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Researching homelessness and support needs: progress in approaches and methods to tackle complexity

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Homelessness and Social Work in Europe
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OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

Progress in researching 'joined up' working to meet complex needs?

- Changing governance of housing and welfare
- Meeting increasingly complex needs (homelessness, risk of homelessness)
- Effectiveness of responses?
- Conclusions and future challenges

GETTING INTO THE DEBATE – YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN THE LATE 1980S/EARLY 1990s

- Youth homelessness crisis – ‘no job, no home’ cycle
- Shelter promoted French model ‘*foyers pour jeunes travailleurs*’
 - Integrated approach to housing, education, training, employment, & independent living
- Acknowledged lack of working across government departments (employment, social security, housing)
- Mechanism needed to engage ‘hard to reach groups’
- Initial developments in evaluating integrated intervention

GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNANCE

STOKER (1998) – FIVE PROPOSITIONS

1. **Complex set of institutions – drawn from, but beyond government**
2. **Blurring of boundaries for tackling social issues – rise of third sector agencies**
3. **Power dependencies - no single organisation commands governance process**
4. **Autonomous self-governing networks of actors**
5. **Government ‘steering, not rowing’ (guidance, tools)**

EARLY 2000s – ‘COLLABORATIVE DISCOURSE’

- Partnership, inter-agency working, integrated delivery, joined up government
- Working across organisations
- Working across professions
- Complex networks; vertical and horizontal linkages

State power – not shrinking but directing?

- Paralleled by progressive homelessness and housing policies

Powell and Glendinning (2002); Powell and Exworthy (2002);
Clarke and Glendinning (2002); Lowe (2004)



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BOUNDARY SPANNERS (WILLIAMS, 2012)

- **Actors use agency to negotiate organisational structures to collaborate with others**
 - **Interpersonal skills (trust and reciprocity)**
 - **Networking skills, communication**
 - **Entrepreneurial, innovation, creative skills**
 - **Co-ordination skills (manage collaboration)**
- **Senior to frontline staff**
- **Managing in and across multiple modes of governance**
- **Blurring of personal and professional relationships**

HOMELESSNESS AND INTER-PROFESSIONAL WORKING

- **Joint working - ‘expertise of different professions’ to resolve complex problems**
- **Working across professions**
 - Same/different organisations
 - Vertically/horizontally
 - Formal/informal
 - Professional networks
- **Housing, health/mental health, social work, support/independent living skills**
- **Delivery by case management**

ANDERSON, DYB AND YTREHUS, 2012



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(NOT) MEETING INCREASINGLY COMPLEX NEEDS

Evidence Reviews (Rosengard et al, 2007; Pleace, 2008)

Service User needs:

- **Personalised, comprehensive service**
- **Ordinary independent living**

Experience/evidence

- **Disadvantage, exclusion from service provision, falling through the cracks**
- **Multiple agencies, not sufficiently co-ordinated**

Recommendation: Strategic and operational partnership working



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MULTIPLE EXCLUSION HOMELESSNESS (2011)

- Substance dependency, mental health, domestic violence, experience of care/prison, prostitution, begging, street homelessness
- Practice: multi-professional, rather than inter-professional, lack of sharing/co-ordination, professional 'protectionism' (Cornes et al)
- Challenges in understanding each others' roles, developing services (workers); negotiating services (clients) (Joly et al).

SEVERE AND MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE (ENGLAND, BRAMLEY ET AL 2015)

- 58,000 adults involved in homelessness, substance misuse and criminal justice systems
- Poverty universal, mental health issues common
- Distinguished by degree of stigma, particularly poor quality of life
- Structural roots of SMD evident
- Outcome of early family/educational experience
- Significant social cost

‘encouraging short-term improvements reported by services, but progress weaker amongst those with most complex problems’



SANCTIONS AND DESTITUTION

Welfare conditionality and benefit sanctions impacting on most vulnerable (Batty et al 2015; Dwyer and Bright 2016)

1.2m destitute in UK in 2015 – cannot afford to buy the essentials to eat, stay warm and dry and keep clean (Fitzpatrick et al, 2016)

COMPLEX NEEDS: EXPERIENCE & EFFECTIVENESS

‘There is no desire for permanent accommodation for the most vulnerable service users interviewed. For them the basics of dealing with their addiction, finding food and a roof (even for one night) is a priority’

Anna Evans Housing Consultancy (2014)

Little evidence of homelessness prevention activity in response to health and well-being needs

Lack of evaluation of practice & limitations to research methods/rigour

(Homeless Link, 2015)



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HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS

Extensive 'clinical research' on health problems of homeless people

- Conducted through 'specialist' services
- Individualised

Access to/exclusion from health care reflects welfare regime and health care system

- Netherlands - wide range of care for socially excluded (e.g. needle exchanges, addiction services, multi-agency implementation)
- Slovenia – relatively accessible services, some barriers/exclusion
- Scotland – health and homelessness standards aim to overcome acknowledged exclusion

Anderson and Ytrehus, 2012; Wolf et al, forthcoming



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PUBLIC HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS

Grounded in structural analysis of health inequalities

Social determinants of health – links to housing, home and well-being

- NHS role in improving health of homeless people?
- Health and social care integration – opportunities to connect with housing?
- Rigorous data linkage
- Early intervention – early years education, mental health, substance misuse, community safety, employability
- Joint training

Hetherington and Hamlet (2015)



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COMMUNITY ISSUES

- **Housing – fundamental human right**
 - **Related rights? (income, health care and other support)**
- **Distinct literatures on homelessness and communities**
- **Key connection – point settling into a community home**
 - **Social housing allocations, Tenancy sustainment**
- **Housing First – new orthodoxy?**
- **Tenure restructuring – private renting, social enterprise**
- **Post-2008 austerity measures**



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COMMUNITY AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES: SCOTLAND (2015-16)

- **Roots of homelessness are in the community (breakdown of relationships, shared living arrangements)**
 - **Support needs identified amongst 38% of applicants**
- **Post-2009 emphasis on homelessness prevention**
- **Housing (Scotland) Act 2014**
 - **Abolition of Right to Buy; Increased lettings discretion to social landlords**
- **2015 legislation to reform private sector tenancies**

NEW RESEARCH: HOUSING THROUGH SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

- EXPLORE HEALTH IMPACTS OF HOUSING PROVIDED THROUGH A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PRIVATE LANDLORD
- COMPARE WITH SOCIAL LANDLORD
- AND RENT DEPOSIT SCHEME (PRIVATE RENTING)
- FOLLOW TENANT SAMPLES OVER TWO YEARS
- EXAMINE WIDER PRACTICE

ESRC/MRC COMMONHEALTH



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INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS: HABITACT PEER REVIEW OF LOCAL HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

- Annual peer reviews of city homelessness policies (2010-2016)
 - Discussion paper; peer review workshop; post-workshop report
- Substantive role for local policy making – fits with changing governance
- Benefits of structured peer review for lesson learning, including meeting complex needs and community issues in period of crisis
- Divergence in practice and capacity
- Dominance of northern and western Europe?
- Measuring progress?
- Positive example of international networking

Gosme and Anderson (2015)



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CONCLUSIONS AND CHALLENGES

- **Complex needs – strong evidence of underlying structural explanations and inequalities**
- **Housing, health, social work – frontline services**
- **Increasingly sophisticated joint working – governance structures**
- **Challenges remain in delivering inter-professional working**
 - **Power dynamics with health and social care (longstanding)**
 - **‘Professionalism’ and inter-professional working**
 - **Joint education and training**
- **Further research – governance and professional practice?**
 - Is the whole greater than the sum of the parts?**
 - Are our responses up to the challenges?**

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