Rebuilding Lives
Supporting formerly homeless people to achieve independent living

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FOR-HOME and Rebuilding Lives studies

- Lack of evidence in UK about the experiences of homeless people who are resettled, their outcomes over time, and the factors that influence the outcomes.

- FOR-HOME study (2007-10) conducted by Maureen Crane and Tony Warnes, University of Sheffield, and funded by ESRC. Sample: 400 single homeless people resettled into independent accommodation in London, Nottinghamshire, Leeds and Sheffield. Interviews with participants just before being resettled, and after 6 and 15/18 months.

- Six homelessness organisations were collaborators: Broadway, Centrepoint, St Mungo’s and Thames Reach in London; Framework in Nottingham; and St Anne’s Community Services in South Yorkshire.

- Rebuilding Lives interviewing FOR-HOME participants five years after they have been rehoused.
Aims of Rebuilding Lives

- To collect information about the longer-term circumstances of formerly homeless people after being rehoused, and their ability to sustain tenancies and live independently. First UK study to follow up homeless people over five years.

- To examine the characteristics of those who continue to receive or need longer-term support, and whether their needs are currently met.

- To identify the roles of different practitioners (social care, health and housing agencies) in providing longer-term support to formerly homeless people, ways of working that have proved effective, and the challenges and difficulties of delivering this support.

- To contribute to policy, public health, commissioning and practice debates about the longer-term support needed to enable formerly homeless people to rebuild their lives and avoid repeat homelessness.
Design of Rebuilding Lives

- Study started March 2013 and lasts 16 months. Involves 297 FOR-HOME participants who were still housed at 15/18 months and agreed we could contact them again.

- Same six homelessness organisations and same interviewers involved.

- Semi-structured interviews with participants five years after their resettlement. Information collected about: housing circumstances and moves; management of household tasks, finances and the payment of bills; use of time; education, training and employment; health and substance misuse problems and treatment; family and social relationships; support from services; settledness, morale and quality of life; and achievements, difficulties and hopes for the future.

- For those who have received care and support in the last 12 months (other than treatment for health conditions) and who give consent, interviews are also conducted with the support staff / practitioners.
Tracing and interviewing the participants

- Tracing the participants is very time-consuming – 38% moved or left their accommodation, and many changed mobile phone number. Some moved several times (between tenancies and homelessness).

- Several sources used for tracking: e.g. relatives, friends and service-providers; door-knocking; electoral roll (192.com); social networking sites; internet searches.

- Most interviews have been conducted in the participants’ homes, but a few in other places, e.g. cafes, pubs, hostels, offices, a park. Some conducted early mornings, evenings and at weekends.

- Interviews have lasted between 50 minutes and 3½ hours – reflects the participants’ eagerness to talk about their experiences and the intricacies of collecting reliable information from them.

- So far, 183 interviews (62%) have been completed and a further 5 have been arranged for this week. Our projected figure is 210-235.
Interviews with resettled participants by 28 October 2013

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Interview status</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Interview completed</td>
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<td>61.6</td>
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<td>Interview arranged</td>
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<td>Declined an interview</td>
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<td>Deceased</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>In prison / left UK</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Still tracking / contacting</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total participants</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviewing support workers

- Of the participants so far interviewed, around one-third have received support from workers and have consented for us to interview the worker. A few received support from more than one worker. In total, we have consent to talk to 72 workers.

- Many more participants in London than in Notts/Yorks have received support within the last 12 months.

- Main types of workers who have provided support are either from the social housing and homelessness sectors, or are drugs / substance misuse workers. A few have had help from care workers or CPNs.

- Some resettled participants have received support but are only able to give their worker’s first name and phone number (they do not know the worker’s job nor the organisation they work for).

- Four workers have so far been interviewed.
Early findings from interviews with resettled participants

- Some participants are doing very well – coping with independent living and have no debts; developing careers or in education or employment; positive family and social relationships. Several have become parents.

- Some participants are still housed but are struggling to keep their tenancy or have lost their housing. Problems include: poor housing conditions; large rent arrears and other debts; heavy drinking and illegal drug use; difficulties with social security benefit claims, re-assessment issues and sanctions; and insecure employment (zero hours contracts).

- Some are beginning to address long-standing addiction problems, but it is a very gradual process of moving forward.

- For some, personal and psychological problems have ‘resurfaced’. Some have resumed substance misuse and several have been newly-diagnosed with mental health problems.
Early conclusions

- It is possible to build a strong and trusting relationship with a cohort of marginalised and difficult-to-engage people and retain them in longitudinal research. It requires time, flexibility, persistence, continuity of interviewers, and a good tracking system in place.

- A relatively high number are still receiving or in need of support five years after being rehoused. Some in need are not getting help. Some have experienced problems when their support has ended or their support worker has changed.

- Many participants have been affected by recent welfare benefit changes and by recent employment and housing policies.
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FOR-HOME final report published 11 May 2011
Available at: