ashamed of being homeless, we're not. Not now anyway. But take care that the label 'homeless' does not hold you back. We all feel that we have learned a lot from being homeless, both good and bad. Never forget that before you are a homeless person – you are a person. We escaped. You can too. Don't give up hope. Don't give up hope.
What is your Escape Plan?

7.2 For Homelessness Services and Workers

7.2.1 Get Together and Get Busy

1. Supporting clients to be involved in group activities should be seen as one of the priority areas of keyworking. These could be volunteering, raining, education, therapeutic group work, sports, arts… anything! The undeniable evidence is that group activities are an effective way of building self-worth, giving back, developing confidence, finding structure, escaping boredom and regaining a sense of belonging, all essential paving stones on the path out of homelessness.

2. Services should look at the provision of group work as an alternative or addition to one-to-one work and give staff sufficient training to allow this to be effective.

> **Pilot Challenge – Group work**
> Groundswell recommends that one or more homelessness agencies conduct a pilot which delivers keywork exclusively through group work to a cohort of clients for a minimum period of 3 months. Data on client recording systems such as the Outcome Star could then contrast their progress with clients who exclusively receive traditional one-to-one keywork.

7.2.2 Changing your attitude towards yourself and others

3. Tools such as the Escape Plan notebook – or others should be utilised to raise the following issues with clients that you provide support to:

    Pride and self-esteem
    Being honest with yourself
    Taking responsibility
    Trust
    Gaining strength
    Hopes

    As these were seen as the key issues that enabled people to move from homelessness.

7.2.3 Hitting rock bottom

4. Services should understand that some people will hit 'rock bottom' before they make changes in their lives. This concept can be utilised when engaging with clients in group work or one-to-one support work, as self-awareness of 'rock bottom' proved powerful for many people, helping people end the 'downward spiral' and start to make positive changes.

5. If a client, particularly one who may not have been previously forthcoming, comes asking for help and indicates that they may be experiencing something akin to 'rock bottom', drop everything and give them as much support as possible. Such moments are unique windows of opportunity to make significant progress.

7.2.4 Workers and Services

6. Managers should work with staff and clients to review 'boundaries'. Whilst safety is crucial, artificial boundaries should not restrict staff from forming positive relationships with clients. A discussion of 'grey areas' can be very useful as a module in staff training programmes.

7. Clients want people to 'stick with them', so services need to take steps to retain staff and reduce the number of temporary workers. Furthermore, steps should be taken to enable service users to work with those they have built a relationship with, even if this is across teams or even across organisations. For example, outreach workers keeping in contact with clients when in a hostel. Or hostel staff being able to maintain contact if a client is resettled.

8. 'Showing respect to clients' should be a key performance indicator for frontline staff, acknowledging the importance of respect, showing care and believing in people. This should be reviewed through 360 degree feedback and observation, and acted upon consistently.

9. Recruitment of staff should test for the core competencies of empathy, good communication, the ability to challenge people and a belief in people's potential.

10. Actively recruit ex-clients as both workers and volunteers, and encourage an organisational culture that accepts this.

Good practice example: Thames Reach's GROW

www.thamesreach.org.uk/what-we-do/user-employment

7.2.5 Peer perspectives and Client Involvement

11. Find formal ways to bring in peers to support your clients, be that talks, to run sessions or be mentors. This will involve the careful setting up of the aims of the project and the training and recruitment of peers, trying to develop people's horizons rather than be preachy.

Good practice example: SEA Advocacy, Nottingham

www.seaadvocacy.wordpress.com

12. Encourage client involvement, developing mechanisms for it at all levels and encourage staff to embrace it.

Good practice example: Outside In, St Mungo's

www.mungos.org/about/clients/outside_in

Good practice example: The Project Assesment Team, Two Saints, Southampton

www.thepatteam.com

7.2.6 Recognising the importance of social networks, family and friends

13. The issue of social and family networks in terms of recovery should form an important aspect of keyworking sessions.

14. Services should do more to practically encourage clients to develop social networks and personal relationships, this includes reviewing guests policies, and hosting events to invite local community or family members to attend events in service premises.

Good practice example: Old Theatre, Broadway
www.homeless.org.uk/node/2780

Further information on forming a visitor policy in the Homeless Link Evictions and Abandonments Toolkit:
www.homeless.org.uk/evictions-abandonment-toolkit-behaviour-criteria

15. Staff should be proactive in promoting, and even funding, clients to be involved in activities that are available to any community member – not only promote activities and groups which are exclusively for homeless people.

7.2.7 Coming to terms with the homeless experience

16. ‘Supporting clients coming to terms with having been homeless’ should be a key element of resettlement worker practice. The mental and emotional transition out of homelessness can be as important as the practical details such as helping clients with bills, benefits, furniture etc.

17. The resettlement process offers an excellent opportunity for peer-support programmes.

7.3 For Local Authorities

18. Local Authorities take into account encouraging group work as well as one-to-one support in the designing and commissioning of services.

19. Local Authorities should monitor the ways services recruit, support and train staff to ensure they are empowered to ‘go the extra mile’. This includes looking at retention and the use of temporary staff.

20. There should be cross-authority working to enable service users to maintain relationships with workers across service boundaries.

21. Local Authorities and relevant agencies such as PCTs (or whatever replaces them!) should take the opportunities to create work placements and ways for users to contribute to service developmet.

7.4 At a National Level

22. This report should be widely promoted across key government departments.

23. The investment by the Homes and Communities Agency in the ‘Places of Change Programme’ should continue with its emphasis on positive outcomes for homeless people; the report clearly supports the need for homeless people to be at the heart of services.

24. With the ring fence from Supporting People removed, there should be a continued emphasis on the need to monitor how people are supported in a holistic way and involve service users in delivery through the Comprehensive Area Agreements.

25. Promote good practice in peer support and client involvement across the homelessness sector.

Appendix I - Bibliography

Bandler R and Grinder J (1988) *Frogs into Princes: Neuro Linguistic Programming.* Santa Cruz: NLP Comprehensive

- (1981) *Reframing: Neuro-Linguistic Programming and the Transformation of Meaning.* Santa Cruz: NLP Comprehensive

Bandura A (1977) *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall

Bevan P (2002) *Multiple Needs – good practice briefing.* Homeless Link: London

Blasi G L (1990) *Social policy and social science research on homelessness.* Journal of Social Issues, 46, pp207–219

Bonner (2003) *Post-methodology and social enquiry*: *an Introduction*. Paper at Methodological Issues in Qualitative Research conference, Augusta, University of Augusta

Bowpitt G & Harding R (2009) *Not Going It Alone: Social Integration and Tenancy Sustainability for Formerly Homeless Substance Users.* In Social Policy and Society (2009), 8:1-11 Cambridge University Press

Brah A (1996) C*artographies of diaspora, contesting identities.* London and New York, Routledge

Brandon D (1998) *Care Planning.* In Bevan P (1998) *The resettlement Handbook.* London: National Homeless Alliance

Broadway (2009) *Profiling London's Rough Sleepers*. National Centre for Social Research, London

Butchy C (2007) *Culture of Street Homelessness in Oxford.* In Seal, M (Editor - 2007) *Constructing and contesting homelessness: perspectives on homeless identities and the homeless sector.* Russell House Publishing: Lyme Regis

Carter M (2007) *Towards an ESRC research programme on multiple exclusion homelessness.* Consultation report for the Homelessness Research Forum.

Daly G (1996) *Homeless: policies strategies and lives on the street.* London and New York: Routledge

Davies J (1996) *Discounted Voices: Homelessness Amongst Young Black and Minority Ethnic People in England.* Leeds University: Leeds

ESRC (2008) *Multiple exclusion homelessness targeted initiative*. HMSO: London

Fitzpatrick S, Quilgars D and Pleace N (2009) *Homelessness in the UK: Problems and Solutions.* London: Chartered Institute of Housing.

Flanagan J C (1954) *The critical incident technique*. Psychological Bulletin, 51, 327–358

Foucault M (1986) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-77.* London and New York: Colin Gordon Longman

Friere P (1968) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Arrow Books: London and New York

Gervais M and Rehman H (2005) *Causes of homelessness amongst black and ethnic minority populations.* CLG: London

Goodman L A (1961) *Snowball sampling*. Annals of Mathematical Statistics 32: 148–170

Gorton S (2007) *Guide to Resettling Older Residents from Hostels.* Homeless Link: London

Greenwood D and Levin M (2006) *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change.* Sage: London

Groundswell (2006) *Being Supported, Homeless People's views on the Supporting People Programme*. ODPM

Hennessy C and Grant D (2004) *Young homeless people and the keys to;successful resettlement.* Housing Studies Association Annual Conference, Sheffield Hallam University, 15th-16th April 2004

Herth K (1996) *Hope from the perspective of homeless families*. In Journal of Advanced-Nursing, 24, 743–753

Heuchemer B and Josephsson S (2006) *Leaving homelessness and addiction: narratives of an occupational transition.* In Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy, 13(3):160-9

Hinds P (1988) *Adolescent hopefulness in illness and health*. In Journal of Advanced- Nursing Science, 10(3), 79–88

Hutson S (1999) *The Experiences of Homeless Accommodation and Support.* In Hutson S & Clapham D (eds) *Homelessness – Public Policies and Private Troubles*, pp.208-225. London: Continuum

Hutson S and Liddiard M (1994) *Youth Homelessness: the Construction of a Social Issue*. London: Macmillan

Johnson G, Gronda H and Coutts S (2008) *On the Outside. Pathways in and out of homelessness.* Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing

Johnston L, MacDonald R, Mason P, Ridley L and Webster C (2000) *Snakes and Ladders: Young people, transitions and social exclusion*. Published for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation by The Policy Press

Jones A and Pleace N (2005) *Daytime Homelessness.* London: Crisis Report

Joniak (2004) *The Qualitative Paradigm: An Overview of some basic Concepts, Assumptions, and Theories of Qualitative Research.* Journal of Qualitative Research 3 (2) pp 210-214

Keys C B and Miller A B (2001) *Understanding Dignity in the Lives of Homeless Persons.* In American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 29, 2001

Fitzpatrick S, Kemp P and Klinker S (2000) *Single homelessness: an overview of research in Britain.* The Policy Press: University of Bristol

Lamb R H (1984) *Deinstitutionalization and the Homeless Mentally Ill.* In Hospital Community Psychiatry 35:899-907, September 1984

Levitas R (2005) *Inclusive Society? New Labour and Social Exclusion.* London: Palgrave

MacKnee C M, Mervyn J (2002) *Critical Incidents That Facilitate Homeless People's Transition Off the Streets.* In Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless, Vol. 11, No. 4, October 2002

McQueen D V, Gorst T et al. (1989) *A study of Lifestyle and Health. A Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) Survey. An Interim Report*. Research Unit in Health and Behavioural Change. University of Edinburgh.

McQueen D V (1989) *Comparison of Results of Personal Interview and Telephone Surveys of Behaviour Related to the Risk of AIDS: Advantages of Telephone Techniques.* In Proceedings of Healthy Survey Research Methods Conference, National Center for Health Services Research and Health Care Technology Assessment (DHSS publication no. (PHS) 89-3447)

McNaughton C (2005) *Crossing the continuum: Understanding routes out of homelessness and examining what works – Final report.* Glasgow, Simon Community

Minkler M and Wallerstein N (2003) *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health*. Josey-Bass: London

Moneyham L, Connor A (1995) *The road in and out of homelessness: perceptions of recovering substance abusers.* The Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care: JANAC 1995;6(5):11-9

Neale (1997) *Hostels: a useful policy and practice response?* In Burrows, Please and Quilgars (eds) *Homelessness and social policy.* London and New York, NY: Routledge

Pantazis C, Levitas R A, Fahmy E, Gordon D, Lloyd E H R R and Patsios D (2007) *The Multi-dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion.* For Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Cabinet Office, Social Exclusion Task Force

Partis M (2003) *Hope in homeless people: a phenomenological study*. In Primary Health Care Research and Development, 4:1:9-19 Cambridge University Press

Piliavin I, Entner Wright B R, Mare R D, and Westerfelt A H (1996) *Exits from and returns to homelessness*. Social Science Review, 70, 32–57

Raleigh-DuRoff C (2004) *Factors that Influence Homeless Adolescents to Leave or Stay Living on the Street*. In Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, vol 21, no 6 December 2004

Reset (2007) *Roads to Resettlement.* London: Reset

Room G (ed.) (1995) *Beyond the Threshold: The measurement and Analysis of Social Exclusion.* Bristol: The Policy Press

Rosenthal R (1994) *Homeless in paradise: A map of the terrain.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Rowe M (1999) *Crossing the Border: Encounters between Homeless People and Outreach workers.* Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press

Russell B J (1991) *Silent sisters: A study of homeless women*. Baltimore MD: Hemisphere

Salganik M J and Heckathorn D D (2004) *Sampling and Estimation in Hidden Populations Using Respondent-Driven Sampling*. Sociological Methodology 34: 193–239. doi:10.1111/j.0081-1750.2004.00152.x.

Scottish Executive (2003) *Routes out of homelessness.* Edinburgh: Scottish Stationary Office

Seal M (2005) *Resettling Homeless People: Theory and Practice.* Russell House Publishing: Lyme Regis

- (2006) *Working with Homeless People.* Russell House Publishing: Lyme Regis
- (2007) *Constructing and contesting homelessness: perspectives on homeless identities and the homeless sector.* Russell House Publishing: Lyme Regis
- (2008) *Not about us without us: Client involvement in supported housing.* Russell House Publishing: Lyme Regis

Somerville P and Chan C K (2001) *Human Dignity and the 'Third Way': The Case of Housing Policy.* University of Lincoln, presented at Housing Studies Association conference on *'Housing Imaginations: New concepts, new theories, new researchers'* in Cardiff 4-5 September 2001

Sosin M, Piliavin I, and Westerfelt H (1990) *Toward a longitudinal analysis of homelessness*. Journal of Social Issues, 46, 157–174.

Snow D and Anderson L (1987) *Identity work amongst the homeless: the verbal construction and avowal of personal identities.* American Journal of sociology 92:1336-71

- *Down on their luck: a study of homeless street people.* LA & London: University of California Press

Smith N and Wright C (1992) *Customer perceptions of resettlement units.* London HMSO

Stotland E (1969) *Psychology of Hope.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Thomas R and Purdon S (1994) *Telephone methods for social surveys.* In Social Research Update, issue 8, 1994, Guildford University: Surrey

Van Doorn A and Kain M (2007) *Homelessness Sector Culture.* In Seal M (2007) (Editor) *Constructing and contesting homelessness: perspectives on homeless identities and the homeless sector.* Russell House Publishing: Lyme Regis

Velasco I (2001) *Service User Participation: Concepts, Trends, Practices.* Scottish Council for Single Homelessness: Edinburgh

Veness A R *(*1993) *Neither homed nor* homeless*: contested definitions and the personal worlds of the poor*. In Political Geography 12, 3, 319 – 340

Warnes D, Crane M, Whitehead W, and Fu R (2003) *Homelessness Fact File.* Crisis: London

Wolch J and Dear M (1993). *Malign neglect: Homelessness in an American city.* San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wong Y I and Piliavin I (1997) *A dynamic analysis of homeless-domicile transitions*. In Social Problems, 44(3), 408–423.

Appendix II - Screening Questionnaire

Escape Plan Applicants' Phone Script Applicant no: Date:

	Yes/No	Notes/General Answers
1. Good morning/afternoon. My name is [Name], thank you for responding to our advert. The survey is to find out from people who have escaped homelessness, 'How they did it'. The eventual aim is to use real life experience to help folk who are currently experiencing homelessness. The first part of the research will be to do a one-to-one interview and the second will be a focus group. All the research will be done by trained peer researchers, who have experienced homelessness. Part of the process will be to interview two other people who knew you during your journey through homelessness: one personal contact and one professional contact.		
• **Do you know two such contacts?**	Y/N	
• **Are you happy for them to be contacted?**	Y/N	
• **Are you happy to be part of this sort of research?**	Y/N	
(If the applicant asks why do we want to speak to two other people, it is because we want a 360 degree view of what worked in helping them overcome their homelessness. Emphasise that all the data collected will be in strict confidence and not shared amongst the participants. The information will only used for the purposes of this research.)		

2. If they ask about the incentive, we will be offering an incentive of shopping vouchers for £30 for interview, and another £10 for focus group.		
3. <u>Housing</u> We will not be talking with people unhoused short term or those who have an alternative or cultural lifestyle including squatters or travellers. Can I just ask: Do you fall into one of the following categories? a) Sleeping rough for at least 6 weeks. b) Living in a hostel for at least 6 months. c) Sofa surfing without prospects of stable accommodation for at least 6 months.	 Y/N Y/N Y/N	
4. <u>Other circumstances</u> We are also interested in the issues that surrounded your homelessness. Would you say that your homelessness was also associated with other issues such as drug and alcohol, or mental health problems? What would you say were your associated issues?	 Y/N Y/N	

5. **<u>Moved on</u>** a) Do you feel you have control of your personal finances?	Y/N	
b) Do you feel like you want to be part of a community outside of the homeless community and have you taken steps towards achieving this?	Y/N	
c) Do you feel your accommodation is now your home and have you made any investment in it, such as buying things for it or decorating?	Y/N	
d) Do you feel some kind of stability in your accommodation and like it's not going to fall apart or be taken away from you imminently?	Y/N	
e) When you have issues, do you face them?	Y/N	
f) If you use any services, are they homeless ones?	Y/N	
g) Do you feel like you're no longer surviving, but looking towards the future and beyond immediate needs/problems (e.g. volunteering, making any other type of contribution)?	Y/N	

6. <u>Sampling</u> We will be interviewing 25 people altogether for this research, and we want to make sure we get a good mix of different backgrounds (age, ethnicity, etc.) so I need to ask you a few questions about yourself. How old are you? What's your ethnic background? Are you in a relationship? Do you have children? If yes, do they live with you? What's your employment status/background?		
7. <u>What happens next</u> Our researchers, Spike and Andrew, will look through the applicants and decide who's going to be part of the research. Then one of them will ring you back to chat about this. ***Is this ok?*** ***When is a good time to call?***	Y/N	
8. <u>Next actions</u>		

Appendix III - Escapees' Topic Guide

The Escape Plan: Participant Interviews

Schedule for Researchers

Materials check list:

- Clock
- Laminated questions (A3) x 3
- Laminated timeline examples (A4) x 3
- Blank timeline templates
- Pens and paper
- Digital Recorder
- TEP Interview schedule [1]
- TEP The Project explained
- Consent form
- Significant Other contact details form

[1] a) Showing examples of time lines
b) Introducing the questions
c) Explanation of time lines
d) Freedom to complete the time line in a way that suit's the interviewee (i.e. designing a timeline on a piece of A4 paper or on a piece of flipchart paper and using coloured pens).

Make sure you seat the participant so they can see the laminated questions

Offer a cup of tea coffee water etc

Who are Groundswell?

Groundswell UK has been around since 1996, we're an independent charity. Our job is to enable homeless and vulnerable people to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on the services they use and to play a full role in their communities.

Who is your researcher?

Trained researchers with experience of homelessness and or drug & alcohol service use.

What's the Escape plan about?

Aim: to create an evidence base of the critical success factors that have enabled people to move on from homelessness. Then to use this evidence to empower people currently experiencing homelessness, establish a good practice model for practitioners and to influence current and future policy development.

How do we do it?

- Interviewing 25 people who have moved on from homelessness - **this interview will take between 1 and 1.5 hours.**
- and two other key individuals in their lives, this may be professionals or people who have supported in a non-professional capacity – such as a friend or family member. ***Reassure people that they don't need to think of someone now and experience tells us that while doing the interview people pop up.***
- Analyse the transcriptions.
- Ask participants in for a **f**ocus group to validate the findings – basically to say this is what we found out overall. Do you folks think that this rings true with you - you won't have to go into any personal details in this group.

What we will do with what you tell us?

- The recordings are typed up **(your name isn't at any time linked to your recording or the transcription).**
- We analyse the data.
- We write a first draft report and take it to the focus group.

Confidentiality

What you tell is completely confidential. We will write a report and might quote things you say. Your name will not be linked to information in the report.

<u>The only reason that we would break confidentiality is if you let us know something that puts you or someone else at risk of harm.</u>

We record the interviews to help us get quotes right - Are you happy for us to record the interview?

Do you have any Questions?

Please complete consent form here.

NB. Interviewers to state at beginning of each recording – Interviewer name, date and time, interviewee reference number.

Start the recording.

<u>Escape Plan 1</u> – good for people who can just talk from the outset.

Talk through with the person their journey out of homelessness, asking them to identify significant incidents. Significant incidents are turning points for the better. Talk through each incident in turn until they run out of them. Use the prompt questions below to help them think of more.

1) Tell me about points where you made a significant positive change either mentally, physically or emotionally in your journey out of homelessness.
2) Tell me about people who were significant in that journey, either friends, family, workers or even strangers.

3) How did you know that you had moved on, or escaped from homelessness? What were the mental, physically and emotional signs?

<u>Escape Plan 2</u> – normally useful for people who think logically and in order of how incidents happen.

Ask people to fill in the Timeline. Use Spike's example if this helps people get thinking.

<u>Escape Plan 3</u> - good for people who remember things visually and/or may not think in a chronological order.

Ask people to draw, or to describe so that they can draw, significant incidents in their journey out of homelessness. Use my version as an example if that helps them get started. If they do this chronologically then draw in the years and lines to show how incidents related to each other. It they are not in order, this does not matter, ask them to draw in the times and the dates afterwards. Use the prompt questions above to help them think about significant incidents and people.

<u>Escape plan 4</u> - good for people who remember things through sounds, smells etc.

Again, get people to either talk, or draw, or even use the timeline, using the prompt questions. However they might benefit from other prompts such as:

Tell me about a song, or a book, or a poem or a programme or saying that was significant to you positively in your journey out of homelessness, and then tell me why it was significant.

Give an example of your own if this helps.

Ask people if they have 3 top tips for escaping homelessness.

Ask participant to identify two other people who we could speak to who would have insight into their journey, or parts of it. It could be family friends, workers or anyone. **<u>Ideally we are looking for one person you knew in a professional capacity and one who you knew personally.</u>**

- Significant Others' contact details – can you tell us a bit about your relationship with these people?

End Recording

Ask participants if they could give their Significant Others a call to prepare them for us ringing – we don't want to be mistaken for double glazing sales people!

- Demographics and Incentives

Appendix IV - Significant Others' Topic Guide

Interviews with others that have insight into the situation

Hi, introduce:

Researcher Work for Groundswell.

(Name of participant) has taken part in some research about homelessness called 'The Escape Plan' and indicated that you are someone who has insight into their journey out of homelessness.

Have they spoken with you? If not explain a bit more in detail.
What have they told you?

Just a bit about Groundswell: We've been around since 1996, we're an independent charity. Our job is to enable homeless and vulnerable people to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on the services they use and to play a full role in their communities.

What's the Escape plan about?

Aim: to create an evidence base of the critical success factors that have enabled people to move on from homelessness. Then to use this evidence to empower people currently experiencing homelessness, establish a good practice model for practitioners and to influence current and future policy development.

What we will do with what you tell us?

- The recordings are typed up **(your name isn't at any time linked to your recording or the transcription).**
- We analyse the data.
- We write a first draft report and take it to the focus group.
- In March and May 2010 dissemination of findings to people currently homelessness, providers and policy makers.

The interview will take approx ½ an hour

Confidentiality

What you tell is completely confidential. We will write a report and might quote things you say. Your name will not be linked to information in the report.

The only reason that we would break confidentiality is if you let us know something that puts you or someone else at risk of harm.

We record the interviews to help us get quotes right - Are you happy for us to record the interview?

Need to get them saying they agree to be recorded on the audio...

Code: (number of participant, initial of Significant Other, date (P – if known in a 'service' context)).

Insert here:

1. **As I've mentioned before you've been identified by (name of participant) as someone who has a significant insight into his or her journey out of homelessness – how would you describe your relationship with him or her?**

Prompt don't need to have known client all their lives. We want to know what you know of their journey.

2. **What else was happening for client around that time?**

E.g. mental health, drugs and alcohol, family, relationship breakdown, work, volunteering, friendship & relationships.

3. **What do you believe were the critical incidents where they made a significant positive change in their journey out of homelessness?**

This is the most important question – take your time, prompt carefully, investigate
(If possible refer to years/where they were staying at the time).
Prompt: ***mentally ***physically or ***emotionally.

4. **Can you think of any critical factors that lead him/her out of homelessness?**

Please prompt.

5. **Can you tell me about any other people who were significant in that journey, either friends, family workers or even strangers?**

6. **How did *you know* that they had moved on, or escaped from homelessness – what were the mental, physically and emotional signs?**

We will be running some focus groups in March to present the first-stage findings and give participants a chance to say, 'yeah that sounds about right- or hold on, that doesn't seem right to me'. They will be in central London and take 1.5 hours.

Would you be interested in attending a verification focus group? Y/N

Thank them for their time and ask them to contact you if they have any further information or insights.