The needs of single homeless people who are rehoused

Maureen Crane,¹ Louise Joly,¹ and Tony Warnes²

¹ Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King’s College London
² University of Sheffield, Sheffield

Topics

- The FOR-HOME study
- Outcomes of being rehoused
- Difficulties once rehoused
- Welfare reforms in England and what is needed
Aims of the FOR-HOME study

To produce longitudinal information about: (a) the experiences of homeless people who are resettled, and (b) the factors that influence the outcomes.

Study conducted at the University of Sheffield by Tony Warnes, Maureen Crane and Sarah Coward. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.
Partner organisations
Study design and data collection

- The sample: 400 single homeless people resettled into independent accommodation by the six organisations. Two clusters: London, and Nottingham / Leeds / Sheffield (Notts/Yorks).

- Semi-structured interviews conducted immediately before being resettled, and after 6 and 15/18 months. Key-worker also completed questionnaire at baseline.

- Interviews from June 2007 to March 2010. Tracking exercise at 12 months to check respondents whereabouts.
Profile of the study respondents

- 296 men and 104 women
- 24% aged 17-24 years; 62% aged 25-49; 14% aged 50+ years
- 56% White British, 44% other ethnicity
- Problems: 63% mental health, 33% alcohol, 57% drugs, 19% literacy difficulties
- 14% homeless more than 10 years
- 48% moved to local authority housing, 38% to housing association tenure, and 14% to private-rented.
Outcomes of being rehoused
Experiences of living independently

- For many, the transition was not easy. 48% had never previously had a tenancy, including 85% aged 17-24 years.

- Most (78%) glad to have moved: gained independence and privacy; had control of one’s accommodation; and able to start afresh and rebuild one’s life.

- Over time, many decorated their accommodation, and gradually acquired furniture and furnishings and created ‘a home’.

- Over time, some obtained jobs, or started education or training courses. Several renewed contact with family and children.
Housing outcomes at 15/18 months (%)

Excludes 4 people who died and 25 unknown if still in a tenancy
Type of accommodation in which resettled by housing outcomes at 15/18 months (%)

- Self-contained flat: 86% in original housing, 5% in new tenancy, 9% in no tenancy
- Studio flat: 84% in original housing, 9% in new tenancy, 7% in no tenancy
- Bedsit: 41% in original housing, 23% in new tenancy, 36% in no tenancy
Difficulties once rehoused
The condition of the accommodation

- At time of moving in, 17% without essential utilities and some accommodation in poor condition, e.g. heating not working; windows faulty; dampness / mould; leaks; plumbing defects.

- At 18 months, 55% LA tenants, 58% HA tenants, and 75% private renters still problems with condition of accommodation. One-half no contact with landlord or landlord unhelpful and reluctant to do repairs. Similar across all tenures.

- Two-thirds without basic furniture when moved in. Many had to move soon after signing tenancy. At 18 months, 9% no cooker, 7% no bed, 18% no floor covering. Private renters more likely to have furniture than social housing tenants.
Respondents **without** basic furniture when moved in (%)
Rent arrears and other debts

- Difficulties managing finances and paying bills, led to increasing rent arrears and other debts over time.

- Reasons for debts: rent arrears on former tenancies and court fines resurfaced once person rehoused; loans from social security and elsewhere to buy furniture and furnishings; difficulties understanding / paying utility bills; in and out of low-paid jobs affected social security benefits.

- Rent defaulters sent standard letters about arrears but some could not read or did not open official letters.
Average rent arrears (£s) by tenure

- Local authority: 42, 110
- Housing association: 38, 105
- Private rented: 187, 305
- All: 61, 131

- 6 months
- 15/18 months
Percentages with debts by tenure

- Local authority: 45%
- Housing association: 66%
- Private rented: 83%
- All: 67%

When resettled: 15/18 months
The availability of tenancy support

- Only one-half received support from a tenancy support (TS) worker after being rehoused.
- Young people *least* likely to have a TS worker yet *most* likely to have *no* experience of independent-living. Only 27% aged 17-24 had a TS worker.
Contact with a tenancy support worker by month resettled (%)
Welfare reforms in England and what is needed
Welfare reforms

- Reduced availability of social housing, and increased reliance on private-rented accommodation for resettlement.
- Shortening of social housing tenancies proposed in the Localism Bill.
- Housing Benefit changes and capping of Local Housing Allowance. Shared-room rate threshold to be applied to those aged 25-34 yrs from Jan 2012 – homeless people exempt if living in hostel for at least 3 months and receive support to resettle.
What is needed – the role of housing providers

- Checking of properties before relet to ensure no maintenance problems and utilities in working order. Improved responses to maintenance problems as they arise.

- More active help with obtaining basic furniture (or with loans of camp-beds, hobs and microwaves).

- Better liaison with homelessness sector service-providers to improve the allocation of tenancy support services to those most vulnerable or inexperienced, and regular reviews of their support needs.

- More flexible responses to vulnerable people who accrue rent arrears, e.g. home visits.
Our warm thanks to …

All the respondents who have participated in this study over a very long time.

Ruby Fu, Camilla Mercer and Louise Joly who have helped massively with running the project and coding the data.

The freelance interviewers – Gary Bellamy, Paul Gilsenan, Louise Joly and John Miles.

Members of the Management Committee: David Fisher (Broadway), Caroline Day and Jennifer Monfort (Centrefloor), Peter Radage and Rachel Harding (Framework), Julie Robinson and Tony Beech (St Anne’s), Simon Hughes and George Miller (St Mungo’s), and John Crowther and Debra Ives (Thames Reach), and to all their colleagues who have been Link Workers or have otherwise assisted with recruitment and tracking.
Contact details

Maureen Crane: m.a.crane@sheffield.ac.uk
Tony Warnes: a.warnes@sheffield.ac.uk
Louise Joly: louise.joly@kcl.ac.uk

Final report published 11 May 2011. Available at:
www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/kpi/scwru/res/roles/resettling