SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Tracking Homelessness: A Feasibility Study

Development Department

social research

TRACKING HOMELESSNESS: A FEASIBILITY STUDY

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Scottish Executive established a Homelessness Task Force (HTF) in August 1999 to:

> *"…review the causes and nature of homelessness in Scotland; to examine current practice in dealing with cases of homelessness; and to make recommendations on how homelessness in Scotland can best be prevented and, where it does occur, tackled effectively".*

1.2 The HTF included members from both the statutory and voluntary sectors, and was chaired by relevant Scottish Ministers. The HTF's first report made a series of recommendations for legislative change (Scottish Executive, 2000), which were incorporated into the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. A key change introduced by this Act was the requirement for local authorities to produce homelessness strategies for their area. The HTF's final report was published in February 2002, and made a raft of wide-ranging recommendations on preventing, alleviating and resolving homelessness. It also included a set of proposals for more radical change to Scotland's homelessness legislation, and these recommendations have been incorporated into the Homelessness (Scotland) Bill currently before the Scottish Parliament.

1.3 The HTF final report further recommended the establishment of a Homelessness Monitoring Group (HMG) to assess progress in implementing the HTF's recommendations. It suggested a 'basket' of statistical indicators that the HMG should pay particular but not exclusive attention to assess progress in tackling homelessness in Scotland. The HMG has now been established and is considering how best to monitor the implementation of the HTF's recommendations and, more fundamentally, to evaluate the impact of the resultant policy and legal changes.

1.4 This report describes the work undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research, the University of Glasgow and the University of Essex to consider how, and in what ways, longitudinal research could assist the work of the HMG. Research conducted for the HTF (Anderson & Tulloch, 2000; Pawson *et al.*, 2001; Rosengard *et al.*, 2002) and the Scottish Executive (Hinds, Sproston and Taylor, 2001) had already highlighted the need for longitudinal research into homelessness in order to understand better the processes which lead people into and out of this situation, and to develop more robust evaluations of specific interventions and projects designed to tackle homelessness.

1.5 The original aims of the study were:

- to identify which groups of homeless people/families – including potentially, currently, and ex-homeless people – can feasibly be studied through longitudinal research;
- to assess specific methodological elements including recruitment and retention of participants;
- to address the ethical and data protection aspect of different methodologies;
- to investigate costs and relative risk of different methodologies;
- to consider how a longitudinal study of homeless people would need to be designed to contribute to evaluations of particular projects or initiatives intended to assist them;

- to carefully assess and compare the relative advantages and disadvantages of different methodologies including the nature, quality, relevance and application to policy of the data generated;
- to make recommendations on a preferred methodology;
- to provide a draft research specification with guideline costs for implementing the recommended methodology.

1.6 From the outset it was clear that we were not trying to design one all-purpose longitudinal study, but rather to look at a combination of approaches that might be undertaken to meet these aims.

1.7 The research for the study was mainly desk-based. A literature review of relevant papers on longitudinal research that had been undertaken in both the United Kingdom and the United States was produced (Chapter 3). As well as identifying what longitudinal research had been undertaken, it also highlighted what research methods had been used and with what degree of success. This review identified where there was a lack of longitudinal research in Scotland and informed a subsequent examination of the policy needs from a study on homelessness (Chapter 2).

1.8 In parallel to the literature review, information about the data on homelessness from administrative sources that are available in Scotland and the main surveys undertaken in Scotland was obtained from both published documents and telephone interviews. Interviews were also undertaken with local authority staff and with staff at a number of homelessness projects. These interviews were undertaken not just to collect relevant information on datasets that are currently held relating to homelessness clients of the local authorities/ projects, but also to assess the feasibility of accessing such data for research purposes.

1.9 Having obtained information about current data availability and policy requirements for new research, we then embarked on a process of exploring research designs that might meet these policy needs. Particular emphasis was given to the types of homelessness for which there is a current lack of information. Chapter 4 describes the various options that were considered as possible approaches to gathering longitudinal information and includes summary research designs for the more promising ideas. Chapter 5 gives detailed information on ways in which tracking of homeless people might be undertaken in any longitudinal research design and examines data protection and ethical issues that need to be considered.

1.10 At the final stage, recommendations (Chapter 6) were made as to the approaches that should be further pursued.

CHAPTER TWO THE NEED FOR LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH ON HOMELESSNESS

2.1 This chapter clarifies the parameters of this research by outlining the definition of homelessness to which we are working. It also describes the needs of policy for longitudinal research on homelessness, and explains the limitations of existing longitudinal research in this area.

DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

2.2 In this study we have adopted the HTF definition of homelessness (Scottish Executive, 2001). This includes all groups currently defined as statutorily homeless, namely those:

- without any accommodation in which they can live with their families;
- who cannot gain access to their accommodation or would risk domestic violence by living there;
- whose accommodation is 'unreasonable', or is overcrowded and a danger to health; and
- whose accommodation is a caravan or boat and they have nowhere to park it.

2.3 In addition, the HTF defined people experiencing any of the following situations as homeless, whether or not these circumstances fit within current statutory definitions:

- rooflessness – people without shelter of any kind, including those sleeping rough, victims of fire and flood, and newly arrived immigrants;
- houselessness – people living in emergency and temporary accommodation provided for homeless people, such as night shelters, hostels and refuges;
- unsuitable accommodation - people residing in accommodation, such as Bed & Breakfast premises, which is unsuitable as long stay accommodation;
- institutions - people staying in institutions because they have nowhere else to go;
- insecure accommodation - this group includes:
  - tenants or owner-occupiers likely to be evicted (whether lawfully or unlawfully);
  - people with no legal rights or permission to remain in accommodation, such as squatters or young people asked to leave the family home; and
  - people with only a short-term permission to stay, such as those moving around friends' and relatives' houses with no stable base;
- involuntary sharing – people involuntarily sharing accommodation with another household on a long-term basis in housing circumstances deemed to be unreasonable.

2.4 We have endeavoured to develop potential designs for longitudinal research which will encompass as many of these dimensions of homelessness as possible. In addition, we have tried to take account of hidden as well as visible aspects of homelessness in the proposed methodologies. According to Webb (1994), people can be considered 'visibly homeless' if:

- their homelessness is recorded in official statistics, that is, they have applied to and/or have been accepted by a local housing authority as homeless; or

- they are in contact with homelessness agencies and/or staying in homeless hostels; or
- they are sleeping rough in visible areas or on known sites, for example, in the city centre.

2.5 The hidden homeless are therefore those whose homelessness is not visible in these respects. Households involuntarily sharing accommodation and people experiencing intolerable and/or insecure housing circumstances are the main groups usually referred to as hidden homeless. However, the other categories of homelessness described above can also take hidden forms, e.g. even rooflessness can be hidden if people sleep rough away from known sites.

THE NEEDS OF POLICY FOR LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH

2.6 Homelessness research in the United Kingdom and in the United States has traditionally been cross-sectional in nature. That is, it has provided only a snapshot of homeless people's circumstances at a particular point in time. In the past few years longitudinal research, which tracks the progress of a particular group (or cohort) of people over time, has been identified as a key priority for future work (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2000; Anderson & Tulloch, 2000). There are two main reasons why longitudinal research is considered to have particular value for homelessness policy.

2.7 First, longitudinal data is required to aid general understanding of the experience of homelessness, and of what happens before and after homeless episodes. Such data is necessary, for example, to provide robust estimates of the numbers of people who experience short-term, long-term or episodic homelessness. Longitudinal research also enables one to identify more precisely the circumstances which lead households to move in and out of homelessness, with Rossi (1991) and others highlighting the importance of such *leverage* points in the development of preventative policies. More generally, longitudinal research can help one to understand chaotic lives better because data is collected closer to when significant events happen.

2.8 Second, longitudinal data is required to develop more robust evaluations of particular interventions and initiatives aimed at tackling homelessness, including those introduced as a result of the work of the HTF. The existing evaluative research on homelessness interventions in the UK is very weak, and in particular there are very few longitudinal evaluations which enable long-term outcomes to be assessed (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2000; Anderson & Tulloch, 2000). Both the life skills training (Jones *et al.*, 2001) and intermediate accommodation (Kennedy & Lynch, 2001) research conducted for the HTF highlighted the lack of evaluative evidence on the relative merits of different models of resettlement provision. The HTF's 'routes out' research confirmed the need for longitudinal evidence on people's pathways out of homelessness to inform policy priorities and investment decisions:

> *"Increasingly, research and evaluations emphasise the need for systematic tracking of rehousing and resettlement outcomes, emphasising this is essential to identify the barriers to sustainable resettlement and 'what works' in service provision." (Rosengard et al., 2002:13)*

2.9 Leading authors in the US have also stressed the importance of longitudinal evaluations of programmes aimed at tackling homelessness. Rossi (1991, p.1049), for example, comments: "*Because change can only be defined in longitudinal terms, the* *implication is that evaluations are longitudinal observations*". He acknowledges the particular difficulties of making repeated contacts with homeless people, but argues that this does not mean that longitudinal research with this group was impossible "*…only very difficult and therefore very expensive*" (p.1041). In a similar vein, Cohen *et al.* (1993, p.332) argue: "*Obviously research studies need to employ longitudinal designs and short and long-term follow-up periods in order to evaluate effectiveness comprehensively*".

2.10 Despite a burgeoning of longitudinal research on homelessness in the US in the 1990s, researchers there continue to argue that there are insufficient long-term studies of resettlement interventions to allow firm conclusions to be reached on their effectiveness (Shinn & Baumohl, 1999). Barrow & Zimmer (1999), for example, contend that studies of transitional housing should include follow-up work extending at least one year, and ideally two, from the point of entry. Similarly, Robertson *et al.* (1999) argue that more longitudinal research is needed to help develop understanding about the resources required to enable young homeless people to achieve positive outcomes in adulthood.

2.11 In assessing the policy value of any particular design for conducting longitudinal research on homelessness several key points must be considered:

- the breadth of the research questions that can (at least potentially) be addressed;
- the methodological robustness which is likely to be achieved (e.g. statistical representativeness, retention rates etc.);
- which groups within the homeless population would be covered. For example, studies using local authority records will tend to be more successful at picking up families with children, whereas those which draw samples from voluntary sector homelessness services will include mainly single people. Similarly, different strategies are probably needed to identify and track hidden and visible homeless people, and possibly different age groups; and
- whether the tracking methods proposed will most easily pick up those with positive or negative outcomes (i.e. those who have or haven't moved out of homelessness).

2.12 These points are addressed in Chapter 4 in relation to each of the potential research designs.

THE LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH ON HOMELESSNESS IN THE UK

2.13 Some recent research on homelessness in the UK has attempted to incorporate a more dynamic, longitudinal dimension, focusing on people's pathways through homelessness (see Anderson & Tulloch, 2000, for a review). However, the great majority of these studies have relied on retrospective accounts from currently homeless people. This introduces two important limitations into the data produced:

- its retrospective nature prompts concerns about the reliability of respondents' recall of past events, particularly for those with chaotic and/or transient lifestyles; and

- it suffers from right hand censorship because data gathering ceases at a point when the sample is still homeless. This means that much more is known about routes into than routes out of homelessness.

2.14 There have been some recent attempts in the UK to address these gaps through for example, follow-up studies which track homeless people's progress prospectively, or through surveying ex-homeless people. These studies are reviewed in Chapter 3, together with a selection of relevant US literature.

2.15 A further limitation in the UK homelessness literature is the lack of robust statistical studies (unlike in the US where quantitative studies based on large samples are much more common). This means that quantitative research questions, for example regarding the proportion of the homeless population with support needs, remain unanswered. The main exceptions to this dearth of quantitative data are the major Department of the Environment funded studies of single homeless people (Anderson *et al.*, 1993) and homeless applicants to local authorities (O'Callaghan *et al.*, 1996). However, only the latter had any prospective longitudinal element, and is therefore reviewed in Chapter 3.

CONCLUSIONS

2.16 This chapter has defined the parameters of this study by outlining the definition of homelessness employed, and has indicated our intention to address both visible and hidden dimensions of the phenomenon. It has also clarified the policy needs for longitudinal research on homelessness, highlighting its importance in enhancing our general understanding of movement in to and out of homelessness and in developing robust evaluations of policy interventions. Finally, it has pointed to the shortage of homelessness research in the UK which has a prospective longitudinal dimension or is capable of tracing routes out of homelessness.

CHAPTER THREE A REVIEW OF EXISTING LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH ON HOMELESSNESS IN THE UK AND US

3.1 This chapter reviews the (limited) existing longitudinal research on homelessness in the UK, supplementing this with selected US studies. We focus on those studies which attempt to fill at least one of the gaps identified in Chapter 2, namely prospective data on homeless people's progress over time and information on routes out of homelessness.

3.2 The studies reviewed fall into two main types: surveys (quantitative and qualitative); and administrative tracking data. While these two approaches to research can be combined in a single research study (as they were in O'Callaghan *et al.*, 1996), they are more usually pursued independently and raise quite different methodological issues. For this reason they are discussed separately. The tables in Annexes 1 and 2 provide summaries of the key studies in the UK and US.

SURVEYS

3.3 Rossi (1990) identified three possible approaches to longitudinal research on homelessness:

(1) Full prospective - this is the most elaborate model. It would start with a sample of people at high risk of becoming homeless, contacting them periodically over a given time span, noting those who become homeless and, among them, those who remain homeless and those who leave homelessness. Rossi identified the major difficulty with this approach as identifying a group with a high enough risk of homelessness – the screening task would be formidable and much effort could be expended tracing people who do not experience homelessness.

(2) Semi-retrospective - this involves locating people who are already homeless and then following their progress over time, with their pre-homelessness experiences reconstructed by asking for retrospective accounts. While this approach is logistically easier than the full prospective model, Rossi highlights the potential unreliability of the retrospective data collected. There also remains the challenge of maintaining contact with a sample of homeless people, many of whom may be leading highly mobile and/or chaotic lives.

(3) Full-retrospective - Rossi describes this as the 'least attractive' but perhaps most feasible approach. Here retrospective accounts of entry and exit from homelessness are gathered from people who have been successfully re-housed. As well as the usual concerns about retrospective accounts, Rossi also points out that those people who have managed to move out of homelessness may not be representative of the entire homeless population, with the long-term homeless in particular likely to be under-represented.

3.4 We use this framework to structure our discussion of surveys.

Full prospective

3.5 Unsurprisingly, given the practical problems inherent in this type of research, full prospective research has seldom been attempted in either the US or UK. However, Stockley *et al.'s* (1993) tracking of 72 young people at risk of homelessness in the south of England could be said to fit into this category. These authors used agency and family informants, as well as more informal tracking through friendship networks, to locate and re-interview their sample one year after the initial interview. The concepts of 'maximum' and 'minimum' information were employed in this study, whereby 'maximum' denoted first-hand information received from the young people themselves (through interviews or questionnaire responses), and 'minimum' referred to second-hand data received from other informants (see also Smith & Gilford, 1991).

Semi-retrospective

3.6 Over the course of the 1990s the US has moved far ahead of the UK in relation to semi-retrospective research, with projects in a range of US cities following a sample of homeless people over time (Burt, 1999). Typically, these US studies comprise large-scale, quantitative surveys which repeatedly interview a cohort of individuals or families sampled from homelessness services. Tracking time scales range from six months to two years, and there are usually two or three waves of interviews. More recent studies tend to be both more ambitious and more successful in tracking homeless people.

3.7 A key early attempt at longitudinal follow-up was made by Sosin *et al.* (1990) who conducted a two-wave, six-month panel study of 451 homeless individuals recruited from homelessness services in Minneapolis (see also Piliavin *et al.*, 1996). Their main research interest was patterns of exits and returns to homelessness. They used a variety of methods to locate sample members for the second interview, including agency and family/friend informants; change of address postcards; and signs and announcements in the relevant services. They also used modest cash incentives. They managed to re-interview 58 per cent of their sample, but do not comment on the relative success of the different search strategies employed.

3.8 In 1993, Cohen *et al.* published an extensive review of prospective homelessness research in the US, including detailed advice on tracking homeless people (discussed in Chapter 5.) They found that attrition rates varied widely in these studies, with some researchers managing to retain contact with only a third of their respondents, while others achieved follow-up rates of over 70 per cent. Cohen *et al.* attributed higher retention levels to more generous incentives, frequent contacts between interviews, and maintaining a presence in settings frequented by participants. In their own study of 163 homeless individuals, they managed to locate 86 per cent of participants at 4 months (re-interviewing 76%), and located 83 per cent at 12 months (re-interviewing 68%). The major variable distinguishing the *locatability* of respondents was service engagement, with those who accepted most help easiest to find. Even higher retention rates have been achieved in some recent studies, with Wong & Piliavin (2001) managing to re-interview 81 per cent of their sample of 564 homeless individuals up to a year after initial contact. Bassuk *et al.* (2001) successfully tracked 76 per cent of their sample of 220 homeless families over a period of two years. Unfortunately, neither of these sets of authors detail the tracking methods they used.

3.9 Survey research with a prospective dimension has less often been attempted in the UK, but several youth homelessness studies have included a follow-up element. Fitzpatrick (2000) used a similar approach to that of Stockley *et al.* (1993) in her detailed study of 25 young homeless people from Drumchapel in Glasgow. She managed to re-interview nine of these young people one year after the initial interview, and received a questionnaire response from another two. She obtained second-hand, 'minimum' information about a further 11 young people in her sample.

3.10 Craig *et al.*'s (1996) study of mental illness among young homeless people also included a panel element, but on a much larger scale. These researchers managed to successfully re-interview 107 young people out of their original sample of 161 after one year (a retention rate of 67%), and received second-hand information about the progress of a further 30 young people (19% of their sample). Their high level of tracking success seems attributable to the comprehensive and continuous tracking methodology used: "*The follow up work began well before the appointed time of the second interview and was painstakingly thorough from the outset.*" (p.34) Craig *et al.* (1996) worked closely with a number of homelessness agencies, and these agencies were proactive in logging their contacts with young people in the sample and in encouraging them to arrange follow-up interviews with the researchers. Another 'vital' means of follow-up contact they used was networking through other homeless young people. The researchers found that asking social services and probation officers to forward letters to young people was less productive, as were attempts to trace the sample through GP registers. Sixteen young people took the initiative in keeping in touch with the researchers by letter or telephone.

3.11 At the other end of the age spectrum, Maureen Crane has carried out a series of sustained, ethnographic studies of the resettlement of older homeless people. Her most recent work has involved tracking the progress of 64 older people for a period of two years after they were re-housed into permanent accommodation (Crane, forthcoming). Crane has re-interviewed her sample every three or six months throughout this time, depending on whether they seemed to have 'settled' in their accommodation. Of the 17 people in her sample whose tenancies ended through eviction or abandonment, she managed to trace and re-interview ten. She traced them mainly through enquiries with agencies and other homeless people, but she searched the streets for some individuals. This was therefore a very intensive, individualised approach to tracking.

3.12 Most of the existing prospective research on homelessness in the UK consists of relatively small-scale, qualitative studies. By far the most substantial quantitative prospective survey has been the Department of the Environment funded study of homeless applicants to nine local authorities in England (O'Callaghan *et al.*, 1996). A large sample of homeless applicants were interviewed as soon as possible after they made their application, with a subsequent interview taking place either when the applicants were permanently re-housed, or after their application was rejected or withdrawn. If the applicants were still awaiting decision at the end of the survey period (18 months), they were interviewed at that point. Out of 1,302 applicants eligible for second interview, 879 interviews were obtained (a 68% retention rate). A wide range of tracking methods were used in this study, but it was noted that local enquiries with former neighbours, contacts through friends or relatives, and checking local authority records for more recent addresses were the most successful. Change of address postcards and asking advice agencies to forward letters were found to be much less productive.

3.13 Important lessons on tracking homeless people can also be learned from prospective surveys with other 'hard-to-reach' groups. Harocopos *et al.* (forthcoming), for example, conducted a very interesting 18-month follow up study of 100 chaotic crack users in London. This sample was re-interviewed five times, with 72 respondents completing the final interview. The authors attribute this high retention rate to several factors, including their recruitment site (an agency which had a positive association for most users); strong rapport between researchers and respondents (built up through frequent interviews, continuity of researcher, sending birthday cards to sample etc.); and a £20 incentive. They mainly used contacts through family and friends to track down respondents, but also reported that treatment agencies and other services were highly co-operative because they were able to produce written consent from their respondents.

Full-retrospective

3.14 The limited review of US literature undertaken for this study did not cover full-retrospective research on homelessness, only studies in the UK were included. Vincent *et al.* (1995) surveyed the progress of men who had lived in Alvaston Resettlement Unit one year after it closed, and Tate *et al.* (2001) interviewed men resettled from the Great Eastern Hostel in Glasgow during its closure programme. Bennett (1990) carried out a very basic, but interesting, study of the re-housing experiences of 40 former residents of the Lochgelly hostel in Fife ten years after it closed. By then, 19 ex-residents were deceased and the whereabouts of six was unknown. Contact was made with 15 ex-residents, of whom 10 were interviewed. The researcher does not detail how the ex-residents were located, but notes that attempts to trace them carried on for nine months, and that local housing and social work agencies were 'excellent' sources of contact.

3.15 There are a small number of other examples of fully retrospective homeless research in the UK. For example, Randall & Brown (1996) conducted a study of ex-homeless people resettled in housing association accommodation through the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI), obtaining their addresses through the RSI Clearing House records. More recently, the 'routes out' research conducted for the HTF involved 27 in-depth, qualitative interviews with ex-homeless people who had sustained their accommodation for at least six months (Rosengard *et al.*, 2002). It was designed as a study of 'successful' resettlement, with the sample selected to reflect a range of six potential routes out of homelessness hypothesised in the HTF *pathways* research (Anderson and Tulloch, 2001). The authors do not detail how they located the sample of ex-homeless people, though it is implied that they used local authority or homelessness agency contacts.

ADMINISTRATIVE TRACKING DATA

3.16 Interview surveys (both quantitative and qualitative) are often considered the 'ideal' means of collecting data on homelessness, because they generate first-hand information from respondents, and are based on questionnaires or topic guides tailored specifically to answer the research questions. However, Anderson & Tulloch (2000) argue that routine data collected by service providers also offers the potential to enhance longitudinal research approaches. Clearly, unique identifiers have to be allocated to each service user to enable longitudinal analysis of their movement through administrative systems, but local authorities and specialist homelessness projects are increasingly using such identifiers.

3.17 The largest administrative tracking study identified in this literature review was that of Wong *et al.* (1997) who monitored the exit and re-entry of almost 28,000 households to New York's family shelters over a two-year period. The database they used covered all of New York's family shelters, and recorded dates of admission, discharge, and subsequent re-admission, as well as housing destinations on discharge. The most substantial study in the UK to use administrative data to track homeless people was O'Callaghan *et al.* (1996) who tracked the progress of 2,474 homeless applicants for between 11 and 18 months. The authors reported that:

> *"The variety of administrative systems in place across the nine authorities, and the potential for a number of different housing department sections to be involved in each case, made the process of tracking applications an extremely difficult and time consuming exercise." (O'Callaghan* et al.*, 1996: 137)*

3.18 Studies like Wong *et al.*'s (1997), and to a lesser extent O'Callaghan *et al.*'s (1996), should be relatively straightforward to conduct as they rely on manipulation of a single, unified database. A much greater challenge lies in linking records between separate homelessness databases and, even more ambitiously, linking records from the homelessness 'system' to that of other databases to track wider outcomes for (ex-) homeless people.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THESE STUDIES

Surveys

3.19 The existing surveys of homeless people both in the US and in the UK demonstrate their value in clarifying the processes involved in moving in and out of homelessness and, especially, in evaluating the impact of policy interventions. Burt (1999) argues that these studies have revealed the complexity of homelessness careers, and in particular have shown that many people experience single short spells of homelessness and manage to 'exit' on their own:

> *"These people may never draw much attention from service providers and planners because they do not draw heavily on service resources. Nevertheless, their experiences can help us understand the circumstances that allow people to leave homelessness and stay housed, and may also be important when planning prevention efforts." (Burt, 1999: 18)*

3.20 These studies also confirm that the process of keeping in touch with homeless people is heavily resource intensive. Clearly the larger the sample size and the longer the tracking period, the more difficult it becomes to retain contact with a reasonable proportion of the sample. Retention rates are also likely to be affected by the type of homeless people being studied with, for example, older ex-homeless people resettled into specific accommodation (as in Crane, forthcoming) likely to be easier to track than young people leading chaotic lifestyles (although Harocopos *et al.* (forthcoming) indicates that high levels of retention can be achieved even with this group). The tracking methodology used also has an important impact, with the following points stressed in both the US and UK literature:

- it is crucial to obtain as many stable contact points as possible from each homeless person, including both agencies and friends/relatives;
- the same researcher should be used to track each homeless person throughout the study period as this helps to maximise rapport and commitment;
- flexibility and persistence are needed in tracking down all leads;
- telephone and face-to-face contact are usually more effective than written correspondence (although some studies have experienced success in sending out letters a week in advance of visits);
- frequent interviews (or low level contacts) are important in maintaining contact;
- it can be helpful to maintain a presence in the 'environmental niche' of the sample;
- incentives are required for some respondents; and
- a signed consent form is particularly helpful in encouraging agency informants to co-operate.

3.21 These points are covered in more detail in Chapter 5.

Administrative data

3.22 The existing studies using administrative data amply demonstrate both its strengths and weaknesses.

3.23 The strengths include:

- the very large samples that can be tracked;
- the relatively long timescales over which tracking can occur; and
- the opportunity it affords to avoid reliance on the recall of homeless respondents.

3.24 The weaknesses include:

- lack of researcher control over the scope of data collected, meaning that only a narrow set of research questions may be addressed;
- lack of rigour in agency record-keeping which can compromise data reliability; and
- the absence of evidence on outcomes for those who leave the 'system' and so drop out of the sample.

3.25 These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

CONCLUSIONS

3.26 This chapter has reviewed the existing UK and US research which has a prospective dimension and/or offers data on routes out of homelessness. It found that these studies fell into two main categories: surveys and administrative tracking data. In relation to the former, a further division was suggested between full prospective, semi-retrospective and full-retrospective designs, based on Rossi (1991). The existing research demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches, and provides a series of practical lessons for future research, especially in relation to keeping in touch with a cohort of homeless people.

Chapter 4 uses this material to inform its discussion of the range of potential longitudinal research designs, and Chapter 5 details practical lessons on tracking homeless people.

CHAPTER FOUR POTENTIAL RESEARCH DESIGNS

4.1 This chapter describes different approaches to collecting data about homeless people. These approaches have been developed over the course of the project to address two main criteria: to address areas of policy interest; and to reflect what is feasible in practice. There has been a particular emphasis on means of obtaining information about groups of homeless people who have been identified by the Scottish Executive as of particular interest and for whom there is currently a lack of information. These groups include hidden homeless people and people at risk of homelessness.

4.2 A major factor in undertaking any research on homelessness would be obtaining the samples of homeless people. Various sources for obtaining samples of the different groups of homeless people have been considered for this project. Because generating a sample frame from scratch is a labour-intensive and difficult (at times, impossible) process, using already available lists of (ex-) homeless people, for example from administrative data currently collected in Scotland or from surveys already undertaken, is desirable. Hence most of the approaches recommended make use of these information sources.

4.3 Research approaches that are considered in this chapter include: the use of surveys currently undertaken in Scotland and administrative datasets as sampling frames; adding questions to current surveys in Scotland to gain more information on homelessness trajectories; using administrative data to study homelessness; and obtaining samples of people at risk of homelessness. General issues related to the design of surveys are not covered in this report – but, where appropriate, recommendations are made about specific research designs as Annexes.

SURVEYS IN SCOTLAND

4.4 Since 2000, the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) has asked respondents a number of questions about prior experience of homelessness and these identify a fair-sized sample of ex-homeless people each year. This therefore makes the SHS an ideal sampling frame for any study of ex-homeless people.

4.5 In its current design, the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) would not be useful for any study of homelessness. However, there is the possibility of adding questions about homelessness to it (see paragraph 4.18).

4.6 Other surveys in Scotland (including the Scottish House Condition Survey, the Scottish Health Survey, the Scottish Social Attitudes survey and the Labour Force Survey) were examined, but were found not to be of use for a study of homelessness.

The Scottish Household Survey

Background

4.7 The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) is commissioned by the Scottish Executive and is one of the largest surveys undertaken in Scotland. There are two parts to the SHS – the household interview is completed by the main income earner or his/her partner, and the individual interview is completed by a randomly selected member of the household aged 16 years or over. The individual interview contains questions on attitudes and experiences, and contains several questions relating to homelessness:

(1) Have you ever been homeless? That is, lost your home with no alternative accommodation to go to?
(2) How many times has this happened to you in the last five years?
(3) Have you ever applied to the local council because you were homeless?
(4) Have you ever had to sleep rough because you were homeless?
(5) Have you got your name on either a council or housing association waiting list?

4.8 Because of its relatively large sample size (approximately 15,000 interviews achieved each year) and the inclusion of the above questions related to homelessness, the SHS offers the potential to obtain a relatively large sample of people who have experience of, but have subsequently left, homelessness[1]. In the 2001 SHS, 568 (4%) respondents reported that they had some experience of homelessness and 129 (1%) reported that they had been forced to sleep rough at some time because they were homeless.

4.9 In addition to identifying a group of ex-homeless people, the SHS could also be used to identify people living in insecure accommodation and/or hidden homeless people by including extra questions to the SHS. This is discussed in more detail below.

Following up the SHS

4.10 The information collected about experiences of homelessness in the SHS is obviously useful in itself for investigating characteristics of people with experience of homelessness. The information would also be useful in generating a sample of people with experience of homelessness which could then be studied further using either a one-off retrospective quantitative or qualitative survey. This is an ideal opportunity to study a group of particular research interest – people that have broken the cycle of homelessness, and would therefore be able to provide crucial information on ‘routes out’. (Because these people have been included in the SHS, it is unlikely that they were homeless at the time of the survey.) A follow-up full-retrospective study would allow more detailed information about their experiences of homelessness and their routes in and out of homelessness to be collected, either through a quantitative survey or qualitative work.

4.11 Qualitative work would be more suitable than a quantitative study to explore the process of moving out of homeless. This is because of the more detailed information that can be collected in a qualitative study. Details of a possible qualitative research design are included in Annex 3.

4.12 One concern about undertaking a quantitative survey is the relatively low rate of respondents that are willing to be re-contacted. In 2001, the questions on homelessness in the SHS identified 568 respondents that reported some experience of homelessness. Of those

[1] Because the SHS is a survey of residential households, respondents to the SHS should all be householders at the address, although it is possible that some respondents might be hidden homeless

568, however, only 72% (about 400) gave permission to be re-contacted[2]. If a follow-up study of a sample from the SHS were to be considered then efforts should be made to improve this re-contact rate[3].

4.13 A second concern is that the sample of ex-homeless people obtained is likely to under-represent the long-term homeless (Rossi, 1990). Therefore quantitative estimates based on this sample are likely to over-represent the experiences of the short-term homeless. This bias should, at the very least, be acknowledged when results are published.

Adding further questions about homelessness to the SHS

4.14 One approach to circumvent the attrition from any quantitative study using the SHS and obtain some (albeit less detailed) information from SHS respondents would be to add additional questions (or a module of questions) about homelessness to the main survey. These additional questions would be answered only by those that report experience of homelessness (i.e. about 500 each year) and so would not impact on the length of the survey for the majority of respondents.

4.15 At the time of this research project a review of the content of the SHS was underway and thus consideration of the potential for new questions on homelessness to enhance understanding of this area was seen as an important element of the study. There is obviously a limit to the number of questions that can be added and hence the depth of information that could be collected. However, adding questions would be useful either if it were not planned to undertake a follow-up study of SHS respondents identified as having past experience of homelessness or to supplement any further study by ensuring a minimum level of information from each eligible respondent. This would generate information on a sample of ex-homeless people for minimal costs and effort. (Some questions that could be included in the SHS are listed in Annex 4.)

Obtain samples of other types of homeless people from the SHS

4.16 In addition to obtaining samples of those with previous experience of homelessness, it would also be possible to identify households in the following groups of homeless people from the SHS (definitions taken from the HTF first report, Scottish Executive, 2000):

- those whose accommodation is ‘unreasonable’ or is overcrowded and a danger to health;
- persons with only a short-term permission to stay, such as those moving around friends' and relatives' houses with no stable base;
- persons with no legal rights or permission to remain in accommodation, such as squatters or young people asked to leave the family home;
- tenants or owner-occupiers likely to be evicted (whether lawfully or unlawfully).

4.17 Some of these groups could be identified using questions already included in the SHS, others would require additional questions to be added. For example, because only permanent members of the household should be interviewed for the SHS, it is unlikely that an interview would be undertaken with anyone with short-term permission to stay and hence such people

[2] This rate was the same as for the general population.
[3] Rates of over 90% are achieved on some surveys of a comparable size.

would not at present be identified. However, one could include a question in the SHS to check whether there is such a person in the household. (Questions that could be added to the SHS to identify these additional groups of homeless people are included in Annex 4.) Identifying these groups of homeless people through the SHS would be of particular policy interest because it would enable information to be gained on 'hidden' homelessness.

The British Household Panel Survey

4.18 The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) is run by the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex. The BHPS is comprised of a household interview and an individual interview with everybody aged sixteen or older in the household. Since 1999, the sample size in Scotland has been boosted to about 2,000 households. There are some core topics that are included each year - other topics are rotated or are included as one-off modules.

4.19 Each year some space in the BHPS is allocated to academics - the BHPS team decides which of the subject areas/questions to include from the applications made. Therefore, there is scope for including questions about homelessness in the BHPS. This could range from a few questions to a whole module (about twelve questions) at the discretion of the BHPS team. Any such application would need to utilise the longitudinal element of the BHPS as opposed to seeking just cross-sectional information. Thus a research question would need to draw on information already collected in the past and link this to the new homelessness questions.

4.20 The number of people in the BHPS that would report having experience of homelessness in Scotland is relatively small. Of the (approximately) 4,000 people interviewed for the individual survey (in which the questions about homelessness would be added), about 160[4] would report experiences of homelessness. Therefore, it would probably only be worth adding questions to the BHPS for a study of the whole of Great Britain.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

4.21 Administrative data are collected on people in a range of homeless situations and, in theory, should offer opportunities to study homelessness. This section assesses the feasibility of studying a range of types of homelessness either using administrative data directly or by obtaining samples for subsequent follow-up studies.

4.22 The main sources of data on homelessness identified during the course of our research are from local authority HL1 Returns, the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) monitoring database run by the Glasgow Homelessness Network (GHN) and the Shelter database. The discussion in this section therefore concentrates on these three sources. It is possible that information from smaller organisations might also be useful, for example if a study was concentrated in a particular area.

[4] Based on the estimate of proportion of respondents with experience of homelessness (4%) from the SHS 2001.

Administrative data related to homelessness

The HL1 Returns

4.23 Local authorities collect information from every household applying for housing as homeless and record this into their own databases. Every quarter a core of information for each applicant is forwarded to the Scottish Executive, regardless of the status of the application. Although each local authority records the name of the applicants in their own database, this information is not passed onto the Scottish Executive – the record is identified by a unique application reference from which it is not possible to identify the individual/household.

4.24 The HL1 returns collect a wealth of information about each applicant. This includes:

- household composition;
- whether slept rough in last 3 months (this is collected for "a member of the household" rather than for applicant);
- postcode of last settled address;
- reasons for becoming homeless;
- statutory assessment;
- housing outcome;
- whether the household has applied previously to the same local authority, and if so the reference number of the most recent previous application.

4.25 At present, the applicants are only asked to give consent for their details to be sent to external organisations in order to check the validity of their applications. This consent would not cover forwarding any information that could be used to identify the applicants to the Scottish Executive (or an organisation working for the Scottish Executive) for research purposes.

Shelter Database

4.26 Shelter Scotland is the national campaigning charity for homeless and badly housed people, providing housing advice through its four Housing Aid Centres (there are also two affiliated advice centres) and Shelterline, a national 24 hour free phone help line covering the whole of Scotland. All contacts between its staff and clients through these Housing Aid Centres and Shelterline are recorded on a database.

4.27 This database includes:

- the full name of the client;
- date of birth, gender and ethnic origin;
- household size and type;
- homelessness status - including whether classed as priority and local connection;
- employment;
- whether roofless;
- referring agency – which indicates whether client is in contact with another agency;

- type of problem – includes homeless, in rent or mortgage arrears relationship breakdown, victim of domestic violence;
- any actions taken/outcomes.

RSI monitoring

4.28 In order to monitor the second round of RSI projects, a database system was set-up by the Glasgow Homelessness Network (GHN), which is used by 68 of the 77 RSI projects. Information is collected by the projects about every individual that makes contact. This information is sent to the GHN and contained in a central database. Using a 'unique' ID code consisting of a client's initials, date of birth and gender, any applications to different projects funded by the RSI can be identified.

4.29 At the point of first contact, a wide range of information is collected including reasons for and history of rough sleeping. However, the only pieces of information required to create a new record are: name, age or date of birth, gender and whether roofless at time of referral. Identifying information such as National Insurance numbers and contact addresses, including forwarding addresses for re-housed clients are not collected.

4.30 Other information that is entered into the database (if collected) includes:

- reasons for sleeping rough;
- last accommodation before sleeping rough;
- history of sleeping rough;
- age first slept rough;
- whether barred and reason for being barred;
- if moved from other local authority;
- where referred and outcomes.

4.31 The projects are asked to enter as much information as possible, however often this is not possible – for example, if the project has contact with a client for a very short time. As an example, the recent figures for all referrals for RSI projects in Glasgow show about 40% item non-response for key information such as alcohol and drug related problems.

Obtaining samples of homeless people from administrative data

4.32 From the administrative datasets described above it would (in theory) be possible to obtain samples of homeless people to include in a semi-retrospective study. However, this does depend on the co-operation of the data holders and appropriate consent being obtained (see Chapter 5).

4.33 The information collected for the HL1 returns would allow samples of all types of homeless people to be obtained. However it should be noted that the people that apply to their local authorities may not be fully representative of the homeless population. It has been argued, for example, that a lower proportion of single homeless people than other groups of homeless people apply to local authorities (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2000). However, it is possible that this will change in September 2002 when local authorities are obliged to offer temporary accommodation to all homeless households (including single homeless people) under the

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. In any case, even with its limitations, HL1 returns constitute by far the most comprehensive single dataset on the homeless population in Scotland.

4.34 In order to adequately cover groups such as single homeless people and rough sleepers who may be under-represented in the HL1 returns, it would be necessary to sample the clients of a range of voluntary agencies. The Shelter and/or RSI databases would be useful in this regard. (In Glasgow, for example, it is estimated that RSI funded projects account for about a third of all homeless service provision.) If a study was targeted in a particular geographical area, then it would be feasible to improve coverage by also sampling from non-RSI projects. However, this would not be possible for studies of larger geographical areas.

4.35 To follow up a sample of homeless applicants for interview, contact information would be required. For the HL1 returns, contact information could only be obtained by contacting the relevant local authorities directly[5] (this information is not passed on to the Scottish Executive). This would require co-operation from every local authority from which a sample member is likely to be recruited. If contact with people sampled from the local authority lists was attempted as close to the date of application as possible, then it is likely that it would be possible to make contact with the majority of sample members.

4.36 Obtaining contact information from other administrative datasets would be more difficult. The Shelter database does include a contact address, although for some groups of homeless people (e.g. rough sleepers) this might not be sufficient to make contact directly. The RSI dataset does not include contact information, although it would be possible to obtain a last point of contact or to contact the person via the RSI project directly. Making initial contact with homeless people selected from any administrative dataset could involve considerable effort. Some of the issues involved are described in Chapter 5.

Monitoring homeless people’s pathways using administrative data

4.37 One approach to undertake a semi- or full-prospective study of homelessness would be to use only administrative data (i.e. to have no direct contact with the sample at all). The samples of interest could be selected from any source – including from administrative data itself – and relevant information extracted from administrative datasets at various points in time.

4.38 The amount of information available from administrative sources is substantial. However, as Chapter 3 highlighted, the key weakness of tracking people through administrative databases is that no information would be available about those that make no contact to any of the relevant organisations during the study period. This therefore implies that nearly all the interesting measures that could be obtained from administrative data would be (potentially) heavily biased. Therefore, there is a limit to the amount of useful quantitative information that could be inferred from using solely administrative data, and any figures would need to be treated with extreme caution.

[5] It should be noted that the databases at all the local authorities can be interrogated so that HL1 information for selected individuals could be extracted – although our interviews revealed that staff at some LAs lacked the IT skills to do this themselves.

4.39 As an example, a potential research question might be to estimate what proportion of a sample of people sleeping rough at a particular time point are still sleeping rough one year later. If this sample was tracked using administrative data over a course of the year then, for each individual, there will be one of three outcomes - they are identified as still sleeping rough, they are identified as not sleeping rough or there is no further information about them. For people in the third category one would have no idea if they were sleeping rough or not. Therefore, as a large number of people are likely to fall into this category, it would not be possible to obtain the desired estimate.

4.40 That is not to say that analyses of administrative databases are not worthwhile. Administrative databases are ideal for obtaining cross-sectional estimates and also some retrospective information (for example, the HL1 includes questions on experiences of rough sleeping). In addition, they are useful for studying some specific longitudinal research questions. For example, because the HL1 return now identifies repeat applications, it is now possible to track households' applications to their local authority. However, it seems unlikely that undertaking a prospective study that used just administrative data would adequately cover the key policy issues identified in this study.

FULL PROSPECTIVE STUDIES FOCUSSING ON *AT RISK* SUB-GROUPS

4.41 As Chapter 3 outlined, the most challenging approach to longitudinal work with homeless people would be to follow a group of people from the point before they experience homelessness, through their homeless careers and onwards after they stop being homeless (a full prospective study). Such a study may be particularly interesting from a policy perspective because it could aid the prevention of homelessness.

4.42 Since the proportion of people in the general population who become homeless is relatively small, following a representative sample of the population to see who became homeless would require a very large sample and would be very expensive for the return it might give. However, since quite a lot is known about the characteristics of people in the homeless population, it might be possible to sample groups of people that might be considered at risk of homelessness and include them in a longitudinal research study.

4.43 Groups that might be included in such a study since there is evidence that they are at higher risk of homelessness include:

- young people leaving care;
- people leaving drug rehabilitation units;
- people leaving prison;
- people leaving mental health facilities;
- people discharged from the army;
- people facing eviction.

4.44 Undertaking a study purely to identify whether people from these groups become homeless is likely to be impractical, and may also be considered dubious from an ethical point of view. Thus any longitudinal work with these groups should probably be driven by policy-makers with direct responsibility for their overall well-being and should cover a wide range of topics, enabling a 'holistic' approach to be taken.

4.45 From a homelessness policy perspective, quantitative longitudinal work with people in these groups might be valuable in identifying:

- the proportions of people in high risk groups who actually become homeless;
- any statistical variations in the characteristics and circumstances of those who do and do not become homeless; and
- the interventions and projects that appear most effective in providing routes out of homelessness for people from high risk groups.

4.46 Qualitative work among high risk groups might also be useful in gaining more detailed information about the reasons some do and some do not become homeless, and why certain types of projects seem to be more or less successful in resolving homelessness for people in these groups.

4.47 In the following discussion of tracking people at risk of homelessness we focus on one of the groups identified above, *young people leaving care*, because the existing evidence suggests that they experience the very highest risk of homelessness. While the sampling strategies may vary a little for other groups, many other issues would be common across the groups and relatively similar research designs could probably be employed. Some information is also given on sampling the other groups.

Obtaining a sample undertaking follow up research with young people leaving care

4.48 There has been some previous work following up young people leaving care in Scotland. However this has tended to be small scale in nature and to follow people up only once, shortly after they leave care. For example, in a recent study in Scotland, a sample of 100 people across a few local authorities were interviewed just before they left care (or retrospectively for a small sample) and then again six months later having left care (Dixon and Stein, 2002). This study had an initial structured interview and more qualitative six-month follow up, and considered outcomes related to accommodation as well as employment or training, social networks, health (including drug use) and offending. This study identified that around 40% of the young people had some experience of homelessness within the six-month period. This is based on young people's own views of considering themselves to have been homeless, including sleeping on friends' floors.

4.49 Around 1000 young people leave care in Scotland each year. Sampling of these people would be possible via local authority social work departments.

4.50 From the previous studies undertaken it does seem possible, and potentially of interest to other policy makers, to think about a general purpose longitudinal study of care leavers. With a large enough sample this might provide valuable information on the numbers of this group who become homeless, and over time, the factors that affect successful housing outcomes. A wealth of other data might also be generated and the lead for such a study should perhaps come from those directly involved in assessing the success of care services. A proposed research method is described in Annex 5.

Generating samples of other *at risk* groups

4.51 Similar studies could be undertaken for the other *at risk* groups. We have undertaken some preliminary work to investigate whether similar research has been undertaken and what sampling frames are available. This is summarised in this section.

People facing eviction

4.52 Research tracking people facing eviction has been done by following up people identified as being at risk of eviction from seven years of the BHPS (Boheim and Taylor, 2000).

People leaving prison

4.53 Information about all prisoners in Scotland is contained in a database called the Scottish Prisoner Information Network (SPIN) which is held by the Scottish Prison Service. This would seem to be the most useful sampling frame for people leaving prison. However, although SPIN does include a contact address, it is the address which the offender gives to the court and in many cases this address is not correct.

People discharged from the army

4.54 Research has been undertaken on people discharged from the army. For example, a study of reproductive outcome and child health among 53,000 UK veterans is being undertaken by the Department of Epidemiology & Population Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (see www.lshtm.ac.uk/eph/eu/gulf_war/ for further information). For this, the Ministry of Defence gave names and addresses of service personnel to the research team. For any study of homelessness, the co-operation of the Ministry of Defence would be required to generate the sampling frame.

People leaving mental health facilities

4.55 In undertaking a study of people leaving mental health facilities, the ideal approach would be to generate a sample of people in the relevant institutions and then trace them after their discharge. Some form of 'trigger' would be needed so that the institutions informed the researchers of the discharge as it happened. This would ensure that no-one was missed from the sample.

4.56 A database that might serve some purpose in sampling people currently or having been in mental health facilities would be the Scottish Morbidity Records (SMRs). These records include information on all inpatient and outpatient hospital activity and have been used as a sampling frame for other research purposes. It would be unlikely that there would be a problem with the Scottish Executive having access to the records. However they would not be useful in obtaining samples of people at the point of leaving mental health facilities – as they would only indicate whether individuals were still resident or had been discharged.

LONGITUDINAL EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES/ PROJECTS

4.57 A further area of research for studying homelessness is the longitudinal evaluation of particular projects or programmes. At the moment some projects do attempt to follow people over time so that they might gain better information on how their work is affecting long term outcomes, however this work tends to be fairly small scale and involve only short term follow up.

4.58 In this section we make some suggestions on how longitudinal evaluations might be standardised to be able to deliver greater strategic benefit by allowing comparison between approaches. We then look at one programme which is about to take place, and which might offer great scope for some longitudinal evaluation - the Glasgow Hostel Closure Programme.

Longitudinal evaluation of projects

4.59 Many evaluation studies for homelessness projects are designed only to evaluate processes of the project and short-term outcomes. They are therefore able to address questions such as:

- How did the project operate?
- Which were the things (e.g. processes) that worked well and which worked less well?
- Did the project have short term benefits for the clients and what were they?
- Did the clients feel they benefited from the project?
- How satisfied were the staff working on the project?

4.60 This is all valuable information, in particular when used by the projects themselves to improve the delivery of services. However, often what is of particular interest to policy makers is the long-term benefit for clients and the success or failure of different interventions.

4.61 It would therefore be helpful for projects to move away from evaluations which focus primarily on processes of administering the projects and to include assessments of the long-term benefits of the clients. Ideally all longitudinal evaluations of projects should begin with an initial assessment of the clients and should monitor outcomes (‘soft’ as well as ‘hard’) over a period of time. By introducing an element of standardisation into this process, it would be possible to compare outcomes for different projects. This would then be of strategic benefit to policy-makers in seeking to address questions such as:

- Which types of projects tend to work well/ less well?
- What are the types of people for whom different types of projects are most/least successful?

4.62 The Homelessness Monitoring Group could become involved in setting up a standardised approach to evaluation. Any attempts to standardise evaluations should recognise that evaluations for many projects will be largely or entirely qualitative in nature due to the numbers of clients using the project and the types of skills and resources available for the evaluation work.

4.63 It is hoped that development of a standardised approach to evaluation will be implemented for the longitudinal evaluation of the Glasgow Hostel Closure programme (this programme is discussed below). It could also be that some of the instruments being developed under the Glasgow Hostel reprovisioning process might be useful in assessing the long-term outcomes of a wide range of projects.

Glasgow Hostel Closure programme

Background

4.64 Glasgow currently has 28 hostels providing around 2,000 places. Most of these provide accommodation for single homeless people. Within this hostel population men represent 75% of the clients and a third are under 25 years of age. A relatively high proportion of Glasgow's hostel population are long-stay clients with some people having spent 20 years in the same place. Despite this, four in ten clients have been in their present accommodation for less than three months.

4.65 It is now planned that the large traditional hostels will all be closed over the next five years - although in reality it may take longer. All existing hostel clients will be resettled, and the procedures will also change for those who approach as 'new' clients to the system. Prior to resettlement all clients will receive an assessment. In addition, assessments are being introduced for new clients approaching the homelessness services.

Evaluation of the Glasgow Hostel Closure programme

4.66 The Glasgow Hostel Closure programme will be subject to some form of evaluation. However the planning of this does not appear to have been extensively developed at this stage, therefore some suggestions could be fed into the process. To evaluate the Glasgow Hostel Closure programme, a sample of homeless people should be selected from those that undertake the assessment interview and followed-up over time to assess the outcomes of the different resettlement options. Given the size of the population, quantitative work would be feasible, which could allow the following questions to be addressed:

- What is the relationship between clients' assessments for support on leaving the hostel settings, and the resettlement programmes on which they embark?
- What kinds of resettlement programme work for those with different support needs?
- What outcomes are achieved in terms of key indicators? (This might include accommodation provision, holding down a tenancy, receiving addiction services, gaining employment, skills training, improved social networks etc.)

4.67 Qualitative work with some members of this group would also provide additional information on topics such as:

- Why some people with apparently similar assessments and who embark on similar resettlement programmes are successfully re-housed and others are not?
- What makes some projects or combinations of project types particularly successful or unsuccessful?

4.68 Recruiting a sample for such a study should be possible, although it would not be entirely straightforward. A suggested design for the evaluation of the Glasgow Hostel Closure programme is included in Annex 6.

CONCLUSIONS

4.69 The conclusions about the potential research designs are summarised in the following table. For each design, the table shows the types of homelessness that could be studied, the type of longitudinal research undertaken, whether it analyses positive or negative outcomes, the suggested methodology and any concerns with the design.

Research Approach	**Type of research**	**Types of homeless people**	**Positive or negative outcomes tracked**	**Type of data generated**	**Concerns**
Following up the SHS	Full retrospective	Ex-homeless. Hidden homeless (especially if relevant questions added). All household types – including families.	Positive	Qualitative (and possibly quantitative) follow-up study.	Permission to re-contact rate low.
Adding further questions to the SHS	Full retrospective	Ex-homeless. Hidden homelessness (especially if relevant questions added). All household types – including families.	Positive	Quantitative.	None
Sampling from administrative data	Semi-retrospective	All visible groups of homeless households – including families.	Both	Quantitative.	Data protection issues
Monitoring pathways using administrative data	Semi-retrospective	All visible groups of homeless households – including families.	Depends on breadth of data sources used.	Quantitative.	Bias from 'lost' people. Data protection issues.
Studying *at risk* groups	Full prospective	Depends which risk categories targeted. Probably mostly single homeless.	Both	General quantitative survey of selected groups. Follow-up qualitative survey if experience of homelessness.	Obtaining the sample. Would need policy interest in general survey of selected population.
Evaluation of projects	Semi-retrospective	Visible groups. Probably mainly single homeless.	Both.	Quantitative & qualitative (probably mainly the latter).	None.

CHAPTER FIVE TRACKING PEOPLE

5.1 A crucial element of any survey with a prospective element is the requirement to maintain contact with sample members and this would seem particularly challenging in the case of homeless people. In this section we consider several approaches to tracking homeless people, from using administrative data to maintaining contact with the sample members themselves. Depending on the data collection mode, it is likely that a combination of approaches would be required.

5.2 Where appropriate, evidence of the success (or failure) of using a particular method of maintaining a sample that was uncovered in the literature review (see Chapter 3) is included.

METHODS FOR MAINTAINING CONTACT

Sources of follow-up leads

5.3 For any surveys of homeless people, the most promising source of tracking information is the occasion of the first wave of data collection – particularly if this consists of a face-to-face interview. This interview allows the opportunity to collect contact details relating to a range of potential future sources of information – family, friends, agencies – and lifestyle information that may be predictive of future location. Once the purpose of the survey has been explained and co-operation gained, the respondents themselves are likely to be in the best position to identify ways in which the researcher/interviewer might be most likely to be able to locate them in the future. This suggests that a rather flexible (and hence more expensive) approach to the collection, up-dating and storage of contact information will be needed.

5.4 It is best to get as many stable contact points for homeless people as possible. Relatives, friends, social workers and agency workers are the main sources of follow-up leads for homeless people. Of these, family members and friends with stable addresses are the most productive. Fitzpatrick (2000) suggests that telephone numbers should be obtained as well as names and addresses wherever possible, as a telephone call is more likely to produce results than written correspondence. However, as telephone calls are more intrusive than letters, researchers should be sensitive when phoning a homeless person's family.

5.5 One study by Harocopos *et al.* (forthcoming) asked for the mobile phone numbers of a sample of crack users, but found that this was not particularly helpful as these young people sold or changed their mobiles so often. It is possible that this would also be the case for homeless people, but is certainly worth trying.

5.6 Professionals with whom homeless people are likely to have continuing contact, such as social workers, are good contact points and staff in agencies which they use periodically, such as day centres, can also be useful in contacting homeless people. Less helpful are agencies they tend to be in contact with for only a set period, such as hostels. Fitzpatrick (1998) found that using agency contacts can be problematic because of concerns about confidentiality and staff time being used to assist researchers. However, she suggests that it is best to arrange follow-up interviews through helping agencies first, before embarking on the more difficult, and potentially sensitive, road of pursuing homeless people's personal contacts. She recommends getting agencies on board from the outset in relation to the tracking exercise so that they expect the researcher to return and (one would hope) will be more willing to assist. It is best to attempt to persuade agencies to co-operate as a network so that they will alert the researcher if they come into contact with any of the sample of homeless people.

5.7 It is a good idea to get participants to sign 'permission to locate' forms as evidence of willingness to be tracked, but informants (particularly from services) will often still want to double check that the participants are still willing to be contacted. Both Harocopos *et al.* (forthcoming) and Craig *et al.* (1996) achieved a very high level of co-operation from a wide range of agencies (including prison and probation services) because they were able to produce written consent from their respondents.

Maximising success in pursuing leads

5.8 There were several recommendations from the homelessness studies reviewed for this project (Chapter 3) for maintaining contact with respondents. These are summarised in this section.

5.9 There is considerable evidence in a range of contexts that the proportion of panel members successfully traced at each wave of data collection tends to be higher the more frequently contacts are made. Harocopos *et al.* (forthcoming) in particular felt that the short period (one month) between the first and second interviews in their study was crucial in building up rapport.

5.10 Informal networking in the respondents' 'environmental niche', such as homelessness services or neighbourhood, has proven a valuable means of re-contacting respondents in a number of studies (e.g. Fitzpatrick, 2000; Crane, forthcoming; Harocopos *et al.*, forthcoming). Maintaining a continuous presence in respondents' current or former environmental niche has sometimes been used to facilitate tracking, but this is likely to be expensive and could probably only be achieved in ethnographic studies and those with restricted geographical areas.

5.11 Most successful studies have used cash or voucher incentives, and have reported that these are crucial in securing the participation of some respondents. Cohen *et al.* (1993) used very low level incentives, and felt that a higher level might have motivated more participants (although they also note that ethical concerns could be raised by incentives that were high enough to be considered 'coercive'). Rossi (1991) suggests that such incentives could involve a sliding scale of payments that increase with each successive contact, but Harocopos *et al.* (forthcoming), who used this device, felt it actually had little impact on the retention rate achieved.

5.12 The most common method for encouraging homeless respondents to let the researchers know if they move is pre-paid postcards. These were used by O'Callaghan *et al.* (1996), but were found to be relatively unproductive. The use of incentives matched to notifications of changes of address has also had little success.

5.13 Wherever possible, the researcher who first interviews a homeless person should also track them for the duration of the project. This allows a one-to-one relationship and rapport to build up between the respondent and researcher, and tends to incentivise both to maintain contact.

5.14 Researchers tracking homeless people need to be creative, persistent and exhaust all leads (both Harocopos *et al.* (forthcoming) and Bassuk *et al.* (2001) managed to re-contact respondents they had lost in one wave of a follow-up in a later wave of interviews, thus demonstrating the value of persistence). They also need to be flexible, so they can respond immediately if a participant surfaces unexpectedly. Cohen *et al.* (1993) recommend that researchers should try to find out when homeless respondents have meetings scheduled with particular services, and be available to interview them at that time. Similarly, Crane (forthcoming) used knowledge of 'habits' of interviewees to time visits. Many studies report that telephone and face-to face contact is usually more effective than written correspondence, although some researchers have experienced success in sending out letters a week in advance of visits.

USING ADMINISTRATIVE DATA TO MAINTAIN A SAMPLE

5.15 Previously in this report it has been stated that it was probably not feasible to use purely administrative data to anwer research questions (see paragraph 4.39). However, this does not imply that administrative data would not be useful when undertaking other research methods. All additional information that can be obtained about panel members would assist when trying to trace them. Both O'Callaghan *et al.* (1996) and Craig *et al.* (1996) reported some success with checking administrative records for move-on addresses and other contact details.

5.16 Any administrative databases for which the Data Protection issues have been resolved could potentially be considered. This includes the main datasets related to homelessness described in Chapter 4, but any other administrative datasets maintained by homeless projects and agencies could also provide valuable information. Some datasets not related to homelessness could also add useful information. These include Benefit Records and Scottish Morbidity Records. Benefit Records contain a range of information and also a current address of any individual. Scottish Morbidity Records include information on all inpatient and outpatient hospital activity as well as deaths.

5.17 Matching to any of these datasets could help to build up a picture of the movements of any lost panel members over the period from which the last contact was made. This information could assist in helping to make physical re-contact with a panel member either through refining any search or by giving a recent contact address.

5.18 In theory, matching to these datasets could be achieved using a minimum of information. Just date of birth and full name would be sufficient, although more accurate matches would be achieved to some of the datasets if National Insurance numbers were available. Matching to more than one dataset would be fairly straightforward and, if feasible, it would be recommended to obtain as much information as possible.

5.19 Note that it is not recommended to just use administrative data to attempt to track a sample, but that administrative data should be used as an additional source of follow-up leads.

DATA PROTECTION AND ETHICAL ISSUES

The Data Protection Act 1998

5.20 In this section we outline relevant changes in the Data Protection Act and the impact these would have on undertaking a longitudinal study of homelessness. Please note that this is only an interpretation of the possible impact of the Data Protection Act 1998 – it may be advisable to obtain a legal opinion before undertaking the proposed study. (See wood.ccta.gov.uk/dpr/dpdoc.nsf for a copy of the 1998 Data Protection Act.)

5.21 The Data Protection Act 1998 was brought into force on 1st March 2000 and replaced the 1984 Data Protection Act. The most relevant changes of this new act were to cover paper records as well as computerised data and to specify certain conditions that need to be satisfied before *personal*[6] and *sensitive*[7] *personal* data can be *processed*[8]. In order for one organisation to pass *personal* data to another, consent would have to be obtained from those individuals. This consent needs to be expressly given, so cannot be assumed from non-response to a communication. To pass *sensitive personal* data, explicit consent needs to be given. This means that the subject needs to be given clear information about to whom their data will be passed, which data items will be disclosed and for what purpose.

5.22 Therefore consent would be required to both obtain samples from any administrative source and to track anyone through administrative data. At present no adequate consent is collected for any of the main datasets related to homelessness.

5.23 The consent required would need to be worded depending on the use to which the administrative data are to be put. If *sensitive* information were to be passed then explicit consent (as defined above) would need to be collected. Information about homelessness is not actually defined as *sensitive* by the Data Protection Act 1998 – therefore obtaining explicit consent would be more of an ethical consideration.

5.24 Consent would have to be collected for the different sample sources as follows:

- for samples selected from administrative data, consent would have to be obtained at the first point of contact with the organisation from whose administrative database the sample would be selected (e.g. for HL1 returns data, this would be when the application is made to the local authority);
- if following up samples from a survey, a consent question could be added to the survey. (This is common on interview surveys, e.g. the 1995 and 1998 Scottish Health Surveys to monitor hospital records.)
- for people at risk of homelessness released from institutions, permission would need to be obtained from these individuals prior to their release.

5.25 All of the above would require co-operation from the relevant agencies. In addition, the precise wording of the consent form would need to be agreed with the agencies from

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[6] Personal data means data from which it is possible to identify a living individual (e.g. name, national insurance number)
[7] Sensitive data includes ethnic origin, sexual life, physical or mental health condition and any offences.
[8] The definition of 'processing' includes passing the data between organisations.

which the information is required in advance. (A generic consent form might not be acceptable to all organisations and would not be sufficient to obtain *sensitive personal* data.)

5.26 The impact of satisfying the Data Protection Act 1998 has already been observed from the question requesting permission to re-contact respondents to the SHS (see paragraph 4.12). The Data Protection Act 1998 requires that where it is known in advance that follow-up studies are planned or likely, respondents should be told of this. The question in the SHS has been worded so as to obtain explicit consent to pass on data collected in the SHS to other organisations and, most likely as a result of this wording, 28% of respondents did not agree to be re-contacted.

Ethical Issues

5.27 As well as satisfying the Data Protection Act, other ethical issues need to be considered. This is mainly to protect the individuals included in the study – especially where they are from vulnerable groups, such as homeless people. In addition though, a lack of ethical consideration will undermine the integrity of the research and also the organisations undertaking the study. The Social Research Association's (SRA) Ethical Guidelines (www.the-sra.org.uk) state that:

> *"Social researchers must strive to be aware of the intrusive potential of their work. They have no special entitlement to study all phenomena. The advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of Information are not themselves sufficient justifications for overriding other social and cultural values."*

5.28 In this report, we do not consider all the wide range of ethical issues raised in the SRA guidelines. Instead, we focus on some of the main issues that would be raised by undertaking a panel study of a particularly vulnerable group.

5.29 For any study or survey, assurances of confidentiality are of the utmost importance. Respondents need to be absolutely convinced that their answers will not be passed on to anyone else - except where permission has been expressly obtained to pass the information to other organisations. In addition, informed consent should be obtained - it should be made clear to a respondent what the study is about and also the purpose of the research. In addition, it should be made clear that participation is voluntary and that there would be no detrimental consequences from not taking part in study.

5.30 The fieldwork should be designed so as to protect the interests of the respondents. For example, if the respondent is not happy participating in a particular environment, then an alternative venue for the interview should be sought. In addition, the same applies if the interviewer does not feel safe in a particular environment.

5.31 Running a panel study generates additional consideration of ethics – namely the impact of the research on the respondent. For example the effect of paying incentives to retain a panel. While a certain level of incentive is acceptable, large incentives might be inappropriate for a study of homelessness. These concerns were highlighted by Rossi (1991), who expressed concern about incentives that were high enough to be considered 'coercive'.

5.32 A further consideration is the amount of advice that interviewers should give respondents. It is not the role of the interviewers to offer advice to the respondents. If respondents ask for advice on any issues related to homelessness, they should be referred to agencies that can offer such advice such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau or Shelter. This policy should be made clear to the interviewers during the briefings. (Even this intervention might impact on the validity of the research as this could effect long-term outcomes, as the process of interviewing an individual might encourage some individuals to seek advice when they might not otherwise. However, it would be unacceptable to withhold details of agencies that could offer advice.)

5.33 These and other ethical issues would need to be tackled before a survey is undertaken, and researchers and interviewers made clear of the necessity to comply with any decisions reached. Consideration would be required when undertaking any study on homeless people or people at risk of homelessness that the process of following them is undertaken sensitively. It would certainly be highly unethical to undertake a study that would make the participants feel stigmatised or that would have a detrimental psychological impact.

CHAPTER SIX RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 As was outlined in Chapter 2, there are two main reasons why longitudinal research on homelessness is required from a policy perspective: to aid our general understanding of routes in and out of homelessness; and to develop more robust evaluations of particular projects and initiatives aimed at tackling homelessness. Our key recommendations to the HMG are presented below under these two main headings. In addition, some technical recommendations are made in relation to enhancing the feasibility and/or effectiveness of a range of methods for undertaking longitudinal research with homeless people.

GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF HOMELESSNESS

6.2 We strongly recommend that the HMG consider pursuing a 'full retrospective' study of ex-homeless people identified in the SHS. Such work could potentially have great policy value in identifying effective 'routes out' of homelessness, and would be relatively inexpensive to undertake. Two approaches could be taken here:

- additional questions related to homelessness could be included in the SHS. These would generate valuable quantitative information on routes out of homelessness;
- a sample of the ex-homeless people in the SHS could be followed-up for a qualitative study to investigate their routes out of homelessness in more detail.

6.3 We also recommend that the HMG press for appropriate questions to be added to the SHS to enable the extent and nature of 'hidden homelessness' to be investigated. This data is likely to be extremely valuable from a policy perspective; both in highlighting the situation of an often overlooked homeless group, and in enabling the potential additional demand for accommodation resulting from the 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act and Homelessness Bill to be estimated more accurately.

6.4 We also recommend that the HMG encourage the relevant authorities to undertake 'full prospective' longitudinal studies of *at risk* groups, with the highest priority given to young people leaving care. Such 'tracking' research would be expensive, but is likely to have significant benefits not only for the development of homelessness prevention policies, but also in facilitating 'holistic' responses to the multitude of problems these vulnerable groups face. If these studies are not undertaken, attempts should be made to track *at risk* people through administrative data for later qualitative interviews.

6.5 'Semi-retrospective' tracking studies of a range of homeless groups could be undertaken using administrative data from the HL1 returns, the RSI monitoring database and the Shelter database to obtain the relevant samples. However, such an approach would be expensive, and the policy applications are less obvious than those of some of the other approaches recommended here. Specific research questions would have to be identified which this method would be cost-effective in answering before it would be sensible to proceed. Also, mechanisms to obtain the required consent to satisfy the Data Protection Act 1998 would have to be developed in consultation with the relevant holders of the dataset.

MORE ROBUST EVALUATIONS TO ASSESS LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF INTERVENTIONS

6.6 We strongly recommend that the HMG encourage the development of longitudinal evaluations of specific programmes and projects to enable their long-term benefits to service users to be assessed. It is particularly recommended that some components of these evaluations should be standardised to allow comparison across programmes and projects.

6.7 We would recommend that a substantial longitudinal evaluation of the Glasgow Hostel Closure programme should be pursued along the lines suggested in this report. This is not only because of the intrinsic value of the data produced for the rolling programme of re-provisioning currently underway in Glasgow, but also because the relatively large numbers involved would enable robust quantitative comparisons of outcomes to be undertaken.

6.8 We strongly recommend that local authorities be asked to report in their homelessness strategies how they will use/encourage the use of longitudinal methods to assess the impacts of projects and policies they have pursued in their area to tackle homelessness.

TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVING FEASIBILITY / EFFECTIVENESS OF LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH

6.9 The lessons learned in previous longitudinal studies in both the US and UK with regard to effective tracking of homeless people should be borne in mind when developing any future research projects with a prospective element.

6.10 In order to use administrative data to assist in maintaining contact with any sample of homeless people, Data Protection issues should be resolved with any of the relevant parties. Appropriate ‘permission to locate’ and/or consent forms should be agreed in advance.

6.11 The possibility of increasing the proportion of people that give permission in the SHS to be re-contacted should be investigated as a matter of priority. Other potential wordings of the consent question should be tried in the pilots for the survey.

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ANNEX 1: EXISTING LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH IN THE UK

Reference	Group covered	'Positive' or 'negative' outcomes traced	Sample size	Tracking period	Number of re-contacts	Timing of re-contacts	Tracking methods/methods for locating sample	Retention/ response rates
1. Fitzpatrick, S. (2000) *Young Homeless People.* Basingstoke: Macmillan.	Young homeless people, mainly single. Hidden as well as visible groups.	Both	25	1 year	1	After 1 year	Used agency and family/friend informants. Gathered second-hand information from these contacts. Spent time networking in neighbourhood. Did not use incentives. Sent questionnaire if unsuccessful in securing interview.	Out of total of 25, 9 were re-interviewed and questionnaire response was received from 2. Second-hand information was received about another 11. No refusals.
2. Rosengard, A., Laing, I., Jackson, A.A. & Jones, N. (2002) *Routes out of Homelessness.* Edinburgh: The Scottish Executive.	A range of homeless households – all age groups and household types.	Positive only – this was a study of routes out of homelessness	27	No tracking – fully retrospective study with ex-homeless people 'settled' in accommodation for at least 6 months.	N/a	N/a	Contacted ex-homeless sample through agencies. No details given of contact process	N/a
3. Bennett, S. (1990) *Lochgelly – Ten Years On.* Edinburgh: Scottish Council for Single Homeless.	Single homeless men. All ex-hostel residents.	Both	40	No tracking – fully retrospective study of ex-residents of a hostel 10 years after closure.	N/a	N/a	Not detailed. But does note that attempts to trace residents carried on for 9 months. Local housing and social work agencies were 'excellent' sources of contact.	10 (out of 40) ex-residents were interviewed. Contact was made with 15, but 3 were judged incapable of interview and 2 refused. 19 of the sample were dead. The whereabouts of 6 was unknown.

4. Randall, G. & Brown, S. (1996) *From Street to Home: An Evaluation of Phase 2 of the Rough Sleepers Initiative*. London: HMSO.	Ex-homeless people rehoused through RSI-2. Mainly single men.	Positive – this part of the study looked at those who had sustained housing association accommodation.	144	No tracking – this was a fully retrospective study of ex-homeless people.	N/a	N/a	RSI Clearing House records provided the addresses of the ex-homeless people rehoused. The relevant housing associations confirmed whether person still resident.	100 interviews were achieved (a response rate of 69%). Interviewers were unable to interview 28 tenants after four visits, 12 people refused, and 4 were not interviewed for other reasons.
5. Harocopos, A. *et al.* (forthcoming) *A Follow-up Study of Crack Users in London.*	Chaotic crack users.	Both	100	18 months	5	After 1, 4, 8, 13 and 18 months.	Recruited sample from drug crisis centre and maintained presence there for 12 months. Mainly used family/friend informants. Also tracked through treatment agencies and prison. Got signed consent form. Used £20 incentive for each interview; £40 for final interview.	72 out of 100 completed final interview (94, 88 and 84 completed interviews at 1, 4 and 8 months respectively)
6. Crane, M. (forthcoming) *Resettling Older Homeless People: A Longitudinal Study of Outcomes.*	Older homeless people rehoused into permanent accommodation.	Both	64	2 years	Between 3 and 7	Every 3 or 6 months depending on whether 'settled'	Interviewed at home. Appointment letters were sent out one week before the visit, and most interviewees were at home. Two people who didn't want to be interviewed agreed to complete postal questionnaires that were sent to them every 6 months.	Contact was maintained with 62 (97%) for 2 years or until tenancy ended through eviction, abandonment or death. 10 of the 17 people whose tenancies had failed were traced and interviewed. They were contacted mainly through agencies and informal enquiries with other homeless people, but the researcher also searched the streets for some respondents.

7. Stockley, D., Canter, D. & Bishopp, D. (1993) *Young People on the Move*. Guildford: Psychology Department, University of Surrey.	Young people at risk of homelessness	Both	72	1 year	1	After 1 year	Used agencies and informal networking to track. Obtained ‘minimum’ information from these sources on young people whom they didn’t manage to re-interview/get a questionnaire response from.	Unsure
8. Craig, T.K.J., Hodson, S., Woodward, S. & Richardson, S. (1996) *Off To a Bad Start: A Longitudinal Study of Homeless Young People in London.* London: The Mental Health Foundation.	Young people.	Both	161	1 year	1	After 1 year	Tracking methods were continuous and comprehensive, with researchers working closely with homelessness agencies. Sources included: a continuous log of contacts made by respondents to participating homelessness agencies; agency record cards; business cards given to respondents; networking with other young people; chance encounters; letters forwarded by probation and social services; and GP lists. The last two methods were less productive than the others.	Successfully re-interviewed 107 out of 161 young people 1 year later (67% retention rate). Received information about a further 30 (19% of sample) and 2 had died. Only 22 young people (13% of sample) were not traced.

9. O'Callaghan, B. and Dominian, L. with Evans, A.. Dix, J., Smith, R, Williams, P. & Zimmeck, M. (1996) *Study of Homeless Applicants*. London: Department of the Environment.	Homeless applicants to local authorities – all household types and age groups were included.	Both	2,474 applicants were included in the study. A first interview was secured with 1497 applicants, and 1,302 were eligible for a second interview.	Between 11 and 18 months for tracking through LA records. Variable for survey interviews– see 'timing of re-contacts'	1	Second interviews were triggered by one of the following events. 1. Permanent rehousing 2. Withdrawal/ rejection of application 3. End of survey period (March 1994) if applicant still awaiting LA decision/ rehousing	There were two elements. 1. Tracking through administrative records using pro formas. This was reported to be an extremely difficult and time-consuming exercise. 2. Two structured interviews with applicants. A range of tracking methods were used including: inquiries with neighbours; LA records; friend/relative contacts; change of address postcards; and forwarding letters through local housing and advice agencies. The last two methods were much less productive than the others.	Out of 1,302 applicants eligible for second interview, 879 interviews were obtained (a retention rate of 68%). The majority of non-response was due to movement (52%) or incomplete addresses (4%), rather than refusal (14%) or non-contact (29%).

ANNEX 2: EXISTING LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH IN THE US

Reference	Group covered	'Positive' or 'negative' outcomes traced	Sample size	Tracking period	Number of re-contacts	Timing of re-contacts	Methods for locating sample	Retention/response rates
1. Sosin, M., Piliavin, I. & Westerfelt, H. (1990) 'Towards a longitudinal analysis of homelessness', *Journal of Social Issues*, 46(4): 157-174.	Homeless individuals using services.	Both	451	6 months	1	After 6 months	Used agency and family/friends informants. Also used change of address postcards, and signs and announcements in relevant services. Used two homeless people as 'searchers'. Paid $7 for the second interview.	58% were re-interviewed.
2. Cohen, E.H., Mowbray, C.T., Bybee, D., Yeich, S., Ribisl, K. and Freddolino, P.P. (1993) 'Tracking and follow-up methods for research on homelessness', *Evaluation Review*, 17(3): 331-353.	Individuals who were homeless and mentally ill.	Both	163	1 year	2	After 4 months and 12 months	Main sources were *informants* (both agency and friends/relatives) and *archives/records* (from mental health and shelter services). Used same researcher to track each participant throughout. Were persistent and flexible to enable immediate response when participants 'surfaced'. Used telephone and face-to face contact with clients rather than written communication wherever possible. Used 'permission to locate' forms. Offered incentives.	At 4 months, 140 (86%) were found, and 124 (76%) completed follow-up interviews. At 12 months, 135 (83%) were located, and 111 (68%) were re-interviewed.

3. Wong, Y.L.I, Culhane, D.P. & Kuhn, R. (1997) 'Predictors of Exit and Re-entry among Family Shelter Users in New York City', *Social Service Review*, 71: 441-462.	Homeless families using shelters	Mainly negative – traced through re-entry to homeless shelters	27,919	2 years	N/a – traced through administrati ve data	N/a - traced through administrative data	Tracked exits and re-entries to homeless shelters in New York using a unified database.	N/a – depended on whether exited or re-entered shelters.
4. Wong, Y.L.I. & Piliavin, I. (2001) 'Stressors, resources, and distress among homeless persons: a longitudinal analysis', *Social Science & Medicine* 52: 1029-1042.	Homeless individuals using services	Both	564	Between 4 months and 1 year	1	After 4 months, up to 1 year	Noted that 'various tracking strategies' were employed but gives no details. Does comment that follow-up interviews were initially intended to take place after 4 months, but took up to 1 year because of search problems.	81% were re-interviewed
5. Bassuk, E.L., Perloff, J. N. & Dawson, R. (2001) 'Multiply homeless families: the insidious impact of violence', *Housing Policy Debate*, 12(2): 299-320.	Homeless families using shelters.	Both	220	2 years	2	After 1 year and after 2 years	Not specified, but were apparently 'successful'	Retention rate was 76 % at 2 years. 61 families were lost at 1 year, and a further 48 were lost at 2 years. However 19 families not found at 1 year were re-contacted at 2 years.

ANNEX 3: DESIGN FOR A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

A3.1 Given the sensitive nature of homelessness and the fact that the sample of interest may be scattered across Scotland, individual interviews would probably be required rather than focus groups. However, it might be that some focus group work targeted at finding out how people broke the cycle of homelessness would be useful and could be organised in Glasgow and Edinburgh where there are greater concentrations of individuals with experience of homelessness.

A3.2 Based on the figures from the SHS 2001, in any year there would be about 400 people with experience of homelessness in the past 5 years and 100 with experience of homelessness prior to this. Of these, about 70% would have consented to a follow up interview, giving a potential sample of over 250 people with experience of homelessness in the past 5 years and 70 people with experience of homelessness more than 5 years ago from each year of the SHS.

A3.3 Information to select the sample for the qualitative study could be obtained from the SHS directly. At present the questions in the SHS would allow one to identify whether a person has experience of sleeping rough, if they have ever applied to a local authority as homeless and whether they are currently on a council or housing association waiting list. In addition, there is a range of demographic information. To select a qualitative sample that covers a more detailed range of circumstances, it would probably be necessary to either add questions to the SHS, or to undertake a screening interview.

A3.4 A screening interview among those identified as ex-homeless (and who have consented to the recall question) could be based on brief telephone (if phone numbers are available) or doorstep interviews. The screening interview could collect additional information relevant to the selection of the purposive sample, such as how long people were homeless, whether they were ever in contact with homelessness agencies etc.

A3.5 Whichever approach was taken, an initial study should be undertaken with around 40 people, setting quotas relating to key variables of interest. With qualitative interviewing, a relatively small sample such as this could be drawn initially, and then supplemented if that later appeared necessary – i.e. should respondents continue to provide new ideas and information of interest as the interviews progressed.

A3.6 Interviews would likely be fairly lengthy including housing histories, causes of homelessness, the homelessness experience, routes out of homelessness, and the stability of current situation. Thus interviews of one or two hours would probably be required, and incentive payments should be offered.

ANNEX 4: QUESTIONS FOR THE SCOTTISH HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

A4.1 Note that the questions included in this appendix are only examples of the types of subject matter for questions that could be included in the SHS. This is not the recommended wording or response categories for these questions.

(1) QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY PEOPLE LIVING IN INSECURE ACCOMMODATION AND THE HIDDEN HOMELESS

A4.2 These questions would identify households living in insecure accommodation as well as people currently staying with the household that would be defined as 'hidden homeless'.

1. Is there anyone (not including lodgers) currently living in this dwelling because they have no stable home?

2. Does anyone (else) sometimes spend the night in this dwelling because they have nowhere of their own to go?
   (This would identify people staying with the household at the time of interview that could be defined as hidden homeless.).

3. If YES, are they are a friend, relative (and if relative – how are they related to the respondent)?

(2) ROUTES OUT OF HOMELESSNESS

A4.3 This is perhaps the most important set of questions. This is an ideal opportunity to investigate routes out of homelessness from a representative sample of ex-homeless people.

1. Did you receive help from any of the following?
   family, friends, LA housing/homelessness department, LA social work department, advice service (voluntary or statutory), voluntary/specialist homelessness accommodation or support agency, other, none?

2. What was the nature of the help you received?
   Financial, accommodation, advice, practical help, emotional support etc.?

3. Did you approach any of the following for help?
   Family, friends, LA housing/homelessness department, LA social work department, advice service (voluntary or statutory), voluntary/specialist homelessness accommodation or support agency, other, none?
   (This will capture where help was requested, but not given)

4. What was the first type of accommodation you moved into after becoming homeless?
   Own mainstream tenancy (LA, RSL or private) or owner-occupied, supported accommodation (group or independent living/temporary or permanent), furnished

accommodation (group or independent living/temporary or permanent/social or private sector), friends or relatives, institution, other etc.?

(3) SPECIFIC HOMELESS SITUATIONS

A4.4 These questions would identify whether respondents had experienced any of the particular situations in the Homelessness Task Force definitions of homelessness (Scottish Executive, 2001). Some of these questions should be asked of all respondents, rather than just those with experience of homelessness.

A4.5 It should be noted that some of these questions are unlikely to be accepted for the SHS because they are too personal and sensitive. However, as that is a decision would need to be made by the SHS team, the questions are included here for completeness.

1. Have you ever had accommodation to which you could not gain access?

2. Have you ever had accommodation that you could not live because you would have risked domestic violence by living there?

3. Have you ever lived in emergency/temporary homeless accommodation (e.g. hostels, night shelters, refuges, B&B)?

4. Have you ever lived in insecure accommodation (e.g. staying with friends/relatives without stable base?

5. Have you ever squatted?

6. Have you ever been asked to leave a parental home?

7. Have you ever lived under the threat of eviction?

8. Have you ever had to share accommodation with another household on a long-term basis because you had nowhere else to go?

A4.6 It would be worthwhile asking for experiences of the above in the last year and last five years and to also ask about current accommodation to find out if the respondent is presently hidden homeless.

(4) REPEAT HOMELESSNESS APPLICATIONS

A4.7 It would be useful to obtain information about repeated applications to different LAs, as this is currently not captured by the HL1 returns. (HL1 returns only capture repeat applications to the same LA.)

1. How many times have you applied to a LA as homeless within the past year?

2. If more than once… Were these applications to the same LA or to different LAs.

(5) HOMELESSNESS HISTORIES

A4.8 It would be useful to ask about all periods spent homeless, sleeping rough, applications to local authorities etc. in the SHS to obtain each respondent's history of homelessness. However, it is unlikely that a full history could be asked in the SHS, so an alternative would be to collect a rough history. This could be done by asking whether the respondents had any experiences of homelessness for previous complete years, e.g. Did you have any experiences of homelessness at all in 2001? 2000? 1999? Etc.

ANNEX 5: DESIGN FOR A PROSPECTIVE STUDY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

A5.1 Since it is not known how successful a long term follow up might be, it would be advisable initially to consider a two year follow up of people leaving care, with contacts every six months. Should the sample of people with experience of homelessness be sufficiently large, and the benefits seem worthwhile, there would always be the potential to extend the study beyond this timeframe at a later stage. (It may be that there would be interest among other policy makers to begin the research at a point substantially prior to young people leaving care.)

A5.2 Assuming that a sample was selected of those soon to leave care, the population would be around 1,000 young people in a set year. Ideally all these people would be selected for initial interview to ensure that there would still be reasonable numbers in later waves of the study. It might be that people who would not consent to interview, might still consent to their details being checked on administrative databases so that some information about them could be obtained (e.g. health records, records of contact with homelessness services).

A5.3 At each wave of the study, a face to face interview would be undertaken with each panel member. Any that are identified as having experience of homelessness could also be asked to take part in a qualitative interview to obtain more in-depth information – although this would impact on the cost.

A5.4 A cheaper alternative to following-up people at risk of homelessness through face-to-face surveys could be to use administrative data to track. Any individuals identified as homeless could then be traced and further studied. This design does have the disadvantage that information prior to someone becoming homeless could only be collected retrospectively – i.e. we would lose the full-prospective design.

ANNEX 6: DESIGN FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE GLASGOW HOSTEL CLOSURE PROGRAMME

A6.1 The assessments being carried out will provide a detailed profile of some of the population of homeless people living in hostels in Glasgow. A review of the assessment interviews should be undertaken to ensure that they contain all information that would be required for a longitudinal study, in order to assess long-term outcomes.

A6.2 Developing a research design is difficult without information on the process of hostel closure and a timetable for this. Ideally everyone would need to be assessed at the same time and in the same way. In reality there are two assessment strands - the one for existing hostel residents and the one for people newly presenting as homeless. The latter of these represents a little over 1,000 cases a month - although some of the same people will reappear in later months (at least under the old system). The timetable for assessment of those in hostels is likely to be related to the availability of new accommodation, and it might therefore take a while for everyone to receive an assessment. It might also be that the process focuses on certain types of groups within the homeless population at different stages. Thus researchers need to obtain as much information on the process of hostel closure as possible and recognise that it might be necessary to sample on an on-going basis, unless a timetable for assessments is drawn up which researchers can access.

A6.3 For the evaluation, a sample of at least 1,000 people from the existing hostel population should be tracked for an initial three-year period, with contact attempted every six months. At each point of contact the type of interviews undertaken could vary. For example, it might be that once a year it would be useful to have a longer interview and in between times a very short interview. Qualitative interviews might be undertaken with a small sub-sample.

A6.4 In order to undertake research among this group, it will be important for the Scottish Executive to discuss monitoring and evaluation issues with the Glasgow Assessment teams before the pilot and evaluation is complete. Without this input, a system might be set up which would preclude research because the necessary consent was not obtained. It is likely that the teams and other staff within the reprovisioning programme will be seeking to undertake monitoring and evaluation work and these ideas might be offered to them as something they can usefully draw upon and perhaps implement.

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