Editorial

In promulgating policy change, it is held as self-evident, that policy responses to pressing concerns such as homelessness, should be based on evidence that clearly demonstrate that the policy adopted is shown to going to have desired effect. For researchers and advocates pressing for the advancement of policy instruments that can reduce homelessness, it is a constant source of frustration that many of the policies are simply not based on evidence, but often seem to fly in the face of the research evidence. In their paper on the introduction and embedding of Housing First in Canada, Macnaughton and colleagues provide important lessons for those wishing to advance evidence based policy on homelessness. In particular, they explore how we can move beyond piloting interventions that prove to be successful in ending homelessness to having them at the core of our response to homelessness. Exploring the case of the Housing First/Chez Soi randomised control trial in Canada, they affirm that in the first instance the research must be methodologically rigorous, but that this is not the only factor that determines whether evidence about what works moves into policy and practice more widely. Just as important is that the evidence should be framed as a 'plausible policy idea for solving a salient problem', and that a sufficient number of key policy actors are able to mobilise around and support such policy change.

In the paper by Kourachanis, the introduction of a pioneering housing led approach to ending homelessness in Greece, the Housing and Reintegration programme, is explored. The introduction of the programme is viewed as a welcome development, but it is a pilot project and a short-term intervention. The lessons from the Canadian experience above will no doubt be useful in developing strategies to mainstream the programme.

Policy change is also the theme of the paper by Mackie and colleagues who explore the pioneering policy shift in Wales to prioritising preventing homelessness over responding to homelessness after it has occurred. The prevention of homelessness, much like evidence based policy, seems obvious, but is not always the case in policy and practice. A key policy lesson from the Welsh experience is that legislation alone, while of course is vitally important, is insufficient. The implementation of the preventative turn in homelessness policy in Wales is uneven and inconsistent, demonstrating that the monitoring of policy change is as important as policy innovation. The theme of prevention also occurs in the paper by von Otter and colleagues on evictions in Sweden. Analysing a new database with detailed information on

evictions and threats of evictions and linking this information with other administrative databases, they are able to profile those households most likely to be served with eviction notices. These households tend to be the most socially and economically marginalised and the single most important reason for initiating eviction proceedings were rent arrears.

Two of the papers in this edition explore the experience of homelessness for women and for migrants. Both papers highlight important methodological issues in measuring and understanding homelessness, and the experience of homelessness for women and migrants is not well-capturing in much of the existing research on homelessness. In a 'state of the art' paper on gender and homelessness, Bretherton challenges several settled assumptions about women and homelessness. In particular, she argues that research which focuses on street homelessness and those using homelessness services, tends to miss a whole swathe of women's experiences of homelessness, such as use of gender based violence services and hidden homelessness. For Bretherton, a key task for future research is to understand how women navigate through homelessness, as such detailed data may hold the key to comprehending the differences in women's homelessness and the true nature and extent of women's homelessness. In her paper, Juul provides an example of research that explores how West-African migrants in Copenhagen 'navigate' through homelessness. In this rich ethnographic account of their strategies of survival, Juul details how what she terms these 'modern hunter-gatherers' navigate through a hostile urban landscape. In doing so, the paper provides a nuanced account of how migrants utilise services and offers one possible methodology for advancing the challenge set by Bretherton of how to understand different routes into and through homelessness. One of the reasons for the relative invisibility of women's homelessness and migrant homelessness is how homelessness is represented. Petersson, in her study of the representation of homelessness in policy documents in Copenhagen, Glasgow and Gothenburg, notes how the default category of "the homeless" tends to be constituted as specifically gendered (male) and racialised/raced (white).

The edition of the EJH also contains a robust, but respectful, exchange of views on the Homelessness Outcome Star between Joy MacKeith and the authors of a critical analysis of the Homelessness Outcome Star in EJH 11, Nicolas Place and Guy Johnson. The editorial committee of the EJH welcome and encourage such exchanges to foster critical discussion on both policy and practice interventions.