

'A HAND UP, NOT A HAND-OUT', NEW LABOUR AND STREET HOMELESSNESS
1997-2010

By

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Abstract

This research examines the impact of the New Labour government on street homelessness across their three terms of office from 1997 to 2010.

Grounded in the oral testimonies of those who designed and delivered New Labour's homelessness policies, it concludes that Labour's achievements in reducing street homelessness were real and significant. Challenging interpretations of New Labour's interventions as 'revanchist' in intent, it shows instead that Labour enacted a coherent and sustained programme, driven from the centre of government, that focused on developing long-term solutions to rough sleeping. It shows that Labour utilised novel and innovative methods of governance to reduce the high levels of rough sleeping it inherited on attaining office, devised new methods of addressing homeless prevention, and instituted policies designed to empower former rough sleepers to permanently escape homelessness. To achieve its aims, New Labour facilitated significant improvements in the scale, scope and working practices of the voluntary sector homeless agencies that delivered its programme.

This research also shows that New Labour's homelessness policies were enacted in accord with its stated 'Third Way' ideology. Given the efficacy of its street homelessness programme, it argues that the Third Way deserves more serious attention than it is commonly afforded, both as an ideology and a mechanism of governance. In addition, as Labour's commitment to addressing street homelessness was sustained long after press and public interest had declined, this research challenges a common characterisation of New Labour as being primarily concerned with maintaining a positive public image at the expense of delivering on social policy objectives.

By focussing on the mechanisms of government and the processes employed in the delivery of Labour's homelessness policies, this research also offers a broader challenge to the writing of political history. Arguing that the process of transferring rhetoric into policy, and policy aims into actual improvements in the quality of citizens lives, is perhaps the most important task of government, it calls for a greater prominence to be given to delivery of social policy aims in assessments of governments' performance in office and in the writing of political histories.

Key Words: Homelessness, rough sleeping, New Labour, Third Way, social policy, delivery.

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List of Abbreviations

ALG	Association of London Government
ALMO	Arms-Length Management Organisation
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
BHT	Brighton Housing Trust
BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CAT	Contact and Assessment Team
CHAIN	Combined Homelessness and Information Network
CHAR	The Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless
CIH	Chartered Institute of Housing
CPN	Community Psychiatric Nurse
CRI	Crime Reduction Initiative
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DETR	Department of Transport and the Regions
DLTR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
DoH	Department of Health
DSS	Department of Social Security
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GLC	Greater London Council
HAP	Housing Action Programme
HDG	Hostel Deficit Grant
HCIP	Hostels Capital Improvement Programme
HMII	Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative
LSRCP	London Soup and Clothing Run Co-ordinating Project
NFHA	National Federation of Housing Associations
NHA	National Homeless Alliance
NIMHE	National Institute for Mental Health England

NPM New Public Management
NRF National Resettlement Forum
NSIP National Social Inclusion Programme
OBPM Outcome-Based Performance Management
ODPM Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PIE Psychologically Informed Environment
PSA Public Service Agreement
OSW Off the Streets and into Work
QAF Quality Assessment Framework
RAG Residents Action Group
RSI Rough Sleepers Initiative
RSL Registered Social Landlord
RSU Rough Sleepers Unit
SEU Social Exclusion Unit
SHP Single Homeless Project
SNMA Special Needs Management Allowance
SP Supporting People
SPDF Supporting People Distribution Formula
SPEAR Single People's Emergency Accommodation in Richmond
TA Temporary Accommodation
TST Tenancy Sustainment Team
USP Unique Selling Point

Introduction

During the 1990's the number of people sleeping rough on the streets of Britain rose to unprecedented levels.¹ In London's West End, every shop doorway on the Strand and Charing Cross Road saw ragged figures bedding down for the night, and hundreds more lived in two 'cardboard cities' that had sprung up in heart of the city, one located in a maze of gloomy underpasses near Waterloo, and another in a grand Georgian square in Holborn.² While central London had the greatest concentration of street homeless people, the same terrible story of visible destitution played out across many towns and cities in the rest of the UK.³ Widely viewed as a national disgrace it provoked both calls for government action and a weary resignation that the problem was intractable. Although steps taken by the Major administration had brought down the numbers from a probable peak in 1994, efforts had stalled, and when New Labour attained office in 1997, little appeared to have changed.⁴ New Labour committed itself to addressing street homelessness from the outset, setting a target of reducing rough sleeping by two-thirds by April 2002.⁵ Despite scepticism that this was even possible, the target was achieved ahead of schedule, in November 2001.⁶ Moreover, over the course of Labour's second and third terms, the number of rough

¹ Statistical measurement of rough sleeper numbers is problematic. Before the 1990s they were, at best, crude approximations, but were visibly rising sharply. Reporting in 1998 Labour's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) estimated that, 'at least 2,400 people spent some time sleeping rough in London' - averaging at about 400 on any given night'. SEU, *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*, (July 1998), Section 1.1, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/19991103002552/http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk:80/seu/1998/rough/srhome.htm> accessed 3/1/21.

² The Cardboard City at Waterloo, known as 'The Bullring' was closed down in 1998, the encampment in Lincoln's inn Fields in Holborn was cleared under the Conservatives in 1992.

³ Single night counts conducted in 1996 showed that the largest concentrations of rough sleepers reported were in Birmingham, Brighton, Cambridge, Manchester, Oxford and Bristol. SEU, *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*, Section 1.3.

⁴ For details of the Major government's Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI), see Chapter 1.

⁵ Blair, T., 'Forward by the Prime Minister' in SEU, *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*.

⁶ Randall, G. & Brown, S, *Helping Rough Sleepers off the Streets: A Report to the Homelessness Directorate*, (ODPM, London, 2002), p.4.

sleepers continued to decline, reaching the lowest ever recorded figures in 2010.⁷

Homelessness ceased to be a visible problem, and by the end of Labour's period in office, there was a genuine feeling within the homelessness sector that it might even be possible to end street homelessness permanently.⁸ However, after Labour left office, street homelessness increased rapidly once more, rising by 169% between 2010 and 2020.⁹

This research is a detailed study of New Labour's homelessness policies during their three terms in office, grounded in the oral testimonies of those who designed and delivered those policies. Its primary aim is simple, to investigate what had happened during Labour's three terms in office that had led to such a remarkable decline in street homelessness, and why this progress had not been sustained. On commencing the research, another striking feature emerged, that Labour's achievements in homelessness had been largely forgotten. They are rarely mentioned in popular histories of the period, and in academic accounts of Labour's performance in office are often afforded little more than a short paragraph as a sub-set of housing policy.¹⁰ Given the intrinsic importance of the issue, its high political and public

⁷The number of rough sleepers fell from 1,850 in 1998 to 498 in 2007. A reduction of 73% from the 1998 baseline. DCLG, *Policy Briefing 20, Homelessness Statistics September 2007 and Rough Sleeping – 10 years on from the target*, (DCLG, London, September 2007), pp.6-7. Figures fell more slowly thereafter to an historic low of 440 in 2010. MHCLG, *Rough Sleeping England – Total Street Count 2010*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-total-street-count-and-estimates-2010> (accessed 3/3/2022). These figures were, however, contested by the incoming Coalition government's Housing Minister, Grant Shapps. MHCLG, 'Grant Shapps to overhaul rough sleeper counts', (MHCLG, London, 15 July 2010), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/grant-shapps-to-overhaul-rough-sleeper-counts>, (accessed 3/3/2022).

⁸ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20; Mick Carrol, Interview, 24/3/21; Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20. It is important to note that all expressed caveats to any 'end of homelessness' due to the continued 'push' factors driving people into homelessness. They did, however, express the view that had Labour's programme continued it was possible rough sleeping could have been all but eliminated.

⁹ Wilson, W. & Barton, C., *Rough Sleeping (England) – House of Commons briefing paper Number 02007*, 6 February, 2019, p.3.

¹⁰ Absence is a difficult thing to demonstrate, but there is no mention of homelessness in either of Rawnsley's accounts of New Labour, Turner's history of 1990s only mentions homelessness in the context of Labour electioneering, and numerous scholarly accounts give it no mention whatsoever. Even in Lund's evaluation of Labour's housing policies, less than half a page is afforded to street homelessness. Rawnsley, A., *Servants of the People: The Inside Story of New Labour*, (Hamish Hamilton, London, 2000); Rawnsley, A., *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour*, (Penguin, London, 2010; Turner, A., *A Classless Society: Britain in the*

profile in the period, and the uniquely visible impact of homelessness on both urban space and public consciousness, this neglect is astonishing. Its absence opened up other questions, about the historical characterisation of New Labour in office and broader questions on how political history is written.

The motivation for this research is also deeply personal, I began working in homelessness in 1990 and ran projects for rough sleepers in London and Bristol until 1998, leaving frontline work just as Labour came into office. Although I am proud of the work I did in that period, I was aware of its inadequacy, the often chaotic and uncoordinated provision of the services offered by the voluntary sector, and had little confidence that substantive change was even possible. Although I had left the sector, my deputy in my first management post, Richard Cunningham, continued to work in homelessness, going on to become a Specialist Advisor on homelessness to the Labour government, and oversaw their Places of Change programme from 2006. He kept me abreast of what was taking place, but, no longer directly engaged, and with the very visible phenomenon of street homelessness disappearing from view, I began to forget it had ever been an issue at all. However, by the time I returned to academia, street homelessness was once again becoming very visible, on the streets of London when I visited, in Birmingham where I was studying, and even in the small city of Hereford where I now live.

Given my background in homelessness, I felt I had a unique opportunity to explore what had happened in homelessness during the apparently highly successful Labour period. I had a wealth of contacts who had worked in central government, local government and the voluntary sector during the time, whose first-hand experience and subsequent reflection I

1990s, (Aurum Press, London, 2014), pp.97; Lund, B., 'Safe as Houses? Housing Policy Under New Labour' in Powell, M. (Ed) *Evaluating New Labour's Welfare Reforms*, (Policy Press, Bristol, 2002), pp. 107-126.

could access and evaluate. Over the course of this research I interviewed 90 people involved in homelessness between 1997 and 2010, from government ministers to frontline workers.¹¹

Two broad hypotheses seemed plausible at the outset. Firstly, that actions taken under the Labour administrations had been highly effective but they had subsequently been forgotten or squandered. If this was the case, uncovering what were the key components of that success could be useful for contemporary homelessness policy. Alternatively, the measures taken by New Labour could have been flawed, incomplete in their scale and scope, and had merely succeeded in hiding the problem temporarily from view. This too could potentially yield useful information for future homelessness policy.

Taken as a whole, the view of those interviewed was clear - while not uncritical of aspects of Labour's homelessness policies, the vast majority of respondents viewed Labour's interventions in street homelessness as a remarkable social policy success. Their testimonies and the documentary evidence suggested that, driven from the very centre of government, Labour had committed unprecedented resources to the issue and undertaken a coherent, systematic and sustained approach to the problem across all three of its terms in office. Along the way it had led to a significant improvement in the collection of data on the numbers and causes of homelessness, refocused provision on prevention, long-term resettlement and rehabilitation, empowered service-users, brought single homelessness into the purview of local government for the first time, broke down department silos to enable a coordinated response, and led to a transformation in the scope and quality of voluntary sector homeless provision.

¹¹ See Appendix A.

This view cuts against the grain of much of the academic literature that addresses Labour's homelessness policies, which more often decries its motivation, disputes its achievements, and tends to focus on its perceived flaws and limitations rather than its overall successes.

In the academic literature, Labour's actions are often characterised as 'revanchist', as a cynical political exercise aimed at 'rendering the visible poor invisible', for the benefit of property developers, businesses and tourism, rather than focussed on the needs of homeless people themselves.¹² The reduction in numbers itself has been challenged as methodologically flawed and as manipulated for political purposes.¹³ Many accounts focus on elements of Labour's programme that they consider to constitute unacceptable forms of coercion and control.¹⁴ Other accounts focus on the perceived negative effects of Labour's chosen mechanisms of governance.¹⁵ The introduction of New Public Management techniques are viewed as leading to a reduction in cooperation between homeless sector agencies, as undermining the voluntary sector's autonomy, stifling its critical voice, and to have driven out smaller, often faith-based organisations thereby reducing the diversity of

¹² The conception of a 'revanchist' approach to homelessness policy was proposed, in an American context, in Smith, N., *The New Urban Frontier and the Revanchist City*, (Routledge, London, 1996). In the context of New Labour, the argument is explored in Johnsen, S. & Fitzpatrick, S. 'Revanchist Sanitisation or Coercive Care? The Use of Enforcement to Combat Begging, Street Drinking and Rough Sleeping in England', *Urban Studies*, Vol 47 No 8, (2010), pp.1703-1723, and in still greater depth in Cloke, P., May, J. & Johnsen, S., *Swept Up Lives? Re-Envisioning the Homeless City*, (Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, 2010), pp.3-12.

¹³ See, Pawson, H. & Davidson, E., 'Fit for purpose? Official measures of homelessness in the era of state activism', *European Journal of Housing Policy*, Vol 8, No 1, (2008), pp.39-60 and Widdowfield, R., Cloke, P. & Milbourne, P., 'Making the homeless count? Enumerating rough sleeping and the distortion of homelessness', *Policy and Politics*, Vol.29, No 3, (2001), pp. 259-79.

¹⁴ See Whiteford, M., 'New Labour, Street Homelessness and Social Exclusion: A Defaulted Promissory Note?', *Housing Studies*, Vol 28, No1, (2013), pp.10-32; Fitzpatrick, S. and Jones, A., 'Pursuing Justice or Social Cohesion? Coercion in Street Homelessness Policies in England', *Journal of Social Policy*, (2005), Vol34, No 3, pp.389-406; Coleman, R., 'Images from a Neoliberal City: The State, Surveillance and Social Control', *Critical Criminology*, Vol 12, No 1, (2003), pp. 21-42.

¹⁵ For a broad critique of Labour's approach to the voluntary sector see, Carmel, E. & Harlock, J., 'Instituting the 'third sector' as a governable terrain: partnership, procurement and performance in the UK', *Policy & Politics*, Vol.36, No.2, (2008), pp.155-71.

provision.¹⁶ The increasing professionalisation of the sector engendered by Labour's approach has been viewed as undermining the humane and relational aspects that are so vital in working with vulnerable, traumatised people, and to have broken the connection to local communities.¹⁷ Although these critical interpretations are not without value, the academic literature gives them an undue emphasis, often leading to a mischaracterisation of New Labour's intentions or the efficacy of their actions, and tends to focus on flaws at the margins to the neglect of its much more substantive achievements. In addition, it became clear that New Labour's approach to street homelessness could be usefully employed as a lens to re-examine their overall approach to governance, offering up a challenge to the broader historiographical representation of New Labour in office.

New Labour in government has often been characterised as focussed primarily on sustaining itself in office, as lacking any real ideology, and concerned more with the manipulation of the media than any substantive programme for social reform.¹⁸ Even before attaining office, critics from the left had dismissed New Labour as having 'capitulated before the Thatcherite agenda', with Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques expressing doubts that 'a New Labour government will amount to anything more than a crypto-Conservative administration'.¹⁹

This analysis has often endured in academia, with Pugh stating in 2011 that 'New Labour

¹⁶ See, Cloke et al., *Swept Up Lives?*; May, J. & Cloke, P., 'Modes of Attentiveness: Reading for difference in Geographies of Homelessness', *Antipode*, Vol 46, No 4, (2014), pp.894-920; May, J., Cloke, P. & Johnsen, S. 'Re-phasing Neoliberalism: New Labour and Britain's Crisis of Street Homelessness', *Antipode*, Vol 37, No 4, (2005), pp.703-730.

¹⁷ Cloke, et al, *Swept Up Lives?*; Jordan, B. & Jordan, C., *Social Work and the Third Way: Tough Love and Social Policy*, (Sage, London, 2000).

¹⁸ In popular history this interpretation of New Labour is best illustrated by Rawnsley's two best-selling accounts; Rawnsley, *Servants of the People* & Rawnsley, *The End of the Party*. For the widespread public acceptance of this characterisation see Franklin, B., 'A Damascene Conversion? New Labour and Media Relations', in Ludlam, S. & Smith, M., *Governing as New Labour: Policy and Politics under Blair*, (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2004), pp.88-105.

¹⁹ Kenny, M. & Smith, M. J., '(Mis)understanding Blair', *The Political Quarterly*, Vol 68, Issue 3, (1997), pp.217-314; Hall, S. & Jacques, M., 'Blair: is he the greatest Tory since Thatcher?', *The Observer*, 13 April 1997.

was an extension of Thatcherism by other means' and Bogdanor arguing that Blair's skill 'lay in enabling Labour to administer a Thatcherite dispensation more efficiently but also more humanely than the Conservatives themselves were able to do'.²⁰ Hindmoor notes that, 'more than a few Labour Party members were, right from the start, convinced that New Labour was basically neoliberalism with a better marketing strategy' and that 'within a few years, cynicism about New Labour became a commonplace'.²¹ Kavanagh contests that 'Blair dispensed with ideology' altogether, and Turner that 'the pursuit of the news agenda and the attempt to dominate it each and every day was to become more important to New Labour than the development of policy'.²² Furthermore, Blair's disastrous involvement in the war in Iraq and Gordon Brown's 'light touch regulation of the financial sector' that facilitated the 2008 crash have become for many the presiding memories of New Labour's period in office.²³ Blair's personal reputation has never recovered, with Hindmoor noting that 'being on the left' in 2018 means 'absolutely hating Tony Blair' and Davies and Rentoul, writing in 2019, that 'the term "Blairite" became an insult of choice'.²⁴ O'Hara points out that the 'legacy of Iraq' so poisoned the reputation of New Labour that 'many elements in the New Labour programme have been lost to the Labour movement's memory, or more widely to the public's recall', and with the subsequent 'debate' shedding more heat than

²⁰ Pugh, M., *Speak for Britain! - A New History of the Labour Party*, (Vintage, London, 2011), p.397; Bogdanor, V., 'Social Democracy' in Seldon, A. (Ed), *Blair's Britain, 1997-2007*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007)

²¹ Hindmoor, A., *What's Left Now? The History and Future of Social democracy*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2018), pp.7 & 9.

²² Kavanagh, D., 'The Blair Premiership', in Seldon, A., (Ed), *Blair's Britain, 1997-2007*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007); Turner, A., *A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s*, (Aurum Press, London, 2014), p.264.

²³ When asked 'How was Blair for you?' by the *New Statesman* in 2007, Louise Christian (The chair of *Liberty*) replied, 'Blair betrayed his own idealistic generation...debased democracy, attacked fundamental freedoms and liberties, and was complicit in torture and abuse'. Louise Christian 'How was Blair for You?', *New Statesman* 7 May 2007.

²⁴ Hindmoor, A., *What's Left Now?*, p.9; Davies, J. & Rentoul, J., *Heroes or Villains? The Blair Government Reconsidered*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2019), pp.1-2.

light has made it more difficult for the historian to evaluate New Labour's 'real achievements in office as well as the true flaws of each policy'.²⁵

There have always been voices that challenged these characterisations. Although Driver and Martell, writing in 1998, suggested there was 'some truth' in the interpretation of New Labour as a "PR show...devoid of substance [and] created by the war room and spin-doctors of Labour's specially created media HQ' they argued that as 'an encapsulation of what New Labour is all about, this reduction to a media and marketing ploy is sorely lacking'.²⁶ Riddell, writing in 2005, noted that while 'many voters believed the government was all spin and no substance', and arguing that 'in the first term New Labour over-promised and under-achieved', he puts forward the view that 'in the second term it was given insufficient credit for its much more firmly based achievements'.²⁷ More recently, challenges to these pejorative characterisations of New Labour have become more commonly expressed. Writing in 2018, Hindmoor states 'it is cutting history horribly short to reduce Blair's legacy to imbecilic wars and the 2008 financial crisis', argues that 'New Labour does not deserve the vitriol now routinely pored upon it', and concludes that 'New Labour showed that it is possible, from a left-of-centre position to compromise on a great deal whilst also achieving a great deal'.²⁸ Davies and Rentoul, writing in 2019, argue that 'so much of the criticism' of New Labour has been 'hyperbolic, unfounded, or simply wrong headed' and argue that 'New Labour developed new thinking about public services which combined high civic ambition with huge resources' and by the third term 'understood how government worked – the amalgamation of strong, evidence backed policy, clearly articulated and driven

²⁵ O'Hara, G., "New Labour in Power: Five Problems of Contemporary History", *The Political Quarterly*, Vol 94, No 2, (2023), pp.225-6.

²⁶ Driver, S. & Martell, L., *New Labour: Politics after Thatcherism*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998), pp.158-9.

²⁷ Riddell, P., *The Unfulfilled Prime Minister: Tony Blair's Quest for a Legacy*, (Politico's, London, 2005), p.196.

²⁸ Hindmoor, A., *What's Left Now?*, pp.3, 201 & 224.

through the system, properly financed and progress-chased', was 'arguably a great demonstration of what government could do in the modern era'.²⁹

This research into New Labour's interventions in street homelessness also offers a challenge to these common characterisations of New Labour. The construction and implementation of Labour's homelessness policies suggest a form of governance that was long-term and strategic in its approach to achieving social policy aims, and one that paid particularly close attention to the details of delivery, far removed from any attention-grabbing headlines in the press. In addition, Labour's homelessness programme also provides evidence that, it did indeed, have a form of ideology that informed the way in which it governed - the very one it espoused when it took office, the much mocked and derided 'Third Way'.³⁰ Although the 'Third Way' is a protean term that is subject to differing interpretations, it is viewed here as best understood as a linked set of discourses comprising; modernisation, joined-up governance, of addressing poverty through the wider conception of social exclusion, of methods of delivery that rejected statism and built 'compacts' with the voluntary sector, and one which aimed to construct a new relationship between state and citizen that sought to empower the individual through embracing notions of both 'rights and responsibilities'.³¹

Charting the course of Labour's interventions in street homelessness provides strong evidence of the centrality of 'Third Way' conceptions to their mechanisms of governance.

Homelessness is an archetypically 'wicked problem' the solution to which requires the

²⁹ Davies, J. & Rentoul, J., *Heroes or Villains? The Blair Government Reconsidered*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2019), p.xii, 14 & 166.

³⁰ See, Giddens, A., *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998); Blair, T., *The Third Way: New Politics for a New Century*, (Fabian Society, London, 1998).

³¹ Differing definitions and critiques of the 'third way' are explored in Chapter 1. This construction of its meaning is from multiple sources, including, Giddens, A., *The Third Way*; White, S., 'The Ambiguities of the Third Way' in White, S. (Ed.) *New Labour: The Progressive Future?*, (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2001), Le Grand, J., 'The Third Way begins with CORA', *New Statesman*, Vol 127, Issue 4375, 3 June 1998; Powell, M. (Ed), *New Labour, New Welfare State?: the 'third way' in British social policy*, (Policy Press, Bristol, 1999),

cooperation of multiple government departments but is central to none.³² It could only be addressed by 'joined-up governance' that broke down departmental silos and obliged co-operation. Labour began the process by creating the Social Exclusion Unit that, in turn, spawned another 'joined-up' body, the Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU). The RSU delivered Labour's homelessness policy primarily through 'compacts' with the voluntary homelessness sector. Under the RSU, the imposition of Labour's new monitoring and accountability regimes engendered a transformation of the homelessness sector's working practice and governance. The services delivered by the now 'modernised' homelessness sector were mandated to facilitate user-empowerment, and structured to enable individuals to escape their own social exclusion by equipping them with the necessary skills, education and training. In return, a degree of reciprocity was expected by the same service users. These very aspects of Labour's homelessness programme are those most often criticised, sometimes justly, but far from suggesting a government lacking a coherent ideology, their approach to street homelessness shows Labour acting firmly in accord with its professed ideology. In addition, the success of Labour's homelessness programme suggests that Labour's hitherto neglected 'Third Way' approach to governance deserves more serious consideration.

More broadly still, this study offers a challenge to the way that much political history in general is written. It advances the view that popular political histories incorrectly tend to focus on moments of crisis, political scandals, foreign policy incidents and other headline-generating events. Under this rubric, Robin Cook's affair, Peter Mandelson's indiscretions and Tony Blair's accommodation with Bernie Ecclestone, loom larger than Labour's

³² Term 'wicked problem' first introduced by Churchman, C., 'Guest Editorial: Wicked Problems', *Management Science*, Vol.14, No 4, (December 1967), pp. B141-142.

performance on Child Literacy, Teenage Pregnancy, hip replacement waiting times or reductions in the number of rough sleepers. Michael Barber, head of the Cabinet Office Delivery Unit under Blair, argues that this, typical, form of political writing as like attempting to understand ‘a family on the basis of its photograph albums’, revealing only special occasions such as ‘birthdays, wedding anniversaries, Christmases and holiday celebrations’, but nothing about the true substance of family life, the ‘routine day-to-day interactions’ that shape it.³³

This study argues for a change in emphasis in the writing of political history to one that focusses on the most vital purpose of government – the methodical delivery of improvements in services that directly impact on the lives of citizens. The very measures taken by government which make the greatest contribution to the collective good are rarely given prominence in the writing of political history. Although, of course, there is much high-quality academic history that focuses on social policy, these often neglect to examine in sufficient depth the actual processes of policy delivery, that vital translation from policy directive to delivery by the ‘street level bureaucrat’.³⁴ Social policy achievements that develop slowly and methodically, or stem from technocratic innovations, particularly if they relate to marginalised groups, are often overlooked in historical accounts. Much more important than political rhetoric is the much-neglected issue of how a government delivers on their policy aims. Whilst dealing with the horrific circumstances of people forced to live out their shortened lives on the streets, this thesis is therefore a study of that most crucial function of government - delivery. For the specialist in homelessness it hopes to provide

³³ Barber, M., *Instruction to Deliver: Fighting to Transform Britain’s Public Services*, (Methuen, London, 2007), pp.111-112.

³⁴ The term ‘street-level bureaucrat’ is from Lipsky’s pioneering work that argued that the most important figures in service delivery were the, often overlooked, frontline workers. See Lipsky, M., *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*, (Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1980).

insights into what happened between 1997 and 2010, and suggest avenues that may be replicable in contemporary homeless policy. For scholars of twentieth century political history it challenges representations of New Labour in office and suggests a refocussing of the writing of political history on the degree of success in the actual delivery of social policy, arguing that this offers a truer barometer of the performance of any government.

Framing & Limitations of Research

This research focuses solely on policies relating to 'street homelessness' or 'rough sleeping'. It is important to note that contemporary definitions of homelessness are much broader than merely rough sleeping. Under the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) ETHOS typology, thirteen separate categories of homelessness are delineated.³⁵ The ETHOS categories range from the 'roofless' (rough sleepers and those in night shelters); through the 'houseless' (including those in hostels and other forms of temporary and transitional housing); the 'insecure' (including those with no legal tenancy or living under the threat of violence) and 'inadequate' (including those living in unfit or over-crowded accommodation).³⁶

The narrower focus of this research was partly pragmatic - to make the research feasible within the time scale some limitations on its scope were necessary - but the narrow framing was also purposefully chosen. The conditions experienced by people in inadequate, over-crowded or insecure accommodation are very different to those of rough sleepers, and the policy interventions required to address them differ accordingly. In office, Labour enacted a distinct set of policies directed at rough sleeping, and although these sometimes overlapped

³⁵ <https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion>, viewed 3/1/21;

³⁶ Ibid.

with policies that addressed those more broadly defined as homeless, they can be legitimately viewed as a separate category of policy making and service delivery.

However, accepting this separation is potentially perilous. It risks reinforcing the common perception that homelessness is *only* a matter of rough sleeping. It also risks reinforcing the long-held historic assumptions that 'homeless people' are some form of distinct separate class of person, the 'vagrant' or 'tramp', whose very nature sets them apart from the rest of society, and who therefore require a different form of response.³⁷ Furthermore, as Cloke argues, governments' adoption of the narrower definition can be politically expedient as it drastically reduces perceptions of the scale of the problem.³⁸ In addition, Cloke points out that the separation of homelessness policy from broader questions of housing need enables governments to neglect the measures required to address the structural problems of housing supply.³⁹

Cloke's point is related to the evolving understandings of the causes of homelessness. For much of the long history of homelessness it was assumed that the primary cause of 'vagrancy' was related to individual pathology, either the 'tramp' elected to live the life of a 'man of the road' as a conscious choice, or was an individual whose inadequacies, criminality or moral laxity made them unable to sustain 'a settled way of living'.⁴⁰

³⁷ For the long history of these beliefs see: Crowther, M.A., 'The Tramp', in Porter, R. (Ed), *Myths of the English*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992), pp.91-113; Humphries, R., *No Fixed Abode: A History of the Responses to the Roofless and Rootless in Britain*, (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1999).

³⁸ Cloke, Milbourne, & Widdowfield, R., 'Making the homeless count?', pp.262 & 273.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Hilton argues that this view was 'enshrined in the 1948 National Assistance Act' from which the phrase 'persons without a settled way of living' comes: Hilton, M., McKay, J., Crowson, N. & Mouhot, J., *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain*, (OU Press, Oxford, 2013). Burrows argues this was the widely-held view until the 1970s: Burrows, R., Pleace, N. & Quilgars, D., 'Homelessness in contemporary Britain: conceptualisation and measurement' in Burrows, R., Pleace, N. & Quilgars, D., (Eds), *Homelessness and Social Policy*, (London, Routledge, 1997), p.2. Foord argues that such characterisations persisted into the 1970s: Foord, M., Palmer, J., Simpson, D., *Bricks Without Mortar: 30 Years of Single Homelessness*, (Crisis, London,

Remarkably, it was not until the 1960s that the structural causes of homelessness, principally poverty, unemployment and housing supply, came to be seen as significant drivers of homelessness.⁴¹ In the ensuing decades the debate about the relative importance of the individual and structural causes of homelessness has swung back and forth.⁴² Modern scholarship now sees the debate as a false binary, with both structural and individual causes contributing to homelessness, but such a view has been very slow to develop, and has proceeded at different paces in political and academic discourse, and in public perception.⁴³

The importance of structural factors in the causation of homelessness exposes the limitations of this research. A broader evaluation of Labour's approach to homelessness would require an exploration of the measures taken to reduce poverty, secure employment and expand housing supply.⁴⁴ It is clear that without addressing these structural factors, however coherently a government devised their rough sleeping programme, the underlying structural forces would continue to generate homelessness in the future.⁴⁵ In addition, as some people have greater vulnerabilities to homelessness, rough sleeping also acts as a barometer of all the flaws and failings across the whole of the welfare system. A full evaluation would require investigations into policy areas across the full spread of government. These limitations need to be acknowledged, but do not invalidate the research

1998), pp.13-14. Carlen (among others) that it was revived in the 1990s: Carlen, P., *Jigsaw: A Political Criminology of Youth Homelessness*, (Open University Press, Buckingham, 1996).

⁴¹ One of earliest to emphasise structural causes was Greve, J., *London's Homeless*, (Codicote Press, London, 1964). The seminal work that centred structural causes is often considered to be Drake, M., O'Brien, M. & Beiuycck, T., *Single and Homeless*, (HMSO, London, 1981)

⁴² See for example, Pleace, N., 'Single Homelessness as Social Exclusion: The Unique and the Extreme', *Social Policy and Administration*, Vol 32, No 1 (1998), pp.46-59

⁴³ Among many others see Neale, J., 'Homelessness and Theory Reconsidered', *Housing Studies*, Vol 12, No1, (1997), p.47 & Main, T., 'How to think about Homelessness: Balancing Structural and Individual causes', *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, Vol 7 No.1 (1998), pp.41-54.

⁴⁴ New Labour's record on housing supply is addressed (briefly) in Chapter 3.

⁴⁵ Whilst not addressing housing supply directly, Under the Homelessness Act 2002 Labour obliged local authorities to develop a homelessness prevention programme. This is covered in Chapter 3

findings. For individuals already forced into sleeping rough, the efficacy of policies that help them get off the streets, aid them in maintaining their accommodation, and empower them to regain control of their lives are of crucial importance, and it is the development and efficacy of those measures that form the core of this investigation.

Methodology

This research had two key components. An extensive and evolving literature search was undertaken, drawing together academic papers from a wide range of disciplines, government and independently conducted reviews, policy documents, codes of guidance and a wealth of hard-to-gather 'grey literature' produced by pressure groups, voluntary sector homeless agencies and other charitable bodies.⁴⁶ The evidence contained in these sources was triangulated with what forms the heart of this research, the oral history testimonies of those who designed the policies and delivered the services for homeless people during the period.

The rationale for utilising oral history was both considered and expedient. Although overviews of homelessness policy in the period have been written subsequently, no overarching review of Labour's programme was ever commissioned, and no concerted attempt to extract the knowledge and experience of its participants has ever previously been undertaken. My contacts in the sector gave me the potential of privileged access to the oral testimonies of progenitors and practitioners and therefore offered a unique opportunity to investigate street homelessness policy formation and delivery during the period.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ There is a vast amount of this 'grey literature' on homelessness and there is no centralised archive of the material. The problem of access is compounded as the research period covers the birth of the internet, early reports never appeared online, and later output has often been edited out of agencies' websites. I am deeply grateful to many of the respondents who sent me copies of otherwise unobtainable material.

⁴⁷ There is also an element of capture. Labour entered office some twenty-six years ago, and many respondents are now elderly and, sadly, some of the key figures, such as Jimmy Carlson of Groundswell and

Ninety unscripted Interviews, lasting on average for an hour and a half, were conducted online over a two-year period from October 2020 to March 2022 using the video conferencing platform Zoom.⁴⁸ Ethical approval was granted and consent obtained to ascribe the full names of all senior figures interviewed, while those of people with lived experience of homelessness and more junior staff were anonymised.⁴⁹ Transcripts were made from the zoom audio recording.⁵⁰

As the research sought to explore both policy formation and delivery, key individuals responsible for the formation of policy in central government and those responsible for service delivery in the homeless sector and local government were targeted for interview. To that end, four Labour Housing Ministers, one junior minister responsible for homelessness, the director of the Social Exclusion Unit and the key figure of Geoff Mulgan in the Labour's Policy Unit were interviewed. The two consecutive heads of the Rough Sleepers Unit/Homelessness Directorate, Louise Casey and Terrie Alafat, were interviewed, along with most of their senior staff. Among those responsible for the provision of homeless services, forty-five CEOs/Senior staff in homeless sector agencies and five local authority employees with responsibility for homelessness were interviewed.⁵¹ To trace the question of delivery down to the 'street-level bureaucrat' interviews were also conducted with seven frontline workers in hostels, outreach teams and day centres. The aim of also interviewing

Gordon Campbell of the RSU/Homelessness Directorate, had already passed away by the time this research began.

⁴⁸ Appendix A gives a full list of interviewees and their roles they occupied during the period.

⁴⁹ See Appendices B-E for the Participant Information and Consent forms used.

⁵⁰ The transcripts were 'tidied' with repeated words and space-filling phrases edited out, and punctuation added. In oral history this is often frowned upon (see Samuel, R., *The Perils of the Transcript*, *Oral History*, Vol 1, No 2, (1972), pp.19-22), but this criticism is less applicable here as the purpose of this study was on information extraction not language and idiom.

⁵¹ It should be noted that many of these senior figures at time of interview had had long careers in homelessness and were often in much more junior positions during the Labour period. They were therefore often able to reflect on both the strategic issues facing senior management and the direct experience of frontline delivery.

people with lived experience of homelessness was largely thwarted by the combination of Covid-19 and lack of access to the zoom platform, but seven key individuals involved with grassroots user-empowerment organisations were interviewed, and three former rough sleepers gave comments via phone or text. In addition, a small number of professionals working in homelessness and health, mental health, substance misuse and criminal justice were interviewed. To limit the scope of the research, only agencies primarily operating in England were approached.⁵² Whilst acknowledging the impossibility of attaining a ‘representative’ sample of interviewees, to gain an impression of the scale and scope of homelessness service provision across England, a mixture of small and large, national and regional agencies were targeted. Twenty-seven senior figures in the larger national/London-based agencies were interviewed, and a further nineteen from five large cities outside London; Birmingham, Newcastle, Stoke, Brighton and Bristol.⁵³ In addition, four representatives from agencies operating in smaller towns and rural areas were interviewed.⁵⁴

The first interviews arose from pre-existing personal contacts, and subsequent interviewees were either specifically targeted or flowed from respondents’ recommendations in a form of cascade. This ‘snowball’ technique has strengths as well as flaws. Its strengths are that the introductions made by prior interviewees greatly facilitates access, and that it tends to

⁵² Labour’s programme also covered Wales, but Scotland and Northern Ireland’s approach differed markedly under their respective devolved governments.

⁵³ These cities were both consciously selected and a product of those who replied positively to requests for interview. The geographical spread from the North East to the South Coast was a deliberate choice. Birmingham, Brighton and Bristol were targeted as all had recorded high levels of street homelessness. Stoke was chosen as an example of a medium-sized city with a substantial homeless population. Newcastle was chosen to represent the North East, but also because its persistently low levels of rough sleeping seemed an intriguing anomaly.

⁵⁴ These were from Luton, Canterbury and Plymouth. All were recommended by other respondents as innovative and successful smaller agencies.

procure individuals who are widely respected in the field. Its limitations are that interviewees tend to recommend people who share their own views, potentially reducing the range of outlooks obtained.⁵⁵ In addition, as it was also much easier to access individuals who had stayed in the sector, and who had therefore at least made some form of accommodation with Labour's programme, it is possible that an evidential bias in favour of Labour was built into the selection process. To try and mitigate against this, when asking for further contacts I often acknowledged the problem of evidential bias, and asked for recommendations of people who had either left the sector or who respondents recalled holding dissenting views.⁵⁶

The form of oral history employed was both 'elite' oral history and a form of 'recovery' or 'evidential' oral history'. Seldon made the case for elite oral history in 1983, arguing that properly handled it could elicit information on atmosphere, personal and organisational relationships, the relative significance of events, and the underlying assumptions and motivations of participants in a way that documentary sources are less able to do.⁵⁷ All these were key elements of this research, and as I was interested in both the respondent's recollections of what happened at the time and their subsequent reflection on its meaning and significance, the oral history method was particularly apt. Many interviewees had begun their careers in homelessness in the 1980s or earlier, and the vast majority had stayed in the sector long beyond 2010. This meant that they could offer perceptions of change over time, under different governments and different economic and social contexts. As a number of

⁵⁵ Seldon, A. & Pappworth, J., *By Word of Mouth: Elite Oral History*, (Methuen, London & New York, 1983), p.59.

⁵⁶ This question led to interviews with Pat McArdle, Alastair Murray and Jenny Backwell who all held views strongly opposed to much of Labour's programme. Pat McArdle, Interview, 15/10/20; Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20; Jenny Backwell, Interview, 11/2/21.

⁵⁷ Seldon, A. & Pappworth, J., *By Word of Mouth*, pp.39-50.

the respondents had already retired, it was hoped that, freed from political pressure or the requirement to secure state funds, greater candour would be forthcoming.

While offering the opportunity to access aspects of the past not commonly preserved in written documents, the use of oral history for 'evidential' or recovery purposes is potentially problematic. Eliciting information about events that took place as long as thirty years ago is obviously hampered by problems of memory and recall. Moreover, memory, as Portelli points out, 'is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings'.⁵⁸ Memories are not fixed, but are constantly reformed and reconfigured, they are shaped by collective acts of remembering, and informed by public representations of events.⁵⁹ As Abrams notes 'the oral history document...is the result of a three-way dialogue: the respondent with him or herself, between the interviewer and the respondent, and between the cultural discourses of the present and past'.⁶⁰ It is possible only to speculate on the impact of these cultural discourses, which are in themselves in constant flux, on the testimonies obtained in this research. In the immediate context, the interviews were conducted during a period of Conservative governance when the numbers of rough sleepers had been rising, perhaps encouraging a rose-tinted reflection on the past. On the other hand, interviews were conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the Conservative government had announced the 'everyone in' directive, where local authorities were obliged, and given the means, to accommodate all homeless people in the face of a public health emergency.⁶¹ This may have engendered a more positive interpretation of the

⁵⁸ Portelli, A., 'What Makes Oral History Different?', in Perks, R. & Thomson, A. (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (2nd Edn.), (Routledge, London & New York, 1998), p.37.

⁵⁹ For greater depth on memory see Abrams, L., *Oral History Theory*, (Routledge, Oxon, 2010), pp.78-105.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.59.

⁶¹ Hall, L., 'Letter from Minister Hall to local authorities on plans to protect rough sleepers', (MHCG, London, 26 March 2020).

direction of travel in homelessness. More broadly, respondents were accessing recollections of themselves as young idealists starting out in the sector and the workings of nostalgia may have conceivably conflated their personal journey with that of the government of the day. Mitigating against such distortions, is the life-long commitment of the majority of the respondents and the seriousness of the endeavour itself. Interviewees had universally thought very deeply about the work over a long period, were tremendously knowledgeable about their field, deeply reflective about their work, and were often openly self-critical.

The issue of memory is not the only problematic aspect of evidential oral history. Oral testimony is also inevitably a form of performance and a constructed narrative - a form of storytelling.⁶² In storytelling people often 'telescope' their recollections, compressing time and simplifying complex issues, and draw on conventional narrative forms that proffer a clear resolution to what are open-ended issues.⁶³ More significant still is the concept of composure, where individuals construct a narrative that fits comfortably with their own sense of self and their place within their 'social world'. Seldon warns that in elite interviewing it is necessary to be aware of a tendency for individuals to overstate their role in events to which they were marginal actors, and Portelli famously noted, 'oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did'.⁶⁴ These problems can be more easily acknowledged than mitigated against. As much as it was possible to reduce their distorting impact, in the interviews probing questions at key moments were asked, a circular form of

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928780/Letter_from_Minister_Hall_to_Local_Authorities.pdf (accessed 30/3/20).

⁶² See Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, pp.106-152.

⁶³ Seldon & Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth*, pp.21-22.

⁶⁴ Seldon & Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth*, p. 22. Portelli, A., 'On the Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop Journal*, No.12, (1981), pp.99-100.

questioning returning to the same theme was sometimes employed, and apparent anomalies were gently challenged. In the research as a whole they could be somewhat mitigated against by cross-checking against other respondent's statements and against the documentary evidence.

In addition, it is necessary to acknowledge that all oral history testimonies are created by a unique encounter between interviewer and interviewee, they are thereby inherently mutable.⁶⁵ A different time, a different interviewer, or even with the same interviewer and interviewee on a different day, will inevitably induce a different series of responses. The intersubjectivity of oral history inevitably influences both the form and content of the accounts recorded. In this instance, the researcher was a cis, white, middle-aged male personally known to a number of the interviewees who had spent ten years running projects for rough sleepers during the 1990s. The research was presented as a serious endeavour to document and explore homelessness under New Labour, and the interviewer attempted to present himself as an affable, intellectually curious researcher, with some considerable knowledge of historic homelessness but keen to be educated by those with greater experience in the sector.⁶⁶ The interviewer as an 'insider', with experience in the field offers some advantages, in that it can enable the more rapid creation of a relationship of trust and mutual respect, thereby eliciting greater candour, but also limitations, in that interviewee and interviewer may already share a common framework, thereby excluding other, equally viable narratives.⁶⁷ Although it is impossible to determine objectively, it was

⁶⁵ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.24.

⁶⁶ Whilst a 'presentation', this characterisation was not consciously a façade, but the way in which the interviewer felt about themselves and the research project.

⁶⁷ Opinion is divided on the comparative strengths of 'insider' and 'outsider' status. See, Perks, R. & Thomson, A., 'Introduction: Interviewing', in Perks, R. & Thomson, A. (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (2nd Edn.), (Routledge, London & New York, 1998), pp.116-117.

felt that rapport was easily achieved, the vast majority of interviews flowed smoothly, there was often much laughter, and an atmosphere of mutual respect was readily achieved. Such camaraderie can, of course, have negative consequences, with respondents seeking to maintain the positive atmosphere by altering their views to what they perceive the interviewer requires, and the interviewer more reluctant to disrupt the convivial atmosphere by asking challenging questions. On balance, 'insider' status was probably an asset, enabling a more rapid arrival at in-depth explorations of the issues and avoiding Seldon's warning that 'the less an interviewer knows about the world of the interviewee the more prone he is to being misled'.⁶⁸

In the interview itself, there is always a danger that the oral historian holds preconceived ideas and constructs a series of questions that guide the interviewee to conform to what they are already looking for. In so far as this could be ameliorated, the Interviews were lengthy and unscripted, and care was taken to allow respondents space to frame their narrative in their own terms. The opening questions was always, 'How did you first get involved in homelessness?', followed by variations on, 'What was your experience like when you began?', with the interviewer remaining passive until the response was played out. By opening with a life story approach, it was hoped to set the respondent at their ease, validate their own experience, and allow them to determine what they felt was of significance. The early questions were restricted to prompts for clarification or requests to explore themes expressed in the opening monologue. Only after exploring the areas to which they had ascribed significance were specific questions raised on topics that the interviewer considered pertinent. Throughout, the approach was taken that this was a

⁶⁸ Seldon, A. & Pappworth, J., *By Word of Mouth*, p.19.

collaborative form of research with the interviewees, and arguments and perspectives raised by previous interviewees were fed back into later interviews. To further mitigate against the interviewer constraining the scope of interviewees' testimony, the concluding question became, 'if you were doing this research are there any questions I haven't asked you that you think I should have done? Are there any areas that you think are important that we haven't discussed?'

A brief mention should be made of the impact of conducting interviews online via zoom. Its rapid uptake during the pandemic offered a unique opportunity to gather the testimonies of many more respondents than face-to-face contact would have allowed, although it excluded the possibility of accessing those who had no access to the technology, most notably people with lived experience of homelessness. Its impact on the nature of those interviews is difficult to determine. What limited research that has been undertaken suggests that the product of such interviews is much the same as that produced by face-to-face contact, and that the inability to respond to body language and the possibility of missing emotional cues is at least balanced by the greater ease of the interviewee who remains in command of their own personal space.⁶⁹ From this experience of conducting elite oral history, it is felt that the strange combination of both distance and intimacy that online interviewing engenders appears entirely advantageous both to building rapport and creating the sense of safety and security that enables candid and fulsome responses.

Chapter 1 gives a brief overview of Labour's homelessness programme, sets it in its historical context and explores the media representation and public perception of

⁶⁹ Gray, L., Wong-Wylie, G., Rempel, G. & Cook, K., 'Expanding Qualitative Research Interviewing Strategies: Zoom Video Communications', *The Qualitative Report*, Vol 25, No 5, (2020), pp.1292-1301. Deakin, H. & Wakefield, K., 'Skype interviewing: reflections of two PhD researchers', *Qualitative Research*, Vol 14, Issue 5 (2014), pp.603-616.

homelessness prior to Labour entering office in 1997. It goes on to evaluate the interaction between historiographical interpretations of New Labour in office and its homelessness policies, arguing that common characterisations of New Labour have led to both the neglect and the misinterpretation of its interventions in homelessness. Exploring the meaning of Labour's Third Way, it argues that New Labour applied the Third Way's central precepts in addressing homelessness, challenging representations of New Labour that characterise it as lacking a coherent ideology.

Chapter 2 focuses on Labour's homelessness policies in its first term. It argues that innovative mechanisms of government, derived from key components of Labour's Third Way approach, created the necessary bodies to address street homelessness. It charts the work of the Social Exclusion Unit and the Rough Sleepers Unit and their impact on homeless provision. Focussing on developments in London, it covers the key innovations brought about by the RSU, the shift to 'assertive' outreach, developments in hostel provision, the controversial soup run closure programme and diverted giving schemes, the new focus on tenancy support and homeless prevention, and evaluates the impact of the RSU on the voluntary homeless sector during Labour's first term.

Chapter 3 focuses on developments in homelessness policy and provision over its second and third terms. It argues that two unheralded initiatives, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Supporting People programme radically altered and improved the provision of services to homeless people. It argues that both were programmes designed for long-term solutions to rough sleeping, and challenges interpretations of New Labour's actions that identify a shift to a more punitive approach after 2003. It explores the key changes brought about by Homelessness Act 2002; the obligation to form 'local homeless strategies' that obliged local

authorities to engage with single homeless people for the first time and form new relationships with the voluntary sector; the prioritisation of homelessness prevention, and the development of a truly national approach. The impact of the Supporting People (SP) programme is evaluated, exploring both its strengths and weaknesses. It highlights how the substantial new resources SP brought into the homeless sector enabled the sector to construct services on a 'needs-led' basis for the first time, engendered professionalisation and led to dramatic improvements in both working and managerial practices in the homelessness sector. It also explores the concomitant problems arising from the new forms of contracting and commissioning of SP; the degree to which they reduced cooperation across the sector, drove out smaller agencies, and reduced the sector's autonomy and critical voice.

Chapter 4 focuses on two key developments in working practice in the voluntary homeless sector, the growth of user-empowerment and the development of psychologically informed environments. It charts the development of user-empowerment up from the grass roots and the way in which interventions by Labour facilitated its passage into mainstream provision. It explores the development of new trauma-informed understandings of homelessness that led to significantly improved working practices and ultimately the development of psychologically informed environments. It argues that whilst the impetus for these developments originated outside of government, their uptake was facilitated by New Labour, most significantly through their 'Places of Change' programme. Drawing together the impact of Labour's policies over three terms it argues that the controversial 'modernisation' of the homelessness sector was a necessary prerequisite that enabled the uptake of vastly improved models of care and support.

In the conclusion, the threads from the first four chapters are drawn together, further research suggested and the utility of insights from the New Labour period for contemporary homelessness policy explored.

Chapter 1: New Labour, the Third Way and Homelessness policy

When New Labour entered government in 1997, street homelessness was a highly visible issue in every city the UK and the term 'cardboard city' had become a household phrase.¹ By the time of Labour's departure from office, there were no shanty towns in the capital, street homelessness was at its lowest ever recorded levels and had largely ceased to be a visible problem.² Given this apparently remarkable achievement, it would be expected that Labour's interventions in homelessness would be both lauded and widely known. This is not the case, and far from being commemorated, Labour's achievements in homelessness have more commonly been ignored, doubted or dismissed as trivial.³

This chapter seeks to explore the reasons behind this neglect, arguing that they relate less to the strengths and limitations of New Labour's homelessness policies, but are more grounded in pejorative historiographical interpretations of New Labour in government and critiques of the whole New Labour 'project'. It argues that this neglect is a consequence of the most common characterisation of New Labour - as lacking any clear ideology and more concerned with projecting a positive public image in the mass media than the delivery of

¹ Anderson, I., 'Housing Policy and Street Homelessness in Britain', *Housing Studies*, Vol 8, No 1, (1993), p.21.

² The figures recorded for the number of rough sleepers fell from 1,850 in 1998 to 498 in 2007. A reduction of 73% from the 1998 baseline. DCLG, *Policy Briefing 20, Homelessness Statistics September 2007 and Rough Sleeping – 10 years on from the target*, (DCLG, London, September 2007), pp.6-7. Figures fell more slowly thereafter to an historic low of 440 in 2010. MHCLG, *Rough Sleeping England – Total Street Count 2010*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-total-street-count-and-estimates-2010> (accessed 3/3/2022).

³ See for example Whiteford, M., 'New Labour, Street Homelessness and Social Exclusion, A Defaulted Promissory Note?', *Housing Studies*, Vol 28, No 1, (2013), pp.10-32; Fitzpatrick, S. & Jones, A., 'Pursuing Justice or Social Cohesion?: Coercion in Street Homelessness Policies in England', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol 34, No 3, (2005), pp.389-406; Toynbee, P. & Walker, D., *The Verdict: Did Labour Change Britain?*, (Granta, London, 2010), p.201.

policies to genuinely address social problems. Given such framing, the sincerity of intent behind Labour's homelessness policies has been often assumed as a smokescreen to hide its self-serving motives, and the execution of its homelessness policies seen as a means of 'rendering the visible poor invisible' for the benefit of tourists, business and property developers than addressing the problem in a manner likely to lead to long-term solutions.⁴ This research, in its entirety, challenges such interpretations, arguing instead that Labour was sincere in its intent, committed unprecedented levels of governmental time and resources to address the issue, and was consistent and coherent in its approach across all three terms in office.

Furthermore, it argues that far from New Labour's common characterisation as 'all spin and no substance' Labour's approach to homelessness was its very opposite, a coherent policy approach that focussed on the actual delivery of measurable achievements rather than media headlines. In so doing it proposes that a close reading of Labour's homelessness policy offers important insights into New Labour's approach to governance, challenging the pejorative interpretations of New Labour outlined above. It also argues that by taking New Labour's homeless policies as paradigmatic, it calls for a re-evaluation of New Labour's much maligned 'Third Way'. Against the historiographic trend, it argues that the Third Way cannot be dismissed as merely a rhetorical device designed to obscure New Labour's ideological vacuum, but instead constituted a coherent set of linked discourses akin to an ideology, which both informed, and was consistently put into practice, in its homelessness policies. Given that this research argues that such policies were highly effective in their aims regarding street homelessness, it puts forward the view that New Labour's Third Way merits

⁴ See Smith, N., *The New Urban Frontier and the Revanchist City*. In the context of New Labour, see Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 'Revanchist Sanitisation or Coercive Care? & Cloke, et al, *Swept Up Lives?*.

serious consideration as an innovative and effective mode of governance with implications for the future design and delivery of social policy objectives.

To place New Labour's interventions in street homelessness in context, this chapter begins by with a brief overview of the history of homelessness, highlighting the changing role of the state over time. It is followed by a summary of New Labour's actions between 1997 and 2010, which brings to the fore the significantly enhanced role that the Labour government undertook. It then critically evaluates two widely held interpretations of New Labour and homelessness: as acting primarily to secure a positive image in the media and public opinion; and that of a 'revanchist' approach, acting more in the interests of capital than the needs of homeless people. Having challenged these interpretations, it explores the ideas behind New Labour's conception of the Third Way and then shows how those principles were put into practice in its policies on street homelessness.

Context: The history of homelessness and the situation in 1997

Before exploring the impact of characterisations of New Labour on interpretations of its homelessness policies and the relevance of the Third Way, it is necessary to set its actions within the wider context of the long history of homelessness and the role of the state in the delivery of services for homeless people.

Homelessness in Britain has a very long history. Fears of the dangers of 'vagabonds and sturdy beggars' was a feature of the Elizabethan age, and similar concerns over the perceived criminality of 'tramps and vagrants' led to the punitive legislation of the Georgian period, with the passing of the Vagrancy Act of 1824.⁵ The Vagrancy Act still remains on the

⁵ Humphreys, *No Fixed abode*, pp.33-55 & 81-85.

statute books and has been applied under all subsequent governments including New Labour.⁶ In the period up to the Second World War, provision for ‘vagrants’ was delivered by the state under the aegis of the Victorian Poor Law of 1834, where Poor Law Guardians were mandated to provide a separate ‘casual ward’ (spike) attached to the workhouse.⁷ The regime in the casual wards was governed by the workhouse principle of ‘less eligibility’ and conditions in the casual wards were even harsher than those experienced by workhouse inmates.⁸ So poor and punitive were conditions in the casual wards, that many more ‘vagrants’ sought the greater freedom afforded by ‘common lodging houses’ - commercially run establishments that varied greatly in quality but which provided basic accommodation at a low cost.⁹ In the late Victorian period, Christian evangelistic organisations entered the field, with the Salvation Army becoming a significant provider of basic, dormitory-style accommodation for the itinerant poor.¹⁰ Social investigator accounts from the Edwardian period through to the 1930s illustrate that little changed until the creation of the Welfare State after 1945.¹¹ The numbers of homeless people occupying casual wards rose and fell in

⁶ The intention to repeal the Vagrancy Act was made in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, but remains in force until replacement legislation is formulated and passed by Parliament. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-factsheets/repeal-of-the-vagrancy-act-1824-police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-act-2022-factsheet> (accessed 22/6/23).

⁷ Casual wards were commonly known as ‘spikes’. The Poor Law Act dates from 1834, but workhouse casual wards only became mandated by a ‘general order’ issued by the Poor Law Commissioners in 1842. Vagrancy Committee, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy: Volume 1*, (HMSO, London, 1906), Section 26, pp.203-4.

⁸ See: Fowler, S., *The Workhouse, The People, the Places, the Life Behind Doors*, (Pen & Sword History, Barnsley, 2014), pp.156-169; Vorspan, R., ‘Vagrancy and the New Poor Law in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England’, *The English Historical Review*, Vol 92, No 362, (1977), pp.59-81.

⁹ Humphreys, *No Fixed abode*, pp.93-94; Samuel, R., ‘Comers and Goers’ in Dyos, H. & Wolff, M., *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, Henley & Boston, 1973)

¹⁰ Humphreys, *No Fixed abode*, p.108.

¹¹ Among many examples see: Jennings, F., *Tramping with Tramps*, (Hutchinson, London, 1932); Gray, F., *The Tramp: His meaning and being*, (J. M. Dent & Sons, London, 1931); Orwell, G., *Down and Out in Paris and London*, (Gollancz, London, 1933).

relation to the broader economic conditions, with numbers peaking during the Great Depression, before falling rapidly after the Second World War.¹²

Post-war, the advent of the welfare state and full-employment, led to lower numbers of homeless people compared to pre-war levels through the 1940s and into the 1950s.¹³ The Poor Law was repealed, and under the National Assistance Act of 1948 that superseded it, many of the casual wards were closed, with those that remained being renamed 'Reception Centres'.¹⁴ Although there was now an intention to resettle the residents in permanent accommodation and the regime was less punitive, little of substance changed, and the aim of resettlement was rarely achieved.¹⁵ The retreat of the state from provision, and increasing shortfalls in housing supply led to numbers rising once again into the 1960s, and this growth continued throughout the 1970s.¹⁶ Two significant changes took place in these decades. From the late 1960s, new charitable organisations with a different ethos became involved in homelessness, with groups such as the Simon Community, St Mungo's, Centrepoint and Crisis emerging, and by the 1970s the charitable sector provided the

¹² The numbers in casual wards, of course, account for an unknown fraction of the total number of homeless people. They reached a peak on 27 May 1932 of 16,911. In contrast, on the last Friday of June 1945 there were only 340. Numbers advanced steadily thereafter, reaching 1545 on 1 January 1947. From Humphries, pp.134 & 138. Statistics extracted from National Assistance Board, *Report on Reception Centres for Persons Without a Settled Way of Life*, (National Assistance Board, London, 1952).

¹³ National Assistance Board reports from 1954 to 1957 show average nightly figures within a band from 1,700 to 2,400. From Humphreys, p.143.

¹⁴ In 1966 they were again renamed, becoming 'Resettlement Units'. Of the 270 Reception Centres taken over by the National Assistance Board in 1948, 136 were promptly closed. Leach, J. & Wing, J., *Helping Destitute Men*, (Tavistock Publications, London, 1980), pp.5-8.

¹⁵ Leach, J. & Wing, J., *Helping Destitute Men*, pp.6-10.

¹⁶ Statistics on Single Homelessness are scarce in this period. A national survey conducted by the National Assistance Board (NAB) in 1964/5 found around 30,000 hostel residents and 1,000 sleeping rough. Central London agencies such as Centrepoint noted significant increases in admissions the early 1970s. In London, increasing gentrification and the impact of slum clearance programmes raised rental costs substantially making accommodation unaffordable for many. From Foord, Palmer, & Simpson, *Bricks Without Mortar*, p.4-8. Leach & Wing note the overall fall in private rented accommodation from 45% in 1950 to only 17% in 1972. Leach & Wing, p.12. Neale reports that half the establishments from the 1964/5 NAB survey had closed by 1972, and 141 of the 567 lodging houses had been demolished. Neale, J., *The Role of Supported Hostel Accommodation in Meeting the Needs of Homeless People*, PhD Thesis, (University of York, June 1995)

overwhelming majority of homeless services and accommodation.¹⁷ In the wake of the broadcast of Jeremy Sandford's docu-drama, *Cathy Come Home*, in 1966, new pressure groups such as Shelter and the Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless (CHAR) rose to prominence.¹⁸ These pressure groups contributed to rising public awareness of the problem of homelessness and influenced the passing of the ground-breaking Housing (Homeless persons) Act 1977.¹⁹ Under the 1977 Act, responsibility for provision was switched from local authority social service departments to their housing departments, and what constituted homelessness was given a clear definition.²⁰ Most significantly, a new duty was imposed on local authorities to provide permanent accommodation to those homeless people determined as 'vulnerable' and 'in priority need'.²¹ While progressive in intent, the principal beneficiaries of the 1977 Act were homeless families with dependent children (now termed the 'statutory homeless'), and no new duty to provide accommodation was afforded to the vast majority of single homeless people who would have to continue to fend for themselves.²²

¹⁷ For a sense of their ethos and development see: Tremlett, G., *Homeless but for St Mungo's*, (Unwin Hyman, London, 1989); Brandon, D., 'A kind of sixties passion: Centrepiece' in Curtis, H. & Sanderson, M., *The Unsung Sixties: Memoirs of social innovation*, (Whiting & Birch, London, 2004), pp.35-51.

¹⁸ Sandford, J., *Cathy Come Home*, The Wednesday Play, BBC1 16 November 1966. For the beginnings of Shelter see, Ware, E., '£325 to re-house a family' in Curtis, H. & Sanderson, M., *The Unsung Sixties: Memoirs of social innovation*, (Whiting & Birch, London, 2004), pp.19-34.

¹⁹ For the process leading up to the passing of the act see: Crowson, N., 'Revisiting the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act: Westminster, Whitehall and the Homelessness Lobby', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol 24, No 3, (2013), pp.424-447.

²⁰ Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1977/48/contents/enacted>

²¹ Ibid. The legislation replaced the much vaguer wording of Section 21 of the National Assistance Act which had been subject to widely differing interpretations by local authorities and obliged only the provision of temporary accommodation. National Assistance Act 1948, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/11-12/29/enacted>

²² It was not only families with children that were designated as 'in priority need' under the 1977 Act. The elderly and those homeless people with physical or mental health problems were also included. These latter categories were, however, poorly defined, and local authorities often set a very high threshold for acceptance resulting in most single homeless people receiving no aid. Although a highly progressive step, and unique in an international context, the Act has been criticised for excluding the single homeless and as reinforcing Victorian notions of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor'. See: Fitzpatrick, S. & Pawson, H., "Fifty years since Cathy

Rough sleeping rose rapidly in the 1980s, and accelerated still further toward the end of the decade.²³ Driven by high levels of unemployment and reductions in housing supply (high rents and the decline in council housing stock under 'right to buy'), it was further accelerated by specific changes in benefit legislation.²⁴ Reductions in board and lodgings payments and entitlement to benefits for young people from 1985, substantially changed the demographics of rough sleepers, with repeated surveys showing dramatic rises in youth homelessness.²⁵ The Conservative governments continued the post-war retreat from direct state provision with a closure programme of the majority of resettlement units from 1985, and the transfer to the voluntary sector of the remaining few after 1992.²⁶ These closures had been championed by pressure group CHAR, which highlighted the poor and inappropriate conditions they offered in favour of the smaller hostels with self-contained accommodation favoured by the voluntary sector providers.²⁷ Although the quality of provision began to improve, there was a net decline in the number of hostel beds available.²⁸ The state's withdrawal was, however, never absolute. To facilitate the change to smaller hostels, a £300M programme, the 'Hostels Initiative', ran from 1980 to 1987, Housing Associations were provided with funds via the Housing Corporation to develop

Come Home: Critical reflections on the UK homeless safety net', *International Journal of Housing Policy*, Vol 16, No 4, (2016), pp.543-555.

²³ With no agreed methodology and differing terms of reference, statistics for the numbers of rough sleepers this period are hugely variable. George Tremlett, writing in 1989, commented that 'no one knows how many homeless people there are... some say 30,000 in London and others 100,000'. Tremlett, *Homeless but for St. Mungo's*, p.2. A University of Surrey/Salvation Army Survey of 1989 found 753 sleeping rough in Central London on one night in April 1989, three times the number found in 1965. Moore, J, Canter, D., Stockley, D. & Drake, M., *The Faces of Homelessness in London*, (Dartmouth Publishing, Aldershot, 1995), pp.33-36.

²⁴ Foord et al, *Bricks without Mortar*, p.13; Anderson, 'Housing Policy and Street Homelessness in Britain', p.20.

²⁵ Anderson, 'Housing Policy and Street Homelessness', p.20; Randall, G., *No Way Home: Homeless Young People in Central London*, (Centrepoint, London, 1988).

²⁶ Foord et al, *Bricks without Mortar*, p.17; Neale, *The Role of Supported Housing*, p.38

²⁷ CHAR, *The Future of Resettlement Units*, (CHAR, London, February 1985).

²⁸ Foord et al, p.17.

specialist accommodation, and the majority of voluntary sector providers received funding under the generous terms of Hostel Deficit Grant (HDG).²⁹

The rise in the numbers of rough sleepers continued into the 1990s, probably reaching a peak in the early years of the decade.³⁰ Rough sleeping numbers were particularly high in central London, with every shop doorway on the Strand and Charing Cross Road occupied on a nightly basis, and two 'cardboard cities', each housing several hundred people, growing up in the heart of the capital.³¹ This led the Conservative administration to take steps to address street homelessness, launching the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) in 1990.³² The first two phases of the RSI (1990-93 & 1993-6) were focussed solely on Central London and on increasing the number of emergency hostel bed spaces in the capital.³³ This led to accusations that the programme's primary purpose was one of 'clearing the capital's streets' of unsightly beggars rather than addressing the long-term needs of rough sleepers - accusations that would also be made against Labour's programme after 1997.³⁴ It is beyond

²⁹ Garside, P., Grimshaw, R. & Ward, F., *No Place Like Home: The Hostels Experience*, (Department of Environment, London, 1990). The number of special needs schemes developed by housing associations grew from 500 in 1980 to 3,000 in 1990. National Federation of Housing Associations (NFHA) & SITRA, *Staffing and Employment: Issues in Hostels and Shared Housing*, (NFHA, London, 1991). The impact of HDG is explored in Clapham, D., Munro, M. & Kay, H., *A Wider Choice: Revenue finding mechanisms for housing and community care*, (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York, 1994). HDG was ended in 1991, but hostel funding continued under the less generous Special Needs Management Allowance (SNMA). Neale, *The Role of Supported Housing*, pp.49-51.

³⁰ Figures for rough sleeping remained notoriously unreliable. The figures from the 1991 census (which, given its methodological limitations, must be considered a bare minimum) found 2,703 people sleeping rough in England and Wales, 1,275 of which were in London. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS), *1991 Census Preliminary Report for England and Wales: Supplementary Monitor on People Sleeping Rough*, (OPCS, London, 1991).

³¹ Anderson, 'Housing policy and Street Homelessness', p.21. The encampment at Lincoln's Inn Field was cleared in 1993.

³² Initially termed the 'Single Homeless Initiative' it was renamed the RSI in 1991. Fitzpatrick argues that it was the 'increasing visibility of homelessness in London' that led to its launch. Fitzpatrick, S., Kemp, P. & Klinker, S. *Single homelessness: An overview of research in Britain*, (Policy Press, Bristol, 2000), p.4. Cloke argues that the impetus to launch RSI came from a 'increasingly hostile media' and the work of pressure groups. Cloke., et al, *Swept-up Lives?*, p.30.

³³ Foord, p.21.

³⁴ The DOE acknowledged that part of the aim of RSI was indeed 'the promotion of London as a good place for business and tourism'. Department of the Environment, *Rough Sleepers Initiative: Future Plans*, (Department

the scope of this research to comment on the motivations of the Conservative government's homelessness policies, which are anyway difficult to discern. On the one hand, inconsistent pronouncements about homeless people, a significant increase in the application of the Vagrancy Act in the period, and restrictions on housing benefit payments (the introduction of 'local reference' rents the 'single-room rent' for under 25s) would suggest an indifference to factors driving homelessness and even homeless people themselves.³⁵ On the other hand, under Housing Minister George Young, RSI evolved into a much more comprehensive programme. Criticisms of the first phase - a lack of move-on accommodation, a prioritising of the 'immanently homeless' over rough sleepers, and a lack of support for vulnerable rough sleepers that quickly led to tenancy collapse - were partly addressed in the second phase.³⁶ Data collection was given a priority with the institution of the first single night street count in 1990, which found 1,046 people sleeping rough in Central London.³⁷ Substantial funds were committed, £96M in the first phase, and a further £86M across the subsequent phases, and 3,300 units of permanent accommodation were allocated to rough sleepers in the capital.³⁸ In the third phase, (from 1996), RSI was expanded to fourteen areas outside Central London, nine of which were outside the capital altogether.³⁹ In

of the Environment, London, 1995). This criticism was made by (among others) Anderson, 'Housing policy and Street Homelessness', p.22 and Cloke et al, *Swept-up Lives?*, pp.30-31.

³⁵ Inconsistency is also demonstrated by the passing of the Children Act 1989, which created a new responsibility for social services departments to provide accommodation for 18-year-olds leaving care, in contrast to the Housing Act 1996, that removed the duty on local authorities to provide *permanent* accommodation. Lowe, S., 'Homelessness and the Law' in Burrows, Pleace, & Quilgars, *Homelessness and Social Policy*, pp.25 & 30. For Conservative government pronouncements and characterisation of homeless people, see below. For use of Vagrancy Act see: Greene, J., 'Managing poverty, managing dissent: homeless policies and collective action in London', *Policy and Politics*, Vol 42, No 3, (2014), pp.325-6. For Housing benefit restrictions see Foord, p.24.

³⁶ See: Randall, G. & Brown, S., *The Rough Sleepers Initiative: An Evaluation*, (Department of the Environment, London, 1993) & Randall, G. & Brown, S., *From street to home: An evaluation of Phase 2 of the rough sleepers' initiative*, (Department of the Environment, London, 1996).

³⁷ Foord, p.21.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Department of the Environment, *Our Future Homes: Opportunity, Choice, Responsibility*, (Department of Environment, London, 1995). Foord, p.23.

addition, the Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative (HMII) was launched in parallel to RSI in 1990.⁴⁰ HMII funded the capital and some of the revenue costs of ten high care rehabilitative hostels, and established five community psychiatric outreach teams across London.⁴¹ Funds were also released under Substance Misuse Specific Grant for rough sleepers, although the requirement for matching funds by local authorities meant take up was low.⁴² In terms of the number of rough sleepers in the capital, RSI could point to some success, from a figure of 741 recorded in 1990, the single-night street counts of 1995-6 found 270-290 sleeping rough in the capital.⁴³ Despite these successes, the numbers began to rise again and by 1997, some 400 people were recorded as sleeping rough in London.⁴⁴ In addition, it was believed that RSI had not reached the long-term homeless who were hardest to engage and whose additional support needs would require new methods of working if they were to be successfully brought in from the cold.⁴⁵ Outside the capital the work had hardly begun. Furthermore, whilst individual components of the programme had enabled progress, it was widely perceived that there was a lack of joined up working between departments and across the statutory/voluntary sector divide which put limits on their efficacy.⁴⁶

Labour would adopt and build on the work of RSI, adopting the programme until 1999 when it developed its much more comprehensive programme that forms the core of this research.

⁴⁰ See: Harding, J., *Post-war Homelessness Policy in the UK: Making and Implementation*, (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland, 2020), pp.129-130.

⁴¹ See: Croft-White, C., *Evaluation of the homeless mentally ill initiative 1990-1997*, (Department of Health, London, 1998).

⁴² In 1997-98 20 substance misuse schemes were funded by the Department of Health under this grant at a cost of £720,000. SEU, *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*. Annex A. For lack of uptake see: Foord, p.22.

⁴³ Foord, p.23.

⁴⁴ SEU, *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*, Section 1.1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, Sections 3.1- 3.6.

⁴⁶ Foord et al, p.22.

New Labour and homelessness: An overview

An estimation of the scale of street homelessness when Labour assumed office was made by the newly-established Social Exclusion Unit (SEU). In its report, published in July 1998, it concluded that 'at least 2,400 people spent some time sleeping rough in London' - averaging at about 400 on any given night.⁴⁷ It acknowledged that data from outside London was, 'less robust' and estimated that that in England, perhaps 2,000 sleep rough each night' and that therefore 'probably 10,000 drift in and out of rough sleeping during the course of a year'.⁴⁸ Outside of London, street homelessness was present in every major city and many smaller towns with the largest concentrations of rough sleepers found in Birmingham, Brighton, Cambridge, Manchester, Oxford and Bristol.⁴⁹

On attaining office, Labour designated Rough Sleeping as one of four priority areas to be investigated by the newly-created Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) which was established as early as December 1997. Given the multiple competing demands facing the incoming Labour government and its commitment to remaining within the preceding Conservative government's spending limits, it is remarkable that New Labour gave such prominence to the issue in its first term in office. Jacobs et al argue that social policy-making can be understood as 'a process of competitive claims-making' and note that 'homelessness [which] is endemic, remain(s) either unrecognised or given low priority for long periods,

⁴⁷ Writing in 1997, Burrows, Pleace & Quilgars noted that. 'information on the number of people sleeping rough ranges from poor to non-existent' as 'no agency with sufficient resources has ever tried to do it' and that such counts that had been performed were conducted by 'organisations without research skills' who were often 'seeking to make a political point about the level of homelessness or raise money' Burrows et al *Homelessness and Social Policy*, p.9. Single-night head counts in London were begun under Conservative Housing Minister George Young; Foord, p.21. The methodology was adopted and expanded upon under New Labour's Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU). For methodological issues around calculating the number of rough sleepers and the related issue of definitions of homelessness see, Pawson & Davidson, 'Fit for purpose?', pp.39-60 and Widdowfield et al 'Making the homeless count?', pp. 259-79. SEU, *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*, Section 1.1.

⁴⁸ SEU, *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*, Section 1.3.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

only to emerge to provoke concern...and then just as mysteriously to recede in importance'.⁵⁰ In contrast to this pattern, New Labour would maintain its commitment across all three of its terms in office. The SEU delivered its report in July 1998.⁵¹ The report was widely praised by the homelessness sector and contained specific recommendations for action.⁵² Crucially, the SEU's proposals were lent the highly visible support of the Prime Minister himself. Blair, in his forward to the SEU's July 1998 report on street homelessness, stated that, 'The sight of a rough sleeper bedding down for the night in a shop doorway or on a park bench is one of the most potent symbols of social exclusion in Britain today' and was 'a source of shame for all of us'.⁵³ Blair vowed to instigate a 'radical new approach across government, that gets to the roots of the problem' and concluded with a call to arms, stating, 'The most vulnerable should not be left simply to fall through the cracks in the system or have the odds so heavily stacked against them. This is a problem that has been with us too long and ruined too many lives. It is time to solve it'.⁵⁴ Blair's over-arching message was unambiguous - homelessness was both a moral issue which had long been neglected, and one that the Prime Minister was prepared to offer both a personal commitment and the resources of government to solving. Blair's moralistic tone was a register he often called upon and for which he was often pilloried. Rogan points out that the importance of morality had long been marginalised or frowned upon by the left, replaced by a more utilitarian emphasis on solutions to material inequality.⁵⁵ For Blair, however, it is

⁵⁰ Jacobs, K., Kemeny, J. & Manzi, T. 'Power, Discursive Spaces and Institutional Practices in the Construction of Housing Problems', *Housing Studies*, Vol 18, No 4, (2003), pp.429 & 431.

⁵¹ SEU, *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*.

⁵² Louise Casey, Interview 5/5/21; Mark McGreevy (CEO DePaul International), Interview 19/10/20.

⁵³ Blair, T., 'Forward by the Prime Minister' in *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*, (July 1998), <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/19991111073302/http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk:80/seu/1998/rough/srfore.htm> (viewed 1/9/21).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Rogan, T., *The Moral Economists: R.H. Tawney, Karl Polanyi, E.P. Thompson and the Critique of Capitalism*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey & London, 2017), pp.1-9.

probable that Christian moral values were central to his approach to politics. Matthew d'Ancona argues that 'Blair's religious awakening at Oxford', was, 'the defining moment of his life', and was happy to declare 'there is a right and wrong. There is a good and bad...we should not hesitate to make such judgements'.⁵⁶ Whatever views are held about the morality of his subsequent actions, it seems likely that Blair saw himself as guided by a strong sense of moral right and wrong.

Blair's words were not merely pious-sounding rhetoric. A new central government body charged with addressing street homelessness, the Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU), was rapidly established, with its high-profile director, Louise Casey, who had been recruited from Shelter, in place by May 1999.⁵⁷ The unit (and its subsequent iterations) was the recipient of unprecedented amounts of public money, and this financial commitment was sustained throughout Labour's three terms in office.⁵⁸ It was Blair's advocacy that ensured Louise Casey had sufficient leverage to command the cross-departmental cooperation necessary to tackle the issue holistically and at ministerial level.⁵⁹ Casey, given the grandiose title of 'Homelessness Tsar', was afforded remarkable latitude in which to act, including commanding her own media operation within the RSU, and obtained a high media profile, becoming a nationally recognised figure.⁶⁰ Most significantly, Labour put itself in considerable jeopardy by publicly committing to a specific target of reducing street homelessness by two-thirds by April 2002, a task that, given the perceived intractability of

⁵⁶ D'Ancona, M. quoted in Seldon, A., *Blair*, (2nd edn), (Free Press, London, 2005), p.516; Blair, T., 'Socialists who would valiant be', *Independent*, 22 March 1993.

⁵⁷ DETR, *Annual Report on Rough Sleeping 1998/9*, (DCLG, London, 1999), Section 4.1.

⁵⁸ RSU granted £145 million for London over first 3 years and a further £34 million under the Housing Action Programme (HAP) over the same period, DCLG, *Annual Report on Rough Sleeping 1998/9*.

⁵⁹ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

⁶⁰ Ian Brady, (Deputy Director RSU), Interview, 15/10/20.

the problem, risked exposing the government to the possibility of highly visible failure.⁶¹ By both leading and working in partnership with the voluntary sector, the RSU pushed through radical new approaches to homelessness and the target for reduction in numbers was achieved ahead of schedule in November 2001.⁶²

Having drastically reduced rough sleeping in its first term, Labour's policies in its second and third terms were designed with long term-solutions in mind. Resources would be pushed 'upstream' from frontline provision, and homeless prevention was given an unprecedented priority.⁶³ Primary legislation (Homelessness Act 2001) was passed that broadened statutory responsibilities, and brought a new obligation on local government to engage with single homeless people through the development of local homelessness strategies.⁶⁴ Most significantly, through the Supporting People programme, £1.8 billion worth of funding was pumped into services to empower and support homeless people and prevent their returning to the streets.⁶⁵ By the end of Labour's third term, street homelessness was at its lower ever recorded level and the funding and mechanisms for sustaining that achievement were firmly established. Labour's policies and funding regimen also facilitated a transformation of voluntary sector homelessness agencies, creating a much more professionalised and skilled sector delivering care and support using sophisticated, psychologically informed, models.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Blair, T., 'Forward by the Prime Minister' in *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*.

⁶² Randall, G. & Brown, S, *Helping Rough Sleepers off the Streets*, p.4.

⁶³ Described as constituting 'the first serious attention on homeless prevention' in Fitzpatrick, S., 'Forward' in Jones, A. & Pleace, N., *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000-2010*, (Crisis, London, 2010).

⁶⁴ Homelessness Act 2002 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/section/6> (accessed 1/2/2022) & Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2051/contents/made> (accessed 1/2/2022).

⁶⁵ Jarrett, T. *The Supporting People programme*, HC Paper 12/40 16 July 2012, Section 2.2, p.8. The impact of Supporting People is explored in depth in Chapter 4.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 4.

Given this record of substantial achievement over such a highly visible form of destitution, its absence in both popular histories and more scholarly accounts of New Labour in office is remarkable and requires explanation. In interview, Geoff Mulgan, (Director of think-tank DEMOS (1994-8) and head of Policy/Director of Strategy Unit under Blair), argued that this neglect may be because, 'there are many more books on policy disasters than there are on policy successes, because they make the better narratives'.⁶⁷ This observation is pertinent, and highlights problems with the writing of political history which this research seeks to redress. In the specific context of New Labour, it is argued here that the absence of recognition of its achievements in homelessness relate directly to the common, pejorative, characterisations of New Labour in office. This mistrust of Labour colours the literature on homelessness where Labour's actions are sometimes considered praiseworthy, but equally as often denigrated, characterised as an approach predated on social control, 'revanchist' in intent, or as having a deleterious effect on the voluntary sector.⁶⁸ This scepticism is most evident in Toynbee and Walker's overview of New Labour in office, *The Verdict: did Labour Change Britain?* where they dismiss Labour's achievements in homelessness as merely, 'a quick alleviation of [one] of the easier symptoms' of the legacy of Thatcherism'.⁶⁹ Given the long history of street homelessness in Britain and its perceived intractability, this comment crassly underestimates the difficulty of the task, and speaks more to a widespread disillusion with New Labour by the left that has led, as Cronin argues, to 'a kind of amnesia and absence of context in the assessment of what Labour achieved in its decade in power'.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Geoff Mulgan, Interview, 21/11/21.

⁶⁸ See, for example Cloke et al, *Swept-up Lives?*

⁶⁹ Toynbee, & Walker, *The Verdict: Did Labour Change Britain?*, p.201.

⁷⁰ Cronin, J., 'Embracing Markets, Bonding with America, Trying to Do Good: The Ironies of New Labour' in Cronin, J., Ross, G. & Shoch, J., (Eds.), *What's Left of the Left: Democrats and Social Democrats in Challenging Times*, (Duke University Press, Durham N.C & London, 2011), p.117.

New Labour insincerity – ‘spin’, the media and the courting of a positive public image?

The argument advanced here is that New Labour was sincere in its attempts to address street homelessness and that its motivation primarily stemmed from its ethics and ideology. It challenges the interpretation that Labour was primarily motivated to intervene in homelessness under pressure from the media and in order to align itself to a shift in public opinion that became more sympathetic to the plight of rough sleepers.

Although there is evidence that supports the view that media representation and public opinion became more supportive of government intervention in homelessness, it is patchy and inconsistent. Media attitudes to homelessness and homeless people in the 1990s and beyond oscillated between deep-rooted hostility and empathic compassion with no clear direction of travel. Whilst it would be disingenuous to suggest New Labour was not influenced by the media and perceptions of public opinion, it is argued here that given the degree of ambivalence expressed, no simple line of causation can be advanced with any confidence.

Undoubtedly homelessness did enjoy a high media profile in the 1990s and there were frequent calls for government action. Isobel Anderson, writing in 1993, concluded that ‘over a period of two years, a marginalised housing issue being championed by one or two pressure groups had become a hugely publicised social problem’.⁷¹ In the summer of 1990, for example, *The Daily Telegraph* described the situation as ‘a growing embarrassment for the government’.⁷² *The Times* also described the increasing numbers of young homeless people as ‘a talking point for visitors and a deep political embarrassment for the

⁷¹, Anderson, ‘Housing Policy and Street Homelessness in Britain’, p.22.

⁷² *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 June 1990, quoted in Hutson, S. & Liddiard, M. *Youth Homelessness: The Construction of a Social Issue*, (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1994), pp.93 & 96.

government'.⁷³ Television news coverage of homelessness in the 1990s followed the trend set by the national press and is described by Hodgetts as constituting a form of 'social advocacy journalism' that, 'emphasised links between increased homelessness and Conservative government policies'.⁷⁴ Louise Casey, in interview, described the high visibility of street homelessness as the Conservative government's 'Achilles heel'.⁷⁵ Labour certainly took advantage of Conservative discomfort over the 'homelessness crisis' in opposition, utilising it as a symbol of the failings of Thatcherism. Under Kinnock, the 1992 Labour manifesto had opened with a poem that began with 'A cold coming we had of it/huddled together in cardboard cities' and appeared to promise a new dawn when Labour came to power, 'as the last cardboard boxes/are swept away beneath busy bridges'.⁷⁶ Blair had picked up the mantle in turn, repeatedly referring to homelessness, and stating in his speech to the 1995 Labour party conference 'I have spent sixteen years being angry, passionate and indignant about young people huddled in doorways'.⁷⁷ At first glance, such media pressure and Labour's use of street homelessness to make political capital out of Conservative failure would seem to support the argument that Labour's policy were driven by media pressure and public opinion; however, the situation is far more complex.

Public attitudes and media attention to homelessness remained highly inconsistent. Firstly, they are subject to regular seasonal fluctuations, with an upsurge of sympathy in the winter

⁷³ Oakley, R. 'Homelessness acquires cash and political importance', *The Times*, 18 June 1990.

⁷⁴ Hodgetts, D., Cullen, A. & Radley, A., 'Television Characterizations of Homeless People in the United Kingdom', *Analysis of Social Issues and Public Policy*, Vol 5, No 1, (2005), p.34.

⁷⁵ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

⁷⁶ Labour Party, *1992 Labour Manifesto*, <http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1992/1992-labour-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 12 June 2021).

⁷⁷ It should be noted that Blair specifically references 'young people' here, not homeless people in general - see below for implications of differential attitudes. Blair, T., *Leader's speech*, Labour Party conference, Brighton 1995, <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=201> (accessed 20/5/21).

months peaking over the Christmas period.⁷⁸ Journalist Steve Platt notes that, 'calls from editors looking for pieces on the plight of the homeless. They'd start when the clocks went back at the end of October, and reach a peak just before Christmas.'⁷⁹ Hodgetts' analysis of ITN's news coverage of homelessness (1993 to 2002) shows the same trend, with the number of news items reaching annual peaks in October and December before dropping dramatically in January and February.⁸⁰ Even this temporarily sympathetic coverage has potentially deleterious effects. It was likely to fix in the public's mind the idea that homelessness is a seasonal rather than a structural problem, whose solution was the provision of rudimentary shelter in the winter months; provision that is best provided by charitable philanthropy, not the direct intervention by government.⁸¹

Furthermore, different groups of homeless people often elicited very different responses. Youth homelessness had been rising since the late 1960s, and in the late 1980s the numbers leapt abruptly.⁸² Fitzpatrick argues this led to a profound change in attitudes of the public toward homeless people.⁸³ Whereas the plight of homeless adults could be ascribed to their own personal failings, homeless amongst young people was more easily characterised as

⁷⁸ Liddiard, M., 'Homelessness: the media, public attitudes and policymaking', in Hutson, S. & Clapham, D. (Eds), *Homelessness: Public Policies and Private Troubles*, (Cassell, London & New York, 1999), p.78.

⁷⁹ Platt, S., 'Home Truths: Media representations of homelessness' in Franklin, B. (Ed), *Social Policy, the Media and Misrepresentation*, (Routledge, London, 1999), p.106.

⁸⁰ Hodgetts, et al, 'Television Characterizations of Homeless People in the United Kingdom', p.35.

⁸¹ Hodgetts argues this creates an emphasis on 'getting homeless people out of the way; a strategy designed to protect the interests of the housed majority' rather than in the interests of homeless people themselves'. Hodgetts et al, 'Television Characterizations', p.37.

⁸² The statement on numbers is necessarily subject to the aforementioned caveats on accuracy. As some form of measure, London's Piccadilly Advice centre reported a rise from 9,000 enquires by young people in 1983 to 29,000 in 1986 from Randall, G., *No Way Home: Homeless young people in Central London*, (Centrepont, London, 1988), p.68. Public opinion on young homeless people may have begun to shift earlier, following the broadcast of the documentary *Johnny Go Home*: Willis, J., Yorkshire Television for ITV, 22 July 1975. Hutson & Liddiard, *Youth Homelessness*, p.2 & 73.

⁸³ Fitzpatrick, S., *Young Homeless People*, (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000), p.21.

evidence of systemic failure and afforded far greater sympathy.⁸⁴ Youth homeless projects certainly gained a high profile during the decade. Jon Kuhrt (Foyer Manager and rolling shelter manager at Centrepoint, 1997-2000), described the ‘global recognition’ and media exposure of Centrepoint and its chief executive Victor Adebowale at the time as ‘incredible’.⁸⁵ However, even in relation to youth homelessness, attitudes and representation remained inconsistent. In academia and the homelessness sector the explosion in numbers was widely ascribed to structural factors, (high levels of youth unemployment; the decreasing availability of private rented accommodation, and reductions in benefit entitlements for the under twenty-fives following the 1986 Social Security Act), but the term ‘runaways’ was also commonly utilised to indicate personal volition and irresponsibility.⁸⁶ The incumbent Conservative government, certainly presented a picture of youth homelessness as one of individual choice, with Thatcher declaring ‘There is a number of young people who choose voluntarily to leave home; I do not think that we can be expected, no matter how many of them there are, to provide units for them’.⁸⁷ Pejorative attitudes were also commonly expressed in the right-wing press, where young unemployed people were often characterised as ‘idle loafers’, ‘leeching off the hard-working silent majority’.⁸⁸ Media representation of youth homelessness fluctuated between

⁸⁴ Cloke makes this point by arguing that public attitudes to young homeless people ‘challenged popular stereotypes of, ‘vagrants’ and ‘tramps’ which also serves to highlight the co-existence of broadly held pejorative views of homeless people in general. Cloke, et al, *Swept-up Lives?*, p.30.

⁸⁵ Centrepoint’s profile was further enhanced by the patronage of Diana, Princess of Wales and the subsequent media attention that afforded. Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 18/9/20.

⁸⁶ See Fitzpatrick, S., *Young Homeless People*, pp.1-19; Hutson & Liddiard, *Youth Homelessness*, pp.3, 7, 46-72.

⁸⁷ *Hansard*, 7 June 1988, Vol.134, p.713. Thatcher made similar comments in an interview in *Women’s Own Magazine*, 23 September 1987.

⁸⁸ Potter, L.L., ‘Scroungers by the Sea’, *The Daily Mail*, 13 July 1977.

sympathetic representations and forms of 'moral panic'.⁸⁹ Such contradictory interpretations could often co-exist within a single article.⁹⁰

More sympathetic views of young homeless people coexisted with long-standing pejorative attitudes to homeless people in general. Hutson and Liddard state baldly that, 'older single homeless people are viewed with considerable suspicion in most countries'.⁹¹ Humphries illustrates this hostility by exploring the shifting language employed to describe homeless people, noting that that historically 'vagrant' has been the most commonly used term, he lists thirty-nine others, the vast majority of which are derogatory.⁹² A lasting legacy of hostility to 'vagrants' in Britain is rooted in Victorian notions of a division between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving poor', notions which were embedded in both the 1834 Poor Law and the 1824 Vagrancy Act, reiterated in the 1948 National Assistance Act and arguably by the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act.⁹³ The assumption that homelessness was caused by individual pathology or moral laxness and the association of homeless people with 'deviance' and criminality was still dominant as late as the 1960s and its legacy endured into the 1990s. There is insufficient space here to explore the shifting interpretations of the causes of homelessness and consequent assumptions on the 'nature' of homeless people.⁹⁴ In academia, the importance of structural rather than individual causes was brought to attention by Greve's 1964 survey and embedded by Drake's 1981

⁸⁹ Hutson & Liddard, *Youth Homelessness*, pp.73-98.

⁹⁰ This was noted by Hutson & Liddard, *Youth Homelessness*, p. 84. They cite an article entitled 'Little Beggars', in *The Independent Magazine*, 3 December 1988, which records this ambivalence, stating that young homeless beggars 'can either be seen as innocent or 'working the system'.

⁹¹ Hutson & Liddard, p.14.

⁹² Humphreys, *No Fixed Abode*, p.2 (from footnote p. 181).

⁹³ For overviews of the historical development of attitudes to homeless people up to the 1960s see Crowther, 'The Tramp', pp. 90-113. For the full span of the history of homelessness including attitudes and the impact of legislation, see: Humphreys, *No Fixed Abode*.

⁹⁴ The balance between structural and individual causes of homelessness remains a matter of academic debate. See among many Neale, 'Homelessness and Theory Reconsidered', & Main, 'How to Think About Homelessness: Balancing Structural and Individual Causes'.

work.⁹⁵ The 1966 broadcast of *Cathy Come Home* is often considered pivotal in changing public attitudes, but certainly never completely eradicated older notions of moral laxity and deviance.⁹⁶ That pejorative attitudes toward homeless people were still prevalent in the 1990s is made apparent in public political pronouncements and media articles around the issue of begging. It should be noted that although the issue of begging and 'problematic street culture' is also often falsely elided with homelessness, many homeless people do indeed engage in begging, and the association may be firmly fixed in the minds of a large proportion of the population. Dean argues that, 'as an economic activity begging is so tainted by its long association with punishment, regulation and suspicion that in the popular imagination it may be perceived to be even 'worse' than other forms of criminal behaviour'.⁹⁷ John Major, tapped into this widespread hostility in a 1994 speech, where he attacked begging, urging 'the public to report beggars to the police, and calling on the courts to use the full sanction of the law', and widened his disdain to homeless people in general, stating that 'it is not acceptable to be out on the street – there is no justification for it'.⁹⁸ Hostility to begging was not merely the preserve of the political right. Jack Straw (Labour Shadow Home Secretary) famously attacked 'winos and addicts' and 'squeegee merchants' in a 1995 speech thundering that, 'We have literally to reclaim the streets for the law-abiding public citizen'.⁹⁹ Tony Blair appeared to support such views when in an interview in the Big Issue in 1997 he stated that, 'It is right to be intolerant of people

⁹⁵ Greve, J., *London's Homeless*, (Codicote Press, London, 1964); Drake, M., O'Brien, M. & Biebuyck, *Single and Homeless*, (HMSO, London 1981).

⁹⁶ *Cathy Come Home*, The Wednesday Play, BBC1 16 November 1966.

⁹⁷ Dean, H., (Ed), *Begging Questions: Street-level economic activity and social policy failure*, (Policy Press, Bristol, 1999), p.3.

⁹⁸ Major, J., *Bristol Evening Post*, 26 May 1994, quoted in Turner, A.W., *A Classless Society*, p. 191.

⁹⁹ Straw, S., Speech to councillors and senior police officers, Lewisham, 3 September 1995, reported by Mills, H., 'Straw sets agenda for reclaiming the streets', *Independent*, 4 September 1995.

homeless on the street' although he later argued that his comments had been deliberately mis-interpreted.¹⁰⁰ That these statements provoked flurries of condemnation suggests that such views cannot be taken as universally accepted by the public.¹⁰¹ Hostile views of beggars were, however, widely promoted by the 'red-tops' and right-wing broadsheets that often ran lurid articles on the supposed high income of street beggars.¹⁰² Platt notes that National Sleep-Out Week 'served as the catalyst for a whole plague of press 'exposés' of begging' with *The Sun* running a front page story about a '£200-a-day beggar, and the *Evening Standard* finding 'a mother who said her son was being deterred from earning his living by the easy pickings he made as a homeless beggar'.¹⁰³ It was not merely the right-wing press that expressed such hostility, the *Guardian* in 1994 carried an article about an English vicar who claimed that beggars earn '£50,000 a year'.¹⁰⁴ Historian Robert Humphries argues that, people were 'largely credulous' about stories of homeless people making 'fortunes from begging', and Dean concludes that it led to a 'new consensus' about begging in the 1990s, considering it to have become 'universally reviled'.¹⁰⁵

A countervailing force was that of the 'street newspaper', *The Big Issue*. Set up by John Bird in 1991, it explicitly sought to challenge stereotypes of homeless people as incapable and

¹⁰⁰ Blair, T., interview in *The Big Issue*, 6 January 1997. Defended his position in Blair, T., 'War on the Streets', *Guardian*, 8 January 1997.

¹⁰¹ For response to Shaw's speech, see Cohen, N., 'Public Enemy Number One?', *Independent*, 9 September 1995; To Major's, see Brown, C., 'Sweep beggars off the streets, Prime Minister demands', *Independent* 27 May 1994 & 'Offensive' Major beggars belief', *Guardian* 28 May 1994.

¹⁰² Tabloid reach and influence was particularly high at this time. The Sun sold an average of 3,877,097 copies daily in 1997, The Daily Mail 2,344,183 and even the broadsheet Daily Telegraph 1,129,777, Audit Bureau of Circulations.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_newspapers_in_the_United_Kingdom_by_circulation#1950%E2%80%931999 (accessed 1/4/21).

¹⁰³ 'National Sleep Out Week' was an occasion when celebrities 'slept out to draw attention to the plight of the street homeless' indicating a sympathetic public attitude – the juxtaposition with hostility to begging once again illustrating the contradictory nature of public opinion towards homeless people. Platt, S., 'Home Truths: Media representations of homelessness', p. 111.

¹⁰⁴ *Guardian*, 17 July 1993.

¹⁰⁵ Humphreys p.174. Dean, H. & Gale, K., 'Begging and the contradictions of citizenship' in Dean, H., (Ed), *Begging Questions: Street-level economic activity and social policy failure*, (Policy Press, Bristol, 1999), p.13.

work-shy.¹⁰⁶ By 1998 it was selling 280,000 copies a week, and Swithinbank argues, ‘it had a profound and sustained impact on the public’s perception of homelessness’, noting that John Bird, became a national celebrity and was the recipient of positive press and documentary coverage, even receiving the award for ‘Editor of the Year’, in 1995.¹⁰⁷ However, *Big Issue* vendors were often also subjected to the same treatment in the tabloid press as beggars. When the *Sun* ran an article about a vendor apparently earning ‘£1,000 a week’ selling the paper, Swithinbank reported a backlash, with ‘members of the public spitting on and insulting vendors’.¹⁰⁸ The decade was also characterised by a renewed vigour in the use of the 1824 Vagrancy Act, a relic on the statute books that effectively criminalised homelessness. Its use rose fourfold in the five years to 1994, and although this was protested in the homelessness sector and the liberal media, it does not seem to have raised the opprobrium of the general public.¹⁰⁹ The ‘End the Vagrancy Act’ campaign launched in 1990 gained no traction.¹¹⁰

Negative characterisations of homeless people were also amplified in the 80s and 90s by the new-right’s conceptions of the ‘moral hazard’ of welfare-dependency and the dangers of rewarding those who ‘refused’ to take responsibility for themselves.¹¹¹ Carlin argues that the Conservatives promoted the view that people who do not own their own homes, or, worse still, are actually homeless, are not only lacking in self-reliance, but their existence is

¹⁰⁶ Swithinbank notes the degree of initial scepticism about the venture – indicating how widely held such prevailing attitudes about homeless people were. Swithinbank, T., *Coming Up From the Streets: The Story of the Big Issue*, (Earthscan Publications, London, 2001), pp. 1, 20 & 92.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 1 & 64.

¹⁰⁸ ‘The Big Earner’, *The Sun*, 28 October 1996, Swithinbank, *Coming Up from the Street*, p.95.

¹⁰⁹ For opposition of liberal press see Carvel J., ‘Destitute teenagers face Jail Penalty’, *Guardian*, 3 January 1990. For figures on use of Vagrancy Act, see Humphreys, p.164.

¹¹⁰ Morris, N., *Scrap the Act: The Case for Repealing the Vagrancy Act (1824)*, (Crisis, London, 2019), p. ix.

¹¹¹ These views were given a high profile through the work of right-wing academics Charles Murray and Laurence Mead. See Murray, C., *The Emerging British Underclass*, (IEA, London, 1990); Mead, L., *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*, (Free Press, New York, 1986).

a threat to British society'.¹¹² Dorling believes that such propaganda was effective, arguing that, 'Thatcher's proteges managed to create, 'a sea-change in thinking: namely that those who have fallen on hard times have only themselves to blame'.¹¹³ Humphries argues that the homeless were most often characterised as members of a 'feckless underclass' likely to 'contaminate whole neighbourhoods' and this caused 'many members of the public...to brand the homeless as social parasites'.¹¹⁴ Although Cloke argues that the Conservative administration 'failed to dampen public sympathy for homeless people', that this attitude had been normalised in at least part of the population is borne out by Butchy's 2006 ethnographic study of rough sleepers in Oxford.¹¹⁵ She notes that, 'Many passers-by were angry with beggars, shouting at them: 'get a bloody job'.¹¹⁶

The inconsistency of the media toward homeless people is made apparent in that sympathetic characterisations of homeless people often ran alongside hostile representations, often in the same publications. For example, *The Daily Telegraph*, which had published some of the most vituperative accounts, also ran a 1995 article entitled 'Broken Lives on Cracked Pavements', that related, 'tales from the dishevelled army of sad souls living in shop doorways'.¹¹⁷ Hodgetts observed similar portrayals in ITN's coverage of

¹¹² Carlen, P., *Jigsaw: A Political Criminology of Youth Homelessness*, p.23.

¹¹³ Dorling, D, *All That is Solid*, (Penguin, London, 2015), p.275.

¹¹⁴ Humphreys, pp.5-6 & 164

¹¹⁵ Cloke et al, *Swept-up Lives?*, p.32; Butchy, C., 'Identities of Rough Sleepers in Oxford', in Seal, M., (ed.) *Understanding and responding to homeless experiences, identities and cultures*, (Russell House Publishing, Lyme Regis, 2006)

¹¹⁶ Butchy, C., 'Identities of Rough Sleepers in Oxford', p.21.

¹¹⁷ Knowsley, J., 'Broken Lives on Cracked Pavements', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 December 1995. Similarly, *The Times* ran an article, (Parris, M., 'Underclass or just Unfortunate', *The Times*, 10 April 1995), which described a *Big Issue* seller as 'one of those youths who never had a youth, but moved from a neglected, abused childhood, into some wretched travesty of independence as an adult'. Widdowfield, R., 'Beggars, Bloggers and Bums? Media representations of Homeless People', (British Academy Review, January- July 2001), p.52. <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publishing/review/5/beggars-bloggers-and-bums-media-representations-homeless-people/> (accessed 3/5/2021).

homeless people, as 'needy victims', 'lost souls or pitiful cases of hardship'.¹¹⁸ Homelessness charities used similar imagery.¹¹⁹ While media characterisations of homeless people as 'needy victims' lends support to the view that 'public opinion' was perhaps shifting to a more compassionate mode, and were probably influential in encouraging high levels of volunteering at Crisis at Christmas, the marked rise in the number 'soup runs' and the proliferation of homeless charities in this period, their impact may have actually been to deter government from direct intervention.¹²⁰ Platt, Hodgetts and Widdowfield all argue that their influence on public-policy making was probably counter-productive. Such images, they argue, 'reinforced existing notions of the contrast between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, and by conceptualising homelessness as 'rooted in personal failings and misfortunes...rather than a product of structural disadvantages, discouraged government intervention'.¹²¹ Hodgetts argues that the framing of homelessness in television news encouraged the view that philanthropy and charitable actions were the appropriate response to homelessness and thereby belied government responsibility.¹²² Andersson and Valentine from their study of the visual images of homeless people utilised by the charity sector argue that the images employed had similar effect, leading away from calls for government intervention and toward a 'depoliticisation of homelessness'.¹²³ These interpretations are lent some support by evidence from the Eurobarometer 'Perception of

¹¹⁸ Hodgetts et al, 'Television Characterizations', p.33.

¹¹⁹ See Platt, S., 'Home Truths: Media representations of homelessness', p.114-5

¹²⁰ Walker reports a rise in number of homeless charities from 500 in 1991 to 2000 a decade later. Walker, D., 'The Homeless Industry' *Guardian*, 1 November 2001. Walker's figures need to be taken with caution as changes in the charities law led to a greater number of registrations, and the latter figure includes many small church groups providing only some form of local service. By 2001 there were 91 separate soup run groups making 196 visits a week to central London. Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Soup and Clothing Run Coordination Project Annual Report*, (Salvation Army, London, 2001), p.11.

¹²¹ Widdowfield, 'Beggars, Blaggers and Bums?', p.53; Platt, p.105; Hodgetts et al, p.30.

¹²² Hodgetts et al, pp.34-8.; (Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, March 1990), p.103.

¹²³ Andersson, J. & Valentine, G., 'Picturing the poor: fundraising and the depoliticisation of homelessness', *Social and Cultural Geography*, Vol 16, No.1, (2015), pp.58-74.

Poverty' surveys conducted in 1977 and 1989 which showed a marked tendency for British people to have a highly positive attitude to giving both their money and time to the alleviation of poverty, but low levels of desire for government action.¹²⁴ The relationship between media representation and 'public opinion' is complex and contested, and its relation to the formulation of public policy even more opaque.¹²⁵ Hodgetts argues that, as knowledge of homeless is largely 'derived from mediated experience', news coverage is pivotal, and that 'policies are likely to be developed and implemented if policy-makers consider there to be sufficient public support 'expressed through' media coverage'.¹²⁶ Negrine, arguing on the broader impact of media on policy-making is more sceptical, stating that, 'the assumption of a clear link between media content and the policies and decisions emanating from the policy process is a pervasive but nonetheless a highly questionable one'.¹²⁷ Further complicating matters, attitudes to homelessness, as Liddiard points out, are always 'profoundly heterogeneous'.¹²⁸ What direct evidence there is for shifts in public opinion can perhaps be derived from the surveys conducted by the European Commission in 1977 and 1989 which suggest that attitudes toward poverty had shifted in the UK over this period.¹²⁹ In the 1977 survey, the British were most inclined to see the causes of poverty in the behaviour of the individual, with 45% of respondents ascribing, 'laziness' as the principal

¹²⁴ Eurobarometer, *The Perception of Poverty in Europe*, (Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, March 1977), p.78. In the 1989 survey, British people recorded a European leading figure of 52% who were willing to 'take part in a voluntary or charitable organisation', and 30% were willing 'to help in a centre for poor people'. Eurobarometer, *The Perception of Poverty in Europe*, ((Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, March 1990), p.103.

¹²⁵ Beresford succinctly summarises the problem of notions of 'public opinion', stating, 'the public is only an abstract and unreal identity. There is no way of summoning it, of hearing its views, or of being restrained by it.', Beresford, P. 'The public presentation of Vagrancy' in Cook, T. (Ed), *Vagrancy: Some New Perspectives* (Academic Press, London, 1979), p.160.

¹²⁶ Hodgetts et al, pp. 30-31.

¹²⁷ Negrine, R., *Politics and the Mass Media in Britain (2nd edn)*, (Routledge, London, 1994), pp.142-3.

¹²⁸ Liddiard, M., 'Homelessness: the media, public attitudes and policymaking', in Hutson, S. & Clapham, D. (Eds), *Homelessness: Public Policies and Private Troubles*, (Cassel, London & New York, 1999), p.79.

¹²⁹ Eurobarometer Opinion Poll, *The Perception of Poverty in Europe*, (March 1977); Eurobarometer Opinion Poll, *The Perception of Poverty in Europe*, (March 1990).

cause, 29% recording, 'drink', and 7%, 'lack of foresight'.¹³⁰ By 1989 'chronic unemployment' had taken a clear lead as the primary cause of poverty at 60%, and the new category of 'welfare cuts' (33%) had overtaken 'laziness'.¹³¹ There are, of course, important caveats to utilising this data, the survey did not ask questions specifically about homelessness, and more sympathetic views about 'poverty' in general, cannot automatically be assumed to include homelessness and homeless people. In both surveys, British respondents gave some of the highest figures across Europe for thinking there was 'no one in poverty' in their area at all.¹³² Given the high visibility of street homelessness, it is plausible that respondents considered homelessness to exist in a separate category to wider notions of poverty.

To conclude, media attitudes to homelessness and homeless people remained inconsistent and contradictory across the decade preceding Labour's election victory, blending compassionate accounts with outright hostility. The impact on public opinion is difficult to determine. It is probable that the high visibility of rough sleeping and the media attention it garnered did engender a qualified shift to a more sympathetic view of homelessness, at least toward young homeless people. Set against this, it is arguable that notions of a feckless underclass, and pre-existing conceptions of the 'undeserving poor' actually gained ground in this period. Pressure on government to act did exist, but the solution to the 'homeless crisis' was most commonly framed in terms of philanthropy and charitable work rather than direct government intervention. Given that single homelessness had not commonly been viewed as a governmental responsibility, and as both media representations of homelessness and

¹³⁰ The only structural cause recorded, 'unemployment', was ranked only third on the list in 1977. Eurobarometer, *The Perception of Poverty in Europe*, (March 1977), pp.49 & 70.

¹³¹ Eurobarometer, *The Perception of Poverty in Europe*, (March 1977), p.6.

¹³² The surveys did not ask precisely the same question, but the figures for the question on the scale of poverty yielded similar numbers saying they 'did not think there was any one in poverty' seem to have stayed at around 60%. Eurobarometer, *The Perception of Poverty in Europe*, (March 1977), p.66; Eurobarometer, *The Perception of Poverty in Europe*, (March 1990), p.24.

public opinion where highly inconsistent, a simple causative link to Labour's actions cannot be upheld. Even if New Labour was, as it has been commonly characterised, concerned primarily with its public image, its granting of such a high priority to homelessness would have been a political gamble with no guarantee that it would directly enhance its popularity.

Revanchism?

Interpretations of New Labour that view its ideology as being primarily an extension of Thatcherite neo-liberalism have also influenced another critique of its motivation for, and delivery of, its street homelessness policies, that of 'revanchism'.¹³³ Formulated in the work of American scholars, the revanchist hypothesis sees the modern 'neo-liberal state' as enacting homeless policies primarily designed to advance the interests of capital rather than to alleviate the sufferings of homeless people themselves.¹³⁴ In this conception, the revanchist state is seen to enact punitive policies that criminalise or make untenable, homelessness and street activity in affluent areas, and by clearing the streets of unsightly poverty, seeks to raise property values for the benefit of property developers, businesses and the tourist industry.¹³⁵ Homelessness itself remains fundamentally unaddressed, with homeless people merely displaced into poorer districts where, out of sight and mind, they can be 'warehoused' in hostels or neglected altogether.¹³⁶ The argument advanced here is that this charge is unwarranted, and that revanchist interpretations of its homelessness

¹³³ The term was first used in this context by Smith, but has been widely adopted by others as a general framework. Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*.

¹³⁴ The key texts are: Davis, M., *City of Quartz*, (Vintage, London, 1999); Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*; Mitchell, 'The Annihilation of Space by Law: The roots and implications of anti-homeless laws in the United States'. *Antipode*, Vol. 29, No 3, (1997), pp.303-335. Each hypothesis proposed a different primary mover for such 'revanchism', Davis in the forces of international capitalism, Smith in middle class desire for gentrification, backed by a vote-seeking city government, and Mitchell, by 'city managers [seeking to] bolster their city's image in an era of intense interurban competition'.

¹³⁵ For a succinct summary of the key tenets of the argument see DeVerteuil, G., May, J. & von Mahs, J., 'Complexity not collapse: recasting the geographies of homelessness in a 'punitive' age', *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol 33, No 5, (2009), pp.647-650.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

policies stem more from a mistrust of its perceived ideological stance than any thorough evaluation of its policies in the round.

Although scholars have questioned the applicability of the importation of the revanchist model from the very different American context, and struggled to locate the precise locus of revanchist intent within conceptions of neo-liberalism, such an interpretation has often been applied to New Labour's homelessness policies.¹³⁷ Jordan argues that New Labour was 'foremost preoccupied with clearing the streets of menacing, dirty, sick or homeless people, beggars and drinkers', and 'gave precedence to reducing offending and the fear of criminality over any concern for improving prospects for homeless people', and Whiteford identifies 'a chain of policy initiatives [by New Labour] that were punitive and vindictive'.¹³⁸ For Coleman, New Labour's approach was typical of neo-liberal governance, ceding power to 'new bourgeoisie and business interests' and cites a systematic cleansing of homeless people from Liverpool city centre in preparation for its role as 'European Capital of Culture' in 2008.¹³⁹ Similarly, in 2010, the Simon Community argued that the zero homeless strategy for London was concerned more with 'how London will be viewed in 2012 during the Olympics than by concern for rough sleepers'.¹⁴⁰ Whilst the leading British scholars working in homelessness take a more nuanced (and evolving) interpretation of the applicability of the revanchist hypothesis to New Labour's policies, they often couch the limits of its applicability in terms of the complexity of modern governance, whereby revanchist tools

¹³⁷ See DeVerteuil et al, 'Complexity not Collapse'; Cloke et al, *Swept-up Lives*, pp.37-40.

¹³⁸ Jordan & Jordan, *Social Work and the Third Way*, p.111 & Whiteford, M., 'New Labour, Street Homelessness and Social Exclusion: A Defaulted Promissory Note?', p.15.

¹³⁹ Coleman, 'Images from a Neoliberal City', pp. 21-42.

¹⁴⁰ View expressed in 'What's Wrong with Ending?', *Simon Star*, Issue 110, Autumn 2009/10, [https://www.simoncommunity.org.uk/admin/editoruploads/file/Simon-Star-Autumn-2009\(1\).pdf](https://www.simoncommunity.org.uk/admin/editoruploads/file/Simon-Star-Autumn-2009(1).pdf), (accessed 2/2/22). Cloke also argues that the target of zero homelessness in London by 2012 was designed with the forthcoming Olympics in mind. Cloke, *Swept-up Lives*, p.242.

provided by New Labour were moderated through the actions of the local state, law enforcement and homelessness sector agencies.¹⁴¹ Fitzpatrick and Jones concluded in 2005 that New Labour was more concerned with social cohesion than social justice, and Cloke that, after 2003, Labour shifted from concern from the 'provision of services...to 'the conduct of conduct of homeless people'.¹⁴² Importantly, in later research conducted by Fitzpatrick, (with Johnsen) in 2010, Fitzpatrick moderated her earlier view, noting that whilst the rhetoric used by government had 'clear revanchist overtones...when examining how enforcement is articulated and contested "on the ground" in England there is little, if any, evidence of the vengeful attitudes and "genocidal" politics alluded to in the revanchist literature'.¹⁴³

Aspects of Labour's programme are, however, open to a revanchist interpretation. From its outset, the Labour programme was predated on a specific target for reducing the number of rough sleepers, and its first steps entailed increasing the number of emergency bed spaces and turning temporary, 'cold weather shelters' into a rolling programme offering basic accommodation across the whole year.¹⁴⁴ Working practice in outreach services was remodelled into a form known as 'assertive outreach', a practice designed to more actively encourage homeless people to leave the streets, backed by closer working with law enforcement, and with the specific aim of the 'disruption' of entrenched behaviours and

¹⁴¹ For the subtleties of this argument see May, J. & Cloke, P., 'Modes of Attentiveness: Reading for difference in Geographies of Homelessness', *Antipode*, Vol 46, No 4, (2014), pp.894-920.

¹⁴² Fitzpatrick, S. & Jones, A., 'Pursuing Social Justice or Social Cohesion?', pp.389-406. Cloke, *Swept-up Lives*, p.35.

¹⁴³ Johnsen, S. & Fitzpatrick, S., 'Revanchist Sanitation or Coercive Care?', p.1716.

¹⁴⁴ In the early stages, RSU funded 120 additional beds in 'rolling shelters' and 550 new hostel beds in London, RSU/DETR, *Coming in From the Cold: The Government's strategy on Rough Sleeping*, (RSU/DETR, London, 1999) <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20010710041743/http://www.detr.gov.uk:80/housing/information/rough/strategy/index.htm>, (accessed 10/2/22).

patterns of street living.¹⁴⁵ 'Disruption' was a term commonly employed by members of the RSU and many practitioners, and lacks a clear definition, but was used to describe steps taken that either directly made living on the streets more difficult, or reduced patterns of service delivery that the RSU considered 'facilitated' rough sleeping.

With the aim of reducing services that 'facilitated' rough sleeping, in July 2000 the RSU launched the London Soup and Clothing Run Co-ordination Project, which aimed to reduce the number of soup-runs coming into central London.¹⁴⁶ By 2002 the number had been reduced by two-thirds, with some 50 ceasing to function.¹⁴⁷ Rather than highly visible queues of rough sleepers being fed on the city's streets, they would in future be fed, and hidden out of public sight, in church crypts and Day Centres. In addition, in November 2000, the RSU launched a diverted giving scheme, 'Change a Life' designed to actively discourage people from giving money directly to rough sleepers, and localised diverted giving schemes were established across the country with the tacit support of the RSU.¹⁴⁸

Viewed through a revanchist lens, these interventions can be seen as primarily aimed at clearing the streets of unsightly poverty, utilising a succession of coercive and punitive measures designed to deprive rough sleepers of their means of sustenance and hide them from view in crude and inadequate forms of accommodation. However, these features of Labour's homelessness policy are given a broadly positive interpretation by the overwhelming majority of those practitioners interviewed for this research. Although there

¹⁴⁵ Described as 'a robust, positive and discerning approach in persuading people to accept help', RSU/DETR, *Coming in From the Cold: The Government's strategy on Rough Sleeping*, (RSU/DETR, London, 1999)

¹⁴⁶ Moore, K., 'Soup of the Day', *Connect*, No 9, (2002), pp.17-18.

¹⁴⁷ Cloke et al, *Swept-up Lives?*, p.94.

¹⁴⁸ RSU/DETR, 'Change a Life' , <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20010706035152/http://www.detr.gov.uk:80/housing/information/index04.htm> accessed 10/2/22. By 2004 schemes had been established in Manchester, Leeds, Holborn & Plymouth. Association of Town Centre Management report, 2004, cited in Fitzpatrick & Jones, 'Pursuing Justice or Social Cohesion?', p.396.

was considerable initial scepticism about ‘assertive outreach’ in the homelessness sector, and doubts about its limitations remained, the vast majority of respondents were persuaded of its value over time and it became adopted as a form of best practice across the sector.¹⁴⁹ Interviewees commonly argued that assertive outreach was effective in getting people into accommodation and other ‘disruptive’ interventions were necessary to break up the patterns of those habituated to rough sleeping.¹⁵⁰ Rather than punitive in intent, respondents argued that such policies were fundamentally humane, arguing that street homelessness takes a terrible toll on health and life expectancy, and that effective rehabilitation and resettlement work could only be undertaken if people were in some form of accommodation, no matter how crude.

The new requirement for outreach workers to work alongside the police could also be interpreted as punitive in intent. Dave Musker (Chief Superintendent for Lambeth with responsibility for homelessness) was clear that part of his role was to break up concentrations of rough sleepers, saying there would be ‘no bashes - I was very clear, I’m not having a tented encampment anywhere on my ground’.¹⁵¹ However, Musker also pointed out that his role also involved protecting both outreach workers and homeless people themselves from those who would ‘prey on the more vulnerable’.¹⁵²

Joint working with the police was initially viewed with considerable suspicion by the sector, but mutually supportive methods of co-working were commonly established.¹⁵³ Richard

¹⁴⁹ For a full evaluation, see Chapter 2.

¹⁵⁰ For a full evaluation see Chapter 2.

¹⁵¹ Dave Musker, Interview, 12/11/20.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Outreach Worker 1, Interview, 15/3/22; Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20; Dave Musker, Interview, 12/11/20.

Cunningham recalls that 'the outreach teams...got used to the idea...it was eventually seen positively... the police weren't ogres'.¹⁵⁴

Musker, is more fulsome still about the benefits of joint working with the voluntary sector describing the experience as 'educative' he stated that 'although we came from very different perspectives, we all shared a common analysis of what the actual problem was' which led to a 'true partnership working towards a common goal'.¹⁵⁵ Musker came to the view that the only way to fix homelessness was to give them the support to fix their issues and some sort of carrot and stick to get them to actually address them... you have to have a rounded solution - enforcement, prevention, treatment - services need to be integrated'.¹⁵⁶ Musker describes his journey away from 'a narrow law-enforcement viewpoint' as typical of officers involved in the RSU's programme, suggesting that far from taking homeless policy in a more punitive direction, New Labour's programme helped push police attitudes in the opposite trajectory.¹⁵⁷

Not all disruptive measures were positively received by the sector. Near universally condemned was the City of London's 2008-9 practice of waking rough sleepers early in the morning, followed by council workers hosing down the shop doorways they slept in with water ('hot washing') to force them to move, termed 'Operation Poncho'.¹⁵⁸ Performed in conjunction with homeless agency, Broadway, it was described as a programme of 'deliberate harassment' by *Pavement* magazine and stopped only after public outcry.¹⁵⁹ It is

¹⁵⁴ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

¹⁵⁵ Dave Musker, Interview, 12/11/20.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Howard Sinclair, (CEO Broadway) in interview, 1/12/20; Johnsen, S. & Fitzpatrick, S., 'Revanchist Sanitation or Coercive Care?', p.1713.

¹⁵⁹ Benjamin, A. 'Cleaned Out', *Guardian* 24 September 2008, *The Pavement*, 'Temporary Halt of Operation Poncho', 22 May 2009, <https://www.thepavement.org.uk/stories/535>, (accessed 11/11/21).

important to note, however, that this was a City of London policy, not one initiated by Labour's Homelessness Directorate.

If 'rolling cold weather shelters' had been the end point of Labour's programme, the revanchist charge would have had traction, but, under Labour, hostels were never intended to 'warehouse' the poor, but were increasingly made over as places of change, empowerment and resettlement.¹⁶⁰ In addition, the overwhelming majority of practitioners argued that the feeding of homeless people via soup runs, while admirable in intent, was largely unnecessary, produced much duplication of effort, and tended to 'enable' street living, actually compounding rather than addressing the problem of rough sleeping.¹⁶¹ New Labour's investment in day centres, they argue, was not designed to hide the homeless from sight, but occasioned opportunities for resettlement and active engagement with a wide range of services.¹⁶² This view was not universally held, however and the strong opposition to soup run closures expressed by Alastair Murray of Housing Justice may be representative of other faith-based organisations, whose ethos differed significantly from that of the more developed agencies.¹⁶³ Although the majority viewed diverted giving schemes as ineffective, they did not view them as punitive in intent, with the majority viewing the generosity of the public as inadvertently facilitating rough sleeping and exacerbating the problems of those homeless people with alcohol or substance misuse problems.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ For the supporting evidence and full analysis see Chapters 2 & 4

¹⁶¹ For supporting evidence and full analysis see Chapter 2.

¹⁶² See Chapter 2.

¹⁶³ Alastair Murray, Interview 18/11/20. Some thirty respondents were positive about this measure. For a full evaluation see Chapter 2.

¹⁶⁴ Both Jeremy Swain and Jon Kuhrt, among others, described both the counter-productive consequences of members of the public giving money to rough sleepers and doubts about the efficacy of diverted-giving schemes. Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 23 September 1990; Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

The charge of a revanchist approach by New Labour is most often made for the period after 2003 when the newly created Anti-Social Behaviour Unit took up the issue of 'problematic street culture'.¹⁶⁵ The concept of 'street culture' or 'street life' has no clear definition. Moore poses four characteristics of people who have a 'street lifestyle': they chose to live out the majority of their waking hours in the company of others in public places; they perform the whole range of social and physical activities in public places, including those which are generally regarded as private/inappropriate; they are generally unwaged; they are often dependent on drugs/alcohol'.¹⁶⁶ The 'problematic' aspect to be addressed centred on begging and the behaviour of street drinkers and street drug users.¹⁶⁷ From 2003, government pronouncements began to take a much more hostile tone, which appeared to elide homelessness with 'street life' and 'street life' with criminality. The Home Office declared 'an anti-social street scene...makes people feel unsafe... the public is threatened and intimidated by people begging and street drinking'.¹⁶⁸ Nor was it merely rhetoric. There was a marked escalation in active measures taken against street activity after the unit's creation. Begging was made a 'recordable offence' for the first time, with offenders details recorded on the National Police Computer, and community sentences imposed for persistent begging.¹⁶⁹ The use of Designated Public Place Orders, where street activity and

¹⁶⁵ New Labour's approach to criminal justice in general represented a complex and significant shift in thinking from long-standing Labour attitudes, and the passing of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 that brought in Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) had a long-gestation. Here the emphasis is only on its intersection with its homelessness policies. For a wider view see Waiton, S., *The Politics of Antisocial Behaviour: Amoral Panics*, (Routledge, Oxford and New York, 2008).

¹⁶⁶ Moore, S., 'Neighbourhood policing and the punitive community', *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, Vol 10, No 3, (2008), p.193.

¹⁶⁷ Home Office, *Responsibility and Respect: Taking a Stand on Anti-Social Behaviour*, Cm5778, (HMSO, London, 2003), pp.46-47.

¹⁶⁸ Home Office, *Together tackling anti-social behaviour action plan*, (Home Office, London, 2003)

¹⁶⁹ Fitzpatrick, S. and Jones, A., 'Pursuing Justice or Social Cohesion', p.395.

street drinking were prohibited by the creation of local bylaws, also increased post-2003.¹⁷⁰

In Liverpool, even vendors of the *Big Issue in the North* were banned from the city centre until overturned on legal challenge.¹⁷¹ Specialist 'street community policing teams' were established in some areas, specifically charged with the task of 'reducing the numbers begging and street drinking'.¹⁷² The 1824 Vagrancy Act, which effectively criminalised homelessness, remained on the statute books despite a campaign for its appeal, and a pattern of regular use by law enforcement continued. Local authorities, such as the London borough of Camden, pioneered outreach teams to work with people on the street who were not sleeping rough which evolved into measures directly focussed on 'street culture' as in the 'Street Safe' project which commenced in 2008.¹⁷³ The hardest measures imposed were the use of ASBOs, and the Home Office's anti-social behaviour action plan instigated 30 Criminal Justice Intervention Programme Areas, with 5 'trailblazer' local authorities leading the way. Westminster city council took to the task with relish, sweeping up 'aggressive beggars' under a 'homelessness audit' that involved arrest and release, with a clear threat to utilise ASBOs for repeat offenders.¹⁷⁴ It is important to note, however, research conducted by Fitzpatrick and Johnsen in 2008 found evidence that 'the use of enforcement measures when accompanied by appropriate support can in fact lead to beneficial outcomes for some individuals involved in begging or street drinking'.¹⁷⁵ They surprisingly

¹⁷⁰ For examples of Coventry and Norwich see Danczuk, S., *Walk on By...Begging, Street drinking and the Giving Age*, (Crisis, London, 2000), p.4.

¹⁷¹ *Guardian* 18 October 2003.

¹⁷² Johnsen, S. & Fitzpatrick, S., 'Revanchist Sanitation or Coercive Care?', p.1709.

¹⁷³ Data on Camden from Tom Preest interviews, 7 & 20 October 2020, additional documents provided by Mark Palframan, Home Office Crime Reduction & Community Safety, Tilley Awards Application 2008.

¹⁷⁴ Home Office, *Together tackling anti-social behaviour action plan*.

¹⁷⁵ Johnsen, S. & Fitzpatrick, S., 'Revanchist Sanitation or Coercive Care?' & Fitzpatrick, S. & Johnsen, S., 'The Use of Enforcement to Combat 'Street Culture' in England: An Ethical Approach?'; *Ethics and Social Welfare*, Vol 3, No 3, (2009), pp.284-302.

found that the harshest methods of enforcement, such as the use of ASBOs, could have the most positive effect on a street-user's well-being, where 'such interventions acted as a 'crisis point' prompting reflection and change, and encouraged engagement with support services'.¹⁷⁶

Moreover, the involvement of the police and the use of enforcement measures were also protective of vulnerable homeless people and this was often appreciated by homeless people themselves.¹⁷⁷ Fitzpatrick and Johnsen found that 'whilst often cynical about the motives of law enforcement agencies, street user interviewees were unanimously supportive of the use of enforcement with "aggressive" beggars, "agro" street drinkers and 'bullies'.¹⁷⁸

For the vast majority of practitioners interviewed for this research did not see New Labour's actions in addressing problematic street culture as revanchist in intent.¹⁷⁹ Although there were dissenting voices in the sector, many argued that disrupting 'street culture' was often a necessary prerequisite to getting people off the streets. Their argument was commonly based on the view that in order to survive on the streets people became habituated to a street lifestyle that was highly damaging to their health and mental well-being, and street culture acted as magnet, pulling people back to a destructive way of life.¹⁸⁰ Rather than

¹⁷⁶ Fitzpatrick & Johnsen, 'The Use of Enforcement to Combat 'Street Culture' in England', p.300; Johnsen, & Fitzpatrick, 'Revanchist Sanitation or Coercive Care?', p.1715.

¹⁷⁷ Dave Musker noted that when arresting someone, no-one was likely to say 'well done officer- fantastic job', but privately later they might acknowledge 'yeah, he was a bastard...he was a wrong-un, needed to be arrested'. Dave Musker, Interview, 12/11/20.

¹⁷⁸ Johnsen, S. & Fitzpatrick, S., 'Revanchist Sanitation or Coercive Care?', p.1711.

¹⁷⁹ Harding, in his thorough and wide-ranging 2020 review, also found that 'none of the respondents interviewed for this book agreed with the analysis that, in the later stages of the Labour governments, the focus was on the anti-social behaviour of rough sleepers rather than attempts to meet their needs', Harding, J., *Post-war Homelessness Policy in the UK*, p.171.

¹⁸⁰ Views expressed by, among others Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21; Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20; Tom Preest, Interview 7/10/20; Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 18/9/20.

punitive, it was considered purposeful, as it was matched with enhanced access to rehabilitation facilities and tailored service provision. In addition, many pointed out that the escalation of 'disruptive' techniques occurred only *after* the earlier rapid reduction in numbers of rough sleepers. Defenders of this new approach argue that it was necessary to disrupt the lifestyle patterns of the most entrenched rough sleepers, a 'hard-core', who had not proved amenable to the more consensual techniques of the earlier period.¹⁸¹ It is also important to note that the actions most easily seen as punitive were taken by particular local authorities acting on their own initiative rather than at the behest of New Labour. As May and Cloke point out, although the left-leaning London Borough of Camden was in the vanguard of actions against 'problematic street culture', its matching of coercive measures with enhanced service provision, stands it in strong contrast with Conservative authorities such as Westminster and the City of London, which led the most aggressive actions against rough sleepers and were much less concerned with service provision.¹⁸²

Other patterns of enforcement that can be interpreted as revanchist were the use of 'local connection' criteria to determine access to services by single homeless people, and the active support given by homeless agencies to the deportation of migrants from EU accession states who were sleeping rough and had no recourse to public funds.¹⁸³

The introduction by some local authorities, (from 2001), of a requirement for individuals to have a local connection to an area in order to access homelessness services, was considered

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² May & Cloke, 'Modes of Attentiveness', p.903.

¹⁸³ From 2004 these comprised nationals of Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia – collectively termed the 'A8'. After 2007 they were joined by nationals from Romania and Bulgaria (the A2). Jenny Bakewell of Brighton Housing Trust was highly critical of these policies. Jenny Bakewell, Interview, 11/2/21. See: May, J., 'Local connection Criteria and Single Homeless People's Geographical mobility: Evidence from Brighton & Hove', *Housing Studies*, Vol 18, No 1, (2003), pp.29-46; Whiteford, 'New Labour, Street Homelessness and Social Exclusion', p.15.

by May as evidence of an ‘increasingly hard line stance on street homelessness’ taken under New Labour.¹⁸⁴ May, who studied its application in Brighton, was both unsure of its efficacy and challenged ‘the ethics of adjudicating a person’s right to food and shelter according to their place of previous residence’.¹⁸⁵ Jenny Backwell of Brighton Housing Trust also sees the requirement for a local connection as inhumane, noting that ‘people came to Brighton...because of things that had happened to them, they didn’t want to be there now they all had to go back where they came from’.¹⁸⁶ May cites evidence from Brighton City Council that makes it clear that the local authority saw the primary purpose of introducing local connection criteria was to discourage homeless people from coming to the city and to reduce pressure on local services rather than the direct interests of homeless people themselves.¹⁸⁷ This would seem to support the charge of a revanchist approach. However, advocates of the application of local connection criteria in Brighton argue that it was necessary as the city had particularly severe problems. Throughout the 1990s Brighton had one of the highest numbers of rough sleepers outside central London, and as, Helen Keats sees it, a combination of the ‘best supply of drugs in the country’ and ‘begging opportunities’ that were ‘wonderful’, it acted as a ‘magnet’, overwhelming local services and drawing homeless people into a destructive drug scene.¹⁸⁸ The introduction of local connection criteria in Brighton can therefore be equally interpreted as both pragmatic, in bringing the demand for drug treatment services down to manageable levels, and

¹⁸⁴ May, J., ‘Local Connection Criteria and Single Homeless People’s Geographical mobility’, p.44. Helen Keats, Interview, 2/12/20.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p.44.

¹⁸⁶ Jenny Bakewell, Interview, 11/2/21.

¹⁸⁷ Brighton and Hove City Council, *Local Connection Criteria: Guidance Notes*, (BHCC, Brighton, 2001), pp.1 & 3-4. Quoted in May, ‘Local Connection Criteria’, p.32.

¹⁸⁸ SEU, *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*, Section 1.3. The SEU report cites Brighton as one of five cities outside London with the highest concentrations of rough sleepers in 1996. Helen Keats, Interview, 2/12/20.

protective, by removing people from an invidious drug culture. Ian Brady points out that it was the deaths of forty-two street heroin users in one year that prompted the council to introduce the policy.¹⁸⁹ Helen Keats, who designed the strategy for Brighton, believes it also helped break up a degree of complacency in the local homeless services that were largely ‘enabling people to stay on the streets’ and offered opportunities for resettlement by reconnecting people to social networks in their place of origin.¹⁹⁰

The policy of cooperating with UK Border Agencies in the deportation of homeless EU migrants, (from 2008), termed ‘reconnection services’ by the DETR, can also be viewed through a revanchist lens.¹⁹¹ Whiteford strongly condemns this approach, stating that ‘under the guise of reconnection services, foreign nationals faced involuntary repatriation or the uncertainty of living out a clandestine existence’.¹⁹² The plight of homeless migrants who had no access to public funds was certainly a problem that was never adequately addressed by New Labour, and evidence of an area where ‘joined up policy making’ manifestly failed. However, although Whiteford is correct that deportation was strongly resisted by some voluntary sector agencies, others saw ‘reconnection’ as the best possible solution to an intractable problem.¹⁹³ Unable to claim housing benefit, and therefore access most hostel accommodation, the deprivation faced by homeless migrants was truly appalling. Rebecca Pritchard and Steve Guyon were both shocked by the ‘primitive conditions’ faced by migrant groups in the camps that grew up around Peterborough where, living in tents in ‘sub-zero conditions’ they ‘were having to defecate next to where they’re

¹⁸⁹ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

¹⁹⁰ Helen Keats, Interview, 2/12/20.

¹⁹¹ Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)/Rough Sleepers Unit, *Coming in from the Cold: Delivering the Strategy*, (DETR, London, 2000), Sections 3.81-3.82.

¹⁹² Whiteford, M., ‘New Labour, Street Homelessness and Social Exclusion, A Defaulted Promissory Note?’, *Housing Studies*, Vol 28, No 1, (2013), p.15.

¹⁹³ Attested to by Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/11/20.

sleeping' and faced being 'burnt out' by hostile locals.¹⁹⁴ Guyon believes that deportation was more of a pragmatic than punitive response – 'we had to do something!'.¹⁹⁵ Dr Philip Reid, of Great Chapel Street Medical Centre, is more positive still, describing the approach as, 'it was a reasonably sort of humane and successful service actually, trying to link people up to local services on arrival - it wasn't, "Here's the plane. Get on. Goodbye"', there was someone to meet you at the other end or go with you'.¹⁹⁶ Labour did indeed fail to adequately address the needs of homeless migrants, but the fault lies in inadequate immigration policies and failures in joined up working rather than an intentionally revanchist approach toward homeless migrants.

To fully evaluate the charge of Labour's policies as 'revanchist' requires the detailed examination of the whole of Labour's homelessness programme which is conducted in subsequent chapters. However, it is important first to consider New Labour's actions through a diametrically opposed lens: that New Labour was sincere in its intentions to develop long-term solutions to street homelessness, and that rather than being a government lacking any ideology whose policies were punitive or concerned only with cultivating a positive image in the media, it conducted its homelessness policies in a coherent manner in accord with a distinct approach to governance that it termed 'the Third Way'.

¹⁹⁴ Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20; Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/11/20.

¹⁹⁵ Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/11/20.

¹⁹⁶ Dr Phillip Reid, Interview, 6/11/20. Howard Sinclair (CEO of Broadway), whose agency cooperated on deportations, echoes Reid's view, saying, 'we never just put [people] on a coach...we had teams of people flying all over the world taking people back', and concluded that, 'it's better someone went back to a third sector agency in Bucharest than they slept in a doorway'. Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

'The Third Way' as ideology

To argue that New Labour's Third Way was a distinct method of governance akin to an ideology, is not a widely held view. Given its fullest articulation by Geddes in 1998, the Third Way was greeted by a small number of academics as a genuinely new approach to governance.¹⁹⁷ Writing in 1998, Le Grand distilled the Third Way down to four key components, 'community, accountability, responsibility and opportunity' and considered it to be a genuine 'Third Way, one rather different from neoliberalism or social democracy'.¹⁹⁸ Freeden engaged critically with the imprecision he found in the Third Way's concepts, and argued that there was 'little in the principles and values underlying Labour's Third Way that hasn't already been given expression in other places, at other times' but strongly refuted those who 'deny that the Third Way is an ideology at all'.¹⁹⁹ Finlayson, while sceptical about the Third Way's underlying assumptions and critical of its inconsistencies, argued that it was 'not simple neoliberalism' nor merely 'cynical spin', but should be 'assessed on its own terms'.²⁰⁰ Such voices are, however, rare, and The Third Way has been far more commonly characterised as a 'fundamentally vague and elusive' concept, 'a label of last resort', or as no more than an 'intellectual fig leaf for pragmatism'.²⁰¹ For Newman, 'the Third Way' was an unsuccessful attempt to develop a "big idea" for our times, an attempt which spoke of the need for hard choices but then avoided them by trying to please everybody.²⁰² Powell argued that the third way was 'neither distinctive nor new' and suggested it was best

¹⁹⁷ Geddes, *The Third Way*.

¹⁹⁸ Le Grand, J., 'The Third Way begins with CORA', *New Statesman*, Vol 127, Issue 4375, 3 June 1998.

¹⁹⁹ Freeden, M., 'The Ideology of New Labour', *The Political Quarterly*, Vol 70, No 1, (2002), p.45.

²⁰⁰ Finlayson, A., *Making Sense of New Labour*, (Lawrence & Wishart, London, 2003), pp.102-143, quotes from p.135.

²⁰¹ White, Stuart, 'The Ambiguities of the Third Way', p.3; Rawnsley, *Servants of the people*, p.310; Wood, S., 'Education and Training: Tensions at the Heart of the British Third Way' in White, S. (Ed.) *New Labour: The Progressive Future?*, (Basingstoke, 2001), p.47. It has also been seen as merely

²⁰² Newman, J., *Modernising Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society*, (Sage, London, 2001), p.46.

summarised by the acronym PAP, standing for 'pragmatism and populism' and concluded that 'the big idea is that there is no big idea'.²⁰³ Others have viewed the Third Way as merely the 'New Liberalism of Lloyd George'.²⁰⁴

Although Blair's party was heir to the long Labour tradition, New Labour was determined to convince the public that this was not the same party that had governed in the 1970s, and the adoption of the 'third way' was viewed alongside the adoption of the red rose as the party symbol, and the suffix 'New' as primarily a means of differentiating Blair's party from what was now known as 'Old Labour'.²⁰⁵ Despite Blair's conception of the 'radical centre', many believed there was an ideological vacuum at the heart of New Labour.²⁰⁶ Those that didn't, tended to view New Labour's journey to the centre-ground (centre-left or perhaps centre-right) as merely, 'an extension of Thatcherism by other means'.²⁰⁷ That New Labour accepted that many of the changes wrought under eighteen years of Conservative government were now embedded in British society and their reversal was neither possible or desirable, was openly admitted by Blair, but he was also always insistent that New Labour remained firmly rooted in the core beliefs of the Labour tradition, often referring to 'traditional values in a modern context'.²⁰⁸ It is clear that those 'traditional values' were, for Blair and the other architects of the New Labour project, bound up in notions of 'social

²⁰³ Powell, M. 'New Labour and the third way in the British welfare state: A distinctive approach?', *Critical Social Policy*, Vol.20, No 1, (2000), pp.39 & 53.

²⁰⁴ Beer, S.H., 'New Labour: Old Liberalism' in White, S. (Ed), *New Labour: The Progressive Future?*, (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2001), pp.21.

²⁰⁵ Among many, see Cronin, J., *New Labour's Pasts: The Labour Party and Its Discontents*, (Routledge, Oxford, 2004), pp.14-26.

²⁰⁶ Among many - Kavanagh, D., 'The Blair Premiership', in Seldon, A., (Ed), *Blair's Britain, 1997-2007*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007), p.10.

²⁰⁷ Pugh, M., *Speak for Britain! - A New History of the Labour Party*, (Vintage, London, 2011), p.397.

²⁰⁸ Blair, T., *A Journey*, (Arrow, London, 2011), pp.90-91 & 317. Dealt with in depth by Seldon, A, '*Blair*', pp.441-451; Cronin, J., *New Labour's Pasts*, p.393. For example, Blair, T., Speech at St Mary's Island Community Centre, Chatham, *Guardian* 13 January 2005.

justice'.²⁰⁹ Blair himself defined the Third way as standing for a 'modernised social democracy, passionate in its commitment to social justice ...flexible, innovative and forward-looking in the means to achieve them'.²¹⁰

The particular way in which social justice was to be achieved was predated on New Labour's conceptions of the limitations of the nation state in a globalised economy.²¹¹ In New Labour's understanding, the nation state no longer had the power to ensure employment for all its people directly, nor could it ensure prosperity solely by the redistribution of wealth through taxation, as 'public expenditure as a proportion of national income had more or less reached the limits of acceptability'.²¹² The solution, therefore, was for the state to invest in 'human and social capital' that would enable the individual to realise the opportunities available in 'the knowledge-based economy of the future'.²¹³ Blair argued that 'the role of government has changed: today it is to give people the education, skills, technical know-how to let their own enterprise and talent flourish in the new marketplace'.²¹⁴ Blair challenged what he saw as a traditional antagonism between economic prosperity and social justice, arguing that 'social justice was the extension to all of a stake in society and was the partner of economic efficiency and not its enemy'.²¹⁵ 'Paid work for a fair wage' was seen as 'the most secure and sustainable route out of poverty', and the role of the state in achieving social justice was therefore less about the distribution of income and instead

²⁰⁹ New Labour's conception of 'Social Justice' was most clearly laid out in The Commission on Social Justice report in 1994. Commission on Social Justice, *Social Justice: Strategies for National Renewal*, (Vintage, London, 1994), pp.17-20.

²¹⁰ Blair, T., *The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century*, p.1.

²¹¹ Blair, T. *The Third way*, pp.6-8. For an excellent analysis of this, see Finlayson, A., *Making Sense of New Labour*, pp.14-38. Also explored in Giddens, A., *The Third Way*, pp.29-31.

²¹² Blair, T. & Schroeder, G., 'The Third Way/Die Neue Mitte', 19 August 1999, Annotated version in, *Dissent*, Vol.47, No 2, (Spring 2000), p.54.

²¹³ Blair, T. & Schroeder, G., 'The Third Way/Die Neue Mitte', pp.54 & 60.

²¹⁴ Blair, T., Speech to the European Socialist's Congress, Malmo, Sweden, 6 June 1997.

²¹⁵ Blair, T., *New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country*, (Westview Press, London, 1996), p. xii.

focused on the distribution of opportunities.²¹⁶ Blair was clear that this shift toward 'equality of opportunity' rather than equality itself, was a radical departure for the Labour party, stating 'I want to highlight opportunity as a key value...the Left, at worst has stifled opportunity in the name of abstract equality'.²¹⁷

New Labour insisted that this new focus was not the neo-liberal individualism of Thatcherism. Under the Third Way, the state was to be an active agent, investing in infrastructure and people, would protect those unable to work, and valued the bonds of mutual obligation inherent in communities.²¹⁸ Furthermore, Blair argued that 'no society can prosper economically or socially unless all of its people prosper, unless we use the talents and energies of all the people rather than just the few'.²¹⁹ This would only be possible if all citizens were in a position to take advantage of the opportunities that would be offered. Those whose circumstances had left them 'socially excluded' had to have the barriers that prevented them fully participating in society overcome.²²⁰ Finlayson argues, against what he sees as a common conception 'in academic as well as public life' that New had 'simply abandoned the value of social justice', it had, in fact, redefined it.²²¹ He argues that 'by seeing social justice as lying in the amelioration or abolition of all kinds of 'social

²¹⁶ Commission on Social Justice, p.20. Most clearly expressed by, Field, F., Speech, The Warwick Debate, University of Warwick, 21 October 1997.

²¹⁷ Blair, T., *The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century*, p.3. Gordon Brown, however, denied the shift to equality of opportunity was revolutionary, saying in 1996 'The pursuit of equality of outcome is someone else's nightmare about socialism rather than a genuine socialist dream. I would prefer to look at equality in terms of opportunities for all.' quoted in Kellner, P., 'Equality of access' in Leonard, D. (Ed), *Crosland and New Labour*, (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1999), p.161.

²¹⁸ Blair, *New Britain*, pp.299-309.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. xii.

²²⁰ Giddens, *The Third Way*, pp.102-109. Blair, T., *A Journey*, pp. xxviii-xxix.

²²¹ Finlayson, A., 'Financialisation, Finance Literacy and Asset-based Welfare', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol 11, No 3, (2009), pp.404-5.

exclusion' and 'disadvantage', New Labour had, 'perhaps paradoxically, expanded the concept', and concomitantly 'reinvented the justification for interventionist government'.

Social Exclusion was indeed, a key concept for New Labour, with Peter Mandelson describing it as 'the biggest challenge we face', and Blair stating it was, 'more damaging to self-esteem, more corrosive for society as a whole, more likely to be passed down from generation to generation, than material poverty'.²²² Mandelson outlined Labour's understanding of the socially excluded as, 'the growing number of our fellow citizens who lack the means, material and otherwise to participate in economic, social, cultural and political life in Britain today', emphasising that, 'this is more than poverty and unemployment. It is about being cut off from what the rest of us regard as normal life'.²²³ Social Exclusion, as Levitas points out, is 'a contested concept'.²²⁴ Levitas identifies three competing discourses and the differing policy responses they elicit: A 'Radical Egalitarian Discourse' (RED), that assumes 'social exclusion is intertwined with poverty' and is addressed by increasing 'the resources available in kind or cash to the poor'; a 'Moral Underclass Discourse' (MED), that 'deploys cultural rather than material explanations of poverty', accepts notions of transmitted deprivation and tends to apportion blame for social exclusion on the failings of the individual and a 'dependency culture' created by the welfare state; and a 'Social Integrationist Discourse' (SID), that 'sees inclusion primarily in terms of labour market attachment' with the solution to exclusion lying in 'increasing labour market participation' where 'paid work is claimed to deliver inclusion both directly and indirectly

²²² Blair, T., Speech on 'Bringing Britain Together' at Stockwell Park School, 8 December 1997; Mandelson, P., *Labour's next steps: tackling social exclusion*, (Fabian Society, London, 1997), p.1.

²²³ Mandelson, P., *Labour's next steps: tackling social exclusion*, Fabian Pamphlet 581, (London, Fabian Society, 1997), p.1.

²²⁴ Levitas, R., *The Inclusive Society?: Social Exclusion and New Labour* (2nd edn), (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2005), p.3.

through the income it provides'.²²⁵ As Levitas points out, New Labour largely rejected the redistributive (RED) discourse, and utilised a mixture of MUD and SID discourses with a strong emphasis on paid employment as the primary route out of social exclusion.²²⁶ This rejection of a redistributive approach provoked widespread criticism, and at the time of the Social Exclusion Unit's launch, fifty-four professors of social policy and sociology wrote a joint letter to the *Financial Times*, describing it as 'trying to tackle social exclusion with one hand tied behind its back'.²²⁷ Many were more stridently critical, alleging that New Labour's adoption of social exclusion was merely 'a way of disguising the fact that nothing was being done about income inequality and material poverty'.²²⁸

For its advocates, however, Social Exclusion was both a wider concept than poverty and opened up new means of addressing long-standing problems. As Perri 6 argues, 'the shift in attention from poverty to social exclusion reflects the lessons learned over many decades as [redistributive] strategies to eliminate poverty have failed to live up to expectations'.²²⁹

Although rejecting a redistributive approach, New Labour embedded tackling social exclusion across the whole of government and monitored its performance in annually produced reports throughout their period in office.²³⁰ Lund describes five key elements of Labour's approach to addressing social exclusion; targeted local initiatives in the form of Neighbourhood renewal programmes; through making mainstream services more inclusive;

²²⁵ Ibid. Quotes from pp.2-3.

²²⁶ Ibid. Similar arguments made in Benn, M., 'New Labour and Social Exclusion', *Political Quarterly*, Vol 71, No 3, (2000), pp.309-318.

²²⁷ See Lister, R., 'From Equality to Social Exclusion: New Labour and the Welfare State', *Critical Social Policy*, Vol 18, No 2, (1998), pp.215-226; Lister, R. & Moore, R., 'Government must reconsider its strategy for a more equal society', *Financial Times*, 1 October 1997.

²²⁸ Hills, J. & Stewart, K., (eds), 'Introduction' in, *A More Equal Society?: New Labour, poverty, inequality and exclusion*, (Policy Press, Bristol, 2005), p.9.

²²⁹ 6, P., 'Social Exclusion: time to be optimistic' in *Demos Collection*, Issue 12, (1997), pp.1-24.

²³⁰ The first of these was: DSS, *Opportunity for All: Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion*, (DSS, London, 1999).

through the creation of new forms of joined-up governance including the creation of the cross-cutting Social Exclusion Unit; through influencing behaviour by attaching obligations to rights, and most importantly through facilitating access to paid work.²³¹

New Labour, under its Third Way approach, argued that to achieve its aims, including ending social exclusion, a new relationship between the state and citizen was required, with the latter taking a much more participative role. This conception had moral overtones, and was summed up under the Third Way as the need for ‘rights to be balanced by responsibilities’.²³² To create this active, participative, citizen, democracy needed to be expanded and civil society reinvigorated.²³³ Integral to this was a new conceptualisation of governance under the modern state, away from Fabian statism, where centralised hierarchical bureaucracies controlled the creation and delivery of welfare, to the ‘plural state’, where government acted as an ‘enabler’ rather than provider of welfare, with provision now diffused across a range of providers including both the voluntary and private sectors.²³⁴ The state as ‘enabler’ was a central tenet of the Third Way, leading to what Finlayson describes as a form of governance where government acts as ‘an enabling institution at the centre of a variety of networks of policy formation’ which ‘affords it indirect power that sets agendas and leads policy by inducement rather than direct intervention’.²³⁵ Much emphasis was laid on the important role of voluntary sector, whose dynamism and flexibility would be empowered through a new partnership or ‘compact’ with

²³¹ Lund, B., *Understanding State Welfare: Social justice or Social Exclusion?*, (SAGE, London, 2002).

²³² Giddens, *The Third Way*, pp.65-66. Blair, *The Third Way*, pp. 12-14.

²³³ Giddens, *The Third Way*, pp.70-78.

²³⁴ The language to describe this form of governance varies. May et al explore this shift through a framework of governance/governmentality, May, Cloke & Johnsen, ‘Re-phasing Neoliberalism’, pp.703-730. See also Newman, J., *Modernising Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society*, (Sage, London, 2001), pp.11-13.

²³⁵ Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*, p.188.

the state.²³⁶ Public sector bodies, too needed radical reform, and under the Third Way, the welfare state was to be transformed from 'a safety net in times of trouble to a springboard for economic opportunity', it needed to offer 'not a hand-out, but a hand up'.²³⁷

In New Labour's analysis, the public sector had become inflexible and unresponsive, often working for the needs of their employees rather than the public they served.²³⁸ Giddens describes a Third Way aim as creating 'a society of positive welfare', arguing that the existing system was 'essentially undemocratic...in some aspects bureaucratic, alienating and inefficient' and could create perverse consequences'.²³⁹ Resolving this perceived problem was to be achieved by the most prominent component of the Third Way, 'modernisation'. 'Modernisation' was the term used most regularly by Blair, and was ever-present in New Labour publications. In Blair's speeches (1997-9) he used the term 'modern' 89 times and modernise/modernisation 87 times.²⁴⁰ New Labour's *Modernising Government* white paper became a key text, and the centrality of modernisation to the New Labour project was made clear by the establishment of the Centre for Management and Policy studies within the Cabinet Office and the creation of the Resource Centre for Evidence-based Policy within the ESRC.²⁴¹ Finlayson argues that 'if there is a single word that captures the essence of New

²³⁶ Blair, *The Third Way*, pp.14 & 18. Analysed in depth by Kendall, J., 'The mainstreaming of the third sector into public policy in England in the late 1990s: Whys and wherefores', Civil Society Working Paper 2, January 2000. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29028/1/cswp2.pdf>

²³⁷ Commission on Social Justice, *Social Justice*, p.8; Blair, *A Journey*, p.26.

²³⁸ Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, (London HMSO, 1999), p.11. Finlayson sees the origins of this in New Labour's acceptance of ideas derived from public choice theory. Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*, pp.111-116.

²³⁹ Giddens, *The Third Way*, p.111.

²⁴⁰ Fairclough, N., *New Labour, New Language?*, (Routledge, London, 2000), pp.18-19. For examples of use in Labour publications see, among many; Department of Health, *The New NHS: Modern, dependable*, (Department of Health, London, 1997); Department of Health, *Modernising social services*, (London, HMSO, 1998); Her Majesty's Treasury, *Modern Public Services* (HM Treasury & Cabinet Office, London, 1998), DETR, *Modern local government* (London, HMSO, 1998); Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, (London, HMSO, 1999). For different usage and meanings of 'modernisation' see: see Finlayson, A., *Making Sense of New Labour*, pp.66-101.

²⁴¹ Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, (HMSO, London, 1999); Newman, J., *Modernising Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society*, (Sage, London, 2001), p.70.

Labour's social and political project, then it is modernisation'.²⁴² Modernisation under the Third Way was centred on the adoption of New Public Management (NPM) techniques, which required incorporation into the public sector of methods of working derived from the private sector. Osborn lists NPM's key components as, 'a focus on hands on and entrepreneurial management - as opposed to the traditional bureaucratic focus of the public administrator; explicit standards and measures of performance; an emphasis on output controls; the importance of the disaggregation and decentralisation of public services; a shift to the promotion of competition in the provision of public services; a stress on private sector styles of management and their superiority; the promotion of discipline and parsimony in resource allocation'.²⁴³ For public sector bodies this would entail new methods of accountability and control, including the setting of specific targets, regular audits of performance which measured outcomes rather than inputs, regular audits, and, where appropriate, competitive tendering for contracts.²⁴⁴ In addition, and linked to the Third Way aims of expanding democracy and increasing participation, service-users (now termed 'customers') had to be both consulted and engaged.²⁴⁵

Under the Third Way, the mechanisms of central government also required modernisation. Policy-making itself was to become 'evidenced-based', outside expertise brought in, and an entrepreneurial spirit engendered within the organs of the state.²⁴⁶ To achieve this, an expansion and remodelling of the Cabinet Office was undertaken, longer-term planning

²⁴² Finlayson, A. *Making Sense of New Labour*, p.66.

²⁴³ Osborne, S. & McLaughlin, K. 'The New Public Management in context' in McLaughlin, K., Osborne, S. & Ferlie, E. (Eds), *New Public Management: Current Trends and Future Prospects*, (Routledge, London and New York, 2002), p.9.

²⁴⁴ This would equally apply to the voluntary sector. Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, pp. 35-43.

²⁴⁵ Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, pp.23, 25-27 & 40.

²⁴⁶ Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, pp.14-21; Cabinet Office, *Professional Policy Making in the Twenty-First Century*, (Cabinet Office, London 1999).

enabled through Comprehensive Spending Reviews, and discrete problems and issues addressed by the creation of specialist units.²⁴⁷ More significantly still, New Labour considered the traditional departmental structure to have significant flaws, arguing that with each individual department of state concerned only with its own specific policy areas and defensive of its budgets, the state apparatus was unable to work strategically toward broad policy aims, and incapable of addressing 'cross-cutting issues' that covered more than one department.²⁴⁸ The solution to this would require both the breaking down of departmental 'siloes' and collaboration with the newly empowered voluntary sector.²⁴⁹ Under the Third Way this was often described as a need for 'joined-up government'.²⁵⁰ Although joined-up working was by no means a new aspiration for government, it was giving considerable impetus under New Labour, becoming a key component of New Labour's modernisation agenda under the Third Way.²⁵¹

Despite combining both conceptions of the role of the state and the citizen with a technocratic programme of institutional change, the Third Way may not cross the threshold required to be considered a fully formed 'ideology'. Certainly, New Labour struggled to articulate its vision, with even the terminology shifting over time. From 'the Investment State' of the Commission for Social Justice of 1994, through 'the stakeholder society' of

²⁴⁷ Dealt with in depth in Chapter 2.

²⁴⁸ Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, pp.17-18. Analysed in depth by Newman, *Modernising Governance, New Labour, Policy and Society*, pp.2, 59-61. In relation to homelessness specifically see, SEU/Cabinet Office, *Report on Rough Sleeping*, Sections 3 & 4.

²⁴⁹ Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, pp.23 & 32-33.

²⁵⁰ Blair referenced 'joined-up solutions' repeatedly, including in his speech announcing the launch of the Social Exclusion Unit. Blair, T., Speech on 'Bringing Britain Together' at Stockwell Park School, 8 December 1997.

²⁵¹ Mulgan points out that 'almost every government has set up cross-departmental committees' including Edward Heath and Winston Churchill, Mulgan, G., *The Art of Public Strategy: Mobilizing Power and Knowledge for the Common Good*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009), p.185. See Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, pp.5, 23, 32-33. Fawcett, P. & Rhodes, R.A.W., 'Central Government' in Seldon, A. (Ed), *Blair's Britain, 1997-2007*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007), p.83; Newman, *Modernising Governance*, pp.59-62.

1996, to the Third Way by 1997.²⁵² Even the term ‘the Third Way’ itself, having found little resonance with the public, slipped out of use during Labour’s second term.²⁵³

What is argued here, however, is that the Third Way contained particular ways of thinking about the relationship between the state and citizen and the state’s role in political economy, introduced new discourses on poverty, put forward new mechanisms of governance for the deliverance of social policy, and was internally consistent. Third Way notions of the distribution of opportunity, social exclusion, the balancing of rights and responsibilities, the state as enabler rather than provider, compacts with the voluntary sector, modernisation and joined-up governance form a linked set of discourses which can be considered akin to an ideology. Despite the lapse in the term’s use, Pautz, among others, argues that the Third Way ‘remained the foundation of Labour Policy throughout its three terms in office’.²⁵⁴ It is also argued here, that in the delivery of its homelessness policies, the precepts of a Third Way approach were central to the way in which it was formulated and delivered.

Labour’s homelessness policies and the Third Way

Labour’s homelessness policies can be seen to be applied in a manner entirely consistent with its espoused Third Way principles. The government acted as *enabler not provider*. New Labour’s homelessness policies were delivered almost entirely through the voluntary sector. Although the degree to which this was a true partnership with the voluntary sector can be

²⁵² A ‘stakeholding’ society, was used by Blair in 1996, but the term was quickly dropped. Philip Gould describes it as ‘a first attempt at synthesis’. Blair, T., Speech to the Singapore business community, 8 January 1996; Gould, P., *The Unfinished Revolution: How New Labour Changed British Politics For Ever*, (Abacus, London, 2011), p.248 & 250. The term ‘the Third Way’ was used by Labour only after 1997 and given its fullest exposition in Giddens, *The Third Way*.

²⁵³ Cronin, J., *New Labour’s Pasts*, p.430; Judd, T., *Reappraisals: reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century*, (Heinemann, London, 2008), p.228 - original published in *New York Review of Books*, 19 July 2001.

²⁵⁴ Pautz, H., ‘New Labour in government: Think-tanks and social policy reform, 1997-2001’, *British Politics*, Vol 6, No 2, (2011), pp.187-209.

disputed, the homelessness sector was deeply involved not only in delivery, but also in the policy making process, not least through key individuals recruited from the sector who would oversee the whole programme.²⁵⁵ In Labour's second and third terms, local, not central government, was given the lead role, both in the formation of local homeless strategies and by local government commissioners who oversaw the Supporting People programme.²⁵⁶ In the delivery of these programmes, local authorities were obliged to form consortia with voluntary sector providers who would deliver the services.²⁵⁷

Labour's homelessness policies were explicitly framed from the outset as a means of *addressing social exclusion*. Self-evidently no group could be considered more social excluded than rough sleepers, and the origins of Labour's homelessness programme begin with the creation of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in August 1997.²⁵⁸ The SEU was based within the Cabinet Office with a direct line to the Prime Minister, and rough sleeping was one of its first three designated priority areas.²⁵⁹ The appointment of Moira Wallace as the unit's director was fortuitous, but as a dynamic and very senior civil servant (she had been principal private secretary to both Major and Blair) she gave the unit considerable clout and impetus.²⁶⁰ In keeping with New Labour's modernisation agenda, the unit was not to be

²⁵⁵ For debate on partnership, see: Lewis, J., 'New Labour's Approach to the Voluntary Sector: Independence and the Meaning of Partnership', *Social Policy & Society*, Vol 4, No 2, (2005), pp.121-131.

²⁵⁶ See Chapter 3.

²⁵⁷ ODPM, *Homeless Strategies: A good Practice Handbook*, (ODPM, London, 2003).

²⁵⁸ Geoff Mulgan, who had been recruited from the think-tank Demos into the Cabinet Office Policy Unit, was instrumental in the establishment of the SEU. In interview he recalled producing a paper recommending its establishment soon after Labour gained office, and this was approved 'pretty quickly' by Blair. Geoff Mulgan Interview 22/11/21; For Demos' work on social exclusion see Demos, *The Wealth and Poverty of Networks: tackling social exclusion*, (Demos, London, 1997). Other Labour-linked think-tanks were also working on social exclusion - for an example of IPPR's work: Oppenheim, C., (Ed), *An Inclusive Society: Strategies for tackling poverty*, (IPPR, London, 1998).

²⁵⁹ Moira Wallace, in interview, stated that she originally approached Blair with a list of 8 topics, 'he looked at me in a slightly worried way and said 'I was thinking maybe of just working on one thing!' - we compromised on three.', Moira Wallace, interview, 8/10/20.

²⁶⁰ Wallace states that she had been inspired to apply for the post after listening to Blair's Aylesbury speech. Moira Wallace, interview 8/10/20. The significance of Wallace's appointment was noted by Geoff Mulgan,

merely a backwater for long-standing civil servants, and recruited its members from across a wide range of government departments and from both the statutory and voluntary sector outside Whitehall.²⁶¹ Under Moira Wallace's direction, the SEU became the embodiment of 'evidence-based' policy making, consulting widely and at every level across the homelessness sector, conducted a review of the academic literature, and adopted an entrepreneurial and hands-on approach to data gathering which involved SEU members talking to frontline workers and rough sleepers and even taking part in soup runs.²⁶²

The SEU report on homelessness was produced by July 1998.²⁶³ The report was widely praised by the homelessness sector, containing as it did not only a thorough analysis of the issues involved, but also a clear plan of action for what needed to be done to bring the numbers down. Louise Casey, in interview in 2021, recalled it as a 'brilliant report' that acted as a 'circuit breaker' heralding a 'new approach to policy' and her views were echoed by many in the sector, including Mark McGreevy's (CEO of DePaul International) who described it as 'an excellent report', formed from 'very good consultation with the sector' and 'we had...for the first time a proper policy understanding in Downing Street'.²⁶⁴ The SEU report led directly to the creation of the Rough Sleepers Unit that would oversee Labour's homelessness programme. Wallace argues that one of the key developments was the bringing of 'arithmetic' to the problem that enabled both quantification and costing.²⁶⁵ The target of reducing homelessness by two-thirds by 2001 was deeply significant in focussing the work of the RSU after its creation in 1999, and a direct application of the

Interview 22/11/21 & Louise Casey, interview 5/5/21. Importance of Wallace's appointment cited in, Barber, M., *Instruction to Deliver - Fighting to Transform Britain's Public Services*, (Methuen, London, 2007), p.279.

²⁶¹ Moira Wallace, interview, 8/10/20.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ SEU, *Rough sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*.

²⁶⁴ Louise Casey, Interview 5/5/21. Mark McGreevy, Interview, 19/10/20.

²⁶⁵ Moira Wallace, Interview, 8/10/20.

modernisation agenda championed by New Labour.²⁶⁶ Wallace argues that the most significant factor in the SEU's homelessness policy was 'due to the Prime Minister investing it so much authority'.²⁶⁷ They met regularly during the early period and Blair gave the issue 'a big policy steer' enabling her to gain traction across government departments.²⁶⁸ The importance of social exclusion to New Labour is also apparent in the oversight by a high-powered ministerial group which contained important Labour figures such as Hilary Armstrong, Stephen Byers, Tessa Jowell, Peter Mandelson and Alun Michael.²⁶⁹

A consistently modernising approach is abundantly clear in Labour's approach to street homelessness. 'Government by unit' was established in the form of the RSU, and outside expertise from the homelessness sector brought in, including its leader, Louise Casey, who, given a relatively free-hand by Labour, ran the unit with a distinctly entrepreneurial spirit.²⁷⁰ Explicit standards were imposed on a previously largely unregulated voluntary sector, clear and measurable targets were set and these were monitored through vastly expanded inspection and audit regimes.²⁷¹ Outcomes rather than inputs were used in their evaluation.²⁷² Competition between service providers was engineered through a competitive contracting culture, and the funds were to be reallocated if organisations failed to achieve specified goals.²⁷³

²⁶⁶ Mulgan freely admits the target was plucked from thin air without any surety that such a reduction was possible. Geoff Mulgan, Interview, 22/11/21.

²⁶⁷ Moira Wallace, Interview, 8/10/20.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Moira Wallace, Interview, 8/10/20. That Hilary Armstrong was the key figure was noted by Louise Casey, Interview 5/5/21; Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

²⁷⁰ Louise Casey, Interview 5/5/21; Ian Brady interview 15/10/20, Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20, Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 18/9/20.

²⁷¹ DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold: Delivering the Strategy*, (DETR, London, 2000); Impact reviewed in Moseley, A & James, O., 'Central State Steering of Local Collaboration: Assessing the Impact of Tools of Meta-governance in Homeless Services in England', *Public Organisation Review*, Vol 8, No 2, (2008), pp.117-137.

²⁷² DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold: Delivering the Strategy*, (DETR, London, 2000).

²⁷³ Cloke, *Swept-up Lives?*, p.34; Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

Labour's whole approach to homelessness was predicated on its notions of joined-up governance. Homelessness as an issue was archetypal of a 'cross-cutting' issue that required joined up government. The remit of the SEU was to address those 'wicked issues' that were irresolvable without co-operation across government departments and to chart a course that would break down departmental 'silos' to enable their resolution.²⁷⁴ The Rough Sleepers Unit that formed out of the SEU report had the same need for joined up working, not only between central and local government departments, but also across the statutory/voluntary sector divide. Both Moira Wallace at the SEU and Louise Casey at the RSU required and received the weight of Prime Ministerial patronage to compel competing departments to commit to the programme.²⁷⁵ Joined-up governance was central throughout the delivery of the homelessness programme.²⁷⁶ Under both Supporting People and the local homeless strategies mandated by the 2001 Homelessness Act, local authorities were obliged to form consortia that included housing and social services department, different branches of the health service, law enforcement and the voluntary sector.²⁷⁷

New Labour's homelessness began with steps that facilitated getting people off the streets and into accommodation, but this was only the starting point. Built in from the very beginning was the provision of '*opportunities*', for homeless people to permanently end their social exclusion.²⁷⁸ To win the contracts offered, homeless agencies had to provide programmes that facilitated 'meaningful activity', and offered opportunities for education,

²⁷⁴ See: Cabinet Office, *Preventing Social Exclusion: Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*, (Cabinet Office, London, March 2001).

²⁷⁵ Moira Wallace, interview, 8/10/20; Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

²⁷⁶ This had been made apparent from the outset with The SEU report containing two chapters entitled, 'A Joined-Up problem' and 'A Joined-Up solution'. SEU, *Rough Sleeping - Report by the SEU*, Chapters 3 & 4.

²⁷⁷ ODPM, *Homeless Strategies: A good Practice Handbook*, (ODPM, London, 2003), Sections 1.1.4-1.2.

²⁷⁸ DETR, *Coming in from the Cold: Progress Report on the Government's Strategy on Rough Sleeping* (Summer 2000); DCLG, *No One Left Out: Communities ending rough sleeping*, (DCLG, London, November 2008), p.51.

training and employment.²⁷⁹ Specific funds were also allocated to partner agencies to facilitate entrepreneurial schemes and to encourage employers to assist homeless people in accessing employment.²⁸⁰

In addition, homeless people were not to be passive recipients of services, but active agents, with requirements built into the contracts issued that obliged service-user consultation and engagement.²⁸¹ The notion of ‘rights and responsibilities’ was embedded from the outset. The state would provide the opportunity (hostel beds, access to education and training etc) but it was also the duty of rough sleepers to take advantage of the provision offered.²⁸² Notions of reciprocity meant that while the programme would offer support and assistance, it also demanded standards of acceptable behaviour, justifying actions taken against ‘problematic street culture’. The development of conditionality in service provision can also be viewed, through a Third Way lens, not as ‘coercion and control’, but as an example of the new contractual relationship between state and citizen that Labour sought to develop.

Conclusion

It is, of course, impossible to truly determine the motivation behind New Labour’s intervention in street homelessness, and for heuristic purposes the debate above has been constructed as a false binary, opposing notions of ‘revanchism’ with a ‘sincere’ approach aimed at long-term solutions. However, it is clear that, whilst there were certainly elements of ‘coercion and control’ in Labour’s homelessness policies, the high profile given to the

²⁷⁹ ODPM, *More Than a Roof: a report into single homelessness*, (ODPM, London, 2003), pp.21-22.

²⁸⁰ DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold*, Key Proposals for Change, Section F; DETR/RSU, *Progress Report*, Summer 2000. This approach was most evident under the ‘Places of Change’ programme from 2006. See Chapter 4.

²⁸¹ ODPM, *Homeless Strategies: A good Practice Handbook*, (ODPM, London, 2003), Section 2.1.5.

²⁸² Blair, ‘Forward by the Prime Minister’ in *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*.

issue, the direct engagement of the Prime Minister, the unprecedented resources committed, and the sustained and coherent nature of the programme make the revanchist interpretation difficult to sustain. Likewise, to argue that Labour was 'sincere' in its intentions, rather than merely acting for reasons of political expediency, is also impossible to determine. Inevitably political parties are concerned with their public image and desirous of re-election, and Labour gave no small amount of attention to communications and media management. However, the fluctuating and equivocal attitudes to homelessness and homeless people in the media and public opinion, does call into question any direct causative link.

However, the assertion that New Labour's achievements in homelessness have been ignored, doubted or dismissed as trivial are more a consequence of pejorative characterisations of New Labour than in accordance with the evidence, is more readily sustained. Any arguments that suggests New Labour's approach to homelessness was primarily about media image and public perception, or primarily undertaken to further the interests of capital are untenable. New Labour was not a party without any form of ideology, remained deeply concerned with notions of social justice, and was determined to address social exclusion. The key Third Way notion of 'modernisation' is concerned primarily with efficiency in the delivery of services, and as a largely technocratic approach it is hardly surprising that new Labour struggled to wrap it into a clearly espoused ideology – as Cronin points out 'no matter how clear and inspiring [modernisation's] meaning might be to the hard core of New Labour activists, ordinary people were never likely to be moved by the notion'.²⁸³ Such pragmatism is often couched as a failure of ideology, and there was

²⁸³ Cronin, J., *New Labour's Pasts*, p.425.

certainly a technocratic and pragmatic core to New Labour in office, but this should not be casually employed in solely pejorative terms. A political philosophy founded on pragmatism and focused on efficient service delivery is unexciting to political theorists but, if effective, is more important to its beneficiaries, including rough sleepers, than any clearly defined ideology. The adage that Blair often called upon, that 'what counts is what works' is worthy of serious reconsideration.²⁸⁴ Although it found it difficult to encapsulate its ideological position, the Third Way was, at least, a series of inter-linked discourses akin to an ideology, and one which was consistently put into practice in its interventions in street homelessness. The detail, and the strengths and weaknesses of New Labour's Third Way approach in street homelessness will be explored in depth in the subsequent chapters.

²⁸⁴ For example, see, Blair, *A Journey*, p.119.

Chapter 2 The Rough Sleepers Unit: Muscular Intervention from Whitehall

In its first term in office, Labour tackled street homelessness with unprecedented vigour and it was during this period that the most dramatic reduction in the numbers of people sleeping rough took place. In addition, steps were taken that led to a profound and lasting transformation of the voluntary homelessness sector that vastly improved the efficiency, capacity and skill-set of the homeless agencies that delivered services to homeless people.

This chapter explores in depth the mechanisms of governance created by New Labour that enabled these developments to take place, and critically evaluates the work of the Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU) that both helped formulate and implement Labour's homelessness policies during its first term. This chapter focuses primarily on the RSU's interventions in London where, given the high concentrations of people sleeping rough in the capital, much of the RSU's early work was directed. It is important to note, however, that the RSU's approach was national from the outset, and London was atypical in already having a network of highly developed voluntary sector agencies.¹ A focus on the capital therefore has limitations, but is used here, partly for simplicity, but also as it was in London that key components of the RSU's approach were first tested, and the response to the implementation of those policies in the capital is indicative of the challenges the RSU would face in delivering its programme nationally.² This chapter consciously focuses on the issue

¹ The voluntary homeless sector in London contains both long-established agencies with high profiles such as St Mungo's, Thames Reach and Centrepoin, and many much smaller, often faith-based organisations. Although many other cities also have prominent, long-established agencies, some are served only by small voluntary groups, or in some cases have no homeless provision at all.

² Developments in the rest of the country are explored in greater depth in Chapters 3 & 4.

of the actual *delivery* of social policy, a subject that is both vitally important and often neglected in the writing of political history.

While Labour's street homelessness programme has commonly been unacknowledged or disparaged, this chapter argues that New Labour's reduction of rough sleeper numbers by two-thirds in just over two years was a remarkable and unprecedented achievement.

Moreover, drawing on the voices of those who designed the policies and delivered the services, it argues that New Labour's interventions in homelessness in its first term were far from 'revanchist' in intent. Rather, it provides substantive evidence that Labour's actions constituted a coherent and considered programme to permanently reduce rough sleeping, and that this was made possible by the sustained application of political will from the very centre of government.

In addition, it argues that to achieve its aims in homelessness, New Labour developed innovative mechanisms of governance that derived directly from its Third Way ideology. These innovations began with a remodelled and expanded Cabinet Office, which brought outside expertise into the heart of government and instituted a new form of 'government by unit'. These new units, the SEU and the RSU, were conscious attempts to create 'joined up' governance; cross-cutting bodies designed to break down departmental silos and enable the cooperation needed to tackle homelessness. The RSU was an experiment in a new form of governance. Headed by a 'Tsar', it was a maverick department, located within Whitehall but granted considerable autonomy, that pioneered an active 'hands on' and 'bottom up' approach that challenged bureaucratic and hierarchical civil service practices.

The creation of the RSU was, however, only the first step. The successful delivery of Labour's homelessness policies required another Third Way element, expanding and

enhancing the role of the third sector in the delivery of services. This was, in itself, a complex undertaking. Provision of homeless services had been historically left to a hugely diverse and largely uncoordinated voluntary sector which had remained largely unregulated and outside of state control. To fulfil its objectives, Labour had to both realise the dynamism and creativity of a sector whose virtues it had espoused, but also bring it under some form of control and give it direction. With control of the new resources Labour had supplied, the RSU set about a comprehensive reform of the homelessness sector. The RSU was, in many ways, a test-bed for the Third Way principle of state as enabler, not provider. In keeping with New Labour's modernisation agenda, performance related targets were set based on 'outputs' rather than 'inputs' and competitive tendering for contracts was introduced. New methods of working practice were pushed through, and services considered to be 'enabling' rather than addressing street homelessness were frozen out. Also, in keeping with New Labour's interpretation of the means of reducing social exclusion, new services that sought to empower the individual were introduced, via service-user engagement, and schemes that enabled education, training and routes out of homelessness into employment.

In total, the actions of New Labour and the RSU in its first term led to radical change in the working practices, organisational structure and governance of the voluntary homeless sector that amounted to a wholesale cultural change, presaging the end of its amateur ethos and ushering in a far more professionalised sector. Such changes were not without controversy or resistance, but the argument advanced here is that they were, on balance, both necessary and effective, and that their method of delivery flowed directly from key components of Labour's notion of a Third Way.

The Creation of the Rough Sleepers Unit

New Labour's innovative approach to the mechanisms of governance, its sincerity in addressing the issue of street homelessness, and its application of the principles of the Third Way to homelessness policy were made apparent from the outset in the work of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) and the creation of the Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU).

The formation of the RSU was a direct consequence of the SEU's 1998 report. In other circumstances, the SEU's report, however well researched and constructed, could have remained a paper document. Governments and civil service departments create many such well-considered reports that produce no material effects beyond a few column inches in the liberal press. However, as Moira Wallace (SEU Director, 1997-2002) points out, this was a 'report *by* government, not a report *to* government', one produced from within the Cabinet Office and carrying the imprimatur of the Prime Minister himself.³ Furthermore, the report was not merely an incisive analysis of the problem, but also proposed mechanisms for how Labour's homelessness policies could be put into practice.

The SEU, a unit created as a means of addressing issues that cut across departmental boundaries and therefore required joined-up government, was to spawn another unit that addressed cross-cutting issues that required joined-up government. That joined-up governance was at its heart is made explicit in the SEU report, with chapter three entitled, 'A Joined-Up Problem', and chapter four, 'A Joined-Up Solution'.⁴ The report stated that without better integration in 'both policy planning and delivery', little would be achieved,

³ Moira Wallace, Interview, 8/10/20.

⁴ SEU, *Rough Sleeping - Report by the SEU*, Chapters 3 & 4.

and that ‘simply putting money down the same fragmented channels’ would not solve the problem.⁵

As well as addressing the plight of those already sleeping rough, the report recognised that preventing the flow of people onto the street was a cross-departmental issue, and its proposals outlined changes in practice for the Department of Health, the Home Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Department for Education and Employment and the Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (DETR).⁶ The key proposal for a joined-up approach was the creation of a new coordinating body for rough sleeping. This body would have a single budget, bringing together four key existing funding streams that had previously been under the remit of four different government departments.⁷ There were limits to this joined up approach, with the RSU’s remit only covering London, but this was swiftly rectified. Ian Brady, (Deputy Director of the RSU), accredits Louise Casey, the Unit’s director, with ‘promptly merging’ the London and extra-London programmes, having ‘clocked...a few weeks in...that you couldn't have two separate bits of government, one working on rough sleeping in London and one working on rough sleeping outside London’.⁸ The RSU was also charged with becoming ‘the centre of a strategic framework to link the work of central government departments and agencies, local authorities’ services, the voluntary sector and business’.⁹ All contracts the body awarded would be conditional on joint working.¹⁰

⁵ Ibid, Section 4.1.

⁶ Ibid, Section 4.10.

⁷ These were: RSI, Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative, Drug and Alcohol Specific Grant and DSS Resettlement Programme. SEU, *Rough Sleeping - Report by the SEU*, Section 4.16.

⁸ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The SEU report, explicitly calls for voluntary sector homeless agencies to work with the police, business communities and soup run providers. SEU, *Rough Sleeping*, Section 4.22.

New Labour's modernising imperatives are also deeply embedded in the SEU report. The work of the proposed body was to be 'evidence-based' from the outset, with one of its key tasks to generate a 'comprehensive information system' that would identify both where rough sleepers came from, and where and how quickly they moved out of street homelessness.¹¹ There was also to be a 'major audit of the scale and type' of hostel provision.¹² New Public Management techniques were central. Mechanisms of monitoring and feedback are repeatedly foregrounded, voluntary sector providers would have to competitively bid for contracts, and these would be awarded on the basis of 'measuring success by what happens on the streets'.¹³ Most significantly, while aiming for a reduction in street homelessness to 'as close to zero as possible' a specific target and deadline were set – to reduce numbers by two-thirds by 2002.¹⁴ Other Third Way aspects were also central in the SEU's plan of action. The programme was to be delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector, who had been widely consulted in the report's creation.¹⁵ In addition, the New Labour conception of a 'social integrationist' route out of social exclusion was to be central, with 'education, training and employment' as one of the eight key measures to be adopted and links to the 'New Deal' for unemployed young people were made explicit.¹⁶

¹¹ SEU, *Rough Sleeping*, Section 4.29.

¹² Ibid, Sections 4.2 & 5.6.

¹³ Ibid, Section 4.21.

¹⁴ Blair, Forward by the Prime Minister, SEU, *Rough Sleeping*.

¹⁵ SEU, *Rough Sleeping*, Section 3.5. Moira Wallace describes the role of the voluntary sector in the reports construction as 'incredibly important' and cites the homelessness umbrella organisation Homeless Network and individuals at Shelter, Crisis and Centrepont as key figures. Moira Wallace, Interview, 15/10/20.

¹⁶ Ibid, Sections 4,2, 4.24 -4.27 & 5.7.

The SEU report did not give definitive form to the new coordinating body that was to be created, but the decision to establish the RSU in the form of a central government unit was made relatively swiftly and the unit was established by March 1999.¹⁷

Government by Unit

The creation of central government units to address specific tasks derives from both New Labour's Third Way modernisation agenda, and the pragmatic streak in its approach to governance that Blair had articulated as 'what matters is what works'. Such units were not an unprecedented innovation, as Rutter and Harris point out, "successive Prime Ministers' have used units for 'incubating and catalysing change'.¹⁸ They had, however, been relatively rare prior to 1997, but would proliferate under New Labour.¹⁹ In addition, New Labour would give them a markedly different role, whereas previously they had taken the form of policy-making bodies or think-tanks, now many were to be agencies tasked with delivery.²⁰ To their supporters they were a means of 're-energising the civil service' and overcoming the 'extraordinary deadweight of institutional inertia'.²¹ Blair certainly became an advocate, singing the praises of the later Delivery Unit as being like having an 'independent private or social enterprise at the heart of government'.²² To their critics they were a symptom of an

¹⁷ The other options were a 'not for profit' company or an independent body attached to the Housing Corporation. SEU, *Rough Sleeping* Sections 5.11-5.20. Having revisiting the report prior to interview, Moira Wallace expressed surprise that they 'had left it so open', suggesting that a central government unit was always the preferred option. The decision was made after consultation and by an 'implementation group' driven forward, Wallace suggests, by the leadership of Hilary Armstrong. Moira Wallace, interview 8/10/20.

¹⁸ Rutter, J., & Harris, J., *The Special Ones: How to make central government units work*, Institute for Government, October 2014, p.1 <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications/special-ones> viewed 1 October 2021.

¹⁹ Only two were created during the Thatcher administration and two under John Major. Rutter & Harris list 10 such units formed under New Labour. Rutter & Harris, *The Special Ones*, p.2

²⁰ Rutter & Harris, *The Special Ones*, p.2; Moira Wallace, interview, 15/10/20.

²¹ Davies, J. & Rentoul, J., *Heroes or Villains? The Blair Government Reconsidered*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2019), p.163; Barber, *Instruction to Deliver*, p.72.

²² Blair, *A Journey*, p.338.

ineffectual ‘hyperactivity’ and for some merely ‘substitutes for action’.²³ For others, such units were part of a worrying trend in New Labour’s approach to governance, one that rode roughshod over forms of representation and accountability.²⁴

Any such cross-cutting body would, indeed, undermine the autonomy of departmental ministers, concentrate power and control in the Cabinet Office and challenge the role of the civil service. Success for the RSU would therefore require considerable finesse given the potential vested interests that might oppose it. In addition, as the RSU was formed when Labour was still operating under its commitment to maintain Conservative levels of spending, there was ‘little fiscal leeway’ and although the sums of money required were relatively small (some £200 million), support of the Treasury was clearly vital.²⁵ Geoff Mulgan notes that he and Moira Wallace ‘worked very hard to get the Treasury involved’, but Wallace states that it was ultimately only thanks to the Prime Minister’s strong advocacy that individual departments were brought into line.²⁶ The RSU was located within John Prescott’s ‘super-ministry’, the DETR, and a ministerial oversight team of high-powered and capable ministers led by Hillary Armstrong was put in place.²⁷ As Rutter and Harris note, previous experiments with specialist units were not commonly successful, and that to gain

²³ Fawcett, P. & Rhodes, R.A.W., ‘Central Government’ in Seldon, A. (Ed), *Blair’s Britain, 1997-2007*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007), p.79. Kavanagh, D., ‘The Blair Premiership’, in Seldon, A. (Ed), *Blair’s Britain, 1997-2007*, p.5.

²⁴ They were allied with concerns over the number of ‘special advisors’, an expanded ‘Prime Minister’s office’ and notions of a ‘command premiership’ by Blair: Pugh, M., *Speak for Britain! - A New History of the Labour Party*, (Vintage, London, 2011), p.399; Rouse, J., & Smith, G., ‘Evaluating New Labour’s accountability reforms’ in Powell, M. (Ed), *Evaluating New Labour’s Welfare Reforms*, (The Policy Press, Bristol, 2002), p.45; Hennessy, P., *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders since 1945*, (Penguin, London, 2001), p.477.

²⁵ Referencing the complexities of the Blair-Brown split in New Labour, Mulgan suggests there was a trade-off in support for the Treasury-sponsored Sure Start programme in return for reciprocal support for the cabinet-led SEU and RSU. Geoff Mulgan, Interview, 22/11/21.

²⁶ Geoff Mulgan, Interview, 22/11/21; Moira Wallace, Interview, 15/10/20.

²⁷ in Labour’s second term the RSU moved to the reconfigured Department of Local Government, Transport and the regions (DLTR), and the Rough Sleepers Unit itself merged with the Bed and Breakfast Unit to form the Homelessness and Housing Directorate in 2002.

the 'authority to act' and be 'taken seriously by departments', strong support from both Number 10 and the Treasury was required.²⁸ By March 1999 these criteria had been realised.

Homelessness Tsar

The creation of a central government unit tasked with service delivery was undoubtedly an innovation in the mechanisms of government, but the RSU was also experimental in the composition of its staff, its manner of working, and the designated title of its leader, that of 'Homelessness Tsar'. Its structure, position within Whitehall, and its access to Prime Ministerial patronage were vital components, but so too was the question of leadership, a factor often given insufficient attention in questions of service delivery.

The recruitment of its leader and many key staff from the homelessness sector, meant that to succeed, the RSU would need to develop ways of working that blended the very different cultures of the voluntary sector and the civil service. In addition, such a peculiar hybrid body, formally part of the civil service, but clearly a political creation outside the bureaucracy's normal structures, had to overcome the suspicions of the broader civil service and, as a cross-cutting body, find means of exercising leverage on government departments to whom homelessness was, at best, a small component of their remit.

Probably the most important action New Labour took was the appointment of Louise Casey as the unit's director. Casey was a logical but politically brave choice as RSU director. She had experience in the sector via St Mungo's and Homeless Network, and was recruited from her position as Deputy Director of Shelter, where she had led on street homelessness.²⁹ Her

²⁸ Rutter & Harris, *The Special Ones*, pp.6-7.

²⁹ Homeless Network was the umbrella organisation for London homeless agencies, it merged with the National Homeless Alliance, becoming Homeless Link in 2004. Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21; Bowcott, O., 'The Guardian profile: Louise Casey', *Guardian*, 9 September 2005.

credentials as an expert were therefore strong, but the appointment of someone from a campaigning organisation that had been a trenchant critic of government housing policy was a bold and potentially risky move. Nor was she a political appointment. Although briefly a member of the Labour party, she was no political insider, and has remained determinedly apolitical throughout her career.³⁰ She herself was surprised to get the job.³¹

Even prior to Casey taking up her role, the problems of bringing an outsider into the civil service structure were apparent. The British civil service remains highly hierarchical, favouring a strongly top-down system of control where authority is determined by an individual's precise position in its elaborate system of grades. For the most traditional of bureaucrats the appointment of an outsider to a grade with sufficient rank to deal with ministers (Grade 3), without having worked their way up through the system was an affront.³² Casey believes that the two-month delay over her appointment was a consequence of a 'kind of warfare' over her grade between Moira Wallace and senior officials in the DETR, a battle won by a combination of Wallace's determination and the backing of the Prime Minister.³³

This arcane struggle for a status sufficient to do the job, was given an unexpected boost by the announcement by Downing Street that Louise Casey, whose formal title was originally 'London Rough Sleepers Unit Coordinator', was now to be 'Homelessness Tsar'. Casey says that she, and everyone else, were taken unawares, noting that the DETR was in the process

³⁰ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21. Casey served in a number of capacities for Conservative administrations after 2010 and sits in the House of Lords as a crossbench peer.

³¹ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21

³² It should be noted that the civil service does operate a 'fast-track' system of promotion, but this too is formally regulated and controlled.

³³ Casey believes the extant civil service Grade 3 for housing put up a determined effort to limit her to a Grade 5 which would have rendered her unable to engage at ministerial level. Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

of 'issuing the most boring press release imaginable' when the new title was announced.³⁴

The use of the title 'Tsar', was a New Labour innovation, adopted from the American practice of presidential appointees.³⁵ Prior to Casey's appointment as 'Homelessness Tsar' only one was in existence, the former policeman Keith Hellowell, appointed as 'Drugs Tsar' in January 1998.³⁶ Subsequently many more have been created.³⁷ The degree to which the title aided Casey's task is difficult to determine. Its adoption certainly garnered a great deal of publicity for the RSU and raised Louise Casey's profile to that of a national figure.

However, it was never a formal title, and did not come attached with any new powers.

Subsequent evaluations of the role of Tsars in public policy have noted the peculiar constitutional position they occupy as a 'strange hybrid between politicians and civil servants'.³⁸ Their role is intended to be that of a 'bureaucratic entrepreneur' tasked with 'pulling together the increasingly fragmented core executive' and to 'innovate change in public services'.³⁹ This was certainly Casey's remit, and fits with both New Labour's modernising and enabling philosophies. The advantages of the employment of Tsars are considered to be that they are not 'morally neutral' and have the 'ability to advocate change' in a way that civil servants, 'who should not become too associated with a particular policy' are unable to do.⁴⁰ Their disadvantages are that as political appointees they can generate 'suspicion from some civil servants', and having no real power other than

³⁴ Casey credits the new title to an intervention by Alastair Campbell, Blair's head of communications, claiming it was 'classic New Labour' although she is not certain of the accreditation. Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21

³⁵ Smith, M. J., 'Tsars, leadership and innovation in the public sector', *Policy and Politics*, Vol 39, No. 3, (2011), p.344.

³⁶ Hellowell, K., *The Outsider: The Autobiography of One of Britain's Most Controversial Policemen*, (HarperCollins, London, 2003).

³⁷ Writing in 2013, Young, Levitt & Solesbury identify over 260 since 1997. Young, K., Levitt, R., and Solesbury, W., 'Policy Tsars - Whitehall's expert advisers revealed', *Public Money and Management*, Vol.33, No.1, (2013), p.77.

³⁸ Smith, 'Tsars, leadership and innovation', p.344.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 347 & 352.

influence, are dependent on the continued patronage of the Minister who made their appointment.⁴¹ Hellowell's tenure as Drug's Tsar was considered to have failed because 'the established institutions did not see Hellowell as a leader but as someone impeding on their territory'.⁴² Casey's position, however, differed from Hellowell's and most subsequent Tsars, as not only was she embedded within a government department, she also had command of her own budget. Success would still be dependent on Prime Ministerial patronage to give leverage over departments whose co-operation was required if the unit was to succeed in its task.

A reluctance to embrace the RSU by the civil service is perhaps evidenced in the accommodation afforded the RSU. Casey wryly notes that her fellow Tsar Keith Hellowell, 'flew in on a helicopter...his office was in the main-building of the cabinet office, in a wood-panelled room', whereas 'the RSU was located 'nowhere near ministers...in this weird office next to the canteen where we could smell the cabbage'.⁴³ Ian Brady, who joined the RSU as Casey's Deputy Director from Centrepoint, noted that 'bits of the department were very wary, they thought I was a spy...I had to work very hard to get their credibility'.⁴⁴ Brady, however, notes that in the majority of cases, 'I was welcomed by the civil servants... ..they wanted my expertise'.⁴⁵

Potentially more paralysing were the traditional, highly bureaucratic and hierarchical civil service methods of working. Brady notes that a simple request to write to local authorities

⁴¹ Ibid, pp.351-2.

⁴² Ibid, pp.345-6.

⁴³ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

⁴⁴ Remarkably, Ian Brady was brought into the Housing department in 1997 under the Major administration at the request of shadow Housing Minister Nick Raynsford with the agreement of the then Conservative Housing Minister David Curry, according to Brady, 'because it was just assumed *when* the Labour government came in, I would go in and join the civil service as an adviser'. Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

⁴⁵ Ian Brady Interview, 15/10/20.

asking them to send an estimate of the numbers of rough sleepers in their area had to be cleared by a Grade 3 civil servant.⁴⁶ Casey, reflecting after decades spent in various roles in government, believes that ‘the civil service job is to ‘maintain the status quo on the basis that the status quo will do no harm’ and is ‘risk averse on a scale I can’t put into words’.⁴⁷ She illustrates this by recounting what she considers to be a pivotal moment two weeks after her appointment when she was presented with a ‘beautifully crafted’ letter written on her behalf, to her supervising Minister of State, informing the minister how ‘the target was going to be difficult to achieve’.⁴⁸ For Casey, it was utterly antithetical to her approach. She called her team in and informed them, ‘The way I look at it, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for us to get everybody off the street...we've got a Prime Minister that wants to do it, we've got a minister that wants to do it, we've got money... I'm not going to fail...and if anyone doesn't believe we're going to meet this target, you need to get out now'.⁴⁹ It was at that moment, she realised, ‘I had to get rid of a load of people’.⁵⁰

The anecdote is telling, not only about civil service inertia but about the nature of the person who New Labour had appointed to be the ‘entrepreneurial bureaucrat’ leading their rough sleeping programme. Gary Messenger, who worked with Casey in the RSU, described her as a ‘marmite’ character, that although ‘he would walk through walls for Louise...she gives you a sense of purpose and makes you feel invincible’, others felt very differently.⁵¹

⁴⁶ This incident occurred before Brady joined the RSU but is included as indicative of certain civil service attitudes – although it should be noted that other, more junior and supportive civil servants helped him overcome the impasse, Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

⁴⁷ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Casey had some sympathy for the letter’s author, however, stating that she ‘understood that ‘it was written in order to protect her’ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20. Ann Wallis, Head of Communications at the RSU and Deputy Director Ian Brady were equally fulsome in their praise of Casey. Ann Wallis, Interview, 30/6/21; Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

She clearly engendered great loyalty within her team at the RSU, and senior figures in the voluntary sector were often strongly supportive. Charles Fraser, CEO of St Mungo's, declared, 'I was probably her biggest cheerleader in the voluntary sector – I thought Louise was great – but by no means everybody else did', adding that she 'saw things clearly and wasn't afraid to make a decision'.⁵² Fraser's also acknowledges that Casey did not shy from confrontation, being willing to 'tell Whitehall to bugger off', and that she 'trampled on a lot of sensitivity in the voluntary sector'.⁵³ Jon Kuhrt of Centrepoin notes that after initial hostility, 'she won a lot of people round'.⁵⁴ Casey herself described her technique (with a wry smile), as 'charm and menace'.⁵⁵

Such leadership qualities were perhaps necessary to succeed in her task. Those not committed to achieving the governments aims were swiftly moved on, which, in itself was an unfamiliar process in Whitehall, and replaced with people seconded from other departments who were invested in the RSU's aims.⁵⁶ Most remarkably, for a government so committed to controlling its media representation, Casey uniquely secured an independent communications facility for the RSU.⁵⁷

Although Casey was often robust in her approach, her role also required considerable finesse and skills in relationship building. For a unit both within and outside the traditional civil service, successful negotiations with other government departments required

⁵² Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

⁵³ It should be noted here that Fraser's tone is one of admiration rather than condemnation for this robust approach. Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

⁵⁴ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20; Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 18/9/20.

⁵⁵ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

⁵⁶ Ian Brady cites key secondments were from the Department of Health and the Department of Work and Pensions. Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

⁵⁷ Ann Wallis expressed both bewilderment and admiration for Casey's securing of an independent media service saying, 'I don't know how she got it signed off...I'm not sure I know how Louise does much things, but she manages to get it done'. Ann Wallis, Interview 30/6/21. An independent legal team for the unit was also secured. Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

leveraging the power of Prime Ministerial patronage. Casey describes Blair's support as constant but, given the multiple demands on the Prime Minister's time, she only meet him at 'stocktakes' every 'three or four months' and 'less as time went on'.⁵⁸ Casey describes the means she employed to ensure cross-departmental cooperation as a form of calculated bluff, consisting of carefully 'choosing your moments when you need the 'magic dust' of Downing Street' but creating the impression 'that you're sat at the desk next to the hand of God'.⁵⁹ Some skill was clearly required. Ian Brady (Deputy Director RSU, 1999-2003), recalls that he couldn't think of 'one government department at the beginning that was completely on board', and that there were 'terrible meetings' and 'stand-up battles...you had to fight tooth and nail all the time'.⁶⁰ Ultimately, however, Casey's mantra of 'this is Tony Blair's target...you have to play your role' eventually ensured co-operation.⁶¹

Under Casey's leadership, the RSU challenged and altered the hierarchical culture of Whitehall. Embattled with other components of Whitehall, within the RSU team an extraordinary esprit de corps developed. Ann Wallis (Strategic Policy and Communications RSU, 1999-2002) recalls that 'because we had a short period of time we just threw our energies and efforts into it', and Gary Messenger, reflecting in 2020, that it was possibly 'the best time of our lives' with 'a group of people all pulling together'.⁶² Helen Keats notes that in many government departments, 'they need to know your grade before they'll talk to you...there was nothing like that. In the RSU... I just went to the people who were the most

⁵⁸ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Brady notes that the worst confrontations were with the Department of Health. Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Anne Wallis, Interview, 30/6/21; Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

effective'.⁶³ Gary Messenger goes further, arguing that it upended the traditional 'top-driven down' civil service culture completely, becoming, at Casey's insistence, 'bottom up'.⁶⁴ The RSU's manner of working was both the personification of its leader, dynamic, assertive, deeply engaged, determined to make real change, and was a direct consequence of bringing the outlook and approach of the voluntary sector into the heart of government. Gary Messenger described the qualities required in the RSU under Louise Casey as 'Do you want to make a difference? Do you actually want to go out there? Because if you do want to make a difference, it's going to be a slog, it's going to be hard. Can you roll up your sleeves? Then this is what we're going to do'.⁶⁵ The degree to which the unit functioned in a highly unusual way for a government department is best evidenced in the way in which all its members got out of Whitehall, engaged with homeless agencies and local authorities across the country, and in their active participation in front-line work. Ian Brady recalls that 'my team travelled the country... I think we covered every street count in the top thirty-one cities outside London' and Messenger that, 'I'd be out sometimes at two or three in the morning'.⁶⁶ For the team this was hugely energising, and formed a kind of real-time action research, 'there was a real buzz about it... what we were picking up on the ground was fed back into policy... it was a well-drilled machine'.⁶⁷ Casey, Brady and Messenger all record making direct interventions while on outreach, securing hostel beds for individual rough sleepers they encountered.⁶⁸ Richard Cunningham (manager of North Lambeth Day Centre, later specialist adviser in the Homelessness Directorate) recalls his bewilderment at seeing

⁶³ Helen Keats was seconded to the RSU from Portsmouth Council in 2002. Helen Keats, Interview, 9/12/20.

⁶⁴ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20; Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

⁶⁷ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

⁶⁸ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21; Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20; Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

‘highly-paid civil servants’ out ‘driving a van, picking up people’, considering it ‘very exciting’ that ‘you had that kind of direct line to government...they were interested, they wanted to see what was going on’.⁶⁹ Messenger saw this work as making sure the homeless agencies were fulfilling the contracts they had been awarded, but the voluntary sector was often less sanguine.⁷⁰ Charles Fraser, although he acknowledges it ‘kept [his] staff on their toes’, and praises Casey for ‘get[ting] out from behind that desk’ believes Casey ‘got too involved’, and that such direct interventions were ‘irritating and counter-productive’.⁷¹ Despite such caveats, for New Labour this was an archetypical form of Third Way governance; an entrepreneurial bureaucrat, delivering joined up government, and conducting policy-making through a form of ‘evidence-based’ action research in partnership with the voluntary sector.

The work of the RSU

Quantification: Street counts & CHAIN

To ensure successful delivery of Labour’s homelessness programme, accurate data on the scale and scope of the problem was vital, and the RSU was tasked with gathering that data.⁷² A key element of New Labour’s modernisation agenda under the Third Way was the importance of ‘evidence-based’ policy making, and prior to the advent of the RSU, even the most basic statistics on the number of rough sleepers outside Central London were crude estimates.⁷³ Ian Brady notes that, ‘nobody really knew what the numbers were...people

⁶⁹ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

⁷⁰ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

⁷¹ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20. Ollie Alcock in Bristol was less than enamoured, describing Casey as ‘an absolute nightmare to work with...extraordinarily opinionated, wouldn’t countenance any views that didn’t fit into her worldview’. Ollie Alcock, Interview, 30/11/20.

⁷² SEU, *Rough Sleeping*, Sections 4.28 – 4.30.

⁷³ Single night street counts had been introduced in London under the preceding Conservative administration, but not outside of the capital city. The SEU report of 1998 could only hazard a rough estimate of numbers outside London. SEU, *Rough Sleeping*, Section 1.3.

were talking about hundreds of thousands of people on the streets'.⁷⁴ The target to reduce rough sleeping by two-thirds by 2002 would, in itself, clearly require a measure of assessing the number of people currently sleeping rough, and policy planning would clearly require accurate and detailed data. The methodology adopted was the 'single-night street count' performed by local government officials and voluntary sector workers traversing the streets on one particular night and collating a head-count of those they found sleeping rough.

There are both broad and narrow critiques of such a methodology. Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield point out that by focussing on rough sleeping figures, street homelessness becomes the defining metric of homelessness, 'distorting popular appreciations of the scale, profile and location of homelessness in the UK', and risks separating the issue of homelessness from that of housing need.⁷⁵ They also argue that enumeration distorts government's policy response, directing funds to those areas that can be measured, and away from areas that are more difficult to quantify, such as the 'hidden homeless'.⁷⁶ These points are both valid and important. More contentiously, they argue that such enumeration has a clear political motive, arguing that 'it is unsurprising that government adopts a fairly strict definition in order to minimise the problem with which they have to deal' and that, 'there is political capital to be made through concentrating on the most visible and quantifiable aspects of a problem'.⁷⁷ Although Cloke's interpretation is plausible, it is argued

⁷⁴ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20. Brady is not exaggerating here, Cloke et al point out that Shelter insisted in 1999 that 'for every person literally without a roof over their head there are hundreds of thousands more who may be less visible, but just in as much need of a proper home', they note that as there were roughly 2000 rough sleepers at this time, this would be more than the total UK population. Shelter (1999), quoted in Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield, p.263.

⁷⁵ Cloke, P., Milbourne, P. & Widdowfield, R., 'Making the homeless count?', pp.260 & 262.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.260.

⁷⁷ Cloke, Milbourne & Widdowfield, pp.264 & 273. It should also be noted that the methodology itself was not designed by New Labour but was developed in 1996 through a collaboration between Shelter, Homeless Network and the incumbent Conservative government. Recounted by Dom Williamson who was part of the team that devised it. Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

here that such a view derives more from a pejorative interpretation of the New Labour project than from a detailed evaluation of their actions in addressing street homelessness.⁷⁸

Cloke also notes that a single night count could not reflect ‘the essentially fluid and transient nature’ of homelessness, where many more would spend some time on the streets over the course of the year, but not on the night of the count itself, thereby enormously underestimating the scale of the problem.⁷⁹ In London this was rectified by the development of the CHAIN system that recorded all contacts of homeless people with London homeless services over the course of the year.⁸⁰ This was more accurate, but was never the headline figure and was never extended beyond London.⁸¹

More narrowly, Cloke points out that single night street counts would always underestimate the figures, due to the difficulties of locating rough sleepers noting that ‘count teams might not know where they [rough sleepers] are, or could not enter inaccessible or dangerous areas, and that some rough sleepers might take active steps to avoid being found’.⁸² This too, is valid. The Simon Community, who persistently challenged the government figures as too low, conducted independent street counts, pairing volunteers with homeless people who had detailed inside knowledge of rough sleeping sites and were willing to enter potentially dangerous environments.⁸³ The Simon counts consistently returned higher

⁷⁸ The interpretation of New Labour held by the authors is made apparent by their comment on ‘the vulnerability of policy to the processes of spin doctoring’. Cloke, Milbourne & Widdowfield, p.261

⁷⁹ Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield, p.269.

⁸⁰ Run by Resource Information Services and Broadway. Howard Sinclair (CEO of Broadway) expressed deep pride at the quality of the CHAIN data although he acknowledged it wasn’t ‘perfect’ Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

⁸¹ Sinclair recalled urging the government to roll out CHAIN nationally, but could gain no traction. Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

⁸² Cloke, Milbourne & Widdowfield, pp.266-9.

⁸³ Mark Palframan recalls being paired with a ‘young heroin user’ on a Simon Community street count who took him ‘down these car parks and weird places...where his friends were’, Mark Palframan, Interview, 2/10/20.

figures.⁸⁴ However, Mark Palframan, who coordinated counts for the Simon Community, notes that they ‘had the same methodology as the government’ and although ‘we always had a higher figure...they did show the same trends’.⁸⁵

The use of rough sleeper street counts does indeed aid a narrow definition of homelessness, but the purpose of utilising a simple, crude figure was seen by the RSU, not as a political smokescreen, but as a baseline measure, which could be used to measure progress. The RSU was well aware of the crude nature of figures produced by the counts. Steve Guyon, (Rough Sleeping Lead, Homelessness Directorate, 2004-2015), explains, ‘it was a snapshot figure...no more than that...the figure was always going to be lower than the real number... but... it allowed us to track rough sleeping progress relatively accurately over the years’.⁸⁶ Having a figure, however crude, also acted as motivational tool, and it is important to recall that prior to the advent of the RSU, there was a wide-spread belief that the numbers could not be reduced, engendering a sense of resignation in the sector and acceptance of the status quo.⁸⁷

Criticism of the street counts did not only come from academia, however, and there were constant accusations that the counts were not merely methodologically flawed, but were being actively manipulated for political gain. The Simon Community repeatedly made this

⁸⁴ Simon Community, ‘Head Counts’, *Simon Star*, Issue 104, Spring 2007, <https://www.simoncommunity.org.uk/admin/editoruploads/file/Simon-Star-Spring-2007.pdf> ; Simon Community, ‘The numbers game...why headcounts count’, *Simon Star*, Issue 109, Autumn 2008, <https://www.simoncommunity.org.uk/admin/editoruploads/file/Simon-Star-Autumn-2008.pdf>; Simon Community, ‘Head Count Gives Disturbing Insight’, *Simon Star*, Issue 112, Spring 2010, <https://www.simoncommunity.org.uk/admin/editoruploads/file/Simon-Star-Spring-2010%20.pdf> ,(accessed 3/5/22).

⁸⁵ Muddying the waters still further, Palframan acknowledges that the Simon Community saw its role as ‘showing that ‘everything the government did was wrong’, and recalls that ‘we used to do the street counts, and then we’d do a press release and slag off the government for massaging the figures’. Mark Palframan, Interview, 2/10/20.

⁸⁶ Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/10/20.

⁸⁷ As attested to by Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20; Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

accusation and were given some support by Shelter and Crisis, who had always been deeply ambivalent about the RSU.⁸⁸ *Inside Housing*, ran with a headline of ‘Call for ‘fixed RSU Figures Investigation’, as early as January 2001, and the *Simon Star* was still accusing the government of lying about the numbers in 2010.⁸⁹ Ian Brady recalls that accusations of manipulating the figures ‘haunted us the whole way through’ and believes this was because people ‘didn’t believe reducing the numbers was even possible...this can’t be happening, they can’t be delivering this’.⁹⁰

Although the broad trend in reduction in numbers is verifiable, there is however, evidence of some license taken at the margins. An argument against the kind of target-setting that New Labour favoured is that it can engender perverse outcomes and there was undoubtedly some gaming of the system. Jeremy Swain recalls a dispute with Casey when a ‘homeless charity threw a big party in one of their hostels to get people into their hostel on the night of the street count’, and a hostel worker recalls ‘the outreach teams...not being allowed to house anyone for four days before the street count...so you could bring them all in the night before’.⁹¹

Despite some gaming of the system, the evidence strongly supports the view that street counts were a flawed, but necessary tool, were broadly accurate within their own frame of reference, motivationally useful, and a valuable means of measuring progress.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Ambosi, M., ‘Call for ‘fixed RSU figures’ investigation’, *Inside Housing*, 3 February 2001.

⁸⁹ Ibid; Simon Community, ‘The Numbers Game’, *Simon Star*, Issue 113, Autumn 2010.

<https://www.simoncommunity.org.uk/admin/editoruploads/file/Simon%20Star%20Autumn%202010%20Issue%202020.pdf> accessed 1/3/21.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Hostel worker, Interview, 16/10/20. The respondent recalls this as a ‘policy decision by the hostel management’, but also one made under the RSU’s pressure to meet targets or risk a loss of funding.

Working Practice

The RSU's achievements in upending the hierarchical culture of the civil service and quantifying the numbers of rough sleepers were, however, only first steps for the RSU. To bring about the reduction in rough sleeping that was the unit's purpose would require harnessing the resources of the voluntary homeless sector.

With their backgrounds in the sector, Casey and her team were aware of the sector's strengths but also its flaws and weaknesses.⁹² There were to be key changes in the focus and the working practice of the sector, new forms of accountability based on 'outputs' rather than 'inputs', and the introduction of competitive tendering. Joined up working was key, bringing mental health, substance misuse and the criminal justice sector into much closer co-ordination with homelessness services, and social exclusion addressed by expanding the role of homeless agencies to include 'meaningful activity' and opportunities for education training and employment. The first steps toward service user empowerment were undertaken. Homelessness prevention was taken seriously for the first time.

To succeed in its aims, Casey and the RSU would have to engineer a profound culture change in organisations over which it had no operative control. This was made more complex as the homeless sector consisted of a hugely diverse group, containing both large, mature, organisations with predominantly salaried employees, and small, localised, volunteer-run and often faith-based groups, each with its own ethos and distinct ways of working. The funding streams the RSU controlled would give it leverage, but institutional cultural change is notoriously hard to achieve, requiring as it does, change at all levels in an organisation. As New Labour experienced in its attempts to reform other parts of the public

⁹² Both Casey and Brady referred to themselves as 'poachers turned gamekeepers'. Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21; Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

sector, 'efforts to restructure organisations are frequently deflected, diluted or absorbed as to conform to prior norms and patterns of behaviour'.⁹³

Focussing on Entrenched Rough Sleepers

The RSU's full impact began with the production of the strategy document, 'Coming in from the Cold' in December 1999.⁹⁴ Following Casey's appointment in April 1999, it had taken her some time to both to re-configure her team and gain the necessary support across Whitehall. Although Casey's public profile was high from the time of her appointment, and some key pilot schemes were set up, it was 'Coming in From the Cold' that clearly laid out both new approaches to the problem and the concrete steps that would be taken to meet the government's target.⁹⁵

Perhaps the most important change was a shift in approach to a focus on the most entrenched rough sleepers.⁹⁶ This decision, according to Ian Brady, was very much Casey's, 'Louise had a particular thing about helping those most in need first... she wouldn't be happy if we got the numbers down, but people who had been out on the streets [a long time] were still there'.⁹⁷

Although it might seem obvious that this was the correct approach morally, it would certainly not be the easiest way to achieve the desired target, belying arguments that Labour's was primarily headline-driven. The term 'entrenched' itself, means an individual

⁹³ Newman, J., *Modernising Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society*, (Sage, London, 2001), p.27.

⁹⁴ RSU/DETR, *Coming In from the Cold*, (London. DETR, December 1999).

⁹⁵ RSU/DETR, *Coming In from the Cold*, (London. DETR, December 1999). The details of its execution, including the specifics of the terms for successful bids for contracts were laid out in the associated document: *Coming in from the cold: delivering the strategy*, (London. DETR, December 1999). The report has strong similarities with the preceding SEU report and Louise Casey, in interview, concurred that it 'mirrored' the SEU report which she praised highly. Louise Casey, Interview 5/5/21.

⁹⁶ Ibid. The term 'entrenched' is not used in the report but became the common parlance for both members of the RSU and the homelessness sector.

⁹⁷ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

who has become accommodated to life on the streets and for whom change would necessarily be very difficult. The process of even getting to a position to contemplate change for an entrenched rough sleeper was also likely to be long and complex to facilitate.⁹⁸ In interview, a CAT (Contact and Assessment Team) outreach worker noted, ‘these were some of the most difficult clients in the UK...they were masters of deflection...they’d been turning down outreach workers longer than I’d been alive’.⁹⁹

Further complicating the problem was that a significant proportion of the homelessness sector in London was not configured to engage with entrenched rough sleepers.¹⁰⁰ Outreach teams were in regular contact with this group, but there was little evidence they were succeeding in moving them off the streets.¹⁰¹ Even if a moment of opportunity arose, there were barriers that prevented this entrenched group from gaining access to a hostel bed. Richard Cunningham notes that, unable or unwilling to cope with challenging behaviour, ‘hostels were functioning in a way that...if you were difficult you got booted out on to the street again’ and many rough sleepers were subject to life-time bans.¹⁰² In addition, many hostel providers believed they could not legally house active drug-users, a position that was amplified by the jailing of two workers from the Wintercomfort homeless centre in Cambridge in the same month *Coming in from the Cold* came out.¹⁰³ Ruth Wyner and John Brock were jailed for a total of nine years (subsequently reduced on appeal to fourteen

⁹⁸ The complexities involved, and theories of how to facilitate change in homeless people are explored superbly in Seal, M., *Resettling Homeless People: Theory and Practice*, (Russell House Publishing, Lyme Regis, 2005).

⁹⁹ CAT team worker, Interview, 15/2/22.

¹⁰⁰ This had been identified by the RSU which criticised previous failures to reach this group. *Coming in From the Cold*, ‘Key Principle 3 ‘Focus on those most in need’ & ‘Background’, Paragraph 2.

¹⁰¹ Outreach Teams had been largely a feature only of central London where they were long-established, although Birmingham had developed its own outreach team by 1998. Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹⁰² Richard Cunningham, Interview 11/10/20. The absurdity and futility of life-time bans was deplored by many interviewees, including Louise Casey, Jon Kuhrt, Richard Cunningham and Tom Preest.

¹⁰³ Shapiro, H., ‘Wintercomfort: The price of trust’, *Druglink*, Vol 15, Issue 2, (March/April 2000), pp.4-7. Kevin Flemen, interview, 9/11/20.

months) after eight people were caught supplying heroin at the Wintercomfort day centre.¹⁰⁴ The case was, in fact, atypical, relating to failure to prevent supply, not the use of drugs on the premises, and prosecution could have easily been avoided, but the fear it engendered made it much harder for drug-users to gain access to hostel accommodation.¹⁰⁵ Keven Fleman, working at the Release drug agency, spent much of the following decade attempting to convince hostel managers that admitting drug-users would not lead to their incarceration.¹⁰⁶ For drinkers, few hostels provided 'wet' accommodation and insufficient high-level supportive accommodation for people with mental health problems and/or complex needs were available.¹⁰⁷ The absence of sufficient move-on accommodation meant that 'no one was moving them on...[people] were stagnating in hostels...meanwhile the people on the street were becoming more intractable'.¹⁰⁸

Consciously or unconsciously services had adapted to cater for the least problematic clients who were easier both to manage and resettle, as Jeremy Swain points out 'unless you manage things strictly and in a disciplined way' services would always be directed toward 'the most capable... because it's easier'.¹⁰⁹ Richard Cunningham recalls that Riverpoint's new hostel in Hammersmith rapidly filled up 'with young people...from the local estates, who all claimed to be rough sleeping, but weren't'.¹¹⁰ He acknowledges that this was 'dealing with a homeless problem, absolutely, but not the rough sleeping problem'.¹¹¹ People with low

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Results of appeal reported by Dyer, C., 'Homeless workers lose drug case plea', *Guardian*, 22 December 2000, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/dec/22/news.claredyer> (accessed 2/3/21).

¹⁰⁵ Kevin Fleman, interview, 9/11/20.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Noted in SEU, *Rough Sleeping*, Section 2.8; Randall & Brown, p.25.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

¹⁰⁹ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹¹⁰ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20. Jon Kuhrt expressed similar views noting that Centrepoint's client group 'didn't have much of a link with rough sleeping' there were 'a lot of young people whose family situations were very chaotic...[but]they weren't rough sleepers and they probably never would be'. Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 18/9/20.

¹¹¹ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

support needs and little or no history of rough sleeping were also taking up the allocation of permanent housing allocated under the Conservative's RSI programme.¹¹² Jeremy Swain (CEO Thames Reach, 1999-2018), believes 'the gatekeeping was really terrible' and illustrates this by recalling a visit to flats earmarked for rough sleepers and finding, 'one well-to-do chap who asked about car-parking space, and a woman who complained that 'you can't expect me to live with rough sleepers'.¹¹³ Charles Fraser goes as far as arguing that although every 'organisation emphasised how unique it was and how it was dealing with those at the bottom of the pile...only two organisations were genuinely doing that, St Mungo's and Thames Reach'.¹¹⁴ Fraser's statement may be an exaggeration, but if some parts of the sector were already primed to work with entrenched rough sleepers and awaiting only the investment of government monies, others were clearly providing a different kind of service.

Assertive Outreach

The RSU's new focus on entrenched rough sleepers necessitated a complete reconfiguration of outreach services beginning with a process of rationalisation. Prior to the advent of the RSU, many agencies had outreach services which functioned independently of each other, often providing competing services covering the same parts of central London.¹¹⁵ Jeremy

¹¹² This constituted 4000 units of local authority accommodation termed 'clearing house accommodation'. For detail see Foord et al, 'Bricks Without Mortar', p.21.

¹¹³ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹¹⁴ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20. Jeremy Swain forwarded similar views arguing that the RSU, 'exposed the organisations that were working with rough sleepers, and those who are not really working with rough sleepers, but the perception might be that they were working with rough sleepers.' Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹¹⁵ It must be noted that despite the duplication of effort in outreach services, there was also considerable co-operation in the homelessness sector in London. London homeless agencies met regularly as part of the London umbrella organisation, Homeless Network. Rebecca Sycamore describes Homeless Network as a 'very linked-in co-ordinated body, very high level of engagement with very senior people in its member agencies, very present, very targeted.' Nationally there was far less co-operation, with the pan-UK body, the National Homeless Alliance being more of a 'campaigning organisation' than one that co-ordinated provision. Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

Swain points out ‘on the Strand you’d see three outreach teams working with the same people within the same two hours’.¹¹⁶ This unnecessary duplication of effort was brought to an abrupt end by the RSU, which divided up central London into clearly demarcated zones, with one agency given sole responsibility for the reduction in the number of rough sleepers their appointed area.¹¹⁷ Despite its obvious rationality, Swain recalls that it ‘seemed at the time to be radical and uncomfortable’.¹¹⁸ That such a small and logical change could feel like such an imposition, is indicative of the autonomy the sector had previously enjoyed and the scale of the task facing Casey and the RSU. Now agencies would be measured by their success in achieving targets in the reduction in numbers of rough sleepers on their patch, and faced with the threat of loss of funding if they fell short. This was the first experience of ‘contract culture’ in the homelessness sector, which had previously operated with minimal oversight and with no proscribed rubric for measuring efficacy.¹¹⁹ The impact of the imposition of a contract culture on the homelessness sector is explored in depth in Chapter 3, and at this stage its impact was muted, with the most established agencies securing the new outreach contracts.¹²⁰ One of the criticisms of New Labour’s use of contracting, that it created ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ agencies, often squeezing out faith-based groups, would appear to be supported here, as the only prominent agency in London that lost out was the

¹¹⁶ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹¹⁷ *Coming in from the cold: delivering the strategy*, (London. DETR, December 1999). The zones themselves were later expanded and similar teams set up in outer London areas with high concentrations of rough sleepers.

¹¹⁸ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹¹⁹ Ian Brady argues that the old system had perverse incentives ‘under RSI...the more rough sleepers you found, the more money you got... we started to change the incentives’. Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

¹²⁰ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

Salvation Army.¹²¹ Jeremy Swain, however, argues that this decision was based on merit, as, in his view, the Salvation Army 'were always the weakest outreach organisation'.¹²²

The next step was to oblige the new outreach teams, now renamed Contact and Assessment Teams (CATs), to focus only on entrenched rough sleepers. People on the streets would now have to be 'verified' as rough sleepers by multiple contacts with the CAT teams, and a list of 'famous faces' (known long-term rough sleepers) was established.¹²³ To facilitate movement off the streets, hostel beds (including in cold weather shelters) would now be reserved only for those referred by the CAT teams, who would also be expected to maintain contact with their referees until they were in settled accommodation.¹²⁴ The new approach meant the RSU had to 'persuade outreach teams to almost walk past the 25 year-old that's just popped up on the street and leave them there for a few nights... that's hard to ask people to do'.¹²⁵ A CAT team worker recalled that, 'at first, we were horrified... so, if someone's there...but they've not been there before - we're basically to ignore them? Surely, they've got problems?'¹²⁶ However, the same worker came around to the view that a targeted approach had merits, 'She [Casey] was right in some ways, we were just driving around in vans picking up homeless people and throwing them into hostels really. We didn't know who they were, we didn't know where they'd come from, and we didn't know what they needed'.¹²⁷ Tom Preest, who led the assertive outreach pilot at Savoy Place, believes that the targeting of

¹²¹ Pleace et al, *Swept-up Lives*.

¹²² Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹²³ The list of 'famous faces' was also never official, but became an integral part of street outreach work. Jeremy Swain notes that the 'verifying' process meant people had to be recorded as sleeping rough 'on three occasions' before contact would be made, a process he considered 'contrived and unnecessary lengthy.' Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹²⁴ Louise Casey credits this idea to Jeremy Swain and Sue Summers at Thames Reach. Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

¹²⁵ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

¹²⁶ CAT team worker, Interview, 15/3/22.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

entrenched rough sleepers and the reservation of cold weather shelter beds for them was 'the absolutely pivotal change' in getting the numbers of rough sleepers down.¹²⁸ Richard Cunningham supports this view, arguing 'we'd had all these resources for years but we'd not dented the problem because actually we'd avoided the problem, we'd all been saying. 'forget those horrible, smelly guys - lets deal with the other people who are homeless as well'...[what] we were doing is squandering the resources'.¹²⁹

In addition to targeting entrenched rough sleepers, the RSU also imposed a new form of outreach working that became termed 'assertive outreach'.¹³⁰ Although this was never clearly defined, assertive outreach's intention was to ensure that interactions with rough sleepers were always geared toward persuading people to come off the streets and into accommodation, bringing to an end a more consensual, 'when you are ready – at your own pace approach'.¹³¹ For the RSU there was no doubt that this change was vital. Ian Brady argues that because there 'had been nowhere for these people to go', outreach teams 'had got into the habit of not even trying to get people off the streets'.¹³² Methods of working had instead become focussed on helping people sustain a life on the streets. Helen Keats, (RSU/Homeless Directorate 2000-2012), is scathing of the pre-existing practices, stating, 'up until then, a lot of outreach had been tiptoeing around, not waking people up, leaving them

¹²⁸ Tom Preest, Interview, 7/10/20.

¹²⁹ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

¹³⁰ DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the cold*, Key Proposals for Change, Section B. The term 'assertive outreach' was not used, being phrased as 'a focused, more targeted approach'. Jeremy Swain, among others, points out that this was not an entirely new approach, and that Thames Reach had been 'moving in that direction' before the advent of the RSU. Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹³¹ The phrase is from Jeremy Swain, who became a strong advocate of assertive outreach, stating that under the old methods, 'they were just talking to people... they hadn't been rehousing anybody'. Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹³² Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

a card on their pillow or on their sleeping bag saying where the Day Centre was'.¹³³ Casey believed the incentives had been wrong, commenting that they were being 'paid to fill out a form saying how many people you'd spoken to....I don't give a damn how many times you've talked to someone, I give a damn when you've moved them off the street permanently'.¹³⁴

The majority of practitioners interviewed for this research became strong advocates of assertive outreach, concurring with Jeremy Swain's view that 'it just made so much sense'.¹³⁵ Others, however, were very unsure of its ethics and efficacy. A CAT worker noted that it required 'being really good at being with people for long periods of time that didn't necessarily want [you] to be there...you're kind of pushing, and it doesn't work'.¹³⁶ These doubts were also expressed by those working for smaller, often faith-based voluntary groups. Alastair Murray, who was running Islington Churches Night Shelter at this time said, 'for those old guys there was no point in trying to push them towards moving off the street - if they wanted to, they would, and if they didn't, they wouldn't'.¹³⁷ Perhaps more importantly still, CAT workers weren't 'well-prepared for the work that we were being asked to do', there was little training, and techniques that would have been useful such as 'motivational interviewing' were largely unknown.¹³⁸ In addition, the imposition of targets for reducing numbers may also have meant that compassion was sucked out of the work.

When a new client arrived on his patch, a CAT worker recalled that his first thought was one

¹³³ Helen Keats, Interview, 9/12/20. Louis Casey was also scathing about existing outreach practices, stating, 'we had a legion of 25-year-old graduates with goatees who would sit down next to somebody and offer them a fag, ' Ooh, bit rough being homeless isn't it? How do you feel about it?' Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

¹³⁴ Casey acknowledges that her comments at the time were often blunt, 'I was young, I was very 'dial out', there wasn't much 'dial in', it was 'I don't know why you're here if you can't get this done.' Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

¹³⁵ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20. Mental Health professionals Jane Cook (CPN, Help team) and Dr Philip Timms (psychiatrist, START team) both considered assertive outreach as axiomatic. Jane Cook, Interview, 24/3/21; Dr Philip Timms, Interview, 21/1/21.

¹³⁶ CAT team worker, Interview, 15/3/22.

¹³⁷ Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20.

¹³⁸ Outreach based hostel worker, Interview, 1/12/21; CAT team worker, Interview, 15/3/22.

of despair, 'what am I going to do with him? Start the whole process again?', and that by reducing people to targets, 'you've depersonalised them - they've become objects'.¹³⁹

Certainly, outreach workers felt disempowered, 'we were being told what to do...we had very little self-efficacy', it was, 'get the numbers down' - here's your targets...it was kind of harsh'.¹⁴⁰ Casey's robust approach to culture change was also in evidence. The new policy was introduced to the outreach teams at a meeting where she informed them that, 'we were going to change the way we were working...we'd been enabling homeless people too long to remain homeless...if you don't like it, the door's over there'.¹⁴¹

Assertive outreach was not merely a new way of working with clients, it also involved 'disruption', the employment of methods that broke up established communities of rough sleepers, and forced change by making sleeping rough on the streets more difficult.

For the RSU this was axiomatic, Ian Brady argues that 'you had to disrupt – you can't get change if you don't disrupt'.¹⁴² 'Disruption' was not an entirely new innovation by the RSU. The large encampment at Lincoln's Inn Fields and 'Cardboard City' in the underpasses at Waterloo known as 'The Bullring', had both been closed down before the RSU was up and running, and had been undertaken as a 'a multi-agency operation involving the police, environment, housing'.¹⁴³ Under the RSU, CAT teams became obligated to share information and co-operate with the police, including sometimes undertaking joint outreach shifts. Co-

¹³⁹ CAT team worker, Interview, 15/3/22.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

¹⁴³ At their peak some 80-100 people were living in Lincoln's Inn, and up to 200 in the Bullring. At the time of its closure in 1999 some 30 people were still in permanent residence. CAT team worker, Interview, 15/3/22. Richard Cunningham who led the voluntary sector response to the Bullring closure recalls, 'organising the police to go down there, wake people up and move them on' and that we 'worked with London Transport police to clear the tunnels'. Echoing the later assertive outreach approach, the closure programme was not seen by Cunningham as punitive in intent as they 'worked hard to provide [housing] options for these people to go to'. Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

working with law enforcement was assuredly not the norm for outreach workers.¹⁴⁴ Dave Musker, Chief Superintendent for Lambeth, who held responsibility toward homelessness in Lambeth, amusingly recalled that early mistrust, stating that initially, ‘some of the voluntary sector may not have had a rose-tinted view of the jack-booted Nazi police, and the jack-booted Nazi police may not have had a rose-tinted view of the quiche-eating, sandal-wearing Guardian readers [in the voluntary sector]’.¹⁴⁵ Ian Brady concurs, recalling that, ‘a lot of the street teams didn’t want to work with the police,’ but it was eventually seen positively.¹⁴⁶ Not that they had much choice, as the RSU made its determination to push through change clear. Ian Brady recalls explaining to those who objected, ‘that’s fine, you don’t have to work in this way, you don’t have to be assertive, you don’t have to work in partnership with the police - but don’t take our money...we will give the money to outreach teams who will work in that way’.¹⁴⁷ Such an approach was not revanchist in intent, as those ‘disrupted’ off the streets would now have somewhere to go where their needs could be met. By allocating specific bed spaces to those referred by the CAT teams, and opening up new hostel provision through a ‘rolling shelter’ programme, there were now sufficient bed spaces in London to provide accommodation for those that needed it.¹⁴⁸

Although agencies such as Thames Reach and St Mungo’s adapted to the new approach others, including the Simon Community, refused to do so. With contracts now open to

¹⁴⁴ It should be noted that working with the police was not solely about disruption. Homeless people were also frequently victims of crime and assaults from both the public and other homeless people. Jeremy Swain notes that ‘some rough sleepers clearly had some sense of greater safety’, when plain clothes police accompanied outreach workers. Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20; Richard Cunningham makes similar comments, Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20; Johnsen & Fitzpatrick’s 2010 work also supports this view. Johnsen, S. & Fitzpatrick, S., ‘Revanchist Sanitation or Coercive Care?’, p.1712.

¹⁴⁵ Dave Musker, Interview, 12/11/20.

¹⁴⁶ Ian Brady, Interview 15/10/20; Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

¹⁴⁷ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

¹⁴⁸ Randall & Brown, p..22.

competitive tender, new agencies who were supportive of such an approach were encouraged to bid. Most important of these was Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI), a Brighton-based agency whose background had been in addiction services in prisons. CRI was first employed to work alongside the Westminster outreach teams and subsequently won other key contracts.¹⁴⁹ CRI were fully aligned with the assertive outreach approach and happy to work alongside the police. Their appointment was controversial but, to their supporters, highly effective.¹⁵⁰

The new approach to outreach was not, however, merely about disruption. New expertise was brought into outreach work by employing specialist youth, substance misuse and mental health workers in the CAT teams.¹⁵¹ In addition, the London multi-disciplinary mental health outreach teams, that had been established under the Conservative government's Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative (HMII), began working more closely with the homeless outreach services.¹⁵² Dr Philip Timms, the psychiatrist who led the South London START team, recalls the CAT teams beginning 'to push referrals towards us' for the first time, describing it as 'the turning point for our team'.¹⁵³

In summary, there are grounds to criticise, as the Simon Community did, the new approach to outreach imposed by the RSU. There are ethical questions about its coercive nature, and

¹⁴⁹ Helen Keats, Interview, 9/12/20. Tom Preest, Interview, 20/10/20. CRI merged with another rehabilitative agency, Sova in 2012 changing its name to 'Change, Grow, Live'. <https://www.changegrowlive.org/about-us/our-story> (accessed 12/2/22).

¹⁵⁰ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20. Tom Preest, who later employed CRI to lead on Camden council's homeless strategy is another strong advocate of their efficacy, also arguing that their approach is now 'bog standard' practice. Tom Preest, Interview, 20/10/20.

¹⁵¹ This was facilitated by the pre-existing Drug and Alcohol Specific Grant money being placed under the remit of the RSU.

¹⁵² The HMII programme was maintained and expanded under the RSU.

¹⁵³ Dr Philip Timms, Interview, 21/1/21. There were four teams, each allocated a specific sector of London with high concentrations of rough sleepers. The Joint Homelessness Team in Westminster, HELP team in East London, the Focus team in Kings Cross and the START team in south London. All were multi-disciplinary teams comprised of psychiatrists, CPN's and Approved Social Workers.

the views of homeless people themselves were not taken into consideration. It is clear however, that existing services were not reaching the most entrenched rough sleepers and needed to be reconfigured. Its moral justification is well put by Rebecca Sycamore (Homeless Link, 2000-2009), who echoes the views of many respondents saying, 'like many practitioners there are times when I am uncomfortable with the use of coercion...[but] when we're talking about people who are on the streets, the alternative to conditionality and a level of coercion is death'.¹⁵⁴ Kevin Flemen, working in substance misuse outreach for the Hungerford project in the 1990s reflected that the 'laissez-faire, befriending, build up relationships' approach that he employed then was a fundamental error, 'we allowed people to remain homeless to the point where they died – we should have pushed harder' and noted 'that all changed with Louise Casey and the RSU'.¹⁵⁵ The number of rough sleepers were rapidly reduced, and Randall & Brown's assessment of the programme concluded that 'the work of the CAT teams has been central to the reduction in numbers'.¹⁵⁶ In a study that stresses the importance of delivery in social policy initiatives it is important to note that ensuring adoption of these new working practices was not an easy task. New Labour, in the form of the RSU, created the necessary body to undertake the task, and granted it the financial levers to impose its aims, but its success owes much to the unit's composition and leadership. Since Lipsky brought attention to the central role of the 'street-level bureaucrat' in policy delivery, the necessity and difficulty of embedding cultural change at the practitioner level has been widely acknowledged.¹⁵⁷ Casey's robust

¹⁵⁴ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

¹⁵⁵ Kevin Flemen, Interview, 9/11/20.

¹⁵⁶ Randall, G. & Brown, R., *Helping rough sleepers off the streets: A report to the Homelessness Directorate*, (ODPM, London, June 2002), p.4.

¹⁵⁷ Lipsky, M., *Street Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*, (Russell Sage foundation, New York, 1980).

managerial style may have been counter-productive on occasion, but the combination of insight, expertise, energy and clear-sighted determination drove through a cultural change that percolated through the whole of the homelessness sector down to the frontline worker.

Hostels and shelters

Having focused outreach services on the most entrenched rough sleepers and brought about new forms of outreach working practice, the RSU needed to ensure there was adequate accommodation for those being brought off the streets by the CAT teams. There were three components to this, increasing the number of bed spaces available, improving the physical fabric of the buildings, and the upgrading the quality and scope of the work performed by hostel staff. The RSU rapidly increased the number of bed spaces by instigating a 'rolling shelter' programme and by 2002 there was 'no longer an absolute shortage of beds'.¹⁵⁸ It also began a profound change in the skill-base and working practice of hostel staff, which became embedded over the next decade.¹⁵⁹ Refurbishment or new build of hostels would always have required a longer time span, but major capital investment in hostel provision under New Labour only came much later, under the Homelessness Directorate's 'Places of Change' programme from 2003, and the delay has been criticised by many in the sector.¹⁶⁰

Although there was nothing radically innovative about the 'rolling shelter' programme, it is a good example of a small improvisation by the RSU that could enable substantive change.

¹⁵⁸ Adding 120 bed spaces in rolling shelters during the first phase to 2001. Randall and Brown, *Helping Rough Sleepers off the Streets*, p.28. in *Coming in from the Cold*, the RSU pledged to provide 'an additional 850 hostel beds [including 120 in rolling shelters] and 250 high support bed spaces'. I have been unable to determine if these were delivered. *Coming in from the Cold*, Key Proposals for Change, Section A.

¹⁵⁹ This is explored in depth in Chapter 4.

¹⁶⁰ The Places of Change programme is explored in depth in Chapter 4.

‘Rolling shelters’ were simply the pre-existing Cold Weather Shelters but made available all year round by closing the building down at a fixed date and reopening in another location.¹⁶¹ Cold Weather Shelters were the crudest form of basic provision, sometimes little more than mattresses laid out in a communal space, but their ease of access and lack of rental charges had often enabled them to bring in the most entrenched rough sleepers that the RSU was targeting, and by doing so could open up possibilities for long-term resettlement.¹⁶²

Prior to the RSU there had been no criteria for referral. A hostel worker at the Centrepoint-run Cold Weather Shelter of 1998 describes a resident group made up of ‘street homeless people...and a lot of young people who have come over to London, were traveling, or at Uni and had got themselves in as cheap digs’.¹⁶³ Another shelter worker recalls, ‘once it got to October/November, you’d start to see new faces turning up... people would come in there just to access that accommodation because they didn’t have to pay rent’.¹⁶⁴ Under the RSU, admittance was now controlled by the CAT teams who ensured access only for ‘verified’ rough sleepers. Jon Kuhrt argues that ‘because of their temporary nature’, the Cold Weather shelters had always encouraged active engagement and resettlement, whereas other hostels often ‘just warehoused people’ and that the rolling shelters turned ‘the

¹⁶¹ Jon Kuhrt, Interview 18/9/20.

¹⁶² They also had a flexibility that permanent hostels did not. Mark Palframan recalls that (the SHP Cold Weather Shelter 99-2000), ‘took this whole scene of rough sleepers from around Spitalfields - just the whole gang of them...brought them all into our chaotic shelter simultaneously because they wouldn’t have come individually... we moved a lot of them on into better accommodation...we basically cleared the streets the following year’, Mark Palframan, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹⁶³ Hostel Worker, Interview, 16/12/20.

¹⁶⁴ CAT team worker, Interview, 15/3/22.

dynamism of that into an ongoing service'.¹⁶⁵ The rolling shelters also offered accommodation for couples that had previously not been available.¹⁶⁶

The ease of access, lack of rental charge, and more tolerant management of challenging behaviour, meant rolling shelters were able to take in the most entrenched rough sleepers. Working with this challenging client group inevitably caused significant problems of management and the shelters were very volatile environments.¹⁶⁷ Dominic Williamson, (Deputy Manager St Mungo's Cold Weather Shelter 1996-97), describes cold weather shelters as 'crazy places - because you didn't know what was coming through the door next...they were big and loud and there's always stuff kicking-off'.¹⁶⁸ What was a difficult environment for staff to manage must have been truly terrifying for many rough sleepers. Rolling shelters were a crude, if necessary, temporary fix, rather than any form of long-term solution. Kuhrt feels that the continued involvement of the CAT teams was a vital improvement, altering a previously problematic relationship between hostels and outreach teams, 'they were [now] the gatekeepers into the hostels...they were far more responsible if people weren't engaging... that meant really close working between us'.¹⁶⁹ A CAT worker

¹⁶⁵ Kuhrt is, however, critical of the Cold Weather Shelter's Soho location declaring, 'I would never set up a cold weather in Soho now...the amount of money that people were making for heroin and crack in begging on Old Compton Street' was 'phenomenal', 'you just lowered a project into that chaos...and were immersed in the mayhem.' Jon Kuhrt, Interview 18/9/20; Mark Palframan also praised the rolling shelter programme, describing it as 'pretty obvious...[but]...a very good thing', Interview, 2/10/20.

¹⁶⁶ A series of focus groups conducted by Groundswell in 2006, however, suggest access for couples remained a significant barrier to accessing longer-term hostels, reported in, Dobson, T., 'Love on the Streets, the denial of homeless people's relationships', in Seal, M., (ed.) *Understanding and responding to homeless experiences, identities and cultures*, (Russell House Publishing, Lyme Regis, 2006), p.40 & 44.

¹⁶⁷ For example, Palframan, in the winter of 96/97, worked in a 'special [Cold Weather Shelter] for people who had been kicked out of the others...our brief was not to kick anyone out...we had 50 people in, men with histories of violence, drinking heavily...ongoing substance abuse...we had a drinking area – a sort of bear pit.' Mark Palframan, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹⁶⁸ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20. Williamson later had more senior roles in numerous homeless sector agencies and was seconded to the Homelessness Directorate in 2008 (see Appendix A). A hostel worker at Centrepoint's 1999 Cold Weather shelter in Admiralty Arch made similar comments, 'adrenaline was just massive working in them things - you never know what you're walking into when you came in, and it took a strength of will to go into the wet room or the more difficult areas.' Hostel worker, Interview, 16/12/20.

¹⁶⁹ Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 18/9/20.

describes the new approach as a marked improvement, noting that having been ‘referred there by an outreach worker...you wouldn’t just get left there’, there would be a ‘housing interview to find out who they are, where they come from’ and to ‘start looking at longer-term accommodation’.¹⁷⁰

Improvements in the physical fabric of permanent hostels was undoubtedly needed as the quality of provision remained a major barrier in persuading people to come off the street.¹⁷¹

It is difficult to generalise on the quality of hostel provision.¹⁷² Whilst moves toward smaller hostels with single room accommodation had been underway since the 1980s, many were still ‘very low standard night shelters with dormitory accommodation’ particularly outside London.¹⁷³ In 2002 Randall & Brown concluded that hostels ‘appear to be a weak link in the chain from street to permanent housing’.¹⁷⁴ Many homeless people avoided entering hostels due to the levels of drug-use or fears of violence.¹⁷⁵ Many homeless women feared or had experienced sexual assault within the hostel’s confines, and lesbian, gay and bisexual homeless people often experienced ‘homophobic harassment, bullying and even violence’.¹⁷⁶ Randall and Brown point to continuing difficulties of access for drug-users, couples and people with pets, ‘inadequate support for those with high support needs...too

¹⁷⁰ CAT team worker, Interview, 15/3/22.

¹⁷¹ Ian Brady recalls being ‘absolutely shocked’ by the quality of some of the hostels he visited. Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

¹⁷² Warnes, Crane & Foley undertook a comprehensive review of London’s hostel provision in 2003. They indicate that a move to smaller and more specialist hostels had taken place since 1990, but by only covering hostels with 24-hour staffing, did not account for the much more basic conditions found in night shelters. For more detail see Warnes, T., Crane, M. & Foley, P., *London's hostels for Homeless people in the Twenty-First Century*, (The Pan-London consortium of Homeless Service Providers, London, November 2004).

¹⁷³ Randall & Brown, p.5. The continued use of dormitories as a form of accommodation for homeless people was still prevalent in 2005, and noted by Richard Cunningham when he took over the Places of Change programme in 2007. ODPM, *Improving the quality of hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation*, Policy Briefing 8, (ODPM, London, 2005), p.7; Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

¹⁷⁴ Randall & Brown, *Helping Rough Sleepers*, p.29.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Cloke et al, *Swept-up Lives*, p.157. O’Connor, W. & Molloy, D., *‘Hidden in Plain Sight’: Homelessness in Lesbian and Gay Men*, (National Centre for Social Research, London, 2001), p.73. Gold, D, *Sexual Exclusion: Issues and best practice in lesbian, gay and bisexual housing and homelessness*, (Shelter, London, 2005), p.9.

many evictions and abandonments... 'patchy' key working and that 'in general hostels failed to resettle most of their residents'.¹⁷⁷ Richard Cunningham believes the RSU was slow to act, arguing that 'the focus was on the outreach teams, and what also needed to happen was change in the hostels...people had got very complacent'.¹⁷⁸ Jeremy Swain believes that 'the hostel accommodation wasn't that much better at the end of the RSU period than when it started'.¹⁷⁹ Change was to come, but a major improvement in hostel standards would not really begin until the Places of Change programme which began in 2003, but when it did, it was coupled with vastly improved working practices and was transformational.¹⁸⁰

Hostel staffing and working practice – the voluntary sector and the amateur ethos

Refuting arguments that view New Labour's approach to homelessness as revanchist, hostel accommodation was never considered as the end point of the RSU's homelessness programme. Far from 'rendering the visible poor invisible' by warehousing homeless people in hostels, the focus of the RSU was on rehabilitation, change and permanent resettlement away from the streets.¹⁸¹ The stated intention to 'help those most in need' would ensure that many of those entering hostels had greater support needs and hostel workers would have to have the skills needed to provide appropriate support and deal with more challenging behaviour in the hostel setting.¹⁸² Moreover, if residents were not to stagnate in hostels, and in keeping with New Labour's views on paid employment as the best means of escaping social exclusion, hostel work would now include programmes to enhance self-

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 5, 22, 24-5, 28.

¹⁷⁸ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

¹⁷⁹ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20. Swain does acknowledge that overall 'the quality was improving' and notes that, under the RSU, Centrepoint had 'managed to upgrade their hostels'.

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter 4.

¹⁸¹ *Coming in from the cold*, Key Proposals for Change. This emphasis was reiterated and given greater depth in the RSU's following report, DLTR, *More than a roof: A report into tackling homelessness*, (DLTR, London, March 2002).

¹⁸² *Coming in from the cold*, Key Proposals for Change, Section D.

esteem, develop 'life skills', engage in 'meaningful activity' and have opportunities to undertake vocational training.¹⁸³ To achieve this the RSU would have to facilitate another cultural change across the homelessness sector, away from its historic roots in philanthropy and volunteerism to one that acknowledged the skilled nature of the work and embraced professionalism. This change would be incrementally adopted and is explored in depth in Chapter 4, but it is necessary to briefly examine the conditions prevalent when the RSU began its work, and acknowledge the high degree of resistance to this transition with which the RSU had to contend.

The homelessness sector was hugely diverse in 1999 and generalisation is problematic. Established agencies such as St Mungo's and Thames Reach ran specialist projects with highly trained staff and had developed training programmes from as far back as the 1980s.¹⁸⁴ Homeless Network had long acted as a forum to share best practice amongst its members, and Shelter routinely delivered training in housing advice.¹⁸⁵ But outside the larger, more progressive agencies, skilled professionals were rare, many night shelters were entirely volunteer-run and any form of training was patchy at best.¹⁸⁶ It is likely that in 1999 the majority of the staff in most homeless agencies were volunteers.¹⁸⁷ A heavy reliance on volunteers has a long history in homelessness and had always been potentially problematic.

¹⁸³ Ibid, Section F.

¹⁸⁴ Mick Carroll, Interview, 24/3/21. However, even within these agencies, standards varied greatly from project to project. Dom Williamson recalls moving from a well-run St Mungo's project to a St Mungo's 'wet' hostel in 2003 where 'in a building full of drunk smokers, they'd done no fire checks...there was serious neglect going on'. Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ The most established agencies had been professionalising since the early 1970s. For process and reasons see Hilton, M., McKay, J., Crowson, N. & Mouhot, J., *The Politics of Expertise*, pp.84-5.

¹⁸⁷ This statement is not statistically verifiable, but was evidenced by the vast majority of respondents whose agencies became professionalised only after the New Labour period began, agencies as diverse as Newcastle Cyrenians (Changing Lives), Brighter Futures in Stoke, Bondway in Vauxhall and SPEAR in West London. Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20; Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20, Tony Waters, Interview, 2/2/21; Author's personal experience.

Employing volunteers, of course, helped keep costs down, but managing large numbers of part-time employees could be difficult and time consuming.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, volunteers brought with them a diverse range of motivations and for undertaking the work and assumptions about both the nature of homeless people and the work itself. Allahyari coined the phrase ‘moral-salving’ to describe a motive for volunteering that favours personal gratification and moral uplift rather than the needs of those ostensibly in receipt of aid and assistance.¹⁸⁹ Richard Cunningham sees this in volunteering at Crisis for Christmas considering it to be ‘more about the volunteers than the [homeless] people there’.¹⁹⁰ Although academics such as Cloke praise the contribution of faith-based volunteering, religiously motivated volunteers could also bring with them a desire to proselytize.¹⁹¹ A hostel worker recalled that, as late as, 2001 a Church Army project expected the staff to ‘lead daily prayer’ and Alan Fraser recalls difficulties at a YMCA in the 1990s where staff ‘would routinely invite people to church with them’.¹⁹² Secular assumptions could, however, be equally problematic. Leach and Wing reported that the young idealists working at the Simon Community in the 1970s, often held a romanticised image of the homeless person as counter-cultural rebel, where ‘destitution was regarded as a positive choice’.¹⁹³ All the above could be just as true for salaried staff, but as unpaid workers with no contract or

¹⁸⁸ Authors personal experience. Additional workload acknowledged by many respondents but not necessarily seen as problematic.

¹⁸⁹ Allahyari, R., *Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 2000). For an in-depth exploration of volunteering in homelessness see: Cloke, P., Johnsen, S. & May, J., ‘Ethical citizenship? Volunteers and the ethics of providing services for homeless people’, *Geoforum*, Vol 38, No 6, (2007), pp.1089-1101.

¹⁹⁰ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20. Steve Bell (CEO Changing Lives, Newcastle) recalls volunteers at the Newcastle Cyrenians ‘taking six homeless people home for Christmas dinner...into their large elegant house with chandeliers, had Christmas dinner and then dumped them back – that makes them feel good, I’m not sure what it does to the individuals’. Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

¹⁹¹ Such an approach would have been axiomatic to the evangelic agencies that dominated homeless provision until the 1970s such as the Salvation Army.

¹⁹² Hostel Worker, Interview, 16/12/20. Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21.

¹⁹³ Leach & Wing, *Helping Destitute Men*, p. 16.

terms of employment and little training, volunteers were much less likely to be adequately supervised. Most importantly, given the high prevalence of alcohol and drug dependency, mental health problems and the sheer vulnerability of multiply-traumatised homeless people, the conception that their needs were best served by well-meaning people with no formal training seems extraordinarily negligent.

Alastair Murray of Housing Justice adamantly disagrees with these criticisms, praising the benefits of tapping into the voluntary resources of religious communities, noting that, 'most church [night shelters] can run on a couple of staff...and then it's a massive multiplication of that expertise and effort through hundreds of volunteers'.¹⁹⁴ Other advocates of volunteering argue it facilitates engagement with the wider community, brings the perspectives of a broad range of people into the work, helps to maintain a high profile for homelessness as an issue and enables the raising of significant amounts of money through fundraising.¹⁹⁵ Buckingham argues that for the provision of 'companionship, hospitality and emotional support...the involvement of volunteers...seemed to be fundamental'.¹⁹⁶ Murray goes further still, arguing that voluntary-run projects work better than professional services, stating that clients of voluntary-run night shelters recognise them as, 'a qualitatively different service' and 'even guests with quite challenging sort of behaviours, will behave and tone things down when they're in the shelter because they recognise that this is a...purely

¹⁹⁴ Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20.

¹⁹⁵ For example, a hostel worker argued, 'you've always got to have a range of people in that environment so that everyone's got somebody that they can connect with him...you can't have a whole army of millennials telling you what to do when you're a 70-year-old man with bad legs...you need a 70-year-old with bad legs to tell you what to do.' Hostel Worker, Interview, 16/12/20. The benefits of employing volunteers is also evident in the careers of many of the CEO's interviewed who began as volunteers and took the deep understanding gained on the frontline into management.

¹⁹⁶ Buckingham, H., 'Hybridity, diversity and the division of labour in the third sector: what can we learn from homeless organisations in the UK?', *Voluntary Sector Review*, Vol 2, No 2, (2011), pp.157-175.

compassionate response on the part of the volunteers'.¹⁹⁷ Such beliefs can be considered naïve, but were also held by long established organisations like the Simon Community and Emmaus who were philosophically volunteer-run and non-hierarchical, and where the equivalent status of worker and client was considered a vital aspect of the therapeutic communities they created.¹⁹⁸ For many in the sector, amateurism even took on a moralistic imprimatur. Ian Brady recalls that when he was at Centrepoin in 1984, the 'volunteers were appalled that I was getting paid'.¹⁹⁹

Whatever the perceived benefits of amateurism, the RSU was determined to target the most entrenched rough sleepers, who were likely to have multiple and complex needs. As Williamson points out, dealing with such a client group 'wasn't something that you could expect...the average volunteer to turn up and do...you had to have people who were really skilled'.²⁰⁰ Even for paid staff, few agencies had invested in the necessary training, there was no recognised professional qualification, and as late as 2005 Mike Seal was still appealing for 'working with homeless people [to] be seen as a distinct field of work, with resettlement services as a distinct profession within it'.²⁰¹ Amateurism also extended to the governance and managerial aspects of many homeless sector organisations. Basic safeguarding was often neglected, CRB checks were not performed, and routine safety inspections not made,

¹⁹⁷ Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20. From personal experience, the author is highly sceptical of Murray's views.

¹⁹⁸ For details of the ethos and working practice of the Simon Community, see, Courtney, R., *Making a Difference: The Story of the Simon Community in Northern Ireland*, (The Simon Community, Belfast, 1992), pp.4-19 & Gibson-Watt, M.T., 'Voluntary Poverty: The Simon Community', in Curtis, H. & Sanderson, M., *The Unsung Sixties: Memoirs of social innovation*, (Whiting & Birch, London, 2004) For Emmaus see, Jordan & Jordan, *Social Work and the Third Way*, pp.111-114.

¹⁹⁹ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

²⁰⁰ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

²⁰¹ Mike Seal had numerous roles in the homeless sector from 1996 and was a leading figure at the National Homeless Alliance, Groundswell and the Federation of independent Advice Centres, (see Appendix A). Seal, M., *Resettling Homeless People: Theory and Practice*, (Russell House, Lyme Regis, 2005), p.1.

endangering both residents and staff.²⁰² Mark Palframan recalls his experience as Services Manager for the Simon Community, an appointment made after a volunteer had been set on fire by a resident, 'we had a lot of very manipulative, dysfunctional people, too many sex-offenders, people living under false identities, we had a really hard, really difficult group of people, with incredibly naïve, idealistic volunteers... were just students who had absolutely no experience of anything... there was no health and safety... they'd done no risk assessment and the whole thing was a nightmare'.²⁰³ With a few exceptions, the sector had not invested in HR or management training, and systems of supervision and support for staff were rudimentary.²⁰⁴ A hostel manager commented that, 'in the 90s, reflective practice meant going to the pub and getting smashed'.²⁰⁵ For paid staff across the sector, the lack of career prospects and low-pay created serious problems with the employment and retention of skilled staff, and Jon Kuhrt recalls a staff team made up of 'some idealists, some cynics and then quite a lot of people who were just not very good at the job'.²⁰⁶ Lack of appropriate training and support often led to 'burn out' with 'breakdowns in the homelessness field' considered to be 'an occupational hazard'.²⁰⁷ Both outreach workers

²⁰² CRB checks were criminal history checks carried out by the Criminal Records Bureau until 2012 when they were replaced by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The absence of CRB checks was identified by several respondents who asked not to be accredited.

²⁰³ Mark Palframan, Interview, 2/10/20. Although the Simon Community were particularly lax, Howard Sinclair, CEO of the much more professionalised Broadway notes that when he first arrived at Broadway no CRB checks were being done, and this remained true across the sector for some time. Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

²⁰⁴ Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20. The first accredited training programme for senior managers in the sector was not developed until 2004 with the 'Leading Places of Change' programme, accredited by the Chartered Institute of Housing. Cited by Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

²⁰⁵ Interviewee requested anonymity for use of this quote.

²⁰⁶ Kuhrt describes it as common to hear residents referred to as 'low lifes' and the hostel's problems were often blamed on the 'chaotic' behaviour of the residents, rather than the institutional setting and the negative attitude of the staff. Jon Kuhrt, Interview 18/9/20.

²⁰⁷ Brandon, D., Wells, K., Francis K. & Ramsey, E., *The Survivors: A Study of Homeless Young Newcomers to London and the Responses Made to Them*, (Routledge, London, 1980), p.40. For an insightful analysis of 'burn out' in homeless sector workers see Scanlon, C. & Adlam, J., 'The (dis) stressing effects of working in (dis)stressed homelessness organisations', *Housing Care and Support*, Vol 15, No 2, (2012), pp.74-82.

interviewed for this research accepted that they had 'burnt out' and had to leave the sector.²⁰⁸

In addition, a common, though not universal ethos of the amateur approach was that of 'open and unconditional acceptance'. This approach still garners support in academia, with Cloke arguing that the Christian notion of 'caritas' represents 'the certain something'...that would seem to be so effective when working with homeless people'.²⁰⁹ The essential passivity of this approach was challenged by the RSU. Predated on change and rehabilitation, it pushed for a much more pro-active approach, and, in keeping with New Labour conceptions of rights and responsibilities, expected hostel residents to take up the opportunities offered. Jon Kuhrt states that Louise [Casey] was 'very challenging to get everyone to think in a far more transformational way'.²¹⁰ As Whiteford (critically) comments, the new resources provided by the RSU would be directed to those 'service providers willing to adopt...support and 'rehabilitation' regimes that placed increasing stress on behavioural contracts and shifting levels of conditionality'.²¹¹

To start the process of making hostels places of rehabilitation and change, the RSU recruited an additional 60 mental health specialists and 80 specialist substance misuse workers across all levels of provision.²¹² It also pledged to create an additional 250 high support bed spaces in hostels.²¹³ Greater integration with the mental health outreach teams established under HMII was developed, they, in turn, developed training schemes for sector staff, and HMII

²⁰⁸ Outreach Worker 1, Interview, 15/3/22; Outreach Worker 2, Interview, 1/12/21.

²⁰⁹ Cloke et al, *Swept-up Lives*, pp.115, 116 & 245.

²¹⁰ Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 23/9/20.

²¹¹ Whiteford, M., 'New Labour, Street Homelessness and Social Exclusion', p.21.

²¹² These were spread across the CAT teams, hostels, day centres and the newly created Tenancy Sustainment teams. DETR/RSU, *Coming in From the Cold*, Key Proposals, Section D.

²¹³ Ibid, Key Proposals, Section A.

was expanded nationally.²¹⁴ Respondents were, however, unsure whether access to mental health services improved greatly in this period. London agencies more commonly praised the work of individuals or the independent development within sector agencies rather than systemic change.²¹⁵ The quality of the new hostel-based mental health workers was also questioned, with a CAT team worker noting that, 'they get called specialist, but really, they went on the two-day training about mental health'.²¹⁶

The situation for homeless people with substance misuse problems was, however, clearly improved, but from a very low base.²¹⁷ 'Wet' hostels and day centres were opened.²¹⁸ New methods of working with substance misusers based on harm minimisation were imported and 'quick access to titration and scripting' for homeless people developed.²¹⁹ Kevin Flemen cites the development of the Soho Rapid Access centre as crucial where, for the first time,

²¹⁴ Harding, *Post-war Homelessness Policy*, p.165.

²¹⁵ Jeremy Swain praised the work done by Dr Philip Timms (psychiatrist and lead on the START homeless mentally ill outreach team) Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20. Dr Timms himself saw the impetus for improvement coming from Thames Reach and St Mungo's rather than the RSU, and that the training schemes were developed from his own team's initiative. He also acknowledges that the needs of those diagnosed with 'personality disorders' were neglected 'we focused on psychosis' and 'it took our team 20 years to get a psychologist'. Dr Philip Timms, Interview, 21/1/21.

²¹⁶ CAT team worker, Interview, 15/3/22. In their 2002 review, Randall and Brown noted similar comments, 'specialist staff...were sometimes generic hostel staff who had a few months' experience, but little or no specialist training or qualifications'. The problem was identified as most acute in substance misuse workers. Randall & Brown, p.26.

²¹⁷ Labour's policies on homelessness and drugs developed over time. The new role for Drug Action Teams (DATs) with a strong emphasis on joint-working with the homelessness sector are laid out in, Randall, G. & DrugsScope, *Drug services for homeless people: a good practice handbook*, (ODPM/Homelessness Directorate, London, 2002).

²¹⁸ The performance of wet day centres was reviewed in 2003, and notes new projects in London, Oxford and Manchester although only one was directly funded by the Homelessness Directorate. Crane, R. & Warnes, A., *Wet Day Centres in the United Kingdom: A Research and Report Manual*, (King's Fund/Homelessness Directorate, Sheffield, October 2003), p.17.

²¹⁹ 'Titration' is the process of taking blood samples to assess the levels of heroin in a substance-user's bloodstream and therefore the appropriate level of the heroin substitute methadone to be 'scripted' (prescribed). Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20. The Home Office/DLTR guidance for drugs and housing (authored by Kevin Flemen and Ian Robinson from *Release*) affords a good overview of Labour's new approach; DTLR, *Tackling Drug Use in Rented Housing: A Good Practice Guide*, (DLTR, London, 2001). Labour's overall drug strategy was laid out in HMG, *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain: The Government's Ten-Year Strategy for Tackling Drug Misuse*, Cm3945.

homeless 'people could be picked up and titrated on the same day.'²²⁰ Access to hostels for drug users, however, remained problematic. While the Single Homeless Project (SHP) pioneered an 'eyes wide open' policy for working with drug users, for many hostels the legacy of the Winter Comfort case persisted, leaving them unwilling to take in substance misusers for fear of prosecution.²²¹ The issue of drug use does show up the limits to New Labour's aim of joined up governance, as in 2006 the Home Office proposed to make changes to Section 8 of the Misuse of Drugs Act that would have prevented hostels accommodating drug users, the opposite of the Homelessness Directorate's intentions.²²² Kevin Flemen described a long struggle on behalf of the sector which eventually persuaded the Home Office to back down.²²³ Despite this, progress was made, and CAT team members could now 'do an on-street assessment (with Drug specialist agency the Hungerford Project) and bring them into the service'.²²⁴ There was substantial investment in rehab and detox facilities, where previously 'there was no access to drug treatment services for street homeless people', and as Rebecca Pritchard comments that 'you'd be waiting three months for an appointment by which time either they were dead, or it was just too late'.²²⁵ Although Brady's claim that they were now 'taking drug addicts on the street and putting them straight into rehab' was not universal, CAT workers acknowledged they were 'getting a few' into rehab, which had been almost impossible previously'.²²⁶ It is important to note that problems with joint working between the homeless sector and substance misuse

²²⁰ Kevin Flemen, Interview 9/11/20.

²²¹ Flemen, K., 'Gimme shelter: Wintercomfort five years on', *Druglink*, Volume 19, Issue 5, (September/October 2004), pp.12-13.

²²² Kevin Flemen, Interview 9/11/20.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Outreach based hostel worker, Interview, 1/12/21; CAT team worker, Interview, 15/3/22.

²²⁵ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20; Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20.

²²⁶ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20. Outreach based hostel worker, Interview, 1/12/21; CAT team worker, Interview, 15/3/22.

services persisted. Drug specialists balked over the issue of the capacity of homelessness workers to make referrals to rehab which they felt undermined their 'clinical judgement', and Ian Brady recalls being 'verbally and physically abused' at a conference by angry drug workers over this issue.²²⁷ Despite these ongoing problems Rebecca Pritchard describes Labour's 'investment in the treatment sector' as a 'huge initiative' that had 'real impact' on the ground.²²⁸

More rapidly adopted was the new role for hostel staff in facilitating 'meaningful activity' for residents, and the introduction of educational and training programmes and a new emphasis on equipping homeless people with the skills to return to work. *Coming in from the Cold* highlighted the centrality of work stating that 'for many rough sleepers the ultimate objective will be a return to paid employment'.²²⁹ Meaningful activity/occupation was understood by the RSU as forms of 'daytime occupation' that helps give people the self-esteem and life skills needed to sustain a lifestyle away from the streets'.²³⁰ Opportunities for meaningful occupation would be made 'immediately' and would be 'individually tailored', offering, 'pre-vocational training covering basic life skills, literacy and numeracy and personal motivation' for those that needed it, and 'appropriate training, education or volunteering', for all.²³¹

For New Labour equipping individuals with the skills to enable a return to paid work was central to their whole approach to ending social exclusion and 'practices in hostels and day centres...became permeated by linkages between Labour's homelessness and employment

²²⁷ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

²²⁸ Rebecca Pritchard, Interview 30/9/20. Pritchard had numerous roles in the voluntary sector and local government in the period as was seconded to the Homelessness Directorate in 2007-2010, (See Appendix A).

²²⁹ DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold*, Key Proposals for Change, Section F.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

strategies'.²³² As outlined in Chapter 1, critics such as Levitas and Lister object in principle to New Labour's emphasis on paid employment, arguing that it enables the abandonment of redistributive approaches to addressing social exclusion.²³³ In homelessness, Whiteford sees this emphasis on paid employment as particularly problematic, arguing that it is 'encased in a strong moral narrative that suggested that 'work dignifies, while homelessness degrades', and considered it unacceptable that homeless people should 'have a 'duty' to transform themselves from the shackles of economic marginality'.²³⁴

These objections can be justified in ideological terms, but there is strong evidence to support the view that meaningful activity was an important tool in successful resettlement and was strongly supported from within the homelessness sector. MacKnee and Mervyn identified five major themes that aided transition of the street, and foregrounded 'accomplishing mainstream lifestyle goals...involvement in meaningful work and completing educational goals'.²³⁵ Both St Mungo's and Thames Reach had been aware of the importance of work before the advent of New Labour and both ran programmes to help their hostel residents find employment.²³⁶ Swain extolled the wide benefits of work for homeless people, saying 'you need the income, you need the stability...the friendships that come with it' and Charles Fraser raised the importance of taking someone from a 'state of

²³² See Powell, M. 'New Labour and the third way in the British welfare state', p.45. Dobson, R. & McNeill, J. 'Homelessness and Housing Support Services: Rationales and Policies under New Labour', *Social Policy and Society*, Vol 10, No 4, (2011), p.585.

²³³ Levitas, *The included Society*; Lister, R., 'From Equality to Social Exclusion: New Labour and the Welfare State'.

²³⁴ Whiteford, M., 'New Labour, Street Homelessness and Social Exclusion, p.15. Levitas too is highly critical of an approach to addressing social exclusion based on individuals gaining paid employment. Levitas, *The included Society*, p.2.

²³⁵ MacKnee, C.M. & Mervyn, J., 'Critical Incidents That Facilitate Homeless People's Transition off the Streets', *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, Vol 11, No4, (2002), pp.301-3.

²³⁶ St Mungo's had been running the Skills, Training and Employment Placement (STEPS) service since the 1980s, and Thames Reach pioneered the GROW programme to employ people with lived experience, which amounted to 23% of the workforce by 2009. Mick Carroll, interview, 24/3/21; Jeremy Swain, interview, 2/10/20

being to one of doing'.²³⁷ Homeless people themselves were clear that they wanted to work, with over 70% of respondents to Thames Reach's annual surveys desiring paid work.²³⁸

There were also benefits to introducing meaningful activity in terms of hostel management, many respondents noted that when an 'activities programme' was introduced, evictions, abandonments and violent incidents went down rapidly.²³⁹

New Labour's approach was not entirely new, the Off the Streets and into Work (OSW) project had been established under the Major administration, and the Foyer movement, which offered accommodation tied to employment and training for young people, had been imported from France in 1992 and grown rapidly.²⁴⁰ In the early stages the steps taken to universalise meaningful activity, employment and training were relatively small, but significant. Changes were made in Labour's 'New Deal' for young homeless people allowing them immediate access, there were pilots of life-skills, creative writing and photography programmes, and grants awarded to the Big Issue and Groundswell for small scale employment projects.²⁴¹ The RSU also worked closely with Business Action on Homelessness (BAOH) that encouraged employers to take on homeless people and set up 'buddy schemes' and other forms of support.²⁴² The big changes nationally would be facilitated under the 'Places of Change' programme after 2003, but even by the time of the Randall & Brown

²³⁷ Charles Fraser bemoaned the corrosive effects of the decline in numbers of Mungo's residents in work, noting that 86% had been in work in 1983, 33% in 1997 and, that by 2014 it was down to 4%. Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20; Jeremy Swain, interview, 2/10/20.

²³⁸ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

²³⁹ Among many others. Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

²⁴⁰ By 2010 there were 130 Foyers in the UK, Hillman, S., 'The Foyer Federation: Aiming to transform the institutions and policies that currently help young people', *Criminal Justice Matters*, Vol. 80 no 1, (2010), p.40. The role of the *Off the Streets and into Work* expanded greatly, between 2002 and 2003 2,240 hostel residents participated in the scheme. Warnes, Crane & Foley, *London's hostels for Homeless people*, p.30.

²⁴¹ DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold*, Key Proposals for Change, Section F; DETR/RSU, *Progress Report*, Summer 2000.

²⁴² Jones, A. & Pleace, N., *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000-2010*, (Crisis, London, 2010), p.83.

review in 2002, 'half of hostel residents had 'taken up new activities- usually creative, computing or recreational, and were looking for training and work'.²⁴³

The transformation of the skills base of hostel workers would take time and the adoption of a new ethos of working was never universally accepted. However, by 2005 Warnes & Crane's survey of London hostels found that support had become 'more individualised, holistic and rehabilitative' and resettlement programmes 'more widespread and effective'.²⁴⁴ Eviction rates were lower, nine-tenths 'provided individual case-work for residents' (up from less than half in 1990), one third had 'mental health, alcohol and drugs workers, or specialist teams that visited the hostels regularly' (up from 18% in 1990), specialist hostels for these groups existed, and 'wet' hostels for heavy drinkers had been developed.²⁴⁵ However, a national survey of direct access hostels conducted in 2006 found that 46% still 'relied heavily on volunteers' and 29% were still unable to access specialist staff.²⁴⁶ The Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) introduced under New Labour's 'Supporting People' programme from 2003 would drive out the most egregious practices and channelled money to those agencies able to meet required standards, ushering in a more professional approach.²⁴⁷ There were, however, limits to the RSU's power to enact

²⁴³ See Chapter 4; Randall & Brown, p.27.

²⁴⁴ Warnes, T., Crane, M. & Foley, P., *London's hostels for Homeless people*, p.vii

²⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.12,23-4, 29, 31 & 33.

²⁴⁶ May, J., Cloke, P. & Johnsen, S., 'Shelter at the margins: New Labour and the changing state of emergency accommodation for single homeless people in Britain', *Policy and Politics*, Vol 34 No 4, (2006), pp.719-720. The different results of the two surveys may indicate the more advanced practices of the London homelessness sector, but may also be a consequence of their contrasting sample groups.

²⁴⁷ See Chapter 3 for the impact of Supporting People and chapter 4 for the broader development of professionalism and skill-base of homelessness work.

change. Many of the faith-based groups had an independent fund-raising capacity, and were willing to forego state support to maintain their ethos of unconditional acceptance.²⁴⁸

Reducing services that 'enable' rough sleeping

The RSU's drive to reconfigure the homelessness sector was not limited to outreach services and hostel work. The RSU was also determined to reduce services that it deemed to be helping 'sustain a street lifestyle' rather than reducing homelessness. This had two main components. A programme to reduce the number of soup-runs going in to central London, and the creation of 'diverted giving schemes' to encourage the public not to give money to beggars and instead to make donations to homeless charities.²⁴⁹ While the former was ultimately successful, the push for diverted giving schemes ended in failure. Both were highly controversial. For the RSU these were myth-busting exercises for the education of the general public and a means of re-positioning the homelessness sector away from an emergency response and toward long-term solutions. It is argued here that the RSU was correct in its analysis, and provides further evidence of the long-term strategic thinking that is characteristic of homelessness policy under New Labour. The RSU's approach had widespread support from within the more professionalised parts of the homelessness sector, but faced strong opposition from other, often faith-based and volunteer-led, groups.²⁵⁰ It also engendered an often vehemently hostile reaction from both the press and public alike who viewed both schemes as inhumane and, for some, as evidence of

²⁴⁸ The Simon Community are the strongest example of this resistance and were charter-bound not to accept government money. For a summary of the ethos of the Simon Community, see: Courtney, R., *Making a Difference: The Story of the Simon Community*, pp.11-20.

²⁴⁹ Soup runs were to be reduced under The London Soup and Clothing Run Coordination Project (LSRCP), launched in July 2000. The first of the diverted giving schemes, 'Change a Life' was launched in November 2000. Both were proposed in DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold: Delivering the Strategy*, (DETR, London, 2000), Section G.

²⁵⁰ Support for a reduction in soup runs was universal among CEO's of the major London-based homeless agencies interviewed.

revanchist intent.²⁵¹ Alastair Murray, of the Christian organisation Housing Justice, typifies the views of many in the faith-based, volunteer-led parts of the sector, arguing that the motivation to reduce soup runs stemmed from ‘pressure from the local community’ to get rid of ‘this long line of tramps at the end of our road’, not the needs of homeless people.²⁵² Although Murray’s view was very much in the minority amongst sector respondents, he was not alone, with Mark Palframan, who led the soup run closure programme and supported its aims, still considered its motivation to be primarily ‘about visibility’.²⁵³

What both campaigns also demonstrate, is the difficulties of policy delivery when addressing issues that go against the grain of press and public sentiment. It is argued here that New Labour’s creation of an autonomous government unit was an essential prerequisite to begin to tackle these issues. It required the unit’s expertise to identify the issues in the first place, propose appropriate solutions, and Casey’s robust management style to handle the controversy they subsequently provoked. New Labour’s granting of an independent communications team to the RSU helped, as it enabled the unit to run a strategic campaign in support of its aims. In addition, although more fortuitous than strategic, Louise Casey’s status as ‘Homelessness Tsar’ meant that Labour was politically insulated from the full force of public and press ire, with the brickbats falling on her rather than the incumbent government.²⁵⁴ That the diverted giving schemes ultimately failed, is

²⁵¹ For press and public reaction see below.

²⁵² Alastair, Murray, Interview, 8/11/20.

²⁵³ Mark Palframan, Interview, 2/10/20.

²⁵⁴ That this was a strategic consideration by New Labour is doubtful. Government was, however, fully aware of its consequences. The chairman of the Select Committee on Public Administration Interviewing Louise Casey in 2001 stated, ‘You are the public voice, the public face, of the Government’s Rough Sleepers’ Programme...if rough sleepers fails, things are so evolved that you...are in the firing line because you have become far more visibly associated with these projects than you would be if they were simply being delivered by normally invisible bits of the Civil Service.’ Select Committee on Public Administration, Examination of Witnesses, 7 March 2001. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200001/cmselect/cmpublicadm/94/1030712.htm> accessed 8/4/2022.

however, indicative of the limitations of attempts by government to alter public opinion and behaviour, irrespective of the merits of the argument they advance.

Soup Runs

The RSU's viewed soup runs into central London as both unnecessary and counter-productive. They were unnecessary as there was already an ample supply, and better means, of providing food and clothing for London's rough sleepers via Day Centres, and with nearly two-hundred soup runs in central London each week there was huge over-provision and a wasteful duplication of effort.²⁵⁵ Randall and Brown poignantly commented in their 2002 review of the RSU that, 'soup runs, which are usually operated by volunteers who do not appreciate that the problems of people on the street do not include a lack of food'.²⁵⁶ In addition, as the majority of soup run providers were independent groups with no links to outreach services, they could play almost no role in resettlement. Furthermore, the RSU argued, by providing sustenance at street level soup runs enabled people to continue sleeping rough, diverted them from accessing day centres and the services they provided, and by drawing those who had been recently resettled back onto the street, hampered permanent resettlement away from street life.

The RSU's campaign to reduce the number of soup runs going into Central London was ultimately successful, despite the strong opposition and hostility it engendered. In keeping with the central issue of the importance of the neglected issue of *delivery* in social policy, the manner in which this was achieved is explored in detail below.

²⁵⁵ In 2000 there were 91 organisations providing soup runs making a total of 196 visits per week. Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Soup and Clothing Run Co-ordination Project: Biennial Report*, (Salvation Army, London, 2002), p.11.

²⁵⁶ Randall & Brown, *Helping Rough Sleepers*, p.4.

The London Soup and Clothing Run Coordination Project (LSRCP) began in July 2000 and was given the target of reducing the number of soup runs coming into central London by two-thirds by 2002.²⁵⁷ Casey had presaged the new approach in November 1999, announcing, 'With soup runs and other kinds of charity help, well-meaning people are spending money servicing the problem on the streets and keeping it there', adding more bluntly, 'there is a plethora of services on the streets. You can get a better sleeping bag on the Strand than you can buy in the camping shop *Blacks*'.²⁵⁸

The press response was immediate and hostile, with the *Observer* running the headline 'Sweep the homeless off the Streets: charities in uproar as culture of kindness comes under attack from new government tsar'.²⁵⁹ The hostility of the media never abated. Anne Wallis (Head of Communications for the RSU) recalls even 'our usual go-to journalists [*Guardian*, *Observer* & *Daily Mirror*] turned on us'.²⁶⁰ Even successful outcomes made no difference. Wallis recalls, 'people were coming off the streets, because the soup was now being served in a Day Centre...but they didn't want to report on that, they wanted to report, 'Casey bans Crisis at Christmas!', rather than, 'Look at this fantastic Night Centre that's serving soup *and* has a mental health nurse'.²⁶¹ Wallis believes the problem was exacerbated as, 'certain elements of the sector didn't believe in what we're doing - they then became the people the media went to'.²⁶² Public opinion appears to have been in accord with the press. Richard Cunningham recalls, 'it went down badly... my phone used to ring hot all day, and I had a

²⁵⁷ Cloke, *Swept-up Lives*, p.94.

²⁵⁸ Casey, L, quoted in, Bright, M. 'Sweep the Homeless off streets', *Observer*, 14 November 1999.

²⁵⁹ Bright, M. 'Sweep the Homeless off streets', *Observer*, 14 November 1999

²⁶⁰ Wallis also notes the persistent hostility of the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph*, saying for them 'we weren't right-wing enough'. Anne Wallis, Interview 30/6/21.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

nun on the phone for an hour...by the end of it she was effectively condemning Louise Casey to burn in hell!’²⁶³

The RSU persisted, and Casey did not shy away from promoting the controversial policy. It is possible to interpret Casey’s pronouncements as intemperate, but she had secured an independent communications service for the RSU, and her role as an agent provocateur may have been more strategic than it appeared.²⁶⁴ Wallis, explains that they were aware of the potential pitfalls from the outset, Casey knew ‘she was going to go out with some quite...radical messages...that people [should] not sustain street homelessness’ and ‘a communication strategy was built-in through the lifetime of the plan’.²⁶⁵ This strategy may have been less successful than hoped, but Casey’s tribulations with the press and public would remain those of an out-spoken homelessness Tsar, not those of New Labour. The controversy did, however, come at a cost for the RSU. Steve Guyon ruefully recalled, ‘I spent a lot of time dealing with flack around things that I personally didn't think were tremendously helpful... an enormous amount of time was spent around soup-runs...plenty of heat but not much light around that’.²⁶⁶

The task for the RSU was not primarily about managing the media, however, but to persuade those providing soup on the streets to cease and redirect their efforts in ways that were more conducive to long-term resettlement. There was considerable resistance to this idea.

²⁶³ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

²⁶⁴ It is possible the language used was not carefully pre-meditated. Later in her career, Casey made a number of pronouncements that were considered ill-advised – see, for example, ‘Blair defends ASBO tsar’s gaffe’ BBC News 6 July 2005. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4656305.stm accessed 8/4/2022.

²⁶⁵ Anne Wallis, Interview 30/6/21.

²⁶⁶ Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/10/20. Guyon is describing the later period of the Homelessness Directorate, but could equally apply to the earlier struggles.

The practice of giving food to people on the streets has a long history in the UK, stretching back at least as far as the middle ages.²⁶⁷ Termed 'soup runs' or 'soup kitchens' they had been a typical example of Victorian philanthropy, and a means for (primarily) religious groups to fulfil their duty of compassion and care for the poor.²⁶⁸ The number of soup runs had grown with the rise in rough sleeping since the 1980s, and by the time New Labour came to power it is estimated that as many as ninety-one separate groups were providing food, sleeping bags and clothing to rough sleepers in central London.²⁶⁹ Groups were driving into the city from as far away as Luton, Harlow and Bedford.²⁷⁰ This level of over-provision led to absurd outcomes. Mark Palframan (who coordinated the LSRCP) recalled that as the numbers of rough sleepers 'dropped off', people would ring him up to ask 'Where are the homeless people?', and, to guarantee a crowd, soup runs were 'piggy-backing of each other' at particular sites, where people 'would come and assemble... and then when the soup runs went they would go home again'.²⁷¹ Richard Cunningham, comments on this over-provision, 'the soup run stuff was nonsense because it was indiscriminate... you had to control them because they were mad. In Waterloo...you could have 15 soup runs turning up on an evening, from all over'.²⁷²

To the RSU and much of the sector, not only was such over-provision absurd, it was a waste of time and resources that did nothing to address the fundamental issue of homelessness.

²⁶⁷ Johnsen, S., Cloke, P. & May, J., 'Transitory spaces of care: serving homeless people on the street', *Health and Place*, Vol 11 No 4, (2005), p.323.

²⁶⁸ Mark Palframan gives an example of this Victorian legacy, 'The Silver Lady Trust Fund was set up in about 1900 by this eccentric old lady who was a millionaire, she used to go down The Strand and give coins to homeless people, and then when she died, she set up this trust fund to finance hot food for homeless people. And it was a proper truck, it was a proper little charity and employed two drivers who would come early in the morning, 'The Pie Man', they called him at Waterloo.' Mark Palframan, Interview 2/10/20.

²⁶⁹ Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Soup and Clothing Run Co-ordination Project: Biennial Report*, (Salvation Army, London, 2002), p.11.

²⁷⁰ Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20.

²⁷¹ Mark Palframan, Interview 2/10/20.

²⁷² Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

Food, clothing and other services could be better provided by London's network of Day Centres.²⁷³ Steve Guyon (Rough Sleeping Lead, Homelessness Directorate 2004-2015) argues, 'I don't think we should be feeding people on the streets in the 21st century... soup-runs are okay as long as it leads to linking people into services...[as] the precursor to proper outreach and it might be useful'.²⁷⁴ The vast majority of soup runs, however, acted autonomously, and were not linked to outreach services and therefore did not act even as a contact point to get people off the streets and into hostels or Day Centres. Furthermore, the RSU argued, soup runs actually acted in a counter-productive way by making it possible to survive on the streets, homeless people became accommodated to street life, discouraging them from taking up hostel places. Richard Cunningham is certain of this, 'this is one of the big problems - people think they're saving lives, because they think that there's nothing out there for individuals. So, they're providing lots of free food and all the rest of it, but actually not trying to get to the root cause of the problem, which is these people need to come inside'.²⁷⁵ Steve Guyon argues that 'that side of the sector who just want to give out free stuff fuelled a dependency culture' and Dave Musker (Lead on homelessness, Lambeth, Metropolitan Police, 1989-2010) argues that all soup runs achieved was, 'supporting people to die early'.²⁷⁶ From the RSU and the more professionalised parts of the sector's perspective, those engaged in soup runs may have been well-intentioned, but it was wrong-thinking of the highest order. The RSU also subscribed to the view that such agglomerations of people acted as a magnet, drawing people back into street life. Ian Brady puts it simply, saying 'if you put too many services on to the streets people came on to the streets'.²⁷⁷

²⁷³ The role for Day Centres envisaged by the RSU is explored later in this chapter.

²⁷⁴ Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/10/20.

²⁷⁵ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

²⁷⁶ Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/10/20; Dave Musker, Interview, 12/11/20.

²⁷⁷ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20. Alastair Murray, interview, 18/11/20.

Alastair Murray, who set up the Soup Run Forum in early 2000s, and led the campaign against Westminster Council's attempt to ban soup runs in the borough in 2008 is a dissenting voice, stating 'I've never bought that idea that somebody would go and live in the doorway in the West End in order to get a free cup of tea and a sandwich - just never in 1000 years'.²⁷⁸ Mark Palframan, however, addresses the issue with more subtlety, arguing that, soup runs were 'unhelpful for the people who had been resettled... away from a street-based lifestyle... they needed to move on from that and settle where they were living'.²⁷⁹

Alastair Murray however, believes that the RSU had missed the point completely, arguing that, 'people who go to soup-runs are obviously in need – they may not be literally street homeless, but they are people who are lonely. They might be on low income, they might have friends amongst the people that use the soup-runs - It's a place of community and hospitality and why should that be so controversial?'.²⁸⁰ Murray is lent support by both Johnsen in 2005 and Lane & Power in 2009, who make a similar argument in defence of the value of soup runs to the marginally housed and isolated.²⁸¹ Soup-run advocates also argued that its, often faith-inspired volunteers brought particular benefits in the form of 'the expression of care in an altruistic, undemanding manner that is free from judgement...bring[ing] a vital element to marginalised people that more directive services cannot'.²⁸² While the RSU was determined to focus on getting the most entrenched rough

²⁷⁸ Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20.

²⁷⁹ Mark Palframan, interview, 2/10/20.

²⁸⁰ Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20.

²⁸¹ Johnsen et al, 'Transitory spaces of care: serving homeless people on the street', p. 328; Lane, L. & Power, A., *Soup Runs in Central London: 'The right help in the right place at the right time?'*, (LSE, London, July 2009), Section 9.1.

²⁸² Johnsen et al, Transitory spaces of care, p.329. Cloke et al also praise this 'post secular' form of care, most commonly performed by faith-based groups, acting through Christian notions of caritas. Cloke et al, *Swept Up Lives*, pp.56-60.

sleepers off the streets, and believed street provision was counter-productive to achieving this, the soup-run providers felt they were serving a wider societal need. Murrays' argument is not without merit on its own terms, but fails to consider the potentially negative consequences of serving people on the streets and the additional benefits gained by providing equivalent services within Day Centres.

The RSU had no direct power over those providing soup runs, so despite Louise Casey's combative public statements, the task of reducing the number of soup runs was conducted by Palframan largely in a manner of patient persuasion rather than brute force. On the matter of delivery, the RSU acted in accord with Third Way principles, setting a clear and measurable target for success and contracting the work to a third sector provider, the Salvation Army, that had a historic commonality with the (mostly) faith-based organisations whose habits it sought to change.

The Salvation Army was awarded the LSRCF contract and appointed Mark Palframan to lead it.²⁸³ Palframan was much more sympathetic to the soup run volunteers than the RSU, describing them as 'nice people doing good things - just a bit naive', but he had no illusions about the absurdity of the over-provision in central London, noting that 'We were coordinating them theoretically, but really it was just a euphemism for stopping these people'.²⁸⁴ Palframan's pitch began by thanking them for their work and then arguing that the success of the RSU meant 'Actually you can stop now - you can do something else'.²⁸⁵ He persuaded 'about half of them to stop', and some to 'open evening drop-ins in their [local]

²⁸³ Cunningham describes the Salvation Army's appointment to the role as 'a poisoned chalice', Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20. Palframan's gently persuasive approach was praised by Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20.

²⁸⁴ Mark Palframan, Interview, 2/10/20.

²⁸⁵ Mark Palframan, Interview, 2/10/20.

church halls'.²⁸⁶ He still faced resistance, 'there were some people from the Simon Community who threatened me at Lincoln's Inn fields one night - quite badly'.²⁸⁷

By employing the Salvation Army and Palframan's emollient skills, the RSU succeeded in avoiding the degree of conflict engendered by Westminster Council's attempt to ban soup runs altogether in 2007. A 'big campaign' against it attracted the support of Liberty, and it was comprehensively defeated.²⁸⁸ With the experience of the RSU's struggles behind him Guyon concluded that, 'If you take a hard-line, people would crawl over broken glass to deliver soup'.²⁸⁹ The RSU's determination and Palframan's patient approach yielded results, meeting its target by stopping or diverting 50 different soup runs by 2002.²⁹⁰

Diverted giving

The aim of Diverted Giving schemes was to persuade the public to cease giving money to people begging on the street, and channel that money to homeless agencies instead. The RSU's advocacy of such schemes derived from the same logic as reducing the number of soup runs, arguing that public gifts of cash to people begging was counter-productive, encouraged street living and therefore hampered resettlement, and served mainly to enable those with drug or alcohol issues to maintain their habits. Ian Brady states this view trenchantly, saying 'people were being killed out of generosity' and recounted an instance when he took out a Home Office minister on the streets of Oxford and 'showed him a beggar...getting £20 from some well-meaning' person... as soon as that £20 was in the

²⁸⁶ Ibid. By 2002 the number of providers had been reduced to 54 who were making a total of 57 visits per week to Central London.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Johnsen & Fitzpatrick note that it was 'overturned in the face of extreme public opposition', with a flurry of letters to national newspapers 'deploring the proposition as 'callous', misguided', 'inexcusable' and 'immoral', Johnsen, S. & Fitzpatrick, S., 'Revanchist Sanitation or Coercive Care?', p.1713.

²⁸⁹ Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20; Mark Palframan, Interview, 2/10/20; Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/10/20.

²⁹⁰ Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Soup and Clothing Run Co-ordination Project: Biennial Report*.

cup...the drug dealer was there...and sold him two bags of Heroin'.²⁹¹ This view was commonly held by homeless agency staff although they were not often forthright in saying so publicly. Jon Kuhrt, who was himself certain of the negative effects of giving money to homeless beggars, recalls, 'although 'a lot of my colleagues also didn't agree with giving money to people begging, but they disagreed with anyone saying it'.²⁹² In interview, many were more candid. Jeremy Swain's comments are typical, saying 'It's really hard to get an engagement in the hostel with people, when it's that easy [to raise money by begging]'.²⁹³ May, Cloke & Johnsen argue that Homeless agencies did not challenge the RSU's diverted giving schemes for fear of losing influence over policy, but the views of the respondents interviewed for this research suggest instead that the majority were actually in agreement with the scheme's intent.²⁹⁴ Research too, supports the RSU's analysis; a survey of 260 'people who beg' in 2001 recording that 86% of respondents were 'currently using hard drugs' and some 25% drinking alcohol on a daily basis, which was only possible due to their income from begging.²⁹⁵

The RSU's attempts to utilise 'diverted giving schemes' was, in contrast to the soup run campaign, a failure. It is argued here that the RSU's logic, and the ethics behind the campaign were sound and had widespread support from within the homelessness sector.²⁹⁶ However, its failure illustrates the limitations of New Labour's aims for 'governing by culture', with the public steadfastly refused to accept their perception of a 'right and proper

²⁹¹ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

²⁹² Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 23/9/20.

²⁹³ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

²⁹⁴ May, Cloke & Johnsen, 'Re-phasing Neoliberalism', p.718.

²⁹⁵ RSU/DETR, *Looking for Change: The role and impact on the lives of people who beg* (2001), <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20020215045034/http://www.dtlr.gov.uk:80/housing/information/rough/begging/index.htm> (accessed 1/3/21).

²⁹⁶ Thames Reach would run an equivalent campaign, 'Killing with Kindness' in 2003. Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

mode of caring'.²⁹⁷ The RSU had financial levers to influence the established homelessness sector and the prestige of expertise to affect change in the volunteer-led groups, but no means of successfully challenging public perception or behaviour. Tom Preest sums up the lessons learned, 'I would always advise against diverted giving schemes now - not because I think they're wrong - but because I think they don't work... in fact they encourage the very behaviour that you're trying to change'.²⁹⁸

The RSU's 'Change a Life' campaign, was launched in November 2000 with the full backing of the Labour government and conducted through advertisements in the national press.²⁹⁹ Other local campaigns were set up in Manchester, Leeds and Plymouth.³⁰⁰ For the RSU, the 'Change a Life' campaign was part of 'a staged approach... we weren't going out to talk to the public about not giving to beggars...until we'd done a lot of the work to get the most vulnerable in'.³⁰¹

This was not how the campaign was received. The press reaction was hostile, and Casey acknowledges that it produced a 'visceral' reaction.³⁰² Far from being persuaded to stop giving to beggars 'many members of the public resented being told what to do with their compassionate impulses' and beggars reported an uptake in earnings on the day of the campaign's launch.³⁰³ In academia, May & Cloke characterise the scheme as fundamentally

²⁹⁷ May, Cloke & Johnsen, 'Re-phasing Neoliberalism', p.717.

²⁹⁸ Tom Preest, Interview, 7/10/20. Jeremy Swain, reflecting on the St Mungo's 2003 'Killing with Kindness' campaign reaches a similar conclusion, Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

²⁹⁹ Ministers Mo Mowlam and Hilary Armstrong were alongside Louise Casey at the campaign's launch. DETR, 'Rough Sleepers and Housing', Press release, 6 November 2000.

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20010706035152/http://www.detr.gov.uk:80/housing/information/index04.htm>, (accessed 12/12/21).

³⁰⁰ Fitzpatrick, S. and Jones, A., 'Pursuing Justice or Social Cohesion?', p.396.

³⁰¹ Anne Wallis, Interview, 30/6/21.

³⁰² Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21. Hostility was greatest in the Liberal press, for example see, Summerskill, B., 'It's official: Thou shalt not give money to beggars', *Observer Society*, 8 October 2000.

³⁰³ Johnsen, S. & Fitzpatrick, S., 'Revanchist Sanitisation or Coercive Care?', p.1713.

revanchist in intent, an attempt at 'cutting off the supply of food and money on the streets at source' and Butchy argues that such schemes were damaging as they denied homeless people's dignity and autonomy by promoting the idea that 'rough sleepers pose a social problem that should be dealt with [only] by specific staff from agencies providing welfare and public order'.³⁰⁴ Despite the RSU's claim that in response to the campaign they were 'inundated' with offers of help, the campaign failed financially.³⁰⁵ Despite a £240,000 advertising campaign it raised only £10,000 in its first four months of operation.³⁰⁶ Other diverted giving campaigns appear to have fared equally badly.³⁰⁷

Day Centres

It is argued throughout this research that accusations of revanchist intent for New Labour's homelessness programme are misplaced and fail to take into consideration its coherent and strategic approach. The soup run closures were not attempts to 'starve the homeless off the streets', but to enable long-term resettlement away from street life. The RSU argued that the provision of food and clothing that the soup runs had provided could be equally well delivered in Day Centres. Homeless people in regular contact with a day centres could benefit from individualised care planning and be able to access a much broader range of services, including training and vocational programmes. To achieve this, the RSU, once again, had to facilitate a significant culture change on a part of the homelessness sector over which it had no operational control and which was deeply imbued with both an

³⁰⁴ May & Cloke, 'Modes of Attentiveness', p.902. Butchy, C., 'Identities of rough sleepers in Oxford', p.20.

³⁰⁵ Term 'Inundated' from 'a spokeswoman' quoted in Vasagar J., "Homeless campaign raises just £10,000", *Guardian*, 20 March 2001.

³⁰⁶ Financial failure reported by Vasagar J., "Homeless campaign raises just £10,000", *Guardian*, 20 March 2001.

³⁰⁷ Jeremy Swain states that Thames Reach's 2003 diverted giving campaign, 'Killing with Kindness', 'became very controversial' and in the end 'he had no evidence to show that it made much difference'. Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

amateur ethos and a method of working centred on 'unconditional acceptance' rather than rehabilitation and change. It is argued here that the reforms of Day Centre working practice, including the move to conditionality in service provision, although not unproblematic, were necessary and effective.

The importance of Day Centres to the RSU had been made clear in *Coming in from the Cold*, where they were 'recognised as an important service', which would be at the centre of New Labour's programme for tackling street homelessness'.³⁰⁸ Gaps in provision were rapidly filled by opening 'wet' day centres and the funding of new 'Night Centres' in London, Bristol and Manchester.³⁰⁹ The new Night Centres were widely praised as an important extension of homeless services.³¹⁰ Although the homeless sector had strongly advocated for the establishment of wet day centres, doubts remained over their efficacy.³¹¹ Progress thereafter was relatively slow, and the more substantial changes took place after the RSU had been folded into the homeless directorate in 2003. By then the ODPM/Homelessness Directorate was the most significant source of funds for Day Centres, providing some £2.5million to London's 39 Day Centres.³¹² In 2004, however, London Day Centres were still dependent for some 45% of their income on charitable fundraising and Cloke notes that 'it is odd that organisations charged with...providing a more comprehensive package of support...should still have to struggle so hard for funding.'³¹³

³⁰⁸ RSU/DETR, 'Coming in from the Cold'.

³⁰⁹ 'Wet' Day Centres allow drinking on the premises, and therefore more possibilities to work with alcohol dependent homeless people. Night Centres perform the same function as day centres but are open overnight.

³¹⁰ Including by Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

³¹¹ Although a wet day centre in Oxford was praised by its staff in Randall & Brown's report, Kevin Flemen is less sure of their efficacy, saying, 'wet day centres are generally very pitiful places, they're not therapeutic and they're not well done'. Randall & Brown, p.20. Kevin Flemen, Interview 9/11/20.

³¹² Out of a total of some £9.5 million. Woods, N., Harrison, M. & Jacobs, C., *Association of London Government, Day Centres research Project*, (Resource Information Services, London, March 2004), pp.2 & 34.

³¹³ Woods, Harrison & Jacobs, *ALG Day Centres Research Project*, p.3; Cloke, *Swept-up Lives*, p.118.

Cloke's comments, and the slow pace of change in day centres may be explicable as a consequence of their relative underdevelopment, financial independence and a conflict in ethos between day centres and the RSU.³¹⁴ The majority of Day Centres had been developed since the 1980s by church groups, and were facilities open to all, that offered an 'open and non-interventionist approach', food and clothing, washing facilities, laundry and 'a place to be'.³¹⁵ The extent of this 'open ethos' is questioned in Johnsen, Cloke and May's earlier research, which notes elements of 'social control' in the use of CCTV, fluorescent lights in bathrooms to deter Intravenous drug users, and 'vetting' at the door.³¹⁶ In 1992 Jeremy Swain described Day Centres as traditionally being considered 'a rather shabby enterprise run on a shoe-string by well-meaning but amateurish people with limited aims'.³¹⁷ The 'shabbiness' would be long in disappearing. Cloke, writing largely in praise of Day Centres in 2010, acknowledged that many still operated in 'clearly substandard and inappropriate premises', which, 'can easily convey a sense that those who use such premises are second-class citizens'.³¹⁸ Richard Cunningham, who worked at both the Passage and the North Lambeth Day Centre, concurs, picturesquely describing homeless people who 'crawled down from the daylight into church basements' into what were 'potentially quite violent...intimidating places'.³¹⁹

³¹⁴ The relative underdevelopment of the Day Centre sector has led to it often being termed a 'Cinderella Service'. Waters, J., *Community or Ghetto? An Analysis of Day Centres for Single Homeless People*, (London, CHAR, 1992).

³¹⁵ Cloke, *Swept-up Lives*, pp.117 & 129.

³¹⁶ Johnsen, S., Cloke, P., May, J., 'Day Centres for homeless people: spaces of care or fear?', *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol 6, No 6, (2005), p.801.

³¹⁷ Swain, J., 'Introduction' in London Day Centres Directory, quoted in Woods, Harrison & Jacobs, *ALG Day Centres Research Project*, p.1

³¹⁸ Cloke, *Swept-up Lives*, p.125.

³¹⁹ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

In addition, the avowed open access policies of Day Centres were the opposite of the RSU's focus on entrenched rough sleepers, and the non-directive ethos the opposite of its aims for rehabilitation and change. The RSU sought to radically change this approach, requiring 'gatekeeping' to ensure the services were targeted at rough sleepers, assessments on arrival, and evidence of active engagement in services for people to continue using the facilities. Murray believes this approach was misguided, lauding the informal welcoming attitude at the West London Mission and arguing if 'those people who...don't want to sign up to a care plan can no longer access that service, they stay on the streets'.³²⁰ In contrast to Murray's views, Cunningham expressed his exasperation over the West London Mission's refusal to change. He recalls, arguing that 'you're providing dinner and breakfast for people every morning...loads of people are doing that circuit of day centres... it's just shifting the deck chairs around... please change the way you working to be a little bit more targeted. But, no, they wouldn't do that'.³²¹ The RSU had little leverage over day centres, as volunteer-run services they had relatively low overheads and independent revenue sources, and some, such as Murray's West London Mission, refused to change their ethos at the price of being cut off from government funding.³²²

The gains and losses deriving from the RSU's more directive and conditional approach to Day Centre work are difficult to quantify. Dobson's study of 2011 broadly shows support from practitioners, with a centre manager praising the new gatekeeping that enabled him to 'concentrate on the people who really need the charity' and that conditional techniques

³²⁰ Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20.

³²¹ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

³²² Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20. Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

were seen to help 'generate practical skills conducive for settled living'.³²³ Although Dobson reported general support for a more 'proactive' approach driven by the more complex needs of clients, she also noted 'that workers oscillate between conditional and more flexible practices'.³²⁴ The Association of London Government's (ALG) review of Day Centres of 2004 was more certain, finding 'many stakeholders... consider that day centres still need to move to a more interventionist model and need to become more professional'.³²⁵

Change to the RSU's model was slow, with Randall and Brown reporting in 2002 that 'there has been some progress in reforming day centres...but more remains to be done'.³²⁶ By 2004 nearly all Day Centres offered some form of health and social care, and there had been significant growth in support for drug users and in employment and training services.³²⁷ However, in 2005 only 13% of day centres were working in a conditional way.³²⁸

Prevention

Prevention was built in from the outset of New Labour's homelessness programme, and was accelerated by both the provisions of the Homelessness Act 2001 and the Supporting People programme after 2003,³²⁹ Blair had stated in his introduction to *Coming in from the Cold*, 'In the long term, we can only make a lasting difference on the streets by stopping people from arriving there in the first place. That is why prevention is a key part of this strategy'.³³⁰ This was not merely rhetoric, and Labour has been credited with paying the 'first serious

³²³ Dobson's work is based on only a single drop-in centre, and was conducted in 2011. Its conclusions are more nuanced than space allows to be represented here, Dobson, R., 'Conditionality and Homelessness Services: 'Practice realities' in a Drop-in Centre', *Social Policy & Society*, Vol 10, No 4, (2011), p.552

³²⁴ Dobson, R., 'Conditionality and Homelessness Services', pp.552 & 547.

³²⁵ Woods, Harrison & Jacobs, *ALG Day Centres Research Project*, p.50.

³²⁶ Randall & Brown, *Helping Rough Sleepers*, p.20.

³²⁷ By 2004, 30 out of 39 had increased services for drug users, 60% offered employment and training. Woods, Harrison & Jacobs, *ALG Day Centres Research Project*, p.2.

³²⁸ Cloke, *Swept-up Lives*, p.121.

³²⁹ Dealt with in depth in Chapter 3.

³³⁰ Blair, T., 'Introduction', *Coming In from the Cold*.

attention to homelessness prevention'.³³¹ Under the RSU new Tenancy Sustainment Teams (TSTs) were established to prevent resettled homeless people returning to the streets, and steps were taken to prevent the flow of care-leavers, ex-offenders and service veterans onto the streets.³³² In keeping with Third Way modernising principles, contracts were awarded by competitive tender with clear, measurable targets set, and statutory services required to work in a joined-up manner.

Six new Tenancy Sustainment Teams (TST) were established in London with funding from the RSU.³³³ The new TSTs had responsibility for a particular area, and contracts were awarded to a single agency by competitive tender. Since the Conservative's RSI programme, there had been good access to move on accommodation through the clearing house, but gatekeeping had been poor, and rates of abandonment and eviction unacceptably high, at some 20% of the total occupancy.³³⁴ The sector was aware that the previous support services had been poor.³³⁵ Bill Tidnam, who managed one of the new TSTs, recalls he 'was contacting people who hadn't been seen for a long time', and that many tenants flats 'had been taken over by drug dealers...lots of people [had been] just put in flats and left to sink or swim'.³³⁶

³³¹ Fitzpatrick, S., 'Forward' to Jones, A. & Pleace, N., *A Review of Single Homelessness*, p.vi.

³³² DETR, *Coming in from the Cold: The Government's strategy on Rough Sleeping*, Sections F & H.

³³³ DETR, *Coming in from the Cold: Progress Report on the Government's Strategy on Rough Sleeping* (Summer 2000), Chapter 2, 'Continuing support into homes', <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20020330014856/http://www.detr.gov.uk:80/housing/rsu/progress/summer2000/03.htm> accessed 3/5/21.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Among others, Gary Messenger, interview 16/10/20; Richard Cunningham, Interview 11/10/20; Jeremy Swain, Interview 2/10/20.

³³⁶ Bill Tidnam, Interview, 30/9/20.

The new TSTs were set tough targets to achieve, requiring continued occupancy on a sliding scale from 98% after six months to 90% after 2 years.³³⁷ The TSTs were also set qualitative targets, requiring joint working with housing providers (Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)) and other specialist support services.³³⁸ As with outreach services, there were doubts over the efficacy of the new specialist workers. Tidnam stated, 'it was far more helpful to have those skills in the team, rather than have someone whose job it was to do that...a service works best if it's really generic and flexible'.³³⁹

In addition, it was stipulated that 75% of tenants should be engaged in 'meaningful activity' after six months in their tenancy.³⁴⁰ With greater accountability, set targets, and license to 'support people as long as possible', Tidnam described it as an 'exciting and very different' time to work in the field.³⁴¹ Weaknesses identified by Randall and Brown in 2002, over pre-tenancy work, were rectified by 2004 with the creation of specific pre-tenancy teams'.³⁴² As with outreach work, the RSU remained actively engaged in assisting service delivery on the frontline. Tidnam recalls, 'we worked really closely with the ODPM...we'd regularly speak to civil servants there- they'd be really helpful when we had some housing providers who we felt weren't doing their job... we felt that we were being listened to, and that made a difference'.³⁴³ By 2004 the set targets had been exceeded and the annual turnover rate at

³³⁷ Lomax, D & Netto, G., *Evaluation of Tenancy Sustainment Teams*, (DCLG, London, 2007), p.21 (survey conducted in 2004 but published 2007).

³³⁸ Lomax & Netto, *Evaluation of Tenant Sustainment Teams*, p.9.

³³⁹ Bill Tidnam, Interview 30/9/20.

³⁴⁰ The 2004 review was unable to determine if the TSTs had achieved this target, as their returns were largely in the form of case studies rather than hard data. Whether this was deliberate concealment or lack of standardised reporting methods cannot be determined. Lomax & Netto, pp.21 & 43.

³⁴¹ Bill Tidnam, Interview, 30/9/20.

³⁴² Pre-tenancy work would normally be conducted in a hostel, preparing the client for their own accommodation and ensure that they would be able to cope. Randall & Brown, p.32; Lomax & Netto, p.8.

³⁴³ Tidnam's reference to the ODPM suggests a later date, (after May 2002), but the sentiment is indicative of the level of engagement by the RSU/Homelessness Directorate. Bill Tidnam, Interview, 30/9/20.

13%, was only two percentage points above the average turnover for mainstream local authority housing.³⁴⁴ This was a considerable achievement.

Three key groups were identified in *Coming in from the Cold* as having particular vulnerability to homelessness; young people (particularly care-leavers), ex-offenders and service veterans.³⁴⁵ In the first instance, and in keeping with an 'evidence-based' approach, the RSU commissioned research, staged pilot projects, and began negotiations with the relevant departments and agencies, but also enacted primary legislation.³⁴⁶ For care-leavers, an audit of care-leaving packages in all London boroughs was undertaken with the Department of Health, for ex-offenders a pilot project was set up with three London prisons, for service veterans a joint project with the Ministry of Defence was created to investigate the role of benevolent organisations catering to ex-services personnel.³⁴⁷

To prevent homelessness among care-leavers the responsibility of social services departments was extended up to the age of 21 and to 24 if they were 'still receiving help from the local authority with education and training'.³⁴⁸ Primary legislation was passed in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, that created a new duty to ensure care leavers were supported and in suitable accommodation.³⁴⁹ In addition, young homeless people were to be diverted from coming on to the street by the creation of a 'Safe Stop' scheme, providing 'an emergency safety net' for 1-3 nights, with 'the intention of providing opportunities to

³⁴⁴ Lomax & Netto, p.41.

³⁴⁵ DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold*, Key Proposals for Change, Section H.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Figures are crude estimates, Newman, in a small study in 1989 found 34% of young homeless people were care leavers. The SEU report cited 'between a quarter and a third'. Newman, C., *Young Runaways: Findings from Britain's First Safe House*, (London, Children's Society, 1989), p.23; SEU, *Rough Sleepers*, Section 1.12; DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold*, Key Proposals for Change, Section H.

³⁴⁹ Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents> (accessed 12/3/22).

return home or secure access to accommodation or other specialist services'.³⁵⁰ The contract was awarded to Centrepoin.³⁵¹ Other youth homelessness pilot schemes were also established.³⁵² Returning home schemes were to be set up across the country, family mediation urged on social service departments, and local authority housing departments asked to set up rent deposit schemes.³⁵³

For ex-offenders, research into assistance prior to release was conducted with the Prison and Probation service, which led to a new resettlement performance indicator.³⁵⁴ In addition, the RSU's special innovation fund granted £250,000 to seven prisons to 'provide accommodation advice and support for those offenders who are identified as vulnerable to rough sleeping prior to release'.³⁵⁵ Casey, in interview, recalled that the very small act of persuading prisons to discharge people on Monday mornings rather than Fridays had a significant impact on homelessness.³⁵⁶

For service veterans the steps were more tentative, but new schemes to identify those at risk were set up including 'working closely with the Military Corrective Training Centre in Colchester to improve the services they provide to people who are discharged for disciplinary reasons'.³⁵⁷ New links were made with ex-services charities and agencies such as

³⁵⁰ DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold: Delivering the Strategy*, Section F.

³⁵¹ DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold, Progress Report*, (DETR, London, Summer 2000), Chapter 3.

³⁵² 'Safe in the City' & 'Safe Moves'. Quilgars, D., Johnsen, S. & Pleace, N., *Youth homelessness in the UK: A decade of progress?* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, London, 2008), p.1.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ From 2001 survey, 64% of rough sleepers had served a custodial sentence, Randall & Brown, p.21. Report published as 'Blocking the Fast Track from Prison to Rough Sleeping' from: DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold, Progress Report*, (Summer 2000).

³⁵⁵ DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold, Progress Report*, Chapter 3.

³⁵⁶ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

³⁵⁷ DETR/RSU, *Coming in from the Cold, Progress Report*, Chapter 3.

SSAFA, to 'expand their accommodation for homeless ex-service personnel' and new funding was granted to provide support for ex-service personnel with alcohol problems.³⁵⁸

Such measures would all take time to filter through, and Randall and Brown dolefully comment that preventative work was still 'in its infancy' in 2002, but it is clear that a serious and methodical approach to preventing the flows on to the street had begun.³⁵⁹

Conclusion

The RSU completed its target of reducing the number of rough sleepers by two-thirds ahead of its deadline in November 2001.³⁶⁰ As a headline figure it was a significant, unprecedented accomplishment. But New Labour and the RSU accomplished far more than that in developing a coherent long-term strategy to address street homelessness. And despite Toynbee and Walker's assertion, it was no simple task.³⁶¹ Its achievement required the application of new mechanisms of government and led to a transformational cultural change across the whole of the homelessness sector.

New Labour's approach was paradigmatic of Third Way' principles. From within central government an expanded Cabinet Office brought radical thinkers such as Geoff Mulgan into the heart of government, leading to the ending Social Exclusion becoming a core aim. An understanding of the need for joined-up governance to address an issue that cut across departmental boundaries led to the creation of first the SEU and then the RSU. Ensuring policy making was 'evidence-based', it consulted widely and brought in outside expertise to staff a new experiment in 'government by unit'. It required bravery in the appointment of an outspoken leader for the RSU, the close attention of the sitting Prime Minister to give

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Randall & Brown, *Helping Rough Sleepers*, p.6.

³⁶⁰ Ibid, p.4.

³⁶¹ Toynbee, P. & Walker, D., *The Verdict: Did Labour Change Britain?*, p.201.

that leader sufficient leverage, and the courage to grant it its own budget, communications team and considerable autonomy in how it delivered Labour's programme. Labour introduced the new conception and title of 'Tsar' to give the new appointee and the issue of homelessness an unprecedentedly high profile. By necessity, but also in keeping with third way notions of compacts with the voluntary sector and government as enabler not provider, it delivered a new social policy entirely via the third sector.

The experimentation did not cease when the baton was passed to the RSU. Under its charismatic leadership it upended the bureaucratic and hierarchal orthodoxy of the civil service and engaged with frontline street work. The 'poacher turned gamekeeper' nature of the RSU's team enabled it to identify the strengths and weakness of the sector, and the indefatigable will of its leader to push through changes to long established working practice in outreach, hostel work and tenancy sustainment. Utilising New Labour's modernisation techniques, it began a strategic rationalisation of the sector and through competitive contracting, defined targets, and contract renewal based on performance, introduced real accountability for the first time to a previously largely unregulated sector. To match the RSU's aims and deliver on their contracts, the homeless sector was obliged to embrace joint-working and upskill and professionalise its staff, presaging the end of its long-held amateur ethos. Cumulatively, the RSU's actions facilitated a wholesale cultural change for the homelessness sector from the top down to the grassroots.

Was all this positive? Critics have tended to emphasise the deleterious effects of all this change. That some long-standing agencies were marginalised and starved of funds. That, obliged to follow the RSU's edicts, diversity was squeezed out of the sector and alternative models of care and support were lost. That increased agencies' dependence on state

funding, undermined their autonomy and neutered their critical voice. That Louise Casey 's confrontational management style put further pressure on staff working in an already pressured and difficult environment. That the impact on homeless people themselves of policies of 'disruption' was unjustifiable, even punitive, and their views were insufficiently taken into account. The criticisms are not invalid, and will be explored in greater depth in Chapters 3 & 4, but it is argued here that such criticisms tend to focus on problems on the margins to the neglect of the overwhelmingly positive change that New Labour's interventions in street homelessness engendered.

In a study grounded on oral history it is appropriate to conclude with the voices of the practitioners who put into action the first phase of New Labour's homelessness programme. Ian Brady argues that far from undermining the homelessness sector, 'most agencies were relieved... they were really pleased to be helping people move away from the street, rather than bashing their heads against the wall'.³⁶² Gary Messenger, acknowledges that the work of the RSU wasn't always appreciated in the sector, saying 'there were some who felt that we were poking our noses into areas that we didn't understand', but he also firmly believes such intrusion was necessary, stating 'the sector is 50:50...there are some fantastic organisations out there...they work their socks off to actually ensure better outcomes... but I also think there's a lot of them out there [who] don't actually do what they should be doing'.³⁶³ Jeremy Swain articulates the view of the majority of respondents from the voluntary homeless sector, and concurring with Messenger's view, stated that 'the sector was in a comfort zone... it came down to a question of, 'do we work with government with all the compromises that involves...or do we continue with our assigned role of being

³⁶² Ian Brady, Interview 15/10/20.

³⁶³ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

essentially critical and not wanting to get our hands dirty?’³⁶⁴ Swain relates a (possibly apocryphal) conversation where a New Labour Minister asked the homeless sector, ‘We’re coming in. We want a different relationship with the voluntary sector, what would you want?’ And they [the homelessness sector] said, ‘We want millions of pounds worth of funding, at least £100 million, we would like it to be given strong leadership, somebody from the homelessness sector ideally, and for it to be embedded in government so you take it seriously’. And of course, what we got was exactly all that’.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20. Similar sentiments expressed by Richard Cunningham, Jon Kuhrt, Tom Preest, Charles Fraser, Mike McCall and many others. Richard Cunningham, Interviews 11/10/20 & 18/10/20; Jon Kuhrt, Interviews 18/9/20 & 23/9/20; Tom Preest, Interviews, 7/10/20 & 20/10/20; Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20; Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

³⁶⁵ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

Chapter 3: Labour's second and third terms: The Homelessness Act 2002,

Homeless Strategies, Prevention & Supporting People

This chapter deals with New Labour's homelessness policies across their second and third terms focussing on two major interventions, the Homelessness Act 2002, and the Supporting People programme that began in 2003. It argues that both these interventions were radical, transformative and, although not without flaws, highly successful. It argues that having drastically reduced the number of rough sleepers in its first term, Labour's policies moved 'upstream', and consisted of a coherent series of initiatives designed both to sustain resettled homeless people in their accommodation and prevent homelessness from occurring in the first instance. It thereby challenges arguments that Labour's actions in this period were revanchist in intent, and argues that academic accounts often over-emphasise Labour's focus on addressing 'problematic street culture' and under-acknowledge its interrelation with its broader programme.

It puts forward the view that the statutory requirement under the Homelessness Act to create 'local homeless strategies' was highly significant. This obligation compelled local authorities to take seriously the needs of single homeless people for the first time in British history, created a new focus on homeless prevention, and had an overwhelmingly positive impact on the provision of services to this long-neglected group.

In addition, it argues that the 'Supporting People' programme was a genuinely radical step, providing, also for the first time, both the resources and the mechanisms necessary to create a strategic, needs-led programme of care and support for vulnerable homeless

people. It also argues that Supporting People led to a radical improvement in the quality of work and skills-base of voluntary sector homeless agencies, with concomitant improvements for homeless people in both their resettlement and quality of life.

As both interventions were far too technocratic to ever garner any headlines, it provides further evidence to challenge common historiographical characterisations of New Labour. That Labour provided both substantial funding and such close attention to unheralded but significant programmes, challenges characterisations of New Labour that as primarily concerned with its media image and public profile at the expense of the delivery of effective social policy.

It argues that New Labour continued to pay great attention to detail in delivery of their homeless policies over the course of their full period in office, employing a broad range of the tools of governance at its disposal and in keeping with their Third Way ideology. Under the Homelessness Act, Labour utilised both primary and secondary legislation, acted as 'enabler rather than provider', mandated local authorities to form partnerships with the voluntary sector, and required joined up governance both between departments and across the statutory/voluntary sector divide. Similarly, Supporting People would be delivered through compacts with the voluntary sector, whose governance was transformed by application of the modernising techniques of accountability and control so central to the Third Way. Joined up working was also central to Supporting People, and the Third Way conceptions of democratisation and a new relationship between the state and citizen were instituted in the requirement to engage service users in the planning and delivery of homeless services. Under Supporting People there was a huge expansion in education,

training and employment schemes for homeless people, facilitating the Third Way conception of paid employment as the surest means of escaping social exclusion.

Reiterating a key theme of this research; the neglect of the importance of delivery of social policy in the writing of political history, this chapter gives a detailed evaluation of the mechanisms employed by New Labour in delivering their programme and evaluates its strengths and weaknesses. Neither intervention was without flaws, and although it is argued that academic accounts give too much emphasis on their failings at the expense of their achievements, it is hoped that a detailed evaluation will be useful for future homeless policy planning and delivery.

The Homelessness Directorate – Labour neglect or long-term strategic planning?

Interpretations of New Labour's approach to homelessness as indicative of a party concerned primarily with its public image are refuted by Labour's expansion of their homelessness programme even after the two-thirds reduction in rough sleeping was achieved in 2001. Homelessness is a uniquely visible social problem, played out in the full gaze of the public eye, and the sight of large numbers of destitute people sleeping rough in the streets incurs press and public demands for 'something to be done'. Concomitantly, this very aspect of visibility can lead to an equally rapid loss of attention, as Louise Casey points out, 'once your visible homelessness disappears...it's no longer a policy priority, at which point you withdraw funding'.¹ Casey argues this is what happened after 2010, but it was manifestly not what took place over the course of Labour's second and third terms.²

¹ Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21.

² Ibid.

This chapter does not seek to overclaim the prioritisation of rough sleeping during Labour's second and third terms, but with the merger of RSU and the Bed and Breakfast Unit in 2002 to form the Homelessness Directorate, Labour established a permanent body within the Whitehall machine that continued and expanded upon the work of its predecessor. It is clear, however, that with Louise Casey's departure in January 2003, the strong direct link with the Prime Minister left with her.³ There would no new high profile Homelessness Tsars.⁴ Terrie Alafat, who led the new unit, acknowledges, 'I didn't have the same political clout...as Louise had - there's no question about that!'⁵ Steve Guyon relates that they were no longer 'reporting at a cabinet level', and that, 'the interface with ministers' was now at 'Junior Minister level'.⁶ Such loss of patronage can be the death-knell for the efficacy of special units, but the unit's members still felt strongly supported by government.⁷ Guyon asserts that, 'homelessness enjoyed a good profile...there was some money kicking about and we were always able to tell a good story with evidence', and Alafat recalls that she couldn't 'think of a minister during that period that didn't take an interest in homelessness' and that she still had 'influence' over the relevant ministers.⁸ Rebecca Sycamore argues that the unit 'didn't need to be fronted up by a minister', and that with the Treasury 'on board',

³ A succession of departmental reorganisations shunted the Homelessness Directorate from the Department of Transport and the Regions (DETR) to the Department of Local Government Transport and the Regions (DLTR) in June 2001, to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in May 2002, and to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in 2006. These changes did not directly relate to the unit itself, and apart from creating a confusing nomenclature appear to have no material effect on its functioning.

⁴ The new head, Terrie Alafat, held the much more conventional title 'Director'.

⁵ Terrie Alafat, Interview, 17/11/20.

⁶ Steve Guyon took over as Team Leader in 2004. He highlights the support of (junior) Homelessness Ministers Ian Austin and Ian Wright describing them as being 'fabulously engaged'. Steve Guyon, interview 13/10/20. This view is echoed by Gary Messenger who states, 'I can't speak highly enough of those guys', Gary Messenger, Interview 16/10/20.

⁷ Rutter & Harris note that 'Whitehall is also quick to spot when a unit does not have, or has lost, prime ministerial patronage...as soon as they have lost the prime minister's ear...then they're done for'. Rutter & Harris, *The Special Ones*, p.6.

⁸ Steve Guyon, interview, 13/10/20; Terrie Alafat, Interview, 17/11/20.

the unit and the civil service were 'incredibly well-aligned'.⁹ The departure of Louise Casey, may even have been to the unit's advantage, as Charles Fraser notes, 'Terrie [Alafat] was good. She wasn't a pioneer like Louise - she wasn't rude - like Louise could be...but she was quite skilful, and actually, you need somebody who can make the system, if not work, at least remove the obstacles'.¹⁰ It seems clear that despite rough sleeping's much lower public profile and the reduction in prime ministerial patronage, the new Homelessness Directorate enjoyed strong support and had become an established part of the machinery of government.

Rather than being a dilution of effort symptomatic of a loss of interest by government, the Homelessness Directorate's new remit was in fact an expansion of the work, pushing its strategy 'upstream' and focussing on the prevention of homelessness at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.¹¹ Jones and Pleace summarise these classifications as: Primary: Activities that reduce the risk of homelessness among the general population or large parts of the population; Secondary (or crisis) Prevention: interventions focused on people at high potential risk of homelessness or in crisis situations which are likely to lead to homelessness in the near future; Tertiary: Measures targeted at people who have already been affected by homelessness that seek to prevent further occurrences.¹² Alafat describes it as 'more than about rough sleeping, it was actually about homelessness in the broadest sense...people being placed in temporary accommodation, statutory homelessness, how do we prevent homelessness?'¹³ Guyon notes that although, 'there was a need to maintain outreach and services that were reactive and got people off the street quickly... we [also]

⁹ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

¹⁰ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

¹¹ Jones & Pleace, *A Review of Single Homelessness*, p.46.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Terrie Alafat, Interview, 17/11/20.

needed to continue to develop services that kept people away from the streets' and there was, 'much more analysis... about how people came to end up on the streets, what choke points there were, how we needed to tackle things earlier.'¹⁴ Sycamore sums the Directorate's approach as, 'that first intense period of the RSU...had...stabilised... different people are in the room at ODPM... what they're trying to do is to think about how they get out of this in the long-term... there's a maturity - and I really think that what they were shooting for was - this is how we end homelessness'.¹⁵ Dom Williamson who was seconded to the DCLG in 2007 was involved in a large-scale consultation producing a review of homelessness policy in November 2008. He shares Sycamore's view, stating 'what we were trying to do was persuade the government that they should finish the job on rough sleeping'.¹⁶ He was hopeful that Labour was receptive but believes that the 'little moment of perfect optimism' was brought to a close by the 2008 crash.¹⁷

Whilst the rough sleeping component of the Homelessness Directorate was maintained and expanded, 'the really big issues for government' had shifted to reducing the numbers of the statutory homeless accommodated in temporary accommodation (TA) and to eliminate the use of Bed and Breakfast hotels.¹⁸ Challenging targets were set both for the rapid elimination of B & B use and a reduction in the use of TA by 50% nationwide.¹⁹ Messenger sees this as being entirely integral with the drive to reduce rough sleeping, stating, 'there's a distinct correlation between statutory and non-statutory homelessness... if you don't get

¹⁴ Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/10/20.

¹⁵ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

¹⁶ Dom Williamson, Interview 27/11/20.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Quote from Terrie Alafat, Interview, 17/11/20.

¹⁹ ODPM, *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All – A Five Year Plan from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister*, (ODPM, London, 2005), p.7 & 10.

that right early on I'll show you a rough sleeper in 20 years-time. It's as simple as that'.²⁰ The Homelessness Directorate took on a similar role to the RSU becoming the lead body facilitating the development of local homeless strategies after the Homelessness Act 2002, and oversaw the Supporting People programme from 2003.

As noted in chapter two, the RSU had been an experiment in the mechanisms of government and can be considered an archetypical form of Third Way governance. Despite the departure of Louise Casey, these characteristics were carried over into the Homelessness Directorate. The unit retained the considerable autonomy that had been granted to the RSU, as Alafat notes, 'there were targets which had to be achieved...but there was a lot of flexibility and innovation in how that would happen'.²¹ Nor did the methods of working of the unit change greatly, retaining an atypically informal, deeply hands-on in approach, and one which was 'bottom up' in its decision-making processes. Messenger gave an example of this bottom-up approach, relating the Directorate's use of 'back pocket money', funds held back from the main allocation and released at the unit's discretion for 'bespoke projects' proposed by homeless agencies.²² The Directorate also continued New Labour's modernising approach by recruiting outsiders with relevant expertise. Alafat had been Director of Housing for a local authority, and others with extensive experience across the homelessness sector were seconded into key roles.²³ Although key figures had left the unit, others, such as Gordon Campbell, remained in post.²⁴

²⁰ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

²¹ Terrie Alafat, Interview, 17/11/20.

²² Messenger reported that the unit was still applying a 'bottom up' approach when he left in 2011. Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

²³ For example, Maff Potts who led the 'Places of Change' programme, and Richard Cunningham who succeeded him were both seconded from homeless agencies.

²⁴ Gordon Campbell had previously worked for the London Borough Grants Unit, but had a long tenure as a civil servant. He was cited by many respondents as particularly skilled at operating across Whitehall.

Alafat emphasises the importance of the skill-base of her team, stating that she inherited an ‘amazing team of people ...that knew about local authorities, knew about rough sleeping, knew the voluntary sector... and we also had people that were really good at navigating Whitehall...the team was one of the best teams I ever managed’.²⁵ It appears that what had been a maverick operational unit, squeezed uncomfortably into the deeply hierarchical civil service structures, embattled and protected only by its charismatic head’s direct access to the prime minister, had become normalised.²⁶ Such autonomy and internal expertise was made more important due to the rapid turnover of housing ministers during the period, with nine housing ministers taking up the post during New Labour’s period in office, averaging 1.3 years in post. This does, of course suggest that Housing in its broader remit was not a high priority for Labour. Nick Raynsford (Minister of State for Housing July 1999 to June 2001) sees the high turnover of ministers as a ‘critical weakness’ and John Healy (Minister of State for Housing 2009 – 2010) considers the separation of homelessness from the wider housing brief as a ‘disjuncture and a disfunction...in hindsight a mistake’.²⁷

Revanchism 2?

It is argued throughout this research that charges of a revanchist approach to Labour’s street homelessness programme are untenable. Many academics, however, detect a shift in New Labour’s approach after 2003 to a more punitive one, one concerned with ‘social control’ rather than social exclusion, and emphasise the increasing use of rhetoric around ‘anti-social behaviour’ and measures taken to address ‘problematic street culture’ that

²⁵ Terrie Alafat, Interview, 17/11/20. Similar views echoed by both Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/10/20 and Gary Messenger, Interview 16/10/20.

²⁶ That such an approach had become ‘normalised’ was stated by Terrie Alafat, Interview, 17/11/20.

²⁷ Nick Raynsford, Interview, 27/10/21; John Healy, Interview, 29/10/21.

appeared to elide homelessness with deviance and criminality.²⁸ That New Labour did, indeed, take a more assertive role in addressing anti-social behaviour in their second term is beyond dispute. Louise Casey left the RSU in January 2003, taking her influential deputy, Ian Brady, with her into the newly formed Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and was specifically tasked with addressing the issue of 'problematic street culture'.²⁹ The use of ASBOs against those who persistently beg was advocated, and begging itself became a recordable offence in Britain for the first time.³⁰ Moore notes that with the advent of 'Neighbourhood policing' (ubiquitous by 2008), the police took a much tougher line, initially with the issuing of Section 30 (dispersal) orders and latterly a 'more pro-active use' of ASBOs targeted at street people.³¹ For New Labour, such an approach was intrinsic to its Third Way conception of the balancing of rights and responsibilities, rather than punitive in intent. It is important to note that, whilst several of the interviewees in this research questioned the efficacy and morality of such policies, and many had nuanced criticisms of some of the methods used, the vast majority saw 'street culture' and begging as intrinsically linked to homelessness, acting as 'pull factors' that helped maintain a street lifestyle and trapped people in homelessness, none felt that Labour's approach had become punitive in intent. Their responses match the findings of Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, that 'there appears to be a remarkable degree of

²⁸ See, May & Cloke, 'Modes of Attentiveness', p.903; Fitzpatrick & Jones, 'Pursuing Social Justice or Social Cohesion?', pp.389-406; Whiteford, M., 'New Labour, Street Homelessness and Social Exclusion', pp. 10-32; Cloke, *Swept-Up Lives*, pp.38, 241-2.

²⁹ Brady moved to the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit six months after Casey's departure. In 2005 the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit was renamed and given a wider agenda as the 'Respect taskforce'. This, in turn, was dissolved after Gordon Brown's accession as Prime Minister with only part of its function remaining as a 'Youth Taskforce' after 2007. Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20

³⁰ A 'recordable offence' is an offence that could result in imprisonment. When a custodial sentence is not given, recordable offences are kept on the national police computer and can be referred to in future prosecutions. This had not previously been the case for begging. Cloke, *Swept-Up Lives*, p.38. For a detailed evaluation and impact and the full range of measures employed see, Johnsen, S & Fitzpatrick, S., *The impact of enforcement on street users in England*, (Policy Press, Bristol, 2007).

³¹ Moore, S., 'Neighbourhood policing and the punitive community', *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, Vol 10 No.3, (2008), pp.191, 195-6.

consensus from all of these stakeholders on the necessity of some role for enforcement in addressing street culture activities, albeit in carefully defined circumstances'.³² Tom Preest argues 'it was never about enforcement'.³³ Citing the example of Camden council, Preest pointed out that they 'provided an appropriate service offer to each individual' and only if 'their street activity continued would we look at appropriate use of enforcement...in the vast majority of cases as a lever to get people to accept the services to which they were entitled to'.³⁴ It is important to note, however, that Camden's approach was not necessarily typical of local authorities across the rest of England. In their nuanced but often critical account, May & Cloke note that the application of enforcement was often determined by local government priorities rather than those of New Labour.³⁵ They specifically cite the apparent contrast between Camden's 'progressive approach' and that of Westminster council, which they describe as appearing to be 'routinely aggressive and closely coordinated with policing and immigration controls'.³⁶ Ian Brady, however, is adamant that such interventions were crucial, and goes as far as saying, 'I think what kept the numbers down was the work we were doing on reducing day time street activity'.³⁷ If the 'disruption' of street activity had not been matched with increased provision of services, the charge of revanchism might stick, but this was far from the case.

³² Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 'Revanchist Sanitation or Coercive Care', p.1717.

³³ Tom Preest held numerous roles in homelessness during the period, including running the pilot Savoy Place CAT team, Street Population Co-ordinator for LB Camden, and was seconded to the Homelessness Directorate as a specialist advisor in 2001, (See Appendix A). Tom Preest, Interview, 20/10/20.

³⁴ Tom Preest, Interview, 20/10/20.

³⁵ May, J. & Cloke, P. 'Modes of Attentiveness, p.903.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ian Brady, Interview, 13/10/20.

The Homelessness Act 2002

The Homelessness Act typified New Labour's Third Way approach to governance. It obliged the creation of an 'evidence-base' for the implementation of policy, was predicated on joint-working across council departments and in partnership with voluntary sector providers, and employed the broad range of New Public Management techniques so central to Labour's notions of modernisation. Third Way notions of democratisation and a new relationship between state and citizen were evidenced in the obligation to engage with the views of service users. Its implementation also illustrates the sustained attention to the details of delivery that were typical of New Labour's homelessness policies. Through its agent, the Homelessness Directorate, detailed guidance was regularly issued, progress was carefully monitored, and a mixture of sanctions and rewards utilised to ensure that the new policies were thoroughly embedded at all levels.³⁸

The Homelessness Act 2002 elicited a transformation in the services provided for single homeless people on a national scale. The RSU had expanded its remit to the thirty-three areas outside of London that had the highest concentrations of homeless people, but it was the Homelessness Act that made Labour's programme truly national in scope.³⁹

Furthermore, prior to the Act's passing, local authorities, working under the provisions of the Housing Act 1996, had focussed almost exclusively on the needs of homeless families, making assessments of 'priority need' for emergency accommodation under legislation that explicitly excluded the vast majority of single homeless people.⁴⁰ Although some single

³⁸ See: ODPM, *Homeless Strategies: A good Practice Handbook*, (ODPM, London, 2003). ODPM, *Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness: A Homelessness Directorate Advice Note to Local Authorities*, (ODPM/Homelessness Directorate, London, April 2003). DCLG, *Homelessness Prevention: A guide to good practice*, (DCLG, London, 2006).

³⁹ RSU/DETR, *Coming in from the cold: delivering the strategy*, Chapter 1.

⁴⁰ The original legislation, the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, was updated in the Housing Act of 1985 and again in the Housing Act 1996 but without substantive change in the criteria. For an overview see

homeless people, primarily those with severe physical or mental health issues, could be accepted as 'vulnerable' and therefore 'in priority need', vulnerability was not clearly defined in the legislation and local authority housing departments differed widely in their interpretation.⁴¹ Given the costs and difficulty of providing temporary accommodation, local authority housing departments tended to form highly restrictive definitions of vulnerability, acting largely as 'gatekeepers' protecting scarce council resources, and did not consider the needs of the majority of single homeless people as falling under their purview at all.⁴² The 2002 act placed local authorities at centre stage, obliging them, for the first time, to take a lead strategic role in addressing the needs of *all* homeless people in their area.⁴³

Local Homelessness Strategies

A new duty to produce comprehensive local homeless strategies compelled local authorities to assess the scale and nature of homelessness in their area, audit the 'resources currently available', 'identify the additional sources required', develop services designed to prevent homelessness and, form partnerships with voluntary sector providers and other relevant bodies.⁴⁴ The Act also brought in an obligation to 'consult with service users and other homeless people' in the production of strategies, giving significant impetus for the development of user-empowerment.⁴⁵ It is argued here, that the act resulted in a cultural shift in local authorities' attitude to single homeless people, led to better co-operative

Fitzpatrick, S. & Pawson, H., 'Fifty years since Cathy Come Home: critical reflections on the UK homelessness safety net', pp.543-555.

⁴¹ See Bramley, G., 'Explaining the incidence of statutory homelessness in England', *Housing Studies*, Vol 8, No 2 (1993), pp.138-9 and Evans, A., 'Rationing device or passport to social housing? The operation of the homeless legislation in Britain in the 1990s', in Hutson, S. & Clapham, D., *Homelessness: Public Policies and Private Troubles*, (Cassel, London & New York, 1999), p.149. Since the passing of original legislation, the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, much case law had been built up that acted to define the degree of impairment required. The criteria, however, remained highly constrained.

⁴² See Fitzpatrick, S. & Pawson, H., 'Fifty years since Cathy Come Home'.

⁴³ Homelessness Act 2002 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/section/6> (accessed 1/2/2022).

⁴⁴ ODPM, *Homeless Strategies: A good Practice Handbook*, Sections 1.1.4-1.2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, Section 2.1.5. See Chapter 4 for a detailed exploration of user-empowerment's development.

working between local authority departments, forged new relationships with the voluntary sector, and led to the development of a broad range of interventions that had a clear and measurable effect in preventing homelessness.

The obligation imposed on local authorities to produce local homelessness strategies provides an excellent example of the kind of policy initiative enacted under New Labour that challenges its common characterisation of as a party primarily concerned with public image. Too technocratic to be noticed by the press and public, local homeless strategies can be considered typical of New Labour's approach to homelessness, pragmatic, predated on joined up governance, and with great attention paid to their construction and delivery.

Ian Brady explains the thinking behind the 2002 Act, 'we took the view that the voluntary sector had a big part to play, but they were never going to solve it on their own, so we had to make local authorities key strategic players in this'.⁴⁶ Alafat adds that it was also about 'recognising that... you can only do so much from Whitehall...we could have an idea about some of the key things that should be changed', but that it was vital to understand that, 'local areas have different issues'.⁴⁷ Its intention was also to completely reconfigure the role of local authorities in regard to homelessness, and government guidance noted that a switch to a 'pro-active prevention ethos' would require 'a substantial change in the traditional culture of homelessness work'.⁴⁸ This was indeed, a radical departure. Spencer expressed the consensus view that prior to the act's passing 'local authorities were ticking over and doing the work they needed to do for families- they simply weren't helping single

⁴⁶ Ian Brady, Interview, 13/10/20.

⁴⁷ Terrie Alafat, Interview, 17/11/20.

⁴⁸ DCLG, *Homelessness Prevention: A guide to good practice*, (DCLG, London, 2006), p.16, Section 2.5 'Making the Cultural Shift'.

people'.⁴⁹ Steve Hilditch goes further, arguing that attitudes were often hostile to working with the non-priority homeless, stating, 'generally speaking...local government thought if you were nice to homeless people you encouraged it'.⁵⁰ To facilitate this cultural change, New Labour committed £360 million (2002-2006) to grant-fund local authority homelessness prevention activities.⁵¹ It appears to have achieved the desired effect, with Neil Morland stating that 'it was a fundamental change for councils' resulting in, 'a big shift in their perspective'.⁵² Morland's views are typical of many respondents including Jean Templeton of St Basil's in Birmingham who believes it 'was a marvellous piece of legislation...that really focussed attention'.⁵³ Helen Keats, went further, describing the new obligation for local authorities to formulate local homelessness strategies as 'the seismic shift'.⁵⁴

The new requirement in the Act for local authorities to undertake an audit of local need was clearly vital, as Shelia Spencer states, 'most local authorities didn't even know how many people were single homeless in their area'.⁵⁵ Greater depth of data than mere headcounts was also necessary for planning service provision, and Neil Munslow in Newcastle recalls the City Council, 'didn't have loads of data or statistical information about the cause and effect of people's homelessness' and as a consequence, 'we just responded'.⁵⁶ The requirement to undertake an audit of need led Newcastle City Council to set up 'a database' and establish a

⁴⁹ Shelia Spencer, Interview, 21/10/20.

⁵⁰ Steve Hilditch, Interview, 12/10/21.

⁵¹ DCLG, *Homelessness Prevention: A guide to good practice*, p.7, Section 1.4. The funds allocated were increased from £60 million per annum in 2005/6 to £74 million per annum in 2007/8.

⁵² Neil Morland, Interview, 16/11/20.

⁵³ Jean Templeton, Interview, 23/9/2020.

⁵⁴ Helen Keats, Interview, 9/12/20.

⁵⁵ Shelia Spencer, Interview, 21/10/20.

⁵⁶ Neil Munslow, Interview, 12/11/20.

project to ‘match demand with supply’.⁵⁷ The Act’s requirement for joint working also made council’s housing departments ‘see homelessness in the round’ and ‘talk to people they wouldn’t necessarily have spoken to before’, both in the form of the voluntary sector providers, and their own Social Service and Children’s Services that the law now obliged to take joint responsibility for delivering the strategy.⁵⁸ Ian Brady believes that ‘over time local authorities began to take pride’ in the work and ‘many people in the sector were liberated by it...they came to learn that local authorities were not their enemies’.⁵⁹

Prevention

Local homeless strategies instituted a new focus on homelessness prevention. Nick Raynsford, the housing minister who devised the act, stated that its purpose was to make it clear to local authorities that ‘homelessness is important’ and to create a ‘real focus on prevention’.⁶⁰ That prevention was its core aim is further evidence that Labour’s homelessness programme was long-term and strategic and far from revanchist in intent. Even academics largely critical of New Labour’s approach to homelessness, such as Jones and Pleace, comment on the novel and important nature of this shift.⁶¹ That this focus on prevention was sustained throughout Labour’s third term is attested to John Healy, who stated that when he became Housing Minister in 2008, ‘the over-riding policy concern was not street homelessness, but preventing people becoming homeless’.⁶² Steve McKinley sums up the significance of this change of emphasis succinctly, saying, ‘you fund

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Shelia Spencer, Interview, 21/10/20; Neil Morland, Interview, 16/11/20. To avoid repetition, the new relationship between the voluntary homeless sector and local government presaged by the Homelessness Act is covered in the section below on Supporting People.

⁵⁹ Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

⁶⁰ Nick Raynsford, Interview, 27/10/20.

⁶¹ Jones, A. & Pleace, N., *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK*, p.1.

⁶² John Healy, Interview, 29/10/21.

homelessness, you get homelessness...fund prevention and you will get prevention'.⁶³ The most significant element of the new prevention agenda arising from the 2002 Act, was the development of council housing advice services and the adoption of the 'Housing Options' approach. This approach was developed independently by a number of local authorities and became part of the official ODPM guidance by 2006.⁶⁴ Under Housing Options, homelessness applications became a 'two-stage process', with 'options and prevention considered first'.⁶⁵ Rather than being dismissed if applicants were found not to be 'in priority need', the Housing Options team would assist in finding alternative housing solutions, and the emphasis was on sustaining their existing accommodation rather than immediately allocating temporary accommodation.⁶⁶ The DCLG also encouraged the adoption of a 'Housing Options' approach prior to prison release and the adoption of peer-led schemes designed to prevent homelessness on discharge.⁶⁷ A snapshot of the scale of activity elicited can be seen in the figures compiled by the DCLG for 2009/10, with 165,200 homelessness prevention and relief activities undertaken by local authorities, including 88,800 activities helping applicants find accommodation, 6,600 negotiations to enable people to remain in their own home, 5,800 examples of conciliation work, 5,400 of debt advice.⁶⁸ The figures for 2009/10 were a substantial increase on the preceding year, and an

⁶³ Steve McKinlay, Interview, 9/11/20.

⁶⁴ Neil Morland cites the London Borough of Camden, Greater Manchester and Leicester as early proponents, with Andy Gale's advocacy at the DCLG important. Neil Morland, Interview, 16/11/20; DCLG, *Homelessness Prevention: A guide to good practice*, Section 2.7.

⁶⁵ DCLG, *Homelessness Prevention: A guide to good practice*, Section 2.7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 16-17, Sections 2.7- 2.12.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, Sections 7.25 & 7.31-7.32.

⁶⁸ Figures compiled from DCLG returns 2008/9 compiled by Harding, J., *Post-war Homelessness Policy in the UK*, (Springer International, 2019), p.163.

extraordinary step-up from the very limited housing advice and preventative measures offered before 2002.⁶⁹

Making the Housing Options approach work required a change in councils' relationships with private sector landlords. Prior to the Act's passing local authorities engaged with private landlords principally to secure temporary accommodation for homeless applicants and, through the work of Tenancy Relations Officers, to ensure properties met necessary environmental standards and to protect the rights of assured tenants. The DCLG gave detailed advice, and local authorities were now expected to have an 'emphasis on networking with private landlords', and to focus 'on negotiation and conflict resolution' and the creation of rent deposit schemes was promoted as good practice.⁷⁰ This pro-active prevention work would play out differently depending on local circumstances, highlighting the importance of homelessness strategies being formulated at a local level. As an example, Neil Munslow of Newcastle City Council identified that 'the biggest routes into homelessness was people being evicted from our landlord' and although Newcastle's council housing had been transferred to an Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO), relations remained close, and evictions were reduced by 75%.⁷¹ In Stoke, Neil Morland reduced unnecessary evictions by internal changes, concentrating on improving the speed and accuracy of housing benefit claims, and working in partnership 'with the Citizens Advice Bureau around debt advice', radically altering a relationship that had been 'very antagonistic'.⁷² Morland's pragmatic solution to the problem of delays in Housing

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ DCLG, *Homelessness Prevention: A guide to good practice*, Sections 2, 3.7 & 4.1-4.31.

⁷¹ Neil Munslow, Interview, 16/1/20. ALMOs were a New Labour creation (under Nick Raynsford's guidance) and indicative of Labour's continued mistrust of local authorities, such stock-transfer associations were able to borrow to fund the construction of social housing in a way that local authorities were not.

⁷² Neil Morland, Interview, 16/11/20.

Benefit causing unnecessary evictions in Stoke, belies the impact of the problem of differences in housing benefit rates and private rented accommodation costs. This mismatch, and a lack of joined up policy making between the DWP (responsible for Housing Benefit) and ODPM (responsible for housing and homelessness) represents a significant failure in New Labour's overall housing and homelessness policies that was never resolved.⁷³

The Act led to preventative practices being widely adopted by councils across the country, and by 2005 the ODPM could report that 87% of local authorities had rent deposit/bond schemes, 81% prevention through CABs and 77.8% tenancy support aimed at prevention.⁷⁴ The DCLG's 2007 review concluded that, 'prevention is being actively embraced by growing numbers of local authorities', who were, 'taking a pro-active rather than a reactive approach'.⁷⁵ This represented a radical advance on previous local authorities engagement with homelessness.

For its advocates, Housing Options was an 'empowering' approach, but others were highly critical.⁷⁶ Steve Hilditch considers that 'strategies became [about] gatekeeping rather than solving homelessness', and a 2004 Shelter survey found that over 50% of councils felt 'under pressure to reduce homelessness acceptances'.⁷⁷ Pawson notes that Housing Options assessments steered homeless applicants into private rented accommodation, potentially

⁷³ For an overview of Housing benefit policy under New Labour see, Stephens, M., 'An Assessment of the British Housing Benefit System', *European Journal of Housing Policy*, Vol 5 No 2, (2005), pp.111.129.

⁷⁴ ODPM, *Survey of English local authorities about homelessness: Policy Briefing 13*, (Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate, London, December 2005), p.14.

⁷⁵ Pawson, H., Netto, G, Jones, C, Wagner, F., Fancy, C., Lomax, D., *Evaluating Homelessness Prevention*, (DCLG, London, 2007), p.7.

⁷⁶ Both Helen Keats and Neil Morland spoke positively of the 'Housing Options' approach. Helen Keats, Interview, 9/12/20; Neil Morland, Interview, 16/11/20.

⁷⁷ Steve Hilditch, Interview, 12/10/21. Shelter conducted a survey of 60 local authorities in 2004. Survey cited in Harding, *Post-war Homelessness in the UK*, p.164.

denying their right to social housing, and that 'unreasonable' refusal to take part in family mediation could be used to discharge council's duty to aid homeless young people.⁷⁸ These criticisms have value. The failure of New Labour to expand the supply of social housing meant that local authorities were inevitably defensive of their diminishing stock, and gatekeeping certainly took place in some councils.⁷⁹ A legal challenge to the way in which Hammersmith and Fulham council were utilising the Housing Options approach as a form of gatekeeping was upheld in a Court of Appeal decision in 2006.⁸⁰ This necessitated the issuing of supplementary guidance by the DCLG that explicitly prohibited councils from using Housing options as a 'device to prevent or discourage people from seeking housing assistance'.⁸¹

The Housing Options approach to homelessness prevention was open to manipulation by hard-pressed local authority housing departments, but it appears to have been highly effective. The DCLG's 2007 evaluation concluded that 'It is highly likely that a substantial part of the 50 per cent post-2003 drop in [Homelessness] acceptances [by 2006] is attributable to homelessness prevention activities'.⁸² The significance of this achievement is made clear in Fitzpatrick and Stephen's 2007 review of homelessness and social housing policy in twelve OECD countries, where it was found that only in England and Germany were levels of homelessness falling against a rising trend elsewhere in the developed world.⁸³ In Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick's subsequent analysis, while expressing some concern

⁷⁸ Pawson, H., 'Local Authority Homelessness Prevention in England: Empowering Consumers or Denying Rights?', *Housing Studies*, Vol 22 No 6, (2007), pp.874-876.

⁷⁹ For Labour's broader housing policy and its impact see below.

⁸⁰ Court of Appeal *Robinson v Hammersmith & Fulham* (July 2006) Reported in Harding, *Post-War Homelessness Policy in the UK*, p.164.

⁸¹ DCLG, *Homelessness Prevention: A guide to good practice*, Section 2.1.

⁸² Pawson et al, *Evaluating Homelessness Prevention*, p.7.

⁸³ Fitzpatrick, S. & Stephens, M., *An International Review of Homelessness and Social Housing Policy*, (DCLG, London, 2007).

about rises in 'gatekeeping' by local authorities, they concluded that 'targeted preventative interventions' under the 'Housing Options' approach were having 'a substantial beneficial effect' on reducing homelessness in England despite worsening housing affordability.⁸⁴

Whilst homelessness strategies were to be determined at a local level, much of what had to be done was highly prescribed by central government, further supplemented by detailed guidance, and subject to an array of new measures of performance monitoring. In addition, new sources of funding were ring-fenced and a central government body, the Homelessness Directorate, played a key role in ensuring compliance. Critics of Labour's approach to local governance interpret this as deleterious to local autonomy and damaging to democracy.

There is an extensive literature evaluating the impact of New Labour's policies on local government, much of it critical.⁸⁵ Rouse and Smith argue that, while local authorities under Labour had 'gained some freedom...their independence is still limited by central financial control and largely central sources of funding. Indeed, they may have lost some control through national standards and regulatory framework for quality and performance'.⁸⁶ To its most ardent critics, Labour's approach risked reducing local government to a 'policy-free zone', whose only role was the deliverance of 'centrally determined policies in a strategic way'.⁸⁷ It is argued here, that despite such concerns, Labour was, once again, undertaking the immensely difficult task of eliciting culture change, and that it was only through the

⁸⁴ Busch-Geertsema, V. & Fitzpatrick, S., 'Effective Homelessness Prevention? Explaining Reductions in Homelessness in Germany and England', *European Journal of Homelessness*, Vol 2, December 2008, p.88.

⁸⁵ See, for example, Travers, T., 'Local Government', in Anthon Seldon (Ed), *Blair's Britain, 1997-2007*; Rouse, J. & Smith, G., 'Evaluating New Labour's accountability reforms' in Powell, M. (Ed), *Evaluating New Labour's Welfare Reforms*; Maile, S. & Hoggett, P., 'Best Value and the Politics of Pragmatism' *Policy and Politics*, Vol.29 No 4, (2001); Wilks-Heeg, S., 'New Labour and the reform of English Local Government, 1997-2007: Privatizing the Parts that Conservative Governments Could Not Reach?', *Planning, Practice & Research*, Vol.24, No. 1, (2009), pp.28-39.

⁸⁶ Rouse, J. & Smith, G., 'Evaluating New Labour's accountability reforms' in Powell, M. (Ed), *Evaluating New Labour's Welfare Reforms*, (The Policy Press, Bristol, 2002), p.44.

⁸⁷ Maile, S. & Hoggett, P., 'Best Value and the Politics of Pragmatism', p.512.

application of mechanisms of control, and attention to the details of delivery that necessary improvements in services could be made. Labour had very clear aims for its homelessness policies, and sought to ensure their universal application. Guidance, tight monitoring and the close engagement of the Homelessness Directorate could be proscriptive, but were also a means of ensuring that expertise gathered centrally could be diffused both across very different polities and down to the ‘street level bureaucrat’ responsible for delivering the actual service on the frontline.

That the act created new legal responsibilities was considered as key by both its progenitors and its recipients. Local authorities function within a legislative framework, and the difference between a ‘duty’ and a ‘power’ is often the difference between something happening and nothing at all. Gary Messenger argues that ‘making a statutory requirement to have a homelessness strategy was the catalyst to really tackle homelessness’.⁸⁸ Neil Morland argues that, for the first time, it forced local authorities into accepting that homelessness was ‘their responsibility’.⁸⁹ Charles Falconer, who took the bill through parliament, argues that liability to judicial review was ‘very, very important’ and Messenger notes that it gave leverage to the voluntary sector to ensure compliance, ‘the sector could challenge local authorities on those strategies’.⁹⁰

Once again, the close attention to ensuring the actual delivery of their homelessness policies that was so typical of Labour’s approach was much in evidence. Great care was taken to ensure that the homelessness strategies local authorities were obliged to produce were thorough, properly formulated and enacted upon. This required close monitoring.

⁸⁸ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

⁸⁹ Neil Morland, Interview, 16/11/20.

⁹⁰ Charles Falconer, Interview, 23/11/21; Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

Gary Messenger states that 100 out of the first 350 strategies were 'not fit for purpose' and Gill Brown felt that Stoke City Council had merely 'cut and pasted large sections of government guidance into a document'.⁹¹ In their 2004 evaluation, the ODPM reported that one fifth of local homeless strategies had failed to consider the needs of 'ex-service personnel, Black and Ethnic minority groups, former asylum seekers and refugees and Gypsies/travellers' and was obliged to give detailed guidance on how to address these failings.⁹² The Homelessness Directorate worked hard to improve them. Shelia Spencer recalls training 'hundreds of authorities around the country on writing homelessness strategies'.⁹³

The 'modernised' structure and make-up of the Homelessness Directorate was vital in ensuring compliance. Messenger believes the presence of local authority and voluntary sector practitioners in the unit allowed it to interact with local authorities much more seamlessly than a conventional Whitehall department, and led to the establishment of relationships based on trust.⁹⁴ This sensibility enabled the unit to pursue a consciously diplomatic approach, 'we always came from a supportive point of view...we wanted to help them make it better, we would never chastise, and we certainly wouldn't make anything public'.⁹⁵ The unit's deep connections to the homeless sector were also beneficial in ensuring the strategies devised were acted upon, 'Shelter... would tell us of...certain authorities that were not adhering to the law', and ask the unit to, 'go in and sort them out'.⁹⁶ To ensure that the new approach reached the front line, Alafat recalls that 'there was

⁹¹ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20; Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

⁹² ODPM, *Local Authorities' Homelessness Strategies: Evaluation and Good Practice*, (ODPM, London, November 2004), pp.10, 15 & 60-63.

⁹³ Shelia Spencer, Interview, 21/10/20.

⁹⁴ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

a lot of work done at that time around promotion of best practice...we engaged the Chartered Institute of Housing to do training for frontline [local authority] workers...it was a very active engagement kind of role'.⁹⁷ The emollient approach of the Homelessness Directorate to ensure compliance was backed up by control over the funds made available through the new Homelessness Prevention Grant (£200 million between 2005 and 2008).⁹⁸ Although a portion of this was allocated to every authority, Messenger recalls that 'those we felt could deliver and were working really well' could be granted 'a better chunk of the funding', enabling the unit to 'actually reward success not failure'.⁹⁹ In addition, New Labour's introduction of New Public Management techniques, so central to its Third Way ethos, were fully employed. Local authorities were subject to oversight by the Audit Commission, and specific 'homeless prevention' Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs) were created which fed into Labour's Comprehensive Performance Assessment mechanisms that graded councils' overall performance.¹⁰⁰ The Homelessness Directorate was fully linked into these systems, Messenger recalls that 'if we felt we did have a problem with the local authority...we were quite open to using the Audit Commission to go in and do a bit of work for us'.¹⁰¹ Further incentive for local authorities to enact successful homelessness strategies was the creation of a 'tackling homelessness' theme under New Labour's 'Beacon Council' scheme designed to recognise and reward excellence.¹⁰² Neil Morland at Stoke believes that

⁹⁷ Terrie Alafat, Interview, 17/11/20.

⁹⁸ ODPM, *Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*, (ODPM, London, March 2005), p.15.

⁹⁹ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

¹⁰⁰ The specific Best Value Performance indicators were 'Housing Advice' (BVP213) and 'Repeat Homelessness' (BVP214). DCLG, *Homelessness Prevention: A guide to good practice*, p.25.

¹⁰¹ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

¹⁰² ODPM, *Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness: A Homelessness Directorate Advice Note to Local Authorities*, (ODPM/Homelessness Directorate, London, April 2003), Section 26. Details in Annex A. For more on the operation of the Beacon Councils scheme see, Wilson, S. & Lilly, A., *Beacon Councils Scheme: Case study*, (Institute of Local Government, London, 2016).

the kudos of attaining ‘Beacon Council’ status in 2003 was effective in maintaining the profile of homelessness within the city council.¹⁰³

The extension of ‘priority need’ categories

In addition to the Homelessness Act 2002, New Labour simultaneously passed secondary legislation that extended the categories of those in ‘priority need’ and therefore entitled to accommodation. This too was a significant change, comprising the first substantive expansion in the obligations of local authorities toward homeless people since the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act of 1977.¹⁰⁴ Under the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order of 2002, sixteen to seventeen-year-olds, care leavers aged 18-20, people vulnerable due to violence or threats of violence, and people deemed vulnerable due to an institutionalised background, were classified as in priority need for the first time.¹⁰⁵

The inclusion of all homeless 16-17-year olds represented ‘a major reversal of the philosophy of the 1979–1997 period, where the prevailing view was that more generous provision could encourage young people to leave the family home unnecessarily’.¹⁰⁶ The prevention of homelessness among young people was prioritised in homeless strategies and a ‘Youth Strategy’ devised by the Homelessness Directorate.¹⁰⁷ The combination of

¹⁰³ Neil Morland, Interview, 16/11/20.

¹⁰⁴ The 1977 Act had been superseded by the Housing Act 1985, but this was largely an act of consolidation with no substantive changes in Local Authority responsibilities toward homeless people. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/68/contents>

¹⁰⁵ For those ‘made vulnerable by being in care’ the age limit extended to 24. Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation Order (England) 2002, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2051/contents/made> (accessed 3/4/2022).

¹⁰⁶ Harding, J., *Post-war Homelessness Policy in the UK*, p.393. It added new responsibilities to local authority housing departments building on those created by the Children (Leaving Care Act) 2000.

¹⁰⁷ DTLR, *Homeless strategies: a good practice handbook*. Helen Keats, Interview, 19/10/20; Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20 Both Keats & Messenger were involved in drawing up the Youth strategy. These policies were informed by the recommendations of New Labour’s more comprehensive 2002 report: SEU/ODPM, *Young Runaways: A report by the Social Exclusion Unit*, (ODPM, London, 2002).

legislative change and detailed guidance appears to have had a significant impact. Services such as mediation, crash-beds and supported lodgings were rapidly developed, with 79.8% of local authorities providing mediation services, and 75.7% home visits by 2005.¹⁰⁸ A review commissioned by Shelter in 2005 was cautious in its judgement of the impact of the new approach describing it as 'positive but limited'.¹⁰⁹ However, a review of youth homelessness conducted by Quilgars, Johnson and Pleace, lauded the 'particularly strong focus on young people' in local authority prevention strategies, and noted a 'significant cultural shift in the way local authorities and support providers are responding to youth homelessness'.¹¹⁰ It also praised the development of a 'full range' of 'earlier interventions' (housing advice services, rent deposit guarantee schemes, mediation services, tenancy sustainment and new initiatives for ex-offenders and those experiencing domestic violence') and youth specific schemes such as 'Safe in the City' and 'Safe Stop'.¹¹¹ Family mediation services were also broadly praised, although the report noted that family mediation practice, 'varied considerably' in quality, and recommended the development of more 'pre-crisis interventions, including parenting initiatives'.¹¹² Pawson was less certain of such schemes efficacy, and although he cited a number of studies that appear to show very high success

¹⁰⁸ Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate, *Survey of English local authorities about homelessness*, (ODPM, London, 2003), p.14.

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, I. & Thomson, S., *More Priority Needed: The impact of legislative change on young homeless people's access to housing and support*, (Shelter, London, 2005), p.11.

¹¹⁰ Lawton A., 'Preface' in Quilgars, Johnson, & Pleace, *Youth homelessness in the UK: A decade of progress?*, p. viii. Quilgars et al, *Youth homelessness in the UK*, p.1.

¹¹¹ Quilgars et al, *Youth homelessness in the UK*, p.1. For more detail on the 'Safe in the City' scheme see, Nistaa, H. & Dane, K., *Staying Safe: Preventing Youth Homelessness through Early intervention Programmes*, (Safe in the City, London, 2000). The 'Safe Moves' scheme was evaluated in, Quilgars, D., Jones, A., Pleace N. & Sanderson, D., *The Safe Moves Initiative: An Evaluation*, (University of York Centre for Housing Policy, York, 2004)

¹¹² Quilgars et al, *Youth homelessness in the UK*, p.1.

rates for local authority family mediation services, expressed a degree of scepticism over their long-term efficacy.¹¹³

In addition, the creation of a clear duty to accommodate those threatened with homelessness through domestic violence was a milestone in the state's acknowledgement of the plight of (mostly) women in terrible circumstances, and addressed a major failing in the existing legislation. Under the preceding legislation (Housing Act 1996) local authorities did have a duty to assess vulnerability as a consequence of domestic violence, but the wording was opaque and resulted in dramatically different levels of acceptance as in priority need.¹¹⁴ In the West Midlands 44% were accepted against only 4% in London.¹¹⁵ The ODPM had commissioned detailed research into housing and domestic violence prior to the legislation, prevention and support services were highlighted in successive codes of guidance, and 'sanctuary' schemes that enabled women to stay in their own homes were championed.¹¹⁶

The limitations of New Labour's homelessness policies: Entitlement to housing and housing supply

The Homelessness Act 2002 and the associated extension of priority need categories instigated a step change in the quality and scope of local authorities' provision of services to single homeless people. They were, however, limited measures. What Labour conspicuously failed to do was either to scrap the notion of 'priority need' altogether and open access to

¹¹³ Pawson, H., 'Local Authority Homelessness Prevention in England', p.876.

¹¹⁴ Levison, D. & Kenny, D. *The provision of Accommodation and Support for Households Experiencing Domestic Violence in England*, (ODPM, London, 2002).

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.14.

¹¹⁶ Levison, & Kenny, *The provision of Accommodation and Support for Households Experiencing Domestic Violence*, pp.15-16; DCLG, *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities*, (DCLG, London, July 2006), p.36. For an evaluation of 'Sanctuary' schemes' efficacy see, Jones, A., Bretherton, J., Croucher, K. and Bowles, R., *The Effectiveness of Schemes to Enable Households at Risk of Domestic Violence to Remain in their own Homes*, (DCLG, London, 2010).

housing to all homeless people, as the devolved Scottish government did in 2003, or to address the issue of homelessness at root by investing heavily in increasing the supply of affordable housing.¹¹⁷ This calls into question both the sincerity of New Labour's stated aim to end homelessness, and highlights limitations to its Third Way approach to governance. Removing any form of 'priority need' from the homelessness legislation would certainly have been a radical departure for Labour. As Cole and Furbey argue, despite the massive investment in social housing by the post-war Labour government and its successors, housing differed fundamentally from other components of the welfare state, with 'the dominant definition of housing as a commodity rather than a social right'.¹¹⁸ Malpass argues that because, 'well-developed, if poor quality housing markets already existed - whereas markets did not provide health care, education and pensions for all, housing 'retained an ambiguous and shifting status on the margins of the welfare state, the least decommodified and most market-determined of the conventionally accepted constituents of such states'.¹¹⁹ He argues that 'as some form of private housing solution is available for most people most of the time, social housing provision is likely to be residual in normal times' and it was only in the 'abnormal' conditions following the two world wars that 'conditions favoured more extensive state provision'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Under the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 the 'priority need' requirement was scheduled to be removed in Scotland entirely by 2012. The separate development of Homelessness policy conducted by the devolved Scottish government is not covered in this research. For a review in this time period see, Pawson, H. & Davidson, E. 'Radically Divergent? Homelessness Policy in Post- Devolution Scotland', *Journal of Housing Policy*, Vol 8 No.1, (2008), pp.39-60.

¹¹⁸ Cole, I. & Furbey, R., *The Eclipse of Council Housing*, (Routledge, London, 1994), p.3.

¹¹⁹ Malpass, P., 'The Wobbly Pillar? Housing and the British Post-War Welfare State', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol 32, No 4, (2003), p.590.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

For even the post-war Attlee government, housing was never 'intended to be universal' nor 'free at the point of access'.¹²¹ No subsequent post-war government has ever envisioned a housing policy beyond providing limited provision for working-class families and certainly not one of 'homes for all' that would include single people threatened with homelessness. Malpass argues that the idea that 'housing is essentially a commodity...is deeply ingrained' and 'long-established' and not the product of Thatcherite zealotry and Blairite modernisation.¹²² As a government that had consciously chosen to govern from the centre ground, Labour shied away from the radical implications of offering housing as a right, largely accepting pre-existing notions of the predominance of the market in the question of housing supply.

Finlayson, Malpass and Watson all interpret Labour's housing policy within a broader welfare policy framework, considering it part of a shift toward an 'individualised system of asset-based welfare'.¹²³ Although subject to differing definitions, asset-based welfare is envisaged as a means by which governments are active agents in creating 'financialised' citizens who save, invest, and accumulate assets, thereby enabling governments to avoid cuts in welfare spending or undertake significant welfare restructuring strategies.¹²⁴ With property the most significant asset held by most people, Malpass notes that it is the 'housing wealth of owner-occupiers that provides governments with the opportunity to pursue welfare restructuring'.¹²⁵ Finlayson argues that New Labour's 'encouragement not

¹²¹ Cole, I. & Furbey, R., *The Eclipse of Council Housing*, (Routledge, London, 1994), p.61.

¹²² Malpass, P., 'The Wobbly Pillar?', p.605.

¹²³ Finlayson, A., 'Financialisation, Finance Literacy and Asset-based Welfare', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol 11, No 3, (2009), pp.400-421; Malpass, P., 'Housing and the New Welfare State: Wobbly Pillar or Cornerstone?', *Housing Studies*, Vol 23, No 1, (2008) pp.1-19; Watson, M., 'Planning for a Future of Asset-based welfare? New Labour, Financialised Economic agency and the Housing Market', *Planning Practice & Research*, Vol 24, No 1, (2009), pp.41-56.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Malpass, P., 'Housing and the New Welfare State', p.1.

only of home ownership but of houses bought as sources of profit and guarantees of future financial security has been part of a wider attempt to create an asset-owning society composed of responsible yet risk-taking, financially independent, yet economically ambitious households'.¹²⁶ Watson goes further, arguing that Labour 'deliberately manipulated the house price bubble that coincided with its first 10 years in office' affording it the 'means of incorporating individuals into asset-based system of welfare and from there of warding off political mobilisation for other forms of welfare'.¹²⁷ Watson provides no evidence to support his claim that this was a conscious Labour strategy, and Malpass' view that 'housing has facilitated a restructuring of welfare services but not driven the process' seems far more tenable.¹²⁸

Whether merely convenient or a conscious strategy, Labour's support for owner occupation and the effect of the increase in property values on stamp duty receipts meant that, as Malpass notes, 'housing has changed from being a cost to the public purse to a source of revenue'.¹²⁹ In contrast, if New Labour had taken the radical step to remove the limits on those with statutory entitlement to housing, it would, of course, have had huge resource implications. Undeniably, resources and policy were inextricably linked. A Crisis panel debating the development of the act concluded that removal of the 'priority need' criteria was 'unlikely to be politically or practically viable in the much more pressured housing market of England, especially in London and the South'.¹³⁰ That there was insufficient social housing was already manifest in 1997 in the form of council housing waiting lists (in areas of high demand) where applicants had no realistic prospect of gaining a tenancy in their

¹²⁶ Finlayson, A., 'Financialisation, Finance Literacy and Asset-based Welfare', p.400.

¹²⁷ Watson, M., 'Planning for a Future of Asset-based Welfare?', p.49.

¹²⁸ Malpass, P., 'Housing and the New Welfare State', p.16.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.10.

¹³⁰ Fitzpatrick & Pawson, 'Fifty years since Cathy Come Home, pp. 543-555.

lifetimes. Lacking the housing stock, but under continued obligation to provide accommodation to those in priority need, local authorities had been forced to purchase expensive and unsuitable temporary accommodation in the private sector on a huge scale.¹³¹ A reduction in the use of Temporary Accommodation was a key target of the Homelessness Directorate, but the paucity of supply was never addressed. Over the course of its three terms in office Labour oversaw the construction of only 7,870 local authority homes and 350,000 units of social housing by Housing Associations, figures that are comparable to the *annual* rate of construction under Wilson or Macmillan.¹³² Nor did New Labour reverse the housing reforms of the Thatcher administration, most importantly, the 'Right to Buy' (RTB) for council tenants that had led to a dramatic reduction in council housing stock across the country. Although in legislation passed between 1999 and 2006, Labour did alter the use of Capital Receipts from council houses sold under RTB and reduce the levels of discount, it never repealed the key components of the act.¹³³ Only in Labour's third term was a target for new homes actually set, and it was not until 2007 that the number of new social rented homes exceeded those lost through RTB.¹³⁴ Although Lund detects a change in Labour's attitude to increasing supply from 2003, through increased funding for Housing Associations, it was only after the financial crash of 2008 that Labour began to invest heavily in building social housing.¹³⁵ Here, as Housing Minister John Healy

¹³¹ The Homelessness Act 2002 also restored the duty to provide permanent accommodation to those accepted as in priority need, which had been reduced to only a temporary duty under the Conservative's 1996 Housing Act.

¹³² Boughton, J., *Municipal Dreams - The Rise and Fall of Council Housing*, (Verso, London, 2019), p.248.

¹³³ Murie, A., *The right to buy?: Selling off public and social housing*, (Bristol, Policy Press, 2016), pp.41-44.

¹³⁴ Boughton, J., *Municipal Dreams*, p.249.

¹³⁵ Lund, B., "Housing policy: coming in and out of the cold?" in Powell, M. (Ed), *Modernising the Welfare State: The Blair Legacy*, (Policy Press, Bristol, 2008), pp.44-45.

recalls, this was only because Gordon Brown 'was willing to see the case for public investment as an economic as well as a social imperative'.¹³⁶

Labour's failure to address the supply of affordable housing supports Interpretations of New Labour that it was motivated primarily by a desire to remain in office by courting public opinion rather than addressing structural inequality. Indeed, there is ample evidence that New Labour did, indeed, suborn its housing policy to the dictates of public opinion. Murie reports that, as early as 1983, it had become 'accepted wisdom' that Labour support for Right to Buy 'was an electoral necessity'.¹³⁷ More broadly, Cole and Furby note that 'working-class support for the principle and practice of state housing has always been rather fragmented and equivocal', and it was this ambivalent attitude that enabled the Thatcher government to dismantle much of the social housing infrastructure with popular support.¹³⁸ Furthermore, many Labour politicians were deeply mistrustful of local government, particularly in their housing role. There is insufficient space here to explore the complexities of New Labour's full relationship with local government. Travers points out that some significant steps were taken by Labour to re-empower the local state, citing removing expenditure capping; giving councils powers to promote economic, social and environmental well-being; annual elections; experiments with elected mayors; the introduction of 'best value' regime; the abolition of compulsory competitive tendering; a 'fair' grant distribution; a directly elected mayor and Assembly for London; a Scottish

¹³⁶ John Healy, Interview, 29/10/21. See DCLG, *Homes for the future: More available, more sustainable*, Cm 7191, (DCLG, London, 2007).

¹³⁷ Murie, *Right to buy?*, p.37.

¹³⁸ Cole & Furbey, *The Eclipse of Council Housing*, p.2. There are many excellent accounts of Housing Policy under the Thatcher administration, Broughton's, *Municipal Dreams - the Rise and Fall of Council Housing* is a useful introduction. For what is still perhaps the definitive work on the failure of modernist system-built council housing see Coleman, A. *Utopia on Trial; Vision and Reality in Planned Housing* (revised edition), (Hilary Shipman, London, 1990).

Parliament and a Welsh Assembly and regional development agencies for England.¹³⁹

Despite these steps it is clear that a residual suspicion of local authorities remained. 'Nick Raynsford acknowledges that, 'if you scratched the surface', many believed that, 'local government isn't competent and we can't leave them in charge' and Steve Philpott describes Hilary Armstrong as 'pathological about councils...that they would just embarrass the Labour party and they shouldn't be allowed to do anything'.¹⁴⁰ Both Charles Falconer and John Healy dispute this characterisation.¹⁴¹ Falconer argues that Labour's mistrust of local authorities had evaporated by 2002, stating that 'the big local authority leaders in London...Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle...were moderates, non-militant, non-disconnected from central government'.¹⁴² Healy accepts that there may have been 'an overhang – a defensiveness', but by the time he became Housing Minister in 2007, 'that had all gone'.¹⁴³ Despite Falconer and Healy's protestations, a degree of historical mistrust of local authorities, coupled with a desire to appear fiscally prudent to the electorate, meant that Labour largely prevented local authorities from building social housing, preferring to utilise housing associations that were seen as 'better, more agile and responsive' and had the additional advantage of 'keeping housing costs off the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement'.¹⁴⁴ Toynbee and Walker argue that Labour 'resisted the logic of state intervention [in housing], partly because rented housing sounded Old Labour, partly because it was scared by the large sums needed for subsidised house-building'.¹⁴⁵ Although

¹³⁹ Travers, T., 'Local Government' in Anthon Seldon (Ed), *Blair's Britain, 1997-2007*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007), pp.55 & 54.

¹⁴⁰ Nick Raynsford, Interview, 27/10/21; Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/1/20.

¹⁴¹ Charles Falconer, Interview, 23/11/21; John Healy, Interview, 29/10/21.

¹⁴² Charles Falconer, Interview, 23/11/21.

¹⁴³ John Healy, Interview, 29/10/21.

¹⁴⁴ Boughton,, *Municipal Dreams*, p.210.

¹⁴⁵ Toynbee & Walker, *The Verdict: Did Labour Change Britain?*, p.138.

the scale and scope of Housing Associations grew enormously under New Labour, their capacity to build and the funds made available to them were woefully insufficient to match demand.¹⁴⁶

Nick Raynsford defends aspects of Labour's record on housing, noting that underinvestment under the preceding Conservative administrations had led to Labour inheriting council housing stock in 'very poor condition'¹⁴⁷. Raynsford argues 'you couldn't justify building, tens of thousands of new homes, when you had hundreds of thousands, millions of existing houses that were unfit to live in'.¹⁴⁸ Labour did commit some £40 billion to improving the remaining stock under the 'Decent Homes' programme and by 2010 more than two million homes had been significantly refurbished.¹⁴⁹ Steve Hilditch also recalls that there was 'a lot of research' prior to 1997 that indicated 'there was low demand for social housing... even in London', but notes that 'demand came back quite quickly, but it led the Labour government to think there wasn't a need to provide supply – which was disastrous'.¹⁵⁰

But such arguments are not the primary causes of Labour's failure to invest in social housing. The core reasons, it is argued here, are rooted in its Third Way ideology, and in its particular approach to addressing social exclusion. The state was to be enabler, not provider, with local authorities facilitating access to housing rather than holding its own

¹⁴⁶ The negative impact of the changing roles of Housing Associations on Supported Housing provision, local accountability and rent levels was raised by several interviewees – most notably Olie Alcock and Shaun Fitzpatrick in Bristol. Joint Interview 30/11/20. For mismatch of supply and demand see 'The Barker Review', Barker, K., *Review of Housing Supply: Delivering Stability: securing our Future Housing Needs – Final Report and recommendations*, (HM Treasury, HMSO, March 2004).

¹⁴⁷ Nick Raynsford, Interview, 27/10/21.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Nick Raynsford, Interview 27/10/21; Raynsford, N., *Substance Not Spin: An Insider's View of Success and Failure in Government* (Policy Press, Bristol, 2016), pp.57-58. Providing support for Raynsford's view, Dorling notes that the 'New Labour government received little acknowledgement for all the homes it ensured were made decent while it held office.' Dorling, D., *All That is Solid*, p.113.

¹⁵⁰ Steve Hilditch, Interview, 12/10/21.

stock.¹⁵¹ Labour accepted the predominance of the market in the provision of housing, and its preferred mechanism was to facilitate people's capacity to purchase housing through monies obtained from paid work. As Levitas argues, Labour largely rejected the redistributive form of addressing social exclusion, (including assets as well as benefits) in favour of one focussed on escaping exclusion through paid employment.¹⁵² Lund notes that as 'New labour fused housing into the social exclusion agenda it is difficult to define Labour's housing policy separately'.¹⁵³ This is certainly the case. Measures such as the extensive programme of 'neighbourhood renewal', the 'New Deal for Communities' and Working Families Tax Credit (and more broadly its education policies, and, in the long-term, its programme to eliminate child poverty) were all designed to equip citizens with the tools required to compete in the market, gain employment and thereby resolve their own housing needs largely independent of government assistance.

This failure to invest in the supply of social housing represents the strongest critique of New Labour's homelessness policies. As Nick Raynsford acknowledges, 'impending homelessness cannot be indefinitely postponed in the absence of the prospect of a better housing solution in the foreseeable future' and adds that any ambitions to end homelessness require 'an adequate supply of housing to meet the country's overall needs, available on terms that are within the reach of all members of society'.¹⁵⁴ Despite the late surge in the building of social housing under John Healy and Gordon Brown, New Labour manifestly failed to do this.

¹⁵¹ Labour accelerated the 'stock transfer' of council accommodation to Housing Associations begun under the preceding Conservative administrations. Between 2001 & 2006, 459,578 were transferred. From DCLG, *Completed large-scale voluntary transfers* (DCLG, London, 2007). Quoted in Lund, 'Housing Policy: Coming in out of the cold?', p.40.

¹⁵² Levitas, *The Inclusive Society?*

¹⁵³ Lund, B., 'Safe as Houses? Housing Policy under New labour', p.108.

¹⁵⁴ Raynsford N., *Substance Not Spin*, p.35.

Supporting People

If the Homelessness Act 2000 had transformed local government's engagement with single homeless people and brought about new forms of joint working with the voluntary sector, the impact of the Supporting People (SP) programme would be still more transformative.

Under SP, local government and the voluntary sector were obliged to work ever closer together, and SP brought £1.6 billion per annum into the homelessness sector, completely transforming the scale, scope and quality of the services provided by homeless agencies.¹⁵⁵

Beginning with an audit of need, and by providing a level of funding that matched the assessed needs, SP enabled agencies, for the first time, to adequately staff their projects with skilled salaried employees. It also enabled the recruitment of specialist staff, a huge expansion in education, training and employment schemes for homeless people, a vast improvement in tenancy support and significant steps toward user-empowerment.

Practitioners considered SP to be 'a catalyst for change', 'a visionary programme', one with 'an emphasis on quality', that moved the sector from a 'crisis response' to 'providing the right amount of support to stop people becoming homeless in the first place'.¹⁵⁶ McKinley also praised the scope of SP noting that it 'factored in...people from prison ...people at risk of offending...people with mental health problems...people with learning disabilities...young people...women fleeing domestic violence...a very cross-departmental approach...it was expensive but it worked'.¹⁵⁷

Once again, New Labour took great care over ensuring the effective delivery of its programme and acted in accordance with Its Third Way principles. SP is another clear

¹⁵⁵ The amount fell incrementally from £1.8 billion in 2003 to £1.65 billion in 2009/10. For detail see Jarrett, T. *The Supporting People programme*, HC Paper 12/40 16 July 2012, pp.12-13.

¹⁵⁶ Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20; Steve McKinley, Interview, 19/11/20; Neil Baird, Interview, 10/2/21.

¹⁵⁷ Steve McKinley, Interview, 19/11/20.

example of evidence-based policy making, modernisation, joined up working, and addressing social exclusion through the provision of services designed to enhance social capital. In addition, the success of Supporting People, outside of those engaged in its delivery or who were its beneficiaries, passed completely unnoticed by the media and the general public. Too technocratic for press headlines, it is both a powerful example of Labour's long-term and coherent strategy to address homelessness, and challenges common characterisations of Labour's ethos and achievements in office.

Supporting People was not a consequence of carefully constructed primary legislation like the 2002 Homelessness Act, instead its origins lie in an adverse court judgement, (see below), that threatened the viability of the whole supported housing sector. New Labour's response was to turn this setback into a remarkable expansion of homelessness provision and social care. As Alan Fraser notes, 'Supporting People was never in any Labour Party manifesto, they lost a court case and panicked. They panicked and put a billion and a half pounds into the sector that wasn't there before'.¹⁵⁸

The Supporting People programme was not without flaws and these are explored in depth below. It is argued here, however, that critics have tended to over-emphasise these flaws, sometimes misinterpreted their impact, and often failed to pay attention to the astonishing improvements in service provision that SP brought about.

Origins and context of Supporting People

Before exploring the impact of SP and the strengths and weaknesses of its manner of delivery, it is necessary to briefly consider the circumstances and context that led to its creation. The origins of Supporting People can be traced to a growing concern with the

¹⁵⁸ Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21.

government's lack of ability to control the ever-rising costs of Housing Benefit. Homeless agency funding had always consisted of a complex mixture of central government grant, Housing Corporation monies (for registered Housing Associations) and charitable fundraising, with the proportions differing from agency to agency. Rental income, however, had for most become a major source of funds. As most hostel and supported housing residents were unemployed, rental income was, in effect, paid by the government through their individual entitlement to housing benefit. Such accommodation was, however, providing more than merely a bed for the night, and homeless sector providers were able to fund their support services by including the additional costs of 'housing-related support' in their housing benefit charges. The difference between 'care', 'support' and 'housing-related support' were not clearly defined. A clear division was never successfully made and may, indeed be impossible. Mike Barrett notes 'there was no real point where one finished...and another one starts'. As it was required in the SP2 returns, he notes, 'we (the sector) came up with all sorts of shenanigans to say this is this'.¹⁵⁹ As Jeremy Swain points out, 'some agencies had been manipulating the system and charging the most astonishing rates to people'.¹⁶⁰ This had negative knock-on effects for hostel and supported housing residents, as it also effectively excluded any possibility of residents obtaining paid work. As Mike Seal points out, it 'trapped them, because they couldn't get jobs, because they'd have to be earning £300 quid a week to pay the wages of the workers who are supporting them'.¹⁶¹ The direct funding of agencies through SP would help ameliorate this problem. Many homeless agencies had become reliant on housing benefit funding and as 'there was no

¹⁵⁹ Mike Barrett, Interview, 26/11/20.

¹⁶⁰ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹⁶¹ Mike Seal, Interview, 4/12/20.

ceiling' to these charges, the Treasury had no means of exerting control.¹⁶² The Major administration had sought to 'limit the range of services eligible for Housing Benefit' in 1995, but had backed down following 'an extensive campaign' by the sector.¹⁶³ Any moves to address the issue by New Labour were pre-empted by a divisional court ruling in 1997 (upheld on appeal in July 1998) that only 'support services such as are directed to preserve the accommodation's fabric' were eligible for Housing Benefit, thereby excluding nearly every imaginable form of support.¹⁶⁴ The ruling effectively destroyed the financial viability of the hostel and supported housing sector, forcing the newly elected Labour government to put in place 'interim measures' in the form of Transitional Housing Benefit (THB), in order to 'stabilise existing supported housing provision and protect many thousands of vulnerable people until a long-term solution [could] be implemented'.¹⁶⁵

Having been forced into action, New Labour seized the opportunity proffered to make radical change, in a manner characteristic of its Third Way philosophy. They consulted widely across the sector, and replaced 'the current arbitrary system of funding support services with a new co-ordinated approach', bringing 'the existing funding streams...to create a single budget'.¹⁶⁶

In a manner typical of New Labour third-way governance, it would both devolve power and retain centralised control. The support services would largely be provided by the voluntary sector, but local authorities were given a new role as commissioners, and empowered to

¹⁶² Jeremy Swain, Interview; 2/10/20; Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20.

¹⁶³ Foord et al, *Bricks Without Mortar*, p.25.

¹⁶⁴ Cited in Jarrett, T. *The Supporting People programme*, HC Paper 12/40 16 July 2012, Section 1.2, p.3.

¹⁶⁵ HC Deb 18 November 1998 cc138-9W; The ruling put an estimated 700,000 vulnerable at risk. From Foord et al, *Bricks Without Mortar*, p.25.

¹⁶⁶ Inter-Departmental Review of Funding for Supported Accommodation, *Supporting People: A new policy and funding framework for support services*, 17 December 1998, pp.10–11, para 22, DEP 1998/1489.

‘take decisions on how the money could be spent most effectively at a local level’.¹⁶⁷ This would be a modernised service. Councils would issue contracts with clearly defined outcome targets, and the recipients were required to conform to quality standards.¹⁶⁸ Central government control would, however, be retained by the Treasury which ‘must approve the terms...the amount...and the manner of payment’.¹⁶⁹ Detailed advice and guidance would be issued, and local authorities required to undergo periodic ‘rigorous and disciplined’ reviews.¹⁷⁰ It was made explicit that councils must ensure ‘good value for money’ and warned that, funding would be reduced if targets were not met.¹⁷¹ Most significant of all, SP funding was ‘ring-fenced’, ensuring the funds provided could only be spent on homelessness prevention, resettlement and support and could not be leached away into the wider council budget.

The impact of the Supporting People programme

The impact of SP was wide-ranging and transformative. Administratively, by bringing multiple funding streams together it created ‘a far more coherent system of financing and planning for housing support services than existed in the past’.¹⁷² As SP was awarded on a ‘full cost recovery’ basis with administration as well as running costs included and payments made in advance, it went a long way to creating a ‘stable footing’ for the financing of the voluntary sector.¹⁷³ As Howard Sinclair points out, ‘before you were always scrabbling

¹⁶⁷ Inter-Departmental Review of Funding for Supported Accommodation, *Supporting People*, pp.10–11, para 22.

¹⁶⁸ Shelia Spencer notes, ‘it was the first time that anybody had looked at what was going on in supported housing and said ‘is this what it should be?’ Shelia Spencer, Interview, 21/10/20.

¹⁶⁹ *Local Government Act 2000*, Section 93 Subsections, 3, 5 & 6A

¹⁷⁰ McNulty, T., ODPM HC Deb, 24 February 2003 cc2WS-3WS.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. The wording was, ‘local authorities who do not carry out proper reviews or who provide insubstantial evidence of the benefits and strategic relevance of services cannot expect to receive continued levels of funding in future’.

¹⁷² Jones & Pleace, *A Review of Single Homelessness*, p.37.

¹⁷³ Neil Baird, Interview, 10/2/21; Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

about in arrears...and worrying about cash-flow'.¹⁷⁴ Helen Keats is, however, critical of this aspect of how SP was administered, noting 'there was no consistency, no guidance on the admin costs...the range was phenomenal because there was no baseline...a huge driver in the cost [of SP] was the admin costs'.¹⁷⁵ SP may have been inadequately cost-controlled, but the amount of money it injected into the sector enabled homeless agencies to become more professionalised and skilled. Gary Murphy of the Salvation Army recalls that, for the first time SP gave 'an opportunity to invest in staff' and as staff could now be awarded 'a good salary', recruitment and retention were greatly improved.¹⁷⁶ More importantly still, the manner of its construction meant that it was driven by an assessment of what was needed in each local area, and homeless agencies could now budget on a basis of what was actually required to do the work, rather than what could be patched together from the money available.¹⁷⁷ This led to the development of new and significantly improved services across the full range of provision.¹⁷⁸ SP would fund homelessness prevention and resettlement services, floating support, supported housing, emergency accommodation, and opened up the opportunity for supported housing providers in supplying 'education, training and employment services for...single homeless people'.¹⁷⁹ Although there were difficulties associated with the new role of local authority commissioners, SP 'committed local authorities to talk to their local providers', and by 'opening up a channel to communicate', allowed local authorities 'a little bit of space to innovate, to look at new

¹⁷⁴ Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

¹⁷⁵ Helen Keats, Interview, 9/12/20.

¹⁷⁶ Gary Murphy, Interview, 5/5/21.

¹⁷⁷ Commented on by numerous respondents including Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20; Dom Wood, Interview, 11/11/20; Neil Baird, Interview, 10/2/21.

¹⁷⁸ Jones & Pleace plotted the distribution of SP funding; 37% of went on supported housing; 30% on direct access hostels and night shelters, 22% on floating support, 5% on women's refuges, 4% on outreach and 2% on foyers. Jones & Pleace, *A Review of Single Homelessness*, p.58.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p.37.

ideas'.¹⁸⁰ In addition, the new systems of accountability SP brought with it gave an opportunity to ensure the quality of services, both raising standards and, as Andy Winter points out in Brighton, 'it forced some disreputable [voluntary sector] organisations to toe the line'.¹⁸¹ Ollie Alcock in Bristol recalled that it also allowed the council to drive out 'unscrupulous operators' in the private rented sector who had taken advantage of the 'lax rules around housing benefit' to offer poor-quality 'supported' accommodation.¹⁸² The Audit Commission praised the impact of SP on user-empowerment, noting in its 2005 review that, 'users are [now] more involved in the services they receive and in planning wider service provision'.¹⁸³ On the crude measure of cost benefit analysis, the DCLG calculated in 2009, that comparing the cost of the whole SP programme against 'the most appropriate positive alternative to SP', had led to a net financial benefit of £3.41 billion per annum.¹⁸⁴ This calculation covers the whole of the SP programme including much social care beyond homelessness. It is difficult to disaggregate the data, but even if only the figures relating exclusively to single homeless people are included, the DCLG calculated savings of £127 million.¹⁸⁵

With support charges bound up in housing benefit, the government was unable to calculate the cost of SP with any accuracy, envisioning it falling somewhere between £350 and £750 million.¹⁸⁶ The final cost, announced in October 2003, turned out to be £1.8 billion per annum.¹⁸⁷ For a government so associated with micro-management and centralised control

¹⁸⁰ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20; Neil Morland, Interview, 16/11/20.

¹⁸¹ Andy Winter, Interview, 17/12/20.

¹⁸² Ollie Alcock, Interview, 30/11/20.

¹⁸³ Audit Commission, *Supporting People*, (Audit Commission, London, October 2005), p.2.

¹⁸⁴ DCLG, *Research into the financial benefits of the Supporting People Programme*, 2009, (DCLG, London, July 2009), p.9, Section 1.3.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.10.

¹⁸⁶ Jarrett, T. *The Supporting People programme*, p.8

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

and with a chancellor famous for his 'prudence', the development of the SP 'pot' represents a curious anomaly. It would appear that, whatever the Treasury's intentions, officials at the DLTR/ODPM understood that the new arrangements offered an opportunity to do far more than merely maintain the existing level of support services, and offered an opportunity to develop new and better services. It was made clear that, in the run up to the launch of SP 'you could get whatever you wanted put in as additional housing benefit...local authorities would agree to it...then the following year...SP would automatically fund it'.¹⁸⁸ A specific cut-off date was set when all agreed funding would be approved and the amount granted frozen, termed officially, 'the Golden Cut'.¹⁸⁹ Many local authorities enthusiastically embraced the opportunity that was being offered. Ollie Alcock recalls 'literally cycling around Bristol meeting up with housing and floating support providers' and explaining what SP could offer them'.¹⁹⁰ Jeremy Swain remembers that Camden 'went around the hostels' saying 'you need another two hostel workers here...you're a bit short of staff - another three there'.¹⁹¹ The Homelessness sector accepted the opportunity with alacrity. Respondents gave numerous examples of the new services they were suddenly able to provide. Dom Williamson recalls getting 'a drug worker and a resettlement worker', Alan Fraser that Redditch YMCA got extra staff, including concierges for night cover enabling them to work with young people with higher needs and Jeremy Swain that it 'enabled Thames Reach to fund 'floating support workers, well-funded hostels and supported housing that we didn't have before'.¹⁹² Dom Wood recalls that 'everyone saw it as a one-off

¹⁸⁸ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

¹⁸⁹ The 'Golden cut' was set at £1.4 billion and is the one most recalled in the homelessness sector. The final cut was referred to as 'the 'Platinum Cut' and produced the £1.8 billion figure in October 2003. Jarett, *The Supporting people programme*, Section 2.2.

¹⁹⁰ Ollie Alcock, Interview, 30/11/20.

¹⁹¹ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹⁹² Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20; Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21. Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

opportunity to try and fund services that there would never be a chance to fund again'.¹⁹³ Although, as Steve Bell points out, 'it wasn't a free-for all', it sometimes felt like it was.¹⁹⁴ Stuart Bakewell recalls 'sitting with a commissioner cost[ing] out a service...we wrote down the numbers, they looked at it and said...no...go away and increase it by a significant percentage... let's really make hay and fill the pot'.¹⁹⁵ Although grateful for the increased resources, Bakewell expressed concerns with the potential consequences of this approach saying 'its public money – it should be well-directed...and not just to build up an infrastructure... if it becomes an end in itself, then it's a wrong turn'.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, although Mike Seal was highly positive of the impact of SP, he also felt that this approach wasn't good for the ethics of the homelessness sector, stating that the sector 'got greedy...obtaining money for its own projects became its primary directive'.¹⁹⁷ Alan Fraser gives an example of the perils of so much revenue rapidly becoming available, recalling that at Birmingham YMCA they had taken an approach of 'let's get the pot as big as we can – fill your boots fellers!'.¹⁹⁸ Fraser states that the YMCA 'doubled in turnover overnight...and couldn't cope with the amount of money coming in...it was chaos'.¹⁹⁹

The enthusiastic uptake of the opportunities afforded by SP was not merely opportunism by local authorities and the homelessness sector, it was actively encouraged by representatives of central government. Rebecca Pritchard recalls Bert Provan (Deputy Director and Project Manager SP at the DLTR) travelling 'around the country' saying to homelessness sector

¹⁹³ Dom Wood, Interview, 11/11/20.

¹⁹⁴ Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

¹⁹⁵ Stuart Bakewell, Interview, 17/11/20.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Mike Seal, Interview, 4/12/20.

¹⁹⁸ Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. Fraser reports that this problem was only temporary. Having been called in to address the crisis, the problems were largely resolved and Birmingham YMCA learnt from its mistakes and was more circumspect in its future dealings.

providers ‘you’ve got to maximise the pot – this is our opportunity’.²⁰⁰ Although the funding was subsequently cut back, and hollowed out after the ring-fence was removed after 2008, for much of its existence it was ‘a very generous programme’ and ‘amongst key stakeholders, Supporting People was seen as one of the most important policy changes in the last decade’.²⁰¹

Strengths and weakness in the delivery of Supporting People

The impact of Supporting People on the scope, scale and quality of services provided by the voluntary homeless sector was overwhelmingly positive, but there were aspects in its formulation and its mechanisms of delivery that were problematic. The cost of SP greatly exceeded Treasury expectations and was whittled down in subsequent years, negatively affecting the quality of services and driving down the salaries of staff. After the crash of 2008 the ‘ring-fence’ was removed from SP and the monies granted dissipated into the wider local authority budgets leading to the collapse of many services. The manner of its origins meant services were built upon existing provision, benefiting the areas with the most developed voluntary sector agencies and the most active local authorities, while other areas missed out. The mechanism of its delivery often put inexperienced local government commissioners in charge of services they did not understand, competitive tendering drove some smaller agencies out of business, stifled cooperation between agencies and created burdensome bureaucratic requirements. There were problems with co-ordination and delivery in two-tier authorities. Dependence on government funding may have reduced

²⁰⁰ Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20. Mike Barrett in Canterbury recalls hearing the same phrase used by DLTR officials. Mike Barrett, Interview, 26/11/20.

²⁰¹ Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/10/20. Jones and Pleace, *A Review of Single Homelessness*, p.38.

agencies' autonomy, and stifled their critical voice, and tipped some into crisis when the ring fence was taken off in 2008.

The degree and significance of these problems is open to interpretation, and although it is argued here that accounts often over-emphasise the deleterious effects of SP at the expense of its achievements, these criticisms are not without merit. While solutions were found to some of these problems, others persisted. Moreover, SP's impact on the voluntary homeless sector was complex, and differed greatly by geographical area and by type of agency. While some agencies thrived under SP, others struggled. These issues are explored below, and it is hoped that by analysing them in depth lessons for future homeless policy planning and delivery can be learned.

The funding of SP – cuts and the end of the ring fence

At its launch in 2003, SP was a generously funded programme, but its cost came as a shock to the Treasury and led to an incremental reduction in funding in every subsequent year.

Although many agencies found ways to adapt to the reduced income, there is no doubt that it had a highly deleterious effect on the quality and scope of services over time. New Labour's major misstep in its homelessness policies was the removal of the ring fence on SP after the crash of 2008 which led to a haemorrhaging of money out of homeless support and the collapse of many high-quality services.

For a Labour government espousing 'joined-up governance' the Supporting People programme is both an excellent example - in the way that it linked local authorities with voluntary sector providers and enabled a much more 'integrated approach' to homelessness prevention and resettlement, and a terrible example, in that the Treasury and the DLTR

were not on the same page.²⁰² When the final cost of £1.8 billion came in it was clear that the Treasury was highly displeased, and as Dom Williamson points out, ‘from the beginning the programme was marked by the Treasury’.²⁰³ The ODPM commissioned an independent review of SP almost immediately.²⁰⁴ It concluded that, ‘that £1.8 billion is too much to pay for the legacy provision’.²⁰⁵ Cuts of 2.5% were introduced in the following year and continued thereafter.²⁰⁶ This undermined the efficacy of the programme over time. An Audit Commission review in 2005 asserted ‘the funding focus is on cutting costs rather than on quality or long-term planning’ and that ‘stakeholders believe this uncertainty is the biggest barrier to progress’.²⁰⁷ Later reviews echoed the same concerns.²⁰⁸

Treasury hostility to the cost of Supporting People was not officially the cause of the ending of the ‘ring fence’ in April 2009.²⁰⁹ Officially, the ending of the ring fence of SP was part of a general policy of ending ring-fenced grants in order to increase ‘local authority flexibility over the use of resources and further reducing onerous reporting requirements’.²¹⁰ This feels a wholly inadequate explanation. Although its removal had been mooted before the 2008 financial crisis, it seems highly likely that the new pressures on local and central government finance paid a decisive role in the decision. The full impact of its removal would

²⁰² Dom Williamson believes the provision of ‘more integrated services’ was the core benefit of Supporting People, Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

²⁰³ No Treasury representatives were interviewed for this research, but this view is widely held across the homelessness sector and borne out by their subsequent emphasis on cutting the budget. Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

²⁰⁴ RSM Robson Rhodes, *Review of the Supporting People Programme*, 12 January 2004.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, Forward and p.17.

²⁰⁶ ODPM, *Government announces £1,8 billion Supporting People allocation*, Press Notice, 12 February 2004.

²⁰⁷ Audit Commission, *Supporting People*, p.43, para 114.

²⁰⁸ ODPM, *Creating sustainable communities: supporting independence. Consultation on a strategy for the Supporting People Programme*, (ODPM, London, November 2005); Audit Commission, *Supporting People Programme 2005-2009*, (Audit Commission, London, July 2009).

²⁰⁹ The consultation and debate around the removal of the ring fence is outlined by Jarrett, but the motivation remains unclear. See Jarrett, T. *The Supporting People programme*, Section 4.2, pp.17-19.

²¹⁰ DCLG, *Area Based Grant: General guidance 2008*, (DCLG, London, February 2008), p.5.

play out largely after 2010, beyond the scope of this research, but the homelessness sector has no doubt of its importance.²¹¹ Mike Barrett describes it as ‘the biggest mistake in terms of homelessness prevention and homelessness support this country has ever seen’.²¹² Once local authorities had discretion about where to allocate the grant, ‘money disappeared from SP into other programmes’.²¹³ This process was rapid. John Hamblin recalls that in Torquay they ‘chopped the SP budget by 80% overnight...we lost 365 units of floating support’, Mike Barrett in Kent that ‘they cut a million-pound budget down to £250,000, and Alan Fraser in Birmingham that ‘we lost two-thirds of our funding at the ‘fag-end’ of New Labour after the crash’.²¹⁴ Shaun Fitzpatrick states that ‘as soon as it became un-ring-fenced ...it was only a matter of time before the whole thing bloody collapsed’.²¹⁵

Uneven Distribution of SP and problems with two-tier authorities

Although SP can be considered a ‘needs-led’ programme, the manner of its creation meant there was never a national audit of need, resulting in an uneven distribution of service provision. Rebecca Sycamore argues that Labour fell short here, recalling that the Homeless Sector strongly advocating the ‘need to distribute [SP] income more equally across local authorities’, but that ‘the London councils ‘bottled’ it and the Labour government wasn’t up for it’.²¹⁶ Although steps were taken to resolve this, they were never completely effective.

²¹¹ Although the ending of the ring-fence by Labour began the process, Steve McKinley argues that it was ‘Eric Pickles Localism Act 2011 that was really the death knell’ Steve McKinley, Interview, 9/11/20. This argument is supported by the excellent work of Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Watts, B. ‘Limits of Localism; a decade of disaster on homelessness in England’, *Policy and Politics*, Vol 48 No 4, (2020), pp.541-561.

²¹² Mike Barrett, Interview, 26/11/20.

²¹³ Steve Hilditch, quoted in Harding, *Post-War homelessness policy*, p.180. Although this loss was widespread, some local authorities, such as Newcastle, retained their commitment to the services provided under SP. Shelia Spencer, Interview, 21/10/20.

²¹⁴ John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20; Mike Barrett, Interview, 26/11/20; Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21.

²¹⁵ Shaun Fitzpatrick, Interview, 30/11/20.

²¹⁶ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

In the run up to the ‘Golden cut’, local authorities and the homelessness sector had taken advantage of Supporting People during its long gestation to develop new and improved services. Because these developments were not centrally driven, however, it did not result in an even distribution of services across the whole country but was dependent on the resourcefulness of individual local authorities and the preparedness of particular homeless sector providers. Shaun Fitzpatrick summarises the consequences as ‘Some cities had better infrastructure...and therefore were able to get on top of things a lot quicker’.²¹⁷ Citing a London example, Dom Williamson points out that, by ‘historical accident’ Tower Hamlets had ‘loads and loads of hostel provision’ whereas neighbouring [equally deprived] borough, Newham, had nothing...‘Nobody went to Newham and said ‘can you tell us what you need?’.²¹⁸ Consequently, under SP ‘some areas were brilliantly provided for and some there was nothing’, creating ‘a post-code lottery in where the provision is’.²¹⁹ This was equally true outside of the capital. Gill Brown recalls approaching Stoke City Council about taking advantage of the opportunities opened by SP and being told ‘we’re not greedy people in Stoke, we’re not looking to a massive expansion of our services – not like Nottingham or Derby’.²²⁰ The disparity in distribution was partly addressed, although never resolved, by the development of the Supporting People Distribution Formula (SPDF) that redistributed SP money in proportion to a measurement of need from 2007-8.²²¹ As there was no new money available, proportionate distribution would have resulted in large losses for some

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20. Jeremy Swain also noted the Newham example and contrasts it with Camden Council, who as ‘an efficient, on-the-ball local authority’ maximised the monies available under SP’. Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

²¹⁹ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

²²⁰ Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20. Brown did ‘manage to squeeze a few more projects in’ but the more deprived area of Stoke missed out in relative terms

²²¹ HC, CLG Committee, *The Supporting People Programme: Thirteenth Report 2008-09*, HC-649-1, (3 November 2009), p.65, para 179-182.

areas, this was avoided by limiting losses to 5% which inevitably meant that much of the pre-existing disparity was preserved.²²²

Another unresolved problem in the implementation of SP was in non-unitary authorities where 'the Supporting People money went to the top [county] tier, whereas the homeless persons responsibility was with the bottom [district] tier'.²²³ For Mike Barrett in Kent as there was no statutory 'stick to hit them over the head with', it was 'very difficult to get the cooperation needed to develop supportive projects'.²²⁴ Jean Templeton of St Basil's in Birmingham also noted that this administrative arrangement in two-tier authorities was a mistake, noting that the solution was 'they should have given the funding to the housing authority'.²²⁵

Commissioning – the role of local authorities

The principle behind local authority commissioning was sound. Having formulated a local homeless strategy, local authorities could take a strategic view of provision for single homeless people and ensure that the necessary services were being provided in their area. However, respondents held widely varying views on local authority commissioning, and it is clear that its efficacy was highly contingent on the individual local authority and even on the qualities of the individuals appointed as commissioners. In London it may have created more difficulties than it solved, but in much of the rest of the country many effective partnerships were formed that led to a step change in the quality of homelessness provision.

²²² ODPM, *Creating Sustainable Communities*, p.31, para 79.

²²³ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

²²⁴ Mike Barrett, Interview, 26/11/20.

²²⁵ Jean Templeton, Interview, 23/9/20.

As in the Homelessness Act, the Supporting People programme brought local authorities to centre stage in the delivery of homelessness services. The voluntary sector would continue to be the principal provider, but councils now held the purse strings and exercised a vastly expanded role in the commissioning and monitoring of the homelessness sector. This was a major realignment, as Jeremy Swain points out, ‘the main relationship for Thames Reach, had been with the housing association. Suddenly...it's with the Commissioner and the local authority’.²²⁶ This new relationship was far from problem-free. Jenny Edwards at Homeless Network notes that ‘the charities didn't think local commissioners cared at all about homeless people...they'd always been the sort of enemy... there was a lot of cultural change that needed to happen’.²²⁷ Charles Fraser's view is perhaps typical of this widespread mistrust in the homeless sector, stating that local authorities, ‘have no interest in single homelessness, unless you are a vehicle for bringing money into the borough’ and were primarily concerned with ‘trying to shove it over the borough boundary’.²²⁸ For the pan-London and larger agencies local authority control caused immediate problems. Homeless people in central London often originated from outside the capital and moved back and forth across borough boundaries. Local authority control now ‘broke things up’, as what had been a ‘London resource’ was now sitting in individual commissioning budgets.²²⁹ Howard Sinclair notes that ‘local authorities like Westminster and Camden started saying...’come on a minute, I’m not providing services to people from Cleethorpes and Kent’.²³⁰ In addition, Pritchard notes that a problem arose for the larger London agencies such as Centrepoint that had developed ‘pathways within our own services’, because these had not been aligned

²²⁶ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20.

²²⁷ Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

²²⁸ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

²²⁹ Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20.

²³⁰ Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

with borough boundaries, 'the main impact of SP was [for Centrepoint] negative'.²³¹ Outside London, however, this was rarely a problem and Neil Morland in Stoke considered SP as 'a blessing' as it centralised 'six or seven funding streams' in one place.²³²

With local authorities now acting as the commissioners of services provided under SP, power over the allocation of funding was now in the hands of an entirely new group of people, the Local Authority commissioning team. Many in the voluntary sector were unconvinced they possessed the necessary skills to understand the 'complex nature of what they were doing'.²³³ Mike Barrett notes that in Kent, 'they recruited some very clever people...but they were clueless when it came to understanding the nature of homelessness and mental health, addiction and the recovery process'.²³⁴ Gill Brown was even more blunt saying, in Stoke, 'contracting was being run by people who didn't know what they were bloody doing'.²³⁵ Rebecca Sycamore holds a different view, saying that councils now had 'loads of resources...massive SP teams', containing some people 'who really knew their stuff...they were collecting data...they really took it seriously'.²³⁶ Jenny Edwards at Homeless Network held similar views, saying that despite the views of many in the voluntary sector there were 'some very good commissioners who did a very good job'.²³⁷ Local authority commissioning teams had to be built from scratch, and their knowledge base and ability unsurprisingly varied widely. Whilst the most progressive local authorities co-opted or recruited people from the Homeless sector or through meaningful dialogue developed

²³¹ Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20.

²³² Neil Morland, Interview, 16/11/20.

²³³ Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

²³⁴ Mike Barrett, Interview, 26/11/20.

²³⁵ Gill Brown Interview, 14/10/20.

²³⁶ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20. Sycamore was consciously taking a wide view, but specifically referred to Tom Preest, at Camden, a local authority previously cited as being particularly able and competent.

²³⁷ Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

‘effective local partnerships’, others had far more problematic relations.²³⁸ Some of the difficulties were those of adaptation to the new relationship and could improve under the experience of joint working, as Andy Winter in Brighton notes, ‘even though we had some difficulties with some of the personalities [at Brighton council] we worked through those differences and became quite close’.²³⁹

Contract culture: monitoring and control

In keeping with Third Way notions of modernisation, commissioning under SP introduced a contract culture into the provision of support services for homeless people, bringing detailed data gathering, monitoring procedures, outcome targets and performance-related funding to homelessness agencies that had previously functioned largely autonomously. The centralised collection of data, ‘number crunched’ at St Andrews University was often praised by the homelessness sector as giving a vital tool for future service development. It was ended when the Conservatives came into office in 2010.²⁴⁰

Whilst it is clear that the imposition of some form of monitoring and accountability led to a widespread improvement in the quality of services, contract culture also had negative effects. That the bidding process favoured larger organisations at the expense of smaller local groups may have enabled the most able organisations to expand, but it also resulted in a loss of diversity. Over time, a tendency to award contracts primarily on cost whittled away some of the gains in quality, and made the recruitment and retention of skilled staff difficult. The paperwork required to fulfil the terms of a contract were often onerous, and valid criticisms have been raised about the intrinsic value of forms of output measurement

²³⁸ Audit Commission, *Supporting People*, p.50, para 133.

²³⁹ Andy Winter, Interview, 17/12/20.

²⁴⁰ Steve McKinley, Interview, 9/11/20.

which deal with complex systems.²⁴¹ Monitoring requirements tended to lead agencies to focus on client's problems rather than their strengths, but other aspects of the funding requirements mandated user-consultation and engagement, and pushed working practice toward empowering homeless people.²⁴² Respondents universally considered the process of re-tendering for contracts every three to four years wasteful of time and effort and fundamentally counter-productive. As agencies were now in competition for contracts, there were negative effects on inter-agency collaboration, but homeless sector agencies also continued to work together, and Homeless Link and the Homelessness Directorate played key roles in the national dissemination of good practice. Some agencies felt that reliance of government contracts led to a loss of autonomy.

On balance, it is argued here that the effect of contracting under SP was positive, with the upskilling of staff and the improvements in quality of service greater than its negative effects. Once more, both the positive and negative effects were highly contingent on the particular local authority involved and the quality of the relationships developed between individual commissioners and their local voluntary sector providers. Whilst some commissioners became over-focussed on cost, others developed productive partnerships with their local providers that drove up the scope and quality of provision.

The majority of those interviewed for this research the arrival of some measure of accountability was a vital necessity. For Bill Tidnam at Thames Reach and Howard Sinclair at Broadway, the regime of data gathering and inspection under the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) 'genuinely raised standards', as it forced agencies to show they 'were

²⁴¹ For problems with measuring outputs in complex systems, see below.

²⁴² Explored in depth in Chapter 4.

doing what they said they were doing', and 'delivering what they said they'd deliver'.²⁴³ Alan Fraser, believes the sector required this discipline to improve the quality of its work, noting that homelessness forum meetings were often characterised by 'people complaining about commissioners', but he suggests 'they were really complaining about commissioners expecting you to do things properly and have records'.²⁴⁴ Jenny Edwards suggested that the monitoring requirements were useful as means to facilitate change, noting that in agencies with 'boards of trustees [who were] quite stuck in their ways', Supporting People was a useful lever to 'help organisations change'.²⁴⁵ Gary Murphy praises the thoroughness of the inspection regime for driving up standards, stating that 'in the second round of SP inspections', the inspectors 'would come and talk to the support staff around...what support they offered, safeguarding policies, all of the policies and getting their understanding of the policy not just the policy procedure...that's when it really came out that it was more than just a paper exercise'.²⁴⁶ Shelia Spencer, however, was more circumspect on the efficacy of inspection, arguing that inspections assumed that 'if it's in a policy document they must be doing it...if the policies were in the right policy manual and the residents knew where the policy manual was and it must be okay'.²⁴⁷

At its most basic, the new requirements obliged organisations to take safeguarding (of both clients and staff) seriously, and CBT checks came in for the first time.²⁴⁸ For organisations that were itching to improve standards it was catalytic. Steve Bell at Changing Lives in Newcastle, argues that having 'targets that you actually had to hit', helped drive the process

²⁴³ Bill Tidnam, Interview, 30/9/20; Howard Sinclair, interview, 1/12/20. Thoroughness and attention to detail was important in an inspection regime focussed on delivery.

²⁴⁴ Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21.

²⁴⁵ Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

²⁴⁶ Gary Murphy, Interview 5/5/21.

²⁴⁷ Shelia Spencer, Interview, 21/10/20.

²⁴⁸ Steve Philpot, Interview, 2/10/20.

of professionalisation, and 'really revolutionised the way we were thinking and the way in which we operated'.²⁴⁹ Bell cites the target of having to move someone on from a hostel into independent or supported accommodation within a set period (two years) as helping end a hostel culture that accepted that people would stay in inadequate accommodation for much of their lives.²⁵⁰ To deliver the improved standards, homeless agencies had to invest more in staff training thereby improving the quality of their work. Alan Fraser sees the requirement to produce 'support plans' and demonstrate 'progress towards support goals' leading to a much more 'systematic way' of working and to the development of internal measures of performance such as the 'Outcome star'.²⁵¹

If the overwhelming consensus of providers was that the monitoring and accountability brought in by SP was beneficial and raised standards. Criticisms of the detail of its execution were equally widespread. The most commonly criticism expressed was that local authorities attempted to micro-manage delivery, and lacking the necessary expertise set unrealistic or unattainable targets. As Bill Tidnam puts it, 'you had local government officers... designing a service down to the last form'.²⁵² Lack of understanding or unrealistic expectations could lead to inappropriate targets being set. Stuart Bakewell recalls 'being totally driven mad...by commissioners...castigating us for failing to reach targets which were never attainable'.²⁵³ Although there were national guidelines, local authorities were free to set their own targets. Mike Barrett recalls in Kent 'they came out with some arbitrary timeline ...12 months

²⁴⁹ Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

²⁵⁰ In Newcastle this time limit was set at 2 years. Steve Bell, Interview 22/10/20. Rebecca Sycamore expressed similar views. Interview, 22/10/20.

²⁵¹ Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21. Shaun Fitzpatrick also saw SP's monitoring requirements spurring important developments in working practice, stating that the tools for 'recording people's needs' which were required under SP were then 'replicated in [Bristol City Council's] contracting side'. Shaun Fitzpatrick, Interview, 30/11/20. The evolution of working practice is explored fully in Chapter 4.

²⁵² Bill Tidnam, Interview, 30/9/20.

²⁵³ Stuart Bakewell, Interview, 17/11/20.

maximum...to get someone off the street, through supported housing, and into some sign of independence....I had to explain you can't get a very vulnerable and disturbed human being from the streets into a one-bedroom flat...and then going to work every morning within eight months'.²⁵⁴ Barrett was not alone in being set unrealistic targets by poorly informed commissioners, Gary Murphy in Birmingham recalls that, whereas 'people could stay originally in the Sally Army...for six months...then the funding changed and it was for three months...that was setting people up to fail, because they didn't have the skills to maintain a tenancy'.²⁵⁵

Accompanying the new commissioning process was an onerous volume of paperwork. That this was excessive was acknowledged in the Audit Commission's 2005 evaluation, noting that under SP, 'benefits can seem increasingly outweighed by the problems associated with loss of independence, over-bureaucratic review and monitoring arrangements'.²⁵⁶ Ollie Alcock recalls that the administrative burden of SP was 'enormous', the 'workbooks that providers had to fill in was like having to write a thesis every quarter'.²⁵⁷ The requirement to record a huge amount of data had a significant impact on frontline work. A hostel worker recalled that 'the amount of paperwork was huge...you'd do an hour's key-working session and at least another hour of updating that stuff'.²⁵⁸ Data collection requirements under SP clearly diverted workers from time that would have been better spent actually working with their clients. Bill Tidnam argues that the reporting regime was too prescriptive, 'it was very one size fits all'.²⁵⁹ For Gill Brown, the contracting regime 'absolutely killed innovation

²⁵⁴ Mike Barrett, Interview 26/11/20.

²⁵⁵ Gary Murphy, Interview, 5/5/21.

²⁵⁶ Audit Commission, *Supporting People*, p.50 para 134.

²⁵⁷ Ollie Alcock, Interview, 30/11/20.

²⁵⁸ Hostel worker, Interview, 16/12/20.

²⁵⁹ Bill Tidnam, Interview, 30/9/20.

because you're telling people the job you want them to do, you're not asking them to solve problems as they go along. They'll do what you've told them to do so they'll get another contract...you couldn't innovate, because innovation meant change and you couldn't change your contract'.²⁶⁰ Andy Winter echoes similar thoughts to Brown, recalling that at Brighton Housing Trust, 'you had very creative managers who were doing things that were unconventional but achieving great results, they suddenly were told, 'No.''.²⁶¹ Others are more sanguine in their judgement. In direct opposition to Brown's view, Neil Morland (co-opted onto Stoke City Council from the voluntary sector) argues that SP created a 'channel to communicate, a much more concentrated conversation with one body...it allowed you a little bit of space to innovate, and look at new ideas and concentrate on where you needed to improve'.²⁶² Howard Sinclair is nuanced, but ultimately positive in his judgement, acknowledging that, 'some of the measures were wrong, or too much', but 'the good local authorities worked with you on determining what those measures were'.²⁶³

A number of respondents argued that the monitoring requirements had a potentially deleterious effect on working practice.²⁶⁴ To satisfy monitoring requirements, staff were obliged to ask invasive questions very early, before a rapport and relationship of trust had been established. An experienced hostel worker expressed this as 'you'd ask people personal stuff...in the first few sessions because they had to be ticked off the box...it felt like it was fighting against what you were supposed to be doing'.²⁶⁵ Stuart Bakewell argues that 'the SP framework...invited everything to be driven through deficit-focused prism... support

²⁶⁰ Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

²⁶¹ Andy Winter, Interview, 17/12/20.

²⁶² Neil Morland, interview, 16/11/20.

²⁶³ Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

²⁶⁴ Among them, Stuart Bakewell and Pat McCardle. Stuart Bakewell, Interview, 17/11/20; Pat McCardle, Interview, 15/10/20.

²⁶⁵ Hostel worker, Interview, 16/12/20.

plans [were] all deficit-focused. ‘What's wrong with you?’ That was the fundamental question – ‘What's your problem?’²⁶⁶ Pat McArdle, of the May Day Trust, argues that the monitoring requirements led to ‘deficit interviewing’ becoming predominant in the sector, and, by focussing on a client’s failings rather than their strengths and abilities, further undermined their self-esteem and was antithetical to enabling people to re-gain control of their lives.²⁶⁷ McArdle argues that that performance culture created ‘problem categories’ which led agencies toward ‘trying to fix people’s problems’ rather than facilitating their individual empowerment and ultimately led to ‘people getting institutionalised in [homeless] services’.²⁶⁸ McArdle and Bakewell’s critical comments are valid and important, but are also indicative of an evolving understanding of best practice that was taking place in the homelessness sector in this period. As Gill Brown points out, there was an historic legacy of paternalistic and disempowering practice in the homelessness sector, and recalls that she made a point of teaching her staff to avoid this, instructing that, ‘if we act like a parent, they will act like children. If we do everything for them and rescue them, then they will become victims’.²⁶⁹ If some aspects of the SP monitoring system pushed agencies in the direction of disempowerment, another key component of SP pulled in the opposite direction. Under SP, the requirement for providers to ‘involve service users in all aspects of service planning and delivery’ led to user-empowerment becoming an integral component of homeless agencies working practice.²⁷⁰ Homeless agencies undoubtedly had to find a way to navigate the contradictory pressures of these two aspects of the SP programme. It is argued in Chapter 4,

²⁶⁶ Stuart Bakewell, Interview, 17/11/20.

²⁶⁷ Pat McArdle, Interview, 15/10/20.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

²⁷⁰ Godfrey, M., Callaghan, G., Johnson, L. & Waddington, E., *Supporting People: A Guide to user involvement for organisations providing housing related support services*, (ODPM, London, May 2003), p.8.

that they mostly found ways to do so, and despite the perspicacity of McArdle and Bakewell's criticisms, ultimately SP did more to advance rather than hinder the empowerment of homeless service users.²⁷¹

More Broadly, the basic assumptions of the Outcome-Based Performance Management (OBPM) that was so intrinsic to New Labour's system of monitoring and contracting of SP has been called into question. Adrian Brown argues that OBPM focusses inevitably on what can be measured, not what ought to be measured, noting that 'most of the important stuff in life can't be measured'.²⁷² Lowe argues output measurement therefore 'distorts both the priorities and practice of organisations who deliver support, resulting in poorer results for those in need'.²⁷³ More broadly still, both Brown and Lowe argue that output measurement is of very limited value in cases of complexity.²⁷⁴ McCardle illustrates this problem by citing the example of an outcome that claims, '90% of the people we saw reduced the risk of offending', arguing this is 'absolutely meaningless data...how can you prove that?... we all tell each other fairy tales and they're accepted, nobody's questioning it'.²⁷⁵ This would equally be true of a core outcome measurement in homelessness, measuring the successful 'resettlement' of homeless people'. Without extended longitudinal research. at what stage could someone be considered to be truly 'resettled?'. Lowe argues that as a consequence of this unmeasurable complexity, monitoring 'becomes a game, the object of which is to

²⁷¹ Explored in depth Chapter 4.

²⁷² Adrian Brown, Interview, 4/11/20.

²⁷³ Lowe, T. 'New Development: The paradox of outcomes – the more we measure, the less we understand', *Public Money and Management*, Vol 33 No 3, (2013), p.213.

²⁷⁴ Lowe, T. 'New Development: The paradox of outcomes'; Lowe, T., 'Performance Management in the voluntary Sector – responding to complexity', *Voluntary Sector Review*, Vol 8 No 3, (2017); Lowe, T. & Wilson, R., 'Playing the game of Outcomes-based Performance Management. Is Gamesmanship Inevitable? Evidence from Theory and Practice', *Social Policy and Administration*, Vol 51, No 7, (2017).

²⁷⁵ Pat McArdle, Interview, 15/10/20.

produce good-looking data'.²⁷⁶ While Lowe's argument throws doubt on the validity of some of the recorded outcomes, the degree to which they deflected homeless agencies from their core tasks is more difficult to determine. John Hamblin's response may be typical.

Recounting the way in which his agency dealt with performance monitoring under SP, he recalls, 'all these meetings with Commissioners when they were asking all these questions on these matrixes ...you'd just sit there going 'Yeah, yeah, yeah we've done all that.' And they'd go, 'Brilliant.' it was all gaming wasn't it?'²⁷⁷

The data required to make a successful bid for contracts was also onerous. For larger homeless sector agencies the volume of documentation required was multiplied many times over, as Howard Sinclair notes, 'St Mungo's worked with 88 different authorities - each of whom did their commissioning slightly different...it became an industry...at least 10% up to 15% of the total pot was spent on running that industry... it costs a small fortune'.²⁷⁸ Charles Fraser was driven apoplectic by the bureaucracy, 'I put in bids where councils required more than 80 supporting documents. Who would read them? - it's absolutely Kafkaesque'.²⁷⁹ It is important to note, however, that this administrative burden was not entirely new, and for some the advent of SP reduced the volume of paperwork required. Neil Morland notes that prior to supporting people there were 'multiple funding pots, six or seven different funding streams that I was constantly having to write monthly reports for, and, of course, they've all got different cycles on when they want the monitoring and different things they want

²⁷⁶ Lowe, T., 'Performance Management in the voluntary Sector – responding to complexity', p.325.

²⁷⁷ John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

²⁷⁸ Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

²⁷⁹ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

monitoring on. Supporting People was a blessing because it did centralise all of that funding'.²⁸⁰

Although there were significant variations across the country, competitive tendering often encouraged competition on a basis of cost rather than quality, Gill Brown argues that commissioners 'were only concerned about price, they weren't particularly bothered about the outcome'.²⁸¹ John Hamblin, however, gives a more nuanced account, arguing, 'it depends on the local authority. it's always interesting to look at the split of the scoring system they're using in some tenders, how much of its about value for money, and how much is about quality. I've seen some shockers where it's 80% money and 20% quality'.²⁸² Competition could be cut-throat. John Hamblin suggests 'some of 'the 'big players' have taken contracts they're not making any money out of it whatsoever... just to get the contract to keep it going'.²⁸³ New entrants with the necessary capacity were drawn in to the market by the opportunities opened up by SP, but Steve Philpot in Birmingham (among others) feels this was not beneficial, 'we've had people who have been willing to tender at such low rates that they have mopped up enormous amounts of business but have been not good at it'.²⁸⁴ Gill Brown lays this specific charge on CRI who expanded rapidly in this period, saying, 'they promised the earth and not deliver it. We used to look at the price and say...they can't deliver that service and pay their staff minimum wage'.²⁸⁵ Competition on costs inevitably brought a downward pressure on wages. Among others, Alan Fraser notes that as 'SP started to drive down on salaries and terms and conditions', it became 'difficult

²⁸⁰ Neil Morland, Interview, 16/11/20.

²⁸¹ Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

²⁸² John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

²⁸³ John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

²⁸⁴ Steve Philpot, Interview, 2/10/20.

²⁸⁵ Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

to recruit good people'.²⁸⁶ This, in turn, had a negative impact on the quality of services, as Fraser notes, 'we lost our contract to people paying...I think it was - £13, 500 to £16,000 for essentially doing the same job [YMCA paid £22,500 – still a low wage] the council would say, 'You're providing a Rolls Royce service we don't need, we need this'.²⁸⁷

The administrative burden was amplified by the requirement to re-tender for contracts on a three or four-year cycle. This practice was universally condemned across the sector as profoundly wasteful of time, energy and resources, generated insecurity, and was ultimately entirely unproductive.²⁸⁸ Dom Wood describes the process of re-tendering as, 'we will expand all of our energy for four months in getting ready...and then the next three months after we've started that service we will spend a lot of organisational energy in making sure that service is up and running in the new way'.²⁸⁹ Stuart Bakewell argues that it was fundamentally pointless as 'services [were] effectively decommissioned only to come back at a later day because...no one can go in and start from start from scratch with a service and expect to see any meaningful delivery really for a couple of years'.²⁹⁰ Andy Winter believes the fear of failing to be re-commissioned brought an end to 'all this initiative and raw enthusiasm' that was initially engendered, and led to 'managers becoming risk averse, just constantly looking over their shoulders [thinking] What will the regulator say?'²⁹¹

²⁸⁶ Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ In interviews conducted for this research, it was condemned by representatives of big national agencies such as Howard Sinclair (Broadway/St Mungo's), dominant providers in non-metropolitan cities (Andy Winter at BHT in Brighton), small semi-rural organisations such as John Hamblin (Shekinah in Devon), and local authority commissioners (Shaun Fitzpatrick in Bristol). Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20; Andy Winter, Interview, 17/12/20; John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20; Shaun Fitzpatrick, Interview, 30/11/20.

²⁸⁹ Dom Wood, Interview, 11/11/20.

²⁹⁰ Stuart Bakewell, Interview, 17/11/20.

²⁹¹ Andy Winter, Interview, 17/12/20.

For many smaller agencies the administrative requirements of SP were beyond their capacity, and they were often forced to merge, be taken over or cease to function.²⁹²

Howard Sinclair notes that for '[smaller] voluntary sector providers that were doing really interesting community-based work' when contract culture came in, 'those organisations were never in a position to pick up any of the market...unless you were of a size you'd just never deliver the contract, you couldn't even express an interest'.²⁹³ As SP progressed this problem was amplified, as John Hamblin notes 'the contracts were getting bigger and bigger and some were moving away from being city-based, becoming county or regional-based which prohibited a lot of smaller providers'.²⁹⁴

For many practitioners this process was seen as leading to a necessary rationalisation of the sector that ultimately drove up standards. Howard Sinclair notes that prior to SP 'a lot of the services were really poor' and Dom Williamson that the power to 'take the contract of people who are doing it badly', was hugely important, as it managed to 'drive the bad providers out of the sector'.²⁹⁵ Charles Fraser is adamant the process didn't go far enough, saying, 'local government didn't have the guts to close down some small organisations'.²⁹⁶ Neil Morland saw it as highly beneficial for Stoke, 'Commissioning gave us some power to try and rationalise the system from 27 competing providers to...a system that was meant to help people'.²⁹⁷ However, in Birmingham, Steve Philpott recalls that consultants brought in to advise on SP told them the way 'to save money was to reduce the number of contracts...it was an absolute farce and a tragedy... Birmingham went from dozens of Supporting People

²⁹² This process was common in all the cities covered in this research.

²⁹³ Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

²⁹⁴ John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

²⁹⁵ Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20; Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

²⁹⁶ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20. Howard Sinclair concurs, stating 'the good got funded along with the bad'. Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20;

²⁹⁷ Neil Morland, quoted in Harding, *Post-War Homelessness Policy in the UK*, p.178.

providers to four... we lost lots of good providers'.²⁹⁸ Alan Fraser supports this view, noting that Birmingham put commissioning 'in the hands of procurement professionals...and they procured support in the same way that they would procure biros or road traffic signs'.²⁹⁹ Alun Michael, who headed labour's Office for the Third Sector from 2006, sees these problems as widespread and systemic, resulting from a 'fragmentation of management' within councils, between 'experts on contracts', given the task of commissioning, and 'individuals and councillors who want to develop a cooperative culture or a culture of partnership'.³⁰⁰ Michael's description is clearly apt for Birmingham, but the way contracting played out was clearly dependent on the approach of the particular local authority and the quality of its commissioners, making generalisations difficult. The overall balance between any gains made as a consequence of weeding out the weaker providers and the concomitant loss of diversity in the sector is explored in greater depth in Chapter 4.

Competition for contracts also had a corrosive effect on the way the voluntary sector worked collaboratively. Although Rebecca Sycamore argues that competition only came in when 'budgets were cut' later in the period, and Howard Sinclair is cynical about any halcyon time when homeless agencies collaborated: 'we're all sharks swimming in the same puddle', the negative effects of competition between homeless providers was at least very widespread.³⁰¹ John Hamblin recalls, 'in those days, we bought into the culture of competition. So, I would not tell my peers, what I was working on. I wouldn't tell my peers anything, because always were that they were going to nick it and get it in the bid before I

²⁹⁸ Steve Philpot, Interview, 2/10/20. Philpot reports that consultants Deloitte were paid £2 million for their ill-informed advice.

²⁹⁹ Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21.

³⁰⁰ Rochester, C 'The Government's Relations with the Voluntary Sector- What next? An interview with the Right Honourable Alun Michael MP', *Voluntary Sector Review*, Vol.3 No.1, (2012), p.123.

³⁰¹ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20; Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

did'.³⁰² Mike Barrett in Kent states, 'almost overnight placed us at odds with each other. - it was madness'.³⁰³ The same was true in London, as Rebecca Pritchard notes, a previously collaborative outlook forged in Homeless Link and the Pan-London Providers Network. disappeared when competitive tendering came in 'we were all pitching against each other...you don't want to share your innovation because your innovation is your USP and it's your competitive advantage'.³⁰⁴ Jenny Edwards, who was the director of Homeless Link, and therefore with a wide view of the sector, recalls that when competitive tendering came in 'the sector started to turn against each other that was a really unhelpful culture'.³⁰⁵

This portrait of a complete collapse in collaborative working does not give the full picture. In terms of joint working between the voluntary and statutory sectors, SP was often highly productive, as Alan Fraser points out, 'Birmingham had got SP forums for each of the strains of SP funding, young people...rough sleepers...learning disabilities...and as a condition of your funding you were expected...to share good practice'.³⁰⁶ In Newcastle, Steve McKinley recalls 'working closely with the leaving care teams and social workers', which had not often been the practice before the Homelessness Act and SP.³⁰⁷ Commissioners too, facilitated collaborative working, as Shaun Fitzpatrick recalls, 'when we cottoned on to something that we thought was good practice, we would try to see how it might develop in the providers that we were working with'.³⁰⁸

The Homelessness Directorate was also a conduit for the sharing of best practice, via its regular publication of guidance, its networking role, and through its 'innovation fund', a

³⁰² John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

³⁰³ Mike Barrett, Interview, 26/11/20.

³⁰⁴ Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20.

³⁰⁵ Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

³⁰⁶ Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21.

³⁰⁷ Steve McKinley, Interview, 9/11/20.

³⁰⁸ Shaun Fitzpatrick, Interview, 30/11/20.

tranche of money held back from the main allocation for innovate projects suggested by voluntary sector providers.³⁰⁹ Also mitigating against cut-throat competition were the actions of some local authorities, such as Newcastle (and post 2010 in Plymouth) who moved to offering 'consortium contracts' with agencies working in partnership, but it was not the majority trend.³¹⁰ From within the voluntary sector itself, the National Resettlement Forum (NRF) was entirely focussed on the dissemination of good practice, and its key figure, Mike Seal, produced widely-read practical guides.³¹¹ Most important of all was the work of Homeless Link, which played a key role in pulling the sector together and promoting best practice, staging an annual conference and running special events and seminars.³¹² Mike McCall credits Homeless Link's role in bridging divides in the sector, by 'getting us around a table and talking civilly to each other'.³¹³ It also worked directly with individual agencies in guiding their development, 'we'd go in and say these are your good HR practices, and this is how you should involve people who are using your services' and by taking them to see people who are further along the journey and are delivering better services and getting their peers to tell them what they should do differently'.³¹⁴ Belying accounts of agencies hoarding their best practice, innovative and progressive agencies, such as Shekinah in Devon, were happy to be visited by other agencies and explain their approach.³¹⁵ With a representative in each region, Homeless Network was cognisant of the nature of localised provision and well-placed to forge nationwide links.³¹⁶ It is important to note that Homeless

³⁰⁹ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20.

³¹⁰ Steve McKinley, Interview, 9/11/20; John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

³¹¹ The NRF held annual conferences and had a branch network, Mike Seal, Interview, 4/12/20. Seal, M. *Resettling Homeless People: Theory and Practice*, (Russell House Publishing, Lyme Regis, 2005).

³¹² Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

³¹³ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

³¹⁴ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/10/20.

³¹⁵ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/10/20; John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

³¹⁶ Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

Link's capacity to perform this role was itself a product of New Labour's 'third-way' approach to the voluntary sector. In line with its development of 'compacts' with the 'Third Sector', Labour had been substantially investing in building 'capacity' to take advantage of its enhanced role in governance.³¹⁷ From 2002, a range of 'builders programmes' were launched, and it was through one of these, the 'Change Up' programme, that Homeless Network received the bulk of its funding.³¹⁸

Much concern has also been expressed about loss of voluntary sector autonomy as a consequence of Labour's policies.³¹⁹ As Moseley points out, 'collaboration [with the state] is inherently risky because it threatens organisational autonomy', and as collaboration between the state and the voluntary sector was expanded greatly under Labour's 'compact', the risks were amplified.³²⁰ The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in 2001, whilst praising New Labour's affording of the voluntary sector a greater role in service delivery, noted that Labour did not 'seem to fully recognise the...implications for the voluntary sector of being thus co-opted'.³²¹ The NCVO report went on to highlight the contrasting attitudes within the voluntary sector noting, 'the differences between those who see engagement with the "compact authorities" as a surrender to the encroaching state and its agenda, as against those who see it as necessary or even desirable to keep the

³¹⁷ See, Alcock, P., 'Voluntary action, New Labour and the 'third sector'', in Hilton, M. & McKay, J., *The Ages of Voluntarism: How we got to the Big Society*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 2011), pp.169-172.

³¹⁸ Ibid & Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/10/20.

³¹⁹ For a broad overview of Labour's policies see; Zimmeck, M., 'The Compact 10 years on: Government's approach to partnership with the voluntary sector and community in England, *Voluntary Sector Review*, Vol 1 No.1, (2010), pp.125-133; Kendall, J., 'The mainstreaming of the third sector into public policy in England in the late 1990s: Whys and wherefores, Civil Society Working Paper 2, January 2000. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29028/1/cswp2.pdf> (accessed 3/3/2023).

³²⁰ Moseley, A. & James, O., 'Central State Steering of Local Collaboration: Assessing the Impact of Tools of Meta-governance in Homelessness Services in England', *Public Organisation Review*, Vol 8, No 2, (2008), p.121.

³²¹ NCVO Centre for Civil Society, *Next steps in voluntary action: Analysis of five years of developments in the voluntary sector in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales*, (NCVO, London, 2001), p.7.

sector at the cutting edge of policy developments'.³²² Although making it clear that the voluntary sector had not become 'mere stooges of the liberal state', Hilton et al argue that under the forms of modern governance employed by New Labour, 'the line drawn between governmental and non-governmental action does not exist in any real, identifiable sense. Instead, the line is rhetorical, constantly reconstructed and complicated anew by myriad interconnections'.³²³ Buckingham acknowledges the 'blurring' of boundaries between different sectors, but rather than seeing a complete dissolution of the divide describes a form of 'hybridisation', with voluntary sector agencies occupying different points on the axes of 'state welfare', 'market welfare' and 'informal welfare' in a 'welfare pyramid', but still retaining a distinct identity.³²⁴

Under SP, homelessness sector agencies were now beholden to local authority commissioners, bound to proscribed quality standards set by the QAF, subject to a rigorous inspection regime and required to reach specified outcome targets. Inevitably some of their autonomy was lost. A 2005 Audit Commission report noted, 'For many, Supporting People has reduced their ability to make independent decisions and set development priorities'.³²⁵ However, the degree to which SP either facilitated collaboration or imposed control, depended greatly on the individual local authority involved and differed from agency to agency. Buckingham proposes a four-fold typology of homeless sector agencies as a tool to measure the differential impact of government contracting, consisting of 'comfortable contractors', 'compliant contractors', 'cautious contractors' and 'community-based non-

³²² Ibid, p.37.

³²³ Hilton uses the term NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) rather than 'voluntary sector'. Hilton, et al, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain*, pp.16 & 189.

³²⁴ Buckingham, H., Hybridity, diversity and the division of labour in the third sector: what can we learn from homeless organisations in the UK?, *Voluntary Sector Review*, Vol 2, No 2, (2011), pp.157-175.

³²⁵ Audit Commission, *Supporting People*, October 2005, p.49, para 132.

contractors'.³²⁶ In Buckingham's classification, 'comfortable contractors' are typically large housing associations for whom homelessness is not their core business, and whose already market-orientated practices were little affected by Labour's contracting regime.³²⁷ Buckingham's 'community-based non-contractors', at the other end of the scale, are small, often faith-based, volunteer groups, whose funding is through charitable donations, and, not being involved in government contracts at all, could also retain their full autonomy.³²⁸ Buckingham's 'compliant contractors' are the more professionalised agencies, who employ few volunteers and rely heavily on government contracts, and the 'cautious contractors' are those involved in government contracts, but who also have a significant proportion of voluntary income and employ more volunteers.³²⁹ In Buckingham's study of homeless agencies in Southampton these two types felt, to varying degrees, that their autonomy had been undermined, with the 'cautious contractors' in particular, struggling to conform to the state's monitoring regimes and feeling that their ethos and values were put under pressure by the state's contracting requirements.³³⁰ Brighton Housing Trust (BHT) is a good fit for a 'cautious contractor' and Alan Winter stated that as a consequence of commissioning 'we lost autonomy...suddenly the local authority could prescribe exactly what they wanted'.³³¹ Jenny Backwell (his predecessor at BHT), was implacably opposed, 'it was all about council control...if they paid for it they were going to control it'.³³² Backwell resigned from her post rather than accept the contracting requirements under New Labour.³³³ Winter, who

³²⁶ Buckingham, H., 'Capturing Diversity: A Typology of Third Sector Organisations' Responses to Contracting Based on Empirical Evidence from Homelessness Services', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol 41, No 3, (2012), pp.569-589.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Andy Winter, Interview, 17/10/20.

³³² Jenny Backwell, Interview, 11/2/21.

³³³ Andy Winter, Interview, 17/10/20.

succeeded Backwell as director of BHT acquiesced, 'to keep this amazing organisation going', and although he had qualms about the quality of local commissioners and the bureaucracy required, spoke very positively about SP and was able to grow the organisation under its auspices.³³⁴ In contrast, Steve Bell at Changing Lives in Newcastle could be classified as a 'compliant contractor'. Bell enthusiastically embraced SP, had no conflict with its ethos, and saw its monitoring requirements as a necessary 'catalyst for change'.³³⁵ For Bell, 'the autonomy didn't change'.³³⁶ A significant factor in the different responses was the degree to which the organisation was dependent on state funding, as Bell points out that, 'you only lose autonomy if you haven't got fundraising income coming in'.³³⁷ John Hamblin at Shekinah concurs, stating, 'I've always been keen to deliver a model that's not wholly relying on one funder, because the moment you fall out with them you've got a big problem on your hands'.³³⁸ This loss of autonomy through over-dependence on state funding would, however, have a catastrophic effect on many homeless agencies after the ring-fence was taken off in 2008 and led to a drastic retrenchment after 2010.³³⁹

Conclusion

In their second and third terms, New Labour's interventions in homelessness were even more significant than their actions in their first term. The Homelessness Act 2002 transformed how local authorities engaged with single homelessness people, and created an entirely new and effective focus on homeless prevention. Under SP, the commitment of in excess of £1.6 billion per annum enabled an astonishing improvement in the scope and

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

³³⁹ The long-term consequences are considered in the final conclusion.

quality of work performed by the homeless voluntary sector, transforming the care and support services for vulnerable homeless people.³⁴⁰ This coherent and sustained long-term strategy to reduce homelessness provides compelling evidence that charges of revanchist intent by New Labour are impossible to sustain. Even those policies that appear the most potentially punitive were considered by their progenitors, and by the overwhelming majority of homelessness sector practitioners, to form an integral part of an overall strategy to reduce rough sleeping.³⁴¹

To achieve its aims, Labour brought in primary and secondary legislation, and ensured their implementation by close attention to the details of delivery, overseen by the experts it had gathered in the unorthodox Whitehall unit in their first term. Compliance was determined by the imposition of its broader systems of monitoring and control. By introducing extensive data gathering, competitive contracting, targeting and output measurement, it raised standards across the homelessness sector. There were unintended consequences as a result of these modernising mechanisms. Competition did negatively affect co-operation between agencies, some commissioners lacked the necessary skills to oversee their duties, re-tendering for contracts was wasteful of time and resources, and the bureaucratic requirements for SP were too burdensome. Some diversity of practice was undoubtedly lost and aspects of the voluntary sectors' autonomy reduced. For many of these problems, the most enlightened local authorities developed ways of joint-working with homeless agencies that mitigated their worst effects, often identifying simple solutions that could be utilised to

³⁴⁰ SP fell incrementally from the initial £1.8 billion allocation of 2003 but was still £1.65 billion in 2009/10. Jarrett, *The Supporting People programme*, pp.12-13.

³⁴¹ That the first head and deputy of the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit were Louise Casey and Ian Brady who had led the RSU was not the result of a Damascene conversion to a punitive stance, but from their frame of reference, an adjunct and continuation of their earlier work. Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21. Ian Brady, Interview, 15/10/20.

inform future policy making.³⁴² Whilst the criticism that Labour's methods of governance undermined local democracy has resonance, the necessity for the centralised direction that Labour imposed is made apparent, in the case of homelessness, with the consequences of removal of the ring-fence on SP money and its dissipation into wider local authority budgets. Fitzpatrick, Pawson and Becks' study of the impact of the subsequent Conservative administration's 'localism' agenda post-2010 supports this view, finding that 'localist policymaking has an intrinsic tendency to disadvantage marginalised groups' and that 'the outcomes of New Labour's centralising tendencies [in homelessness] were, on balance strongly (albeit not uniformly) positive'.³⁴³

Labour's lack of investment in the supply of social housing was a major failing, but within the narrower focus of street homelessness Labour's achievements over their second and third terms were remarkable. While pushing 'upstream' to homelessness prevention, services for rough sleepers were maintained, and the numbers continued to fall, to their lowest ever recorded level of 440 in 2010, 75% lower than the baseline figure of 1998.³⁴⁴ In addition, by 2009 Labour's focus on homeless prevention had aided a reduction in homeless

³⁴² Examples here would include the 'consortium contracting' arrangements in Newcastle and latterly Plymouth, and the recruitment of people from the homelessness sector as commissioners such as Steve Philpott in Birmingham, Ollie Alcock and Shaun Fitzpatrick in Bristol and Neil Morland in Stoke.

³⁴³ Fitzpatrick, Pawson, & Watts, 'The limits of localism', pp. 541 & 556.

³⁴⁴ DCLG, *Rough Sleeping England: Total Street Count Estimates 2010*, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20100909092045/http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/roughsleepingcount2010> (accessed 3/3/2021) These figures were, however, disputed by the incoming Conservative Minister and the new data set generated from 2010 was substantially higher. MHCLG, *Rough Sleeping in England: total street count and estimates 2010*, (MHCLG, London, 23 July 2010), <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-total-street-count-and-estimates-2010> (accessed 1/2/2023).

applicants of 72% from their 2004 peak, and led to a 47% reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation over the same period.³⁴⁵

Its success was clearly apparent to the vast majority of practitioners interviewed. Rebecca Pritchard recalls it as ‘a golden era’ and Shaun Fitzpatrick that ‘for the first time ever in my life’, he felt that ‘we were going to be able to help make so many people’s lives better for them’.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ DCLG, *Statutory Homelessness: 4th Quarter (October to December 2009), England*, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120919211252/http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/homelessnessq42009> (accessed 3/3/2021)

³⁴⁶ Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20; Shaun Fitzpatrick, Interview, 30/11/20.

Chapter 4: Advances in Working Practice: User-Empowerment, Person-centred and Trauma-informed work and Psychologically Informed Environments

The final chapter focusses on the development of voluntary sector homeless agencies under New Labour. It argues that under New Labour the homelessness sector was transformed, and by 2010 constituted a professionalised and much more highly skilled sector, able to adopt new forms of working practice that vastly improved the services they provided to street homeless people. It challenges critics who have argued that Labour's modernising strategies tended to drive out diversity of practice and erode the humanity of frontline work.¹ Instead it argues that those very same strategies led to a necessary rationalisation of the sector which pruned out many of the weaker organisations and built upon the more capable national and regional agencies to create centres of excellence across the country. Under Labour's prompting, these agencies became better-run businesses, financially stable, able to invest in the supervision, training and development of staff, and big enough to experiment without risking the viability of the organisation in the case of failure. Thus constituted, they were able to build upon new understandings of homelessness to vastly improve the services they provided, developing person-centred and trauma-informed approaches and Psychologically Informed Environments (PIEs). In addition, despite fears of

¹ Cloke, Swept-up Lives?; Scullion, L., Somerville, P., Brown, P. & Morris, G., 'Changing homelessness services: revanchism, 'professionalisation' and resistance', *Health and Social Care in the Community*, Vol 23, No.4, (2015), pp.419-427.

the potentially corrosive effects of professionalism, it was during Labour's second and third terms that user-empowerment went from a marginal to a mainstream practice, giving the voices of those with lived experience of homelessness a key role in service provision for the first time.

In the adoption of new working practices, Labour's role was often more catalytic or facilitative than causative, but its role was nonetheless, vital. Although user-empowerment was driven up from the grassroots, it was New Labour's decision to make engagement a compulsory component of homelessness strategies, Best Value, and in bids for key funding streams, that pushed it into mainstream practice. New understandings of the relationship between homelessness and trauma derived from developments within psychology, but the adoption of trauma-informed practice was aided by its promulgation by New Labour bodies. In addition, it was the capital expenditure and ethos of Labour's 'Places of Change' programme that enabled the transformation of many hostels into Psychologically Informed Environments.

Third Way notions of government underpinned these developments. Labour acted throughout as enabler, not provider, its 'partnerships' with the voluntary sector facilitating the expression of the unique skills, flexibility and dynamism of a sector it had championed. Furthermore, Labour's advocacy of user-engagement was also derived from Third Way notions. Its modernisation programme gave prominence to ideas of user-consultation to improve efficiency in the delivery of public services, and its conception of empowering the individual to escape their own social exclusion, encouraged forms of self-help that aligned with the aims of grassroots organisations and led to the development of 'bottom up' planning and co-production.

Policy delivery was very much in the hands of independent voluntary sector agencies, but Labour retained oversight through the Homelessness Directorate, which continued to be staffed by experts seconded from the voluntary sector. The Directorate worked in a fruitful partnership with the sector's umbrella group, Homeless Link, to promote good practice. Homeless Link was able to take on this role as a consequence of the significant funding provided by Labour's 'capacity building' programme for the voluntary sector.² It was the Directorate that articulated the philosophy and controlled the dispersal of funds for the 'Places of Change' programme that profoundly improved the quality of hostel provision and enabled the development of PIEs.

Changes in the capacity of the Homelessness sector: A Homeless Industry?

The impact of New Labour's homelessness policies on voluntary sector homeless agencies was both transformational and complex, and is a key theme running through this research. By Labour's third term, the main features of this transformation were in funding, contracting, quality of service, professionalisation and working practice. They consisted of:

1. A huge injection of money had vastly increased the size of the sector and the scope of work it undertook.
2. Labour's contracting and commissioning systems favoured larger agencies, whose greater capacity to bid for and manage contracts enabled them to grow substantially, and many smaller agencies were forced to either merge with bigger organisations or cease to function.
3. Guided by individuals with deep knowledge of the sector, the Homelessness Directorate targeted funds at the most progressive agencies outside the capital, enabling the growth of mid-sized, 'regional champions' (the author's denomination – not an official designation) that often acted as centres of excellence.
- 4.

² See Chapter 3.

Agencies became more professionalised, both in terms of their management structures and in the employment of paid staff and highly-skilled specialists. 5. New ideas, most notably from user-empowerment and trauma-informed approaches, radically altered agencies working practices.

The argument advanced here, is that the significant changes in homelessness sector organisations brought about by New Labour, were crucial elements in providing the sector with the tools necessary to successfully make the transition to more sophisticated ways working. It was Labour's vastly increased funding of the sector that provided the resources and the greater financial security necessary for agencies to be able to plan ahead, accelerate the professionalisation of their staff teams, and transform the fabric of the buildings they operated in. It was also largely as a consequence of the pressures brought about by New Labour's monitoring and accountability regimes, that homeless sector agencies were forced to adopt more business-like planning models and invest in improving managerial skills, management systems, HR provision and staff training. It is possible to overstate the degree of financial stability, as the problems of declining funding over the life of SP, the removal of the ring-fence in 2008, and the requirement to re-tender for contracts every three years explored in Chapter 3 attest, but financial security for homeless agencies under New Labour was certainly stronger than under previous governments.

These developments have not always been viewed positively. The introduction of business management techniques and the imposition of new mechanisms of monitoring and accountability has been seen as a co-option of the voluntary sector, undermining both its

independence and its distinctiveness.³ For Carmel & Harlock, the introduction by New Labour of ‘operational governance mechanisms of procurement and performance’ was catastrophic, amounting to an attempt at the ‘normalisation of [voluntary sector agencies] as market-responsive, generic service providers, disembedded from their social and political contexts and denuded of ethical or moral content and purpose’.⁴ More specifically, May et al argue that such measures forced agencies in receipt of funds to follow the government’s rather than their own ways of working, reducing the diversity of service provision, and that fear of losing funding dampened the sector’s critical voice.⁵ Cloke emphasises the way in which the new regime created ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ agencies marginalising those, often faith-based groups, that refused to conform.⁶ Buckingham, in her nuanced account of the impact of contracting on homelessness provision in Southampton, suggests that the detailed stipulations imposed added to the administrative burden, reduced collaboration and ‘could discourage providers from pursuing more holistic approaches that better suited their client’s needs’.⁷ Renedo goes as far as arguing that the stipulations imposed under contract culture undermined staff’s ‘capacity to care’ leading them to ‘detach them from the human and intimate encounter with their clients and constrained their person-centred caring interventions’.⁸ For Cloke, the professionalisation of the sector and the decline in

³ See, for example: Osborne, S. & McLaughlin, K, ‘The Cross-Cutting Review of the Voluntary Sector: Where Next for Local Government-Voluntary Sector Relationships?’, *Regional Studies*, Vol 38, No 5, (2004), pp.571-580. These concerns provided the impetus for the formation of The National Coalition for Independent Action in 2006 – its newsletters explored the issue and provided a site for ‘resistance’ until its dissolution in 2015. <http://independentaction.net/> (legacy site accessed 12/12/20)

⁴ Carmel, E. & Harlock, J., ‘Instituting the ‘third sector’ as governable terrain: partnership, procurement and performance in the UK, *Policy and Politics*, Vol 36, No 2, (2008), p.155.

⁵ May, Cloke, & Johnsen, ‘Re-phasing Neoliberalism, pp.703-730.

⁶ Cloke, *Swept Up Lives?*, p.46

⁷ Buckingham, H., ‘Competition and contracts in the voluntary sector: exploring the implications for homelessness service providers in Southampton’, *Policy and Politics*, Vol 37, No 2, (2009), pp. 235-254.

⁸ Renedo, A, ‘Care Versus Control: The Identity Dilemmas of UK Homelessness Professionals Working in a Contract Culture’, *Journal of Community and Applied Psychology*, Vol 24, No 3, (2014), pp.220-233.

volunteering, risked breaking the connection to local communities and undermining the compassionate approach vital for successful work with vulnerable and marginalised people.⁹ These critiques are not without value, but it is contended here that by focussing on these problematic areas the bigger picture is lost from view.

The argument is perhaps better addressed by flipping it on its head. Why was a sector that worked with some of the most vulnerable people in society ever *not* professionally managed and staffed, or subject to forms of accountability that required it to measure and justify its outcomes? Why was the provision of these services left for so long to a multiplicity of small, under-resourced and volunteer-led charitable organisations? It must be recalled that much of the sector in the 1990s was both ‘voluntary and amateur’, with largely untrained staff working with people with highly complex needs.¹⁰ Even basics such as CRB checks and other key safeguarding measures were largely unaddressed, and conditions in hostels were sufficiently chaotic that many recall the period as being akin to the ‘Wild West’.¹¹ Inadequate managerial systems meant that supervision and support were often absent or very poor, rates of ‘burnout’ among staff were very high, and as a hostel manager recalled, ‘reflective practice meant going to the pub and getting smashed’.¹² Homeless agencies often lived hand-to-mouth, scrabbling for grants and donations to keep operating,

⁹ Cloke *Swept Up Lives?*

¹⁰ ‘Voluntary but not Amateur’ is the title of a guide for the voluntary sector, first published by the London Voluntary Service Council in 1985. It was widely consulted by small voluntary sector agencies and was in its fifth edition by 1998. It’s 8th edition was published in 2009. Hayes, R. & Reason, J., *Voluntary but not Amateur*, (Directory of Social Change, London, 2009)

¹¹ CRB checks were criminal history checks carried out by the Crime Records Bureau. The term ‘Wild West’ was used by several respondents to describe homeless services in the 1970s and 1980s including Mick Carroll of St Mungo’s. Mick Carroll, Interview, 24/3/21.

¹² Interviewee requested anonymity for this quote.

and provided services in whatever buildings were available, which were often unfit for purpose.

It is not disputed here that many smaller agencies were driven out of business or forced to merge with larger organisations to survive, and that there was therefore some loss of diversity. However, it is argued that the new requirements imposed by New Labour benefited the growth and development of the most able national and regional organisations. Nor is it disputed that much of the effectiveness of homeless agencies rests heavily on the humane qualities of its staff and their capacity to form relationships of trust with their clients. What is refuted, is that these qualities were more present in those faith-based and community-focussed groups that were driven out or subsumed by larger organisations. Fr Philip Bevan, an Anglican priest for whom faith was the cornerstone of his work in homelessness, dismisses this idea, noting, 'I don't think you could work in homelessness if you haven't a heart and a love for the people concerned – you won't stay'.¹³ These very qualities shine out in every interview conducted for this research and at every level from frontline workers to CEOs. CEOs of the largest agencies such as Jeremy Swain, Charles Fraser and Mark McGreevy all started out as volunteers at a time when there was no conception of a 'career' in homelessness and it has clearly been their compassion and humanity that has remained their primary motivating force.¹⁴ Such attributes were widespread in the homelessness sector. Nearly all interviewees, when recalling their careers, talked about individual homeless people who had had a profound influence on them, and recalled, with both affection and respect, many others. These positive

¹³ Fr Philip Bevan, Interview, 22/3/21.

¹⁴ Jeremy Swain, Interview, 2/10/20; Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20; Mark McGreevy, Interview, 19/10/20.

relationships clearly defined their experience in the sector but it is difficult to represent the centrality of these relationships in a work of this kind. Maxine Edney sums up the attitude of the sector leaders, saying, 'there was an incredible team spirit in the 90s amongst all of the chief execs... respect for each other and just commitment to making a difference and changing vulnerable people's lives...you couldn't doubt that of anyone'.¹⁵

What is argued here is that far from the business-modelling and professionalisation of the sector reducing the human and relational qualities that are so essential to the work, it actually facilitated their expression more widely across the sector and in a sustainable manner.

Increase in the size and mergers of homeless agencies: Rationalisation or a loss of diversity?

The injection of funds into the sector under New Labour elicited the rapid growth of many of the larger homeless sector agencies. Some of this growth was organic, as the funds released enabled the development of new projects, but some came about through mergers with agencies which lacked the capacity to cope with the new demands of contracting. Some smaller agencies were unable to adapt to the new regime and ceased functioning altogether.

The largest agencies certainly grew substantially, with St Mungo's turnover rising to £75 million by 2014/15 and Thames Reach's to £15.7 million by 2012/13.¹⁶ During the period the larger London-based agencies also began to expand nationally and, in both St Mungo's and DePaul's case, internationally.¹⁷ Mike McCall sees St Mungo's expansion outside London

¹⁵ Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20.

¹⁶ Figures Extracted from *St Mungo's Annual report and Financial Statements – Year ended 31 March 2017*, (St Mungo's, London, 2017), p.10; *Thames Reach Shareholders' Annual Report and Financial Statements 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014*, (Thames Reach, London, 2014) p.27.

¹⁷ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20; Mark McGreevy, Interview, 19/10/20.

in 2008/9 as positive in its effect, stating, “we realised that there's some of the things we were doing were unique and we did them particularly well...and that they could add value to other cities’.¹⁸ Mike McGreevy (CEO of DePaul International) notes that care was taken with DePaul’s national expansion to acknowledge local strengths, stating, ‘in doing it, we were careful to hire people who really understood what was happening locally within that homelessness scene’.¹⁹ Smaller regional agencies also underwent substantial growth, with Brighter Futures in Stoke growing from a staff of 12 and a turnover of £80,000 in 1988, to a turnover of around £8 million and 200 staff by 2012.²⁰ At St Basil’s in Birmingham turnover rose from £3.3/4 million in 2001 to £12 million.²¹ A considerable proportion of this growth came from successful bids for government contracts. Mike Seal is critical about the distribution of these funds, feeling that, ‘all the money went to the big boys...the small organisation that was doing some interesting work... didn't get it...all the contracts were hoovered up by St Mungo’s’.²² Growth also came about through the spate of mergers that were characteristic of the period. Broadway was formed from a merger of Riverpoint and HSA in 2002 (merging with St Mungo’s in 2014), Bondway with Thames Reach in 2000/1, and 1625 Independent People from a merger of two Bristol youth homelessness agencies in 2009.²³ Many of these mergers were, as Steve McKinley recalls, ‘usually as a result of an organisation taking the decision that it couldn't survive in [New Labour’s] contracting

¹⁸ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

¹⁹ Mark McGreevy, Interview, 19/10/20.

²⁰ The dates listed cover more than the New Labour period and some of the growth came from sources independent of the government. It is used here as indicative of the extraordinary growth in size of smaller organisations. Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

²¹ Jean Templeton, Interview, 2/9/20. Similar growth took place at Porchlight in Canterbury and Changing Lives in Newcastle. Mike Barrett, Interview, 26/11/20; Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

²² Mike Seal, Interview, 4/12/20.

²³ Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20; Tony Waters, Interview, 2/2/21; Dom Wood, Interview, 11/11/20. Steve McKinley recalls ‘a number of mergers’ into the DePaul group over the same period. Steve McKinley, Interview, 9/11/20.

culture'.²⁴ Those who were involved in mergers have nuanced views of their strengths and weaknesses. The act of merger itself was often time-consuming and costly, diverting resources from an agencies primary task.²⁵ Charles Fraser considers mergers as, 'a doubtful exercise...mergers can be very expensive....and you're dealing with egos when you deal with merger, not just Chief Executives, but the board members as well'.²⁶ Mergers also inevitably led to some loss in diversity of approach. Maxine Edney recalls that, 'often when a small organisation merges with a larger one, in reality, it's more of a takeover... a number of them were really great organisations and maybe their uniqueness hasn't translated post-merger'.²⁷ Mike McCall concurs with Edney, recalling that, after merger, 'the big agencies tended to impose their way of working'.²⁸ McCall's view is nuanced, noting that this was his view of the process at St Mungo's and may not be typical of all mergers in the sector, and that some of the diversity of approach could pass over, noting, 'that doesn't mean we couldn't learn things from the way they were operating'.²⁹ However, even those who were critical of the loss of diversity through mergers saw some benefits.³⁰ Maxine Edney saw gains in cost-benefit terms, noting that 'there were too many of us doing the same thing...all paying a Chief Exec or Performance Director, all paying office costs and so on'.³¹ Dom Wood

²⁴ Steve McKinley, Interview, 9/11/20. Tony Waters also states that Bondway's merger with St Mungo's was because 'Bondway just wasn't big enough to survive'. Tony Waters, Interview, 2/2/21;

²⁵ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20. Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

²⁶ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

²⁷ Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20.

²⁸ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Steve McKinley, Maxine Edney, Dom Wood and Mike McCall all gave balanced accounts of the positives and negatives of the mergers they had experienced. Steve McKinley, Interview, 9/11/20; Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20; Dom Wood, Interview, 11/11/20; Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

³¹ Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20; Mike McCall, echoes this view arguing that, 'because we [St Mungo's] were bigger...we could be more cost effective'. Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

highlights the logistical gains of merger recalling, 'suddenly I had somebody who did HR, and somebody who did funding and comms'.³²

Losses in diversity were also often gains in quality of service provision. Many of the agencies that folded or subsumed were not offering high quality services, as Mike Seal acknowledges, prior to 1999 'there was also some rip-roaringly awful practice'.³³ Mike McCall makes the same point in a more positive way, arguing that the growth of the larger agencies raised levels of expertise across the sector. He believes that St Mungo's 'were pioneering and ahead of the curve', and argues this stemmed from both the organisation's size and culture, 'St Mungo's had 'an internal sense of dynamism and competition for the new ideas that were constantly bubbling up...there was creativity...we prided ourselves on pioneering new things'.³⁴ McCall also makes the crucial point that St Mungo's size gave it flexibility and the capacity to take risks, stating, 'the luxury of being a big organisation, we could try stuff out other organisations couldn't, we could take risks, we could do things and then if they didn't work, we could stop doing them and, financially, it wasn't a big hit'.³⁵ In addition, even with their increased size, homeless agencies were never truly behemoths. Jean Templeton argues that 'good voluntary sector organisations, they're like the speed boats to the tankers, aren't they? There's the government, the local authorities, all the rest of it, they're the oil tankers that...take quite a while before they go about, whereas we can be the little speed boats around and about and doing the stuff that needs to be done'.³⁶

³² Dom Wood, Interview, 11/11/20.

³³ Seal did also note that there was some 'brilliant practice' too. Mike Seal, Interview, 4/12/20.

³⁴ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20. Steve McKinley makes a similar argument for the benefits of agencies that merged with DePaul, stating, 'a lot of those projects...have actually been strengthened by DePaul's involvement'. Steve McKinley, Interview, 9/11/20.

³⁵ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

³⁶ Jean Templeton, Interview, 23/9/20.

A business-like approach

If their increasing size opened up new opportunities for homeless agencies, managing a larger enterprise would require a different organisational culture and a new set of skills that had previously not been widely distributed in the homelessness sector.

Crucial to this was that under New Labour, homeless agencies were provided with a reliable source of income for the first time which enabled them to plan ahead and to recruit, train and retain a much more skilled staff team. Mark McGreevy lends strong support to this view, noting that 'because we [DePaul] had been so well-funded and because we'd had to accelerate our professionalism I think raised the bar a little bit as well for existing agencies... it funded a culture change, really, across the sector that kind of money'.³⁷ Howard Sinclair recalls when taking over at Broadway in 2002, 'we had enough money in the bank... to pay the wages for about a week and a half'.³⁸ Such a situation had long been the common lot of homeless agencies. Jenny Backwell recalls times when in the early days of Brighton Housing Trust when they were close to being unable to pay staff wages or cover overheads, she recalls her accountant saying 'I can't pay the wages at the end of the month. And I'd say, 'I'll go and get some money then - that's how we lived'.³⁹ The financial circumstances of homeless agencies differed and it is important to note that those that were also registered housing associations usually had capital assets and could draw upon funding from the Housing Corporation (Homes and Communities Agency from 2008) and therefore had a much more secure financial footing. They were also answerable to Housing Corporation oversight and therefore subject to some measures of accountability prior to New Labour.

³⁷ Mark McGreevy, Interview, 19/10/20.

³⁸ Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

³⁹ Jenny Backwell, Interview, 11/2/21.

Nonetheless the resources provided by New Labour greatly improved financial stability, as even Pat McCardle, one of its most trenchant critics, acknowledges stating, 'there wasn't the living from one financial crisis to the next, so that was definitely a positive'.⁴⁰ The importance of financial stability for the planning of service provision was clearly understood by Steve Bell of Changing Lives who stated, 'I've sort of built a business on the back of the balance sheet...you need to be able to build a business to be able to do the other bits'.⁴¹ Bell had come into homelessness from a business background, but such managerial skills were rare in the homeless sector.⁴² Even St Mungo's, which had introduced some forms of management training in the 1980s, was described by consultants brought in 1997 as having no 'theories, concepts or models about management at all that they could discern'.⁴³ Most CEOs in the sector had learned what management skills they had acquired in an ad hoc way, and were unsure of the value of formal training. Mick Carroll describes considerable resistance to his introduction of 'management 101' training at St Mungo's as late as 1997.⁴⁴ Others were more enthusiastic about management concepts. Jean Templeton instituted a 'preferred futuring' exercise when she took over as CEO at St Basils, and Rebecca Sycamore and Jenny Edwards at Homeless Link both recall being influenced by ideas on the importance of networks in Malcom Gladwell's book 'The Tipping Point'.⁴⁵ The London Housing Federation (LHF) had set up a leadership programme in 95/96 that led to a diploma in voluntary sector management from Sheffield Hallam University and some key individuals

⁴⁰ Pat McCardle, Interview, 15/10/20.

⁴¹ Steve Bell, Interview, 20/10/20. Howard Sinclair makes the same point, saying, 'you've got to run a business before you can run the charity.' Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

⁴² Steve Bell, Interview, 20/10/20.

⁴³ Mick Carroll, Interview, 24/3/21.

⁴⁴ Mick Carroll, Interview, 24/3/21.

⁴⁵ Jean Templeton, Interview, 23/9/20; Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20; Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

such as Jeremy Swain and Ian Brady attended.⁴⁶ For the majority, however, it was only under the Homelessness Directorate's 'Leading Places of Change' leadership programme, accredited by the Chartered Institute of Housing, in 2005 that they received any formal training.⁴⁷ Richard Cunningham describes the course as, 'effectively a degree in housing...a kind of HR programme... about managing staff...about ethos...objectives...working with local authorities, how to maximize income'.⁴⁸ Rebecca Sycamore describes the programme as 'identifying 'future stars' and tried to put them together and train them up...there was an accredited leadership programme for a couple of years - that was amazing'.⁴⁹ Gary Murphy (Birmingham Salvation Army) and Gill Brown (Brighter Futures) attended the Leading Places of Change course, and John Hamblin of Shekinah was 'one of the six trainers' on the course.⁵⁰ Both Murphy and Hamblin praised the programme, although Gill Brown was less sure of its merits.⁵¹ Cunningham noted that the programme itself was suggested by Howard Sinclair of Broadway, highlighting the degree to which Labour's central government unit worked in partnership with the sector and its 'bottom up' planning processes.⁵²

Better management was necessary to overcome serious flaws that had long existed in the voluntary homeless sector, with poorly supervised and supported workers often 'burning out' under the pressures of the work. As Howard Sinclair points out this was an overdue 'recognition that you have to take HR seriously because if you don't, you end up in a mess'.⁵³ The impetus for this came from New Labour's monitoring and accountability

⁴⁶ Mike McGreevy, Interview, 19/10/20.

⁴⁷ By June 2008 the first cohort of 120 had graduated from the leadership programme. DCLG, *No One Left Out: Communities ending rough sleeping*, (DCLG, London, November 2008), p.28.

⁴⁸ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

⁴⁹ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20

⁵⁰ Gary Murphy, Interview, 5/5/21; John Hamblin, Interview 28/10/20; Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

⁵³ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

regimes, as Bill Tidnam at Thames Reach notes, 'we were really late to create a sort of professional structure...that was largely driven in the 2000s by Supporting People'.⁵⁴ Prior to New Labour's homelessness interventions, the quality of supervision and support for staff had been haphazard at best. Jon Kuhrt states that 'staff management, I think, was appalling at times, really - people got away with all kinds of things'.⁵⁵ Mike Seal concurs, recalling that often, 'support mechanisms weren't there – at best people would get line manager supervision once a month and in quite a lot of places, got it never', adding that, 'workers who'd been badly supported, went on to become managers who didn't know how to support workers'.⁵⁶ The toll of this on staff was significant. Seal notes that 'frontline psychiatric social work is the only equivalent profession that has as high a burnout rate as homelessness sector...if you work in the sector for five years, your chances of having had to have taken time-off for stress was 40%'.⁵⁷ Without more professionalised supervision and support, retaining skilled staff and the subsequent transition to more sophisticated approaches would have been impossible. Their increased size gave homelessness sector agencies the capacity to set about addressing this deficit systematically. Howard Sinclair recalls setting up an 'HR agency consultancy to provide the best HR advice across the sector because there wasn't any', and then 'worked really hard on management... how to recruit

⁵⁴ Bill Tidnam, Interview, 30/9/20.

⁵⁵ Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 18/9/20.

⁵⁶ Howard Sinclair made similar comments about the lack of supervision in the sector when he took over at Broadway. Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

⁵⁷ Mike Seal, Interview, 4/12/20. For a thoughtful interpretation of 'burnout' in homeless work see, Scanlon, C. & Adlam, J., 'The (dis) stressing effects of working in (dis)stressed homelessness organisations', *Housing Care and Support*, Vol 15, No 2, (2012), pp.74-82.

people, how to manage your staff, how to praise your staff, how to supervise your staff'.⁵⁸

Other agencies underwent a similar process.⁵⁹

The increased capacity of homeless agencies also enabled the development of vastly improved staff training. By the period's end, comprehensive staff training programmes were the norm, agencies employed internal training managers, and some developed sufficient expertise to provide training programmes for other agencies. As examples, Gary Murphy describes the Salvation Army as 'heavily investing in staff' in this period; Neil Baird that Changing Lives employed a 'specific training manager' with 'the same status and authority of senior staff', and Gill Brown that Brighter Futures not only obtained an Investors in People certification, but developed the agency's training capacity to be able to sell places on its own courses to other local organisations.⁶⁰ There had been moves to create a formal qualification for homeless work previously, but only towards the end of the period did agencies begin to ensure that support workers gained an NVQ Level III in Health and Social Care.⁶¹ The Homelessness Directorate was directly responsible for the qualification's rapid take-up after it was made mandatory for those in receipt of Places of Change funding.⁶²

This argument does not seek to gloss over the problems with aspects of competitive tendering and commissioning, nor to claim that only the largest agencies were capable of

⁵⁸ Sinclair notes that they developed a system of '35 indicators for managers for things they had to do' termed 'solid foundations'. He commented that the term itself sounds 'very New Labour'. Howard Sinclair, Interview, 1/12/20.

⁵⁹ This was true of the larger agencies such as St Mungo's and Thames Reach and also 'regional champions' such as Changing Lives in Newcastle and 1675 People in Bristol. Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20; Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21; Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20; Dom Wood, Interview, 11/11/20.

⁶⁰ Gary Murphy, Interview, 5/5/21. Neil Baird, Interview, 10/2/21. Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

⁶¹ The NVQ was adopted by organisations as diverse as the Salvation Army and Brighter Futures. Gary Murphy, Interview, 5/5/21; Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

⁶² Alan Fraser, Interview, 6/4/21.

quality work.⁶³ In addition, several respondents expressed concerns over the direction of travel under New Labour, fearing that a ‘homeless industry’ had been created that was in danger of becoming self-perpetuating.⁶⁴ John Hamblin argues that, for some, the maintenance of the business has, in itself, become paramount, arguing ‘we’ve created a mass industry and some organisations do very well out of it’.⁶⁵ In addition, the mechanisms created by New Labour left the sector floundering when people from the EU ‘accession states’ began turning up on the streets in 2004.⁶⁶ Alastair Murray commented that on the first day of accession in 2004 ‘people were queueing around the block’ at the Passage Day Centre and Jenny Edwards recalls that this new form of homelessness ‘happened overnight’.⁶⁷ With most unable to access public funds, they were ineligible for housing benefit and could not be assisted under the terms of agencies’ Supporting People contracts.⁶⁸ Although the sector ‘configured themselves toward their needs’, and a ‘No Recourse to Public funds Network’ was set up, ‘it took time’ and provision was most often provided in night shelters run by those faith-based groups that had remained outside of Labour’s funding regime.⁶⁹

These criticisms have value, and remain pertinent warnings for the sector, but if a straightforward comparison between the skill-set of both management and staff of homeless

⁶³ John Hamblin’s work at the small agency, Shekinah, stands out as a refutation to the argument that large is necessarily best.

⁶⁴ Mark McGreevy, Steve McKinley and Jon Kuhrt all used the term a ‘homeless industry’ with similar pejorative overtones. Mark McGreevy, Interview, 19/10/20; Jon Kuhrt, Interview, 18/9/20; Steve McKinley, Interview, 9/11/20.

⁶⁵ John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

⁶⁶ From 2004 the ‘A8’ (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) gained the right to reside in the UK but were restricted in their access to state benefits for up to five years. The A2 (Bulgaria and Romania) joined in 2007 and faced similar restrictions.

⁶⁷ Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20. Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

⁶⁸ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20; Steve Guyon, Interview, 13/10/20; Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

⁶⁹ Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20; Alastair Murray, Interview, 18/11/20.

agencies between 1997 and 2010 is made, what emerges are vastly more capable organisations, both regionally and nationally, working with more sophisticated notions of care and support, yet who have retained their distinct identities and have enhanced their capacity to innovate and experiment.

User-Empowerment

Perhaps the strongest rebuke to arguments that focus on the losses to the sector under New Labour and the dangers of the professionalisation it facilitated, is the rise of user-empowerment. This was probably the most profound cultural change in working practice in the homelessness sector, and its direction of travel is opposite to those who feared the development of a remote, uncaring professionalised service. Prior to the mid-nineties, the voice and views of homeless people were almost completely ignored by the homelessness sector and the concept of user-engagement, in Mike Seal's words, simply 'didn't exist'.⁷⁰ Seal, whose career spanned a huge range of homeless sector agencies, was also a key actor in the development of the grassroots user-empowerment organisation Groundswell, and was therefore well placed to make this observation. However, despite his view being echoed by many other respondents, there were older and different forms of user-empowerment already taking place outside the mainstream sector.⁷¹ The Simon Community (established in 1963) functioned as a form of 'therapeutic community' with homeless residents involved in the running of the Simon House they lived in.⁷² Emmaus (established in France in 1949 and in the UK from 1992) also ran therapeutic communities with

⁷⁰ Mike Seal, Interview 4/12/20.

⁷¹ Lack of user-empowerment – viewed expressed by, among many: Toby Blume, Interview, 16/2/21; Stuart Bakewell, Interview, 17/11/20. All the hostel workers interviewed commented on the absence of service-user engagement prior to New Labour.

⁷² See Wallich-Clifford, A., *No Fixed Abode*, (Macmillan, London, 1974).

‘companions’ working alongside workers and involved in daily decision making.⁷³ Although the Simon Community had a strong voice in homelessness, it sat avowedly outside the mainstream provision and renounced all forms of state funding. In addition, *The Big Issue* had been established as a self-help organisation as early as 1991, employing street homeless people as vendors from the outset. Monthly vendor’s meetings were held where their voices could be heard, homeless people were employed in outreach and distribution from 1992, and the Big Issue Foundation was established in 1995 to aid vendors in gaining training and employment. In a speech made at the Big Issue Foundation by Peter Mandelson in February 1998 he stated ‘The philosophy of the *Big Issue* is the same as the philosophy of the new government, lifting dependency and offering the opportunity to those previously denied it’.⁷⁴ Under New Labour, the mainstream agencies, whilst never completely transformed, the sector went from primarily paternalistic forms of working and deference to the ‘expertise’ of the support worker, to an ‘underlying ethos’, as Athol Halle puts it, ‘that homeless people are part of the solution, not the problem’ and that ‘the only way to tackle homelessness is with the direct involvement of homeless people’.⁷⁵ The impetus for user-empowerment was generated primarily by grassroots organisations and innovators from within the sector, but its adoption as mainstream practice was only made possible by specific steps taken by New Labour.

The intrinsic value of client engagement seems immediately apparent. As a hostel worker put it, ‘obviously, people need to have a voice about where they live, how they live, what’s provided and how they do it...people are in their homes and for people to feel involved and

⁷³ See <https://emmaus.org.uk/about-us/> (accessed 3/2/23)

⁷⁴ Swithinbank, T., *Coming Up From the Streets*, pp. 1, 42, 47, 117, & 197. The importance of the *Big Issue* in the development of user-empowerment is probably under-played in this research as none of the key individuals contacted replied to requests for interview.

⁷⁵ Athol Halle, Interview, 8/1/21.

included and like they're important and they're worth something, of course, they need to have a voice'.⁷⁶ Mike Seal identified four distinct rationales for user empowerment: a personal development perspective, that emphasises the benefit to the individual in terms of increased agency and self-esteem; a rights perspective, that involvement is a fundamental right in a liberal-democracy; a critical perspective, that sees involvement as means of challenging the power dynamic of homeless people in hostels and supported housing; a consumerist perspective, seeing feedback from the client as essential for efficiency and ensuring that services accurately reflected the needs of the client.⁷⁷ Given the obvious right of people to have their views taken into consideration, and the benefits of increased agency in terms of self-esteem, it is remarkable how late its uptake was in homelessness. By contrast, in mental health such moves had begun in the 1960s, been formalized in the mid 1980s, and Peck and Barker were already reflecting on 'ten-years' of experience' by 1997.⁷⁸ The long delay in its adoption in homeless working practice is indicative of prevailing paternalistic approaches to care and support in the homelessness sector prior to the late-1990s. When it did come in, there was considerable resistance by frontline workers. Andy Williams recalls 'having real conflict with staff' and 'an incredible amount of antagonism' when trying to introduce a new approach focussed on user-empowerment, he recalls 'being in a workshop with staff - having people literally in my face...shouting'.⁷⁹ The resistance was usually grounded in the belief that as homeless people were 'some of the most vulnerable

⁷⁶ Hostel Worker, Interview 16/12/20.

⁷⁷ Adapted from - Seal, M., *Not About Us Without Us: Client Involvement in Supported Housing*, (Russell House Publishing, Lyme Regis, 2008), pp.13-14. (Nb. page numbers may not be accurate – copy of book sent to the researcher as a word document).

⁷⁸ Peck and Barker date user-empowerment's arrival in mental health from 1985 with the advent of patient's councils in psychiatric services and the birth of campaigning group 'Survivors Speak Out', in the same year. Peck, E. & Barker, I. 'Users as Partners in Mental Health - Ten Years of Experience', *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, Vol 11, No.3, (1997), pp.269.

⁷⁹ Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21.

people in society... it just wasn't possible...to get these people involved in a meaningful way'.⁸⁰ Steve Bell, of Changing Lives in Newcastle, echoes these thoughts, saying, 'when I first brought in [employing service-users as staff] there was some real challenges from some of my existing staff, they thought I was probably a bit barking really'.⁸¹ Mike Seal notes a similarly vehement reaction from agency staff who feared that 'involving them just perpetuates dependency'.⁸² Jerry Ham has a more benign explanation for the slow take up of user-empowerment in homelessness, arguing that, 'when you're working in a very frontline project and you're dealing with all the day to day business and...the crisis management that you have to undertake in that setting, user-empowerment and user-participation is...something else I need to do...[another] demand on my team on my resources'.⁸³ Although some agencies embraced user-empowerment rapidly, for the majority it would require external pressure both from below by Groundswell, and prompts from above by New Labour.

New Labour's advocacy of user empowerment has several distinct roots. Third way thinking on reducing social exclusion was that it should be achieved by equipping the individual with the skills necessary to make their own way out of social exclusion primarily through re-joining the labour market.⁸⁴ Recognising the individual's capacity for self-determination, encouraging aspiration and facilitating the development of their abilities in a way that promoted their independence was integral to New Labour's thinking and was made explicit in the 1998 white paper 'Modernising Social Services: Promoting Independence, Improving

⁸⁰ Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21.

⁸¹ Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

⁸² Mike Seal, Interview, 4/12/20.

⁸³ Jerry Ham, Interview, 10/12/21.

⁸⁴ For a critical evaluation of this approach, see Levitas, *The Inclusive Society?*

Protection, Raising Standards’.⁸⁵ The citizen, thus empowered, would, it was hoped, take a more active role in their community alleviating the burden on the state and taking up not so much their right, but their responsibility to express their views and become an ‘active citizen’.

For New Labour, user-empowerment was also central to their aim to modernise public services, a key aim being the creation of ‘responsive public services’ which met ‘the needs of citizens, not the convenience of service providers’.⁸⁶ A radical departure from Labour’s traditional ‘statist’ approach to service delivery, New Labour sought to improve efficiency by ‘listening to people’, stating that, ‘rather than imposing solutions we must consult and work with people’.⁸⁷ This desire for improved efficiency in service delivery fed into homelessness in the form first of user-consultation, and latterly as user-empowerment and co-production.

Up from the Grassroots - Groundswell and the origins of user-empowerment

New Labour’s approach would prove vital in promoting the uptake of user-empowerment, but it would be highly misleading to paint New Labour as its progenitor in the homelessness sector. Its origins lie outside both government and the mainstream homeless agencies, in a small group of people with lived experience who seeded and, in turn, were nurtured by, the grassroots group Groundswell.

Groundswell began with a small group of homeless people who set up the ‘Residents Action Group’ (RAG) in 1993 with support from the manager of the hostel they were living in, Jerry

⁸⁵ Department of Health, *Modernising Social Services: Promoting Independence, Improving Protection, Raising Standards*, Cm. 4167, (1998).

⁸⁶ Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, p.23. Finlayson argues that New Labour’s thinking was heavily influenced by Public Choice theory, and others such as Hay, have commented on the influence of Downs’ original hypothesis on New Labour. Finlayson, A., *Making Sense of New Labour*, pp.114-116; Hay, C., *The Political Economy of New Labour*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1999); Downs, A., *Inside Bureaucracy*, (Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1967).

⁸⁷ Cabinet Office, *Modernising Government*, p.25 para 7.

Ham, who would become Groundswell's first co-ordinator.⁸⁸ From the very beginning, RAG went beyond merely giving a voice to hostel residents, campaigning to parliament against the closure of short-term RSI-funded hostels.⁸⁹ Ham explained how the actions of RAG 'inspired' him, expressing his astonishment that people 'living in a pretty desperate situation' [could] 'have the interest and the energy and the outlook to be doing something that was bigger [than their immediate circumstances] ...trying to get people involved in speaking out against a government policy'.⁹⁰ Ham was an important figure in facilitating the development of user-empowerment in homelessness, but it was the energy and capabilities of people with lived experience that ignited his subsequent actions. The work of Ham and the RAG caught the attention of Jon Fitzmaurice, the director of National Homeless Alliance (NHA), and he secured a 3-year lottery grant to establish a grassroots user-empowerment group, Groundswell.⁹¹

Groundswell developed a self-help directory, published newsletters, administered a small-grants scheme and focussed on building up a 'network of DIY and ground level movements across the country'.⁹² The network was brought together at 'self-help forums' and 'speak-outs' that were, 'a cross between a conference and a festival', bringing together 'homeless people, service providers, professionals, activists and campaigners' and where many

⁸⁸ McNaughton House was a 150-bed temporary London hostel converted from a Metropolitan Police Hall of Residence by English Churches Housing in 1992 with funding from the Conservative-led RSI programme. Jerry Ham, Interview, 10/12/21.

⁸⁹ Jerry Ham, Interview, 10/12/21.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Jerry Ham, Interview, 10/12/21. Groundswell was not the only important grassroots user-empowerment group. Theatre group Cardboard Citizens, (founded 1991), produced plays written and performed by people with lived experience of homelessness which were staged in day centres and hostels across the country. Athol Halle believes that for some people (both actors and audience) 'the experience was life-changing'. Athol Halle, Interview, 8/1/21. For Cardboard Citizens history and continued work see, <https://cardboardcitizens.org.uk/> (accessed 6/1/21).

⁹² Jerry Ham, Interview, 10/12/21; Mike Seal, Interview, 4/12/20.

workshops were run by homeless people themselves.⁹³ Seal notes that ‘the first one was two-thirds workers and a third were homeless people - and you forget that in those days that was unbelievable that you’d do something like that’.⁹⁴ Imbued with a strong counter-cultural spirit, self-help forums brought together long-term homeless people, squatters, and activists with an aim of ‘trying to inspire this whole DIY culture of ... if you're in trouble...sort it out yourself, you've got a lot of resourcefulness, resilience, you don't need anyone or anything. ‘Go for it’.⁹⁵ Groundswell also built contacts with Homelessness International, the International Federation of slum-dwellers, the Indian Slum-dwellers Federation and the South African Shanty Town Federation.⁹⁶ Jimmy Carlson, who had spent many years homeless, said that meeting representatives of these groups ‘were to change his life’. Jimmy became ‘the heart and soul of Groundswell’ and was awarded an OBE for services to homelessness in 2012.⁹⁷

Such a movement could easily have remained unconnected to mainstream provision and policy making, but Groundswell’s ‘speak outs’, brought homeless people into contact with key decision-makers in government and the homelessness sector.⁹⁸ New Labour was present from the outset, with Louise Casey attending the first national self-help forum in Sheffield in 1999, and Cabinet Office Minister, Mo Mowlam later events.⁹⁹ The engagement

⁹³ Halle expands on this - ‘most people were attending the conference were running something - how to fight evictions, how to run your own meetings, how to...all DIY stuff’. Athol Howell, Interview, 8/1/21.

⁹⁴ Mike Seal, Interview, 4/12/20.

⁹⁵ Jerry Ham, Interview, 10/12/21; Athol Howell, Interview, 8/1/21; Toby Blume, Interview, 16/2/21.

⁹⁶ Toby Blume, Interview, 16/2/21. <https://groundswell.org.uk/2012/jimmy-carlson-receives-his-obe/> (accessed 3/3/22).

⁹⁷ Groundswell Mss: *Jimmy’s Story*. Toby Blume, Interview, 16/2/21.

⁹⁸ The first ‘Speak outs’ were arranged across the whole country as well as being embedded in the national self-help forums – linking local, as well as national, decision-makers with homeless people.

⁹⁹ Toby Blume, Interview, 16/2/21. John Bird and Lucy Russell from the Big Issue, and Victor Adebawale from Centrepoint were also in attendance. For a flavour of the conduct and tone of both the first national self-help forum at Sheffield in 1999 and regional speak outs, see Groundswell’s short film ‘Seize the Day’ <https://groundswell.org.uk/2000/seize-the-day-film-launched/> (accessed 3/3/22)

of the head of the RSU and a Labour Cabinet Minister was highly significant. It certainly took a degree of courage. The debate was often 'very raw' and they were 'walking into a lion's den in many ways' where often people were 'just shouting at them'.¹⁰⁰ Casey earned the respect of Groundswell workers, 'she listened, she engaged...she was encouraging to those that were there'.¹⁰¹ Mowlam was even more highly regarded, being described as 'an incredible inspiration and motivation to what we were doing at the time'.¹⁰² Blume feels that New Labour's engagement was sincere: 'they wanted to hear from homeless people at that point, I think there was a recognition that it wasn't okay to simply take the word of intermediaries... and a real recognition that the landscape was shifting'.¹⁰³ The benefits of participation by significant Labour figures was multiple. Blume states that, 'feelings of not having a voice - that was one of the biggest frustrations that homeless people had...having people in positions of authority listen - it was an empowering process and gave people greater confidence in themselves'.¹⁰⁴ Nor was it just beneficial for homeless people's self-esteem, Blume argues that 'the involvement of the senior policymakers in in what we were saying', made user-empowerment, 'a credible, serious thing' and 'helped to exert influence over what was happening at a local level'.¹⁰⁵ Blume credits other individuals and groups as significant in enhancing Groundswell's credibility, particularly Ruth McLeod at Homeless International. He also suggests that New Labour's support granted 'much more credibility' to the approaches of others working in community participation (such as Anne Power, Bob

¹⁰⁰ Jerry Ham, Interview, 10/12/21; Athol Howell, Interview, 8/1/21.

¹⁰¹ Toby Blume, Interview, 16/2/21.

¹⁰² Ibid. Jerry Ham, Interview, 10/12/21.

¹⁰³ Toby Blume, Interview, 16/2/21.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Toby Blume, Interview, 16/2/21.

Holman and Liz Richardson) which in turn strengthened user-empowerment's wider adoption.¹⁰⁶

Groundswell continued to pioneer new ways of incorporating user-empowerment in homeless work and developed new services, including a healthcare advocacy service and a small grants scheme that funded self-help projects, homeless-led groups, and agencies seeking to expand user-empowerment.¹⁰⁷ Most significantly, it established the importance of peer-led research. Halle sees the development of peer research as vital, pointing out that, 'by the time you end up in homeless services you have been significantly let down by the majority of significant authority figures in your life...if you want to know what's really going on you've got to create a situation where people feel safe to say the truth – and it cannot be asked by somebody in authority'.¹⁰⁸ Despite this admirable track-record, when the three-year lottery grant came to an end, the organisation was in financial difficulties and had to separate from the NHA, becoming an independent organisation in the hope of securing further funding.¹⁰⁹ Without the structure of the NHA to support it, Groundswell was also, as its newly appointed Chief Executive, Athol Halle recalls, 'was dysfunctional internally... it was a mess'.¹¹⁰ Dom Williamson, who joined Groundswell's board of trustees at this point

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ There is insufficient space to do justice to the range of activities that Groundswell performed at this time. The healthcare advocacy service, where homeless people both undertook research into barriers to access to health services and acted as mediators and advocates for others was both highly effective and transformative. It remains the mainstay of the organisation's current work. The small grants scheme provided seed money of £500 pounds, which was, 'often the catalyst to unlocking much greater change and resource within organisations'. The scheme funded a very diverse range of projects led by homeless people including Teesside Homeless Action Group, a self-build project, and 'a Somali refugee who was in a hostel in East End of London' who went on to found 'a new women's organisation, working with homeless, refugees and asylum seekers, providing mutual support.' Toby Blume, Interview, 16/2/21.

¹⁰⁸ Although the voice here is that of Athol Halle, he fully credits ex-homeless Groundswell workers, Jimmy Clarkson and Dennis Rodgers as key figures in the development of both peer research and healthcare advocacy. Athol Halle, Interview, 8/1/21.

¹⁰⁹ Athol Halle, Interview, 8/1/21.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

attests, 'it was on the edge of falling apart, to be honest, we had about four months money in the bank, and no discernible source of income...it's all very touch and go, whether it would survive'.¹¹¹ Long-term Groundswell funders, the Tudor Trust, kept the floundering group afloat, but Halle attributes its survival to the obligations created by New Labour for user-engagement in local authority homeless strategies, under Best Value and the QAF and, most significantly under Supporting People.¹¹² As Halle, points out, 'suddenly there was a market of local authorities who needed to engage with and consult with homeless people, and homeless agencies [who] needed to engage with and consult with their service-users'.¹¹³ Halle realised that, 'Groundswell can make money for itself by selling client involvement' to homeless agencies, and the organisation's expertise in peer research enabled them to get 'all these jobs' where local authorities needed 'to involve homeless people in local homeless strategies'.¹¹⁴ Groundswell would later develop other sources of income, becoming 'a consultancy and trained up homeless people to be researchers and trainers' and [Groundswell employees] began 'to go anywhere across Europe and do various sort of workshops and training up staff in how to do client involvement'.¹¹⁵

These revenue streams came later, and Halle gives primacy to the actions of New Labour, not only in keeping Groundswell financially solvent, but in facilitating the growth of user-empowerment across the sector. Halle believes that it was only as a consequence Labour's requirements that homeless agencies became willing 'to pay for client involvement stuff, not because they believed in it, because they had to...we were banging on the door and

¹¹¹ Dom Williamson, Interview, 27/11/20.

¹¹² Athol Howell, Interview, 8/1/21.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Athol Halle, Interview, 8/1/21.

¹¹⁵ Mike Seal, Interview, 4/12/20.

then they opened it when they had to, not before'.¹¹⁶ He also makes the wider point that, 'there's a lot of grassroots movements that don't get anywhere...once you get a helping hand from above, then that's what made the difference'.¹¹⁷

Adoption as mainstream practice – sector innovation and the role of New Labour

The broader uptake of user-empowerment in the homelessness sector was partly a consequence of Groundswell's pressure from below and Labour's contractual stipulations, but it also built on innovations developed independently by homeless sector agencies, often led by some of smaller organisations. Some groups, such as Brighton Housing Trust and Brighter Futures in Stoke, had developed practices based on user-empowerment prior to New Labour.¹¹⁸ Using an American model from the mental health sector, Gill Brown at Brighter Futures, had already developed a 'club house' community centre run by and for homeless people with mental health issues.¹¹⁹ Richard Cunningham recalls that, in terms of user-empowerment, 'smaller guys out in the shires were way ahead [of the big agencies] in terms of their thinking'.¹²⁰ New Labour adamantly did not invent user-empowerment, but the ideas and ways of working that had been independently developed were then diffused across the sector by the structures and methods of delivery that Labour had established in their first term. The expert-led unit within Whitehall, with its deep links to the sector and bottom-up methods of working, could pick up and promote examples of good practice from below, as well as feeding back insights gained into its own programmes.

¹¹⁶ Athol Halle, Interview, 8/1/21.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Andy Winter, Interview, 17/12/20; Gill Brown, Interview 14/12/20.

¹¹⁹ Gill Brown, Interview 14/12/20. The 'club house' opened in 2000. The development of Brighter Futures is detailed in a short book published by the organisation at the time of Brown's retirement. Brighter Futures, *Future reflections: Learning from two decades of delivering solutions to complex needs*, (Brighter Futures, Stoke, 2015).

¹²⁰ Cunningham's context is the funding of user-empowering components of the Homelessness Directorate's 'Places of Change' programme he led from 2006. Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

Jenny Edwards credits John Hamblin at Shekinah in Devon as an early pioneer.¹²¹ She states, 'he built his programme around that understanding of what people could do, and what will build back their self-respect - but that was not part of national thinking at that time'.¹²² At Shekinah, Hamblin developed a construction training programme and directly employed homeless service-users in the construction of a new hostel.¹²³ By the time of interview some 40% of employees at Shekinah were people who had experienced homelessness.¹²⁴

Hamblin's pioneering approach was diffused across the sector by both Homeless Link and the Homelessness Directorate who worked in partnership to promote best practice.¹²⁵

Other projects were encouraged to visit Shekinah and learn from their experiences, Hamblin tutored on the 'Leading Places of Change' management training programme, and self-build projects were incorporated as one of the core components of the 'Places of Change' programme.¹²⁶

Other smaller agencies were given the opportunity to put user-empowerment into practice directly as a result of New Labour's interventions. Mike Barrett at Porchlight in Canterbury credits the impetus of Supporting People with enabling him to 'properly include client service-users in the decision-making processes within the organisation... you could see immediately that the difference in the outcomes that people were achieving where we had that expertise on board'.¹²⁷ By 2005, 30% of Porchlight employees were ex-service-users.¹²⁸

From 2006, Changing Lives in Newcastle, 'had training centres where you're giving people

¹²¹ Jenny Edwards, Interview 20/10/20.

¹²² Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

¹²³ John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20; Jenny Edwards, Interview, 28/10/20; Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

¹²⁶ John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

¹²⁷ Mike Barrett, Interview, 26/11/20.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

brick-laying and plastering skills’ and ‘any contracts we did with builders we insisted that they had to take on one or two people that were in our services as trainees’.¹²⁹ Although, according to Neil Baird, ‘the concept was there, prior to getting the money’ it was from the Places of Change programme (beginning in 2005) ‘where the employing of people who have been in our services came from’.¹³⁰ At the time of interview 20% of Changing Lives staff were former service users including ‘some senior managers’ and Steve Bell, it’s Chief Executive describes this change as ‘the best thing we’ve ever done’.¹³¹

Under New Labour, user-empowerment was also taken up by the larger homelessness agencies, although, as Jenny Edwards points out, ‘it took a lot longer for St Mungo’s and others...such as Broadway [who] weren’t always keen...to get there’.¹³² Jerry Ham defends St Mungo’s record, stating that even in the late 1990s ‘St Mungo’s had probably more progressive thinking around user-participation’ than other agencies, and the second largest homeless agency, Thames Reach were earlier still in establishing their GROW programme to train former clients with a view to their employment within Thames Reach.¹³³

Once underway, the uptake of user-empowerment practices was both incremental and transformative. Mike McCall believes that employing Groundswell on a paid consultancy basis, was ‘the breakthrough moment’ in user-empowerment for St Mungo’s, and by 2004 they had appointed Andy Williams as ‘Service-User Involvement Manager’.¹³⁴ The evolution of user-empowerment is illustrated by the subsequent changes in Williams’ job title, he

¹²⁹ Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

¹³⁰ Neil Baird, Interview, 10/2/21.

¹³¹ Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

¹³² Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

¹³³ Jerry Ham, Interview, 10/12/20. Thames Reach also set a 20% target for employment of people with lived experience in the organisation. St Mungo’s target was initially 10%. Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

¹³⁴ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20. It should be noted that the employment of Groundswell by St Mungo’s was funded by an ‘innovation grant’ prior to the later obligations under Supporting People – but the innovation grant itself was awarded by the Homelessness Directorate.

became 'Client Involvement Manger' in 2008 and, subsequent to the New Labour period, 'Head of Client Involvement and Recovery' from 2013.¹³⁵ Williams argues the adoption of user-empowerment required wholesale 'system and culture change', and that initially he found it 'really quite hard getting staff to think about involvement within their own projects'.¹³⁶ Williams considers the support of senior management as vital saying, 'if you don't have access to that, then you're just going to create a closed room where you're just getting growing frustration'.¹³⁷ To achieve change across the organisation, Williams developed a 'tool kit' for staff, appointed 'training-lead workers in each project' and a client representation group, 'Outside-in', was created.¹³⁸ Williams describes Outside In as evolving into an entity that had 'tentacles throughout the whole organisation...they were pretty much involved in everything, comms, fundraising, the strategic side of things, designing new bids...all policies would go through Outside-in'.¹³⁹ Subsequently, Mungo's launched an 'apprentice' scheme for service-users, 'who had the potential to be support workers, but weren't yet ready'.¹⁴⁰ The scheme had a 'ridiculously high success rate' and, 'getting people with lived experience in staff teams, was the thing that started a culture shift'.¹⁴¹ As the number of employees with lived experience increased, user-empowerment grew from the outlook of 'a small minority' to becoming embedded across the whole organisation.¹⁴² The

¹³⁵ Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21. In addition, St Mungo's ran an annual 'client involvement conference. Employing similar tactics to Groundswell's self-help forums it became a 'festival kind of an event' with music as well as more formal workshops to encourage participation. Stuart Bakewell, Interview, 17/11/20.

¹³⁹ The strong support by senior management is made apparent by Outside-in meeting the organisation's directors every six weeks. Williams considers this as 'the engine room for change'. Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21.

¹⁴⁰ Employment of service-users was raised by members of Outside In at their very first meeting. Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20.

employment of people with lived experience was not without its difficulties and required significant policy change. Andy Winter at BHT and Andy Williams at St Mungo's both highlighted the requirement to carefully reconsider their HR policies around DBS checks, and determine if criminal records were historic or ongoing.¹⁴³ John Hamblin, Steve Bell, Andy Williams and Rebecca Pritchard (Thames Reach) highlighted problems with ex-service-users around professional boundaries, particularly around existing relationships with clients.¹⁴⁴ All acknowledged that they initially hadn't put in sufficient support for their new employees, and learned through making mistakes. Williams concludes that, at St Mungo's, it 'became a model of how you do recruitment, induction and training...a good recruitment model, full stop - whether you've lived experience or not'.¹⁴⁵

User-empowerment at St Mungo's even reached the level of co-production with the birth of the 'recovery college' where 'clients [were] involved in developing services and much of the training was peer-led'.¹⁴⁶ McCall describes it as, 'beyond consultation, beyond participation to actual delivery and it's a massively powerful thing'.¹⁴⁷ The 'recovery approach', which was built upon utilising and developing the skills and abilities of service users, was adopted as the 'unifying model' for the whole of the organisation in 2012.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Andy Winter, Interview, 17/12/20; Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21.

¹⁴⁴ John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20; Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

¹⁴⁵ Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21.

¹⁴⁶ The Recovery College was developed by Stuart Bakewell. Bakewell had been employed as the manager of an SP funded St Mungo's supported housing project. He became concerned that whilst the project provided 'a lot of care and attention' it 'wasn't really listening to what people wanted or needed in terms of their own self-determination and establishing a life course outside of services'. Fully committed to a 'person-centred' approach and user-empowerment he was given the latitude and strong support by St Mungo's Chief Executive Charles Fraser to create the recovery college. Although not launched until 2012 it is included here to illustrate the direction of travel by St Mungo's across the period. Stuart Bakewell, Interview, 17/11/20. Bakewell's key role was fully attested by Mike McCall, Andy Williams and Charles Fraser.

¹⁴⁷ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

¹⁴⁸ Stuart Bakewell, Interview, 17/11/20. Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

The evolution and embedding of user-empowerment in the homelessness sector illustrates a number of key themes. First and foremost, it demonstrates significant progress in the quality of service provision for homeless people during the New Labour period. User-empowerment's adoption had not only a profoundly positive effect for individual service-users' self-esteem, but also, through listening to its 'customers', enabled homeless agencies to be more effective in achieving the long-term resettlement of people away from the streets. Perhaps more importantly still, by recognising and fostering the skills and abilities of homeless people, it played a vital role in preventing the institutionalisation of people within homeless services. It also provides evidence of the homelessness sector's flexibility, resourcefulness, and capacity for innovation. These were the very qualities that Third Way advocates considered the third sector to hold in abundance, and hoped to unleash by supporting its growth and development. In a sector made up of hundreds of independent organisations, innovative ways of working could be modelled by smaller, regional agencies and grassroots organisations before their adoption by the bigger, national bodies.

New Labour's interventions were significant and catalytic in this process. Although the impetus was seeded by Groundswell and developed through the commitment and advocacy of specific individuals, it only accelerated and became mainstream practice after it was made a requirement in order to access government funding streams. Its diffusion across the sector was also directly facilitated by a New Labour body, the Homelessness Directorate, working in partnership with the sectors' members' group Homeless Link, that was itself funded from New Labour's 'builders programmes' to increase the capacity of the voluntary sector. The development of user-empowerment also illustrates the benefits of the professionalisation of the sector that New Labour had brought about. To undertake such a transformation, staff had to be skilled, requiring significant training input, quality

supervision, and management structures that were sufficiently robust and flexible to implement the changes required. These changes were also necessary prerequisites to enable more sophisticated ways of working with homeless people that were person-centred and trauma-informed, and facilitated the development of Psychologically Informed Environments.

Trauma-informed practice - towards Psychologically Informed Environments

The development of user-empowerment within homeless services was only part of a profound transformation of working practices during the New Labour period. Paternalistic practices which had been common, (although never universal), in the preceding decade began to be replaced with more 'person-centred' methods of working that listened to and validated the experiences of homeless people. By 2010, the re-configuration of psychiatric notions of 'personality disorder' and new understandings of the importance of trauma in homelessness led to practices that became less centred on managing behaviour in homeless settings and more focussed on understanding the root causes of behaviour.¹⁴⁹ These inputs from psychology led to the uptake of 'trauma-informed practice' which required a far higher skill base for staff, and a recognition of the importance of the whole environment in which work with homeless people was undertaken, including, importantly, the fabric of homeless hostels. The ultimate aim was to work holistically with clients in 'Psychologically Informed

¹⁴⁹ These developments have a long lineage in the fields of psychology and psychiatry. See NIMHE, *Personality Disorder: No longer a Diagnosis of Exclusion, Policy Implementation Guidance for the Development of Services for people with Personality Disorder*, (NIMHE, London, 2003) & Haigh, R., Harrison, T., Johnson, R., Paget, S. & Williams, S., 'Psychologically informed environments and the 'Enabling Environments' initiative', *Housing, Care and Support*, Vol 15, No 1, (2012), pp.34-42.

Environments' (PIEs) where all aspects of the work were empowering and conducive to healing and recovery.¹⁵⁰

Although key individuals were responsible for the genesis of a PIE approach, the concept was developed under the aegis of Labour's National Social Inclusion Programme.¹⁵¹ Robin Johnson, the key figure in the development of PIE, was mental health and housing lead for the National Social Inclusion Programme.¹⁵² His work there was published by the Coalition government in 2010.¹⁵³ As with user-empowerment, the development of trauma-informed practice was often initiated autonomously by homeless sector agencies, but the Homeless Directorate, in partnership with Homeless Link, promoted its adoption and worked actively to disseminate it as a form of best practice.¹⁵⁴ Labour's most significant contribution was through its Hostels Capital Improvement Programme (HCIP), from 2005, that transformed the physical fabric of many hostels into places conducive of recovery.¹⁵⁵ The HCIP aimed to provide the capital investment needed to change the 'very nature of hostels' into 'welcoming positives spaces' and was linked with changes in working practice that would make them 'Places of Change' very much in line with a PIE approach.¹⁵⁶

The over-arching argument advanced here is that such positive changes in working practice were only made possible by the resources brought into the sector by New Labour and the

¹⁵⁰ The term PIE was introduced only in 2010, after Labour had left office. It is included here because the report it appears in was commissioned and developed under New Labour, and as it acts as a useful shorthand for developments in homelessness working practice in the period.

¹⁵¹ See ODPM, *Mental Health and Social Exclusion: Social Exclusion Unit Report Summary*, (ODPM, London, June 2004).

¹⁵² Robin Johnson, Interview, 30/11/20.

¹⁵³ CLG/National Mental Health Development Unit, *Meeting the Psychological and emotional needs of homeless people' (non-statutory guidance)*, (CLG, London, 2010).

¹⁵⁴ Helen Keats, Interview, 19/12/20; Nick Maguire, Interview, 4/12/20.

¹⁵⁵ See below.

¹⁵⁶ ODPM, *Hostels Capital Improvement Programme (HCIP) Policy Briefing 12*, (ODPM/Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate, London, September 2005), p.4. The HCIP became known as 'The Places of Change' Programme in official documents by 2008 – see for example DCLG, *No One Left Out*, p.16.

concomitant professionalisation and enhanced skill-base it engendered. This is challenged by critics who argue that aspects of its accounting and monitoring systems worked against a 'person-centred and 'strengths-based' approach and instead encouraged a 'deficit-based model'.¹⁵⁷ Pat McCardle believes that far from creating a homelessness sector that empowers individuals, 'the legacy [of the New Labour period] was 'that we industrialised a whole industry around fixing people's problems, and its institutionalised and trapped generations of people in services'.¹⁵⁸ Which approach came to predominate over the period is hotly contested by the sector, and certainly all agencies had to juggle two contrasting imperatives. Many respondents commented on the problems of balancing monitoring requirements and a person-centred approach, including Andy Williams at St Mungo's and Foyer manager Jonathan Greenwood.¹⁵⁹ Pat McArdle feels she was 'blindsided' to the inherent flaws in Labour's programme at the time, and in 2012 completely reconfigured the work of the Mayday Trust, 'unravelling a system that had become so inflexible and so unable to deal with individual people's lives'.¹⁶⁰ In addition, the quality of provision and forms of working practice in the sector was still highly variable in 2010, and even the most advanced practitioners struggled to maintain standards when the ring-fence on Supporting People monies was withdrawn after 2008.

New Understandings of homelessness – complex needs and the origins of PIE

The new understanding of the relationship between trauma and homelessness are succinctly summarised in the National Mental Health Unit's guidance of 2010.¹⁶¹ It notes

¹⁵⁷ Pat McArdle, Interview, 15/10/20; Stuart Bakewell, Interview, 17/11/20.

¹⁵⁸ Pat McArdle, Interview, 15/10/20.

¹⁵⁹ Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21; Jonathan Greenwood, Interview, 25/2/21.

¹⁶⁰ Pat McArdle, Interview, 15/10/20.

¹⁶¹ CLG/National Mental Health Development Unit, *Meeting the Psychological and emotional needs of homeless people' (non-statutory guidance)*, (CLG, London, 2010). This report, published by the Coalition government in 2012 was initially scheduled to be shelved by the incoming government, it was published only

that, 'experiencing a traumatic childhood...can also be compounded by further trauma in adult life, thus perpetuating the cycle of homelessness. Without addressing the trauma, it can prove difficult to help people stabilise their lives and find and keep accommodation'.¹⁶²

It goes on to explain that 'A PIE is an approach rather than a place...an enabling environment... [that] makes people feel emotionally safe... in which staff can respond effectively to people with psychological needs and longstanding emotional problems. This includes trying to understand people's behaviour, helping them to be involved with others in a genuine way, and to take as much responsibility for themselves as possible'.¹⁶³ The report notes that, 'the prevalence of personality disorders in the general population...is around 10 per cent...this rate rises to 60 per cent of adults living in hostels in England'.¹⁶⁴

As with user-empowerment, the case for a PIE approach seems immediately apparent. The long delay in its adoption has two key reasons. Firstly, prior to the 1990s many homeless agencies were run by unskilled staff or were volunteer-led, they were often hard-pressed financially, over-burdened by numbers, and providing services in whatever premises had come to hand. Richard Cunningham, who took up his post at Places of Change only in 2007, sums up the situation as he found it, 'around the country...you had all these services setting up in church basements or light-industrial buildings - very often with dormitory accommodation... you are bringing people in...people who are on the edge... and you're bringing them into what are potentially quite violent...intimidating places - they were

with the proviso that its nature as 'non-statutory guidance' was made apparent in the title. Robin Johnson, Interview, 30/11/20.

¹⁶² CLG/National Mental Health Development Unit, *Meeting the Psychological and emotional needs of homeless people*, p.4.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p.4. The importance of feeling 'emotionally safe' is a key argument for the development of the peer support and peer advocacy services championed by Groundswell, highlighting the parallel development of ideas in user-empowerment.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p.19.

frightening places’¹⁶⁵ Even the more professionalised services were still administering large hostels and the chaotic conditions are often recalled as being like ‘the Wild West’.¹⁶⁶ In these circumstances, even those with the best intentions tended to focus on the management of behaviour not its underlying causes, and other organisations, more institutional in their outlook, were more concerned with minimising disruption and ensuring the collection of rents. Jane Cook recalls, ‘when I worked at Tooley Street (Salvation Army hostel, 1986-89) it was just staff managing the behaviour, managing the building, making sure rent was paid’.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, Dom Wood describes the approach at English Churches Housing’s Jamaica Street hostel when he first joined as, ‘This is your room, and as long as you come down for meals on time and don't cause any fuss, you'll eventually get a flat’.¹⁶⁸ As a consequence, many hostels excluded those with the most challenging behaviour altogether, refused those with alcohol or drug issues, and had extensive ‘banned lists’. Steve Philpott recalls hostels ‘which literally have got a Rolodex at the reception which is the ‘Barred List’. The Salvation Army had a barred list of thousands... there was no appeal - there was no process, there was no transparency’.¹⁶⁹ Broadly speaking, it was not until the advent of the RSU, and its focus on bringing the most ‘entrenched’ rough sleepers inside, that people with what became known as ‘complex needs’ gained greater access to many hostels.¹⁷⁰ In addition, pejorative views of homeless people often persisted, with ‘bad

¹⁶⁵ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

¹⁶⁶ The phrase ‘Wild West’ was used by many respondents to describe conditions in the 1980s and early 90s including Dr Philip Reid of Chapel Street medical centre who describes conditions as ‘a bit like the Wild West...it was very much crisis management...there wasn’t any real sense of having control’ Dr Philip Reid, Interview, 6/11/20.

¹⁶⁷ Jane Cook, Interview, 24/3/21.

¹⁶⁸ Dom Wood, Interview, 11/11/20.

¹⁶⁹ Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/10/20.

¹⁷⁰ As in all generalisations there are important exceptions – St Mungo’s, in particular, had been working with those with complex needs long prior to the advent of the RSU and had established specialist mental health provision as early as the 1980s. Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20. The term ‘complex needs’ began to be used in the sector from around the early 2000s.

behaviour' viewed as a form of personal deficit or moral laxity, there was no need, therefore, to be concerned with the causes of such behaviour. Gill Brown recalls, on starting at Potteries Housing Association in 1988, that there were 'lots of people with that, 'Well, what do they expect? They're lucky we're here to do this for them'... I was quite horrified by the sort of patronising attitude towards homeless people'.¹⁷¹ In a related way, psychiatric diagnosis labelled those with mental health issues that were not the major psychosis, and whose condition would therefore not be alleviated by psychotropic drugs, as having 'personality disorders'. As 'personality disorders' were untreatable, they fell beyond the remit of even psychiatric teams undertaking street outreach with homeless people. Dr Philip Timms, a psychiatrist who worked in the South London START outreach team recalls, 'all the teams in London, I think, were pretty much focused on psychosis when we started...it took our team 20 years to get a psychologist...the paradigm of treating psychosis in the early 90s didn't really involve psychology as it does now'.¹⁷² The new understanding that 'personality disorders' were often the consequence of repeated trauma was late to emerge, and before this input from psychologists, the only way of practically working with such people was by hoping to manage their behaviour sufficiently well to keep them within the confines of a hostel. It took new understandings to bring about change, as Athol Halle explains, 'personality disorder, which is a distrust of authority... is a coherent life-strategy of distrusting people when you've been massively let down by people...we didn't get it...and then you get people rejecting services'.¹⁷³ This is not to say that many homeless agencies and individual workers did not understand that a key part of their role was relational, but, as

¹⁷¹ Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

¹⁷² Dr Philip Timms, Interview, 21/1/21.

¹⁷³ Athol Halle, Interview, 8/1/21.

with the question of user-empowerment, assumptions about the ‘inadequacy’ of homeless people meant that paternalistic models of care were the norm. Dom Wood recalls (at English Churches Jamaica Street hostel – early 1990s) ‘older workers’ with ‘quite institutional ways of working...I know how to live your life better than you and I can teach you how to do that’.¹⁷⁴ David Ford, founder of Expert Link, recalls during his lived experience of homelessness, ‘one of the things that was bad about that time was the f**king arrogance of organisations - the belief that they knew what was best for people’.¹⁷⁵

The dissemination of PIE approaches

The origins of trauma-informed working practice and a PIE approach rest with key individuals, but, as with the case of user-empowerment, their broad adoption was facilitated by the actions of New Labour.

Many homeless agencies had long operated a ‘humanistic’ way of working that contained many elements of a trauma-informed PIE approach, but its origins can be traced back to 2003 with the employment of Dr Nick Maguire, a consultant psychologist, in a four-bed hostel in Southampton run by the Society of St James.¹⁷⁶ Taking referrals from the street homeless prevention team, and working only with those who’d ‘burned all their bridges’, Maguire tried ‘to run as many systems as possible according to psychological approaches...trying to get engagement from people in in their environment, decision making, and to attempt co-design and co-delivery’.¹⁷⁷ He describes the process as ‘a very

¹⁷⁴ Dom Wood, Interview, 11/11/20.

¹⁷⁵ David Ford, Interview, 8/1/21.

¹⁷⁶ Nick Maguire, Interview, 4/12/20. Robin Johnson and Nick Maguire both stated that they had largely only given a label and framework for the best practice that already existed in the homelessness sector. Robin Johnson, Interview, 30/11/20; Robin Johnson explores this in Johnson, R., ‘This is not a Pipe’, *A Life in the Day*, Vol 13, No 2, (2009), pp.26-27.

¹⁷⁷ Nick Maguire, Interview, 4/12/20.

steep learning curve’, but by pulling in ‘psychological support from the local trust’, created a ‘cross-disciplinary, cross-organisational relationship’.¹⁷⁸ Maguire reflects that, ‘that four-bed house was the proto-PIE’.¹⁷⁹ He published a ‘tiny evaluation, a case series evaluation, of the first four guys’, commenting, ‘never has so little data gone so far’.¹⁸⁰ New Labour’s involvement can even be seen here. As Maguire tells it, the previous street count in Southampton had found 11 rough sleepers and the RSU target ‘needed it to get down to seven...so miraculously this house for four people turned up’.¹⁸¹ Maguire notes ‘we started off a whole paradigm of thinking on the basis of this horribly political thing that happened in 2003’.¹⁸² A more generous interpretation of New Labour’s programme could interpret this as vindication of a strategy of reducing rough sleeping by setting measurable targets, a focus on the most entrenched, the obligation to form local homeless strategies that mandated cross-disciplinary collaboration, and the funding of street homeless prevention teams that made referrals into the project.

Working in parallel to Maguire, Robin Johnson had taken up a post as Mental Health and Housing Lead in the government’s National Social Inclusion Programme (NSIP).¹⁸³ His appointment echoes Labour’s approach to recruitment at the RSU. Johnson, who describes himself as determinedly ‘not a civil servant’ and with a ‘slightly anarchic approach’ was given an opportunity to formulate policy from within Whitehall.¹⁸⁴ Johnson himself is sceptical about much of New Labour’s approach, believing it was too concerned with what

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Nick Maguire, Interview, 4/12/20. Maguire, N., ‘Cognitive behavioural Therapy and Homelessness: A Case Series Pilot Study’, *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, Vol 34, No 1, (2006), pp. 107-111.

¹⁸¹ Nick Maguire, Interview, 4/12/20.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Robin Johnson, Interview, 30/11/20.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

was quantifiable and neglectful of the relational aspects that could not be measured. He did, however, acknowledge both Blair and Brown's commitment to addressing social exclusion and the programme of which he was a part.¹⁸⁵ Johnson recalls being energised by the 'really exciting, interesting stuff being done in housing and homelessness' through the opportunities opened up by Supporting People, and the post he gained at the NSIP was archetypically New Labour, tasked with developing the 'PSA mental health and housing settled accommodation indicator'.¹⁸⁶ Embracing the Third Way notion of social exclusion, he concluded that addressing it in mental health meant working with those who 'orthodox psychiatric care didn't work with', those who had previously been considered as having 'personality disorders' who and 'were now going down to the homelessness services'.¹⁸⁷ Building on ideas of 'enabling environments' from psychiatry, he set about 'developing this new way of thinking about therapeutic community in a community psychiatry, rather than a specialist hospital world'.¹⁸⁸ Johnson points out that what he was doing was not 'something new and completely different' but that 'it had never been applied in homelessness'.¹⁸⁹ In a marked form of joined up working, the PIE approach was formulated by Johnson who had a background in mental health and social work, Nick Maguire from psychology, Helen Keats from a housing background, and Peter Cockersell who was health lead at St Mungo's.¹⁹⁰ In a manner very similar to the growth of user-empowerment, the translation from a small project on the margins to mainstream practice, was facilitated by the actions of New

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. PSA's were Public Service Agreements – A means of measuring the performance of Public Sector bodies first introduced by the Treasury in 1998.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Johnson states, 'there were a lot of quite radical thinking within homelessness, but it wasn't joined up with anything to do with mental health'. Robin Johnson, Interview, 30/11/20.

¹⁹⁰ Robin Johnson, Interview, 30/11/20.

Labour.¹⁹¹ With Johnson situated inside government, and Maguire a psychologist with one foot in the homelessness sector, what brought their complimentary ideas together was the input of Helen Keats, who had been first seconded to the RSU in 2000.¹⁹² Keats' approach was both informed and pragmatic. Having met Maguire 'early on' she was impressed with the necessity to address the 'emotional and psychological needs of people who are chronically homeless' arguing that, 'if we don't help them deal with how they feel - they are always going to relapse and go back on the streets'.¹⁹³ Despite a lack of enthusiasm from Louise Casey, Keats says, 'I just ploughed on' and very much drove it [PIE] from within government...within the unit'.¹⁹⁴ Richard Cunningham confirms Keats role as the driving force stating, 'Psychologically informed environments came out of the RSU. Helen Keats worked with Southampton University to look at this idea of psychologically informed environments and how we could put them into use in homelessness'.¹⁹⁵ Maguire recalls that Keats 'had a lot of contacts', which enabled him to present at homeless sector conferences, connected him to Homeless Link and, with Keats from 2008, began training homeless agencies in the new approach.¹⁹⁶ What Maguire and Keats were advocating resonated with many from within the sector.¹⁹⁷ Gill Brown recalls going up to Nick Maguire at a conference 'and threatened to hug him because at last he had put into a comprehensive clear

¹⁹¹ The 'wider sphere' here, is changing understandings of 'personality disorder' in psychiatry and psychology and the validation of lived experience and strengths-based working from user empowerment. See National Institute for Mental health (NIMHE), *Personality Disorder: No longer a Diagnosis of Exclusion*, Section 4.1.

¹⁹² Helen Keats, Interview, 9/12/20.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Keats recalls that despite Louise Casey's habitual outlook that, 'if something doesn't work, stop doing it' she was 'deeply suspicious of PIE'. Helen Keats, Interview, 9/12/20.

¹⁹⁵ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

¹⁹⁶ Maguire freely credits Keats as the reason 'why this whole thing started off'. Nick Maguire, Interview, 4/12/20.

¹⁹⁷ Maguire recalls it first being picked up by Victoria Aserveertham at Westminster council, the DePaul group and Jean Templeton at St Basil's. Nick Maguire, Interview, 4/12/20. At St Mungo's, the appointment of Dr Peter Cocksell as Director of Health and Recovery in 2007 was considered the decisive turning point by Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21.

framework of what I've been trying to say and understand for years'.¹⁹⁸ Tony Waters of Bondway, comments that 'what we were experiencing towards the 2000s was not people so much with clear-cut mental health problems, as people who were psychologically damaged... we didn't really have any support around dealing with very psychologically damaged people'.¹⁹⁹ He came across Maguire at a St Mungo's conference and, 'for about three years in a row I took half the staff team down...to meet Nick...we would talk about case studies ... and he'd come up with ideas'.²⁰⁰ Also working with Keats and Maguire, Robin Johnson's complimentary ideas percolated through the homelessness sector. Johnson describes three types of reaction in the sector, those that said, 'Thank heavens, someone who has described what we actually do', those that said 'could you spell out a bit more what it looks like so we can see if we're doing it properly' and those that said 'you've got us bang to rights! This is what we should be doing, and we're not'.²⁰¹ That all three types of response were positive is indicative of the receptivity of the sector to the approach and its capacity to learn and evolve. Jean Templeton at St Basil's describes the research paper Johnson and his team produced as 'a kind of light bulb moment ... [if] it's not about personality disorder...it is actually about behaviour that arises as a result of complex trauma - you can do things about it'.²⁰² Although Templeton credits the influence of this report on St Basil's working practice, her organisation had been working in a person-centred, strengths- based manner since the early 2000s.²⁰³ The change was more of a deeper

¹⁹⁸ Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20.

¹⁹⁹ Tony Waters, Interview, 2/2/21.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Robin Johnson, Interview, 30/11/20.

²⁰² Jean Templeton, Interview, 23/9/20.

²⁰³ Ibid.

understanding of the importance of trauma, and in 2011, St Basil's 'took the decision to take a whole organisation approach to becoming a psychological informed environment'.²⁰⁴

It is important not to impose a false linearity on these developments, nor to over-privilege the work of Maguire, Johnson, Keats or the role of New Labour. Johnson describes witnessing, 'dozens, and dozens of examples of completely different ways of expressing the same kind of empathy and emotional intelligence and compassion' in homeless sector practices that characterised a PIE approach.²⁰⁵ A PIE approach also built on insights from user-empowerment, and both the 'recovery approach' and the 'Outcome Star' developed by St Mungo's were centred on listening to and empowering homeless people rather than merely managing their behaviour.²⁰⁶

Whilst the critique that Labour's monitoring and accountability systems worked against a holistic and strengths-based approach, has merit, there is ample evidence that, at least in the more developed agencies, the person-centred approach began to take root, and led to much more sophisticated and effective ways of working than existed prior to 1997. For example, Jean Templeton at St Basil's in Birmingham comments "psychologically, informed environments...that is our DNA now, and that's just been a progression throughout the years really".²⁰⁷ The transformation was marked, as Dom Wood notes, 'if you talked about all the things I talk about now, about complex trauma and attachment, neuro-plasticity and

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Robin Johnson, Interview, 30/11/20.

²⁰⁶ There is insufficient space here to do justice to the development and impact of the 'Recovery model' or the 'Outcome Star' which both remain central to St Mungo's working practice. See, St Mungo's, *St Mungo's Recovery Approach: rapid Evidence Review*, (St Mungo's, London, July 2020). The Outcome Star was adopted by many other Homeless agencies, and adaptations such as Centrepoin't's 'life-web' and Porchlight's 'logic model' were derived from it. Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20; Mike Barrett, Interview, 26/11/20. See Homeless Link, *The Outcome Star: User's Guide (2nd edition)*, (Homeless Link, London, 2008).

²⁰⁷ Jean Templeton, Interview, 23/9/20.

all those things... people wouldn't have any idea what you were talking about - and also think it was a lot of crap'.²⁰⁸

Places of Change

If New Labour's role was merely facilitative in the genesis of trauma-informed approaches and PIE, it made a much more direct impact on its widespread adoption in 2005 via its Hostels Capital Improvement Programme (HCIP), which became termed 'Places of Change in 2008'.²⁰⁹ Although provision had improved over the preceding decade, and many dormitory-style hostels had been refurbished with single rooms, many very poor-quality hostels still remained in operation across the country.²¹⁰ The HCIP Places of Change programme combined the re-configuring of hostels with changes in working practice to create (although the term itself was sparingly used at the time) psychologically informed environments.²¹¹ Labour invested £90 million to the first HCIP programme (2005-8) and allocated a further £80 million for the next three years of the programme.²¹² The investment was widely spread across that country, covering 178 projects in 62 local authority areas in the first phase, and 80 projects in 54 local authority areas in the second.²¹³ These were substantial sums of money, and they were not merely for refurbishment of physically aging premises, but aimed

²⁰⁸ Dom Wood, Interview, 11/11/20.

²⁰⁹ CLG, *Places of Change: Tackling homelessness through the Hostels Capital Improvement programme*, (CLG, London, 2008)

²¹⁰ The continued use of dormitories as a form of accommodation for homeless people was noted by the ODPM in 2005, and by Richard Cunningham when he took over the Places of Change programme in 2007. ODPM, *Improving the quality of hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation*' Policy Briefing 8 (ODPM, London, 2005), p.7; Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

²¹¹ Rebecca Pritchard describes the relationship as, 'the Places of Change programme...kind of segued into the whole concept of psychologically informed environments.' Rebecca Pritchard, Interview, 30/9/20.

²¹² DCLG, *No One Left Out*, p.16.

²¹³ Ibid.

to 'change the very nature of hostels' and to create, 'welcoming spaces' that were, 'neither institutional nor reflect the harder edge of emergency accommodation'.²¹⁴

The necessity for such a change seems, once again, entirely obvious, and its long delay surprising. Cunningham is critical of the RSU over this saying, 'the second stage...wasn't so well planned... the focus was on the outreach teams not on hostels and what also needed to happen was a change in the hostels - but that came a bit later and that was after a lot of lobbying by the outreach services'.²¹⁵ That the conditions in hostels acted as a barrier to people coming off the streets had long been understood, with Randall and Brown in 2001 noting that rough sleepers were scared to enter hostels due to fears of violence, with some commenting that 'they felt safer with their mates on the street', and Cloke noting that women, in particular, 'rarely turn to shelters, frightened by the violence that frequently flares in them and by the very real risk of sexual assault in mixed dormitories'.²¹⁶ What had not been given great consideration was how the grim and institutional settings experienced by those who became residents were also likely to further damage their sense of self-esteem, prevent their recovery from the repeated trauma of homelessness, and in themselves contributed to the aggression and violence that often occurred.

The ethos behind Places of Change is summed up by Steve Philpott, who describes it simply as addressing the question of 'What does good quality accommodation look like for homeless people?' and Neil Baird sees its philosophy in terms of the question, 'would you want to live here? And if the answer's, 'No', we shouldn't be providing that'.²¹⁷ The answer certainly would certainly have been negative for most of the hostel provision that existed in

²¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 4 & 5.

²¹⁵ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

²¹⁶ Randall & Brown, pp.23-24; Cloke et al, *Swept-up Lives*, p.157.

²¹⁷ Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/10/20;

1997. Neil Baird recalls that at conditions at Virginia House, (a 30-bed hostel run by Tyneside Cyrenians - which later became Changing Lives) were so bad that homeless 'people would walk in and walk out – I'm not staying there!'.²¹⁸ This response would not have been uncommon across the sector. Mike McCall too, accepts that at St Mungo's, 'the weak point of our service at that time was the quality of the accommodation' and Richard Cunningham argues that beyond the more progressive agencies, many 'well-intentioned people had slipped into the "this is good enough for these kind of people" mentality, but that what they provided was 'terrible accommodation...it was dreadful actually'.²¹⁹ Despite awareness of the inadequacy of hostel accommodation, it had remained unaddressed largely due to the absence of the necessary funding. Even agencies that were housing associations, and could therefore access Housing Corporation funding, had been unable to make wholesale improvements. Mike McCall recalls that St Mungo's 'would spend money on maintenance, and we had a stock improvement programme' but not the funding for 'a major capital refurbishment and updating the service'.²²⁰ Philpott argues that the Corporation, being more used to the relative simplicity and lower costs of general needs housing, 'didn't always contain the skills that are required' for hostel rebuilds, and Mike McCall that 'the scale of the challenge in some of those hostels meant that they were way down the pecking order in terms of what the Housing Corporation might fund'.²²¹ Homeless agencies that were not registered housing associations could occasionally secure other sources of capital investment, but it was only with the HCIP programme that the sector as whole would be

²¹⁸ Neil Baird, Interview, 10/2/21.

²¹⁹ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20; Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

²²⁰ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20

²²¹ Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/10/20; Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20. Charles Fraser recalls 'endless arguments' over these issues with the Housing Corporation. Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

transformed.²²² Mike McCall concludes, 'we've got some really fabulous buildings now and it was thanks to those central government-led initiatives...it needed special funding streams to get that sort of scale of change within the hostels sector'.²²³

The Places of Change money was not merely for standard hostel refits.²²⁴ From the outset it aimed to create environments that 'treated people with respect' and created 'services that inspired the people that lived in them'.²²⁵ Changes in the accommodation went beyond merely providing single rooms. Maxine Edney describes the new arrangements at Centrepoint's Berwick Street as 'we created little cluster flats, so everybody had their own bedroom with an ensuite bathroom...like good quality student accommodation...we thought a lot about colour and a lot about lighting'.²²⁶ Such improvements were typical.²²⁷ Steve Philpott highlights the psychological benefits of the greater independence afforded the residents of Snow Hill hostel in Birmingham after Places of Change, noting that people could now cook for themselves, 'had their own front door key, and got a shorthold tenancy rather than a license'.²²⁸ Another of the areas that was tackled as a priority was the front entrance and reception areas. Richard Cunningham recalls that 'very often you'd walk into a homeless hostel's reception area it's wired glass or a shutter and barriers'.²²⁹ This kind of

²²² Gill Brown got a new hostel for Brighter Futures when a property developer wished to purchase their old building and she demanded a new building in exchange. John Hamblin at Shekinah secured EU funding, and built a new hostel using ex-homeless workers who had graduated his building construction programme. These were highly exceptional cases. Gill Brown, Interview, 14/12/20; John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

²²³ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

²²⁴ New builds were also funded by Places of Change. Mike McCall recalls, 'we did two new builds... we got more imaginative architects involved...that's where the more theoretical, psychologically informed stuff came in'. Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

²²⁵ Ricard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20; Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20.

²²⁶ Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20.

²²⁷ Steve Philpott at Snow Hill hostel in Birmingham, describes taking 'two bedrooms and made them into 25 metre squared apartments...They've got their own bedroom space, a lounge space and a bathroom space'. Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/10/20.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

arrangement was very common. Mike McCall describes St Mungo's Endall Street hostel before the refurbishment as, 'you'd come in and you'd be in a pair lock...you'd come in through the front door and then it is another front door, basically, and you have to speak to somebody through a little portal, tell them what you were there for, and then you might be allowed into the inner sanctum, which was a corridor and gloomy and depressing'.²³⁰ Cunningham describes the impact of this on service users, 'You're desperate...you're hungry, you're cold, you're scared...you're not sure what the future holds for you, to be met by someone staring at you through a chicken-wire fence...treating you like you are a criminal'.²³¹ Places of Change funding transformed these spaces. Tony Waters described the original entrance to Graham House hostel as, 'it had a bulletproof hatch - it looked like a bloody fortress'.²³² Having secured Places of Change money it then, 'had an open plan office with a lovely curved bench and glass offices for the staff to work in, a glass meeting room and a glass interview room'.²³³ McCall describes the new Endall Street reception as 'like a hotel, it's got lovely, big, light, open spaces' and Steve Philpott describes the refurbishment of Snow Hill hostel in Birmingham as having 'open[ed] up the front up so you can see in - lots of LED lighting and plants and a big sweeping entrance way, with a big open plan hotel-style reception desk...and a coffee shop built alongside with the frontage for the public to come in'.²³⁴ While these changes were enthusiastically embraced by many in the sector, there was some resistance from the staff to removing the barriers and grills in hostel receptions. Richard Cunningham recalls his predecessor Maff Potts, receiving virulent letters of complaint from Salvation army staff, and Rebecca Sycamore that her colleague had to

²³⁰ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20.

²³¹ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 11/10/20.

²³² Tony Waters, Interview, 2/2/21.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/10/20.

‘fight Mungo’s tooth and nail to get them to open up their reception [at Endall Street]to make it this amazing open space’.²³⁵ In both instances following the change, as Sycamore puts it, ‘lo and behold, they reopened and...all of the community problems went away’.²³⁶ Philpott describes the investment as a ‘properly funded programme’, and Maxine Edney points out, ‘we were encouraged to put really good quality finishes and fittings and not the cheapest... and it was right because they would last’.²³⁷ Nor was this just extravagance, despite fears, often voiced by workers in the sector, that the residents would ‘trash’ the expensively refurbished hostels, the opposite was the case. John Hamblin recalls people commenting after Shekinah’s new hostel was completed, ‘this is a bit too good - will they look after it?’.²³⁸ He found the opposite, pointing out that if ‘it just looks crap I’m not going to feel good about myself, so I’m probably not going to respect it...actually, if you put people in nice settings behaviour’s often influenced by that’.²³⁹ Philpott sums this up as ‘people respond to and respect their environments...if you have the nicest environment for the most chaotic and challenging individuals it is a good and calming influence’.²⁴⁰ The intention of the Places of Change programme was not just to improve behaviour and make hostel management easier, but to raise the self-esteem of service users.²⁴¹ As Maxine Edney puts it, ‘it did impact on how people felt about themselves... imagine if you're 16/17 and you've been in most awful environments suddenly you move into a beautiful property in Soho...It just made people feel differently, and I believe it made them all motivated to want to move

²³⁵ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

²³⁶ Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

²³⁷ Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/10/20; Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20.

²³⁸ John Hamblin, Interview, 28/10/20.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/10/20.

²⁴¹ As mentioned, the notion of Psychologically Informed Environments was not specifically articulated in the Places of Change programme, but many respondents saw the development of PIEs as contingent on the Places of Change programme and guided by the same ethos. Neil Baird, Interview, 10/2/21; Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/10/20.

on in their lives'.²⁴² Nor was it just about attractive reception areas, Cunningham explains that it was 'more about the bits that were hard to fund through Housing Corporation grant - so space for activity, trying to promote activity that would change people's perceptions - education, literacy, numeracy, work skills'.²⁴³ Hostels refurbished or new built under Places of Change now provided 'good communal space so you can engage people better'.²⁴⁴ Within the more 'welcoming environments' that were created, Places of Change obliged agencies to develop working practices that empowered service users and 'to genuinely promote a service that would help people move on from homelessness'.²⁴⁵ All funding bids were required to demonstrate 'the involvement and support of service users', 'how a scheme will identify and create training and employment activities' and favoured schemes that incorporated 'self-build' and the development of social enterprises.²⁴⁶ Richard Cunningham describes the process of assessing bids as, 'there was a range of priorities... We assessed on priority stuff - so really horrible stuff that needed to be gone - and then addressing what else they did...what else were they offering? Are they looking to re-provision for single rooms? What additionality are they bringing in their bid? Are they looking at social enterprise? Are they looking at training? What are they going to do... to genuinely promote a service that would help people move on from homelessness'.²⁴⁷ An extraordinarily diverse range of schemes were funded through Places of Change, including service-user run restaurants, mechanic training schemes and even a show garden at the Chelsea Flower Show.²⁴⁸ Residents at Changing Lives in Newcastle, were trained in construction and

²⁴² Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20.

²⁴³ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

²⁴⁴ Mike McCall, Interview, 2/12/20

²⁴⁵ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

²⁴⁶ DCLG, *Places of Change Programme: Application Guidance*, (DCLG, London, November 2007), p.8.

²⁴⁷ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

employed to build a new hostel and office extension, and a community radio station was established in one of their hostels.²⁴⁹ At Snow Hill in Birmingham ‘there was a basket weaving coffin making business’ and ‘a cupcake bakery business, with a coffee shop on the front’, both set up as social enterprises.²⁵⁰ These were often new directions for homeless agencies, and Steve Philpott recalls that ‘we were pushed into uncomfortable places in terms of doing that, but there was the backing to do it’.²⁵¹

The HCIP Places of Change programme was transformative for its beneficiaries, both in vastly improving the quality of hostel provision and in facilitating the progressive development of working practices. It built on ideas of user-empowerment and was integral in the creation of Psychologically Informed Environments. New Labour’s role was absolutely central, both in terms of providing the funding - some £180 million in total - and mandating new working practices in order to bid successfully for funds.²⁵² The programme also illustrates the importance of New Labour’s mechanisms of government in facilitating change. As with the RSU in 1999, the scheme was overseen by a cross-cutting government unit, the Homelessness Directorate, the make-up of which was still a blend of civil servants and individuals co-opted from the voluntary sector. Many respondents cite the importance of civil servant Gordon Campbell, whose background on the GLC and London Boroughs Grants Committee and skills as an operator in Whitehall, ‘persuaded the Treasury that it was a good value programme’.²⁵³ Campbell, in the style typical of the RSU, but still unusual in

²⁴⁹ Changing Lives were still called Tyneside Cyrenians at the time. Neil Baird, Interview, 10/2/21; DCLG, *Places of Change: Tackling homelessness through the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme*, p.8.

²⁵⁰ Steve Philpott, Interview, 2/10/20.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² The figure of £180 million was higher than the £170 million initially announced – this figure is from Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

²⁵³ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20. Richard Cunningham and Jenny Edwards and Rebecca Sycamore made similar comments. Sadly Gordon Campbell died in 2004. Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20; Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20; Rebecca Sycamore, Interview, 20/11/20.

Whitehall, had 'gone around the country' and having seen the poor quality of homeless provision, had 'set about trying to lasso a chunk of money to improve the fabric of buildings with the intent of developing better outcomes'.²⁵⁴ Charles Fraser is fulsome in his praise of Gordon Campbell, describing him as 'immensely experienced in the voluntary sector in London...extremely intelligent, knowledgeable, and he cared'.²⁵⁵ Fraser considers him to have been the most significant figure in the RSU/Homelessness Directorate, who 'put the logic into it' and praises his clear-sighted decisiveness as key in ensuring that major funding decisions were made quickly and appropriately.²⁵⁶ The unique nature of the unit and its deep links to the voluntary sector is perhaps most embodied in first head of the Places of Change programme, Maff Potts, who was anything but a typical civil servant.²⁵⁷ Potts had been a project manager at Crisis before joining the DCLG in 2005, and Gary Messenger describes him as 'a very...charismatic individual, almost evangelical', and Steve Bell as 'brilliant because he was a visionary...he takes you along with his enthusiasm'.²⁵⁸ Under Potts, decision making was done 'in a very unconventional, un-civil service way'.²⁵⁹ Potts 'was encouraging organisations to be really creative' and was 'a great advocate' for the change that had to 'happen culturally' in organisations to make the programme work as more than a bricks and mortar exercise.²⁶⁰ Andy Williams comments that 'I like the word experiment and I think the Places of Change did offer that, it offered it in a way that was 'we're not going to hammer you if that goes wrong...what we want to do is to extract the

²⁵⁴ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

²⁵⁵ Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Unfortunately, Maff Potts did not respond to requests for interview for this research.

²⁵⁸ Gary Messenger, Interview, 16/10/20; Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

²⁵⁹ Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20.

²⁶⁰ Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20; Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20.

learning'.²⁶¹ Neil Baird sums the way the programme operated under Potts as, 'you had leadership and you had people with the autonomy to take forward the vision'.²⁶² He was succeeded in 2007 by Richard Cunningham who had also had a long career in homeless agencies, and who instituted more formal processes, which Steve Bell considers as 'what you needed... you needed it go through from the flair to the actual 'this is how we do it'.²⁶³ Under both heads, the Places of Change programme was able to act quickly with a 'straightforward' application process and a 'quick turnaround' of decision making and subsequent access to funding.²⁶⁴ In this instance, Neil Baird argues the 'criticisms of bureaucracy' often levelled at New Labour 'weren't the case'.²⁶⁵ In addition, the efficacy of the programme was greatly facilitated by the partnership between the government unit and the homelessness sector umbrella group Homeless Link. Homeless Link's regional advisors worked jointly with the Homelessness Directorate to deliver Places of Change.²⁶⁶ Cunningham took advice from Homeless Link regional advisors on 'what were the problems in a city, the organisations that are good, who may need assistance, but also...who may need a bit of incentive to change'.²⁶⁷ Potential applicants would be given advice by Cunningham who would then inform them that, ' I'm going to leave this person [from Homeless Link] behind...to provide you with support and advice to help you change your services...if you want [the funding] you have to listen to this person'.²⁶⁸ Homeless link were also involved in reviewing the applications received, and Cunningham made decisions on

²⁶¹ Andy Williams, Interview, 25/1/21.

²⁶² Neil Baird, Interview, 10/2/21.

²⁶³ Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20.

²⁶⁴ Maxine Edney, Interview, 11/11/20. Similar comments on the speed of decision making were made by Steve Bell and Charles Fraser. Steve Bell, Interview, 22/10/20; Charles Fraser, Interview, 18/11/20.

²⁶⁵ Neil Baird, Interview, 10/2/21.

²⁶⁶ Homeless Link was funded primarily by 'Change Up' programme. See Alcock, P., 'Voluntary action, New Labour and the 'third sector'', p. 172.

²⁶⁷ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

the allocation of funds partly based on 'the recommendation of the Homeless Link regional area manager'.²⁶⁹ Rebecca Sycamore (Homeless Link) recalls, 'Richard [Cunningham], me, and his team spend about three days locked in a room at the ODPM, going through all of the applications'.²⁷⁰ In addition, Homeless Link used its networks to promote the new forms of best practice, 'when the capital programme was coming through and somebody had got their money and got their plan, they went on a coach journey that our regional team organised to see people in another region and to hear what they were doing'.²⁷¹

The Hostels Capital Improvement Programme and Places of Change was met with near universal approval by the sector at the time, and remains so today. Steve Philpott states 'thinking about the environments that people live in was important - that was Blair's governments...and was an important legacy' and Mike McCall that 'if they did nothing else under the Blair government, improving the quality of hostels was something they can be very proud of'.

Conclusion

Over the course of New Labour's three terms there were enormous advances in the quality of provision and the forms of working practice in the homelessness sector. Labour was not responsible for the genesis of ideas of user-empowerment but its insistence on user-engagement in Best Value, the QAF, Supporting People and the Places of Change programme was vital in ensuring it spread upwards from the grassroots and into mainstream practice. Nor was New Labour directly responsible for the development of trauma-informed methods of working and Psychologically Informed Environments. Here

²⁶⁹ Richard Cunningham, Interview, 18/10/20.

²⁷⁰ Rebecca Sycamore, interview, 20/11/20.

²⁷¹ Jenny Edwards, Interview, 20/10/20.

again, however, it played a key role through funding research and in the dissemination of ideas through the Homelessness Directorate and Homeless Link. Its investment in improving the environment in hostels through the HCIP was vital to make the PIE concept viable, and the requirements mandated by Places of Change drove the process forward.

On a broader scale, Labour's imposition of New Public Management methods profoundly transformed the nature of the homelessness sector creating larger, more professional agencies both nationally and regionally. These better-resourced and managed bodies were, in turn, far better equipped to conduct the more skilled work required for a trauma-informed PIE approach. The process of change was overseen and guided by a New Labour innovation in the mechanisms of government, a cross-cutting unit that brought in expertise from the sector, was hands-on and flexible in its approach and worked in a genuine partnership with sector agencies. At a broader level still, it was Third Way notions of an increased role for the 'third sector' and a justified belief in its greater capacity to innovate and change that enabled these developments to take place. Furthermore, an ideology that broadened notions of poverty and saw homelessness as a form of social exclusion, also contained a route out of homelessness through the empowerment of individuals. Labour's Third Way approach centred on the individual's capacity to end their own social exclusion and sought to provide the necessary tools to achieve this through education and training and an emphasis on paid employment. Although the path was by no means straightforward, nor universally applicable, these notions led to a greater valuation of homelessness people's skills and capacities, leading to strengths-based approaches in working practice and the recognition of the necessity to engage and empower homeless service-users.

Conclusion

The achievements of New Labour in reducing street homelessness were real and significant. In its first term Labour oversaw a rapid reduction in the numbers of people sleeping rough, and this was sustained throughout its three terms in office. This research strongly refutes the argument that New Labour was revanchist in its approach. Far from 'sweeping the streets clean' and 'warehousing' homeless people out of sight and mind, Labour instituted a coherent and sustained programme aimed at long-term solutions to street homelessness. Over its three terms in office it took significant steps to reduce existing rough sleeping and developed programmes which focused on homeless prevention and which sought to empower former rough sleepers with the means to permanently escape homelessness.

In a sense, Labour addressed two separate but related problems. The first was an historical legacy – the large numbers of people sleeping rough when it came into office in 1997, many of whom had lived so long on the streets that they had become 'entrenched' in homelessness. This was no simple task. To address the particular set of needs of this group required a radical change of approach, one which extended the whole way from the Cabinet Office to the street level worker. Within Whitehall, cross-cutting government units (the SEU and the RSU) were created, backed by prime ministerial patronage, infused with expertise from the homelessness sector, and given significant autonomy in how they achieved their aims. Under the muscular leadership of Louise Casey, the RSU was a maverick unit, upending the hierarchical practices of the civil service and instituting a wholesale transformation of the working practices of the voluntary homelessness sector.

With its target of reducing the number of rough sleepers by two-thirds achieved by 2001, New Labour moved on to the second and larger problem – how to reduce the flow of people

onto the streets and how to support those who had been resettled to ensure that their escape from homelessness was made permanent.²⁷² This too was a complex undertaking. Labour set about this task through multiple strands. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local government was obliged, for the first time, to address the needs of single homeless people, to work collaboratively with the voluntary homeless sector, and to produce coherent strategies focussed on the prevention of homelessness. Building on the success of the RSU, the Homelessness Directorate retained its deep connections to the voluntary sector and its unconventional working practices, but now worked to a broader remit. Most significant of all was the Supporting People programme that began in 2003, which injected unprecedented level of resource into the homelessness sector. Supporting People was a truly radical programme which enabled, for the first time, a 'needs-led' approach to housing support services, vastly expanding the scale and scope of homeless sector providers, bringing in new specialist skills and enabling the sector to professionalise. In turn, the newly professionalised and upskilled homelessness sector was facilitated by New Labour in the development of more sophisticated, trauma-informed, ways of working which were much more conducive to long-term recovery and permanent resettlement away from the street. Under Labour, capital investment transformed many hostels from grim institutions to 'Places of Change' and combined with the new ways of working enabled the sector to develop the first 'Psychologically Informed Environments'. Concomitant with these advances, Labour's advocacy of user-empowerment facilitated its adoption into mainstream practice, helping raise homeless peoples' self-esteem and to return a degree of agency over their own lives to this disempowered group of people.

²⁷² The division applied here is a conscious simplification. Homelessness prevention and long-term support was built in from the beginning of Labour's programme – but the relative emphasis undoubtedly shifted after 2001.

New Labour's street homelessness programme was not, however, without flaws. It is clear that the commissioning and contracting process in particular could generate unintended negative consequences. The localised nature of the commissioning process was in some ways a strength, as it engendered a response tailored to local needs, but it also meant that the its quality was dependent on the competence of the individual local authority and often on the talents of the specific individuals appointed to the task. Too many, particularly as the funding for SP was cut, focused more on cost than quality, and in seeking value for money drove down the value of successful bids, reducing the salaries of paid staff and making recruitment and retention of skilled individuals difficult. Although there may have been benefits of reducing the number of contracts issued in the first instance by driving out the weaker providers, too often this was performed for administrative ease, and too little care was taken to protect the 'ecosystem' of different service providers. Competition for contracts reduced, although it did not eliminate, collaborative working between agencies. In London, the breaking up of a city-wide issue into individual boroughs was disadvantageous, and in two-tier authorities the lines of responsibility were blurred, stifling new initiatives. Re-tendering for contracts every three years was wasteful of time and resources and counter-productive to the financial stability of homeless agencies and their ability to provide continuity of care. Although the systems of monitoring and control broadly raised standards across the sector, the paperwork required was often onerous, necessitating the diversion of resources away from the provision of services, and reporting requirements could lead workers into a counter-productive form of 'deficit interviewing'.

These flaws are not insubstantial, but they should not distract from the scale of Labour's achievements. This research provides a challenge to many academic studies that have

tended to privilege the problems and flaws in Labour's homelessness programme to the neglect of its wider achievements.

This research also demonstrates that New Labour's homelessness policies were enacted in accord with its particular approach to governance, the blend of ideology and pragmatism it termed the Third Way. Envisaging homelessness as being the most egregious example of social exclusion, Labour's homelessness programme was predicated on the re-empowerment of the individual whose escape from destitution would be facilitated by a 'hand up, not a hand out', calling for an engaged citizen who had 'responsibilities as well as rights'. Labour's championing of service-user empowerment and its emphasis on education and training programmes were guided by the Third Way assumption that the state's role was the provision of 'social capital' which would enable the individual to escape their own social exclusion, principally through paid employment. Identifying homelessness as a joined-up problem it addressed the issue with joined up solutions, introducing cross-cutting bodies, breaking down departmental silos, and obliging cooperation across the statutory/voluntary sector divide. In delivering its homelessness policies, Labour acted as 'enabler not provider', managing through control of the purse strings and detailed guidance rather than direct provision. The responsibility to form local homeless strategies and to commission services under SP was ceded to local authorities, and the bulk of its homelessness programme was delivered through 'compacts' with an empowered and validated voluntary homeless sector. The Third Way mantra of modernisation permeated every aspect of its programme. Policy formation was evidence-based and the result of widespread consultation. The experimental forms of 'government by unit' created by New Labour to deliver their programme, were infused with staff co-opted from outside Whitehall, developed unorthodox, 'hands on' and 'bottom up' decision-making process, and continuously developed their approach through

forms of feedback akin to action research. These units were granted their own budgets and communications staff, and with their leaders acting more like social entrepreneurs than salaried state apparatchiks, were given considerable autonomy in how to achieve their aims. Extensive new systems of monitoring and accountability were imposed on the previously largely unregulated homelessness sector in the form of target setting, regular audit, key performance indicators, output rather than input measurement and competitive contracting.

Despite demonstrating that Labour consistently applied a Third Way approach to street homelessness policies and that, in this field, such an approach was effective, this research does not amount to a wholesale validation of the Third Way. The limitations of the Third Way are most apparent in its implications for New Labour's broader housing policy. Working under the assumption that the state's role was to act as enabler rather than provider, Labour largely accepted the predominance of the market in the provision of housing, aiming to facilitate people's capacity to purchase housing through monies obtained from paid work. As a consequence, New Labour failed to address one of the most fundamental structural causes of homelessness, that of the adequate supply of affordable housing. This was a major failing. Critics have also raised important questions about the Third Way that have not been fully addressed in this research which has focussed primarily on the efficacy of the Third Way in terms of delivery, to the conscious neglect of broader questions of political economy or ethics. The argument that it is preferable and more effective to address social exclusion through direct redistribution of wealth by the state as opposed to Third Way notions of the redistribution of 'social capital' has not been evaluated here.²⁷³

²⁷³ For this argument see Levitas, *The inclusive Society?*

Validation of the voluntary sector under the Third Way may undermine the role of public sector organisations, risking the disengagement of the state from provision of services. The importation of New Public Management techniques of monitoring and accountability may undermine an ethos of public service, erode trust and negatively affect morale over the long-term. The assumptions behind the notion of rights and responsibilities may constitute an unacceptable degree of coercion and control, and enable the displacement of duties that should be borne by the state onto the shoulders of individual citizens. This research does not explore these issues in depth. What this research does demonstrate, however, is that in the field of street homelessness, a Third Way approach was central to a series of positive outcomes, thereby suggesting that this approach might have a wider applicability, and that, as a much derided 'ideology', the Third Way is worthy of more serious consideration than it has hitherto been afforded.

Following directly from this, this research provides a challenge to common characterisations of New Labour as lacking any form of ideology and being primarily concerned with maintaining a positive public image at the expense of delivering on social policy objectives. In their street homelessness policies Labour was clearly working within its own stated ideological framework, that of the Third Way. Nor can Labour's actions be easily seen as primarily focussed on engendering a positive public image. Whilst there was public and media pressure to act on rough sleeping in the late 1990s, public attitudes to homelessness and homeless people were as often hostile or equivocal as sympathetic, and Labour was willing to risk public and press ire in pushing forward controversial policies such as the reduction in Central London soup runs and the promotion of direct giving schemes. A more significant repost still to charges of Labour being 'all spin and no substance' is the continued investment in homelessness after 2001. Labour did not neglect street homelessness after

the dramatic reduction in the number of rough sleepers had largely eliminated the problem as a visible issue and it ceased to appear on the front pages of the national press. Labour's most radical and far-reaching interventions, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Supporting People programme from 2003, were far too technocratic to ever garner headlines, and knowledge of the scale and importance of their impact remained confined largely to those working directly in the field. Not only did Labour commit unprecedented resources beyond 2001, but its approach was characterised by a close attention to the details of delivery, demonstrating a seriousness of purpose diametrically opposed to charges of social policy neglect.

Having demonstrated that in one policy area New Labour's approach to governance differs entirely from its most common characterisation, challenges, but does not invalidate such characterisations. Labour's interventions in homelessness may not have been indicative, let alone paradigmatic, of its approach to other social issues. Homelessness, with its long history of state neglect and predominately voluntary sector provision, may have been particularly suited to a Third Way approach. It is plausible, however, that the pejorative characterisations of New Labour have their roots in other factors far removed from any analysis of their actual behaviour in office. There was a high degree of scepticism and mistrust of the New Labour project from the outset, particularly from the left, and the consequences of the disastrous engagement in the Iraq war and the 2008 financial crash further tarnished New Labour's reputation. It is possible that these events so coloured perceptions of New Labour that their earlier achievements in office have been overshadowed and their approach to government mischaracterised. The surprising neglect of Labour's interventions in street homelessness in both popular histories of the period and academic accounts of New Labour is perhaps indicative of a broader 'collective amnesia'

over Labour's approach to governance and achievements in office.²⁷⁴ To test this hypothesis, it would be useful to triangulate this research with studies of Labour's approach to governance in regard to other social policy issues. Those areas targeted by the Social Exclusion Unit; neighbourhood renewal, teenage pregnancy and school exclusion, may well demonstrate a similar approach and efficacy. Certainly, these were important issues that required a cross-cutting approach, and ones where improvements would be slowly achieved and were unlikely to engender much media attention.²⁷⁵ The work of the Cabinet Office Delivery Unit, primarily on the NHS and education, would also be a good comparator.²⁷⁶

By focussing on the mechanisms of government and the processes employed in the delivery of Labour's homelessness policies, this research also offers a broader challenge to the writing of political history. Echoing Blair's assertion that 'what matters is what works' it calls for a greater prominence to be given to the degree of success achieved in the actual delivery on social policy aims, in both evaluations of government performance in office and in broader characterisations. The process of transferring rhetoric into policy, and policy aims into actual improvements in the quality of citizens lives, is perhaps the most important task of government and is often neglected in the writing of history. This study, hopes, in some small regard, to make a contribution to that rebalancing.

²⁷⁴ It is possible, however, that the unique visibility of street homelessness as a social problem may make its subsequent occlusion typical only of homelessness, not as a consequence of a wider neglect of New Labour's achievements.

²⁷⁵ No thorough research was undertaken on these issues, but Louise Casey commented on the success of Labour's Teenage Pregnancy strategy. Louise Casey, Interview, 5/5/21 This seems to be borne out by subsequent evaluations. Hadley, A., Chanda-Mouli, V., & Ingham, R., 'Implementing the United Kingdom Government's 10-year Teenage Pregnancy Strategy for England (1999-2010): Applicable Lessons for Other Countries', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol 59, No 1, (2016), pp.68-74.

²⁷⁶ Michael Barber's evaluation of the Delivery Unit he led covers much of the necessary ground. Barber, M., *Instruction to Deliver - Fighting to Transform Britain's Public Services*, (Methuen, London, 2007).

Contribution, Limitations and Legacy

This research is a work of history, and by utilising the oral testimonies of a broad range of participants has brought to light a huge quantity of previously unknown data on homelessness policy making and delivery during the New Labour period. By capturing the views and knowledge of many of the most important figures, it reveals new data on the relationships between key historical actors and between the institutions they represented. The oral testimonies gathered for this research also bring to light for the first time the policy and practice areas which were considered the most significant by those who planned and delivered Labour's homelessness programme. As many of the key players interviewed had retired or were nearing the end of their careers in homelessness, this research provided a unique opportunity to capture their reflections across the whole of their long engagement with homelessness and the place of the New Labour period within that span. By gathering testimonies from a broad range of participants, it enabled the uncovering of new evidence on the impact of Labour's homelessness policy on the voluntary sector, bringing together for the first time the perspectives of both senior management and front-line workers. By gathering data across a broad geographical range, it opened up new avenues for comparison of the differential impact of homelessness policies on the capital, other major cities in England and smaller towns and rural areas. The use of oral history also enables the recovery of less tangible but equally important elements of the history of homelessness in this period, and it is hoped that some of the humanity, humour and resilience so necessary to do the work has been transmitted. Oral historians create their own archives, and there was a great deal more fascinating and important evidence gathered than could be included in this thesis. A more complete account would require a more expansive format.

There were, of course, significant limitations to this research. By focussing solely on street homelessness, the impact of New Labour on statutory homelessness and hidden homelessness remains unaddressed, and the impact of Labour's broader housing policy has only been touched upon. Although it is argued here that there is value in exploring street homelessness as a separate policy area, it cannot be entirely divorced from the wider actions of government. As homelessness is partly generated by structural causes, principally poverty, unemployment and housing supply, a full exploration of New Labour's impact would require an examination of its policies across these areas. In addition, as some people have greater vulnerability to homelessness due to their circumstances and experiences, rough sleeping also acts as a barometer of all the flaws and failings across the whole of the welfare system. Such a full evaluation of the whole of government would add greater depth, but also distract from the key aims of this research. A pragmatic decision was made to explore only those aspects of Labour's homeless policies that were applicable to the majority of the homeless population, with the concomitant neglect of the implications for specific groups of homeless people. Significant changes took place under New Labour in the provision of services for homeless women, young homeless people, black and ethnic minority groups, refugees and asylum seekers, LGBTQ+ homeless people and service veterans. There is considerable extant research on each of these areas, and many respondents imparted new insights into the impact of Labour's programme on these groups.²⁷⁷ This work would be improved and deepened by addressing these areas separately and by integrating them into the wider narrative.

²⁷⁷ On Homeless Women: Reeve, K., Casey, R. & Goudie, R., *Homeless Women: Still being Failed yet Striving to Survive*, (Crisis, London, 2006); Reeve, K., Goudie, R. & Casey, R. *Homeless Women: Homelessness Careers, Homelessness Landscapes*, (Crisis, London, 2007); May, J., Cloke, P. & Johnsen, S., 'Alternative cartographies of Homelessness: Rendering visible British women's experience of 'visible' homelessness', *Gender Place & Culture*, Vol 14, No 2, (2007), pp.121-140. LGBTQ+: O'Connor, W. & Molloy, D., 'Hidden in Plain Sight':

The obvious development of this work would be to capture the voices of those with lived experience of homelessness, whose perspectives are clearly essential for a full evaluation of the impact of Labour's programme. This would best be achieved by the researcher partnering with a homeless agency or grassroots organisation, building up relationships of trust, and utilising networks to reach out to people who had experienced homelessness during the New Labour period. Training peer researchers to undertake the work would probably be the most effective method, and would have the additional benefits in terms of self-esteem and empowerment for those people with lived experience employed on the project that were documented in chapter 4.

Although this is a work of history it is also the detailed examination of a successful social policy. No overall evaluation of Labour's homeless programme was ever commissioned, and no attempt to capture the views of the generation of policy-makers and practitioners who designed and delivered it has ever previously been undertaken. By accessing the testimonies of those who designed and delivered the programme, this research affords a unique insight into the strengths and weaknesses of New Labour's approach by those who were in the best possible position to do so.

Homelessness in Lesbian and Gay Men, (National Centre for Social Research, London, November 2001); Gold, D., *Sexual Exclusion: Issues and best practice in lesbian, gay and bisexual housing and homelessness*, (Shelter, London, 2005); Dunne, G., Prendergast, S. & Telford, D., 'Young, gay, homeless and invisible: A growing population?', *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, Vol 4, No 1, (2002), pp.103-115. On Refugees and Asylum Seekers, see Geddes, J., 'Understanding the Refugee Experience', in Seal, M., (Ed.) *Understanding and responding to homeless experiences, identities and cultures*, (Russell House Publishing, Lyme Regis, 2006). On BAME, see: ODPM/Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate, *Causes of Homelessness Among Ethnic Minority Populations: Research*, (ODPM, London, September 2005); ODPM/Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate, *Tackling Homelessness Among Ethnic Minority Households: A Development Guide*, (ODPM, London, September 2005); Netto, G., 'Vulnerability to Homelessness, Use of Services and Homelessness Prevention in Black and Minority Ethnic Communities', *Housing Studies*, Vol 21, No 4, (2006), pp.581-601. Service Veterans: Dandeker, C., Thomas, S., Dolan, M., Chapman, F. & Ross, J., *Feasibility Study on the Extent, Causes, Impact and Costs of Rough Sleeping and Homelessness amongst ex-Service Personnel in a Sample of Local Authorities in England*, (KCMHR, London, 2005); Johnson, S., Jones, A. & Rugg, J., *The Experiences of Homeless Ex-Service Personnel in London*, (University of York, York, 2008).

In 1971 David Donnison wrote an article on homelessness for *New Society* entitled, 'No more reports', arguing that no further studies should be commissioned until something was done with the evidence that had already been gathered.²⁷⁸ It is a fervent hope that this research is not merely another redundant study in an already over-supplied field. It potentially performs two vital functions, that of gathering insights from the Labour period that would otherwise have been lost to institutional memory, and by exploring the strengths and weaknesses of Labour's approach, to give pointers to future homelessness policy. There are, of course, limitations to the applicability of past solutions to contemporary problems, economic circumstances change and the nature and demographics of homelessness change over time. However, the stark contrast between the sustained decline in the number of rough sleepers under New Labour, reaching its lowest ever recorded level in 2010, and the 169% rise in street homelessness in the decade after Labour left office, suggests that there is a high value in extracting the most important insights from the period.²⁷⁹

Most broadly, it is clear that Labour was correct in identifying street homelessness as an issue that could only be addressed by a form of joined up governance, and provided practical examples of the kind of cross-cutting bodies that were necessary to ensure cooperation across central and local government and the voluntary sector. An equivalent of the RSU/Homelessness Directorate, staffed with expertise from the sector, flexible in its approach and working closely with the homelessness sector should be re-established on a permanent basis.²⁸⁰ It is also clear that to succeed, a commitment from the very heart of

²⁷⁸ Donnison, D., 'No more reports', *New Society*, Vol 17, (1971), pp.921-2.

²⁷⁹ Wilson, W. & Barton, C., *Rough Sleeping (England) – House of Commons briefing paper Number 02007*.

²⁸⁰ The Conservative government appeared to be moving in this direction with the creation of a homelessness 'taskforce', with Louise Casey appointed as its head in May 2020, but her tenure was short-lived.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dame-louise-casey-to-spearhead-government-taskforce-on-rough->

government is necessary to give any programme the necessary impetus, and the Treasury must be on board and willing to commit the necessary funds. To address existing rough sleeping, the equivalent of contact and assessment outreach teams are vital, with specialist mental health and substance misuse workers embedded or working in parallel with these teams. Access to residential substance misuse and mental health services must be accessible and made appropriate to the needs of homeless people. Despite its critics, an assertive outreach approach appears to be highly effective. Outreach teams must have good access to suitable forms of accommodation, and provide continuity of care. Hostels should not be grim foreboding institutions or temporary night shelters, but attractive and welcoming environments, have appropriate levels of skilled staff and run programmes designed to engage and empower residents and help them re-engage with the wider community. Trauma-informed approaches and psychologically informed environments represent hugely significant improvements in working practice, should be universally adopted, and the necessary training and funds provided to employ the highly skilled staff required for effective delivery. Beyond direct access accommodation, the appropriate forms of supportive housing are less clear, although long-term support is clearly vital. In recent years homeless provision has moved more toward a 'housing first' model, rather than the 'tiered system' of passing through forms of supportive housing toward increased independence, but the competing merits of these systems are beyond the scope of this research to assess.²⁸¹ In terms of homelessness prevention and long-term resettlement away from the street, an equivalent of New Labour's Supporting People programme should

[sleeping-during-pandemic](#) Booth, R. & Butler, P. 'Fears over 'vacuum' as top UK Homelessness advisor steps down', *Guardian*, 20 August 2020.

²⁸¹ There is an extensive literature on 'Housing First' for an overview, see: Padgett, D., Henwood, B. & Tsemberis, S., *Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems, and Changing Lives*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015).

be reinstated. As opposed to the ad hoc way that Labour's programme developed, it is clear that a national audit of need is required at the outset, and an appropriate allocation of funds committed for the long term. Delivery through local government appears to be broadly effective, but the funds must be permanently ring-fenced to ensure that they are not dissipated into the wider council budget. In London, a coordinated city-wide approach would be preferable to funds allocated to individual boroughs. In two-tier authorities the funding should be given to the housing authority. If contracting is to be retained, to ensure better co-operation and to preserve diversity of practice, bids by consortia of homeless agencies should be favoured. Contracts should be subject to review, but granted over a lengthy period with no requirement to re-tender every three years. Labour's systems of monitoring and control, although sometimes over-bureaucratic, appears to have been effective in raising standards and should be retained at least in part. The number of targets could be reduced and reporting requirements tweaked to make the volume of paperwork less onerous. Care needs to be taken to ensure that reporting requirements do not push providers away from 'strengths-based approaches' and into 'deficit' forms of interviewing. User empowerment has been repeatedly demonstrated as vital across all aspects of service provision and should be built in to all service contracts.

Most importantly, what this research demonstrates is that despite the significant reduction in funding since 2010, the necessary expertise to address street homelessness still exists in abundance within the sector. Many of those interviewed had decades of experience in homelessness, and all had reflected deeply on what worked in homeless provision and the strengths and weaknesses of the policy approach of successive governments. Although some have now retired, many have risen to become directors and CEOs of the expanded national agencies and regional champions that emerged during the New Labour period.

Within the organisations they work for and as individuals they contain a huge repository of knowledge and expertise that could be easily accessed and empowered if the political will do so was to be applied.

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Appendix A: Record of interviewees

Total Number of Interviewees: 90

By profession/role

Labour government politicians/special advisers/senior civil servants - **8**
Rough Sleepers Unit/Homelessness Directorate staff (including seconded staff) - **13**
CEOs/Senior staff in Voluntary Homeless Sector organisations - **45**
Frontline workers in homelessness - **7**
Local Authority employees with responsibility for Homelessness - **5**
Service User-empowerment/Lived experience of homelessness – **9** (2 text exchange only)
Health/Mental Health/Substance Misuse workers - **5**
Academics/other professionals involved with Psychologically Informed Environments – **3**
Police – **1**

Homelessness Sector by Region

London/National Agencies – **27**
Birmingham/West Midlands – **7**
Newcastle/North East – **5** (1 Local authority)
Stoke-on-Trent – **2** (1 local authority)
Bristol – **3** (2 local authority)
Brighton - **2** (1 local Authority)
Rural/Smaller Towns & Cities - **4**

New Labour/Government

Adrian Brown

Policy Advisor in Prime Minister's Office - Delivery Unit & Strategy Unit, 2002- 2005.

Charles Falconer,

Minister of State for the Cabinet Office 98-2001; Minister of State for Housing, Planning and Regeneration 2001-2, Minister of State for Criminal Justice, Sentencing and Law Reform 2002-3; Secretary of State for Justice/Lord High Chancellor 2003-7.

John Healey

Financial Secretary to the Treasury May 2005- June 2007; Minister of State for Local Government June 2007 – June 2009; Minister of State for Housing June 2009- April 2010.

Steve Hilditch

Member, Labour government Housing Advisory Board, 1997-2001, Adviser to successive Labour Housing Ministers from Hilary Armstrong to John Healey.

Geoff Mulgan

Director, Demos 1993-98; Head of Policy Prime Minister's Office 98– 2000; Director of Performance and Innovation Unit 2000-2; Director of Strategy Unit 2002-4.

Nick Raynsford

Minister for London 1997-1999; Minister of State for Housing and Planning 1999-2001; Minister of State for Local and Regional Government 2001-2005.

Iain Wright

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, DCLG (responsibilities included homelessness), July 2007-June 2009.

Social Exclusion Unit

Moira Wallace

Director, Social Exclusion Unit (1997-2002); Director, Office for Criminal justice Reform 2002-2005; Director General for Crime and Policing, Home Office, 2005-2008.

Rough Sleepers Unit/Homelessness Directorate

Terrie Alafat

DCLG, Director of Housing, 2002-2015, including leadership of Homelessness Directorate 2002-2010.

Ian Brady

Deputy CEO Centrepont. Seconded to advise the Conservative Housing Minister on rough sleeping in 1997; Social Exclusion Unit 1997-1999, Deputy Director RSU, 1999-2003; Deputy Director Anti-Social Behaviour Unit 2003-5; Head of Delivery for Respect Taskforce and Troubled families programme.

Louise Casey,

Director RSU, Homelessness 'Tsar', 1999-2002; Homelessness Directorate 2002-3; Head of Anti-Social Behaviour Unit 2003-2005; Head of Respect Taskforce, 'Respect Tsar', 2005-2010.

Richard Cunningham

Manager, Passage Day Centre; North Lambeth Day Centre; CAT Team leader; Lambeth Council Rough Sleeping Population Co-ordinator. Homelessness Directorate Specialist Advisor (Rough Sleeping) 2007-2008, Places of Change Programme Manager 2008-10.

Steve Guyon

DCLG/ Homelessness Directorate, Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness lead, 2004-2015.

Helen Keats

Housing Initiatives Manager, Portsmouth City Council 1990-2000, Seconded to RSU 2000-2002, Homelessness Directorate/Bed & Breakfast Unit, 2002-2012.

Gary Messenger

DCLG, Homelessness Directorate Senior Policy Officer 2002-6; DCLG, Head of Homelessness programme, 2006-2011.

Niamh Mohan

Researcher and Policy Assistant, Office of Dame Louise Casey, 2019-present.

Anne Wallis

Assistant Director, Strategic Policy and Communications RSU, 1999-2002.

(Rebecca Pritchard, Tom Preest, Dom Williamson & Neil Morland also had secondments at the Homelessness Directorate – see below)

Homeless Sector

London/National Agencies

Stuart Bakewell

Manager, Argyle Street Supported Housing project, St Mungo's; Area Manager, St Mungo's, 2002-2014. Founder of Recovery College 2007.

Fr Philip Bevan

Resettlement and Community Support Manager, St Mungo's, 1993-1997; Commissioned to co-write 'The Resettlement Handbook', National Homeless Alliance, 1997-1998; Community Support Manager, St Mungo's, 1998-1999; Multiple Needs Co-ordinator, National Homeless Alliance/Homeless Link, 2000-2006.

Mick Carroll

Head of quality and Information, St Mungo's, 1997-2004; Director, Mick Carroll Consulting Ltd, 2004-2006; MD, Leading Works, 2006-2008; Operations Manager, Harrow Churches Housing Association, 2008-2012.

Maxine Edney

CEO, Capital Housing, 1996-2000; Partner, Added Value Consultancy Services, 2002-2008 (interim director at HAS, St Botolph's, Turning Point, Southside Partnership); Centrepont, Chief Operations Officer, 2008-2013.

Jenny Edwards

CEO Homeless Link, 2004-2011.

Jon Fitzmaurice

London Regional Co-ordinator, National Housing Federation, 1987-91; CHAR, 1991-1998; Director, National Homeless Alliance, 1998-2000; Director, Self Help Housing, 2009 – present.

Charles Fraser

CEO, St Mungo's, 1994-2014.

John Kuhrt

Foyer Manager Centrepont 1997-1999; Cold Weather Shelter/ Rolling Shelter Manager, Centrepont, 1999-2000, Director of Community Mission, Shaftesbury Society, 2002-2010.

Pam Orchard

Training Programmes Manager, YMCA Scotland, 1998-2003; Deputy CEO Edinburgh Cyrenians, 2003-2011.

Don Macdonald

Chief Executive Foyer Federation, 1992-1996; Consultant and business planning for public, private and voluntary agencies including Crisis, Riverside HA and English Churches, 1996-2010.

Pat McArdle

Cork Simon Community; Head of Network Services, Foyer Federation, 2003-2008; Development Director, House of St Barnabas, 2006-2007; Director of Services, YWCA (Platform 51), 2008-2011.

Mike McCall

Regional Manager, St Mungo's; Operations Director, St Mungo's, 1999-2014.

Mark McGreevy

Group CEO, DePaul International 1990 – present.

Alastair Murray

Manager, Islington Churches Night Shelter 1999-2003, Manager, North London Action for the Homeless, 2001-2006; Development Worker, UNLEASH Church Action on Homelessness in London 2003-2007; Founder Night Shelter Forum, 2003; Director of Projects, Housing Justice, 2007-present.

Mark Palframan

Information Worker, National Day Centres Project 1995-1999; Co-ordinator, North London Action for the Homeless, 1998-1999; Cold Weather Shelter Project Worker, SHP, 1999-2000; Field Worker, Salvation Army Soup and Clothing Run Co-ordination Project, 2000-2001; St Volunteers Manager, Martin-in-the-Fields Social Care Unit, 2001-2004; Services Manager Simon Community 2004-2007; Co-ordinator, Camden Street Safe Project 2007-2009; Outreach Services Manager, Equinox Care, 2009-2010.

Tom Preest

Deputy Manager, English Churches Cold Weather Shelter, 1998-99; Outreach Manager Thames Reach, lead on Savoy Place, pilot CAT team, 1999-2000, Street Population Co-ordinator/head of anti-social behaviour, London Borough of Camden 2000-2001., Specialist advisor rough sleeping (seconded), Homelessness Directorate, 2001-2002; Head of Community safety LB Camden.

Rebecca Pritchard

Housing Services Manager Thames Reach, 1998-2001; Strategic Commissioning Manager, (Supporting People) Surrey County Council, 2001-2; Director of Services, Centrepoin, 2002-2005; Specialist Adviser (Youth Homelessness), DCLG, 2007; Head of Support and Neighbourhoods, National Housing Federation, 2008; Specialist Adviser (Rough Sleeping), DCLG, 2008-2010.

Jane Rothery

Simon Community, mid-1970s – mid-1980s.

Mike Seal

Homeless Development Worker, Voluntary Action Camden, 1996-1999; Commissioned to co-write 'The Resettlement Handbook', National Homeless Alliance, 1997-1998; Director, TRAC, Training Research and Consultancy, 1998-present (Published a number of books on homelessness and resettlement and developed qualifications for workers in homelessness); Homeless Services Co-ordinator, Federation of independent Advice Centres 1999-2000; Senior Lecturer at YMCA George Williams College, 2000-08; Head of Criminal and Youth and Community work, Newman University, 2008-2018.

Howard Sinclair

CEO, Broadway, 2002 until merger with St Mungo's 2014; CEO St Mungo's, 2014-2020.

Jeremy Swain

CEO Thames Reach, 1999- 2018.

Rebecca Sycamore

Social Worker, Mental Health Outreach (JET team), 1997-1998; Coordinator, 'Reach Out' Mental Health Outreach Project, Crisis, 1998-2000; Homeless Link, 2000-2009, Director of Regional Development, Homeless Link, 2005-2009.

Bill Tidnam

Resettlement Manager Riverpoint, 1997-2000, Tenancy Sustainment Team Manager 2000-2, Thames Reach; Services Manager, Thames Reach, 2002-2004; Departmental Director, Thames Reach, 2004-2018.

Tony Waters

Manager, Bondway Night Shelter, 1989-2001; Manager Graham House Hostel, Thames Reach Bondway, 2001 -2013.

Dominic Williamson,

Deputy Manager, St Mungo's Cold Weather Shelter, 1996-1997; Project Coordinator, Homeless Link, 1997-1999, Researcher and Project Manager, Homeless Link, 2001-2002; Manager, Hackney Road Project, Providence Row HA, 2002-2004.; Groundswell, Chair of Board of Trustees, 2006-2008; DCLG, Special Adviser Rough Sleeping (secondment), 2008; Homeless Link, Director of policy and Campaigns, 2004-2009; CEO Revolving Doors, 2009-2014.

John Yeudall

Member of Management Committee, Simon Community 1972-1989, Chair, Simon Community, 2001-2005.

Frontline Workers

Outreach worker 1

Roles Held in period: (all London) Outreach Worker; Day Centre worker; CAT Team Worker.

Outreach Worker 2

Roles Held in period: (all London) Outreach worker; Local Authority Housing Support Worker; Day Centre Case Worker; Youth Worker; Trainer in motivational interviewing.

Hostel Worker 1

Roles Held in period: (London & South Coast) Hostel worker; Floating Support Worker; Cold Weather Shelter Resettlement Worker; Outreach Worker; Day Centre worker; Women's Refuge Support Worker.

Hostel Worker 2

Roles Held in period: (all London) Cold Weather Shelter Manager; Hostel Manager.

Hostel Worker 3

Roles Held in period: (all London) Mental Health Worker; Drugs Worker; Manager, Multiple Needs & Prevention Team: Housing association Head of Operations; Planning & Development Manager Homelessness and Health.

Day Centre Worker 1

Roles Held in period: (all London) Simon Community Volunteer, day centre worker, skills trainer for people with lived experience of homelessness.

Day Centre Worker 2

Roles Held in period: (all London) Day Centre Manager; Homelessness and ex-offenders project manager.

Regional Homeless Sector

Birmingham/West Midlands

Alan Fraser

CEO, Redditch YMCA, 2002-2005; CEO Birmingham YMCA, 2005-2021.

Jonathan Greenwood

Housing Officer, Elgar Housing Association, 1995-1998; Area Housing Manager, Partnership Housing Group, 1998-2001; Foyer Manager, Malvern Hills Homeless Young Adults Trust,

2001-2002; Housing Manager, Elgar Housing Association, 2002-2004; Manager (Young People's Projects), 2004-2012.

Dave Hider

Project Worker, YMCA Exeter, 1996-1998; Manager, Gloucester & Hereford YMCA, 1998-2001; Head, SHYPP (Supported Housing Young People's project), 2001-2007; Group Head Care and Supported Housing Citizen HA, 2007-2010.

Garry Murphy

Manager, Salvation Army hostel, Coventry, 1997-2000; Manager, Birmingham Salvation Army Hostel & Domestic Violence scheme, 2000-2015.

Jean Templeton

Director, St Basil's, 2000- present.

Steven Philpott

Focus Housing, Team Leader Outreach Services (CAT team from 2000) 1999-2002; Head of Homelessness Services Centre, Focus Housing/Midland Heart 2002-2009; Places of Change Programme Manager, Midland Heart, 2009-2012.

Newcastle/North East

Neil Baird,

Day Centre Worker/Deputy Manager, Tyneside Cyrenians, 2002; Assistant Director (Communications and Fundraising, ACE programme & Rough Sleeping/Direct Access lead, Cyrenians/Changing Lives, 2002-present.

Stephen Bell

Tyneside Cyrenians, 1995-2002; CEO, The Cyrenians (Changing Lives from 2013) – present.

Steve McKinley,

Head of training, Sunderland YMCA, 2003-2006: Regional Manager (NE), DePaul Trust, 2006-2014.

Shelia Spencer

Housing and Homelessness Consultant, 1995- present. Work included: DCLG, co-lead on evaluation of homeless strategies in England, 2002- 2004; Advising local authorities across England on Supporting People from 2003, and work on ex-offenders, Supported Housing Strategies and substance misuse strategies; Newcastle Homeless Prevention Project 2005-present.

Local Authority - Newcastle City Council

Neil Munslow

Housing Services Manager, Newcastle City Council, 1989-Present.

Stoke-on-Trent

Gill Brown

CEO, Brighter Futures, 1987 -2015.

Neil Morland

RSI Team Leader, Potteries Housing Association, 1998-2003; Housing Solutions Manager Stoke City Council, 2003-2007, DCLG, Specialist Adviser on Homelessness, 2007-2010.

Brighton

Jenny Backwell

Director, Brighton Housing Trust, 1981-2003.

Andy Winter

Senior Manager, Substance Misuse and Mental Health Services, Brighton Housing Trust, 1987-2003; CEO, Brighton Housing Trust, 2003-present.

(both Helen Keats and Jerry Ham also worked in homelessness in Brighton)

Bristol

Dom Wood

Housing Manager, Priority Youth Housing Services (PYHS), 1996-2003; Director, Priority Youth Housing Services, 2003-2009. PYHS merged with Way Ahead Housing in 2009 to become 1625 Independent People. CEO, 1625 Independent People, 2009-present.

Local Authority – Bristol City Council

Olly Alcock

Advisor, Hub Advice Centre, 1995-1999; Supporting People team/Single Homeless Rough Sleeping Service Manager, Bristol City Council, 1999-2010.

Shaun Fitzpatrick

Housing Corporation appointee, Carr-Gomm, 1998-1999; Housing and Community Care Manager, South Gloucestershire Council, 1999 -2001 (?), Supporting People Manager, Bristol City Council, 2001- 2005 (?); Supporting People Manager, North Somerset, 2005-.

Plymouth/Devon

John Hamblin

Head of Training, Shekinah, 1999-2008; CEO, Shekinah, 2008-present

Canterbury

Mike Barrett

CEO, Porchlight, 1999-present

Luton/Bedfordshire

David Morris

CEO, Noah Enterprises, 2020- present.

Jim O'Connor

CEO, Noah Enterprises, 2000-2020.

User Empowerment/ Lived Experience

Toby Blume

Volunteer/Project Worker responsible for small grants programme, Groundswell, 1997-2001, Director, Groundswell, 2001-2003.

David Ford

Volunteer Support worker, Croydon Churches Housing Association, 2009-2010; Facilitator, SMART Recovery, 2009-2010; Volunteer Support Worker, Salvation Army Advice and Guidance Centre, 2010-2012; Volunteer, The Well (Salvation Army), 2010-2012; Homeless Services Co-ordinator, Salvation Army, 2012-2013; Expert Advisory Panel, Homeless Link, 2011-2014.

Matt & Jess Turtle

Co-Founders, Museum of Homelessness, 2015-present.

Athol Halle

Training & Conference Manager, National Homeless Alliance, 1999-2000; Project Manager, Cardboard Citizens, 2000-2003; CEO, Groundswell, 2004-2017.

Jerry Ham

National Co-ordinator, Groundswell (National Homelessness Alliance), 1996-2001; Programme Manager, Brighton Housing Trust, 2003-2006.

Andy Williams

Homeless Persons Unit worker, Westminster City Council, 1997-1998; Resettlement Worker, Thames Reach, 1998-2002; Team Leader Lambeth Floating Support Team, Thames Reach, 2002-2004; Service-User Involvement Co-ordinator, St Mungo's, 2004-2008; Set up 'Outside In' 2005; Client Involvement Manager, 2008-2013.

Rough Sleeper X, London & Brighton

Rough Sleeper Y London

(Comments by text)

Rough Sleeper Z London

(comments by text)

Health Services

Jane Cook

Clinical Nurse Specialist, Camden & Islington Community Health NHS Trust, Healthcare Homeless Outreach with PCHP, 1994-2001; Team Leader, Refugee Clinical Team, Lambeth Primary Care Trust, 2001-2003); County Lead – Health of Black and Ethnic Minority Groups, East Sussex CMT, 2008-2012.

Gill Leng,

Executive Director – Strategic Housing Services, HGN, 2006-2010; National Advisor – homes & Health, Public Health England, 2014-2017.

Dr Philip Reid,

GP, Great Chapel Street Medical Centre, 1992-2022, Trustee, Wytham Hall, 1992-2022.

Dr Philip Timms

Consultant Psychiatrist – Leader of Mental Health and Homelessness Outreach START team, 1991-2015 (?).

Substance Misuse

Kevin Flemen

Young Persons Drug Worker, (Street and Satellite Work & Research), Hungerford Project, 1993-1997; Substance Misuse Worker, Big Issue, 1997-1998; Project Officer - Social Exclusion team, Release, 1998-2002; Acting Director, Release, 2002; Drug Consultant, KFX, 2002-present. Publications include 'Smoke and Whispers' for Turning Point (1997); 'Room for Drugs' for Release, 1999; 'Safe as Houses' for Shelter (2006); 'Tackling Drug Use in Rented Housing – A Good Practice Guide' for the Home Office (2008).

Psychologically Informed Environments

Robin Johnson

Mental Health and Housing Lead, National Social Inclusion Programme (NIMHE), 2007-2009; Member, Enabling Environments Development Group – Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2008-2012. RJA Consultancy, many consulting roles including Rethink (mental health) and

development of concept of Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE); Founder & Director, Homelessness Insight, 2010-present; Editor/Chief Curator PIElink, 2012-present.

Nick Maguire

Clinical Psychologist, NHS, 1999-2004; Trainer, Homeless Link, 2006-2010); Deputy CBT Course Director, University of Southampton, 2003-2012; Trustee, Revolving Doors, 2010-2018.

Dr Christopher Scanlon,

Consultant Psychotherapist & lead Training and Consultation, SW London & St. Georges Mental Health NHS Trust – Henderson Hospital Democratic Therapeutic Community, 1999-2008; Senior lecturer Forensic Mental Health, St Georges, 2000-2011; Senior Research Fellow, University of West of England – psychosocial practice in working with social exclusion in mental health & social care, 2007-2013.

Police

Dave Musker

Superintendent/ Chief Inspector, Metropolitan Police Brixton, 1989-2010. Lead on homelessness in Lambeth, (including leading on the closure of the Bullring), founded and chaired “Seven Borough Alliance’ on homelessness.

Appendix B: Participant Information Leaflet – Key Decision Makers

Title of Proposed Study:

A Hand Up not a Hand Out: Street Homelessness and the Labour Governments 1997-2010

Description of proposed study:

My research project investigates the Labour government's interventions in street homelessness between 1997 and 2010. It has three principal aims. 1. To evaluate the motivations for Labour's engagement with street homelessness in its historical context. 2. To evaluate the delivery of the programme; its strengths and weakness, the means by which it was managed and controlled, the working practices used, the resources applied to the task, and its impact on both those working in homelessness and homeless people who participated in the programme. 3. To make an overall evaluation of the efficacy of the Labour party's homelessness programme.

To fulfil these aims, I plan to conduct a series of oral history interviews with three groups of people involved with the Labour party's programme; key decision makers responsible for designing and overseeing the conduct of the programme; workers in the voluntary sector and local government responsible for its delivery, and homeless people who participated in the programme.

What does participation entail?

If you would like to participate in this study, you do so on a voluntary basis. To participate in this study, you will be required to give up roughly one to two hours of your time for an online audio-recorded interview. This would take place at a time acceptable to both interviewer and interviewee.

You can refuse to answer questions if you wish, and I will stop the interview if you feel uncomfortable at any point. If, following the interview, you are unhappy with certain things you have said, you can select them and ask me to exclude them from my research. You may withdraw from the study up to one month after an interview has taken place. If you decide to do this, your data will be destroyed.

Please note that the interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. Recordings and transcripts will later be deposited in an archive for use by future researchers.

If there is anything you do not understand prior to participating, please seek further clarification from me.

Confidentiality and data security:

As you played a key role in the devising/delivering of the homeless programme during this period, your testimony would have a greater impact on the historical record if it was *not* anonymised, but if you would prefer your identity to be confidential, I would not wish that to be a barrier to your participation. If requested, I will use pseudonyms for your name and

the names of anyone you mention, and I will not include any specific information that might lead you to be identified. In these circumstances I will only share identifiable information with my PhD supervisors: Professor Nicholas Crowson and Dr Chris Moores.

Please note that if disclosures are made which indicate that you or someone else is at risk, I may have to share these with the relevant authorities.

Reimbursement / expenses:

There will be no reward, reimbursement or expenses paid.

Results of the study:

Quotes from the interviews and analysis of these quotes will be used in my doctoral thesis, in academic publications, and in papers delivered at academic conferences. Data provided may also be used to place the interviews in their social and historical context but any details will be kept non-specific, ensuring that it is not possible to identify you individually.

The recordings and transcripts will be deposited in an archive for use by future researchers.

Funding:

The study is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, through the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership.

Contact details:

Lead Researcher:

David Christie
PhD History
University of Birmingham

Email address: [REDACTED]

Supervisor:

Professor Nicholas Crowson
Professor of Contemporary British History
University of Birmingham

Email address: [REDACTED]

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Appendix C: Participant Information Leaflet – Practitioners

Title of Proposed Study:

A Hand Up not a Hand Out: Street Homelessness and the Labour Governments 1997-2010

Description of proposed study:

My research investigates the Labour government's interventions in street homelessness between 1997 and 2010. It has three principal aims. 1. To evaluate the motivations for Labour's engagement with street homelessness in its historical context. 2. To evaluate the delivery of the programme; its strengths and weakness, the means by which it was managed and controlled, the working practices used, the resources applied to the task and its impact on both those working in homelessness and homeless people themselves. 3. To make an overall evaluation of the efficacy of the Labour party's homelessness programme.

To fulfil these aims, I plan to conduct a series of oral history interviews will be undertaken with three groups of people involved with the Labour party's programme; key decision makers responsible for designing and overseeing the conduct of the programme; workers in the voluntary sector and local government responsible for its delivery, and homeless people who participated in the programme.

What does participation entail?

If you would like to participate in this study, you do so on a voluntary basis. To participate in this study, you will be required to give up roughly one to two hours of your time for a face-to-face audio-recorded interview. This would take place at a location acceptable to both interviewer and interviewee.

You can refuse to answer questions if you wish, and I will stop the interview if you feel uncomfortable at any point. You may withdraw from the study up to six months after an interview has taken place. If you decide to do this, your data will be destroyed.

If there is anything you do not understand prior to participating, please seek further clarification from me.

Please note that the interview will be recorded using a digital recorder for transcription purposes. Recordings and transcripts will later be deposited in an archive for use by future researchers.

Your participation in this research may provide valuable information that can be used to plan and improve services for homeless people in the future

If, following the interview, you are unhappy with certain things you have said, you can select them and ask me to exclude them from my research.

Confidentiality and data security:

Your data will be treated as confidential, unless you request otherwise. This means that when I use the interviews in my research I will use pseudonyms for your name and the names of anyone you mention, and I will not include any specific information that might lead you to be identified. I will only share identifiable information with my PhD supervisors: Professor Nicholas Crowson and Dr Chris Moores.

Please note that if disclosures are made which indicate that you or someone else is at risk, I may have to share these with the relevant authorities.

Reimbursement / expenses:

There will be no reward, reimbursement or expenses paid to the participant.

Results of the study:

Quotes from the interviews and analysis of these quotes will be used in my doctoral thesis, in academic publications, and in papers delivered at academic conferences. Data provided may also be used to place the interviews in their social and historical context but any details will be kept non-specific, ensuring that it is not possible to identify you individually.

The recordings and transcripts will be deposited in an archive for use by future researchers.

Funding:

The study is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, through the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership.

Contact details:

Lead Researcher:

David Christie

PhD History

University of Birmingham

Email address: [REDACTED]

Supervisor:

Professor Nicholas Crowson

Professor of Contemporary British History

University of Birmingham

Email address: [REDACTED]

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Appendix D: Participant Information Leaflet - Service Users

Title of Proposed Study:

'A Hand Up not a Hand Out: Street Homelessness and the Labour Governments 1997-2010.'

Description of proposed study:

My research investigates the Labour governments' programme for rough sleepers between 1997 and 2010. It has three main aims. 1. To understand why the Labour governments focussed on street homelessness. 2. To consider the strengths and weakness of the different parts of the programme and their impact on both those working in homelessness and homeless people themselves. 3. To find out how effective the Labour party's homelessness programme was overall.

To achieve this, I plan to conduct a series of oral history interviews with three groups of people involved with the Labour party's programme; the key decision makers responsible for designing and overseeing the programme; workers in the voluntary sector and local government responsible for its delivery, and homeless people who participated in the programme.

I am aware that this research project may touch upon sensitive subjects and painful memories and great care will be taken to avoid distress. It is hoped that the research will help improve services to homeless people in the future.

What does participation entail?

Obviously, participation in this study is voluntary. It will require you to give up between one to two hours of your time for a face-to-face audio-recorded interview. This would take place at a place and time convenient to you. Any money spent on travelling to the interview will be reimbursed.

You can refuse to answer questions if you wish, and I will stop the interview if you feel uncomfortable at any point.

The interview will be recorded using a digital recorder. Recordings and transcripts (written copies of what was said) will be kept an archive for use by future researchers.

After the interview has taken place, I will type up a written copy of what you have said (a transcription). If you want to have a copy of the transcription, let me know and I will send you one. If you are unhappy with anything you have said I can remove it from the record.

If, in the month following the interview, you decide you no longer wish to take part, let me know and I will destroy both the audio recording and the written copy.

Please note that if you are still receiving support from a homeless agency, whether or not you chose to take part in this research (or anything you say) will not be shared with that agency, and will make no difference to any services you receive.

Your participation in this research may provide valuable information that can be used to plan and improve services for homeless people in the future.

If there is anything you do not understand prior to participating, please seek further clarification from me.

If you are interested in finding out the full results of the research, please let me know and I will send you a summary of the most important findings. I would also be interested in any comments you may have on the results of the research and will make sure you have a contact address so that you can get in touch with me.

Confidentiality and data security:

Your data will be treated as confidential. This means that when I use the interviews in my research I will use pseudonyms (made up names) for your name and the names of anyone you mention, and I will not include any specific information that would make it possible for anyone to identify you. I will only share identifiable information with my PhD supervisors: Professor Nicholas Crowson and Dr Chris Moores.

Please note that if something you say suggests that you or someone else is at risk, I may have to share these with the relevant authorities.

Reimbursement / expenses:

Travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Results of the study:

Quotes from the interviews will be used in my doctoral thesis, in academic publications, and at academic conferences, but no details that could identify you individually will be shared.


The recordings and transcripts (typed copies of interviews) will be kept in an archive for use by future researchers.

Funding:

The study is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, through the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership.

Contact details:

Lead Researcher:

David Christie
PhD History
University of Birmingham
Email address: 

Supervisor:

Professor Nicholas Crowson

Professor of Contemporary British History

University of Birmingham

Email address: [REDACTED]

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Appendix E: Consent Form

A Hand Up not a Hand Out: Street Homelessness under the Labour Governments 1997-2010

Oral History Consent Form

This agreement constitutes a release by _____ ('the Participant') of a digital recording of an interview that is to take place on _____ to David Alan Christie ('the Researcher'). The recording, transcript of the recording, and any accompanying material will be the property of the Researcher, and will be available for his use unless any restrictions are specified below. It is intended that extracts from the written transcript of the recording will be used by the Researcher in a history of street homelessness under the Labour governments between 1997 and 2010. Extracts will be used in the Researcher's doctoral thesis, in academic publications, in conference papers and in academic presentations about the research. If any other use of the digital recording is requested (such as radio or television productions) further permission will be sought from the Participant. Following standard oral history practice, on completion of his doctoral thesis, the Researcher will deposit all recorded and printed material in an archive to make it available for other historians.

The information is being collected as part of a research project conducted by the Department of History at the University of Birmingham, in collaboration with the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The information which you supply will be transcribed and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research and statistical and audit purposes. The data will be stored for ten years in line with University of Birmingham policy.

By supplying this information, you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. No identifiable personal data will be published, unless the Participant wishes to remain identifiable.

- I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that I am giving consent to have the interview audio recorded.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw up to one month after the interview without giving any reason. If I withdraw my data will be removed from the study and will be destroyed.
- I understand that my personal data will be processed for the purposes detailed above, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Based on the above, I agree to take part in this study.

Name of Participant (in block capitals): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Researcher (in block capitals): DAVID CHRISTIE

Signature:  Date: _____