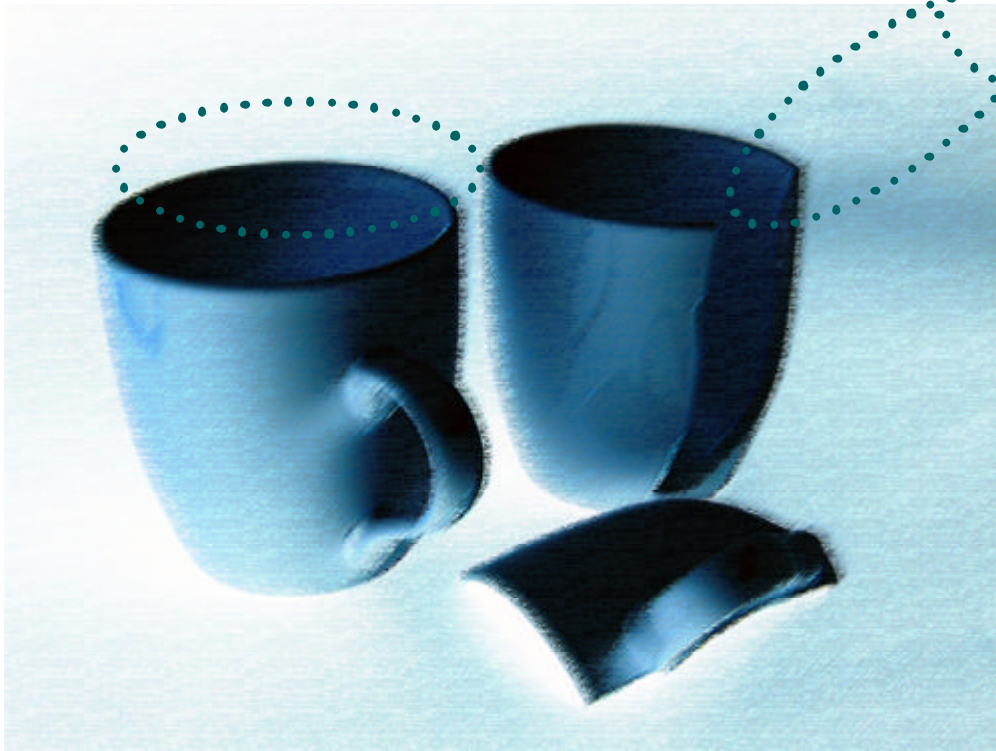
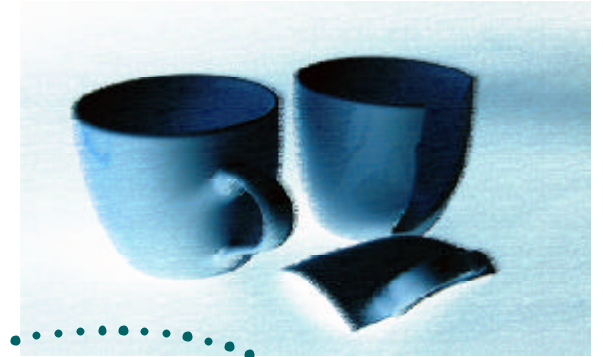


“...the Cup
with no
Handle”



Social Networks & Homelessness in Glasgow

March 2006



glasgow homelessness network

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with this piece of research during her placement with GHN.*

CONTENTS

1. Introduction: p5

What are Social Networks?

Social Networks & Homelessness

Social Networks & Service Provision

Aims of this Report

2. Methodology: p9

Social Networks Development Group

Social Networks Seminar

Service Provider Interviews

Service User Focus Groups

3. Research Findings: p13

Service Provider Interview Analysis

Service User Focus Groups

4. Conclusions & Recommendations: p21

5. Appendix: p27

Service Provider Questionnaire

Service User Focus Group Brief

Service User Focus Group Questionnaire

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Service Provider Interviews:

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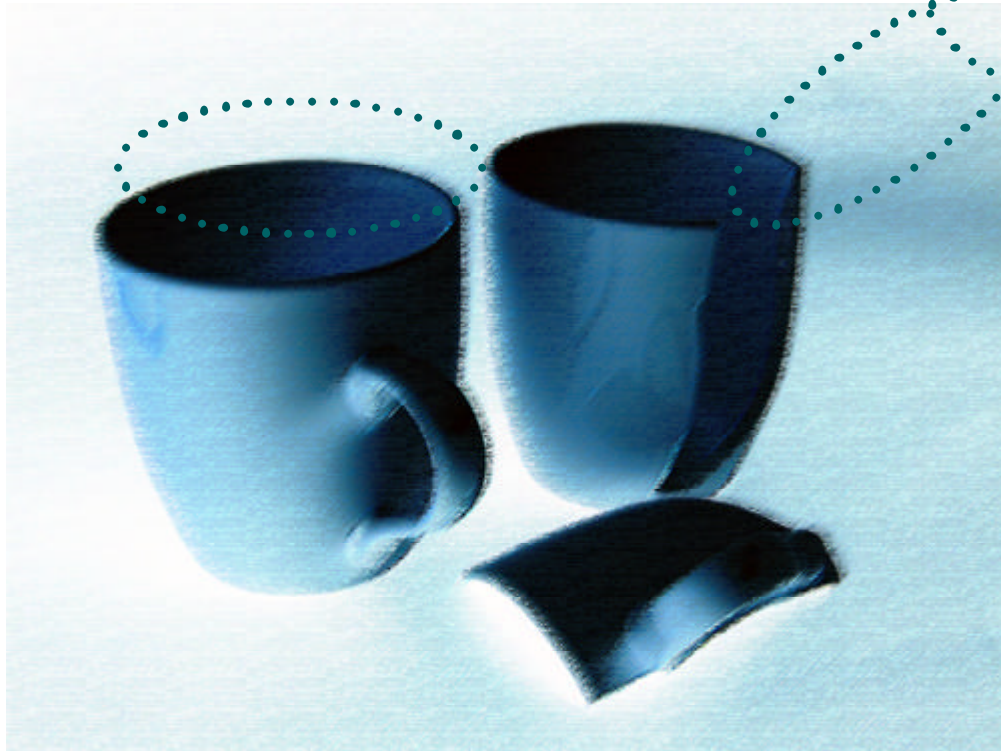
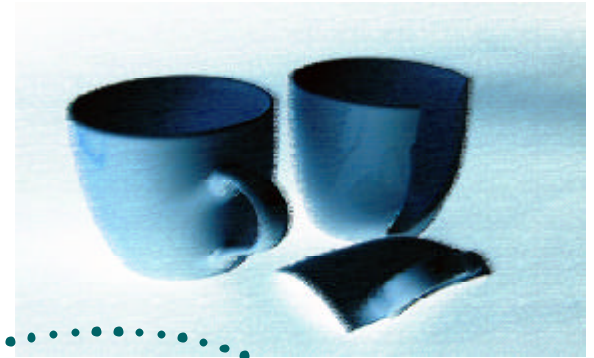
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Blue Triangle Housing Association
Glasgow Simon Community; Govanhill Women's Project
Lodging House Mission
Scottish Christian Alliance: The Arch
Wayside Day Centre



Introduction

“When I go to see my sister, I get the only cup in the house with no handle”

Social networks... Something so intrinsic to the foundation and fabric of our everyday life that most of us would not quickly be able to define or articulate the role they play or impact they have. Except perhaps if our life altered to such an extent that a family member, without comment or observation, started to give us the only cup in the house with no handle...

The purpose of this report was to establish what people affected by homelessness in Glasgow felt about their own social networks; whether disrupted or negative networks contributed to their homelessness; whether specific support for feelings of loneliness and isolation might have prevented or alleviated their homelessness; and what they intended or expected that their future (post-homelessness) social networks would look like.

Researching a theme of such a complex and emotive nature was certain to trigger complex and emotive considerations – and so we weren't startled when it did. Some people affected by homelessness in Glasgow were able to define and articulate that their overall

(Lodging House Mission Service user; 2005)

feelings and perceptions of self-worth, trust, hope and belonging were linked to and wrapped up in the quality of their social networks.

Crucially, some were able to define and articulate their own individual challenges to “wean” themselves off homelessness – that is, that the circumstance of homelessness in Glasgow, while damaging existing positive social networks, also created artificial ones which became difficult to leave behind when the homelessness system considered that it was now time to ‘resettle’ within new and unfamiliar communities.

We hope this report prompts the start of an ongoing dialogue and wider consultation in Glasgow - at planning, policy and practice level – with regards to our current and future capacity to empower and enable people to exercise their right to sustainable social and community integration (in other words, assistance to enjoy a *full life*) before or beyond homelessness.

**GHN Social Networks
Development Group; 2006**

1. INTRODUCTION

The final report of the Homelessness Task Force highlighted that homelessness is often caused by needs wider than housing that have not been recognised or effectively addressed. In addition, providing an effective response and promoting sustainable routes out of homelessness must also incorporate and recognise these more comprehensive needs. One of these wider needs identified within the final report was ensuring people have access to positive social support, through strong social networks.

What are Social Networks?

Social networks are something we all take for granted. Each individual's social networks are made up of their interpersonal relationships with family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances upon whom we can call for help, or simply chat to. Also, social networks can be built up through leisure activities, education and training and through linking into the wider community. Quite simply, strong social networks can be anything that adds value to someone's life.

As such, positive social networks can often be illustrated by three main characteristics:

1. *Mutuality – There is an existence of an obligation to each other within the social network;*
2. *Lasting – The relationship is not transient and all members of the social network expect to still be seeing each other in the future;*
3. *Beneficial – A level of security exists because help and assistance can be accessed through the social network.*

(Lemos & Crane, 2002)

Having strong social networks is something everybody needs but nobody really thinks about. The reality is, however, that these strong social networks play an important part in our lives as they encourage a sense of belonging and stability; promoting the acceptance and defining of ourselves, allowing us to live fulfilling lives.

“Having these relationships allow us to achieve things we are unable to achieve on our own”

(Field, 2003).

🏠 Social Networks & Homelessness

Recognising and responding to the need for people to have strong social networks can play a vital role in both preventing homelessness and supporting sustainable resettlement.

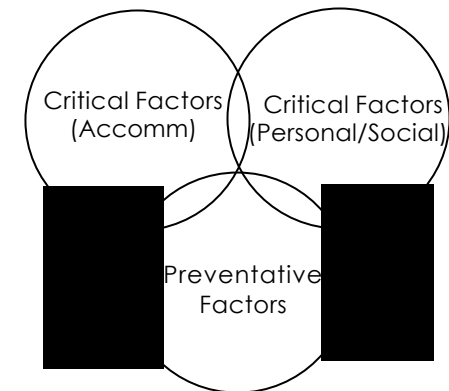
The Prevention of Homelessness:

The degeneration of social networks, e.g. family breakdown, is regularly cited as the reason for people initially becoming homeless, showing that the absence of social networks can be a direct cause of homelessness.

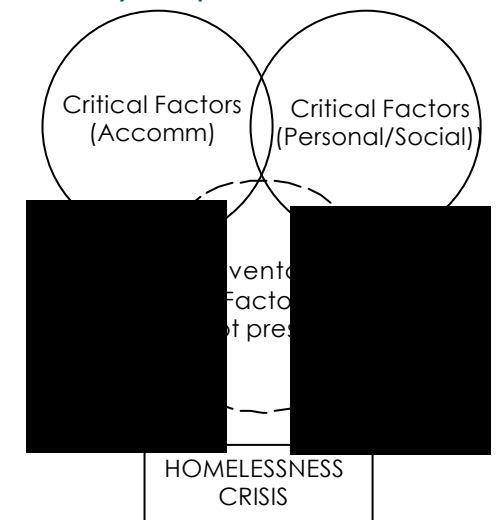
Research has also shown that having access to strong social networks can often help people address the other problems that are recognised as contributing factors to homelessness, such as mental illness, drug and alcohol misuse, enabling them to avoid the further trauma of homelessness (Lemos & Crane, 2002).

There has been a wide range of qualitative and quantitative research undertaken in Glasgow which clearly identifies the ‘critical factors’ that contribute to homelessness. Based on this, effective homelessness prevention might therefore be represented in the following diagram:

People with ‘preventative’ factors (outlined below) are more likely to be protected from homelessness crisis:



People without ‘preventative’ factors are more likely to experience homelessness



Critical factors are in relation to the accommodation (e.g. eviction) and personal/social triggers (e.g. mental ill-health) that contribute to homelessness in Glasgow.

However there are people who encounter a complex mix of critical factors, but who manage housing transitions without experiencing homelessness. Often, this is because the person will be protected by the following **'preventative'** factors:

- Positive **social networks** of family and friends
- Meaningful occupation - be employed, volunteering, in training or in education
- Access to a relevant range of advice and information about their circumstances and situation

Sustainable Resettlement:

The reality and culture of homelessness in Glasgow can often mean that people are greatly at risk of losing whatever social networks they have.

Sleeping rough and living in temporary accommodation can make it extremely difficult to repair relationships with family and friends (or just keep in touch) - as well as to forge new social networks.

This can make sustainable resettlement from homelessness difficult; figures in Glasgow show that one-third of tenancies allocated to people affected by homelessness break down within the first year (GHA, 2005). This is often caused by social isolation and loneliness which makes it problematic for people to move on from homelessness and integrate within communities.

 **Social Networks & Service Provision**

The Homelessness Task Force identified 3 main services that are key to assisting the (re)building of social networks in the prevention of homelessness - and among people already affected:

Befriending:

Befriending services focus mainly on carrying out social activities to encourage people to interact with their community and develop hobbies and interests in order to reduce social isolation and encourage social integration (Stenhouse, 2005).

Mentoring:

Mentoring services focus upon ensuring people are empowered to plan their own future. Mentoring is a more goal-focused activity and has been used

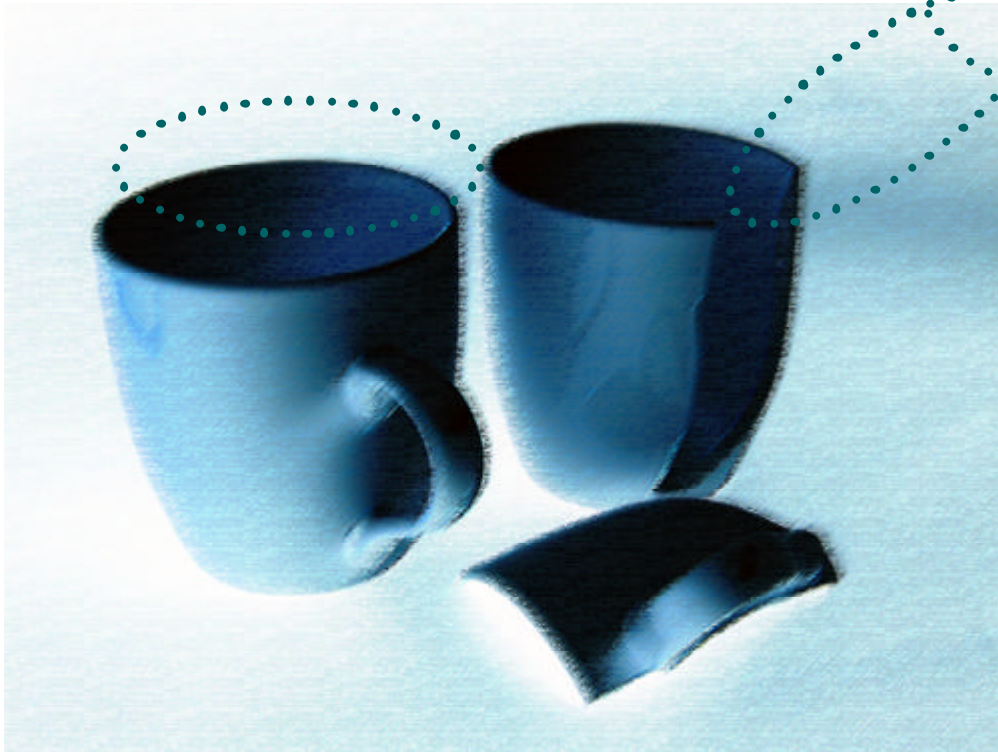
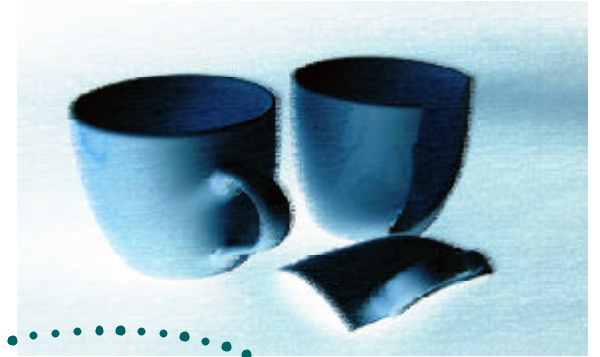
most frequently and successfully in relation to supporting people into education, training and employment (Stenhouse, 2005). Research by Lemos & Crane (2002) highlights the positive benefits of mentoring for people who acknowledge that aspects of their current situation or behaviour, eg the effects of drug or alcohol misuse, do not allow them to form new relationships or re-build previous ones.

Mediation:

Mediation services are particularly important in the re-building of social networks, both in preventing homelessness as well as successfully resettling from it. Many people feel that things have happened in the past which do not allow them to re-establish contact with their families, parents, partners or friends. Independent mediation supports people to reconsider and re-negotiate previous and/or current relationships, where this is appropriate.

Generic Homelessness Services:

The importance of ensuring that person-centred services exist that promote the pivotal role of social networks needs greater clarity in homelessness strategies. Raising awareness among services and staff to consolidate the consideration of social networks as a core activity is key.



Methodology

2. METHODOLOGY

The overall aims of this research were:

- To relate the national objectives outlined in the final report of the Homelessness Task Force to the local Glasgow level;
- Encapsulate and present the views of *service providers* as to the role and impact of social networks in the prevention and alleviation of homelessness in Glasgow;
- Encapsulate and present the views of *service users* as to the role and impact of social networks in the prevention and alleviation of their own experience of homelessness;
- Map the range of existing services and resources; identifying gaps and potential for replication.

Since March 2005, work has been ongoing to establish and record views and perspectives of the role and impact of (re)building social networks for people affected by homelessness in Glasgow.

The work has been carried out in four main ways:

- i) Social Networks Development Grp
- ii) Social Networks Seminar
- iii) Service Provider Interviews
- iv) Service User Focus Groups

GHN Social Networks Development Group

GHN established the Social Networks Development Group in March 2005, under the wider umbrella of the Voluntary Sector Forum. Membership of the group has come from a variety of agencies that already recognised the importance of social networks for people affected by homelessness:

- Aspire
- Greater Easterhouse Alcohol Awareness Project
- Quarriers Befriending Project
- Scottish Churches Housing Action
- Shelter Families Project
- Youthstart

An action plan was developed which included the need for research on service user's perspectives of social networks and homelessness in Glasgow.

SSNF/GHN Social Networks Seminar (Glasgow)

The final report from the Homelessness Taskforce recommended that:

- 56) A national coordination role be created to build and coordinate local mediation, befriending and mentoring services for homeless people.

As a result, the Scottish Social Networks Forum (SSNF) was established, and its Coordinator, Lesley Stenhouse, organised a number of seminars across the country to provide an opportunity for local authority staff, voluntary organisations and others involved in homelessness, mentoring, befriending or mediation to work together to make a positive difference to the support offered to people affected by homelessness.

The expertise of GHN's Social Networks Development Group was used to help plan and facilitate the Glasgow event, held in June 2005. The agenda for the day included presentations from a local and national perspective, as well as workshops that captured the participants' views on:

- Definitions of social networks
- Impact of no/negative social networks
- Role of specialist/generic services
- Gaps in current provision: tools and services
- Next steps: at a service and local authority level

Information from the seminar fed back into the remit and priority areas of GHN's Social Networks Development Group, and also forms part of the information base for this report.

Service Provider Interviews

As part of their action plan, GHN's Social Networks Development Group undertook a mapping exercise of befriending, mentoring and mediation services for people affected by homelessness in the city. Information was also captured on generic organisations who clearly identified the role of social networks in the prevention and alleviation of homelessness (eg day centres and housing support providers in Glasgow).

Following this, the group wanted to research and record current approaches used by each (specialist and generic) service in Glasgow that had been mapped on a city-wide and locality basis. In order to do this, a questionnaire was designed to capture information on the nature and reach of the services provided and a basic profile of clients accessing the service.

How did we interview?

GHN carried out interviews with 15 organisations across the city who, in the main, were visited and interviewed face-to-face. Time restrictions meant some telephone interviews were undertaken.

The questionnaire was broken down into 4 sections: Service Provision; Clients;

Staff & Volunteers and the Future. A copy of the questionnaire template can be found at the back of this report.

Why carry out a questionnaire?

Questionnaires are the most frequently used method of carrying out sociological research, and are generally regarded as being a quantitative research tool. However by conducting them on a face-to-face basis for this research it allowed them to capture qualitative data as well.

What did we want to learn?

One of the aims of this report is to identify gaps and potential for replication in current approaches to supporting the building or rebuilding of people's social networks, including through befriending, mentoring and mediation services. We also wanted to capture practitioner's views on the role and impact of social networks on people accessing their service.

Service User Focus Groups

Most importantly, the research wanted to explore the connections and relationships that people who are or have been affected by homelessness have with other people and organisations in Glasgow.

6 service user focus groups were carried out in a diverse range of organisations

across the city, to ensure an accurate as possible representation of views, in terms of age, gender and accommodation type. These organisations were:

- Aspire
- Blue Triangle Housing Association
- Govanhill Women's Project
- Lodging House Mission
- The Arch
- Wayside Day Centre

Why use Focus Groups?

The main purpose of the focus groups is to draw upon the respondent's feelings, attitudes, experiences, beliefs and reactions in a ways in which would not be possible using different methods. The attitudes and feelings of the individuals are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails. Focus groups bring out a wealth of views and emotional processes within a group context. Also, they enable the researcher to gain a larger amount of information in a shorter period of time.

However, focus groups can be difficult to bring together. It many not be easy to get a representative sample. Also, the method of focus group discussion may also put off some people from trusting others with personal or sensitive

information. Hence, it is crucial that the aims of the focus group were explained, to help people feel at ease and help the interaction between the group members. A copy of the focus group questions can be found at the back of this report.

Ethical Issues

When selecting and involving participants, the researcher must ensure that information about the purpose and use of participants contribution is agreed. A particular issue to think about in the case of focus groups is the use of sensitive material and confidentiality given due to there being more than one participant in the group. Participants must be encouraged to keep confidential what they hear during the meeting and researchers have a duty to anonymise information from the group.

Desk-based Research

Following the interviews being carried out with service providers, a desk-based mapping exercise was carried out to clearly identify and

record the full 'reach' of each service provider, in terms of restrictions placed as a result of geography, age, gender, capacity or funding.

The most prominent restrictions for service providers were in relation to funding limitations and capacity. The organisations interviewed were categorised as follows:

Housing Support

Of the 5 organisations highlighted, 4 are limited by their geography.

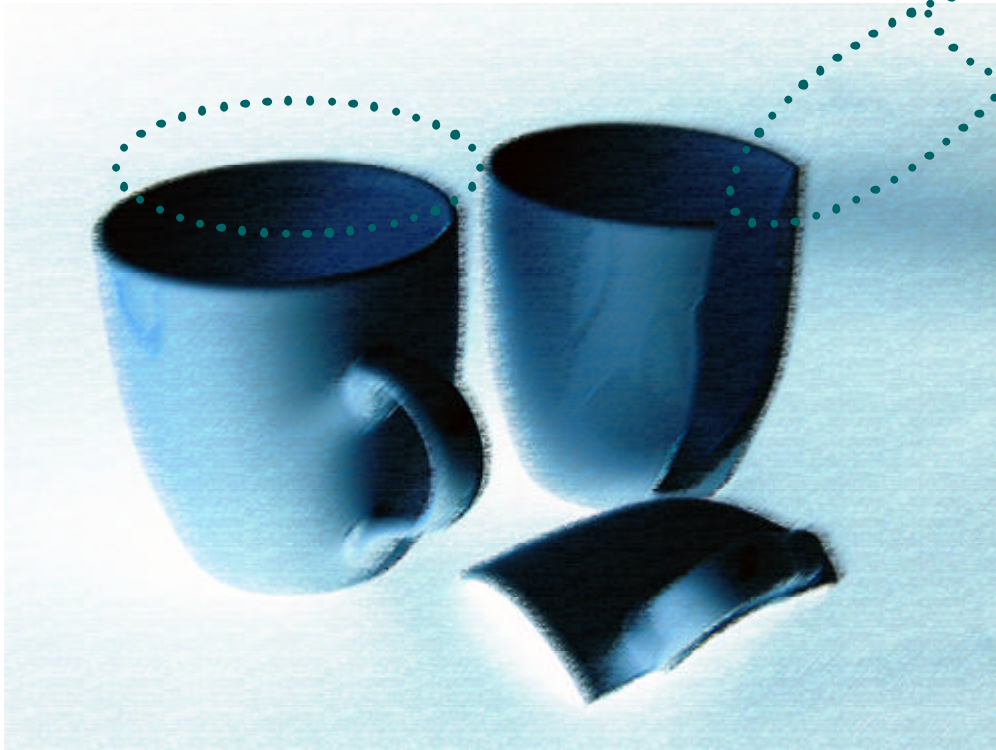
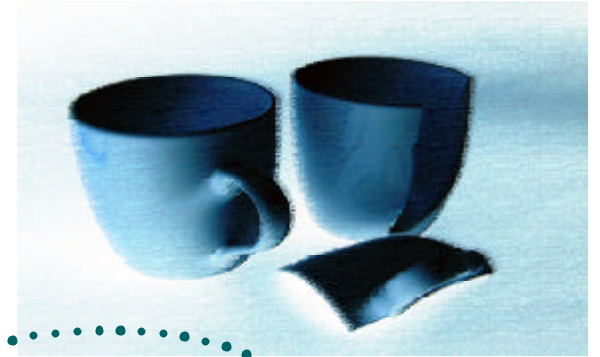
Day Centres

All 4 day centres are clustered within or near to the city centre.

Specialist Services

The 6 organisations are scattered throughout the city, providing a mixture of befriending, mentoring and mediation support.

The complete desk-based analysis that mapped and measured the reach and range of key 'social network' service providers is available as a separate document. However, the key findings are incorporated into and inform the conclusions and recommendations of this research and report.



Research Findings

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Analysis of interviews with Service Providers

GHN staff undertook a structured interview with 15 service providers across the city that recognise the important links between social networks and homelessness. The organisations interviewed can be split into three main types of service providers working across the city:

- Housing Support Providers
- Day Centres
- Specialist Services

This section of the report provides an overview of the responses of each of the different types of service providers to the social networks questionnaire.

● Housing Support Providers

The five housing support providers in Glasgow were interviewed, as well as the Glasgow Rent Deposit and Support Scheme, which provides housing support, often in conjunction with the other providers, to people getting tenancies through their service.

Role of Social Networks:

The services providing housing support

for people affected by homelessness in Glasgow view ensuring that those using their services have access to strong social networks as central to the aims of their organisation. On the whole, it is agreed that the ultimate aim of resettling people back into local communities is going to be very difficult to achieve if there is not additional work undertaken to ensure that those feeling vulnerable as a result of their experiences are not excluded, at a personal and social level, from these communities. The exclusion and isolation that people often feel when working towards resettlement is regularly what causes a return to chaotic lifestyles and, ultimately, repeat homelessness.

Service Provision:

In terms of the detail of the service provided by Housing Support staff, it mainly focuses on helping people maintain their tenancy by improving finance and budgeting skills, cooking skills, and accessing social activities. Budgets for social activities are available for the majority of the organisations, but it is often limited, and one organisation has no budget for this area of work at all. All of the Housing Support Providers highlighted that their staff were not befrienders, but recognised that there is very often a small befriending role for them to play. The work of the support providers is mainly done on an outreach basis, although some of the services do provide additional support on-site. Each of the support providers cover a

particular area of the city and, as such, can only work with people in the relevant localities. The five Housing Support Providers together ensure that there is full geographical coverage for the city in terms of this type of support.

Clients:

On average, the Housing Support Providers in Glasgow work with between approximately 150 to 480 clients on an annual basis, although this is calculated in different ways across the agencies. The support provided to clients is monitored on a regular basis, with individual support plans in place that are regularly reviewed and updated in order to assess and take account of progress being made.

Staff:

Each of the Housing Support Providers use paid staff (ranging from 35 to 150 members of staff) to provide support, and for half of them, the amount of clients the organisation can take on is limited by the maximum number of hours of support the staff can provide. If this capacity is reached, waiting lists are put in place for people who require the housing support. Each member of staff has to go through an Enhanced Disclosure Check by Disclosure Scotland, and they also have an induction period at the beginning of their employment, ranging from two weeks to four weeks, that covers training in health and

safety, policies and procedures, addictions, homelessness and mental health issues, and the remit and boundaries of the role of a support worker. In terms of matching staff with the clients they will support, the Housing Support Providers tend to base this upon staff availability and workload, always trying to match female clients with female members of staff, although some do try to base the match on common interests in an attempt to ensure the success of the relationship.

Future Service Provision:

In general, the Housing Support Providers working across the city identified the need for more specialist services within the localities in order to ensure that clients who could benefit from more intensive and ongoing support can access this. It was recognised that befriending and mentoring services can help avoid situations of people being left isolated and unsupported in their tenancies.

- **Day Centres**

The four main day centres in Glasgow were interviewed, all of whom have a wider role of providing a crisis response to people affected by homelessness across the city, as well as providing a daily structure and range of 'meaningful activity' for the large

numbers of people who regularly access each service.

Role of Social Networks:

Day Centre staff easily identify the importance of social networks among people who use their service, as by their nature they facilitate social contact. They advise that resettlement for this client group can be particularly difficult in the absence of strong social networks. This is often due to isolation triggering a return to the day centre service, or that the stigma surrounding homelessness is hindering an individual's attempts to integrate into their local community.

Service Provision:

The main services provided by the Day Centres include a mix of social and educational activities, and without using the terminology, a lot of their work falls under the definition of befriending. Across the four centres there is also a mix of services such as mediation and one-to-one support. On the whole, each of the day centres have funding to cover the costs of social activities carried out with people accessing the service, and most of the work carried out is done on an on-site basis, only providing outreach when required. Overall, the only restrictions to the service provided by the day centres is that some are unable to work with families.

Clients:

The day centres support the highest

volume of people affected by homelessness in Glasgow on a daily basis. Each of the day centres also collect at least basic monitoring information, such as gender, age and engagement with other agencies. However, some have very thorough monitoring in place and have individual care plans for those who use their service on a regular basis.

Staff:

All four of the day centres use a mixture of paid staff and volunteers, although support related to peoples social networks is generally only carried out by paid staff. Half of the day centres have a maximum amount of clients they can work with at any given time, and this is mainly due to staff workloads and health and safety requirements for the building. With regards to matching processes between staff or volunteers and clients, all of the day centres try to match females together as much as possible, and there are also attempts to match by age. The final decision with matching often comes down to the workload of staff, however. In terms of screening processes for staff and volunteers, application forms, interviews, references and Disclosure Scotland checks are all in place, and induction training is provided at a basic level across all of the day centres, mainly focusing on health and safety.

Future Provision:

The common themes of improvements for future provision across the day centres included better training available for staff to incorporate social networks into drug and alcohol services.

- **Specialist Services**

5 specialist services were interviewed, 3 of which carry out befriending, and two that focus on mentoring.

Role of Social Networks:

The specialist services identified have, as their overall aim, the promotion of the social networks of people affected by homelessness. Their experience highlights that social isolation often prevents people from integrating into society and, as such, create further barriers to accessing education, training and employment opportunities. This often results in low self-esteem and lack of confidence, making people more at risk of homelessness or a return to homelessness.

Service Provision:

The main areas of work carried out by the specialist services tends to focus on carrying out social activities to increase confidence to interact with the local community, although one service focuses specifically on people accessing education, training and employment.

Half of the services have specific budgets available to carry out the social activities with clients, while some have made a deliberate decision not to provide funding due to the specific nature of the client group they are working with. Others have no access to budgets at all. Each of these services carry out their work on an outreach basis, but are mainly restricted in who they work with due to age (working specifically with young people), geography (only working within certain localities), funding and status (such as clients having 'leave to remain').

Clients:

On average, the specialist services work with between 50 and 200 clients on an annual basis and in-depth monitoring of progress and any issues' arising is carried out. The majority of services fill in 'diary sheets' after each visit with a client and these are reviewed regularly to ensure that both the client and the staff are happy with developments.

Staff:

The specialist services are split in terms of using paid staff or volunteers. Most tend to use one or the other, with only one using a mix. In addition, 4 out of the 5 services have a maximum number of clients they can work with at any time, mainly as a result of funding and staff availability. When it comes to staff

recruitment, all services but one have Disclosure Scotland checks in place, with this not being a requirement for the remaining service. Extensive inductions and training are carried out to ensure that those providing the service are aware of issues such as boundaries, confidentiality, and other issues related to homelessness and the reasons for it occurring. Further training to supplement the knowledge gained throughout the induction is also available through a number of the services. The specialist services also tend to place more of an emphasis on having solid matching processes in place to ensure the success of the relationship. Most of the services will take into account hobbies and interests, age, gender, employment status and family situations when deciding on the best staff/client match. One service in particular allows for the clients themselves to choose who they want to work with, often based on the same issues highlighted. Processes are also in place to ensure the match can subsequently be changed.

Future Service Provision:

The ability to recruit more staff and volunteers to increase the capacity of the service to carry out the befriending and mentoring was highlighted across the specialist services as an important way of improving services in the future.

Analysis of Service User Focus Groups

The purpose of the Service User Focus Groups was to explore the connections and relationships that people who are or have been affected by homelessness have with other people and organisations in Glasgow.

6 focus groups were facilitated by GHN with a small group of service users from each of the host organisations - a basic profile of participants is provided below:

FOCUS GROUP PROFILE Numbers participating:

26 people in total

Gender:

15 men and 11 women

Age:

Between 20 and 57 years, with an average age of 37

Accommodation type:

17/Supported Accommodation
7/Own Tenancy
1/Temporary furnished flat
1/Rough sleeping

The findings from the Service User Focus Groups will be presented under the following headings:

- **Social Networks in the Prevention of Homelessness**
- **Impact of Homelessness on Social Networks**
- **Social Networks during Homelessness**
- **Social Networks & Resettlement**

Social Networks in the Prevention of Homelessness

When asked to consider the role of social networks prior to becoming homeless, 3 key themes arose from the focus groups:

- i) While some people were unsure about their level of influence, social networks were mentioned in each group as a direct factor in causing homelessness, either through:

- Relationship breakdown
- Family breakdown
- Bereavement

“Your ego stops you asking family for help.”

- ii) People discussed how you are much more likely to become homeless if your social networks are smaller, less varied and less robust.

- iii) Services were not available (or accessible) to support individuals or families where there was a clear risk of homelessness; e.g. services that could have reduced the risks associated with a relationship breakdown or conflict between young people and parents which led directly to accommodation crisis.

Impact of Homelessness on Social Networks

Participants were asked to consider the impact that being homeless has had on existing social networks. Many people articulated how their social networks could have survived had they *not* become homeless or had better supports existed while they were homeless.

People talked specifically about relationships with **family, friends, partners and children** that were damaged or lost as a result of homelessness. The impact of homelessness created both **emotional** and **practical** difficulties and barriers to sustaining social networks:

Emotional difficulties and barriers

- Being rejected by family and friends as a result of homelessness and related issues (e.g. addiction):

“Family remove money from my reach.”

- Losing confidence and trust in sustaining existing relationships and developing new ones:

"Folk will stab you in the back."

- Feelings of shame and detachment; some people related this specifically to how they felt they looked:

"When you're sleeping rough... people don't want to be around you."

Practical difficulties and barriers:

- Homelessness systems and structures damaging social networks. Reduced places to see family - 'no visitor' rules in hostels and other accommodation types:

"It's not fair to be in a hostel and then call someone while they are sitting up in a big house."

- Losing custody of children
- Losing contact with people; being preoccupied with homelessness and other more fundamental priorities:

"I haven't seen my family since I was 16" (30-year old)

- Financial constraints; can't afford

to travel to see family or money to go out with friends:

"if you have money in your pockets you have plenty of friends."

 **Social Networks during Homelessness**

Focus group participants were asked to consider the social networks they had developed since becoming homeless. These were most likely to be:

- Other homeless people
- Formal support: staff & agencies

Other Homeless People

People often encountered the same difficulties with peers whilst they were homeless as with family members prior to their experience of homelessness (specifically traumatic incidents including abuse and sudden death). The conflicting nature of peer relationships among people affected by homelessness was discussed; how these can be both positive and negative (as defined by focus group participants themselves):

Positive: Some strong friendships were made while people were homeless. These were often characterised by shared experiences and practical support (sometimes financial and/or addiction

based). Peer relationships also offered safety, comfort, camaraderie, encouragement and humour. They provided non-judgemental company and emotional reciprocity:

"you can commiserate with each other."

Negative: Many people spoke about having developed pragmatic acquaintances rather than firm friendships and losing trust in people through being exploited by peers. People talked extensively about the damaging impact of exploitation which was seen as particularly relevant in hostel style accommodation:

"it's about survival in hostels."

Formal Support (staff and agencies)

Formal sources of support (support staff and agencies) were valued by many people as new relationships that were developed during their experience of homelessness. Similar to new networks developed with peers, the professional support networks developed as a result of homelessness were considered to have both positive and negative aspects:

Positive: People felt valued and made to feel like somebody worthwhile. Staff also offered practical and emotional support; social activities and help to fill the time:

"I was out of touch with my brother for 22 years until the [-] encouraged me"

Negative: Often viewed as a substitute family, but the sustainability of this support network is not feasible. One participant blamed an agency for breaking up an important relationship (alcohol co-dependency), and a perception that the emotional void this created was not addressed.

Social Networks & Resettlement

Social networks were seen as a key factor in resettlement – both in terms of facilitating and potentially hindering sustainability. It was clear that the chance of people sustaining resettlement was dependent on them having a range of social networks, each interacting at different phases of the resettlement process.

People expressed fear about moving on from homelessness, and whether their social networks were strong enough to support this transition. A lot of people expressed fear about moving out of supported accommodation or *"cutting ties with homelessness"*. Many people had experienced others who had moved into their own accommodation

but had struggled to cope and had become homeless again. These fears often relate to peoples' concerns about being isolated, unsafe and lonely.

The role of social networks in resettling from homelessness was considered through the following aspects:

- Common Concerns
- Role of families/friends
- Role of Staff/Agencies

Common concerns raised throughout each of the focus groups were:

- **Safety.** Women in particular talked about how safe they felt in supported accommodation. Generally people were concerned that, in the absence of other people to keep them safe if they lived by themselves, they could be exposed to violence or harassment from other people, including family members:

"I keep to myself in my high rise."

- **Relationships** with peers. A lot of people talked about their social network during their experience of homelessness being comprised extensively of other homeless people. Many people were afraid that they would become socially isolated and

bereft of emotional support if they moved out of these networks. Specifically, how to re-negotiate relationships made during homelessness:

"going back to your old haunts and your old ways."

- **"Managing your door"** - concern that peoples' new homes would become 'skippers'; that geography would change but not the damaging aspects of peoples' relationships:

"I'm trying to break away from the people I have met through [-] who I used to drink with but it's really hard."

- **Isolation** - the majority of people appeared to be pessimistic about their chances of developing new relationships or successfully managing and re-establishing existing ones, once they moved on from homelessness

"There are no places to meet people."

- **Boredom** - it was clear that many people developed a structure for their time during their experiences of homelessness. People were very concerned about what would fill their day if they lived alone or had nowhere to go each day.

Role of families/friends

A number of people said that *graduating* contact with their family during the time when they were looking to move on from homelessness was crucial. A large number of people spoke about how trust between family members had been damaged. Attempting to re-establish contact with family members whilst they were still homeless or having an addiction had presented set backs for some people:

“You think you’re doing well but they don’t. It cuts your confidence.”

Many people said that being around other homeless people who had begun to reconnect with family was the spur to them thinking about doing the same.

Specific issues were raised about childcare. Women in particular said that it had been difficult for them to re-establish contact with their children, particularly where children had not been cared for by family members whilst the person was homeless.

And while some people were keen to get back in touch with family members, others wanted no contact with family or the past:

“People might not want to re-establish contact, especially if contact has been lost because of violence.”

Role of Staff/Agencies

People spoke about the following contribution that supportive agencies had made that assisted their resettlement from homelessness:

- Substituting the perceived role of families (a range of practical, social and emotional supports);
- Improving peoples’ confidence and therefore their willingness to take risks with social relationships (including family) and look for new relationships;
- Restoring peoples’ faith in other people – by treating service users with respect and not exploiting them;
- Providing good accommodation and practical supports (including cooking and washing facilities). A large number of people in the focus groups were ex-residents of big hostels who said that they were not ready to think about moving on;
- Identifying whether re-establishing contact is appropriate and where so, actively supporting people.

Focus group participants also described the type of support and services that were not available (or accessible), which would assist their resettlement:

Night time support – people talked about being particularly lonely or afraid at night, and whether this could be provided via visiting support, a phone line or ‘drop-ins’:

“Just somebody to check that you are getting on ok.”

Housing/floating support. Overwhelmingly people spoke about the importance of housing support that travelled through pre-resettlement phase with them, or that it was implemented immediately upon somebody moving into accommodation:

“Don’t let people stew!”

Support to negotiate the management of their existing and new relationships:

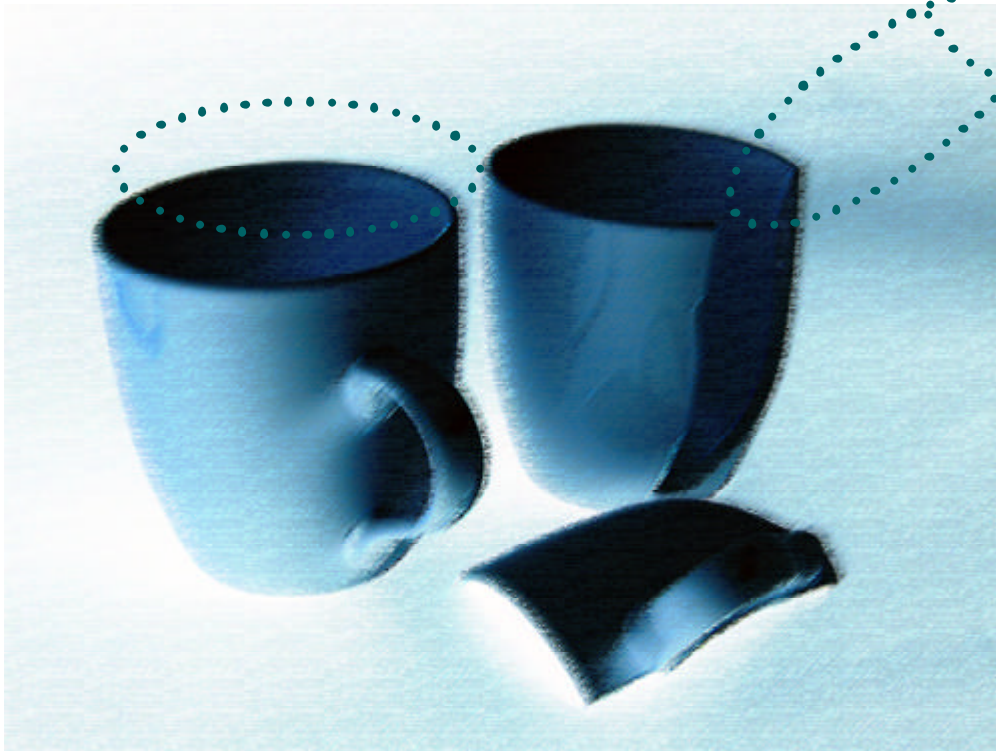
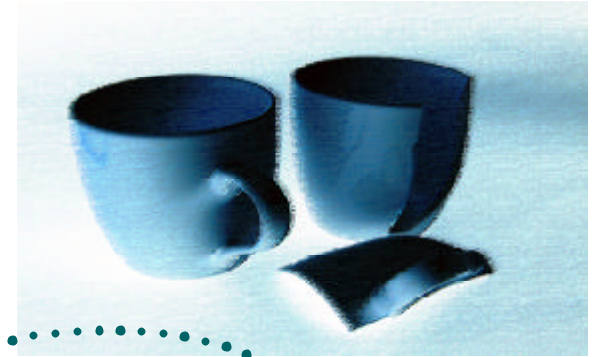
“The more you are alone, the more likely you are to revert to bad habits.”

Information and Support to locate and access locally based services, including opportunities for training, employment, volunteering or education were viewed as important to integrate into new areas:

“Getting a job – it will give you money to do things, keep you busy and keep you motivated.”

Help with **furniture** for their house and better access to furniture grants:

“A bare room feels very lonely.”



Conclusions & Recommendations

This research aimed to:

- Relate the national objectives outlined in the final report of the Homelessness Task Force to the local Glasgow level;
- Encapsulate and present the views of *service providers* as to the role and impact of social networks in the prevention and alleviation of homelessness in Glasgow;
- Encapsulate and present the views of *service users* as to the role and impact of social networks in the prevention and alleviation of their own experience of homelessness;
- Map the range of existing services and resources; identifying gaps and potential for replication.

The conclusions and recommendations contained within this section of the report have directly resulted from the undertaking of these aims.

By categorising this learning under 3 broad headings as outlined below, it is possible to demonstrate the complex interplay between social networks and homelessness in Glasgow:

- Social Networks in the Prevention of Homelessness
- Social Networks & Resettlement
- Social Networks and Service Provision in Glasgow

🗨️ Social Networks in the Prevention of Homelessness

Throughout the series of Service User Focus Groups, the role that social networks played in individual experiences of homelessness in Glasgow were recurrently attributed to:

- Relationship breakdown
- Family breakdown
- Bereavement

Services were not deemed available (or accessible) to support individuals or families where there was a clear risk of homelessness - that is, services that could have reduced the risks associated with the above situations leading directly to accommodation crisis. Therefore, it was subsequently identified that the key service interventions in Glasgow that many people would benefit from are Mediation and Counselling services.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** It would be beneficial for the Glasgow Homelessness Strategy to formalise joint working arrangements with existing **mediation & counselling** services in Glasgow. The role of **advice, information and signposting** to such services should be fully considered and incorporated into the Glasgow Homelessness Partnership's Homelessness Advice & Information Strategy and Communications Plan.

Employability & Opportunity

As illustrated in the introduction to this report, key 'protecting' factors from homelessness in Glasgow include access to a positive set of social networks and 'meaningful occupation' of time through employment, training, education or volunteering. It is apparent that these two areas are interrelated: meaningful occupation provides access to new social networks, while new social networks inevitably present new opportunities for people to meaningfully occupy their time. Therefore, an additional preventative element would be undertaking further exploration of how these interrelated roles can be most effectively developed and deployed in Glasgow.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** Employment Planning Groups (Employment Planning & Implementation Group (**EPIG**); and Employability & Opportunity sub group of the Homelessness Planning & Implementation Group (**HPIG**)) in Glasgow should fully consider and incorporate the role of Social Networks in their action planning. This would logically and primarily focus on the target and objective setting that is associated with **mentoring services**.

Housing Associations

Clarity regarding roles & responsibilities

of Housing Associations/RSLs in the prevention of homelessness in Glasgow continue to be developed. As one aspect of this, the Glasgow Homelessness Partnership should explore funding partnership through Communities Scotland 'Wider Role' Funding Programme. The aim of such a partnership would be to increase capacity for a Glasgow befriending and mentoring network that promotes and ultimately increases the likelihood of tenancy sustainment.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** That opportunities to increase tenancy sustainment created by the facilitation of a befriending and mentoring network in partnership with Housing Associations/RSLs through the **Communities Scotland 'Wider Role'** Funding Programme are fully explored by the Glasgow Homelessness Partnership. The service outline should incorporate **flexible operating hours** (evening, late evening and weekends), as highlighted through the service user focus groups.

Social Networks & Resettlement

The role of social networks in promoting sustainable resettlement has been discussed throughout this report in terms of combating the loneliness, isolation and fear that people experience when moving on from homelessness. Resettlement is

often viewed as a complexity of 'unknowns' facing people during an already transitional and stressful stage of their lives; which in itself can contribute to the recurrence of homelessness. For example, both service providers and service users highlighted that **the issue of** "managing your door" when attempting to leave behind old (*negative*) social networks and forge new (*positive*) ones contributes to this transitional and unsettling time. Where people have difficulty 'managing their door', trouble or disruption within the property can inevitably occur; in turn leading to neighbour complaints and consequent action being progressed under anti-social behaviour legislation.

Therefore, the current circumstances of a person's social networks are a key factor in resettlement – both in terms of facilitating and potentially hindering its sustainability. It is clear that the success by which people are sustaining resettlement is largely dependent on them having a range of social networks, each interacting at different phases of their resettlement process.

The existence of specialist services focusing on the (re) building of social networks has an important part to play in the wider issues relating to sustainable resettlement. Where, as this research recommends, a befriending and mentoring network in partnership with Housing Associations/RSLs is progressed, then such a service would concurrently perform a resettlement support role.

Social Networks and Service Provision

Specialist 'v' Generic Homelessness Services

It is evident that a person's social networks are not something that can simply be confronted when other issues have been resolved. Rather they are central to enabling people to successfully deal with the range of crises related to their own homelessness - such as drug or alcohol misuse, or mental ill health - and consequently working towards these issues being alleviated.

Generic support workers across the city can therefore facilitate the building or rebuilding of social networks as part of their ongoing work - and many already are. However, current feedback highlights the need for good-practice guidelines that will assist staff to incorporate basic issues around social networks into their work and care plans.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** GHN's Social Networks Development Group should seek financial assistance to develop and publish a **Social Networks Toolkit** for support staff across the homelessness network in Glasgow. This resource should increase awareness and expertise among staff which will enable them to focus on the key issues around social networks for people accessing their

service. The unique issues and considerations associated with the (re) building of social networks among **young people, women and minority ethnic groups** should also be fully considered within this resource. A current directory of key mediation, counselling, befriending & mentoring services should also be incorporated.

The role of generic support staff is limited, however, as the work around relationships may highlight the need for **more specialist support**, in the form of befriending, mediation or mentoring (Lemos & Crane, 2002). Consequently, the development of social networks for people affected by homelessness in Glasgow must also be tackled at a specialist service level.

The service user focus groups, carried out across a variety of homelessness services in Glasgow, highlighted a substantial level of fear amongst people moving on from homelessness – fears mainly about isolation, loneliness, boredom and safety that make sustainable resettlement seem unattainable. However, those with personal experiences of using specialist services, such as befriending, mentoring or mediation to build or rebuild their social networks articulate how these specific needs are addressed through

a dedicated service, which cannot be fully dealt with in the more generic services that are looking to play a number of roles concurrently. However, the mapping exercise undertaken as part of this research highlighted service gaps; both geographical and age restrictions in the availability of this type of specialist service. This was further exacerbated by the Quarriers befriending service for young people closing during 2005 after 7 successful years as a result of continuation funding ending.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** The complex, unique and
- challenging issues associated with young
- people affected by homelessness, including
- the age-specific impact of peer relationships create a real demand for a **mentoring and befriending service specifically for young people under the age of 25.**

Targeting all age groups, a befriending model being used throughout Scotland is the **'By My Side'** project, run by **Scottish Churches Housing Action (Churches Housing)**, which takes a capacity building approach to the development of befriending services at local level for people affected by homelessness. Funded in part by the Scottish Executive, it is a three year programme to develop at least six new befriending schemes in different parts of Scotland in conjunction with existing organisations and suitable local partners. The model uses trained, supported and vetted volunteer befrienders to work alongside paid

staff so that the service can be provided in addition to other work. In Glasgow, the SCHA model is being implemented by the **Glasgow Rent Deposit & Support Scheme (GRDSS)** who are developing a service in partnership with Housing Support Providers that will provide at least 20 befriending matches a year.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** It is important that
- appropriate service capacity is
- deployed that will effectively support
- (re)building social networks of people affected by homelessness. The stage of development of the **GRDSS** proposed service and its position within a national model, make it a logical service to **pilot, review and measure demand** for a city-wide approach to the fundamental issues surrounding social networks & homelessness in Glasgow.

Day Centres in Glasgow

'Day Centre Services in Glasgow: Recommendations and Considerations for future development' (GHN; 2005) undertook a review of existing research and a comparison of the functions undertaken by homeless day centres across the UK. One of the key recommendations from this report was:

"while services may be based in the city centre, day centre services should work on

an outreach basis and seek to support people within the communities into which they are resettling where possible. They should be adequately funded to work in this manner"

(Day Centre Services in Glasgow: Recommendations & Considerations for future development; GHN 2005)

Within the context of assisting the (re) building of a person's social networks, this recommendation is particularly significant due to both the high volume capacity of the Day Centres in Glasgow and, more specifically, the percentage of people who continue to use them after securing accommodation.

Were an outreach strand incorporated into the remit of the day centres, its key function would be to provide a reliable, consistent, person-centred support service for people using their service, through each phase of their individual resettlement. When a person feels more connected with their new community, the service may be appropriately withdrawn. This is likely to reduce the potential for repeat episodes of homelessness and may also assist some people to move on completely from homelessness, leaving any existing negative social networks behind.

There are however 2 areas where this outreach aspect may not be appropriate:

- (i) For young people (under 25) who would not normally access the Day Centres in Glasgow
- (ii) Within a preventative role, where the overall aim is to divert 'first-time' families and single people from traditionally 'homeless' environments

Otherwise, the qualitative evidence gathered throughout the course of this research supports the need for this type of outreach service on a befriending and/or mentoring basis.

• **RECOMMENDATION:** The Glasgow Homelessness Partnership give further consideration to the use of Day Centres in providing **outreach befriending/mentoring** for day centre service users who have moved on from homelessness but continue to use the Day Centre services.

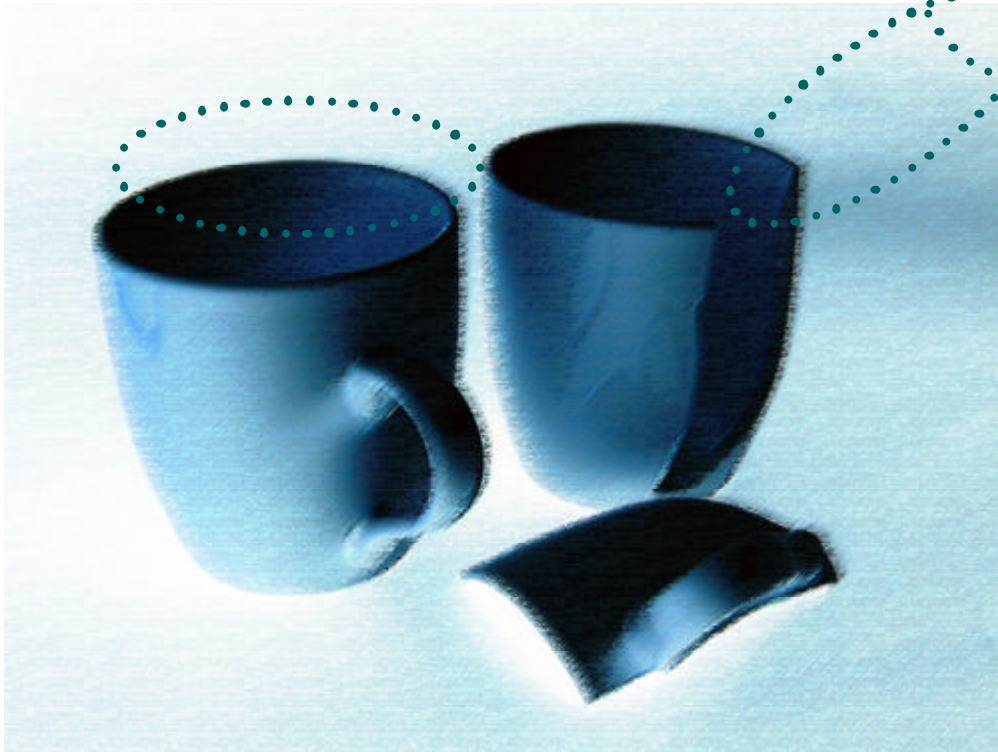
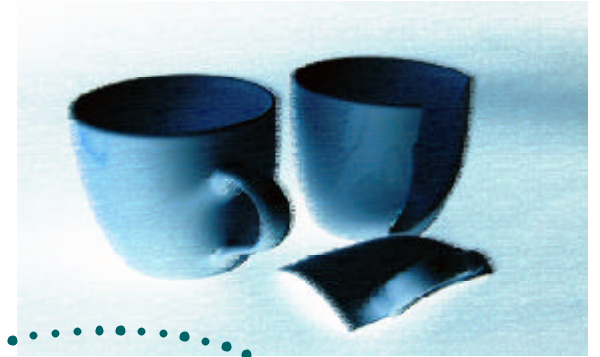
Finally, a number of separate research, review and evaluation work recently undertaken in Glasgow has prompted the potential role of Glasgow's Soup Kitchens to be more fully considered. Glasgow has a number of soup kitchens which are largely managed by charities and voluntary sector organisations, with none in receipt of local authority funding. Within the context of this research, it is clear that soup kitchens provide a service to a high

number of people, some of whom are resettled into tenancies but who may ultimately be at risk of homelessness or repeat homelessness. The outcomes of harnessing this existing client contact with the purpose of developing meaningful engagement through a befriending and/or mentoring service might be very positive.

However before initiating this development, it would be important to ascertain the level of cross-over between people who regularly access Day Centres in Glasgow and those who frequent soup kitchens.

In supporting the (re) building of social network among both service user groups, we need first to have evidence that clearly indicates the extent and nature of overlap.

• **RECOMMENDATION:** The Glasgow Homelessness Partnership should undertake additional research which clearly indicates the extent of multiple service use across Day centres and Soup Kitchens in Glasgow. From this, further examination of the potential role for soup kitchens in providing an initial engagement of people who would opt to access a befriending or mentoring service should be undertaken.



Appendix

GHN SOCIAL NETWORKS QUESTIONNAIRE

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2005

The purpose of this questionnaire is to establish what services exist in Glasgow to improve the social networks of people affected by homelessness and to provide an up-to-date picture of what kinds of services are provided, where they exist and who they work with.

The first section looks at information regarding service provision, while sections two and three look at information on clients using the service and the capacity of staff to provide the service. Section four is looking for ideas and suggestions for service delivery in the future, both in terms of your own service and at a general level across the city.

1. Contact Details for Organisation

Name:

Address:

Post Code:

Telephone:

Fax:

Email:

SECTION 1: SERVICE PROVISION

- a) What is the nature of the service provided?
- b) Do you have specific funding available for activities with clients?
- c) Where do social networks fit into your overall service? Is it your overall service?

- d) What are your services experiences of the impact of social
- e) Do you provide the service on an outreach basis, or on-site?
- f) Are there any restrictions to the service you provide?
- g) Is the service you provide only available to existing clients?

SECTION 2: CLIENTS

- a) How many clients do you work with on an annual basis?
- b) Do you collect monitoring information on the clients accessing your service?
- c) Could you provide us with case studies of the positive benefits of your service to your clients?

SECTION 3: STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

- a) Does your service use volunteers or paid staff?
- b) Does your organisation have the capacity to take on more clients or does it only work with a maximum number at a time?
- c) What is your process for matching up clients with staff/volunteers?
- d) What induction and/or training do you provide for staff and volunteers?
- e) Do you have a screening process in place for the recruitment of staff/volunteers?

SECTION 4: THE FUTURE

- a) If you had a wish list to improve your current service and service provision across Glasgow, what would be in it?

GHN Social Networks

Brief: Service User Focus Groups

What is the group about?

We wish to explore the connections and relationships that people who are and have been affected by homelessness, have with other people and organisations. These connections can be made up of family, friends, colleague and acquaintances. Put simply, these are people that we know, who we can chat to or call on for help. Everyone's connections are unique to him or her. As a shorthand we use the phrase Social Networks. We tend to take Social Networks for granted as they have always been there.

What do we want to find out?

We would like to establish if someone becomes homeless because they have smaller or less tight social networks (i.e. few friends or limited contact with family) or does someone have limited social networks as a result of becoming homeless?

We want to know if resettlement (moving out of homelessness) can be successful without people having robust social networks? For example, people are often resettled in parts of their city they don't know and find it difficult to meet people and feel at home there).

Also, there are some services that provide support to help people strengthen their social networks e.g. befriending, housing support or mediation services and we would like to find out if people who have been homeless know about the services and what they think of them.

What will the groups be like?

We want to speak with people who have experienced homelessness to find out what they think the role of social networks is. There will be three people in the group who will be asking 6 questions based on the themes above. There will be no more than 7 people in the group who will be answering questions in the group. Refreshments will be provided and the group will last no longer than an hour.

We know that some people might find talking about their experiences of homelessness difficult and we will be sensitive to this. You will not be pushed to answer the questions and you can leave the group at any time.

We are hoping to record the group on tape to make it easier for us to write it up but we will not do this if you tell us that you don't want us to. The tape will be kept for a period of three months and then be recorded over. We will ask that everybody who comes to the group respects everyone else's confidentiality but this cannot always be guaranteed so it is important to be sure beforehand if you want to talk about very personal things. Everybody who attends will get £2.70 to cover expenses. If you need additional help with travel, let us know in advance if possible.

What will happen after the group?

A report will be written up which will also include the views of people who work in homelessness services. This report will produce some recommendations and will be passed on to people in charge of planning services. You can get a copy of the report by contacting us after the group.

The research will be conducted by staff and a placement student from Glasgow Homelessness Network (GHN). GHN is an organisation that seeks to represent the views of people affected by homelessness in Glasgow.

GHN Social Networks
Questionnaire: Service User Focus Groups

1) What role, if any, do you think that social networks play in people becoming homeless?

- (a) For example, do you think that people who have less contact or strong ties with family, friends or other sources of support are more likely to become homeless?
- (b) Would it be your view that quite often a break up of social networks can be a direct cause of homelessness?

2) Do you think that being homeless can affect your social networks?

- i) For example, -
 - (1) do you think that it is harder to keep in contact with family and friends when you are homeless?
 - (a) If so, why?
 - (2) do you think that people make different friendships or relationships when they are homeless?
 - (a) If yes, what kind?

3) In terms of moving on from homelessness, what role do you think that social networks play?

- i) e.g. does having strong social networks (e.g. lots of people / good relationships) increase your chances of moving on?

- ii) Does having less strong social networks reduce your chances of moving on from homelessness?

4) How can people be supported to re-establish contact with family, partners or friends that they may have lost contact with as a result of homelessness?

- a) Can anybody think of examples of things that have helped them?

5) Following on from that, what kinds of things do you think could help people who are isolated or lonely while they are homeless?

- Can anybody think of examples of things that have helped them?

