Young People's Homeless Pathways

Paula Mayock
Mary Louise Corr
Eoin O'Sullivan

Young People's Homeless Pathways

Paula Mayock
Mary Louise Corr
Eoin O'Sullivan

December 2008

Acknowledgements

About the Authors

Dr Paula Mayock is a Lecturer in Youth Research at the School of Social Work and Social Policy and Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin. Her research focuses primarily on the lives and experiences of marginalised youth, covering areas including youth homelessness, drug use and drug problems, sexuality, risk behaviour and mental health. Paula has recently undertaken post-doctoral research funded by the NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse) INVEST Fellowship programme, USA. She is the author of numerous articles, chapters and reports and recently co-authored a book entitled, *Lives in Crisis: Homeless Young People in Dublin*, published by the The Liffey Press. She is also a member of the editorial board of *Youth Studies Ireland*.

Mary Louise Corr is a PhD candidate at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin and is based at the Children's Research Centre. Her PhD research explores young people's experiences of crime and victimisation, with a particular focus on the effect of homelessness and unstable housing. Previously, Mary Louise was a research intern at the Children's Research Centre, graduated from Trinity College Dublin in 2003 with LLB (Law) and completed an M.Sc Criminology at the University of Edinburgh in 2005. She also works as a Teaching Assistant on the Introduction to Social Policy course at Trinity College Dublin.

Dr Eoin O'Sullivan is Senior Lecturer in Social Policy in the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College, Dublin and Fellow of Trinity College. He is a member of the European Observatory on Homelessness and a member of the editorial team for the *European Journal of Homelessness*. Recent collaborative publications include *Lives in Crisis: Homeless Young People in Dublin* (2007), *Crime and Punishment in Ireland 1922 to 2003: A Statistical Sourcebook* (2005), *Crime, Punishment and the Search for Order in Ireland* (2004), *Crime Control in Ireland: The Politics of Intolerance* (CUP, 2001) and *Suffer the Little Children: The Inside Story of Ireland's Industrial Schools* (2001).

" I suppose I have a relationship back with me family, we get on brilliant now and everything's kind of, we can communicate, we can talk to each other…She's [mum] learned to trust me and that's the biggest thing, there's a bit more trust in the family. Nobody trusted me before and now they do trust me which is great … What made a difference was getting off everything (drugs) … going into detox and then going into treatment and then doing the day programme. Just kind of getting me life back together, you know what I mean. I've grown up an awful lot in the last year, grown up a huge amount which was really needed.

Anna (19)

Contents

Contents

Contents

List of Tables

> " I think when you go through the Out of Hours you can class yourself as homeless 'cos you're never guaranteed a bed you know that type of way. But now I have a home, this is my home. It mightn't be my name over the door and I mightn't be paying the mortgage or a lot of money for it but it's my personal space and everything in it is mine. It's my home, you know.

Caroline (17)

Executive Summary

The Study

This is a qualitative longitudinal study of homeless young people in Dublin city. The research adopted a *pathways approach* and set out to document, record and understand temporal change in the homeless experience over time. A core aim was to generate in-depth understanding of the process of youth homelessness, with a particular focus on young people's trajectories into, through and out of homelessness. The study also aimed to inform policy-relevant recommendations related to service provision, early intervention and the prevention of negative outcomes.

Research Methods

The research was conducted in two waves: the first between September 2004 and January 2005 (Phase I) and the second between September 2005 and August 2006 (Phase II). 40 young people (23 males and 17 females) were recruited at the outset of the study and, at the time of follow-up, information was successfully obtained about the living situations of 37 of the study's 40 participants. Direct contact was re-established with 32 of these young people and follow-up interviews were conducted with 30 (16 males and 14 females).

Phase I was commissioned by the Office of the Minister for Children and a summary report was published in November 2006[1]. Further material from this phase of the study was subsequently published in book form[2]. Phase II was joint-funded by the Health Service Executive and the Homeless Agency.

---

[1] Mayock, P. and Vekić, K. (2006) *Understanding Youth Homelessness in Dublin City: Key Findings from the First Phase of a Longitudinal Cohort Study.* Dublin: Office of the Minister for Children.

[2] Mayock, P. and O'Sullivan, E. (2007) *Lives in Crisis: Homeless Young People in Dublin.* Dublin: The Liffey Press.

Community Assessment Process

The study commenced with a 'Community Assessment Process', a period dedicated to establishing contact with professionals working directly or indirectly with homeless youth. In addition to informing service providers about the nature and aims of the study, this process enabled the research team to build local knowledge which in turn informed the recruitment and selection of research participants. It also facilitated initial introductions to prospective participants.

Recruiting and Tracking Respondents

Young people were initially recruited through hostels, residential settings, night shelters, drop-in centres and the street. During Phase II of the study, a combination of strategies was utilised in an attempt to regain contact with the young people approximately one year after their baseline interview. The tracking process often began with the researcher making contact with the hostel or residential setting where they had resided at the time of their initial interview. In the case of rough sleepers, efforts to re-establish contact involved a combination of visiting street locations and asking other homeless youth if they had knowledge of the individual's whereabouts. As might be expected given that the vast majority had moved on at least one occasion since the time of initial contact, several practical difficulties arose in attempting to re-enter the lives of participants following a period of no contact.

Life History Interviewing

The life history interview was the core method of data collection. The method rests on the collection and analysis of stories that speak to turning point moments in people's lives. This approach to interviewing therefore provided the scope to record young people's accounts, not of 'homelessness' but of 'a life' in which homelessness occurs and is possibly resolved.

All baseline (that is, Phase I) interviews commenced with an invitation to young people to tell their 'life story'. Several key topic areas – including family life and relationships, friendships, street experience, accommodation history, drug use, criminal activity, and so on – were then targeted for detailed questioning. During the follow-up interviews young people were asked to 'update' their life history narrative by detailing significant events since the time of their initial interview. They were asked to describe changes in their current social or peer groups, family relationships and any new service providers in their lives. During both phases of the study, interviews were conducted in an

open-ended manner, allowing young people to frame their 'stories' through the events and themes that were personally significant.

The Study's Young People

Number of Young People Interviewed, Phases I & II
Phase I (2004–2005):   40 (23 young men; 17 young women)
Phase II (2005–2006):   30 (16 young men; 14 young women)

Age
At the time of conducting baseline interviews, young people were aged between 14 and 22, and at the time of follow-up, they ranged from 15 to 24 years.

Living Situation
At the time of Phase I young people were accessing varied accommodation types: emergency short-term hostel accommodation (25); longer-term residential setting or hostel (2); adult hostels/B&Bs (3); between hostel and home (1); rough sleeping (2); prison (3); supported/transitional housing (2); home (having experienced homelessness in the past six months) (2).

The living situations of the young people had changed significantly by the time of Phase II interviews and included: emergency/short-term hostel (1); adult hostels/B&Bs (4); rough sleeping (3); prison (5); supported/transitional housing (8); home (5); private rented sector (2); residential care (3); foster care (1); special care unit (1); residential drug treatment (1); caravan (1); deceased (1).

Movement Between Living Situations
While a number of the study's participants reported only one housing transition since the time of their baseline interview, many others reported several moves between temporary forms of accommodation. While approximately ten had experienced relative stability of housing, a larger number had experienced a more complex pattern of movement with a number reporting up to eight changes in their living situations since Phase I.

Homeless Pathways
Although young people's living situations differed, as did their experiences of living out of home, it was possible to categorise their housing situations and transitions over the course of the study into three homeless pathways. Those within the three pathways identified share a general trend in their movement

either *out of homelessness* (Pathways 1 and 2) or *towards more chronic homeless states* (Pathway 3). The homeless pathways identified include:

Pathways	Number of Young People	Accommodation Type
Pathway 1 Independent Exits from Homelessness	7 (5 females; 2 males)	Home (6);* Private Rented Sector (1)
Pathway 2 Dependent Exits from Homelessness	10 (7 females; 3 males)	Transitional Housing (7); State Care (3)
Pathway 3 Continued Homelessness	13 (2 females; 10 males)	Adult Hostels (4); Sleeping Rough (2); Prison (5); Other (2)

* Includes one young person who was living between home and care and another young person who was about to move home.

Pathway 1: Independent Exits From Homelessness

7 young people (2 males and 5 females) were categorised as having exited homelessness independently, having either moved home (6 young people) or to private rented sector accommodation (1 young person).

Moving Home

Leaving Home

For young people in this pathway, premature home-leaving was associated with their 'problem behaviour' during early to mid-adolescence or, alternatively, was related to a period of profound instability due to conflict within the family home.

Returning Home

For those who moved home, exiting homelessness was a process with a number of transitions and negotiations attached. The following factors were found to facilitate the young people's move home:

■ Addressing 'problem' behaviour and adhering to the specific conditions (e.g. attending drug treatment) attached to their return home.
■ Specific 'turning point' experiences or events in the young person's life (e.g. a period of incarceration) which appeared to forge personal motivation for change.

- A change in the behaviour or circumstances on the part of the young person's parent(s), including an increased ability to care for their children.
- Improved family relationships.
- Continued contact with, and support from, parents subsequent to becoming homeless, which appeared to facilitate a smoother transition back to the family home.

Sustaining the Move Home

Young people experienced a 'settling in' period following their return home as they adapted to household rules and parental expectations. The move home was often accompanied by changes across a number of dimensions of personal and social life including some or all of the following:

- Finding a new social network and peer relationships subsequent to returning to their home neighbourhoods.
- Distancing themselves from former social networks, particularly those associated with drug and street 'scenes'.
- Maintaining a regime of abstinence from drugs.
- Participation in education, training or the labour force.

It is really weird to be like sitting in one place with them (friends in home neighbourhood) and they are talking about going on holidays and, you know, their lives or their jobs and all and then going in there (drug treatment setting) and then listening to, 'I scored here last night' … the blokes are all full of image and you know kind of even the way they speak, the whole slur in their voice … I suppose I am more comfortable in that whole drugs world because that is all I know for the last 5 or 6 years. But I would love to be in the other world and like just be normal and never having to have been gone near drugs.

Sarah (23)

Ambivalence, Instability and Risk

Not all of the young people who moved home viewed the transition in positive terms and there is evidence to suggest that a number may experience housing instability in the future. Reasons included:

- Attachment to staff and residents in the short- or medium-term residential (hostel) settings where they had previously resided and consequent difficulties adjusting to life at home.
- Lack of readiness for the move home.
- Unresolved issues and continued volatile relationships with parents.
- Moving home as a last resort due to the absence of alternative housing options.
- Difficulties with distancing themselves from former friendship networks of homeless and/or drug using peers.

It's fucked up, it is, because I know I shouldn't be there, do you know that like, it's not, it's not me home …it's just like the place where I sleep and eat and wash meself in …my ma doesn't give a fuck about how I feel, or if I try and tell her anything she just doesn't understand it … we just don't see eye to eye, and we just don't get along so, yeah, there will be a big blow-up and she'll fuck me out, and she'll call me all the names under the sun and I'll be back to square one.

Rachel (16)

Private Rented Sector

Only one young person who exited homelessness independently was living in private rented accommodation at the time of follow-up. At Phase I, this young man had been living in adult hostel accommodation with no social supports from family or friends. The decision to access private rented accommodation was motivated by the birth of his son and he made the transition out of homelessness largely with the support of services. However, he subsequently experienced multiple problems due in large part to his inexperience of the private rented sector. At the time of follow-up, he reported difficulties with his landlord, had accrued rent arrears and his accommodation was in a poor state of repair. Further risks to housing stability included the absence of family support, continued drug use and criminal activity, lack of education/training and mental health difficulties. This young man's experience highlights the need to support young people with homeless histories in their efforts to access and maintain private rented sector accommodation.

Pathway 2: Dependent Exits from Homelessness

10 young people (3 males and 7 females) were categorised as having made a dependent exit from homelessness, that is, they had moved off the street or from services targeting homeless youth or adults to alternative accommodation *with the assistance of statutory and/or voluntary services and intervention.* 7 of these young people were living in transitional/supported housing at the time of Phase II and 3 were in State care.

Moving to Transitional Housing

In all but two cases, the move to transitional housing was the first change in accommodation since the time of their Phase I interview. This stability appears to facilitate the move to transitional housing by providing young people with opportunities to address issues and problems that had impacted on their lives in general and on their housing situation, in particular. It was possible to identify a number of factors that facilitated the move to supported housing as well as difficulties and challenges experienced by young people in making this transition.

Facilitators

- A personal desire to move towards independence.
- Entry to treatment played a crucial role for those with problematic drug/alcohol use (seven of the young people were regular consumers of alcohol and drugs).
- Participation in education/training provided a structured daily routine and also helped young people to set goals for the future.
- Social networks and support of family: five of the young people felt their relationship with family had improved and two reported receiving family support which appeared to play an enabling role in exiting homelessness.
- A number received support from professional sources: from social workers, key workers or aftercare workers. For a number, engagement with these service providers was a positive experience and one that facilitated the move to more stable accommodation.
- For many of the young people, friends provided important supports and helped them to avoid loneliness. Many reported a shift in their friendship networks, most often related to their efforts to distance themselves from their former 'way of life'.

I couldn't hang around with people using drugs now. It's too much, well I might for 5 minutes and then I'd have to go. I wouldn't, you know what I mean, I wouldn't feel confident around it now to stay around you know … you can't be around people who are using drugs without using them yourself, you have to get away from that situation. It's only now that I'm off drugs that I'd be talking to the few lads in [home neighbourhood] 'cos whenever I was on drugs they wouldn't have anything to do with me.

<div align="right">Seán (22)</div>

Challenges

- Some of the young people found the period of seeking transitional accommodation difficult due to the number of refusals they initially received on applying to various housing projects.
- Several experienced challenges in seeking employment while others experienced difficulty with returning to education after a period out of school.
- A considerable number experienced a sense of loss on moving from their former place of residence, most often a hostel for under-18s.
- Some felt ill-prepared for the move to transitional housing and found that they lacked basic household management skills. Linked to this was their inability to maintain a healthy diet.
- Most also experienced financial stress and problems with money management and budgeting.
- Some reported negative experiences of professional supports and several were critical of their social workers, in particular.
- There was evidence to suggest that some young people struggled at times with negative or depressed feelings.

Most of the young people viewed their move to transitional or supported housing in positive terms, depicting it as a step towards independence. However, one young man was not happy and did not equate his living situation with having a home; he also expressed anxiety about future housing. Many, however, were relatively optimistic about their future housing prospects and hoped to finance a move to independent living through participation in the labour market.

Moving to Care Settings

3 young people were living in a care setting (2 in residential care and 1 in foster care) at Phase II. All were female and 17 years of age and had been living in accommodation accessed through the Out of Hours Service at the time of their baseline interviews. They shared a number of experiences:

- All identified household instability and family conflict as the primary reason for their home-leaving.
- They had limited contact with their families and a return to the family home was not a feasible option. In this sense, their family situations and relationships did not facilitate an independent exit from homelessness.
- Two of the young people had experienced considerable accommodation instability since their Phase I interview and had commuted in and out of the Out of the Hours Service. Their stories highlight the challenges of finding suitable care placements for young people in crisis.
- This accommodation instability also affected other areas of their lives such as education and training. One young woman began to use alcohol/drugs more frequently.
- The move to a care setting was followed by a period of very considerable upheaval and young people experienced high levels of stress and anxiety during this time.

I was real agitated, I was like, 'I am not moving in and staying with a load of strangers two days before Christmas like. And I was like, 'I don't want to go, I don't want to go, I don't want to go'. So I started to drink again so it would jeopardise me placement here (current placement), so I wouldn't be able to go here but like that didn't work … I was, do you know, we were getting the Christmas tree ready in [the hostel] so it was real upsetting because I was helping them do all that and I wasn't going to be there.

Lisa (17)

At the time of follow up, these young people felt that their living arrangements were more stable than previously despite the initial difficulties they experienced with the transition to a care setting. All were attending school and aspired to further education and employment.

Pathway 3: Continued Homelessness

13 of the young people (11 males and 2 females) remained homeless at the time of follow-up interviews. They reported the following living situations: adult hostels/B&Bs (4); rough sleeping (2); prison (5); residential drug treatment (1); supported living (awaiting sentencing) (1). These young people reported rapid movement between multiple living situations; they depended on the most unstable accommodation types and reported more chaotic housing careers than those who exited homelessness. The majority had experience of sleeping rough and a number reported prolonged periods of rooflessness.

'Going Through': The Cycle of Hostel Use

Of the 13 young people in this Pathway, 10 accessed accommodation through the Out of Hours Service (OHS), typically between the ages of 12 and 17 years. They shared the following experiences:

- Repeated entry to the OHS as teenagers (that is, under the age of 18) and movement between many different hostels (OHS residential settings).
- Entry to adult hostels at the age of 18 years.
- The lack of structure in their lives forced them to spend time in very public settings and exposed them to criminal and other 'risky' activity.
- Failed attempts to exit homelessness.

Process of Disengagement

Young people's disengagement from the mainstream was a process that often started during early adolescence. Most left school early, reported short-lived attempts at a return to education/training, had limited participation in the labour market and weak family ties. Their homeless lifestyles, often characterised by drug use and 'getting by', made their attempts to engage in conventional activities difficult. As their homeless 'careers' progressed, they became immersed in a homeless lifestyle and relied increasingly on others in a similar situation for help and support.

It's hard, do you know what I mean, like you see people and they say, 'Ah why don't you get yourself a job', and this and that. But how can you get a job when you're homeless, you know what I mean, you've no address to work off or, you have got a job, I have tried it, do you know what I mean?

Wayne (23)

The Contours of Chronic Housing Stability

Three issues are central to the understanding of prolonged or chronic housing instability: substance misuse and drug dependence, incarceration and temporary exits from homelessness.

1. Substance Misuse and Drug Dependence

- All who remained homeless had a history of drug misuse and two also reported heavy or problematic alcohol use.
- First drug use experiences typically occurred between the ages of 10 and 16. 9 of the 11 young men and both of the young women reported heroin use.
- A number had accessed drug treatment but often relapsed and resumed use at an escalated level.
- Housing instability had an impact on their drug use practices and exposed them to other drug users, particularly in the context of adult hostels.
- Substance use was also implicated in the breakdown of more stable living situations such as supported housing or the family home.

It's because I got onto a different scene. Like I moved into town to that place (adult hostel) and you start fuckin' seeing all the tablet heads all the junkies all over the place … I just became one of them you know and it was only a matter of months. But just before that I wasn't into it, I hated it like, do you know what I mean. I thought it was all right to smoke hash, drink, take coke, or whatever. But I just went into that scene then you know.

Christian (19)

---

2. Incarceration

- All in this pathway reported criminal activity at some stage in their lives.
- 11 (10 males and 1 female) had spent time in prison. Experiences of incarceration varied from relatively short periods spent on remand to sentences ranging from several months to a number of years.
- Typical offences of which young people had been charged and/or convicted included criminal damage, trespassing, shoplifting, theft, robbery, dealing and possession of drugs, and assault.
- Young people usually entered prison while living in OHS accommodation, adult hostels, the street or with friends and, on release, returned to similar living situations.

- 8 young males reported more than one period of incarceration and several had become accustomed to a cycle of alternating between prison and temporary accommodation.
- Time spent in prison was sometimes viewed in a positive light, providing respite from the street as well as an opportunity to reduce or quit drug use.

Just like, I was going through and I was floating in and out of hostels and I hadn't really got a proper place to stay. There was a telly in there (prison) in the bedroom, meals and the people that were in the cell were fuckin bang on, sound … But at times like, don't get me wrong now, I wasn't having the time of me life in there but it's not as bad as I thought it would have been.

Luke (19)

---

3. Temporary Exits from Homelessness

A number who remained homeless had accessed more stable living arrangements since their Phase I interviews, suggesting that some had tried to exit homelessness. The breakdown of these more stable living arrangements was strongly related to alcohol and/or drug abuse.

Services and Supports

A large number of those who remained homeless reported contact with services and agencies of the State from a young age including: Out of Hours Service, detention schools, drug treatment services, and social work agencies. Engagement with services was often sporadic and/or a response to a specific crisis situation and the services they accessed at these junctures rarely facilitated a move out of homelessness. The sudden withdrawal of supports at the age of 18 years impacted very negatively on their lives and served ultimately to prolong their homeless careers.

When you're living in placement when you're under 18 you should be shown a few things; what to cook, budgeting skills and shit like that. That's what I struggle with the most, keeping me money … They wash their hands of us when we're 18.

Luke (19)

Facilitators and Barriers to Exiting Homelessness

On the basis of the homeless pathways identified, it was possible to recognise the following facilitators and barriers to exiting homelessness:

Facilitators to Exiting Homelessness	Barriers to Exiting Homelessness
■ Access to appropriate, affordable housing.	■ Movement between multiple unstable accommodation types following the first homeless experience.
■ Lack of movement between unstable or temporary forms of accommodation.	■ Continued use of Out of Hours Service accommodation and movement between hostels/residential settings targeting the under-18s.
■ Contact with family; family support.	
■ Aftercare – adequate preparation for the move towards independent living.	■ Lack of access to secure, appropriate housing or a care placement.
■ Disaffiliation from former peer networks; establishment of positive and enabling social relationships.	■ Gaps in accommodation and service provision, particularly in services targeting 18–25 year olds.
■ Professional supports from aftercare workers, social workers or other professionals, often related to a strong relationship between the young person and an individual professional.	■ Entry to adult hostels.
	■ Time spent homeless (i.e. longer duration without stable accommodation).
	■ Negative peer associations.
	■ Involvement in criminal activity.
	■ Incarceration.
■ Participation in education and/or skills training.	■ Lack of employment/training opportunities.
■ Drug treatment (in conjunction with access to appropriate housing).	■ Alcohol and/or drug problems.
	■ Mental health problems.

Recommendations

Nine key policy recommendations were identified on the basis of the findings documented (see Chapter 7 for a detailed discussion).

Recommendation 1:

Develop more fluid models of service provision that do not strictly differentiate between persons under and over the age of 18 years.

Recommendation 2:

Formalise the role of the HSE in offering services to young adults who were homeless as children.

Recommendation 3:

Amend local authority housing need categorisations to include young people leaving all forms of substitute care, not simply institutional care.

Recommendation 4:

Gather accurate and timely information regarding outcomes for children in care.

Recommendation 5:

Prevent imprisonment by greater utilisation of non-custodial sanctions.

Recommendation 6:

Integrate research findings on the nature of homelessness with the construction of service delivery models.

Recommendation 7:

Review all youth homeless services, both statutory and voluntary, to emphasise housing solutions to prevent the move to adult homelessness.

Recommendation 8:

Discontinue the use of Garda stations as the means of accessing the Out of Hours services.

Recommendation 9:

A hybrid Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) should be utilised to house homeless youth.

Introduction

This report documents the findings of the first two phases of a longitudinal study of homeless young people in Dublin. The study was initiated in 2004 when the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) granted funding to conduct the first phase of the study. Summary findings of this phase were published in December 2006 by the OMCYA in a report entitled, *Understanding Youth Homelessness: Key Findings from the First Phase of a Longitudinal Cohort Study* (Mayock and Vekić, 2006) and the full findings were subsequently published in a book entitled, *Lives in Crisis: Homeless Young People in Dublin* (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007). In 2006, the Homeless Agency and Health Service Executive granted funding to embark on the second phase of research which involved a process of tracking and re-interviewing the forty young people who originally enlisted as study participants.

In its broadest terms, the research set out to generate an in-depth understanding of the process of youth homelessness, with the specific aim of identifying the *pathways* followed by young people subsequent to becoming homeless. Conceptualising youth homelessness as a process presupposes that homelessness is not a static or fixed state and rather views it as an evolving status that is continually subject to change. Thus, becoming homeless is not seen as resulting in an inevitable decline or progression towards chronic homeless states. While this conceptualisation – often referred to as a pathways approach – is relatively well documented internationally, research drawing on this theoretical model is only beginning to emerge in an Irish context. Indeed to date, homeless research in Ireland has been dominated by questionnaire surveys and has been primarily concerned with enumerating and profiling the homeless (O'Sullivan, 2008).

The identification of homeless pathways ideally requires research that tracks or maps the homeless experience *over time*. Longitudinal qualitative research is undoubtedly effective in examining the interplay between the

potential myriad of factors that come together to either hinder or assist individuals as they move through various life transitions. In relation to homelessness, qualitative longitudinal research, because of its sensitivity to context, can illuminate social processes that impact on people's living situations, as well as the way people negotiate changes as they occur in their lives. Over the past ten years in particular there has been growing interest and involvement in qualitative longitudinal research within social science research. This enthusiasm for longitudinal studies now extends beyond academic circles to policy and practice arenas.

The published findings of Phase I of this study (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007; Mayock and Vekić, 2006) provide invaluable insights in the process of becoming homeless and of young people's experiences of the services designed to meet their needs. However, in common with other studies of homelessness which have attempted to explore temporality retrospectively, these data do not permit a detailed exploration of the routes that young people follow during the months and years subsequent to becoming homeless.

The findings documented in this report are based on data generated from *two data sweeps* – the first of which was conducted in 2004–05 and the second in 2005–06 – and provides a detailed longitudinal analysis of homeless young people's lives and experiences. Importantly, it also identifies three separate pathways taken by the study's participants subsequent to becoming homeless.[3] Young people within each of the three pathways share a general trend in their movement either *out of homelessness* or *towards more chronic homeless states*. Thus, for the first time in an Irish context, this longitudinal study provides detailed information about the dynamic routes or 'journeys' embarked upon by young people who experience homelessness as teenagers. The findings presented indicate that young people can exit homelessness (sometimes, relatively quickly) and achieve greater stability in their lives. This is significant in the context of the recent Government commitment to end street and long-term homelessness by 2010 (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008) since knowledge about facilitators and barriers to exiting homelessness can potentially guide policy and service initiatives aimed

---

[3] The study will enter a third phase in January 2009 when attempts will again be made to track and re-interview the forty young people who enlisted in the study in 2004. This third phase of data collection will allow us to assess the sustainability/durability of young people's housing transitions, thus permitting a more robust understanding of homeless exits.

at supporting exits from homelessness. The final chapter of this report engages in a detailed policy discussion and makes nine specific policy recommendations. These recommendations, which are based on the evidence generated from two data sweeps, are aimed at ensuring that policies and practices that may unintentionally contribute to maintaining young people in homelessness are reduced and that mechanisms that facilitate exits from homelessness are enhanced.

The report starts by providing a detailed overview of the research literature on homeless 'careers' and pathways (Chapter 1). Chapter 2 outlines the research methodology, including the sampling approach, recruitment and tracking strategies and data collection and data analysis methods. The following four chapters present findings pertaining to young people's homeless pathways. Chapter 3 outlines the three pathways identified and explains the criteria underpinning these categorisations. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 then provide a detailed exploration of each of the three pathways identified, including independent exits from homelessness (Chapter 4), dependent exits from homelessness (Chapter 5) and continued homelessness (Chapter 6). Drawing on the information gleaned over the course of the study, Chapter 7 identifies five key issues for discussion and then outlines nine policy recommendations.

Homeless Careers and Pathways: A Review of the Research

Introduction

Since the early 1980s, research on all aspects of homelessness has multiplied in both North America and Europe. This in part mirrors the growth of visible homelessness in these countries during the period and, perhaps unsurprisingly in this context, a large segment of the research has focused on enumerating the homeless population and proposing policy solutions to ameliorate their obvious extreme marginalisation. Definitions of what constituted homelessness have been contested, as have the causes of homelessness. In the United States during the 1960s and early 1970s research focused on the characteristics of the inhabitants of 'Skid Row', areas of cities where homeless men clustered. Homelessness in these studies was largely understood as a process of disaffiliation[4] from society because of the individual deficits of the homeless themselves. However, as the numbers of visible homeless grew during the 1980s, individualistic explanations became increasingly difficult to support and structural explanations came to the fore. While structural accounts were a necessary corrective to the individual pathology explanations, they in turn

---

[4] The leading exponent of this perspective was Howard M. Bahr and his associates. His formal definition of disaffiliation was 'homelessness is a condition of detachment from society characterised by the absence or attenuation of the affiliative bonds that link settled persons to a network of interconnected social structures' (1973:17).

failed to adequately explain why only some households who found themselves exposed to growing unemployment, increasing poverty, and a shortage of affordable housing became homeless. In more recent years, social science research on homelessness has increasingly come to understand homelessness as the outcome of a dynamic interaction between individual deficits and structural change. From this understanding of homelessness, a broad conceptual framework has emerged that aims to understand pathways into and out of homelessness, underpinned by the notion of a homeless 'career'.

This notion of a career stands in contradistinction to understandings of the homeless as static entities. As Cloke *et al* (2003:32) argue, for those deemed homeless at a point in time, we need to understand that their 'homelessness, mobility and spatiality shifts over time, often charting complicated pathways into and out of different accommodation, different 'resting places.' The 'career' concept emerged as research became methodologically more sophisticated and moved away from cross-sectional or point-in-time surveys towards longitudinal approaches. With this, researchers became increasingly aware that households moved into and out of homelessness on a more frequent basis than cross-sectional studies had previously revealed. Moreover, cross sectional research over-estimated the severity of homelessness since, at any point in time, the long-term or chronically homeless tended to be overrepresented in such studies. Therefore, from an almost exclusive focus on routes or pathways *into* homelessness, a focus on routes *out* of homelessness emerged as it became clear that such a status was more likely to be episodic than a progression towards chronicity. This research demonstrated that individuals and households had multiple homeless episodes and understanding the conditions for successful long-term exiting from homelessness came to the fore of researchers and, indeed, policymaker's agendas.

Thus, by the beginning of the 21st century, homelessness had increasingly come to be understood as an objective condition that could occur for a much greater number of households than was previously envisaged, particularly if both individual deficits and structural adjustments interacted in a specific manner. A growing body of research has suggested that the majority of homeless households exited this state reasonably quickly, although some later experienced a series of further short-term homeless episodes. Others remained homeless for longer and this appeared to be exacerbated by individual deficits, particularly poor mental health and a lack of employment history.

Within the broad family of research into homeless pathways, a number of distinctive theoretical traditions are evident which, in turn, have guided the

methodological orientation of these studies (Pinkney and Ewing, 2006). In very broad terms, we can identify, firstly, an interactionist strand with an emphasis on qualitative, and largely ethnographic methods of research; secondly, a strand that develops the concept of housing careers, theoretically influenced by postmodernism and the emergence of a risk society and utilising qualitative interview research methods; and a third strand, which is more positivistic in orientation and utilises quantitative methods, either *via* survey research or more recently drawing on large scale administrative databases. Both the first and third strand are most developed and influential in the US, with the second strand most influential in the UK.

In attempting to explain the differing research traditions in the US and the UK, Fitzpatrick and Christian (2006) note that researchers of homelessness in the UK tend to have academic backgrounds in social policy and housing whereas, in the US, academic backgrounds in psychology, social work and medicine tend to dominate. Methodologically, this situation has broadly resulted in quantitative methods dominating US research, with qualitative methods featuring most prominently within British studies. These shifting theoretical and methodological approaches have resulted in differing understandings of homelessness with explanations in the US, particularly for families with children, highlighting structural factors, specifically the role of the housing market and the lack of affordability of rental housing, over individualist explanations. In Britain, a move is evident that highlights the individual support needs of homeless persons alongside a clear policy message that homelessness is more than simply a housing problem.

Homeless Careers: An Interactionist Account[5]

Much of the work of this strand draws theoretically on the work of Howard Becker who developed the career concept in aiming to explain how individuals became 'deviant' or non-conforming. Methodologically, Becker rejected models of human action that viewed actions as emerging from simultaneous forces and, instead, argued for the importance of sequential causes. In other words, a

---

[5] Symbolic interactionism, as a sociological framework, developed in Chicago during the 1920s. Its key premise is that individuals are involved in a continuous process of interaction and interpretation of particular situations which in turn shapes understandings of social life. In the 1960s, interactionism fused with new deviancy theory to generate a range of influential works on aspects of human deviance of which Becker's work is perhaps best known.

'career' has a number of sequences and each one is equally important in framing the eventual outcome, whereby the individual can pause, progress or return along the career path. Importantly, for Becker (1963:34), the concept of a career incorporates the notion of 'career contingency'. By this, he means:

> … the factors on which mobility from one position to another depends. Career contingencies include both objective facts of social structure and changes in the perspectives, motivations, and desires of the individual.

While Becker's work was originally concerned with understanding deviance, the framework he established has proven useful in understanding the career path of homeless households. His observation that researchers should not only research those who become ever embedded in a deviant career, but 'also consider those who have a more fleeting contact with deviance, whose careers lead them away from it into conventional ways of life' (1963:24–25) has particular significance. Substitute the word deviant for homeless and the basic premise of a particular approach to homelessness research is discernible.

Recruitment to Skid Row

Drawing on Becker's concept of deviant careers in an ethnographic account of the Minneapolis Skid Row[6], Wallace (1968:97) provided one of the first accounts of a typical homeless trajectory:

> Recruitment into the skid row way of life may be divided into four phases with component community and social psychological characteristics. The incipient phase involves the dislocation from the basic social network of society accompanied by a sense of rootlessness. Exposure to skid row subculture follows, accompanied by isolation and desocialization. The third phase – regular participation in skid row institutions

---

6 Although Wallace uses the term 'careers on skid row', he is in fact referring to what social scientists today would call 'strategies of survival'. Peter Archard's (1979) ethnography of London's skid row, although drawing on symbolic interactionism and new deviancy theory, focuses largely on the strategies of survival utilised by homeless men and on how their lives are shaped by agencies of social control. As a consequence, whilst a path breaking corrective account of the myriad of agencies that shape the lives of homeless men, neither the 'causes' nor 'pathways' to homelessness feature in this work. For an application of this framework to Ireland, see O'Brien (1979).

– witnesses the beginnings of submergence into skid row subculture. The final phase in the natural history of the skid rower is marked by his integration into the skid row community, and by his acculturation.

Wallace's work is of note as he sympathetically juxtaposes society's understanding of the individual's progressive decline into skid row as the gradual abandonment of wider societal norms with that of the skid rower for whom such a decline is the gradual acceptance of the norms of skid row. Although Wallace traces a series of steps towards full immersion in skid row, he does acknowledge that at different stages, individuals may not progress their skid row career. Regrettably, however, he did not develop this theme.

Homeless Career Trajectories

In one of the most detailed ethnographic accounts of homelessness to date, Snow and Anderson (1993:277) note the existence of differing career trajectories:

> … there seem to be five possible career trajectories for the homeless. Some have only brief careers on the streets. Others sink into a pattern of episodic homelessness. A third career entails permanent embeddedness in a liminal plateau typically in an institutional niche outside conventional society. A fourth career leads to chronic, unrelieved homelessness. And a final possibility involves permanent, or at least relatively long-term, extrication from street life and return to conventional society after years, or perhaps even a decade or more, of homelessness.

In terms of their own data, Snow and Anderson highlighted the extreme difficulties, particularly for those who become long-term homeless, in exiting this situation. This, they argued, could be explained as a combination of a gradual dislocation from resources and supports and the tendency of services to be geared towards enabling individuals to survive, rather than extricating them from, homelessness. While they acknowledged that chronic long-term homelessness was not an inevitable progressive path and that episodic homelessness was common, Snow and Anderson (1993:276) nonetheless argued that repeat episodes result in an 'increasing physical, social, and psycho-logical engulfment in homelessness.'

These largely ethnographic studies, particularly the American research, highlight in detail both the episodic nature of and the stages in the pathway to homelessness. Nonetheless, such accounts stress the existence of a pathway,

rather than *pathways*, albeit acknowledging that individuals may at different stages exit or pause in their journey to chronic homelessness. The various transitions described have at their core an inexorable finality, which is chronic homelessness. While offering rich and compelling accounts of pathways to homelessness amongst those who were literally homeless, i.e. sleeping in the streets or in emergency shelters, such accounts often overestimated the extent of a progressive decline into such forms of homelessness and underestimated the extent of exit from homelessness. This was largely a consequence of the methodology employed in such research, which resulted in an over-representation of those who were chronically homeless. Nonetheless, many of the key insights from this body of research were fruitfully utilised in a series of research projects employing quantitative research techniques with large samples of homeless individuals and households.

Homeless Careers: A Positivist Account

As highlighted, early interpretations of a homeless 'career' suggested a progressive deterioration into skid row, which can be construed as a linear trajectory towards chronic homelessness. However, research in the positivist strand of homeless 'careers' suggests that homelessness is best understood as episodic, characterised by residential instability, rather than as an inevitable or ever-declining quality of accommodation. For example, in their meta-analysis of research into homelessness, primarily in the US during the 1980s, Shlay and Rossi (1992:141) found that:

> the average time spent homeless was just under two years; all but two studies reported that the average time spent homeless was greater than 14 months. At the same time, these studies reported that the majority of their samples were homeless for less than six months.

In a series of studies researchers in this tradition have attempted to understand routes into homelessness, the duration of homeless careers and the conditions required for a successful exit from homelessness. From the late 1980s, a number of panel surveys were launched which allowed for a longitudinal analysis and extensive use was made of shelter registers and other administrative data sources from the early 1990s, in particular. Detailed information on patterns of homelessness was extracted from these databases utilising advanced multivariate techniques.

In one of the earliest quantitative analysis of homeless careers, Piliavin *et al* (1993:592–593) argued that 'childhood placement in foster care substantially increases the length of homeless careers, second … prehomeless psychiatric hospitalization reduces the length of homeless careers. Third, time worked reduces the length of time homeless. Fourth, several variables often viewed as important determinants of homeless careers have little effect on career length, most notable, alcohol abuse.' This study established what was to become a reasonably robust finding in these quantitative studies, that is, that individual deficits were not as significant as previously thought in either determining entry to homelessness, length of time spent homeless, or success in exiting homelessness. Rather, the evidence suggested that the provision of institutional support, particularly affordable independent accommodation and/or financial assistance towards housing costs, was more significant in determining entry to, duration of and exits from, homelessness. This became clear particularly when exploring why individuals returned to homelessness after a successful exit. Thus, the episodic nature of homelessness identified in early ethnographic accounts was confirmed in much larger samples of homeless individuals and households.

Exiting Homelessness

In understanding whether or not a household experienced an additional episode of homelessness following an initially successful exit, both Sosin *et al,* (1990) and Piliavin *et al,* (1996) distinguished between 'dependent' and 'independent' exits. Independent exits, as the term suggests, were described as exits to private accommodation without the formal support of social service / welfare type agencies, where the costs of the accommodation were largely borne by the resident, albeit with support in the form of housing allowances or benefits. 'Dependent' exits, on the other hand, ranged from transitional housing to staying with family and friends. Those who made independent exits were less likely to return to homelessness than those who made 'dependent' exits and this appeared to be particularly the case when individuals received welfare support in the form of financial assistance. These findings led the authors to conclude that 'accessibility and availability of sustained institutional support influence the likelihood of exits from homelessness' (Piliavin *et al,* 1996:52). The availability of affordable housing also emerged as a key determinant of successful homeless exits in Wong *et al's* (1997:459) study of family shelter users in New York when they argued that their data 'clearly indicate that subsidized housing is linked with a substantially lower rate of

readmission to the Family Shelter System'. In a similar vein, Zlotnick *et al*, (1999:220) argued in their study of homeless exits in California that 'entitlement-benefit income, and an exit into subsidized housing, were significantly associated with an exit from homelessness into stable housing' but that those homeless who were substance users were less likely to exit homelessness than those who were not (Zlotnick *et al*, 2003).

Dworsky and Piliavin (2000:209) elaborated further on these findings and confirmed that 'the type of housing situations to which sample members exit significantly affects the likelihood of them becoming homeless again.' In other words, not all homeless exits are equal and greater specificity as to the nature of the initial exit could assist in predicting future returns to homelessness. Other factors that contributed to successful exits included recent employment history and social service worker accessibility. On the other hand, referring to unsuccessful exits 'meeting the diagnostic criteria for a major mental illness decreases that likelihood' (Dworsky and Piliavin, 2000:209). In relation to the role of social service workers, the authors advise caution as they did not have robust data on the nature of the service received and what they observed 'reflects some selection process rather than the benefits of social service intervention' (2000:209). Dworsky and Piliavin (2000) particularly argued that the most important factor in not returning to homelessness appeared to be access to a private residence[7] rather than agency-managed transitional housing or informal arrangements such as staying with family or friends. The apparent lack of success of transitional housing in preventing returns to homelessness has been confirmed by other research which highlights that those homeless households who resided in service intensive homeless provision did not have shorter stays than those in less service intensive projects (Gerstel *et al*, 1996). What Gerstel *et al*, (1996) describe as the 'therapeutic incarceration' of homeless families in transitional housing, whereby a disciplinary regime was imposed to ensure adherence to the 'life-skills' that would prevent homelessness, actually worked to maintain dependency. This, the authors concluded, was because lack of affordable housing rather than individual deficits was the primary reason for homelessness.

---

[7] By this they mean private residences that individuals considered their own and for which they paid all or a substantial part of the housing costs, rather than, for example, social service agency run transitional housing.

Gender and Exiting Homelessness

Wong and Piliavin (1997) in their longitudinal study of homelessness in a Californian county, concluded that women, in particular female headed households, were more likely than men to exit homelessness speedily. This, they concluded, was not attributable to a greater incidence of individual deficits amongst the homeless men in the study; rather, such deficits played 'at best a minor role in accounting for gender and family status differences in homeless spell exit rates' (1997:420). The explanatory factors were largely institutional and related particularly to the availability of cash benefits. The greater likelihood of females exiting homelessness more rapidly was confirmed by Culhane and Kuhn (1998) using administrative data from public shelters in both New York and Philadelphia when they demonstrated that, over a two year period, approximately 55 percent of male and 65 percent of female shelter users had only a single homeless episode (less than 30 days usage of the shelter system) over a two-year period. Thus, a significant number of individuals both enter and exit homeless services relatively speedily. Those who experienced most difficulty exiting shelter services tended to be 'older people and people with mental health problems, substance abuse problems, and in some cases, medical conditions' (1998:38).

Metraux and Culhane (1999:390–91) argue in relation to homeless women that 'having children in the household, family instability, and domestic violence – are all associated with an increased risk of their experiencing additional episodes of shelter use.' In terms of exiting homelessness, the provision of permanent and affordable housing was found to be the single most important factor in reducing further episodes of homelessness (see also Wong *et al*, 1997 for a similar finding). While the authors acknowledged that the provision of such housing cannot in itself remedy the above risk factors, 'it can provide an atmosphere more suitable to addressing these problems, and it can prevent a single homeless episode from becoming a series of repeat stays' (1999:392). Interestingly, their research questions the need for homeless women to participate in transitional housing arrangements on the basis that the evidence suggests that the provision of housing with services has equally positive outcomes, but is less expensive.

Incarceration and Returns to Homelessness

A more recent area of research in this tradition is the interaction between the growing rate of incarceration in many western countries and homelessness. A longstanding tradition in homelessness research has highlighted that the

experience of homelessness is inherently criminogenic through engagement in survivalist crimes such as shoplifting, begging and larceny, resulting in imprisonment in many instances. More recently, the experience of imprisonment has been examined as one that contributes to an exacerbation of homelessness while also being a contributory factor for homelessness, rather than being an outcome of homelessness. In other words, while homelessness can lead to incarceration, increasingly incarceration is viewed as contributing to homelessness. In Australia, Baldry *et al*, (2006) have demonstrated that in their sample of those released from prison, homelessness increased from 18 percent who were homeless pre-prison to 21 per cent post-release. In addition, being homeless after prison increased the likelihood of further incarceration. Metraux and Culhane (2006) came to a similar conclusion in the US, showing that the likelihood of re-incarceration was intensified for those who had a history of homelessness prior to their initial imprisonment. Gowan (2002:525) came to a similar conclusion in her analysis of the nexus between homelessness and incarceration in two American cities, arguing that in relation to the men, particularly the African–American men studied, that:

> [t]he research clearly indicates that the initial entry point into the homelessness / incarceration nexus was more likely to be incarceration than homelessness. In other words, for men entering the cycle for the first time, the road from incarceration to homelessness was more welltrodden than the road from homelessness to penal confinement. Yet once they were trapped within the cycle, causality moved both ways with equal strength, as men shuffled backwards and forwards between the prison and the street, between punishment and abandonment by the wider society.

In their meta-analysis of research into homelessness during the 1980s, Shlay and Rossi (1992:139–140) suggest that 'on average 18% of the population of homeless persons had served time in prison after being convicted of a felony, and about one third of the population of homeless persons had been jailed on misdemeanour charges. An average of 41% of the population of homeless persons experienced some form of incarceration within the criminal justice system.' In a detailed New York study, which matched prison and jail records with those of public shelters for the homeless on December 1st 1997, Metraux and Culhane (2006) showed that nearly one-quarter of the shelter residents had been incarcerated in a New York prison or jail in the previous 24 months. As

the authors acknowledge, this may well be an underestimate as information was not obtained on the shelter residents who had been incarcerated outside of the New York facilities. Caton *et al*, (2005) in a survey of newly homeless men and women who were admitted to New York City shelters in 2001 and 2002 showed that eighty-one percent of participants returned to community housing during the follow-up period, but arrest history was one of the strongest predictors of a longer duration of homelessness. In a recent overview of the relationship between homelessness and incarceration in the United States, Roman and Travis (2006:395) suggest that 'about 10 percent of the population coming into prisons has recently been homeless, and at least the same percentage of those who leave prisons end up homeless, at least for some period of time.'

The results from over a decade of research into homeless entries, homeless careers and exits from homelessness are extraordinarily consistent. Homelessness, as an objective condition, occurs episodically to a considerable minority of the population (at least in the United States). Longitudinal research shows that the majority exit homelessness relatively quickly and those most likely to exit on a permanent basis are those who access affordable housing and/or obtain financial assistance to maintain such housing.[8] Transitional housing schemes and other interventions that aim to train or mentor individuals to reduce their risk of homelessness appear largely ineffective since access to housing, rather than individual deficits, largely determines a return to homelessness. To date, research of the nature highlighted above has been largely deployed in the United States, with little evidence of this approach being used in Europe. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, this in part reflects the differing disciplinary backgrounds of those engaged in such research in Europe.

Homeless Careers: Postmodernity and Risk Society

In part, this approach starts with a critique of positivist assumptions about housing consumption and the methodologies employed. The approach argues that in post-modern society, framed by globalisation and risk, researchers cannot assume universal household attitudes and motivating forces and that lifestyle and housing choice needs to be researched rather than assumed. To do so

---

[8]   For qualified support for the view that homeless individuals can maintain long-term accommodation, if appropriate to their needs, in Germany, see Fichter and Quadflieg, (2006).

requires an understanding of housing consumption as dynamic and the metaphor of a pathway is employed. A housing pathway is defined by Clapham (2002:63; see also 2004) as 'patterns of interaction (practices) concerning house and home, over time and space.' Clapham describes the pathways approach, not as a theory, but as a metaphor, which assists in illuminating the changing relationships and interactions that households experience when consuming housing. To fully understand these changing relationships and interactions, he recommends employing ethnographic or biographic methods. Within the framework, homelessness can be understood as 'an episode or episodes in a person's housing pathway' (2003:123). Research drawing broadly on this approach has been undertaken largely in the UK, but also in Australia.[9]

Multiple Pathways

In one of the earliest and most detailed accounts of homelessness amongst young people, Hutson and Liddiard (1994) argued, on foot of their study of homeless young people in Wales, that homelessness needs to be viewed and understood as a progressively problematic 'downward spiral' consisting of three phases: 'early', 'middle' and 'late'. Most of the young people in their study had left home in an unplanned way and tended to stay with relatives or friends for a short period of time. Following this, some appeared to resolve their home-

---

[9] While research to date in an Irish context has not focused explicitly on tracking young people's homeless 'careers', a number of studies have drawn attention to the different routes that people may take both into and through homelessness. For example, Halpenny *et al's*, (2002) study of homeless families living in emergency accommodation reported a number of factors that led families into homelessness including: community difficulties, overcrowding in the family home, family conflict, violence from a partner and unaffordable housing. Cleary *et al's,* (2004) Dublin-based qualitative study of 20 men aged between 18 and 30 years characterised the path from home to homelessness as one of trauma and loss. At a young age, most of the men had experienced a range of negative events and difficulties including death, family separation, reconstituted families, domestic violence, parental mental illness, addiction and care placements. The duration of their homelessness varied from between three months and fifteen years, with recurring episodes of homelessness featuring in many of their life stories. Although this study did not document pathways through homelessness, *per se*, it did nonetheless convey a clear sense of the men's lives, their coping strategies and of their experiences of homelessness over time. It also drew attention to several barriers to their movement out of homelessness including social isolation, financial problems, low educational attainment and the practical difficulties of finding and maintaining a home.

based difficulties, either returning to their family or moving into private rented accommodation. Others, however, transitioned to the 'middle phase' of homelessness and lived in youth residential projects, used squats and, as time progressed, the use of adult hostels became more common. Among those who subsequently moved into the 'late phase' of homelessness, were many viewed as too problematic to be accommodated in youth residential projects and were either sleeping rough or staying in adult hostels. Few of these young people were employed and many were heavily involved in criminal and drug lifestyles. Chamberlain and MacKenzie's (1994) Australian study identified three temporal categories of homelessness among the young people they studied: 'short-term', 'long-term' and 'chronic'. This research drew attention to wide variation in young people's homeless 'careers', with some exiting following a relatively short period and others remaining homeless for far longer periods. The study also highlighted the increasingly complex needs of the young people who progressed through the three stages, with the chronically homeless presenting the most challenging needs due to their progressive participation in, and attachment to, a 'homeless subculture' (for a critique of assumptions underpinning this research and the policy implications stemming from it, see Bessant, 2001).

Craig *et al's,* (1996) London-based study was one of the first to attempt to track a cohort of young homeless people over a specific period. The research initially included a sample of homeless young people as well as a comparative sample of domiciled youth and attempts were made to re-establish contact with both sub-samples following a time-lapse of one year. At the time of follow-up, only just over a third of the homeless young people with whom contact was re-established had achieved 'stable' (defined as remaining in an independent tenancy, shared accommodation, long-stay hostel or returned to parental home for at least six months) or 'fairly stable' housing throughout the follow-up year. Some 28 per cent had not achieved stable housing and were experiencing continued short stays in various types of accommodation and one fifth were still sleeping rough and using night shelters. Those young people who had achieved stable housing were more likely to be female, from black/minority ethnic groups and have educational qualifications. Additionally, those homeless for less than two years at first interview were more likely to have achieved stable outcomes than those with longer homelessness histories. Based on a broader sample of 315 young people, including both homeless youth and those perceived to be 'at risk' of homelessness in the counties of Surrey, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Stockley *et al*, (1993) presented a more positive picture

of young people's movements based on a follow-up study of 72 of the young people. This research revealed a trend from less adequate to more stable forms of accommodation, concluding that 'some are likely to go through a period of accommodation instability making use of more marginal types of accommodation, before moving into more permanent or more adequate accommodation' (Stockley *et al*, 1993:17).

More recent research has identified additional homeless pathways. For example, Anderson and Tulloch's (2000) review of literature distinguished 23 pathways (including 5 specific pathways for young people, 11 for adults and a further 7 for those in later life). In Australia, Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2006) identified three career typologies based on an examination of data from a national census of homeless school students. The three typologies included: 'youth career' (which in turn incorporated five distinct phases and four biographical transitions); a 'housing crisis career' (which in turn had three phases and three transitions) and; a 'family breakdown career' (which had four phases and three transitions). Mallett *et al,* (2006), also in Australia, identified family violence, personal/familial drug and alcohol use and desire for independence/adventure, in equal measure as the key reasons for leaving home for the 692 homeless young people they interviewed between 2000 and 2005.

Fitzpatrick's (2000) Glasgow-based qualitative study is one of the most sustained in terms of using a pathways framework aimed at examining the distinct processes and patterns of experience among homeless young people. This research described six homeless pathways taken by young people in an urban context which can be summarised as follows:

1 Local youth homelessness: Mainly resulting from structural poverty leading to family friction, alternating between moving around friends' and relatives' houses and sleeping rough locally, with a strong attachment to the local area.
2 Using 'official' city homeless network: Typically young men who have had very difficult childhoods (e.g. involving physical and/or sexual abuse, the death of a parent, destructive step-relationships, residential care). They have little or no contact with their families, little attachment to any local area, and their social networks may revolve around hostel residents. They may have serious personal problems, including mental ill health and substance abuse.
3 City centre Homelessness: Young people who have moved immediately to the city centre on becoming homeless. They may already know people homeless in the city centre, or fear family or others in their home neighbourhood. Their homelessness is linked to severe family problems in

childhood and they have complex needs. They typically alternated between rough sleeping for extended periods in the city centre, hostel, and prison or drug rehabilitation units.

The pathways identified by Fitzpatrick were not completely separate and some young people moved from one pathway to another at different stages in their homeless career. This research uncovered a sharp distinction between city-centre and local area homelessness. Few of the young people from the local area pathway (pathway 1) moved into patterns of homelessness which involved sleeping rough in the city-centre. One of the major innovations of Fitzpatrick's (2000) work is its focus on the experiences and perspectives of the young people themselves as they construct their own situations. The findings of this and other studies of homeless youth, emphasising processes and trajectories through homelessness, suggest that there is a general drift towards institutional accommodation as young people's homelessness lengthens, with adult hostels usually featuring later in their homeless careers.

Biographical Accounts

Perhaps the most detailed qualitative account of homelessness utilising the in-depth qualitative interview is that conducted by May (2000). May (2000:616) argues that, 'for the majority of single homeless people the experience of homelessness is neither singular nor long term but episodic, with each homeless episode interspersed with often extended periods in their own accommodation and with no increase in either the frequency or duration of homeless episodes over time.' He identifies unemployment as the single most important factor in determining repeat entry into homelessness. Thus, in contrast to the model espoused by Hutson and Liddiard (1994), characterised by a series of distinct 'stages' with a steady decline in the use of independent accommodation over time, for the majority of homeless men in May's study, their time both prior and subsequent to each homeless episode had been spent in accommodation of their own, most often in the private rented sector. Thus, rather than showing a decline over time in the use of independent accommodation and a progression towards ever longer homeless episodes, the housing careers of the majority of the 24 men making up this second group in May's study were instead dominated by the use of private rented accommodation throughout, but interspersed by occasional and short-lived periods of homelessness (May, 2000:625).

Even for the long-term homeless, May (2000:634) argues that no clear progressive decline to such a position was evident:

… whilst for some homelessness had been an almost permanent existence, for others periods on the streets or in hostels that had often lasted years were interspersed with equally long periods in their own accommodation. Further, although some of these men talked of a desire for the kind of supported housing schemes that are often advanced as a solution to those who have been homeless for a long period of time and who may also have significant and multiple vulnerabilities, by no means all embraced these schemes as an answer to their housing needs.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined various approaches to understanding homelessness within what is generally termed a pathways approach. This approach to homelessness seeks to map out and explain patterns (and changes) in the experience of homelessness over time and, increasingly, does not assume a progressive decline from being poorly housed to temporary accommodation to street homelessness. Instead, it recognises that individuals can move into and out of homelessness at different stages across the life cycle. Thus, the notion that individuals can move between being homeless, poorly housed, or well housed is a key starting point for a complex and dynamic analysis of pathways into and through homelessness. Despite these general observations, we have noted that a number of strands of research are discernible, each with distinctive and competing theoretical and methodological approaches. In addition to academic boundaries, geographical boundaries are evident in the approaches adopted. Research into homelessness in Ireland is only beginning to draw on these frameworks for the purposes of generating more detailed information on the nature of homelessness and appropriate policy responses. Whilst this report contributes to this debate by drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with homeless youth, the other approaches identified above also need to be developed in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the pathways into and out of homelessness.

Chapter 2
Research Methodology

As stated in the introduction, this report is concerned with documenting young people's *homeless pathways*, based on a longitudinal study of homeless youth in Dublin city. Here, we provide an overview of the research design and methods of data collection and analysis, paying particular attention to the merits and challenges associated with the conduct of qualitative longitudinal research on homeless young people. We also discuss a number of ethical issues and challenges that arose during the course of the study.

The Study

In its broadest terms, the research aimed to generate an in-depth understanding of the *process* of youth homelessness, with a specific focus on the identification of trajectories into, through and out of homelessness. Conceptualising youth homelessness as a process assumes that it is not a fixed 'state' but rather a fluid and evolving status continually subject to change. For many young people, this can be temporary or episodic while for others, it is a longer-term experience punctuated by periods of temporary or more stable accommodation. Some clearly exit homelessness while others continue to move between unstable living situations for extended periods. Yet others progress to more sustained or chronic homeless states. As highlighted in the previous chapter, relatively little is known in an Irish context about the circumstances and experiences that bring about positive or negative change in the living situations of homeless youth. To

redress this gap in knowledge, the current study aimed to document, record and understand temporal changes in homeless young people's living situations and to capture change in the homeless experience. A core aim was to generate knowledge and understanding to inform policy-relevant recommendations related to service provision, early intervention and the prevention of negative outcomes.

The task of studying trajectories into, through and out of homelessness is one that ideally demands the investigation of the homeless experience *over time*. A qualitative longitudinal study was designed and the research was conducted in two waves: the first between September 2004 and January 2005 and the second between September 2005 and August 2006.[10] During the first wave of data collection (Phase I) life history interviews were conducted with 40 homeless young people. Contact was re-established with 32 of these respondents during the second wave of the study (Phase II) and information regarding living situations was collected on an additional 5 young people. Information was therefore available to the research team on 37 of the 40 young people interviewed during Phase I. Of these, a total of 30 were re-interviewed during Phase II of the study.[11]

This study used the life history interview as the core data collection method. Life history interviewing is an effective means of identifying contexts and processes associated with the life course and can usefully uncover sequences of transitions and states as well as people's routes into and out of them. Biographical approaches to the study of homelessness have been successful in developing an understanding of the complex interplay of factors that can lead a person to becoming, remaining or exiting homelessness (May, 2000) and have also helped to explore the different ways in which people negotiate that experience (Watson and Austerberry, 1986). Qualitative research methods more generally are particularly effective in exploring areas that are under-researched, unexplained or subject to false assumptions (Smith and Ravenhill, 2004). Homelessness is frequently subject to misconceptions and there is a relatively poor understanding of the processes that lead to homelessness or of the mechanisms, events and circumstances associated with different homeless 'journeys'. Moreover, qualitative interviewing gives 'voice' to the individuals under study, a particularly salient point since homeless young people may have few opportunities to articulate their experiences and needs (Stephens, 2002).

---

[10] A third phase of data collection will commence in January 2009.

[11] See later sections of this chapter for further information on the challenges associated with re-establishing contact with young homeless people in the context of longitudinal research.

Qualitative Longitudinal Research

As already stated, the current study is qualitative and longitudinal. With duration, time and change as its foundation stone (Saldana, 2003), qualitative longitudinal research is predicated on the investigation and interpretation of change, processes and social contexts over time. What distinguishes qualitative longitudinal research 'is the deliberate way in which temporality is designed into the research process making change a central focus of analytic attention' (Thomson *et al*, 2003:185). The aim, as Berthoud (2000) suggests, is to capture a 'movie' rather than simply a 'snapshot' of social life.

The importance of time, the temporal dimension of social life, has long been recognised in sociological thinking, but has taken on new significance with the recognition of rapid social change under late modernity.[12] It is through time that we can begin to grasp the mechanisms and strategies used by individuals to generate and manage change in their lives and the ways in which structural factors impact on their experiences.[13] Indeed, 'it is only through time that we can gain a better appreciation of how the personal and the social, agency and structure, the micro and macro are interconnected and how they come to be transformed' (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003:190). Longitudinal qualitative research is undoubtedly effective in examining the interplay between the range of factors that come together to either hinder or assist young people as they make the transition from youth to adulthood (Ward and Henderson, 2003).

Qualitative longitudinal research permits an incremental exploration of events and experiences that are personally significant. As young people communicate their experiences and perspectives, past and present, it is therefore possible to acquire a multilayered picture of their homeless 'careers'. Processes, practices and behaviours can be examined as they develop and evolve and the meanings that they attach to their changing circumstances can

---

[12] Much of the enthusiasm for qualitative longitudinal or 'tracking' research coincides with the expanding discipline of 'youth' and youth transitions. Over the past decade or more, there has been an increased emphasis on understanding the way in which the transition from youth to adulthood is made and, more specifically, on what makes it possible for some young people to make relatively smooth transitions while, for others, transitions are enormously complex and fraught (see Furlong and Cartmel, 1996 for example).

[13] To date, the field of longitudinal research has been dominated by quantitative research designs. Studies typically take the form of large scale surveys that chart changes in patterns of social behaviour across nationally representative samples and give a statistical picture of wider social trends.

be explored. A focus on the meanings placed on experience is important since 'homelessness' is understood differently by homeless youth (Fitzpatrick, 2000; Hudson and Liddiard, 1994). Furthermore, individuals' perceptions of their situations may be subject to change over time.

The increasing enthusiasm for longitudinal research within academic circles over the past ten years or more extends to policy and practice arenas. As Holland *et al*, (2004:5) point out:

> There is a growing interest and involvement in qualitative research methods in the social sciences, and amongst policy makers, who can see that statistical methods can give answers to the 'what' questions, but leave them in relative darkness about 'why' and 'how'.

Holland *et al,* (2004:7) further suggest that the mounting interest in qualitative longitudinal research may be associated with '[h]olistic approaches to policy, focusing on the individual rather than the issue, and understanding the often subtle interaction of factors shaping processes such as social exclusion, resilience and risk'. In relation to homelessness, qualitative longitudinal research, because of its characteristic sensitivity to context, can illuminate social processes that impact on people's living situations, as well as the way people negotiate change as it occurs in their lives.

Eligibility Criteria for the Study

The study set out to recruit a cohort of young people who were homeless or without secure accommodation. To be eligible for participation in the study's baseline interviews, all participants had to:

1 Be homeless or in insecure accommodation;
2 Be between 12 and 22 years; and
3 Have been living in the Dublin metropolitan area for the past six months.

Defining Homelessness

The term 'homelessness' has been defined differently, reflecting the array of conditions and circumstances that may characterise the absence of a stable and secure place of residence. Distinctions are often made in the academic literature between the 'visible homeless' such as rough sleepers and hostel dwellers, and the 'hidden homeless' such as those staying temporarily with family and friends (O'Sullivan, 1996). The term 'out of home' is frequently applied to young

homeless individuals because of the diverse and fluid circumstances that may characterise their situations over time (Mayock and Carr, 2008). For the purposes of the current study, the following definition of homelessness, proposed by the Forum on Youth Homelessness (2000:17) and recognised by the *Youth Homelessness Strategy* (Department of Health and Children, 2001:11), was used:

> Those who are sleeping on the streets or in other places not intended for night-time accommodation or not providing safe protection from the elements or those whose usual night-time residence is a public or private shelter, emergency lodging, B&B or such, providing protection from the elements but lacking the other characteristics of a home and/or intended for only a short stay.

The research targeted young people who seek accommodation from the Out of Hours Service[14] and also allowed for the inclusion of 'those in insecure accommodation with relatives or friends regarded as inappropriate, that is to say where the young person is placed at risk or where he or she is not in a position to remain' (Forum on Youth Homelessness, 2000:187).

Community Assessment Process

This research was undertaken amid a dearth of knowledge about contemporary youth homeless 'scenes' and it was important that the selection and recruitment of research participants was informed by current information about the possible range of young people who experience homelessness at some level. The study therefore started with a 'Community Assessment Process' (Clatts *et al*, 2002), a phase designed to inform service providers about the research and to facilitate entrée to field settings. Essentially a period of immersion in field settings, this exercise allowed the research team to build a repertoire of field contacts and provided access to important information about how and where young people might be recruited into the study. It also facilitated the identification of particular 'sub-groups' within the homeless youth population, thereby assisting the achievement of diversity across the study's sample. Contact was

---

[14] The Out of Hours Service was established by the Eastern Health Board in 1992 to provide children and young people (under the age of 18 years) *in crisis* with the necessary services when all other options were closed (see Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007 for a detailed account of the events leading to the establishment of this service).

established with almost 40 service providers during the course of the community assessment (conducted between September and December, 2004). While this contact often involved informal meetings and conversations, formal semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 key informants across a range of agencies dealing directly with young homeless people. These interviews focused on the perceived extent of the homeless youth problem, the needs of homeless young people, gaps in service provision, and so on. The community assessment process was a crucial mechanism for establishing field contacts and facilitated initial introductions to young people. It also enabled the research team to build local knowledge which in turn informed the recruitment and selection of research participants.

Recruitment and Tracking Strategies

Young people were initially recruited through hostels, residential settings, night shelters and drop-in centres. A number of strategically chosen street-based settings were also used as recruitment sites (see Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007 for a detailed account of access and recruitment issues). The achievement of diversity was a core aim of the recruitment strategy and necessitated the establishment of new access routes as time progressed. Gaining trust and establishing rapport were important and demanded a significant investment of time. The initial recruitment phase extended over a five-month period from September 2004 to February 2005.

During the conduct of baseline interviews, young people were invited to provide details of how and where they might be contacted for a second interview following a time lapse of approximately one year. A 'contact sheet' was used to record one, or a combination of, possible contact routes. These included the address/phone number of a parent(s) or other family members, the address/phone number of a friend, name and phone number of a social worker, if appropriate, and locations where they often 'hung out'. None of the young people declined the request to provide contact details but a number were unable to give reliable contact information due to their estrangement from family members and/or their transient lifestyles.

There are a range of practical difficulties associated with attempting to re-enter the lives of homeless youth following a period of no contact. As with the conduct of qualitative longitudinal research with care leavers (Ward and Henderson, 2003) and drug users (Harocops and Dennis, 2003), the transience of homeless individuals poses particular problems. At the time of follow-up, many participants had moved at least once since the time of initial contact and,

for a considerable number, their place of residence was still of a temporary nature, such as being accommodated in homeless hostels, bed and breakfast accommodation or sleeping rough. While the procedure of collecting contact details for the young person and their significant others was adhered to, these details did not provide a direct route of access in a large number of cases. Many young people had, for example, given a mobile phone number, but most of these numbers were obsolete at the point of seeking a follow-up interview. In any case, returning phone calls to researchers understandably featured as a low priority for the majority. The tracking process frequently began with the researcher making contact with the hostel or residential setting where the young person had resided at the time of their initial interview. Service providers were often aware of the young person's movements and sometimes provided information about their current living situations. This was clearly not possible, however, in the case of those young people who moved frequently and/or slept rough. In such cases the tracking process involved a combination of visiting specific street locations and/or asking other homeless youth if they had knowledge of the individual's whereabouts.

Locating respondents was the first step in what was often a protracted process of negotiation prior to conducting a follow-up interview. Parental or social worker consent had to be obtained in the case of under-18s, arrangements had to be made with service providers to use a room for the purpose of conducting interviews, and access to detention settings had to be re-negotiated. Additionally, lifestyle factors, including chronic instability, meant that several failed to turn up for interview initially. Great flexibility was therefore required on the part of interviewers throughout the follow-up phase of the study and the offer of a financial incentive (in the form of a €25 gift token) was undoubtedly important in achieving a satisfactory retention rate. In an overall sense, interviewers aimed to make the research process as pleasant, friendly and convenient for participants as possible. Although interviewers went to great lengths to arrange interviews, at no stage was pressure placed on young people to maintain a commitment to the study or to participate in a second interview.

Life History Interviewing

A 'life history' refers to 'the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived' (Atkinson, 2002:125). The merits of using life history interviewing to understand young people *in transition* are discussed in detail elsewhere (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007). The following section outlines this approach to interviewing as well as the topics addressed during baseline and follow-up interviews.

Baseline Life History Interview

All baseline interviews commenced with an invitation to young people to tell their 'life story'.[15] Several key topic areas were then prompted during interview. Young people were asked to describe their family history, their experiences of 'growing up', including their early family environment and childhood experiences, experiences at school, and any key events or milestones during childhood and adolescence. Questions also focused on the young person's social world, including the important people in his/her life (e.g. family members, peers, friends, romantic or sexual partner), their economic situation, current 'hang-outs' and health-related behaviour. Later in the interview, young people were asked to discuss their alcohol and drug use, history of street involvement and level of contact with services. The following specific areas were addressed during baseline interviews with all respondents:

- early childhood experiences (family life, schooling, relationships with peers and members of their extended family);
- events and circumstances leading to the initial experience of homelessness;
- the experience of homelessness (coping strategies, services accessed);
- events and experiences subsequent to the initial experience or period of homelessness (with an emphasis on the chronology of events);
- current level of contact with family and friends;
- alcohol and drug consumption (frequency of alcohol consumption, level and type of drug use);
- health-related behaviour (sexual behaviour and sexual health, risk behaviour, food and nutrition);
- level and nature of contact with youth and/or homeless services;
- help-seeking behaviour and coping strategies; and
- perceptions of their current needs.

The interview schedule was designed to allow for flexibility in structure and content and to facilitate the exploration of experiences and issues raised by respondents. The interview itself was deliberately informal in style, reflecting the perspective that talk generated in an interview context is jointly constructed (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002; Holstein and Gubrium, 1997). If a young person raised issues not included on the schedule, interviewers pursued these topics

---

[15] This open ended question generated narratives which varied in length and also in terms of the level of detail proffered by respondents.

and allowed the respondent to elaborate. Interviews were conducted in a variety of settings, including coffee shops and outdoor settings, but most frequently at a hostel or other form of emergency or short-term accommodation. They ranged in duration from 40 to 100 minutes, with the majority lasting for between 60 and 90 minutes. All respondents received a gift token from a high street store of their choice to the value of €20 as a token of appreciation for their time and effort.[16]

At the time of conducting baseline interviews, socio-demographic information was also collected from each research participant using a pre-coded questionnaire. The information sought included: age, gender, school history, past and current living situation, school and employment history. Data were also recorded on each young person's alcohol (regularity, amount, type of beverages etc.) and drug use (lifetime, past year, past month and past week use) history.

Follow-up Life History Interview

Prior to the conduct of follow-up interviews, interviewers re-read the participants initial interview transcript, paying particular attention to critical life events and turning point experiences, specific vulnerabilities, and key relationships and supports in young people's lives. This process enabled interviewers to re-acquaint themselves with the background, situation and perspective of the young person and constituted a key preparatory task.

During follow-up interviews young people were asked to update their life history narrative by detailing significant events since the time of initial contact with them. Additional life history information was disclosed by some respondents at this stage. As the interview progressed, young people were asked to describe changes in their social networks and family relationships and to identify any new service providers in their lives. While participants were encouraged to clarify details about events and individuals mentioned during their initial interview, the interview was open-ended, allowing young people to frame their 'stories' through events and themes that were personally significant. Interviewers also probed for future orientation as well as the interviewees' perspectives on their own lives and development. Finally, participants were asked how they felt their lives were (or were not) 'different' from when they first entered the study.

---

[16] This amount was revised upwards to €25 for Phase II respondents.

Ethical Issues and Considerations

Homeless young people are an especially vulnerable group because of their age, socio-economic disadvantage and stigmatized status (Ensign, 2003). In keeping with recommended practice in the conduct of social research involving the participation of minors (Morrow and Richards, 1996), the voluntary and informed consent of each young person was obtained prior to their participation in each phase of the research. All participating young people received a detailed explanation of the purpose of the research as well as an account of what precisely their participation involved in terms of the commitment of time required and the nature and content of the interview. Assurances of confidentiality were provided, including the assurance that their names would not be mentioned in any written dissemination of the research findings. However, participants were also informed at the outset of the interview that if they disclosed information indicating that they were at risk or in danger, it was the obligation of the researcher to inform a relevant individual. As recommended by Mahon *et al*, (1996), it was explained that, in the event of such an occurrence, no action would be taken without first consulting them.

Prior to conducting interviews with young people under the age of 18 years parental consent was almost always obtained. However, the requirement of parental consent was impractical or inappropriate in some cases since a number had little or no contact with their parents; others had left home because of extremely difficult experiences, including violence and abuse. According to Ensign (2003), the requirement for obtaining parental/custodian written consent may be waived in the case of some homeless youth because the requirement is unworkable and could also potentially jeopardise their safety and well-being. The rationale for not obtaining parental consent in such cases therefore hinges on the fact that seeking parental consent could potentially further compromise their safety (Rew *et al*, 2000). In any case, empirical evidence indicates that, by the age of 14, most adolescents are as capable as adults of making competent decisions about participating in research (Levine, 1995; Petersen and Leffert, 1995). The question of parental consent for young people's participation in research is clearly important and is one which, among other issues, highlights the tension inherent in balancing the rights of adolescents and their parents (Brooks-Gunn and Rotheram-Borus, 1994). It is widely recognized that there are circumstances when the requirement of attaining parental consent may not be in a young person's best interest, particularly when the research involves the participation of high-risk and multi-problem youth populations (Brooks-Gunn and Rotheram-Borus, 1994;

Meade and Slesnick, 2002). In the current study, social worker consent was obtained during both phases of data collection in cases where parental consent was not acquired.

Data Management and Analysis

A characteristic of longitudinal qualitative research is the huge volume of data it produces. Baseline and follow-up interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim and the study has, thus far, generated in excess of 2,000 pages of transcribed interviews. Data management was therefore an important first step in the analytic process during both waves of data collection. A coding scheme was developed following the conduct of Phase I and the transcripts were coded manually in accordance with 15 separate coding 'categories', generated with close consideration of the study aims. Consistent with the interpretivist tradition, categories were identified on an iterative basis as revealed by the data, thereby incorporating issues and themes arising directly from the young people's life stories (Fetterman, 1989).

The views and experiences expressed by respondents needed to be analysed not only in relation to the other responses given at that wave, but also in relation to findings from the previous wave of data collection. The complexity of the interview data therefore demanded a number of complementary analytic strategies, including cross-sectional and temporal analysis.

Cross-sectional analysis was undertaken for each round of data collection in order to capture a particular 'moment' or point in time and to compare accounts across the data set at each data collection round. These analyses drew attention to differences and similarities within the sample across a range of domains of experience (e.g. their living situations, drug and alcohol consumption, health, service utilization and so on). Temporal or longitudinal analysis involved the examination of respondents' life histories *over time* to establish changes in their lives and living situations. This approach has been described elsewhere as combining 'synchronic' (cross-sectional) and 'diachronic' analyses (temporal or longitudinal) (Thomson *et al*, 2004).

Case Profiling

Following the conduct of both waves of data collection, a 'case profile' was prepared for each study participant. This involved documenting key events, changes and transitions according to a set of pre-defined 'categories' of life experiences and events (e.g. accommodation types, family and peer relationships, drug use, criminal activity). At Phase II, this exercise also focused

on their changing accounts of 'self' and homelessness over time. Thus, the longitudinal character of the analysis drew attention to how identities can change over time in response to changing circumstances and the accumulation of experience.

Interpreting Life Histories

The open-ended nature of longitudinal research challenges the authority and stability of interpretation. As McLeod (2000:49) puts it:

> Analysing interviews conducted over time can illuminate, confirm or unsettle initial and tentative interpretations, alert us to recurring motifs and tropes in participants' narratives as well as to shifts and changes, suggest continuities or disruptions in emotional investments in desires and dispositions, and provide a strong sense of how particular identities are taking shape or developing.

While the analytic task is to demonstrate patterns of broader significance (Yates, 2003) this aim can be easily unsettled by the shifting circumstances and perspectives of the study respondents over time. The task of establishing broad patterns is also challenged by the unique or distinctive flavour of individual stories. While similar challenges arise in the analysis of narratives arising from 'one off' interviews, they become more apparent when people's lives (and homeless) histories are recorded longitudinally. Nonetheless, efforts to establish patterns and themes can be achieved whilst simultaneously recognising and demonstrating difference, diversity and variation. This aim was achieved in part by accounting for negative instances (Seale, 1999), that is, data that contradicts emergent or dominant ideas, to highlight evidence that challenged or extended existing ideas, themes and arguments. Additionally, rather than seeking to move towards 'saturation', case profiling (and the use of case studies) permitted the presentation of individual stories, thereby giving 'voice' to both typical and unique experiences.

Conclusion

This study sought to move beyond cross-sectional or single point-in-time research strategies which can present a distorted picture of the nature and duration of homeless experiences (Anderson and Christian, 2003). Taking a longitudinal perspective, and setting out to examine young people's routes into, through and out of homelessness, it is the first study of its kind to be

undertaken in an Irish context. Although the tracking process was time consuming, the retention rate for life history interviewees (at 75%) is satisfactory and information was available to the research team on the living situations of an additional seven young people. This study foregrounds the experiences and perspectives of homeless young people in Dublin. The findings presented in the following four chapters are based on a combination of cross-sectional and temporal analytic strategies which attempt to take account of their changing circumstances, attitudes and perceptions over time.

" [After initial interview] I got kicked out of transitional housing. I left that house and then went back to me sister's house and I was in me sister's house for a while and then I think back and forward from court charges like and got dealt with them all so I'm actually clear now with all my court dates. I did a bit of time (in prison) like over the last month or two. I was in Cloverhill and I was in the Joy (Mountjoy Prison) and I'm now out here, back on me feet, back working … when I got kicked out of (transitional housing) I didn't actually go straight to me sister's … I was in town a lot, I was living on the streets in town like.

Julian (24)

Chapter 3
Young People's Homeless Pathways

As highlighted in the previous chapter, a core objective of this research was to describe and understand temporal changes in the life experiences of young homeless people. Chapter 3 starts the work of tracing their homeless pathways by describing the study's sample at the time of conducting baseline and follow-up interviews. This is followed by an overview of young people's living situations at Phases I and II of the research. A key aim is to present data on the housing and living situations of the study's respondents *at two points in time*. Young people's housing transitions are then discussed with reference to three homeless pathways identified on the basis of a detailed analysis of their Phase I and Phase II narratives (see Chapter 2 for a full account of the analytic process).

The Study's Young People

Table 3.1 provides a breakdown of the number of young people interviewed at Phases I and II of the study by gender.

Table 3.1 Number of Young People Interviewed, Phases I & II

	Phase I (2004–2005)	Phase II (2005–2006)
Young Men	23	16
Young Women	17	14
Total	**40**	**30**

40 young people were interviewed for the purposes of the study during the first wave of data collection between September 2004 and January 2005. It was possible to negotiate and conduct follow-up interviews with 30 of the 40 young people interviewed at baseline. These were carried out between September 2005 and August 2006.

Contact was re-established with an additional 2 young people (both male) during the conduct of follow-up fieldwork, although efforts to arrange an interview proved unsuccessful. Nonetheless, this contact did yield information on their current living situations as well as the opportunity for informal exchange. In five other instances, information about the whereabouts of Phase I participants was obtained from service providers. In all, information was successfully obtained about the living situations of 37 of the 40 young people interviewed in-depth during the initial data sweep, including one young woman who was deceased by Phase II of the study. Efforts to re-establish contact with or acquire any information about three of the study's Phase I participants (all male) proved unsuccessful.

A breakdown of the sources of information accessed at Phase II is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Follow-up Sample: Breakdown of Sources of Information

	Young Men	Young Women	Total
Interviewed in-depth	16	14	30
Personal contact but no interview	2	0	2
Information from service provider	2	3	5
Total	**20**	**17**	**37**

The process of tracking and re-establishing contact with study participants differed by gender. Of significance was the relative ease of access to information (through contact with voluntary and statutory agencies) about the whereabouts of young women compared to young men. Nevertheless, the negotiation of interviews with young women failed in some cases due to complexities of access related to their current care placements. For example, in the case of one young woman, efforts to negotiate access through social work services were unsuccessful (although we were able to establish that this young woman was in residential care). In the case of young men, difficulties in re-establishing contact were related primarily to their chaotic lifestyles and/or to the absence of knowledge or information about their whereabouts. These gender differences

point to variation in the life circumstances of young men and women who experience homelessness as teenagers. We will return to this issue in later chapters of this work.

At the time of conducting baseline interviews, young people were aged between 14 and 22 and, at the time of follow-up, their ages ranged from 15 to 24 years. Table 3.3 provides a breakdown of the age of study participants by gender for both waves of the study.

Table 3.3 Age and Gender of Young People Interviewed, Phases I & II

Age	Phase I, 2004–2005 (n=40)			Phase II, 2005–2006 (n=30)		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
12–14 years	—	2	2	0	0	0
15–17 years	9	11	20	3	8	11
18–21 years	12	3	15	8	4	12
22 years	2	1	3	3	0	3
23 years	0	0	0	1	2	3
24 years	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	23	17	40	16	14	30

By Phase II, a large number had moved from 'child' to 'adult' status. The move out of homeless services targeting under-18s has been identified as a key turning point experience in earlier analyses of the study's Phase I data (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007; Mayock and Vekić, 2006). Many had entered into adult homeless services, including transitional or supported living situations, adult hostels and B&Bs. Some had used these services intermittently and subsequently moved to more stable living situations while others reported a cycle of commuting between various city-centre hostels and had not succeeded in securing stable accommodation.

Housing Transitions: An Overview

The homeless pathways and housing transitions of people who experience homelessness are influenced by a range of social, structural, personal and situational factors (Fitzpatrick, 2000; Piliavin *et al,* 1993; Piliavin *et al,* 1996; Stojanovic *et al,* 1999; Wong and Piliavin, 1997). Homeless experiences and pathways are also influenced by young people's access to and interaction with services and service providers (Gerstsel *et al,* 1996; Mayock and O'Sullivan,

2007). This section is concerned with documenting the living situations of the study's young people at the time of conducting Phase I and Phase II interviews. As stated, information was obtained at follow-up about the current living situations of 37 of the 40 participants (17, or all, of the young women and 20 of the 23 young men) interviewed during the first wave of data collection. The vast majority had moved to alternative accommodation since the time of initial contact; most had experienced at least one housing transition during the 12 to 18 months subsequent to their initial interview and a considerable number had lived in multiple living situations during this time. It is important to bear this in mind in any reading of the figures presented in Tables 3.4 and 3.5 since these data represent respondents' living situations at *two points in time* only. Consequently, they do not capture the complexity of their movements and housing transitions.[17] Table 3.4 presents data on the accommodation types occupied by the young people at the time of conducting the study's Phase I interviews.

Table 3.4 Living Situations, Phase I

Accommodation Type	Young Men (N=23)	Young Women (N=17)	All (N=40)
Emergency/Short-term Residential Care Setting or 'Hostel'*	12	13	25
Longer-term Residential Setting or Hostel	2	0	2
Adult Hostels/B&Bs	2	1	3
Between Hostel and Home	1	0	1
Street	2	0	2
Prison	3	0	3
Supported /Transitional Housing	1	1	2
Home	0	2	2
Total	**23**	**17**	**40**

* Includes those young people who used emergency and short-term hostel accommodation targeting young people under the age of 18 years *and* specialised crisis/short-term hostels for 16–21 year-olds.

[17] Later chapters discuss the nuances and complexities of young people's homeless pathways in detail.

At the time of Phase I, twenty-five young people (over two-thirds) were staying in either emergency or short-term hostel accommodation. The Out of Hours Service and emergency/crisis residential settings or 'hostels'[18] were, therefore, the most commonly used services.

Table 3.4 indicates that young people's living situations varied and they also differed by gender. Among the twenty-three young men interviewed, twelve had an emergency or short-term hostel placement at the time of interview (compared to 13 young women), three were in prison, two were living in adult hostels (compared to one female) and two were sleeping rough. A further two had a long-term hostel placement and another was alternating between home and a hostel placement. Only one young man had a transitional housing placement (on a par with the number of females). Finally, two young women had returned home only recently following a period of homelessness, both having enrolled in a drug treatment programme.[19] None of the young women were sleeping on the street or incarcerated at Phase I of the study.

The living situations of the young people had changed significantly by the time of conducting follow-up interviews in 2005/06. The range of accommodation types they had occupied since the previous interview is presented in Table 3.5.

---

[18] Young people invariably referred to the emergency or short-term residential settings where they were placed as 'hostels'.

[19] Although not currently homeless, these young women (both 17 years old) were admitted to the study on the grounds that they had experienced homelessness in the past six months. Although both had recently returned home, their living situations were relatively unstable and conditional, to some extent, on their ability to maintain their engagement with the drug treatment service where they were registered.

Table 3.5 Living Situations, Phase II

Accommodation Type	Young Men (N=20)	Young Women (N=17)	All (N=37)
Home	2	3	5
Private Rented Sector	2	0	2
Emergency/Short-term Residential Care Setting or 'Hostel'	0	1	1
Supported /Transitional Housing	3	4	7
Residential Care	0	3	3
Foster Care	0	1	1
Longer-term Residential Setting or Hostel	0	0	0
Special Care Unit	1	0	1
Adult Hostels/B&Bs	3	1	4
Supported Living (but awaiting sentencing)	1	0	1
Between Hostel/Care and Home	0	1	1
Street	2	1	3
Prison	5	0	5
Residential Drug Treatment	1	0	1
Caravan	0	1	1
Deceased	0	1	1
Total	**20**	**17**	**37**

Significantly, many more 'categories' of accommodation types were required to describe young people's living situations by Phase II of the study. Notable also is that only one young person was staying in an under-18s emergency/short-term hostel, compared to 25 at the time of conducting Phase I interviews. This movement out of emergency or short-term residential settings or hostels targeting under-18s is undoubtedly a function of age: on reaching *formal* adulthood (that is, age 18), young people can no longer access these settings and they must, therefore, seek alternative accommodation. Additionally, by Phase II, many of the study's young people had also undergone a (sometimes quite lengthy) period of interaction with services and interventions that work in various ways to achieve stability of housing for 'out of home' or homeless youth. One might expect, therefore, that they would have moved out of emergency accommodation by Phase II of the study.

Of the 20 young men about whom information was obtained, three were currently staying in adult hostels, two were sleeping rough and five were in prison. Four were living in supported/transitional housing, two had moved home and a further two lived in private rented sector accommodation. One had been placed in a special care unit and another had recently entered a residential drug treatment programme following a period of movement between adult hostels, places of detention and the street.

These living situations suggest a mix of stability and instability of housing: those in supported housing and private rented sector accommodation (six in total) had moved towards greater stability. However, six had recently slept rough and/or were current users of adult hostels. An additional five young men were incarcerated, compared to three at Phase I of the study. Two of these participants had been in prison since Phase I of the study. The housing experiences of young men who had spent time in prison indicate that most lived in unstable living situations both prior to entering prison and on release. For example, all three of the young men who were incarcerated subsequent to their Phase I interview entered prison from a background of unstable housing, including the use of adult hostels, B&Bs and Out of Hours Service emergency accommodation. Furthermore, two had prior experience of the juvenile justice system and, on release, re-entered the hostel 'scene' through the Out of Hours Service.

Although not incarcerated at the time of their follow-up interview, a number of others had prior experiences of detention. Since Phase I, a total of six other males had spent time in prison and, like those currently incarcerated, all had accessed adult hostels, slept rough or stayed with friends immediately prior to going into prison. Following release, all returned to these unstable living situations, with the exception of one who moved home. For four, this cycle of movement between hostels and other temporary accommodation had continued. Of significance is that this cycle often started during their early to mid-teenage years when they first entered the juvenile justice system. A number also talked about upcoming court dates and about their fears of another period of incarceration, suggesting that this cycle may continue for at least some.

By Phase II of the study, the living situations of the study's young women differed significantly from those of young men. Four of the 17 young women initially recruited to the study currently lived in a supported/transitional housing unit (on a par with men), 4 had moved home (compared to only 2 of the 20 men), and 4 had moved to a care setting (compared to none of the men). These transitions represent a move towards greater stability of housing, certainly compared to their male counterparts. Three of the young women were

living in temporary accommodation (hostels, B&B, caravan) or sleeping rough at the time of follow-up but only two had spent time in prison. One of the latter had been accessing adult hostels immediately prior to incarceration but moved into a transitional housing unit on release from prison. The other had similarly depended on unstable living situations (hostels and squats) before incarceration. Although she moved home on release, she soon returned to a cycle of using B&Bs, squats and other temporary forms of accommodation.

One of the most notable findings relates to the number of young men who had contact with the criminal justice system compared to their female counterparts. For these young men, prison was one of a number of accommodation types they accessed over the course of the study. This issue will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Movement Between Living Situations

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 demonstrate change in young people's accommodation situations between Phases I and II of the study but they do not capture the nature and extent of their movement *between* different types of accommodation during this time. While a number of the study's participants reported only one housing transition, many others reported several moves between temporary forms of accommodation since the time of their baseline interview.

Approximately 10 young people had made relatively few moves since Phase I of the study. For example, one young woman who was living at home at the time of Phase I had spent just one week out of home in a drug treatment setting by the time of her Phase II interview. Two others had made only one change of accommodation before returning home. Five of the seven young people who were living in supported or transitional housing by the time of follow-up had moved directly to these settings from their places of residence at Phase I.

However, a large proportion of others experienced a more complex pattern of movement, with a number reporting up to eight changes in their living situations since Phase I (this does not include adult hostel and B&B users who tended to move even more frequently). These young people typically found themselves commuting between a variety of temporary living situations including hostels, the home of a friend or family member and, in some cases, prison. Many stayed in these temporary lodgings for a period of only days or weeks. Julian, who lost his place in a transitional housing unit shortly after his baseline interview, described how he had alternated between the home of his sister, sleeping rough and prison for a considerable period.

[After initial interview] I got kicked out of transitional housing. I left that house and then went back to me sister's house and I was in me sister's house for a while and then I think back and forward from court charges like and got dealt with them all so I'm actually clear now with all my court dates. I did a bit of time (in prison) like over the last month or two. I was in Cloverhill and I was in the Joy (Mountjoy Prison) and I'm now out here, back on me feet, back working ... when I got kicked out of (transitional housing) I didn't actually go straight to me sister's ... I was in town a lot, I was living on the streets in town like.

<div align="right">Julian (24)</div>

Julian first experienced homelessness at the age of 13 and quickly embarked on a cycle of movement between unstable living situations. His entry into the official network of homeless youth in the city-centre was a critical turning point experience: he did not find stable accommodation and, simultaneously, became immersed in street 'scenes'. This cycle continued until the age of 18 years when he entered into the adult system of intervention. Although living at home at the time of his follow-up interview, he claimed that this move to adult services served to further entrench him in a life of homelessness. Others similarly explained that their entry into adult services brought them into contact with riskier forms of behaviour.

It's the people in town you mix with know what I mean 'cos in all the over-18 hostels, most of them are on the gear. You want to keep the young people away from them 'cos that's how people end up on the gear ...
[Do you think it's a danger then, turning 18 and being homeless?]
It wrecks your life. I think people like the young fellas I hung about with were all a year or two older than me yeah. Every one of them is on the gear. Most of them are going to hostels and all and I can tell you I can see nothing for them, know what I mean. I can't see nothing for meself but at least I'm not strung out, at least all me money won't be going on the one thing. So I would say it is a danger, yeah.

<div align="right">Finn (17)</div>

The Out of Hours has banned me. They said they didn't want me using the services so I had to go out to [over-18s hostel] and that's, that's like another leap, it's like the over-18 hostels you know, it's bit much fucking, more like everybody is like a zombie in it, you know what I mean, they're there out of their heads asleep you know.

<div align="right">Brendan (18)</div>

The move from children's to adult homeless services constituted a major turning point for young people who remained in emergency accommodation at the age of 18. The risks associated with this transition have been highlighted in earlier analyses of this study's data (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007; Mayock and Vekić, 2006) and are further reinforced by the study's Phase II accounts.

Homeless Pathways

Although young people's living situations differed, as did their experiences of living out of home, it was possible to categorise their housing situations and transitions over the course of the study into three homeless pathways. These pathways were devised on the basis of a detailed analysis of the narratives of the 30 young people re-interviewed at Phase II.[20] Young people within the three pathways identified share a general trend in their movement either *out of homelessness* (Pathways 1 and 2) or *towards more chronic homeless states* (Pathway 3). The homeless pathways identified include:

Pathway 1: Independent Exits from Homelessness
Pathway 2: Dependent Exits from Homelessness
Pathway 3: Continued Homelessness

Table 3.6 presents a breakdown of the number of young people assigned to the three homeless pathways identified.

---

[20] Although information was available on the whereabouts and living situations of an additional 7 young people, this pathways analysis draws solely on the narrative data available from the study's Phase I and Phase II interviews.

Table 3.6 Young People's Homeless Pathways (n=30)			
Homeless Pathways	**Young Men**	**Young Women**	**All**
Pathway 1			
Independent Exits from Homelessness	2	5	7
Family home (6);			
Private rented sector accommodation (1)			
Pathway 2			
Dependent Exits from Homelessness	3	7	10
Transitional/supported housing (7);			
State Care (3)			
Pathway 3			
Continued Homelessness	11	2	13
Adult hostels (4), rough sleeping (2);			
prison (5); other (2)			

Pathways 1 and 2 (which account for 17 of the 30 young people re-interviewed at Phase II) represent moves towards greater stability of housing and both are classified as homeless exits. The living situations of these young people varied: some had moved home or to the private rented sector (independent exits), while others had moved to transitional housing or had been placed in a residential or foster care setting (dependent exits). It might be expected, therefore, that those who exited homelessness differed in how they experienced this transition. Pathway 3 (13 young people) represents those who failed to exit homelessness and, like those in other pathways, their situations and experiences also varied. However, many reported substance abuse problems and/or contact with the criminal justice system. The majority had relatively lengthy histories of homelessness and faced numerous barriers to exiting the streets.

Later chapters (4, 5 and 6) deal with each of these homeless pathways in considerable detail. At this juncture, it is important to address some broader methodological issues related to the construction of the pathways above.

Constructing Homeless Pathways: Independent Exits, Dependent Exits and Continued Homelessness

Clearly, the dynamics of homelessness extend beyond its initial onset and also include exits from and returns to a homeless state (Piliavin *et al,* 1996). When a longitudinal perspective is applied (as in the current study), a key consideration in the construction of homeless pathways relates to how exits are

defined. It is possible, for example, to create several and/or different types of exits depending on the *destination* of the individual (that is, the setting to where s/he transitions) and the *duration* defined as constituting an exit.

In relation to the *duration* considered to constitute an exit, Wong and Piliavin (1997) stipulated that in order to be designated as a homeless exit, the transition (to a domicile residence) had to have lasted at least 30 days. Whilst acknowledging that this definition was somewhat arbitrary, they pointed out that others had similarly applied such a threshold (Piliavin *et al,* 1996). However, the current study did not impose this 30-day 'rule' to the categorisation of homeless exits. Furthermore, in the case of several classified as having exited homelessness (either in a dependent or independent sense), their transition to a more stable living situation was relatively recent. Consequently, our classification scheme might be viewed as rather lenient or optimistic, the danger being that some of those respondents classified as having exited may be merely experiencing an exit *spell*, that is, a period of exit that could be followed by a return to homelessness. Nonetheless, this sample's respondents are relatively young and it is important to recognise positive transitions in their housing 'careers' and to devise appropriate ways to categorise shifts that may have been challenging for many. A third wave of data collection will undoubtedly permit an examination of the sustainability of these independent and dependent exits.

In terms of the *destination* of individuals, both Sosin *et al,* (1990) and Piliavin *et al*, (1996) made a distinction between dependent exits, involving moves to (1) hotels, motels, or single-room occupancy facilities, (2) the home of friends or family, or (3) social service agency-run transitional housing, and independent exits, involving moves to private residences that individuals considered their own and for which they paid all or a substantial part of the housing costs. Neither Sosin *et al*, (1990) nor Piliavin *et al*, (1996) provided a rationale for distinguishing between these two types of exits. However, Dworsky and Piliavin (2000:196) contend that there are justifications for this distinction:

> … several arguments can be made to support the hypothesis that homeless people who make independent exits will be less likely to return to homelessness than those who make dependent exits. For example, those who share housing with others, particularly housing to which they contribute little or no payment, may experience interpersonal conflict or loss of good-will, either of which could increase the likelihood that they will again find themselves without a

stable place to live. In addition, those who bear primary or sole responsibility for their housing costs may have other attributes (e.g., job skills, education, emotional well-being) that help them to maintain stable housing. Finally, those living in a private residence may avoid conditions (e.g., unemployment, alcohol or drug dependence, depression) that might increase their likelihood of experiencing a subsequent homeless spell.

This study similarly distinguishes between 'independent' and 'dependent' exits from homelessness but applies somewhat different parameters. As Table 3.6 indicates, independent exits included those young people who moved (1) to the family home, (2) the private rented sector. Thus, our parameters diverge from the studies cited above (Sosin *et al*, 1990; Piliavin *et al*, 1996; Dworsky and Piliavin, 2000) in that exit definitions are not as closely related to *financial* independence or lack thereof. For example, young people who had moved home by Phase II clearly depended, to a greater or lesser extent according to their individual circumstances, on the financial support of their parents. In the context of the current study then, 'independent exits' reflect respondents' relative independence from State-subsidised housing or intervention (although private rented sector occupants may have been receiving rent allowance). This distinguishes them from those who made 'dependent' exits to State-subsidised transitional/supported housing settings or to State care.

As acknowledged by other researchers (Piliavin *et al*, 1996), definitions of what constitutes a homeless exit are somewhat arbitrary. When devising exit parameters for longitudinal studies of homelessness, it is important to consider the age and developmental stage of participants, their prior homeless histories, and the local contexts of their homelessness, including the structure of available services. Definitions and parameters of pathways and exits were developed in the context of the current study with due consideration given to these issues. A core aim was to depict temporal changes in young people's housing and non-housing transitions in a manner that captures the challenges they have experienced and, in some cases, continued to endure as their homeless 'journeys' progress.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of the study's sample over the course of two waves of data collection. The study's retention rate is satisfactory in light of the challenges associated with maintaining contact with this transient

population: 30 out of 40 of the study's young people were re-interviewed and it was possible to access information on the living situations of a further 7 interviewed during Phase I of the study.

The living situations of the study's respondents changed significantly over the course of the study. By Phase II, there was greater diversity of accommodation types and practically all of the young people had moved out of emergency accommodation targeting under-18s. The move from homeless services targeting children up to the age of 18 years is a critical point of vulnerability (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007) and a number subsequently entered adult homeless services where they struggled to cope and were exposed to more intense drug use and criminal activity.

Nonetheless, a considerable number of the study's young people had moved towards greater stability in terms of their housing situations: seven had moved home or to private rented accommodation (independent exits) and an additional ten were either living in transitional housing or had been placed in a residential care setting (dependent exits). These developments signify positive change in the housing situations of over half of the study's Phase II respondents, confirming that homelessness during adolescence need not progress into adulthood. However, 13 of the 30 young people re-interviewed at Phase II remained homeless, suggesting that a considerable number who become homeless during adolescence will face challenges in their efforts to exit street life.

The following three chapters examine the homeless pathways of young people – independent exits, dependent exits, and continued homelessness – in considerable detail.

Chapter 4
Independent Exits from Homelessness

This chapter examines the housing *transitions* of seven of the study's young people who exited homelessness independently. Independent exits, according to Sosin *et al*, (1990) and Piliavin *et al*, (1996), are transitions made to accommodation that occur without formal support from social service agencies, where the cost of the accommodation is borne largely by the resident (and/or support in the form of housing allowances). Young people who reported this transition (Pathway 1) typically moved out of temporary or longer-term accommodation targeting homeless teenagers or young adults to their family home or the private rented sector.

The chapter starts by presenting the living situations of those who exited homelessness independently at Phases I and II of the study. It goes on to examine the experiences of those young people who moved home, outlining the processes associated with the move and some challenges associated with this transition. Later sections focus on the only participant who moved to private rented accommodation. A key aim is to document the factors that facilitated this group's exit from homelessness. Throughout, difficulties and challenges are also highlighted and particular attention is given to situations and circumstances that may serve to undermine their living situations in the future.

Independent Exits from Homelessness: An Overview

As stated, 7 young people (5 females and 2 males) were categorised as having exited homelessness independently (Pathway 1). They were aged between 16 and 24 years at the time of follow-up: one was 24, one 23, one 21, one 19, two 17 and one 16. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide a breakdown of their living situations at Phases I and II, respectively, by gender.

Table 4.1 Living Situation at Phase I: Young People Pathway 1

Accommodation Type	Young Men	Young Women	All
Emergency/Short-Term Residential Setting (Hostel)	0	3	3
Transitional Housing	1	1	2
Home	0	1	1
Adult Hostel	1	0	1
Total	**2**	**5**	**7**

At Phase I, three of the young women lived in an emergency or short-term residential unit (hostel) which they typically accessed through contact with the Out of Hours Service. Two (one male and one female) were living in transitional housing, one young woman was living at home following a period of homelessness and one young man was accessing emergency adult hostel accommodation.

Table 4.2 Living Situation at Phase II: Young People Pathway 1

Accommodation Type	Young Men	Young Women	All
Home	1	3	4
Between Home and Care	0	1	1
Emergency/Short-Term Residential Setting*	0	1	1
Private Rented Sector	1	0	1
Total	**2**	**5**	**7**

* This young woman was about to move to her sister's home.

As Table 4.2 demonstrates, the living situations of young people who exited homelessness independently varied. Four (three females and one male) had moved home by Phase II (this figure includes one participant who was living at home at Phase I). Two others were about to move to the home of a family member: one was alternating between her mother's home and a residential care setting and another was about to leave the residential setting where she had lived for several years and move in with her older sister. Therefore, a total of six young people were either living, or in the process of moving home, suggesting that this is an important exit route from homelessness. One young man had moved to private rented accommodation.

Moving Home

For those young people who moved home, the process of exiting homelessness was one with a number of transitions and negotiations attached. Only two of the group had remained in the same living situation since Phase I of the study, with the remainder having moved between a number of accommodation types, including two or more of the following: hostels, transitional housing, home, the streets and residential or foster care placements. Most, therefore, had experienced one or more changes in their living situations since the time of their baseline interview suggesting that there is considerable diversity in the route that young people take towards independent exits from homelessness.

As highlighted in Chapter 1, there is a relative dearth of research on young people's exit routes from homelessness and even less is known about how they negotiate a return to their family home. Returning home has been found to be more likely among young homeless people who avoid criminality, remain connected with their families and have fewer problems with school, the criminal justice system or drug use (Thompson *et al*, 2001). This section examines a number of key facilitators to their return home and also highlights some problems and difficulties experienced by a number in relation to this move. As a starting point, however, it is useful to briefly revisit the circumstances surrounding their home-leaving.

Leaving Home

The home-leaving of three of the young people (two females and one male) was associated with their 'problem behaviour' during early to mid-adolescence, including drinking and drug use, staying out late, and so on[21]. These types of

---

[21]   See Mayock & O'Sullivan (2007) for a full account of this pathway into homelessness.

behaviour caused tensions at home and led to their leaving voluntarily or at the request of a parent(s). During the period prior to their becoming homeless all described themselves as associating with the 'wrong crowd' and both of the young women were involved in romantic relationships that met with the disapproval of their parents.

Of the six who moved or were in the process of moving home, an additional two (both young women) left home for the first time following a period of profound instability. One had an extremely fraught relationship with her mother and was the victim of physical and sexual abuse within her home (the perpetrator of this abuse was her mother's partner who had since been convicted of child sexual abuse). She left home at the age of 10 and lived with several foster families for a period of approximately two years. At the age of 12 she returned to her family home but left voluntarily at the age of 14, made contact with the Out of Hours Service and was then placed in an emergency residential setting (hostel). A second young woman experienced a high level of domestic instability during childhood. Her parents moved house on multiple occasions, both were heavy drinkers and this behaviour led to great disruption to family life. With tensions running high, she left and stayed with a cousin initially and, later, with a family friend. She subsequently presented at a Garda station, declared herself as homeless and entered the Out of Hours Service. She was also 14 when she first experienced homelessness and was placed in an emergency residential setting.

The final participant in this group was born in South Africa and moved to Ireland at the age of 11. She had lived in an emergency residential setting for several years and, now aged 17, was about to move to a suburban locality to live with her sister.

Returning Home

As might be expected given the differences in the circumstances surrounding their home-leaving, the process associated with returning home differed for each individual. Nonetheless, there were a number of identifiable themes. For young people whose 'problem' behaviour was a factor in their homelessness, specific conditions were invariably attached to their return to the family home. All three had become heavily immersed in drug use during their teenage years and two had criminal records. Sarah, for example, reported a lengthy history of drug use and criminal activity and had served two prison sentences. Since the age of 15 when she first left home she had slept rough, lived in England for a period and had also used adult hostels on many occasions. At the time of her

Phase I interview she was living in a transitional housing unit and receiving drug treatment. However, she subsequently relapsed, resumed a path of moving between unstable living situations and was incarcerated for a second time. This second period in prison appeared to constitute a turning point experience, providing her with respite from street life and an opportunity to address her drug use.

It [prison] got me clean, it didn't feel like a punishment to be honest with you because I got myself clean, got my head together while I was in there … it is just like going to a treatment centre.

<div align="right">Sarah (23)</div>

Sarah moved home on release from prison but explained that remaining drug free was a condition attached to her return to the family home.

When I got locked up they [parents] found out I was in the prison and they came up to me. So it was like I had put them through an awful lot and they still came back like and I am so lucky to have them like but they don't tolerate it when I am active (using drugs) which is fair enough. They won't have me near the house or they won't let me live at home when I am like that you know. So there was tight restrictions around even me parents taking me home like.

<div align="right">Sarah (23)</div>

She went on to explain that her father had played a critically supportive role during her time in prison and felt that her situation would be much different had he not intervened at this juncture.

I had a kind of good relationship, a good enough relationship with dad, like I was talking to him all the time … Mam wasn't keen on me going home but dad had said like he really wanted me to.
[And if your dad hadn't come to visit you? Would things be different?]
I would be back in the hostels … Yeah definitely I would have been back. I know I wouldn't have stayed clean (drug free) on me own, you know.

<div align="right">Sarah (23)</div>

Motivation and readiness to address one's situation is an important phase in the process of exiting homelessness (Karabanow, 2008) and such motivation can be triggered by a specific incident or life event (MacKnee and Mervyn, 2002). Like Sarah, Julian's second period in prison appeared to motivate him to change.

Being 15 years of age living on the streets, it's not nice like. I was a kid you know what I mean. Like I had nowhere to go like, no family. I had got family but they didn't trust me like 'cos I was on drugs and doing crime and done all that. Now since I copped on to meself, you cop on when you're locked up in prison, you cop on to everything.

<div align="right">Julian (24)</div>

Julian's transition home following a second prison sentence was an incremental process involving some negotiation with his father. He had moved home only three weeks prior to his follow-up interview and regaining the trust of his father appeared to be a key facilitator in this move.

[Last time I met you, you sort of said you didn't have much contact with your Dad …]
I didn't but we sorted all that stuff like. We had a good chat, talk … Me da trusts me now like, me da trusts me, it's good to have like you know a bit of trust out there.

<div align="right">Julian (24)</div>

The vast majority of those who moved home described troubled relationships with their parents during their Phase I interviews. These home-based difficulties and tensions ranged from conflict between parents and young people over their behaviour (e.g. mixing with 'troublemakers', drug use, staying out late) to resentments on the part of young people towards their parents linked to feelings of abandonment and neglect. As stated earlier, a number had left home under extremely difficult circumstances having suffered trauma in their homes as children. Improved family relationships were important enablers to moving home and, as demonstrated, a number openly acknowledged that their move home had been facilitated by the support they received from their parents. Anna is another participant who highlighted the crucial role of parental support.

I'd be lost without them (parents) because they're huge support for me and they'd do anything for me. So I can't complain about them too much (laugh).

Anna had been living at home for over 18 months by the time of her second interview and described a greatly improved relationship with her parents. She also talked about renewed communication and trust, attributing these developments to 'getting off' drugs.

I suppose I have a relationship back with me family, we get on brilliant now and everything's kind of, we can communicate, we can talk to each other…She's [mum] learned to trust me and that's the biggest thing, there's a bit more trust in the family. Nobody trusted me before and now they do trust me which is great … What made a difference was getting off everything (drugs) … going into detox and then going into treatment and then doing the day programme. Just kind of getting me life back together, you know what I mean. I've grown up an awful lot in the last year, grown up a huge amount which was really needed.

Anna (19)

Sarah is another participant who spoke about the positive impact of seeking treatment for her drug use.
[Is there anything that stands out as having helped you the most over the past year?]
I suppose just the whole treatment thing has been really helpful. Like they gave me great support with coming off the methadone like … I have to say they were great support. They were there all the time, they linked in with me family and me probation officers in court like so … and I have to say on the whole now even getting me Mam and Dad involved, that was great as well.

Sarah (23)

These accounts strongly suggest that exiting homelessness was associated with changes in other domains, including issues that had previously served to undermine their ability to access and maintain a secure living situation. Young people were therefore required to make some significant lifestyle changes and there was also a sense in which they had to embrace new responsibilities, particularly in relation to their daily routines.

For others, resolving home-based difficulties hinged to a far greater extent on change in the behaviour of their parents. Amy's home-leaving was strongly related to her mother's heavy drinking. During childhood, she and her family lived in hostels and B&Bs for periods and Amy and her siblings were subsequently placed in care. Amy's care placement broke down and she accessed emergency accommodation through the Out of Hours Service. However, by Phase II, her mother's situation had improved dramatically and she was in a position to care for a number of her children having quit drinking and been allocated local authority housing. Amy had had regular contact with her mother between Phases I and II of the study and, at the time of her follow-up interview, was living five nights a week with her mother and two nights in a residential unit. Professional supports also played an important role in her return home by organising and negotiating home visits.

Well she [key worker], anything I say to her like she'll get it done for me and all do you know what I mean. Me saying I wanted more access and all she'll get back on to the social worker and say to her and all about me and what days I stay with me ma and all do you know what I mean.

<div align="right">Amy (17)</div>

For the majority, moving home was a process that hinged to a large extent on the ability of young people and their parents to resolve past tensions and conflicts. For those who were drug dependent, entry to treatment was a key facilitator and was also a condition of their return home. Some described turning point experiences which appeared to prompt them to make a personal commitment to behaviour change and also fuelled their determination to exit street life. For others, the move home was contingent on changes in their home-based circumstance and their parents' behaviour, in particular. In a general sense, strengthening relationships through communication, behaviour change and trust were all important to the process of moving home.

Sustaining the Move Home

Moving home is not an isolated event and it cannot be assumed that this residential stability will automatically sustain itself. Just as homelessness is itself an adaptive process (insofar as it requires adjustment to new settings and environments), moving home also necessitates a number of adaptations. For example, a number of young people talked about the restrictiveness of some household rules (e.g. restricted socialising time, curfews, and so on). Moreover,

parental expectations sometimes led to tensions resulting in efforts on the part of young people to re-negotiate agreements of various kinds. There was almost always a 'settling in' period, which is not altogether surprising given the freedom from boundaries that most had grown accustomed to during the time they had lived out of home. Thus, the physical move home was accompanied by emotional and psychological upheaval linked to transition and change across a number of dimensions of personal and social life. One of the most demanding of these related to the need to find new social networks. Anna had lost touch with most of her friends in her local area when she left home at the age of 15 but, since her return, had established a new circle of friends who she believed to be trustworthy and reliable.

Yeah like I have friends, you know, that aren't going to stab me in the back, that aren't going to rob off me do you know, all that stupid shite. I've good mates that I can talk to when things are not going good and when things are great.

<div align="right">Anna (19)</div>

All who reported heavy past involvement in drug use and/or criminal activity felt that they needed to distance themselves from their former social networks in order to maintain their current living situations. On leaving her neighbourhood, Anna had begun to socialise with a group of young people in the city-centre where she was introduced to heroin. However, she had broken contact with this group on moving home. In the following account, she described a changed perspective on her former street-based associations and friendships.

At the time I thought they (old friends) were the best thing since sliced bread and everything was brilliant but looking back on it now it wasn't, they all were two faced about everything do you know what I mean. We did terrible things together and we just, we were bad influences, all of us were bad influences on each other, do you know that kind of a way. They weren't proper friends, they weren't now what I associate as friends … Like I totally disconnected from all the old people I used to hang around with, all of the mates I have now are all in recovery, they're all clean and yeah they're all good.

<div align="right">Anna (19)</div>

Breaking ties with former friends was often intertwined with making a break from drug 'scenes'. Like Anna, others had lost contact with peers in their home neighbourhood and re-establishing contact with old friends was depicted as an important part of the process of successfully exiting the street. Aware that past associations might hinder the stability of her current living situation, Sarah endeavoured to make a break from past routines by establishing new social networks.

All the friends I had before I was ever on drugs have been great like ... since I have moved home all me friends have been great like now, I mean my friends that have never been on drugs that I grew up with. Like it has been good like having that support like you know, having your friends back like.

<div align="right">Sarah (23)</div>

However, the process of breaking former social and personal ties was a challenging one due in large part to the central role that drugs had come to occupy in their lives. These young people openly acknowledged the struggle of leaving street friends behind and the considerable personal upheaval associated with this shift. Sarah later explained that she sometimes felt more comfortable with the world of drugs.

It is really weird to be like sitting in one place with them (friends in home neighbourhood) and they are talking about going on holidays and, you know, their lives or their jobs and all and then going in there (drug treatment setting) and then listening to, 'I scored here last night' ... the blokes are all full of image and you know kind of even the way they speak, the whole slur in their voice ... I suppose I am more comfortable in that whole drugs world because that is all I know for the last 5 or 6 years. But I would love to be in the other world and like just be normal and never having to have gone near drugs.

<div align="right">Sarah (23)</div>

Julian also talked about the challenge of abandoning familiar routines and rejecting former friendships, explaining that from the age of 13 when he first left home, his friends had been the only people he could depend on. He had in fact formed strong drug and criminal connections with members of this peer group as a teenager.

They looked after me, they helped me out. If I hadn't had them there I would've been probably dead or something like that.

Julian (24)

Having moved home following a period of incarceration, he was now in closer proximity to this group than he had been for some time. Although he claimed not to socialise regularly with former peers, his attachments to them remained strong.

Like I still look up to a few of my friends from years ago, they're not all that bad like, know what I mean. I still say hello to them you know. Like I hung around with the young fella who lives across the road like for years. We've done a lot together like you know what I mean. He's still one of my mates like no matter what.

Julian (24)

Julian's story of homelessness, criminal activity and drug use helps to contextualise the uneasy tension that can accompany the process of distancing from former peers and ultimately terminating these relationships.

> ### Julian (24)
>
> Julian left home at 13 due to his problem behaviour (drug/alcohol use and criminal activity) which, he claimed, was triggered by the death of his mother. Following this event, he did not have much support from his father: '*He was mostly around for me sister, me two sisters and me brother, he didn't have time for me not really, you know the way. Because I used to get into trouble and all, the black sheep*'. On leaving home, Julian embarked on a cycle of using numerous unstable accommodation types including hostels, the street and the homes of friends. He reported a high level of criminal activity which he attributed to his homelessness: '*I had to do it to survive*'. He spent a number of months in prison and, on release, was placed in a transitional housing unit for young offenders where he remained for a period of one year until his eviction which resulted from his ongoing criminal activity.
>
> Subsequently, he returned to a cycle of moving between various unstable living places (sleeping rough, using adult hostels and squats) and was incarcerated for a second period some time later. Since leaving prison just three weeks prior to his follow-up interview, Julian was living at his father's house, despite having had very limited contact with him for a very

Independent Exits from Homelessness | 75

considerable period of time. He stated that he found moving in with his father to be *'tough'* initially because of their estrangement and the absence of trust. Nonetheless, Julian felt that his situation had improved greatly and claimed to be 'very happy' about his return home.

Julian had reduced his drug and alcohol intake, a development he attributed to his commitment to an apprenticeship. He openly acknowledged the importance of steering clear of friends who had been close associates in much of his earlier criminal activity. Yet, he did socialise with this peer group occasionally, suggesting that it remains an important source of identification. Due to financial difficulties, Julian admitted that criminal activity was tempting at times *'cos it's easy money'*. Desisting from crime was, in fact, one of the conditions his father attached to his return home. At the time of follow-up, Julian had had little contact with services or other positive sources of identification.

By Phase II, Julian depicted his changed circumstances optimistically and viewed home as a stable living situation. He had also made positive transitions in education and employment through his apprenticeship. However, Julian's return home was recent and was preceded by an exceptionally chaotic housing history from the age of 13 years. Significant also is that his criminal activity had led to a breakdown in prior housing placements. Although Julian felt that he had made progress and was positive about the future, his housing and criminal history, coupled with his continued ties and associations with former peers, may put his situation at risk in the future.

Ambivalence, Instability and Risk

Almost all who returned home viewed the move as a positive development in their lives, typically referring to the value of being cared for and also recognising the advantages of the limits and boundaries set by their parents, even if they found some of the rules and restrictions difficult at times. Nonetheless, this was not the only perspective on moving home expressed by those who had made this transition. For example, one respondent expressed some misgivings about the prospect of relocating to her sister's home. Olivia had been living in a short-term residential setting since she moved from South Africa to Ireland at the age of 11. At the time of her Phase II interview she was about to move to her sister's home and was clearly apprehensive about the move.

I'm just not ready yet, it hasn't sunk into my head, ok, I'm ready, but I haven't accepted the fact that I'm moving in just two weeks.
[So are you a little bit nervous about it as well?]
I am, you know, 'cos it's going to be very stressful for me…and I don't really get along with my sister.

<div align="right">Olivia (17)</div>

Young people who spent a considerable period of time in short- or medium-term residential (hostel) placements subsequent to becoming homeless often experienced a sense of loss following their departure from these settings. Even if they wanted to move towards a more independent living situation, their attachments to staff and residents typically produced feelings of anxiety as the date of their departure approached. A number who moved to transitional housing also experienced similar difficulties (see Chapter 5).

A second respondent did not view her return home as a positive development and in fact portrayed it as a retrograde step. Her story reveals that, although she moved home voluntarily and against the wishes of her social worker, she did so out of desperation rather than a belief in the benefits and appropriateness of such a move. The complexities surrounding her return home are detailed below.

Rachel (16)

Rachel was a victim of sexual abuse during childhood and entered foster care at the age of 10. She returned to the family home at the age of 12 but left voluntarily soon after under traumatic circumstances (she had been physically assaulted by her mother) and made contact with the Out of Hours Service. At the time of her baseline interview, she had been living in an emergency residential setting (hostel) for three months and was hoping to move to a longer-term placement in the near future. She had had no contact with her mother since she left home and spoke about her in extremely negative terms.

However, Rachel remained in this emergency setting for a very considerable period and formed strong attachments to staff and residents there. By the time an alternative placement was proposed, she was reluctant to leave the security of a setting where she had established relationships but she did, nonetheless, hope that this move would prove to be a positive one: '*I thought, you know, a new place for the year, be able to find me feet*'. However, Rachel was deeply unhappy with her new

placement and started to engage in self-injurious behaviour. Her drug use also escalated and she began to socialise with a '*bad crowd*'. This is how she depicted daily life in this new living situation:

They didn't sit down and watch DVDs and like when you came in, if you were late in like, they wouldn't say anything to you, or they wouldn't ring you to see if you were alright, anything like that. It was like that they just didn't give a fuck about you.

Rachel left this setting voluntarily and moved to her mother's house. At the time of her follow-up interview, she had been living there for approximately eight months. She shared a bedroom with her mother and their relationship had not improved. Her brother, who she claimed had abused her in the past, was also living in the house. Rachel reported some progress in other areas: she was attending school and hoped to complete her education and go to college. Overall, however, she did not feel that life had improved and she reported depression: '*Sometimes like I just want to be by meself and let meself drown in me own misery*'. Rachel depicted her home situation in extremely bleak terms:

It's fucked up, it is, because I know I shouldn't be there, do you know that like, it's not, it not me home … it's just like the place where I sleep and eat and wash meself in…my ma doesn't give a fuck about how I feel, or if I try and tell her anything she just doesn't understand it … we just don't see eye to eye, and we just don't get along so, yeah, there will be a big blow-up and she'll fuck me out, and she'll call me all the names under the sun and I'll be back to square one.

For Rachel, moving home was not a positive development and she was deeply unhappy with her situation. She had many unresolved issues with her mother and their relationship was clearly volatile. She also reported feeling 'down' and depressed, had engaged in self-harm in the past and appeared to have limited social support.

According to Kurtz *et al*, (1991), some young people return to the family home as a last resort only to leave or be pushed out again in the future. Home is not always the best or most suitable housing alternative for young people who have lived out of home for a period. Fitzpatrick (2000) observes that the

process of making frequent unsuccessful attempts to return home only serves to further damage young people's relationship with their parents and ultimately jeopardises their ability to exit homelessness permanently.

The Private Rented Sector

Only one young person who exited homelessness independently was living in private rented accommodation at the time of his follow up interview. Colm, aged 21 at Phase II, had left home because of high levels of domestic instability, including physical abuse by his step father. He started to use drugs at an early age and his behaviour deteriorated following the death of his mother when he was 15 years old. He moved in with his sister after his mother's death but left at the age of 16 following conflict over his drug use. At this point he embarked on a cycle of moving between unstable living places, including hostels (both under- and over-18), the street and prison. At the time of his baseline interview he was staying at a hostel for young people over 18 years. His contact with family members was limited to a hostile relationship with his step father and brothers and distrust on the part of his sister. Colm received little education growing up and was involved in criminal activity and drug use from an early age. At the time of his Phase I interview, he had practically no social supports from family or friends and his daily routine consisted of a cycle of drug use, theft and accessing homeless services.

At follow-up, Colm had been living in private rented accommodation with his girlfriend for nine months. He had moved there directly from hostel accommodation and depicted the move out of homelessness as a personal decision. He had set about seeking accommodation in the private rented sector with the assistance of a staff member from the hostel where he was a resident.

It took me about (pause) … I started looking for a flat and it was kind of hard but I heard off a few people that if you look for a good week hard, that you will get one. And I looked for a good hard week and the girl over here in [the hostel], she helped me find it.

Colm's motivation for improving his situation was linked to the birth of his son who was in foster care at that time. Although he and his girlfriend were heroin users and struggled with many aspects of daily living, Colm claimed to be motivated to change his life.

I want to make the best life for my son possible. I'm going to try and make him become a doctor or whatever he wants to be. I'm going to give him the best education money can buy. I'm going to have to get a job and pay for his school so he can get a job and an education.

In making the transition out of homelessness, Colm received support from services, firstly, to facilitate the move and also to provide support in settling into his new accommodation. Residential staff from the hostel where he had previously resided advised him about how to go about finding suitable accommodation. Although he was satisfied with his progress initially, he had experienced several problems in more recent months. The extremely poor state of his accommodation was an issue he raised repeatedly.

The place has fallen to bits, there's mice and rats and there's holes and the windows are falling out …It's just not suitable, it's disgraceful. I don't know how someone could rent a place like this out.

Colm had also experienced difficulties with his landlord due largely to his own inexperience of the private rented sector. He had sought help on one occasion from a voluntary agency, a step which helped him to avoid a return to the streets.

I went down to the place who looked after that sort of thing … They rang him (landlord) up and told him the situation because he came around asking for 100 Euro and he wanted it there and then or he would have kicked me out and he changed the locks on the spot. So I went down there and I told them and they rang him up and he came back and changed the locks back. If I had to give him the 100 Euro I would have been on the streets again in hostels.

There are several factors that pose a risk to the stability of Colm's housing. In the absence of support from family, Colm remained almost completely dependent on the supports he received from services. He had few friends for companionship or support and most were also heroin-involved. Although his involvement in criminal activity had decreased over time, he continued to engage opportunistically in criminal acts and had several outstanding charges to be dealt with in court. Having accrued rent arrears, he was also facing financial difficulties and, in general, he was struggling to cope.

When I live in this house I have to pay electricity, rent, food, like I smoke cigarettes, food, maybe say go to the cinema probably once a week or do one kind of small activity not too expensive a week. No way can you fit all that in on the money I get. No way.

Colm's continued drug use was a serious drain on his financial resources. Like others in this study, he talked about feeling depressed and had recently contemplated taking his life.

I feel kind of really, really depressed in meself for the last I'd say 3 weeks…really being upset about me mum and stuff, and thinking about the way me child is in foster care and the way my life is going. I really, really was going to take my life about a week ago, I just couldn't handle it anymore, over the drugs and stuff like that. I just couldn't handle. I was just going to put loads of heroin into a needle and bang it into me arm to tell you the truth. I was just going to kill meself. But I thought about me life, me son and me girlfriend and me brothers and sisters and I'm loved a lot so I didn't take my life.

Since only one young person interviewed at Phase II had entered the private rented sector there are limits to what can be concluded about this particular housing transition. Nonetheless, this young man's experience draws attention to the difficulties young people may face when they disengage from services and attempt to live independently. In a study of young people accessing the private rented sector, Lister (2004:328) highlights the insecurity that such a move can bring to the housing transitions of young people:

> Securing accommodation in the PRS [private rented sector] does not necessarily mean that young people have the ability to live independently or achieve satisfactory housing conditions and reciprocal relationships with landlords, nor does it mean that the search for suitable accommodation is over. It may simply prolong the search for satisfactory accommodation and a reciprocal tenancy relationship and so influence the high levels of mobility in the sector.

Colm's inexperience of the rental market, and his failure to make rental payments, make his housing situation extremely fragile. His continued heroin use, involvement in criminal activity and lack of education or training all exacerbate his difficulties. In addition, the physical state of his accommodation

was poor and he had experienced difficulties with his landlord. His story highlights the need for continued support and services for young people as they attempt to move towards independent living situations. Young people with histories of homelessness need support, not only with accessing appropriate accommodation but also in negotiating relationships with their landlords and in managing their finances if they are to make this transition successfully. Young people's educational and drug treatment needs also require attention, as do mental health issues. All of this presents particular challenges for services since young people who enter the private rented sector are likely to be distancing themselves from agencies as they move towards a more independent lifestyle.

Conclusion

For this study's young people, the process of exiting homelessness independently came with a number of negotiations and challenges attached. As a transition influenced by a range of factors including family, friends, services, personal motivation and the experience of homelessness itself, the move was not simply a matter of access to housing. Support from family was clearly important to those who exited homelessness by moving home, a finding which is consistent with other research on homeless exits highlighting the enabling role played by family members (Karabanow, 2008; MacKnee and Mervyn, 2002; Mercier and Racine, 1993). The experiences of this group also support the findings of previous research which suggests that those who have continued contact with, and support from, their families throughout the homeless experience make a smoother transition home and are more likely to view their move home in positive terms (Thompson *et al*, 2001). A smaller number of accounts question the appropriateness of home for some who have not resolved difficulties with their parents (Fitzpatrick, 2000).

Continued family and parental support was almost always contingent on a number of commitments made by the young person prior to them moving home. Seeking drug treatment and quitting use featured strongly within the agreed ground rules among those for whom drug use was an issue. In addition, young people almost always had to make decisions about their peer networks and these invariably involved breaking ties with past friends and associates within both street and drug 'scenes'. Young people frequently raised this matter spontaneously and many attested to the importance of establishing new social networks. Nonetheless, even for those committed in principle, the process of leaving behind former friends was a painful upheaval and a number struggled to come to terms with this loss of social ties. Continued involvement with drug-

or criminally-involved peers presented risks to the stability of young people's living situations by reinforcing sources of identification that are not conducive to exiting homelessness.

Only one young person had entered private rented accommodation and his account draws attention to the numerous challenges that young people may face in attempting to negotiate this transition. When the private rented sector is a young person's first experience of independent living (as was the case for the young person in question), the adjustments and demands associated with the move can be significant, particularly in cases where the individual has few personal or financial resources on which to draw. Lister (2004) identifies a range of skills, including economic and social strategies, required by young people to maintain private rented accommodation and tenancy relationships. Those who have specific vulnerabilities and low social support are particularly susceptible to failed tenancies.

Not all of the young people in this pathway viewed the housing transition associated with their homeless exit in positive terms, nor can all of their current living situations be considered stable. The process of exiting homelessness independently is clearly complex and young people appeared to experience varying levels of control over how and when their living situations changed. Furthermore, this process was ongoing rather than fixed and it must be remembered that their current living situations do not necessarily represent an end to their housing transitions or, for that matter, an end to housing instability. Although some accounts suggest that they may well continue along a stable accommodation path, there is also evidence that others may experience housing instability in the future.

Key Findings:
Independent Exits from Homelessness

Exiting Homelessness Independently
- 7 young people exited homelessness independently, having either moved home (n=6) or to private rented sector accommodation (n=1)
- Independent exits from homelessness involved a series of negotiations best characterised as a process involving parents and other family members as well as wider social supports.
- Factors such as mental health problems, criminal activity, financial problems and continued drug use can threaten the stability of the living situations of young people who exit homelessness independently.

Moving Home
- Continued contact with and support from family members throughout a young person's homeless experience facilitated a smoother transition back to the family home.
- Conditions (imposed by parents), such as seeking and remaining in drug treatment and disassociating from former peers, were almost always attached to a young person's move home.

The Private Rented Sector
- Young people who are exiting homelessness via the private rented sector need to be prepared for this move and may also need continued support and advice in relation to budgeting, relationships with landlords, and so on.
- Continued heavy drug use and/or dependence hampers young people's ability to successfully negotiate and sustain the move to private rented accommodation.

Dependent Exits
from Homelessness

Ten of the study's young people were categorised as having made a dependent exit from homelessness; that is, they had moved off the street or from services targeting homeless youth or adults to alternative accommodation *with* the assistance of statutory and/or voluntary services and interventions. By Phase II, seven of the young people had moved to transitional or supported accommodation and an additional three had been placed in a long-term residential care setting. This chapter explores how these transitions came about and examines young people's experiences of their new living situations. It also draws attention to the kinds of difficulties and challenges that can accompany homeless exits of this kind.

Transitional Housing

The terms *transitional*, *supported* and *semi-independent* are often used interchangeably to describe housing that is aimed at people who need time and assistance to prepare for independent living.[22] In general, these provisions are

---

[22] The provision of transitional/supported housing is a relatively recent phenomenon throughout Europe and in most countries it is a development which has occurred since the early to mid-1980s (Edgar *et al*, 2000). There is diversity in the forms of provision in evidence throughout Europe. According to Edgar and Doherty, (2001:76), this diversity 'is apparent in the terminology employed to describe such forms of accommodation: community lodgings, group homes, protected apartments, sheltered housing, transitional accommodation and supported housing'.

understood to offer medium-term housing with support to help residents develop the skills and capacity to establish themselves in a home. In some transitional programmes participants live in apartment-style quarters, while others may be in group settings where several individuals share a household. The level of support varies between projects but is generally linked directly to the needs of residents. Edgar and Doherty (2001:60–61) describe the range of accommodation types that can be potentially classified as transitional or supported housing:

> The various forms of accommodation associated with the provision of supported housing can be seen as ranging across a continuum from self-contained mainstream housing with a planned, albeit sometimes minimal, programme of support to shared accommodation which has been funded, built or designated for the purpose of providing an integrated package of housing and high-level support, often for a specific client group. In all cases, the aim of the provision is to enable people to live independently in the community.

Transitional or supported housing can be seen as providing a link between traditional direct access hostels and permanent accommodation (Edgar and Doherty, 2001). These housing programmes generally involve the provision of both accommodation and support and are designed to assist people who are ready to move beyond emergency or short-term services but unable to return home or support themselves (Rashid, 2004). Transitional housing is generally understood to be an important 'stepping stone' for people to move out of homelessness, allowing individuals to develop the stability, confidence, and coping skills needed to sustain permanent housing in the future.

The 7 young people (4 females and 3 males) who reported moving to transitional or supported housing ranged from 17 to 22 years at the time of follow-up: three were 17, two 18 and two were 22 years old. One had been living in a transitional housing unit for 14 months at the time of interview, while the remaining six had only recently moved to this new living situation. Table 5.1 presents the living situations of these young people at Phase I.

Table 5.1 Living Situations at Phase I: Pathway 2 Respondents in Transitional Housing

Accommodation Type	Male	Female	Total
Emergency (short- or medium-term) residential setting (hostel)	0	4	4
Long-term residential setting (hostel)	2	0	2
Adult hostel	1	0	1
Total	**3**	**4**	**7**

Like others in the sample, some had experienced other accommodation types since they first became homeless. Table 5.2 presents the number who had lived in adult hostels or with friends or relatives and those who had experience of rough sleeping and squatting.

Table 5.2 Accommodation History: Pathway 2 Respondents in Transitional Housing

Accommodation Type	Male	Female	Total
Rough Sleeping	1	3	4
Squatting	0	1	1
Adult Hostel	1	0	1
Home of Friends	0	2	2
Home of Relatives	0	1	1

While four had slept rough at some time, only two had done so for extended periods of days or weeks. One young person had experience of squatting and another was a seasoned user of adult hostels (both had also slept rough on occasion). However, three of the young people had no experience of the sleeping places listed in Table 5.2. There was a sense, then, in which a number who moved to transitional housing do not conform to the commonly-held stereotype of the young homeless as 'roofless' and sleeping on the street.

In all but two cases, the move to transitional housing was the first change in accommodation since the time of their Phase I interview. This is significant and undoubtedly provided a degree of stability as well as opportunities for young people to prepare for the move to transitional housing. Their transitional living situations varied: four lived in a group setting while the remaining three resided in apartment-style quarters in a building containing several units with communal

areas available to residents. The following sections examine a number of factors and experiences associated with the move to transitional living.

Moving to Transitional Housing

The homeless histories of the young people differed and, in keeping with this, the circumstances surrounding the move to supported housing varied. Jacinta had lived in medium-term hostel accommodation since the time she left home at the age of 14 years following conflict with her adoptive parents. She explained her reasons for seeking alternative accommodation as her eighteenth birthday approached:

[You have moved from the hostel. Can I ask how that move came about?]

I just asked them (staff at medium-term hostel). I wanted to move, wanted my independence. Like when I was living there it was hard 'cos I was the oldest and all the rules were just like the same for every age … so there were a lot of restrictions … Like I turned 18 in November but the rules they were the same.
<div align="right">Jacinta (18)</div>

At the time of her follow-up interview, Jacinta had recently moved to a transitional housing unit. Prior to her acceptance to the programme where she was now a resident, she had gone through a process of applying to various housing projects. This period of seeking accommodation had been difficult because of the sense of rejection she experienced following successive refusals from other housing projects:

There is just some people that just don't know how to do interviews. Like I didn't know how to do interviews so it's good to get people to help you with that … the worst thing was like, you see, it pissed me off as such because everyone else, all the girls that were moving out, they got places and no one was accepting me so that was kind of a bad thing.
<div align="right">Jacinta (18)</div>

Maeve's history was somewhat different. She had moved between multiple foster and residential care placements from the age of 7 and, at the time of her Phase I interview, was living in medium-term hostel accommodation which she accessed following contact with the Out of Hours Service. Her move to supported housing appeared to arise out of the absence of a suitable alternative.

[Can you tell me how the move happened?]

Well I was only supposed to be in [medium-term accommodation for under 18s] for 6 months but then they couldn't find anywhere else for me so I had to stay there. And then they wanted to wait until I was closer to 18 to move me in here because I'm not really supposed to be in here because I'm 17. But they moved me in here 'cos there was nowhere else … Like the health board could only get me residential but I didn't want to go to residential 'cos I'm sick of all that, getting treated like a kid, because I'm nearly 18 so I should be getting treated like an adult.

<div align="right">Maeve (17)</div>

Of note is that both of these young women expressed a desire to move towards independence or to a more adult status. Nonetheless, the lived reality of 'independence' produced some unexpected emotions and anxieties. Maeve's later comments suggest a tension between her need for independence and her readiness to leave the hostel where she had lived for over one year.

[And were you part of the whole process of moving, did they ask you?]

No. I didn't want to move here … they told me it'd be a good idea, that it'd be good for me here … I don't like it.

<div align="right">Maeve (17)</div>

Young people had experienced different levels of preparation ahead of the move to supported accommodation and only two stated that they had received specific support and advice prior to the move. Several appeared relatively ill-prepared and, even if eager to make the transition, found the move to be stressful when it did take place. A number also simultaneously experienced a sense of loss. Caroline explained the initial difficulties she experienced.

It just wasn't what I expected and I just wanted to go back to [hostel/residential setting]. I just wanted to leave here. I had no money and I had nothing and my head was wrecked. But then once I started getting all my bits and pieces into it and again getting used to me routine and all it just became normal.

<div align="right">Caroline (17)</div>

Those who had only recently moved to transitional housing continued to visit their previous placement regularly, sometimes up to several times per week. This contact was important in helping them to maintain a sense of continuity in their lives.

[So how often do you visit (the hostel)?]
About three times a week … like I live now by myself in a big building with other people. But I'm not like really used to living by myself so I'm the kind of person, I need a lot of company so that's why I probably pop up to the hostel most of the time, just to see them 'cos it just gives me something to do.

<div align="right">Jacinta (18)</div>

Taking Responsibility

There were usually specific issues that young people had to address in order to be considered for transitional housing and, for some, this involved taking personal responsibility for certain behaviour and/or discontinuing specific activities. Issues related to substance use and misuse featured strongly here. While two young people reported no drug and limited alcohol use, the remaining five were regular consumers of alcohol and drugs and two reported problems related to heroin (and polydrug) use at Phase I of the study. By the time of conducting Phase II interviews, four had decreased their drug intake and two of these had sought treatment. Where drug dependence was an issue, entry to treatment played a crucial role in the move to transitional housing. Seán, who had been living in supported housing for the past 14 months, explained that methadone maintenance helped him to manage his life.

… that [drug treatment] was a big life saver for me because, from going out every day scoring drugs, your life is, you can't manage your life you know.

<div align="right">Seán (22)</div>

Jacinta had gone through a period of heavy drinking since the time of her Phase I interview but had been attending addiction counselling for a number of months at the time of her follow-up interview. She described her progress.

I was just finding things desperate … I was drinking every day but I'm doing counselling for it now and I've been off hash for a few months.

<div align="right">Jacinta (18)</div>

Participation in education and training also facilitated the move to transitional housing. Six of the seven respondents had continued or returned to education or skills training by the time of their Phase II interview. Participation in education/training provided a structured daily routine and helped young people to set goals for the future. Most recognised that education could enhance their future employment opportunities.

I don't want to end up living on the street. I don't so that's why I really need a job after my Leaving Cert.

<div align="right">Taofeek (17)</div>

Nonetheless, returning to school was not always a smooth transition. One participant who returned to education found it difficult to settle following a considerable period out of school.

I never really liked school but I'm just sticking it out for another year and then getting out of it. Do my leaving cert and get out … It's just the circumstances, that I haven't been in school for 4 years … a new school and new people and all and trying to fit in and not having all the latest gismos and gadgets is hard, you know.

<div align="right">Caroline (17)</div>

None of the young people who moved to transitional housing were employed and most were not currently seeking employment because they were in the process of completing their education or training. However one young man had been trying for some time, with little success, to enter the labour market. This experience had been extremely frustrating and discouraging.

I went for a couple of interviews at Dunnes just for stacking shelves. I went for interview and she said to me, 'Hi Seán, we're recruiting big time'. And I was thinking surely I'll get in here. But because there was such a gap in my CV, I think anyway, a letter came back saying thanks for your time but you've been rejected or whatever to that effect anyway. That sort of gave me a kick back, saying, 'Jaysys, they don't think I can stack shelves'. Fuck sake, do you know what I mean. I think I took that a bit too personally but … how qualified do you have to be to stack fucking shelves? If it was a hard job I would sort of say, 'Fair enough, I probably wasn't qualified enough'.

<div align="right">Seán (22)</div>

Although Seán felt that life had improved dramatically since the time of his Phase I interview, he faced many challenges when it came to getting a job. He had left school at the age of 15 and experienced homelessness for the first time at the age of 16 when his parents asked him to leave the family home. Since that time, he had moved between a range of temporary accommodation types (including numerous adult hostels) and had become heavily dependent on heroin. At the time of his initial interview, he was receiving treatment and subsequently moved to a transitional housing unit. His account demonstrates how expectations of independence can be thwarted by lack of opportunity and setbacks of various kinds.

The transition to supported housing was a process with contingencies and uncertainties attached. Young people had worked hard to gain acceptance to a housing situation that signified a move towards independence. Yet, when the moment arrived, a number were relatively ill-prepared for the move. Participation in education or training was a significant enabler in that it provided a structured daily routine as well as personal goals and potential markers of achievement. There are many other dimensions to young people's experience of transitional housing. The following sections consider the role of family and wider social supports in young people's move towards independent living.

Family Support

All of the young people reported some level of contact with their families and five of the seven felt that their relationship with family members had improved since the time of their previous interview. The accounts of a number also suggest that family support played a positive and enabling role in their move to transitional housing.

One young man had succeeded in building a stronger relationship with his mother (related in large part to his success in addressing his drug problem) and visited home on a regular basis. He depicted his mother's role as vital in his return to education and the affirmation he received at home appeared to be an important motivator: '*You get pride in paying things like that, paying the ESB, because like I'm showing to me ma I can survive*' (Seán, 22). Another young woman described a vastly improved relationship with her mother as well as increased levels of support from home. These developments were closely associated with her pregnancy.

I need me ma. I'm having a baby and I need her help do you know that way … she's trying her best to be involved in this and she wants to be. She's putting a lot of effort into that, I can see how excited she is about it so I want her to feel involved in it as well and let her know that I need her there, you know that type of way.

<div align="right">Caroline (17)</div>

Caroline did not feel isolated or alone and the social networks available to her were a crucial source of support.

I'm not on me own. Like it would be different if you were a young girl going through the Out of Hours who was after losing contact with her mother completely, losing contact with her father, and all she had was her friends and her key worker. Then you'd need support. But I have all my family around me, they're still there, they're not distant in any way so I have the support that any normal girl who's having a baby would have, you know what I mean … and I have a big circle of friends as well so I'm not isolated in any way.

<div align="right">Caroline (17)</div>

Others who reported improved relationships with parents and other family members did not have this level of contact and support from their families. Although one young woman's relationship with her mother had improved, she continued to feel uncomfortable and awkward when she spent time at home.

I'm talking to me ma all the time now and I'm talking to all me brothers which is better but I don't know, it's just weird being around me ma 'cos I don't know what to talk about.

<div align="right">Roisín (18)</div>

For a number, the process of resolving past conflicts with parents was clearly an incremental one. Roisín did not feel she could relate well to her mother, although her family relationships had improved since her Phase I interview. One of the young men reported a somewhat similar dynamic; although he visited his father regularly and felt their relationship had improved, the home-based supports available to him were nonetheless limited. There were others who reported ongoing relationship difficulties with family members. Another young woman reported escalated tension and conflict with her family since the time of baseline interview and had had no contact with her parents during the two months prior to her follow-up interview.

I was talking to me school about what was happening and then the social worker was involved in it and then there was just big fights over it and me ma was denying stuff and, you know, and I just said, 'Nah, fuck, I won't bother talking to anyone'.

<div align="right">Jacinta (18)</div>

A second respondent felt that his relationship with his mother had deteriorated and, at the time of interview, was clearly troubled about recent events.

It [relationship with mother] was great up until the point where she says she didn't want me in the house anymore. That kind of makes you feel rejected … it was getting really bad because I was like a lodger instead of a son in the house which was practically what she wanted … I'm happy go lucky, I will go back if she wants, well I might go back if she wants me to. I'd rather not be in the bog arse of nowhere away from my family and, like it or not, my mother is part of my family.

<div align="right">Neil (22)</div>

Most young people move out of their homes as young adults with the full support of their parents who can be important resources for budgeting, advice and financial support. It cannot be assumed that support networks and opportunities to gain life skills are readily available to those who may have lost contact with their parents, are estranged from their family or have grown up in care. Neither can it be assumed that they have adequate, or any, access to financial or social support from family, friends or other community networks (Cashmore and Paxman, 1996). Although all of the young people had some level of contact with home, only two received a high level of support from their families, benefiting from regular contact with their parents and from the positive endorsements they received for their efforts and achievements. Others had resolved some issues and home-based difficulties and, although not completely at ease with their parent(s), did maintain contact. Two young people reported ongoing or heightened tensions between themselves and a parent and neither could rely on family members for support.

Peer Affiliations and Friendships

The support networks available to young people extended beyond family members and several depicted their peers as crucial sources of identification. For most, friends provided important supports and helped them to avoid loneliness.

Yeah, it's nice to have friends. Yeah definitely because I would be the type of person that would get lonely on their own do you know that sort of way.

<div align="right">Seán (22)</div>

I met loads of new people … Like most of my friends, they live either in town or they live in the flats near me so like I wouldn't be stuck for anybody to speak to, there is always somebody around like.

<div align="right">Jacinta (18)</div>

The majority reported significant changes in their friendship networks since the time of their baseline interview and this shift was most often related to their efforts to distance themselves from their former 'way of life'. For a number, disconnecting from certain peers was important because of their mutual prior involvement in street-based drug 'scenes'. Seán explained.

I couldn't hang around with people using drugs now. It's too much, well I might for 5 minutes and then I'd have to go. I wouldn't, you know what I mean, I wouldn't feel confident around it now to stay around you know … you can't be around people who are using drugs without using them yourself, you have to get away from that situation. It's only now that I'm off drugs that I'd be talking to the few lads in [home neighbourhood] 'cos whenever I was on drugs they wouldn't have anything to do with me.

<div align="right">Seán (22)</div>

Others similarly described a process of leaving old associations behind. Caroline first made contact with the Out of Hours Service at the age of 14 and, during her initial period out of home, spent much of her time with other homeless youth who were also in contact with this service. In the following excerpt she reflected on her changed perspective on her former social networks.

When I first came through the Out of Hours I thought I was so cool, I was out every day drinking and came in when I wanted, I went out when I wanted, nobody was telling me what to do, I ate what I wanted do you know, it was great. I thought I was this big grown-up person, going out into the town, we thought we were mad and we thought everyone was afraid of us, we were never short of money you know that type of way? Then as you get you older you start to realise what the fuck you're doing, like, you know that type of way? Like it's real weird like, I look at them now and I seriously can't imagine that I was ever

part of that group sitting out there [...] We all thought we were too big for our boots, we all thought we were deadly, we all thought we were mad in town, no one messes with the Out of Hours gang. Now I look at the Out of Hours people out there on the boardwalk and I think, the state of them. They just stick out like sore thumbs, they make themselves obvious to the Garda and obvious to everyone by trying to be so hard and all like it's ridiculous. I can't believe I ever wanted to be part of a group like that at all. It's madness, they piss me off they do, throwing their weight around.

<div align="right">Caroline (17)</div>

Lack of identification with a 'culture' of homelessness has been recognised as an important enabler to exiting homelessness (Zlotnick *et al*, 1999). Like others, Caroline had adopted a strategy of distancing from former street associates and claimed not to be interested in these old friendships.

I generally get along with everybody you know. Some people just don't take a shining to me but that rarely happens because I don't really involve meself in new situations and new people. I kind of know who my friends are over the last few years and I kind of have my life exactly where I want it. So I'm not meeting new people or involving meself with any kind of conflict anymore, you know that kind of way.

<div align="right">Caroline (17)</div>

These young people appeared to want to dissociate from former friends or associates for a range of practical and emotional reasons and they demonstrated considerable agency in this regard. This sense of agency was evident in their choices and decisions, which sometimes involved concealing specific information from their peers. Jacinta had a number of peer networks but was reluctant to tell some of her friends about her new living circumstances, fearing that this might jeopardise her new living situation.

I don't really tell them that I have a flat, cos they'd be like, 'Ah let's go up to your flat an all'. I'm only allowed to have two visitors twice a week but they'd still say, 'Ah put my name down', do you know and I just, like they are nice to hang out with, outside, but they'd probably start bringing drink in and all, and that would get me kicked out, so I just don't bother.

<div align="right">Jacinta (18)</div>

However, not all young people were as resolute or confident in their approach to peers. One young woman found it difficult to trust new people.

[Have you made new friends?]
Yeah, I make friends every day.
[And would they sort of be friends that you can trust or?]
No, we would just talk.
[I remember last time you said the only person you trusted at that time was yourself?]
Yeah.
[Is that still the case?]
Yeah 'cos, at least if I don't put my trust in anybody then they won't be able to let me down.

<div align="right">Roisín (18)</div>

Another respondent reported closer, rather than more distant, affiliations with street 'scenes' and had established strong social ties with other homeless youth since moving to a transitional housing project in the city-centre. At the time of her follow-up interview, Maeve's social life revolved around meeting these friends after school: '*Have a few joints, few bottles and take a few E at the weekend or whatever*' (Maeve, 17).

Transition and change were dominant themes in the young people's accounts of their peer and friendship networks and for a considerable number the move towards independent living was accompanied by efforts to distance themselves from former peers. Most appeared to share a belief about the potential negative consequences of 'bad' peer associations and made deliberate efforts to establish and maintain positive and enabling social relationships.

Professional Supports

The level of support young people received from professional sources – social workers, key workers, aftercare workers and other professionals – varied and the experiences of some were far more positive than others. Three referred to their contact with their social workers, with one describing this as a positive experience. However, this young woman acknowledged that not all young people encountered this level of support.

She's great, my social worker's, very good. She's cool, she comes in at least every second week and she's always on the phone. Anything I want answered she does, she's very good. I think she does over the extent of what a lot of my friends' social workers do for them. She takes a lot of time out her own spare time and anything I've ever asked her she's done for me or at least attempted so she's cool.

<div align="right">

Caroline (17)

</div>

Maeve is a young woman who told a very different story:

I got a new social worker. She's a cow, she's not even a social worker, I wouldn't even call her a social worker. I hardly even see the woman. I can't even get in touch or anything … She's meant to like, if you have a problem, you're meant to be able to call a social worker. If I call her office they're like she's not here or tell me to hold on for like 15 minutes and me credit will just go. She's useless she is. They say to leave a message that she'll ring me back but any time I leave a message she never rings me back, she never does.

<div align="right">

Maeve (18)

</div>

Three young people reported different kinds of experiences with their key workers. One respondent found his key worker helpful, while another felt her key worker was inexperienced and not fully aware of her needs. A third felt that it would take time to build a relationship with her new key worker.

My key worker is fuckin' useless to be honest like.

<div align="right">

Seán (22)

</div>

They're all right. They're kind of new to the whole key working and pregnancy, pregnant teenager so they don't know really what to do with me and what to be saying so that's why I find I wish I was in [medium-term hostel where she lived previously] because they were so used to, do you know, they always have pregnant teenagers in and like they know exactly what to do bit by bit.

<div align="right">

Caroline (17)

</div>

It's grand, well I'm not really used to her do you know that way so I don't really speak to her as much.

<div align="right">

Jacinta (18)

</div>

Two young people reported positive experiences of aftercare programmes. Aftercare was very important for one young man, both in terms of accessing new accommodation and having continued support. Like others, he paid regular visits to the hostel where he had previously resided.

I go back mainly because they're my friends and I trust them … I wouldn't have anywhere to sleep if it wasn't for it [hostel]…I learn most of the stuff [referring to cooking, shopping] that you learn from about 12 to 18 in here.

Neil (21)

In general, young people mentioned professional supports less frequently than those they received from other sources and it also appears that they had different experiences and relationships with social workers and aftercare workers. Where these relationships were positive, young people certainly valued and appreciated the advice and assistance they received. Others were critical of interventions in general and of social workers, in particular.

Challenging Times

Earlier discussions have highlighted a number of difficulties experienced by young people at the point of making the transition to a supported or semi-independent living situation. Many also reported challenges associated with day-to-day life within these settings. These ranged from problems with budgeting to their struggles with depressed psychological states. The majority had previously lived in residential settings or hostels targeting under-18s where adults took primary responsibility for organising their daily routines. Although they did have to contribute to household chores, this was usually undertaken under the direction and supervision of staff members. Unsurprisingly perhaps, those who moved to apartment-style transitional living situations often found that they lacked basic household management skills and a number were simply unaccustomed to taking responsibility for and control of everyday chores and duties.

When I first moved in here I hadn't got a clue, I barely knew how to peel a potato for God's sake, me head was wrecked. Now I just feel like I'd be able to do it, you know. It's gave me the confidence to say, 'Yeah I'd be able to live on me own with the baby'.

Caroline (17)

Linked to the problem of not feeling adequately equipped to complete basic domestic tasks were problems with maintaining a healthy diet. Most stated openly that they skipped meals and/or opted for fast food to avoid the task of cooking.

[How do you find the cooking and cleaning and all that stuff?]
I don't know? Whenever I want I just go down to the chipper and buy something, there's a chipper only down the road.

<div align="right">Maeve (17)</div>

Like you would much rather go buy yourself a bag of chips every night of the week. That's what I was doing for a long time and then I just said no, I have to start eating properly.

<div align="right">Caroline (17)</div>

I'm not eating proper foods, I should be eating more. I'm not getting all me meats 'cos they're too dear to buy.

<div align="right">Roisín (18)</div>

I hate cooking … I had visitors there the other night, I had to cook for them, but it was more like, they kind of cooked, cos I didn't know how to do it. Most days in the school now they do lunch, it could be sausages and chips, or something. But if I had a weekend by meself I'd be on the cereals.

<div align="right">Jacinta (18)</div>

Several also reported some measure of financial stress as well as problems with money management and budgeting.

I've learned, I have tried to budget and tried to space my money out but on such little money it is hard, do you know that type of way, and no matter what I say to myself, 'No I'll keep that now, make sure I have that', but then I see a nice top that I want what everybody has and I'll say, 'Fuck it', like do you know and I'll get the top.

<div align="right">Caroline (17)</div>

You see my money is in the bank but every time, when I took money out a few weeks ago, I only say took out about 40 or 50 Euro and it said that like, when I was taking out a bit more, it just said you do not have sufficient funds, so I just (pause) … I don't know?

<div align="right">Jacinta (18)</div>

I would like to socialise but at the moment it's hard because, like I said, with the social welfare and the bills I have to pay it's hard to have any money left over, you know that sort of way. I need to look out for a job and a training course. I can't really afford to go out.

<div align="right">Seán (22)</div>

Problems with financial self-sufficiency are common among homeless and other categories of vulnerable young people (Baron and Hartnagel, 1997; Hagan and McCarthy, 1997). Although the majority reported no current involvement in criminal activity, one young woman stated that she had recently sold heroin simply to make money: '*I sold drugs for a while just to have money in me pocket to buy things for myself*'.

Apart from practical difficulties related to finance, nutrition and maintaining a household, there was evidence to suggest that some young people struggled at times with negative or depressed feelings. The origins of these struggles pre-dated the move to transitional housing and, in some cases, spanned childhood or early adolescence. A large number of this study's respondents had, in fact, experienced some combination of family conflict, abuse, neglect and/or violence as children (Mayock and Vekić 2006; Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007). Feelings of depression linked to boredom and loneliness were sometimes expressed.

Yeah, if you're bored you start thinking of stupid things, if you're bored you start thinking, 'I wish I was doing this, this would be better, he'd be doing that'. I miss my friend, can't get through to him.

<div align="right">Neil (22)</div>

One young woman reported feelings of depression following the move to a semi-independent situation and two had been prescribed anti-depressants in the past year. The vulnerability of young people with a history of homelessness is demonstrated in the account of Roisín who had engaged in self-harm during the past year.

[Is there anything that you worry about at the minute, any worries?]

Just worried that if I haven't got anything to do during the day I'll go back to using (heroin) then. And about charges, the police and getting in prison. I don't want to get locked up.

[Have you ever felt down or depressed?]

No, not really. Once in the hostel I slit me wrists.

[Was there anything that triggered that do you think?]

I was just drinking, I was just really bad.

[Is there anything that helps you make you feel better when you're worried or stressed?]

It can't get any worse, life gets better.

<div align="right">Roisín (18)</div>

There was no evidence to suggest that the move to transitional living *per se* placed young people at higher risk of depression or other mental health problems. Rather, a number continued to deal with long-standing mental health issues. Young people can, however, begin to address these problems with the help of appropriate supports and interventions. Another young woman who had a history of self-harm stated that she had not engaged in this behaviour for six months and attributed this development to her improved circumstances and living situation: *'Things were kind of getting a bit all right for me, like I got my own place, I can be my own boss'* (Jacinta, 18).

Enablers, Instabilities and Risks

The move to transitional housing was facilitated by several developments and events not directly related to housing. We have seen, for example, how improved family relationships provided important connections and supports for a number. Participation in education and training introduced a greater measure of certainty for others and, for a smaller number, drug treatment was a critical facilitator in the move out of homelessness. This section revisits a number of the factors that shaped young people's entry to semi-independent living situations and simultaneously draws attention to sources of instability and risk that can serve to undermine the success of this transition.

As stated earlier, many who moved to a supported living situation did not report a series of moves between different types of accommodation since the time of their baseline interviews. They had thus experienced relative stability of housing during the 12 to 18 month period subsequent to their baseline

interview. This stability appears to have facilitated the move to transitional housing by providing young people with opportunities to address issues and problems that had impacted on their lives in general and on their housing situation, in particular. The importance of such stability is further demonstrated in the accounts of a smaller number who had moved on two or more occasions since the time of their initial interview. One young woman's story is used here for illustrative purposes.

Roisín, age 18

Rosín left home at the age of 14 years following conflict with her parents over her drug use and their disapproval of her relationship with an older man of 25 years: '*I had a boyfriend and I got kicked out over being on the drugs … there was a big gap, he's like 25, you know. Met him three or maybe four years ago. I was pushed out, told to leave, and have been on me own ever since*'.

On leaving home, she stayed with friends initially and later slept rough and lived in squats with her boyfriend. During this time, she became heavily involved in heroin use. Her relationship with this man subsequently ended and she made contact with the Out of Hours Service at the age of 16. At this juncture she was placed in a short-term residential setting (hostel). Roisín also became involved in criminal activity to finance her drug use and accumulated several charges for theft but, at the time of her baseline interview, was about to be admitted to a residential drug treatment programme. When asked about her hopes for the future at this juncture, she replied, '*a normal life*' but worried about the future and '*how it's going to turn out*'.

By the time of follow-up, Roisín was living in a supported flat in the city-centre but had experienced great instability in the intervening period. On leaving residential drug treatment she had no stable place to live and was forced to re-enter the Out of Hours Service. She was placed initially in an emergency short-term hostel and later moved to a semi-independent apartment in the city-centre. Two months later she relapsed, lost this accommodation and again re-entered the Out of Hours service. During the ensuing 4–5 months, she continued to smoke heroin but subsequently enrolled in a methadone maintenance programme. At the time of follow-up, she had returned to a supported living situation (flat) run by a voluntary agency and had been in a relationship for a number of months

with a young man (age 17) who was also homeless. Roisín had accumulated additional charges for theft since the time of her initial interview and continued to steal everyday items and goods: *'I rob nearly every day'*. She worried about her ability to remain drug-free and also about the risk of incarceration: *'Just worried that if I haven't got anything to do during the day that I'll go back to using … and I don't want to get locked up'*. Nonetheless, she did feel that her situation had improved since the time of her baseline interview. She had recently re-established contact with her family and, although her relationship with her mother remained difficult, she had a good relationship with many of her siblings.

Roisín's story demonstrates the negative impact of instability of accommodation and also points to numerous vulnerabilities. It is significant that she did not have stable housing to return to on completing residential drug treatment, a situation which led to her return to the Out of Hours Service, a cycle that has been demonstrated to heighten the risk of young people's involvement in street 'scenes' (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007). Although she was registered on a methadone programme at the time of her follow-up interview, Roisín worried about her ability to remain abstinent. She was not participating in training or education and continued to commit crime to finance everyday needs.

Maeve's story, documented below, similarly demonstrates the kinds of instabilities that young people may face on exiting homelessness.

Maeve, age 17

Maeve's first experience of homelessness occurred during childhood when she and her family stayed in a hostel. From the age of seven, she spent several years moving between foster and residential care placements and made first contact with the Out of Hours Service at the age of 16 years. At the time of her baseline interview she had been living in medium-term residential accommodation (hostel) for under-18s for just under 2 months. She was attending school and remained in this setting for approximately one year.

By Phase II of the study, Maeve had recently moved to supported lodgings. She had experienced some difficulty with this move and felt her living situation had not improved since the time of her previous interview: *'No things haven't improved 'cos I liked the hostel, it was grand. The gaff was nice, the staff were nice people and this is different.*

> Since her move from the hostel, Maeve had started to socialise regularly with other homeless youth and spent most of her free time (after school) 'hanging around' town. This had brought her into contact with the police: '*Drunken disorderly, I've been arrested for that. Or else getting caught with hash or getting caught smoking hash or something, you know*. She also reported high exposure to violent incidents, mainly on the street and had been the victim of a vicious attack.
>
> [Is that very important, to stick up for yourself?]
>
> *Yeah, it's very important. Like if you come through the Out of Hours you have to stick up for yourself or everybody's going to start on you, everybody would be killing you or fighting with you and taking everything off you, taking your phone off you and all, stealing off you too much. It's not nice.*
>
> She was a daily cannabis smoker and had also experimented with a range of other drugs. Her response to a question about future drug use suggests that she may be vulnerable to heroin initiation.
>
> [Have you ever been tempted to take gear?]
>
> *Gear? A few times. If I can't get E and like, if I'm dying for a few E and there's a bag of gear there. I wouldn't do it now. I wouldn't. I haven't done it yet and I'm not going to you know. I hope I wouldn't do it.*

The ability of vulnerable young people to manage and cope with the responsibility of transitional living is clearly not a given. In addition to the experience of homelessness, both Roisín and Maeve have had contact with law enforcement agencies, have histories of drug use and appear to lack positive and reliable role models. Although the transition to supported housing signifies a positive move towards independent living, equally, their accounts reveal vulnerabilities that could serve to compromise their ability to negotiate this housing transition successfully.

The Meaning of Independence

In general, young people's views on their new living settings pointed to positive change in how they perceived their situations. A number equated the move from hostel accommodation as a positive move towards independence.

Things have changed definitely like. You can't put a price on your own independence, living on your own. I know it's not totally 100% independent with the staff but like I mean in a few months time, 5 or 6 months time hopefully I'll be in approved rented accommodation and things will go well there.

<div align="right">Seán (22)</div>

Seán went on to depict his current living situation as a 'stop-gap' between hostel life and independent living, seeing it as a vast improvement on past experiences and he no longer self-identified as homeless.

[Would you say that you're a person living out of home or are you independent? How would you describe your situation?]
Sort of in between, this is … this is for 18 months, 14 months through it all, I'll be 15 months here in a week's time and I only have 3 months left and then I'll be moving on somewhere else. I'll probably think of here as a stop-gap between going from the hostels and total homelessness to somewhere much more independent.
[So there was a period there where you would have considered yourself as homeless?]
Yeah I was, I was on the streets. I was homeless, you know what I mean, how more homeless can you get, nowhere to go, no home. It doesn't get any more homeless than that does it?

<div align="right">Seán (22)</div>

This shift in perception was also apparent in other accounts. Caroline described a quite dramatic change in her perception of her situation from previously 'homeless' to currently having a home.

I think when you go through the Out of Hours you can class yourself as homeless 'cos you're never guaranteed a bed you know that type of way. But now I have a home, this is my home. It mightn't be my name over the door and I mightn't be paying the mortgage or a lot of money for it but it's my personal space and everything in it is mine. It's my home, you know.

<div align="right">Caroline (17)</div>

Others simply stated that they were not homeless or framed their situations with reference to their new living situation.

Well I see myself as a young person living out of home but I am not homeless because I'm not homeless. See these people here [in the house] I count them as my family because they were to me as my family and what my step-mum would do or my dad would do they would do even more, you know what I mean.

Taofeek (17)

I'm not homeless. I have me bed to sleep in.

Jacinta (18)

I'd say I was living in my own flat.

Maeve (17)

While most depicted their transitional or supported housing settings in positive terms, Neil was not happy with his living situation and did not equate it with having a home. He also expressed concerns and anxieties about his future housing prospects.

I don't have words to describe it [supported housing setting]. It's not a home, it's not a house, it's not temporary lodgings which isn't nice but I suppose, I don't know what to describe it, temporary lodgings would be the only equivalent place because I can't make it into a home because I have to leave it in like what, 2 months so I can't make a home out of it … I'm completely dazed and confused about where I'm going to live. Where the fuck am I going to sleep next year … That's my exact worry in exact words.

Neil (22)

Nonetheless, Neil did not equate his situation with 'homelessness': 'I've always had a roof over my head, I've always had somewhere to go'. In general, young people did not see themselves staying long-term in their current placement but, unlike Neil, most did not express anxiety about their future housing options. Many aspired to moving to private rented accommodation, although four stated that they did not want to make this move until they had completed their schooling.

[Do you see yourself moving on anywhere?]

I kind of do when I go out, I want to kind of get me own place…yeah and like to get a few friends to share a flat, cos me friend she said we might do that, we're just saving money but I want to leave school before I do that.

<div align="right">Jacinta (18)</div>

Many of these young people were relatively optimistic about their future prospects of moving to independent living situations (usually the private rented sector) and hoped to be in a position to finance such a move through participation in the labour market. Despite the challenges they confronted following entry to semi-independent living situations, the move to transitional housing appeared to confer a sense of achievement, purpose and self-worth.

Moving to Care Settings

Three of the young people (all female and 17 years of age) were living in a care setting at the time of follow up. At Phase I, all lived in an emergency/short-term residential setting (hostel) which they accessed through the Out of Hours Service (OHS). None had a prior lengthy care history, although two had spent a short time in foster care at age 14 prior to their first contact with the OHS. All three identified household instability and family conflict as the primary reason for their home-leaving.

At the time of follow-up, two lived in a residential care setting and one in foster care. While one had experienced relatively little change in her living situation since the time of her Phase I interview, the remaining two had experienced very considerable accommodation instability during this period. It is important to examine the sources of this instability and the circumstances surrounding their movement between living situations.

Lisa left home aged 14 following a period of serious home-based difficulties, including frequent household moves and a tense relationship with her parents. On leaving home, she was initially placed in foster care but subsequently accessed the OHS and, at the time of her baseline interview, she had secured an emergency residential placement (hostel) where she remained for a nine-month period. However, subsequent to moving from this placement she lived in the following situations over a period of several months: home, the street, the homes of members of her extended family, and with friends in the UK. She had also returned intermittently to short-term residential placements or hostels targeting under-18s which she accessed through the OHS. Lisa expressed frustration about decisions regarding her situation which she felt

were made on her behalf and without adequate consultation. She described how she felt when she moved from the residential setting for under-18s where she had lived for nine months on becoming homeless.

It was at that stage, I was after getting even closer to the staff so I didn't want to go like … but I had to go because if I didn't go I would have ended up in another hostel.

<div align="right">Lisa (17)</div>

On leaving this hostel, she was initially placed in a residential setting but this arrangement broke down after just three days and she returned to the family home. Following physical abuse by her father, she left and again made contact with the OHS. Although her father was willing to have her back home at this time, she refused to return. At this juncture, she was placed in another emergency setting and, once again, was reluctant to leave at the point when a longer-term placement was arranged.

I was real agitated, I was like, 'I am not moving in and staying with a load of strangers two days before Christmas like'. And I was like, 'I don't want to go, I don't want to go, I don't want to go'. So I started to drink again so it would jeopardise me placement here (current placement), so I wouldn't be able to go here but like that didn't work … I was, do you know, we were getting the Christmas tree ready in [the hostel] so it was real upsetting because I was helping them do all that and I wasn't going to be there.

<div align="right">Lisa (17)</div>

Kemi had also experienced considerable instability prior to moving into her current foster care placement. At the time of her baseline interview, she had recently moved from an emergency residential placement where she was deeply unhappy. She was subsequently placed in an alternative short-term residential unit but this arrangement also failed due to bullying.

What happened was the boys there were asking me for my pocket money, for me to buy, what's it called, smoke for them, for their stuff.

<div align="right">Kemi (17)</div>

Following this, she entered the foster care system and lived with two consecutive families, neither of which proved successful. While awaiting a placement with her current foster family, she stayed with friends for a period of two weeks in order to avoid re-entry to the Out of Hours Service.

After becoming homeless, both of these young women commuted in and out of the system of intervention (Out of Hours Service) designed to meet the needs of children *in crisis*. Their stories highlight the challenges of finding suitable placements for young people in crisis and also demonstrate the negative impact of this continued instability. Their exit from homelessness (through entry to foster or long-term residential care) followed a period of very considerable upheaval related to changes in their living situations and both talked about the stress and anxiety they experienced during this time. Kemi felt at one point that she had nowhere to go.

[What about in the last year, were you ever sort of sad?]
Yeah
[Yeah? Can you remember a particular time?]
When I left [second foster care placement] …Yeah, because they hadn't got a new place.

<div align="right">Kemi (17)</div>

Lisa's movement between placements continued to affect her ability to trust and communicate with staff in the residential setting where she lived.

[So you still haven't built a real strong relationship with any staff member?]
No. I have moved too many times and like I have left so many people that it is real hurtful like they have really like helped me out like it's just I find … here, it's just like a wall do you know what I mean, they have tried to get over it but I just can't.

<div align="right">Lisa (17)</div>

The instability of their living situations also affected other areas of these young people's lives. For example, Lisa had been unable to maintain a commitment to school throughout the lengthy period of movement between living places. Furthermore, on leaving one of her placements, she stopped attending the training course where she was enrolled and spent her days socialising with a group she described as the 'wrong crowd'.

It was mad but because I was so young I liked it, do you know what I mean, like we went out every night and got drunk and started doing coke and smashing windows and fighting with people and getting arrested. But it was just what we were used to because there was absolutely nothing to do during the day and that is how we amused ourselves.

<div align="right">Lisa (17)</div>

The drug and alcohol-related behaviour described above by Lisa is significant since she consumed alcohol intermittently at the time of her Phase I interview and had only tried a drug on one occasion. Although she had since decreased her drug use, returned to school and claimed to no longer associate with this peer group, she nonetheless continued to identify to some extent with homeless street 'scenes'.

Yeah like still I would still miss the city centre … I know it is mad to hear but I'm glad I experienced every bit of it … And I have not got one bad thing to say about any of it. The only thing I didn't like was the sleeping rough but it was an experience and that is what made me think about going back to school because like, if I didn't, that would be me life so every bit of it.

<div align="right">Lisa (17)</div>

At the time of follow-up, both considered their current living arrangements to be more stable than their previous placements. Kemi, for example, spoke positively about her new foster carer and, although Lisa was having difficulties communicating with staff in her current placement, she did feel that she was making progress: 'I like it, I am glad I settled down eventually like'. All three young women were attending school and aspired to furthering their education and having a career. One had attended school continuously since her baseline interview and was about to start college.

These young people made little reference to their families when they talked about their experiences and clearly had far less contact with or support from family members than their counterparts who moved home. Lisa was not in contact with her family at Phase I and reported strong resentments towards her parents at that time. Although she reported a better relationship with her mother by Phase II, this development did not play a role in her exit from homelessness. Likewise, Lyndsey, whose home-leaving was associated with physical abuse by her mother, had re-established contact with her father and reported an improved relationship with him. Nonetheless, she did not want to live with her father: 'It would feel strange to have a man looking after you'.

A return to the family home was not a feasible option for those who moved to care settings. Furthermore, these young people had no desire to return home, due primarily to the presence and persistence of problems that had driven them out in the first place (Fitzpatrick, 2000). This was explicitly the case for Lisa who, on an attempted return home, suffered continued physical abuse by her father. Significant also is the fact that these young people had limited or no support from their families in exiting homelessness, leaving them dependent on social workers, residential care staff and their key workers for day-to-day help and support.

Conclusion

It has been argued that, compared to previous generations, *all* young people seeking independent housing have an increased risk of finding the costs unsustainable, living in poor conditions and experiencing frequent mobility (Rugg and Burrows, 1999). Those young people who find themselves in more extreme circumstances, including those who experience homelessness (Please and Quilgars, 1999) or have a history of State care (Biehal and Wade, 1999) are even more susceptible to instability of housing due to their vulnerability and their more restricted economic and social resources. This chapter's analysis confirms that young people with histories of homelessness are likely to face numerous challenges when it comes to seeking and maintaining housing. The data strongly suggest, for example, that many who had moved from hostels or other short- or medium-term accommodation types to supported living situations struggled, to a greater or lesser extent, to adjust to this housing transition. The evidence presented also points to considerable variation in the extent to which these young people were able to plan for and control their entry to these dependent living situations, their personal readiness for the transition and their ability to manage their new living situations. Nonetheless, the majority perceived their current circumstances as a significant positive move towards independent living.

In keeping with the findings of other research, participants revealed that moving away from life on the streets and/or cutting connections with their street or drug-using friends were important enablers to exiting homelessness (Karabanow, 2008; MacKnee and Mervyn, 2002). A considerable number who moved to transitional housing also reported improved relationships with parents and other family members and some had the benefit of family and broader social support networks. The majority had continued or resumed participation in education or training and it is certainly the case that many held

conventional goals such as moving towards independent living and getting a job. These findings largely affirm that ties to family and mainstream institutions are important elements in facilitating the transition from homelessness to a more stable lifestyle (Karabanow, 2008; MacKnee and Mervyn, 2002; Rashid, 2004).

Transitional housing programmes can provide an effective way to reduce failure rates for those who are making the transition from homelessness to stability (National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2004). However, it is widely recognised that re-housing policies and practices alone do not solve the underlying problems linked to homelessness (such as the lack of affordable permanent accommodation, unemployment, unhappy personal relationships, the lack of a family or friends, or simply the length of time that an individual has been without a permanent home). It follows that young people with histories of homelessness who attempt to move towards independent living situations need a range of supports to enable them to make this transition successfully.

Key Findings:
Dependent Exits from Homelessness

Dependent Exits from Homelessness
- 10 young people reported a dependent exit from homelessness, having either moved to transitional/supported housing (n=7) or to a residential care setting (n=3).

Transitional Living
- Young people generally viewed their transition to supported housing as a positive move towards independence.
- The move to transitional housing was facilitated by the following: support from family members, support from professionals (after care workers, key workers and social workers), participation in education or training.
- For those who reported drug problems, seeking treatment was a critical enabler in the transition to supported housing.
- Most felt that it was important to distance themselves from former peer networks and attempted to establish and maintain positive and enabling social relationships.
- Young people experienced financial difficulties as well as problems with everyday household chores and responsibilities (budgeting, cooking and eating healthily).
- A number reported feelings of loneliness and depression linked, in many cases, to a sense of loss they experienced on moving from the emergency residential setting where they had lived previously for some time.

State Care
- All who had moved to a care setting by Phase II were female and 17 years of age.
- All identified household instability and family conflict as the primary reason for their home-leaving.

- They had limited contact with their families and a return to the family home was not a feasible option. In this sense, their family situations and relationships did not facilitate an independent exit from homelessness.
- Two of the young people had experienced considerable accommodation instability since their Phase I interview and had commuted in and out of the Out of the Hours Service. Their stories highlight the challenges of finding suitable care placements for young people in crisis.
- This accommodation instability also affected other areas of their lives such as education and training. One young woman began to use alcohol/drugs more frequently.
- The move to a care setting was followed by a period of very considerable upheaval and young people experienced high levels of stress and anxiety during this time.
- Nonetheless, at the time of follow up, these young people felt that their living arrangements were more stable than previously despite the initial difficulties they experienced with the transition to a care setting.
- All were attending school and aspired to further education and employment.

" I've been going round in circles for a long time probably since back then (time of initial interview) but it's just hard. Like I was doing well for a while, I'd be doing well for a few weeks but then something would happen. I get setbacks, you know. Having nowhere to stay is the main thing. Staying here, I'm trying to get clean urine but as you know it's, this hostel is for people who's on drugs and I'm sharing a room with a fella and like. I'm trying to stay away from everything and he's doing it in me face. It's just there in me face. It's just so, it's just so hard.

Eoin (22)

Chapter 6
Continued Homelessness

This chapter examines the experiences of those young people who remained homeless (Pathway 3) at the point of conducting Phase II interviews. The analysis pays particular attention to their movement between living situations and also examines their peer networks, drug use, criminal activity, and the nature of their contact with services and interventions over the course of the study.

Continued Homelessness: An Overview

By Phase II of the study, thirteen of the young people remained homeless, that is, they continued to access emergency hostel accommodation, sleep rough or live in other temporary or unstable living situations. Eleven males and two females, their ages ranged from 17 to 23 years at the time of their Phase II interview: two were 17, one 18, six 19, one 21, one 22 and two 23. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 provide a breakdown of their living situations at Phases I and II, respectively, by gender.

Table 6.1 Living Situations at Phase I: Pathway 3 Respondents

Accommodation Type	Young Men	Young Women	All
Emergency/Short-term Residential Care			
Setting or 'Hostel'	6	0	6
Adult Hostels/B&Bs	1	1	2
Street (squats, rough sleeping)	1	0	1
Prison	3	0	3
Family (parents, siblings, extended)	0	1	1
Total	**11**	**2**	**13**

At Phase I, six of the young men in this pathway were living in emergency or short-term accommodation (hostels) for the under-18s, three were incarcerated, one was accessing adult hostels or B&B accommodation and one was living on the streets. Of the two young women, one was alternating between adult hostels and B&Bs and one was living at home.[23]

Table 6.2 Living Situations at Phase II: Pathway 3 Respondents

Accommodation Type	Young Men	Young Women	All
Adult Hostels/B&Bs	3	1	4
Street (squats, rough sleeping)	1	1	2
Prison	5	0	5
Residential Drug Treatment	1	0	1
Supported Living (but awaiting sentencing)	1	0	1
Total	**11**	**2**	**13**

At the time of follow-up, two of the young people (one male and one female) were sleeping rough, four (three male and one female) were staying in adult hostels or B&B accommodation, five (all male) were in prison and another male was enrolled in a residential drug treatment programme. The final young man had recently moved to supported accommodation but had been alternating between adult hostels and squats during the period immediately prior to his follow-up interview. He described instabilities that posed a serious

---

[23] At the time of conducting Phase I interviews, this young woman had recently moved home following a period of homelessness.

risk to his supported housing placement and was awaiting sentencing for crimes of which he had been convicted.

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 do not convey the extent of respondents' movement between living situations, an important dimension of the homeless experience. Table 6.3 lists the range of accommodation types they had accessed since they first left home.

Table 6.3 Accommodation History: Pathway 3 Respondents

Accommodation Type	Young Men	Young Women	All
Emergency/Short-term Residential Care Setting or 'Hostel'	10	1	11
Adult Hostels/B&Bs	7	2	9
Street (squats, rough sleeping)	8	2	10
Prison	10	1	11
Transitional/Supported Housing	4	1	5
Family (with parent(s))*	4	2	6
Family (siblings, extended)	3	2	5
Friends	8	0	8
Private Rented	0	1	1

* Represents attempts to move *back* to the family since first leaving home.

The data above point to a number of identifiable patterns that are significant in understanding the experiences of young people who fail to exit homelessness.

Repeated Cycle of Accessing Emergency Accommodation

The vast majority reported *rapid* transitions between *multiple* living situations. Eleven (ten males and one female) had stayed in an emergency/short-term residential care setting (hostel) targeting under-18s since leaving home and ten had accessed this accommodation through the Out of Hours Service (OHS). Following first contact with the OHS, most embarked on a path of alternating between temporary or emergency living situations and several reported repeat admissions to hostels targeting under-18s. For a large number, this pattern had persisted for a prolonged period (sometimes several years), although the chronology of events and living situations were different for individual young people. Although respondents in other pathways had also experienced significant housing disruption, as a group, Pathway 3 participants reported more chaotic housing careers.

Rooflessness

The majority had experience of rough sleeping and a considerable number reported prolonged periods of rooflessness. Young people in this pathway were more likely than those who had exited homelessness to have slept on the street or in squats and to have stayed in adult hostels and/or B&Bs. Ten (8 males and 2 females) had slept rough since first leaving home and nine (7 males and 2 females) had stayed in adult hostels and/or B&Bs at some time. The roofless periods they experienced were interspersed with stays in adult hostels, periods of incarceration, and time spent in drug rehabilitation centres.

Incarceration

Incarceration occupies a significant place in the housing careers of young people in this pathway. Eleven (10 males and 1 female) had spent time in prison since they first left home.

Temporary Homeless Exits

Six of the young people (4 males and 2 females) reported failed attempts to return home and five (3 males and 2 females) had sought temporary accommodation with siblings or members of their extended family at some time. In addition, five (4 males and 1 female) had entered into a transitional living situation which they subsequently lost. Eight young men had stayed temporarily with friends and one young woman had briefly entered the private rented sector since leaving home. These patterns of movement between *more* and *less* stable accommodation suggest that a considerable number had tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to exit homelessness.

The patterns identified above highlight the complexity of the homeless pathways of those who fail to exit. Their homeless histories differ from young people in Pathways 1 and 2 (see Chapters 4 and 5 for homeless exits) in terms of the *number* of accommodation types they accessed and in the *frequency* of their movement between living places. Their continued reliance on some of the most unstable accommodation types is noteworthy, as is their entry at a relatively young age into a cycle of movement between temporary living situations. However, a considerable number also reported temporary exits from homelessness, that is, they had intermittently entered into more stable living situations such as the family home, the home of a sibling or the private rented sector. These placements proved unsustainable for a range of reasons that will be explored in full later in the chapter.

There are many dimensions to the homeless experiences of young people in this pathway. In order to understand their homeless 'careers', it is useful to revisit the early days of their homeless experiences.

'Going Through': The Cycle of Hostel Use

Young people's first contact with the Out of Hours Service (OHS) has been identified as a watershed for many in this study. As a point of entry to the official network of homeless youth, it can mark the onset of a process of dislocation from their home neighbourhoods and a corresponding exposure to settings and environments that pose a risk to their safety and well-being (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007; Mayock and Vekić, 2006). Of the 13 young people in Pathway 3, 10 (nine males and one female) accessed accommodation through the OHS, typically between the ages of 13 and 17 years. Although a small number had only one-off contact with this service, the majority embarked on a cycle of movement between city-centre hostels targeting young people under the age of 18. Paul explained how he continued to access OHS accommodation from the age of 13 years when he first experienced homelessness:

(Hostel 1) was the first hostel I was in. I was in there again (later) you know but in between the hostels, I was in the Out of Hours. 'Cos like you get fucked out and then you have to go through the Out of Hours again. So (Hostel 1) for five months and then back through the Out of Hours for a few months and then I got back into (Hostel 1) again. And I was only in there for two months that time and back through the Out of Hours again. Then after that to (Hostel 2). I was in there three times, I lived there three times and then, em, going through (Hostel 3) as well. That's it, that's about it. And then I turned 18 and started using (adult hostel).

<div align="right">Paul (21)</div>

The sequence of repeated entries to OHS hostels (short-term residential settings) described by Paul was a commonly reported experience. Most often referred to as 'going through', the phrase is of interest because it captures the path that a large number embarked on subsequent to leaving home. There are, in fact, many dimensions to the experience of 'going through'. Following first contact with the OHS, initial days and weeks were stressful and most found it difficult to adjust to their new living situations. Under considerable pressure and traumatised, in many cases, following a particularly difficult period at home, young people faced the task of integrating. This necessitated socialising

with others who were in a similar situation to themselves and most relied on adaptive responses to their new environments. This meant that 'fitting in' was tantamount to settling in. Luke described the activities that quickly became routine following his introduction to hostel life:

Like the people that are going through, I'd hang out with them, go drinkin' and socialising.

<div align="right">Luke (19)</div>

For those who embarked on a cycle of 'going through', hanging around was the norm, and drinking and drug use a staple of daily life. Although many had experimented with drugs prior to accessing the OHS, constant contact with peers and settings where drugs were in use invariably resulted in heavier drug and alcohol consumption. Brendan was introduced to heroin through others who were accessing the OHS:

I was after getting a phone, I was only into town and I asked them to bring me somewhere to sell it you know, so I sold it and I gave them a few quid for helping me.. So they said they were going off to get the gear and I just said, 'Fuck it I'll come with you'. And I just went off and done it with them.
[Did they show you how to do it?]
They done it for me like, they put it on the foil and all and I've been doing it since that time you know, since then.
[And these two lads, are you still in contact with them?]
I see one of them regular enough yeah. The two of them actually, the other one was in here a while ago.
[And would they be in the Out of Hours?]
The two of them would be, yeah.

<div align="right">Brendan (18)</div>

In many cases, hostels had to be vacated in the morning and young people were not re-admitted until late evening. Without the structure of attending school or a training programme, this situation forced them to spend time in very public settings where their risk of involvement in criminal and other 'risky' activity was high. Several linked their criminal activity and clashes with the police to the extent of their exposure to street life:

In the hostels, see Out of Hours, when you're going through the Out of Hours you're out at ten o'clock in the morning and you're not back in till around 8, 9 or 10 at night. So during the day like you just go into a shop and just rob the shop you know, rob the shop and then just, that'd be your food.

<div align="right">

Paul (21)

</div>

It's, it's just the whole idea of being on the streets like, I was going through it and was fucking robbin' everyone. Like I was never strung out on gear or anything like that, but I just robbed people, you know ... so you just end up robbin' and getting yourself a charge sheet, locked up.

<div align="right">

Ronan (19)

</div>

That's when I was on the streets, that's how I started (robbing).

<div align="right">

James (19)

</div>

Some felt strongly that, if they had not had to come into the city-centre to access the OHS, their lives would in all likelihood have taken a different course:

In the middle of town everything is all around you, you're in the middle of everything like ... you know, fights, drugs, everywhere like.

<div align="right">

Ronan (19)

</div>

If I didn't come into town I wouldn't be here (prison), I know I wouldn't. I don't know like. Out there (home neighbourhood) like, I'd probably could have like a robbed car charge know instead like but I wouldn't, I wouldn't be having, you know the serious bad assault an all, I wouldn't say so in any way, just in town, it's much different, it's totally different than the suburbs and then you come into the city like, it's much different.

<div align="right">

Paul (21)

</div>

It has been argued that in order to survive on the streets individuals must assimilate a street culture – the information, resources, values and associations to enable them to negotiate everyday life. Absorption into street 'scenes' can support and give meaning to life on the streets but this acculturation also makes it difficult to re-enter mainstream society (Wallace, 1965). Put differently, people who become enmeshed in daily street routines and activities with other homeless people often have a hard time exiting from the streets (Snow and Anderson, 1993).

The Process of Disengagement

Young people's immersion in street 'scenes' was accompanied by a corresponding process of disengagement, culminating in their weak connections with mainstream society. Most had only sporadic contact with family members, their participation in the labour market was extremely limited and their social networks were tenuous at best. All in this pathway left mainstream education at an early age. Early school leaving was linked to both school and home-based difficulties but also to 'problem' behaviour, including drug use, and to first and early homeless experiences. Paul explained his early school leaving during his Phase I interview in terms of the constraints associated with his drug use and premature home-leaving:

Yeah, I was going to school like. I was like any, like most kids you know, a bit wild, goin' on the hop an' all but yeah, once I started on the gear I stopped going to school, you know. And I got kicked out of me house so I couldn't really go. Well I could have but it would have been a struggle, you know, trying to go to school an' all so I couldn't go.

<div align="right">Paul (21)</div>

Over the course of the study, the majority had attempted to return to education or training but their efforts to do so were most often short-lived and, at the time of follow-up, only four – three of whom were in prison – were engaged in some form of education or training. These young people rarely depicted their return to education as an opportunity to enhance their future prospects:

I'm in here (prison) so I might as well do something.

<div align="right">Gerrard (17)</div>

Yeah, I go to classes but I don't know. Fuck education, that's not going to do fuck all for me now. What's the point in having a good education with a criminal record, know what I mean?

<div align="right">Finn (17)</div>

Unsurprisingly, given their low level of education and skills training, participation in the labour market was rare, with only three reporting a prior history of employment. In addition, most found it difficult to maintain the regime of daily attendance at their work places, and turning up late or not at all made job loss inevitable. Wayne explained his attempts to return to work during a period when he had temporarily exited homelessness:

Then when I got clean like I got another job as a forklift driver. I was dabbling (in drugs), do you know what I mean, still going to work. And it just got out of hand, completely out of hand so I just said, 'Look I'm leaving', do you know what I mean. He (employer) was knocking on me Ma's door every morning looking for me an' all. And I was saying, 'I'll follow you in' and I'd never turn up. So I gave it up.

<div align="right">Wayne (23)</div>

The instability of daily life and the absence of secure accommodation made job-seeking challenging and, in general, the notion of labour market participation was perceived as out of reach. This is perhaps unsurprising given that daily life had become an exercise in survival, with drug use and related activities dominating a routine of 'getting by'. More broadly, their stake in society had been eroded over time, leading them to doubt their ability to re-engage with conventional activities:

It's hard, do you know what I mean, like you see people and they say, 'Ah why don't you get yourself a job', and this and that. But how can you get a job when you're homeless, you know what I mean, you've no address to work off. I have tried it, do you know what I mean?

<div align="right">Wayne (23)</div>

The relationship between disengagement and homelessness was self-perpetuating for many in this pathway. Indeed, it is claimed a homeless person who has less contact with family and friends and fewer contacts with needed services is more likely to remain homeless (Rog and Holupka, 1999; Sosin, 1992). There are also claims that the homeless typically have few strong friendships (Rossi, 1989), although others contend that homeless youth form 'street families' where they gain affirmation from other homeless youth (Hagan and McCarthy, 1997; Smith, 2008). When young people in this pathway talked about their peer affiliations and friendships, many questioned the quality of these relationships. Indeed, several pointed out that their 'mates' were almost always embedded in street activities (such as drinking and drug use) and rarely provided them with a sense of certainty or security. Fergal's remarks about 'loyalty' are instructive in this regard:

[Are you loyal to each other?]
Yeah, you could say loyal, like if something happened one of us we'll all just get involved in all that. Loyal, I wouldn't say loyal now, just mates, you know that way.

<div align="right">Fergal (19)</div>

Christian similarly questioned the quality of the friendships he had fostered with others in a situation similar to his:

[Were you able to make friends through the Out of Hours Service?]
No it's not easy to make friends. They all pretend to be your friend, you know, fellas at this age, they all pretend to be your friend. Even as you're growing up, it's (pause) … I don't know? It's just very different, you know, to normal people, you know. Everyone knows everything about you and all, you know. Well they think they do.
[Is this the young people or the staff?]
The young people, most of the young people, yeah.

<div align="right">Christian (19)</div>

Young people appeared, on the one hand, to embrace the relationships available to them on the street but, on the other, to reject the notion that these friendships were reliable or 'real'. There are of course strong social forces on the street and young people may feel safer and more confident as part of a group. However, beyond this layer of companionship, few in this pathway conveyed a belief that their street peers could be trusted. This paradoxical relationship is expressed succinctly by Snow and Anderson (1993:177):

> Peer relationships among street people are infused with a paradoxical combination of isolation and sociability. Street life is characterized on one level by easy conviviality and the quick development of friendships … But … social relations on the streets also tend to be characterised by superficiality and instability.

Street relationships are plagued by instability due, in part, to the degree of transience among the homeless (Snow and Anderson, 1993). The stories told by young people in this pathway suggest that the social relationships available to them were inherently unstable, even if they did help them to survive street life. Most had become embroiled in street 'scenes' which provided company but

also endowed a sense of isolation and loss. Added to this, relatively few received or accepted support from family members and, over time, most had become estranged from their homes. A number indicated that they perceived themselves as a burden to their parents and siblings, while others did not feel 'comfortable' in the presence of family members. Emma explained how she felt about moving home:

Because I'm on drugs I feel a little bit awkward, I feel like when I walk out of the room maybe they're talking about me or, you know, saying like she doesn't look great or you know … Like if we (referring to her boyfriend) finished tomorrow, I probably still wouldn't go back to me family 'cos like I just don't feel comfortable.

<div align="right">

Emma (19)

</div>

Both of the young women in this pathway were involved in relationships with men who were also homeless. Like Emma, Siobhán depended on the support of her boyfriend and, following a number of failed attempts to move home, had ruled this out as a potential route out of homelessness:

It's just me and my boyfriend all the time … there's really no friends like, it's just, I stay with him all the time … He does a lot for me you know. I'd be stuck like, I'd be lost without him. Yeah he is a great support. I'm out of home now seven year like so … And I just rather get me own place instead of keep on going home to me ma's and all that.

<div align="right">

Siobhán (23)

</div>

Wayne had been using adult hostels since the time of his Phase I interview and remained heavily immersed in heroin use at follow-up. Over time, he had adopted an isolationist approach and avoided contact, where possible, with others in a similar situation to his.

I just stick to meself now, do you know what I mean, there's no point, you're only dragging them down, they're only dragging you down … in this town you can't trust no one as far as you could throw them, do you know what I mean like.

<div align="right">

Wayne (23)

</div>

Compared to those who had exited homelessness, young people in this pathway had weaker family ties, fewer connections to the mainstream and they relied to a far greater extent on others who were in a similar situation to theirs for help and support. There is also evidence that their connections had weakened as their homeless 'careers' progressed and that they were more, rather than less, immersed in a homeless lifestyle by Phase II of the study.

The Contours of Chronic Housing Instability

As documented, at a relatively young age, the young people in this pathway had accessed multiple temporary living situations. Their stories also strongly suggest that they confronted a range of barriers to exiting homelessness. This section addresses three issues central to understanding their prolonged or chronic housing instability: substance misuse and drug dependence, incarceration, and temporary exits from homelessness.

Substance Misuse and Drug Dependence

Although the abuse of alcohol and drugs has been well documented among the homeless, there is continued discussion and disagreement about the nature of the relationship between substance abuse and homelessness. The question of whether substance misuse is a cause or consequence of homelessness is at the centre of this debate. This study's analysis of young people's paths or routes into homelessness indicated that while drug or alcohol abuse contributed to the premature home-leaving of a minority, practically all reported an escalation in their substance use subsequent to leaving home. This development was strongly related to their exposure to city-centre street 'scenes' (see Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007 for a detailed discussion).

All who remained homeless had a history of drug misuse and two (one male and one female) also reported heavy or problematic alcohol use. First drug use experiences typically occurred between the ages of 10 and 16, indicating that a number had initiated prior to leaving home. Table 6.4 presents summary data on the drug consumption practices of Pathway 3 respondents at Phases I and II of the study, respectively.

Table 6.4 Young People's Drug Use at Phases I and II: Pathway 3 Respondents

| | Phase I | | Phase II | |
	Male (n=11)	Female (n=2)	Male (n=11)	Female (n=2)
Any Drug Use	11	2	11	2
Heroin Use	7	2	8	2
Injecting Drug Use	5	2	6	2

For this sub-group of participants, the table above demonstrates high levels of heroin and injecting drug use over the course of the study. At Phase I, seven of the eleven young men and both of the young women were heroin users. At the time of follow-up, a further two (both young men) had initiated heroin use and one had ceased use. In total, therefore, nine of the young men reported heroin use at some point in their drug 'careers'. Both of the young women continued to use heroin at Phase II, although they had accessed treatment and, at different times, succeeded in remaining abstinent for periods of weeks or months.

Assessing whether young people's drug use had escalated or declined over the course of the study was not straightforward, demonstrating the complexity of the drug 'careers' of homeless youth. For example, it was sometimes the case that a young person had sought treatment and quit but subsequently suffered a relapse and resumed use at an increased level. Others reported escalated drug use during the months subsequent to their Phase I interview but were enrolled in a treatment programme at the time of follow-up. Indeed, drug use levels appeared to rise and fall in concert with other life events or life-changing circumstances. Nonetheless, it was possible to identify seven (all young men) who reported a clear pattern of increased consumption since the time of their baseline interview, including two young men who had initiated heroin use between Phases I and II of the study. Both had transitioned to injecting drug use relatively quickly. Of note is that one had expressed strong anti-heroin sentiments at the time of his baseline interview.

I always slag people for being on drugs, the likes of heroin and all. I just hate it you know what I mean. I hate them around me and things like that … I wouldn't do gear, people have to have standards.

Christian (17)

Christian explained his heroin initiation at the time of follow-up with reference to his move from emergency under-18s accommodation to adult homeless services.

It's because I got onto a different scene. Like I moved into town to that place (adult hostel) and you start fuckin' seeing all the tablet heads all the junkies all over the place … I just became one of them you know and it was only a matter of months. But just before that I wasn't into it, I hated it like, do you know what I mean. I thought it was all right to smoke hash, drink, take coke or whatever. But I just went into that scene then you know.

<div align="right">Christian (19)</div>

Similarly, Luke's move to an over-18s hostel brought him into daily contact with heroin users.

Everyone that was in it (adult hostel) was on it (heroin) … Yeah, looking at them stoned and they're all talking about it. The relief that it's supposed to bring them so I just tried it and liked it.

<div align="right">Luke (19)</div>

Others who reported escalated drug consumption talked about their regular use of cocaine and/or prescription drugs. Finn attributed increased consumption to his cycle of movement between OHS hostels.

[Would you say now that your drug use has increased over the last year?]
I'd say it has 'cos when I was in (first OHS hostel) I didn't do tablets or anything you know. But when I was back through the Out of Hours I started doin' tablets.

<div align="right">Finn (17)</div>

Housing instability had a discernible impact on young people's drug use behaviour and on their perceptions of the benefits of drug effects. Moving between temporary living places brought them into contact with other drug users and also cultivated an acceptance of 'hard' drug use. Their entry to adult hostels was a point of particular vulnerability due, in large part, to the sense of despair many experienced at this juncture. Escalating drug consumption impacted on a range of areas of young people's lives, including their physical and mental health, and also negatively influenced their ability to maintain

meaningful ties to society. That is not to say that none actively engaged in efforts to curb their drug use and/or remain abstinent. On the contrary, a number did try to address the matter of their drug consumption and several had sought treatment at some time. Pregnancy propelled one young woman to make a concerted effort to 'get clean'.

I had to do it for me young fella (baby), like I have to get clean now for me young fella's sake … That's the main reason why I'm going to as well like, so I have to do it for him.

<div align="right">Siobhan (23)</div>

Emma explained her motives for quitting heroin use and, although she subsequently relapsed, had returned to methadone treatment at the time of follow-up:

I know I don't like being on heroin so like, I always, like when I was on it, I was, 'I hate this fucking shit'. I was always determined to get off it like.

<div align="right">Emma (19)</div>

Young people's efforts to address drug abuse and/or dependence were constantly hampered by the absence of a stable place to live, rendering abstinence a constant struggle. Eoin, who was staying in an adult hostel at the time of his Phase II interview, confronted many challenges in his efforts to 'stay clean'.

I've been going round in circles for a long time probably since back then (time of initial interview) but it's just hard. Like I was doing well for a while, I'd be doing well for a few weeks but then something would happen. I get setbacks, you know. Having nowhere to stay is the main thing. Staying here, I'm trying to get clean urine but as you know it's, this hostel is for people who's on drugs and I'm sharing a room with a fella and like. I'm trying to stay away from everything and he's doing it in me face. It's just there in me face. It's just so, it's just so hard.

<div align="right">Eoin (22)</div>

Reliance on some of the most unstable of living situations led to feelings of being in a 'no-win' situation. The stories and comments above highlight the extent to which young people in this pathway are engaged in drug use and the difficulties they confront in maintaining a regime of abstinence. Substance use interacted with their housing careers and was also implicated in the breakdown

of more stable living situations such as supported housing or the family home. Following such events, exposure to drug use settings typically increased, thus compounding the vicious circle of drug dependence and homelessness.

Incarceration

All of the young people in this pathway reported criminal activity at some stage in their lives and this behaviour can be traced to the early or mid-teenage years of many of them. Reported involvement in unlawful activity ranged from minor to more persistent and serious patterns of offending. Five (all male) were incarcerated at the time of their Phase II interview and an additional six had been incarcerated at some point in their lives. In sum, therefore, eleven of the young people (10 males and 1 female) in this pathway had spent time in prison, suggesting that incarceration plays a significant role in their housing careers.

For some, the experience of incarceration was limited to relatively short periods spent on remand while others had been sentenced to a number of years in prison. Typical reports indicate that most were convicted of offences such as criminal damage, trespassing, shoplifting, theft, robbery, dealing and possession of drugs, or assault. During the period immediately prior to entering prison all had lived in OHS accommodation, adult hostels, the street or with friends and, on release, practically all returned to these or similar settings. One young woman moved home on release from prison but this arrangement soon broke down and she returned to emergency hostel accommodation.

Young people often linked their criminal activity to changes in other areas of their lives, including changes in their drug use and living circumstances. Luke's story demonstrates the evolution of his criminal 'career'.

Luke, age 19

Luke left home for the first time at the age of 16. At this stage, his criminal activity was limited to stealing food during the periods of days or weeks he spent out of his home. On moving from his home neighbourhood to the city-centre to access the Out of Hours Service, he came into contact with the police. At the time of his Phase I interview, he had been arrested once but had no criminal charges. By Phase II, Luke's criminal activity had escalated alongside changes in his drug use and accommodation situation. Although Luke moved into transitional housing, he subsequently lost this placement and began to use adult hostels where he came into contact with heroin users. Within a relatively short time, he initiated heroin use, a development which impacted on his

criminal activity. He began to steal money and goods more frequently in order to finance his drug use and subsequently served two prison sentences. Luke recognised the cyclical nature of his situation which he referred to as a '*revolving door*'.

I also think it's difficult to come out of prison because you come out with the same attitude and you just end up going back again. It's just like a revolving door.

Of significance is that eight of the young people (all male) reported more than one period of incarceration. This pattern of repeated committal to prison started at a young age for a number. Christian, who had spent time in a children's detention school during his early teenage years, explained the frequency with which he was arrested and 'locked up'.

I fuckin' couldn't stay out of there (prison). Every time I got out of there in a couple of days I'd get arrested on the street, fuck sake, and back inside … Every time I walk down the street, do you know what I mean, I was getting fuckin' locked up … I was getting locked up for everything. They just wanted to get me off the street for as long as possible, you know what I mean.

<div align="right">Christian (19)</div>

Homeless youth are more at risk of being arrested and incarcerated for certain types of offences such as public drunkenness, loitering and begging (Snow *et al*, 1989) and there is also evidence to suggest that homeless males are more vulnerable to arrest than their female counterparts (Chapple *et al,* 2004). On release from prison or detention, many return to the streets where they are susceptible to re-arrest and re-incarceration. This cycle of movement through homelessness and incarceration has been documented previously (Gowan, 2002; Hagan and McCarthy, 1997) and is noteworthy since arrest history and incarceration are strong predictors of a longer duration of homelessness (Caton *et al,* 2005).

Some in this pathway who had spent one or more periods in prison appeared to have grown accustomed to this cycle and, as they moved between temporary living situations, a number came to view prison as an alternative place to stay:

Just like, I was going through and I was floating in and out of hostels and I hadn't really got a proper place to stay. There was a telly in there (prison) in the bedroom, meals and the people that were in the cell were fuckin bang on, sound … But at times like, don't get me wrong now, I wasn't having the time of me life in there but it's not as bad as I thought it would have been.

<div align="right">Luke (19)</div>

Indeed, time spent in prison was sometimes depicted in a positive light, perhaps reflecting the harsh reality of life 'outside'. Christian, Siobhan and Wayne explained that they reduced or quit drug use during their time in prison.

I was happy when I got locked up to be honest with you because I was kind of clean, gave me a chance to get clean.

<div align="right">Christian (19)</div>

Prison done me a great job like, it got me off the gear for a good while like you know.

<div align="right">Siobhan (23)</div>

Prison does help me an awful lot for some reason, I don't know what it is, it just helps me an awful lot, it helps me go through me sickness (withdrawal), the whole lot, you can't get out.

<div align="right">Wayne (23)</div>

Others indicated that respite from the street taught them valuable lessons:

I've copped on a bit since I've been in here (prison), I'd say that's probably the biggest thing (that's happened in the last year).

<div align="right">Ronan (19)</div>

Nonetheless, the progress that some acknowledged as arising from time spent away from the pressures and influences of street life did not necessarily result in long-term changes in behaviour:

Like if I hadn't, if prison wasn't there I would say I would be more than likely be dead like. 'Cos it, it gives you time to think an' all, like it gets you off the drugs as well and it gets your body back into shape, and you put a bit of weight on. But like every time you get out you just go back and do the same shit again like. You would be, probably doing that for a week or two but, you go back to the same again.

Eoin (22)

Eoin's account highlights the limited options available to homeless youth on release from prison and the extent to which the cycle of homelessness and incarceration erodes their stake in society and exacerbates their marginalisation. The connection between homelessness and incarceration, particularly among those who remain homeless, is reasonably well recognised (Gowan, 2002; Kushel *et al*, 2005) and largely confirmed here: constant movement between temporary accommodation places and incarceration were two experiences shared by a large majority of those who remained homeless.

Temporary Exits from Homelessness

As stated earlier, among those who remained homeless, a number had accessed more stable living arrangements since their Phase I interviews, suggesting that some had tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to exit homelessness. This section is concerned with unravelling the factors and circumstances which led to the loss of this accommodation and their subsequent return to homelessness.

At the time of her Phase I interview, Emma was living at home following a period of rough sleeping but was subsequently forced to leave home and find B&B accommodation. She later secured a place in a transitional housing unit where she lived with her boyfriend for a period. However, she lost this placement because of her drinking and drug use and had returned to B&B accommodation by the time of her second interview. In the following account she described her movement between different living situations:

I wasn't going back to me Mam's, I wasn't getting in contact with her, you know. Finally got myself a B&B and I was living there on me own and about 3 months, maybe 4 months later, I was seeing this guy … and we got into a B&B together and moved then to transitional housing. I thought I was on a track then, I was in transitional housing, that was the first one that I got with him was transitional housing so I, you know, I thought I was on a roll like. I could get a flat out of this you know but unfortunately with the alcohol and stuff it didn't work out so we moved to another B&B. That's where I am now in a B&B.

<div align="right">Emma (19)</div>

Emma is an example of a young woman who moved from homelessness to relatively stable accommodation (home, transitional housing) and back again. Her movement between living situations was strongly influenced by her drug and alcohol abuse. Indeed, drug use and related activity were implicated in the accounts of the majority who reported exit spells and subsequent returns to homelessness. Since his Phase I interview, Fergal had moved to transitional housing but lost this placement because of his involvement in drug dealing activity. Since that time he had alternated between the street and a variety of adult hostels:

[Where are you staying now?]
Sometimes I stay in a different hostel every night or every two nights but like I try and get myself up into (particular hostel) every night. It's all right there, it's not too bad. It's just a dorm, it's just a bed like.

<div align="right">Fergal (19)</div>

Brendan is another young man who described the role of drug use in his return to homelessness:

[Did you ever move back home to your mum's?]
Two or three times I did yeah. The drugs just stopped that again. In the bedroom, she'd come up and the door would be locked and she'd know what was going on. So she had to throw me out 'cos she couldn't have that in the house.

<div align="right">Brendan (18)</div>

Substance misuse and dependence were sources of ongoing anxiety for a large number of young people in this pathway. While many had sought treatment, relapse was common and access to housing was difficult for those with histories of alcohol or drug misuse. There was also evidence of limited provision of accommodation for young people on completing detoxification or other residential treatment programmes. Temporary homeless exits are common among people who experience homelessness and a number of studies have sought to uncover the dynamics of exits from and returns to homelessness (Dworsky and Piliavin, 2000; Piliavin *et al*, 1996; Sosin *et al*, 1990; Wong and Piliavin, 1997). Christian's experience encapsulates many of the factors that acted as barriers to exiting homelessness for this group.

Christian (19)

Christian arrived in Ireland with his father from Eastern Europe at a young age and entered the care system when he was 10 years old for a short time. He was later returned home and lived with his father but subsequently left voluntarily at the age of 13 and accessed accommodation through the OHS. From there, he embarked on a cycle of hostel use and, during his early to mid-teenage years, also spent periods in juvenile detention. At the time of his Phase I interview, he was staying in an OHS hostel and had no contact with family members. He had left school aged 13 and had recently enrolled in a FÁS course. Christian was a regular cannabis smoker at that stage and used ecstasy, cocaine and prescription medicine intermittently. At Phase I he was living in an emergency hostel for under-18s and hoped to move into semi-independent accommodation in the near future.

Christian did, in fact, move into a semi-independent flat some time after his Phase I interview but was subsequently evicted because of his involvement in drug dealing activity. He was over the age of 18 by this time and had no option but to enter the adult hostel system. He described the material and symbolic significance of this transition: '*Staying in under-18 hostels, well basically they're great. Looking back at it now like the support there is great. Then when you go to adult hostels there's no support there, you're basically out there for yourself like you know. You're just fucked basically. It's a fuckin hole you're in and it's very hard to get out of you know. Takes a lot of shit to get you out of it you know*'.

> Shortly after accessing adult hostels, Christian initiated heroin use and quickly transitioned to injecting drug use. He also served three short sentences in prison and was no longer receiving education or training of any kind. He continued to have no contact with his family. At the time of his Phase II interview, he was enrolled in a residential drug treatment programme and his future seemed uncertain: '*Half of me wants to go back to what I was used to doing, half of me wants me to have a normal life, have a home, whatever, kids, whatever it is*'.
>
> During a chance meeting with Christian several months after his Phase II interview it was discovered that he had just been released from prison, having served a 7-month sentence, and was living in B&B accommodation.

Services and Supports: 'They wash their hands of us when we're 18'

As highlighted, a large number of the young people in this pathway reported contact with services and agencies of the State from a young age. Many, for example, made first contact with the OHS between the ages of 14 and 16 years and continued to interact with this service for an extended period. A number had also been committed to a detention school during their teenage years; several had entered into a drug treatment setting at some time and practically all reported social work involvement in their lives from an early age. This level of State intervention might be regarded as high by any measure but, despite this, these young people had become and remained homeless. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this analysis to unravel all aspects of service provision and access, there are identifiable characteristics that define young people's engagement with services and interventions, particularly as their homelessness persisted. Most notably, perhaps, those who availed of support often did so sporadically or in response to a crisis situation, rather than consistently or in a manner that might facilitate their exit from homelessness. Others only availed of specific practical supports, so that their engagement did not extend beyond the immediacy of their needs (e.g. accessing the night bus service, emergency accommodation or places to wash and change clothes and receive food). Although critical interventions for young homeless people, these crisis-oriented services rarely facilitated a move out of homelessness.

When young people talked about services, their suspicions about what was available or on offer were striking and a number spontaneously responded to questions about formal sources of support by recounting a chronology of

negative experiences. Social work services were often the focus of negative attention within these accounts.

They're (social workers) the ones that fucked me life up.

Fergal (19)

She (social worker) couldn't do nothing for me, she never did. You had to push her for things, push her and push her. It would take ages, weeks, months for me to get something … taking bleeding three months, four months before I get it. I told her to get me bleedin homeless payments started up, took her bleedin' two months or something. All she had to do was send a fax saying this person needs to be paid. No didn't do it for about 2 months. So I stopped ringing her …

Finn (17)

Finn (quoted above) was approaching 18 years at the time of his follow-up interview and was acutely aware of the difficulties he was likely to confront on turning 18.

Yeah I know you've to go through adult services, you've to pay for your bed, pay for your dinner and all … Then like, if I become 18 and I'm still on the streets? When I turn 18 I'm going to have to get a flat, put it that way, I'm not living through them bleedin' hostels.

Finn (17)

Several over the age of 18 recounted the impact of the sudden withdrawal of supports at this juncture.

I think they should give you some time to (pause) … you just don't turn into an adult straight away overnight. You have to go through things and make mistakes and learn from your mistakes so I think they should give you more time.

Eoin (22)

Luke talked about his personal struggles and felt that young people needed preparation ahead of the move to adult services. His account highlights a broader belief among young people that they had been abandoned at the age of 18:

When you're living in placement when you're under 18 you should be shown a few things; what to cook, budgeting skills and shit like that. That's what I struggle with at the most, keeping me money … They wash their hands of us when we're 18.

<div align="right">Luke (19)</div>

Young people suffered following the sudden withdrawal of supports and the stories of older respondents highlight their more limited engagement with services on becoming eighteen. This is significant since homeless people who have less contact with needed services are more likely to remain homeless (Rog and Holupka, 1999; Sosin, 1992). Emergency hostel accommodation, the most frequently accessed service by young people in this pathway, may well have helped them to manage street life but did little to enable or empower them to move off the streets.

Conclusion

Those young people who remained homeless were primarily male and of a young age, with nine of the thirteen in this pathway aged 19 years or under. They depended on the most unstable living situations and made many moves between accommodation types. While some had temporarily exited homelessness to more stable environments such as the family home, transitional housing or the private rented sector, for a variety of reasons their attempts to move off the streets proved unsustainable in the longer term.

The young people in this pathway inhabited 'marginal and invisible spaces' (Pain and Francis, 2004:97) and, compared to youth who exited homelessness, they were more socially isolated and mobile and had fewer protective resources. Many entered the homeless 'scene' during their early to mid-teenage years, most often through their association with the Out of Hours Service. In keeping with the findings of previous research, the transition from youth to adult homeless services emerged as a point of entry into the adult homeless population (MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 2003). The city-centre environment introduced the majority to risk practices and peer groups that facilitated and supported their entry to drug and criminal 'scenes' which further jeopardised their safety, health and well-being. Indeed, their life histories highlight the extent to which homeless, drug and criminal 'careers' interact. On the one hand, drug consumption and associated criminal activity had a clear negative impact on their housing pathways and, on the other, the state of homelessness itself affected young people's abilities to abstain from drug use and desist from

criminal activity. At the same time, these young people were extremely vulnerable to victimisation both on the street and in the places where they resided (Mayock, 2008).

Homeless spells have been found to be longer for individuals who have been incarcerated and/or have a history of drug or alcohol abuse (Allgood and Warren, 2003; Christensen and Vinther, 2006). Young people in this pathway were criminally-involved and the majority had served one or more prison sentences. This cycle of repeat incarceration, interrupted by periods spent in emergency hostels, squats and B&Bs, led some to view prison as an alternative accommodation type and also as a welcome relief from street life.

The matrix of social-service and control agencies that deal directly with the homeless serve to shape their routines and options (Snow and Anderson, 1993). Those young people who failed to exit homelessness had few social supports on which to draw and most described weak social ties and limited sources of help or comfort. Entry to adult services further diminished their material and emotional resources since the formal supports available were henceforth limited to basic subsistence needs such as emergency accommodation, food, and a place to wash. There was little in their stories to suggest that the cycle of emergency accommodation use they reported was set to change in the near future.

Key Findings: Continued Homelessness

Continued Homelessness

■ 13 young people (11 males and 2 females) remained homeless at the time of follow-up.

■ 10 had accessed accommodation through the Out of Hours Service (OHS) as teenagers, typically between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

■ Most reported a pattern of repeated entry to the OHS as teenagers as well as constant movement between different hostels (OHS residential settings) for the under-18s.

■ The accounts of these young people strongly suggested a process of disengagement from mainstream society that often started during early adolescence.

■ Most left school early, reported short-lived attempts at a return to education/training, had limited participation in the labour market and weak family ties.

■ Their homeless lifestyles, often characterised by drug use and 'getting by', made their attempts to engage in conventional activities difficult.

■ As their homeless 'careers' progressed, they became immersed in a homeless lifestyle and relied increasingly on others in a similar situation for help and support.

The Contours of Housing Instability and Continued Homelessness

Three issues emerged as central to the understanding of prolonged or chronic housing instability:

■ Substance misuse and drug dependence – All who remained homeless had a history of drug misuse and two also reported heavy or problematic alcohol use. 11 (9 males and both females) reported a history of heroin use. Substance use was implicated in the breakdown of more stable living situations such as supported housing or the family home.

- Incarceration – All in this pathway reported criminal activity at some time and 11 (10 males and 1 female) had spent time in prison. These young people usually entered prison while living in OHS accommodation, adult hostels, the street or with friends and, on release, returned to similar living situations.
- Temporary exits from homelessness – A number who remained homeless had accessed more stable living arrangements since their Phase I interviews, suggesting that some had tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to exit homelessness. The breakdown of these more stable living arrangements was strongly related to alcohol and/or drug abuse.

Chapter 7
From Research to Policy: Discussion and Recommendations

As highlighted in this report, the cost both to young people themselves and society at large is considerable unless successful exits from homelessness occur. Consequently, there are social, moral and economic imperatives to ensuring that all interventions targeting homeless youth are focused on achieving sustainable exits. Drawing on the information gathered during the course of this longitudinal study, five issues have been identified that merit further discussion in this final chapter:

- the transition from child welfare to adult homeless services;
- leaving substitute care;
- the role of the criminal justice system, in particular incarceration;
- services for the young homeless; and
- housing, the welfare state and homelessness.

Following a detailed discussion of these key issues we will conclude by outlining nine policy recommendations. As a starting point, however, it is helpful to reiterate our conceptual understanding of homelessness, in particular, the pathways approach.

Homeless Pathways

Much of the existing research on homelessness relates to those households who are long-term homeless and/or repeatedly use homeless services. In contrast, as

Caton *et al,* (2005:1753) point out, '[l]ittle is known about the characteristics of people who stop using homeless services after a short time'. As highlighted in Chapter 1, research attention has shifted, over the past decade in particular, from an almost exclusive focus on routes or pathways *into* homelessness towards the investigation of routes *out* of homelessness. This shift has coincided with a broader recognition that homeless experiences are more likely to be episodic in nature than to signify an inevitable progression towards longer-term or chronic homelessness. Correspondingly, the need to understand the conditions for successful homeless exits has come to the forefront of the agendas of researchers and, indeed, policy makers.

Significantly, as argued by Minnery and Greenhalgh (2007:652) in their review of homelessness policy in Europe, Australia and the US, '[t]he important concept of homelessness pathways or careers implies that homelessness cannot be addressed through single-focus initiatives.' Thus, as argued by Kidd and Davidson (2006:446) in relation to youth homelessness:

> An important direction for future work lies in examining programs that serve to a) identify and intervene with youths at risk of becoming homeless and their families in various contexts such as schools and mental health service provision settings, b) reduce the likelihood of youths becoming homeless following problematic experiences in contexts such as child welfare and criminal justice systems – both common pathways into homelessness and c) increase opportunities for impoverished children (e.g after school programs).

Research in Ireland is only beginning to draw on the pathways framework for the purposes of generating detailed information on the nature of homelessness (e.g. Mayock and Carr, 2008; Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007; Pillinger, 2007). The discussion and recommendations that follow draw on this conceptual understanding and are organised around a number of key policy implications arising from the study's findings. As a preamble, Table 7.1 presents the key facilitators and barriers to exiting homelessness, based on the findings presented in the four preceding chapters.

Table 7.1 Facilitators and Barriers to Exiting Homelessness

Facilitators to Exiting Homelessness	Barriers to Exiting Homelessness
■ Access to appropriate, affordable housing.	■ Movement between multiple unstable accommodation types following the first homeless experience.
■ Lack of movement between unstable or temporary forms of accommodation.	■ Continued use of Out of Hours Service accommodation and movement between hostels/residential settings targeting the under-18s.
■ Contact with family; family support.	
■ Aftercare – adequate preparation for the move towards independent living.	■ Lack of access to secure, appropriate housing or a care placement.
■ Disaffiliation from former peer networks/establishment of positive and enabling social relationships.	■ Gaps in accommodation and service provision, particularly in services targeting 18–25 year olds.
■ Professional supports from aftercare workers, social workers or other professionals, often related to a strong relationship between the young person and an individual professional.	■ Entry to adult hostels. ■ Time spent homeless (i.e. longer duration without stable accommodation). ■ Negative peer associations. ■ Involvement in criminal activity. ■ Incarceration.
■ Participation in education and/or skills training.	■ Lack of employment/training opportunities.
■ Drug treatment (in conjunction with access to appropriate housing).	■ Alcohol and/or drug problems. ■ Mental health problems.

The Transition from Child Welfare to Adult Homeless Services

This study has identified the transition from child welfare to adult homeless services as one of the most significant contributors to ongoing or prolonged homelessness. On leaving home or a care setting, many of the young people whose lives and experiences are the focus of this research entered into a world

that was unfamiliar, chaotic and unpredictable. Significantly, this sense of apprehension intensified for those who subsequently moved to adult homeless services and the accounts of others who faced this prospect in the near future were particularly revealing in their portrayals of fear and uncertainty. Entry into the world of adult hostels constituted a significant crisis point and a number appeared to equate this transition with an acceptance of homelessness as a way of life.

These findings strongly suggest that the current organisation of homeless services, whilst attempting to impose structure through bureaucratic certainty (transfer from child to adult services at age 18), acts to perpetuate homelessness and reduce the likelihood of a speedy exit. For those young people who enter the 'official' system or network of youth homelessness, a clear systems failure is evident. This failure is particularly apparent in the case of those who subsequently enter adult homeless services. The deleterious consequences of this transition are amply documented in this report and barriers to preventing this transition need therefore to be constructed. Specifically, more fluid models of service provision that do not strictly differentiate between those under- and over-18 require consideration. Such models could possibly draw and elaborate on models already in existence and might be most appropriately deployed by voluntary agencies. Voluntary agencies are positioned to obtain the requisite funding from statutory providers who are likely to confront legislative barriers to the provision of services to over-18s but, equally, have discretion in relation to the allocation of funding. In any event, these more fluid interventions are crucial if we wish to ensure that young people do not become enmeshed in a homeless lifestyle.

Leaving Substitute Care

Linked to the previous issue, this study's findings indicate that young people leaving substitute care are particularly vulnerable to homelessness. The *Review of the Implementation of Homeless Strategies* acknowledged that significant progress has been made by Health Boards in developing aftercare protocols for all young people leaving care. However, despite these positive developments, it is not clear if local authorities are fully monitoring their obligations under the *Housing Act, 1988*.

Section 9 (2) of the *Housing Act, 1988* stipulates that a housing authority, in making an assessment of housing need, shall have regard to the need for housing of persons who—(*f*) are young persons leaving institutional care or without family accommodation. However, as Table 7.2 demonstrates, the

results of the *Assessment of Housing Need* for 2005 indicates that 262 young people leaving institutional care or without family accommodation were recorded nationally by the local authorities. Noteworthy is that none of the greater Dublin local authorities recorded any young people, with County Sligo recording the highest number of individuals in this category. This may simply reflect the recording practices of the differing authorities but is also a situation that renders such young people relatively 'invisible' in the allocation of social housing.

It seems clear that local authorities have both under- and inconsistently recorded young people leaving institutional care or without family accommodation for the purposes of assessing housing need. While acceptance on to the assessment of housing need does not confer an immediate right to such housing, at a minimum, it accepts that such a need exists. All young people leaving the substitute care system should have their housing needs assessed by the local authority where they are resident and, if eligible for social housing, allocated accommodation appropriate to their needs. The development of the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)[24] and its ongoing implementation would appear to offer a useful mechanism to accommodate such young people, a topic we deal with in greater detail later.

---

[24] This scheme was announced by the Government in July 2004 to transfer responsibility for housing SWA Rent Supplement recipients who are deemed to have a long term housing need to local authorities over a four year period. The scheme is a collaborative project between the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG), local authorities, the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the community welfare service. The scheme can be used in appropriate cases by local authorities to accommodate homeless cases who are not on Rent Supplement but do have a long-term housing need.

Table 7.2 Leaving Institutional Care or Without Family Accommodation in 2005

Leaving Institutional Care or Without Family Accommodation in 2005

	Number	%
Clare County Council	1	0.4
Cork South Division	1	0.4
Ballinasloe Town Council	1	0.4
Dundalk Town Council	1	0.4
Dungarvan Town Council	1	0.4
New Ross Town Council	1	0.4
Trim Town Council	1	0.4
Westport Town Council	1	0.4
Galway City Council	2	0.8
Mayo County Council	2	0.8
Letterkenny Town Council	2	0.8
Sligo Borough Council	3	1.1
Cavan Town Council	3	1.1
Waterford City Council	4	1.5
Cork West Division	4	1.5
Kildare County Council	4	1.5
Clonakilty Town Council	4	1.5
Waterford County Council	5	1.9
Westmeath County Council	5	1.9
Wexford Borough Council	5	1.9
Donegal County Council	8	3.1
Wicklow Town Council	9	3.4
Skibbereen Town Council	14	5.3
Wicklow County Council	21	8.0
Louth County Council	34	13.0
Enniscorthy Town Council	44	16.8
Sligo County Council	81	30.9
Total	**262**	**100.0**

Source: Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2006) *Annual Housing Statistics Bulletin 2005*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

The cost to a child of becoming and remaining homeless in terms of negative health outcomes, exposure to risky situations, and so on, has been highlighted in this report and in other publications related to the study (Mayock, 2008; Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007; Mayock and Vekić, 2006). Against this backdrop, it is useful to consider the financial cost of a number of the existing interventions. While we do not attempt a cost-benefit evaluation of the whole range of interventions designed to assist homeless youth in Ireland (since sufficient accurate data does not exist), it is perhaps important to note the costs of some of the interventions and places of residence that have featured prominently over the course of the study. This (Table 7.3) is a rather crude exercise but nonetheless demonstrates that statutory expenditure is, in fact, likely to have been considerable (to date) for many of the study's respondents.

Table 7.3 Cost of Various Interventions, 2004/5/6[25]

Intervention	Cost (€)
Offender in St. Patrick's Institution	97,100
Special School for young offenders	362,823
Foster care per annum	18,936
Residential care per annum	327,138
Crosscare residential project	307,166

All of the young people interviewed had experience of at least one of the interventions listed above and some reported using the full spectrum of places of residence or detention listed. The number of respondents who were ever incarcerated or detained in institutions for young offenders (11 in total) is perhaps particularly noteworthy in light of the figures above. Data from Trinity House, the only secure unit for male offenders under the age of 16 in Ireland, show that of those released in 2005, 70 percent were in prison or a place of detention (St. Patrick's Institution) within 3 months of release, and this

[25] *Source*: Irish Prison Service (2007) *Annual Report 2006*. Dublin: Irish Prison Service (p.40). The cost of keeping a young person in a special school is calculated by dividing the net total expenditure on the schools in 2005 (€29,025,881) by the number of children in the five special schools in June of that year (80). The same methodology is employed in respect of foster care (annual cost of €80,349,000 divided by 4,243 children) and residential care (annual cost €144,595,000 divided by 442 children). Source: Dail Debates, 22nd March 2007 Col.555–556.

percentage increased with time. The high cost of these custodial interventions and poor outcomes for a large number of those admitted makes the evaluation of custodial interventions an imperative, both in terms of assessing value for money and in seeking to appropriately and effectively meet the needs of children.

In the context of this discussion it is important to be mindful that although a proportion of homeless youth may have a care history, the majority of those children and young people placed in care do not experience homelessness.[26] Indeed, a key difficulty in this area is the lack of accurate and timely information regarding outcomes for children in care. In reviewing the development of a National Child Care Information System in Ireland, Buckley *et al,* (2006:82/84) argue that '[f]actual data can illustrate the pathways through care experienced by children separated from their families', but that we need also to 'avoid the indicators being interpreted as the reality and to consider the significance of context each time the information is utilised.' This point is particularly important in the case of youth homelessness, where the data collected *via* the Interim Minimum Child Care Dataset is ambiguous and dated (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007). In addition, Kidd and Davidson (2006:446) argue for the need:

> … to measure "success" in a way that acknowledges the unique challenges of homelessness (i.e. success should not be measured solely by the number of youth who become employed, return to school, and/or become housed, as success may also mean a youth surviving through the winter or using less harmful substances).

---

[26] In a similar fashion, while research has consistently highlighted that illicit and problematic drug use is prevalent amongst the homeless, the majority of problematic drug users are not homeless. For example, of those who received treatment for problem drug use in Ireland in 2002, only 3 per cent were recorded as homeless (Long *et al*, 2005: 18), although this figure was 6.8 per cent in the Greater Dublin region (Kelly *et al*, 2005: 18). Of the 404 new clients using opiates interviewed as part of the Research Outcome Study in Ireland (ROSIE), less than 10 percent were homeless at the time of the baseline interview, but closer to 20 percent had been homeless at some stage in the previous three months (Cox and Comiskey, 2007). Likewise, while rates of mental illness are high amongst the homeless, the majority of those who suffer from mental illnesses are not homeless. In a study of a psychiatric service in a Dublin city hospital over a six month period, just under 14 percent of those who used the service were homeless, with the majority residing in hostels rather than sleeping rough (O'Neill *et al*, 2007).

Criminal Justice System

The role of the criminal justice system in maintaining homelessness (see Chapter 6), particularly amongst young men, is a significant finding to emerge from the study. It is also consistent with international research which has highlighted the role of imprisonment in contributing to, and in some cases perpetuating, homelessness. In their longitudinal study of first-time homeless single adults in New York, Caton *et al*, (2005) found that just over 80 percent had exited homelessness after 18 months of first becoming homeless and that among those who were able to exit homelessness, 'the most common type of living arrangement was living with family or friends' (Caton *et al*, 2005:1756). The duration of their homelessness was strongly influenced by both age and arrest history, with Caton *et al,* (2005:1758) noting that this finding underscores the association of the criminal justice system with the problem of homelessness.[27]

The *Review of the Implementation of Homeless Strategies* notes that the discharge policies for offenders have improved significantly since the initiation of the Homeless Prevention Strategy. However, while a focus on discharge policies is important for young people in particular, preventing imprisonment,

---

[27] Of course, there is nothing particularly new about this in Ireland. Hart's (1978) study of residents of the Simon Communities in the mid-1970s suggested that one-third had experienced imprisonment. O'Mahony's surveys in 1986 and 1996 of prisoners in Mountjoy Prison, the largest committal prison in country at the time of the surveys, found 3 and 8 percent of the prisoners reported that they were homeless or living in hostels at the time of their committal (O'Mahony, 1997). Interviews conducted with 171 homeless adults residing in hostels in the former Southern and South Eastern Health Board areas in 2000 revealed that 37 percent had experienced imprisonment (O'Leary *et al*, 2003: 37). More recently, in a random stratified sample of committed male prisoners from all Irish prisons in 2001, just over one-quarter claimed to have been homeless at some time in their lives, but only 1.6 percent of the sample were homeless and roofless in the month prior to their committal (Duffy *et al*, 2006:57). For male remanded prisoners, just over 40 percent had experienced homelessness at some stage and 5.5 percent had been roofless in the month prior to arrest (Linehan *et al*, 2005: 130). In the case of female prisoners, the figures appear significantly higher, with over half of a sample of committed and a cross sectional sample of female prisoners reporting having been homeless at some stage in their lives, just under 10 percent were roofless in the month prior to their committal and between 10 and 15 percent stating they had nowhere to live on release from prison (Wright *et al*, 2006: 49). O'Loingsigh (2004) provides qualitative data on the difficulties experienced in obtaining accommodation by released prisoners from the inner city of Dublin.

where possible, through the use of non-custodial sanctions remains a crucial objective. A welcome decrease in the number of young people between 15 and 21 committed on conviction to prison and places of detention occurred from 2001–2005 but, regrettably, a substantial increase is evident between 2005 and 2006 (as demonstrated in Table 7.4 below). On a more positive note, the number of young people committed on remand, or for immigration offences, has shown a welcome decline, with a similar decrease evident in the Special Schools for Young Offenders managed by the Department of Education and Science.[28] These changes may reflect, in part, the gradual implementation of the non-custodial options of the *Children Act, 2001*. Of concern, however, is that over 1,000 young people received a custodial sanction on conviction in 2006. Notable also is that close to 40 percent of those committed on conviction to Irish prisons and places of detention received a sentence of 3 months or less and it is not clear what purpose such sentences serve in terms of rehabilitation, restitution or incapacitation. What is clear, however, is that rates of recidivism are high. The only study of recidivism in Ireland indicates that over half were re-incarcerated within 4 years of release, with a higher risk of reincarceration for young males (O'Donnell *et al*, 2008).

Table 7.4 Number Aged 15–21 Committed on Conviction to Prison and Places of Detention, 2001–2006

Year	Committed on Remand/Immigration	Committed on Conviction	Total	% of Total Committals on Conviction
2001	612	1,226	1,838	23.8
2002	1,034	823	1,857	16.3
2003	1,038	877	1,915	16.2
2004	655	944	1,599	18.6
2005	464	809	1,273	15.9
2006	613	1,015	1,628	17.5

Source: Irish Prison Service, Annual Reports. Various Years.

---

[28] There were 80 children detained within the special schools at the end of the school year 2005 compared to 170 in 1995. Administrative and legal responsibility for children in detention schools moved from the Department of Education and Science to the newly formed Irish Youth Justice Service in 2007.

Services for the Young Homeless

As highlighted earlier in Chapter 1, recent studies suggest that, for the majority of individuals, homelessness is a temporary state and that most who find themselves in this situation have the capacity to obtain accommodation, often with relatively little professional support. The key support that individuals appear to require in order to exit homelessness is material support. On the other hand, many service providers, particularly for the young homeless, operate a model of intervention that views homelessness as a *quasi* form of deviance, and one that requires that young people submit themselves to structure and control to enable them to resolve their homelessness (Carlen, 1996).

The theme of responsibilisation features prominently in the literature on youth homelessness and service provision. The notion of responsibilisation suggests that service providers frequently operate from an understanding that attributes homelessness to a lack of structure in young people's lives, accompanied by a belief in the necessity for them to take responsibility for resolving their predicament. Indeed, much of the available research is critical of the practices of agencies or 'institutions' designed to care for homeless youth (e.g. Armaline, 2005; Jomiak, 2005). Nonetheless, these services are not uniformly perceived as negative by the young homeless. For example, in the current study, homeless young people often identified particular individuals as supportive to them, even if this appeared to be a personalised relationship developed on a one-to-one basis, rather than emanating from the structure of the service itself.

A crucial finding from the research in relation to the provision of emergency accommodation is that while hostels aim to responsibilise young people and impose a sense of structure on their often chaotic lives, they served an opposing function for at least a proportion by diminishing their social networks and limiting them to contact with other homeless youth. Respondents talked about the transient nature of their lives and how this impacted negatively on their enthusiasm for friendships and their ability to plan for the future. Similarly, the transience and disruption associated with the move from child welfare to adult homeless services, and the dislocation and uncertainty associated with this transition, was very evident. Social networks also appeared to decrease with the duration of homelessness and there is evidence that the dissolution of social networks contributes to maintaining homelessness. In other words, the organisation of homeless services in attempting to impose structure (via residential facilities) may act to perpetuate homelessness and reduce the likelihood of exit. These findings also highlight the lack of integration between research findings

on the nature of homelessness and the construction of appropriate and effective service delivery models. Furthermore, 'along with the compelling need to develop an evidence base regarding the effectiveness of interventions for homeless youths, there needs to be a careful review of funding practices and strategies informed by research' (Kidd and Davidson, 2006:446).

In their detailed quantitative overview of exits from homelessness, Dworsky and Piliavin (2000:209) argue that the most important factor in not returning to homelessness is access to a private residence[29] rather than agency-managed transitional housing or informal arrangements such as staying with family or friends. The apparent lack of success of transitional housing in preventing returns to homelessness appears to be supported by other research highlighting that those homeless households who resided in service-intensive homeless services did not have shorter stays than those in less intensive projects (Gerstel *et al*, 1996). The disciplinary regime imposed to ensure adherence to the 'life-skills' aimed at preventing homeless actually worked to maintain dependency, leading the authors to describe service-intensive interventions such as transitional housing as a form of 'therapeutic incarceration'.

For the majority in this study who had exited homelessness through entry to transitional housing, the move was recent. It is not possible, therefore, to comment on the longer-term outcome of this kind of intervention in facilitating and supporting sustained exits from homelessness. What is clear, however, is that those young people who commuted between emergency Out of Hours Service hostel accommodation were more likely to remain homeless than those who attained relative housing stability at an earlier juncture. They were also more likely to subsequently enter adult hostels, a transition which further diminished their stake in society and the likelihood of their exiting homelessness. As Busch-Geersema and Sahlin (2007:87) persuasively argue in relation to hostel-type accommodation, '[l]earning how to dwell in an institution does not facilitate independent living, conversely, it might entail opposite results: institutionalisation, secondary adaptation and stigmatisation.'

A key challenge for service providers, both statutory and voluntary, is to develop facilities that maximise the likelihood of young people exiting homelessness at the earliest possible juncture.

---

[29] By this they mean private residences that individuals considered their own and for which they paid all or a substantial part of the housing costs, rather than, for example, social service agency run transitional housing.

Housing, the Welfare State and Homelessness

In a recent international review of homelessness in eleven countries, Fitzpatrick and Stephens (2007) note that the majority of the enumerated homeless were single males and that a link was discernible between high rates of homelessness and low levels of affordable housing and weak welfare states. This, they explained, was because 'welfare regimes that produce high levels of poverty and inequality are likely to have particularly high levels of homelessness because of the relatively weak purchasing power of lower income households in those countries' (Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007:208). In addition to these macro-level findings, the role of housing support has been identified as a crucial variable in assisting individuals to exit homelessness across a range of detailed empirical studies, with the provision of subsidised housing emerging as the most important predictor of residential stability. This does not necessarily imply *support in housing*, but rather financial support in *meeting the cost of housing*. As Busch-Geertsema (2005:218) reminds us in his analysis of resettlement projects in three European cities including Dublin, in addition to those who require support, '[i]t must not be forgotten that there are many other homeless people who do not need any specific personal support at all, or only 'weak' forms of 'attendance". The importance of understanding the role of the State in both the provision of welfare generally, and housing in particular, stems logically from our understanding of homelessness as a manifestation of social exclusion, with housing a vital element in achieving social inclusion.

From the foundation of the State until late 1990s, the private rented sector had been declining both in real terms and as a proportion of the housing stock. However, due to the introduction of a range of financial incentives, particularly in the 1990s, the sector grew and continues to grow and now accounts for somewhere in the region of 12–13 percent. In addition, the implementation of the *Private Rented Tenancies Act, 2004* provides a reasonably comprehensive set of mutual rights and obligations for both landlords and tenants. Alongside the expansion of this sector of the housing market it has become progressively easier for low-income households, particularly single male households, to access the sector. The private rented housing sector is now a key provider of low-cost accommodation for households unable to either purchase housing on the open market or unable to access the various social and affordable housing programmes. The number of households in receipt of a rent supplement grew

to nearly 60,000 by 2004, from just over 40,000 in 1999 and has stabilised at the 60,000 figure.[30]

Although the expansion of the rent supplement system has been criticised by some, it does provide an increasingly accessible route into housing for households, particularly single young person households, for whom market provision housing is not an option and who do not receive priority or qualify for the various social and affordable housing schemes. Nonetheless, in light of the fact that the rent allowance scheme was never intended to provide a long-term housing solution to households unable to provide housing from their own means, in 2004 a new scheme, the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), was devised to meet the housing needs of households in receipt of a rent allowance for over 18 months.[31]

Table 7.5 Rent Supplement Claimants Aged under 20, 1998–2007 by Gender

Year	Under 20	Percentage of Total	Male	Female	Male/female ratio
1998	605				
1999	1,466	3.5			
2000	735	1.7			
2001	741	1.6			
2002	1,500	2.8			
2003	1,755	2.9	367	1,388	3.7
2004	1,258	2.2	203	1,028	5.1
2005	1,359	2.3	246	1,113	4.5
2006	1,200	2.0	227	973	4.2
2007	1,217	2.0	256	961	3.7

Source: Department of Social and Family Affairs, Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services. Various Years.

As highlighted in Table 7.5, in 2007 just over 1,200 households under the age of 20 were in receipt of a rent allowance. The numbers of such households has

[30] In addition, tenant support services such as the Housing Access Unit, operated on behalf of the Homeless Agency by an NGO Threshold, enabled those with particular needs to access the private rented market, creating over 300 tenancies between 2003 and 2006.

[31] By the end of 2007, 11,096 households transferred from the rent allowance scheme to the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

fluctuated over the past 9 years with no clear pattern. What is immediately obvious, however, is that for this age group, females are more likely to be in receipt of the allowance than males, with on average between 4–5 females in receipt of the allowance for each male.[32] As Coates and Norris (2007:43) argue:

> For young people, the housing system – and in particular the private rented sector – plays an essential role in facilitating (or obstructing) the transition to adulthood. Whilst public policy encourages young people to be mobile so as to participate fully in the labour market, many official documents have identified young, low-income tenants who have sought independent accommodation as a problem – a source of rising claimant numbers and costs. At the same time, local authorities do not offer housing to young single adults without children, and (parts of) the benefits system do not treat young people as independent adults if they are living in parental household.

Not only, as Coates and Norris highlight, are there inconsistencies in the delivery of rent allowances to young people based on competing understandings of the system, but also ongoing hostility to using the private rented sector from many voluntary agencies. The review of transitional housing managed by voluntary agencies in Dublin conducted by Fitzpatrick Associates (2007:48) noted that:

> There was reluctance in many services to accept that the private rented sector represented a viable option for their clients upon completion of the transitional programme, and some even went as far as to remove such an option from consideration for move-on. The approach was justified as it was cited that many clients had already had very negative experiences of private rented accommodation that had resulted in eviction, and that there was insufficient security and stability attached to the use of such housing. The risk that the progress made during the transitional programme could be placed in jeopardy by placing a former resident in this environment was considered too great at this stage.

Even for those who had positive experiences of the private rented sector in rehousing homeless people, the consensus was that 'local authority housing was

---

[32] The overall ratio is 1.3 females for every male.

preferable wherever this was available' (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2007:49). This view of the private rented sector, it can be argued, ignores the very considerable changes in the sector brought about by the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2004*. This insistence on privileging local authority housing over private rented accommodation ignores the reality that in the Greater Dublin area, allocations to all homeless households ranged from 27 percent of all allocations in Dublin City Council to 2.7 percent in South Dublin County Council (Homeless Agency, 2007:43). In the case of the young single homeless, the number to be accommodated in social housing provided by either local authorities or housing associations is likely to be negligible. Privileging local authority over other options such as RAS or the private rented sector as an objective in its own right may ultimately operate to the detriment of those seeking residential stability. Support networks are crucial to achieving this stability and as McNaughton and Sanders (2007:893) argue in relation to homeless women:

> … making a transition out of homelessness, obtaining permenant and adequate housing was a key material change. The location of that housing could be crucial to assist people make the transition away from negative influences. However, moving away from familiar networks could also lead to intense isolation … Many of the women cited the intense isolation, boredom and loneliness they experienced once they made a transition away from the networks of familiarity.

For the young people in this study, local authority housing, particularly for the single males, is not an immediate prospect, but with an increase in output over the next decade or so, this option will become increasingly available at a later stage in their housing careers. This results in transitional housing[33] having a limited utility for such households if service providers remain dogmatic in their refusal to use the private rented sector. Nonetheless, for young people without adequate family support, survival in 'pure' private rented sector can be difficult and the hybrid Rental Accommodation Scheme appears to offer the requisite degree of security of tenure and a pathway to long-term social housing for young homeless individuals.

---

[33] According to Brooke and Courtney's (2007:26) survey of the outcomes for 276 residents of 12 adult homeless services in Dublin, over one-quarter moved to longer-term or transitional housing, with a further 7 percent returning home.

Recommendations

In this chapter, we have attempted to place the detailed findings of this qualitative longitudinal study of homeless young people in a broad policy context before outlining our recommendations. The policy environments explored emerged as arenas where the young people in the study experienced barriers and difficulties in exiting from homelessness. These barriers are not deliberately constructed but, in many cases, are inadvertent outcomes of legal and policy choices directed primarily at other target groups. No organisation, whether voluntary or statutory, concerned with homelessness either directly or indirectly would wish to maintain practices and policies that serve to inadvertently perpetuate homelessness. Moral or ethical considerations aside, providing sustainable exits from homelessness is substantially more cost-effective than providing interventions based on emergency or other *homeless* services.

The recommendations outlined in this final section are based primarily on the data generated from Phases I and II of the research and are supported, where appropriate, by international and domestic evidence based on a detailed review of literature. We acknowledge that the study is based on a relatively small sample and that the subjects of the research were homeless at the time of initial contact with them. Nonetheless, the study's longitudinal perspective offers relatively rare insight into the dynamic nature of homeless experiences and has certainly succeeded in identifying young people's exit routes from homelessness as well as the factors and circumstances that can prevent this transition to stable housing.

We also acknowledge and welcome the commitment in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016* (Office for Social Inclusion, 2007:35–36) that 'the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) will undertake a review of progress on the implementation of the *Youth Homelessness Strategy* and develop a new programme of action in 2007.' The recommendations below focus on a number of crucial interventions for young people that have the potential to either exacerbate their homelessness or facilitate their exit. The divergent outcomes for young men and women is a striking finding of the research, with young women more likely to exit rather than remain in long-term homelessness. It may require a third wave of data collection to fully validate and more adequately explain this finding.

Recommendation 1: Develop more fluid models of service provision that do not strictly differentiate between persons under and over 18.

Currently, a young person may lose most (if not all) of their prior supports from State bodies on reaching the age of 18 and are then required to seek assistance from adult services. When, for various reasons, a young person does not rapidly exit the underage experience of homelessness, they are forced to rely on adult homeless services which may not have the resources or capacity to cater for their specific needs. More fluid interventions from child/youth services are crucial to prevent young people from ever entering the world of adult homelessness.

Recommendation 2: Formalise the role of the HSE in offering services to young adults who were homeless as children.

Section 45 of the *Child Care Act 1991* allows for aftercare for children who were previously in the care of the Heath Boards (HSE). This, however, raises the problematic issue of the legal status of homeless children under the Act. The HSE can provide accommodation to homeless children under Section 5 of the Act, but if the young person is not formally in care, then the provision of aftercare may not formally exist. To ensure, in all possible cases, that the entry to adult homeless services is minimised, formalising the role of the HSE in offering services to young adults who were homeless as children should be legislated as an amendment to the *Child Care Act 1991*.

Recommendation 3: Amend local authority housing need categorisations to include young people leaving all forms of substitute care, not simply institutional care.

Local authorities have both under-estimated and inconsistently recorded young people leaving institutional care or without family accommodation as part of their enumeration of housing need under their obligations under the *Housing Act, 1988*. It is recommended that the category for assessing housing need be amended to include young people leaving all forms of substitute care, not simply institutional care as the majority of children in care are now in various forms of foster care rather than institutions *per se*. All young people leaving the substitute care system should have their housing needs assessed by the local authority in which they reside and, if eligible for social housing, should be allocated accommodation appropriate to their needs. In particular, the development of the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and its ongoing implementation would appear to offer a useful mechanism to accommodate such young people.

Recommendation 4: Gather accurate and timely information regarding the outcomes for children in care.

All of the young people interviewed had experience of at least one specific intervention. The statutory expenditure is thus considerable for many, if not all, of the young people in the study. The high cost of these interventions and poor outcomes for some children, particularly for those detained within the criminal justice system, makes it an imperative, both in terms of value for money and in more adequately meeting the needs of children, that the nature of these interventions and their outcomes be evaluated. One of the key difficulties in this area is the lack of accurate and timely information regarding the outcomes for children coming out of care. While the unique challenges of youth homelessness make measuring success a challenge, this should not prevent the development of outcome measurement and value for money indicators.

Recommendation 5: Prevent imprisonment by greater utilisation of non-custodial sanctions.

The role of the criminal justice system in maintaining homelessness emerged as a significant theme amongst the study participants, particularly in the case of young men. The *Review of the Implementation of Homeless Strategies* acknowledged that the discharge policies for offenders had improved significantly since the initiation of the *Homeless Prevention Strategy*. However, experience of prison is still strongly indicated as a factor in some young people's pathway into continued homelessness. While a focus on discharge policies is important, preventing imprisonment through greater utilisation of non-custodial sanctions is a crucial objective. The gradual implementation of the non-custodial options of the *Children Act 2001* provides a positive example of this for children, where Section 92(2) stipulates that detention should only be used as a last resort. This research suggests that it would be highly beneficial to extend the provisions of Section 92(2) of the *Children Act 2001* to all young people under the age of 21. If such a measure was legislated, the pathway to continued homelessness could be blocked for a significant number of young people.

Recommendation 6: Integrate research findings on the nature of homelessness with the construction of service delivery models.

The provision of shelter or other forms of residential services are common responses to youth homelessness. However, a remarkably consistent finding of studies into the operation of such facilities is the belief that young people need structure in their lives to reverse their homelessness and that these facilities can

instill the required structure and discipline. A crucial finding from this research in relation to the provision of emergency accommodation is that while these hostels aim to make young people more responsible and impose a sense of structure on their often chaotic lives, they served an opposing function for at least a proportion of young people by diminishing their social networks and limiting them to contact with other homeless youth. The challenge is to develop symbiotic relationships between researchers and service providers in this area to develop models of service provision that best meet the needs of homeless young people.

Recommendation 7: Review all youth homeless services, both statutory and voluntary, to emphasise housing solutions to prevent the move to adult homelessness.

Young people should be moved into stable accommodation as soon as possible, where any other support needs can then be addressed, rather than seeking to address personal needs before assisting young people to find housing. A key challenge for service providers, both statutory and voluntary, is to develop facilities that maximise the likelihood of young people exiting homelessness into stable housing as soon as possible. All services should be reviewed in light of the overarching objective of attaining appropriate housing alongside personal support services. Obstacles to the rapid exiting of homelessness by young people should be identified and eliminated as far as possible.

Recommendation 8: Discontinue the use of Garda stations as the means of accessing the Out of Hours Services.

The initial portal into official homeless services for many of the young people was the Out of Hours Service. While acknowledging the necessity to provide a site where both young people and the Out of Hours staff are protected, the use of Garda stations is particularly problematic and a change in this policy has been recommended on numerous occasions over the past decade. Given that the number of young people who use the Out of Hours Service has declined significantly over the past number of years, this may provide an opportunity for a renewed attempt to devise an alternative organisational structure, in consulation with key stakeholders, to meet the needs of young people who present as homeless and to ensure that they exit homelessness as soon as possible.

Recommendation 9: A hybrid Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) should be utilised to house homeless youth.

The expansion of the rent supplement system provides an increasingly accessible route for housing single young people who do not receive priority or qualify for the various social and affordable housing schemes, and for whom market provision housing is not an immediate option. For young people, the housing system – and in particular the private rented sector – plays an essential role in facilitating (or obstructing) the transition to adulthood. Insistence on privileging local authority housing over RAS or the private rented sector ignores that only a small number of homeless households are accommodated in social housing provided by either local authorities or housing associations. Therefore, privileging local authority over other options such as RAS or the private rented sector may ultimately operate to the detriment of those seeking residential stability. Nonetheless, for young people without adequate family support, survival in the private rented sector without supports can be difficult. Therefore, a hybrid Rental Accommodation Scheme (operated in partnership with non-governmental organisations) appears to offer the requisite degree of security of tenure and a pathway to long-term social housing for young homeless individuals.

Bibliography

Allgood, S. and Warren, R.S. (2003) The duration of homelessness: Evidence from a national survey. *Journal of Housing Economics*, 12, 4, 273–290.

Anderson, I. (1994) *Access to Housing for Low Income Single People*. York: Centre for Housing Policy, University of York.

Anderson, I. and Christian, J. (2003) Causes of homelessness in the UK: A dynamic analysis. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 13, 2, 105–118.

Anderson, I. and Tulloch, D. (2000) *Pathways Through Homelessness: A Review of the Research Evidence*. Edinburgh: Scottish Homes.

Archard, P. (1979) *Vagrancy, Alcoholism and Social Control*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Armaline, W.T. (2005) 'Kids need structure': Negotiating rules, power, and social control in an emergency youth shelter. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48, 8, 1124–1148.

Atkinson, R. (2002) The life story interview. In J. F. Gubrium and J. A. Holstein (Eds) *The Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*. London: Sage. pp. 121–141.

Bahr, H.M. (1973) *Skid Row: An Introduction to Disaffiliation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Baldry, E., McDonnell, D., Maplestone, P. and Peters, M. (2006) Ex-prisoners, homelessness and the state in Australia. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 39, 1, 20–33.

Ballintyne, S. (1999) *Unsafe Streets: Street Homelessness and Crime*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Baron, S.W. and Hartnagel, T. (1997) Attributions, affect, and crime: Street youth's reacting to unemployment. *Criminology*, 35, 3, 409–434.

Becker, H. (1963) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press

Berthoud, R. (2000) Introduction: The dynamics of social change. In R. Berthoud and J. Gershuny (Eds) *Seven Years in the Lives of British Families*. Bristol: Policy Press. pp. 1–20.

Bessant, J. (2001) From sociology of deviance to sociology of risk: Youth homelessness and the problem of empiricism. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 29, 1, 31–43.

Biehal, N. and Wade, J. (1999) "I thought it would be easier": The early housing careers of young people leaving care. In J. Rugg (Ed) *Young People, Housing and Social Policy*. London: Routledge. pp. 79–92.

Bottrell, D. and Armstrong, D. (2007) Changes and exchanges in marginal youth transitions. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10, 3, 353–371.

Brooks-Gunn, J. and Rotheram-Borus, M.J. (1994) Rights to privacy in research: Adolescents versus parents. *Ethics and Behaviour*, 4, 2, 109–121.

Brooke, S. and Courtney, R. (2007) *Emergency Accommodation Overarching Report: Evaluations of Emergency Homeless Services in Dublin*. Dublin: Homeless Agency.

Buckley, H., Giller, H. and Brierley, M. (2006) The formation of information in child care: Herding cats or counting sheep. *Administration*, 54, 1, 72–87.

Busch-Geertsema, V. (2005) Does re-housing lead to reintegration? Follow up studies of re-housed homeless people. *Innovation*, 18, 2, 205–226.

Busch-Geertsema, V. and Sahlin, I. (2007) The role of hostels and temporary accommodation. *European Journal of Homelessness*, 1, 67–93.

Carlen, P. (1996) *Jigsaw – A Political Criminology of Youth Homelessness*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Cashmore, J. and Paxman, M. (1996) *Longitudinal Study of Wards Leaving Care*. Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre.

Caton, C.L., Dominguez, B., Schanzer, B., Hasin, D.S., Shrout, P.E., Felix, A., McQuistion, H., Opler, L.A. and Hsu, E. (2005) Risk factors for long-term homelessness: Findings from a longitudinal study of first-time homeless single adults. *American Journal of Public Health*, 95, 10, 1753–1759.

Chapple, C.L., Johnson, K.D., and Whitbeck, L.B. (2004) Gender and arrest among homeless youth. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 2, 2, 129–147.

Chamberlain, C. and MacKenzie, D. (1994) Temporal dimensions of youth homelessness. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 29, 1, 1–25.

Chamberlain, C. and Mackenzie, D. (2006) Homeless careers: A framework for intervention, *Australian Social Work*, 59, 2, 198–212.

Christensen, I. and Vinther, H. (2006) Exit from homelessness: Individuals with substance abuse or mental health problems. *International Journal of Mental Health*, 34, 3, 3–24.

Clapham, D. (2002) Housing pathways: A post modern analytic framework. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 19, 2, 57–68.

Clapham, D. (2003) Pathways approaches to homeless research. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 13, 2, 119–127.

Clapham, D. (2004) Housing pathways – A social constructionist research framework. In K. Jacobs, J. Kemeny and T. Manzi (Eds) *Social Constructionism in Housing Research*. Aldershot: Ashgate. pp. 93–116.

Clapham, D. (2006) Housing policy and the discourse of globalization. *European Journal of Housing Policy*, 6, 1, 55–76.

Clatts, M.C., Welle, D., Goldsamt, L.A. and Lankenau, S.E. (2002) An ethno-epidemiological model for the study of trends in illicit drug use: Reflections on the 'emergence' of crack cocaine. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 13, 4, 285–295.

Cleary, A., Corbett, M., Galvin, M. and Wall, J. (2004) *Young Men on the Margins*. Dublin: Katherine Howard Foundation.

Cloke, P., Milbourne, P. and Widdowfield, R. (2003) The complex mobilities of homeless people in rural England. *Geoforum*, 34, 1, 21–35.

Coates, D. and Norris, M. (2007) Young rent supplement claimants in the private rented sector: An analysis of socio-economic characteristics and duration of claims. *Youth Studies Ireland*, 2, 1, 32–44.

Cox, G. and Lawless, M. (1999) *Wherever I Lay my Hat: A Study of Out of Home Drug Users*. Dublin: Merchant's Quay Project.

Cox, G. and Comiskey, C. (2007) Characteristics of opiate users presenting for a new treatment episode: Baseline data from the national drug treatment outcome study in Ireland (ROSIE). *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 14, 3, 217–230.

Craig, T., Hodson, S., Woodward, S. and Richardson, S. (1996) *Off to a Bad Start: A Longitudinal Study of Homeless Young People in London*. London: The Mental Health Foundation.

Craig, T., and Hodson, S. (2000) Homeless youth in London: II. Accommodation, employment and health outcomes at 1 year. *Psychological Medicine*, 30, 1, 187–194

Culhane, D.P. and Kuhn, R. (1998) Patterns and determinants of public shelter utilization among homeless adults in New York City and Philadelphia. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 17, 1, 23–43.

Department of Health and Children (2001) *Youth Homelessness Strategy*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2008) *The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland, 2008–2013*. Dublin: Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2006) *Annual Housing Statistics Bulletin 2005*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Department of Social and Family Affairs (various years) *Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services*. Dublin: Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Duffy, D., Linehan, S. and Kennedy, H.G. (2006) Psychiatric morbidity in the male sentenced Irish prisons population. *Irish Journal of Psychiatric Medicine*, 23, 2, 54–62.

Dworsky, A.L. and Piliavin, I. (2000) Homeless spell exits and returns: Substantive and methodological elaborations on recent studies. *Social Service Review*, 74, 2, 193–213.

Edgar, B. and Doherty, J. (2001) Supported housing and homelessness in the European Union. *European Journal of Housing Policy*, 1, 1, 59–78.

Edgar, B., Doherty, J. and Mina-Coull, A. (2000) *Support and Housing in Europe: Tackling Social Exclusion in the European Union*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Ensign, J. (2003) Ethical issues in qualitative health research with homeless youths. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 43, 1, 43–50.

Fetterman, D.M. (1989) *Ethnography: Step by Step*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Fichter, M.M. and Quadflieg, N. (2006) Intervention effects of supplying homeless individuals with permanent housing: A 3-year prospective study. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 113, 1, 36–40.

Fitzpatrick, S. (2000) *Young Homeless People*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Fitzpatrick, S. and Christain, J. (2006) Comparing homelessness research in the US and Britain. *European Journal of Housing Policy*, 6, 3, 313–333.

Fitzpatrick, S. and Stephens, M. (2007) *An International Review of Homelessness and Social Housing Policy*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

Fitzpatrick Associates (2006) *Review of Implementation of Homeless Strategies*. Dublin: Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Fitzpatrick Associates (2007) *Transitional Housing Overarching Report: Evaluation of Transitional Housing and Support Services in Dublin*. Dublin: Homeless Agency.

Forum on Youth Homelessness (2000) *Report of the Forum on Youth Homelessness*. Dublin: Northern Area Health Board.

Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F. (1996) *Young People and Social Change*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Gaetz, S. and O'Grady, B. (2002) Making money: Exploring the economy of young homeless workers. *Work, Employment and Society*, 16, 3, 433–456.

Gerstel, N., Bogard, C.J., McConnell, J.J. and Schwartz, M. (1996) The therapeutic incarceration of homeless families. *Social Service Review*, 70, 4, 543–572.

Gowan, G. (2002) The nexus: Homelessness and incarceration in two American cities. *Ethnography*, 3, 4, 500–534.

Grigsby, C., Bauman, D., Gregorich, S.E. and Roberts-Gray, C. (1990) Disaffiliation to entrenchment: A model for understanding homelessness. *Journal of Social Issues*, 46, 4, 141–156.

Gubrium, J. and Holstein, J. (2002) From the individual interview to the interview society. In J. Gubrium and J. Holstein (Eds) *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 3–32.

Hagan, J. and McCarthy, B. (1997) *Mean Streets: Youth Crime and Homelessness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Halpenny, A.M., Keogh, A.F. and Gilligan, R. (2002) *A Place for the Children? Children in Families Living in Emergency Accommodation: The Perspectives of Children, Parents and Professionals*. Dublin: Children's Research Centre/ Homeless Agency.

Harocops, A. and Dennis, D. (2003) Maintaining contact with drug users over an 18-month period. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6, 3, 261–265.

Hart, I. (1978) *Dublin Simon Community 1971–1976: An Exploration*. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute.

Holland, J., Thomson, R. and Henderson, S. (2004) *Feasibility Study for a Possible Qualitative Longitudinal Study: Discussion Paper*. London: Economic and Social Research Council.

Homeless Agency (2007) *Annual Report 2006*. Dublin: Homeless Agency.

Holstein, J. and Gubrium, J. (1997) Active interviewing. In D. Silverman (Ed) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*. London: Sage. pp.113–129.

Houghton, F.T., Kelleher, P. and Kelleher, C. (2001) Children out-of-home in Ireland. In A. Cleary, M. Nic Ghiolla Phadraig and S. Quin (Eds) *Understanding Children. Vol.1: State, Education and Economy*. Cork: Oak Tree Press. pp. 79–98.

Hutson, M. and Liddiard, M. (1994*) Youth Homelessness: The Construction of a Social Issue*. London: Macmillan.

Irish Prison Service (2007) *Annual Report 2006*. Dublin: Irish Prison Service.

Joniak, E.A. (2005) 'Exclusionary practices and delegitimization of client voice: How staff create, sustain, and escalate conflict in a drop in centre for street kids'. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48, 8, 961–988.

Karabanow, J. (2008) Getting off the street: Exploring the process of young people's street exits. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 51, 6, 772–788.

Kellett, P. and Moore, J. (2003) Routes to home: Homelessness and home-making in contrasting societies. *Habitat International*, 27, 1, 123–141.

Kelly, F., Long, J. and Lynn, E. (2005) *Trends in Treated Problem Drug Use in the Health Service Executive Eastern Region, 1998–2002*. Dublin: Health Research Board.

Kidd, S. A. and Davidson, L. (2006) Youth homelessness: A call for partnerships between research and policy. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 97, 6, 445–447.

Kurtz, P.D., Jarvis, S.V. and Kurtz, G.L. (1991) Problems of homeless youths: Empirical findings and human services issues. *Social Work*, 36, 4, 309–314.

Kushel, M.B., Hahn, J.A., Evans, J.L., Bangsberg, D.R. and Moss, A.R. (2005) Revolving doors: Imprisonment among the homeless and marginally housed population. *American Journal of Public Health*, 95, 10, 1747–1752.

LaGory, M., Ritchey, F. and Fitzpatrick, K. (1991) Homelessness and affiliation. *Sociological Quarterly*, 32, 3, 201–218.

Lawless, M. and Corr, C. (2005) *Drug Use Among the Homeless Population in Ireland: A Research Report for the National Advisory Committee on Drugs*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Levine, R. J. (1995) Adolescents as research subjects without permission of their parents or guardians: Ethical considerations. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 17, 5, 287–297.

Linehan, S., Duffy, D., Wright, B., Curtin, K., Monks, S. and Kennedy, H. (2005) Psychiatric morbidity in a cross-sectional sample of male remanded prisoners. *Irish Journal of Psychiatric Medicine*, 22, 4, 128–132.

Lister, D. (2004) Young people's strategies for managing tenancy relationships in the private rented sector. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 7, 3, 315–330.

Long, J., Lynn, E. and Kelly, F. (2005) *Trends in Treated Problem Drug Use in Ireland, 1998–2002*. Dublin: Health Research Board.

MacDonald, R., Mason, P., Shildrick, T., Webster, C., Johnston, L. and Ridley, L. (2001) Snakes and ladders: In defence of studies of youth transition. *Sociological Research Online*, 5, 4, at: www.socresonline.org.uk/5/4/macdonald.htm

MacKenzie, D. and Chamberlain, C. (2003) *Homeless Careers: Pathways In and Out of Homelessness*. Swinburne and RMIT Universities.

MacKnee, C.M. and Mervyn, J. (2002) Critical incidents that facilitate homeless people's transition off the streets. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 11, 4, 293–306.

Mahon, A., Glendinning, C., Clarke, K. and Craig, G. (1996) Researching children: Methods and ethics. *Children and Society*, 10, 2, 145–154.

Mallet, S., Rosenthal, D., Keys, D., Myers, P. and Tattam, A. (2006) *Moving Out, Moving On: Young People's Pathways into and Through Homelessness*. Melbourne, Victoria: Key Centre for Women's Health in Society, University of Melbourne.

May, J. (2000) Housing histories and homeless careers: A biographical approach. *Housing Studies*, 15, 4, 613–638.

Mayock, P. (2008) Young people's homeless pathways and the offender-victimisation nexus. In D. Downey (Ed) *Perspectives on Irish Homelessness: Past, Present and Future*. Dublin: The Homeless Agency. pp. 76–86.

Mayock, P. and Carr, N. (2008) *Not Just Homelessness … A Study of 'Out of Home' Young People in Cork City*. Dublin: Health Service Executive, South.

Mayock, P. and O'Sullivan, E. (2007) *Lives in Crisis: Homeless Young People in Dublin City*. Dublin: The Liffey Press.

Mayock, P. and Vekić, K. (2006) *Understanding Youth Homelessness in Dublin City: Key Findings from the First Phase of a Longitudinal Cohort Study*. Dublin: Office of the Minister for Children.

McNaughton, C.C. and Sanders, T. (2007) Housing and transitional phases out of 'disordered' lives: The case of leaving homelessness and street sex work. *Housing Studies*, 22, 6, 885–900.

McLeod, J. (2000) Metaphors of the self: Searching for young people's identity through interviews. In J. McLeod and K. Malone (Eds) *Researching Youth*. Hobart: Advance Publicity. pp. 45–58.

Meade, M.A. and Slesnick, N. (2002) Ethical considerations for research and treatment with runaway and homeless adolescents. *The Journal of Psychology*, 136, 4, 449–463.

Mercier, C. and Racine, G. (1993) A follow-up study of homeless women. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 2, 3, 207–222.

Metraux, S. and Culhane, D.P. (1999) Family dynamics, housing, and reccurring homelessness among women in New York City homeless shelters. *Journal of Family Issues*, 20, 3, 371–396.

Metraux, S. and Culhane, D.P. (2006) Recent incarceration history among a sheltered homeless population. *Crime and Delinquency*, 52, 3, 504–517.

Milburn, N.G., Rosenthal, D., Rotheram-Borus, M.J., Mallet, S., Batterham, P., Rice, E. and Solorio, R. (2007) Newly homeless youth typically return home. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 40, 6, 574–576.

Minnery, J. and Greenhalgh, E. (2007) Approaches to homelessness policy in Europe, the United states, and Australia. *Journal of Social Issues*, 63, 3, 641–655.

Morrow, V. & Richards, M. (1996) The ethics of social research with children: An overview. *Children & Society*, 10, 90–105.

National Health Care for the Homeless Council (2004) *Homeless Young Adults Ages 18–24: Examining Service Delivery Adaptations*. Nashville: National Health Care for the Homeless Council.

Neale, B. and Flowerdew, J. (2003) Time, texture and childhood: The contours of longitudinal qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6, 3, 189–199.

Neale, J. (2001) Homelessness amongst drug users: A double jeopardy explored. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 12, 4, 353–369.

Office for Social Inclusion (2007) *National Action plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016*. Dublin: Office for Social Inclusion.

O'Brien, J. (1979) *'Criminal Neglect – Some Aspects of Law Enforcement as it Affects the Single Homeless* A Submission from The Simon Community (National Office) to The Commission of Enquiry into the Irish Penal System.

O'Donnell, I., Baumer, E.P. and Hughes, N. (2008) Recidivism in the Republic of Ireland. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 8, 2, 123–146.

O'Leary, E., O'Sullivan, K., O'Sullivan, D. and Gallagher, J. (2003) *The Psychological Experience of Homelessness*. Cork: Tower Books.

O'Loingsigh, G. (2004) *Getting Out, Staying Out: The Experiences of Prisoners Upon Release*. Dublin: Community Technical Aid.

O'Mahony, P. (1997) *Mountjoy Prisoners: A Sociological and Criminological Profile*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

O'Neill, A., Casey, P. and Minton, R. (2007) The Homeless Mentally Ill – An Audit from an Inner City Hospital. *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 24, 2, 62–66.

O'Sullivan, E. (1996) *Homelessness and Social Policy in the Republic of Ireland*. Occasional Paper No. 5. Dublin: Department of Social Studies, University of Dublin, Trinity College.

O'Sullivan, E. (2007) Criminalizing people who are homeless? *Homeless in Europe*, Summer, 3–4.

O'Sullivan, E. (2008) Researching homelessness in Ireland: Explanations, themes and approaches. In D. Downey (Ed) *Perspectives on Irish Homelessness: Past, Present and Future*. Dublin: The Homeless Agency. pp. 16–23.

Pain, R. and Francis, P. (2004) Living with crime: Spaces of risk for homeless young people. *Children's Geographies*, 2, 1, 95–110.

Park, J.M., Metraux, S., Brodbar, G. and Culhane, D.P. (2004) Public shelter admission among young adults with child welfare histories by type of service and type of exit. *Social Service Review*, 78, 2, 284–303.

Petersen, A.C. and Leffert, N. (1995) Developmental issues influencing guidelines for adolescent health research: A review. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 17, 5, 298–305.

Piliavin, I., Entner-Wright, B., Mare, R. and Westerfelt, A. (1996) Exits from and returns to homelessness. *Social Service Review,* 70, 1, 33–57.

Piliavin, I., Sosin, M., Westerfelt, A.H. and Matsueda, R.L. (1993) The duration of homeless careers: An exploratory study. *Social Service Review*, 67, 4, 576–598.

Pillinger, J. (2007) *Homeless Pathways: Developing Effective Strategies to Address Pathways into, through and out of Homelessness*. Dublin: Focus Ireland.

Pinkney, S. and Ewing, S. (2006) *The Costs and Pathways of Homelessness: Developing Policy-relevant Economic Analyses for the Australian homelessness Service System*. Melbourne: Commonwealth ofAustralia.

Please, N. and Quilgars, D. (1999) Youth homelessness. In J. Rugg (Ed.) *Young People, Housing and Social Policy*. London: Routledge. pp. 93–108.

Please, N. (1995) *Housing Vulnerable Single Homeless People*. Centre for Housing Policy, University of York.

Rashid, S. (2004) Evaluating a transitional living program for homeless, former foster care youth. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 14, 4, 240–248.

Rew, L., Taylor-Seehafer, M. and Thomas, N. (2000) Without parental consent: Conducting research with homeless adolescents. *Journal of the Society of Pediatric Nurses*, 5, 3, 131–138.

Rog, D.J. and Holupka, C.S. (1999) Reconnecting homeless individuals and families to the community. In L.B. Fosburg and D.L. Dennis (Eds) *Practical Lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homelessness Research*. Washington DC: Department of Housing and Urban Development; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, at: http://aspe.hhs.gov/progsys/homeless/symposium/11-Reconn.htm

Roman, C.G. and Travis, J. (2006) Where will I sleep tomorrow? Housing, homelessness, and the returning prisoner. *Housing Policy Debate*, 17, 2, 389–418.

Rossi, P.H. (1989) *Down and Out in America: The Origins of Homelessness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rugg, J. and Burrows, R. (1999) Setting the context: Young people, housing and social policy. In J. Rugg (Ed.) *Young People, Housing and Social Policy*. London: Routledge. pp. 1–16.

Saldana, J. (2003) *Longitudinal Qualitative Research: Analyzing Change Through Time*. Walnut Creek, Lanham, New York, Oxford: Altamira Press.

Seale, C. (1999) *The Quality of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Shlay, A. and Rossi, P. (1992) Social science research and contemporary studies of homelessness. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18, 1, 129–160.

Smith, H. (2008) Searching for kinship: The creation of street families among homeless youth. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 51, 6, 756–771.

Smith, J. and Ravenhill, M. (2004) *Undertaking Qualitative Research amongst Homeless Populations in the UK – Contrasting Strategies*. Paper to Workshop 4, Centre for Housing and Community Research, at: http://www.cuhp.org/admin/EditDocStore/WS4%20-%20Long%20-%20UK.pdf

Snow, D.A. and Anderson, L. (1993) *Down on Their Luck: A Study of Homeless Street People*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Snow, D.A., Baker, S.G. and Anderson, L. (1989) Criminality and homeless men: An empirical assessment. *Social Problems*, 36, 5, 532–549.

Sosin, M., Piliavin, I. and Westerfelt, H. (1990) Towards a longitudinal analysis of homelessness. *Journal of Social Issues*, 46, 4,157–174.

Sosin, M.R. (1992) Homeless and vulnerable meal program users: A comparison study. *Social Problems,* 39, 2, 170–188.

Stephens, J. (2002) *The Mental Health Needs of Homeless Young People*. Cardiff: Barnardos.

Stephens, M. and Fitzpatrick, S. (2007) Welfare regimes, housing systems and homelessness: How are they linked? *European Journal of Homelessness*, 1, 201–212.

Stockley, D., Canter, D. and Bishopp, D. (1993) *Young People on the Move*. Guildford: Psychology Department, University of Surrey.

Stojanavic, D., Weitzman, B.C., Shinn, M., Labay, L.E. and Williams, N.P. (1999) Tracing the path out of homelessness: The housing patterns of families after exiting shelters. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27, 2, 199–208.

Thompson, S.J., Safyer, A.W. and Pollio, D.E. (2001) Differences and predictors of family reunification among subgroups of runaway youths using shelter services. *Social Work Research*, 25, 3, 163–172.

Thomson, R., Holland, J., McGrellis, S., Bell, R., Henderson, S. and Sharpe, S. (2004) Inventing adulthoods: A biographical approach to understanding youth citizenship. *The Sociological Review*, 52, 2, 218–239

Thomson, R., Plumridge, L. and Holland, J. (2003) Editorial. Longitudinal qualitative research: A developing methodology. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6, 3, 185–187.

Wallace, S.E. (1965) *Skid Row as a Way of Life*. Totowa, NJ: Bedminister Press.

Wallace, S.E. (1968) The road to skid row. *Social Problems*, 16, 1, 92–105.

Ward, J. and Henderson, Z. (2003) Some practical and ethical issues encountered while conducting tracking research with young people leaving the 'care' system. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6, 3, 255–259.

Watson, S. and Austerberry, H. (1986) *Housing and Homelessness: A Feminist Perspective*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Wong, Y.L.I. and Piliavin, I. (1997) A dynamic analysis of homeless- domicile transitions. *Social Problems*, 44, 3, 408–423.

Wong, Y.L.I., Culhane, D.P. and Kuhn, R. (1997) Predictors of exit and reentry among family shelter users in New York City. *Social Service Review*, 71, 3, 441–462.

Wright, B., Duffy, D., Curtin, K., Linehan, S., Monks, S. and Kennedy, H.G. (2006) Psychiatric morbidity among women prisoners newly committed and amongst remanded and sentenced women in the Irish prison system. *Irish Journal of Psychiatric Medicine*, 23, 2, 47–53.

Yates, L. (2003) Interpretive claims and methodological warrant in small-number qualitative, longitudinal research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6, 3, 223–232.

Zlotnick, C., Robertson, M.J. and Lahiff, M. (1999) Getting off the streets: Economic resources and residential exits from homelessness. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27, 2, 209–224.

Zlotnick, C., Tam, T. and Robertson, M. J. (2003) Disaffiliation, substance use, and exiting homelessness. *Substance Use and Misuse*, 38, 3–6, 577–599.

Trinity College Dublin
children's research centre
research for children & young people

School
of Social Work
and Social Policy

Children's Research Centre
Trinity College Dublin
Dublin 2

Tel: +353 1 896 2901
www.tcd.ie/childrensresearchcentre

School of Social Work and Social Policy
Trinity College Dublin
Dublin 2

Tel: +353 1 896 1000
www.socialwork-socialpolicy.tcd.ie