

HOUSED AND UNHOUSED TWO WORLDS

Edited by Philip Morgan
and Roberta Piazza



Alexander the Great:

‘Is there anything I can do to help you?’

Diogenes: ‘

Yes, you can step aside; you’re blocking my light.’



First Base Day Centre, Brighton, offers food, clothes, washing facilities and a route to available services for unhoused individuals. This book centres on interviews conducted with staff and service users at First Base during 2017.

‘It’s something that
could happen to
anyone, anyone,
**there’s no exception
to the rule.**’





WHAT DO YOU THINK THE GUYS WANT?

So... what do you think the objective of the service should be? I mean, what do you think the guys want? I say guys...

A: STAFF MEMBER, FEMALE, 45': Mmm.

...because most of them are men.

Well, some people will tell you that they want housing and some people will tell you that they definitely don't want housing. I think...I think people want to feel a sense of belonging.

1) No names are used in this book, only the letters of the alphabet; this is to respect the speakers' identities, not to render them invisible. The information about age and gender I hope will contribute to understanding these people better.



WHAT DO WE DO?

B: STAFF MEMBER, MALE, 45: So when you say what do we do, it starts from the very second someone walks through that door. I think walking through that door is someone asking for help and should be greeted with simple things: eye contact, a smile, shake of a hand and shown through, listened to. These are all the things that are important to people wanting recognition. And, from speaking to a lot of homeless people, when they're out on the streets, they're in this crazy kind of paradoxical life where they're highly visible; they're very much kind of in the world, but they feel excluded from it. They watch it and it goes by, all the options that people have: going in and out of shops and pubs and clubs and walking down the road with bags of shopping and in relationships and a couple of kids walking behind – all of these things are not for them at that particular time, or they may have had and have lost. They observe a life and a world and a society that they are not actually a part of.

And they don't really get much back from that society, particularly individuals: someone might drop them a pound, someone might stop and listen, someone might verbally abuse them or hit them, but they have this position looking in from the outside. What I like to think is that when they come into First Base, that's when they are stepping into a society that actually does care and actually does want to hear what they have to say and actually does value them. And in order to convey that right from the outset a non-judgemental attitude to whoever walks through the door



THE UNHOUSED AND THE DIS-MEMBERED ARE FEARED

is essential. And that shouldn't change once we later find out maybe not particularly nice details about things that have happened to people or things that people have done. We're always working towards... we have an attitude where – 'OK so that's what's happened, where do we go with that? Where are we moving on with that? Where are we going forward? How can we help?' is basically the bottom line.

So what do we do? We like to help; we want to help. We want to give people pants and socks and something to eat and somewhere to wash, somewhere to step out of you know this, like I say, the paradoxical life they lead on the streets into a place of inclusion and, you know, somewhere where they actually are listened to, and then on from there treating each person as an individual that needs to be treated in order to be able to help them the most.



Those with homes build ever longer and more heavily guarded perimeter walls to keep out and exclude the homeless and the dispossessed. Systems of care create ever more elaborate ways of excluding the disorderly and the disordered from our services and from our minds. The unhoused and the dis-membered are feared and pushed away because they threaten our idea of what it is to feel that we are in a 'housed' state of mind and members of normal social groupings.

Adlam/Scanlon²

²] Adlam and Scanlon refers to articles published by Christopher Scanlon, *South London and Maudesley NHS Trust* and John Adlam, *Henderson Hospital Democratic Therapeutic Community*.

HOW I ENDED UP ON THE STREET or LOSING IT ALL



C: UNHOUSED, MALE, 62: Me mum and dad died when I was seven, me sister brought me up, me sister died about nine years ago – cancer. I was living with her and that's how I ended up on the street.

D: UNHOUSED, MALE, 66: Yeah. It's, yeah... notice a lot of laddies in here same as myself, there's mental health problems. The majority of it, I would say, is mental health.

How did you lose your place?

E: UNHOUSED, FEMALE, 29: Um, they kind of sort of fucked me over really. And they're very clever at it, to turn it on to you so it's your fault and you've made yourself...

Made yourself homeless?

Yeah. They used that one on me. Basically I lost my children, um, 2014, I lost my children and you know so they... 2015...

What, they took them into care?

Yeah, they took them off me ... my mental health. I just weren't coping no more and, um, I was diagnosed with a few mental health problems. They used that against me quite a lot, um, but when I lost my children, um, my money got stopped for my children, which is fair enough, but because

I'd never been in that situation before I didn't understand all the, like, certain things. It was the first time they took the kids off me so, but, um, because my children's money got stopped my housing benefit got stopped but I didn't know. The first I knew, I got a letter – and actually they done the same thing to a friend of mine really recently, they're doing it to her now – um, I got a letter saying I owed eight hundred something pound and I wasn't like receiving any money, um, I wasn't even eating. I was having to keep going to people's for dinner and stuff like that cos I didn't have no money and so, yeah, I was so how do you expect me to pay this, I can't even afford to feed myself? Eight hundred something pound, but it went up each week. Obviously it got more and more and more, and they took me to court and they took my house off me so it does kind of it feel like they fucked me over and now it's... I've appealed it a few times with BHT.³ They helped me but the council are really hard ones – when they've made their mind up that's it. Feels like they do it deliberately, though. Because I was supposed to be downsizing, that was the original plan.

Yeah, so you go to a smaller place.

Giving up the house and stuff, um, but yeah this feels like, I don't know, just feels like one thing after another so... But a plus though, I do still see my daughter.

That's good.

I don't see my boys but I do see my daughter. That's the only good thing at the minute until I get a roof over my head and then I can be more stable. I'm not very stable at the moment. I'm diagnosed with an unstable personality disorder and it kind of defeats the whole thing, like them kicking me out onto the streets making me more unstable.

More unstable, yeah.

I've had the doctor write letters and say that I need to be stable and I'm diagnosed with a stability disorder, you know: I need to be stable, my mental health has deteriorated. I need a base. And they're like no, not good enough. They told me to get that letter, it's really weird and no it's not good enough, so...

³] BHT: Brighton Housing Trust: Local charity providing a range of services around housing, homelessness, resettlement, substance misuse, mental health and benefits.

What do they mean 'not good enough'? You're not ill enough?

Yeah, basically the letter wasn't good enough. They said to get a letter from my doctor's as proof and I did so, but it was like they sent me on a wild goose chase for nothing. They're like, no sorry it's not good enough. It's literally like there's nothing...

F: UNHOUSED, MALE, 35: Everyone's different really, er, because everyone is in different situations. I got evicted this time for rent arrears. I had bad jobs, zero hours contracts. I wasn't going to earn a decent wage to pay me bills and things like that with a zero hours contract. I didn't create a zero hours contract, that's a government that created that, government and employers that created a zero hours contract. Why did they create a zero hours contract? So they can save money by not giving you whatever hours you need to live off. So I started; I don't think I could work anything less than thirty hours a week with the type of bills that you have to pay. For anything below that you're not going to be able to afford anything, you're not going to be able to pay anything and you're just going to get yourself into debt. That's what happened with my flat: zero hours contract.

I had to travel sixteen miles to work and yet I was coming out with, like, fourteen hours a week or something. It was like, well how, how can I pay the fuel? Seventeen hours a week, you've got to do that every day, sixteen miles, that's probably just the fuel money for me car. What about me other expenses? So I got rent arrears, got kicked out in the end. Er, yeah, people look down on you sometimes, saying it's your fault you've put yourself on the streets – not always, because everyone's different. Some people may have put themselves on the street by taking drink, drugs, going too mental, but I didn't put meself on the streets this time, I say that's down to government people, government figures, stating that certain laws are changing, cutbacks. So I can't earn a living wage. Er... the minimum wage, I think it's a bit low personally but, er, you've got to go with it. So I became homeless and I've been homeless for the past two years now.

D: M, 66: A lot of people are what you would call itinerant, move from county to county, big job to big job. I've been like that most of my life, since I was 20, from say a big power station to motorways and all that... thrown-in caravans and bed and breakfast ... massive amount of money. And then this is a completely different situation, since I was about 55. Yeah, physically and mentally broken, yeah. You're working twelve, fourteen hours a day at times like winter, summer ...



‘LOCK ’EM IN’, ‘LOCK ’EM OUT’, ‘THROW ’EM OUT’ OR ‘LOCK ’EM UP’

A powerful voice within the wider social system complains that some homeless people are intentionally homeless. They are choosing to be outside, and therefore we need not think about their needs. Instead they are construed as anti-social, delinquent or deviant, rather than dis-

placed. The impulsive societal response is to ‘lock ’em in’, ‘lock ’em out’, ‘throw ’em out’ or ‘lock ’em up’.

Adlam/Scanlon



A TYPICAL DAY



C: M, 62: Just walking all the time.

Where are you sleeping at the moment?

I'm sleeping up the top of the road. You know where the church is?

The Baptist church, you mean? Which one?

You go out of here, you go left, right up the top of the hill, up the top of the road, there's a graveyard. There's an office block over the road. I'm in there 'cos I've got CCTV camera on me twenty-four hours a day.

What, to keep you safe?

Yeah. That's where I sleep. People do wake you up sometimes in the night, just to say hello. I just try not to respond to them; it's too early in the morning. I don't drink, don't take drugs. Go round on me own. I do a bit of begging, like, for money. Like I don't ask, just sit there, on me sleeping bag sometimes, just sit there; people give me food, cups of tea.

Have you got like a regular place where you sit?

Outside McDonald's. Sometimes I sit outside Subway. I used to sit down on the seafront last year, begging, but it's so cold down there at night so, yeah, um, then you get other homeless people come up asking you for money but you don't give 'em that. It's alright in here, but like I say when I'm outside I just keep meself to meself, but a lot of people, all the staff, know me in here so I'm alright. I just keep to meself cos I'm 62. That's all it is really, just sleep and walk

round until it gets dark. I go to bed about eight, get me 'ead down and I sleep until about half six, then I'm at McDonald's at seven having a cup of tea, then I'm down here by eight. So I do alright really but, like I said, you keep yourself to yourself. That's what I do.

E: F, 29: I come here in the morning for eight. Have me shower, have some food, maybe wash some clothes if I need to and then walk up to Antifreeze, that opens at twelve. So go there, have some more food, somewhere to keep out the rain. If it's raining I just keep off the streets for a few hours and then at four o'clock they close and we sort of just... usually we just walk around until it's time to bed down, there's nothing else to do. Depending on the weather, if it's cold we'll try and find places to go sit in like the library or McDonald's, anywhere that's warm that we can sit in. And then usually we'll bed down about half six as soon as it starts getting dark.

Where do you stay?

Hove Town Hall. At the police station where the police cars are parked – we stay there. At the moment we've got a tent and it was our first night in the tent last night. So we're actually out of Brighton for the weekend. So that'll be quite nice. Um, but apart from that, that's where we are. It's not too bad there; we're safe there cos there's police cameras and everything on us.

And you don't get hassled by the police or anything?

No, they know me, they know me by my name so actually they come and check up on me.

So do you think you're different from the other women? Where do the other women sleep?

G: UNHOUSED, TRANSEXUAL, 38: Am I different from the other women?

Well, yeah, because you're sleeping in a tent, (...) you think that... Well, I'm a transsexual, so yeah.

Okay, yeah, okay. But do you, apart from that, your sexual preferences, do you think that because you've decided to live in a tent you're doing or making a different choice? Is that common? I don't know. You tell me because... I see life ... the only thing I can own earth-wise is mental wealth, isn't it?

So, I'm meant to learn from it, aren't I? I've got a perfect excuse to learn, haven't I? And I don't really need any money for the next year, do I, because I'm learning guitar so I'm doing my guitar lessons at St Luke's. You know what I mean? I do my singing. I do my writing and that will all come together, won't it?

Absolutely, yeah. You could write down the lyrics also for your song, you could do that and you could write your own song.

Exactly. Exactly. So ... look, I'm not the same as these people really. Most of these people in the end, you know, I don't know. I don't think I'm down on my luck [laughs].

Are there any groups where you talk to one another? Do you kind of reflect on the experience? Is that something you do at all?
No...

Do you think it would help?

It would help. I don't know, I don't know. Not all people are the same, are they?

[...]

Yeah. I don't, you know, I don't normally look homeless.

No, no, no, you don't.

I mean, I do look rough today but that's because I've had a flat tyre.

Yeah, yeah. A flat tyre? Where, on what vehicle?
On my bike. I have a flat tyre on my bike.

Oh, you've got a bike? Yeah...

So you seem quite well organised, the bike, the tent...

Oh yeah, because I need to get around and I need to get things done. I need to find a place to live. I need a place for the kittens, don't I? I can't be ... it's like having two children, isn't it?

Yeah, yeah. Of course.

So I need a place for them to be. They can't sleep in a doorway, you know, the two conflict, you know what I mean?

No absolutely, yeah, yeah. So you don't have a network that can support you, you know, family, friends...?

Well, you know what I mean, well because I'm trans, my friend, my mum and dad – well, my mum is dead but my dad doesn't talk to me anymore.

Oh, really?

Friends don't really fit in that much, to be honest with you. I mean, I know a lot of people in Brighton but I would never ask them for their help.

Why not?

Because... 'cause I just, I stand up for myself [laughs], thank you very much...

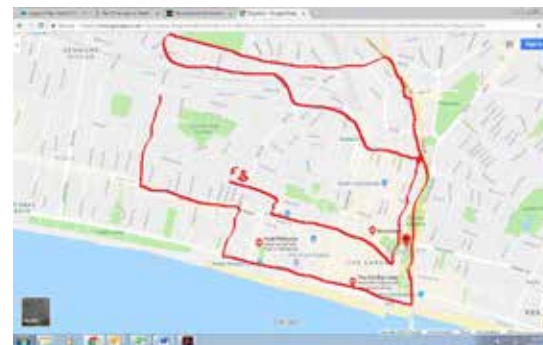
H: UNHOUSED, MALE, 55: A typical day, what it would be like? What I used to do as a way of coping – I mean, I had a habit anyway –but I would literally from the minute I opened me eyes, I would open me eyes and I would have a drink there, hopefully, that I've managed to save for the next day, because my, my, my aim was to get through the next day, the day I woke up, my aim was get through that day, the day what I woke up, as quickly as possible without having to feel anything – you know, to block it out.

I used to sleep in an underground car park off St James's Street, under the tower block; there used to be a few people in there, but I used to sleep in there. There was a fire cupboard for the hose reel and stuff like that, but that was all broken. It was all, you know – the door was kicked off, so I used to sleep in there, either me on my own or a couple of other people, freezing cold. I used to go out just before I bedded down and get as much cardboard and stuff that I could sleep on top of. And then, yeah, so, and then through the night there'd be people coming in from pubs, you know, like couples going down there doing stuff, you know, sexual stuff. There'd be people using down there, there would be all sorts going on. So you'd never sleep through the night; you'd always be woken up, different kinds of stuff going on. Um...

In the morning, I used to wake up really early, about five, half past ... be freezing cold. Five half five in the morning and the reason you wake up is because you're so cold. When I slept it was maybe for three-quarters of an hour at a time and because you was so cold you'd just be waking up, you know ... and then, you know, you'd have trouble getting back to sleep again and you wouldn't want to start drinking that can that I'd saved. I wouldn't want to start drinking that can too early because otherwise I'd, you know, if I fell back to sleep and woke up again it'd be... I'd have to do it again, you know, so I kept it for as long as I could. I used to try and get as much alcohol, drugs. Drugs I had to use once a day, you know, but I couldn't use until I'd had a drink, until I was well from the drink, um...

Yeah, yeah, I was that ill in the mornings. I couldn't beg, I couldn't talk because I was that ill. I was shaking. I was reaching [sic]. I couldn't hold a conversation. You know it just felt terrible, horrible, alone, um, and the thought of another day, having to get through another day was, you know... When I used to get me head down at night, the amount of nights that I just used to drink meself... I used to drink that much that I used to think to meself that if I go to sleep now and I don't wake up it would be a good thing. It would be a good thing, I never had the bottle to kill meself but I used to, used to, you know, I used to drink meself into oblivion, you know, and hope that was enough not to have to do this again the next day. Each day was like an uphill battle, every day... um, yeah.

10am to 4pm Route



I: UNHOUSED MALE, 35: ... my days are spent waiting to go back to sleep. Mentally it's tough because I worry what other people think of me if I look unclean. It's boring, repetitive, tiring and long. I walk for 2 hours before First Base opens at 8am. Then from 11am through to 11pm I am on the go."



PEOPLE DON'T HAVE A STRONG ENOUGH SENSE OF THEMSELVES

A: STAFF: Often they've been with multiple carers, so they haven't had one stable relationship; they haven't been adopted. They've had multiple parents. The relationships are broken down. Or they've been in care homes where they've been abused and neglected. Clients who've lived with families, often those families are very dysfunctional, so many, many clients have parents who were substance misusing or who had mental health problems themselves. Huge numbers of clients have suffered neglect, sexual abuse. So I do think that a history of on-going childhood trauma and the impact, the fallout of that, is a huge part of people's experience when they're homeless. People have just not had the opportunity to develop the ability to manage their own emotional intensity. People don't have a strong enough sense of themselves, so don't have relationship skills.



I DO FEEL SORRY FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT ARE ON THEIR OWN, ON THE STREET

H: M, 55: And I'm not with his mother any more, she's a client at William Collier House.

So she didn't get straight?

No, she's still, still... she's in that madness, she's smashing herself to pieces over it still, yeah.

What happened?

Yeah. She got clean for a little while and then when we didn't get 'im back...

Oh, and then like you went off but then she never came back?

No, no, she never came back. She's still smashing herself, you know, she's still using and that now.

E: F, 29: I met [NAME]. I've known [NAME] for a long time anyway but I started seeing [NAME] about eight months ago. We got together eight months ago. I was already doing it on my own before I was with him.

Right.

Yeah, so I was already used to it.

Yeah, I assume it's easier with the two of you than it was when you were alone. You'd think, you'd think. I think it was so much easier when I was on my own.

Oh really?

Yeah, having him there, you know, I need him there for emotional support so I'm not on my own, but physically I was fine on my own. I was absolutely fine. It's even more expensive and, and you've got to think about someone else other than yourself as well, living on the streets. If we had a place of our own it'd be so different but because we're, you know... you've got to think about each other on the street, not just your self. So does that make sense?

Yeah, it does. So what you're saying is in some ways it's easier if you're on your own.

Yeah, cos you're only thinking about you.

Because you can, like, move quicker and you don't have to worry about what the other person's ...

Yeah, things like that.

... wanting and things, that sort of stuff.

Yeah. I just used to mooch around on my own going to places on me own whereas you can't when you're in a relationship.

No.

I was alright on my own. I'd had lots of nights on the street on my own, but it was easier to find places to crash when you're on your own. Yeah, it's been long enough. It does put a massive strain on me and [NAME], we're both so stressed out we argue quite a bit, or I argue with him I should say. It does get stressful. In a way it is quite nice that I do have a companion with me and I'm not on my own. I was saying to [NAME] last night, actually I do feel sorry for a lot of people that are on their own on the street. Must be really scary.

Yeah, I suppose it's six of one, half a dozen of the other. Yeah, lonely but in some ways you're more adaptable. But it must be very lonely.

Yeah, it looks lonely. I've seen a lot of people look really lonely. I gave a man my blanket today. He looked really cold and I'd only just got it and I was really looking forward to it, but he looked freezing. He was using a coat for a blanket. So I gave him my new one.

That's very generous of you.

Yeah. The way I look at it is there are people worse off. I always try and make myself feel better. I think there's a lot of people could be worse. I could be on drugs or I could be on me own or you know and I'm not. At least I've got a clear head on me while I'm on the street. And I'm not alone. When [NAME] is with me, although I'm the mouth and he's like the quiet one, because he's quite a big bloke so he looks intimidating, even though he's not, so people won't approach us because I'm with him. Do you know what I mean? [...]

Got to try and be strong while you're doing it. Stay strong and you'll be alright. I don't like being on the streets, I hate being on the streets, but I got used to it, do you know what I mean? I've got used to coming here every day. It's like, like my little street family. [...] It is a homeless community; we are a homeless community. We're all like a little street family. Me and [NAME] actually had a couple of weeks off, **we had a friend that let us stay there for two weeks.** I was actually really missing this place for that two weeks; obviously we've come back now. We knew it was only for a couple of weeks and we're back out but I was really missing everyone. Which was weird because people wouldn't, would they, but I was. So when I walked through I got hugs from everyone, every one was so excited – oh my god, where you been?

J: UNHOUSED, FEMALE, 30: She's quite vulnerable and she's got a drinking problem. I don't [know] if she shared that; she's been abused and her ex-partner abused her. Yeah, so obviously when this whole thing was going on I told the police, listen she's vulnerable, this is what's happened to her. I phoned her sister, never met the family. I said, you know, [NAME] wasn't going to tell we're together, but I need to tell you this, what's happening. I'm worried about your sister.

She was nasty, really verbally abusive to me the other day, yeah. When all this was going on. But I never said a word, I was just quiet. Because I know it's not her; it's the alcohol talking. So I'm prepared to support her, but I said to her if it happens again, it's over. I can't ... I can't be going through it. My ex-girlfriend was abusive and I just don't want to go through that again. You've got to value yourself enough to know... And she was bringing up my father, you know, saying, oh go and join your dead father and oh yeah, go and get raped again. All this stuff and I was like, oh you can't...oh your family doesn't want you, you're never going to get back to South Africa for your holiday. Really cutting...cutting stuff.



The only thing I said to her was, go back to your ex-boyfriend. That was the only thing. I was crying. You know when you've been so hurt. And she came to find me yesterday and I said to her, I said to her, you know what [inaudible]? You know, first of all you just left with this guy, you had the opportunity come sort things out with me, you chose not to, this guy is a sexual predator. And he is, you know. Why did I phone the police? Obviously I phoned the police. I was worried about you; I care about you enough to speak to your sister and find out I what should do. If I didn't I wouldn't have done that, you know what I mean? And she apologised and she says I'm really sorry, you don't deserve it.

You know what, none of us are perfect. I've forgiven her, but I can't forget about it because it's obviously hurt me deeply. And the trust is now broken, obviously. And I said that to her. I said, you know what, I'm prepared to be with you and support you through your...whatever, your issues with alcohol, but I'm taking a bit of a step back. And I am a bit on guard and, as I said to you, if it happens again... dead...

C: M, 62: You married again?

I married again, took me a long time.
Oh, blow that.

You've not been, no?
No.

Why not?
No. I met a woman once on the street in Brighton and I caught something.

Oh, right.
So, no, never again, never sleep with homeless women.

Right, a word from the wise.
Yeah. She loves me and I was sitting down the seafront last year on me own – oh hello, I love you and all this. Then we ended up sleeping together in the sleeping bag and then I had to go to the clinic. Oh man, I was in pain for about five weeks. I was even on crutches.

Oh dear.
I was bad, mate, I tell you.

Blimey.
Never again. I came in here on crutches, didn't I? I never saw the bird again.

Beware.
That's what you get for not wearing a condom. I haven't seen her since.

She disappeared?
I hope so. Never sleep with homeless women. I made a big mistake there.

Sounds like it.
Never do that again. I'm better now.

Yeah, they sorted you out?
I had to have a scan and loads of tablets. Got rid of it, the infection. That was last year though, another year now – never again though.

MASS OBSERVATION ARCHIVE⁴

4) Mass Observation Archive is a charitable trust in the care of the University of Sussex at the Keep in Brighton. It collects material about everyday life in the UK. The social research project started in 1937 and is still active. Materials identifiable by a number are handwritten and digitalised and information about the authors is noted at the beginning of each entry.

MO no. B5342.

Part 1: Homelessness.

Age: 30

Sex: Female

Location: Salisbury

Occupation: small antique jewellery business

Status: single, no children.

Five words that "home" makes me think of: family, warmth, food, bed, baths.

I am fortunate enough to say I have never been without a home or faced with homelessness. I have lived securely in my family home all my life. Other people aren't as lucky as me - they have divorced parents, step siblings... they aren't welcome to stay in the family home like I have been. I also can't think of anyone I know who has ever been near to homeless. I live in a rural area where everyone is quite well off. The danger is when you have to rent and if you lose your job it leaves you in a desperate situation. Living in Britain today does require a great amount of money, constantly. So many different taxes, bills, inflation on food etc. My heart goes out to anyone who is struggling because it's like a tidal wave that we must swim against.

There is no homelessness in my village, as far as I know. I've never seen a tramp here. There's a lot of them in Salisbury, always has been. I wouldn't say there's any more now. And they have all sorts of expensive facilities to help them.

I think it is life events that cause homelessness, particularly when it is two or three things that happen in succession. For example, if someone suffers a bereavement, that upsets their home life so they start performing poor at work and are made redundant. Then they can't pay the bills, their family life and relationships fall apart... It's like a house of cards, very fragile. It only takes one thing to be disrupted for everything to disintegrate. Before you know it, they are in a desperate situation and there's nothing they can do.

I imagine the biggest challenge would be the day-to-day misery of it. Worrying about the cold, starving to death, being attacked. They are at the

mercy of inner-city life. Any time we go to sleep, we are at our most vulnerable and they are exposed to anybody who might walk by. I can imagine they must think, "Will I make it through today? How will I make it through? Where will I be a week, a month, a year from now? Will I die like this, as a homeless person?" It must be endless, incalculable misery. Often homeless people have dogs, and that makes it sadder in a way, though at least they can find comfort in each other. It must make it harder to have to find food and try to care for a pet, on top of your own own fight for survival.

I think no matter what policies are put in place, some homeless people will always slip through the cracks - perhaps by choice. Let's not forget that society is our own construction, and no one is obligated to be a part of it if they don't want to. I do believe that some homeless choose to live "off the grid". Maybe the new laws will help the more "temporary" homeless types. That can only be a good thing.

There is also the drug addict type of homeless person. These who live rough because it is part of their lifestyle of committing crimes to then go and shoot up drugs in a back alley. I would rather help the genuine cases, people who have been made redundant through no fault of their own. Otherwise we are just encouraging crime.

I can't really think of any policies that would help. It's a bit of an impossible problem to solve.

I feel a mixture of fear and pity for the homeless. I'd be especially scared if I was on my own in a deserted street and had to go right by one. They could have schizophrenia or be on drugs. They could stab you or rob you. Sometimes people like that get offended if you look at them and offended if you don't. I feel sorry for them but I don't want to be near them. I take my personal safety very seriously after getting badly bullied at school. If it was dark and I saw one ahead of me, I'd probably run a mile.

We used to buy copies of the Big Issue from homeless men in Salisbury. It felt nice to help them, though they made me feel a bit weird. They would be kind of sarcastic. It made me feel I couldn't trust them. We would put a few pennies in if a homeless person had a hat on or whatever. Sometimes they would smile. I would be too scared of them to actually go and talk to them or take

MO no. 85342

them food. I generally always mind my own business.

No, I don't contribute to any charity for the homeless. I can't afford to, which is part of it, but as I've got older I've got much more cynical about the whole thing. I just think that I've been through some horrendous times in my life and there was no charity there for me. There was no one there for me. I had to find the strength within and work my ass off to make things better. So why should someone else get it for free? I know that sounds selfish and horrible, but I just get really sick of the whole charity thing, people using it to sound virtuous.

I invariably do think about homelessness at Christmas because those sad Salvation Army adverts usually make me sad. It's a horrible time of year when it's so cold.

For me to be homeless, my dad and brother would have to die. I could live off my savings for a while, but then things like council tax would need to be paid and I'm sure after a couple of years I ~~would~~ would be homeless. I'm out here in the countryside so I guess I'd have to walk into town, or I'd just freeze to death. Honestly, I don't know what I'd do if any of this became a reality. I might be forced into suicide if it got that bad.

SOME PEOPLE'S GOOD AS GOLD



K: UNHOUSED, MALE, 60: They go to work, come home, have their dinner, Monday to Friday. And they get the wife all ponced up, go down the pub for a meal or whatever, play with the kids, go to bed all tucked up. They've got no idea.

H: M, 55: Just feel alone, you feel alone, you feel frightened. I mean I've been on the streets on and off for a good fifteen years, and it doesn't matter how long you're on the streets for, you've always got to watch your back. You've always got to keep your wits about you, so you know, it's frightening and it's survival.

Some people's as good as gold, there's some lovely people out there but, but there's some horrible people out there as well. I've been kicked. I've been punched. I've been wee'd on, everything, by people. Yeah, yeah, it's not nice but there are some lovely people about...but um...yeah. When, you know, I've been in a doorway in St James's Street and someone's run over and booted me, you know, on the way home from a club or something like that and...

F: M, 35: So, yeah, it's difficult being on the streets, 'specially when you're older. 'Cos, er, when you're younger, people seem to feel more sorry for you, when you're a child. I got lots of help when I was younger, a child, being a runaway. Got lots of help off lots of people. I was sleeping in Manchester once, when I was a child, near the red light district. I got a bit of money offered me off the prostitutes that were working round there 'cos they seen a child: oh, no, no, here's a bit of money. Prostitutes offering money 'cos they don't want to see me doing the same sort of shit they're doing or something.

E: F, 29: I feel safe enough on the streets. I don't feel unsafe. Um, ninety per cent of the time I feel safe. Obviously there's that risk of things happening in the street, but I think because I'm female a lot of people won't start with me, do you know what I mean? Because if I was a male I'd probably get it more. People tend to leave me alone. Unless you get like, um, a couple of times when [NAME] left me if he's had to go to the shop or something, um, I had boys throwing food at me. I've had a group of boys approach me, try and chat me up because obviously I'm sitting there. I look vulnerable but I'm really not. I'm really small and I'm a girl. I know I look vulnerable but as soon as I open my mouth they're like whoa.

It's weird. I weighed myself the other day and I've put on a stone. So I was underweight before – seven and a half – now I'm eight and a half, eight and a half stone. It's all them bloody sandwiches, all them Greggs. But, yeah, you get fed more being on the streets than you do having your own place. It's crazy.

You mean people like giving you food?

Yeah, we get a lot, well we don't so much now because we spend nights in the tent now, but when we was in the doorway we'd get a lot of food drops. Um, a lot of people like knew of us so they like... We had Bankers chip shop used to deliver to us every night and we'd get people dropping pizzas to us. There's a few other charities that come round with like stews and stuff, so, yeah. But we haven't had so much recently, which ain't a bad thing because I need to like slow down with the eating anyway. But you come here during the day and you can eat as much as you want and then you go off to Antifreeze and you can eat as much as you want and it's all free, and then obviously we still do have money in our pockets so we're eating while we're out as well. When I had my place I was always bloody hungry or struggling for food. Now, I'm homeless I eat more.

J: F, 30: As a woman on the street you're exposed to all sorts of vulnerabilities, obviously. I was almost trafficked once by a Romanian man I've been asked by members of the public, males, do you want to make quick buck, give me a blow, all this stuff, yeah. But also being a woman with a woman on the street, the men try and get involved in the relationship and try and break things up. Yeah. And it's happening all the time, but there is a sense of protection. Obviously when you're out there, there's two of you, but I never sleep. I'm always up, watching what's going on. You can't sleep. I've been abused verbally, I've been abused physically. I had a man... I woke with a man masturbating in my doorway. Another one sitting there staring at me while I slept. That was really weird. You know, when you know something's not right as a woman and I woke up and this guy's... I'm a very, very strong woman. And I've learned to stand up for myself

L: UNHOUSED, MALE, 25: The other day when I was begging, some girls walked past, a family and the girls. They came back with loads of clothes and stuff and bits and bobs in a bag and little bags and that with their family. And, um, it was Valentine's day and they gave me, the girl gave me a Valentine's card. One of the girls was going round giving the guys like little Valentine cards with little hearts on them saying: you capable whatever, capable and all this, of doing, helping and, and, and things get better and stuff, and the Valentine, and it came from a little girl who wrote it. Do you know what I mean? Because they asked their family to, actually they suggested, the girls, to the family, saying they wanted to go and get some food and bring it to us, the kids actually said they wanted to do it, and I asked them and they said yeah and their families went and got it and brought it to us and I saw them going around giving them to a few people, and I think that's good. So society's getting better with kids, even though sometimes some kids can be mouthy and horrible to homeless people because they've been dragged up, not brought up. I bet you've got kids and your kids wouldn't be like that to people on the street, would they? No, they wouldn't 'cos you wouldn't accept it, would you?

F: M, 35: They wouldn't put me on a scrip because I had to fail that test. So I had to do it on me own. Well, I did get a bit of help off a police officer, 'cos I locked meself in me own flat in Bridlington before, er, I went homeless again; er, me friends were knocking and I was blanking the door. After about five days they got worried, they thought I'd decided to get some drugs, had it, od'd, so they called the police. Police were banging on me

door. I decided to open it and let him in and I told him the truth right from the start. I said, I'm a junkie and trying to get off it. I tried getting a scrip. I kept on passing their test – but I needed to fail it so I could get on the scrip, rarara.

So, OK, the police officer understood everything. He liked what I was doing, er, he asked me if I wanted help. I said, well what help can you give me? I've been through all the channels what you're supposed to go through to get help and I've told yer I've passed their test when I'm supposed to fail it. How am I supposed to get help?

So the police officer decided to offer his services. Er, he was engaged and his fiancée was a nurse at Steppinghill. So he offered to help me out of, er, work hours, sort of thing, off duty, same with his, er, missus; came round to me house, not every night, couple of days a week popped round, helped me, gave me a bit of medication, cooked for me. I remember they cooked for me a couple of times in me own kitchen. One day they came round; they cooked a meal for me; they sat down; we sat down together; we ate it together, watched TV. So, do you know, like respect, because a lot of people like me probably don't have no respect for a lot of government figures, 'specially police. A lot of us probably see them as bullies and this, that and the other, and most of them probably are corrupt. But you know what, respect to that police officer, he went out of his way to help someone that he thought needed his help, and I did, and yet him and his missus helped me. And yeah, respect to them.

I got off it. I moved away from Stockport for a while, went down to Blackpool, lived down there for a year. Came back to Stockport, started dabbling in the drugs again, er, ended up getting arrested one day and funnily enough the desk sergeant that was on was the copper that helped me that day. He asked me, he said, how are you doing, are you still off the drugs? And do you know what? I didn't want to tell him, but I had to [crying]. I told him that now I'm dabbling again. I disappeared for a bit, came back, started to dabble again, don't want to. So I told him the truth that I was doing it again. He was disappointed but, do you know what, he offered to help again.

WHAT THE CLIENT ACTUALLY MEANS BY FEELING SAFELY HOUSED



Our observation was that teams working with homeless or personality-disordered people find themselves torn between one impulse to coerce them out of their places of refuge and into 'proper' housing and an opposite impulse to wash their hands of them and leave them out in the cold. Our hypothesis is that organisations often struggle to understand the needs presented to them because concepts like 'successful resettlement' and other ideas about what constitutes a 'positive

outcome' are predicated on the workers' experiences of having 'housed' state of minds, rather than on any particularly methodical enquiry into what the client actually means by feeling safely housed.

Adlam/Scanlon

IN OF ADDICTION AND OUT OF ADDICTION



M: UNHOUSED, MALE, 45: I've been homeless for four years on and off and in of addiction and out of addiction and in addiction and – do you know what I mean?

N: UNHOUSED, MALE, 47: Um, the smoking, um, what, what, what; when you have a joint the hit you get from it, it's um... I can't describe the hit, do you know what I mean? But it's lovely, it's a lovely, um... I don't know, again; it's a nice place, puts you in a nice place. It's, it's, it's, just puts you in a nice place, you know what I mean? And you know it can make you hungry; it can make you go to the toilet; it can, you know, lalala – do you know what I mean? But it puts you in a, yeah, no, just, lovely. I'm addicted to it. Which makes me slightly, er, fucked off, do you know what I mean? But at the end of the day I've had all the drugs in my lifetime that I've had, through cocaine, through the ayahuasca that'll kill me, through all the different smokes and stuff, all the different weeds and lalala and the LSD lalala – this Spice is the one that's got me by the bollocks, man, really got me by the balls, um, and um yeah, fucking hell.

M: M, 45: This and a touch of that and sat up all night just drinking beer, all drunk and swinging and swaying about, well enjoying yourself – you've got to do it sometimes when you're out there on the street. And having

company is a good thing actually, it is good but it, it's always around alcohol and drugs, and a lot of people are doing it who are having normal lives anyway in a sense, as a recreational sort of thing. Since Christmas I've pulled meself away from it all again, so that's why I'm down Portslade way. I'm not...

There's only one way you can do it, like get off the street, and you've got to do it yourself. I thought well I've got the means of saving up a deposit, but that ain't ever happened and I don't think it ever will. I don't think I'm ever going to save because I've started using again now the last three getting on for four months now. I've picked up the needle again. So last four months I've been using heroin and cocaine because it's been easy to get. What stopped me from using it, well, I didn't want to use it really in the first place, but at the moment it's so easy. I've got a connection and it's bang, it's there straight away and I've got somewhere I can use it as well instead of being outside. I can go in and do it all in there in comfort surrounded by four walls, sit there for a few hours and then go on my way. So at the moment the drugs is, um yeah, because it's easy to get. I've got connections and that, don't have to hare around for hours, run around here, run around there, for two hours, always trying to get a bloody ten bag of this; it's quite easy at the moment and I don't know why I've picked that back up at the moment, that's the reason why I've picked it back up, because it's easy to get at the moment. So now I haven't had any of that for three days, so now I'm clucking a little bit and I'm feeling it: the aches and the pains... It's been three days and nights now since I haven't had any of that, so a few more days and I might have it all out of me system and feel a bit better, but then I need to stay away from it. But come pay day I don't know what I'm going to do, I really don't. I find I have a real problem saying no to things, I really do, yeah. I'm weak and I've got a weak point and that's saying no I don't want it. Come pay day I'm going to bump into a certain person and it's going to be so easy and then I'm going to spend all me money on that and then a couple of days down the line, a week down the line, the money's gone. I'm going to feel, when I'm two days after, I'm going to feel like rubbish again, feeling a bit like I do now.

D: M, 66: Yeah, physically and mentally broken, yeah. You're working twelve, fourteen hours a day at times, like winter, summer, all the time, and the alcohol was massive, massive, yeah, yeah. While I was at work, you know, have a wee hip flask ... just to get you through the day. I was never like a tramp, like George Orwell down and out in Paris, London. As long as you keep yourself clean and half tidy you get by. You always had your

pension and I had my invalidity and all that and so I was having, just on basic average, about one hundred fifty pounds a week. But sometimes you could get through that in two or three days if you just went to an off-licence or a dope dealer's. Before you know it you've spent sixty, seventy pounds. As for the next day, the morning after, the hair of the dog... Yeah.

Alcohol, yes, they can abstain from alcohol but, er, at night times, prowling about, you know the fox goes out hunting at night... They know where to go, where they hide their drinks. Down at the big dance halls, clubs, you know, for the half bottle, it's like a getaway, the fly guys, they know where to go. They don't normally drink it like that, they normally have plastic containers or something, anything: vodka, whiskey, gin, wine, cider, ah, just put the lot in because it's all going the one way anyway. They'll just go and crash out somewhere and re-emerge in the morning and drink all that shit; I've done it. I'm off alcohol just now.

Oh, you are, are you?

Yes. I, I did quite a bit there, a while ago. I was over seven month off it. I saved just over three thousand pounds, yes, and then blew it all. But I didn't blow it all on drink, I only bought so much drink, you know, for a couple of weeks, you know, the litre bottles and hide yourself away somewhere, you know, with legal highs and that: dreaming the world away. But this day I must have picked up a right few quid and the next day or the following day I was semi-comatose and: where's the bus pass, where's the bank card, where's the money? I just went into the pocket... threw the lot away.

Why?

Why, why? Angry with yourself. And yeah, I would reckon, er, almost a grand, no problem, and me bus pass. That's where I'm going this morning, actually, to get me bus pass. So it just shows you how, I had three thousand pound in the bank, yeah and within a couple of weeks it's gone. And you're not associating with anyone much on one of those, er, personality kind of complexes –you think you're Daniel Defoe, you think you're Robinson Crusoe, you know, stuff like that, crazy. And you know, er... I'll need to buy another radio today. That went, also, oh that went, phone also, yes, everything went.

So, you just like threw it all away?

There's no other way I could have done it. I wasn't mugged or anything like that. All gone for whatever reason, I don't know.

F: M, 35: Er, I remember when I was a drug addict, er, about seven years ago, er, I was into heroin and crack cocaine and I was addicted to it for about five years living in Bridlington, in Stockport. And, er, I finally decided, do you know what, enough is enough; I need to sort me life out, I need to get on the scrip and get off it. When I went to do the drug test, you're supposed to fail the test so you can get on the scrips. I passed the test, it was like, well, how's that? I just had a bag of heroin and, er, a rock of crack thirty minutes ago, yeah. How have I passed it? Yeah? It went on for weeks, re-testing me, re-testing me. I kept on passing their tests. I said, I'll tell you what, I'm going to do it in front of yer 'cos you clearly don't believe I'm a smack head, so for you to believe that I am a junkie I've got to take it in front of you, is that what you're saying? No, no, no, no, you can't do that. Well tough, I'm going to. So me next appointment I actually smoked it in front of them, which was kind of wrong, but they watched me smoke and thought right let's re-test yer now, I could see that yer smoked it so that should be in your system now. Still I passed it.

How weird is that?

Exactly, yet they say these tests are good and positive and get good, er, reactions. Well, how come I kept on passing it when I should be failing it? It means I can't go on a scrip now. Even though they watched me smoke it, they still wouldn't put me on a scrip.

THOSE TROUBLESOME INDIVIDUALS



There would always remain a group of people who will refuse to play the game. Perverse people whose violence or intrusiveness presents a risk to others, homeless people with complex needs who refuse to be *settled*, people with severe eating disorders who refuse to eat (or to stop eating), people with drug and alcohol problems who refuse to stop damaging themselves through dangerous addictions, recidivist offenders who refuse to be *corrected*, disaffected young people who refuse to be educated, or those *troublesome* individuals who do not believe that they have a problem, there will always be people who will continue to refuse.

In his work with the homeless of Paris, Declerk (2006a) states that the plight of the homeless is compounded by the insidious sadism of a society that needs to punish those who live on the fringes and so ensures that health and welfare provision will always remain structurally inadequate. More directly he suggests that this is so because we hate them, and we hate them because they refuse to belong to the 'functioning' world and in their refusal are experienced as mocking everything that the mainstream of society holds dear: hope, self-betterment, personal relationships, procreation, bringing up children, and even simply getting up in the morning. They are an insult to our aspirations and our narcissism.

Adlam/Scanlon



I COULDN'T LIVE ON ME OWN. I CAN'T LIVE WITH PEOPLE



M: M, 45: My problem with being homeless though is ... I tend to drag meself away from everything. I go off on my own. Since I left Worthing. I pulled meself away from all the drinkers and all the people that just live on the street, don't use centres. I spent a long time with them just drinking, smoking, just passing the day as one of them type of people, but I knew in the end I needed to get away from this situation, so slowly I did. I started moving back towards Brighton. And then I got to Portslade and, um, I wasn't using the centres at first or anything, I was just going off on my own and sitting in fields thinking, you know, this is what I need, this is what I have: get away from everything and cut meself off.

That's what I was doing, then, the beginning of 2016. I cut meself off from everything and then, slowly but surely, I realised it ain't going to work, so I have to start using the centres again. So I'm coming into town and I'm meeting people again who I know. God, and I only just realised how many people I do know by living on the street. It's amazing how many people you meet, and slowly get back into the alcohol again, slowly get back into the drugs. But deep in the back of me mind I knew that I've got to change, I can't just sit around doing this for the rest of my life.

When I'm feeling like that I shouldn't be on the street; I shouldn't be congregating. I don't want to be congregating with other homeless people 'cos I shouldn't be here. And I go off on my own and drag meself away; then it's totally even worse. And I'm sat by meself thinking to meself. I don't know, it's weird; it's strange to explain. *

C: M, 62: The council wanted to rehouse me in me own flat but I said no.

Why?

I couldn't live on me own. I've got to be round people. These shared houses, I can't live in one of them. I can't live with people.



LIMINAL LIVES¹



Such individuals live liminal lives: the doorstep, the threshold, the borderline becomes in a sense their only true home and 'unhousedness' has become their state of mind. In a profound sense, such people are both psychologically 'unhoused' and psycho-socially 'dis-membered'; like Groucho Marx, they would not be a member of any club that would offer them membership... Caught between...two poles of longing and fear, their life becomes an endless and painful oscillation between the intimacies and fear of the inside (claustrophobic anxiety) and the distances of outside (agoraphobic anxiety). (Glasser, 1996.)

Adlam/Scanlon

^{1]} The terms "liminal" and 'liminality' were popularised through the writings of Victor Turner, who discovered the work of Van Gennep on the concept of liminality. In *Liminality and Communitas* Turner defines liminal individuals as 'neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony' (1969: 95). Liminars are therefore different from individuals on the edges of society (marginal) and lowest on the social scale (inferior), as they occupy a suspended in-between space. Liminars 'are stripped of anything that might differentiate them from their fellow human beings – they are in between the social structure, temporarily fallen through the cracks, so to speak, and it is in these cracks, in the interstices of social structure, that they are most aware of themselves'. (<http://www.liminality.org/about/whatisliminality/>)

I WANT TO BUILD 200 SHELTERS



H: M, 55: Later on in my life when I was 40, my boy was born and, um, and he was taken off me, he had a bad accident. Um, it was no one's fault, it was an accident. And he was put on a life support machine in King's College Hospital. He fell off a coffee table after I came back from Manchester. I was housed in Manchester with my missus. We came back to Brighton because I didn't want him brought up there, because it was heavy. He was at my niece's, and we was going to have a barbecue because we'd come back from Manchester so all the family met him for the first time. He was only eighteen months old and he fell off me niece's coffee table onto a carpet, but it was carpet on top of sort of concrete and, er, he got a bleed on the third layer down of his brain and he went into a fit straightaway and he got rushed to King's College Hospital, London.

I was down the Level pissed out of me head; I wasn't there. Everyone was trying to find me; the police found me actually. I was walking up Edward Street, the police pulled over, I said you can't arrest me. What happened was my nephew came running towards me; I hadn't seen my nephew for years. Um... We hadn't been in Brighton long. He come running towards me, you know, like crying and all that and I was going what's going on? I was pissed, this was outside Glenwood Lodge, and, er, he was shaking his head and he couldn't tell me and I was going what's going on and he couldn't tell me and was crying his eyes out. He said we've been looking for you. And then, then I had to go through all me family, you know:

Terry, Tina and he's going no, no, no and then I said Rees, you know my boy, and he went yeah and shook his head and he couldn't say no more. He said he's up the hospital and you've got to get up the hospital so I ran from there along to Edward Street.

I was running up Edward Street, the police come past and they pulled me over. I thought they was going to arrest me for something. I said you can't nick me, my boy's in hospital, and they went we've been looking for you; your family's been looking for you – get in, and they give me a lift up there. By the time I've got there he'd been taken to King's College Hospital in London so I missed him. They wouldn't let me leave the hospital, um I was that pissed they wouldn't give me any more information, so I ended up falling asleep at Sussex County Hospital and I woke up at three in the morning and then they told me that he'd been moved and then they gave me a lift to the social services up Whitehawk. Social services give me a bus travel warrant and I went straight to King's College Hospital the next day...

Yeah, and I got there and my ex partner was up there and, and oh it was just fucking mad and er... and then we nearly lost him. It was, I don't know... it was... they had to cut his head open from there right to the back of his ear to release the pressure. It was only a bump, you know, only a bump but, but that bump led to, you know, a bleed on his brain. Then we got pulled into a meeting up there; we had all the police in there, social services... you know, they had to verify that I wasn't there, who was there, where it happened, you know all these inquiry things. And I was looking at them, looking at the copper; I had tears in me eyes going – listen, please listen to me. I'm on the streets, though we was in Glenwood Lodge at the time, I went – I'm an alcoholic and all that, I went, but I'd never hurt my kid, I went, you can call me anything you like, I went, but this is me boy.

So there was a big..., there was an investigation. Then they had the surgeon up there, King's College Hospital. They spoke to the surgeon and he had to do a report and he said yes it's a common injury, he said it happens, you know, um, and so they left us alone and it was all right, it was good. They wouldn't allow us near him or anything to start with, um, so then he got transferred back down to Brighton. He was getting better and then a surgeon in Brighton queried that surgeon's report and so they got a bit funny again, and all this time the social services got involved. He was taken off us and put into temporary foster care and he's now been adopted. I went into rehab, I went I've had enough, so I went into rehab.

I went into rehab and then went to court to get him back. I had seventeen contacts with him, perfect contacts, no, no worries and all that, went to court and they said no.

I walked out of treatment, went straight back on the drink and it's taken me two goes since then to get back in and to do it right basically and to get to where I am now, so that's why I didn't give up this time, that's why I couldn't, because although my boy's not with me no more I've got letterbox contact with him.

You've got what contact with him?

Letterbox contact.

So you can write to him, then?

Yeah, I can give him presents, Christmas and birthdays. I've met his adoptive parents, they're lovely people, but it's taken me... I had to go through treatment three times for me to accept that... because I love him so much and I want him... but it's taken me all this time to realise that because of me addiction – although I'm not using, I haven't used for two and a half years – he's not going to come back to me because of the risk if I do pick it up again. So the next best thing is for him to be as happy as possible, and that's what I have to look at. He's happy, he's well looked after. Um, it's taken me a long time and every day I have to work at that, I have to work at that acceptance.

M: M, 45: It's like one moment I'm in this lifestyle with these certain type of people and the lifestyle I'm leading now with these type of people – they're two totally different contrasts. They'll be saying about this group what I'm doing now, the friends I used to have'll be going: what an idiot, look at that scruffy old tramp now. I know what they'll be thinking in their minds, what they'll be saying to each other. And the people I'm living with now. I'll probably be saying the same about these people: all stuck up, no good, wouldn't give you the time of day, wouldn't give you ten pence if you were dying on the street, which is true. I've lived like two kinds of lifestyles. In a way I'm still thinking I wish I was back there because it was all comfortable and nice having that certain type of friends and that, going out to restaurants and things like that. They'd come round, make sure I was showered, washed and shaved; well, you can't come out with me until you've had a shave and a wash and it would be all that kind of stuff. Yeah. Wishing this had... no, wishing I should have done this and I should have done that, aw.

J: F, 30: My dad was the closest person to me in my family. When he died I detached myself from the family and I didn't want to know. I stopped wanting to do Christmas dinners. I just really... it was really a hard time for me. Obviously being gay with my mom being... we're all Christians, but my sister in London doesn't approve of it so there's a lot of, you know... so I've had to pretend for ages I'm not. And it's been a real struggle, but in London I drew on the streets. I did flags of the world in chalk and I did a YouTube video, I've done March for the Homeless in London, I've written to the Queen.

So you've written to the Queen about what?

About my homeless shelters that I want to build – 200 shelters. I've got a webpage called [name of website] and it...it means to harvest in African. So what we want to do is we want to have like an allotment, a gym, hairdressers, podiatrists, councillors, a safe place for women on the streets who have been homeless, been abused. We'll let them stay there for three months, empower each other through the skills they have, so one might be a painter, whatever and we'll say, who wants to do painting? So that gives them a sense of purpose and like any plant or tree you need to nurture it, don't you? So it's like human beings, you need the right environment, the right sort of whatever. I've got a charity event coming up that I'm doing in St James's Street. The drag queens are doing a show for me.

Oh wow.

Yeah. And the proceeds are going to go to that. I've written to the council, I've been seeing housing officers, I'm applying to do my social work degree this year. I've applied to be a representative through, you know, BHT?

Yeah.

To be a representative between the homeless [...] Yeah. So I've got my interview coming up on the 15th.

Okay.

And it's ... it's volunteering, but they train you to be support worker, which is exactly what I want to do.

What you want to do, yeah.

And it's also going to give me a good step up to be a social worker when I have my shelters running. So the aim is to have the shelter. One here, one in Africa, built with the black women over there because that will also change lives and change thinking: a white woman with a black woman doing shelters and a white woman who's been homeless so she can relate. Rather than English people going over building shelters when they don't

have a clue. Or working at orphanages when they don't have a clue what really goes on in the street.

F: M, 35: I'm in college, I'm studying.

You're in college now?

Yeah, I'm still in. I passed me level 2 last year – catering course at Brighton City College. I passed it, passed it. Yeah, decided to, er, continue and do the level 3 – well, slightly better chance of getting a job, slightly better qualified from this. I decided to continue, had to get a student loan though as the Job Centre wouldn't pay for it this year. The reason why the Job Centre wouldn't pay for it, even though they said that they'd help me get back into work, was because the college was not honouring a discount for people that are not working. So because the college was not honouring a discount, they're not willing to pay to sort my life out to get a job. So I had to get a loan, which was a hundred per cent accepted anyway, so I got the five and a half grand loan that's only for the college course. You don't get no student accommodation loans for college courses, you only get them for uni now.

Then soon as I've passed it, er, get a job hopefully. I've had a couple of interviews while I've been homeless but not been successful. I didn't get one because he found out I was homeless, so he refused to give me the job 'cos he's seen me as a health and hygiene problem. Well, if college didn't have a problem with it, why did you? So that's the reason why I didn't get that one, er, at the [NAME] 'cos he seen me as homeless and he's seen me as a health and hygiene problem. But, er, I'm doing it.

As soon as I've done that I want to try and get visas to work abroad, er, yeah work abroad, tour the world, er, see the world before I get too old and what have you, work abroad, that's if I can. I'll apply for the visas. I'd probably get rejected on quite a few of them. I do have a criminal background. I've not done anything in years though, which might be a slight advantage but still not pinning me hopes on it. I'll apply for holiday visas if I don't get the work visas. I reckon I'll just go on holiday and just try me best and see if I can get a job anyway. That's how a lot of people do it anyway. Most people don't go through the correct channels and get visas, most people just go on a holiday, ask a local person at a bar: oh, I need a bit of dough, can I?... yeah yeah, handing out leaflets, so I can just do that. But I want to end up in America really, yeah. I want to try and set up a business, set up me own restaurant and what have you. I'll

tour the world and work for hotels, restaurants preferably with top chefs so I could learn something. I definitely want to go up in the world and I definitely want to be a good chef definitely. I'd love to own a Michelin star restaurant, but yeah...

A: STAFF: I think the authorities think that the problem is that there's an ever-growing group of clients who are... well, they call them enmeshed in street life, who've got drug/alcohol problems, low-level mental health problems, who are responsible for a high level of anti-social behaviour, who've repeatedly been through hostels and been evicted. Who are hard to engage, and who, you know, use up a lot of health resources with repeated A&E admissions. And who, you know, choose to end, well, not choose to, but they die either accidentally or through illness or because they end their lives.

So, you know, it doesn't look good, does it, for Brighton Council to have all that here. So I think there's a view that there is a group of people who are hard to reach. Often those clients are quite high priority for hostel places, but often they are evicted from hostels before any real work can go on with them really, and they may actually die on the street. You know,



they do die. I feel sometimes with our clients that we're offering much too little much too late, and at the lowest point to me I feel like we're offering palliative care, that we are seeing people almost at the end of their lives after, you know, such a long time on the streets and...and that actually what we can offer them is very little, because so much damage has been done over so many years. For some clients it's hard to understand how that can begin to be addressed or put right in any way.

B: M, 45: So three months turned into eleven years pretty quickly. I mean personally for me it's been an absolute... it's just changed my life. I've gone from working at American Express and prior to that it was, er, ad hoc temp jobs, more interested in making music, hanging out with my friends, partying, frankly, than getting that job. In that time I've got married, bought a house, had a son and have something now that in my life no one can ever take away from me – that sense that you know you don't work in a day centre for ten years without feeling like you've done something. So, um, as much as that might harm you at times, I'd go as far as to say that.

It has impacted my physical and mental health to a degree. I mean, aside from secondary or primary trauma you might experience during an event, **there's** everyday, vicarious trauma you're exposed to, but again that's testament to the team and the supervision and the management and the way we kind of manage to facilitate the de-briefing and the sense that you don't take anything home with you. It's one of those jobs, isn't it, where if you go in and give a hundred per cent then you can walk away, even though people walk back out again on the streets that night and rough sleep that night, and they've still got their problems. If you still feel you've given as much as you can, um, then you can go home and sleep easy that night yourself.

So, you know, I guess going back to what we were saying originally about being non judgemental and open to people when you first meet them, it's amazing how for me years of hurt can be comforted by a complete stranger who genuinely cares and actively listens, and that's a pretty amazing and privileged situation to be in as a human being, I think. To be able to impact someone's life there and then for the better – to what degree and for how long I don't know – but the point is that person feels a little bit better having spoken to you than they did before, which is pretty powerful sort of stuff really, and what keeps me coming back.



Our plea is for greater tolerance, understanding and interest in the lives of those who, as a result of fearful refusal, have found themselves on the borderlines and liminal spaces of our deeply troubled

society, and for a better informed debate between our systems of care and the wider social world about how to introduce the structural and cultural changes that will be necessary in order for us to relate meaningfully to some of the most vulnerable members of our community whether we – whoever and wherever we are – like it or not.

Adlan/Scanlon

FURTHER READING

This publication grew out of Philip Morgan's involvement with his local rough sleeping community. He became a volunteer at First Base, his local day centre for homeless or insecurely housed people, in 2015. After two years of working at the centre he began to offer service users and staff the possibility of recording whatever they wished to say. These encounters were as unmediated as possible and not led in any particular direction. It rapidly became apparent that there was a desire by the participants for their words to be preserved, and the possibility of a book was suggested. The form of the book was discussed with the participants and it was agreed that it should be presented in such a way as to appeal to a general reader. The conclusion was to create a composite picture of the community by presenting sections of the recordings together with images. Roberta Piazza also became involved with the publication and conducted some of the interviews as well as contributing to the final presentation. The publication can best be defined as a piece of citizen research conducted with the intention not of proving a particular point but of raising certain questions.

FIRST PERSON

The Grass Arena (1988): John Healy.
An unflinching and deeply challenging account of Healy's time as a homeless alcoholic in London during the 1960s.

Travels with Lizbeth: Three Years On the Road and On the Streets (1993): Lars Eighner.
An extended road trip without any real explanation of how or why the writer became homeless. During his time on the road with his dog he is in pursuit of the goal of supporting himself through writing gay erotica.

Factotum (1975): Charles Bukowski.
The narrator of this entertaining book describes a particular lifestyle dominated by sex, drugs, poverty and intermittent homelessness.

Down and Out in Paris and London (1933): George Orwell.
A work, which documents poverty with extraordinary vividness. However, one knows that at any point he could have gone back to his family but chose not to out of probably a combination of pride and the search for material.

Autobiography of a Super Tramp (1908): W.H. Davies.
Davies chose to be a tramp, wanting to spend any money he had on getting his poems published. He railroaded his way across the US and Canada (where he lost a leg) and tramped around the UK for six years. A fascinating picture of USA and UK at the time, which seems to have been a great deal more generous then than now.

REPORTAGE

Rachel and Her Children (2006): Jonathan Kozol.
An unforgettable record of the voices of homeless families in the USA.

Stuart: A Life Backwards (2005): Alexander Masters.
A portrait of a profoundly mentally ill man who was intermittently homeless and committed suicide before the publication of the book.

The People of the Abyss (1903): Jack London.
A first-hand account of the extreme poverty and homelessness in the East End of London in 1902.

ADLAN/SCANLON

Housing 'unhoused minds': Inter-personality disorder in the organisation?

Article in Housing, Care and Support · December 2006
DOI: 10.1108/14608790200600018

Refusal, social exclusion and the cycle of rejection: A cynical analysis?

© *Critical Social Policy Ltd* 2008 0261– 0183 97 Vol. 28(4): 529 – 549; 095301
SAGE PUBLICATIONS, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore,
10.1177/0261018308095301

Imprint

