

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution:	University of Northumbria at Newcastle
Unit of Assessment:	22 – Social Work and Social Policy
Title of case study: Using Research into Homelessness and Social Exclusion to Develop New Services for Young People	
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>As a result of commissioned research produced by Northumbria University, a new system for supporting young people in the move to independence from local authority care has been developed. This includes an innovative method of assessment and the creation of two new joint posts shared between Newcastle City Council and Home Housing Group. The research revealed that people from care are over-represented among the North East's homeless population and that professionals felt that support systems for the most vulnerable young people could be improved. Research has led to other service changes by Newcastle City Council that more effectively meet the needs of homeless and socially excluded people.</p>	
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research has been conducted in three phases, reflecting an evolving relationship with local organisations dealing with homelessness and social exclusion in Newcastle. Initial studies identified groups whose needs are difficult to meet and changes that could beneficially be made to services: these findings raised questions that have been addressed through further commissioned pieces of research. The staff who undertook the research were Dr Jamie Harding (employed at Northumbria 1995 – the present), Adele Irving (2010 – the present); Dr Mary Laing (nee Whowell) (2010 – the present).</p> <p>In the first phase, initial research commissioned by Newcastle City Council, and completed by Harding in 2004, examined the experience of homeless 16-17 year olds re-housed into their own accommodation. The research demonstrated that young people faced many difficulties living independently, with growing problems of debt and substantial tenancy failure, although relationships with parents often remained positive. Some services, such as helping young people to access benefits and discussing tenancy obligations, were effective but in other cases services were only reaching a minority of the young people who were eligible for them.</p> <p>Following this piece of research, Newcastle City Council commissioned a further study in 2004-2005, completed by Harding and subsequently published (Harding and Willet, 2008), which identified the reasons for people staying for extended periods of time in temporary accommodation. A major EURO CITIES Peer Review (conducted in 2010), and chaired by Harding, reached a positive conclusion about the city's services for homeless people but made a number of recommendations. Harding and Newcastle City Council also took a role in the European project, COM.IN, which examined services for socially excluded young people in four major European cities. This project made recommendations for the development of services to young people leaving local authority care, centring on the relationship between different agencies. The recommendations have now been implemented with some adjustments: Harding is currently evaluating the new services that have been developed (2013).</p> <p>Origins of Poverty, the first of three projects commissioned by the Cyrenians (a regional charity working with homeless and other socially excluded people) was conducted by Harding, Irving and Laing in 2011. A large number of interviews with homeless people revealed the extent of their experiences of social exclusion, particularly the high number who had been in local authority care. The second project - on the subject of providing effective services to homeless people at a time of austerity - was completed and disseminated at events held in May and June 2012. The reach of these events beyond the region was demonstrated by the presence of a special advisor to the Department of Communities and Local Government and employees of two national homelessness charities: Homeless Link and Centrepoin. Finally, Harding and Irving undertook an evaluation of the housing related support services provided by the Cyrenians.</p>	

3. References to the research

- Harding, J. (2004) *Making it Work – The Keys to Success for Young People Living Independently*, Bristol: Policy Press
<http://www.policypress.co.uk/display.asp?K=9781861345325>
- Harding, J. and Willett, A. (2008) *Barriers and Contradictions in the Resettlement of Single Homeless People*, *Social Policy and Society* 7:4, pp.1-12 DOI: 1017/S1474746408004405
- Harding, J. (2010) *Eurocities Peer Review of Newcastle City Council's Services to Homeless People*, report to the Eurocities group of the European Commission available at http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/Eurocities_Peer_ReviewHousing_Newcastle_Final-CGRE_11940.pdf
- Harding, J. Irving, A. and Whowell, M. (2011) *Homelessness, Pathways to Exclusion and Opportunities for Intervention*, at http://www.thecyrenians.org/Resources/Tyneside%20Cyrenians/Resources/Research%20Reports/Homelessness_%20Pathways%20to%20Exclusion%20and%20Opportunities%20for%20Intervention.pdf
- Harding, J. McLoughlin, K. Metcalfe, L. and Brown, S. (2013) *Enhanced Pathway Planning to Prevent Homelessness Among Care Leavers in Newcastle*, UK in Mirbach, T. and Guntner, S. (eds) *Strategies for the Active Inclusion of Young People Facing Multiple Disadvantages – Findings of a Transnational Policy Experiment*, Hamburg: Lawaetz Foundation – available from HEI on request
- Harding, J and Guntner, S (2013) Active Inclusion: an effective strategy to tackle Youth Homelessness, *European Journal of Homelessness* Vol 7 (2) – available from HEI on request

Grants

The grants that were received to support these publications were:

- **£7,163** from Newcastle City Council for the work on Barriers and Contradictions (2004)
- **£18,960** from the Cyrenians for the Homelessness, Pathways to Exclusion work (2010)
- **£2,000** from Newcastle City Council for the Eurocities Peer Review (2010)
- **€11,070** from the Lawaetz Foundation for the Strategies for Active Inclusion work (2011)
- **£10,000** from The Cyrenians for the Cost Benefit Analysis work (2012)

4. Details of the impact

The findings from Harding's 2001 study resulted in *Newcastle City Council providing more resources for mediation when a young person is asked to leave the family home*. A key finding - that one service was seeing only 15% of the young people who had been re-housed - led to the workers from this service being relocated into the homelessness section in order to provide support at the point where a young person approaches the local authority as homeless. Mediation services and support at the point of the homelessness application continue to be provided today. The continued influence of Harding's initial findings is still apparent in the manner in which the local authority and other agencies continue to seek to provide housing support to young people at the earliest possible opportunity. Most recently there has been the introduction of a new system of housing assessment for people in the care of the local authority from October 2012 and the

appointment of two workers to provide intensive support to this group from April 2013.

The report for the Origins of Poverty project *influenced debates about homelessness within the Cyrenians (Source 1)*. It was used in training with new members of staff of the Cyrenians and key issues were discussed at board and senior management meetings. The most important finding was that people who had been in local authority care were substantially over-represented among the sample of homeless people, suggesting particular difficulties in the transition to adulthood for this group. The research was also discussed at the Sunderland Homelessness Strategy event in December 2011 and the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum in January 2012.

The EUROCITIES Peer Review of homelessness services in Newcastle led by Harding *identified good practice that was used to inform the work of delegates from Barcelona, Malmo, Munich, Oslo, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Vienna*. However, it also suggested that there were weaknesses in supporting the most difficult and chaotic homeless people, who often come from a background of local authority care. These findings led the local authority to ask a delegation from Hamburg to consider this issue as part of a peer review of services for young people which took place in February 2012 and was part of the European project, COM.IN **(Source 2)**.

One of the Hamburg delegation's recommendations was to create 'transitions panels' of staff of all relevant agencies, particularly housing and social services staff, to support care leavers in the move to independence. Harding was the specialist advisor to the Hamburg delegation's visit and wrote the 2013 response to the recommendations, in consultation with the local authority **(Source 3)**. This response indicated that greater joint planning to meet the housing needs of care leavers would be achieved, not by the creation of transitional panels, but by incorporating a more substantial housing needs' assessment into the Pathways Plan drawn up by social workers and young people around the time of their sixteenth birthday. This assessment is in the form of a RAG (red, amber, green) system which is demonstrated in one of the corroborating documents and assesses the likelihood of a successful transition to independent living and the risk of homelessness **(Source 4)**.

From October 2012, this *RAG assessment has been used as part of the statutory Pathways Planning process (Source 5)*. According to the Newcastle Children and Young People's Plan, there were 509 children in care in Newcastle in November 2010 – all now receive a RAG assessment to help formulate their Pathways Plan. The assessment supports social workers and young people as they plan the future move to independent housing; housing professionals are also involved in the planning process where their input is judged to be helpful.

A further response to the findings of the COM.IN project saw Harding working with Home Housing Group and Newcastle City Council in 2012 to *make a successful bid to the Northern Rock Foundation* for a project to provide and evaluate new intensive forms of support for those young people in care whose RAG assessment is red **(Sources 6 and 7)**. *Two workers were employed from April 2013* and are providing support to a small number of the most chaotic care leavers **(Source 8)**. The project will run until August 2014 and the fact that the evaluation report will be produced by Harding and Irving has been identified as a key factor in any application for continuation funding. The funding for the project includes money for an event in the summer of 2014 to disseminate the outcomes of the project to a wider audience.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact – available from HEI on request

1. A statement from the Cyrenians about the impact of the Origins of Poverty work
2. *Peer Review Report: Services for Young People at Risk of Homelessness in Newcastle* by Ines Moers, Anne-Marie Gehrke and Simon Guntner (the Hamburg peer review team)
3. *Transition Panel For Care Leavers: Newcastle City Council's Response to Hamburg's Peer Review*

Impact case study (REF3b)

4. The 'country report' produced by Harding for the COM.IN project, evaluating the introduction of the RAG assessment for young people in Newcastle.
5. A document showing the RAG assessment introduced into the Pathway Planning process for young people in care by Newcastle City Council.
6. Application to the Northern Rock Foundation from Stonham Tyneside Foyer (part of Home Housing Group) for support workers for care leavers, which cites evidence from the Origins of Poverty study.
7. Email from Newcastle City Council supporting bid (in 6 above)
8. An email from Home Housing Group, confirming the appointment of the two workers to work intensively with care leavers who face the greatest risk of homelessness.