

Is Employment a Route out of Homelessness?

Professor Nicholas Pleace

Dr Joanne Bretherton

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About the services

- Arts-based and education programmes
- Training
- Help with seeking employment
 - One-to-one support
 - Social enterprise cafes
- Support with mental health
- Six towns and cities

Services

- Progressive, customer/service user led
- Elements of personalisation (bespoke)
- And co-production
- Positively viewed by most people who used it
- Well intentioned approach
- Though experiences could vary

The research

- Administrative data analysed on over 14,000 people using the service
- Talked to 158 people using the service in-depth
- 56 people interviewed four times in 24 months and 27 three times in 18 months (83 people)
- 47 women
- 111 men
- 406 interviews in total, 169 hours

Women: Who?

- 47 women took part in the cohort study
- 136 interviews in total with most interviewed 3 or 4 times over a three-year period
- They were tracked at the beginning, throughout and after leaving the programme
- Most of the women were in their 30's and 40's, although some (9) were in their 20's and 7 over the age of 50.
- 9% had a criminal record.
- Almost half reported a limiting illness / disability.
- 64% reported history of mental health.
- 15% problematic drug / alcohol use.

Women: Who?

- 40% were homeless at first contact (rest recently homeless or at risk of).
- Experience of rough sleeping widespread but very short term.
- Less than a third had not completed formal education and 36% had reached further or higher (inc University) education level.
- All unemployed at first contact.

Women's experiences

- Diversity of routes into homelessness were reported – mental health / Domestic abuse / Neighbourhood ASB and violence.
- Income poverty was fundamentally the immediate cause and obstacle to escaping homelessness. Women lacked the personal, practical and financial resources and had exhausted informal support and / or avoided services or been turned away.
- Almost all the women did not have children and consequently received little support from the statutory system.
- Evidence of shifting between situations of hidden homelessness (informal support), living rough and use of formal services.

Women: Moving away from homelessness

- At point of last contact, 33 / 47 described themselves of having moved away from homelessness.
- Eight in paid work, 25 in education, training or volunteering and / or actively seeking employment.
- 24 of these 33 were housed (mostly social rented or PRS). The other 9 were in temporary accommodation or hidden homelessness with accommodation on the horizon.

Women: Moving away from homelessness

- However, strong sense of precarity amongst these women:

It often goes in cycles. You get a place, you're homeless again, do you know what I mean? People need support for a long time afterwards.

With private rented [housing] it can be very precarious. How can you plan if you're only going to be somewhere for a year?

I've had Housing Benefit stopped about two or three times. It's stopped at the moment, for about the last month, so I'm constantly beginning to think, okay, I felt as if I've finally settled down for a bit, but then, who knows where this goes...

- Fourteen remained in negative situations at last contact.
 - No paid work throughout our contact nor engagement with ETE services.
 - All reported issues of poor mental health, isolation, poor physical health, limited social integration, continued housing problems.

Men: Who?

- 111 men were interviewed in the cohort study
Men tended to be older than the women, more were in their 40s and 50s
- Similar in terms of patterns of homelessness
- But women were more likely to be in accommodation at first contact

Men's experiences

- Less likely to be 'regaining progress'
- More likely to be 'moving forward for the first time'
- Very similar to women with respect to 'punctuated progression'
- And in terms of making 'limited progress'

Men and Women

- Men were typically *less* educated
 - In terms of completing basic education
 - And in terms of further/higher education
- Men were considerably *less* likely to report a history of mental illness
- And *more* likely to report addiction
- Somewhat more likely to report criminal record
 - But a minority in both genders

Overall outcomes

- Only a minority got paid work, around 1 in 4 of both men and women
- Women were more likely to have entered further or higher education
- And to be looking for work
- Men were more likely to have entered basic skills education or training
 - But were less educated at first contact

A route out of homelessness?

- For some, yes, there were real achievements
- But paid work did not always mean housing stability
- The “problem of the rent”
 - Had to be paid, could not plan to spend less
 - Was high relative to earned income
 - And incomes were often *unpredictable* as well as low

Partial exits

- A few women and men left homelessness
 - But they tended to be ‘regaining progress’
- For others, employment or education lifted them part-way out
 - But they could be ‘suspended’ just above homelessness
 - Not stably or sustainable housed as poverty and precarity remained
- A minority were given structure to their day, courses and arts-based activity, but employment or training were not realistic goals

Supply side integration

- The logic of ‘normalising’ people to make them employment ready
- Same logic of ‘normalising’ people to be housing ready
- But the reality is that ‘training and treating’ only works for some
- Some need ongoing support in a normal life to help them live a normal life
- And others get stuck, cannot complete the process that makes them ‘work ready’

Avoiding shallow integration

- Housing First shows us the need for – and the effectiveness of – comprehensive support that enables homeless people with high needs to have their own homes
- Individual Placement Support (IPS) follows a similar logic, place people with support needs in ordinary work and support them to stay there

Mixed results

- Women and men who were closest to normal life, whose homelessness was a break in a normal life course were assisted
- And there were positive changes for others who were helped towards socioeconomic integration for the first time
- But a positive result was not always stable or secure, because of what housing and labour market conditions were like
- There could be ongoing needs for support once housed and once in work, the lesson of Housing First
- Meanwhile training and treating did not work for a minority, those furthest from work and education, similar to high cost, high risk cases that staircase/linear residential treatment services could not help

Housing First and Job First

- Have to get away from the idea that people can be reintegrated into social and economic structures that left them out or excluded them to begin with by *changing the person*
- Must instead think in terms of how to support the person in a way that will enable them to integrate into society
- And accept that some people may need ongoing support and will probably not be in work anytime soon or at all

More information



Crisis Skylight Final Report of the University of York Evaluation

Nicholas Pleace and Joanne Bretherton

January 2017

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Crisis



Crisis Skylight Pathways to progression

Second interim report

Joanne Bretherton and Nicholas Pleace
January 2016

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Thanks for listening

Professor Nicholas Pleace

Centre for Housing Policy, University of York
European Observatory on Homelessness

Dr Joanne Bretherton

Centre for Housing Policy, University of York
Women's Homelessness in Europe Network

