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**Good Practice in Joint/
Multi-Agency Working on
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**GOOD PRACTICE IN JOINT/MULTI-AGENCY
WORKING ON HOMELESSNESS**

Catherine Kennedy
Emily Lynch
Robina Goodlad

Scottish Executive Central Research Unit
2001

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Richard Evans, Scottish Executive
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SUMMARY

1. In recent years, a growing body of research evidence has identified the range of factors associated with people's routes into homelessness and their complex and inter-related needs beyond the practical need to secure accommodation. Whilst such research generally recommends the need for greater policy co-ordination and collaboration between organisations as a step to achieving sustainable solutions to homelessness, there is a lack of systematic evidence on the practice of multi-agency working on homelessness. This report aims to address that gap.

2. The research was commissioned by the Scottish Executive as part of the Homelessness Task Force's research programme. The aim of the research was to identify the reality of joint working in the delivery of front-line services to homeless and potentially homeless people in Scotland; and to identify aspects of good practice which illustrate different aspects of successful joint working. This has been achieved through the following methods:

- A review of published and unpublished literature on good practice in joint/multi-agency working; and the available research evidence on multi-agency working in homelessness service provision in Scotland and the rest of the UK.
- A postal survey of the directors or heads of housing/homelessness services within the 32 local authorities in Scotland, and 8 voluntary sector homelessness forums (31 and 5 responses received respectively).
- An in-depth examination of 8 case-study services which involved participation or service provision from more than one organisation, either in tandem or co-ordinated sequential stages. This involved interviewing a total of 41 agency workers and 22 service users.

3. The research reflects many of the issues identified within the research and policy literature on joint/multi-agency working, including the motivations for, and enablers and barriers to multi-agency working. Key findings of the research include:

- Whilst joint/multi-agency working on homelessness was generally seen as a necessity and a strength of current provision of services to homeless people, it is also something which is seen to be lacking and needs to be improved upon. The postal survey revealed that joint/multi-agency working is commonly found between statutory and voluntary sector organisations, and less commonly with housing associations, the private sector or community groups.
- Twenty-nine of the 36 postal survey respondents were able to identify examples of joint/multi-agency working at a service delivery level in their area. In relation to ways of working this most commonly involved planning, information sharing, referrals and liaison, and less frequently joint service delivery, satellite or outreach work with other organisations.

- Most of the examples of joint/multi-agency working identified had been established relatively recently. Of the 8 case-study initiatives selected, 6 had been established since 1998, 3 of these in the year 2000.
- The motivations or rationale for organisations working together generally involved 2 core issues: an identified need and gap in service provision; and the availability of funding. Identifying partner agencies generally involved selecting those with a known track record or with whom there was some prior knowledge or relationship. The ‘model’ of provision selected was generally an adaptation of current practice, or the adoption of a model successfully developed within similar services elsewhere.
- Enablers to the development and practice of joint/multi-agency working included: committed staff; good working relationships; communication; a clear demand; common understandings; shared aims and goals; expertise; the availability of funding; adequate staff and time; senior political support; a flexible and reflexive approach; and being developed at an operational rather than a policy level.
- The difficulties encountered included: organisational and professional boundaries; a lack of understanding of organisational remits, duties and limitations; a lack of understanding or trust; inadequate or unequal funding between the partners; differing aims and remits; inadequate staffing; and the time involved in developing and sustaining relationships.
- Despite the tensions and difficulties encountered, interviewees generally felt that most could be overcome or resolved, and all agreed that this did not detract from the ‘added value’ to service provision that had been created through working collaboratively. Improvements to the process included: addressing further gaps in provision; designated worker time; increased time for developmental work; joint planning and assessment processes; agreements on sharing information; and job shadowing or joint training.
- The vast majority of the service users interviewed were extremely positive about the services they were involved with, generally welcoming the services, support and opportunities that had been available. Most of the interviewees were unaware that more than one organisation was involved in the service, either because they were only accessing one part of the service, or their involvement with other parts or the partner agencies had been fleeting.
- In highlighting aspects of joint/multi-agency working which they considered to be good practice, interviewees focused on more qualitative and inter-personal aspects including: communication; commitment; close working relationships; clear and agreed roles, aims and boundaries; and trust. Whilst a series of operational issues were also highlighted, it is clear from the findings that these, more inter-personal factors provide the fundamental basis to successful joint/multi-agency working.

4. The report concludes with a series of recommendations for policy makers and practitioners.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1.1 In recent years, a growing body of research evidence has identified the range of factors associated with people's routes into homelessness, and their complex and inter-related needs beyond the practical need for secure accommodation (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2000; Fitzpatrick and Kennedy, 2000; Third and Yanetta, 2000). Such research findings have produced a series of conclusions and recommendations, centring on the need for greater policy co-ordination and collaboration between organisations as a step to achieving sustainable solutions to homelessness (Kennedy and Fitzpatrick, 2000).

1.2 The salience of such recommendations is clear within homelessness policies and planning at a national and a local level (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998; Glasgow Street Homelessness Review Team, 2000). In addition, the 1997 Code of Guidance on Homelessness recommends that inter-agency co-operation between housing, social work, health, police and voluntary services should be based on agreed homelessness strategies, with clear objectives and responsibilities (Scottish Office, 1997). Identifying examples of joint or multi-agency practice was selected as a priority within the 'what works' in homelessness service provision stream of research for the Homelessness Task Force.

1.3 Calls for increased levels of joint or multi-agency working are not new, and a considerable amount of research has been undertaken exploring its operation at a strategic and an operational level. Examples of such research exist in the field of health and housing (Arblaster *et al*, 1996; Goss and Kent, 1995); community care (Hannigan, 1999; Higgins *et al*, 1994); youth services (Christian and Gilvarry, 1999; Lloyd, 1994); and domestic violence (Hague *et al*, 1996), amongst others. In addition there is a broad range of literature exploring aspects of inter-organisational working (for example Huxham, 1996). Such research evidence has tended to highlight a range of barriers to multi-agency working including: professional and organisational cultures and boundaries; differing aims and objectives; legislative and administrative problems; tensions over resources and funding; the absence of a supportive strategic framework; and an unwillingness to co-operate.

1.4 In the light of such findings, authors highlight recommendations for improving joint/multi-agency working, and provide suggested checklists to be utilised in researching such working. Examples of factors likely to facilitate improved working arrangements include: clear goals and objectives; clear lines of responsibility and accountability; the availability of resources; communication, awareness raising and information sharing; joint training; and the development of trust and user involvement. However, whilst generic literature may offer important insights to such arrangements for homelessness services, it is expected that the complexity of needs combined with the transient nature of this client group may hold particular problems for joint working in this field.

1.5 Exhortations to inter-agency collaboration and integrated service delivery are increasing within the research literature on homelessness, largely in response to identified gaps in provision (for example Bines 1994; McCluskey, 1997; Oldman, 1997). Others report on improvements encountered in inter-organisational working, or cite positive examples of action in specific initiatives (Pannell and Parry, 1999; Randall and Brown, 1996). Some authors have offered good practice advice towards specific aspects of homelessness

provision, such as community care planning (Leigh, 1993); providing access to health, education and social services (Firth, 1998) and to temporary accommodation (Currie and Pawson, 1996); and assisting young people (Fitzpatrick, 1999; Rugg 1999). However, there remains a dearth of systematic evidence particularly of the *practice* of multi-agency working on homelessness, in particular, assessment of the outcome of such activity, and importantly, the perspectives of the service users. As a result, the Scottish Executive have commissioned this study '*Good Practice in Joint/Multi-Agency Working on Homelessness*' as part of the Homelessness Task Force's research programme. It is the aim of this research to fill these gaps, by focusing on joint/multi-agency working at the front-line of service delivery. The report does not explore the experience of multi-agency working at a strategic level, for example in the planning of service provision.

RESEARCH AIMS

1.6 The aims of this research were:

- to examine the reality of joint working in the delivery of front-line services to homeless and potentially homeless people in Scotland. This has been approached through *describing* services and arrangements for collaboration and joint working and exploring agency workers' and service users' *perceptions* of their value
- to identify examples of good practice which illustrate different aspects of successful joint working
- to report on good practice to practitioners and policy makers.

1.7 Towards achieving these aims, the research reviewed the available literature and explored current service provision in order to:

- identify examples of good practice, highlighting positive and negative aspects
- identify the experiences both of those providing and using the services
- gather evidence on the outcomes of this work
- contribute to the work of the Homelessness Task Force and inform the development of homelessness policy and practice in Scotland.

DEFINING 'JOINT' AND 'MULTI-AGENCY' WORKING

1.8 A variety of terminology exists which seeks to describe the various ways in which organisations work together. For the purposes of this research 'multi-agency working' is defined broadly to include the whole spectrum of inter-agency relationships in the organisation and delivery of services to homeless people. This includes 'intra-organisational' working, for example between housing and social work departments, and ranges from referring clients to other agencies, to 'joint working' where 2 or more organisations are involved in providing a specific service. The arrangements can be voluntary or statutory, formal or informal, and may or may not involve a financial relationship.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

1.9 The research has involved 3 inter-related stages: a literature review; a postal survey of local authority and voluntary sector homelessness forums; and in-depth exploration of 8 case study services.

Stage 1: Literature review

1.10 A review was conducted of the literature on good practice in joint working, and the academic literature and research evidence on multi-agency working in homelessness service provision in Scotland and the UK. This was designed to identify any existing practice of multi-agency working on homelessness in Scotland, and existing research evidence in relation to practice in the UK. The data was gathered from a wide variety of sources, including: informal discussions with informants in key agencies; policy documents; published academic literature relating both to homelessness and joint/multi-agency working; grey (or unpublished) literature produced by organisations providing services to homeless individuals and families (such as internal and external reviews, monitoring data, annual reports); and guidance notes on good practice for joint/multi-agency working.

Stage 2: Postal survey

1.11 A postal survey was conducted to gather information on the current provision of services to homeless people across Scotland and to identify examples of joint/multi-agency working in providing services to homeless people. This involved contacting key informants in both statutory and voluntary sector organisations. The sample included all of the current directors or heads of housing within the 32 local authorities in Scotland. In addition key informants were contacted within each of the local authority areas to discover the existence of any voluntary sector-led homelessness forums. As a result of this the survey was sent to 40 organisations: 32 local authorities and 8 local voluntary sector homelessness forums. The survey was piloted with both these types of organisations before the full survey was launched.

1.12 The design of the survey questionnaire was informed by issues emerging in the literature review. Both structured quantitative information and more open-ended qualitative information were collected. Key issues covered included:

- descriptive information about the agencies and the services they offer
- current policies and practices on working with homeless people
- the perceived support and service needs of homeless people and people at risk of homelessness
- information on joint/multi-agency working in respect of service provision for homeless people, including:
 - names and contact details of core agencies they are currently working with
 - details of membership of any established networks or forums in the local area
 - information on any service agreements and referrals procedures operating between organisations
 - information on any joint service provision
 - perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of current practice and provision; and

- the availability of relevant publications and reports.

1.13 Thirty-six of the 40 questionnaires were completed and returned: 31 by local authority contacts and 5 by the voluntary sector forums. The data has been analysed using SPSS.

Stage 3: Case studies

1.14 The third stage of this research involved a detailed analysis of 8 services or ‘case studies’ that appear to represent good practice. Preliminary background information on a range of joint/multi-agency initiatives on homelessness was gathered through Stages 1 and 2 of this research. The 8 case studies were selected to represent the range of ways in which organisations work together, for different ‘groups’ of homeless people, including single and family homelessness and people who are at risk of homelessness. In addition, cases were selected to demonstrate, as far as possible, provision in different geographic regions of Scotland (urban and rural; prosperous and deprived). The criteria for selecting case study services were as follows:

- the service must involve the participation of more than one organisation or department and
- the service must involve service provision to homeless people from more than one agency, either in tandem or in co-ordinated sequential stages.

1.15 Semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted with agency workers and service users. Interviews were conducted with a range of agency staff, both those involved in the direct delivery of the services, and those involved more in the overall management of the initiatives in order to gain insights into the experiences of workers at different organisational levels. Across the case studies, service users were selected to broadly represent the appropriate age and gender balance for the particular organisation. Supplementing the interview data, relevant background information was collected for each of the case studies (project history, management and funding arrangements, services offered, organisational philosophy, monitoring information about service users and ex-users).

1.16 Interviews were conducted with a total of 41 agency workers and 22 service users. Due to the variation in the size and scope of the initiatives studied, the number of interviews conducted varied between case studies. Each case study involved interviewing between 4 and 6 agency workers, and between 2 and 4 service users.

1.17 Interviews with *agency staff* gathered:

- details of the origins and nature of the service
- knowledge of organisational aims and policies
- perceptions of service users’ housing circumstances and needs
- details of joint/multi-agency working
- experience of joint/multi-agency working on homelessness (agencies involved, length and type of relationships, forms of interactions, impact on service provision)
- strengths and benefits of multi-agency working
- weaknesses and difficulties of multi-agency working
- possible improvements in the provision of services to homeless people.

1.18 Interviews with *service users* gathered information on:

- personal and family history
- housing and homelessness pathways
- experience of services
- opportunities and barriers experienced in accessing services
- types of service desired/required.

1.19 It is important to note that at the outset of the research, no claims could be accurately made that services selected were examples of good practice. Rather, the emphasis of the research was on exploring the range of experiences of multi-agency service provision in a diverse range of situations and, on the basis of the detailed analysis, identifying examples of good practice.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

1.20 Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature in relation to good practice and multi-agency working. This includes a brief review of the current policy context relating to homelessness and multi-agency working in Scotland, and the key themes and issues relating to the practice of multi-agency working in a variety of policy fields. Chapter 3 explores the extent of joint/multi-agency working on homelessness in Scotland. This is based on information gathered as part of the postal survey, and includes a review of current service provision in addition to views on multi-agency working. Chapter 4 explores the practice of multi-agency working in more detail, through exploring the views of agency workers and service users in the 8 case study services. Finally Chapter 5 provides an overview of the findings of this research, and identifies a range of recommendations for future policy and practice.

CHAPTER TWO JOINT/MULTI-AGENCY WORKING - A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

2.1 Stage 1 of this research involved a review of the available literature and research evidence on good practice in joint/ multi-agency working on homelessness. Literature relating directly to this topic is limited however, and thus the review encompassed the broader literature on good practice and multi-agency working. This summary highlights some of the key issues emerging from the literature, including: rationales for joint/multi-agency working; approaches to multi-agency working and examples of practice; the benefits and barriers to this process; and finally the available guidance on good practice. First, a short review of the policy context is provided.

THE POLICY CONTEXT

2.2 Calls for multi-agency working in the planning and delivery of services have been increasingly common in recent years. Such an approach can be seen as central to a number of policy fields, such as urban regeneration and social inclusion, and to the work of the Scottish Executive, as demonstrated through publications such as *Working Together for Scotland: A Programme for Government* (Scottish Executive, 2001). In relation to homelessness, the recent consultation document *Better Homes for Scotland's Communities* (Scottish Executive, 2000) highlighted the need for a multi-agency response to the complex array of factors underpinning homelessness:

"Tackling and preventing homelessness is not just a matter for local authority housing departments. It requires concerted and co-ordinated efforts from a range of bodies, both public and voluntary, to make in-roads into the underlying problems and despair caused by drug abuse, mental and physical illness and household breakdown." (Scottish Executive, 2000a:8)

2.3 The requirement for organisations to work together is already contained within various pieces of legislation. For example the *NHS and Community Care Act 1990* requires all health, social work and housing authorities to develop joint community care plans for service provision in their area. In addition, the *Children (Scotland) Act 1995* introduced a corporate responsibility for local authorities to provide accommodation and support for young people, particularly those leaving care. In relation to the current homelessness legislation, Section 38 of Part II of the *Housing (Scotland) Act 1987* places a duty on local authorities, under reasonable circumstances, to co-operate with and give assistance to other local authorities and registered housing associations in Scotland, England or Wales, in carrying out certain homelessness functions. The *1997 Code of Guidance on Homelessness* develops this requirement, and emphasises the importance of an inter-agency approach which involves a wide range of actors, including voluntary agencies, health boards and the police. Such an approach, it is suggested, should be based on an agreed homelessness strategy, with clear objectives and agreed roles and responsibilities (Scottish Office, 1997).

2.4 The launch of the Rough Sleepers Initiative in Scotland in 1997 can be seen as a further example of attempts to promote a strategic approach to homelessness services and

joint/multi-agency working. Under this initiative, local authorities were required to consult with a range of organisations in their area and develop strategies for tackling rough sleeping in order to receive funding for services. Finally, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduces a duty on local authorities to produce strategies for preventing and alleviating homelessness in their area.

2.5 Whilst legislation and policies exist to support joint/multi-agency working at a local level, developing such services has in practice proved much more difficult. These difficulties are perhaps best exemplified in relation to community care. A number of Circulars have been issued as a result of the identified lack of effective joint working and the limited involvement of housing providers in the planning and delivery of community care services (for example, Scottish Office, 1994). In addition, in 1999, a Guidance Note was issued in an attempt to assist social work and housing authorities, and health boards remove administrative boundaries and improve co-operation (Scottish Executive, 1999).

RATIONALES FOR JOINT/MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

2.6 Much of the discussion of joint/multi-agency working in the homelessness literature appears at the end of reports as a recommendation for changes in policy and practice. The rationales given for the need for multi-agency working are broadly similar to those in the wider literature. Joint/multi-agency working is argued to be necessary due to the complex range of problems experienced by many homeless people. These, in addition to a lack of accommodation, make it difficult for them to access and sustain permanent housing (Randall and Brown, 1999) and other services to meet their needs (Pannell and Parry, 1999). In addition, complex needs often require diverse and co-ordinated services which are beyond the capability of individual organisations. As a result, there is a need to develop models of inter-agency working that can provide holistic solutions for single homeless people (Pannell and Parry, 1999); reduce poverty and social exclusion (Brown and Passmore, 1999); and reduce the negative impact of housing conditions on health (CIH, 1998). Other issues highlighted as reasons for greater joint/multi-agency working include: the more effective use of scarce resources (CIH, 1997); and as a response to funding mechanisms, such as the RSI, requiring agencies to work in partnership (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2000). Therefore multi-agency working can be seen as both a response to an identified problem and to an opportunity.

2.7 Multi-agency working has also been increasingly necessary as a result of changes occurring within the public sector since the late 1980s. These included the changing role of local authorities and health boards from being the providers of services, to that of purchasers, commissioners and enablers. As a result services have been provided by an increasingly fragmented range of organisations. The increasing diversity of service providers has been praised by some authors because of the increase in small-scale specialist provision for specific client groups. Conversely, the expansion has been argued to increase the risk of duplication of services, and in the absence of a co-ordinated framework, increase the potential for people falling into the gaps between services. Whatever view is taken, the existence of a bigger pool of organisations necessitates the establishment of networks between services.

APPROACHES TO JOINT/MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

2.8 There is no single prescribed format in which organisations can work together. Rather, multi-agency working can take a variety of forms, and many authors suggest a 'fitness for purpose' approach is taken (Hambleton *et al.*, 1995). Arrangements can be voluntary, for example in circumstances where organisations recognise a shared concern or advantage in working together; or they can be directed, such as by legislation or funding incentives (Hudson, 1987). Arrangements can vary in formality, membership, and scope, both in geographic terms, and time-scale. They can also vary in the type of activity, for example from strategic planning to service delivery; and in the desired outputs, whether they are tangible or intangible.

2.9 Several authors have highlighted a range of conditions that are required for effective inter-agency working. These include: a willingness for organisations to co-operate (Alter and Hage, 1993); clear expectations, agreed goals and agreed roles amongst the professions (Hudson, 1987; Brown and Passmore, 1999); an awareness of their mutual dependence, and the potential 'collaborative advantage' to be achieved from working together (Huxham, 1996; Brown and Passmore, 1999); a balance of power between organisations (Hudson, 1987); the availability of resources (Alter and Hage, 1993; Arblaster *et al.*, 1996); appropriate levels of expertise amongst the participants (Alter and Hage, 1993); and the commitment of individuals to create change (Hudson *et al.*, 1997). There is disagreement amongst the authors as to whether joint/multi-agency working is more effective between organisations which are homogeneous (Hudson, 1987) or diverse (Alter and Hage, 1993) in terms of their structure and function. However, several authors agree on the importance of 'role awareness' (Whyte, 1997), and the value of guidance and joint training to support workers (Hague, 1997; Brown and Passmore, 1999).

2.10 The importance of trust between participating organisations is also commonly highlighted (Alter and Hage, 1993; Hudson *et al.*, 1997). Hudson *et al.* (1997), as a result of their analysis of working alliances between health and social care services, developed a 'collaborative continuum' to demonstrate how the level of trust relates to the degree of integration of services. Four distinct points are identified on this continuum, ranging from *isolated encounters* at the end of the scale with low trust and integration, through *communication*, and *collaboration* to *integration* where there is a high level of trust.

2.11 Finally, a number of 'models' of joint/multi-agency working have been identified within the literature:

- liaison/referrals between relevant specialist organisations to provide appropriate support
- Service Level Agreements (SLA) between departments (for example housing and Housing Benefit) or between organisations (for example housing and health). This can involve action taking place simultaneously or consecutively
- services incorporating provision from a number of agencies within a single site (for example a one-stop-shop approach)
- services established through multi-agency funding but delivered by a single agency
- specialist services delivered on an outreach or 'satellite' basis in the premises of other agencies, such as hostels and day centres
- generic outreach workers linking service users in to a range of specialist services

- strategic planning and co-ordinating groups, involving senior level representation for statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

EVIDENCE OF EXISTING PRACTICE IN JOINT/MULTI-AGENCY WORKING ON HOMELESSNESS

2.12 As has been previously noted, there is little research evidence available on joint/multi-agency homelessness service delivery. Indeed whilst there appears to be an increasing amount of joint working on homelessness occurring at a strategic/planning level, this still appears to be more limited at an operational level. However, this section briefly reviews the experience of multi-agency homelessness service provision involving statutory and voluntary sector collaboration. Three examples illustrate some of the issues emerging from the literature.

2.13 One example of multi-agency homelessness service provision is the HUB housing advice centre in Bristol (Pannell and Parry, 1999). The HUB incorporates staff from voluntary, statutory and national organisations working together to meet the needs of single homeless people. Improvements in strategic planning and co-ordination of services are argued to have resulted from the involvement of enthusiastic key players; the commitment of senior managers; the operation of ‘genuine’ co-ordinating fora involved in assessing need, reviewing current provision and developing plans for the future. Pannell and Parry (1999) suggest that multi-agency working needs to develop organically and cannot be imposed from above. In addition, the prior existence of networks between organisations and an established level of trust helped facilitate the process. Finally they argue for the importance of a small steps approach, enabling trust and confidence to be built up gradually, over time.

2.14 A further example of joined up working is the ‘Under One Roof’ project, a partnership of 30 statutory and voluntary organisations seeking to address the needs of vulnerable rough sleepers in 2 areas of London (Stern *et al.*, 2000). This project, funded by the King’s Fund and managed by START, aimed to develop a one-stop-shop model of provision and improve relations between the statutory and voluntary sectors. This involved 2 part-time multi-disciplinary teams delivering services to single homeless people within day centres. Whilst this model of provision was found to be ineffective at reaching new people as it was based within existing services, Stern *et al.* (2000) consider having open access one-stop assessment services as being appropriate for rough sleepers who are excluded from mainstream provision. In addition they recommend the development of ‘generic assessors’ located within single agencies to address the needs of clients with complex problems, combined with ‘multi-agency panels’ to pool information and identify how services can be brought together.

2.15 In their study of interagency collaborations between health, housing and social work in providing support for people in ordinary housing, Arblaster *et al* (1996) found many examples of 2 agencies working together in the planning and delivery of services, but very few 3-way links. In addition, whilst there were often formal agreements at a strategic level, these were not commonly reflected at other levels within the organisation. Links between agencies at a service delivery level tend to focus on particular projects and client groups and be *ad hoc* in nature (Arblaster *et al.*, 1996). Interagency collaboration was found to be poor at specific points when people access services, when the opportunity to look at clients’ needs as a whole was often missed (Arblaster *et al.*, 1996).

BENEFITS AND BARRIERS OF JOINT/MULTI-AGENCY WORKING ON HOMELESSNESS

2.16 Few accounts of joint/multi-agency working discuss the benefits of such an approach in great detail. In general, the benefits highlighted mirror the rationales for working together: to better address people's support needs; and to make best use of scarce resources. As highlighted in the previous section, positive outcomes resulting from joint/multi-agency working included increased trust; increased awareness and understanding; and improved strategic planning of services. However, in spite of some positive experience, a diverse range of barriers remained to the further development of such relationships (Oldman, 1997; Pannell and Parry, 1999). Indeed some have argued that difficulties experienced in collaboration have been the key obstacle to improvement in service provision (Means and Smith, 1995).

2.17 Many of the identified barriers to joint/multi-agency working relate to the cultures and structures of the organisations and professions involved. At an administrative level these include non-coterminous boundaries; and different planning mechanisms and cycles of organisations (CIH, 1998). In addition, a lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of health, social work and housing professions, in particular where responsibilities begin and end, were commonly highlighted. For example, the confused role for housing management in providing care support has been identified (Arblaster *et al.*, 1996). The existence of different professional perspectives, for example between medical and social care professions (Oldman, 1997; Pannell and Parry, 1999), can lead to a lack of agreement over appropriate care. Relationships between these professions are characterised as harbouring traditional hostilities (for example between housing and social work) and the negative stereotyping of professions (Oldman 1997; Pannell and Parry, 1999).

2.18 Tensions also exist between the voluntary and statutory sector in terms of roles and responsibilities. For example O'Leary (1997) highlights the difficulties experienced by homeless people with dual diagnosis (drug or alcohol problems and mental health problems, for example) in accessing appropriate care, caused by tensions between voluntary services and social work. Social workers have a statutory responsibility for carrying out community care assessments and funding care packages. Such assessments are often carried out with very little knowledge of the client, and yet social workers are considered to be reluctant to ask workers in the voluntary sector for advice, even where they may have detailed knowledge of clients' needs (O'Leary, 1997).

2.19 The introduction of 'market mechanisms' and a spirit of competition within public sector organisation have been argued to limit the potential for inter-agency working, and are seen as being at odds with calls for greater collaboration between health, housing and social work agencies (Arblaster *et al.*, 1996; Oldman, 1997). The fragmentation of services, with a split between the purchasing and the provision of services, and an increasing diverse range of providers (Arblaster *et al.*, 1996; Oldman, 1997) are also seen as complicating calls for co-ordinated services. The separation of the purchasing and provision of services has been seen as creating unequal power relationship between organisations. This is seen to be the case between the statutory and voluntary sector in particular, with voluntary sector organisations being largely dependent on grant aid from local authorities (Oldman 1997). In addition, the general under funding of social housing, health and social care is commonly highlighted (Arblaster *et al.*, 1996). The pressure to achieve efficiency savings has been argued to impede innovation (Goss and Kent, 1995).

2.20 Other barriers to multi-agency working include: competition over clients and resources; having an incomplete knowledge of the policies and practices of other organisations, particularly between voluntary and statutory sectors (Arblaster *et al.*, 1996); poor communication between agencies in relation to identifying appropriate persons to contact and in sharing information (Arblaster *et al.*, 1996); perceived status differences between professions (Pannell and Parry, 1997); vested interests (Webb, 1991); and the desire for organisational survival (Oldman, 1997).

GUIDANCE ON GOOD PRACTICE

2.21 A range of good practice guidance is available which is intended to support organisations working together. The Chartered Institute of Housing in particular has published a range of literature, for example on housing and health (CIH, 1998), developing local housing strategies (CIH, 1997) and developing anti-poverty strategies (Brown and Passmore, 1999). This, and other guidance from a variety of policy areas, reveals a significant degree of consensus as to what factors are essential for effective multi-agency working.

2.22 First, several authors highlight the importance of establishing inter-agency forums with a strategic overview of provision in the local area (Means and Smith, 1995; Oldman, 1997). Such forums need to be supported by partnership working at both senior and service delivery levels (Carter, 1999), and should be genuine forums rather than ‘talking shops’. For example such forums can play a central role in reviewing and monitoring service delivery, conducting audits of policies and working practices; and identifying gaps in provision and ways to fill them. This links into the second good practice indicator, the importance of conducting research. Research is seen as vital in assessing need, and reviewing the appropriateness of existing policies and practices (Carter, 1999; Seddon and Truman, 1999).

2.23 A third suggestion for good practice in multi-agency working is the development of ‘network awareness’ (Means and Smith, 1995); that is, developing an understanding of the different organisations and their various roles and responsibilities. Joint staff training is commonly suggested as a means of increasing understanding and awareness and increasing levels of trust and co-operation. In addition other staffing arrangements such as shadowing, placements and secondments could be introduced to similarly improve awareness (Pannell and Parry, 1999).

2.24 A fourth aspect of guidance centres on the need for commitment to joint/multi-agency working. This is variously seen as requiring the involvement of senior members, including politicians, but also the key organisations, including the voluntary sector; local people and communities (Brown and Passmore, 1999); and homeless people themselves (Birrell, 1998; Watson, 1999). The involvement of key actors during the development stages of planning for multi-agency working is seen as vital for establishing commitment (CIH, 1997) in addition to trust. Also required are agreement on roles and responsibilities; and identification of the perceived gain for all parties (Means and Smith, 1995).

2.25 A range of more specific recommendations exist for altering some aspects of current provision. For example, whilst authors generally recommend that local authorities should be the lead agency in multi-agency service provision, their role needs to become more flexible when working with other organisations (Rugg, 1999). Several authors have pointed to the

need for joint and agreed assessment forms to ensure that people's needs are looked at holistically. O'Leary (1997) suggests that agreed local pro forma assessment sheets agreed between statutory and voluntary agencies, are developed. These could contain vital background information on clients that may be unlikely to come up in an assessment, and can be held on file by social work departments to be taken into consideration during the assessment process. Having a joint assessment process would also reduce the numbers of occasions on which homeless people are asked to divulge the same pieces of personal information in order to secure support. In a similar vein, some authors have suggested that there needs to be greater co-ordination in funding arrangements, both at a national and local government level (Randall and Brown, 1994; Watson, 1999). Others have suggested that funding should be prioritised to services which can demonstrate strategic links with other services (Rugg, 1999). Other elements of guidance for practice include: having a range of formal and informal agency contacts to promote communication; recognition of the time needed for inter-agency working; dedicated posts for forging inter-agency links; development of methods of sharing confidential information, resolving disputes and monitoring; and equal power relationships (Arblaster *et al.*, 1996).

SUMMARY

2.26 This section has reviewed the literature on multi-agency working. Whilst there is a limited amount of literature specifically discussing multi-agency working and homelessness, common themes for good practice have been identified within the broader literature. These include: strategic frameworks, research and evaluation; network awareness; joint training; commitment; flexible working arrangements; common assessment forms; co-ordinated funding, and key strategic individuals with the specific role of forging links between organisations.

CHAPTER THREE THE EXTENT OF JOINT/MULTI-AGENCY WORKING ON HOMELESSNESS IN SCOTLAND

INTRODUCTION

3.1 This section reviews the findings of the postal survey. Questionnaires were sent to 32 local authorities, and to 8 voluntary sector homelessness forums across Scotland. The response rate was high, with 36 out of the 40 questionnaires returned, 31 from local authorities, and 5 from homelessness forums. The following analysis is based on the 36 responses, with results from local authorities and homelessness forums usually shown separately. The homelessness forums are located in large urban authorities or mixed rural/urban areas and in one case covers the area of several authorities. The views and experiences of voluntary sector organisations elsewhere in Scotland are therefore not covered by this survey.

3.2 The purpose of the survey was to gather information on the current provision of services to homeless people across Scotland and to identify the extent of joint/multi-agency working in providing services to homeless people. The survey was designed to provide systematic and up-to-date information that will supplement the material collected in Stage 1. The survey data also helped inform the selection of case studies for Stage 3 of the research by providing a useful context for understanding and evaluating multi-agency working.

3.3 This section describes the respondents' perceptions of the main service needs of homeless people and the strengths and weaknesses of current service provision. It also details respondents' experiences and opinions of multi-agency working, identifying examples of good practice in multi-agency working where available. The data in Tables 3.2 – 3.8 and Tables 3.11 - 3.12 relate to open-ended questions. A wide variety of responses were obtained from these questions which have been classified into broad categories for analytic purposes. Greater detail regarding the precise nature of the responses is illustrated within the text.

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXTS

3.4 Of the 36 responses received, the majority (20) described the area they serve as containing a mixture of urban/rural environments. Of these 20, 12 were reported to be disadvantaged areas, and the other 8 more affluent areas. Eight respondents considered their organisations to serve predominantly urban areas, with 6 in disadvantaged and 2 in more affluent urban areas. Of the 8 organisations based in a predominantly rural area, 4 are in disadvantaged rural areas, one in a more affluent rural area, while the remaining 3 describe the area as a mixture of affluence and disadvantage.

3.5 To understand the context within which each organisation is working, Table 3.1 identifies the most common reported reasons for homelessness in the local area. It is clear from the table that respondents believe there are multiple reasons for homelessness. The most commonly cited reasons were social problems and personal problems, with almost all respondents identifying these factors. Over half of respondents also identified the short

supply of housing, the mismatch of housing size/type and housing need, and economic problems.

Table 3.1 - Most common reasons for homelessness in respondents' local area

Reasons	ULA	Voluntary Forums	All
Short supply of affordable housing	16	4	20
Mismatch of housing size/type and housing need	15	4	19
Poor housing conditions	6	1	7
Social problems	24	5	29
Economic problems	18	4	22
Personal problems	22	4	26

Sample number = 36

N.B. Respondents could select more than one reason

SERVICE NEEDS

3.6 The main service needs of homeless people identified by respondents are shown in Table 3.2. Just as respondents identified multiple reasons for homelessness, they also point to multiple service needs. Although almost all local authorities (27) and voluntary forums (3) identify suitable and affordable accommodation as a key service need for homeless people, other important service needs were also regularly identified. One such service need, identified by 27 of the 36 (24 local authorities and 3 forums), is the need for social support and support services. This included support to maintain tenancies, support for those with substance misuse problems, and mental health care assistance. Supported accommodation was identified by 6 local authorities and 2 forums as an essential service need, particularly for people with alcohol, drugs and mental health needs, and also for young people and for those with no independent living skills. Other service needs identified by just under half of all respondents include employment and training (12 and 2), and advice and counselling (13 and 3).

Table 3.2 - Main service needs of homeless people

Service Need	ULA	Voluntary Forums	All
Accommodation	27	3	30
Supported accommodation	6	2	8
Support services/Social support	24	3	27
Advice and counselling	13	3	16
Advocacy	2	1	3
Co-ordination of support services	2	0	2
Employment/Training	12	2	14

Sample number = 36

N.B. Respondents could select more than one service need

SERVICE PROVISION

3.7 In addition to the previous question, which asked respondents their perception of the service needs of homeless people, they were further asked whether such services were available in their area. A large majority of respondents (27 local authorities and 4 forums) indicated that the full range of services needed by homeless people were not available in their

local area. Most said that some needs were met but 2 authorities and one forum said that the service needs of homeless people were not met. Respondents confirmed that where services were available, they were provided by a range of organisations, including the local housing authority, other local authority departments and statutory services, and voluntary and private sector organisations.

3.8 The services provided by local authorities are shown in Table 3.3. The main services provided by all 3 types of organisation were advice and counselling, accommodation, social support and advocacy. Training and employment services were also provided by each type of organisation, but less frequently. Various health care services, such as GPs or chiropody services, were identified as services provided by public sector (health) organisations. Services unique to voluntary or private sector provision include legal services, day centres and practical or material assistance, such as soup kitchens, clothing and furniture. Table 3.4 shows the results from forums.

Table 3.3 - Number of ULA respondents reporting which services are provided by each types of organisation

Services	Housing	Other LA/statutory	Voluntary/Private
Advice and counselling	25	9	16
Accommodation	28	8	25
Social Support	13	16	17
Advocacy	6	5	11
Training and Employment	1	3	4
Health care	n/a	11	0
Practical and material assistance	n/a	0	2
Legal Services	n/a	0	3
Day centres and drop-in centres	n/a	0	4
None	1	2	0

Sample number = 30

N.B. Respondents could identify more than one service

Table 3.4 - Number of Voluntary Forum respondents reporting which services are provided by each types of organisation

Services	Housing	Other LA/statutory	Voluntary/Private
Advice and counselling	2	2	3
Accommodation	4	0	5
Social Support	0	0	3
Advocacy	0	0	2
Training and Employment	0	0	1
Health care	n/a	2	0
Practical and material assistance	n/a	0	2
Legal Services	n/a	0	0
Day centres and drop-in centres	n/a	0	2
None	0	0	0

Sample number = 5

N.B. Respondents could identify more than one service

Strengths of current service provision

3.10 The respondents were asked what they considered to be the strengths of current service provision for homeless people (see Table 3.5). Eighteen of the 31 local authorities and 4 of the forums identified the co-ordination and joint working amongst organisations providing services to homeless people as a strength. Respondents believed there were signs of ‘*an integrated response*’, ‘*some good partnership working*’, and ‘*a willingness of all agencies to work in partnership*’. However, as this was the known topic of the survey these figures should be interpreted with a degree of caution, although it remains encouraging that joint working was seen as a strength. Another main strength identified by 15 of the respondents (all local authorities) was the type of accommodation provided, referring both to the good range and quality of temporary accommodation, and the provision of more permanent accommodation.

Table 3.5 – Perceived strengths in current service provision

Strengths	ULA	Voluntary Forums	All
Co-ordination and joint working	18	4	22
Accommodation	15	0	15
Assessment	3	1	4
Specific initiatives	3	0	3
Range of services	5	1	6
Good access to homelessness services	8	0	8
Homelessness policy, strategy or protocols	6	1	7
High levels of advice and support	5	0	5
None	2	0	2

Sample number = 36

N.B. Respondents could identify more than one strength

Weaknesses of current service provision

3.11 The weaknesses and gaps of current service provision for homeless people in local areas are outlined in Table 3.6. While the range and quality of accommodation was identified as a strength by many respondents, 20 of the 31 local authorities and 4 of the forums highlighted aspects of the current provision of accommodation as a weakness. This was predominantly due to a lack of supply of supported accommodation for young, old, and vulnerable people, and people with drug, alcohol or mental health needs. The respondents variously reported there to be a lack of emergency, temporary and permanent accommodation. In addition, 18 of the local authorities and 2 of the forums highlighted the limited availability of support services in their area, particularly for people with drug, alcohol and mental health needs; and young or vulnerable people. Seven respondents (6 local authorities and 1 forum) regarded the lack of homelessness strategies, protocols or service agreements as important gaps in service provision. Almost one-third of local authorities (9) and one of the forums pointed to the lack of co-ordination among homelessness services, referring to ‘*incomplete networks of services*’, and the ‘*lack of links to health and education*’ as weaknesses in provision. It is interesting that while joint working and co-ordination have been previously identified as a positive development towards meeting client needs, there is still an apparent difficulty in operationalising the process, which further adds to the difficulties created by a general lack of provision.

Table 3.6 – Weaknesses of current service provision

Services	ULA	Voluntary Forums	All
Accommodation	20	4	24
Support services	18	2	20
Co-ordination	9	1	10
Advice and advocacy	6	1	7
Strategy and protocols	5	2	7
Gaps in service provision and general resources	3	0	3
Prevention	4	0	4

Sample number = 36

N.B. Respondents could identify more than one weakness

Service improvements

3.12 Respondents were asked what improvements could be made in the service provision for homeless people in their area. The responses are summarised in Table 3.7. Almost two thirds of respondents (21 local authorities and 2 forums) suggested that improvements in accommodation provision are necessary and over a half (15 and 2) recommend improvements in support provision. Specific recommendations included increased provision of temporary and supported accommodation, support workers and community care resources. Twelve local authorities and 2 forums indicated that a more co-ordinated approach to service provision would be an improvement. One respondent suggested that *‘a multi-agency team, offering a one door approach and single assessment’* would be beneficial. Others agreed that *‘closer inter-agency working at the point of use’* and a *‘multi-disciplinary team, including housing, social work, health and the benefits agency based at the access point for homeless presentations’* would provide a more effective service. There is therefore recognition that while provision of appropriate accommodation is important, there is also a need for multiple service needs to be met by a combination of services, which inevitably requires improved co-ordination. More generally, several respondents argued for better links and communication with registered social landlords, the private rented sector, and all other service providers in order to provide a more holistic approach. Several respondents also argue that clearer homelessness strategies and protocols would lead to more effective service provision.

Table 3.7 - Suggested improvements in service provision

Improvements	ULA	Voluntary Forums	All
Co-ordinated approach	12	3	15
Accommodation	21	2	23
Advice and advocacy	9	1	10
Support	15	2	17
Strategy/protocols	4	3	7
Prevention focus	3	2	5
Legislation	1	0	1
Other	1	0	1

Sample number = 36

N.B. Respondents could identify more than one improvement

Obstacles to service improvements

3.13 Table 3.8 shows the respondents' perceived obstacles to making such improvements. Ten local authorities and one forum highlighted funding structures as an obstacle to making service improvements. More specifically, these factors included a general lack of funding, particularly to the voluntary sector, but also the difficulties in obtaining resources through various funding streams. In addition to this, 13 local authorities and 3 forums felt that a general lack of accommodation, time and resources were important obstacles.

Table 3.8 - Obstacles to making improvements in service delivery

Obstacles	ULA	Voluntary Forums	All
Funding structures	10	1	11
Professional and organisational barriers	6	2	8
Co-ordination issues	6	1	7
Lack of accommodation, time and resources	13	3	16
Lack of strategy, plans or protocols	2	1	3
Lack of understanding or acknowledgement of the reasons for homelessness and the needs of homeless people	6	2	8
Legislation	4	3	7

Sample number = 36

N.B. Respondents could identify more than one obstacle

3.14 Six local authorities and 2 forums pointed to professional and organisational barriers, and the same number of authorities plus one forum identified general co-ordination issues as further obstacles to making improvements. Professional barriers mentioned include: differing priorities; prejudice; a culture of protectionism; and service and departmental rivalries. Co-ordination issues identified were lack of formal agreements with registered social landlords and confusion amongst agencies about their roles and responsibilities. Other co-ordination issues, such as agreeing the line management of a multi-agency team, pooling of budgets, and the time it takes to get people and other organisations on board, were also identified. Again, the perceived lack of homelessness strategies, plans or protocols was argued to make co-ordination and effective service delivery more difficult. Finally, the current legislative frameworks were identified as an obstacle by almost a fifth of the respondents. Clearly then, while increased co-ordination and multi-agency working is undoubtedly desired by most respondents, the difficulties associated with such working arrangements are identified as resilient barriers to effective service delivery.

JOINT/MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

3.15 Joint/multi-agency working, or conversely the lack of co-ordination or collaboration, have been identified respectively as the strengths and weaknesses of current homelessness service provision. Clearly then, while multi-agency working on homelessness does exist in Scotland, the quality and nature of its existence requires further discussion. This section explores the respondents' experiences of multi-agency working in more detail.

Extent of multi-agency working

3.16 According to respondents estimates, there were somewhere between 2 and 300 organisations providing services to homeless people in each local area. However, for over half of respondents (20) there were fewer than 10 organisations in their local area, and 4 respondents indicated there were fewer than 5. Only 13 respondents out of 36 reported more than 10 organisations providing services to homeless people in their area.

3.17 The survey asked respondents to identify which organisations they work with on a regular basis. Almost all (32) of the respondent's reported working with voluntary sector organisations on a regular basis, common examples include Citizens Advice Bureau, Women's Aid, Shelter and RSI services. More than half of all respondents (20) reported working regularly with other statutory organisations, most commonly social work departments and health services. Almost half of the respondents (15) worked on a regular basis with housing associations and 3 organisations reported working regularly with national organisations, such as Scottish Homes.

3.18 Respondents were asked to identify organisations they work with in planning, information sharing, joint service delivery, satellite/outreach, referrals and liaison. Tables 3.9 and 3.10 demonstrate the range of relationships. More than half of the local authorities and forums reported statutory or voluntary agencies working together in all these activities, and at least half of respondents reported joint statutory and voluntary sector work in planning, information sharing and referrals. The statutory agencies most commonly involved were social work departments, health services and the police. In relation to voluntary sector agencies, Women's Aid, Shelter, Citizens Advice Bureau, NCH Action for Children and specific RSI services were most frequently highlighted. Between 9 and 15 respondents reported working with housing associations for each activity, although only 3 respondents shared satellite and outreach work with housing associations. Only 2 respondents (both local authorities) identified the private sector as a partner, and reported working with bed and breakfast landlords on a referrals and liaison basis only. It is possible that working arrangements with the private sector are under-represented within respondents' answers. Liaising with, and making referrals to bed and breakfast landlords can often be taken for granted within temporary accommodation processes, or seen as a personal relationship between an individual and a particular bed and breakfast landlord rather than an example of an inter-agency relationship. Some respondents reported working with national organisations, such as Scottish Homes and the Scottish Executive, for planning work, information sharing, referrals and liaison. Working with other organisations on each of these activities was described by most as a mix of formal and informal arrangements.

Table 3.9 – Numbers of ULA respondents who work with each type of organisations in different types of work

	Planning	Information Sharing	Joint Service Delivery	Satellite/ Outreach	Referrals	Liaison
Statutory	23	24	17	16	21	22
Housing Associations	15	11	9	3	14	12
Voluntary	23	22	20	22	24	20
Private	0	0	0	0	2	1
Community	0	0	0	0	0	0
National	9	7	0	0	1	4

Sample number = 31

N.B. Respondents could identify more than one organisation who they worked with

Table 3.10 – Numbers of Voluntary Forum respondents who work with each type of organisations in different types of work

	Planning	Information Sharing	Joint Service Delivery	Satellite/ Outreach	Referrals	Liaison
Statutory	4	2	1	0	2	3
Housing Associations	0	0	0	0	0	0
Voluntary	3	3	2	0	2	2
Private	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community	0	0	0	0	0	0
National	1	0	0	0	0	0

Sample number = 5

N.B. Respondents could identify more than one organisation who they worked with

3.19 Twenty-eight of the 36 respondents (24 local authorities and 4 forums) reported that there are networks or forums on homelessness in their area in which they were involved. Many respondents included forums on homelessness-related issues like young people's housing, domestic violence and community care in their answers to this question. Twenty-five reported fewer than 5 forums in their area, with 9 identifying only one forum. Assuming some overlap, there were approximately 70 different forums mentioned by respondents and the main focus of these was to produce homelessness strategies. The vast majority (45) of these forums have been established in the past 2 years, although some have been around since the early 1990's. Twenty-eight respondents indicated that their organisations were also involved in other relevant forums, partnerships or networks at a national or local level.

Benefits of multi-agency working

3.20 Respondents were asked what they thought the main benefits of working with other organisations were. Nearly all respondents (32) believed that multi-agency working enables more effective service delivery. This was due to the perceived rationalisation and pooling of resources; the streamlining of services by reducing duplication; better access to services by

increasing co-ordination; and improved delivery through the use of the most appropriate agency.

3.21 Two thirds of respondents (22) felt that the sharing of knowledge, skills and information is an important benefit of multi-agency working. Respondents described how other organisations bring specialist knowledge, expertise and strengths, which can encourage the development of ‘*common values and best practice principles*’. Other benefits identified by respondents include the improvement of relationships with other agencies (7) and gaining access to additional funding and resources (11).

Difficulties in multi-agency working

3.22 Table 3.11 demonstrates the respondents’ views of the main difficulties encountered in working with other organisations. Two thirds of all respondents (20 local authorities and 1 forum) felt that professional and organisational barriers create difficulties in working with other organisations. Such barriers include: inter-agency rivalry; ethical and value differences; protection of roles; conflicting policies, practices and agendas; and issues around confidentiality and sharing of information. Related to this is the lack of understanding and trust between organisations, which was identified by 9 local authorities and 3 forums. Other difficulties reported by respondents include practical difficulties in multi-agency working, inequality within partnerships, funding difficulties, and differing statutory obligations. Two respondents believed that there were no difficulties in working with other organisations.

Table 3.11 - Difficulties in working with other organisations

Difficulties	ULA	Voluntary Forums	All
Professional and organisational barriers	20	1	21
Multi-agency working takes longer	5	0	5
Lack of understanding and trust	9	3	12
Inequality within partnerships	1	1	2
Funding	3	3	6
Differing statutory obligations	3	0	3
None	2	0	2

Sample number = 36

N.B. Respondents could identify more than one difficulty

Changes in multi-agency working

3.23 Table 3.12 summarises respondents’ views of how multi-agency working could be improved. Ten local authorities and one forum felt that a clearer strategy, or protocol, for multi-agency working would improve the current situation. Related to this, 4 local authorities and 2 forums suggested the development of service level agreements to improve working practices with other agencies. Ten respondents (all local authorities) believed that more funding, resources and time would lead to more effective multi-agency working. Others recommended staff secondments or training initiatives, while some felt that changes in legislation or statutory obligations are necessary. Finally, 9 local authorities and 3 forums believed multi-agency working would improve with further co-ordination, integration and communication.

Table 3.12 - Improvements to multi-agency working

Improvements	ULA	Voluntary Forums	All
Clearer strategy, or protocols	10	1	11
Service level agreements	4	2	6
More funding, resources and time	10	0	10
Staff secondments	5	0	5
Training	6	3	9
Improve communication	6	0	6
Legislation, changing statutory responsibilities	5	0	5
More co-ordination and integration	9	3	12
Other	2	1	3

Sample number = 36

N.B. Respondents could identify more than one improvement

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN JOINT SERVICE PROVISION

3.24 Of the 36 respondents, 29 were able to identify examples of multi-agency or jointly provided service for homeless people operating in their area. Statutory organisations were involved in almost all of the cited examples (27), usually a combination of housing, health and/or social work. The voluntary sector was involved in more than half of the jointly provided services identified, most commonly RSI services, or other homelessness projects. Housing associations were involved in just under a quarter of the examples, and Scottish Homes was identified in one example.

3.25 The jointly provided services identified by the respondents were aimed at meeting the needs of a range of homeless (and potentially homeless) people. Client groups included: rough sleepers; young homeless people; persons assessed as intentionally homeless; non-priority homeless; young and vulnerable tenants, young people leaving care and people leaving hospital, group homes and prison.

3.26 The aims and purposes of the services varied according to the type of service. The most common aim was to provide housing and support services. The identified aims of specific projects included: securing accommodation; providing supported living; assisting with planned accommodation and support; working with individuals through the transition into long term accommodation; assisting people to access the private rented sector; and preventing repeat homelessness and a high level of tenancy turnover. Other aims of jointly delivered services included the provision of training and health services to homeless people.

3.27 Of the 29 respondents who were aware of instances of jointly provided services in their area, 26 believed these services to be examples of good practice. Over half of these respondents attributed this to the fact that joint provision had resulted in better service provision. Improvements highlighted included better access to services for clients, and services that are more effective at meeting the needs of clients. Nine respondents felt services represented good practice because they were based on effective co-ordination and partnership working. Other reasons highlighted included: a more effective approach to solving problems; the provision of a more holistic assessment of the homeless persons needs; and a more cohesive approach to meeting these needs.

SUMMARY

3.28 This chapter has identified the key issues emerging from the postal survey relating to current service provision and multi-agency working. The 2 main service needs of homeless people were identified as accommodation and support. The findings revealed that, while the range and quality of accommodation was identified as a strength, the amount of provision of temporary accommodation, supported accommodation and support services, particularly for people with drug, alcohol and mental health needs; and young or vulnerable was perceived to be insufficient. The research also identified that while multi-agency working on homelessness was seen as a necessity and a strength of current provision, it was also seen as something that was lacking in some areas, and needed to be improved upon.

3.29 The majority of respondents were able to identify examples of joint/multi-agency working at a service delivery level in their area. Joint working was most commonly found between statutory and voluntary sector organisations, and less frequently with housing associations and the private sector. The survey also highlighted the range of different ways in which organisations worked together, both formally and informally. Most multi-agency working involved planning, information sharing, referrals and liaison with other agencies. Less commonly, organisations engaged in joint service delivery, or satellite or outreach work with other organisations. Multi-agency working was seen as essential, yet the practical difficulties of co-ordination, and the presence of professional and organisational barriers, can make this process a challenging one. Such findings mirror the themes emerging from the literature review and are explored in greater detail within the case study services.

CHAPTER FOUR JOINT/MULTI-AGENCY WORKING IN PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

4.1 Within previous chapters, a number of common themes and issues have emerged in relation to the practice of multi-agency working. This chapter examines these issues in greater depth, through exploring the views and experiences of agency workers and service users in 8 case study services. First, the different ‘models’ of joint/multi-agency working identified are described. Second, the development processes associated with the services are reviewed. This is followed by an exploration of the practice of multi-agency working within the services, including the enablers and barriers organisations face in working together. Fourth, the experiences of service users are considered, followed by a review of the outcomes of such provision. Finally, perceptions of ‘good practice’ in relation to joint/multi-agency service provision for homeless people are considered.

MODELS OF PROVISION

4.2 One of the concerns of this research has been to explore the range of different ways in which organisations engage in joint/multi-agency working in delivering homelessness services. As such, in the selection of case studies every effort was made to explore a range of different models of joint/multi-agency working. In addition, the services selected cover a range of geographic areas, including large urban centres and more rural areas, and provide services for different groups of homeless people, including homeless families, young people, rough sleepers, and ex-offenders. Table 4.1 summarises the key characteristics of the case study services, including the organisations involved, the services provided and the target group. More detailed summaries of the case study services can be found in Annex 1. The services include:

- housing, social work, health and voluntary sector collaborations
- voluntary sector collaborations
- voluntary and private sector collaborations
- joint working
- one-stop shops
- service level agreements
- liaison/referral arrangements.

4.3 Whilst 6 of the case study services offer support or services directly for homeless or ex-homeless people, 2 case studies did not. One of these services redistributes food from shops and restaurants to homeless hostels and day centres. This initiative did however work with homeless and ex-homeless people through the availability of volunteering opportunities. The other service was aimed at preventing homelessness through developing and delivering information on homelessness to fourth year school children. This initiative involved school children in the design of the materials.

Table 4.1 - Case study characteristics

Case study	Date Established	Organisations Involved	Funding	Target Group	Services Provided
Detached Streetwork/Resettlement	(1991) 1999	Voluntary sector (previously also social work and community education)	Rough Sleepers Initiative plus voluntary sector funding	Vulnerable young people	Detached Streetwork and follow up. Advice and Advocacy; link into resettlement
Food Redistribution	1999	Voluntary sector Private sector	Voluntary sector Private sector sponsorship	Homeless accommodation projects and day centres	Food redistribution Volunteering opportunities; training and employment opportunities; including for homeless people
Homeless Families Support	1998	Voluntary sector; housing and social work.	National Lottery Charities Board/Children in Need (Changing to Transitional Housing Benefit)	Vulnerable homeless families	Practical and emotional support to adult and child; advice and advocacy
Housing Education	1999	Housing; Social Inclusion Partnership; School; voluntary organisation.	Housing and Social Inclusion Partnership	School children	Peer education project; information on housing and homelessness; education.
One Stop Shop	2000	Housing, social work, health	Rough Sleepers Initiative, plus additional funding from housing social work, and health.	Vulnerable homeless people, particularly rough sleepers with complex needs.	Access to housing, social work and health services; advice, support, advocacy; assessments.
Supported Tenancy Project	2000	Housing, social work, voluntary organisation	Social work and Transitional Housing Benefit	Schedule 1 offenders	Temporary accommodation, lead in tenancies; housing support, monitoring.
Temporary Supported Accommodation/Independent Living	1992	Housing, social work and voluntary sector	Housing, Social work, Care in the Community; DSS.	Young people	Temporary supported accommodation; independent living accommodation; drop in; housing support; advice and advocacy.
Temporary Supported Accommodation/Resettlement	2000	Housing; Social Work; Health Board, Housing Association.	Rough Sleepers Initiative, Health Board and Transitional Housing Benefit	Rough sleepers	Temporary supported accommodation; advice and advocacy; drop in; nursing care; support to staff.

4.4 It is also important to note that the majority of the case study services have been developed fairly recently. Six had been operating for between 9 months and 3 years. However, one service had been established in 1992, whilst in another the 2 voluntary agencies had a long-standing history of collaborative working within a previous partnership with statutory sector organisations, which they had since continued.

DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES

4.5 Two issues emerged as common to the development of each of the case study services: the identification of a service need that was not being met; and the availability of funding. In 5 of the 8 services this identified need had been demonstrated or supported by research conducted in the area, whilst in the other 3 the unmet need had been recognised by agency workers for a number of years. The opportunity to develop the required provision in the majority of cases stemmed from the availability of funding. For 3 services this involved applications for Rough Sleepers Initiative grants, whilst others had accessed Urban Aid grants, Social Inclusion Partnership funding, and National Lottery Charities Board grants. In the case of one initiative, Crisis Fareshare, this service developed as a franchise with part funding through Crisis and the remainder from the managing organisation, Edinburgh Cyrenians. However, in the case of 2 services, the development was less to do with the availability of funding, and more about the necessity of the organisations working together to meet the needs of a particular client group. In the case of the joint work between the detached streetwork and resettlement teams, the importance of establishing relationships and trust with young people was recognised in the 2 organisations operating a joint shift to introduce young people to the resettlement service. In relation to the supported tenancy project, difficulties experienced in finding appropriate accommodation and support led to discussions with a voluntary sector organisation and the development of a service for which funding was identified.

"It was recognised quite early on that no one organisation can do this on their own. Social work couldn't provide accommodation, housing can't provide support, how do we approach this joint working relationship that will satisfy us all." (Agency E, worker 3)

4.6 Variations exist between the case studies as to how the various organisations became involved in multi-agency working. Four services had been initiated by local authority housing departments and 3 by voluntary sector organisations, whilst the remaining initiative was instigated jointly by statutory and voluntary sector organisations. Other organisations to work with were generally selected because of their strategic importance to tackling an issue and because of some prior experience of working together.

4.7 In developing a model or structure for the joint/multi-agency working, most respondents suggested that the method chosen was 'obvious' based on the service needs of their target client group. For example, for the one-stop-shop initiative, an open door facility was important due to the realisation that a group of people for whom an appointment system was inappropriate were not accessing mainstream services. Most services had adapted models previously used with other client groups, or which had been successfully developed within similar services elsewhere in the UK. For example, the supported tenancy service was offered by the voluntary organisation to other groups of offenders; whilst the food redistribution service had been operating successfully in other cities.

4.8 In looking at what had enabled the services to become established, the 2 most common responses concerned the individual agency, commitment and interest; and good, established relationships and communication between key people in organisations. Interviewees working in more rural areas commented that people knowing each other personally was beneficial to developing interagency working. As one interviewee commented:

"One thing about small organisations is that people are more important than process. We have an excellent relationship with [service] based predominantly on the fact that myself and the service manager at [service] have been working closely together to ensure that that is the case." (Agency B, Worker 1)

4.9 In addition, interviewees also highlighted the good reputation and established track record of some organisations as facilitating the process. Being able to offer a service where there is a clear demand, having the appropriate expertise and a common understanding of the problem were also seen as enablers. Several interviewees highlighted the availability of funding as a clear enabler, whilst local authority interviewees also highlighted the importance of having political and/or senior support for the initiative within their organisation. Other enablers were seen as having sufficient time available; being flexible rather than prescriptive in the planning of services; and the initiative being developed at an operational, rather than a policy, level. As one interviewee commented:

"Because it was at an operational level we weren't dealing with a policy out there. It was about practical problems on a day to day basis, so we could discuss individual cases. We knew the staff on the ground who were providing the service, so that allowed development." (Agency E, worker 5)

4.10 Two common difficulties or obstacles to the development of multi-agency services concerned the inadequacy of resources available and existing tensions between organisations. In addition to a shortage of funding and staff time, some voluntary sector interviewees highlighted the restrictions imposed on the way organisations can work due to the narrow remits of posts within funding applications. Tensions between organisations highlighted by interviewees included clashes between housing and social work departments; between social work and health services; and between the voluntary and statutory sectors generally. These issues were raised by interviewees within each of the case study services apart from the food redistribution service.

4.11 Interviewees involved in the development of services were asked if they would change anything about the service if they were to establish it again. The most common responses were that they would increase the amount of time available for operational developments, and increase the numbers of staff attached to the initiative. Some interviewees thought that more staff at a service delivery level should be included during the development phase; others that more senior staff should be involved. Whilst many interviewees were supportive of having a flexible approach to service development, some local authority interviewees reported a desire for service level agreements with other providers to guarantee a level of provision.

4.12 In summary, the joint/multi-agency services were developed in response to an identified need and through the identification and availability of funding. The developments

generally involved adopting current models of provision or identifying models that had successfully been developed elsewhere, and the process tended to be facilitated by the commitment, interest and agency of the individuals involved, combined with established relationships between participants. Whilst appropriate levels of expertise and shared understandings of the problem were seen as enablers, the interviewees highlighted the existence of organisational and professional differences. Potential changes to service development included being more inclusive and allowing more time.

EXPERIENCES OF JOINT-MULTI-AGENCY WORKING IN PRACTICE

4.13 In the previous section, the experiences of agency workers regarding the development of multi-agency working have been reviewed. This section focuses on the experiences of agency workers working in the delivery of joint/multi-agency services.

4.14 The ways in which organisations worked together within the case study services ranged between liaison and referral of clients between services to actual joint service delivery to clients. Within some of the services, such working was characterised as generally informal, frequently involving regular contact by telephone for advice and information. However, most of the services also held regular review meetings with the partner agencies, and most had multi-agency steering or advisory committees. The majority of services currently have protocols and service agreements that are approved by each of the partner organisations. The Homeless Families Support project had drawn up referral criteria for organisations, although such arrangements are set to be reviewed by both organisations and become more formalised when the management of the organisation moves from the voluntary organisation to the local authority. Each of the services, except the Housing Education project, collected monitoring information, which was submitted to management or steering committees for accountability and review purposes.

4.15 In relation to the involvement of service users in the design and delivery of services, most of the services identified ways in which they had incorporated the views of users, and those that did not indicated that it was something they were seeking to develop. In 2 services there are quite clear examples of user involvement: the Housing Education project involved school children in the design, production and delivery of information on homelessness; and the food redistribution service provided volunteering opportunities for homeless and ex-homeless people. Other examples included service user groups within 2 services (although there were mixed views as to how successful these were); and the inclusion of a clients' self-assessment within case review meetings. Within one project an unqualified post had initially been created with the intention that this could be filled by an ex-service user. However, this had not proved possible to fill, and workers raised questions about the appropriateness of it.

4.16 When interviewees were asked how well they thought the agencies involved in their initiative were working together, most thought that the organisations were generally working very well together, and that relations between the partner organisations had much improved on those they had experienced before the joint/multi-agency working. Aspects which were felt to contribute to positive working relationships included: mutual respect between agency workers and a proven track record of working; genuine commitment; having shared goals and vision; being open; understanding the roles, remits and restrictions of organisations; involving other organisations at an early stage; regular personal contact; and the personalities of the people involved. Several interviewees commented on the importance of being flexible

and reflexive, and not afraid to change things as the work proceeds. Not all interviewees had experienced difficulties in working in partnership with other organisations, and several commented that while tensions did exist from time to time, they were always capable of being resolved.

4.17 However, in some case studies not everyone was in agreement that the organisations were working well together. One aspect which appears to be key to a sense of good working relations is the agreement of roles, remits and responsibilities for organisations. Within 6 of the 8 case studies, interviewees commented that there had been relatively few problems relating to the roles and responsibilities of the various partners. Such roles were seen as being quite distinct and separate. In some cases initial tensions had emerged, for example between housing and social work, or between social work and voluntary sector support services, but such tensions had generally been resolved. This generally involved joint meetings being held to clarify the issue concerned.

"The main difficulties were around workers' roles ... he could take over roles and do things he shouldn't have been doing. There were times when we had to pull in the reins, but we have always been able to raise problems and concerns and get them sorted." (Agency A, Worker 1)

4.18 However, in 3 of the case study services some of the agency workers felt that the roles of the various organisations had not been agreed, and that the problems were still to be resolved. Within one initiative, some partners felt that they had been left to develop the work and had to initiate contact with the statutory organisation that was supposed to be leading the partnership. Within another service, a number of interviewees felt that there was a lack of clarity about the roles of the partner organisations in relation to one another. Interviewees highlighted that there were unclear lines of management and accountability both within the initiative and the parent organisations. In addition, each of the organisations had separate systems of record keeping for client information, and interviewees were unclear about which other services clients were using. As one worker commented:

"You've got a lot of very strong powerful personalities in a very small building. They're all fairly autonomous, working on their own initiative, they don't respond so well to trying to be a collective unit. The management team is not working as well as it could. The [project manager] has a remarkably difficult job, but not an awful lot of backing. If someone does something that [project manager] feels is not useful for the service, [project manager] can't reprimand them in anyway, doesn't feel that they have a say. People play games. We need a clearer structure." (Agency H, worker 4)

4.19 In a third case, tensions concerned the housing partner feeling that they were often not being invited by social work to case-review meetings, with the voluntary sector partner often acting as go-between the 2 statutory partners.

4.20 One key issue emerging as a difficulty in joint/multi-agency working was the lack of understanding of the limits and restrictions placed on organisations. For example, a common complaint relating to health and social work services was the lack of willingness to share information considered as vital by housing departments for them to adequately fulfil their duties. Whilst some interviewees indicated that social workers tended to be a bit 'precious' with information, there are also clear restrictions on the information that they can share.

Equally, it was felt by some housing officers that there was a lack of understanding of their limited ability to access appropriate housing. Such tensions between organisations were felt to be exacerbated within one-stop shop services where agency workers have no control over the decisions of the parent organisations. As one worker commented:

"One of the things that we highlighted at the away day, right at the start, was to recognise that we don't have complete control over the resources that we're trying to access through mainstream services... The housing staff here don't have control over what allocation of housing has been made, or the availability of housing. We have to remember we don't have overall control, we can't expect our colleagues to, even though they are the person from that department." (Agency H, worker 1)

4.21 Whilst almost all of the interviewees highlighted the degree of tension existing between statutory sector organisations, the relationship between statutory and voluntary sector providers was more varied. In several cases interviewees reported good working relationships, and the valuable role that voluntary sector providers can play in mediating between statutory organisations, as previously highlighted. In other cases, the relationships were less constructive. In one voluntary sector initiative, interviewees highlighted the initial tensions they had experienced in developing their relationship with statutory organisations. This they believed to derive from a lack of understanding of their role as service providers, separate from the campaigning role of their parent organisation. Again, the development of trust over time and a clear agreement of roles had removed such tensions. Interviewees in another voluntary sector initiative highlighted both the difficulties resulting from the power imbalance between statutory and voluntary sector agencies, and a greater level of understanding between voluntary sector organisations,

"There is not as much respect between voluntary and statutory agencies as there is between voluntary and voluntary. Usually when you are working with other voluntary organisations you are much more understanding and sympathetic about their funding, their resources, their staffing, all the constraints. But I think we are less sympathetic about housing and social work constraints, and it is very much seen as they should take responsibility for it because they have a statutory duty or whatever. Sometimes it can also be very difficult to challenge and forge good working relationships, so it's about looking at how we can have an equal working relationship when funding-wise we are dependent on them." (Agency A, worker 1)

4.22 Other difficulties encountered included: changing personnel; shortage of staff, time and funding; unequal funding of organisations; short term funding and planning timescales; inflexible staff attitudes; and a lack of ownership of inter-agency targets. Some of the interviewees highlighted a range of external factors affecting their service provision including: community campaigns against the location of services and service users; logistical issues connected to providing services in rural areas; and gaps in service provision necessary to support their clients.

4.23 Interviewees were also asked how their service provision could be improved. Several suggested improvements related to resolving gaps in provision highlighted previously, such as housing, support services, and more staff and resources. Other improvements were more related to practice within the services. Suggested improvements included: designated worker

time; increased time for development work; joint planning and assessment processes; agreements on information sharing; and job shadowing or joint training. Some of the services had been involved in joint training sessions with their partner agencies, but many interviewees thought that this should be increased. In addition, a number of workers spoke of the need, particularly in services working with people with complex needs, for increased staff support. Whilst multi-agency working was strongly identified to be essential in providing services for this client group, the tensions associated with working across organisational boundaries, and in working with a client group who had in some cases not previously been accessing services, were seen as creating additional stress for workers. In one service, the health worker had unofficially assumed the role of providing support for her colleagues, whilst another worker identified this as an urgent need:

"The stress, I've personally never known stress in my life until I came here. I wake up dreaming about clients and the problems. I think the emotional impact of other people's problems is a lot, you do need to find some way of dealing with that. That's something that's missing. We should definitely have access to an outsider, whether it's a counsellor, so we could talk about things." (Agency H, worker 2)

4.24 Peer support, and having adequate time for staff to discuss and resolve their experiences, concerns and difficulties were also seen as an important means of reducing the burden on frontline workers.

4.25 In summary, whilst methods of service delivery varied, all of the services had multi-agency involvement at a management, steering or advisory level. Regular review meetings were held to monitor the services. Service users had different mechanisms for involvement in many of the services, including peer education, volunteering, service user groups, and case review meetings, whilst other services were looking to develop this. Most interviewees felt that the organisations within their service were working well together, highlighting the importance of personalities, respect, commitment, interest, common understandings and goals, and flexibility. Most of the services had experienced some tensions and disagreements with partner agencies, and whilst most had been resolved through communication, for some the tensions were unresolved. Key difficulties included the difference in power and status of organisations involved, the absence of clear roles or lines of management or accountability. Suggested improvements included more time to develop multi-agency working; more joint agreements, planning and working; and job shadowing or joint training.

THE VIEWS OF SERVICE USERS

4.26 One of the key gaps identified within the literature on joint/multi-agency working is any discussion of the views of service users. As a result, one of the concerns of this research has been to review the experiences of the users of multi-agency services. It is important to note that, due to the range of services selected, not all the 'service users' had experienced homelessness or were in receipt of direct service provision: the service users in one initiative were 4th year school children with no experience of homelessness; and in another, the 'service users' were homeless and ex-homeless volunteers working in the project.

4.27 Interviews were conducted with 22 service users (8 women and 14 men). Their ages ranged between 15 and 82 years. Of the 18 service users who had experienced homelessness,

12 were still homeless, usually staying in hostels or other temporary accommodation, whilst 6 had obtained tenancies of their own. The interviewees' experiences of homelessness ranged widely from those who had never previously been homeless, to those who had experienced several episodes of homelessness, often from a young age. Reasons given for becoming homeless generally included one or more of: leaving local authority care or prison; family and/or relationship breakdown; drug or alcohol dependency; and domestic abuse.

4.28 The length of time interviewees had been engaged with the case study services ranged from a few weeks or months to several years. Interviewees from the Detached Streetwork/Resettlement Service and the Temporary Supported Accommodation/Independent Living projects often reported using services on and off over a period of time. Services they reported receiving from the projects included: advice and advocacy; practical support, such as form filling, budgeting, and getting furniture; help with registering with doctors and accessing grants, benefits and accommodation; and a range of more personal and emotional support. Service users were almost unanimously positive about the services they were receiving. Indeed due to the common experiences of trauma and isolation by many of the interviewees, it was this personal and emotional support that was particularly valued. For example:

"If I need any help at all, the doctor's there. They're not just there to fill in prescriptions, they've got a good ear, and it doesn't matter how long it takes, if it takes an hour to have a blether with you and sort out your problems."
(Agency H, service user 1)

4.29 Service 'users' who were not in receipt of support from the services were also extremely positive about the services, both in terms of its impact on them and on others. School children who were involved in the development of information on housing and homelessness, and those who had been given lessons using the material, all thought it had made them much more aware of the issues. Indeed, one pupil suggested that it had made her think twice about her future options:

"I've learned that it's not going to be easy. I was determined that I was leaving home as soon as I turned 16. I just had an idea I was going to get a flat. I didn't know anything about getting a flat. It's been very beneficial, very important to know this. We had to write a list of what everything was going to cost and everyone was like, 'woah!'." (Agency D, service user 3)

4.30 In addition, volunteers at the Food Redistribution Service spoke of the benefits they had gained through volunteering in terms of a sense of purpose, structure to their day, and social support. They also highlighted the additional benefits of 'giving something back', and one interviewee spoke of the positive health benefits gained by some of his homeless friends due to the service provided:

"It is brilliant. See if this had been up and running years ago I'd have still had a lot of friends here who died through ill-health, not eating properly. I'd have probably been one of them. If I hadn't come here I'd have been back on the drink now or dead...The goodness it is doing for people like myself...my friends are still on the street and I can see the difference in them health-wise cos they are even looking better." (Agency C, service user 2)

4.31 It was almost impossible to get service users to identify any negative aspects to the services they had received from these services. Several had never accessed such services previously, either through them not being available, or their lack of knowledge of them, whilst others compared more negative experiences of homelessness with the additional support they were now receiving. One interviewee complained about group living environments, whilst another wished that services were available at weekends. When asked, the vast majority of service users felt that they were involved with decisions made about their service, although mostly in relation to the support they were receiving, rather than the overall provision. Examples of the ways in which service users felt involved included: peer education, residents meetings, and case review meetings. As one service user commented:

"Some things you do have a say, like at the residents meetings, you can suggest that a rule gets changed. And then they discuss it at the staff meeting and let you know at the next residents meeting. We got them to change the rules on the coming in times." (Agency B, service user 3)

4.32 Interviewees were asked about their views of how well the organisations were working together within the services. The vast majority of service users were overwhelmingly positive, although many were not initially aware that there was more than one organisation involved in the service. In some circumstances this was because interviewees had only accessed one part of the service, whilst for others their involvement with the partner agencies was not seen as connected. For example, their contact with a housing department may have been fleeting, whilst ongoing support is received from another organisation. Those service users that were aware of more than one organisation working together were those using jointly provided services, or where several organisations were present at case review meetings. Even then, the service users did not necessarily engage with each of the partner agencies. As one service user commented:

"I've really just seen the doctor, but I am aware of the housing. The Doctor told me as soon as I registered, 'if you need help with a house, the facilities are next door'. At that point I didn't need them, I just got lazy, I'm in a hostel, I'm getting meals. But if someone tells you to get off your rear end and find something, then obviously I know there are people here. I'd come here." (Agency H, service user 1)

4.33 Most interviewees reported that they had experienced no tensions or conflicts in the advice or support offered by services. However, one interviewee highlighted previous experience of the difficulties that can arise when organisations are not working together:

"[Case-study service] were helping to get me into a training course, whereas my key worker in the [accommodation service] was wanting me to go to New Horizons [training project], my social worker was wanting me to go to Phoenix [House – residential rehabilitation]. They were just picking places to put me in, they weren't asking me what I wanted, whereas [case-study service] said it's what you want. And that's how I feel a lot more comfortable when I work with them... My key worker was making appointments for me at New Horizons, and I was like Whoa, pure heavy stress. My social worker was wanting to put me into Phoenix and I was like, stop the bus, but they were like, 'put her in there because that will help her fill up her time cos she's not taking drugs anymore'. ... so it was getting confused, so they had a

meeting, so everyone is quite clear where I am and what I'm doing and who's doing what now, but away back it was a bit confusing because I was working with that many different people that we didn't really know as we didn't have a meeting with everybody." (Agency A, service user 1)

SERVICE OUTCOMES

4.34 A further concern of this research has been to identify the outcomes of different models of joint/multi-agency service provision. As has been previously highlighted, the relatively recent establishment of many of the services means that their longer term benefits are not known. However, the perceptions of agency workers and service users of the 'outcomes' of these services were gathered in relation to: the impact on service provision in their area; the impact on the agencies involved; and the impact on service users.

4.35 First, in relation to the impact on service provision, each of the services was seen as having a positive impact on provision in their area. For some this had been due to an absence of provision for their client group prior to the establishment of the service, whilst others identified the 'added value' achieved through working in partnership for both agency workers and service users.

4.36 Views of the impact of joint/multi-agency working on the agencies involved were, however, more varied and contained both positive and negative aspects. Positive impacts of the services for the agencies involved included: raising the profile of homelessness generally within their organisations; developing a broader understanding of the roles and activities of different organisations, and the constraints on their practice; developing trust; and enabling a more appropriate and effective delivery of services. For example, the statutory agencies involved in the Supported Tenancy Project highlighted that working with a voluntary sector organisation providing housing support had enabled them to better fulfil their statutory obligations of monitoring and providing appropriate accommodation, with additional benefits of increasing the safety of the service user and the wider community. Whilst the project is still in its early days, there has been no tenancy breakdowns or episodes of re-offending involving any of the clients. In addition, the Food Redistribution service was considered to be a 'win/win' situation, with a reduction in waste for the food suppliers; volunteering, training and employment opportunities within the project; and the benefit of a more varied free food supply to homelessness services.

4.37 However, some agency workers also highlighted more negative impacts for the agencies or, more specifically, the workers involved in multi-agency working services. These comments were largely confined to 'one-stop-shop' access services. First, a number of interviewees commented on the tensions created by the increased accessibility of open door services to vulnerable homeless people not being matched by an increase in actual provision of accommodation or resources which the multi-agency service is intended to provide access to. Second, the development of specialist provision for homeless people was seen by some to present an opportunity for mainstream service providers to refer clients elsewhere when in the past they may have provided the service directly. This was seen to increase the pressure on services intended to pick up people not accessing mainstream services. Thirdly, unclear lines of management and responsibility and differences in working practices were perceived by some to increase the potential for conflict between workers and reduce the effectiveness of multi-agency working. Indeed workers in the detached streetwork/resettlement initiative who

had previously been involved in the Glasgow City Centre Initiative considered their service delivery to have become more effective since leaving as they were able to work with a broader range of organisations and clients.

4.38 Finally, in relation to the impact of provision on service users, several agency workers highlighted the increased accessibility of services to homeless people in areas where there was previously little or no provision. For example, in relation to the supported accommodation/resettlement project, workers spoke of the visible improvements in the health and self-esteem of some service users. In addition, despite some of the difficulties raised by workers at the one-stop-shop initiative, none of the workers doubted the increased accessibility of statutory services to homeless people that had been created through an open door service with outreach support. As highlighted in the previous section, many of the service users commented that the services and support they had received had been invaluable. And finally as one agency worker highlighted, there is a danger within joint/multi-agency working services that the focus is too much on operational problems and not the bigger picture:

"The last evaluation meeting that we had, people were focusing on tiny wee negative things that people had, and nobody focused on the fact that we hadn't had any major incidents that we hadn't been able to resolve, there hadn't been any re-offending. You know no-one focused on any of the positives, it was all about not having information, not being invited to meetings. They really missed the point of what it was all about I felt." (Agency E, worker 1)

GOOD PRACTICE IN JOINT/MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

4.39 Finally, agency workers were asked to identify what they considered to be good practice in joint/multi-agency working. Their responses broadly reflect the enablers and barriers discussed previously. Five closely inter-related aspects were raised by the majority of workers: communication; commitment; close working relationships; clear and agreed aims, roles and boundaries; and trust. Personal contact between workers was commonly identified in the form of face-to-face meetings. Additional aspects mentioned included: flexibility; honesty; having a pro-active approach; and the importance of monitoring and review. Some interviewees highlighted the importance of spending time developing the process of multi-agency working, and not trying to take short-cuts in a rush to develop work. The consensus appears to be that joint/multi-agency working does not just happen. Rather it can often be a time-consuming process that requires effort, attention and reflection. As some of the agency workers commented:

"It's communication, all down to personal communication, not letting things escalate out of hand, constantly being in touch, by phone, in person, whatever, and making sure that everyone's kept informed, that everyone is part of the partnership." (Agency C, worker 2)

"I think communication is the most important thing, and taking responsibility for sharing your skills and staff resources. What I've tended to find the most disappointing aspect of multi-agency working is that people are very much, 'this is my bit' or 'you can't tell me to do that', when it's all about trying to provide a service to homeless families or whoever needs it. And I think the

most important thing is that people have shared responsibility and are prepared to communicate and share ideas towards that purpose." (Agency F, worker 2)

"Respecting boundaries is the first thing, respecting differences within agencies. Having an understanding of what the aims and objectives of each agency are, their policies and protocols. Keeping it simple, staying focussed and remembering what you are there for rather than getting caught up in politics." (Agency A, worker 4)

4.40 It is interesting to note that all of the issues raised relate to qualitative rather than quantitative aspects of working. This appears to suggest that even in the context of unlimited staff and funding, successful joint or multi-agency working could not be achieved in the absence of such conditions. However, it is also important to remember the important role that funding had played in enabling the development of such services.

SUMMARY

4.41 This chapter has reviewed the practice and perceived value of joint/multi-agency working through exploring the views and experiences of the agency workers and service users of 8 case study services. It is clear that the development of joint/multi-agency working services is universally supported by the interviewees, and all of the agency workers identified clear benefits for the organisations involved, for service users and to service provision generally, as a result of the development of their projects. However, it is also clear that developing such services has often been a difficult and time consuming process, dependent on the commitment, interest and agency of key individuals; a willingness (and need) to co-operate; senior or political support within the partner organisations; the availability of adequate staff, time and resources.

4.42 The majority of interviewees indicated the importance of those who are involved in the delivery of services being involved in the planning and development of services. In addition, it was felt that such developments needed to be flexible rather than prescriptive, adapting to changing needs and circumstances. This suggests a preference for 'bottom-up' approach to developing such services. The importance of individuals, and their personalities, may be argued to make such working arrangement fragile from changes in personnel, and thus it is important that such services develop broader foundations to enable continuity. This highlights the necessity of developing organisational support and ownership at senior levels. Of course, the opportunity for such work to develop is also influenced by the wider policy and legal framework that has not been part of this analysis. Indeed, many interviewees also highlighted a range of difficulties to developing their practice resulting from organisational structures and systems. Having a supportive framework is essential for the development and sustainability of multi-agency provision. Thus effective multi-agency working requires the co-ordination of services both horizontally (between organisations) and vertically (between practice, management and policy).

INTRODUCTION

5.1 The aim of this research has been to explore the range of joint/multi-agency working that currently exists in the delivery of homelessness services; to describe that provision and perceptions of its value; and to identify examples of good practice that illustrate different aspects of successful multi-agency working. In this final chapter, the key findings of this research are reviewed, and recommendations for policy and practice based on this research are outlined.

KEY FINDINGS

5.2 The findings of this research are based on data obtained through a postal survey of local authority housing services and voluntary sector homelessness forums, and qualitative interviews with 41 agency workers and 22 service users of 8 case study services. The research reflects many of the issues identified within the research and policy literature on joint/multi-agency working, including the motivations for, and enablers and barriers to working together. In general terms, joint/ multi-agency working on homelessness was seen as a strength, its absence a weakness and as a required improvement to the current provision of services for homeless people. The expanding range of organisations providing services for homeless people identified by most of the respondents to the postal survey, combined with the often complex and inter-related support needs and service requirement of many homeless people, indicates that working with other organisations is increasingly a necessity for service providers.

5.3 The findings of the postal survey revealed that joint/ multi-agency working is commonly found between statutory and voluntary sector organisations. Twenty-nine of the 36 survey respondents were able to identify examples of joint/multi-agency working at a service delivery level in their area. Statutory organisations were involved in almost all of these, and voluntary sector organisations in over one half. In contrast, housing associations were involved in fewer than one quarter of joint/multi-agency services, with barely any involvement from the private sector or community groups. The survey also highlighted the range of different ways in which organisations worked together, both formally and informally. Most commonly this involved planning, information sharing, referrals and liaison with other agencies. Less commonly, organisations engaged in joint service delivery, or satellite or outreach work with other organisations.

5.4 Most of the joint/multi-agency service provision identified within the research has been established relatively recently. In relation to homelessness forums, most had been established within the previous 2 years, although some had been in existence since the early 1990s. In addition, of the 8 case study services, 6 had been established since 1998, 3 in the year 2000.

5.5 The motivations or rationale for organisations to work with other providers generally involved 2 core issues: an identified service need and gap in provision; and the availability of funding. In most cases, the service need had been identified by organisations or through research conducted locally, and in most cases the development involved obtaining additional

funding or grants. In relation to identifying partner organisations, this commonly involved selecting particular agencies with a known track record, or with whom there was some prior knowledge or relationship, rather than canvassing a range of providers. In selecting a 'model' for the joint/multi-agency working interviewees reported either adapting current practice, or using models successfully developed within similar services elsewhere.

5.6 In relation to the enablers and barriers experienced in working with other organisations at a service delivery level, similar issues were raised in connection with both the development and operation of the services. Enablers to the process included: committed staff; good working relationships; communication; a clear demand; common understandings; shared aims and goals; expertise; the availability of funding; adequate staff and time; senior political support; a flexible and reflexive approach; and being developed at an operational rather than a policy level. The difficulties encountered included: organisational and professional boundaries; a lack of understanding or organisational remit, duties and limitations; a lack of understanding or trust; inadequate or unequal funding between the partners; differing aims and remit; inadequate staffing; and the time involved in developing and sustaining relationships. However, despite the tensions and difficulties encountered, interviewees generally felt that most could be overcome or resolved, and all agreed that this did not detract from the 'added value' to service provision that the services had created. Improvements to the process included: addressing further gaps in provision; designated worker time; increased time for developmental work; joint planning and assessment processes; agreements on sharing information; and job shadowing or joint training.

5.7 In relation to the views of service users, the vast majority of the interviewees were extremely positive about the services they were involved with, generally welcoming the services, support and opportunities that had been available. None of the service users were able to identify significant weaknesses or negative aspects to the provision; several had never accessed such services previously, or else compared their previous negative experiences with the additional support they had received this time. Many of the interviewees were unaware that more than one organisation was involved in the service, either because they were only accessing one part of the service, or their involvement with other parts or the 'parent' agencies had been fleeting and they had not realised the connection.

5.8 Due to the relatively recent establishment of most of the case study services, it is difficult to comment on the outcome of such provision in any quantitative sense. However, agency workers all felt that their services had made a positive and much needed contribution to available service provision. They were considered to have increased understanding, helped improve relationships between organisations, and raised awareness of homelessness and the needs of homeless people within a wider range of organisations. Of all the models joint/multi-agency working incorporated within this research, the 'one-stop-shop' variety presented the greatest challenge for agency workers. There appeared to be an increased level of tension between the different professions involved as expectations were raised as to what the partners could do, without the necessary changes within the parent organisations for the partners to be able to deliver. Despite this, this model was still seen as having clear benefits to service users in relation to accessibility and referrals.

5.9 Finally, in highlighting aspects of joint/multi-agency working which they considered to be good practice, interviewees focused on more qualitative and inter-personal aspects including: communication; commitment; close working relationships; clear and agreed roles, aims and boundaries; and trust. Whilst a series of operational issues were also highlighted, it

is clear from the findings that these factors provide the fundamental basis to successful joint/multi-agency working.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

5.10 A core aim of this research has been to report on good practice to practitioners and policy-makers, and to inform the work of the Homelessness Task Force. In this final section, a series of recommendations arising from the research findings are presented. These are in 2 parts: recommendations for policy makers, and recommendations offering guidance to service providers for ‘making it happen’.

Recommendations to policy makers:

- This research has focused on the experience of developing and operationalising joint/multi-agency working at a service delivery level. However, the research has highlighted the important influence of external and strategic decision-making on such service delivery. As such it is strongly recommended that further research is undertaken, examining multi-agency working on homelessness at a strategic, decision-making level.
- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 has introduced a new duty on local authorities to prepare strategies for preventing and alleviating homelessness in their area. This corporate responsibility will present a useful opportunity for the development of intra-organisational working on homelessness. However, in the context of an expanding range of service providers and a recognition of the complex needs of many homeless people, it is important that such strategies are developed in collaboration with a broad range of actors, including housing associations, voluntary sector services, health services, and employment and training services. There is a need to develop appropriate mechanisms for ensuring that such collaboration takes place.
- The research emphasised that multi-agency service provision has implications for the partner agencies who may manage and fund them. It is vital that the work of the service providers is supported and that valuable lessons from service providers are included in future policies and planning. It is therefore recommended that service providers are involved in the planning and co-ordination of services.
- The research also highlighted the range of barriers to service development resulting from organisational structures and processes. Difficulties were experienced in accessing funding and a lack of continuity of funding. In addition, tensions arise over the prescribed remits and restrictions on organisations. It is therefore recommended that organisations review their organisational policy and practice to examine ways in which their practice can become more open and flexible, to identify potential barriers and explore ways to overcome them. An additional recommendation is for greater transparency and consolidation of funding routes.
- Having adequate time and resources to develop and sustain multi-agency working is one of the key findings of this research. This needs to be recognised within funding applications and assessments. In addition, given the time taken to develop and sustain working relationships, it is important that such initiatives are supported by mechanisms to ensure a continuity of funding that is not currently available. Appropriate systems of monitoring and reviewing joint/multi-agency working service delivery should be developed in order to identify and promote examples of good practice, and increase the continuity of funding for such initiatives.

- The Rough Sleepers Initiative has provided a valuable opportunity and incentive for organisations to work collaboratively. It is recommended that such joint funding continues to be available.
- Finally, much of the good practice identified within this research has been dependent on the commitment, interest and inter-personal skills of the people involved in the process. It is important that such individual contributions are both recognised and rewarded. It is essential such work is seen as an important part of people's work, and that designated time is made available for service development.

Recommendations to service providers:

General

- Multi-agency working is not an easy option or a panacea. It is something which needs to be considered carefully before it is undertaken. However, it is important to remember that most people who have experienced it are positive about the benefits.
- Service providers are encouraged to identify opportunities for joint/multi-agency working both within and between organisations and sectors, for example, between local authority departments and between voluntary sector organisations.
- Voluntary sector organisations in particular must take great care in making their role and operation as service providers distinct from any broader campaigning role which may cause tensions within joint working arrangements.
- It is important to be aware of the variety of types and models of multi-agency working, and to be prepared to consider alternatives to suit particular circumstances.
- It is important to be aware of the considerable time required for development work and for sustaining relationships during multi-agency working.

Getting started

- Be aware of opportunities to build from existing relationships. Multi-agency working and service delivery has usually grown from previous contact and personal relationships. These provide the first basis of trust and knowledge of each other's roles that is so essential for good multi-agency working.
- Multi-agency working should not be attempted for the sake of it – agencies need to see a clear purpose. Multi-agency working seems to develop where partners see advantages for clients and agencies in collaboration. These are typically – for clients – better or more effective service delivery or co-ordination and – for agencies – complementary provision of resources or expertise.
- Existing homelessness and other forums can be a useful starting point for getting to know each other and exploring opportunities for multi-agency working; where homelessness forums do not exist, local authorities and voluntary organisations should consider their establishment; where they have been set up for the purpose of developing homelessness strategies, the opportunity should now be taken to turn attention to service delivery and wider collaboration.
- Multi-agency working should be explored outside the boundaries of existing forums as well, for example in relation to collaboration with the private sector.
- Even when new multi-agency working develops from existing relationships, it is important to allow time for the development of the collaboration or service, and to agree roles and responsibilities, management structures and processes.

- It is important to be careful, as far as possible, in constructing staff teams to be clear about roles, hierarchies and accountability, especially if more than one agency is employing staff who will work side by side. For example, try not to create tensions because of salary differentials; be aware of the steep learning curve that staff may have to go through.
- Get agreement about information sharing between different professional groups.

Carrying on

- Since existing personal relationships are often the starting point for collaboration, be aware that when one or more individual moves on the collaboration could be endangered – time and effort will be needed to build new relationships and trust.
- Do not take for granted that because good relationships have existed in the development of a collaboration or service that this will continue; create and maintain regular meetings between key staff. A variety of types of liaison may be required, for example, a multi-agency steering group of senior people, complemented by one to one meetings between staff of agencies involved in the multi-agency working complemented by staff meetings involving many or all staff.
- If tensions emerge they need to be identified by someone in a position to do something about them; they should be raised at meetings, discussed between the staff who meet regularly and some approach to resolving them worked out: for example, joint meetings of staff, or joint training sessions.
- Consider the needs of staff. Working across organisational and professional boundaries, particularly in delivering services to homeless people with complex needs, can be stressful and staff may need some mechanism for counselling or support. Joint meetings and peer support should be encouraged.
- Multi-agency working has continuing implications for agencies that are collaborating together. Be prepared for unmet need to be identified or for the service to create a demand for resources that are in short supply. These include the need for time for (joint) staff meetings or training, the need to consider issues that are revealed through the collaboration, such as weaknesses in the range of services available or in the delivery of services by partner agencies.
- A judicious mix of clarity and flexibility in multi-agency/joint service delivery is required. This means that staff may have to challenge traditional ways of doing things.
- It is important to identify the ‘added value’ created both for agencies and service users through joint/multi-agency working as well as the tensions and difficulties.

SUMMARY

5.11 This section has outlined the key findings of the research and a series of recommendation to policy makers and practitioners. For policy makers the key recommendations are concerned with ensuring a wide range of agencies are involved in homelessness service provision; learning from service providers and fostering their contribution to strategy, planning and co-ordination; identifying barriers revealed by joint working and exploring ways to overcome them; recognising the time required for joint service development within funding applications and assessments; achieving continuity of funding; and recognising the commitment, interest and inter-personal skills of the people involved.

5.12 For service providers the key general messages are that multi-agency working is not an easy option. They should consider the variety of models of multi-agency working before choosing one and be aware of the time required for development work and for sustaining relationships.

5.13 In getting started, be aware of opportunities to build from existing relationships. Identify a clear purpose and benefits. Where forums do not exist, consider their establishment or development and seek wider collaboration. Allow time for development and agree roles and responsibilities. Be aware of the steep learning curve that staff go through and get agreement about information sharing.

5.14 In running services be prepared to devote time and effort to build new relationships and trust when staff move on. Consider the needs of staff for counselling or support. Create and maintain regular liaison. Deal with tensions as they emerge. Be prepared for unmet need to be identified. Spend time reflecting on the successes as well as weaknesses of multi-agency working.

5.15 In summary, the 5 key messages are:

- communication
- commitment
- close working relationships
- clear and agreed roles, aims and boundaries
- trust.

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Detached streetwork/resettlement

Barnardo's Street Team and the YMCA Resettlement Team have a long-standing history of joint working. They were both previously partner agencies in the Glasgow City Centre Initiative, along with Glasgow City Council Social Work and Community Education departments since 1991. After leaving this partnership in 1999, the 2 voluntary organisations continued working together.

Barnardo's Street Team has 6 full-time staff, 4 posts being funded through RSI, and 2 by Barnardo's. They deliver detached streetwork with young vulnerable people in the city centre, including young runaways and people up to the age of 25 years. They operate streetwork shifts 6 nights and one afternoon a week. The YMCA Resettlement Team form part of the YMCA City Centre Project, and have 3 full-time resettlement workers, funded through the RSI, and a pool of between 8 and ten sessional workers. They deliver one-to-one key-working with clients, seeking to link them in to a variety of services, and offering support in moving into and sustaining a tenancy. Together, the Barnardo's and YMCA teams operate a weekly joint shift, the aim of which is to introduce young people who have been working with the Street Team and who are ready to move into accommodation, to a resettlement worker in order to provide a continuity of support and help establish relationships of trust. Initially this involved a full shift, and combing arranged meetings with young people in their accommodation with a streetwork shift. The agencies had planned to develop this service, looking to establish a professional befriending service. However, due to staff shortages, this has been reduced to a half shift of arranged meetings.

The agencies have a formal written protocol for the service, which sets out each agency's roles and responsibilities. In addition to the joint shift, the organisations also communicate regularly by telephone, particularly in discussing any follow-up work undertaken. The 2 project workers and their managers meet once every 3 months to review the work, discuss any concerns or proposed changes, and look at service development issues.

Food redistribution

Edinburgh Cyrenians established the Crisis FareShare Project in October 1999. The Project is a franchise of an initiative developed nationally by the homeless charity, Crisis. The Project has a small amount of core funding for the first 3 years from Crisis but additional funding from Edinburgh Cyrenians, other donations and sponsorship is required to keep the Project operational. Prior to the project being established a feasibility study was conducted by a secondee from Standard Life. FareShare employs 2 full time staff and operates with some 50 volunteers. Approximately 18 of the volunteers are, or have experience of being, homeless.

The project has 3 key aspects. First, they collect food from wholesalers and retailers which is 'unsuitable for sale' and would otherwise be waste. Most of the food is past its 'best before' date but within its 'use by' date. It can also be surplus stock or items that have been wrongly labelled or have damaged packaging. The project is redistributing an average of 5 tonnes of food each week and delivering to between 11 and 18 homelessness projects in and around

Edinburgh. Second, the Project had an Education and Training aspect which offers volunteering opportunities in a supportive environment to people who are experiencing homelessness or recently moved from a hostel into their own tenancies. The Project also offers New Deal placements promotes the Millennium volunteering scheme. Finally, FareShare have recently established a Food Education Programme. This involves developing peer education opportunities in respect of cooking, nutrition and diet.

Homeless family support

The Shelter Families Project was set up in 1998 as a pilot project in Edinburgh and South Lanarkshire with 3 years funding from the National Lottery Charities Board. This funding is now coming to an end and the 2 pilots are becoming independent projects, managed by Shelter Scotland and with funding administered through the local authorities (South Lanarkshire and Edinburgh City).

The case study focused on the South Lanarkshire project. This currently shares a manager with the Edinburgh project and has one full-time support worker and a part time child support worker. The number of staff will, however, be increasing to 6: a full-time manager, 2 support workers, 2 child support workers; an administrative worker and a volunteer co-ordinator. The child support workers will be funded by Children in Need and the Community Fund, with the remaining funding through Transitional Housing Benefit.

The service works with homeless families in homeless accommodation, providing support to both the adults and the children to seek to minimise the disruption of homelessness and prevent its reoccurrence. The project continues to support families once they have moved into their accommodation for a minimum of 6 months and for up to a year. Support provided to adults ranges from advocacy and liaising with organisations, to practical assistance with moving, obtaining grants and furniture, negotiating repairs, to more personal and emotional support. Child support workers also provide practical support, such as accessing health services and schooling, but also play opportunities and personal support for children. The service is accessed through referrals from housing and social work departments, and also by self-referral.

Housing education

The Housing Education Project began in 1999 as a result of discussions between Tranent Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) and East Lothian Council Housing Department. Increasing youth unemployment in the area, combined with a lack of specialist services for young people in the area, led to the development of a peer education project aimed at preventing youth homelessness by developing and delivering information on housing and homelessness to 4th year school children. A teacher in Ross High School, Tranent, was approached to help co-ordinate the development of information, and at a later stage the re-located Bridges Project, a voluntary sector youth homelessness service, became involved. The project was funded jointly by the Housing Department and Tranent SIP.

Over the course of a year, a committee of 5th and 6th year pupils were involved in conducting interviews with organisations and gathering information on housing and homelessness. At the end of this process, a 'snapfax' and a housing education booklet were produced. This

information was distributed to 4th year pupils with 4 lessons on housing and homelessness. The Ross High School teacher and the Bridges Project worker were primarily responsible for co-ordinating the project and, due to changing staff, the Housing Department has latterly become more involved. The project has now developed into a more co-ordinated arrangement to oversee the dissemination of the information.

One-stop-shop

The Access Point (TAP) in Edinburgh is a one-stop-shop, open-door facility which combines housing, health and social work services. The project opened in March 2000 and is primarily funded through the RSI, with additional funding from Edinburgh City Council Housing and Social Work departments, and Lothian Primary Care NHS Trust. There are a total of 30 staff across the 3 agencies, including a project manager. The aim of the service is to increase the level of access of vulnerable homeless people, particularly rough sleepers (many of whom have complex needs) to mainstream services.

Services offered include: homelessness assessments and housing advice, and links to temporary accommodation; access to social work assessments for community care and supported accommodation; access to a primary health care team including CPNs (community psychiatric nurses); drug and alcohol workers; access to resettlement and housing support services. Services are available through TAP premises, with some aspects also being delivered on an outreach basis within hostels and homeless day centres.

Supported tenancy project

The Supported Tenancy Service was established in August 2000 by key individuals from Fife Council's Housing and Social Work Services and SACRO Safeguarding Communities, Reducing Offending. It is funded primarily through Transitional Housing Benefit, plus an additional start up payment from Social Work. The aim of the Service is to provide a planned route into appropriate and sustainable accommodation for Schedule One offenders leaving prison. The intention is that offenders should be identified and the necessary assessments made whilst they are still in prison, so that suitable temporary accommodation can be found in time for their release. Referrals are also made for people in the community who are still on Court Orders whose accommodation has broken down.

The service user is provided with temporary furnished accommodation until an appropriate lead-in tenancy can be accessed. Accommodation is provided on condition that the service user accepts support and monitoring from SACRO. The support provided includes: help with accessing benefits and grants, purchasing furniture and setting up payment schemes, helping people budget, making sure they are registered with a GP and trying to tackle isolation. In general one or 2 arranged and one unannounced visits are made each week, depending on the level of support required. Involvement with a client lasts for the length on the Court Order, although informal support may still be provided.

The service is delivered by one Project Worker and one Sessional Worker, plus a designated Homelessness Officer and Court District Social Workers; and co-ordinated by Managers from each of the partner agencies. The service has a range of written protocols, service agreements and criteria for monitoring and review. Regular planning meetings are held with

each of the partner agencies to review their work with clients and explore the development of the service. Additional case management meetings are called if particular concerns arise.

Temporary supported accommodation/independent living

Broad Horizons was established in Alloa, Clackmannanshire, in 1992. The service is provided by NCH Action for Children and managed by Clackmannanshire Council. The service was initially funded by Urban Aid, Central Region Social Work and Clackmannanshire Council Housing departments. Since local government reorganisation the service has been funded by Clackmannanshire Council's Housing and Social Services with care in the community and DSS funds, plus contributions from the young people's personal allowances.

The project offers 3 levels of supported accommodation for young people aged 16 to 24 years, with the aim of equipping them with the skills necessary to live independently and to sustain independent tenancies in the long term. The levels of support are: supported accommodation in a group living environment; independent flats in the same building; and chalets in the community with a minimum of 3 co-worker visits a week. The young person stays initially for a 2-week assessment period, after which they are offered a contract and allocated a co-worker. The young person and co-worker will assess the length of stay and the level of support required. The service also has a drop-in, and offers housing advice, support and advocacy.

Regular Referral Group meetings involving a senior housing officer, a senior social worker and the project manager are held fortnightly to discuss referrals, existing clients and the general running and development of the service. In addition, there is a multi-agency advisory group which includes voluntary sector, housing association, police and community representatives. This meets quarterly and advises on the development of the service.

Temporary supported accommodation/resettlement

Solas (Gaelic for place of tranquillity or rest) was developed in September 2000 through the collaboration of Argyll and Bute Council's housing and social work departments; Argyll and Clyde Health Board and Haven Housing Association. It is funded primarily through the RSI, with additional money from Argyll and Clyde Health Board and Transitional Housing Benefit. The service was developed in response to research which revealed some rough sleeping in Oban, and a lack of support services for homeless people in the area. The service has 3 full-time staff employed by Haven Housing Association, and 2 part-time nurses, one of whom is based in Dunoon.

The service will soon provide direct access temporary supported accommodation for 4 people (being built at the time of the research). It also offers advice and advocacy, a drop in facility and housing support for people moving into their own tenancies. The project is managed by Haven Housing Association and Argyll and Clyde Health Board, and reports to a multi-agency steering committee which includes the partner agencies, senior council officers and local church representatives.

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