The housing and support needs of older homeless people

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Presentation

- Backgrounds of older homeless people
- Rehousing older homeless people: findings from a study of outcomes over five years
- Conclusions and recommendations
Backgrounds of older homeless people
Older homeless people

Defined as homeless people aged 50+ years


Majority of older homeless people are men

Some have been homeless for years and have become elderly while homeless; many become homeless for the first time in later life.
Common reasons for homelessness

Marital / relationship breakdown

Death of parents or spouse

Loss of job / retirement

Housing problems

Mental health / alcohol problems
Rehousing older homeless people: emerging findings
FOR-HOME study
Funded by Economic and Social Research Council. Followed up 400 homeless people for 18 months after being rehoused (56 were 50+ years).

Rebuilding Lives study
Funded by NIHR School for Social Care Research. Followed up FOR-HOME sample five years after being rehoused.

The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the ESRC, NIHR SSCR or the Department of Health, NIHR or NHS.
Partner organisations

- Broadway
- St. Anne's Community Services
- Centrepoint
- St Mungo's
- Framework
- Thames Reach
Characteristics of older participants

- 56 participants (51 men & 5 women)
- 41 aged 50-59 years; 15 aged 60+
- 75% White British
- 53% mental health, 54% alcohol & 29% drug problems
- 18% literacy difficulties
- 46% no living relatives or no contact with relatives
- 44% homeless more than 5 years
Accommodation when rehoused

Those aged 50-59 years:
  - 88% moved to independent accommodation
  - 12% moved to sheltered accommodation

Those aged 60+ years:
  - 13% moved to independent accommodation
  - 87% moved to sheltered accommodation

Among those in independent accommodation, 40% saw a tenancy support worker regularly for the first six months; 23% had no tenancy support worker.
Six months after being rehoused

- Most (81%) were glad to have been rehoused: restrictions when in hostels and disturbance by other residents.

- Most (87%) regarded their accommodation as ‘home’: had privacy and control over housing; felt safe and comfortable.

- 44% were experiencing difficulties budgeting and managing money. 42% had had rent arrears and 31% problems with utility payments.

- 55% were worried about how things were going, one-half felt depressed and one-half lonely ‘some’ or ‘most’ of the time.
Independent v. sheltered housing

- Those who moved to sheltered accommodation were *more* likely to think of their accommodation as ‘home’.

- Those who moved to sheltered accommodation were *less* likely to be worried about how things were going or to say that they felt depressed.

- *No difference* in reports of loneliness between sheltered and independent tenants.
### Housing outcomes after 5 years (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In original accommodation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved once to another tenancy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple moves</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left tenancy, whereabouts unknown</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In hospital</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown if still in tenancy</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total %</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among those who changed tenancy, 64% moved to *more supported* accommodation.
**Case study 1: Joe aged 57 at resettlement**

- Homeless 5 years - breakdown in relationship
- Slept rough, stayed in hostels
- Problematic drinking and history of gambling
- Independent tenancy on large isolated estate

| 6 months | Doing well, no debt, not worked, reduced drinking  
| Flat clean and tidy. Felt it was “home”. Volunteering.  
| **Support worker helped with utilities, bills, furniture** |
| 18 months | Doing well. Worked part-time for short period.  
| Uses homeless day centres; resumed limited family contact  
| Stopped volunteering  
| **Occasional visits from support worker** |
| 5 years | Flat and clothing very dirty. Drinking increased ++.  
| ASB on estate. On Work Programme.  
| No debts. Worried about benefits stopping.  
| **Tenancy support ended two years ago** |
Case study 2: Patricia aged 53 at resettlement

- Came to UK 30 years ago. Worked and lived in hotel which closed
- Homeless 6 years – in hostel and shared housing
- Physical health problems; depression intermittently
- Independent tenancy in large, converted house

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Felt accommodation was ‘home’ and happy with location. Reduced mobility and unable to work due to physical health problems. Struggling to pay bills but no debts. <strong>Tenancy support only first 2 months. Support from friends.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Still happy with flat. In hospital twice since last seen (physical health problems). Depressed. Still struggling to pay bills but no debts. <strong>Support from friends.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Happy with flat. Physical health problems worsened. Welfare benefits changed to ESA 14 months ago; ESA stopped 2 months ago. Has no income. Unable to afford food / heating. <strong>Support from friends who have lent her money.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case study 3: Steven aged 55 at resettlement

Homeless 3 years due to mental illness. Slept rough / lived in hostels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Housing status</th>
<th>Time there</th>
<th>Reason for move</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resettled</td>
<td>Independent tenancy and tenancy support worker</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Stopped taking medication. Admitted to hospital with mental illness. Needed more support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Accommodation with 24 hour support</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Support needs reduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Accommodation with 7 hours support a day</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>Support needs reduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Independent tenancy; weekly support visits</td>
<td>19 months</td>
<td>Became unwell again and eventually homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Slept rough</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Admitted to hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shared house with daily support</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>Still living there</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions and recommendations
The situation of older homeless people

- Number of older homeless people is likely to grow.
- Most older homeless people want permanent and stable accommodation.
- Some are able to live independently; many require supported accommodation.
- Some prefer mainstream supported accommodation for older people; others require specialist housing that takes into account their particular needs.
- The support needs of older homeless people can fluctuate once they are rehoused. Some do not ask for help when experiencing difficulties.
Service responses

- Older homeless people are a neglected and disadvantaged group. Many voluntary / statutory agencies working with older people give little attention to those who are homeless. Homelessness organisations work with people of all ages.

- Very few services in England dedicated to older homeless people. In contrast, many services for young homeless people.

- Only a few permanent housing projects for older homeless people with complex needs. In contrast in USA and Australia, various types of supported housing developed for older homeless people.

What is needed

- UK Coalition on Older Homelessness lobbied on behalf of older homeless people and advocated for services. Disbanded in 2010. A new campaigning group is needed to raise awareness of the particular needs of older homeless people.

- Various types of permanent supported housing that promote stability and independence.

- Tenancy support services that are able to respond to the fluctuating support needs of formerly homeless older people. Mechanisms to recognise those experiencing difficulties who are at risk of losing their tenancy.
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FOR-HOME final report available at:
www.kcl.ac.uk/scwru/res/hrp/past/for-home.aspx

Details of Homelessness Research Programme:
www.kcl.ac.uk/scwru/res/hrp/index.aspx
Our warm thanks to …

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