How does childhood trauma and victimisation contribute to youth homelessness and criminal misconduct? A study of influences on young people's propensity to offend and the role of professionals in supporting homeless young people into living a crime free life.

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED

TO THE FACULTY OF

MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY LONDON

BY

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M00225185

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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September 2020

Abstract

Homeless youth experience social exclusion on numerous fronts, as they are a demographic who occupy the margins of the social, economic and civil spheres of English society. It is the misrepresentation of these marginalised youth that has contributed to this ostracism. Therefore, the crux of this study is to gain a thorough insight into the realities of youth homelessness and crime, through the lens of the lived experiences of young homeless people and the professionals who work directly with them. This insight is attained through the application of grounded theory with a substantial emphasis on ethnography, consisting of professional and research reflection, participant observation, life-story, in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and analysis.

This use of grounded theory and the accounts of their lived experiences challenges the societal isolation of the marginalised homeless youth themselves. It draws upon their own 'first person' accounts of being homeless, addressing issues including discrimination, racism, bullying, victimisation, coping and survival mechanisms, family life and parental influence, opportunities and reasons for criminal behaviour, limited access to education, conventional employment and housing.

A key question raised through this research is 'how does childhood trauma and victimisation contribute to youth homelessness and criminal misconduct'. The findings were clear that there was a direct correlation between suffering early traumatic or abusive experiences through primary caregivers (guardians) and later homelessness and involvement in criminal activity. Deterrents such as police action or punishment were not a motivating factor in refraining from criminal behaviours, rather moral or religious beliefs often served to dissuade involvement in criminal activity. Perceptions of crime also varied greatly between the young people interviewed which had significant bearing on the research findings. In seeking to establish if there was a direct correlation between homelessness and crime, the findings illustrated the complexities in defining the young person's status of 'perpetrator' or 'victim' – with some homeless youth occupying both roles simultaneously.

The practical implications of this research are multifaceted. In the first instance, it serves to clarify many of the societal and professionals misunderstandings around the issues affecting homeless youth as well as the characters and motivations of the youth themselves. As the research progressed, it became clear that there is sufficient confusion to warrant a systematic ethnographic review. Secondly, this work

challenges the debilitating stereotypes of homelessness, providing a perspective on youth homelessness that is up to date and rooted in lived experience whilst raising awareness of the actual challenges faced by homeless youth. In addition, this research makes a meaningful contribution to the scholarly literature examining the topic of youth who experience homelessness and crime. Too often, young people's voices are rarely heard in relation to the issues and actions that deeply affect them. This research represents an attempt to build an academic study around the voices and perspectives of the homeless youth.

Finally, if the concerned authorities, policy makers, academics, youth, and social work professionals are serious about resolving this significant social, ethical and moral matter in a purposeful manner, they need to consider the reality of the challenges that homeless young people face. The findings and recommendations laid out in this study clearly highlight the key issues that need to be addressed, as identified by the young people themselves, and those who work with them. This can subsequently enable policy makers and experts to find more workable, viable and sustainable solutions to the issues related to youth homelessness and crime.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my PhD supervisors. Professor Anthony Goodman has been a core source of consistent support during the research. I hugely admire his patience, direction and encouragement throughout the project. Professor Vincenzo Ruggiero has been also unwavering in his support. Without their encouragement and professional skills, I would not have been able to complete this research. My dear brother Amjad Qaisar, who has always been there to help and guide me. Thank you is the least I can say to you to show my appreciation for everything you have done for me. My three lovely sisters for their love, care, faith and prayers, which always boosted my confidence - especially, Kousar who has been constantly involved in my research study and always reminded me that I could do it. Khalida and Shakeela's (sisters) confidence on me also encouraged me a lot. My best friend Jude Trenier, without whom this project would not have been a real success. I appreciate your efforts, enduring motivation, belief and unconditional support. I especially want to acknowledge and thank the young people who shared their time and life experiences with me. I will never forget our conversations and our interactions in the shape of their thoughts and feelings: sadness, resentment, enjoyment, depression, expectation, and appreciation. I do believe that youth who experience homelessness in the future will benefit from your lived experience and wisdom. I thank each of you for your time, devotion and enthusiasm to get involved. The professionals who were interviewed and have always shown willingness to share their experiences of working with homeless youth. I believe their knowledge and working ethics will help the current and future homeless youth and young trainees.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to dedicate my thesis to my beloved and inspirational parents Mr Abdul Rasheed (late) and Mrs Sarwar Rasheed (late). I want to extent my heartfelt gratitude to both of you as you are the greatest and best parents in the world. I fully believe that without your love, care, values and training I wouldn't be able to achieve this milestone.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The crux of this study is to gain, through the lived experiences of young homeless people, a thorough insight into youth homelessness and crime. It also draws on the experiences of the professionals who work directly with them. This is achieved through the application of grounded theory with a substantial emphasis on ethnography. Throughout my professional life, I have taken note of the stark realities facing these vulnerable young people. Their voices are rarely, if ever, heard. They are often the last the people to be consulted about measures to help them. In addition, these measures are often woefully inadequate in light of the magnitude of the problems, and often try to 'solve issues' that others assume need to be addressed, rather than what the young people actually need. As professionals, we often try to help from within our own preconceived ideas or assumptions. Yet they are the experts on their own experiences rather than impose inadequate systems and structures upon them, it behoves us to enable them to have a voice and an active role in shaping their own future and the interventions that will allow them to thrive. It was for this reason I approached this research highlighting their voices and experiences. This consists of reflection, participant observation, life-story in-depth semi-structured interviews, and analysis.

This use of grounded theory and the accounts of their lived experiences challenges the societal isolation of the marginalised homeless youth themselves. It draws upon their own 'first person' accounts of being homeless, addressing issues including discrimination, racism, bullying, victimisation, coping and survival mechanisms, family life and parental influence, opportunities and reasons for criminal behaviour, limited access to education, conventional employment and housing.

The term 'youth homelessness' is a necessary one when used in relation to young people who experience homelessness. The differentiation of this term and one that broadly references the needs and experiences related to adult homelessness is important. Young homeless people will experience some issues unique to them that do not apply to adult homeless people. The types of housing and support young people require, can have significantly more complexities than adult focused services. Some of this is down to their level of vulnerability. Other factors they encounter will relate to their mental and emotional maturity.

It is well documented that a still developing brain will cause young people to act differently than adults. According to 'Mental Health First Aid England', an adolescent's prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain that helps us make reasoned or rational decisions) is still developing into adolescent's early twenties and a teenager's brain may rely on the amygdala to make life altering decisions and solve problems. Given that the amygdala is associated with emotions, impulses, aggression and instinctive behaviour

(fight, flight or freeze reactions). For many homeless young people this means that they will rely more heavily on 'survival instinct' reflexes than their more mature adult counterparts. This response can be heightened when a young person has experienced trauma of any kind in their life thus far.

As a result, they may also engage in impulsive or high-risk behaviour without thinking through the consequences of those decisions. While none of this is reason to excuse criminality or explain a decision to leave an abusive home situation, it should be carefully considered by those offering or creating services and specialised support to adolescents so as to inform the support offered and action taken. A 'one size fits all' approach to 'homelessness' for children, adolescents and adults is at best ineffective and can result in causing further isolation and life-long issues and difficulties for the individual. All this adds a complex layer of needs for homeless young people in terms of how best to provide support, particularly in relation to the reasons they will have felt it necessary to leave a home environment in addition to the complexities this causes for them in terms of mental and emotional health. Another key factor worth considering and related to a young person's vulnerability, is the fact that for many young homeless people, they have been forcibly removed from (or forced to leave) the home where they were living as dependants. This removal may have been instigated by the adult or parental figure or indeed by them themselves due to feeling unsafe or because of some kind of abuse. For an adolescent who has suddenly become homeless, it is not merely issues of food and shelter they are now contending with. Many will have lost the family network, friends, education/school life and a place in their community. They are alone, often already traumatised and extremely vulnerable.

Many youths, particularly from less affluent areas (including economic, relational and opportunity related affluence) have made the decision or been forced to leave their homes in search of a better future. For many, London appears to enjoy the mythology that there are ample opportunities to make a brighter future a reality. However, this allure has too often been deceptive. Sometimes, not 'all that glitters is gold'. Young people instead find themselves struggling to find the very basic life essentials of shelter, work and safety. Whilst homelessness is not restricted to young people, they are a fast growing and highly vulnerable demographic in London.

Despite changes in the policies around homelessness, priority needs, universal credit and the British political economy, many more young people are being forced into rough (and often hidden) sleeping in the capital. With Government benefits being severely cut back each year, the financial capacity of councils and other charitable organisations is shrinking drastically, whilst the need for their services is

growing exponentially. The general public are becoming more aware of the issues around homelessness and expressing frustration about how it is steadily rising whilst the Government continues to prioritise spending in other areas, seemingly ignoring the issue rather than addressing the cause.

British geographers have acknowledged the significance of diversity or different ethnicities in urban life. However, they have been slow to consider the implications of homelessness particularly in relation to a high risk and vulnerable group such as young people. As this research focuses on youth homelessness and crime, the careful study of this topic offers understanding and insight into one aspect of life, which is relevant, yet often profoundly misjudged. This research and analysis seek to explore the problems and issues faced by this most vulnerable group of homeless youth, and the brighter future that they search for in the capital city.

Staying in what is frequently a peripheral space, homelessness is more associated with turmoil than harmony. The challenging presence and visibility of these homeless youths in the urban environment, means they are brought into regular contact with the public. Many of the public view homeless young people as shadowy figures, their incongruity with their often-affluent surroundings means that the urban public often do not know what to make of them or even understand why they find themselves in such a dire situation. Those who have been approached by a homeless youth for food or money, may misinterpret the need they see and assume that those who are begging or asking for these things should be viewed with suspicion and fear or as criminals looking to take advantage of them. This leads to further ostracism and isolation for these vulnerable young people.

In general, the misrepresentation of those who are consistently marginalised in the capital has contributed to this ostracism. This process challenges this isolation of the voices of the marginalised homeless themselves, as it draws upon their own accounts of being homeless through their interactions and conversations with the researcher in a way that shapes the nature of the research itself.

According to the interviewees (homeless young people and professionals), this thesis examines the impact of youth homelessness and crime, taking into consideration the experiences both before and after homelessness, their actions, future concerns and the role and responsibilities of professionals and parents roles in bringing them back into stable accommodation and a crime-free life. The London based youth and their experience of homelessness offers a clear idea about environment of conflict and challenges they face. The life stories of the homeless youth explore the ways in which young people try to survive and make decisions in relation to the things they identify as essential for staying alive.

In the main, this research is based on London's homeless youth population rather than presenting a more widespread overview of youth homelessness. Instead of contending with the broad and vague definition

of homelessness, it focuses on those young people who have been living in temporary or unstable accommodation for the previous six to twelve months. The young participants interviewed were aged between 17 and 21 years 11 male and 7 female young people. Participants were chosen from this age group for the following reason:

Members of this age (17-21-years) would have been heavily involved in education (school, student referral units or different settings) and accordingly would have had adequate time to think about their experiences. Hirschi (2009) asserts the connection between age and offending as one of the most dynamic relationships from a criminological perspective. This link demonstrates that offending rates rise in early youth, around the age of 14, peaking in the mid-20s, and begin to decline thereafter.

Epistemological rationale or justification of chosen method

Willig, (2013) articulates the stance of the researcher, which stresses that all concepts derive from the lived experience. This thesis sought to examine the issue of homelessness and crime not only as a social and structural phenomenon, but through the lens of the everyday reality of being homeless. Ravenhill (2016), highlighted the importance of incorporating the views of those experiencing youth homelessness in any research done on the topic.

The process included exploring the life of the person before they became homeless, the experiences they had whilst being homeless, any subsequent criminal involvement and role of parents and professionals in their lives. This information then needed to be framed with the understanding of the social construction of the person's reality (Ritchie, 2014). There also needed to be recognition of the fact that the person affected by, or experiencing these issues also made choices affected by their social, emotional, political and economic climate (Becks, 1992).

In order to thoroughly gain a full picture of the situation, research questions were carefully crafted. Josselson, (2013) describes the lived experience as being comprehensive, exclusive and cohesive with meaning and structures. Put simply, this means that it is in fact those who are living in the reality of the situation, are therefore best placed to provide clarity and data on that culture and the experiences therein. In essence, those we seek to understand are the experts on that which we wish to research. Therefore, this study included homeless young people as key research participants in order to gain greater insights into how they behave and why, as well as the reasons they became homeless and the challenges they now face because of that. The research set out to determine how homeless young people interacted with the society they found themselves on the fringes of as well as the homeless 'sub-culture' they now found themselves a part of. This was achieved through their life story interviews, which explored the reasons

they committed or did not commit crime. The goal being to gain a greater appreciation of the intersection between homelessness and crime, as well as an accurate picture of the contributing factors.

The recent 2018 research conducted by Centrepoint, proved an eye opener for the British Government. It found that a shocking 18,000 people aged 16 to 25 were living in unstable or temporary accommodation. Plainly put, the factual statistics of youth homelessness are still far from accurate, as many of the young people without accommodation are ending up sofa surfing, staying with strangers or sleeping in the streets.

"Measuring the extent of youth homelessness is largely guesswork" (Muncie, 2015. p 242).

Such findings are often based on research or referrals to campaigning/assistance-based organisations, for example, Shelter, Centrepoint, Depaul etc. Official evaluations by local authorities and Home Office records put the figure significantly lower than the one stated above. A strong contributing factor to the inaccurate statistics is likely to be that in order to be acknowledged officially as a homeless person, one needs to meet a particular and very specific criterion which many argue only reflects a miniscule part of the overall issues and actual criterion of the term 'homelessness'. For example, they should demonstrate that they are not deliberately homeless, and they have a 'priority need', for example, being in danger of sexual abuse, pregnancy, disability or financial exploitation (Muncie, 2015). The Guardian newspaper investigated London's homelessness issue in 2016 and published its findings in the December of that year emphasizing the difficulties that the city was experiencing when trying to house it's most vulnerable.

Muncie (2015) highlighted the issues with these official statistics by pointing out that they only show the registered cases who have been referred to the local authority. They do not account for those who are the 'hidden homeless' due to an inaccurate and narrow definition of homelessness. Some young people may leave an abusive home but seek shelter through other means that could not be categorized as a 'safe home' or in some cases even proper shelter. According to Centrepoint (2016), these may include sleeping in overcrowded squats, a friend or family member's sofa for a few nights, bed and breakfast accommodation, or sleeping under a shed or other temporary, insecure shelter.

Who is homeless? This question is exceptionally difficult to answer. This is because many young people, who have had to leave their primary accommodation, either live with their friends or a friend's family's house, or they are a couch surfer, rough sleeper or remain with extended family for whatever length of time that is possible. (Centrepoint, 2017).

In 2017, the number of rough sleepers in London, (under the age of 25) had doubled from that of the previous year, leading to a 29 per cent rise across England. The Christmas period magnified the despair that many of these young people felt. Three quarters of 16 to 25-year olds expected to feel positive, content, loved or happy at this time of year, however, the research highlighted that virtually all young people sleeping rough felt alone and that no one cared about them or what happened to them.

Whilst the young homeless population in London are vulnerable to social and economic circumstances beyond their control, they are in the main, not to be considered mere victims – people without hope and goals, direction or purposelessness. Instead they could well also be viewed as being highly resilient given the extreme difficulty of the circumstances in which they find themselves. They may approach what is to many people, a difficult and unpleasant life, with a 'make do' attitude that seeks to create a positive life in enormously challenging conditions.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to investigate the social phenomena of 'youth homelessness and crime' (both as victim and perpetrator), as experienced by homeless young people. It is intended to identify the key links between homelessness and crime and how and why some homeless young people get drawn into criminal activity, and some do not. It will also investigate their lived experiences of victimisation. To investigate it thoroughly, I employed the use of grounded theory, which involves going out into the field for data collection (Glaser and Strauss1967, Robson and McCartan, 2016).

As grounded theory is suitable for investigating important social relationships, conduct and the behaviour of groups (Charmaz, 2014).

> *"Grounded theory has an intuitive appeal for new researchers as it allows them to get deeply engaged within the data" (Myers, 2009 p. 111).*

In data analysis this immersion practically explained in the shape of constant comparison, coding and memoing methods. Charmaz (2006) endorsed this concept and assures that "grounded theory provides new investigators with the needed principles and heuristic devices to get started, stay involved, and finish the project" (p. 2).

Whilst homelessness and crime are not necessarily linked, many young people are exposed to traumatic experiences which can result in their involvement in criminal activity (Porteous, 2015). Many young people struggle with issues of alcohol abuse or drug abuse because of their homelessness or the issues

that led to it. For others, it can be those issues around substance abuse, which has contributed to their situation of homelessness in the first place. Whilst research addressing both risk and protective factors has been conducted and investigated the developmental processes that may contribute to youth offending and victimisation; the links between risk and protective factors remain unclear. With protective factors often opposing risk variables, it is vital to therefore view them, as interlinking, rather than isolated entities. They inform each other. It is only when viewed in a way that we can gain a greater understanding of the overall issues involved.

We must therefore begin with some key questions: Why do some young people end up becoming homeless? Why do some young homeless people offend when others do not? What is the relationship between crime and youth homelessness? How do professionals and parents support former homeless young people into leading a crime free life?

There are substantial issues and difficulties of homeless youth that need to be assessed. A significant element that must inform our understanding of youth homelessness is the fact that many young people who become homeless are forced from their homes either as a means of escape from abuse, (Martin et al, 2011) or they are forcibly removed by those residing within that home – often a primary caregiver. Bearing this in mind, one then has to consider the myriad of other issues that accompany this loss of a primary residence. It is, after all, not merely the loss of physical shelter. The impact on a young person will extend to the loss of family and friends, perhaps exclusion from education and a higher risk of mental health and other health related complications (Porteous, 2015). Young people are at increased risk where there is family disruption and break down which may include parental mental illness, criminality, substance abuse, inconsistent discipline, bereavement or abuse including neglect which can have a significant impact on a young person's overall development (Martin et al, 2011). In the average secondary school classroom, ten pupils will have witnessed their parents separate, eight will have experienced severe physical violence, sexual abuse or neglect, one will have experienced the death of a parent, and seven will have been bullied (Mental Health First Aid England 2017).

In addition, the findings of a study also conducted by MHFA England of 2,275 young people is significant. All were between the ages of 11 and 17. 4.8% of 11 to 17 year olds and 11.3% of 18 to 24 year olds reported that they had experienced contact sexual abuse, as defined by criminal law; one in five of the young people (aged 11 to 17), had experienced severe maltreatment and one in four young adults aged 18 to 24 had experienced severe maltreatment by a parent or guardian. This begins to provide a clearer picture of some of the reasons why young people become homeless and need to deal not only

with their changed living situation, but the effects of trauma and resulting mental, physical and emotional health issues which make accessing much needed support all the more complicated.

The main aim of the thesis was to examine youth homelessness, victimisation and crime, specifically concerning their experiences of being homeless. The purpose of these life-story interviews was to be in a position to recognise and incorporate the first-hand knowledge of these young people who are facing homelessness and their views and future concerns about their lives.

This first chapter provides introduction to the topic, reviews the current trends in youth homelessness and offending, outlines the purpose of the study, and particularly addresses youth homelessness in the capital.

The second chapter goes on to provide a review of the literature regarding the association between the dependent variables (i.e. youth homelessness delinquency and criminal behaviour) and the independent variables (i.e. Parental control, professionals). It also contemplates the relationship between agency and social reproduction, raising the question 'to what degree are London's homeless youth capable of critical and self-determined action?'. The chapter goes on to review key and relevant literature on issues pertaining to youth homelessness and crime including, alcohol and drug abuse, institutionalisation, parental and professional roles and responsibilities as well as risk and protective factors. This extensive review was to not only provide context to the research, but also to enable to select the approaches which would yield the most robust results for the study.

The third chapter addresses the methodology which is then used to test the previous hypotheses. A description of the data collection, participant observation, and ethical consideration and research methods is discussed. This includes a full description of the various steps taken in the compilation of data and provides details about the way that research was conducted. This study included 18 young people and 14 professionals' using semi-structured and unstructured interviews. I also had some informal discussions with young homeless people and professionals. A combination of qualitative and grounded theory methods was chosen for the research.

The fourth chapter gives a detailed analysis of the young people's views about their homeless and offending experiences. A number of causes were recognised and established as factors that increase people's vulnerability when they are homeless. It also addressed their homelessness experience, domestic and sexual abuse, offending history, life in temporary accommodations, future concerns and other themes which emerged during the course of their interviews.

The fifth chapter presents six individual case studies for the young people identified as being the most vulnerable in the sample, providing the reader with a glimpse into the true nature of their vulnerability and harsh day to day experiences. After 6-9 months' re-interviews were conducted to establish if there were any changes that occurred in their lives after initial interviews. This was completed in order to provide ample opportunity for each young person interviewed, to express as much as they were able to, about their ever-changing circumstances and how they were adapting or reacting to the challenges of their situation.

Chapter six will consider the views of the professionals, including a Youth Offending Team (YOT) staff member, a social worker, a probation officer, police etc. It will examine and also explore the link this has to the support made available for homeless young people and role of professionals and parents in bringing them back into a crime free life. The researcher sought to discover the concerns of the homeless young participants as this questionnaire was drafted after the interviews with them had concluded. These interviews were purposefully conducted with a wide range of professionals in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and challenges they experienced when working with homeless youth and how they understood them and their situation. This included asking them about what they would change about the support they could offer and system they worked within.

Chapter seven looks at the theoretical notion of strain and social control theory and examines why young people may or may not commit crimes. This chapter also briefly discusses social bond theory, anomie theory, theory of delinquent subculture and self-control theory to see how social control theory is help young people to abstain from offending. Social control theory provided a lens through which the circumstances or issues that contributed to youth homelessness could be addressed, as well as result in their being able to access support and achieve a life that included the things that helped them thrive and overcome the challenges that contributed to their homelessness.

Chapter eight discusses the findings and limitations of the study. It additionally looks at opportunities for further research and conclusions and discusses implications for practitioners. It identifies the root causes of homelessness, offering recommendations for professionals in achieving sustainable, positive change in the lives and care of vulnerable homeless young people.

Limitations

As with all areas of study, there were several limitations throughout the course of research. Youth homelessness is a complex and significant social issue with implications not only for those experiencing it, but for society as a whole.

In the first instance, this research focused on interviews with a sample of 18 young people and 14 professionals. Given that the statistics state that there are over 5,000 young homeless people in London (DCLG, 2016), the sample size was relatively small. This then only provides a snapshot of the combined experiences of the myriad of homeless youth in the capital. Secondly, for a topic of this magnitude, having only one researcher did make approaching a topic as broad and complex as this, a challenge. Ideally there would have been more researchers in order to carry out a larger study, enabling a larger sample size which would have yielded a wider breadth of experiences and information.

Finally, in the interests of ethical transparency, it was necessary for each participant in the study to know the aim and title of the research – 'Youth Homelessness and Crime'. This knowledge alone could well have influenced those who took part, in that they may have felt they were required to give certain responses or indeed have felt unable to discuss certain behaviours or attitudes for fear of being 'judged' in some way.

Contribution of this Study:

I intended to establish if there is a direct correlation between homelessness and crime both in terms of offending and victimisation in relation to youth (17 – 21 years) and if so, help to shed light on the reasons why they offend, as well as identifying the circumstances in which they may also be a victim of crime.

My primary research consisted of one-to-one life-story interviews, through carefully crafted questionnaires and open discussions. This offered me unique insights from individuals who were currently facing these issues (their lived experiences).

Secondly, the ability to review the initial interviews after some time had passed allowed the data to lend itself to other areas of research. This also enabled a thorough examination of the term 'future concerns' of the homeless youth through the telling of their life stories in the interviews with them and the professionals. Related to this, was the use of open-ended questions throughout the interview process in order to give informants a voice, and allow the researcher to gather a more transparent understanding (Ritchie, 2014) of the circumstances described, in which young homeless people express what led to them becoming homeless as well as its subsequent impact on them. By focusing on the issues raised by the participants themselves, the research will raise awareness of the issues experienced by young people at risk of homelessness and crime in the future. In other words, it will work at a protective level. A final key reason was, to establish the role and validity of theories such as General Strain and Social Control

in their contribution to the understanding youth homelessness and the risk and reasons for committing crime.

In addition to dealing with a range of theoretical debates, this work has practical implications. Through discussion with many working directly with homeless young people including policy makers, practitioners, chief executives, managers, senior supported housing officers, it became clear that misunderstandings of homeless young people and the issues they faced lay not only in the minds of the public, but also existed amongst professionals in that field. Whilst this by no means characterises the entire body of people in the homeless 'industry,' (for much work in this area is very good) there is sufficient confusion to warrant a systematic ethnographic review. Like issues affecting any population, the character of homelessness changes with time, as indeed does the population which perceives it. This work challenges the debilitating stereotypes of homelessness, providing a perspective on youth homelessness that is up to date and rooted in lived experience.

I believe my research makes a meaningful contribution to the scholarly literature on, or related to the examination of the topic of youth who experience homelessness and crime. I now consider myself to have a much deeper understanding regarding the factors and reasons behind youth homelessness, the victimisation and criminal acts committed by and against young people as well as the factors that drive them to get involved in criminal activities. I believe that young people's voices are rarely heard or even listened to when the issues that deeply impact them are discussed by policy makers, academics and even those who directly work with them. This research represents an attempt to build an academic study around the voices and perspectives of the homeless youth. I also anticipate that this research will also shed light on the responsibilities of both parents and professionals to bring young people back into a crime free life. This study explored the term "future concerns" of homeless young people, to reflect the young participants concerns about their stable housing and independent living.

Finally, if the concerned authorities are serious about resolving this significant social, ethical and moral matter in a purposeful manner, they need to consider the issues and challenges that homeless young people face which are informed and strategically addressed through the research. This research has been conducted with this in mind. The findings laid out in this study clearly highlight the key issues as identified by the young people themselves, and those who work with them, which can enable policy makers and experts to find more workable and viable solutions to the issues related to youth homelessness and crime.

Summary

The research suggests that the majority of young homeless people need some form of help and support to resettle and live independently, and that this support needs to be flexible enough to not only address specific issues, but allow young people to progress through, and access the programme according to their needs and abilities. After conducting the interviews, it became clear that a large number of young homeless people had been experiencing significant traumas since their early childhood. Also, in interviews with professionals, it highlighted the inadequacies in the system and identified recognisable solutions, which could protect young people from becoming homeless or at least lessen the risk of their homelessness and offending. In addition to the young people themselves, the professionals who work directly with these young people, are in the best position to highlight the issues, and the interventions that need to be in place.

It needs to be recognised that one-size solutions don't fit all, and many end up 'falling through the cracks' in a system that demands they fit the support offered rather than create a support plan around the individual. There are serious failings and flaws within the social care system - policies and processes, (pathway plans and paperwork) need to be tailored to individuals e.g. age restrictions on care (18) and then they age out of the system rendering them unsupported and at higher risk, regardless of issues they may be experiencing. Understaffing, under budgeting, lack of training and understanding about the real issues affecting the young people, as well as an expensive private rental sector, all contribute to a chaotic system that tries to solve complex individual issues and needs with a wide sweep approach. The Covid-19 pandemic illustrated the deficits in interventions – placing homeless young people in hotels merely serves to address one issue. Providing a physical roof over their heads. It is woefully inadequate in dealing with the systemic and long term issues that caused the lack of housing in the first place. For example, further isolation in a hotel room can only lead to many experiencing higher levels of mental health issues and a deeper sense of lost freedom, creating more need for support than it offers. Street based young people used to being out 14-15 hours a day will experience a significant, negative impact.

In short, if the social care system only addresses the physical issues of the lack of shelter and not the myriad of problems that can lead to and cause homelessness, then the issue will not go away. The above is not mere hypothesis – it is based on the first hand lived experiences of the young homeless people and the multifaceted issues they face every day. In essence, it shines a light on the grim realities of each person affected by homelessness and crime.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review:

In this chapter, I examine the current texts concerning youth homelessness, the experience of being homeless, and its relation to victimisation and criminal acts. It explores both aspects to offer background and framework to the problems being explored and presents some of the scopes of themes, which will be identified throughout the research. In the first instance, a brief history of youth homelessness will be presented, including statutory and non-statutory homelessness, rough sleeping hidden sleeping etc. and the main discussion as to how it affects young people in everyday life. Secondly, I will explore the significance of both youth homelessness and criminal acts carried out by them. I will examine the conflicting relationship between homelessness and crime whilst reviewing the various interrelationship between concepts such as youth homelessness and youth offending. I will also explore the role of both parents and professionals (who work directly with homeless youth) in bringing homeless youth back to crime-free life. The literature used offers diverse and unclear explanations relating to why homeless youth end up in crime and victimisation. This research has been designed to investigate these issues through the lens of homeless young people's perspectives.

Literature searching strategy

Within the sphere of grounded theory research, there have been extensive discussions regarding the importance and effectiveness of detailed literature searches (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 2015; Glaser, 1992), the recommendations from Charmaz (2014):

> *"An effective strategy is, to demonstrate your grasp of relevant work, identifying and discussing the most significant ideas, to make explicit and compelling connections between your study and earlier study and to permit you to make claims from your grounded theory. At first, literally to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas" (p.307).*

I carried out a comprehensive search of the academic literature resources available within the Middlesex University (sources Athens, Dawsonera, summon etc.) and British library. The research included journals, scholarly articles, and newspapers. The keywords included were: "Youth", "crime" and "homelessness". The primary inquiry combined extra catchphrases including: "wrongdoing", "social support", "parents/guardians", and "professionals". Databases produced seven sources and after survey,

only one as pertinent to this review. Just two studies with high applicability to this review were found, however they have not yet matched with a geographical area. Whilst my research is based in London, I did not find a single research document or report regarding youth homelessness and crime, which was purely based in London. Additional searches focused on emerging themes such as families, parental supervision and multi-agency working. The reference list of all significant reviews was thoroughly searched to examine related writings in the subject area.

The literature examined in this chapter is the culmination and conclusion of a four-year process. The aim was to capture the current information base relating to the subjects of youth, homelessness and offending. Internet sources were used to search for related writings by using the combinations of keywords, including 'youth', 'homelessness', 'wrongdoing', 'drugs', 'youth offending', 'destitute', 'homelessness', 'home' and 'identity'. Moreover, key sociological intellectuals (Hirschi, Gottfredson, Durkheim, Matza, Carlen, Blumer, Zinberg, May, Giddens), famous authors (Anderson, Muncie, Arnett, Barker, Baumrind, Cohen, Fitzpatrick Johnsen, Neale and so forth) and philosophical systems (typical interactionism and phenomenology) were explored for their significant contributions to theory and knowledge, which were relevant to this thesis.

With regards to the methodology, searches were carried out using keywords such as 'participant-observation', 'qualitative method', 'grounded theory', 'research ethics', 'ethical consideration semi-structured interview', 'data analysis' and 'reflexivity'. I researched and used journals and online articles because I recognised that these generated the most 'subject related' results. These included:

- The Journal of Youth Offending;
- Youth Homelessness:
- Criminal Acts in Youth, Prevention and Policy;
- International Homelessness and Crime;
- European Journal of Homelessness;
- Housing Studies;
- Establishment of London refuge for the destitute 1804;
- Juvenile Offender act 1847;
- Crime Prevention act 1908;
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Government legislation about youth and crime;
- Youth offending team (YOT) reports;
- Bromley Report (Prison Reform Trust);

- Youth Crime Surveys;
- Reports about troubled families etc., which included the latest figure of crimes committed by young people.

Additionally, I searched many other topic-related sites for relevant information.

The Review

There was a key focus throughout the study on young homeless people and their experiences of crimes as both perpetrators and victims. The starting point for this literature review was "why don't all homeless young people commit crime" and in the later part the "parents and professional's responsibilities to bring young people back to a crime-free life".

Background and history

Youth Homelessness

We currently reside in a society that houses vulnerable children and their families in converted shipping containers and office blocks as a poor alternative to accommodation that should be considered, *'fit for purpose'*. For those unable to attain extortionate rent levels in the UK or finding themselves at risk of homelessness the logical step is to approach the local authority. According to the Children's Commissioner, local authorities respond to this crisis with solutions that at best, could be described as temporary and insufficient as they struggle to plug the gap in available housing. Instead of settling families and housing homeless children, these short terms and short sighted 'solutions' merely create a subculture of shame and stigma amongst their peers and local communities (The Children's Commissioner Report, 2019).

There is no simple way to define "homelessness". It can be defined in many ways. Does "homeless" mean being without a personal place to live? A permanent sanctuary? A place to live freely. Ownership of one's bed? A peaceful place to sleep. A place without family? The term is a difficult one to characterize. This section reviews the literature addressing the subject and the clarification of youth vagrancy in general. Numerous researchers have endeavored to characterize what being "destitute" means and what it involves. In 1987, Lord Scarman explained homelessness as something that destroys a human's personality and is ultimately a threat to civilization (Liddiard and Huston, 1994).

Homelessness, particularly amongst the youth population, highlights a significant deficit in the society in which it occurs. It is not simply a case of having no home – the complexities and layers of homelessness as an issue are extensive (Carlen, 1996; Ravenhill, 2016; Schenwar, 2014). Many young homeless people have differing and multifaceted mental health problems. Being destitute is related with a range of vulnerabilities including; susceptibility to exploitation, poor physical and psychological wellness, high prevalence of substance abuse issues, antisocial and aggressive conduct, absence of legal work opportunities and continuing negative attitudes from the public (Petersen et al., 2014). These issues commonly lead to criminal activities. Research has started to investigate youth homelessness and the type of homelessness experienced by the young people and their journey to a crime centered or crime-free life. Ravenhill (2016) articulates that young homeless people are a marginalised and destitute group. Hammack and Cohler (2009) describe how homeless youth face harmful social perceptions and upsetting environments related to survival in their everyday lives.

Definition of homeless persons in the UK

The Housing Act 2004, in England and Wales states that a person can be classed as 'homeless', if they have no accommodation, or even have accommodation, but are denied access to it. If someone owns or has access to a moveable structure (e.g. caravan, mobile home) but has no rights to set it up as a place of residence (no land that allows it or that they have ownership of).

Fitzpatrick, (2004) explains, this definition also includes those living in temporary and emergency accommodation, those experiencing 'intolerable' housing conditions (overcrowded housing or experiencing domestic violence) and those threatened with the imminent loss of their current accommodation. Several developed typologies have attempted to display homelessness as a spectrum. Bramley et al., (2015) defines homelessness as people who factually lack a roof over their heads, such as those sleeping rough, those experiencing emergencies and that fleeing violence, or those in temporary accommodation precisely provided to meet the needs of homeless households.

The home needs to be related to a feeling of wellbeing, a sentiment, flexibility, peace and quality of life. Accommodation is about more than just a physical place. It can also be viewed a place in which one can experience comfort, harmony and psychological wellbeing (Ravenhill, 2008). Nonetheless, in many organisations working with or providing for homeless youth, there is a roof provided for the young people, but a significant lack of other wellbeing necessities as described above. Some young people do

not want to, or indeed choose not to live in accommodation because they feel happier in the streets (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). However, it worth noting that this is a minority of young people.

Factors of youth homelessness

The reasons for youth homelessness are often diverse and interdependent (Centrepoint, 2014). In the last five years, it has been found that young people in the UK are at a significantly higher risk of homelessness than their older counterparts (OVO Foundation Report, 2015). Research indicates that the leading cause of youth homelessness is family or relationship breakdown (Centrepoint, 2018; Hollingsworth 2008; Quilgars et al., 2008). Typically, relationship breakdown happens between the young people and their parents/guardians, but this is not always the case. There are often varieties of complicated and stressful reasons that push the young person towards homelessness. For most of these young people, relationship breakdown is accompanied by viciousness and violence (or threats of) (Centrepoint, 2018). For others, they may be leaving care without independent living skills, be a victim of, or suffering sexual or emotional abuse, drug misusers, newly released from prison and/or experiencing mental health issues. Any of these factors can precede an episode of youth homelessness (Homeless Link, 2015). Fitzpatrick et al., (2017) articulate the issues involved with young people becoming homeless and outline how financial stress can add to the strain put upon key relationships in a young person's life, thus leading to a severing of ties between 'anchoring' social relationships and the vulnerable young person.

In 2018, Centrepoint found that in the U.K. one of the primary reasons a young person becomes homeless is because the young person has no choice but to leave their family home. The growing concern is that the economic pressure many families are experiencing due to poverty, significantly contributes to this rise. Youth from ethnic minority groups and deprived socio-economic families are considered to be at a higher risk of homelessness than young people from other socio-economic groups. A response to the poverty faced by families, can be a breakdown in the support of their children and a failure to look after or nurture them properly (Goodman and Kennison, 2008), which generally creates relationship problems between the family/parents and young people (Carlen, 1996; Hagan and McCarthy, 2004; Ploeg, and Scholte, 1997; Rizzini and Lusk 1995). In many cases, poverty can push young people into debt and its myriad of related problems, which consequently makes it tougher for them to access housing (Centrepoint, 2019).

A higher risk of youth homelessness is linked to many factors. These can include one or more kinds of child abuse (including neglect, sexual, emotional and physical abuse), witnessing or being a victim of

domestic violence. In addition, experiencing parental/guardian as well as their own drug misuse and mental illness, bullying, truancy, early school leaver/dropping out of education, dyslexia, autism or learning disabilities, and being a transgender, lesbian, gay, or bisexual young person (OVO Foundation Report, 2015). To target the right support/help and to implement preventative measures, these significant concerns offer support services working with youth and their families a means to address their felt needs and eradicate their problems.

Research indicates that an increasing percentage of youth who access services have 'multifaceted needs'. Homeless Link (2014) outlines that these can include the urgent need to address psychological and behavioural problems, issues around recreational and habitual drug abuse. Also to be considered are learning disabilities which can affect attendance and performance at school, particularly if they go undiagnosed, anti-social behaviour and delinquency which can then lead to further isolation from society (Martin et al, 2011), through a lack of awareness or adherence to social norms of expected behaviour. In 2015, Centrepoint specified that it is the exact issues that directly contribute to a young person's homelessness, that can then lead to them being unable or unwilling to access the services and help they desperately need thus ensuring that they inevitably become at risk of homelessness in its various guises.

The gang and its culture/influence is also a factor that often triggers youth homelessness. For some young people, it can become too unsafe to live in their local area because of gang-related issues (Porteous, 2015). Therefore, they end up in an unfamiliar part of the city, homeless (Bernstein, and Foster, 2008; Ravenhill, 2016). At Centrepoint, one in six young people are affected by gang crime (Centrepoint, 2015). By using the qualitative method and grounded theory, this study explores factors pertaining to youth homelessness, how young people experience crime and being homelessness by exploring their lived experiences and engaging with leading discourses about homelessness that cause them to take risks to ensure their survival.

Risk and protective factors for youth homelessness and crime

Young people leaving care are the most vulnerable group, with a high risk of facing youth homelessness (Centrepoint, 2017). This is because many of these young people have had difficult encounters in early life, combined with the challenges they confront at 18 years of age whilst making a move from the care framework into independent living (Quilgars et al., 2008; Homeless Link, 2018; NAO, 2015). It is evident that care leavers will probably encounter a higher incidence than their peers outside of the care

system, of issues such as social exclusion, complex needs and extreme hindrance in later life (Bramley et al., 2015).

It is well documented that young people who have experienced many troublesome or traumatic encounters during their lives, are at more risk of homelessness than those that have not (Carlen, 1996). These encounters can include violence and insult, domestic misconduct/viciousness inside the family home, emotional well-being issues or potential drug misuse in the family home (Bramley et al., 2015; Quilgars et al., 2008). When Llamau, (2015) investigated the key factors leading to youth homelessness, they found that young people affected by the issues above were far more likely to have experienced significantly higher incidences of psychological abuse and neglect than their home-based peers. This exposure to abuse was not limited to first-hand experience – approximately 60% of homeless young people had witnessed the abuse of a family member.

Blackburn (2005), explored the connection between protective factors and risk factors. Whilst research has led to some understanding of those links in relation to the likelihood of youth offending, this correlation has not yet been made clear. It is generally accepted that protective elements are the inverse of risk factors, and they do change our understanding of this problem (Hagan and McCarthy, 2004). In order to better our understanding, both risk and protective factors are better viewed as interconnecting elements rather than working in isolation of each other.

The risk factors for youth offending are more significant when they spend most of the time on the street (Porteous, 2008). Homelessness, youth offending, and drug abuse intersect to a large degree with those who have dropped out of school, are a teenage parent, and experience mental health difficulties. Strong examples of protective factors include positive parental involvement, high self-esteem, and good physical, mental and emotional health, a significant and guiding set of affirming values or beliefs and constructive use of leisure time. In 2014 in London, around 27,000 children became ‘children in need’, because of issues ranging from domestic violence and neglect in families, to antisocial behaviour or dysfunctional families (Department of Education, 2015).

Youth Homelessness and Crime

Youth homelessness is almost always related to other behavioural problems such as offending, victimisation, alcoholism, drug abuse and prostitution. Before discussing these social issues, and how they are connected to homeless youth, we should consider the question of whether these social issues cause homelessness, or whether they are an outcome of the homelessness (Centrepoint, 2018).

Empirically, it is still hard to answer this question (Llamau, 2015; Ploeg and Scholte, 1997). The connection between youth homelessness and delinquency is multifaceted, and homelessness can both be a source and an outcome of delinquency (Shelter, 2017).

London is a large metropolitan city, and young people enjoy access to many opportunities whilst living here, such as educational prospects, extracurricular activities, sports and many other chances to achieve their goals and desires. However, London is over-crowded, so they may also experience some disadvantages whilst also being vulnerable to other significant risks. Homelessness, youth offending, victimisation, and sexual exploitation are some of the main issues of concern. In cases where a young person has unstable unsupportive relationships with their family or guardians, the risks can be even higher (The Children's Society, 2015).

Research shows that to fulfil their immediate desires or needs, street culture offers young people other, not always healthy alternatives (Ilan, 20015). According to Hagan and McCarthy (2004), the streets are also the source of easy access to drugs, violence, viciousness and early sexual promiscuity. In addition, the streets create optimum conditions for abuse and victimisation (Porteous, 2008) as well as opening doors for homeless young people to start offending (Hollingsworth 2008; Ilan, 2015). However, there are some positive aspects, which the city may offer to homeless young people such as labour opportunities and may help keep them out of trouble provided (Hollingsworth, 2008).

Siegel and Welsh (2017) argue that homeless young people who have less opportunity to earn legally are more likely to be involved in illegal activities such as begging, shoplifting, robbery, mugging, and sex work (Aggleton, 1999; Carlen, 1996; Hagan and McCarthy, 2004). Additionally, having no permanent roof over their heads makes them more vulnerable to involvement in other types of anti-social and offending activities, such as sex-work, drug dealing/selling, serious crime, knife and gun related crimes. There is a greater chance to engage in drug abuse and criminal behaviour such as stealing, through their presence and vulnerability on the streets (Ward et al. 2012; Ilan, 2015). Hollingsworth (2008) explains how young people involved in offending and drug abuse will experience victimisation and institutionalisation.

Most young people in London grow up in supportive families and progress to become successful adults. However, some young people face risks that make them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (ONS, June 2015). There are some significant reasons why young people become homeless. These may include relationship breakdown due to poverty, migration and domestic abuse. Problems at home often result in

young people running away or going missing. Young people run away from home for many reasons. However, when they experience issues, threat and conflict in relationships this can be a key push factor for many young people (Carlen, 1996; Centrepoint, 2018; Department of Education, 2015; Hagan and McCarthy 2004; Ravenhill, 2016). Financial problems and poverty can be influential in a breakdown of the family (Goodman and Kennison, 2008). In London, families suffering economic crisis will have a higher probability of living in areas with a higher crime rate and gang-related activity. London has a higher proportion of young people living in poverty than anywhere else in the UK. There are 70,000 young people living in poverty (approximately 4 in 10 young people) across the capital. Every day, these children and their families struggle for their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothes and heating (The Children's Society London, 2015).

When families experience poverty and financial instability, young people face an inordinate amount of pressure (Goodman and Kennison, 2008). They may feel or indeed be compelled to leave home and school in order to mitigate circumstances that are out of, or beyond their control (e.g. domestic abuse, bullying). Whilst homeless, young people struggle and face hardships as they strive to fulfil their basic needs including food, shelter and clothes (Anderson, 2000; Hagan and McCarthy 2004). Additionally, after leaving school, many of these young people do not (or are in some cases unable to) take any serious steps to find productive employment, and so, they face economic instability (Marcus, 2007). Moreover, homelessness is a landscape where young people are routinely exposed to exploitation and victimisation (Hagan and McCarthy, 1999, 2004).

Drug abuse among homeless youth

Research suggests that much of the income generated and subsequently spent by homeless youth is on drugs (Hollingsworth 2008; Portugal 1999). Homeless young people can often have easy access to drugs. This combined with adverse situations and peer pressure can lead to drug misuse, addiction and drug dealing (Carlen, 1996; Hagan and McCarthy, 2004; Rizzini and Lusk 1995). Hollingsworth (2008) proposed that paste, glue, or thinner are the main drugs of choice for 'street youth' because they are easily accessible and cheap. Wright et al., (1993) outlined that the issues of alcoholism and abuse of drugs puts a young person's physical and mental health and development at significant risk and (Ploeg, and Scholte, 1997) found that substance misuse is the second, most seriously damaging behaviour frequently found amongst homeless young people.

According to Hollingsworth (2008) when examined amongst the homeless youth, drug use serves two purposes. Firstly, it helps overcome negative feelings that arise from stressful situations including malnutrition, hunger, isolation, or experiences of victimisation. Secondly, drug use is a common source of socialising that helps facilitate acceptance and communication within the social or peer groups (Centrepoint, 2015). Young homeless people, both male and female, also use drugs to deal with the circumstances that have resulted in them living on the streets or to cope with any recent event of victimisation. Drug use also suppresses feelings of starvation, physical discomfort, aching or illness. In London, most young people who initially present to health professionals with issues of substance abuse, are also found to be dealing with other issues such as significant emotional, mental or social problems. These can include issues such as eating disorders, self-harming, no established home base, criminal behaviour family issues and unemployment, not being in education and relationship breakdown (The NHS Information Centre, 2011).

Wright et al., (1993) suggest that drug abuse using inhalants, lessens the fear of reprimand and encourages boldness for homeless youth. They use drugs before undertaking risky or criminal activities. Before engaging in acts of 'survival sex' with adults, many homeless young people will use drugs in order to cope with or lessen the trauma of the experience. Similarly, drugs are often used to garner courage for acts of stealing, robbery or any dangerous criminal activity. In many cases, substance use amongst homeless youth makes the dangers and strain of street life somewhat bearable. Sadly, it is a vicious cycle as drug use can end in incidents that lead to arrest or further victimisation by others (Hollingsworth 2008). Substance abuse and victimisation are prevalent and complex interrelated problems in the lives of single homeless youth (Ploeg and Scholte, 1997). These issues are more predominant for young people living on the streets than for their peers who live in stable housing (Ryan et al., 2000; Wachholz, 2005).

Victimisation

Victimisation of youth is not an ignorable topic, especially when research such as the offending crime and justice survey (OCJS), has shown that offending and victimisation are unmistakeably connected. Wilkstrom and Butterworth (2006) found that young offenders were nearly twice as likely to be a victim of crime as those who did not offend. It is worth noting however, that a focus on young people's offending is more common than studies of criminal victimisation in research and government policy (Martin et al, 2011). Carlen (1996) defines physical attack as a prevalent fear for both homeless young men and women. Out of her 50 respondents, 15 young females and 35 young males had been victims of

crimes whilst they had been homeless. Homeless young people, who are the victim of physical assaults from members of the public through items thrown at them or others beating them up, are far more likely to be victim to verbal assaults of a racist nature. Most of the young homeless people interviewed responded that they thought that homeless females were more vulnerable than their homeless male counterparts (Carlen, 1996). Whitbeck and Hoyt (1999) describe that being homeless offers higher risks of frequent victimisation sexually and physically and increases the risk of the perpetration of violence. Young homeless girls are regularly the victims of humiliating sexual comments, harassment and violent sexual gestures.

For specific groups of young people, negative interaction with the police is a common occurrence (McAra and McVeigh, 2005). Research indicates that youth, mainly from ethnic minorities, who are active in gangs or life 'on the streets' have a significantly higher chance of engaging with the police in a hostile or antagonistic context (Flood-Page et al., 2000; Porteous, 2008). Research shows that the police excessively target the 'usual suspects', often done through conscious or subconscious profiling. Whereas, in the first place, they are accused because of their conduct and living circumstances, once they are acknowledged or stigmatised as a delinquent, this status puts a young person under ongoing suspicion, irrespective of whether they continue to be involved in misconduct or crimes (McAra and McVeigh, 2005).

Homeless young people report the many negative experiences they have with police as a direct result of their risky lifestyle e.g. drug abuse, drug dealing, delinquency, prostitution and stealing. Much of the time, members of the public approach and interact with street youth using aggression and resentment (Trussell 1999; Ploeg and Scholte, 1997). Street youths often face discrimination by shop and stall owners – the assumption of criminality is a justifying factor. Research suggests that females who are involved in prostitution, are often sexually abused by their clients (Dibblin, 1991; Kushel et al., 2008; Wolseth, 2014). Females engaged in prostitution may not be paid by some clients or are beaten by others (e.g. men who control or claim 'ownership' of them) and forced to divide or surrender their subsequent income, due to their (perceived) lower status in society (Hollingsworth 2008).

Portugal (1999) reported that young homeless people were often forced to surrender their money, clothing, drugs or belongings to others. If they refused to accept, they were attacked. *"For women, sexual abuse may lead to prostitution" (Carlen, 1996 p 102).* Females who are homeless are more vulnerable and at greater risk of sexual and physical assault than young homeless males (North and

Smith 1993). According to Hollingsworth (2008), girls are sexually victimised by their peers and members of the public. Hagan and McCarthy (2004) claim that homeless youths whose behaviour deviates from street group rules or accepted peer behaviour, (for instance, being unable to escape capture by police after committing a crime), run a very high risk of experiencing punishment caused by their peers such as physical or sexual assault as a form of punishment.

Within the population of street youth, the experience of victimisation is significant and related to many issues (Porteous, 2008), including mental health, begging, substance abuse, male and female prostitution and connection with deviant peers (Kushel et al., 2008). High rates of drug abuse amongst homeless youth increases the possibility of victimisation because of more frequent exposure to high-crime areas, and interaction with those involved with drug dealing (Novac et al., 2006). Research shows, homeless young people disclose that a high number of youths have experienced domestic violence and neglect. The subsequent juvenile aspects are generally reported experiences to youth homelessness:

- High incidences of physical and sexual abuse in childhood (Carlen. 1996; Hagan and McCarthy, 2004; Novac et al., 2006; Whitbeck et al., 2007)
- Insufficient parental care and supervision in childhood (Hermen et al., 1997).
- Frequent social care placements, because of abuse and neglect (Novac et al., 2006).

Most of these issues are associated with homeless youth, which has resulted in their stigmatisation (Whitbeck et al., 2007) and for many, means that they are then caught up in a vicious cycle of abuse and victimisation. These circumstances often end up perpetuating the homelessness and violence experienced by the young person in their efforts to survive.

Homeless Youth and Survival

Research shows that homeless young people have very weak ties with society and school. This may be because many homeless young people spend much of their time on the streets (Centrepoint, 2016; Watson, 2001). As indicated by Hagan and McCarthy (1999), homeless youth will probably participate in offending acts, due to a considerable amount of time spent on the streets. Anti-social behaviour and criminal acts are the result of a lack of social support. The problems faced in fulfilling the fundamental needs largely food, shelter and clothes (Hollingsworth 2008; Morewitz, 2016; Ravenhall, 2016).

Hollingsworth (2008) symbolises the street as a venue where abuse, victimisation, exploitation and opportunities for crime are available. Additionally, streets are also the source for young people to fulfil their immediate and most urgent needs, for example, food and clothing (Aptekar, 2016). Homeless young people with weak family bonds, or not in employment, will likely depend on illegal activities to create income (Colvin, 2001; Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). In London, begging, sex work and stealing are the most common criminal ways to survive (Carlen, 1996). Young people may also go missing because they are pressurised into anti-social behaviour or committing crimes, with many also forced into or groomed for sexual exploitation (The Children's Society London, 2015).

Begging has become an essential survival activity for young homeless people, especially in London (Centrepoint, 2018). Youth on the streets also request food when they encounter people who are eating (Hollingsworth 2008). Ironically, some homeless youth may earn a good amount of money from begging, through eliciting pity from the public (Hollingsworth 2008; Panter-Brick, 2004). As Carlen explains, *"Without jobs or homes, the homeless on the street depend on the generosity of others in society to help them get through the day" (Carlen, 1996 p 112).*

> *"I have asked some people for money, and I often made around 15 quid. Some people they are polite and kind, give me pound or two and show me their concern. So, I go and buy a meal from Mc Donald's" (Carlen 1996, young person, 19-years).*

Young homeless people also generate money or meet their basic needs by shoplifting or stealing (Carlen, 1996: Hollingsworth 2008; Morewitz, 2016). In Huang and colleagues' (2004) study, they reported that the primary source of income for homeless youth was stealing and shoplifting. Young people cited survival as the prime motive for these activities. In a survey of 453 young homeless people in Brazil, 76% reported theft as their major source of income (Campos et al., 1994). In a self-reported survey of homeless London males, Farrington (1989) found out that each had engaged in least of one classifiable criminal offence by the age of 32. Finally, Carlen (1996) reported findings in her study in the UK, that the cities of Manchester, Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent had a high proportion of young people who relied on illegal income generation activities for survival at one point or another, for example, begging, sex work, shoplifting and stealing.

Sex work is another income generator for homeless youth (Centrepoint, 2011). Sex work when done for survival is simply to fulfil fundamental needs such as food, clothing, accommodation, and items related to physical protection (Carlen, 1996). It can also be used for lifestyle needs e.g. drugs and luxury

lifestyle items (expensive clothes, food, electronics etc.). Aptekar (2016) claims many studies have proposed that survival sex work is predominantly a female activity. However, other studies propose that survival sex work is also behaviour engaged in by males (Centrepoint, 2011).

Although shoplifting, stealing, begging and prostitution is mentioned in the literature as an illegitimate source of income for youth, youth homelessness and crime in London has not been widely researched. The CEO of Centrepoint explained a possible reason for this lack of evidence through research on the topic, to me:

> *"There are some issues as most of the young homeless people have no trust in the researcher, which is preventing them from expressing the facts about their criminal experiences. They have trust issues and are hesitant to divulge any information that may incriminate them even if they are assured anonymity" (CEO, Centrepoint).*

Institutionalisation

Research would indicate that many homeless young people are on a continuous pattern of movement and relocation from the streets, to a 'home type' situation, to institutions and the cycle brings them back around to the streets (Aptekar, 2016). Homeless young people are likely to experience two types of institutions;

1. Rehabilitation institutions (e.g. somewhere short term to stay, clinics, etc.)
2. Incarceration institutions (e.g. juvenile detention centres or prison).

According to Carlen (1996), homeless youth often do not like, and therefore leave rehabilitation institutions because they find them too forceful, with too many rules and regulations. For this reason, these institutions often set vulnerable young people up to fail before they have even begun their rehabilitation process. For many homeless young people, prison is often an institution they experience as they go through life. The incidences of incarceration are high amongst those who engage in anti-social or criminal behaviour (Rizzini and Lusk 1995). Because of inappropriate or incompetent management, these institutions are severely criticised. Institutions of incarceration have health and safety issues, and these include young residents feeling unsafe, or experiencing repeated violence and abuse.

Many youth incarceration establishments do not work within government legislation, resulting in many incidences of abuse and violence against young inmates by staff and other inmates. The conditions in these places are often substandard, violating basic laws of humane treatment. For many, these conditions of imprisonment appear to 'groom' criminals and promote illegal activity rather than dissuade young inmates against that lifestyle. Instead of teaching skills that would enable these young people to succeed once released, the young inmates instead learn how to survive by any means available and forge strong connections with other inmates. This can also result in higher incidences of criminal behaviour once they are outside. Homeless young people are particularly vulnerable to the mistreatment inside these correctional facilities and will therefore often respond to perceived threats with violence and hostility (Hollingsworth 2008; Rizzini and Lusk 1995).

Theoretical perspective

Strain theory

Background

Analysts and sociologists frequently refer to adolescence as a period of turmoil and confusion. We should be mindful of understanding that this does not mean that chaos and confusion make young people only vulnerable, but also that they are liable to exhibit different anti-social behaviours (Goffredson and Hirschi, 1990; Moffitt, 1993; Porteous, 2013; Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). In addition, they are likely to experience anxiety, anger and frustration. The literature about strain, suggests that the adolescent age is laden with struggle, suffering, agony and adverse feelings (Agnew, 1985). Durant and colleagues (1995) propose that life stress is a leading source of the breakdown in the mental health of adolescents, and it can lead to various consequences including offending (Vaux and Ruggiero, 1983).

There are two main causes of strain, which leads young people into offending or other misconduct. Firstly, an empirical examination has demonstrated that there is a connection between strain and youth offending (Agnew 2012; Cohen, 2011; Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). Secondly, offending/misconduct does not just cause immediate issues to adolescents (e.g. increased exploitation), but also can make their future life unstable (Moffitt 1993; Sampson and Laub, 1993). Agnew (2001) has reasoned that unemployment and homelessness represent two foundations of negative relations or strain, which can be linked to delinquency or youth offending.

Research by Elliot (1994), Farrington (1989) and Moffitt (1993) shows that youth offending is an early warning sign of those at risk for a later, more involved life of criminal activity, which can have a long-term negative impact in every sphere of their lives.

Agnew (1992, 2001) discusses the idea that strain theory is not just applicable to the issue of criminology (Cullen et al., 2006) but it is also applied by numerous researchers and theorists in their efforts to look into the strain/aberrance connection. Though general strain theory appears to be an essential theory in clarifying youth offending, some empirical studies suggest that general strain theory could be improved (Anderson, 2014). Agnew (2001) re-examined the original version of general strain theory in order to answer criticisms.

General Strain Theory

In sociology and criminology, strain theory has a long history. It traces back to Durkheim. Years later, Merton (1938) amended Durkheim's thought, and proposed the dominant theory of anomie. Merton's theory of anomie was designed to define offending in America. Parsons (1951), likewise utilised a comparable thought of strain to clarify individual offending conduct and social control. Later, Cohen (1979) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960) introduced the idea of subcultural delinquency, for example gang culture, through links with the idea of anomie (Anderson, 2014).

In sociology and criminology, strain theory offers a valuable contribution regarding criminal behaviour and conducts. However, some researchers, such as Bernard (1984) do not agree. Instead, they argue that strain theory is used to explain issues and statistics around the social structures and rates of offending. Still others would argue that strain theory is person centric and derives from Merton's anomie theory (Agnew, 2017). Nevertheless, the theory is best considered as a full-scale theory (Merton, 1964), a sociological rather than a nuclear theory, which initiated from the strain theory school of thought and is suitable for clarifying an individual's behaviour or actions (Paternoster and Bachman, 2001).

Agnew (1992) reviewed classic strain theory. Through this process, he was able to add an additional class of strain. This one allowed for a more diverse and wider breadth of negative feelings and incorporated the idea of coping mechanisms and conditioning. This more expansive definition of the relationship between strain and offending was entitled 'general strain theory'. General strain theory has three main components: strain; negative emotions and coping strategies. The crux of general strain theory is the negative associations with others: relationships in which the individuals are not treated, as they want to be treated (Agnew, 1992).

General strain theory consists of three types of strains. The main type of negative relationship contains strains from classic strain theory, (e.g. economic stress) and may be linked with modern strain theory. The second kind of negative association includes different circumstances in which a person feels awkward or out of place. Agnew (1985) called attention to that the idea that preventing people from an aversive or detrimental situation can lead young people into criminal acts. The third type of adverse association can be found in unpleasant life-occasions, for instance, the death of a blood relative. However, classic strain theory and the first type of strain are similar. Additionally, Agnew (1992) divided this kind of inability for strain theory to achieve positively valued objectives, into three subtypes:

- The disconnection between desires and actual events
- The disconnection between desire and genuine accomplishments
- The interference between fair results and actual outcomes. The second significant type of strain indicates to the introduction of dangerous provocations.

Adverse stimuli can be societal or non-societal in origin. Agnew (2006) argues that people who experience severely challenging negative circumstances beyond their control may end up highly engaged with youth offending as a means of escape from a situation. They attempt to regain some sense of control (e.g. skipping school) or dull the situational pain (e.g. drug abuse). They may try to regain a sense of power and dominance through exerting violence against those they perceive to be the reason for their poor situation.

The third type of strain arises from the elimination of positive values, which can be social, e.g. companionship or non-social, e.g. materials. For instance, in general, distressing life events in the anxiety literature usually include relationship breakdown, a relative, or parent's death. Agnew (2017) also postulated that the accumulation of several negative results over a short period had a particularly damaging and strong effect on individuals.

After the explanation of different types of strain, Agnew (1992) made determinations about the qualities of strain, by adding that strain was of a high magnitude and had stronger effects on consequent negative sentiment and crime (Cohen, 2014). He argued that strains occurring in a similar timeframe had an exceptionally negative impact on young people. For instance, a failure in exams, in and of itself, may not be so distressing, but rather it turns into a strain when terrible results are combined with having a fight with friends.

In general, strain theory, supports a broad approach that highlights how negative relations lead towards offending and misconduct (Agnew 1992). These negative relations incorporate the inability to accomplish well-appreciated objectives (unemployment) and the introduction of life altering shocks, e.g., homelessness. Agnew (2006) proposes that labour market issues, such as the inability to achieve financial objectives and homelessness (Cernkovich et al., 2000) may be forms of strain connected to the criminal action or offending. Moreover, he believes that youth homelessness has a significant effect on delinquency. He explains that this kind of strain is probably seen to higher degree since it speaks to a significant range of objectives, qualities, exercises, personalities and desires (Agnew, 2001). He recommends that youth homelessness might be partial and categorically connected with low social control (Hagan and McCarthy 1999).

Social Control Theory

Throughout the second part of the research, the key question regards the role of parents and the theoretical notion of social control theory to bring young people back into a crime-free life. Social control theory, on an academic level at least, can in many ways help clearly define the ways that a person's family background can relate to later incidences of offending (Hirschi, 1969). The fundamental principle of this theory is the idea that increased bonds with society reduce the possibility of offending behaviour. Hirschi (1969) specifies four foundations of the social relationship:

- Attachment - defined as the level to which an individual has strong bonds with others;
- Commitment - defined as the anxiety of offending and anti-social behaviour
- Involvement - defined as healthy participation in conformist activities that leaves no time to be involved in criminal activities;
- Belief - described as an impression, which is hugely reliant on the strength and cohesion of a community. If the youth have more trust and confidence in the community, there is a lower possibility that those youth will fall into deviant behaviour (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

Social control theory asserts that people obey social rules because they have solid connections and effective communication with parents/guardians, attachment to the social norms, lower risk factors regarding their integration into the society, and faith in social customs (Cohen, 2014; Newburn, 2013). On the other hand, those young people who have poor connections with their parents, who are less attached, both to and within their community, have little association in conventional events, and display poor behaviours regarding societal standards, are more likely to take an interest in offending conduct

(Hirschi, 2009). As such, it is the quality, and not the quantity of attachment, of the social bonds, that controls offending behaviour (Leiber et al., 2009).

The levels of attachment the child feels towards or is able to build with the parent or parent figure in their lives, are key social bonds, which can determine the ability to attach in a healthy or unhealthy manner throughout their entire lives. These levels of attachment or bonds are formed through activities such as, the amount of time the parent gives or spends with the child, how involved the parent is in observing and managing their child's activities as well as investing in their child's growth and development on a regular basis (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). For instance, Hoeve et al., (2009) analysed the elements that affect why family structures cause offending behaviour. Their meta-analysis of 161 young people confirmed that the most significant connections within the family were parental supervision, mental health problems, and general lack of support.

Concerning parental involvement, research demonstrates that young people spending more time with parents, who are positively involved in their lives, are inclined to have less interest in criminal activities (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). The more time that a young person spends with supportive parental figures, the greater the chances that the child will not commit delinquent acts. Conversely, if a child does not have a good relationship with their parents, he or she will probably hide things from them because of the communication gap (Keijsers et al., 2010). If a young person is homeless and not living with parents/guardian, then there are no checks and balances, and this can lead that person into crime (Carlen, 1996).

Youth homelessness in United Kingdom

Youth homelessness is on the rise, with a recorded 210,000 children in the UK 'sofa surfing', in temporary accommodation or living on the streets. This figure does not reflect the potential extent of the crisis with 375,000 children living in families who are at economic risk of becoming homeless (CNN London, August 2019).

Such findings are often based on research or referrals to campaigning/assistance organisations, for example, Shelter, Centrepoint, Depaul etc. Official evaluations in view of local authority and Home Office records put the figure significantly lower than the one stated above. In order to be officially acknowledged as a homeless person, one needs to meet a particular and often narrow criterion. For instance, they should demonstrate that they are not deliberately homeless, and they have a 'priority need',

for example, being in danger of sexual abuse, pregnancy, disability or financial exploitation (Muncie, 2015).

Youth homeless in London

> "Except for London, there are not large numbers of young people in Britain living permanently on the streets, developing their sub-cultures, acquiring the skills necessary to survive outside the legal and institutional framework, as in Naples, Bogota or Bombay" (Saunders, 1986, p 05).

The Guardian newspaper investigated London's homelessness and find out the difficulties that the city was experiencing when trying to house its most vulnerable (The Guardian, December 2016). In London, this year there are more than 2000 homeless people than in last year (Shelter, 2019).

Muncie (2015) argued that the official statistics only show the officially registered cases, namely those reported to local authorities. There are always gaps and authenticity issues regarding homeless statistics, because of the in-appropriate or inaccurate definition of homelessness. Sometimes, people may be technically living under a roof, but we cannot categorize them as 'not homeless'. For example, many may be rough sleepers, sofa surfers, bed and breakfast tenants, sleeping under the shed, newly arrived migrants and people living in overcrowded accommodations (Centrepoint databank, 2016).

Who is homeless? This question does not have an authentic or accurate answer. This is because many young people live with their friends or in a friend's family home or they are a couch surfer, rough sleeper or remain with family for whatever length of time that is possible (Centrepoint, 2017). To base homelessness figures solely on data provided by those registered with local authorities is extremely misleading. However, this is often how these figures are defined.

Local authorities ought to record everybody who approaches them and declares himself or herself as homeless, but we realize that they have often refused to support or accommodate those who presented as such. Therefore, these undefined homeless never make it into the statistics (Kate Webb, Shelter 2016).

The CHAIN database is a software developed for rough sleepers and those living on the streets in London. This is an innovative software, which gives a clear picture regarding rough sleepers. It is easy to locate rough sleepers through this software, to find out if they have already been contacted by a support agency or not. Howard Sinclair, St Mungo's (CEO) said the database is working well in London for recording accurate numbers of those sleeping rough. In London, outreach workers go into the streets

every day, speak to rough sleepers, and include them in CHAIN. We want the CHAIN database to be rolled out nationally to prevent homelessness, and we are trying to achieve this (CLGC, 2016). I have worked as an outreach worker in St Martin's in the field; but CHAIN only counts people if they are bedded down in the street – not if they are in a hostel. If someone is not sleeping rough and yet still homeless, CHAIN does not include them in the statistics as a homeless person. Our present frameworks are failing to help some of our most vulnerable population, who are not included in reports about homelessness.

Hidden Homelessness

In the capital, it is estimated that about 225,000 young people have no stable accommodation to sleep and they have stayed in unsafe place every night (London Assembly Report, 2017). In 2016/17, one in five young people aged 16 to 25 had "sofa surfed", with 49 percent of this group spending over a month couch surfing (Centrepoint, 2018).

Numerous young people experience what is known as 'hidden homelessness'. This is still sleeping rough, even though they may be sleeping in friend's house, sofa surfing, sleeping on the bus, living in places without a protected roof over their head that they can call home. Regularly these individuals go uncounted by local authorities and homeless organisations, so the exact size or clear scale of the issue is unknown (Muncie, 2015).

As Saunders (1986) clarifies, *"the issue of youth homelessness remains unrecognised because it is unquantified. The evidence which exists is largely anecdotal and incomplete (p 11)."* Hidden homelessness and single homelessness are synonymous, which demonstrates that to be a single homeless person in the UK implies that you are 'hidden' from important advice and support regarding homelessness or housing (Green, 2013; Reeve and Batty, 2011), therefore, this veils the issue and contributes to the problem.

Local authorities turn numerous young people away without them getting the help they are entitled to by said homeless organisations. Regardless, statutory acceptance of a homelessness status represents only a few young people out of the high levels of the actual youth homeless population, the reason being, that many young people are unable to meet the narrow criteria required by the state in order to qualify for emergency assistance. In 2013/14, 64,000 young people contacted the benefits office in order to obtain help. This was more than four times higher to those registered as 'statutorily homeless' (Ravenhill, 2016).

Hidden homelessness amongst youth is difficult to quantify. Younger single people in England, especially if they are not living with their families, are hidden (Padley, and Hirsch, 2014). Indeed, the 'emotional disintegrating in youth fortunes' related to issues such as inaccessibly high rents for private accommodation, difficulty getting a job and declining benefits, leads to the obvious outcome of increased levels of destitution for young people in the UK (Muncie, 2015; Ravenhill, 2016).

Young homeless people - Benefit cuts

In 2017, the charity Shelter explored the situation of a governmental move to decrease housing benefit for 18-21-year olds. Throughout this research, they interviewed local authority and voluntary sector workers, with none able to respond with any sense of positivity to the development. In fact, most regarded the cuts to be instrumental for a sharp increase in street-based homelessness. Many of those consulted explained that these cuts would in fact potentially force young people who were experiencing homelessness to engage in illegal or high-risk activities such as shoplifting, sex work and begging in order to earn enough money to survive (Shelter, 2017).

The fact worth taking note of in all this is the already extremely low level of income support given on a weekly basis to those considered entitled. Current Jobseekers Allowance rates for those under the age of twenty-five is £57.90 every week, as contrasted with the £73.10 for adults aged twenty-five and over (Home Office Income support, 2019). Young people have entitlement to far fewer benefits and weekly allowances than those over the age of 25-years old.

In addition, 'Youth Responsibility' is a concept that came into force as of 30th April 2017. The aim of this initiative is to enable unemployed young people aged 18-21, to access better employment support and qualifications. Added to this, the stricter contingency may further exacerbate the young people's current negative experiences of benefit licences (Youth Homelessness Parliament 2017).

A young individuals' risk of homelessness and their access to a reasonable settlement, will likewise be affected by various other policy changes. Most importantly, the changes that may occur in the process of financing supported accommodation, (including the development of the local authority housing allowance caps for social housing), will noticeably affect young people, precisely because of the low level of shared accommodation rate of Local Housing Authority (LHA) that they are entitled to (UK Homeless Monitor, 2017).

Homeless Youth and Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) 2018

The key provision for the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) is twofold: to provide a prevention benefit for those households who are facing the imminent threat of homelessness and also provide a relief benefit for those who are already homeless and eligible for assistance, regardless of priority need or intentionality status. Importantly, the Act extends the period applied to those who are considered at risk of homelessness (losing their home) from 28 days to 56 days (UK Homeless Monitor 2019).

Youth homelessness charity, Centrepoint, estimates that virtually all local councils consider that the amount young people are entitled to in housing benefits is inadequate for renting accommodation within the private sector. Part of the reason for this is because people under the age of 35, are only entitled to the shared accommodation rate. This rate is significantly lower than Local Housing Allowance. In a survey conducted across one hundred and nineteen local authorities in England, 85% claimed that they found difficulty fulfilling their housing duties due to welfare reforms, which negatively affected young people. 81% expressed the lack of social housing as being an issue and explained how it affected their ability to ensure they met their goals in providing adequate support for young people. 93% felt that Universal credit had such a stigma attached to it that it hampered efforts by young people on benefits to rent from private landlords.

Centrepoint issued stern warnings around the Homelessness Reduction Act, stating that young people would continue to resort to homelessness as an alternative to other destructive living situations, provided the key issues were not addressed through significant changes to welfare policies. The charity called on ministers to increase the LHA rate for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. 89% of the councils who had been involved in the survey applauded this idea. The current rate has been frozen since 2016 and with rental rates now far outstripping those of 2016, it is now barely enough to cover rates in today's rental market. Take for example the shared accommodation rate in an East London Borough. It is capped at £324.54 a month. The average rent for a room in this location is a massive 84% higher at £600 per month.

Think tank 'Reform' produced a report in May 2019 reporting their findings of the irregularities in the process referring young people to housing services. They also levelled an accusation at the DWP's approach, for what they termed a 'box-ticking' exercise. The report found that in many instances, basic information such as date of birth is often missing. This has serious ramifications for young people trying to access help as the lack of personal information makes it more difficult to identify those who are at

risk of homelessness because referrals are delayed or not made and vulnerable young people are in danger of 'falling through the net' (The Independent 14, May 2019)

Co-author of the report, Dr Luke Heselwood, stated *"A year on, new homelessness legislation isn't hitting the mark and too many vulnerable young people are not getting the support they desperately need".*

In order for the Homelessness Reduction Act to be effective and result in necessary changes, the vulnerable young people and the local councils attempting to help them must be able to find and secure affordable accommodation. However, with the supply of supported accommodation and social housing dwindling, Centrepoint is continuing to call upon the government to give a higher rate of housing allowance to every young person at risk of homelessness, so that they might at least be able to rent within the private sector, thus avoiding homelessness altogether.

On Friday, 28th February 2020 the Westminster Social Policy seminar event is going to take place. This event will focus on ideas and actions to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in England - policy implementation and HRA progress's (overview and evaluation). That this event is taking place is an encouraging and hopeful sign that the nature of social work and work with young people is evolving and will continue to do so whilst also shedding light on the working techniques of homeless reduction act.

Latest statistics of youth homeless

Homeless Link (2019) produced research and data that illustrated the stark realities concerning the issues linked to the increase of homelessness. In the past year, nearly 84,000 young people in England had contacted their local authority due to being homeless or at risk of homelessness. For 54% of these young people who approached their local authority in 2018, there was no documented assistance provided. This lack of intervention simply increases the risks for these young people. Approximately a third of those seeking help were offered prevention and relief duty assistance. With the highest numbers of application yet to be received, less than a quarter were accepted as being statutory homeless. From 2015, the levels of youth homelessness were beginning to rise significantly (Youth Homelessness Scoping report, 2019). In 2017/18, approximately 7,484 people identified as 'rough sleepers' were recorded in London. This number then rose to 8,885 in the following year (2018/19). 692 of these young people had contact with (and initiated by) an outreach worker (London CHAIN 2018/19).

Concerns around a young person's homelessness grows, as the opportunities afforded to them decrease significantly. Young people no longer just have to deal with the issue of having no home, but also of living in situations of extreme poverty (Centrepoint, 2018; Muncie, 2015; Padley and Hirsch, 2014).

Statutory youth homelessness

"Statutory homelessness" is a term Local Authorities use to assess the application made, seeking support or assistance with accommodation due to immediate loss of housing or homelessness. The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 officially manages this.

Until 3rd April 2018, each of the four UK nations were working within a different legislative framework, when qualifying distinctive groups for various levels of help. The complexities surrounding the definition of a young person as 'homeless', was therefore extensive. For example, they may be acknowledged as being homeless by their local authority, but simultaneously not viewed as such, if they were deemed 'homeless on purpose' or did not fulfil the criteria of 'priority need'. The criteria for categorisation differ across the UK, but eradicated in Scotland. However, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, most single young people over 18-years of age were not considered a priority need status (Centrepoint Databank Report, 2015).

The narrow criteria informing priority need in England includes pregnancy, having dependants, being 16 or 17 years of age or leaving care between 18 and 21 years of age. Also included are those who would be considered vulnerable, due to mental or physical health issues or experiencing violence at home (Muncie, 2015).

An accurate picture of youth homelessness is hard to find because of a lack of reliable national figures, which truly reflect the actual extent of the issue. Apart from statutory homeless figures, various sources merely give a reserved view of youth homelessness.

Most of the homeless youth or those considered at risk of homelessness, do not contact their local authority for support, as they are unaware of their eligibility for housing benefits and privileges. Moreover, young people may receive support from their local authorities via prevention and relief programs without having had a documented homelessness assessment. In addition, most statistics do not record an age breakdown, which makes it almost impossible to gauge the degree to which these proposals account for the reduction in statutory homelessness. This results in the statistics being unclear and blurred. In 2017/18, local authorities reported that the number of young people presenting as homeless has increased 40% (Young and Homeless, 2018).

Non-statutory youth homelessness

There are significant discrepancies in the statistical published evidence of youth homelessness and the actual reality, which is significantly higher, particularly in England (Muncie, 2015: Ravenhill, 2016). However, some local authorities will present the more accurate data in a prevention or decision-making format, but many young people will never go through official channels to access the help they so desperately need. Therefore, they will not be recorded in any official statistical documentation.

Subsequently, to consider statutory statistics alone is significantly underestimating the facts and actual figures of youth homelessness. The service-based information offers a vital method for attempting to evaluate the extent of non-statutory homelessness. These kinds of records do not present an accurate picture of the true levels of homelessness in the UK. They disregard the hidden homeless who do not contact local authorities or homeless charities (UK Homeless Monitor, 2019).

Clarke et al., (2015) sought to measure the levels of youth homelessness across the UK by merging the legal statistics and the information gained through local authorities' contextual analysis and estimations of, non-statutory youth homelessness. Their conclusions illustrated that, of the 39,491 young people who had accessed homeless services between January – September 2014, approximately half of them were already destitute and many went on to become homeless by the end of that period.

Regarding the scale of youth homelessness, many other projects were approached to collect a more comprehensive picture of youth homelessness. Centrepoint youth homeless charity has established the Youth Homelessness Databank. This computerised, open-date asset enables the recording of national government, local authorities and lodging supplier information from across the UK. This leads to improved statistics and a geological outline of homelessness and the effects of administrations (Centrepoint Making Homeless Young People Count, 2018).

Rough sleeping amongst young people

Rough sleeping cannot simply be defined as someone who sleeps in parks, or on the streets. Those who had nowhere else to stay, other than cars or tents should also be considered rough sleepers given that they only did so because they had nowhere else to go (Clarke et al., 2015).

As previously discussed, rates of homelessness are rising with an 18 per cent increase in 2018/19 compared to that of2017/18 (Homeless Link, June 2019). More than 8,000 young people were recorded as sleeping rough in London in 2016 (London Assembly Housing Committee, 2017).

> *"The street life in Britain's cities is not glamorous. It is isolated, unfriendly, and largely uncaring. It exploits the natural credulity of young people and increases their vulnerability" (Saunders, 1986 p 8).*

Young rough sleepers are overwhelmingly male. However, CHAIN data also shows that one in five rough sleepers are young females. This is higher than for levels of rough sleepers overall, standing at one in seven rough sleepers are women, which is a point of concern. The diversity in terms of race and nationality amongst London's homeless youth population is extensive. Many critical sources would claim that most rough sleepers in the UK are of British decent. However, findings in 2017/18 confirmed that two thirds of young rough sleepers in the 18-21 age bracket were in fact not British. Over half of those sleeping rough were found to be of Central and Eastern European extraction with approximately one in six being from locations outside the UK.

Youth offending in London

There have been many violent incidents involving young people in London during 2019, which have been widely publicised in the media:

The Financial Times ran a headline on the 8th of August 2019 about young people being stabbed and calls on the need for the Government to make an urgent investment in youth services, homelessness issues, offender rehabilitation measures and community policing.

Many young people expressed concern about the rise of gang activity, with knife crime and rising levels of violence such as shootings in the inner city of London. The research into these trends shows mixed reports. However, young people affected by these incidents reported that due to feeling at risk, many now carried knives or other weapons as a means of protection or joined gangs in order to mitigate the risks in the increasingly dangerous world they inhabit (Martin et al, 2011).

Assistant Commissioner, Martin Hewitt expressed his concern over the rise of gun and knife crime by and against young people. He stated that the nature of the offenders was changing rapidly. He also added there was evidence that more young people are carrying knives for a variety of reasons including status, criminality and self-protection but stated that only around a quarter of those carrying knives are affiliated with gangs.

In April 2017, the Evening Standard newspaper reported that between January and March of 2017 three teenagers were shot dead in London, compared to the whole of 2016 when there were zero murders of teenagers involving firearms. In the first week of 2017, a sixteen-year-old by the name of Karim Simms was shot and fatally wounded in North Woolwich whilst on his way home from meeting a friend.

On 1st May 2019, 15-year-old Tashaun Aird was stabbed to death in Hackney, London, and in that same week on May 5th, an 18-year-old man was chased down and killed in Elephant and Castle. Analysis by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Knife Crime found that the areas suffering the largest cuts to youth spending have seen bigger increases in knife crime. Chair Sarah Jones said: “We cannot

hope to turn around the knife crime epidemic if we don't invest in our young people" (Independent, May 7th, 2019)

Head of Criminal Justice at think tank 'The Centre for Social Justice' - Rory Geoghegan, (also a former Met officer) stated that the challenges involved with security and crime in London were at their highest and toughest in many years. The significant challenges were exacerbated by financial restrictions through austerity.

In 2017-18 there was a 68 per cent increase in knife offences recorded by police in England and Wales, which also saw swingeing cuts to police budgets (Independent, 7th May 2019). The Deputy Mayor of London added that with such a sharp rise (almost 600 victims of youth violence monthly) in serious violence against and committed by young people, the Met police needed to give serious consideration to new ways of tackling this rise in crime if they were to have any hope of really helping impoverished London communities. He went on to say that the police needed to resist the temptation to simply increase the levels of racial and youth profiling through stop and search, or indeed bring in new officers who were not known by, or to, the communities they were to protect and serve.

Young people themselves have declared that urgent action is required in order to tackle the underlying causes of knife crime, including drugs, homelessness and unemployment. This should take place alongside other preventative measures such as investing in mentoring and skills development for at-risk children (Financial Times 8th August 2019).

Researcher understanding about London homeless youth offending

Research on youth homelessness and youth offending in London indicates that these young people are in extreme danger of getting involved in criminal activities, and it can involve any number of criminal acts (Centrepoint, 2017). Through my previous work with homeless youth since 2010, it was evident that the road to homelessness often begins with adversity in the relationships at home through relationship breakdown, domestic violence, poverty, parental drug abuser. This means young people experiencing one or more of these are more vulnerable and at serious risk for engaging in criminal conduct. This might be the consequence of weak or damaged attachment to parents/guardian or a lack of commitment and cohesion to the community. When leaving home, many adolescents may turn to crime as a means of survival, or to help fulfil their basic needs.

Peer and beer pressure can also lead to criminal activities in the streets (Martin et al, 2011), and the longer one remains homeless, the more likely one is to participate in different types of criminal acts (Ravenhill, 2016). The individuals who feel they cannot adjust to their homelessness by legal means will likely turn to criminal behaviour, and circumstances of urgent need, (for example, food/hunger) can likewise directly influence offending (Petherick, 2014). My research consistently reveals the connection between youth homelessness and crime through their life-stories interviews.

Currently, youth crime has been the focal point of researchers, public and policymakers (Muncie, 2015; Martin et al, 2011). The media is not playing a crucial or constructive role through offering coverage to high profile cases, and the continuous depiction in the media of hooded adolescents threatening communities would suggest that youngsters are becoming more criminalised (Siegel, 2017). The image of young people today seems, by all accounts, to be in danger to be sure, as most of the media stories about young people are negative (Muncie, 2015). The outcome of this focus on young people's behaviour is that they are alienated due to experiencing childhood in a culture that has a deeply negative impression (and expectation) of youth (Carrabine, 2014).

Family Structure and Delinquency

Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, (2017) declared the family unit to be the most vital and influential social force. This was primarily because the family unit was where young children are socialised and learnt key skills such as ethical worldviews, moral viewpoints, forms of accepted behaviour and religious views. Those in their family unit – both with the potential to be a positive and negative force, reinforce all these. Therefore, the family is the primary source of resulting delinquency or lack thereof.

Children from marginalised families possibly get involved in crime more quickly because they are less able to accomplish their objectives lawfully (Farrington, 2007). It has been argued (Muncie, 2015) that of all the factors in a family unit, the most influential are criminal or anti-social parents or parents who are not around for their children (e.g. latch key kids) to provide support and guidance at a critical time of childhood development. For effective parenting to occur there needs to be, a healthy set of boundaries established and adhered to, through clear and continuous communication. Young people who have experienced a lack of active positive involvement from parental figures are much more likely to engage with activities related to crime and delinquency (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). Effective parental

supervision is the best thing for young people, for example, setting up an arrangement of "house rules" and simply conveying them. Sound judgment proposes that unsupervised young people will probably participate in crime, and extensive research has affirmed this conclusion. (Moffit, 2017; Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

> *"Another way parent influence the behaviour of the child is through emotional understanding. Presumably, children who like their parents will respect their wishes and stay out of trouble" (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017 p. 247).*

Attachment theory gives the required strong foundation to describe the significance of emotional support when it comes to youth offending (Pratt and Cullen, 2005). At the point when adolescents get emotional support from their parents, strong connections can provide much needed structure. Stable relationships act as an obstacle against misconduct and offending (Demuth and Brown, 2004; Mears and Travis, 2004). Conversely, when the emotional connection between youth and their parents is broken, the probability of youth offending increases (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). It is proven that if there is little emotional support, the establishment of anti-social behaviours, hopelessness, apprehension, violence, and offending is more likely to happen (Muncie, 2015).

With the specific aim being to lessen the probability of offending, both enthusiastic and instrumental support is very important. A bond depicts a person's relationship with society (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). Youth live in various family structures with a fluctuating flow that can either dissuade or improve the probability of recidivism. While the family is considered an essential component when considering adolescent criminal behaviour, homelessness, peer pressure, race, auxiliary impediment, and exploitation, are all elements that can add to the likelihood of a youth offending.

Summary

This literature review has examined factors around youth homelessness and its impact on young people, including the potential to offend. It has emphasised that the greater the number of risks factors a young person is confronted with, the higher probability of the young person becoming a victim of crime in addition to them participating in misconduct, anti-social behaviour, and violence. Therefore, youth homelessness ought to be a major concern for the government and policy makers particularly in a capital city like London, which attracts a proportionately higher number of young people, native or immigrants and therefore, presents greater issues and problems regarding homelessness.

Because of this, I have drawn on the literature from London's central youth homeless organisations (Shelter, Centrepoint, Launchpad, DePaul, Youth Offending Team, Newham) to illuminate some of the difficulties facing homeless young people, especially in London. Drawing on the documentary material from these organisations, also provided a detailed outline of policies and procedures and information on how young homeless people are treated when they are away from their home and family/parents. If a young person is living on the streets, their risk of offending will be higher than individuals who live in stable/intact family house (Carlen, 1996). Based on this review, the initial aim of the current research is to explore the various experiences of the homeless youth of London. This research is concerned with the youth's own experiences of homelessness and their journey through a criminal or non-criminal life, homeless youth and their illegal ways of earnings, as well as their victimisation and their experiences of being homeless and living in and interacting with homeless organisations.

This research explores how these experiences affect homeless young people and whether they participate in or desist from crime as a result. The findings are contextualised within a criminological framework of social control, labelling and strain theory, and these theories will be discussed in detail in the seventh chapter. I will then conclude by exploring in detail, the in-depth interviews conducted with young homeless people and the professionals who work with them, in an effort to enable them to engage with a crime free life.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

- Research Questions
- Choosing an appropriate Method
- Methods Chosen
- Epistemological Rationale of Methods Chosen
- Life-story interviews
- Interviews
- Participant Observation
- Documentary Analysis
- Practical Issues
- Data Sources and Gatekeepers
- Personal Safety in the Field
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- Access to Organizations
- New Choices for Youth, Centrepoint and Youth Offending Team
- Strength and Limitation
- Research Ethics
- Data Analysis
- Structure of Interviews
- Informed Consent
- Participant protection
- Confidentiality
- Summary

This study is designed to investigate the social phenomena of 'youth homelessness and crime – both as victim and perpetrator' experienced by homeless young people. I intended to identify the key links between homelessness and crime and how and why some homeless young people get drawn into criminal activity, and some do not. It will also investigate their lived experiences of victimisation. To investigate it thoroughly, Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory has been used, which involves going out into the field for data collection (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

> *"This allows for identification of general concepts, the development of theoretical explanations that reach beyond the known and offers new insight into a variety of experiences and phenomena" (Strauss and Corbin, 2015 p 6).*

Whilst homelessness and crime are not necessarily linked, many homeless young people are exposed to traumatic experiences, which can result in criminal activity. Many young people struggle with issues of alcohol abuse or drug abuse because of their homelessness or issues that led to it. For others, it can be those issues around substance abuse, which has contributed to their situation of homelessness in the first place. Whilst research addressing both risk and protective factors has been conducted and investigated the developmental processes that may contribute to youth offending and victimisation; the links between risk and protective factors remain unclear. With protective factors often opposing risk variables, it is therefore vital to view them, as interlinking, rather than isolated entities. Ones that inform each other. It is only when viewed in this way that we can gain a greater understanding of the overall issues involved.

Glaser (2007) describes all data as relevant information, regardless of the source. This includes observations, interviews, documents, and media coverage. Charmaz (2006) explains that the grounded theory approach provides flexibility during data collection as the researcher observes what is taking place. This method has flexible rather than rigid prescriptions, given that researchers can code and classify information immediately after collecting it. With the grounded theory method, a researcher can continuously design and redesign data collection and therefore, improve the data and create a fuller understanding of the research topic (Charmaz, 2014).

> *"Furthermore, grounded theories can be revised and updated as new knowledge is acquired" (Strauss and Corbin, 2015 p 10).*

It has been debated whether or not 'grounded theory' is, in fact a theory. Many scholars would describe it instead, as a method or a technique. The benefit of this approach is that it enables the researcher to be more analytical in their approach to qualitative data. The inductive research method essentially means that theory can be extrapolated from the collection of information and data, which forms the strategic analysis of the information gathered. The grounded theory methodology retains the data at its core.

The main objective is to discover what is taking place in homeless youth's lives and understand their experiences from their own perspective and experiences. The youth's accounts can then be thoroughly analysed in order to draw out central themes. As this process is repetitive, it improves accuracy and enables impartiality. This helps to facilitate the researcher in transcribing an abstractive account of his/her examination or research (Glaser 2002).

This research was designed to gain a thorough insight into homeless youth and crime, through the lived experiences of young homeless people and professionals (who directly work with homeless young people) by applying the grounded theory with a substantial emphasis on ethnography. This comprised of reflection, participant observation, life-story in-depth semi-structured interviews, and analysis. The most frequent data collection in grounded theory is observation and interviews. It places emphasis on actions, progression and composition of personal lives (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). It is my belief that this approach is well suited for research which seeks to investigate the lived experiences of a neglected, highly vulnerable and largely helpless populace: homeless youth.

The Research Questions

Grounded theorists are generally not in favour of starting research with formal questions. This is because they think preconceived ideas or thinking might bias the data. Instead, to understand what develops from the study, informants are requested to apply their own meaning to the phenomenon being examined. Corbin and Strauss (2015) state that the research question is an important aspect. A well-formed question will provide the parameters for the entirety of the research whilst simultaneously providing the researcher with much needed focus in order to obtain the most accurate findings.

Robson and McCartan (2016) suggest that in relation to the research project, having an excellent, precise set of questions is important. It should also be flexible in design and able to be modified in the light of the researcher's findings. Therefore, broad and general research questions should be established at the beginning.

Therefore, the research herein was informed/started by broad prior knowledge and field experience with homeless youth in London. This knowledge was then grounded in a detailed literature review. The previous knowledge highlighted potential areas for research and examination. Amongst these are the following questions:

- **Why do some young people end up becoming homeless?**
- **Why do some young homeless people criminally offend when others do not?**
- **What is the relationship between crime and youth homelessness?**
- **How do professionals and parents support former homeless young people into leading a crime free life?**

These primary questions describe the structure of the research.

Choosing an appropriate method

Silverman (2013) proposed that whilst there are no right or wrong methods of conducting research, there are certain methodologies that are better suited to the subject and model you are studying. Identifying and using the best and most accurate research method for your research should be a priority, given that no methodology is a neutral vehicle of research. Robson and McCartan (2016) explored this concept and concluded that methodology reveals the true ideological and theoretical leanings of the researcher, whilst presenting the direction the research project will take. Joyner (2003) supports this perspective, pointing out that all social research will be impacted by a researcher's personal or professional bias, assumptions, political beliefs and judgements – a factor all researchers need to be mindful of.

I chose to utilise the qualitative method combined with a grounded theory approach, in order to comprehensively reflect my understanding and professional experience of the issues presented by the topics of youth homelessness and crime. As Silverman (2013) discussed, I chose to keep my research methodology simple in order to gain clear and concise results and facilitate the involvement of young people and professionals.

I have worked with young people for almost nine years. I was conscious that youth homelessness is often a hidden problem, and they can be considered the most negatively affected and vulnerable population in our society, who do not get the support they need. Their problems may include high rates of truancy; substance and alcohol misuse; a lack of social support; lack of employment and education; involvement in criminal activities and experiences of physical, sexual or emotional abuse present in numerous transformations (Agnew and Brezina, 2015). It is a proven fact that most homeless young people are not suffering only with homelessness. In fact, their problems are far more multidimensional (Mayock and Bretherton 2016; Ploeg and Scholte, 1997; Ravenhill, 2016). Apart from these factors, youth homelessness and its link to victimisation and offending have not been thoroughly investigated in the United Kingdom, especially in London.

Method Chosen

A combination of the qualitative and grounded theory methods was chosen for the research throughout the thesis. The main reason being, that grounded theory *"offers sharp tools for generating, mining and making sense of data" (Charmaz, 2014).*

Epistemological Rationale or justification of chosen method

Willing (2013), articulates the epistemological posture of the researcher, which stresses that all concepts initiate from the lived experience. The thesis sought to examine homelessness, victimisation and crime as a social and structural occurrence alongside the everyday reality and experiences of being young and homeless. In order to fully achieve this goal, there was a need to readdress the lens through which homelessness was viewed. Berger (1972) argued that new ways of analysis required to be formed. The research needed to be up-dated. It required recognising the way homeless young people observed or perceived this issue (homelessness and crime) and discuss it (Ravenhill, 2016).

The events examined involved the life of the individual before homelessness, being homeless and criminal involvement as a victim and perpetrator. In addition, the role of parents and professionals in the lives of the young people needed to be understood alongside the social construction of the person's reality (Ritchie, 2014). The individual's existence involved choices, conclusions and activities that needed to be made in an ever-changing political and social world (Beck 1992). Josselson (2013) describes the lived experience as comprehensive, exclusive and cohesive with meaning and structures. If we accept that those with the most knowledge about homelessness and the destitute culture are the individuals who have experienced that way of life first hand, then homeless youth must be treated as experts in the research method employed.

The study planned to discover how homeless young people interacted within the social structures of conformist society and the homeless culture, through their life-stories interviews and explanations, their inspirations and perception whilst making choices/decisions. The aim was to gain an understanding of the complex and interconnected nature of the relationship between the homeless process and crime.

Qualitative Methods

The qualitative approach is the main research tool employed to collect lived experiences from young people about how they feel about homelessness, victimisation and crime. It was also used to evaluate the professional's and parent's responsibilities to rehabilitate young people. This approach has also been used with a grounded theory approach to gather information on how professionals use their skills to enable young people to live a crime-free life. Mason (2002) described qualitative research as "exciting and important". The reason for this being that as we engage with the findings, we involve ourselves with "things that matter, in ways that matter". Qualitative research allows us to engage on a deeper level with our research participants, fully exploring how they understand, experience and process the world around them. It enables us, as researchers, to fully explore how relationships, social processes and interactions work and how and why they are significant.

Mason (2002) further states that qualitative methodology celebrates,

> *"the richness, depth, distinction, context, multidimensionality and complexity rather than being embarrassed or inconvenienced by them" (P. 01).*

Grounded theory provides an explicit process for the analysis of qualitative data (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Qualitative methods work for researchers as a toolbox of personal and participatory procedures. These reproduce and demonstrate moral issues that, if implemented with attention, can produce stories, reports, opinions, descriptions, perception and knowledge that can open the phenomena under examination. Qualitative research resists theory testing and instead is an inductive procedure that respects the humanity of participants (Ritchie, 2014). The qualitative method draws on informational, intensive and investigative interviewing strategies. Grounded theorists may invoke each approach but typically use in-depth interviewing (Charmaz, 2014) which has been used in this study through interviews with homeless youth and professionals. When we conduct in-depth interviews, we also do some informational interviewing to gather important details for our study. In grounded theory, the interview approach can be changed with the development of the research (Charmaz 2014; Robson and McCartan, 2016).

Directing and planning research that builds up a good comprehension of the social world and lived experiences of people, communities or groups, requires strategies that can interact in a personal way, which respects the rights of people (Crow and Edwards, 2013). In this regard, qualitative techniques have a few key points of interest that were dynamic to the achievement of this research. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) explain that qualitative research lends itself well to more fully understanding and exploring the meaning that people and societies attribute to values, beliefs and actions within their social sphere.

When we research people's lives, particularly those who live their lives in especially limited circumstances, the key issues of how people are represented in our work, and the ethical observations that are an important part of it, all turn into vital parts of the research process (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Robson and McCartan, 2016). To address the research questions, it is necessary to explore young people's observations and experiences in detail, within ethical parameters (Alderson, 2005). In all research interviews, ethical consideration was the most important element. I was interested in discovering how young people form decisions about their life through their experiences of being homeless and involved in criminal processes and, therefore, I was keen to examine that process, focusing on how each young person felt and expressed their thoughts about the future as they envisioned it.

Gaining such an understanding through the narrow categories of a questionnaire was not an "easy nut to crack". I did not want to extract young people's responses to pre-defined types. Instead, I was asking them open-ended questions that helped to enable them to talk freely about their experiences and add further thoughts if they wanted to. The incredible outcome being the participant's interest in this, and their provision of the critical data through informal conversations.

Life-Story Interviews

In qualitative method research, the life-story interview is a tool that uses face-to-face in-depth interviews to gain fact-based reflective and existing information. Usually, it is recorded and examined in an on-going set-up (Ritchie, 2014).

Within sociological research, it is not a commonly used method, because of concerns regarding the authenticity of the data. However, the precision of individual's memories has proven to be reliable even after many years have gone by (Parry et al., 1999). Chamberlayne et al., (2000) argue that life-stories interviews are a reliable source of information from a past, present, modern, social policy, agency and personal opinion. To relate the personal to the social and structural, biographical-style research is beneficial and authentic (Giddens 1984; Merrill, and West, 2009). It also helps to produce development into a person's understanding and social process, and subsequent response to those procedures. Life-stories are suitable for understanding the decisions/choices that people make in the light of their circumstances (Chamberlayne et al., 2000). The life-story interview is the best form of sociological research (Ritchie, 2014). There are some gaps in life story interviews such as rationality of the data and examining a huge amount of information. However, if a researcher is eager to research lived experience correctly, s/he should use this method (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Chamberlayne et al., 2000; Ritchie, 2014).

Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were utilised to gather the information from homeless young people. As recommended by Silverman (2011), the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews allows a connection between the research participant and researcher. This discussion facilitates the researcher to adjust and ask additional questions over the span of the interview. Use of semi-structured interviews enables research participants to be effectively involved in the mainstream of the interview process, in

this way a researcher can produce more logical information (Robson and McCartan, 2016; Ulin et al., 2002).

Charmaz (2006) articulates that in a grounded theory approach, there is a range of data collection methods that can be used. A one-to-one interview technique is particularly suitable, because meaning is created through participant-researcher communications to generate new knowledge and themes. A semi-structured interview is also a useful tool for data collection. As a well-established method of collecting information, Corbin and Strauss (2015) explain how it actively encourages meaningful engagement with research participants as they explore their varied views, opinions and attitudes.

A set of comprehensive questions or sub questions were used to guide the discussion with the participant. Robson and McCartan (2016) explain that this enables self-determination within the interview to investigate some problems in-depth or follow-up lines of investigation that arise from the discussion. It's also used to explain or pursue elaboration on some answers. As Patton (2002) emphasises, the point of view of others should be significant, understandable, and able to be expressed clearly. While a structured interview has a formalised, limited arrangement of examinations (Charmaz, 2014), a semi-structured interview is adaptable, permitting new sub-questions to be raised in the middle of the interview pertaining to what the interviewee says (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Robson and McCartan, 2016).

In January 2016, I got approval from Middlesex University Ethics Board to conduct interviews with young people. As soon as the sample size was decided, in April 2016, the organisations staff members were contacted to assist in making sure that the young people were keen on participating in the research.

Overall, the duration from starting consultations with Newham YOT, New Choices for Youth and Centrepoint for access to a sample, and completing the fieldwork, was approximately twenty-six months, on a full-time basis.

The fieldwork began in April 2016 and reached completion by June 2018. This included a full literature review, initial interviews with young people and professionals, re-interviews with the sub group (6) of young people (January 2018 to March 2018), as well as transcribing the interviews (during fieldwork for the young people and from June – August 2018 for the professionals). It concluded with conducting a thorough analysis and refining the supporting chapters of the research by June 2019.

Participant Observation

For greater understanding and knowledge (Stake, 1995), young participants were selected based on specific criteria. Young participants

1. Had been homeless for last 9-12 months
2. Were in supported accommodation
3. Some representation of BAME
4. Some representation of LGBTQ

I worked with the staff at their respective organisations to identify young people who fit the above criteria. Thirty young homeless people were invited to take part in the study (ten from each organisation), and my target was to enrol 6-7 young people from each organisation. I then worked with staff in each of the organisations, to set up a time for the first meeting with each young person. How this was implemented depended upon the organisation and their typical protocols for corresponding with youth. Staff members provided descriptions of the young people initially selected and reviewed each to ensure they fulfilled the criteria. They then highlighted each according to their ethnicities and represented key experiences such as abuse, sexual exploitation, LGBT self-identification, gangs, and interactions with the juvenile courts. Only staff members selected, to ensure impartiality.

Young participants involved with the YOT were understandably reluctant to participate in tape-recorded interviews, with most of them refusing to be recorded after the initial meeting. I submitted my access request for meetings with young homeless people in June 2016. The application process and approval by the volunteer group took approximately nine months to completion.

Overall, the selection I went on to interview for my final research fully represented the key criteria (1 and 2) above, with some representation of BAME and LGBTQ. (3 and 4). It is important to note that there was no pre selection of any participant other than the above criteria. It was only through interviews that other themes emerged and offered insights into some common experiences and traumas that contributed to the young person's homelessness. The interviews allowed each participant to share their own story and perspective of their lives and how they understood the reason's they became homeless. None were selected because of these reasons, but the commonalities each participant revealed through the interviews did go on to richly inform the overall research, findings and recommendations.

I visited all the organisations I included in my research who were involved with both the young people and professionals and provided leaflets with information on the study. Participants were recruited according to their distinctive perspectives and relevant experiences. Staff also identified each participant as being reasonably self-reflective and articulate.

Furthermore, I attended numerous staff meetings at each of these organisations to ensure that support workers, team leaders and managers were all aware of the study, how they could help the young people they were working with and assist in identifying the young people who were potentially interested in taking part. Support staff and managers from “New Choices for Youth” and “Centrepoint” attended consultation meetings and were later sent follow up emails so that they could see the benefits the research would have for the organisation and the young people they work with. By being closely linked with the organisations, engaging with staff members through policies and procedures was a positive experience. In order to determine the eligibility of the youth participants to be involved in my study, I asked each of them to describe their living situation over the previous nine to twelve months. Those reporting experiences of “homelessness” or “housing instability” were eligible to participate. Literal homelessness (e.g. living on the streets, in parks or wooded areas); "couch surfing" (i.e. moving from the home of a friend or family member to the residence of other friends or family members and/or living in shelters).

An initial short screening process was undertaken with the specific aim of deciding whether the young person met the required criteria, which took approximately ten minutes. After this selection, the admission method was directed which included informing the young person about the nature and status of the interview. Letters and mailings were sent to the staff welcoming them to take part in participant observation. At the start of the meeting, the staff members were informed about the nature of the research.

The precision and rigour of a qualitative research sample is defined by its ability to represent salient characteristics (Ritchie Lewis and Elam, 2003). This study is based upon the responses of a non-random purposive sample of youths (in grounded theory studies the sampling is purposive) (Robson and McCartan, 2016), who are known to three homeless and youth crime organisations in London. Purposive sampling is used to satisfy the needs of a researcher in the project and attempting to access hard-to-reach and vulnerable population (Fowler, 2014). Whereas this project was purely designed for youth who experience homelessness and crime, it was in researcher’s knowledge that the terms “youth” and “homelessness” are difficult to operationalise.

My literature review of youth homelessness and youth offending also prepared me for the fact that these terms have not been absolutely defined. The data collection for this project was conducted at three organisations in London – all of whom provide services to youth who experience homelessness and, in

many instances, crime. I depended on these agencies to gain access to homeless youth willing to participate in this research.

I feel fortunate that I found supportive staff members and they helped me throughout my fieldwork. The organisation's staff members were fully cognisant about the nature of the study. Staff also told young people about the research topic and the aim of the research.

Interviews: Composition of Sample

This group consisted of eight young people from New Choices for Youth, eight young people from Centrepoint and two from Newham Youth Offending Team. Seven females and eleven males were interviewed. Their educational backgrounds varied widely. Most of them went to school, but the truancy rate was high across the board. The Centrepoint and New Choices for Youth organisations were trying to get the young people back into schools or colleges, but education was not a priority for the youth themselves. Seven of the young participants used drugs including smoking marijuana and drank alcohol almost every day. Five young participants smoked and drank regularly, but not every day. Six young people were involved in attempted murders, robbery, burglary, drug dealing, etc. (high-risk offenders). At the time of my one-on-one interviews, all these young participants were in pathway plans. Each were working towards independent living. However, most of them found themselves in an uncertain situation about their future life. The term I used in this research to illustrate this was 'future concerns'.

Documentary analysis

Documentation studied included: quarterly and annual reports, publications, fundraising booklets, from the main homeless organisations (Shelter, DePaul, Centrepoint, Launchpad, Crisis, YMCA, Alone in London, Greater London Authority etc.). The selection of these publications provided a variety of information from several frameworks. These documents/publications also helped create a means for crosschecking the data collected. Using grounded theory, the information has been systematically coded and analysed.

The study aimed to employ documentary analysis in order to examine the life-story accounts of the homeless young people's situations, which were used by various homeless organisations. The study sought to explore existing stereotypes and how issues of homelessness and crime may be constructed.

Data Authenticity

The question of accuracy is the main criticism addressed to grounded theory, as ethnography raises concerns about researcher's bias, partiality and misconception of the data. Charmarz (2014) suggests that in order to avoid such criticisms, researchers must be both reflexive and keen observer. Their own influences and responses should be considered as a part of the data. To increase their efficacy, postmodernists tried to hold the researcher's voice within their writing (Day 2002). The researcher's opinions or views are additional variables and must be coded along with other data. Personal explanations aid elimination and are made neutral when they are viewed alongside other data (Glaser, 2002).

Constructivist grounded theory is an alternative research method introduced by Charmaz (2006). The focus of this theory is to record different social realities correctly. Charmaz articulates that if a researcher is fully aware of the topic/theme, then combined structure of information between the interviewer and interviewee would be dynamic. Mutual understanding is key between the investigator and investigated, in order to develop factual knowledge. Charmaz reasons that grounded theorists detach the meaning from the story by isolating the experience from the experiencer. Therefore, this both restricts and condenses the understanding of their experiences (Glaser and Strauss, 2012; Robson and McCartan, 2016). Glaser (2007) proposes that people's beliefs are not important for understanding but one should obtain their opinions and ideas as data collection, code it and conceptualise accordingly.

Throughout my research, I attempt to produce Charmaz's aspect - to represent detailed homeless youth stories and combine that with the need to grasp Glaser's idea of abstraction. In the researcher's mind, the script from every life story becomes nearly inviolable. However, an articulate depiction of homelessness and crime, whilst combining the composition of voices and opinions, requires specific/clear text, that avoids stereotyping and the diminishing of the homeless youth's lived experiences.

Additionally, Corbin and Strauss (2015) argue that ethnographic researchers certainly become (emotionally) involved with some of the research participants. On occasion, some of the participant's life stories stand out strongly in the memory of the researcher. Hardy and Bryman (2009) offer the observation that grounded theory is not only the study of people, but also learning from them through the exchange of ideas and information. A key element of the thesis was the observation of the participants and this was conducted with great care. Every person, regardless of background or circumstance interacts with, and reacts to their culture and adjusts and reasserts their actions depending on how they perceive and are perceived by those around them.

The study of people within their social context is an essential part of ethnography. (Charmaz, 2014). People's conduct and the way they interact with their setting means their communication and the way they answer the questions, is also a part of the study. The research was formed by the research questions and aims of the study.

Study Design

"If you don't give serious attention to the design of a research project you likely end up with a mess" (Robson and McCartan, 2016 p 05).

The study was designed to use a mixed sample of male and female participants. The age range for young people is 17-21 years of age. There was no specific age sample for professionals.

- Semi-structured in-depth interviews with young homeless people.
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews with key agencies and professionals
- Participant observation in the London case study

For this component, the questionnaires utilised open-ended questions, as I sought to understand in detail how young people feel about homelessness and crime. The questionnaire groupings were 18 young people and 14 professional workers. Each interview lasted approximately 45-50 minutes, and as there was a possibility of poor literacy with the young people, I read all questions aloud.

The research process was designed very carefully; in order not to involve any method which placed young participants and professionals at risk of physical, emotional or psychological

harm. The questionnaire was crafted to not only engage the young people, but to encourage them to express their views and experiences about crime at a young age whilst being homeless. The professional participants' questionnaire was drafted after conducting the homeless young people interviews. My main task as the researcher was to link research questions and the questions used in the questionnaire. (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Both questionnaires were related to the research questions. As I mentioned above, the use of open-ended questions enabled the young homeless people to explain and describe in detail their life-stories in their own words. In order to build a rapport with each young person I interviewed, I was aware that their trust in me played a role in what they did and did not divulge in the interviews. Taking the time to get to know each individual also enabled me to help the conversations flow more smoothly.

Both the youth and professional participants expressed that they were satisfied with the interview protocol as outlined. They were happy to take part in research that investigated the social issue of youth homelessness, victimisation and crime.
Many hoped that this would help others in the same situation. One homeless young girl communicated how she felt that it was vital to share her story and that she hoped that this study would help other young homeless people. She shared at length about the problems that she experienced when she was on the streets. Additionally, many of the young people offered details beyond what was required by the questions I asked. Every young person was given a chance to self-define about his or her experiences of being homeless.

Interview Process

Interviews were conducted in the open, communal area of the organisation. At the start of each interview, I provided the participant a form for the informed consent and I read it clearly. Participants were well-informed about their rights while included in the research, including the option to stay until the end of the interview or leave at any time they chose during it. The participants and I talked about the importance of confidentiality and the use of a pseudonym to make them comfortable. I requested their permission to record the interview and to see their case documents as well.

At the end of each interview, I checked in with every participant to ensure that they were ok and to check whether they might want me to get somebody for them to talk further about any issues raised throughout the interview. Furthermore, I asked if they preferred to be known by

a pseudonym; all of them preferred the alias. Next, I reached out to the staff and updated them with regards to how the interview went and the conduct of the young person throughout. Every professional involved had played a key role at some stage in the adolescent's life. I completed fourteen staff members' interviews, which lasted an average of fifty minutes each. The staff also made case files accessible to me. For reasons of confidentiality I could not take away the case files outside of the organisation, so instead I sat with the documents in a staff meeting room at every organisation and made handwritten notes of my observations. During each face to face interview I wanted to concentrate on the interviewees wording, so I did not use a notebook during the interview itself. I recorded my impressions of the meetings quickly after each interview for accuracy. All conversations were carefully recorded and transcribed.

Why I have chosen London

Whilst homelessness is a fast-growing issue in the UK, as the capital, London has a significantly higher issue, particularly amongst young people. However, it can be difficult to formulate accurate and up to date statistics regarding the numbers of homeless people. Current Government figures place half of homeless people as being aged between 16 and 25 years of age with 35% of this total located in the London area. In addition to official statistics, high numbers of homeless young people are not included in these figures; they are often classed as the 'hidden homeless.' Of the 400,000 people estimated to be amongst the hidden homeless across the UK, most tend to be living in short term, insecure accommodation such as hostels, illegal squatting, sofa surfing or staying with friends or their families.

In 2014/15 Centrepoint statistics showed that more than 7,500 people slept rough for at least one night in London, 12% of these were under 25, a number which has doubled since 2009/10 (Centrepoint, 2016).

However, homelessness charities have long argued that official statistics only tell one side of the story (Centrepoint, 2017). By all indications, the problem of hidden homelessness is on a much larger scale than that of visible homelessness. Carlen (1996) outlines that many of the hidden homeless do not have a roof over their heads but struggle to access or are considered ineligible for Government benefits. This forces them to resort to desperate measures such as couch surfing, sleeping rough and even trading sex for a bed for the night or short-term rental of accommodation.

In 2019 nearly 88,000 young people were homeless and in unstable accommodation in London, which is one in every 24 children. Nearly 90% local authorities have the highest rates of homeless young people in the capital (The Guardian June 2019).

Youth homelessness in London

- One in five 16 to 25-year olds sofa surfed in 2014. Of these, roughly half couch surfed for more than a month.
- 225,000 young people in London have stayed in an insecure or unsafe place because they had nowhere safe to call home (Centrepoint, 2014).
- On any one night in London, we estimate a minimum of around 12,500 people are what can be classified as 'hidden homeless'.
- Thirteen times more people are hidden homeless than sleeping rough in London (DCLG, 2014).
- Only 1 in 5 young people contacts a local authority about their homelessness (Crisis, 2011).
- A fifth of those who do contact are turned away without any practical assistance.
- There is often poor coordination and collaboration with other agencies, e.g., health services and social services.
- Many young people are shuttled around between services without significant help.
- A lack of rigorous investigation by local authorities, resulting in some applicants being refused without receiving a full assessment.
- There is a significant communication gap between homeless service organisations
- Inconsistent assessment of vulnerability, priority needs and intentionality
- Pressure on local authority resources regarding staffing and costs, particularly the cost of temporary accommodation (Shelter, 2013).

Avoiding of self-completion questionnaire

Self-completion questionnaires can be problematic. The main issue with self-completion questionnaires; are late and low responses from the participants. Issues with literacy is another problem as some people are not adept at reading or writing, so it can be difficult for them to complete a questionnaire according to quality standards (Oppenheim, 2009; Tourangeau,

2013). This research is based on a diverse homeless population, and some of the participants were immigrants, for whom English was not their first language. I read out all my questions clearly and explained to all participants that if they were unsure about any of my questions, we could check language was not a problem and thus avoid embarrassment with literacy issues.

I decided to conduct interviews by using qualitative semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The same methodology I used when compiling the research questions that I drafted for homeless young people and professional participants. Given the second part of my research is about the role of parents and professionals in bringing young people back into crime-free life, it would be beneficial to discover a parent's understandings on where the strengths and weaknesses about their attachment and monitoring lie. I was also exploring the effort, connection and cooperation of professionals regarding young people's improvement in their activities and how it relates with a crime-free life.

Data Analysis Procedures

Once the direction of the fieldwork methodology had been decided, the information that was produced included fieldwork notes, for example, organisational contacts, participant observations, interviews (young people and professionals). A digital Dictaphone was used for recording all my interviews. It is not the production of information that tends to be risky, but rather how to make sense of, and what to do with the information/data once you have it (Wolcott, 1994).

Data analysis was initiated at the beginning of data collection and continued both during and following completion of fieldwork (Robson and McCartan, 2016). This enabled me to do data consideration, review the literature and therefore, to ensure authenticity of data and check it anytime. As Silverman (2011) states, the degree to which raw information should be depicted, examined and translated, influences most of the literature on data analysis. I transcribed the recorded interviews myself. To retain the participant's privacy, every participant was assigned an alias (this is for my use in identifying each interviewee). Any data that could expose the identity of the participant was deleted from all transcripts. As the starting point for the progress of my analytic context, I read each transcript. The emergent themes and codes form the basis for my analysis.

In the data analysis phase, open coding has been used as the lens through which to view individual interview transcripts. Each line of the transcript was coded through the application of activity codes or by defining actions within it. These were then used to recognise detailed sections of text on a thematic or topological basis. The reason I chose this type of coding, was precisely because it helps the analyst to remain sensitive to the participants 'perspectives of reality' (Charmaz, 1986; Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Ritchie, 2014). The activity codes also helped me, as the researcher, to employ the constant comparative method.

The data was collected and analysed as part of a constant comparative approach to the grounded theory. It begins with the first collection of data. Strauss and Corbin (2015) describe Primary data as compared with concepts stemming from the literature which then updates following data collection through the development of the research questions. As the data collection progresses, this becomes a repetitive process. For example, comparing different participants, looking at information from a similar individual with multiple focuses at the same time, comparing a classification and different categories. The difference of texts within each theme or subject creates an additional layer of codes that form the construction of important ideas, methods, and types. It is these key differences that go on to become the 'basic building blocks of theories' (Kelle 1997). Glaser (2002) discusses the layers of codes that can draw concepts from the gathered data and help form theories.

Robson and McCartan (2016) point out the emphasis grounded theory places upon theory development. This finding is supported by Strauss and Corbin (1997) when they highlight grounded theory as being one of the most popular modes of theory creation in the context of qualitative research, particularly when it comes to arenas such as research in education and health and social sciences (Charmaz, 2003; Thomas and James 2006).

All interviews have been transcribed by the researcher, and they will be analysed in chapter four (Homeless youth interviews) and chapter six (Professionals interviews). I recently conducted interviews with six additional homeless young people in order to add an updated view of young people. I planned to undertake a thematic analysis of my data.

Themes emerging so far:

1. Housing instability and concerns about independent living.

2. Victimisation and stigmatisation

3. Crime as a means of developing a materialistic lifestyle

4. Need for a healthy relationship with professionals

5. Need to maintain local connections

My place in the research

I have worked as a youth worker, support worker and qualified social worker with individuals experiencing homelessness (mostly youth) for the last nine years. Starting out, I decided to focus my professional life on work with young people. I later completed my MA in 'Social work' and my second MA in 'Youth justice community safety and applied criminology' from Middlesex University under the supervision of Professor Anthony Goodman. When I was working with homeless young people, I found that they were a significantly deprived group in London. It was this extensive experience that informed the decision to conduct my research on youth homelessness and crime. I also recognised that a limited bond between the young participants and I, combined with low levels of previous interaction would potentially decrease the degree of their overall or continuing engagement. I also appreciated that from a homeless youth's standpoint, I was not able to proceed with this research unless I established a sense of responsibility and commitment towards my participants. Researchers frequently get more benefits from their research than those who participated in the study (Harding, 1993).

After gaining ethical research approval, I was deeply conscious that, as a researcher, I owed my participants a "duty of care" that could not be satisfied by an "enter and extract" method of data collection. My commitment and connection with the young participant also needed to be significant as well as providing benefit to those participating in the research. This boosted my confidence and pushed me to become meaningfully engaged. Whilst I acknowledged the material and non-material advantages I would achieve through this research, I also understood the deeper significance of sharing the 'authorship' of this work with each of the participants whose experiences and willingness to share them made this work possible. Their knowledge, experiences and openness illuminate this project. Their "lived reality" informs every aspect of this work.

Strengths and Limitations

In research design and analysis, Ritchie (2014) explains the importance to consider both strengths and limitations. This approach gives us the direction to choose the right or suitable method for the research study. Through this method we can also predict boundaries, considering reliability, validity and the epistemological position of the researcher.

Given that youth homelessness is a massive, multifaceted social problem, there are numerous limitations to this study. Firstly, the research mainly focuses on interviews with eighteen homeless young people and fourteen professionals. However, there are more than 5,000 recorded homeless youth each year in London (DCLG June 2016). A study of this size is hard to capture the myriad of complicated life journeys of youth in the capital city, London. Secondly, there is only one principal researcher on this study. Given the density and the size of the material - youth homelessness and crime is a broad topic to investigate, it would have been ideal to have more than one researcher working on the research study. Thirdly, because of ethical considerations, it was necessary for the participants to know about the area of research and research title (Youth Homelessness and Crime), and this could have affected what the young participants may have thought were required as appropriate responses.

Ensure Trustworthiness

The requirement for trustworthiness also involves a need for accuracy. Evaluating trustworthiness according to the honesty of responses by the research participants (Kirk and Miller, 1986). Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher to ensure the precision and accuracy of the data collected.

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is portrayed as a method for including credibility, legitimacy, and thoroughness to the review (Creswell, 2007). Robson and McCartan, (2016) describe how a researcher can influence the audience, ensure that findings are authentic and what is that makes the study credible and truthful. Many steps were taken to ensure authenticity of the research. Firstly, the examinations were directed by supervisors, included three youth homeless organisations, and key individuals. Secondly, the youth explored their own stories to approve that the fusion of their interviews, the staff interviews, and the case record (risk assessment) information displayed a genuine version and representation of their individual stories. Thirdly, both during and after my fieldwork and data collection, I debriefed with the staff members in several ways, in order to do a reality test on my analysis and interpretation of

the data. Reality testing is a step that increases the accuracy of descriptions and engages the participants as well (Patton, 2012).

The researcher's interview questions, were also reviewed by two main supervisors: Professor Anthony Goodman and Professor Vincenzo Ruggiero (Middlesex University, London). The researcher also presented these research questions to two other professionals (CEO's of homeless Organisations) and described the methodology. The researcher also asked these professionals to consider whether any of the questions were inappropriately leading with regards to young people. All professionals approved the questionnaires. The questionnaires were deemed to fall under the ethical recommendations and suitable for the better understanding of youth homelessness and crime.

Access to Organisations

Gatekeepers

It was through my position as a volunteer and employee with London based organisations that I gained access to a reliable cohort of young homeless participants. I was mindful of the reality of needing to abide by the formal and informal rules and policies of these organisations.

Managers of these organisations, each of whom serve homeless youth, attempted different approaches to safeguard their young people from conceivably harmful conditions or incidents. I was required to give an approval letter to the office managers, which confirmed that my research had approval from the ethics committee at the Middlesex University, London. I approached Centrepoint to gain permission to interview young people. I put forward my proposal for gaining access to meetings of young homeless people in June 2016 and the application has been approved in March 2017.

Conducting research with young people

Researching with children and young people requires a researcher to be more considered, as it is important to speak at length with adults and older people during qualitative interviews and follow up with some queries. However, children and young people need extra considerations and controlled questioning (Harden et al., 2000; Ritchie, 2014). There are several factors to be

understood and adhered to, such as institutions and individual guardians requiring, by law, that the researcher acquires the necessary clearance and permissions (e.g. a criminal records check) in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the young person prior to any research being carried out.

These legal/official processes often differ between countries. Likewise, in any case, schools, social care NHS and welfare experts may put requirements on the researcher about the nature and type of their research that raises other moral issues (Schenk and Williamson, 2005).

Researching with children and young people can be difficult. In any research, children and young people must be considered vulnerable, as recent literature has drawn attention to the potential complications of it (Connolly 2008; Ritchie, 2014). For many methodological and practical reasons, children who communicate well, or who regularly attend school are more likely to be given a voice in research (Curtis et al., 2004). I have been working with young homeless people in different settings since 2010. My experience of working with young people for more than nine years, means my understanding of the problems and ethical considerations needed to gain access, has increased. I have consulted my research supervisors concerning my research interviews, as well as the Middlesex University Ethics board and organisational managers.

New Choices for Youth

New Choices for Youth (NCY) is a semi-independent charity. NCY has been working with young homeless people for the past three decades. NCY's primary focus is working with vulnerable young people involved in the Criminal Justice System. The organisation is known for providing excellent and suitable semi-independent, short-term and stable accommodation for homeless youth in Newham, London. The charity continues to adapt in order to be able to respond correctly to the changing needs of children and young people and to work comprehensively with vulnerable young people according to their needs and best interests. NCY follow all legal procedures by developing programmes for young people in danger of becoming a lawbreaker, or at risk of harm by those involved in criminal behaviour. By being placed in semi-independent housing, most of the young people are perceived as being at low risk.

Centrepoint

Centrepoint is a leading UK charity working with homeless young people from all walks of life. Centrepoint gives homeless young people a chance to change their lives constructively and prepare them for a future where they can realize their potential. Centrepoint supports over 9,200 young people a year in London and the North East. The organization supports and guides 16-25-year old in finding a secure place to live. The organization has developed a pathway plan (independent living) and provides young people with a health assessment and support for their individual psychological and physical health needs. The research sample will be mixed - male and female. These participants can be either an offender or non-offender. I intend to explore their life experiences both before and after their experience of being homeless.

Newham Youth offending

Newham Youth Offending Service is working to prevent and assist in ending the pattern of children and young people becoming involved in anti-social behavior and criminal activities. It offers a wide range of rehabilitative programs for young people and their families. Newham is considered a deprived borough in London, with a large and diverse population. Being a deprived borough, the young people are vulnerable and at great risk of becoming homeless and involved in criminal activities.

I have categorized the three organizations according to their risk factors. The Newham Youth Offending Team participants offer a high-risk cohort, likely to provide six participants engaged in criminal activities. From this group, I can learn about behavior and attitude towards others, homelessness and illegal activity. Asking questions such as why they were involved in criminal activities and what are the main factors leading to their offending?

Research Ethics

When considering ethical issues and our response to them, it is vital to first address what we mean when we use the term 'ethics' (Powell et. Al., 2012). Ethics is a generic term and due to influential factors, such as background, culture, beliefs and social impact, we may each define and understand the term differently to others, even those in the same field of research. Ethical

issues can arise in many aspects of research and are especially prominent when interviewing vulnerable group in society, (e.g., lived experience of homeless young people) (Denzin, 1994). As Lichtman (2014) states *"What are the meaning of ethics and ethical behaviour?" In layman's terms, "doing what is right" (p 56). "Ethical decisions are not being defined regarding what is advantageous to the researcher or the project upon which they are working. They are concerned with what is right or just, in the interests of not only the project, its sponsors or workers, but also others who are the participants in the research" (May 2001:59).*

Curtis et al., (2004) and James et al., (1998) recognised the importance of research into the lives of young people and how this has led to a significant growth in research regarding youth. Research about young people carries relevant issues in all social research, including informed consent, confidentiality and participant protection against any harm (Powel et al., 2012; Morrow, 2008). By ethical consideration and proper planning, these core tenants of research ethics, work as protective factors for reducing the possibility of harm and distress to young participants. It is also the researcher's responsibility to take account of young people's immaturity and vulnerability throughout the research process (Robson and McCartan, 2016). As I mentioned previously, research with children and young people ethically requires more attention. According to Aldridge (2016), *"an essential first step was to ensure that the research questions asked of children were both necessary and valid" (p 36).*

The main body of this research involved vulnerable young people. Therefore, I carefully considered and adhered to the various ethical considerations and safeguards throughout the duration of the research. In considering appropriate ethical safeguards, I used ethics research guidelines on researching with children and young people, guidelines produced by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in 2004, and British criminological society 2006 guidelines on researching with young people. The research additionally considered the full ramifications of the Human Rights Act 1998. This ensures a person's entitlement to self-assurance, protection and respect, confidentiality, privacy, consistent treatment and insurance from distress and hurt.

Conducting research was even more difficult with those who are considered socially excluded (Connolly, 2008). Importantly, as a researcher, I enjoyed working with my young and professional participants. I am happy that I was able to make them comfortable enough to choose to be involved in the research of their own free will. Ethical approval for the research thesis was awarded in January 2016 by the Middlesex University London Ethics Board.

Permission was also granted from the managers (gatekeepers), of the three organisations included in the study. The following section will discuss some of the leading ethical considerations and procedures undertaken in this research. These include; participant protection, informed consent, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.

Participants Protection

In this research, the health and safety of participants was my major concern. As Lichtman (2014) stresses: *"The main principle associated with research ethics, "do not harm" is the cornerstone of ethical conduct" (p 57).* I attained all the appropriate legal checks that were required by the government to work with children. I had already submitted my updated DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) certificate as currently, this is the process of 'Enhanced Disclosure' as managed by the Criminal Records Bureau. I also did everything necessary to ensure that no participant encountered harm or any psychological distress as a result of partaking in the research.

All young people and the managers of their organisations who were involved the research process, were given the contact details of my director of research, where they could provide feedback or submit complaints if they experienced any problems during their interviews. However, prior to the interviews with the young people, I met with a senior support worker (who directly works with that young person) from each organisation to learn more about the individual young person's specific risk factors. Most of the support workers were involved voluntarily and helped me to arrange the meetings with young people. Their role was commendable throughout my interviews. In Newham's Youth Offending Team, this process was particularly onerous, because most of the young people were not willing to discuss their life experiences, particularly with regards to offending. The interactions with the young offenders in those settings were more difficult, and it took longer to create a more open and engaging environment for young participants and to gain their trust.

An essential part of conducting research is the identification and implementation of ways to reduce known risks that can cause harm (Robson and McCartan, 2016). This was considered carefully in all of the interviews and subsequent conversations as well. In all interviews my priority was to safeguard the participants. I arranged all meetings in appropriate conditions, whilst under the supervision of other staff.

Informed Consent

> *"Any individual participating in a research study has a reasonable expectation that they will be informed of the nature of the study and may choose whether to participate or not" (Lichtman, 2014 p 59).*

Ensuring that each and every participant gives their informed consent is vital throughout the process and in all interviews conducted. There is often difficulty in obtaining this in a clear and open way with vulnerable children or young people, but the fact remains that it is of critical importance that this consent is outlined in a transparent and simple manner so as to enable and empower young people in their choice and autonomy. Crow and Edwards (2013) emphasise the need for great care to be taken when considering the 'nature and meaning' of informed consent and how it can be successfully achieved.

The research writing around this area and the BERA (2004) guidelines, shows that it is vital to obtain consent from the young people, or parental/guardian consent for the individuals who were less than sixteen years old. In my research, all participants were over sixteen years of age, so no parent or guardian consent was required. Each participant was given a consent form to read and understand, which they then signed to show that they were completely aware that their participation was voluntary. If at any time in the process they no longer felt comfortable, they could withdraw anytime.

Appendix at back of thesis

Data protection and confidentiality

> *"Any individual participating in a research study has a reasonable expectation that information provided to the researcher will be treated in a confidential manner" (Lichtman, 2014 p 59).*

The guidelines set out by the British Society of Criminology and the ESRC enable any researcher to ensure that the identities and key points of interest are kept secure and confidential – this also includes keeping interview data such as interview transcripts and recordings private and separate from the presentation of research findings. In order to observe this fully throughout my research, I began by assigning each interviewee a number, which made each

case recognisable whilst retaining confidentiality. I replaced the names of each young person in the subsequent write up with pseudonyms in order to protect their identities.

In addition, I used pseudonyms for the professional workers, who were involved in the research. They also knew that they could withdraw at any time.

Appendix at back of thesis

Other issues

After reading the literature on ethical consideration, I considered all risks very carefully. To reduce risk during the research process, all the interviews were conducted in a communal setting. This was affording the young people privacy during the interview whilst simultaneously allowing them to feel secure by being in a public space. Where appropriate, I was given a personal alarm by the staff member that enabled me to inform them about any threats or conceivable attacks. I always told my brother about the organisation and gave him information as to where I was going to hold the interviews. Plans were made with professionals (staff members) to have a room available for the interview and I always reminded them of that necessity by way of email and phone call, a day before a meeting.

I also reminded the participants as well through staff members about their interview. I was informed about the risk assessments of young people and advised about that some young participants may be mentally upset. I understood that I needed to remain quiet if they expressed any unexpected behaviour such as a sudden loud voice/shouting. E.g. They might begin to stroll around the room, couldn't focus on the question, or expected to be able smoke between the sessions, and so forth. I felt very comfortable during a significant portion of the interviews and did not feel a specific threat from the interviewees.

Structure of Interviews

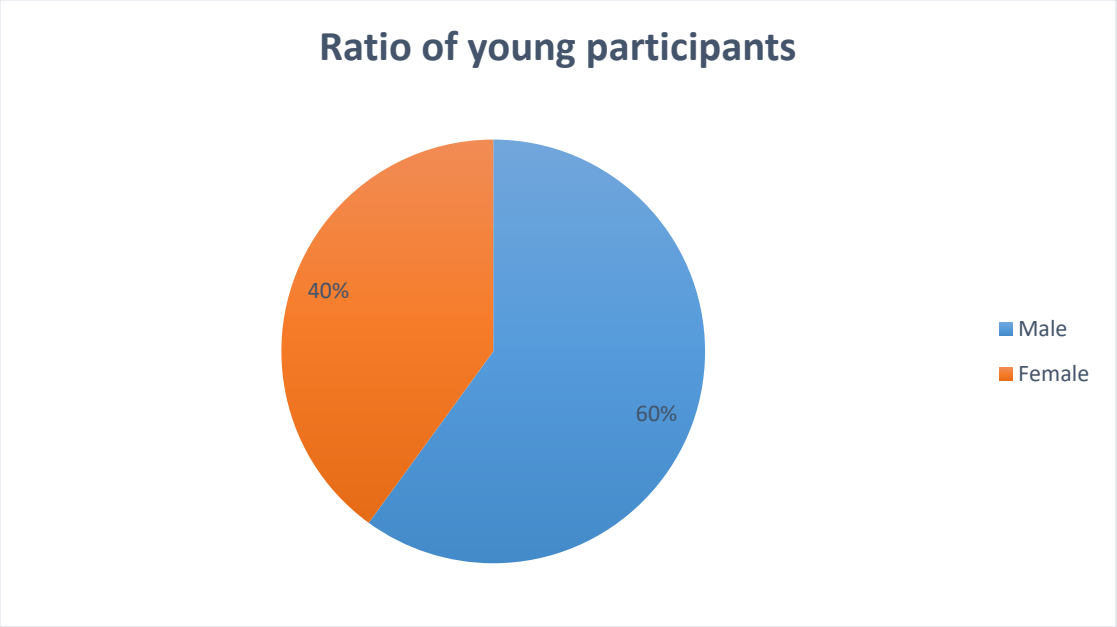
Every interview conducted throughout this research was one to one, face to face and semi structured. Prior to each interview, I spent time with each participant, clearly explaining the project and outlining in detail how I formulated the questions, and how they were free to add anything to the topic or conversation about their own life-experience. I informed the youth that the questions had been developed in order to more fully understand the problems of homelessness and their experiences as a homeless young person.

In keeping with my semi structured interview model, I was able to maximise free flowing conversation in order to facilitate dialogue and rapport and employ the power of discussion in the research process.

Initial question/hypothesis employed in research (Young People)

The Informants: young people's experiences of being homeless and their views about homelessness and crime.

Organization	**Male**	**Age**	**Female**	**Age**	**Total**
New Choices for Youth	Black male White male White male Asian male Albanian male	17 years 18 years 18 years 19 years 18 years	White female Black female Black female	18 years 18 years 21 years	08
Centrepoint	Black male White male White male Asian male	18 years 19 years 19 years 20 years	White female Black female Black female Asian female	17 years 19 years 19 years 19 years	08
Newham YOT	White male Asian male	17 years 18 years			02
Total	11 Male		7 Female		18 youngsters



The interviews were made up of open-ended questions. This was an intentional choice made in order to give informants a voice. It also meant the researcher could pick up a more transparent understanding (Ritchie, J. 2014) of the circumstances in which young homeless people describe what led to them becoming homeless, as well as its impact on them. By concentrating on the issues raised by the participants themselves, the research will raise awareness of young people at risk of homelessness and crime in the future. In other words, it will work at a protective level.

Initial Question/Hypothesis employed in research (Professional workers)

I decided to develop a questionnaire for professionals to get their perspectives on why their young people had become homeless and implications of this for the risk of offending. The knowledge and the experience of these specialists was proving very helpful in relation to this thesis. I drafted the professional interview questionnaire after the completion of young people's interviews so as to both include and address the issues raised by the young people.

Gaining access

As the researcher, I accessed professionals for interviews through the contacts at the participant observation stage. A total of nine meetings were held at the professional's work environment.

Before the interview was started, the aims and objectives of the research were clarified. In addition, I discussed the issues of confidentiality and privacy. I also asked them about giving their consent to participate in my study. A range of relevant professionals were approached (social worker, YOT officer, Manager, CEO, senior supported housing officer). All interviews were recorded and lasted between fifty and sixty minutes.

Organisation	**Chief Executives**	**Managers**	**Senior Worker**
New Choices for Youth	1 black female	1 White male	1 white male 1 black female
Centrepoint	1 white male	1 white male 1 black female	1 Asian male
Newham YOT		1 white female	1 black male
Social Worker	1 black female (A London Borough) 1 White male (A London Borough)	1 white male	
Director London based charity	1 white female		
	05	05	04
Total			14 professionals

I had designed two questionnaires: one for homeless young people, and the other for professionals who directly work with homeless young people. The central question for professionals being: how do they bring young people back to living a crime-free life through their skills and experience? I also learnt more about why young people become homeless and if there were concerns about offending and victimisation in young people.

The interviews used with the young people were adapted to be more suitable for professionals (to get more understanding about homelessness and crime). They involved discussing homeless youth problems and concerns raised by homeless youth (interviews) included the following:

- Engaging with homeless young people
- Role and responsibilities of professionals
- Reason for youth homelessness victimisation and/or offending
- Barrier in pathway plans
- Policies and services for homeless young people
- Relationship of homelessness and youth offending

The research

Overview

As I initially visualised it, this project was to be developed in two stages. In the first stage, I planned to conduct interviews with homeless young people, reflecting upon their life-experiences of homelessness and crime. In the second stage, the outcomes of the young people's interviews helped me to ask informed and relevant questions in the professional's interviews. I could add questions or raise the points of concern reported by the homeless young people. I gained good knowledge of the young people's concerns. I discuss these findings in chapter 6: ***"Analysis of professionals' interview."***

As described above, prior to carrying out my research, I worked as a professional youth support worker with homeless young people. My responsibilities ranged from welcoming them, to appraising them of the amenities available to them such as clothing, food and personal hygiene items. I was also involved with helping them engage with activities which would help them learn to be more independent such as cooking, writing up to date resumes, supporting them in

their housing issues, and guiding them to local authorities that could help them with housing. The primary responsibility of my role was to help them to achieve targets in their pathway plans and attain independent living.

I invested much of my time meeting and conversing with them about their lives and circumstances. I immersed myself in a setting that was friendly to the homeless youth and established myself in a non-threatening role; in this way, I could meet, connect with and build relationship with different youth across central London (DePaul, Centrepoint, NCY Launchpad). While my conduct might be perceived by some as "controlling", my intentions were not to misdirect the adolescents I connected with. On the contrary, it was to build a relationship with them based on mutual respect and trust. I interacted with the youth in a way that was non-threatening, non-intrusive and allowed for the organic development of trust. It should also be noted that, because of the transient nature of the homeless population, a significant number of the young people with whom I made connections, did not take part in the research project. However, my interactions with them in this context helped me develop knowledge and sharpen my interviewing skills.

Context of Researcher

Adopting the qualitative and grounded theory methods was the correct methodological decision for this thesis. This methodology empowers the researcher to be in the field for an extended period, and this part of the strategy was critical to the achievement of this investigation (Robson and McCartan, 2016). As was discussed above, many the young people who had taken an interest in this research had encountered anti-social behaviour and violence in their early life. It was not an easy task to build a relationship with young participants based on trust, confidence, and respect. This procedure was vital, as rapport and trust gave the meaning to this research.

Summary

In this methodology chapter, I have tried to deliver an honest account of the challenges, issues, and problems that I confronted in carrying out my research, fieldwork and how I subsequently overcame them. I also started with an introduction of the theoretical underpinnings of the research methods used. I included my personal experience as a youth worker and the awareness

I had with regards to the impact that this experience may have had on the data collection. I then proceeded with a depiction of the procedures and principles of the research. Conducting interviews with homeless youth in a youth offending team and other organisations was not an easy task. It took longer to arrange these interviews than I had originally anticipated.

As I have outlined previously, research with young people can raise significant challenges with regards to issues such as the approach to ethics and the way interviews are conducted. My extensive work as a professional care giver with young homeless people enabled me to carry out the interviews in such a way as to put each participant at ease and ensure they fully understood the questions and the process. These skills helped me ensure the best possible outcome to these interviews, thus yielding strong results. My work with homeless youth also provided optimum opportunities to enlist the support and engagement of youth work professionals, which in turn offered me access to potential participants.

Furthermore, in this study, I have employed a rigorous research methodology to provide an authentic and fair research process. Drawing on a qualitative approach, I have demonstrated my research objectives to look in-depth, at homeless youth observations and experiences. I have explained in detail my strategy in how to sample respondents for the research and outlined the essential characteristics as well. Ethical considerations were tended to, taken after by step by step depiction of strategies for data collection. The final section addressed the use of semi-structured interviews and some of the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methodology (qualitative and grounded theory).

CHAPTER 4

Research Findings (young people interviews)

In this chapter I will discuss the most prominent themes that have emerged from the observations and interviews with homeless young people. The life-stories of homeless young people that emerged are comprised of various elements, with each young participant comprehensively sharing and recording their journey of homelessness. They described the details of their lives through various lenses, for example, childhood, schooling, family structure and environment, job or apprenticeship, relationships and peer pressure. Each explained the significance of these sources of social capital, to the homeless youth in the transition to committing criminal acts or choosing not to engage in criminal behaviour. I will discuss all of these key themes carefully in this section, along with the challenges associated with homelessness and crime. I also explored why young people became homeless in the first place and if there were concerns about offending and the victimisation of young people.

Young people who are experiencing homelessness share many things in common, but one factor in particular stands out: they reside in youth hostels. Whilst most young people in this situation have experienced trauma, the term 'homelessness' is exceptionally and perhaps unhelpfully broad when looking at such a specific issue. The significant variance from person to person regarding young people's identities, the reasons for becoming homeless, challenges, strengths, and future goals, can make it difficult to identify a single fixed method of successfully working with them – an issue discovered during my own fieldwork. As in my literature review study, my research suggests that many homeless youths experience a journey arc that involves domestic violence or the experience of parental drug abuse. This can then lead to some version of the following chain of events: leaving the parent/guardians home, living in the streets, gaining access to services, and ideally, moving away from a life on the streets toward self-sustaining independence and security.

The interview questions used, were adapted to be more appropriate for professionals (in order to gain a greater understanding about their perspective on homelessness and crime). A section discussing the problems homeless youth face and concerns they raised was also included.

The means by which professionals and services can effectively help youth to achieve long-term success and a transformational sense of belonging, is yet to be determined and understood. I will discuss this further in the chapter six entitled: "Professionals interviews findings".

The final findings will be divided into four parts:

1. The first part debates the results related to the research questions
2. The second will demonstrate the new themes
3. The third recommends suggestions for future research.
4. The final part will discuss the researcher's stance and what gains this study achieved.

Pseudonym	Gender	Current age	Age became homeless	Prison history	Drugs	Gangs
Jana	F	19 y 8 month	15 years	6 months	No	No
Abdul	M	20 y 6 month	16 years	1 year	Yes	Yes
Steve	M	18 y 1 month	16 years	3 months	Yes	No
Terry	M	20 y 4 month	14 years	1 year	Yes	Yes
Wilano	M	20 y 4 month	14 years	No prison	Yes	Yes
Kuku	M	18 y 9 month	16 years	6 months	Yes	No
Andy	M	21 y 8 month	15 years	1 year	No	Yes
Alisha	F	21 y 2 month	14 years	No prison	No	No
Stephine	F	21 y 2 month	16 years	1 year	Yes	Yes
Louise	F (Lesbian)	19 y 5 month	16 years	6 months	No	Yes
Melisa	F	19 y 2 month	15 years	3 months	Yes	No

Karol	F (Trans)	20 y 0 month	16 years	6 months	Yes	Yes
Julisha	F	19 y 1 month	17 years	No prison	No	No
James	M	19 y 7 month	16 years	6 months	Yes	Yes
Ben	M	20 y 8 month	14 years	2 years	Yes	Yes
Sam	M	21 y 1 month	16 years	1 year	Yes	Yes
Sabir	M	20 y 8 month	15 years	1 year	Yes	No
Jon	M	18 y 4 month	14 years	2 years		Yes

Key questions:

- Why do some young people end up becoming homeless?
- Why do some young homeless people offend when others do not?
- What is the relationship between crime and youth homelessness?
- How do professionals and parents support former homeless young people into leading a crime free life?

Emerging Themes

1. Housing instability and concerns about independent living
2. Victimisation and stigmatisation
3. Crime as a means of developing a materialistic lifestyle
4. Need for a healthy relationship with professionals

5. Ethnic minorities discriminated against by staff and public

After a detailed construction of these themes, which are mentioned above, I re-interviewed six young people to discover how their lives have changed over the past nine months.

> *"I never thought that I am a prostitute and I hate to give it that name, this is my job. Some people sell food and some cars, and I sell my body. This is my business ... aren't I working just like others are working? I need to pay bills and want to eat. I am a boss and I work when I want to work."*
>
> *(Melisa 19-years-old)*

Analysis of Story Similarities and Uniqueness

Similarities

There were eighteen life-story interviews conducted and each of the lived experiences shared by homeless young people during the course of this research were unique, but there were also various similarities across the stories. Similarities included difficulties linked to early age life experiences, relationship breakdown, domestic violence, substance abuse, survival, prostitution and mental health and wellbeing.

A method I considered, in order to increase the understanding of homeless young people, was looking at the similarities right across the young homeless participant's life stories through the lens of a biological framework, as discussed in the literature review. I achieved this by identifying and examining the multiple and interacting levels of effect that individual, connection, community, and societal factors have in their lives (Glanz et al., 1997). Similarities of these eighteen stories were examined by initial themes and emerging themes.

Journey to homelessness

Initially, I present the journey to living life on the streets or homelessness because, ultimately, this research is about the young people's lived experiences. It is tied in with perceiving and regarding where the young people originated from, where they are now, what their aspirations

are and what they are looking for in terms of their overall life goals. The standards are intended to help direct staff in their support of each youth's situational improvement and creating a positive direction in life. Every young participant provided life-descriptions about him/herself, which may also be defined as a journey. Individually, the young participants talked about the same themes, which exist amongst biological and personal history factors such as, domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, relationship breakdown, victimisation, and poverty. Young participants life-stories included contexts in which social links occurred, such as on the streets and at homeless youth support facilities. In all eighteen life-stories, they clearly expressed that their journeys were difficult, with the majority of them being pessimistic about the 'brightness' of their future. In previous research, the key factor leading young people to homelessness is some form of domestic abuse (Taracena 1998). Similarly, most of the young participants in the research I conducted left home because of some form of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.

Analysis of the homeless young people's lived experiences revealed a journey arc that illustrates their route to homelessness and crime. Initially, the young people shared the contributing factors that led them to a life on the streets. Secondly, young people talked about the suffering they experienced and defined their circumstances both before and after homelessness. Thirdly, all participants had experienced abuse during their period of homelessness. Fourthly, most of young people had the significant concerns with regards to their own future, with some emphasis on issues surrounding stable accommodation and health concerns. Fifthly, prostitution was a common activity amongst homeless young girls. Sixthly and finally, young people were not ashamed or embarrassed to shoplift and steal if they were hungry.

Lived experiences of homeless young people

Childhood family conflict

The main reason given by most of the young participants for their homelessness, was domestic violence and family conflict during their childhood. Twelve of the eighteen young participants described growing up with their parents or guardian as 'a nightmare' and how they had been abused by their biological or stepparents. A majority of them used the term "thrown out" or "kicked out" from their home when describing how they had had to leave. Family conflict was

often related to issues including sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, and transgender), substance abuse, sexual harassment, poverty and gang issues. Six young people had a history of running away as they were freedom seekers.

I asked each of them the question: 'Why did you end up becoming homeless?'

> *"Oh, do you think that was a home, it was f****g WWF [World Wrestling Federation] with my stepdad beating me up with stick. My Mum was crack and cocaine user. I was sick of all the irritations, my mum yelling and fighting, it was frightening."*
>
> *(Kuku, 18 years-old male)*

There were several types of abuse that young people mentioned during their life-stories interviews. Ben is 20-year-old British white male. He had been entrenched in a lifestyle of rough sleeping for some time. He had also been smoking crack since the age of fifteen. His early upbringing was not a happy one, and he had significant difficulties in his relationship with his mum. He described how his mother, as a substance abuser, had given him access to crack at an early age. He claimed he was deprived of his fundamental needs because his family was poor. Financial crisis affected him so severely that it stopped him from attending school and he found he was unable to focus on his education. He disclosed that he had been a victim of domestic abuse at the hands of his mother and her boyfriend. He also admitted to being involved in acts of offending that included stealing, robbery and drug dealing in order to fulfil his lifestyle needs.

Most of the participants mentioned financial circumstances or poverty as a key factor in their subsequent homelessness. Young people did not declare it directly, but their later clarifications as they told their story, proposed that financial instability had been a major factor in causing their family to abuse them in certain ways.

> *"My mum forced me to go to work instead of go to school. She said earn money and fulfil your needs. Most of the time I couldn't find food in my house. If I complained about it, she became furious and one day she beat me up. I was afraid to go home. It was frustrating." (Wilano, 20 years-old)*

> *"My mum was a club dancer and I am sure she was a prostitute. Sometimes, if she didn't get client or didn't make money, that fired her anger and she would beat me and*

take her fury out on me. She is such a vamp. Financial crisis created many harms in my early life and physical abuse was one of them." (Sam, 21 years-old)

These two examples illustrate how poverty led these two young people into homelessness. In Wilano's case he was forced to go to work instead of school. He was also contending with physical abuse in the home. It made him frightened to go back home. He explained that the fear to go back to home, combined with the lack of money, directly contributed to the situation developing into physical or verbal abuse. Many young people growing up in impoverished homes can exhibit emotional or behavioural issues (depression, violence, bullying) due to the deprivation and neglect they experience. These issues can result in loss of, or reduced education (exclusions), choices (regarding further education and career) and an inability to succeed at a crucial time of life development. This can go on to influence their adult lives through lack of gainful employment, criminal activity or prison.

In Sam's case, his mother's anxiety, due to financial instability, led to spontaneous events of domestic violence. This established an inconsistent, unpredictable bullying situation. Through my research, I have seen time and again how young people living in this constant state of anxiety and fear or violence will often mimic this violent behaviour as a survival mechanism. This can lead to further issues inside the home as well as at school and in peer groups. It often also leads the young person to have to escape the violence by leaving the family home with no physical or financial means of support and therefore they find themselves homeless and forced to resort to criminal acts (gangs, stealing etc.) as a means to survive.

There is another common theme of violence and personal victimisation prior to homelessness and during homelessness in the young people interviews. Fourteen of the eighteen young participants reported a history of physical abuse at the hands of family members or guardians. Four young female participants were victims of sexual assault by their stepfathers or mother's boyfriend. Two of the young homeless males also described their experience of sexual assault. Prior to being homeless, two young girls were sexually assaulted by their stepfather between the ages of twelve and fifteen and one was sexually harassed by her mother's boyfriend. Whilst homeless, four of the young girls were sexually assaulted.

"My mum's boyfriend was a big black nasty man. A few times he insulted my mum, but she never minded it. One day he was arguing with her, I told him to stop shouting he

pushed me… and call me a white twat. I was frightened. Luckily, I ran away. Later, my mum put the blame on me that I stole her money and kicked me out at the age of 16."

(Ben 20-year old male)

Sexual orientation was one of the common emerging themes which led young people into homelessness. Karol, a twenty-year old, half-Italian and half-English trans-girl, was predominantly raised by her father because her parents were divorced, and her mother had left Karol with her father and re-married. She said:

"I wanted to be a woman and I spoke about it to my female cousin. The reason why I became homeless was because my cousin let my dad know about my sexuality. My dad was so cross with me he screamed and slapped me on my face. He told me to leave the house. He threatened me to kill me. I had no choice so, I left."

Jana is from East London, born to mixed-race parents of English and African descent. At seventeen, she has already been a systematic victim of heroin addiction and chronic enslavement. Her unfortunate circumstances including the death of her father, has inflicted severe wounds on Jana's mental health and lead her into habitual drug abuse. Moreover, during her teenage years, due to her mother's persistent abuse of alcohol and drugs, Jana always felt vulnerable and confused. Jana was also a victim of sexual, and physical abuse at the hands of her mother's boyfriend.

"I was happy before my mum's boyfriend came in my Mum's life. We had problems but there weren't big issues. I was then being abused physically and sexually by him. I told my mum, but she condoned it. I was just 14 years old and really upset when one day he pressed my breasts and bit my neck. My mum was scared. First, she threatened to kick me out, then she gave me a tenner to shut my mouth. My mum really wanted to live with her boyfriend. So, one week after this incident she kicked me out. Which I wanted too"

(19 years-old female)

Where did they stay?

The first problem presented to the young participants, was where to go or stay once they had left their family home. Since leaving their parents' home, the young participants had stayed in different types of settings. The homeless young people cited the most common places to go, as

being a friend's house, on buses and the streets. Half stayed in their friend's house, just over a quarter slept rough on the streets or huts, a fifth used buses to sleep at nights in the early days of their homelessness. Almost all mentioned that they spent most of their time on the streets, parks, train stations, coffee shops, subways, central London and shopping malls.

Most of the young participants stated that their friends were reluctant to have them stay with them for long periods. Some of them were scared of their families and some homeless young people talked about their self-consciousness because they did not want to outstay their welcome. I asked: 'What was the main reason for leaving your friend's place?'

> *"I stayed about four days in Chris's house, but his parents were rude and never answered my greetings. They used to be nice before I became homeless, I felt I should leave."*
>
> *(Steve, 18-year-old male)*
>
> *"I am Trans and I didn't have an idea about all this homeless stuff. I was unclear about where I had to go to. I moved to my friend's house to protect myself. Ahhhh (long pause) yeah it was a shit people's place. My friend's brother called me joker which I didn't like. He was discourteous about my sexual orientation."*
>
> *(Karol 20 years-old)*
>
> *"I used to sell drugs, and because of that people ring my house buzzer all the time. My mum she didn't like it and told me to stop my friends. But it kept happening so one day she kicked me out. As you know I'm a short guy, so I went upstairs in the bus and hid myself in the back seat and slept. I did this for about two weeks."*
>
> *(Jon 18 years-old)*

I asked them to describe their harshest experience whilst sleeping rough at the beginning of their homelessness:

> *"I slept in Trafalgar Square, Charing Cross station and in the parks."*
>
> *(Ben, 20-years old)*
>
> *"I got thrown out by my mum and ended up sleeping outside the church on benches for the night. It was really scary in the middle of the night. I had a phobia of someone is coming towards me. I couldn't get sleep."*

(Sam 21 years-old)

*"Oh man you will be shocked; it was a cold night and I slept in the bin garage and it was f*****g too smelly. I can't forget that night."*

(Kuku, 18-years old)

Whereas homeless young people frequently left their friend's houses for the above-mentioned reasons, almost three quarters of them claimed to have felt forced to stay in someone's house or on the streets because of the lack of other options.

Why do some young people end up becoming homeless?

Fourteen out of the eighteen young people interviewed, declared that relationship break down and severe domestic violence in early life was the primary source of their homelessness. Two young people experienced problems in their local area because of gang-related activities, so they moved from their homes for safety related reasons. Two young girls decided to leave home to be with their boyfriends as they felt they wanted more freedom.

The youth were also asked to identify a key turning point in their life, and their thoughts and concerns about their future. The turning point was often not specific; rather it was something that happened over a period of time such as leaving a gang, finding a girlfriend, gaining a good job, leaving prostitution, becoming a mother etc. These events seemed to stimulate two types of actions: working toward the specified goals and ambitions, forgetting the past and making a new life in the best possible way, or making their life worse by joining gangs and getting involved in criminal activities. These important and positive turning points took place over an extended period and involved the significant effort of professionals and programmes put in place by local authorities.

Homelessness and survival

In the capital city, London, youth homelessness is becoming a more significant problem day by day. The emergence of youth homelessness, with regards to the broader issue of homelessness, has been conditioned by financial and socio-political changes. In reality, young people have long been victims of these social changes. The plight of homeless youth has been expressed by the homeless young people through their lived experiences interviews. During

interviews with the young people, I heard thoughtful and interesting views about homelessness in London.

> *"People say London is capital city, but I always claim that London is probably one of the worst places and it is the capital of homelessness…a place where it is hard to survive."*
>
> *(Ben 20-year-old male)*

Seventeen out of eighteen young participants mentioned that stealing and shoplifting was a justifiable act in order to survive and fulfil the basic needs of life. All the participants claimed that they were involved in petty crimes for the means of survival. The most common survival needs included; a safe place to sleep, food, warm clothing, personal safety, avoiding bullying etc. e.g. Sam believes that committing crimes for survival is not a bad thing, as poverty and expensive lifestyles are the main contributors to young homeless people being victimised to a great extent on the streets. He describes:

> *"Yes, it is ok to do crime for food, clothes, survival of life, that's how I think about your question. Being a homeless person, you face different hitches and crack heads every day. As I said, I was a piece of shit on the earth, who did drugs and I did all crap. Some people see homeless people, and they'd just throw food or pennies at them or abuse them. It's fucking so annoying and embarrassing for anyone. Such experiences have pushed young homeless people into crime."*
>
> *(Sam, 21-years old)*

I asked Melisa if she thought that she could sometimes justify crime for survival purposes such as stealing food, sex work, begging etc. Melisa responded that it is justifiable to steal, snatch, beg, engage in sex work or commit crimes for survival.

Melisa stated:

> *"Yes, when you are there, you must do it - that's the only way you feel about it. I was doing the shoplifting as well, and I had to because I don't want to die with hunger. I would prefer to rob than beg."*
>
> *(19-years old)*

Most of the young participants were noticeably clear about the acceptability of committing crimes in order to survive. For James, survival is important, but he felt the survival instinct

makes people act without moral character if they do not have money. According to James, survivor on the streets is someone who is a strong headed, and apparently homeless for a short or long time. However, the majority of the time he stops himself from going down a wrong path, such as offending, although it does occasionally occur. He believes that he is strong willed, but not consistently enough to avoid drugs and petty crimes, as central London has an easy access to drugs.

He said:

> *"It is the survival of the fittest. You either survive or don't. Why have I said that? You know what? If you couldn't survive, you will end up taking drugs and alcohol, being a substance misuser - that shows you're fucked up. I think differently about survival."*
>
> *(James, 19-year-old male)*

Throughout the young participants life-story interviews, begging, theft, mugging, shoplifting, and drug dealing were discussed in detail. Four young females were involved in prostitution for survival. Louise was incredibly open with her answers when questioned about her involvement in the criminal activities she engaged in to survive. These crimes included shoplifting, prostitution and begging.

Louise answered:

> *"Sex for survival isn't a new concept. Homeless youth do it for food, money to get some clothes, drink, and buy drugs or number of things. Also, being a female and walking around on the streets every day you get targeted by a lot of men. It is justifiable to steal or work as a prostitute. In fairness, I did it many times."*
>
> *(19-year old female)*

Homelessness creates high risks especially for young females, as some men objectify them and see young girls as a possession, simply a sexual entity to own, trade, make money from, and ask/pay for sex or even rape, if consent is not given.

> *"Men have their two faces in the beginning - they try to build trust that they are helping you, but they are f*****g pimps, they sell you to people for the night and make money. That's how it happened to me."*
>
> *(Stephine, 21 years-old female)*

"I might be wrong, but London is probably one of the worst cities regarding survival. Stealing, begging and prostitution are the main sources for young homeless people."

(Julisha 19-years female)

Jana's life-story after homelessness is also similar, she remembers being enmeshed in a life on the streets, and consequently, she got involved in various crimes, including prostitution. She believes that life on the streets and in hostels leads to crime such as prostitution and begging, just as it happened to her. She explained that:

"Homelessness takes many things away from you. There are many opportunities to earn, but you must use your intelligence, but I couldn't. I was in a bed and breakfast and the food was not good as I have seen mice in the kitchen. I was starving and desperate for food. A guy gave me a tenner for a blowjob. I went to KFC and had a chicken wrap."

When questioned about their survival whilst being homeless, including prostitution, sex work and begging in the streets, three quarters of the female respondents were involved in prostitution. They had different arguments and rationale to justify their actions and shared different stories of how they got involved in prostitution. Virtually all of the young participants were involved in different kinds of begging in order to be able to access food, money, clothes and drugs.

The relationship between homelessness and crime

All but one of the young participants stated that homelessness and crimes are completely interrelated. Being realistic about their need to survive, many homeless youths are not opposed to engaging in criminal activity. They mentioned different types of 'acts' they needed to 'put on' whilst criminally offending, primarily for survival and lifestyle needs. This included giving dirty looks, telling overstated or fake stories, hanging around the ATM machines, using hostels for prostitution, deliberately messing up their hair before begging, being crafty, petty theft, shop lifting, phone snatching and fraud. In the capital city, even trivial dishonesty can attain much needed benefits.

When questioned about connections between youth homelessness and crime Abdul grinned and with an ironic look, he stated:

"Yes, there is a link between homelessness and crime. When you are away from your parents, there are more chances to get involved in crime. I was in a gang and was involved in crime. The reason being, I was very young and wasn't aware of what is wrong and right. Drug dealing was the main source of my money. That's awkward, but I was involved in fights, and attempting murders. This is normal stuff in the gangs (giggling)."

(20 years-old)

"Oh, yeah, crime oh yeah and homelessness. Jesus Christ, I don't even remember how many bikes I had stolen in the first year of my homelessness. I used to do petty crimes when I was living in my parents' house, but bike stealing, mugging, phone snatching, drug selling etc I have been doing since I became homeless. 110% connection between homelessness and crime."

(Steve 18 years old)

Melisa was labelled by the staff at Centrepoint as an angry child from her early days of schooling and was constantly facing problems. Additionally, she was diagnosed with anger management issues, which have gotten her into a lot of trouble. However, when she became homeless, her anger made her life even worse.

According to Melisa:

"Yes, I know that I am a short-tempered young girl. But homelessness put fuel on it which led me to prison few times. I have no doubt that homelessness leads to crime. Survival is difficult when you're hungry, or so tired you fall asleep. Mental health issues do occur a lot with these homelessness issues, just because of the inconsistency that's in homeless young people lives. These problems likely engage young people in criminal activities."

Andy also has the similar views about homelessness. He said:

"Oh, whatever, it's not about right or wrong. It's all about would you survive or die. I became psycho, low self-esteem, weak body, out of focus - what the hell is it? I had no choice but to go out and find the soft target and rob them and that's it."

(21 years-old)

"I was bullied and sexually abused being in the shelter houses. For my own safety I joined a gang and then [got involved with] robbery, shoplifting, drug dealing, aggressive, fighting and frauds."

(Stephanie 21 years-old)

Louise believes that society's behaviour towards young people and the homeless creates criminals. She was a law-abiding citizen and tried to follow the rules. The day she became homeless was the day she fully realised the bitter realities of life.

According to Louise:

"Absolutely... 100% youth homelessness and crime are related. I stole food many times and got arrested a couple of times in the supermarket. It does not only lead to crime for survival it is also attached to mental health issues."

(19 years-old)

The period of homelessness was a challenging time for Kuku and a lot happened during that complex and painful period in his life.

Kuku stated:

"Homelessness can be very shocking… it makes people unwise, unhealthy, illiterate, aggressive, criminal, sick, mental, and so on. (Long breath) I was a pimp because of this fucking term; homelessness."

"Most of the time I hang around the ATM indifferent areas. As soon as I see older people taking cash out the machine, I asked them about address to just make them busy and if there is no one around I quickly hold [take] the cash and ran away."

(Jon 18 years-old)

In order to make ends meet, Terry started shoplifting and stealing most of the time. Terry considered himself skilled in stealing bikes and selling drugs. His close friends call him "Boss" and he is proud of that title. I questioned Terry concerning whether he thought it is justifiable to commit crimes to survive, and if he thought there was a link between youth homelessness and crime.

Terry answered:

"Homelessness and crime are related -I think so. I will give you an example of that - I nicked things a couple of times for survival. I did more stealing and shoplifting being a homeless person. I always steal when I am in that situation where I cannot survive." (20 years-old)

Alisha has mixed views about the relationship between the youth homelessness and crime committed by homeless young people. However, when asked if there was a considerable degree of relationship between youth homelessness and crime, she replied:

"It is, but not for everybody. Not every homeless person, and it depends on age as well. Not all homeless young people commit crimes which is interesting. It is interconnected because it is about survival. So, yes petty crime does have influence on homeless people. In my view, it is justifiable to commit the crime for food or basic needs."

(21 years-old)

In James' childhood, he had suffered abuse several times at the hands of his family members and relatives. Due to the extreme amount of domestic abuse and physical harassment on the streets, he wanted to take revenge on the perpetrators at any cost. This desire brought about a swift change in his personality. He spoke of how he 'used to be coward' and never tried to engage in fights or cause trouble. He found he had developed rebellious thoughts as a result of all this abuse. Therefore, he joined a local gang and was involved in violent incidents including physical fights, stealing, shoplifting, threatening other gang members, mobile phone snatching, and other robberies. He stated:

"Youth offending and homelessness has a strong connection, but it also varies in the circumstances of a homeless young person. I was a polite and sympathetic person and liked to help and respect people, but I had been bullied and abused so many times. I accepted that I was in a gang, did almost all the bad stuff. But who made me to do that?"

(19 years-old)

"London is full of tourists, most European's and Chinese are the soft targets of crimes. I always choose Westminster area for soft targets which means London eye, Soho, Trafalgar square and Oxford Street. I think people are more criminal when they are homeless, especially young people."

(Ben 20 years-old)

"Homelessness made me smart and a good thinker. You know what? (Laughs loudly) I am doing well. I go to into big restaurants, it's just you need to dress up posh. Order a meal and when I am almost finished it, I put hair or any particle in it and complain about it to the manager. They are always apologetic and even offer me more food. I show them my angry face and leave. (Laughs again)"

(Wilano 19 years-old)

Many young homeless people feel that they have been victimised and therefore justify their criminality through acts of revenge, either upon those who abused them or anonymous strangers. There may be a mind-set of a 'victimless crime' when stealing through fraudulent claims such as in a restaurant where the staff are not directly affected by the acts the young person performs in order not to pay. Many young people who have been the victim of abuse or injustice may also feel that the world 'owes' them and therefore it is justified to steal even if the act is not motivated by immediate survival. It can help them feel they have 'evened the score'.

Victimisation and violence

Seventeen out of eighteen participants believed that homelessness makes young people more vulnerable to occurrences of victimisation by different individuals or groups. They may have been victimised by their families, friends, police, gang members, and members of the public. More than half the participants stated that their main concern whilst living on the streets was being victimised by passers-by and their friends even when living in the hostels.

"A woman on the streets in danger of being sexually abused by trespassers and by her own male friends."
(Mellisa 19 years-old)

"Your own friends know more about you and they know about your whereabouts and belongings. Sometimes, when you are sleeping and not in your room, they nick your nice clothing or fashion stuff. When you ask them, they don't accept that they nicked it, but one day you might see them wearing it, they lie to you, and you can't do anything."

(Abdul, 20 years-old)

*"Homelessness make people thieves. Homeless people are f*****g skint. I stole my friend's food many times. It happens among young homeless people. I drank Tom's milk and put water in the milk bottle."*
(Terry, 20 years-old)

Young people highlighted that they were often robbed, or their stuff was missing when they left their belongings unattended whilst sleeping or drunk. Furthermore, many respondents indicated that sharing a bathroom and kitchen with other people also created a high risk of the theft of their belongings.

Physical abuse or victimisation is another core issue amongst homeless young people. In the interviews, young male and female respondents experienced different types of physical exploitation. Most of the male respondents have reported being physically attacked and many female respondents had experienced sexual abuse. They had also been robbed, threatened, beaten up, bullied, and stabbed. Almost every respondent believed that homeless people are always at risk of victimisation, and as a result, they carry any type of weapon available to them for their own protection.

Sexual abuse was a factor for all the female participants. Some attributed to be the triggering reason for their homelessness and others reported it as an everyday part of homelessness.

*"I wasn't like this, I was a cool gal. No troubles or drama. I was kicked out. Being on the street was a nightmare and then I moved to supported accommodation. You live with strangers, some are horrible. I was beaten by a male because of refusing his five quid offer of a blowjob. He punched my face. I made my mind up to f**k him and break his dirty face."*

(Mellisa 19 years-old)

*"It's not like that you are only abused while you are homeless. I was abused in my parents' house. The story isn't finished here - and then I was abused and victimised by my best friend G who raped me with another male after giving me drugs. Life is a f*****g bed of thorns. What happened as a result? I left."*

(Julisha 19 years-old)

The entire cohort of young respondents referred to homelessness as an exhausting, inexorable and physically draining experience. Most of them believe once anyone becomes homeless, his/her life is in absolute danger. Ambiguity, and problems will surround you quickly. Friends would not answer the call; social services would not accept you and then you have to be ready to be physically victimised in the street.

Over half of young participant's had been sexually abused prior to their becoming homeless. Once they become homeless, their risk to further sexual exploitation or rape becomes higher. Almost half of the female respondents and a quarter of the male respondents had been sexually abused whilst in their parents or guardians homes. That percentage then increased once they became homeless. Virtually all of the female and almost half of the male respondents mentioned that they were sexually abused once they became homeless.

This clearly illustrates that once they leave their home, the young person becomes vulnerable to high levels of victimisation. It is not easy for them to survive without having the life skills to cope up with this significant problem. They can then end up in prostitution or engaging in 'survival sex' for their basic or lifestyle needs.

> *"I did sex work many times, but I don't want to share the details with you. You asked me, so I am telling you - I think most of the young girl's on the street do it. But the worst thing is that some men are idiots, they do not give you the money and if you ask them again, they beat you up or spit on your face. They bite your lips and shoulders."*
>
> *(Melisa 19 years-old)*

Four young people cited numerous negative experiences they had with police as a direct result of their risky lifestyle e.g. drug abuse, drug dealing, delinquency, prostitution and stealing. Most of the time, members of the public approach and interact with them in an aggressive manner. Many of them often face discrimination by shop or stall owners.

> *"If you grow up in a broken or unstable family, no one gives a f**k about you, and no one is showing you the right path, so you find the alternative ways. You are pissed off and see all these rich youngsters with their nice branded fashion clothes, and you just want to kick the f**k out of them. I was in a gang so every time anything happens somewhere, the police come and arrest me I am really pissed off man. I tried to not let the fuzz catch me."*

(Wilano 20 years-old)

"There are different people in this world, and they think in their own way. I have brought up the way some people are raised in this way, because for me, I have been raised in the shit way. I know my self-respect, but the way police treat us it's not acceptable. I am a criminal, but it doesn't mean that I'm involved in every crime. Very disrespectful."

(Terry 20 years-old)

Once young people have a police record or a reputation as being someone who is regularly in trouble with the police it can be difficult for them to access the right help and support. They are instead seen simply as a problem. The police force often do not have the appropriate training to understand the issues young homeless people are facing, or indeed the reason they often feel they have to commit crimes. The police are not specially trained to be able to identify vulnerable youth and put measures in place to help young people exit a life of crime. Therefore, young people in need, who face domestic abuse, are young carers for mentally ill parents or who face extreme poverty, such as homeless youth, understandably perceive police as a threat rather than a source of support. If police could work more intentionally, in conjunction with homeless charities and social services, young people would not be so vulnerable or susceptible to crime and criminals.

Over three quarters of the young people interviewed stated that the impact of life on the streets is inevitable for homeless young people, even if they are living in different types of supported accommodation. They discussed their activities whilst still on the streets with their peers.

"Once you are familiar with the street culture, then it's almost difficult to refrain from it. Doesn't matter you are in hostel or flat."

(Jon 18 years-old)

Most of the male respondents reported that physical victimisation or violence was the outcome of any conflict with their peers over money, smoking, alcohol, or different type of drugs.

"Oh yes, if you don't pay back or not pay for drugs, they will find a way to fight with you, they shout, yell or beat you up. They don't care about friendship."

(Steve, 20 years-old)

"During my gang life, I used to sell drugs and if my friend or friend's friend didn't pay me, then me and my friend beat them up and snatched their bike or mobile phone."

(Abdul, 20 years-old)

*"I can't forget that my friend N***k was stabbed because of only 10 quid by his best friend."*

(Terry 20 years-old)

A couple of the respondents mentioned the phrase "power struggle" between young people as a factor in physical violence or victimisation. They also mentioned other factors such as jealousy, misinterpretations, hiding drugs etc

"See all my friends, they been in groups like the family. I know that's the wrong crowd. But it was like a family. I used to beat people up because we were in a big group. Most of the time if we found someone is homeless, we tease him/her. We had sex with homeless girls many times. We have all got a temper, anger problem. People fear us sometimes because we have our family gang."

(Terry 20 years old)

The stigma of homelessness

This was a prominent theme, which was emerged during the young people's interviews. In reply to the general questions about the public attitude towards homelessness, fourteen out of eighteen participants articulated that there is a stigma around homelessness. Nine young participants actively hid their homelessness from their friends and partners to begin with. When asked how homelessness affected them:

"Homelessness physically and mentally drains your power and respect. On a realistic note it is not something you feel proud of."

(Ben 20 years-old)

"I didn't tell my friends that where I live. Sometimes they ask to come to my place to drink or eat. I always refuse by making lame excuses because I was afraid of being hated."

(Jon 18 years-old)

"I believe people only pretend to be nice to you but in reality, they don't like us. They think we are dirty, lazy, ill-mannered and immoral people. As most of them see homeless as substance abusers and beggars too. I am living in the hostel but still it is homelessness and I don't normally tell people about it, only my close friends know about it."

(Jana 19 years-old)

"It is a stigma, as homelessness makes you uncivilised. People think homeless are lazy wankers and taking their taxes money."

(Andy 21 years-old)

"We can't do anything if we want to do something. In my hostel like - if put the music up, in a minute someone come up and ask me to put the music down. Then I realised beggars can't be choosers. So, I hate to tell people that I live in a homeless hostel."

(Melisa 19 years-old)

"The way they looked at us made me feel that we are not as good as others living in stable housing. Judging us, that we are lazy wankers"

(Karol 20 *years-old*)

Twelve young participants specified that homelessness had a negative impact on their overall personality. They talked about many difficulties related to their homelessness.

*"I would say that I am a non-judgemental person. But not everyone thinks the way I think. During my drug dealing time, I met one blonde teenager, she was pretty. We dated a couple of times yeah. And one day I told her that I live in a B n B. She never showed me any concern but the whole day she did not contact me or reply to my text. I got it bro, she thought I was a f*****g thief."*

(Steve 18 years-old)

"First two weeks were a nightmare. I was very depressive, unhappy, sad and frustrated. I felt I lost my dignity and respect."

(Stephanie 21 years-old)

"Let me tell you one thing, a young girl using the same bathroom and toilet with another five people including a male, yeah there isn't privacy and sometimes I feel ashamed of it."

(Julisha 19 years-old)

"Homelessness made me feel disrespected and embarrassed and it damaged my personality."

(Alisha 21 years-old)

"I have been neglected and treated like I am an outcast. Which is hurtful in [isn't] it? And it made me mental."

(Kuku 18 years-old)

"As soon as people they know about your living style, they think wrong about you and sometimes I have seen this clearly."

(Sabir 21 years old)

"Homelessness affected my self-respect and I thought 'I am a beggar'. Jesus Christ, I had the suicidal thoughts about it."

(Sam 20 years old)

In contrast, four of the young participants appreciated the work that was done with and for them by the hostels. They expressed their appreciation for the hostels and the staff members. They were pleased to live in the hostels and felt more confident to tell their friends that they are homeless and that they live in supported accommodation.

"Most of the people think homelessness is a stigma. We are living in a thankless society and don't appreciate people who help us. I have been using bed space, roof, heating, water, shower and food in Launchpad. What else do I need?"

(Wilano 20 years-old)

"When I first became homeless the air was too cold, the eyes of people were horrible, time was longer, and my stomach was aching. There was lots drama happening and one day I had a suicidal thought. Yes, it was a stigma but later I realised that at least I have a roof under which to sleep, as I performed prostitution in exchange for a bed. For me my supported accommodation is a blessing."

(Tomieka 21 years-old)

"I shouldn't be ashamed to be homeless; I think I put the blame on my parents who were not able to keep me in their home."

(Louise 19 years-old)

According to young people, homelessness is stigmatised, and this stigma plays a key role in influencing their mental health and exacerbating self-harm issues. Most of them discussed the general perception of the general public about homelessness. They reported the effects of this stigma, and how these perceptions can sometimes lead to discrimination, suicide, mental health and an inferiority complex.

Over two thirds of the participants stated that they had tried to hide their living conditions from others. They stated the couple of reasons for this. Firstly, hiding homelessness seemed to help them to avoid the direct discrimination or feelings of embarrassment and disgrace that they receive from the reactions of the public, peers and relatives. Secondly, in their opinion, homelessness creates a negative impression that can impact their relationships and employment process or opportunities. They believe that homelessness is a major source of embarrassment and creates disrespect.

For many homeless young people, the fact they have nowhere to live, is seen as a justified source of shame. The misconception many members of the public have about homelessness is that it has occurred because of laziness, criminality or addiction, rather than addiction or crime being inevitable outcomes for young people who find themselves homeless and without the means of support they need to survive.

Homelessness - is there a positive aspect?

One of the most common themes that emerged through almost two thirds of the young people interviews, was about the positive aspect of homelessness. Many thought homelessness gave them independence and caused them to think more about both the hardships and positive aspects of life. Eleven of the eighteen respondents believed that their experiences of a life on the streets and living in supported accommodation, made them mature and independent in their decision making. They felt more confident and independent in making decisions themselves, rather than relying on their parents or guardians to do so for them. The young participants interviewed, considered themselves more independent than their friends who had been living in stable housing.

"My life was bad before, and it's going to be good now. Before I was doing the bad stuff, I was with a lot of bad people, and I got pregnant when I was 15. I was just a sick child. My family was poor, and I have six other siblings as well. I used to live with my parents; my house was overcrowded. Even that time, I used to sleep on the mattress with other siblings. We had a three-bed room house with seven siblings. At present I feel more confident and independent to make the right choices."

(Tomieka 21 years-old)

"I used to be in prison on and off. Being a gang member, I was carrying the knife all the time for my protection. I was unhappy and scared...I didn't have anyone to look after me. People used me for their wrong intentions. Homelessness is hard, but I have learned a lot in a positive sense. Getting better."

(Andy 21 years-old)

"I sofa surfed for one month but didn't feel comfortable with the idea of going back to my parents again and they didn't even ask me to come back and live with them. I was frustrated and down because of their attitude. Eventually, I contacted with Centrepoint, and they gave me a place. Life isn't great, but it is nicer than my parent's house. I think I feel more protected here than in the streets and my mum's house. I have more freedom and independence."

(20 years-old)

"*I feel safe in the hostel because I was unsafe when I was in my [local] area. I was attacked three times when I was living in East London. I have a sense of security in my hostel."*

(Abdul 20 *years-old*)

Half of them declared that supported accommodations offer a protection and life-saving alternative to living with parents or guardians who were emotionally or physically unsafe and violent.

"My stepdad sexually harassed me. I didn't tell anyone as I was scared to be embarrassed. When I left home, I was scared. I cried because it happened to me the first time, and I had no option to live with. Staff supported me well and I feel I am getting back to normal."

(18 years-old female)

Abdul feels safe in his new environment, as he had been in gang and didn't feel safe in the East London area. Staff at the Launchpad helped him complete a life skills courses which gave him experience and knowledge in areas such as cooking, budgeting, sexual health, general health etc. and he was happy about it.

According to Abdul:

> *"Why [do] I feel better to be in a hostel than my Dad's house? Because the reason is clear - I am away from East London and bad company. Here they teach me to be more mature and responsible. In this hostel, the staff are teaching me about life skills (means my pathway plans) and I am moving forward."*
>
> *(Abdul, 20 years-old)*

Stephanie thinks living in a supported housing is so dangerous for a young girl, as she feels she is facing so many evil eyes and predatory people are looking at you, wanting to 'eat your body.

> *"Just being a young blonde teenager, there are already so many stressors, and then having housing instability on top of it, it's frustrating. All of the regular things and you only have few clothes and shoes; it's just a feeling of hopelessness."*

In interviews with the homeless young people, sixteen out of eighteen participants were dependent on one or more types of drug. Nine young people had issues with heavy substance abuse. The interviewees also mentioned how they first started using drugs, including the mitigating factors, experiences of drug dealing, the consequences of that as well as drug addiction. Four young respondents first began to use drugs whilst they were living with their parents, but another twelve of them had their first introduction to drugs when they became homeless.

Many of the young respondents claimed that they were not good with budgeting. On the occasions when they did not properly budget, their benefit payments and spent money too quickly, they would wish they could have been the type of person who is responsible with money. This illustrates that they would have benefitted from some kind of financial literacy training when they had been in care. However, for the most part, they don't experience this, and it is possible that it is at this stage of their life they start to smoke marijuana, drink alcohol and experiment with other substances. This meant they often took no responsibility for

themselves and subsequently found themselves developing a weed and alcohol habit. The financial situation was likely made more difficult for the homeless young people due to decreasing social circles, which also led to boredom due to having nothing to do and no one to see every day. Combining this with the realisation that tomorrow is not going to be any different than the day before, and many feel they have to therefore numb themselves through abusing alcohol, weed or other chemicals.

> *"Drug or substance misuse is an everyday life experience of homeless young people. I have more than 20 cigarettes a day and some of them with weed."*
>
> *(Terry 20 years old)*
>
> *"To fight with the freezing cold weather, you need an alcohol blanket. Otherwise, you will die in the minus temperatures. Amongst the homeless people, substance use is a common practice and it can be a weed, cannabis, cocaine etc."*
>
> *(Melisa 21 years old)*

Abdul, Sam and Willano's stories look similar in relation to their experiences of a difficult past, facing various kinds of issues and the fact that they have been using drugs and have been involved in drug dealing as well.

> *"The minute the homeless youth picks up substance dependency issues, [the fact they're] not independently wealthy dictates that they must commit crimes to feed their habits. You see, those proclivities require economics, and homeless young people don't have any income, do they? Which means they have to steal to get alcohol, weed, heroin and crack."*
>
> *(Abdul 20 years old)*
>
> *"Every now and then I used to drink and smoked weed and marijuana as this is our homeless culture. Especially when you live in hostels, you can even sell it to them and make good money every day."*
>
> *(Wilano, 21 years old)*

Terry is selling drugs and consuming marijuana every day. Terry believes that his smoking habit is due to the impact of a long history of smokers in his home. Every member of Terry's family smoke weed every day. His mother was also a substance misuser.

"I had good customers on my second placement. Using substances is a hot trend amongst homeless people. I believe that more than 90% homeless young people are into substance misuse. I sold drugs in the hostel and made good money."

(Terry, 20-year-old male)

Terry thought that parents using drugs, negatively affected their parenting skills and did not create a healthy environment for the children of that home.

Likewise, Sam's mother was a drug addict, using different types of drugs recreationally and ignoring the dire consequences of her substance abuse. He had a damaging childhood, as he was forced to live in an abnormal, and unhealthy atmosphere. He wasn't taking drugs whilst he lived in his mother's house. But as soon as he started living on the streets, he was introduced to the different type of substances that he felt would 'help' him overcome the trauma of his homelessness.

"Definitely, the era was horrible, the life was crunched. But homelessness attacks your self-esteem. Now I take heroin to clear my head, once in a while, as now and then my head's altogether muddled up. It's a heavy smoke but it makes me light bro".

Louise was very open when answering questions about her involvement in substance misuse. She believes that homelessness can be very traumatic and trying to handle and manage it is not an easy task to do.

"It's just challenging, and there are certainly some unique challenges that you face. In this situation, survival is hard, and you need alcohol or substance or chemicals to forget this tough situation."

Louise also had bad experiences with law enforcement officers. In her interviews she mentions numerous negative experiences with police due to her lifestyle which included drug abuse, drug dealing, delinquency, prostitution, and stealing.

Melisa was the victim of different forms of abuse. She relied on support from other people whom she met on the streets. Currently, she lives in a hostel. Melisa began smoking marijuana when she became homeless and it is through using it that she has met one of her homeless friends.

"It was easy to walk in and out of my hostel. When I walk in my hostel corridor, I always smelled a strong smell of weed but I never smoked it. I wanted to try it. I spoke one of

*my hostel fellows, he gave me one weed cigarette for five f*****g quid. Now I smoke weed five days a week. Sometimes I have high buzzes of heroin."*

(Melisa 19 years old)

James was primarily selling drugs for money, but within just three months he started using drugs himself and became a cocaine addict. He quickly realised that his substance dependency issues alongside not being independently wealthy, meant he must commit crimes in order to feed his addiction and those proclivities require money.

"I never thought of substance using, but it can happen when you don't have anything to do. I use crack… people say you can't get dependent on that, yet I require that to rest or have a nap. I find it relaxing and if I don't have that I get mad and will have it anyway."

"I am a hash smoker, I'm not dependent but require fake stimulant."

(Julisha 19-year-old)

Seven of the young respondents adopted drug dealing as a source of income. This was in spite of all of them understanding the consequences of selling drugs. For them selling drugs is the easiest way to make immediate money. Therefore, homeless young people may sell drugs on and off, most of them to buy the things they need for themselves or for their peers. Over two thirds of the respondents also reported how drugs and substance use helped them to forget their past and current situational problems.

"As soon as I'm having it and have myself high…I overlook everything, totally everything. I am at peace mate."

(Kuku 18 years old)

*"It takes you to your own particular existence where nothing else matters. A little world. A world of calm and harmony. That's what we need when we are f***ed up."*

(Andy 21-year-old)

"It simply just fades away my problems, issues, boredom, and tiredness.it basically helps me to sleep."

(Alisha 21 years old)

On the contrary a couple of the young respondents were not interested in alcohol and substance use. One stated:

> *"I know substance use and alcohol has penetrated homeless youth culture. But I drink like once in a blue moon as it doesn't intrigue me... I have seen people in my hostel they drink and smoke every day. I am not a big fan of drugs and it's a big hole in your pocket."*
>
> *(Jana 19 years old)*

Most of the young respondents believe that taking drugs and alcohol is an effective method of dealing with stress and intimidating circumstances. In some cases, it may also lead young people to bowing to pressure from others. From the moment the young homeless person develops dependency on any substance, they find themselves in a predicament of having to commit crimes in order to be able to afford to pay for the addiction. This means they now feel they have no other option but to steal to get alcohol, weed, heroin or crack. Throughout the interviews, they shared how they can walk into an off licence or supermarket and steal alcohol by slipping a bottle of alcohol inside their jacket. The security staff might chase them and have a little tussle unless they can run away fast enough. They also stated that they may come across 'the crack head' in some places, with no teeth and when they try to steal from them, 'the crack addicts just punch and kick them and that's the best-case scenario'.

Consequently, young people's accounts of their life-experiences, suggests that drug and alcohol use for homeless young people is a common way they use to deal with the stigma of homelessness, victimisation as well as past and current life experiences as a homeless youth.

Substance dependency sometimes separates young people from their peers who are not on drugs. Who would hang around and spend time with them, if they smell from a lack of hygiene or because they are continuously wearing the same clothes? For some, they have little opportunities or finance to be able to socialise. They also face obstacles such as having nowhere to have friends come to visit or meet them, and nowhere to shower or wash clothes. Therefore, these and other reasons can lead homeless people to misuse illegal substances and alcohol. Sometimes homeless young people end up in institutions such as prison or juvenile detention.

It's easy for many to stand back and judge young homeless people who use or abuse drugs or alcohol. It can be wrongly used as a reason to deny funding, housing, intervention or to continue providing them with the support they need to regain their independence in safe living

environments. For many, the misery and fear that being homeless inflicts, is lessened or 'helped' by substance abuse. The need to escape their everyday circumstances and feelings of powerlessness is alleviated as well as exacerbated by the use of drugs or alcohol. Criminal activity is often a side effect of this need to escape or deal with homelessness rather than being something most homeless youth actively want to engage in.

Housing instability and concerns about independent living

Whilst all of the homeless young people described their different and exclusive journeys, some also had concerns about their stable accommodation and future life. Half of them were hopeful about their future life and stable housing, and the rest had serious concerns about their future and largely had pessimistic thoughts about it. The young people talked openly about the process of their transition into independent living by means of various pathway plans.

Just under half of the young participants appreciated the way staff had treated and helped them. They felt confident about their transition into independent living and believed that they would be fine. Abdul showed appreciation for the staff's level of concern regarding his future independent living situation. He stated how beneficial the different life skills focused training courses had been.

Abdul stated:

> *"Last month I started my apprenticeship in plumbing. I feel so proud of it and credit goes to my key worker M. He always encourages me and supports me."*

Abdul had had some bad experiences in his previous placements. But he was impressed with the way M dealt with him. M treated Abdul according to his self-declared needs and was very supportive of him. M gave him confidence and showed him the path of a structured lifestyle.

Terry had been homeless since November 2014. At the start, he lived in his Nan's house. However, his Nan's house was very overcrowded. Terry then got involved with criminal activities such as stealing, shoplifting, violent crime, substance abuse and drug dealing.

According to Terry:

> *"Life is better now, because I left the area where I was doing the crime and all the troubles that happened to me. The best thing is, it feels like a house. I am living on my*

own. I take decisions, make choices and that gives me more confidence and I am learning about independent living which is cool."

When she first became homeless, Alisha had concerns about her personal safety and type of people she would live within the homeless hostels. Upon the encouragement of her friend, Alisha decided to contact the local authorities. As a result, she was given a room at Center Point.

"In my early days of homelessness, I was sleeping on the streets, but it was scary, and the idea of going back to rough sleeping again wasn't attractive. I had bad thoughts about homeless hostels, but I am having a good experience here."

She ended up liking the hostel life, but she felt unhappy due to her perception of the staff's behaviour towards other non-British residents.

Sam also appeared happy and content with the treatment he received in the supported accommodation. Staff were well mannered and considerate regarding Sam's needs, and provided him with a pair of socks, a couple of pairs of jeans, and several shirts. In the centre, he had access to a free shower, laundry, tea, coffee, juices and food. He is in supported accommodation and believes that he is in a secure environment.

"I think staff members are co-operative and teaching me independent living skills which will help me for independent living. I shouldn't have to complain, as I'm still breathing, walking, eating etc. But still, housing is the main issue, and I'm not sure that I would find an independent place to live."

(Sam, 21 years old)

On the other hand, more than half of those interviewed expressed feelings of dissatisfaction, stating that they did not feel they had sufficient help or assistance in order to be able to live self-sufficiently. They raised concerns they had about staff discriminating against certain young people and resulting behaviour, mental health issues, budgeting, pathway plans, decision-making and general health problems. The young respondents discussed in detail their worries regarding their independent living and finances. Throughout the interviews, they reflected on their goals and ambitions, in particular, issues such as stable accommodation, employment or apprenticeships, substance abuse, and health issues.

When asked to describe their life-experiences and plans for the future whilst in supported accommodation, the young people were not convinced they would be able to achieve their goals. E.g. Louise was not happy with the atmosphere in the hostel. Added to that, the hostel was not clean, and her room was small and smelt bad. She was desperate to get out as she was also experiencing problems with her housemate. According to Louise:

> *"Being homeless, I just hung out by myself. Walking in the street by myself definitely makes me more vulnerable as a young blonde girl. The policy in the hostel is 'one-size fits all', which is not helpful. Staff must work with young people according to their felt needs. There isn't a concrete road map about housing, and I don't think that I would get my own place to live."*
>
> *(Louise, 19 years old)*

Melisa had more or less the same viewpoint as Louise, believing that living in hostels means there is no privacy. She was unable to bring friends to visit on a regular basis and experienced further disappointment when it came to the hostel's rules. Melisa also felt the hotel staff did not always treat her well.

Melisa stated:

> *"Think before you speak and don't speak on which you can't act. They kept telling me, 'Mel, you're on the right track, we are trying harder and can get you accommodation in 8-10 weeks'. But in reality, they are just making me fake it to get into the course. I do not trust their words. I never get positive benefits even attending all the shit course.*
>
> *(Melisa, 19 years old)*

Similarly, Jana also felt insecure in her accommodation. She had been involved in different types of pathway training for the preceding ten months. Due to a length of the process, she was deeply upset by the way councils and benefits work.

> *"I am just sick of it. There is no future for homeless young people"*

Julisha felt upset about the way other residents abuse their privacy and how staff put pressure on her to fill the forms and meet the deadlines.

> *"No privacy and security here. A girl needs to change all the time and have private things to do and my surrounding is full of noisy males, I don't feel comfortable. I don't like the way staff deal with young people sometimes, the government treats us like a*

panhandler. How come they put a young girl to live in with a bunch of boys? One thing I know, once homeless, always homeless in London."

"Hostel life makes people mad with noise, the substances strong smell and also hurt your health. It can be physical or mental health."

(Andy 21-year-old)

"Staff members must treat us like human beings and understand that we are a vulnerable population. They are so bossy. A large population is in the queue [for accommodation] I don't think that I will get the place to live independently."

(Kuku 18 years old)

The perceived lack of support from the staff, means homeless youth in the system often feel they are prevented from moving forward. However, society often blames the young person for failing to overcome their circumstances than rather than the system.

"I don't see any future by living in here, I just live day by day."

(Jordan 20 years old)

Many young respondents were not clear about the rules of the hostel. Seven of the young participants were happy with the hostel's rules and the remaining eleven were disappointed with them. From the young people's point of view, they need sustained input in order to empower them to achieve positive outcomes, which are detailed in their pathway plans. Those include cooking; budgeting; relationships with others, physical and mental health wellbeing, education and employment, apprenticeships, decision making, extracurricular activities, and family bonding.

Centres and hostels caring for homeless young people need to train them from scratch and it seems clear that a 'one size fits all' policy does not work well. Due to the young people's low self-esteem and difficult circumstances, many find it difficult to represent themselves by speaking up and articulating what their problems, challenges, and needs are. The reasons which contribute to their need for assessment are the same ones that cause the breakdown of the assistance being offered. Many therefore turn to other things to fulfil their needs which means staff need to identify other grass root agencies for that service delivery. This takes significant time and effort to organise, in order to ensure that these services complement each other and provide effective, holistic service delivery for the young person. If each young person is given

basic lessons in home economics, financial literacy, how to look after themselves by paying bills or dealing with tasks in the home, then they would be given the tools for success. Everything else is setting them up to fail.

Staff working with homeless young people are often struggling with unrealistic caseloads, complex issues within the system and the rigid parameters they have to work with. Budget cuts and understaffing contributes to pressured staff, which can result in many homeless young people feeling as though those working within the system do not care or plans put in place that do not adequately address their needs. While rules seem arbitrary to many young people living in hostels, the 'one size fits all', rules-based approach is definitely problematic. For many young people, these hostel rules further enforce the feelings of isolation, grief or anger that comes with having lost a home. They now find themselves in an institutional setting where things are impersonal and as a result many feel overlooked or unseen – like they are just a number in a system that just needs to process them rather than care for them.

Why don't all homeless young people commit a crime?

One of the key questions of this study is; 'Why don't all homeless young people commit a crime?' To explore this, the young participants were asked a carefully selected sequence of questions. These included questions about their lives, their experiences of being homeless and the connections they themselves perceived between youth homelessness and offending and in the same situation not to offend.

Seventeen out of eighteen young participants stated that homelessness and crime are completely interconnected. Realistic about their need to survive, homeless youth are not opposed to offending. They mentioned different types of acts they needed to 'put on' whilst offending in order to meet survival and lifestyle needs. However, when asked; 'why don't all homeless young people commit a crime?' They came up with interesting answers.

Abdul experienced a tough early life with lots of dilemmas and troubles. When he was first homeless and living in central London, he was very uncomfortable and angry. He has been involved drug dealing and violent crimes. Abdul explained why he separated himself from criminal activities. Especially, he believes when life gets hard, you turn to Allah (God). That's how it is... Allah is looking all the time.

According to Abdul:

"I belong to a strong Muslim background. My dad always tried to preach about my religion, and that day it made me curious as to why my dad always asks me to follow religion. So, curiosity led me to ask him for details and he explained it to me well. For me, I have changed because of my religion. That was a turning point in my life. If I wasn't in my religion, I'd probably end up in prison or something or in danger that's what I know. I know this life is temporary so what's the point of doing it wrong?"

(20 years old)

"I would prefer to beg than steal, shoplift, rob or any form of offending because I want to have a clean record, otherwise no job opportunities."

(Wilano 20 years old)

Just over half of young respondents were involved only in petty crime and almost half had committed severe and violent crimes. This supports the idea that homelessness and unemployment lead many homeless youths to commit crimes in order to fulfil their basic necessities of life. In this research, the data indicates that those who were homeless at an early age became involved in committing crimes in the first week of their homelessness. However, the nature of their crime was not dangerous and violent.

Louise specified:

"The first two weeks of my homelessness was really terrifying as I didn't want anyone knowing my circumstances. I was wearing a hoodie to hide my face. I didn't make much money after begging, just £7.50 but it was enough for my Mc Donald's. I felt ashamed of it as it was for survival against hunger."

(19 years old)

"I wouldn't steal and rob someone if I have enough money to fulfil my fundamental needs. This is not rocket science. Poverty is the root cause of all evils."

(Melisa 21 years old)

Jana believes that society and their behaviour and attitudes towards homeless people produces offenders. She was a law-abiding citizen and tried to follow the law. The day she became homeless was the day she experienced the true hardships of the life. She said:

"I think morally it isn't good to steal or do drug dealing. Look, I would not like it if someone robs me. So, I should follow my instincts that what is right and what is wrong."

Steve thinks substance use is the main reason for crime. In his case, as he did more crimes just for the sake of fags, weed, and alcohol.

"Drug abuse is the factor, to be honest."

(Kuku 18 years old)

"It's all about a person's will and upbringing."

(Terry 20 years old)

Terry grew up in a drug addict family atmosphere and his family members were also involved in crimes as well. So, for him crimes are justifiable, and he isn't ashamed to do it. He trusts that morality and family values are the factors that stop people being involved in criminal activities.

Most of the young respondents cited that if the state fulfils their basic necessities of life for example food, shelter, and clothing, they will be less likely to be involved in criminal activities. Therefore, it does reduce the risk to involve in youth offending.

"As I told you earlier that I steal food, drinks, and clothes. If I have all survival stuff, then I don't need to steal".

(Julisha 19 years old)

"Homeless person means a hopeless person. Hopelessness leads to frustration and it leads to crimes."

(Wilano 20 years old)

Alisha's prostitution was a by-product of being homeless. She first got involved in prostitution because she wanted to buy food and other basic necessities of life. Alisha, Ben, and Wilano share similar views about why one should not commit a crime. They recognised the three contributing factors that cause young people to turn to crime, and, in their absence, a young person can easily turn away from criminal activities. These three factors are:

1. Peer Pressure

2. Homelessness

3. Poverty.

Wilano assumes Peer pressure, is the main cause as young people have to prove daring themselves to the people around them. If they run away from an argument, they will be considered as coward. So, young people want to show others their bravery and this is the starting point of a problem.

> *"It's nothing about homelessness, poor people can easily be attracted towards crime."*
>
> *(Ben 20 years old)*
>
> *"I promised myself; I should have to quit this shit lifestyle and try to find nicer lifestyle. I believe you need a direction and someone you trust to put you on the right track. I think self-evaluation makes people live a crime-free life."*
>
> *(Sabir 20 years old)*
>
> *"People who are career focused don't take the risk of crimes."*
>
> *(Andy 21 years old)*

Karol says the question is not about why young homeless people do or do not commit crimes. It is the circumstances that matter. She did not choose to involve in crimes it was just happened to her because she needed money to survive or live a basic life.

She stated:

> *"Honestly, I didn't choose to be homeless or being involved in crimes. It just happened after my mum's death. I needed money to survive, but I did not have that. I think circumstances push people into crime."*
>
> *"Personally speaking, I wouldn't get involved in crimes as there is a saying; 'do well and have well'. I have been in a lot of crap in the past and I always used to be in danger. Now I have a peaceful life and my girlfriend is pregnant. I want to give the best life to my child."*
>
> *(20 years old male)*

Tomieka proclaims that when young people are not in education or jobs, there is a void of activities to keep them occupied, so they try different things to fill the void, like drugs, begging, fighting, prostitution, shoplifting etc. She felt that when you are bored, and you have nothing to do, you are vulnerable to wanting to try new things.

"I wouldn't say that it's for everyone. Realistically, I am trying to be a good person, but it's now getting harder for me to stop stealing and engage in criminal acts like a petty crime. Now, I am scared as I am 18 now and if I get arrested the prosecution will be harsh. I guess if I find an opportunity to steal, I will steal."

(Tomieka 21-year-old)

"In my opinion morality and values means your family background is really important to make you good or bad. I used to steal and shoplift but now I feel this isn't right, I should work and buy whatever I want."

(Sabir 20 years old)

Almost all of the young participants expressed that if they are hungry, cold and afraid their moral compass will undoubtedly shift. If it is a choice between survival and stealing, they would prefer to steal even though some participants believed it is wrong. Whilst society states that it is against the law to steal, it is hard to take the moral high ground with a young, desperate person when it comes to committing crime for survival. As a society, it is immoral that we do not have more in place to help these vulnerable young people, so they are forced into committing criminal acts just to be warm or safe or fed. Surely, the criminality at play here is committed by society against the young people rather than by them? Due to our lack of provision for homeless young people we, as a society force them into a life of crime because they feel they have no other option. This appalling situation speaks more to our lack of care as a society than the characters of the young people committing these crimes.

The fact that they are homeless does not necessarily automatically render them prone to criminality. The misperception is that homeless youth are highly likely to resort to criminal behaviour. For many homeless youths however, the very reason they left the home context, was because they did not feel safe, or independent or free. These are all the very things they stand to lose if they are caught, arrested or charged with a crime and then imprisoned. Having a criminal record will of course make achieving future goals (e.g. jobs) that much harder. In the young people interviews, for some, the morality of such actions will of course be an issue which they will struggle to overcome even if they are desperate. They choose instead to endure the difficulty and humiliation of the systemic processes to be able to get benefits, housing or other help rather than resort to any kind of criminal activity. For some, this becomes an issue of ethics and faith – religion and the teachings one has grown up with will definitely have a huge impact of decisions like engaging in crime or not regardless of one's circumstances.

Most common illegal income generation activities

The young people talked about different skills or tricks they utilised in order to generate money. These tricks were interconnected with the accessibility of sources. In their life-stories interviews, it was confirmed that homeless youth in London used certain skills or tricks to earn a livelihood. The most common illegal means of making money discussed in these interviews are mentioned below:

- **Stealing and shoplifting**
- **Drug dealing/selling**
- **Begging**
- **Prostitution**

Stealing and shoplifting

Almost all of the respondents were involved in stealing food and drink. Perhaps, the principal thing that any new homeless youth arriving in London needs to learn, is that the environment in London is never what they will have expected.

Steve is a nineteen-year-old white male born in Yorkshire. He moved to London when he was sixteen years old. He describes himself as a brave, active and passionate individual. However, he feels utterly disappointed and unlucky due to the extremely poor living standards he faced when he first arrived in London. His father was a gambler and his mother died when he was nine years old. Sam's mum had also been a drug addict, and she tried different types of drugs for her pleasure and ignored the dire consequences of substance abuse.

> *"London the capital city… there is a saying that 'all that glitters aren't gold'. I was hoping to get a job, money, housing easily but I ended up sleeping on the strand, alleyways and parks having no food, so I stole food, drinks and perfumes."*

> *"London has the highest numbers of homeless people and the reason is its attraction for people. I found it really hard to survive when first I became homeless. I and my friend Kim used to go to the off license. Kim was a short girl, only 4 ft11 inches. She used to go to the far end of the corner [of the shop] and asked for help as she couldn't reach to the top shelf and as soon as the shopkeeper had gone to help. I nicked whatever I wanted and shot out".*

(Steve 18 years old)

*"Until the age of 16, I am sure I never even thought I'd hurt someone's feelings. As you said to me before the interview, I must give the true and factual answers. Homelessness is itself a crime. Where is this f***ing state who says we are Great Britain when the kids are sleeping on the street in minus temperatures? I started shoplifting when I became homeless."*

(Julisha 19 years old)

However, concerning stealing and shoplifting, the homeless young respondents practiced it as a means of survival.

"The food in the hostel is horrible. It's stinky and out of date. I prefer to go to the supermarket, steal a tuna sandwich and eat in them shop toilet."

(Jon 20 years old)

Seven out of eighteen of those interviewed were also involved in bike stealing, robberies, and mobile snatching. It is not that homeless young people should not be held responsible for breaking the law. But when they are arrested there needs to be a more holistic approach to their rehabilitation – prison or detention is not the answer. We need to address the root cause of why they committed the crime and put support and provision in place tailored to their mental, emotional and physical needs so they have no reason to commit crimes. We have to do more for these vulnerable young people who have already experienced so much trauma and tragedy in life that the only option left open to them is to be homeless and turn to crimes like stealing and prostitution just to stay alive.

Drug dealing/selling

Abdul's parents separated when he was fifteen years old. Due to his recognised vulnerability, he went straight into care. Because of gang-related activities, East London was not a suitable place for him to live. Abdul lived in a care home in central London for one year. He felt his involvement in crime-related activities and selling drugs was a result of having a broken home, family issues and growing up in poverty.

Abdul stated:

"Years ago, I was in a gang, so police must move me out of my area [to a place] where I can be out of danger, so they moved me to central London. I was young and hadn't much intelligence at that time and I needed money, so I was involved in drug selling"

Terry's experience of homelessness and drug dealing was different than Wilano's but had similarities with respect to selling drugs. As Terry describes,

"Being homeless, is you got to deal with the different types of problems. I just adopted the culture of drugs and crime from my family members."

Stephanie thinks poverty is the root cause of all crime. When living independently in supported accommodation, money is essential in order to obtain the everyday, basic necessities of life. However, having no job and no money means that even simple things like doing laundry and eating healthy food can be a huge strain. Social services are not paying them enough to enable them to fulfil their fundamental needs. Many young people are then forced into finding illegal ways to earn money such as drug dealing, begging and prostitution. She explained,

"Homelessness, Jesus Christ ... there are so many issues and then for pennies you have to fill up the long paperwork at the job centre and they put you on hold for hours. This all is fucking a waste of time and frustrating. Many homeless young people like me are attracted to quick and everyday money means cash in hand, so drug selling is the best job then."

"You can easily make £200 profit on Saturday night and that's not bad and in supermarket jobs they pay you around £8 an hour - bad isn't it?"

(Wilano 20 years old)

However, from the young people's point of view, it was clear that they thought that young people want to make money quickly, and in order to achieve that they are willing to take risks through drug dealing. About half of the respondents were involved in selling drugs and justified it by saying that they did not have a good job or money to enable them to survive in temporary accommodation. Two of the young participants were involved in selling drugs prior to becoming homeless.

Begging

Fifteen out of eighteen interviewees mentioned they had been involved in begging. Three others condemned the practice saying they would prefer to steal rather than beg. Ten

respondents commented that they absolutely do not view begging as an offence or offending behaviour. On the other hand, five young participants considered it a criminal activity.

In London particularly, some respondents viewed begging as an art or a trick. They went on to explain their thinking as well as the views of other people and how to take advantage of their attention and sympathies. For many who find themselves homeless, deception is frequently employed in order to achieve the end goal – economic gain for survival or lifestyle needs. The use of dubious tricks or deceptions depends on the ethics of the homeless metaphor. Homeless young people know that some forms of deceptive acts are necessary 'evils' of the everyday life of seeking immediate economic gains.

Throughout the interviews, formal and informal discussions were conducted with each of the homeless young people. They described different tactics and stories regarding their begging, including how they found ways to get a quick response from members of the public in the form of money, food, belongings etc.

> *"You just need to dress up like Leonardo DiCaprio and tell people 'sorry to bother you I lost my wallet and I have to go back to Coventry or Leicester from London. I don't have money to buy a train ticket'. In a couple of hours, you can get thirty to forty quid and I did it".*
>
> *(Andy 21 years old)*
>
> *"People use different strategies to beg as it's hard to convince people about your situation. Like [for example] Mr. T has a lovely dog and Mr. T asks for money for his dog's food and most of the people give him money easily, and he makes good money every day. Sometimes, I tried to convince people with my scruffy hair and dirty look."*
>
> *(19 years' female)*
>
> *"I used to beg for survival - you need food, clothes and a roof to live and without financial assistance, it's impossible to survive. You know what I mean?"*
>
> *(Karol 19 years old)*
>
> *"Most of the time I asked for food and sometimes people gave me a quid or fiver, it depends. I used to go to Oxford Street, Covent Garden or Piccadilly Circus."*
>
> *(Jon 20 years old)*

"Most of the time I beg to buy alcohol and other drugs."

(Steve 20 years old)

In contrast to these accounts, three of the young respondents totally condemned the idea of begging, even for survival. Abdul stated that he did not think there was any justification for stealing, begging, engaging in prostitution or other crimes for the sake of survival. He believes begging damage people's respect and dignity

Abdul stated:

"I don't think this is justifiable because you must be a good human so you should try to find a job for your needs and pay for yourself. It is not acceptable and justifiable to me. I would prefer to die than to lose my respect and ego."

Terry believed poverty pushed young people into committing illegal acts like begging in order to find ways to earn money. He considers himself a leader and firmly believes that 'a leader should always lead from the front'. He abhors both the act and even the idea of begging. This preference may not be ethical however as he would still choose to steal or rob rather than beg.

According to Terry:

"Homeless young people are poor, and they need money to buy food and clothes. As I get older the crime starts to get more serious and more serious and I started to get noticed doing it. I prefer to rob or attempt any serious crime than to beg."

"I would prefer to be a prostitute than a beggar."

(Alisha 21 year's old female)

In young people interviews, survival was the reason given as the main justification for begging. Four respondents openly admitted that they used to beg so that they could buy cigarettes and drugs. They talked about what it was like to beg in London and explained that the main areas of success for begging included Bond Street, Soho, Strand, Leicester Square, Covent Garden and Camden Town. In order to gain immediate benefits from begging, the homeless young people utilised different types of tactics. For example, exaggerating their poverty and appearance or circumstances played a significant role tin gaining people's sympathy and attention, which often resulted in a quick response in the form of money, food or cigarettes. Through the young people's answers, I analysed that begging is one of the main illegal sources

of income for young homeless people. The homeless defiantly strive to survive in the city using all the means available to them, legal and illegal, in order to create a viable livelihood.

I think members of the public get mixed messages about what to do when they see someone begging. For some, seeing the evident vulnerability causes them to engage and give money out of many different motivations including pity or guilt. Now in the age of contactless, fewer people carry cash, so it is understandable in a way that desperate young people will resort to elaborate deceptions in order to get the money they need. The issue here is that giving cash or food is a 'Band-Aid on a bullet wound' – it does not address the real issues in a sustainable, long-term manner. In many ways, it exacerbates the problems, because if homeless youths have success with begging or creating elaborate hoaxes, it both motivates the young person begging and disillusions the member of the public who gave. Nobody really wins in this scenario.

Prostitution

In formal and informal discussions with young people interviewees, virtually all of the female and just under half of the male respondents were involved in some kind of prostitution. In particular, the young female respondents thought that homelessness was a leading reason why a young girl would take the path into prostitution. Most of the male respondents confirmed this fact by stating that prostitution is the main source of income for most of the girls they know.

Wilano added:

> *"Being in supported accommodation for last 3 years, I have seen, and I can number it - eight out of ten young girls are involved in sex work."*

In answer to my question regarding what she thought about prostitution being justified if one was homeless, Melisa responded that it is justifiable to do sex work as a means of survival. Glittery dresses, full makeup on, high streets and casino's or hotel entrances are the best spots to get rich customers.

Melisa stated:

> *"Yes, I have done prostitution for a little while usually a casinos entrance is the best place to get rich men. If they won, they would give you a good deal. If they look at you, just ask them if they are looking for business. If they reply to you positively mean job's done."*

Louise would have classed herself as being heterosexual up until the age of fifteen. However, her elder sister then witnessed Louise kissing a white, blonde girl in Hyde Park. Louise was incredibly open in answering when questioned about her involvement in sex work in order to survive. She thinks sex for survival is not a new concept. Homeless youth do it for food, money to get some clothes; drinks, buy drugs or a number of things. Also, being a young girl and walking around on the streets every day trying to get targeted by a lot of men. They approach girls, and some might be pimps. Sometimes they give a good deal.

Louise described:

> *"People say you don't need money for fun and happiness. I would like to say, 'are they crazy?' Money is the reality of life. Life is crap without money. I was the victim of prostitution and many times it was for survival nothing else."*

Just as with Melisa and Louise, Alisha's prostitution could be viewed as a direct result of being homeless. She first got involved in prostitution because she wanted to buy food and other basic necessities of life. One of the concerning factors in this activity, was her use of her hostel as a place to conduct her prostitution. She had been using her hostel with clients since she had moved in. Occasionally, she brought clients (who would be considered trespassers in this context) to her room not knowing of potential hazards, and consequences of such actions, which could endanger the well-being of both her and other hostel residents.

> *"I met a tall white boy, initially he asked me for lighter and then he started to chat. He said that I am a beautiful girl. He offered me fifteen quid for a blowjob. I replied, 'where do you live?' He said that he cannot let me into his house as he lives with his family. So, I took him to my hostel room and made fifteen quid in just thirty minutes. It was the beginning of my prostitute life and after it, I brought many males to my room. Sometimes I got a good deal about a [£50] for the night."*

Alisha does not consider prostitution to be an immoral or unethical profession but rather accepts it as her job or main source of income. Alisha's historical experiences of domestic abuse or homelessness may have motivated her to engage with prostitution, but it was her essential day-to-day needs that prompted her to view and pursue prostitution as her career. Whilst homelessness may not be a justification to embrace prostitution as a career, many young people use survival as the reason they decide to engage in it. Alisha violated the hostel rules by bringing in the unauthorised guest into the hostel and breached her tenancy agreement. In

this instance, had there been an appropriate and secure visitors/guest policy, Alisha might not have engaged in prostitution.

Taking up another point of view, Salma (in informal discussion) thinks prostitution is dangerous for both health and personal safety. Salma comes from North West London, and she was born into a Muslim family. Salma had problems with her family because of her father's strict rules and worldview. She wanted freedom and independence for herself. Consequently, she started to confront her father in order to challenge his rules. This resulted in her becoming homeless. She strongly believes that sex work, even for survival is a bad thing. She describes:

> *"How come for the sake of little money you can take high risks? Having sex with strangers, I can't even think about it, it's just STI's and you might end up being HIV positive. My body is precious, and nobody can suck it or chew it for a little money. I would not let any c**t to even touch it."*
>
> *(Salma 20 years old)*
>
> Karol gave the opposite viewpoint:
>
> *"Prostitution was frightening, but I didn't have another choice [other than] to end up sleeping with morons and twats"*
>
> *(Karol 20 years old)*

Five of the young male respondents were caught up in male prostitution. In his early years, Wilano had been abused several times by both his mother and other relatives. Due to the extreme level of domestic abuse and physical harassment, he ended up living on the streets. Once there, adult homeless people bullied and sexually harassed him. He stated:

> *"There is a saying those who are drowning get the help of a twig. I was offered £5 for a blow job and I did it. I had no choice." (Wilano 20 years old)*
>
> *"The attractive part of it is you can make a quick money, whereas with begging you can't make quick money. I experienced it many times."*
>
> *(Kuku 18 years old)*
>
> *"Let me tell you the reality - it's a common exercise among homeless young people, I know some of my male hostel mates do it for money and drugs."*
>
> *(Ben 20 years old)*

From many of the young interviewee's points of view, the body is simply a tool or product which can be used to earn money whilst being homeless or living in hostels or temporary accommodation. Understandably, in spite of the dangers, prostitution and begging appeared like viable options in order for them to help them overcome their economic circumstances and fulfil their everyday needs such as food and shelter. Given they did not have a permanent address, openings for legitimate employment were non-existent.

It appears people justify using young people in acts of prostitution in many different ways. They somehow overlook the desperation that must have forced a young person to sell their body through a sexual act with a stranger for what often amounts to a minimal amount of money. These young people are not protected by working from a brothel, or even by the police. Instead, they, rather than the 'client' are criminalised. It is the 'punter' that needs to be unreservedly punished for paying for sex with vulnerable young people. The system (legal and social care) needs to change, so that young people who need to earn can go through legitimate channels where their mental, emotional and physical safety and wellbeing is not under threat.

Experience in supported accommodation

When interviewed about their experiences and observations of life in a hostel or supported accommodation, the respondents described with both the positive and negative characteristics of the subject. Some considered hostel life to be an impetus for obtaining their freedom or as a means of liberation from controlling parents or guardians. Some of them regarded it as the worst kind of experience in life. They spoke freely about their experiences in the hostel and on the streets.

Maturity and confidence

One theme that developed during the young people interviews, was the fact that their confidence and decision-making skills improved through living in the supported accommodation. Ten out of eighteen young participants considered their experiences of hostel life as beneficial through producing positive change in them and their outlook on life and made them feel as though they were stronger in the face of life challenges than their friends were. They felt this new sense of independence and maturity would help them to achieve their future goals and develop positive coping mechanisms for life. These types of personality traits

encouraged the individuals to be self-determining and self-reliant rather than depend on other people or agencies. This is in contrast to the way many homeless young people frequently rely on government organisations and agencies to meet their fundamental needs. On the other hand, eight out of the eighteen interviewed considered their life in supported accommodation to be filled with challenges and difficulties.

In the interviews with the young people, it became clear that some appreciated the care and assistance that was given to them in the hostel in the form of a roof, food, clothing and staff assistance as they moved into independent living. When describing the level of independence and development of maturity whilst living in hostels. Being no family around you, to help you, life is full of unseen challenges. These are the factors which make you adult at young age.

Wilano expressed:

> *"We are living in a modern age where you have to be confident and motivated. I suppose homelessness makes you grow fast, and maturity comes quickly in this scenario yeah? Particularly, when you're struggling and find something hard in the beginning and then you try to find the solution that makes you creative and strong. This type of situation is making it or break it. Only strong nerves will survive, the rest will fall down."*

Similarly, to Wilano, Abdul explained his views on the positive nature of supported accommodation by saying:

> *"A bright part of supported accommodation is that you have to take the responsibility for your action. How come you hide yourself behind the myth of 'I am young?' No man, I believe we must behave like the proper man and take the responsibility and that's what I have learnt by living in this hostel."*

Others supported this statement:

> *"In comfort you never grow, only hard times make you to think in deeper and in constructive ways."*
>
> *(Kuku 18 years old)*
>
> *"Little things make a big difference, I used to steal or shop lift to feed myself. But now in my hostel we have free Pret Food so now shoplifting is almost removed from my life".*

(Andy 21 years old)

"Survival in the street is hard so you have to be smart enough to cope. I believe I am very mature and wise, and credit goes to staff and my circumstances".

(Salma 20-year-old female)

The above participants and some of the others had the same ideas around gaining maturity and learning independent living skills. They saw this as a positive change in their lives. They believed their approach to life had become more thoughtful, individually independent and established than the people who lived in their familial homes.

On the contrary, some of the young people interviewed expressed concerns about life in the hostel. Violence, contraventions to health and safety, and crime had been the main concerns reported by the young people. They were not happy with the hostel rules and regulations and had considerable concerns around personal privacy.

"I know I am living in the hostel there is no doubt about it. But I ask you one thing. Would you like if someone knocked on your door and in a second opened the door and said I am staff and just wanted to know, how are you? In my absence any staff member could enter my room and can check my belongings - it's a breach of my privacy. They can see my under garments it's not right and not acceptable."

(Melisa 20-year-old female)

"Some people they have skin problems and then you are using the same kitchen, shower and toilets it can easily lead to the spread of skin infections. Am I right or wrong?"

(Louise 20 years old)

"Hostel is crap and it is fully emotionally unstable."

(Sam 20 years old)

Hostel life is really tough in the beginning, it's all about a person's strength and how he or she digests it.

(James 20 years old)

The young people had mixed views about life in the hostel but most of the participants believed that when living in the hostel, it is a necessity for homeless youth to have the ability to adapt. In the first instance, they should figure out how to manage themselves in new environment and

settle into that setting. They should implement a flexible and resourceful outlook that enables them to take advantage of every opportunity offered. Just over half of the young participants reported that they have never liked being in the hostel, but they adapted to life there because they had no other choice. Two of the participants who are also immigrants, cited that the main thing one has to learn is that one will face circumstances in London which they could never hope to have anticipated.

What were your expectations before you came in London?

> *"Same as others - the streets are bright, so many job opportunities, high living standards etc but those thoughts are in the bin now. So many hurdles for a little welfare [payment] and long paperwork. So, I can say that all that glitters are not gold."*
>
> *(Sabir 20-year-old male)*
>
> *"There is a saying 'a distant drum sounds well'. I had bad thoughts about Manchester city where I was born, but my stay in London proved me wrong. There's so much victimisation and bullying in London towards homeless young people."*
>
> *(Sam 21-year-old male)*
>
> *"I would prefer street life than a hostel."*
>
> *(20 years old male)*

This begs the question: Why are so many homeless young people reluctant to live in a hostel? Initially, they had lived on the streets in order to elicit sympathy from the general public which could help them access charity or help. Furthermore, young people are focused on independence and freedom and do not like having to follow the strict hostel rules. The hostel setting doesn't allow them to smoke or use drugs. Due to these and other restrictions, many young people prefer life on the streets as it makes it easier to smoke, drink and use drugs without restriction. Thirdly, living on the streets, away from hostel life and rules allow them to interact with peers whenever they choose, alongside the ability to commit crimes in order to make money. The main areas in London for this type of criminal activity for homeless youth are, Oxford Street, Leicester Square, The Strand, The Savoy and Piccadilly Circus. All these areas have ample opportunities for theft.

"Street life is full of opportunity. At Piccadilly Circus, one woman gave me her mobile to capture her picture. I just told her a pose - to sit down on the top stair. As soon as she turns her back, I ran away. You know what? An open door will tempt even a saint!"

(Terry 20 years old)

For many young people coming from difficult or traumatic home backgrounds, life on the streets is an escape of sorts. Yes, it can be scary and dangerous, but it offers a viable alternative to living with parents or guardians who perpetrate violence or abuse or in a hostel with strangers, and no privacy or independence. Ironically young people seeking safety resort to making choices that often result in the opposite. While committing crimes and sleeping on the streets would not be their first choice, it is seen as 'a lesser evil' than living under the oppressive rules and restrictions of a hostel. Instead, they find the fulfilling relationships and community they so desperately want on the streets, where they also get to live life on their own terms to some extent.

Racism and discrimination

The term racism is often used without sufficient definition. The Stephen Lawrence inquiry found widespread 'institutional racism' in the police (MacPherson Report, 1999), a finding that caused shock waves in the political and media arenas. It is understood that the police had assumed that Stephen himself was to blame for the violence and had caused the violence which led to his death (this was subsequently found to be untrue), simply because he was black. The report defined the distinct difference between 'racism' and 'institutional racism' (Littlechild, 2012).

The young black and Muslim participants each spoke about discriminatory practices they experienced both on the streets and in hostels. They felt discrimination and racism were both a key cause of division in society. They believed that ethnic minorities were not treated with the same dignity or respect as white people. Five of the young participants belonged to an ethnic minority group with one participant identifying as lesbian and one as transgender. Importantly, discrimination and racism were not specifically included in the questionnaire. However, during the interview process as well as in official and informal discourse, those who self-identified as homosexual as well as those of ethnic minority origins discussed racism as a key issue in their

context. It was the black and Muslim participants who explained how prolific an issue it was and how deeply it affected them on an ongoing basis.

Sabir is twenty-one years old. He was born to mixed-race parents. His father is Pakistani, and his mother is from Bengal. He was born in Islamabad, Pakistan and moved, with his family, to London when he was just three years old. He was subsequently kicked out of his parents' house because he had a white girl friend. His dad was deeply religious and wanted him to adhere closely to the teachings of Islam. Sabir himself described himself as a social person who loved to go out with friends, play football and enjoyed food. Sabir stated:

> *"Wa Allah Al Azeem (I swear to God) I respect human beings. I treat everyone in a same manner as everyone has the same colour blood. I have a beard and I look like a Muslim. Do you know what? So many times, around Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus the police stopped me and looked in my ruck sack and checked my pockets. Because they think I have beard I am Muslim and might be a terrorist. [Long pause] …trust me I feel bad about it. It made me embarrassed. You don't think this is racism?!"*
>
> *(20 years old)*
>
> *"I can't believe when the president of USA said all the Muslims are not terrorist, but all the terrorists are Muslim. Then what can you expect from the general public? I have no doubt about it that Muslim young people are discriminated [against] every day."*
>
> *(Kuku 18 years old)*
>
> *"I don't believe most of the people in this country like us. You know what happened last year June in front of the Finsbury Park mosque? Bro, I have been attacked in East London because of my identity. East-London is a dangerous place for young Muslim people. I know it much better. Support staff even discriminate [against] us as well."*
>
> *(Abdul 20 year's old male)*
>
> *"My Muslim female friend was beaten in the Marble Arch subway as she was wearing a scarf. Two young males shouted, 'hey she is Muslim let's kick her ass'. They pushed her to the wall, punched at her back and ran away. Females in the scarf are always at risk of violence in London. Staff never even treated us same as white young people."*
>
> *(Jana 19 year's old female)*

Sam is a 21-year-old male born in Manchester and of African descent. He moved to London with his family, when he was ten years old but became homeless at the age of fifteen. He had what he describes as 'a damaging childhood', as he was forced to live in an abnormal and unhealthy atmosphere. He was a victim of multiple types of abuse at the hands of the adults around him. He was beaten up by gang member in north-west London as a direct result of his race. He commented.

> *"I am a black male and people don't like me, and this is white people country. You got my point? And having no money and clothes. I walked around with dirty dressing, uncomfortable and patchy shoes have been abused in the streets. I went to the off-licence shop to buy cigarettes; the shop owner was a bit rude and refused me to sell anything."*

Other supported this view on discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity:

> *"I might be wrong, but I noticed that staff members are softer and more flexible with white residents in this hostel than other ethnicities. X, Y, Z [white residents] are always entertained in the more flexible manner than me and MR AA [other ethnic minority residents]."*
>
> *(Willano 20 years old)*
>
> *"Even I am a white male, but the reality is Muslim and black homeless young people are vulnerable. If you check the youth crime statistics many young black males have been killed in this year."*
>
> *(Terry 20-year-old male)*

Louise's sexual orientation was as assumed as heterosexual until the age of fifteen. This assumption changed when her elder sister saw her kissing a white, blonde girl in Hyde Park. When Louise came back home after this event, her family were devastated and told her to 'stop this nonsense of being intimate with the same gender'. Having this event brought under family scrutiny, Louise was left feeling scared, and did not want to leave her girlfriend Stacey.

According to Louise:

> *"My mum is religious and follows the Catholic religion and goes to church every Sunday. My dad has mixed views about gay or lesbian relationships, but my mum could not even imagine having a daughter who is a lesbian. My dad was alcoholic and [my*

parents] separated because of his drinking problems. The day she finds out that I am lesbian she got a panic attack and after three weeks kicked me out of the house because of my sexuality. That life was worse, as most of my peers laughed at me because of sexual orientation."

"I am not Trans or lesbian but, in our society, there is no respect of these genders. In fact, they are discriminated [against] by their own family."

(Melissa 21 years old)

Sam, Willano, Terry and Andy believed that society viewed non-white people as inferior. Each of them, as people of colour, had experienced neglect and had fewer opportunities for economic or personal development growing up. They each felt they lacked worth in society and were oppressed in a variety of ways because of this. In addition, Abdul, Sabir, Jana and Kuku confirmed that in their experience, both police and society discriminated against Muslim young people. They explained that they see Muslim people consistently portrayed in the media as being a threat to the world e.g. when George Bush and Donald Trump declare Muslims as terrorists. Many of the young, white participant's agreed with Sam, Willano, Terry, Jana, Abdul, Sabir and Kuku's views on this subject. They confirmed that racism and discrimination are happening regularly in British society. Four out of five of the young ethnic minority participants complained about hostel and centre staff behaviour towards them, which each of them innately felt was due primarily because of their race rather than other contributing factors.

Whilst we live in a society that has moved on from inherent, accepted racism in terms of law and policies, we are pre-Brexit, in a state of deeper division in some sectors of society than ever before. Fear is a major motivating factor for this racism, particularly that which is directed at the Muslim community (misguided associations with terrorism) as well as black boys (assumptions about gangs and knife crime). The media does influence these stereotypical ideas to some extent, but for young homeless people, these stereotypes can prevent them from getting the help or care that they need.

Assumptions of guilt in police interactions, as well as issues around educational engagement and teacher's attitudes all have a significant part to play when it comes to how young people of colour are viewed. Add to this negative stereotype, the issue of homelessness and you find young people who are quickly jaded and disillusioned with the system and the society they are struggling so hard to belong to. In many cases young people 'rebel' by engaging in risky behaviour such as gangs, crime and prostitution because they have not found life made any

easier through obeying the rules. They therefore begin to 'go along with' what they perceive as society's low opinion of them and end up in a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' situation. It is easier in many ways for a young person to engage in the negative behaviour that is 'expected of them' rather than strive to excel when there is so much systemic opposition for them to overcome.

Racism and prejudice are still a prolific problem in UK society. There is an expectation that young people of colour are more likely to be involved in criminal activity, or to be excluded from education or indeed to come from more 'troubled' backgrounds. Home office (2002), Police 'stop and search' data illustrates the differences in policing black and white people. Black people are seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than their white counterparts (Littlechild, 2012). The only way to overcome these stereotypical beliefs is through education. Educating the services that work with young people including social services and the police but also educating the young people themselves – that they have got potential, they can make positive choices, they are able to create a better future for themselves if they engage with the right help, people and services regardless of where they've come from in life. Those working within social work must have a wider understanding of these issues in order to tackle subsequent issues effectively (Littlechild, 2012).

Summary

A well-formed questionnaire provided the parameters for the entirety of the research whilst simultaneously providing the researcher with much needed focus in order to obtain the most accurate findings. I determined from the start not to make any assumptions or impose or view things through my own experiential lens but rather let the young participants talk about their own lived experiences and allow the data to speak. I wanted to be culturally sensitive and to learn about the young people experiences both before and after homelessness. I strove to make the space for them to speak for themselves and give them a voice. Theirs being voices not normally heard when it comes to decisions being made about their lives.

Many steps were taken to ensure authenticity of the research. Firstly, within three youth homeless organisations, supervisors and key individuals directed the investigations. Secondly, the youth explored and reviewed their own stories to ensure that the combination of their interviews, and the case record (risk assessment) information displayed a genuine version and representation of their individual stories. Thirdly, both during and after my fieldwork and data collection, I debriefed with the staff members in several ways, in order to rigorously reality test

my analysis and interpretation of the data. Reality testing is a step that increases the accuracy of descriptions and engages the participants as well.

The research was as tightly controlled as possible in order to address serious factors like ethical parameters and the variables that affect the authenticity of data. A strong element that can influence the authenticity of the findings is the mood of the interviewee on the day of the interview. The researchers cannot control this element, however it can affect outcomes and it can influence the findings. Before every interview, I emailed or called the staff members and talked to each participant before I conducted the interview to be aware of the current mood and situation of the participant.

The interviews were semi-structured, but after completion of every interview, I offered all participants the freedom and opportunity to add more information if they wanted to. As soon as I switched off my tape recorder, many added more details about their life experiences and offending history. With their permission, I made notes of these unrecorded conversations straight after the interviews. Therefore, I would surmise that my methodology included semi-structured and unstructured interviews. I think clear and consistent methodology is a key factor in makings my findings authentic and trustworthy. I also had some informal discussions with young homeless people and professionals to make my finding more reliable. I couldn't use my informal discussion content in my thesis, but it helped me to understand more about the problems each of them face.

Emerging Themes

1. Housing instability and concerns about independent living

2. Victimisation and stigmatisation

3. Crime as a means of developing a materialistic lifestyle

4. Need for a healthy relationship with professionals

5. Ethnic minorities discriminated against by staff and public

Chapter 5

Case stories of six young people:

This study aims to investigate the experiences of eighteen homeless young people through semi-structured interviews. Moreover, this is to gain an in-depth understanding because it allows us to map out the complexity of their decision-making cognition. Participants are between the ages of 17 and 21 and are living in youth focused homeless organisations where they are unaccompanied by family and are perceived as sensibly reflective and suitable by organisational members of staff.

All interviews were accurately transcribed from the tape recorder. Qualitative data analysis program NVIVO was used and data placed into project files separated into 'young people' and 'professional' interviews. I read each transcript in order to progress my analytical context which resulted in emergent themes and codes.

Furthermore, open coding was used to look at individual interview transcripts. For open coding, each line of the transcript was coded applying activity codes or by defining actions within it. These are used to recognise detailed sections of a text on a thematic or topological basis. Additionally, this form of coding helps the analyst to remain sensitive to the members 'perspectives of reality'. The beauty of line by line coding is that it enables one to take the codes that stand out and seem to speak to the data as you interpret the words (Charmaz, 1986; Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Ritchie, 2014).

The data is collected and analysed as part of a constant comparative approach to the grounded theory. It begins with the first collection of data. Strauss and Corbin (2015) describe primary data as a comparison with concepts stemming from the literature which then updates the following data collection throughout the development of the research questions. Throughout data collection, this is a progressively repetitive process. For instance, comparing different participants, looking at information from a similar individual at multiple focuses in time and comparing classification against different categories.

Themes in questionnaire

The eighteen homeless young people were interviewed, and responses analysed in order to identify the main research questions in the young people's life stories. The previous knowledge specified potential areas for research. From these, the thesis examines the following:

- Why do some young people end up becoming homeless?
- Why do some young homeless people offend when others do not?
- What is the relationship between crime and youth homelessness?
- How do professionals and parents support former homeless young people into leading a crime free life?

These are primary questions that described the structure of the research.

Life-story interviews provide a deep understanding of an individual's life experiences. In order to gain a richer understanding, semi-structured interviews with applied grounded theory method were selected as the most suitable technique for the study of homeless young people. In this chapter, I provided details of six out of eighteen homeless young people's case stories from the beginning to the end of their homeless journey. I have chosen these six case stories due to their uniqueness of life experience. I re-interviewed these six-young people to see how their lives have changed over a period of six to nine months. This has been done for several different reasons:

1. To build a rapport. I am aware that trust will play a factor on what my informants do, and do not, disclose to me. Getting to know these individuals will also help me to establish the authenticity of data collected from them.

2. Review progress. This may provide valuable data and may help identify other areas of potential research.

3. This study looked to established theories such as General Strain and Social Control theories to explore how they may contribute to the understanding of youth homelessness and the risk and reasons for committing the crime.

4. This study wanted to explore the term "future concerns" of homeless young people through their life stories.

5. Using open-ended questions. By giving informants a voice, the researcher could gauge a more transparent understanding (Ritchie, 2014) of the circumstances in which young homeless people find themselves in, alongside their descriptions of what led to them becoming homeless as well as its impact on them. By concentrating on the issues raised by the participants themselves, this research will raise awareness of young people at risk of homelessness and crime in the future. In other words, it will work at protective level.

Furthermore, these six case stories consisted of three males and three females. In all the interviews, ethical parameters were diligently followed as each shared detail about their lives both before and after homelessness. Further questions were drafted to discuss being homeless with regards to specific issues such as survival, offending history, future concerns and pathway for independent living.

According to Bruner and hunt (1987),

"(individual) life stories must mesh . . . within a community of life stories" (p. 21).

In these selected six case-stories, the sequences of the accounts were determined purposively and do not reflect the factual serial order of the young person's interview. Likewise, case-stories were ordered according to the exclusivity of the stories. For example, in these case-stories, I decided to discuss the problems faced by different genders.

Case stories of six young people:

Pseudonym	**Gender**	**Current age**	**Age became homeless**	**Prison history**	**Drugs**	**Gangs**
Abdul	M	20 y 6 month	16 years	1 year	Yes	Yes
Melisa	F	19 y 2 month	15 years	3 months	Yes	No
Louise	F (Lesbian)	19 y 5 month	16 years	6 months	No	Yes
Sam	M	21 y 1 month	16 years	1 year	Yes	Yes

Terry	M	20 y 4 month	14 years	1 year	Yes	Yes
Alisha	F	21 y 2 month	14 years	No prison	No	No

Young people provided a comprehensive account of their lived experiences of homelessness, crime, and victimisation.

ABDUL

Homeless experience

Abdul is a 20-year-old British Bengali, Muslim male. He was born in East-London and was living with his parents until the age of sixteen. He described himself as "A jolly character and you know what? I am the best". Abdul stated that he used to be in gangs, involved in drug dealing and shoplifting. When he was eighteen years old, he started to practice the Islamic religion.

According to Abdul:

> *"My homeless experience is in both ways positive and negative, and it depends on the person how he takes it. Positive because they become independent and try to do things by themselves, and negative in a sense more freedom which is not good sometimes. I think [if] they are young…if they have more freedom they might go in wrong ways."*

Abduls parents separated when he was 15-years old. He went straight into care because of his vulnerability. Due to gang-related activities, East London was not the best place for him to live. Abdul resided in a care home in central London for one year.

Abdul stated:

> *"Years ago, I was in a gang, so police must move me out of my area where I can be out of danger, so they moved me to central London. So, I calm down. I was worse there than when I came here, and [now] this is my own choice to be homeless."*

Supported accommodation

Abdul has been homeless since 2014, in the last five years he has been accommodated in various hostels. Currently, he is living in semi-independent accommodation at Launchpad (New Choices for Youth) since December 2016. He feels safe in this environment and stated that the staff members supported him in the pathway plans for independent living, or anything else he required. Staff helped him prepare his life skills courses. For example, cooking, budgeting, sexual health, general health etc. and he was happy about it.

According to Abdul:

> *"Why is my life good now? The reason is clear - it teaches you to be more mature and responsible, as when I was in my Dad's house, I was not that responsible but now I have the responsibility and I feel more independent. In this hostel, the staff are teaching me about life skills (means my pathway plans). It's obvious that if I don't make the right choices and decision this would affect my housing. That is why I am careful."*

Abdul showed appreciation for the staff's level of concerns regarding his future independent living situation. Abdul stated how beneficial the different training courses were in teaching him life skills.

Abdul stated:

> *"Last month I started my apprenticeship in plumbing. I feel so proud of it and credit goes to my key worker Mark."*

Abdul had some bad experiences in his previous placements. He was impressed by the way Mark dealt with him. Mark treated Abdul according to his felt needs and was a very supportive towards him. Mark showed him the purpose and direction in a positive and constructed lifestyle.

Youth homelessness and crime

When questioned about connections between youth homelessness and crime? He grinned and gave an ironic look and believes when young people are away from their parents there are more chances to get involved in crime and gang. According to Abdul:

"Yes, there is must link between homelessness and crime. The reason that I was in gang? I was very young, unwise and engaged in drug selling, fights, and attempting murders. This is normal stuff in the gangs (laughing).... More than 90% homeless people do crime for survival."

Abdul appeared to be happy at this point in his life in spite of experiencing a difficult past with lots of difficulties. When he first became homeless and was living in central London, he was very uncomfortable and frustrated. He was involved in muggings, stealing, robberies and violent crimes. His father frequently tried to instil in him the values and beliefs about Islam and Quranic education. This later led to Abdul making a key decision to visit his father at a mosque. He now credits his change in life to his religion. (Islam) According to Abdul

"One day curiosity led me to ask dad about Islam and he explained [it to] me well. For me, I have changed because of my religion and that was a turning point in my life. If I wasn't in my religion I probably would have ended up in prison or in danger, that's what I know. I am practicing it now, I know this life is temporary, so what's the point to doing it wrong? I wasn't practicing my religion, and then I have read it and understand it, so I left it all."

In addition, Abdul states that he does not think there is any justification for stealing, snatching, begging, prostitution or other crimes for the sake of survival. He understands and knows of other homeless young people who do engage with activities such as begging, stealing and prostitution. However, he remains adamant in his belief that doing any of these kinds of criminal activities is wrong, even for survival means.

Abdul stated:

"I don't think this [criminal activity] is justifiable because you must be a good human. You should try to find a job for your needs and pay for yourself, it's not acceptable and justifiable to do prostitution for food. For me, it is disgusting to even to think about male prostitution."

Abdul has not engaged in begging or prostitution for survival but was aware of the reality for other people. His opinion on the matter was: "You might earn some money, but you will definitely lose respect if you will do that." He also shared his own offending incidents and he said he was ashamed of them. Abdul clarifies by stating:

"A man is known by the company he keeps. As my childhood was not that great. I disobeyed my parents. There are few factors to influence me: I wanted nice clothes, bikes and good life. I didn't have money, so I got involved in crime. Everyone wants money and money is the thing that can buy you things, you know what I mean? The main factor is an expensive lifestyle or survival, and secondly, your company means peer influence."

Do you think that parents play a key role in enabling or empowering their child to resist a life of crime? Abdul was the victim of a broken home and living with his father after his parents separated. However, His opinion was that a parent's supervision is very important in a child's life.

"In my case, my parents split up when I was very young so didn't get that much attention from them."

Abdul stated that he has a good relationship with his parents even though they live separately. Additionally, since following the teaching of Islam consciously, Abdul stated that he now respects his parents and looks after them. He tries to manage his time so he can see them both at least once a week.

Themes emerging from the initial interviews

1. **Housing Instability**
2. **Crime as a means of developing a materialistic lifestyle**
3. **Need to maintain the local connections**

Re-Interview (Current Situation): February 2018

Seven months after the first interview, a second follow up interview took place. In this interview, Abdul reported that he was undergoing a plumbing apprenticeship. He was looking after himself well and was attending a gym three or four times a week. Abdul seems optimistic about his future. He stated that his social worker was happy with his progress and he was hoping to move into independent accommodation in the subsequent six months. I went on to ask him about his accommodation/future concerns in his follow up an interview.

Abdul smiled and stated:

> *"I am a different person now; I think a man's desires are never fulfilled but necessities [are]. If I do not find independent accommodation in the next six months, I will move to my Mum's house and look after her. She will cook for me and I will make her happy."*

Abdul defines the experience of being homeless as a good thing in his life. Abdul explains that being away from his family made him strong and changed him a lot in that period. Abdul now understands the importance of family and is not materialistic anymore. He loves his family.

Abdul stated:

> *"I thank my Almighty Allah that He put me in this situation and now I fully understand this life is temporary. Now I am even more about the respect of family and my relationships."*

Abdul looks after himself and believes that 'health is wealth'. He believes healthy people are active and can follow a faith in a better way. Everything Abdul does is to make Allah happy. Abdul used to drink and smoke but now he does not consume any kinds of drugs or alcohol. Abdul believes that Allah is always watching him and anything he does is being recorded, and in the Day of Judgment, he will be held accountable for every act he carries out. Abdul believes he will only be rewarded in the afterlife so is no longer attracted to the instant gratification that crime afforded him.

According to Abdul:

> *"Your best deeds will help you on the day of judgment. I try to be a nice and virtuous every day. I know I have done drug dealing in the past. At that time, no man, I wouldn't steal - doesn't matter how expensive something is."*

Abdul shows appreciation towards staff and the people he has met whilst being on this homelessness journey. Abdul believes that the policy, which is in accordance with local connections, is not ideal for homeless young people. The reason being that the council only shortlist a young person if they have lived in their preferred area for six months of the last twelve months. During the interview, Abdul was looking happy and was hopeful about his future. His plumbing apprenticeship will be completed in eight months' time and after that Abdul is hoping to start full-time employment. He was happy to share his story and concluded

that; if sharing his life-story for this research brings about positive change in someone else's life, his job would be done.

Abdul's story illustrates the vital importance and positive impact that a good relationship with a key worker/staff member can have in an otherwise challenging situation. Abdul turned to his faith to find strength, support, comfort and a positive frame of mind. Abdul is now able to find a purpose outside of himself and his own needs/wants. He now wants a family of his own and looks forward to being a positive role model for his own children one day. However, he remains unconvinced that the homeless setting and the current social care system create roadblocks to finding a fulfilled and happy life.

MELISA

Homeless experience

Melisa is a black British born 19-year-old female. Melisa was born in King's Cross, London, and faced abuse from her stepfather whilst she resided with her mother. Melisa's mother did not believe Melisa's account of the abuse when she tried to explain the violence she had been suffering. As a result, this caused Melisa and her mother's relationship to end. They began arguing frequently and Melisa the situation had a hugely negative effect on Melisa's education leading her to fail at college. In one instance, Melisa's stepfather tried to punch her, and he hit Melisa with a paperweight stone. These kinds of events eventually caused Melisa to become homeless as a result of her mother and stepfather kicking her out of the home at the age of 15. She experiences such a bad time in the early days of her homelessness as her belongings were stolen.

According to Melisa:

> *"I went to my friend's house and her mum gave me the sofa, but she only allowed me to come there in the evenings. I sofa surfed for one month but didn't feel comfortable with the idea of going back home to mum again and even then, they didn't ask me to come back and live with them. I was frustrated and down because of their attitude."*

Supported accommodation

Furthermore, after sleeping rough and spending time on the streets, Melisa had become the victim of different forms of abuse. She relied on support from other people she had met on the streets. Currently, she lives in a hostel. Melisa has developed health issues as a result of substance misuse. She does not trust staff members and tries to hide details of her life from them. Ergo, she does not feel mature enough or ready to go back to school. Sometimes she regrets having left her education incomplete. Melisa also acknowledges the importance of education and her desire to go back to school at some point. She has been living in Centrepoint for past thirteen months and dislikes hostel accommodation. Melisa stated:

> *"Life isn't great now and to be honest I am not doing well. Hostels are miserable as sometimes they put pressure on you. We are young and not trained, but they want perfection. No privacy, as I share a bathroom with other male residents, which is so disgusting."*

Melisa believes that living in hostels means no privacy. She was unable bring friends there on regular basis and underwent further disappointment with the hostel rules. Melisa also criticised the staff behaviour towards her.

She stated:

> *"The staff kept telling me, 'Mel, you are on the right track, we are trying hard and can get you accommodation in 8-10 weeks'. But in reality, they're just fooling to get me into the course."*

Youth homelessness and crime

Melisa was labelled by the staff at Centrepoint as an angry child as a result of her early days of schooling and was constantly facing problems. Additionally, Melisa has anger management issues, and which got her into a lot of trouble. However, when she became homeless, her anger made her life worse. She fully placed blame for her current living circumstances on her criminal acts and considers that homelessness and offending is strongly interconnected.

According to Melisa:

"Yes, I know that. But homelessness put fuel on it which led me into more trouble sometimes. Mental health issues do occur a lot with these homelessness issues, just because of the inconsistency that's in homeless young people lives."

Melisa began smoking marijuana when she became homeless and it introduced to her one of her homeless friends. To support herself financially during this period, she started to engage in illegitimate ways to earn. Drug dealings and stealing was her main source of income. A couple of months later, Melisa joined a street gang she knew through her drug dealer. She thought being in the gang would give her protection and easy access to money. She adopted gang culture quickly and engaged in several offending practices with gang members. According to Melisa:

*"I was involved in shoplifting, burglaries, assaults, drug dealing and in attempted murder too. [It was] Just desperation wasn't it? I have done everything. What haven't I done? I can assure you that it happened because I was f***ng homeless."*

When I asked her if she considered crime (such as stealing food, sex offence, begging etc.) was justified when done for reasons of survival, Melisa responded that it is justifiable to steal, snatch, beg, sex work or commit crimes for survival.

Melisa stated:

"Yes, you must do it that's the only way you feel. I have done prostitution, I was just stupid, but I had no choice."

Melisa was tense, unhappy, annoyed and irritated. She said her stepfather was responsible for her current situation. Melisa has no clear idea about her future accommodation and is of the opinion that because of her black colour, staff discriminate against her and do not treat her the same or as well as they treat white residents. She is very pessimistic about her future accommodation. She said crime just happens when you are on the street and there are several factors which lead homeless young people into crime.

According to Melisa:

"I don't think anyone chooses it [homelessness] and if you do choose it then it's a bit weird, but you know, I think sometimes it just happens. In fairness, I did not choose to be homeless or being in crimes. It just happened. Being homeless is very difficult to survive."

She thinks that there are three main factors of crime among homeless young people:

1. Top one is Peer Pressure
2. Basic lack of provision in the house (poverty, low income etc.).
3. Desire to buy expensive clothing."

Melisa said that crime and youth homelessness is 'one hundred percent connected' and she explains similarity in situations with some of her friends. She discussed her friends' experiences in relation to shoplifting and prostitution. She added that her friend was also a victim of domestic violence at the hands of her step farther. Melisa's friend wasn't in education, and she loves fighting and shoplifting. Melisa stated that even her friend has shown positive changes now that she is in stable environment, but she still associates crime with homeless culture and the values and principles learned in childhood has changed her forever. Melisa's friend also had a bad relationship with her parents and does not express any form of love for them.

Re-Interview (Current Situation): February 2018

Themes emerging from the initial interviews

1. **Housing Instability and future concerns.**
2. **Crime as a mean of developing a materialistic lifestyle**
3. **Victimisation and stigmatisation**
4. **Need for a healthy relationship with professionals**

Melisa had a follow up interview six month after her first interview. She reported that she was still smoking marijuana. At the interview, Melisa expressed how she has been seriously damaged by the death of her best friend (Mary) as she was diagnosed with cancer five months prior. She was remarkably close to her friend. Melisa shared how important Mary was to her in terms of sharing feelings and experiences. This sad incident had led to her becoming an alcoholic. She was genuinely saddened. Melisa stated:

> *"She was such a companion and advisor. She used to look after me when I was down or depressed. She had a sweet smile and strong personality. I really miss her, and I love her."*

Melisa appeared weak and depressed. I tried to encourage her by telling her that people come people go and she must look after herself. She replied "Thanks" and quickly changed her mood by telling me to carry on with interview with a grin on her face. She desires society to recognise how tough it is to be in a situation where you are living with strangers and cut off from your family. It is scary and horrible when people think homeless people are crap or a piece of shit. Melisa stated:

> *"It is not an easy nut to crack to find stable accommodation. There is so much f***ng paperwork to go through to reach that level. Particularly if you're not smart enough."*

She thinks being homeless is a stigma and it makes people think in a bad way about homeless young people. She added, "Homelessness is a stigma and homeless people lose respect quickly and it is not something to be proud of".

> *"I tried to hide it in the beginning as people think homeless people are thieves. I met someone and I did not want him to know that I was living in Centrepoint. One day he finds out and I noticed a big change in his behaviour."*

When questioned about the positive changes in last six months of her life, she looked at me in silence for a moment, before stating that she did not think there was any change since I last interviewed her. She still believes homeless young people are victims of different types of abuse in the streets.

Realistically, Melisa was dealing with grief, loss and stigma. In a more stable environment, these issues would have been challenging enough. However, in the context of homelessness they were overwhelming. Between the first interview and a follow up 6 months later, not much had changed for Melisa. She was still dealing with the loss of her friend Mary to cancer, had significant anger management issues and was finding it difficult to build any kind of positive relationship with staff members. Add to this the obstacles of lengthy processes and paperwork and it essentially culminated in Melisa continuing to feel isolated and victimised.

Louise (Identifies as lesbian)

Homeless experience

Louise is a white British born 19-year-old female. Louise was born in East London and had been living with her mother until the age of 16. Her sexual orientation was classed as

heterosexual until the age of 15. However, her elder sister saw Louise kissing a white blonde girl in Hyde Park. When Louise came back home her family was devastated and told her to 'stop this nonsense of being intimate with the same gender'. Louise was left feeling exposed and really scared, and she did not want to leave her girlfriend at the time, Stacey. Furthermore, Louise's mother had ordered her to stop dating Stacey, otherwise, she will have to leave the family home. On one evening, she came back home and tried to open the main door with her keys, but her mother had changed the barrel in the locks. As her dad has mixed views about gay or lesbian relationship, but her mum does not even imagine having a daughter who is lesbian.

As a result, this situation started having a negative impact on Louise's mental health. She resided for the first four days after her mother evicted her, at her girlfriend's house. Louise's girlfriend, Stacey, was only 14 years old at the time and the couple both felt uncomfortable living at Stacy's parents' home. After leaving Stacey's home, Louise chose to sleep in the homes of many different friend's houses. This continued for many months after.

Louise stated:

> *"I never assumed homelessness would happen to me, and it changed my attitude and life quickly. I used to live in a separate bedroom, but everything has been changed in a blink. Once you realise you lose it or do not you have like everyone else, that's where you get frustration and depression. I have that state of mind because generally, people don't give respect to lesbians I think."*

This sofa surfing ordeal was difficult and devastating for Louise. Many friends had suggested that Louise find suitable housing options such as hostel, etc. that would give her a roof and bed, however, this is not an easy route to take for Louise. It is exceptionally dangerous for a young girl like Louise to sleep on the streets as leaves her vulnerable to extensive risk of violence, abuse, and freezing temperatures.

Louise stated:

> *"My life was great before. I had everything. But because of one incident everything was changed."*

Supported accommodation

At the time Louise temporarily moved into Stacey's home, Stacey had explained to her mother about Louise's argument with her own mother which had left her feeling distraught, thus she was living with Stacy for a couple of days. Furthermore, Louise requested that Stacy not disclose their relationship to Stacy's mother, as this would worry Louise about impact this could have on Stacy 'relationship with her mother. Subsequently, on a cold evening on 29 November 2017, Louise was sitting on the stairs of a church when she had an encounter with an old friend. This friend encouraged Louise to come with her to a night shelter.

Louise stated:

> *"Luckily, I found an emergency placement because J (male-friend) helped me. Being in a homeless shelter was an electric shock, it's horrible, a fully different culture. The food they gave me was not hygienic I saw a mice in the kitchen and after that couldn't eat anything the whole night."*

Louise faced many challenges regarding her sexual orientation. She decided to hide her sexual identity and keep it a secret from everybody that she knew. Joe started to show interest in Louise, ergo Louise did not disclose the secret of her girlfriend Stacy. On the other hand, Louise was hungry, and she did not eat for an entire day. She started to beg and asked for food from people on the street. Louise's attractive appearance often led men to offer her sex in exchange for money.

Louise stated:

> *"First two weeks were really scary as I didn't want anyone knowing my circumstances. I was wearing a hoodie to hide my face. I didn't make much money begging, just £7.50 but it was enough for my Mc Donald's."*

Louise was not happy with the hostel atmosphere. The hostel was not clean, and her room was too small and smelled bad. She wanted to get out, as problems arose with the other hostel mate. She was also afraid of the homeless experiences she experienced on the streets. Louise was verbally, physically and sexually bullied during her time living on the streets. Being homeless she just hung out on the streets by herself which makes her more vulnerable as a young blonde girl and has been a victim of her sexual orientation.

According to Louise

"Generally speaking, in British culture, young people they have a concept of having a boy and girl relationship, and normally they don't acquire anything in between. I am lesbian and when boys try to kiss me, I push them back. Sometimes they squeeze my boob if I ignore them. They hit me or abuse me. Nobody knew who I am, then that's when I started getting bullied."

She did not like the hostel's execution of their rules and regulations along with the living conditions. She complained about the lack of privacy in the hostel. Being female, she feels unsafe living with unfamiliar males who compromise her privacy.

Louise stated:

"There is no privacy in youth hostel. Screaming, loud voices and music is also the part of homeless culture. My life was good when I was with my mum, and now I miss that life."

Youth homelessness and crime

Louise believes that society as it is creating criminals. She was a law-abiding citizen and tried to follow the rules. The day she became homeless was the day she felt she truly experienced the bitter realities of life. She supports the idea of committing crime for the means of survival, as she used steal food and drinks from the supermarket.

According to Louise:

"Absolutely... 100% and it does not only lead to crime for survival it is also attached to mental health issues. Having no roof caused my mental health issues. But I tell you one thing, mental health also leads homeless young people into crime. It's interconnected because it is about survival. That's what brings [about] offending in homeless people like me – survival, getting food, getting money, so yes petty crime does influence homeless people."

Louise was very open in her answers when questioned about her involvement in criminal activities in order to survive. These crimes included shoplifting, prostitution, begging etc Louise expounded on her answer and explained her actions by stating the fact that prostitution is not a new concept and homeless youth do it for food, clothes, drinks buy drugs or number of

other materialistic things they feel they either want and/or need. Young homeless girls are always a soft target of men, regarding sex.

Louise answered:

> *"It is justifiable to steal food and other stuff for the basic needs. Money is the reality of life. Life is crap without money. I did beg as well, just like other homeless people."*

Louise chose to become rebellious towards society, as she was a victim of society. There must be the law for everyone. When other people do not follow the law, then why would she? As People bullied and harassed her on the streets.

Louise added:

> *"Why would you expect me then to behave in a legitimate way? I don't; I do crime for my pleasure. I put scratches on the car of one of the staff members who was rude to me in the last placement."*

Moreover, Louise's period of homelessness was a challenging time for her, and a lot happened during that complex and uncomfortable period. She found herself losing her identity and becoming rude.

> "*Homelessness can be very traumatic… while trying to handle and manage is not an easy task to do. Everyday homeless youth face challenges and troubles, and some are horrible. In this situation, it depends on what type of problem someone is facing and to handle it, sometimes a person follows the wrong path".*

Louise went on to say:

> *"The main three reasons for crime in homeless youth are 1. Lack of hope, 2. Poverty 3. Homelessness."*

Louise was not at all impressed with the policies and staff's behaviour in the homeless hostel setting. She thought hostels could never feel like a home, no matter how long you have lived in one or how many friends you make there. Still, so many things that need to change in homeless hostel settings. The 17 to 21 [age] is a transition to adulthood where they need to take positive steps. But the problem is they aren't aware of lots of services to access. They have no deep life skills understanding, as many of them have never been prepared for independent living, but organisations follow the policies and push them towards independent living.

Louise felt:

> *"They've never had experience of cooking. But the problem is the policies are not person-centred. I would say there must be separate female hostels. Otherwise, they must have attached baths. Staff needs to be soft with the residents."*

Re-Interview (Current Situation): March 2018

Themes emerging from the initial interviews

1. Victimisation and stigmatisation

2. Crime as a mean survival and developing a materialistic lifestyle

3. Housing Instability and future concerns

4. Need for a healthy relationship with professionals

Seven months after Louise's initial interview, I had a follow-up interview. She still has high concerns about victimisation. Physical and sexual attacks had been her major concerns since she became homeless. She stated that her mother was the main reason for her current circumstance. She described her experience of being a homeless person as a wake-up call. She explained that this experience was an eye opener and that nobody can change her life, she has to take the right decision for herself if she wants a positive change. Homeless young people, especially (Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender) LGBT aren't safe, people nonstop harassing them. They are familiar with their faces and appearances. Sometimes they chase to have sex with them, and they think that they are cheap meat.

Louise stated:

> *"I don't think people are sincere with me. You must only trust the face you can see in the mirror. Boys from other hostels come to you and sexually harass you. There is so much shit in this homeless crap and with me it's still the same. I want to get out of it."*

Louise also encountered bad experiences with law enforcement officers. She mentions many negative experiences whilst interacting with police due to her lifestyle, which included drug abuse, drug dealing, delinquency, prostitution, and stealing. Louise believed she was a victim of society and the police had always dealt with her using aggression and resentment.

Louise stated:

> *"Police and most of the people they don't respect homeless people. If somewhere, anything bad happens, police officers stop and search us like thieves, and we will be the first suspect - homeless young people. This is pissing me off."*

She was unable to find a stable job or a permanent accommodation to live in. She thought Great Britain was a wealthy country and found herself questioning why young and vulnerable people are living in the marginalised stream in extreme poverty and hardship. She also stated about the failure of the welfare system and even policymakers don't understand about homeless youth problems.

Louise expressed:

> *"Why every day do I see many young and old people are sleeping in Westminster in freezing cold weather? Homelessness not about that you don't have a roof over your head, it leads you to many other evils too. I believe that my circumstances will be the same till I die."*

Consequently, Louise was annoyed with the existing Government policies and attitude of staff members towards LGBTQ individuals. Firstly, she was not happy when she was placed in accommodation with a group of male residents, especially given the fact that they knew she was lesbian. Essentially, she felt that one problem (shelter) had been 'solved' by creating an even bigger one (vulnerability to harassment due to gender and sexuality).

Secondly, understanding that the LGBTQ population can be considered a vulnerable group, she felt let down that the government policies and funding did not do more to support their living conditions and added vulnerabilities.

Thirdly, she believed that young LGBTQ people, (especially those who are homeless) faced significant and additional exclusion and discrimination from their families, staff members, the general public as well as normative and law enforcement institutions. As a researcher, I highlighted her prevailing attitudes, deeply negative experiences and opinions about the whole social care system and the attitudes of staff within that context towards young LGBTQ people. She was understandably angry and felt let down by everyone. She blamed her current homelessness on her family and felt strongly that more needs to be done to educate and support families. Overall, her circumstances and attitudes showed no positive change between the first interview and the follow up one 6 months later.

Whilst all homeless young people are highly vulnerable, Louise has an added layer of vulnerability in the form of the challenges she faces around her sexuality. Staff members need to ensure they create a safe space for her by allowing her to have some autonomy and voice in what measures need to be put in place to best support her. Generational views in families and institutions may well be contributing to higher numbers of LGBTQ youth within homelessness services. Professionals must strive to understand the additional complexities this presents and respond accordingly.

Terry

Homeless experience

Terry is a 20-year-old white British male. He was born in East London. By nature, he is talkative and jolly. He was living with his Mother until the age of 15. He was extremely close to his three siblings but faced domestic violence at the hands of his mother and her boyfriend. Terry and his mother had a fluctuating relationship. His mother was a drug misuser and smoked marijuana every day. He categorised himself as both a runaway and throwaway.

Terry narrates:

> *"Before I was homeless, I was living with my mum. Obviously, my mum had a couple of bad occasions when we have had a hard arguing together. I have been physically and mentally tortured by my mother. Because of that, I have a choice to move to my Nan's. I moved to my Nan. Before becoming homeless the life was in both ways - there were good and bad bits."*

His Nan tried to convince him to go back to his mother's house, but Terry wanted to be independent and enjoyed spending time on the streets.

According to Terry:

> *"Most of my friends don't want to live with their parents. How can someone bear such types of insult and abuse? My mum and her boyfriend beat me up many times. How long can you tolerate it and then you don't have a choice. So, there are young people bullied by their families, one day they explode, end up in rough sleeping or in prison. They end up in offending."*

Supported accommodation

Terry had been homeless since November 2014. In the beginning, he lived in his Nan's house however, his Nan's house was overcrowded. This caused Terry to research accommodation for homeless people and he came across a few hostels. Terry attended a day-centre and one of the day staff members gave him a list of homeless hostels (street link) and their direct phone numbers. They offered him food, warm clothes, a clean place to shower and a pair of socks. However, he struggled to receive any promising replies from the telephone numbers of hostels given to him by staff. Additionally, because of the cold weather, all the accommodation he approached was full. The procedure of calling the organisations numbers and requesting for accommodation and being turned away left Terry feeling depressed.

According to Terry:

> *"The process was so frustrating, they put me on hold about 30-40 minutes and then there was a long list of question. I felt that I am a beggar. In the last number I was angry, and I told them to listen, if you don't have a spare room then please don't put me on hold and don't ask me so many questions. I know places are full. After a little chat over the phone, they set up an emergency room."*

This became a big deal for Terry as this was the first time, he felt independent in his life. He took homeless in a positive way because he left the area where he was doing the crime and had lot of trouble.

According to Terry:

> *"This place is very safe for me and I feel good here. The best thing I am living on my own. I take decisions, make choices what gives me more confidence and I am learning about independent living which is cool."*

Terry has a good relationship with his social worker and case worker. As his key worker, Nikki was helping him find a pathway for independent living. However, Terry has also found himself in trouble since he became homeless. He smokes marijuana every day and deals drugs.

Youth homelessness and crime

To make ends meet whilst homeless, Terry started shoplifting and stealing much of the time. Terry appraises himself as skilled in stealing bikes and selling drugs. His close friends call him

“Boss” and he is proud of that title. I questioned Terry about whether he thought it was justifiable to commit crimes in order to survive and if he thought there was a link between youth homelessness and crime? Which he answered yes, as he did more stealing and shoplifting being a homeless person.

Terry answered:

> *“I always steal when I am in that situation where I cannot survive. Yes, of course, it is ok to do crime for survival. I am not saying this stealing and shoplifting is right, don't get me wrong.”*

Terry believes poverty forces young people to commit crimes from a place of desperation. He considers himself a leader and, in his opinion, a leader always leads from the front. He does not like begging and hates sexual criminality. Although he is aware that many homeless young people are making money from begging and prostitution. However, he would personally prefer to steal than beg or become involved in male prostitution. He also criticises the Government high tax rates and welfare cuts.

According to Terry:

> *“My first crime was when I was younger - it was stupid…was a petty crime like stealing etc. But obviously as I get older the crime starts to get more serious and more serious, and I started to get noticed doing it. But other kids, like in borough where I belong, they don't know why they do the crime. They’re stupid, unwise and this generation is fucked up bro....they don't know what life is. Anything can trigger them, and they do a crime.”*

Currently, Terry is selling drugs and also consuming marijuana every day. Terry believes that his smoking habit is due to being influenced by a long chain of smokers in his home. Every member of Terry’s family smoke marijuana every day. On the contrary, Terry does not like gangs but is associated with many people who are a part of a gang.

According to Terry:

> *“See all my friends they been in groups in the family. Most of them been in gangs I was in that group of people, but I wouldn't say it’s a gang, these were my own people. Nobody pushed me to join them. I am the leader in it. They are a follower.”*

Terry believed if parents use drugs, it does impact negatively on their parenting skills and would not create a healthy environment for the children of that home. Because of his parents he used to smoke weed everybody.

Terry stated:

> *"Definitely, drug abuse affects their parenting skills, but I cannot specify this that is only the reason."*

Terry's life story is a solid example of negative or lack of attachment to a child's parents due to lack of parenting skills. His experience of homelessness began with domestic altercations and domestic violence. First, he was beaten by his mother and rejected which lead to him frequently leaving home because of hostile family circumstances. One might say he was forced to leave in order to save himself. However, ultimately poverty and his parent's drug misuse lead him into homelessness. Terry never had a positive or strong attachment to his parents and feels they never bothered to do anything about it. It is their lack of parenting skills that Terry believes led him into living a life of homelessness and crime, not helped by the fact that his parents also have a history of drug misuse and crime.

Themes emerging from the initial interviews

1. Victimisation and stigmatisation

2. Crime as a means of survival and developing a materialistic lifestyle

3. Housing Instability and future concerns

Re-Interview (Current Situation): March 2018

Almost seven months after I re-interviewed him, Terry reported that he was not using hostel accommodation so much as he was staying in his Nan's house most of the time. He was worried about his future. He was somewhat happy with the positive changes in his own behaviour towards his Nan since we spoke at our previous interview. Terry was openly talking about his offending, and he was still involved in stealing, drug dealing and fighting. He said he was never ashamed to steal. In fact, he calls it a profession.

He described it by stating:

"I think, I don't trust people as much as I probably would. You know my family? They're kind of like clever headed people and twist things in a blink. And, they love to lie to people and cheat them, I've grown up among them. Nothing can change me. They injected their lifestyle in me. I'm not living in fool's paradise. I have a brain to think. Once a thief, always a thief and it's my job or you can call my profession or skill. Last week I nicked a bike. It's normal when you are homeless."

The impact of homelessness and Terry's family background led him to crime and he now considers stealing his profession. It was a positive change that he was now staying in his Nan's house. But what was alarming was his attitude towards crime.

"If you understand my journey you will notice it. I had no choice, basically if you see your parents are going to church every Sunday, obviously you will follow them. You are growing up seeing fights in the family, drugs, alcohol, definitely you will try it. We are not educated; it was hard for me to get a job then. No matter wherever you apply, by the time they know you are homeless and uneducated you are out of the picture. I believe nobody would hire me, so I had no choice but to turn to the crime for money, make my money and make ends meet."

On the other side, Terry was not happy the way police treated him, and victimised him. In fact, he openly does not like them. As he said,

"I feel myself a piece of shit mate. I try to calm down, but their attitude isn't respectful. There was an incident when they pushed me into the police van, I have my ego, lots of people were looking at me. I got angry and shouted not to fuck with me. How you can expect respect by disrespecting others?"

Terry represented himself as an offender and deviant by engaging in high-risk activities e.g. theft, shoplifting, breaking windows, and drug dealing, violence etc. and stated that he continues to take ever higher risks and this behaviour is linked to his experiences with his family. Whilst he is involved in a certain lifestyle associated with non-conformity, rebellion and anti-social activities, he also made a conscious choice to stop taking cocaine and injecting drugs because of its negative impact on him. He also hoped in a better future and thought about pursuing a career within his own family. In the present circumstances however, he is not hopeful about a positive future because of his criminal history. He depicted himself right now as a criminal young man and certainly involved in some illegal activities.

There were layers and senses behind his perceptions of crimes, which were multifaceted and developing, and that were also interactionally established. For example, his perception that the second greatest risk on the streets was the stigma and harassment young homeless people felt from the general public, pushed him further to engage in deviant activities. This perception played a significant shaping role in his construction of himself as a changed person and supported his belief that 'life is not a bed of roses; it is full of thorns'. I did not see a positive change in his attitude and circumstances in his second interview. He said

> *"If I am wearing the dirty clothes, people assume that I am homeless or poor. I don't like it. I hide my homeless. It's not the best feeling when people judge you. I want to show my worth to people and show them that I am the best and have a great lifestyle. I did crime, I do crime and I will do crime, as I have no option bro."*

Terry's attitude to crime and deviant behaviour did not change throughout the course of the interviews. After 8 months, he was still of the strong opinion that he committed crime from largely necessity but was also driven to steal in order to appear as though he was not homeless to others around him regardless of whether they were strangers or not. Whilst he may agree that crime is not 'good', he saw it as a means to an end. It helped him achieve bigger goals rather than the committing of crimes for fun or other superficial reasons. What he gained from his criminal activity seemed to give him some sense of personal dignity as well as feelings of protection from the stigma around homelessness. He shows a strong sense of self-awareness when it comes to other decisions in his life (e.g. drug use) and the role his family dysfunction has played in his path to homelessness and crime.

Alisha

Homeless experience

Alisha is from the area of East London, and she is born to the mixed-race parents of English, and Spanish lineage. At the age of just 21 she has already been a systematic victim of heroin addiction and chronic enslavement. However, the unfortunate and circumstances of the death of her mother has inflicted grave wounds on Alisha's mind and lead her into the habitual abuse of drugs. Alisha was 13 years of age when she suffered the loss of her father, but she managed to settle down with her mother in their domestic home. Moreover, during her teenage years,

Alisha always felt vulnerable and bewildered, due to her mother's persistent abuse of alcohol and drugs. Alisha was also a casualty of sexual and physical abuse at the hands of her mother's boyfriend. Consequently, she started to confront her mother in order to seek answers.

> *"My Mum's boyfriend tried to kiss me. I pushed him back. He holds me tightly and squeezed my back. He slapped me and call me 'fuckin bitch'. It bruised my face instantly. I screamed, then my younger sister came into the room. She was loud [shouting] 'what happened, what happened'? The time she shouted loud he left quickly. I was so frightened."*

She believes that she hasn't fully recovered from her agonising and torturous life in the past. But comparatively, she feels little healthier and stronger than before. Additionally, Alisha was harshly abused in a physical and sexual context, whilst living in her mother's home.

> *"My life is getting a little better now. Before I was terrible, I was with a lot of bad people in the streets. That was full of crap, and I got pregnant when I was 16, I was just a sick child."*

Supported accommodation

Alisha did not attempt to seek any help from local authorities whilst being homeless. She considered the realities of moving back into her mother's home, because she did not feel confident enough to live and interact with strangers. But she was instantly reminded of her frightening experiences in the past, which involved distressing acts of sexual exploitation committed by her mother's boyfriend. However, it was Alisha's conscious decision to stay silent and not inform the official authorities that she was homeless. She manufactured a reason, saying she was aware of a hostel's atmosphere and living conditions.

> *"One of my teenage female friends used to live in shelter house. Her stuff got nicked by one fella, everything was taken out after one week she was in. I have heard that the hostels are full of gypsies and awkward people and also people are easily robbed and raped in them. I was scared because of that as I had a bad experience at my mum's house. I was sleeping rough in Westminster."*

Clearly, Alisha had concerns about her personal safety and the types of people she would live with in homeless hostels. Despite going through rough and restless nights on the streets, she

was reluctant to stay in youth hostels. However, she temporarily moved to her friend's house and it was she who encouraged Alisha to get in touch with the homelessness authorities, in order to find permanent accommodation. Alisha decided to contact the local authorities, as she was left with no choice, but to seek alternative facility before her friends' parents come back from vacation and she would be asked to leave. As a result, she was given a room by the local authorities. She was sent to live at Centrepoint.

> *"In my early days of homelessness was sleeping in the streets, but it was scary, later my friend helped me and took me to her house for more than a week. She wasn't comfortable with me during my stay in her house. The idea of going back to rough sleeping again wasn't attractive. Eventually, I contacted with Centrepoint, and they gave me a place. I had bad thoughts about homeless hostels, but I am having a good experience here."*

She ended up liking the hostel life, but she felt unhappy due to the staff behaviour towards other non-British residents. She thought that there was discrimination, and which isn't acceptable. She specified;

> *"I'm British girl, but I have seen some of the immigrants been called with different names. I don't like that. Like one day one of my English friends said to other residents 'this is my country you fucking cunt go back to your country'. Sometimes I've heard from residents that staff discriminates [against] them as well. It must be discouraged."*

Youth homelessness and crime

Alisha has mixed thoughts about the relationship between the youth homelessness and crime committed by youth on the streets. However, when asked the questions: a) If there exists a considerable amount of relationship between the youth homelessness and crime? and b) Is it justifiable to commit a crime in order to survive? She has mixed views about it:

> *"It is, [justifiable] but…not all homeless young people commit crimes. It's interconnected because it is about survival. That's what brings [about] offending in homeless people, like survival, getting food, getting money. In my view, it is justifiable to commit the crime for food or basic needs."*

After she became homeless, she fully recalls feeling trapped in street life, and consequently, she got involved in prostitution. She believes that the difficulties experienced during life on the streets leads to involvement in prostitution and begging for most young children in this situation. She explained that:

> *"There are many opportunities to earn, but you have to use your brain. I was in my first placement. I was starving and desperate for food or money. I brought men to my hostel and signed them in as my guests and every week I made about £80-£100 quid. Some of them were my permanent customers."*

Alisha's prostitution could be viewed as the result of being homeless. She got involved in prostitution because she wanted to buy food and other basic necessities of life. The alarming factor was that she had been using her hostel as a base for prostitution since she moved in. Occasionally, she brought customers (who are effectively trespassers in this context) to her room not knowing of potential hazards, and consequences of such actions, which could endanger her well-being.

> *"A tall white male offered me 15 quid for the blowjob. I took him to my hostel room and made 15 quid in just 30 minutes. It was the beginning of my prostitute life and after it, I brought many males to my room."*

She does not consider prostitution to be an immoral or unethical profession, but rather accepts it as her job or source of income. Alisha's domestic abuse or homelessness may have been a motivating factor in her decision to get involved in prostitution, but it was her fundamental day to day needs that prompted her to pursue prostitution as her career. Homelessness is not in and of itself, a reason to embrace prostitution as a career. Sometimes, young people use the reasoning of survival in order to accommodate their basic life necessities. Alisha violated the hostel rules by bringing in the unauthorised guest into the hostel and breached the tenancy agreement. If there was an appropriate and secure visitors/guest policy, Alisha might have been more able to avoid resorting to prostitution. She gave me an interesting answer when I asked her about the factors of crime among homeless young people. She stated:

> *"In short, for me top 3 factors are:*
>
> *1. Bad moral values*

2. *Poverty*

3. *Low self-control*

"Most of my friend's, they do crime because they are from broken families. Their background also was indulging in poverty. They want clothing and designer stuff and desire something big. But I know most of the young people even doing crimes to fulfil their desire which is wrong, not acceptable."

Alisha dislikes the idea of violence, criminal activities, and gangs roaming at their free will to cause disruption within their communities. She believes that youth homelessness and crimes are interrelated, but she condemns hurting someone else for the sake of gaining pleasure and money. When asked if she knows of anyone who's been part of violent activities or such people have motivated her to join certain crime-related gangs, she replied:

"One of my male friends, M……. aged 16, was involved in burglary, violent attack, victim intimidation, and public order offences. He was also a victim of serious bodily harm but refused to co-operate with the police. By the age of 17, he had attended the local hospital ten times for various injuries. One day he approached me and offered me to join his group and gave me a tenner for drinks. I refused him - gangs are dangerous and have threats of death and violent crimes."

Themes emerging from the initial interview

1. Victimisation and stigmatisation

2. Crime as a mean survival and developing a materialistic lifestyle

3. Housing Instability and future concerns

Re-Interview (Current Situation): April 2018

Nine months after Alisha's first interview, I held a follow-up interview. She still has significant concerns about her heroin and drug use. Since she became homeless, her mental health and drug abuse had been her major concerns. She blamed her mother for her current situation.

She described her experience of being a homeless person and her drive to meet her basic needs in life. She explained that her experience of being homeless merely highlighted the fact that life is not smooth and easy in any way. She was not content with her current circumstances or finding that she was able to move on and was still figuring out how to deal with the challenges of being homeless. Moreover, Alisha went into greater detail and expressed her thoughts about stigmatisation and victimisation. She said:

> *"On a reality note, I still feel the same about homeless young people's victimisation and stigmatisation. Government should implement the laws forcibly regarding young people's safeguarding and discrimination. Do you think that we are living in a civilised society where you see dogs have more rights than human beings? Fuck sake."*

Alisha constantly talked about her declining physical and mental health due to substance abuse. She seemed concerned about her unstable accommodation, hygiene and employment. She still believed that homelessness leads to prostitution and begging for most young children living on the streets and she was still involved in sex work. She explained:

> *"Once a thief always a thief. I would like to say once a prostitute always a prostitute. What would you do if you don't have any other option? {It's as] simple as that."*

She mentioned many negative experiences with members of the public in addition to the general public's perception about homeless youth. Alisha thought she was a victim of society's dysfunction and felt that living in unstable accommodation sometimes make her mood worse. The alarming thing she mentioned was about her 'strategy' of isolating herself from others over the past couple of months. She was utterly lonely but decided to distant from other hostel mates and friends. She mentioned:

> *"People are not sincere, and everyone has their own interest. I don't trust people anymore and like to be alone because I think it is peaceful and [there are no] expectations."*

Alisha still considers prostitution to be a legitimate way of earning money. However, many would strongly state that homelessness is not an excuse to embrace prostitution as a career. Sometimes, young people use homelessness and subsequent illegal activity as an excuse, citing their need to survive in order to accommodate their basic life necessities. I asked her about the risk associated with this illegitimate profession, such as being arrested, sexually transmitted diseases and assault or victimisation. She wasn't shocked at all and displayed a pronounced

awareness of sexually transmitted diseases. But she agreed about the risk of assault by the clients and victimisation as well. She stated:

> *"I am aware about this STI stuff as we are living in modern age and also my key worker explained it to me well."*

She claimed prostitution is an easy way to make quick money. But I felt she was reluctant to pursue it in the long run. She described it as something she did now because she wanted to fulfil her basic needs. She aspired to be able to earn money in legal and faster ways. There were times when she wanted to stop being involved in prostitution and drugs and wanted to get out of it. But at the same time, she found getting away from that lifestyle difficult.

> *"This is a trap. Once you get in, there is no way to get out of it. Let me tell you something…it's all about survival and you know it."*

I did not see a major positive change in her attitude and circumstances in from her first to her second interview. She was still involved in similar activities as described in her initial interview. But the most important aspect when she talked about the negative aspects of prostitution and brought trespassers or clients in to her hostel room. She openly talked about the risk of sexually transmitted disease and discussed it with her key worker. However, she wasn't fearful about assault from the clients. Her physical and mental health was worse as well and she related it to her hostel life and current situation. Alisha wished professionals and policy makers would learn from her life story, that things are not easy for young girls when they are in the streets and even in the hostel. Prostitution was for her, a necessity born out of no other option for survival. It was not something she would willingly want or choose to do.

Sam

Homeless experience

Sam is a 21-year-old African male, born in Manchester. Sam became homeless at the age of 15. He describes himself as a bold, energetic and enthusiastic individual. However, he feels disappointed at the lack of opportunities he has had due to the disadvantaged living standards he has faced throughout his life. His mother was a club dancer and he know nothing about his father. Sam's mother was a drug addict, abusing different types of drugs and ignoring the dire consequences of substance abuse. He had a damaging childhood, as he was forced to live in an

abnormal, and unhealthy atmosphere. He felt it was not his fault that he became involved in gangs and other crimes because he was the victim of multiple types of abuse at the hands of others. He grew up with his uncle, who had physically bullied him on numerous occasions. He felt that he had had an awful childhood and he was hoping for a better future. He was a gang member and also involved in different kinds of criminal activities, including knife crimes.

> *"Walked unnecessarily and with the dirty look as usual act and you must do this every day for most of your time during the day. I never see my father, and I don't know who he is. My mum got married to an Asian man who kicked me out. They used to hit me with a stick, leather belt."*

He decided to leave his mother's house because of the rough life he had experienced there. On the streets, he was picked on a lot by drug addicted individuals, who could over-power and bully him. He also got attacked by other homeless people, and the majority of the time, he ended up with bruises and marks on his face. In other incidences, he was beaten with a baseball bat and seriously injured. He had thought of reporting the incident to the police, but he was afraid of getting himself into more trouble. As soon as he recovered from his injuries, he felt angered and afraid by what had occurred the previous incident, and as a result, he decided to break the arms of the guy who had beaten him up. He said

> *"I was an asshole coward boy. People could bully me easily. The day someone hit me with the baseball bat made me fearless. I still remember I have seen the writing on someone shirt "be brave and be fearless" that changed my life a lot. I found that guy and broke his arm and made his eye blue and beat him up badly."*

Sam experiences a lot of frustration and anger as a direct result of the domestic abuse he suffered throughout his childhood. Sam was diagnosed with anger management issues and he still carries residual feelings of vengeance and retaliation and will react in this manner if he is bullied again in future.

Supported accommodation

Sam had been living on the streets for past three months and was fortunate to find an alternative place to live through an outreach worker. On that occasion, there was a SWEP (severe weather emergency protocol) because of the freezing weather and Sam was shivering whilst sat on a cardboard bed. An outreach worker took him to the night centre. He said

> *"It was December, and it was minus three, was fucking cold. I was completely unprepared for the risky reality of rough sleeping. An old man helped me to find cardboard and set up a bed near Charing Cross station. Around midnight an outreach worker offered me a bed. I was so happy. I said yes."*

After a couple of weeks staying in the night shelter, Sam's caseworker helped him to find a place in Centrepoint. Sam appeared very happy and content with the treatment offered to him in the centre. He considered the staff to be well-mannered and considerate towards his needs. They provided him with a pair of socks, a couple of pairs of jeans, and shirts. He had access to a free shower, laundry, tea, coffee, juices and food in the centre. He is in supported accommodation and believes that he is now in a secure and healthy environment. He believes that his life is going in a more positive direction as he has already disengaged himself from the gang and other criminal activities. He also appreciated the support he received from staff whilst he was in the supported accommodation.

> *"I think staff members are co-operative and teaching me independent living skills which will help me for independent living. Housing is the main issue, a bit of pessimist about stable accommodation."*

Sam has multiple mood swings, and he thinks that he is bipolar, but has not been formally diagnosed by a medical practitioner. However, certain situations get him angry quickly and he feels intimidated at the slightest threat. However, he is scared to go to the psychiatrist. He experiences wild mood swings. At times he feels excited and thrilled, but on other occasions, he feels low and angry and acts in a rude and discourteous manner towards the people around him.

> *"Sometimes I really like my mates who live next to me, but sometimes I hate them which is really crazy. I'm forgetting things, missing hospital appointments. Staff always remind me of it. Apart from that, physically I'm fit and active"*

Youth homelessness and crime

In Sam's childhood, his mother, her boyfriend and his cousin had abused him several times. Due to the extreme level of domestic abuse and physical harassment in the streets, he wanted to exact revenge on people, regardless of personal cost. He had developed rebellious thoughts at a very young age of 15. Therefore, he had decided to join a local gang and carry out unspeakable criminal activities in order to outshine other members. It took him little more than three months to become an official member of this gang. He was involved in vicious incidents including physical fights, stealing, shoplifting, threatening other gang members, mobile snatching, and robberies. In a short time, he became a well-known drug distributor within his neighbouring communities. When I asked him how he felt about youth homelessness and its relationship to crime, he said:

> *"Crime and homelessness are interconnected, but it also varies in the circumstances of a homeless young person. I accepted that I was in a gang, did almost all the bad stuff."*

Sam had encounters with the police force on multiple occasions and he always thought of police as his prime enemies. He was arrested a couple of times and subsequently received three months of conviction and a community service sentence. It was at this point that Sam decided to change his lifestyle. His YOT officer, and caseworker helped him to get back into a healthier lifestyle. He decided to leave the criminal way of life and instead directed his life and energy towards a more positive pathway in order to achieve success in his life. Unquestionably, his prison experience was an eye opener for him. He said:

> *"I believe you need a direction and someone you trust to put you on the right track. I want to say thank to my YOT worker J, one of the best men I have ever met. Homelessness leads young people into crime."*

He also believes that committing crimes for survival is not a bad thing as poverty and an expensive, aspirational lifestyles are the main contributors. Young homeless people are victimised to a great extent when living and trying to survive on the streets. He describes it;

> *"Yes, it is ok to do crime for food, clothes, survival. I stole, I robbed, I assaulted, I sniffed... I did all that crap."*

Sam reported many problematic issues within his family circle and the experience of being homeless was an unforgettable one. Primarily, he isn't happy the way public treats homeless youth and how people don't consider them as part of the societal norms. Being homeless signalled a change in the way Sam was perceived by others, and he believes a parent's role is a vital factor in an adolescent's life.

> *"There isn't any doubt about it, homelessness teaches you the real lesson of life. My mum had in drugs and she never gives attention to her kids."*

Sam spoke about his couple of friends, who were harassed by the police force in youth hostels. He explained more about how he was harassed:

> *"One night I was sleeping in my hostel accommodation, the police knocked on my door and loom over me [as] the suspect, handcuffed me and asked me stupid questions. They blamed me for things I have never done."*

Themes emerging from the initial interview

1. Victimisation and stigmatisation

2. Crime as a mean survival and developing a materialistic lifestyle

3. Housing Instability and future concerns

<u>Re-Interview (Current Situation): March 2018</u>

Almost six months after I re-interviewed him, Sam reported that he was doing well, and he had plans for his future. He was happy with the positive behaviour of the staff towards him since I last interviewed him. Sam appeared optimistic about his future as he stated that his caseworker was helping him with his independent living, and he was hoping to move into a semi-independent living situation soon. When he first moved to temporary accommodation he wasn't engaging well with other residents and staff members. But later he realised communication with other residents and staff members is important, so he started more positively integrating with others.

He explained the change in his attitude:

"It's nice to be polite and respect others. I have more friends now and I am wise enough to pick good fellas in life. Friends are my power and not all, but the good ones. Especially my caseworker, [he] is a nice man. When I'm down and under clouds, he shows me the best way to stay up and keep moving. Not 100%, but I feel safer here now."

He has also met other young people in the hostel, and he feels more comfortable talking to people. He has become very thoughtful and attentive, and in case of any problems he has, he will be quick to identify the help and support he needs. There is a difference between help and support. If a person is starving, someone could lend him a packet of noodles. That is help, once he saw an old homeless woman was shivering. He put his jumper on her shoulders to help her. He loves to help homeless people. He added:

"Support is different in my point of view. I think it's more about motivation, encouragement, showing young people alternatives. That's what was missing when I was living in my last placement. They didn't support me the way I'm having [support] here."

On the other hand, Sam was not happy with the way the police treated him, and how the police officers were not kind to him. In fact, he categorically stated that he does not like them. He strongly believed that the police are judgemental with regards to homeless young people and they think most of the homeless youth are dishonest and troublesome. As he said,

"I am telling you because it happened to me and other young people. Sometimes they look at youth like they are hardened criminals, and this is rude. They come to your face and ask you about your personal information, they just take my privacy. What the hell is this?"

Sam credits his caseworker with helping him to find a semi-independent living situation and for enabling him to take a step away from his difficulties. Homelessness is an evil scourge which destroys a young person's identity and integrity. Sam concluded our interview saying that most homeless young people justified their criminal acts in order to put all of the blame on society and homelessness. In his opinion for most young people it is a simple case of 'fault finding'. He described it as 'just like a window when washed, it appears that all the dirt is on the other side of the window'. People will not take personal responsibility for their own actions. It's always someone else's fault. He was unswerving in his belief that he would only steal in an extreme situation as he understands life well.

"I am trying hard to be a good person. I wouldn't steal. What would stop me? It's my understanding of what is right and what is wrong."

He emphasises that one of his greatest challenges had been learning to believe in himself, as he was always rejected and disrespected by his family. But in his current situation, he has been feeling more confident since he met his new case worker. He realises his potential now, and he grasps the idea of the importance of learning to control his resentment and anger towards other people:

"I used to stigmatise homelessness and it made me angry that I am homeless. But ups and downs are part of life. Some people have cars some people even don't have legs. Some have a palace; some have a hut. I still have concerns regarding my future, but I have to move on with positivity, otherwise it's going to affect my future."

Sam wants other homeless youth to know that there are staff and youth hostels waiting to offer them support. He suggests the youth hostels, especially Centrepoint to homeless young people because they have contributed to changing Sam's life and ensured that he is able to live up to his potential.

Towards the end of the interview, Sam expressed a wish for others to know that "every cloud has a silver lining". Whilst he could not claim that his life has been ideal as a whole, he did acknowledge that it was getting better. He felt that there are two ways for a young homeless person to benefit from engaging with youth organisations. One is to engage with healthy and extracurricular activities and second is having a solid relationship with front line staff members.

Throughout his interview, Sam highlighted the need to stay positive and be patient with the system. Homeless young people like Sam are usually dealing with more than one crisis point and their needs are multifaceted. For Sam, losing his home, family and not having a job was a breaking point for him. Through engaging with his staff worker, he had been able to find a sense of optimism about his situation. He knew that having a place to stay was just one of the interventions that needed to occur for him to be able to see his own future with hope. He understood that the process was not a simple or straightforward one but was willing to do what was needed in order to be able to move on with his life in a positive way.

A journey of conducting interviews

The journey of conducting young people interviews was a challenge. It was full of surprises and unexpected issues.

I established myself with each participant in a friendly and professional way and developed a relationship of trust and respect. During my sample selection, I visited each organisation several times and chatted with the youth who I then interviewed in my research study.

I feel fortunate that I found supportive staff members and they helped me enormously throughout my fieldwork. The organisation's staff were fully cognisant about the nature of the study. Staff also informed the young people about the topic and the aim of the research.

Conducting second interviews was a little easier than the first, mainly because we already had an established rapport. I decided to re-interview the young people who had experienced significant difficulties according to their criminal history, mental and physical health. For example, Terry and Melisa were initially a bit confused and suspicious about a re-interview, but after my reassurance of continued confidentiality, they were happy to participate. Terry's interview took longer to complete as he struggles with time management.

Lastly, access to the young people attending Centrepoint was a challenge as it took about six months to have them approve my interview request. Overall, it was a challenging and positive experience to interview these young people and I am so grateful to them for sharing their stories with me.

With more than forty interviews with young people and professionals, (some of whom were reluctant to have formal interviews, so I opted for informal discussions in some instances), time constraints, significant travel demands and language barriers with some of the young people, this research journey was, at times a real struggle. Due to the nature of the topic (youth homelessness and crime), most of the young people were initially reluctant to talk about their life experiences. My interest and passion for the issues affecting these vulnerable young people has been evidenced for many years. I have worked as a professional in this field and had a passion to understand the problems and be part of the solutions in order to improve the quality of life and opportunities for all young people affected by homelessness and crime. Therefore, in spite of the struggles I encountered, I feel that the knowledge and information gathered throughout this research has confirmed that this effort has been worthwhile and will make a real difference for young people who are homeless.

Summary

I decided to re-interview the six young people again to explore how their lives have changed in the previous 6-9 months. I chose these six young people according to their uniqueness within the sample group. Terry (drug abuser and dealer), Abdul (ex-gang member and Muslim), Alisha (hard core criminal and prostitute), Melisa (mental health and anger management issues), Louise (Lesbian) and Sam (black and severely domestically abused).

The additional information I gathered from these interviews concerning changes in their life situations highlighted that for most their attitudes and situations were more or less the same as they had been 6-9 months prior. This was with the exception of Abdul and Sam who both had positive changes occur. They were both still residing in the supported accommodation and despite all the previous traumatic experiences they had in that context, they were both still hanging in there. Both were forming positive relationships with their key workers and beginning to develop longer-term ideas where they wanted their life to go. Abdul had begun a plumbing apprenticeship and started to be more actively involved with his religious beliefs and community. He showed more interest in learning independent living skills and further investing in the development of a positive relationship with his key worker and social worker.

Similarly, Sam made his mind to discuss any concerns that were on his mind with his link worker rather than bottling them up. He began to come out of his shell and started to engage with different life skills courses. His link worker assisted him and educated him in how to positively face the bitter realities of life. Sam's engagement made a real change for him, and it has enabled his link worker to fully support him in achieving this pathway plans. The primary caregivers in their lives have scarred many homeless young people. This makes it difficult to open up and trust those who are in a position to help. However, the relationship they build with their link workers is vital – not only to move them through the system, enable them to access all the help they need, but to also rebuild some of that broken trust and restore some faith in people. A positive, affirming relationship with a professional can help a young person regain some hope and optimism and see their situation as temporary and obstacles as possible to overcome. Equally, if a professional worker does only the bare minimum, or views the young person simply as another 'case number', it can drive the young person's identity and self-esteem and sense of value down, thus resulting in further dysfunctional behaviour. For Alisha and Terry, behaviours such as weed smoking and prostitution did not stop but their awareness of the dangers grew through interaction with their link workers. However, both described

feeling let down by the system and so likely could have benefitted from more intensive and specialised interventions.

What all this highlights is that you can't give these young people short term fixes. Interviewing the sub sample 6-9 months later further demonstrated there is no easy short-term fix to the issues and challenges these vulnerable young people face. A couple of the young participants tried to engage with their key worker and think in a more productive way. However, whilst Sam was able to make some changes, he was still not fully disengaged from misconduct. Having said that, both Sam and Alisha were thinking a little differently about their future and how that might look different to their present life.

In essence, homeless young people have to be surrounded by people who believe in them. Who believe they can change. Who believe they can have a different kind of future even when they cannot initially believe this for themselves. The more those influential figures around them believe in them, the easier it is for them to start to emulate that belief in themselves.

Shad Maruna talked about how people desist from offending by adopting a much positive view of themselves. They get rid of their old behaviour and they see themselves succeeding. People desist offending by adopting a new life strategy, which is more positive. It is not a quick change as according to Maruna, they are still forming positive life strategies. They begin to see there is a life beyond what they were seeing in their current situation. Changing and turning around the lives of these young people is not an overnight job it takes a lot longer.

Both 'what works' and 'desistance' narrative are established on a belief in what Maruna and King (2009) call 'moral redeemability'. This theory relies on the basis that a person's past does not have to dictate their future. This applies to criminality in the sense that crime is an adaptive reaction to negative life circumstances rather than being a personality trait in an individual. Self-awareness and a change to more positive circumstances can alter a person's involvement with criminal behaviour.

CHAPTER 6

Description of Professional's Interview participants

I decided to develop a questionnaire for professionals to get their perspectives on why the young people they worked with had become homeless, as well as the implications of homelessness for the risk of offending. The knowledge and the experience of these specialists proved to be very helpful in relation to this thesis. I drafted the professional interview questionnaire after the completion of young people interviews to both include and address the issues raised by the young people. The resulting interviews were adapted to be more appropriate for professionals (to gain more understanding about the issues of homelessness and crime). Interviews with professionals about problems and concerns experienced by homeless youth in their interviews included:

- Engaging with homeless young people
- Role and responsibilities of professionals
- Reason for youth homelessness victimisation and/or offending
- Discrimination/racism by staff and public
- Future concerns about stable accommodation
- Policies and services for homeless young people
- Relationship of homelessness and youth offending

Organisation	**Chief Executives**	**Managers**	**Senior Worker**
New Choices for Youth	1 black female	1 White male	1 white male 1 black female
Centrepoint	1 white male	1 white male 1 black female	1 Asian male
Newham YOT		1 white female	1 black male
Social Worker	1 black female (A London Borough)	1 white male	

	1 White male (A London Borough)		
Director of London Youth Charity	1 White female		
	05	05	04
Total			14 professionals

The professional participants were selected very carefully. All the professional participants had been directly working with homeless young people in London in different contexts. Of the fourteen professionals interviewed, the sample was made up of eight males and six females. I also had some informal discussions with professional participants (staff members) with the view to make my findings more robust and trustworthy. Each semi structured interview lasted approximately forty to fifty minutes.

During the data analysis of the young people interviews and subsequent coding process, some of the most significant themes emerged. I decided to input these themes into the professionals questionnaire in order to discover how professionals think about homeless young people's concerns and problems.

- Engaging with homeless young people
- Complex barriers that impact youth homelessness
- Reasons for youth homelessness, victimisation and/or offending
- Role and responsibilities of professionals
- Discrimination/racism by staff and the general public
- Relationship between youth homelessness and crime
- Future concerns about stable accommodation
- Why don't all homeless young people commit crime?

Engaging with young people

In the interviews with the homeless youth, some of the young participants talked about the miscommunication and lack of trust they had with staff members. For the professionals engaging with homeless young people, dealing well with those who have troubled past and

victims of domestic violence is not an easy task. One of my key questions for them was, how well do they think that young people respond to them? In his opinion the first meeting with the young person is the most crucial meeting. Because that can actually inform whether or not they will form a relationship with a professional.

> *"Obviously as a manager homeless young people respond differently to me as they would as a key worker. For example, one day when I was working in YOT as duty day worker and my manager came to me and said, 'these two homeless young people from court need LAC (look after children) now'. I requested time to read the reports and talk with the young people. I asked the first young person 'so who you live with? Mum and Dad?' He looked at me and said, 'both my parents are dead…one of my grandparents is looking after me'. It's been six months of hard work trying to recover that relationship because of that question, he just didn't talk to me. So, sometimes you [have to] really try to develop a trust relationship, as they are going through a messy life."*
> *(Bevan, Senior Manager NCY)*

As an individual or as an organisational CEO, Michelle tried to make sure that she could meet many young people.

> *"The response I get from young people is very good. They're usually very welcoming, they're usually very warm, friendly. I have felt that [I have a] very good response from young people - they say you are the boss."*
>
> *(Michelle, CEO NCY)*

When I asked her to explain her experience as an individual worker not as a CEO. Michelle strongly believes in communication with young people. She described a recent event:

> *"We were doing outreach and it was about how to reach [out] to group of young people. About 20 meters away [I saw] a group of young people standing there. I approached them and asked if I could talk to them. They answered 'Ahhhh about what?' I smiled and said, 'Good afternoon, how's going?' then chat, chat and chat. Just 5 minutes later they all were very responsive, talking, smiling. I can say that all were very engaged and wanted to participate in our young people's wellbeing project. We were then able to tell them about the course.*

"They respond to me well. But it doesn't mean that it's easy to work [with] or understand young homeless people. Most of the time they are unpredictable. I can give seven out of ten and it really depends on individuals. In my personal experience communication is the key and trust as well."
(Ronnie YOT officer Newham)

Matt does not feel hard to working with young people. He thinks he is only thirty-one and he can relate to many young people. He is interested in the same sort of things they are in and the issues they have been facing.

"I have [experienced those] issues. Sometimes the young people do not trust the system they've been through. They are not open to trusting someone. Sometimes they keep you at arm's length. You should try everyday [to gain a] bit more room, [a] bit more headway. I have a male client, he used to live here in Launchpad. First, he seems to be cautious, but after some time seemed more open, [to] chat to me and come to me when he's got an issue."

(Matt, Senior housing officer, Launchpad)

"I don't try to judge them. I try to make them feel the right thing. A professional need to be honest with a young person and doesn't make any false promises."
(Emma support worker, St Martins in the field).

Most of the professionals acknowledged the importance of establishing relationships through repeated discussions and clear communication skills. They identified the fact that listening to the homeless young people and also giving offers of help regarding their concerns and issues was vital in building relationships that could be transformative for the young person's life in the long-term. From the professional's point of view, trust and empathy are the main elements required in order to create positive understanding and trust filled relationships with homeless young people. They believe it takes a number of meetings and key work sessions with homeless young people, to overcome the barriers to trust and establish a concrete relationship, opening the possibility of positive outcomes for the young person. Many professional's believed that using these techniques makes working with homeless youth a much simpler process. Other

professional's in the interviewed group, (four out of the twelve professionals), talked about the homeless young people's bad attitude and manipulation of them as workers.

> *"Sometimes homeless young people try to play games with staff members. They tell lies about their whereabouts, drugs issues, relationships, mental health etc. If you try to be firm with them, they start complaining about you and call you racist, rude, bastard, bossy etc."*
> *(Emily, night worker Centrepoint)*

> *"I believe youth homelessness is a big problem in London and Government strict policies about benefits [are] making young people more vulnerable. There is lengthy paperwork and many routes to go through which sometimes creates a trust deficit between homeless young people and staff. This is reality - that homeless young people don't really engage with staff members. I have gone through it."*

> *(Jack, senior housing officer Centrepoint)*

> *"They respond [to] me well but sometimes they are just moody. I always try to engage with my clients, but sometimes it's going to be hard when they don't turn up for the key work session and if you ask them [why] they become impolite to you."*

> *(Steven, Social worker – A London Borough)*

Christine mentioned that to understand homeless young people, a worker must see their behaviour critically. As we assume that they are innocent or victims but in reality, they aren't.

> *"They only respond to me well when they want too."*

Complex Barriers that effect homeless young people

One of the most common themes to emerge during the homeless young people interview's related to the complex barriers that effect their pathway plans. This theme also integrated the skills and strengths utilised by youth whilst experiencing homelessness. Almost all the young participant's avidly identified the various barriers they face during homelessness. The

challenges they faced including understanding about budgeting, health, drugs, education, employment and accessing services were commonly recognised as the most common barriers.

> *"The biggest barrier for young people is compliance. For lot of young people, it's not that they aren't willing to co-operate. Many young people, have difficulty sleeping and their sleep patterns slightly drift, and your appointment with you is at 9am - don't you think that you would struggle to make it in for 9'o clock in the morning? In our organisation, we make appointments] in [the] afternoon as it's easier for them to comply."*
> *(Michelle, CEO NCY)*

Emma thinks similarly to Michelle and encourages the administration to be more flexible with young people regarding their pathway plans, key work and other meetings.

> *"It is de-motivating for homeless young people because they try, and they fail. It's yet another thing they've failed. Therefore, you need to help them, by making things more flexible and easier for them. Start from the winning point rather than with the losing point. If you already offending you are in the courts, you are overwhelmed with problems and negativity. Better to start with asking, 'ok what are they good at? What have they achieved?' Even [if] something is very small, celebrate the achievement. Boost their confidence level. So, they can succeed and show their potential."*
> *(Emma support worker, St Martins in the field).*

> *"The welfare and housing system are a bit complicated and I believe it's hard for the young people to navigate it in the right direction. This must be [made] easy and straight forward."*
>
> *(Jack, senior housing officer Centrepoint)*

Christine also supports Jack's opinion and sheds light on the temporary accommodation procedures for homeless young people.

> *"Almost three months ago I assisted one young male to apply for emergency accommodation and you know what? The paperwork that the council was asking for was lengthy and illogical. It's exhausting."*

(Christine, senior housing officer Centrepoint)

Another barrier addressed several times by many professionals was regarding the complications associated with the fast turnover and changing social or case workers. Sometimes homeless young people are under an immense pressure to achieve specific targets by a certain date, but some young people are not able to achieve them due to their mental or physical health issues. Bevan highlighted it comprehensively that professionals and staff members should have a healthy conversation and some form of right mentoring with young people. Most of the time young people don't have any [idea of the] importance of the pathway plan because they haven't got a good relationship with their social worker or the reviewing officer.

He added;

> *"Relationship needs to be built. I'll give you an example of young girl: she was in our hostel for about two years. In that time, she has five different social workers and the reality is she had mental health issues because her father has died. She was going through the grieving process again every time someone left her. The point is, because she never had a good pathway plan, because there wasn't an understanding that it was harming her and also, how she can get to that stage where she should be independent?"*
>
> *(Bevan, Senior Manager NCY)*

Six out of fourteen professionals stated that the immediate barriers are the lack of services after leaving care. Obviously, there are also barriers whilst they are in care, for example, a lack of funding, social workers are hard to reach, or they cannot access the resources they need easily or fast enough. The professionals mentioned that once young people reach the age of eighteen, there is no more official help, no specific plan. They added that everyone is aware that up until the age of eighteen the council is responsible to look after them as minors. But, essentially, after the age of eighteen they are on their own. But the facts of the matter are they still need support and assistance to move on and create an independent life. Therefore, counsels definitely should provide them more, or some continuation of services even after the age of eighteen. This could be a need assessed process as every young person will have individual needs pertaining to physiological and psychological health as well as differing rates of capability, education and maturity.

"Realistically, they wouldn't be here if they were in the correct place that they were meant to be in life, therefore absolutely providing more services after the age of eighteen and giving support is important. I also think that social workers like me are given way too many cases and we are overloaded with work which doesn't allow us to dedicate enough time to people who require our assistance which is necessary."

(Chris, Social worker – A London Borough)

"I work for a London borough, so all young people have to have their pathway plan [reviewed] every 6 months, which is a great idea. However, I think it's more like a show piece unfortunately. For the local authority [a] pathway plan is a statutory thing, all young people have to have a plan. Why? I think it's more for the benefit for the local authority. I'm yet to meet to young person who says to me, 'Steven is it time for my pathway plan?"

(Steven, social worker – A London Borough)

He doesn't feel young people have the ownership of the plan. It's not important for many young people as the resources are there for what the young people want.

Professionals Chris and Steven think that there is an imbalance between what a young person asks for and the council's ability to provide it. For example, if a young person wants to attend a course and that course costs £2000 or the equivalent of a yearly gym membership, is the local authority is going to pay that? Perhaps they look at their budget and respond by saying that the council does not have funds and therefore will not provide that financial support for that young person. The main thing to be considered is how realistic, doable or manageable the plan is and whether or not the resources are available. All these things need to be in place for a pathway plan to be successful. Otherwise homeless young people will never trust the welfare system they are involved in and relying on for help as they work towards independence.

Nine out of fourteen service providers agreed with the young people's concerns regarding their pathway plans or independent living skills. Many professionals felt positive about the services young people received in temporary accommodation or in hostels, but they expressed concerns about the policies regarding young people's pathway plans. They felt that professional interpretation of what the young person's needs are is vital and can look entirely different to what the young person perceives their 'needs' to be. It is about finding a balance, as well as recognising the reality that on occasion, staff or social workers are biased.

"I can't stand this kid and it's quite personal which it shouldn't be. I haven't got the time for this. Don't you realise that how big my case load is? Make sure that you got the right people put in place because if anyone's doing this for a career to make money then he is in the wrong profession - this something about your passion."

(Symond Probation officer Newham)

Reason for youth homelessness, victimisation and/or offending

Nearly all of the professionals reported that homeless young people's previous home settings/atmosphere had been unsupportive, which had been an obstacle to their development and caused them untold levels of anxiety and frustration. They talked about the young people's problems in early years and childhood as well as issues such as domestic violence, which led them to life on the streets and rough sleeping. Homeless young people are society's most vulnerable group, and many are vulnerable to long lasting effects such as shock, mental disturbance, trauma etc. Numerous service providers backed up these findings about the homeless young people's negative life experiences contributing to their status as homeless.

Some professionals talked about outcomes and impact of extreme unemployment. It is a fact that when a young person does not show good progress or interest at school and subsequently fails exams this often results in them dropping out or being excluded because of lack of attendance or behavioural issues. How then can he/she can get a job with little or no qualifications? A significant number of young people who get involved in offending are also the young people who don't do well in school. Thus, lower attainment in life means they will now struggle with issues such as securing stable employment, paying rent and bills and being independent. Who will employ them as they do not have any experience? Without stable employment it is easier for a young person to get involved in offending and criminal activities, especially if they want to make money.

"Regarding youth offending, unemployment is a biggy. Where's the hope if you are in school and you have been told that you are not worth anything or there is not any job for you because of financial slump etc? What they don't teach to young people [is] you don't need to work for somebody you should do your own business. Give them hope. There is no vision, dream, and passion if you invest on young person and help them to

build a dream, they can achieve it. Who's going to give them dream and hope?? That's the issue."

(Michelle, CEO NCY)

"If a young person doesn't have the opportunities of the legitimate source of earning, then definitely that person will try the illegitimate source - simple as that."

(Jack, senior housing officer Centrepoint)

Bevan, Christine, Matt, Elizabeth, Symonds and Emma think in the same way and stated peer pressure as the main reason for offending amongst homeless youth. Homeless young people feel like they have to prove themselves to be brave or daring to the people around them. If they run away from an argument, they would therefore be known as a coward or weak. Because they are young and often feel they rely on 'belonging' to a peer group they do silly or dangerous things sometimes to please or prove themselves to their friends.

"Many homeless young people doing crimes to just prove that they are brave and strong. Let me give you an example one of the young lads I worked with stole bikes just to show his peers that he is not scared from police and no one can catch him."

(Bevan, senior manager NCY)

"The social media is a bad influence like Facebook, Instagram, what's app etc. and young people link up with it quicker. If you look at London riots and they started to get involved in the social media, people were just turning up thinking it's going to be a fun experience and they got involve themselves in lot of violence and everything else. This is a negative role of social media and also peer pressure."

(Christine, senior housing officer Centrepoint)

"Three main reasons of youth offending in my opinion is peer pressure, family breakdown and drug addictions."

(Emma support worker, St Martins in the field)

Several professionals strongly concurred that the pursuit of a materialistic lifestyle is a key reason for youth offending. We currently live in a very materialistic society and young people are an important and growing target market for companies and products wanting to grow their

sales – clothing, shoes etc. They want to have Nike trainers and other big brands to show off to their peers. 'Owning stuff' has become a status symbol even amongst their peer groups.

> *"I think the rise within London the gang culture in some of the boroughs and the poor areas young people living. Once you are homeless and, in the gang, you are on the road to offending. It is purely financial gain and peer pressure."*
>
> *(Steven, social worker – A London Borough)*
>
> *Peer pressure – or pressure from gang members/local criminals who may or may not be in their peer group, but seek to take advantage of a vulnerable, homeless young person.*
> *(Elizabeth, Director London Based Youth Charity)*

Elizabeth went on to discuss that from her experience, loneliness, isolation and fear are also the main causes of youth offending. Many homeless young people struggle to fulfil the myriad of demands put on them as they go through 'the system' (social services, shelters, job centres) and rather than fail, or face the shame of having to jump through these endless, systemic hoops such as meetings and interviews, (which often yield little to nothing by way of practical help), they turn instead to crime to get their needs met and find an escape from their situation. They take the responsibility on themselves to change the future, rather than rely on a system that is struggling to help and more often than not fails them or at best proves overloaded and unreliable.

Many reasons for youth offending and homelessness were discussed by the professionals, but the most common reasons given by them were unemployment, peer pressure, poverty, gang culture in London, lifestyle crimes, lack of hope and isolation. The professional's main concerns were social groups, or peer groups such as gangs. An example given of this was when young people hang around together and through playing games like football in order to instigate fights which can lead to dangerous consequences such as arrest, criminal record, injury or on occasion, death. Young people often like to hang around in solid social groups, based on mutual competition or peer pressure and get involved in fights or violence because they think it's a way to establish high status or gain the approval or even fear of their peers or perceived rivals.

Many young people on the streets, (not all of whom are homeless), feel more secure in this status when they are surrounded by their peer group – the ones who show them respect, or whom they know will offer loyalty if they encounter resistance or challenges by others, whether

they be peers from another group or members of the general public or even law enforcement. There is a sense of security for many young people when 'travelling as a pack' – they may feel they are more likely to be successful or have less fear when committing a crime than acting on those impulses whilst alone.

Most young people want money for things they desire such as expensive goods as well as for needs such as food. For some, being surrounded by others in society who have access to goods and services they want as well as those they need can be too much for some young people who have little or nothing. They feel deprived of a lifestyle they see through those around them as well as through media and marketing – this can be a strong motivation to engage in criminal activity. They think only of the gains and do not fully consider the damaging impact the consequences of crime may have on their lives both now and in the future.

Almost all of the respondents felt that in addition to the circumstances above, many homeless young people also experienced high levels of criminal victimisation ranging from verbal, physical, psychological abuse to assault. The perception of them as criminals based solely on their material circumstances, even with the absence of anti-social or criminal behaviours may also influence many young people to engage in criminal activity thus succumbing to a self (or society) fulfilling prophecy. Another way vulnerable homeless young people are at risk of victimisation is through relationships with peers, their familial relatives, friends, police, gang members, and members of the public. Half of the professionals indicated that a significant concern of young people living on the streets was being victimised by passers-by and their peers even when living in supported accommodation.

Discrimination/racism by staff and public

The factors acknowledged by each professional interviewee, highlighted a small portion of the systematic and societal causes that strongly effect a young person's ability to endure and flourish. During the young people interviews, most of the interviewees attested to the discrimination or racism they experienced at the hands of staff members and members of the general public. When I conversed with the professionals regarding the young people's concerns about staff discrimination, six out of fourteen did not agree with those testimonies. Instead, they believed that an individual young person's attitude towards the authorities helped shape the way they receive the support on offer. Whilst discrimination most certainly does exist in this field in some places, much of this discrimination can be improved when young people

change their attitude towards where the help is coming from. Many of the professionals felt strongly about this perception of discrimination.

> *"Not necessarily, homeless young people are good in twisting things and blaming others of their faults.*
>
> *(Noreen, supported housing officer)*
>
> *"They do it on purpose to show others that they are victims because they are lazy and not able to follow the policies sometimes. So, they blame their failure on the staff members."*
>
> *(Matt, Senior housing officer NCY)*
>
> *"In my opinion most of the homeless young people have favourites sometimes. So, they don't like any of the staff member they would say that staff member is racist."*
>
> *(Steven, social worker – A London Borough)*
>
> *"Ok I'll give you an example and it happened to me. I asked one of my young clients in for key work session and he missed it six times. I gave him a verbal warning and he [made a] complaint against me - that I called him black bastard. Which I didn't."*
>
> *(Symond, YOT officer Newham)*

But eight out of fourteen professionals were convinced with young people discrimination issues.

> *"In a word, yes. Homeless young people are victims of discrimination sometimes."*
>
> *(Elizabeth, Director London Based Youth Charity)*

Elizabeth also believes staff working in youth focused services are often over worked, underpaid and under serious amounts of pressure to move people through the system or deal firmly with issues when they arise (e.g. in hostels and in temporary accommodation). This can be a cause (not an excuse) for those incidences where it is quicker and simpler to rely on tired stereotypes around race and religion. Fear is also another contributing factor – fear of the unknown or a lack of understanding about what they believe, stand for or look like. The media has a role to play in perpetuating these stereotypes, but she envisages that black and Muslim youth (particularly boys) are often regarded with suspicion or negative/damaging assumptions about their character or motivations.

"Black minority ethnic and Muslim young people are more likely than whites to experience housing stress such as overcrowded, poor quality housing and poverty. Police and other security agencies most probably stop and search them more than white and native young people."

(Emma, Support worker at St Martin's in the field)

"If you talk about London yes, I have seen this so many times that police stop black young guys and Muslim young males especially if they have a beard."

(Jack, Senior housing officer Centrepoint)

Racial profiling happens more than we would like to think it does. Institutional racism in bodies such as the police means black and Muslim youth (particularly males) are far more likely to be stopped, searched or arrested than their Caucasian counterparts. This kind of misconception is often based on little more than ignorance or misunderstanding about the race, religion or social context of the individual. It seeps down to influence the perceptions of the public at large about black and Muslim young people.

Michelle thinks deeply about this matter and feels that positively engaging young people who live in marginalised situations and are struggling with everyday needs, is not an easy task. Professionals and staff members must acknowledge the importance of establishing constructive relationships with homeless young people. The professionals approach must be non-judgemental and empathetic. Only when young people recognise that they are being accepted and understood will they begin to trust staff members who are trying to help them. Every young person is an individual with their own unique experience of the world and for young people whose primary experience of the world has been negative, it can be extraordinarily difficult for them to open up, rely on others and establish a solid relationship based on trust.

Many young people feel they have trusted authority figures previously and have not received the care or help they hoped for. This means many will view offered help or professional people with suspicion and even hostility which can be prolonged and cause severe drawbacks to the positive impact of any support systems or processes.

"I do believe there is a racism in this kind of work. Ok we should find a solution than pointing out this problem. For me getting to know them, show them that you are willing to help them, understand their problems, don't impose the harsher rules on them. I

believe when young people feel that someone trying for them, they will try to change themselves."

(Michelle, CEO NCY)

The onus is on social workers, through their work, to ensure the promotion of social justice across the spectrum of society. An awareness and deliberation in the prevention and challenging of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ability, age, culture, socio economic status, political or spiritual beliefs, skin colour or other physical characteristics (Littlechild, 2019).

Role of professionals

The roles of the professional were one of the most commonly stated facets of their experience of social care by the homeless young people with regards to their pathway plan. Emma stated that she wanted homeless young people to feel more comfortable and to be able to talk about their problems with professionals and not to hide them:

"I would like to say a friendly and trust base environment or atmosphere is really important to empower homeless youth and stop them from re-offending."

Most of the professionals affirmed the need for perseverance and keeping the door open whilst working with young people. Many of them also mentioned that some young people are stubborn and working with them can be challenging and chaotic. Whether a social worker, supported housing officer, key worker, probation or YOT officer, it is not an easy job especially when you are supporting homeless young people. In this type of work professionals need to be ready to confront any type of situation and they have to work harder to achieve the optimum results in these difficult circumstances (Littlechild, 2009). Once professionals connected and effectively collaborated with other supporting agencies the positive outcomes for the young people were significantly increased through these mutual partnerships.

Michelle, Bevan, and Jack all emphasised the importance of staff training and upskilling.

"My role being a CEO is to make sure we have services that can meet the needs of young people. So, part of that is about fundraising to make sure that we keep going so

that we help workers be available. That we have people trained and able to respond to young people."

(Michelle, CEO NCY)

Michelle stressed the importance of training front line staff and making staff aware of the importance of these skills. This is key in enabling them to understand that they can meet young people's requirements and respond to whatever issues they bring up. Frequently, young people can come presenting one issue but there is often another deeper issue behind it. For example, a young person is referred because they are an offender, but they may also be suffering from a mental health issue. This is a one side of the picture, but it's always important to ask; 'What else is going on? What else is contributing to the circumstances that they are in?' It is more about helping staff members to be able to help young people according to their problems, whether seen or unseen in initial meetings.

Bevan tries to get the young people he works with to recognise what their behaviours are, where they stem from and how it could impact on themselves or others around them e.g. their family or community. His endeavour is to actually get them to take ownership of what they do. He tries to make young people more aware of the consequences of what they do, and that they will have to pay later.

"First of all, I don't tell someone to go for offending or don't offend. I always explain [to the] young person, and I actually approach[it] along the lines that this is the consequence of what could happen if you do X Y or Z - I am going to end up in the court, I could be put back on another order. Whereas, if I go through the process and actually achieve something from it. I may be look on alternatives lifestyles. It's good to give more alternatives."

(Bevan, senior Manager NCY)

Most homeless young people don't think they can be anything other than what they see around them, like family members or friends. It is hard for them to start thinking of possibilities or alternatives outside of that group because they don't know much about life. They are not mature and often don't have a completed sense of their own individuality or identity.

"If a young person wants a fast car, they will try any way they can to get it, including criminal activity. For me, I think if we could get young people to apply this skill they have applied in criminal activity into a career or into a business they'd do amazing

things. It's [through] counselling and also showing them good examples. Briefly tell them that the gangster lifestyle American dream type stuff looks great. How many successful gangsters do you know?? And in reality, how many gangsters do they know who actually made it come out the other side and are living the dream. It's hard to identify any."

(Symonds, YOT officer Newham).

Elizabeth was the executive director of a London based youth charity and later the Communications director at gang's charity, in London. She explained that local authorities and other youth centred services need to put more preventative measures in place, rather than simply relying on inadequate, often 'too late' reactive methods in order to deal with the issues young people face long after the point of helpful intervention. Any professional working with young people needs to have a full understanding of the complexity of the issues they face - whether that's in a dysfunctional home setting, living on the streets or a criminal, drugs or gangs context. Understanding and education of staff and policy makers is the first step to creating a system that is built around the needs of young people, rather than having a complicated, slow moving system that requires vulnerable youth who are in urgent need, having to jump through hoops just to get the help they so desperately need. Right now, too many of them fall between the cracks of the system.

She goes further, by explaining that if a professional is able to offer an individually tailored 'plan' for each young person, considering issues such as additional needs, trauma, or substance abuse, they can ensure that young person is given the opportunity to engage with the right services. This would enable and empower them to move into a healthy life that is based on independence, positive decisions and support – eradicating the need for crime to be a part of a survival plan for a homeless young person.

*"We currently have a system that makes getting help incredibly difficult and complicated. The sad reality is that our government is cutting funding to youth services across the board, rather than recognising the long-term impact of such neglect and it's knock on effects on society as a whole. Attitudes to young people who demonstrate need, (of any kind – homelessness, *NEET, mental health etc.) has to be addressed at the highest levels of our government in order to achieve any real, lasting change."*

(Elizabeth, Director London based Youth Charity).

Matt believes social care professionals should try to engage homeless young people in education and training or apprenticeship. Thus, they will have something to do and are not actually unoccupied and bored. Engaging them in some physical activities means they are too busy to find time for offending.

> *"It is about bonding and put them in activities. I am talking about isolation, like if you are free all the time and has nothing to do what you going to do? Generally speaking, one the guy we have here, I had spoken to him couple of times. I felt that he is in [volved in] crimes. One day I was talking to him and asked him, 'where you got this bike?' He didn't answer me. I have just said 'its fine, but it looks like a new bike'. Later he was open and told me 'I just found it there and I nicked it - anyways it's not his bike, it is a company bike, so I didn't harm anyone'. Young people, they think in a different way."*
>
> *(Matt, senior supported housing officer)*

Steven uses different constructive ways to help young people to avoid re-offending. Education, employment, training and positive activities are the main tools to stop homeless young people re-offending.

> *"I think [in] my role as a young person's advisor, I advise in areas like education, training, housing. Whatever they bring and present one of the things I've found is very effective is education, training and just giving thoughts to young people, that how they use their time constructively. How they make use of their daytime and also support them to begin to think about the peers they knock around [with] and what kind of influence they are around."*
>
> *(Steven, social worker – A London Borough)*

Noreen's strategies are to show homeless young people what all the alternative options are in order to help them to be busy in a progressive way through outlets such as education, apprenticeship or work. The main point is, that professionals have to create a tailored pathway through which the young person can reintegrate back into society by helping them understand the functionality of law and order and its benefits towards them and their community. Professional responsibilities are about raising aspirations in many of the homeless youth and providing responsible and inspiring role models.

"There are many cases [where] young people had committed further offences because they hadn't any aspirations in that time. It's about taking time, listening to what the problems are, asking the open-ended questions. Follow through the process, never promise a young person something that a professional/staff cannot deliver. So, the information I give you now may not help you currently, but one day might save your life."

(Noreen, supported housing officer)

Nelly also believes to show young people alternatives and try to get them out of that pattern or even show them the opportunities they have because some people don't even realise what opportunities they can avail as they are locked in this world of crime and it is all they know.

"My job is to show them that there is an alternative to what they are doing and that it will produce something better than what they are getting from re-offending. For example, I have had young women who have prostitution in their history. For them that was normal. As I said, they thought everyone did that and after working with them I got them to see that it's not meant to be like this and that instead of giving it away someone earns it and treats you with respect and they admire you for the person you are instead of the body you have then it's much more worthwhile."

(Nelly, young people psychiatrist)

If young people have positive role models, mentors, professionals in their lives, to whom they can look up to, trust and talk openly to without judgement, they will be more likely to stay within a support-based programme or pathway plan. They will commit not to programmes or ideals, but to positive relationships with people who show care and genuine commitment to them. However, the relationships of staff working with young people are a vital part of any effective intervention (Porteous, 2015). Young people want hope. They do not choose crime or homelessness – it is often because the circumstances in their life has become so difficult, hopeless or damaging that they turn to the only alternatives they feel are open to them. Mental health issues, lack of self-esteem, abuse and fear often cause them to make long lasting, detrimental decisions. If the professionals who come into their lives can show them, they are accepted, have value and can choose a different, more positive future – one that has hope, then this can herald the beginning of an independent life that has meaning and purpose for that young person. All they need is for someone to believe in them. To model to them how to believe in themselves (Littlechild, 2009).

Relationship of youth homelessness and crime

Twelve out of fourteen professionals strongly believed that youth homelessness and crimes are interconnected. It is important to be realistic about a homeless youth's need to survive and doing so without proper support, it seems logical that they are not opposed to engaging in criminal activity. Most of the professionals talked about the difficulties young people face, especially when they don't have stable accommodation. Bevan, Michelle, Emma, Steven, and Matt viewed this term in a broad way and placed significant emphasis on the importance of education, employment, training and apprenticeships. They discussed homelessness as being more likely to disrupt a young person's engagement in education and employment. When Bevan discussed the relationship between youth homelessness and crime, he stated:

> *"Absolutely... one hundred per cent, there is no ways around it in my mind. I have a young male, he used to steal food from a freezer in a garage and got arrested previously and he wasn't homeless. He was sofa surfing because he wasn't being looked after properly by the family. I reported him to social services but six weeks down the line there [was] no one and basically, he was having to feed himself and his younger brother, so he got caught stealing food from the freezer. You know something's wrong with the society that someone is having to do that for survival."*

Kate said it is completely interconnected. She has been working with homeless young people for the past twenty-one years and she was certain that homeless young people commit crime because of the need to survive.

> *"Mainly survival brings offending in homeless people like getting food, getting money, so yes petty crime does influence on homeless people. This is a homeless culture - to steal for survival."*
> *(Joseph, Probation officer Newham)*

> *"I would definitely say that there is a relationship and association between them but ultimately homelessness isn't just [being] without a home. It also means that you have no stability, normal income, employment or education, so more people that have nothing to do and are in that situation are more likely to get into trouble in my opinion.*

If you ask a young child, why they did something wrong ninety-nine per cent of them would say "because I was bored" and I think that really clearly highlights how boredom links with children getting themselves into trouble and committing crimes and just doing things that they shouldn't be doing."

(Emma, senior support worker connection at St Martins)

Elizabeth also replied that there is a strong affiliation between youth homelessness and crime. However, as a young person, he/she can be one without being the other. Not all homeless youth get involved in criminal activity and not all criminally active youth are homeless. Being homeless however, does up the ante in terms of the potential 'need' to commit a crime in order to be able to survive – food, clothing etc. It also contributes to the likelihood of a vulnerable youth living on the streets, being targeted by opportunistic gangs (e.g. especially in the case of young girls who are often chosen to smuggle drugs or weapons across the city as they are deemed less likely to be stopped and searched by police etc) who will take advantage of their helplessness and lack of visible support.

Furthermore, she added and emphasises that youth homelessness is a complex issue and every homeless young person has their own story, their own individual reasons for why they choose to engage with crime or not.

"Of course, it is interrelated. Having said that, I believe that homeless young people have more reason to engage in criminal activity than most, and when left to fend for themselves, what choice do we really offer them? For some, they may commit crime just too finally get access to the help they need, even if this help is then presented in the form of a prison sentence.

(Elizabeth - Director London Based Youth Charity)

"It is, but not for everybody. Survival in the streets bring [about] offending in young people, like getting food, getting money, so yes petty crime does influence on homeless people."
(Michelle CEO NCY)

O' Neil's also take this view of survival as being a key component for young homeless people committing crime. Youth offending, in general, is related to many areas of an individual's lifestyle and choices, but he also believes that being homeless and offending is interrelated as

individuals can want to survive (food, clothing, bedding) by whatever means they can include stealing, sex work or begging (This can sometimes be aggressive begging).

> *"Completely agreed that youth homelessness and crime are related when it comes to survival. Sadly, most of the young people get money or food by prostitution."*
>
> *(O Neil's senior co-ordinator Passage house)*

Noreen's also appears to agree with O Neil's point of view and stated, that the lack of empathy by others leads many young people to feel isolated. These feelings result in rebelliousness simply to gain some attention – which may also be interpreted as a cry for help. As young people, they are still learning about the world and themselves. They face challenging thoughts, such as who they are (identity), what value they have (self-esteem) or what role they have to play in this world (does the society they live in value them?). Many social cultures react to criminal activity and so, the young person, who, up until that point, has not been given much attention, takes the attention (albeit negative) and sees it as meeting a need they have for validation.

Only two of fourteen professional participants have opposing thoughts to those expressed above. They say that young people get involved in criminal activities because of their weak moral values and not just because of their living conditions or circumstances.

> *"London is a metropolitan, urban and capital city. I agree that urban surroundings trigger homeless youth to commit crime, but if you ask me, morality is the main factor in youth offending."*
>
> *(Jack, senior housing officer Centrepoint)*

> *"When I was growing up, if you did something wrong you expected not only a slap from your parents but also the people around you like your uncle or aunty and your neighbours. Everyone down the street, you address them as uncle or aunty. So, there is lack of community spirit as well. Definitely, it is more about morality."*
> *(Chris Social worker – A London Borough)*

From Jack and Chris's points of view, youth offending is a lack of a moral compass, rather than their situation of being homeless or exercising survival tactics or justification of their survival. They also think 'good upbringing' and community participation is very important in setting

young people on the right path to being law abiding citizens. He gave the example of the London riots. Apparently, one of the protestors was from a wealthy background. Similarly, these offenders wanted something for nothing, and they were for immediate gratification, instead of having to save up and then pay for it and own it legally.

He was not against owning a high-status vehicle such as a Rolls Royce, Limousine or Audi, but money wise it is not feasible for him. Talking speculatively in the event that if he did own such a vehicle and he was to park it up in the town, well behaved or moral people would simply say 'nice car' and might feel happy in a positive way as they admire it. On the other hand, envious people may attempt to break into it, damage it or steal it which is totally immoral. Many homeless young people do not feel accountable for their actions. Young people also had problems back in the 1970's or 1980's but the youth offending levels were not that high.

While historically youth crime levels may have been lower, there are complex reasons for this. Including, accurate records not being kept, support services not being fully functional, communities taking care of their own 'delinquent youth', without getting the authorities involved, mental health issues not being recognised, and even young people being charged as adults rather than children due to society's lack of recognition of adolescence as a key stage in a child's life as they progressed into adulthood. The reasons why a young person who is homeless commits crime, are as diverse as the individuals who commit those crimes. Of course, having strong positive role models will impact a young person's decisions and future, just as having negative role models will.

There is no doubt that if a young person feels secure, has a strong sense of belonging to a positive familial or peer group and has a sense of their own value, they will develop to be more emotionally and mentally and even morally resilient, make better choices and ultimately have a greater chance of having a future that is stable with opportunities for growth and advancement. Without these factors, a young person can quickly become disillusioned, angry and feel they have been forgotten. Some attention is better than none. Some recognition, even if it for a crime, is better than being invisible and forgotten. Most young people would not choose a life of crime. If, early on, they had been offered an alternative life to the one they are now living, most would choose a crime free life in which they are housed, fed and loved and cared for.

Future concerns about stable accommodation

This is one of the most common themes that emerged during the young people's interviews. In the professional's interviews, almost every professional expressed their concerns about the lack of stable and independent accommodation for young people. Eight out of fourteen participants addressed the fact that some young people in temporary accommodation may not be ready to live independently but are often moved on before they are ready. Sometimes young people do not have sufficient life skills or knowledge to take the heavy responsibility associated with independent living. Professionals who deal with housing benefits and work directly with pathway plans, claim that while 'housing young people', sounds attractive in the paperwork, the reality is starkly different. Not everyone is in an appropriate situation to be in stable accommodation. Michelle observed:

> *"What I find hard especially, is single homeless people. The systems set up in such a way that encourages young women to get pregnant because that's the only way to get a home quicker. It reinforces the negative behaviour and this behaviour is a disadvantage to them anyway. So, some people can cope being a single parent [and] still have a career to move forward [but] not everybody can. She can get a house, but she might not have the independent living skills and she has to look after a baby as well and she doesn't have support."*
>
> *(Michelle CEO NCY)*

Joseph said:

> *"Realistically, it varies person to person that he/she figures out what is beneficial. I would never discourage housing somebody, but I would like to make sure that they are ready to live independently."*

Jack believes that moving to temporary accommodation can be traumatic for the homeless young people. Most of the young people who had been in temporary accommodations outlined the issues regarding privacy, health and safety and hygiene. Young women we particularly unhappy about living in the male dominated hostels. He explained:

> *"The last place I worked wasn't good for the young people. If I was homeless, I wouldn't stay there. There was drug dealing, people yelling and shouting, dirt was everywhere, such a chaotic and unhealthy atmosphere to be honest. How can young people learn and get ready for the independent living in such type of atmosphere?"*

Bevan shared his concerns about housing provision where the staff focus is rent arrears and service charges. The young person is struggling for day to day survival and that becomes the priority for them rather than their own wellbeing. The young person has to manage both because if they don't safeguard their tenancy then they are going to be homeless. At the same time, the young person needs to survive. It becomes increasingly difficult for the young person to get the food they need and pay bills at the same time.

> *"Somehow meeting halfway helps them to budget properly. They have money to travel, they have basic food supplies and they pay their rent or rent arrears, but [need to learn] budgeting to teach them to control their environment, so people don't eat their food [and they] end up hungry. So, survival skills. It's about to be learning to be selfish in some respect."*
>
> *(Bevan, Senior Manager NCY)*

Three quarter of the professional's had major concerns around the government's strict housing policies regarding homeless young people. For professionals, the sign of success was securing accommodation for young people, through government, housing association or private rental sectors. Almost every professional recognised the fact that there are inadequate affordable housing options in the U. K's capital city. Also, private rented accommodations were considered unstable and often more expensive but were typically the only option available. Emma said, the only solution is to build more small flats for homeless youth who are currently living in shelters, hostels or temporary accommodation. The atmosphere in the shelters or hostels is not very good for the young people and they have an easy access to drugs, physical and sexual violence which placed extra risks."

> *"Homeless young people are not very good at literacy and aware of the route to finding and keeping housing, and also staff [are] sometimes not well equipped to offer the support that was required to homeless people."*
> *(Emily, Night worker Centrepoint)*

Elizabeth believes that bodies like schools and social services do try to help vulnerable young people. But because of funding cuts, understaffing, lack of resources and training, even the best intentioned within the youth services are struggling to be able to perform in a way that makes a real, lasting difference to issues such as youth homelessness. There need to be a radical

reimagining of the entire housing system for vulnerable young people. A different strategy, so that young people with various needs are being housed in stable accommodation where they feel safe, are being looked after according to their needs (mental, emotional and physical) and have specialist staff who can offer the right levels of support for as long as it takes in order to equip them to live independently. For most of us, even as adults, living in noisy, unsafe hostels or centres where we have little privacy and a strict regimented schedule (e.g. having to be out of that place by a certain time) would take a severe toll on our emotional and mental well-being. How then can we expect already vulnerable young people to thrive and develop independence in such environments?

Matt expressed his dissatisfaction with the policies related to housing young people. If a young person is homeless and he/she has to go to the housing unit to be assessed or if he/she is on the streets, then he/she has to go to a police station to be assessed. Essentially this system is flawed as a lot of young people have issues with the police or might they be involved in criminal activities so going willingly into a police station is not something they particularly want to do. It is not what they would consider a 'friendly' environment. In fact, in that environment it can be difficult for a young person to communicate effectively or talk about their private life problems openly.

> *"Its difficult situation for anyone to be in and it needs to be done in softer way. There must be a children's charity office where a young person can get all the information they need in an easy and friendly manner and they don't feel any pressure to talk about their problems. Where services specifically for young people or even a mental health worker should be appointed in every unit on a daily basis."*

Professionals also have to assess to ensure that the young person in question is in fact homeless and that they are not just trying to get the accommodation. They also deserve good behaviour, respect and equal treatment from the staff members.

Chris said

> *"I am not saying that [it's about] handing over the keys and letting them in without any paperwork. They have to go through a proper channel. Especially if someone is homeless, make sure wherever you put him/her [it] must be safe and please make sure that he/she is ready to live on his/her own. They must receive timely information, advice and guidance about benefits they're entitled to.*

Nelly talked about communication and transparency. She believes that everyone should be direct and straight up. If you can't communicate with agencies that will affect your young person, then you are not doing your job properly.

From Kate's point of view, young people are entitled to several stages of housing related provision and guidance in order to gain the life-skills to live independently. The other part of the problem is the universal credit, which has brought about a drastic change for eighteen to twenty-one-year olds.

> *"The big housing challenge of eighteen to twenty-one-year olds is the loss of benefit entitlement towards housing costs with limited exemptions. It possibly fuels the youth homelessness and probably rough sleeping."*

O Neil has mixed views about homeless young people concerns. He feels that the Homeless Reduction Act 2018 is a move in a more positive direction. It assists with homelessness protection. Improved advice and information are also welcomed into a system in order to make it simpler for those in need of housing. Unfortunately, not all councils / boroughs have accommodation suitable, such as supported housing, for homeless young people. There is a possibility that vulnerable young homeless people may be placed in inappropriate accommodation, without support, and as a result, return to the streets / rough sleeping. He has strong concerns about immigrant homeless young people in the future. He explained

> *"I don't think enough support is given to immigrants when coming in this country and when they turn eighteen so then they ask them to leave. I think that's wrong. When someone comes to this country at the age of fourteen or fifteen and spends more than a couple years, then that person has ties with community and relationships, and you ask them to leave then it's not positive. They come here for the reason they have been accepted but when they turn eighteen, they have to be out of the door, that's when they really need to look out."*

Ninety per cent of the professionals spoke clearly about the issue of getting accommodation as being a first step for many homeless young people and keeping that accommodation offered many challenges. Transitioning from being homeless to being in stable housing is a key challenge and there is a need for constant interaction to help young people adjust. Professionals mentioned that without staff support, young people breached tenancy agreements and created trouble that resulted in a speedy return to homelessness. There were significant fears expressed in the interviews, that many young people lacked the skills to maintain stable, independent

housing. This may be because most of the young people who are living in supported accommodation have been through traumatic life experiences which have deeply impacted them. In their early years many experienced neglect, mental, physical and emotional abuse. They also faced their parent's substance misuse, poor parenting skills and breakdown in their family relationships.

Why don't all homeless young people commit crime?

This theme is the crux of the thesis and the professionals to reply this theme with varying interesting answers. Elizabeth responded to it by saying that the fact that they (young people) are homeless does not necessarily automatically render them prone to criminality. The misperception is, that homeless youth are highly likely to resort to criminal behaviour. For many homeless youths however, the very reason they left the home context, was because they didn't feel safe, independent or free. These are all the very things they stand to lose if they are caught, arrested or charged with a crime and then imprisoned.

Having a criminal record will of course make achieving future goals (e.g. jobs) that much harder. For some the morality of such actions will of course be an issue which they will struggle to overcome even if they are desperate. They choose instead to endure the difficulty and humiliation of the systemic processes to be able to get benefits, housing or other help rather than resort to any kind of criminal activity. For some, this becomes an issue of ethics and faith – religion and the teachings one has grown up with will definitely have a huge impact of decisions like engaging in crime or not regardless of one's circumstances.

In Elizabeth's interview she touched on many aspects of young people's future accomplishments and potential. O' Neil appeared to agree with Elizabeth's views on this when he shared that young homeless people can be discriminated against and stereotyped, for several reasons, because of their situation.

> *"My experience has been that not all homeless persons commit crime due to their upbringing, beliefs / faith or wanting not to break the law and gain a criminal record. They're wanting to change their lifestyle, get away from the streets, and gain independence, education, training and support, that the individual is entitled to, can also be reasons why a rough sleeper does not commit crime."*

Emma thinks slightly differently to Elizabeth on this subject and expressed that in her opinion homeless young people are freedom seekers and do not want to go to prison. Because the prison rules are tight, and everyone has to follow them whether they want to or not.

> *"In my experience a large percentage of homeless young people have varying degrees of issues and problems. These include substance dependence or addiction; however, many do not commit crimes because they do not want to go to prison. They value their freedom."*

Noreen thinks as Emma - not all homeless people are criminals. The reality is a crime will get them arrested and potentially thrown in prison where, although free food and a bed will be provided, their freedom would be compromised. Moreover, there is always assistance provided for homeless people offering them access to shelters and food banks and allows them the freedom to move around as they wish.

> *"Homeless young people don't want to get arrested as they think going to the jail will affect their DBS and also, they don't want to compromise their liberty as they love to be on the streets."*

Matt thinks homelessness leads young people into crime and they often end up in the prison. Most of the homeless young people I spoke with, had had a bad experience and they feel prison is dangerous place. The environment in prison is crowded, here are hygiene issues, hostility, mental health issues, gangster mentality, and cleanliness issues. The main issue young people spoke about in relation to prison life revolved around privacy and health issues.

> *"Some of the young offenders I work with told me that there is nothing interesting in the jail. Life is so boring, no activities, no outings and people are very angry and rude in the prison. Even they argue on small issues which leads to fights. Some people they are very loud, and you can't even read. It was such a bad experience and they wouldn't prefer to end up in the prison."*

Michelle and Kate said that homelessness undoubtedly produces an atmosphere where offending can be learned behaviour. In hostels and homeless settings, young people meet other people already engaged in crime. Most of the time these other criminally involved peers act as criminal role models for those new to the homeless context. When they see these criminals having a good lifestyle it can influence them to engage with criminal activities themselves. However, in spite of the pressure and example their peers set for them regarding crime, some

young people rely on their self-control, morality or religious beliefs and are able to decide not to engage in criminal activities regardless of the apparent benefits or gains.

Kate comments:

> *"I always teach my young people the saying 'a man is known by the company which he keeps' isn't right. A man is known by the company which he avoids. The important things to assess what is right and what is wrong. In my point of view moral values, self-control and future goals stop people from getting into trouble."*

Bevan and Joseph have a strong belief around why not all homeless young people commit crime. They said morality comes with religion and if someone has strong religious values then that person would not commit crime. Religious people try to follow the law of the land or of their faith. The education and teachings of both Christianity and Islam has a strong influence on the people who read it and follow it. Now that teaching religion has been eliminated from state schools and early family training as the U.K has moved towards being a more secularised society, the morality that faith education offered if largely lost. For example, many of the young people I spoke with often go into cafés and steal sugar or teaspoons and do not see the moral implications of this action. Bevan commented:

> *"I can give you two strong young [as] examples [who are] are living with us. 'A' belongs to a Muslim background, he was involved in mugging, stealing, robberies and violent crimes. With some free time on A's hands, he decided to visit his father at a mosque. Curiosity led him to ask his dad about his religion. After knowing a little deeper he said his religion was a turning point in his life. I remember he was a violent kid and was in violent crime. Now, I never see him as a rude or violent. Other example is 'K', she is Catholic, and she hates stealing lying and disrespecting others. She goes to church every Sunday."*

Joseph shares that one of his clients he wasn't scared of the rules in the hostel, but he was scared of the day of judgement.

In the reply to the question 'why don't all homeless young people commit crime?', almost sixty per cent of the professionals (only 14 participants) mentioned the fact that the reason homeless youth refrain from offending or criminal activities is not because they fear societal punishment or the police. The major reason is their moral values and religious beliefs which encourages them to avoid criminal activities. Most of the professionals, when talking about their young

clients, mentioned how those clients perceived crimes in the first place. They said many homeless young people don't really bother about the rules and laws, as they tend to be very impulsive and imperceptive, and always seek immediate gratification.

Joseph highlighted the idea of prevention regarding morality and religion as in homeless hostels and shelters the Government must develop policies that educate young people about moral and religious education according to their beliefs. Most of the homeless young people belong to troubled families, one parent or no parents and they were deprived from moral and religious teaching. These types of reforms could bring a positive change.

On the other hand, about forty per cent of the professionals (only 14 participants) claimed that homeless young people are freedom seekers and do not like the prison life and this acted as a strong deterrent to involvement in criminal activities.

Summary

Overall, the professional's interviews yielded mixed results on some topics. However, the majority were agreed, that should young people have strong role models, safe, supportive, stable accommodation and were able to access the help they needed through systems that were tailored around them and their needs, (as well as being simpler and easier to access) most young people would be able to envision a future that was crime free, independent and had opportunities and hope. The professionals working in this field are often fighting too many fires on a localised level to be able to change the systemic or societal issues leading to youth homelessness or indeed the 'solutions' offered. But what was clear, is that every one of those working with these young people, believed that an alternative, better future was possible for every young homeless person regardless of what challenges they had now or in their past. However, the constraints with funding and amenities meant they were constantly doing their already difficult jobs with a metaphorical hand tied behind their backs.

Note: Strongly illustrating the challenges and crisis affecting the sector, shortly after the interviews were completed, New Choices for Youth were forced to close due to lack of funding.

Key themes in this chapter:

- Engaging with homeless young people

- Role and responsibilities of professionals
- Reason for youth homelessness victimisation and/or offending –

Many homeless young people are stigmatised and talk openly about their experiences of discrimination by others. Common misperceptions include being thought of as unreliable, lazy, criminal, dirty, dangerous, threatening, promiscuous and deserving of what they get in terms of punishment. These assumptions are largely based on little more than outdated and uninformed bias and sweeping generalisations. They reduce the young people to a dehumanising stereotype rather than seeing each young person as an individual with their own story and experiences that have led them to their current situation.

Discrimination/racism by staff and public – With recent events highlighting the existing discrimination and racism in British culture (Black Lives Matter protests of June 2020), it becomes obvious why 6 young people in this sample strongly felt that race and difference in any capacity made their lives and experiences even within systems supposed to help them (e.g. police) far more difficult. The sense that they were seen not as people of a certain race or religion, but as 'others' who were different made a huge impact on them and how they engaged with the systems around them. That pervading sense of 'them' and 'us' in interactions with those there to help or guide them (perhaps through a lack of awareness of unconscious bias as much as overt racism) actually served to further alienate these vulnerable young people, preventing them from getting the help they needed to create a positive future for themselves.

- Future concerns about stable accommodation
- Policies and services for homeless young people
- Relationship of homelessness and youth offending

CHAPTER 7

How far are theoretical notions of social control theory able to explain why not all young people commit crime?

I started with four initial questions to direct my research. I used my literature review to inform me about issues around the current state of knowledge and experience regarding homelessness. Through my young people and professionals interviews, what emerges is the complexities of their lives and how much of this begins within their primary household and family. The influence of family on future life choices cannot be minimised. What comes through clearly in my own data is the lived experiences of these young people. Many of them had lives that they would have considered normal in the sense that in spite of any dysfunction, it is normal for them – but not by societies standards. Family dysfunction, violence, rejection, abuse and the stigma attached to victims of these behaviours etc. They may have a family where there was drug dealing, prostitution, violence, rejection etc. This is what they lived with and genuinely bear the impact of that experience throughout their lives. They live what could be described as a very precarious or chaotic life, but their negative early life experiences have led them to believe these behaviours and abuses are 'normal', so they expect bad things to happen to and around them. This is what they know and expect throughout their lives (without intervention), as a direct result of the negative or destructive pattern being emulated around them in their early years.

Four main risk factors that occur before and after becoming homeless, which may lead them to commit crime, are:

- Anger Management issues (lead to low self-control)
- Stigma (self-fulfilling prophecy) prejudice etc
- Domestic abuse (less attachment with parents/guardian)
- Survival (shoplifting, prostitution, stealing)

According to my data findings, I decided to employ social control, bond and labelling theory to see that how far theoretical notions of these theories are able to explain why not all homeless young people commit crime.

Background of criminological theories:

The phenomenon of youth offending is not new. For more than two centuries, researchers and criminologists have been exploring this issue. Throughout these centuries of study, criminologists have built a collection of theories, which are collective set of thoughts and ideas that endeavour to describe and anticipate both when and why youths commit crime. Simply put, theories are the ideas used to explain realities. They represent the perspectives of criminologists whose work develops from specific contexts defined by parameters such as family history and geographical location. This is significant in fully understanding that theories are attached to real life experiences. Therefore, as social orders change, so do the experiences of its individuals. New practices create new thoughts, which subsequently develop new theories (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

Empirical testing of a theory depends on the implication of the examinations it produces. The central idea focuses on the role of social control theories and how they work to prevent young people from engaging in criminal activities. In addition, they examine how far the theoretical notion of social control and labelling theory is able to explain why not all young people engage in committing crime. These inquiries are noteworthy as well as carrying significant weight, as they are fundamental in building up a picture of the causation and avoidance of offending. There is insufficient proof to date to either affirm or negate the two theories being referred to by several authors. Whilst the facts may confirm that there is no clear proof as far as approving or negating these speculations goes, what is assured is that it will remain uncertain if researchers do not engage in rational discussion through empirical research. In this chapter, I will explore the question of how far theoretical notions of social control and labelling theories are able to explain the reasons why not all young people commit crime?

Hirschi (2009) expresses that the field of criminology is loaded with theories clarifying misconducts and examples of offending. A key element theories offer is the vital dependence on the facts surrounding the criminal case or event. However, with the abundance of criminal theories (particularly contemporary theories), the result has often been the addition of an increasing myriad of questions rather than answers when it comes to investigating crimes, and why and how they occurred. These questions emerge, to some degree, because of the dependence on fundamental realities of criminal culpability. Questions including: What types of young people were most likely to have participated in criminal acts? Is this result similar for

all violations or just specific kinds of misconducts? Is stigma a contributing factor in criminal actions? What are the key components when investigating youth crime?

Theories offered in order to explain events and delinquency can further be divided into more specific group categories (e.g. why do males engage in more criminal offences than females?) versus the individual (e.g. For what reason(s) does one individual participate or engage in crime given the opportunity, when another does not?

In the effort to clarify anti-social behaviour, there exists an open discussion over the requirement for, and suitability of general reasons for misconduct and deviance. Some theories (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Agnew 1992) offer an interpretation of crime that would be better equipped to clarify a full range of practices, taking the experiences and voices of people from all backgrounds into consideration. Different theories focus on limited conduct designs. Ogle et al. (1995), examines the theory of destructive practices in a females development stages. However, the question of 'can a general theory be produced' cannot presently seem to be addressed formally or explicitly (Akers 1991).

Stigma is a major contributing factor of youth offending and increasing incidences of mental illness. It can deeply affect their ability to perform positively in social relationships. Many young people reported emotional reactions such as feeling annoyed, upset, neglected, and depressed as a result of stigmatising experiences (Corrigan and Kleinlein, 2005). Homeless youth is one of the vulnerable group who face stigma in everyday life this can be resulted in the shape lower self-confidence and self-control, frustration, self-harm, isolation, depression and anger. In this research finding "Labelling theory" is very useful in explaining young people offending, causes of deviant and anti-social behaviour in society. Labelling theory well defined that how a young person be drawn to misconduct as opposed to morality.

Edwin Sutherland called for more comprehensive reflections by theorists regarding the (criminal) event and all violations in criminological theories (Vold and Bernard 1986). Sutherland proposed that most of the criminological theories up to that point had concentrated specially on the lower class and types of offending and those future theories ought to try to explain and incorporate a wider range of criminal practices (Sutherland 1973). Consequently, the field of criminology gradually became more responsive to the criteria used to characterise crime and the estimation of criminal activities. Experimental approvals of criminal theories have started concentrating on all type of criminals (Piquero, 2016)

The capacity of a single theory to explain all types of misconducts is still in doubt. However, general theories, such as Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) low self-control theory and (Sampson and Laub, 1990) developmental theories and life-course theories are well known in contemporary course readings (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

Travis Hirschi is a well-known name in leading control theorist's circles. Through his book 'Causes of Delinquency' (1969), he changed the control theorist's worldview by presenting the community-based ideas of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Bond theory, as it has come to be known, strengthens the social mental (connection, duty, and conviction) and social (association) components to explain the individual behaviour (Hopkins-Burke, 2014).

Hirschi did not p**r**opose the directional or social position of these components and acknowledges there might be connections between them (Shoemaker 1996). There are differences, though, in the explanation and the significance of the distinctive components. Shoemaker (1996) states that no component is supposedly more vital than another, while others (Williams and McShane, 2016) express that attachment is the most vital component. However, bond theory shows support for the differential significance of the processes (Gibbs and Giever, 1995). Bond theory has been referred to as a well-known criminal theory, yet it is not without its criticism.

> *"There is a chicken and egg problem. Is delinquency being a product of weak attachment to cultural norms or is weak attachment a product of delinquency?"(Newburn, T, 2014, p 240).*

Different studies of bond theory argue that it gives better interpretations of offences performed by females and minor offenses as opposed to explain a wide range of crimes and criminals. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) claim that low self-control is a product of insufficient or poor ties with the society/community.

Social Control Theory

> *"Control theories have a formidable pedigree. They can be traced back through Durkheim to Hobbes and to Aristotle: 'It is men not to be satisfied the fact is that the*

greatest crimes are caused by excess and not by necessity" (Downes, Rock, and McLaughlin, 2016, p 204).

For a long period of time, sociologists, analysts, researchers and criminologists have attempted to shed light on criminal behaviour. An unquestionable explanation has not yet surfaced in translating youth offending, even after a long struggle between sociologists, psychologists and criminologists (Newburn, 2013).

Intensive examination of literature suggests there is comprehensive support and affirmation that offending is the outcome of a variety of variables (Clinard and Meier, 2016). Thus, a few sociologists have adopted an integrative strategy when it comes to youth offending. There was a need for a comprehensive theory. One, which would help to explain the reasons during development that are behind why a young person develops into an offender. It poses the question; what encourages them to continue in their criminal acts?

Whilst trying to exemplify delinquency, Travis Hirschi created "Control Theory" and "Social Bond Theory." The relationship between homelessness and criminal activity therefore sits quite comfortably between the ideas behind both 'social and control' theories. Both theories enable the raising and exploration of vital questions in a contextual manner around why certain young people commit crime whilst homeless and others do not, as well as why some later cease to engage in criminal activities and others continue it as a lifestyle, based upon both need and want.

"You might consider the question 'What causes crime?' as the most central or important in the study of criminology. Control theory, however, stems from a different question and makes its case that the question 'Why don't the majority of us commit crime more often?' is the better starting point, rather than focusing only on deviance and seeking to explain the causes of crime through the lens of conformity. As the question implies, the central argument of control theory is that crime is a normal occurrence and is something that should be expected in the absence of adequate controls. Control theory also takes a rather different view of human nature than some other criminological theories. Simply, put, control theory tends to assume that human conduct is driven by desires and needs and that, therefore, we are all predisposed to deviance. Social order is maintained by bringing such desire under control. The central concern of control theory is conformity rather than deviance." (Newburn, 2013 p. 234).

Hirschi discusses four elements of the social bond. Starting with the element 'commitment', which he describes as 'the actual fear of law breaking'. Secondly, he addresses the element of 'involvement', which he describes as 'the act of participating in what's deemed to be conventional acts' i.e. taking part in healthy activities, day to day activities that would divert someone from committing a crime. Thirdly, the element of attachment, described as 'the level of affection, strong ties that a person has with others'. The final element then is belief, which Hirschi describes as 'being highly dependent on social sentiments/impressions'. The stronger the social bond, the less likely it is that youth will commit crime (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

Gottfredson and Hirschi present a theory, which they consider equipped for clarifying misconducts, whilst concentrating on low self-control. Whilst self-control is comprised of a mixture of characterising elements, these components come together to frame one general dimension. Self-control theory articulates that people with high self-control do not get in trouble/misconduct quickly, whilst those with low self-control are very likely to perpetrate crime (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). General Theory (self-control theory), was produced with the aim of being a "comprehensive" theory, one that relates to everybody, irrespective of sexual orientation, nationality, age, social status, or culture (Downes, Rock, and McLaughlin, 2016).

Cohen (1995) explains that criminological theories can be divided into two parts in order to gain a deeper understanding of criminal behaviour. Firstly, why does offending vary between different groups/gangs, setting/place, and periods/phases? Secondly, why do some young people commit crimes, and others do not? The most significant contribution in advancing the social control theory was made by Travis Hirschi, who asserted that all acts of delinquency and anti-social behaviour, primarily occurs when an individual's ties to society are weak or broken entirely (Newburn, 2013).

General Strain theory

Background

Experts and sociologists frequently reference the period of adolescence as a tumultuous time. This often leads to young people engaging in anti-social behaviour at an extremely vulnerable time in their lives (Goffredson and Hirschi, 1990; Moffitt, 1993; Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi,

2017). General strain theory supports adolescence as a time of chaos, struggle, anxiety, anger and frustration (Agnew 1997). Given that adolescence is often a time of 'feeling between' childhood and adulthood, these reactions cannot be considered unexpected. Durant (1995) and others made clear through their research that the chaos the young person experiences during this time can lead to the development of mental health conditions as a reaction to the stress the adolescence experiences. The breakdown of mental health and other factors can be a leading contributing cause of negative, life altering consequences, including engaging in criminal activity. For vulnerable young people, engaging in criminal activity in this period of their lives can not only expose them to exploitation, but also put them at greater risk of more long-term consequences, which can then affect every part of their lives as they progress through adulthood (Elliot, 1994; Farrington, 1989; Moffitt, 2017).

Whilst general strain theory appears to be essential in explaining youth offending, some empirical studies suggest that the theory still has room for improvement. In order to answer these criticisms, Agnew (2001, 2006) re-examined the original version of general strain theory.

General Strain Theory

Strain theory as a term traces its roots back to 1893 and Durkheim in relation to describing the breakdown of clarity and rules around behaviour in society. Merton then took Durkheim's idea of 'anomie' further as did many other researchers, seeking to define the causation of various dysfunctions in society, including crime. There are some criticisms of this theoretical approach, including Bernard (1984) and Agnew (1987, 2006) who point out that strain theory is centred on the person rather than the other factors involved. Agnew went on to add to the concept of strain theory in an effort to round it out. This then became known as 'General Strain Theory'. General strain theory is useful for understanding why a person acts the way they do.

Currently, general strain theory focuses on the relationships and connections that impact a person negatively, holds them back from achieving, undermines or indeed involves the abuse or neglect of another. Factors such as economic stress, difficult life circumstances and pain (e.g. loss of a loved one) can be contributors to a young person choosing to engage in acts of criminality. Agnew's (1992) criticism highlights the drawbacks and strain theory's inability to achieve positively valued objectives – this criticism focuses on the disconnections that occur

between desires, actual events and genuine achievements and outcomes. Agnew goes on to explain that often individuals will simply pursue to escape from adverse situations or circumstances beyond their control. They attempt to manage the situation themselves through negative means such as drug abuse or crime, or indeed use violence as a means by which to feel dominant and in control in another sphere of their interactions with wider society. He also pointed out that whilst one evident strain may not produce negative behaviour, the simultaneous occurrence of life altering events or negative situations produces a strain and can therefore lead to anti-social behaviours. When put in the context of youth homelessness, it becomes more obvious how the various stressful situations and daily issues the homeless youth deals with, can culminate in behaviours such as crime.

Merton's Anomie Theory

Following Durkheim's Anomie theory, Merton re-examined the legacy of his thoughts to explain various delinquent acts in the U.S.A. Merton followed Durkheim's ideology and proposed to build up a sociological explanation for offending conducts in society. Accordingly, he expressed that the main objective lies in discovering how social structures apply a clear weight upon specific people in the society to take part in unconventional, rather than conventional conducts (Merton, 1938). He later stated that we have a sociological perspective (1968).

Durkheim's theory was largely based on one type of social deviance – suicide. Through sociological theories, Durkheim and Merton both attempted to explain social issues but had three key differences in their findings. Firstly, Durkheim said that deviance arises when the social rules breakdown. Conversely, Merton expressed that deviant conduct might be viewed sociologically as an indicator of disconnection between socially prescribed ambition and socially organised opportunities for understanding these aspirations (1968). Secondly, Durkheim described anomie as the failure of society to control or restrain objectives and to offer suitable standards to follow e.g. normlessness. Conversely, Merton sees the breakdown in the social structure as the reason for anomie, occurring particularly when there is an intense disconnection between social norms and objectives and the socially structured capacities of individuals to act in accordance with them (Merton, 1968). Thirdly, Durkheim focuses on social deviance and applies his theory to issues within it e.g. suicide. However, Merton is firmer

about different types of deviance and misconducts as compared to a single factor of deviance (Cullen, 1984; Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

The emphasis of Merton's theory was to explain anomic society (dis-organised society). A society may become unbalanced if the social and cultural structures (including social objectives and institutional means) are not aligned, and social objectives are universally applied whilst the means are unequally shared within that social structure.

The latter refers to the circumstances in which the social objective is held at the most elevated position, while cultural means are consigned to a relatively low position. In such circumstances, gratification is likely to come to people who could not deal with it effectively, either because access to the means is missing or access to the means are ineffectual. Merton stated that the individuals who constantly suffer defeat will, naturally, work to change the rules of the game (Merton, 1964).

Merton was significantly instrumental in how anomic culture and the inequalities within it are understood. In an anomic society, individuals will most certainly struggle and face hardship and disappointment, which will lead them to act out in ways that society would deem deviant. However, it was through the work of Cohen (1995) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960), that the difference of subcultures and their significance was explored.

Cloward and Ohlin's theory of Delinquent Subculture

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) expanded on Merton's ideas around the disparity of objectives and means when they discovered the development of male offending subcultures in the lower social class. They found that young people who connected with violent gangs did so in the pursuit of success. Because their legitimate path to success is blocked, they turn to unlawful means of achieving it in the form of offending (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). However, they pointed out that Merton ignored the way that the distribution of opportunities for progress is not accessible to everybody. They additionally referenced Cohen's idea that adjustment issues can produce strains for people. These people then gather under the commonality of a situation or strain to gain support or find a solution. This gathering in turn leads to the creation of delinquent subcultures and offending.

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) suggested that people in society try to meet or fit in with social desires or rules and that such activities often involve significant stress and hindrance due to

disadvantaged circumstances. Moreover, they expressed that developing socially recognised goals under conditions in which conformist means are not accessible, is the requirement for rebelliousness and offending, as predictable reactions to strain or adjustment issues. They then applied those essential themes to shed light on the issue of lower-class youth offending and development of delinquent subcultures. These attention-oriented issues affect lower-class groups and are critical for the young people (1960).

> *"When an individual feel that he/she is not a successful person in life, going forward, he/she may blame his/her failure on society or on him/herself. If he/she blames society, he/she will likely become alienated from it and consider its rules irrelevant, especially if he/she believes he is capable and deserving of success" (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017 p 129).*

They observed that there are structural and cultural barriers to overcome to achieve objectives in this specific group, which influences the strain, tolerating these characteristics and appears to be much more upsetting (Cloward and Ohlin 1960). With these conceptualisations, Cloward and Ohlin further explain that lower-class young people who face such strains interact with each other through a long and complex process. It is this which may then encourage them to withdraw from the sentiment of help from the established system of norms (1960). With the assistance of other people who share similar issues, people may embrace ill-conceived plans to make progress. Cloward and Ohlin went on to argue that the development of a delinquent subculture as an answer for an adjustment issue is likely simply a result of people ascribing their disappointment because of the unfair system instead of themselves.

Having defined the source and procedure of framing the delinquent subculture, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) presented another vital idea: ill-conceived means. This idea helps to recognise three distinctive delinquent subcultures: criminal, clash, and retreatism subcultures (Regoli, Hewitt and DeLisi, 2017). The methods contain two elements: Firstly, the learning environment for obtaining required skills and qualities to perform a role, and secondly, the opportunity structure that empowers people to achieve the role (Cloward, 1959). A criminal subculture develops in combined neighbourhoods where traditional values and delinquent values exist together. In addition, the diverse ages of offenders are pooled as well. Unless those inhabiting the criminal and conformist roles are well bonded, strong criminal roles can't develop (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). As the criminal roles build up, adult offenders become role models to teenagers to follow, and in the meantime, offer illegal opportunities to succeed. A strong

example of this is gang culture, where one must prove their allegiance through criminal acts and conform to the norms and values as dictated by the gang leaders. Gangs also offer a sense of community and protection that vulnerable young people crave due to the loss of more conventional sources of these vital elements of secure development.

The theory suggests that young males from a lower-class background confront strain due to lack of lawful means with acknowledge social objectives. Rather than basing presumptions on past speculations, they raised the point that illegal opportunities are not equally accessible to all young people who are victims of such types of strain (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). Therefore, the individuals who end up prominently associated with the criminal subculture are those for whom ill-conceived prospects are more readily available. As regards the individuals who respond with extreme violence, for many, both the legal and the criminal means are closed off to them regardless of whether or not these youths have physical capacity or courage to succeed. Finally, for the individuals who lack these means, it becomes a double failure, and the retreatism subculture becomes conspicuous. The key contribution of Cloward and Ohlin was to bring the open-door structure into strain theory, to explain why some stressed lower-class young people end up engaged with some sort of offending behaviour. (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

Labelling theory

Theoretically, it is important to develop a conceptual model of this complex social problem, requiring that we identify and understand the variety of factors contributing to the stigmatisation of homelessness. From a practical standpoint, knowledge of these attitudes can help direct policymakers who are seeking public support for initiatives that concern the homeless population. Frank Tannenbaum (1938) was one of the first sociologists to recognise the negative impact of the application of stigmatising labels. He coined the term "dramatisation of evil", in which he argued, "officially labelling someone as a delinquent can result in the person becoming the very thing he is described as being".

Labelling theory generally predicts that a punitive response to delinquency promotes future delinquency (Lemert, 1951). Lately Howard Becker (1963) stated that society might in fact create further deviance through setting parameters around 'acceptable behaviour' and labelling any who do not comply as outsiders.

Therefore, a deviant is someone who has been labelled as such by some segment of society, namely those whose social position gives them the power. Similarly, Tannenbaum (1938), Lemert (1951), and Becker (1963) propose that the application of a stigmatising label essentially attacks an individual's sense of self and encourages them and others to expect the 'deviant' characteristics. In essence, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Cullen & Agnew (2011) mentioned that a person is inclined towards offending when h/she has gone through a stigmatising process, (putting a label on him/her), and the creation of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Stigmatising and labelling leave a greater impact on self-credentials, respect and objectives than the misconducts themselves. It's not only the actor alone who is responsible, but the reactors who are also having an impact on it. Understanding labelling's effects could be meaningful for policies within social and institutional settings. During early and adolescent life experiences, young people are still growing, establishing their self-identity, and at times, this may include engaging in anti-social behaviour or misconducts.

Labels are unfairly distributed, as some young people are more likely to be labelled than others are. According to Heimer & Matsueda (1994), criminal labels are more likely to be placed on the weak, poor, and destitute, especially young people given their age and lack of authority. Delinquent labels are generally placed on existing stereotypes of criminality such as those in the lower class, minorities, young people and those living under poor circumstances (Farrell and Swigert, 1988). As soon as a young individual feels that people see him/her as an offender, it triggers him/her to engage in criminal acts and live up to the role one perceives is expected of him/her. Therefore, a negative label can be significantly harmful for a young person as they develop and feel the judgement and negative expectations of society through these labels (Cechavicute & Kenny, 2007).

The staff at Centrepoint labelled Melisa as an angry child from her early days of schooling and she constantly faced problems because of this label. She was later diagnosed with anger management issues, which have contributed to the negative label, giving the impression of a difficult or bad person. This is an excellent example of when a self-fulfilling prophecy takes place and she in turn responded in the way people labelled her.

Assumptions of guilt in police interactions, as well as issues around early domestic abuse and staff's attitudes all have a significant part to play when it comes to these young people. Add to this negative stereotype, the issue of homelessness and you find young people who are quickly jaded and disillusioned with the system and the society in which they are struggling so hard to

belong. In many cases young people 'rebel' by engaging in risky behaviour such as gangs, crime and prostitution because they have not found life made any easier through obeying the rules. They therefore begin to 'go along with' what they perceive as society's low opinion of them and end up in a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' situation. It is easier in many ways for a young person to engage in the negative behaviour that is 'expected of them' rather than strive to excel when there is so much systemic opposition for them to overcome.

Terry, John, Willano, James, Stephanie and Steve were labelled as drug dealers. Most of them believed that society's behaviour towards young people and the homeless population creates criminals. Terry, James and Stephanie said that labelling causes an increase in individuals fulfilling the negative label.

Matsueda (1992) explains that genuine internalisation of a negative label generates a "delinquent as self" as an identity. When a young person assumes this kind of identity, they will then begin to gravitate towards similar peers. These relationships form a new reference group of those similar youth (Glaser, 1956). This new youth reference group creates its own rules for group behaviour, ways of life and beliefs. It is within this environment that justifications, reasons and encouragement is offered in order to participate in offending.

In a group of criminal peers, a negative label may be viewed as a 'badge of honour'. (Heimer & Matsueda, 1994). Terry prides himself as skilled at stealing bikes and selling drugs. He is proud of being known as 'The Boss' amongst his peers and considers himself a 'smart criminal'. Labels have tremendous impact in influencing how peers view an individual. Terry stated:

> *"In my circle everybody knows that I could steal or rob in a best way. (Laughs) Leader innit?"*

For some of the young people, reputation is also a solid personal characteristic to get prominence, because it is a source of power, money and pride.

Self-Control Theory

> *"Social control theory can be traced back to the 17th century philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. In his book 'Leviathan', he argued that man is 'an aggressive, argumentative, shy creature in search of glory who would naturally use violence to master other men,*

their wives and their children'. This profile referenced the quality of all men, not simply criminals. In Hobbe's view, men were basically bad, and to create order, the state must strike fear into their hearts and punish them severely when they broke the law" (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017, p 134).

Modern criminologists and criminalists later developed upon Hobbes's assertions and created the social control theory. Later Gottfredson and Hirschi changed the focus of his past origins of control theory from the social bond theory to self-control theory. In 'A General Theory of Crime', they built up a general theory, which highlights the path, needed to examine a wide range of deviant acts. At the central point of their theory, low self-control is the personal reason for a criminal act and that low self-control is sufficient for clarifying all misconducts, in all circumstances, as well as many types of conduct that are not endorsed by the state. Hirschi and Gottfredson's theory has received impressive consideration since its commencement, with some examination supporting the connection between low self-control and criminal practices (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

Hirschi and Gottfredson combined aspects of other scholar's work to frame the general theory of crime, taking ideas from rational choice theory, routine activities theory, and other biological and psychological based social theories of crime. The two theories mentioned above, contrast what is accepted to be the crucial inclination towards crime; nonetheless, both theories are based on the best parenting skills towards their children. (Siegel and McCormick, 2006). They concentrated on internalized control as opposed to social control. The general theory of crime offers shared traits with the previous theory through its attention on the role of child rearing in instilling self-control during childhood (Hopkins-Burke, 2014).

Obviously, they might contend that those with low self-control are arrogant or rude. This may be the reason for them to see themselves denied or destitute because they are less inclined to consider the endeavours others have applied in gaining their achievements. Besides, scholars working with the idea of relative deprivation regularly link it to anger (Messner, 1988). This kind of reaction is something also connected with low self-control. Thus, the low resilience for "dissatisfaction" may imply that those with low self-control will be easily "angered" or disappointed by their economic status and their inclination for "simple or straightforward delights or wishes" and "at this very moment" instant introduction may result in them being more prone to carrying out wrongdoing/offending. Both financial disappointment and relative deprivation might simply be the consequence of low self-control meaning their relationship to

offending is spurious (Downes, Rock, and McLaughlin, 2016; Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

Individuals with a tendency to get involved in criminal activities are often thought to have a lack of self-control. Theorists believe that this lack of self-control may be traced back to an individual's childhood where the initial signs of irregular / deviant behavior arise. For people with limited self-control, acts of deviant behavior will likely continue throughout their life (Lily et al., 1995; Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). Now, whilst initially seeming in contrast to the theoretical perspective (that people do not change), the theory does suggest that rates of offending do decrease with age. This is not due to individuals gaining self-control, because people do not change. Instead, their circumstances change and so do opportunities to commit or participate in criminal activities and/or deviant behavior (Piquero and Bouffard 2007; Siegel and McCormick, 2006). Both Gottfredson and Hirschi's perspective is that human nature is one of being self-centred, greed, and gratification. Based on this postulation, criminal acts do not stem from a simple materialistic desire for something, nor are they a derivative of external influence. They are simply inherent, basic human predispositions. Humans are naturally driven toward anti-social behaviour or misconducts and those who do not, simply have self-control.

When someone talks about or defines self-control, the first important question to ask is 'what causes low self-control or why does a person lose control or engage in displaying certain behaviours?' As indicated by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), the most vital and primary factor is parental training/socialisation. They assert that parents must effectively socialise and monitor their children in the early formative and more receptive years of life. This may include key learning such as imposing healthy boundaries, mutual respect, measured discipline where needed and providing a safe environment to learn and grow.

Early parental supervision either hinders or encourages the improvement of self-control. It depends how the parents supervise their children. Social control theory suggests that individuals who have strong positive attachment with their parents and society are less likely to be involved in crimes (Hirschi, 2009; Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

Hirschi claims that the Parent-child attachment is most powerful factor in youth offending, and this relationship must be strong and bonded (Hirschi, 2009; Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi 2017). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) linked criminal acts/behaviours with some components of self-control, such as, criminal acts offer instantaneous gratification of desires, those with low self-

control are at risk of being involved in offending and their orientation is contributing to crime. While offending acts can offer instant gratification of 'wants' as opposed to needs (i.e. expensive things without money) individuals who do not have self-control will be short tempered and reckless (Piquero, 2016).

The young people interviews conducted as part of the research strongly reflected the findings above. Many attributed the main reason for their homelessness to issues of domestic violence and family conflict. Of the eighteen participants interviewed, twelve described the abusive and 'nightmarish' home lives they had experienced as children. Biological and stepparents perpetrated much of this abuse, which often resulted in the child/young person being forcibly made to leave their home. Conflict within the family unit was often a result of substance abuse, sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, and transgender), sexual harassment, and poverty and gang affiliation/involvement.

The strongest examples of these scenarios were the stories from Melisa, Ben, Abdul, Louise, Terry, Alisha, Sam, Jana, James and Wilano. Each of these participants described growing up without adequate parental supervision or attachment in situations of domestic violence and abuse. This abuse took the form of physical abuse at the hands of a parent and/or sexual abuse by a parent's partner or parental/guardian drug abuse. Therefore, leaving this disrupted and abusive home environment was the only option for the young victim to be able to escape and seek safety. Having escaped the abuse simply led to a myriad of issues for the young person, including poverty and homelessness. Given the lack of adequate parenting these young people had experienced, they were left with little or no option but to engage with crime as a means to an end. For many, parental substance abuse created an unsafe, precarious home environment. One that was not trained to deal with allegations of sexual abuse, as with Melisa's case. When she had voiced her experiences of physical abuse at the hands of her stepfather, she was not believed. The suffering she endured affected her ability to excel in college and caused the breakdown in her relationship with her mother. The violence in her home escalated resulting in her failing in college and having to leave the family home and become homeless.

The notion that young people become homeless to simply rebel or escape rules and regulations laid down by caregivers is a misnomer. For many young people it is a desperate attempt to escape life-threatening situations. Leaving home can feel like the only viable option at the time. Most young people do not have the emotional and mental resilience they require to access help

from a complicated social welfare system. The result being that they find themselves alone and homeless, facing no option but to engage with criminal behaviour in order to survive.

Hirschi and Gottfredson proposed that criminal acts are stimulating, dangerous and exciting. Therefore, individuals who experience the ill effects of low self-control tend to be brave and physical. Furthermore, offending offers less benefits and needs little expertise or preparation and as is the case with most criminal acts, they frequently result in the pain or inconvenience of a victim (Akers, 2009). Following this line of thought, individuals with low self-control will be emotionless or heartless to the needs and feelings of others and more prone to take part in wrongdoing because it satisfies their essential and immediate desires or needs (Hirschi, 2009; Mischel, Shoda, and Rodriguez, 1989). Simply, the attributes of low self-control include a lack of patience, cold-heartedness, courage and a need for quick satisfaction (Funder and Block, 1989).

Funder and Block (1989), argue that different parts of life will be critically influenced by low self-control. For example, training, occupation, sports, relational connections, physical wellbeing and financial wellbeing. This is considerably difficult for the individuals who do have low self-control because of the influence of these characteristics over the life path, and those who get involved in crime will have a hard time calculating the potential adverse outcomes of their conduct or choices (Hirschi, 2009). It is a fact that when an individual struggles with low self-control throughout their lives, they will probably engage in misconduct or acts that are can be construed as bad behaviour, for example, drugs, alcohol, rape, robbery, attempting or committing murder, knife crime, fighting, violence etc.

Social control Theory and Homelessness

In general strain theory, Agnew (1992) embraces a wide approach that stresses how negative relations can lead to offending and misconduct. These negative relations include the inability to accomplish well-appreciated objectives (unemployment) and the introduction of negative impact (homelessness). Agnew (2001) proposes that labour market issues, the inability to accomplish financial objectives and homelessness (Cernkovich et al., 2000) might be forms of strain connected to criminal action or offending. Moreover, he believes that youth homelessness will significantly affect future misconduct. He recommends that homelessness might be partial and is clearly connected with low social control (Hagan and McCarthy 1997).

Social control theory was made well known by Hirschi (1969), who depicted it by referencing four key components; attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). Homeless youth as a subgroup generally consists of young people who have runaway or been kicked out from their homes, as well as who spend a few or the most of their time in different public areas. Literature on homelessness suggests that the homeless youth subculture is comprised of a diverse group of young people from pre-teenagers to those in their mid-20s. Many have dropped out of education or attend sporadically, do not have employment and little option of gaining qualification through training, or struggle to maintain any employment they are able to secure. 'Street youth' can apply to those who are on the streets during the day, who may return to a home in the evening. (Shane 1996; Whitbeck and Hoyt 1999).

They stated that they might be living on their own without anyone in a role of authority paying due attention or care, to having the option to return home for sleep. Perceiving the heterogeneity of this population, around 18 respondents (11 young male, 07 female) were recognised in view of four sampling criteria:

1. 17 to 21 years old
2. They must be living in supported accommodation
3. Living in a shelter/homeless organisation in the past 6-12 months.

The recruitment of this sample was according to my research question. It involved vulnerable homeless young people (Ryan and Deci 2008).

Social control theory is a term broadly used to help understand youth offending. As per Shelden and Brown (2002), misconduct continues when a youth's ties to society are poor or broken, particularly bonds with family, school, and different organisations. At the point when this happens, the youth is probably going to look to create common bonds with different groups, including gangs; whilst keeping in mind the objective to get their needs met. Being destitute and additionally in a prolonged state of vagrancy can be shown through the individual's absence of ties to a social institution. An absence of connection to social services such as work/job/school can be an issue in destitute populaces. Young people who are long term homeless often lose ties to family and other societal support networks, have less opportunity for employment and frequently live in poverty.

Hirschi clarifies that a lessened bond between individual and social groups are an immediate consequence of an individual having the capacity to engage or connect as that individual now

relies upon himself as opposed to others. Likewise, the lack of commitment regarding societal gatherings and social standards that homeless face are what isolate that individual from the 'normal' working class. This gap slowly increases in accordance with the duration of the time of homelessness. Acts of homelessness and public order violations committed by homeless when seen from Hirschi's viewpoint could be understood as acts rising from desperation and necessity rather than a statement of morality as a substantial portion of these wrongdoings are committed for survival deviant.

Finally, fetishism of money is viewed as the most critical perspective when looking at this subject, regardless of anything else in the modern age. Money is considered the measure of a person's success, achievement, and esteem; its strength has created a consumerist culture, socialising society and its members to become consumers. Also defined in social bond theory, are groups of people, (or what may be classed as social organisations'), sharing roles and norms and values, tailor-made to meet crucial human needs. These social establishments are found all through an individual's domain, including schools, the work environment, family, and different regions of social interaction. It is when these social foundations crash that the individual turn to a substitute means of survival, often going against normative societal values. Those at risk of homelessness frequently suffer a high financial stress.

People develop and discover their desires in everyday life. Awareness and pursuit of these can draw out the best in individuals. However, when those desires are frustrated for any reason, an individual may replace them with more achievable, but negative options.

The capacity to revoke and limit desires requires restraint. Since self-control is frequently impacted by what others, and society overall, considers being an achievement or positive, individuals are often persuaded to act in such a way as to gain approval from others rather than adhere to their own long term individual goals.

As a matter of honour, this ought to cultivate co-operation and social harmony (Baumeister et al., 2007). However, in some circumstances, individuals consider it difficult to know which strategy is the good and right one. Why at that point, should people feel constrained to fit in with regularising principles of conduct? Particularly when they feel less attachment to specific groups, or do not have the appropriate guidelines? It is hard to maintain a balance of life as a homeless person.

At the point when a deteriorating economy offers little hope of prevailing over poverty, people who are at risk progress towards destitution; overcrowding through sharing homes with different families, living in covers/hut, or on the streets. The chance to be involved in social foundations is next to impossible, and the necessities of daily human needs are not fulfilled. The ability to enable or help a homeless young person to return to be a 'contributing individual' in society is extremely testing and often appears to be hopeless. These criminological theories will be used as a part of the present examination as a calculated structure for analysing the relationship between youth homelessness and crime. In the context of social control theory, it is normal that an individual's homeless status will be related to different kinds of offending.

Low self-control theory

Researchers state that low self-control is a developed feature instead of inherent characteristic (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Appropriate child rearing, as per Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), includes "observing the child's conduct, recognising misconduct when it happens, and punishing such conduct (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi 2017).

On the other hand, there is a difference between the idea of socialisation and supervision. Socialisation includes the capacity to create in the youngster a feeling of good and bad without constant supervision. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) describe that guardians/parents may likely oversee their children in an unexpected way, yet that does not really imply that they socialise them in an unexpected way. Thus, this theory concentrates on the socialisation of youngsters, which impacts on one's level of self-control, and not just parental supervision.

The general theory of crime does not just address misconducts, as people who have low self-control are additionally more prone to end up simply included in closely similar practices. They also refer to behaviours that include immediate gratification and lack of limitation, including for example, using tobacco, rape, even accidents (auto or something else) and work-related truancy.

Hirschi (2009) says that the control applied through social bonds, cannot represent the steady contrasts between people, yet social bonds control people through self-control. He expresses

that "the source and quality of "bonds" is solely inside the individual reporting or exhibiting them. He denies the idea that society controls people yet maintains that the "main source of control in social control theory is the concern for the inclusion of others, (Hirschi, 2004), and low self-control makes an individual neglect to consider societal controls, for example, a parental connection. Subsequently, the quality of described social bonds is, as a result, a marker of self-control. People with high self-control will care about the opinion of others. Conversely, people who do not care about the concerns of others have lack of self-control (Hopkins, 2014).

Hirschi reclassified self-control in (2009) as the 'inclination to consider the full scope of potential costs of a specific demonstration'. In doing this, he asserts that people with high self-control will report being stimulated, and following this logic, social bonding will show what level of self-control an individual has. In spite of the meaning of social control changing significantly since the publication of 'The General Theory of Crime', the core of the theory remains as it was previously – a single stable measurement of all wrongdoing.

Relationship of social control theory and youth offending

Social Control theories were created as a response to what appeared to be the over-emphasis on individual components, to the detriment of supplementary or interactional elements. Hirschi (1969) called for a retraction of strain and subcultural theory, finding them inadequate when seeking to explain crime as being monetarily motivated and prevalent in all classes of society.

Social control theory (Hirschi, 1969) proposes that connections which are produced through family, friends and school are vital obstacles to deviant behaviour if those connections reflect positive ethics and moral convictions which may empower self-control and adjustment to honest conduct, independent of class or prospects (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017).

Nevertheless, Hirschi questions the "gang mind set" or differential relationship since his study offers no evidence of crime resulting because of a connection to peers. Despite what might be expected, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) test the constructive estimation of attachment to peers and the idea that a youngster's stake in the public arena influences his/her selection of peers. This is in contrast to what subcultural theory proposes, where peers are influencing one's state of mind in relation to society (Gottredson and Hirschi, 1990). As with Cloward and Ohlin, Hirschi (1969) embraces the view that deviance can happen when the transition period is drawn out amongst adolescence and adulthood. He asserts that the behaviour and support of parents/guardians and professionals is vital for the young person to fully develop and become an independent adult. (Shoemaker, 2012).

Similarly, one's stake in the public arena is influenced by one's aspiration to make progress towards and accomplish conventional objectives - the lower the levels of desire and success, the less concern is given over to the outcomes of deviant conduct. Consequently, the more important the desires an individual has, for instance in work prospects, the more outlandish he/she is likely to be when engaging in criminal acts (Shoemaker, 2012). However, Hirschi drew strongly on self-directed surveys from a cross-section of secondary school students who had, for the most part, low rates of criminal involvement. In this way, he cannot completely explain the reasons behind more persistent delinquency later on in life. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) focus on the absence of self-control in people, their circumstances, and the simultaneous search for fast, immediate gratification/pleasure. As they, assert their theory as a 'general theory of crime' (Hopkins-Burke, 2014).

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) discuss that in early years individuals are not very strong minded and normally have little control over their needs. They consider offending to be the self-inflicted boost of joy and the minimisation of pain, and delinquency as the propensity of individuals to pursue temporary pleasure without thought of the long-term outcomes of their actions (Hopkins-Burke, 2016). The individuals who participate in criminal conduct tend to be reckless, narrow minded, selfish, and intolerant. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) assert that without the regulating support of positive life conditions and socialisation, offending tends to thrive.

Nonetheless, authors don't propose that delinquency in and of itself will bring about crime, but that wrongdoing is merely one indication of an absence of self-control. They contend that crime rates decrease with age, independent of culpability, yet that criminality and low self-control may show themselves in various ways for the duration of the life course. This shows that self-control and social bonds have a close relationship.

Life perspective and Control theory

Sampson and Laub (1993) modified the Hirschi's social bond theory over the life course and categorised it in three principles:

1. Structural setting interceded by informal family and school social controls explains offending in youth and pre-adulthood.

2. There is progression in anti-social behaviour from youth through adulthood in a variety of life domains.
3. Informal social bonds to family and work in adulthood clarify changes in criminality over the life expectancy regardless of early youth inclination (Hopkins, 2014).

Those people who perpetrate crimes in their youth will probably feel the impact sometime later in life. Crime rates rise rapidly in the high school years, peak at 16-18 years of age, and reduce quickly thereafter (Sampson and Laub, 1993). However, offending in pre-adulthood is linked to different negative results in adulthood (Glueck and Glueck, 1968). For instance, anti-social and delinquent behaviour can develop into criminal conduct because of weak social bonds (Laub and Sampson, 1993). These negative outcomes in adulthood, from delinquency at a younger age have been observed to be consistently high with people in the lower class (Hagan, 1991). The middle-class youth who are more able to distance themselves from the negative results of their activities, seem to suffer minimal injurious impacts as adults.

Thus, being an individual from the middle or upper class society gives protection from the negative impacts of youth offending in later life. (Laub and Sampson, 1988).

Regardless of neighbourhood components, youth offending is most definitely identified with bonds to guardians/parents and schools which apply the most social control and, in this manner, keep youth from delinquency (Liska and Reed 1985; Sampson and Laub 1993). Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that offending does influence these connections and can be affected by them. School and home connections are probably going to be affected by a youths conduct and a strained connection in one area, e.g. issues at school can lead to a stressed connection in the other aspects of life such as family (Downes, Rock, and McLaughlin, 2016).

The main difference between Sampson and Laub's theory from that of Gottfredson and Hirschi, is regarding the role of self-control in the early years and continuity of offending and crime and in addition the stability of low self-control over the course of an individual’s life. Hirschi asserts that low self-control is the cause for youth offending and remains steady throughout the individual’s life. Sampson and Laub (1988) contend that there are certain life occasions and circumstances that moderate an individual's inclination toward offending. Momentous occurrences, for example, marriage and employment can "educate" individual self-control and along these lines, change the course and probability of misconduct (Downes, Rock, and McLaughlin, 2016).

Family structure and Control Theory

Control theorists have been consistently discussing about the importance of family structure. In a child's life, parental attachment and family involvement is the key for the most positive upbringing. Families are the first institution from where a child learns values, norms and traditions. Hirschi thinks the best predictor of delinquent behaviour is a child's attachment to parents, school and peers, the primary agents of socialisation (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). Children from marginalised families are likely to get involved in crimes more easily because they are less able to accomplish their objectives lawfully. (Farrington, 2007; Nye, 1958).

> *"The strongest family factors are criminal or anti-social parents, poor parental supervision and disrupted families" (Muncie, 2015 p 26).*

Effective parental supervision is the key. This may include establishing a set of "house rules" and clearly communicating them. Unsupervised and less attached young people are more likely to participate in delinquency, and substantial research has confirmed this correlation. Sound judgment proposes that unsupervised youth will be more likely to participate in crimes, and extensive research has affirmed this relationship (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). There is substantial evidence that juveniles with strong attachments to their parents and siblings are less likely to engage in offending behaviour, unless of course the family is involved in criminality, whereupon family attachment can be a negative factor (Burke, 2016).

It is the quality, not the quantity of attachment that young people have with their families that counts. Parental punishment is a key factor for children. When they misbehave or fail to follow the house rules. If children have a strong, positive connection to their parents, they are considered less likely to be involved in offending acts Patterson and Yoeger (1993). It (criminal behaviour) is normal when seen in delinquent families where parental checks and balances, discipline, commands and affection tend to be missing Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990).

With a specific objective set in order to lessen the probability of offending, both enthusiastic and instrumental support are very significant. A bond with family depicts a person's bond with society (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). Youth live in various family structures that can either deter or improve the possibility of recidivism. While the family is an essential component

in the youth justice framework inclusion, other factors including peer pressure, race, auxiliary impediment, and exploitation, are all elements that can add to this.

Most researchers find that young people from broken families have higher levels of offending behaviours. Juby and Farrington (2001) conducted a longitudinal survey of 411 males in South London and found that crime rates were higher among three quarters of young males who were living in broken homes, contrasted with young males living in unbroken families (Muncie, 2015). In addition, Price and Kunz (2003) directed a meta-examination, including 72 studies that included the links between separation/divorce and youth offending. The outcomes demonstrated that youngsters from separated/divorced families have higher rates of misconduct contrasted with kids from in intact families.

Earlier research has established that young people brought up in traditional, two-parent families encounter a lower risk of offending than kids from a single parent family. Single guardians may be less effective in managing their children than in two-parent conditions (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017; Rankin, 1983).

> *"How does the breakup of family affect children? According to Ronald Simons and his colleagues, divorced parents make fewer demands on their children, provide less monitoring, are more likely to display hostility, and tend to use less effective disciplinary techniques than do married parents. Each of these factors contributes to the greater likelihood delinquency found among the children of divorced families" (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017 p 240-41).*

Regarding effective parenting and responsibilities of parents/guardians, Gottfredson and Hirschi work hard to explain how insufficient parenting can be dangerous for young people and could lead them into a delinquent lifestyle. In their theory, they investigated and identified ways in which a family can go wrong. These include less attention paid towards children, ignoring the bad acts of children, no checks and balances, setting no boundaries etc. Not only do they identify poor parenting practices, but they also advise that the parents are responsible for the misbehaviour and misconducts of the children. Family is the most primary and contributing factor to delinquency (Sampson and Laub, 1993).

This theory also sheds light on the connection between the self-control of the parent and the subsequent self-control of the child. There is a good reason to expect, and the figures confirm,

that people lacking self-control do not socialise their children well. According to the Donald West and David Farrington, *"the fact that delinquency is transmitted from one generation to the next is indisputable." (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990, p 100).* Problems within the family can also affect the children.

The young people who reported experiencing abuse within the home in their early formative years were able to attest to the fact that this, and ongoing abuse through drugs or violence, were significant contributors to them later leaving the family home and seeking safety on the streets or in others houses (couch surfing).

The Strength Model of Self-Control

In a recent amplification of the strength model of self-control, Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice (2007) continue to use the analogy of a muscle in their conceptualisation of the strength of self-control. Put simply, the more the muscle is exerted, the less strength will be available for subsequent efforts (Biddle, Mutrie, and Gorely, 2015). However, in the same way exercise can increase an individual's muscle capacity, repeatedly overcoming temptations can improve the individuals overall level of strength and self-control (Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice, 2007).

Joining of cross-discipline tests will give a more definitive response to Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) control theory.

> *"The reputation of self-control theory is larger than life, so much so that it has been referred to as the tyrannosaurus of criminology. Various measures of self-control have been linked to the gamut of anti-social behaviour, including violence, property, white collar and drugs related offending, noncompliance with the criminal justice system, victimisation, smoking, drinking, cheating and other imprudent behaviours. Scholars are busily examining the sources of self-control, including its genetic and environmental bases" (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017 p 140).*

The main worth of self-control theory lies in the idea that demonstrations of self-control depend on a typical point of origin. The underlying definition of the theory declares that each cognitive process or choice drains a little self-control. Reducing self-control in one part of your life implies that you will have less self-control left for different aspects of your life. A time of research and many reviews strengthen the conceptualisation of self-control as a restricted supply of self-discipline, as opposed to a principally intellectual process or a procured aptitude (Baumeister et al., 2007). A single, quality supply of self-control fulfils various administrative

activities, including overseeing thoughts and feelings, urge and control attentions, directing obvious conduct, and settling on decisions (Sinnott, 2013).

Control theories have attracted a considerable following. Nettler and Hagan argued that they provide the most promising foundation for criminological theory. Hagan, Simpson and Gillis have proceeded to explore the impressive potential of control theory for the explanation of gender differences in criminality. Additionally, if self-control is drained in one modality (e.g., physical continuance), there is less restraint remaining for other behavioural and enthusiastic modalities (e.g., passion control). Just like a physical muscle, routinely practicing self-control increases its strength and capacity. Should self-control be drained, some sort of rejuvenation must happen before restraint can again be utilised fully. (Baum, 2012). For young people living on the streets, self-control can be low and criminal behaviour high because of facing significant daily challenges and having under developed coping mechanisms.

When young people who are already vulnerable due to other issues in their lives, find themselves without the safety of stable, ongoing accommodation, it can exacerbate all the struggles they are already coping with. Subsequent feelings of fear, desperation and lack of a safe place to withdraw from the world then leads many into committing acts of criminality in order to be able to attain the basic need for warmth, food and safety. This criminality may in fact also render the young person a victim of crime as well as being the perpetrator. This may be due to being forced into acts of prostitution, drug smuggling or theft for others in order to be able to get the means they need to gain material necessities such as money for rent or a hostel, food or a bed for the night. Young people on the streets may be left with little choice but to abuse drugs, alcohol or others in order to survive.

Critiques of Control Theory

Hirschi's original formulation of control theory did not escape criticism. Empey (1982) was one of the main critics of Hirshi’s theory, stating that there is no sufficient way to test this theory empirically. Hirschi believes that thriftiness and consistency are more significant than testability. In his book Causes of Delinquency, Hirschi (1969) stated,

"To state a young person is free of bonds to traditional society isn't to state that he will essentially confer criminal acts. Everything we can state is he will probably submit illegal acts" (p. 28).

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) placed that all individuals want to carry out wrongdoing. The main contrast between the individuals who surrender and the individuals who do not is simply the person's level of control. They propose the idea that if an adolescent receives poor parenting and has little financial structure in their lives; they are more likely to get into legal trouble later (Hirschi, T. 2009).

As an immediate answer to Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory, Rankin and Kern (1990) express that youth offending is complex, and various causes can regularly trigger the same behavioural result. Just because an individual has low self-control, does not mean the individual will jump into deviant acts. John Wright and Kevin Beaver demonstrated that *"self-control is not caused by parenting at all" (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017 p 141).*

Grasmick et, al. (1993) said that absence of self-control is not sufficient in and of itself, but the opportunity to commit crime must equally be assessed. Empey (1982) proposed that the concentration of Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory ignores the effects of peers, socioeconomics and structural associations, which may affect offending. Gottfredson and Hirschi advocate that there are important class contrasts in child rearing and in self-control. Fundamentally, they contend that class difference is indirectly responsible for differences in low self-control and that these differences work through family elements.

Taken together, an expansive extent of the investigations on self-control and offending have discovered a critical connection between misconduct and lower levels of self-control. Nonetheless, it ought to be noted that control theorists are quite open about the most telling criticism of their approach (Hopkins-Burke, 2014). Most of the authors have interpreted these discoveries as characteristic of the quality of the theory in anticipating all crimes with a general theory of crime.

As mentioned above, some have examined the degree to which this instigation of crime construct referencing only levels of self-control can be used to explain all crime. Furthermore, critics of the general theory of crime have discovered the dependence on self-control as the fundamental clarification of offending problems. It is doubtful that criminal and similar practices will be definitively related amongst all offenders, including, for instance, white-collar

criminals who have displayed delayed gratification in getting high-status occupational positions (Clinard, and Meier, 2016; Lily et al., 1995). Whilst many agree that this theory may remain constant for a few types of crimes, how the theory clarifies different types of criminal acts is not clear to some.

Gottfredson and Hirschi's central argument is that the individuals who need enough self-control are the ones to discuss crime. From an examination point of view, some have addressed how this origination of low self-control can be tried experimentally, isolating self-control from a proclivity for culpability (Downes, Rock, McLaughlin, 2016). The general theory of crime appears to recommend that, inclination towards wrongdoing and low self-control have all the hallmarks of being one and the same (Akers and Sellars, 2009). Accordingly, the theory recommends that low self-control and culpability are constantly connected. (Regoli, Hewitt, and DeLisi, 2017). However, critics of the theory are not as positive about the quality of the causal connection between self-control and offending. For some critics,

> *"the major difficulty that control theory has, however, is that whilst it helps explain why people don't offend, it is less good at providing an explanation of why they do" (Newburn, 2013, p 244).*

The conclusions of the general theory of crime, is that low self-control, if steady over the course of one's life, assumes that individuals' propensities for offending may likewise stay stable. However, there are those who continue to debate that significant life change away from offending is still possible with the successful introduction of self-control. (Siegel and McCormick, 2006).

Summary:

Five decades have passed since Hirschi presented his control theory, it appears to be a simple theory and easy to understand. Initially, social control theory lends itself astoundingly well to experimental research and has emerged as the most tested theory regarding the causes of crime. Besides, it is exceptionally well supported experimentally. Secondly, given it abstains from involving social structural issues, (for example, homelessness and unemployment) as a reason for criminal conduct, it was to end up prominently famous with the conservative in the USA when appealing for research funding.

It serves as the foundation for a variety of delinquency programs. As this chapter also centers on the role of parents in bringing young people back into a crime free life. It includes elements such as parent's/guardian supervision, socialization and monitoring.

Although we can acknowledge the fundamental suspicions of control theory in relation to human instinct, which promotes the idea that we would all be deviant yet for the control over our common inclinations, the question remains: in what ways would we be delinquent? Ultimately we must continue to ask questions such as, why is offending so regularly non-utilitarian; why is aggression ritualized so much of the time and peaceful in its results; why don't all young people commit crime; why does sexual satisfaction take such multilayered structures? Why does rash driving make a few people happy? In short, control theorists make truly little of both deviance and conformity. (Downes and Rock, 1998).

Because of the enormous attention put on the role of self-control, (or deficiency in that area), in causing criminal conduct, social projects mediating in the lives of young people at an early phase of development are developed. These have included activities for educating on the practicalities of parenting, keeping in mind the final objective to enable parents/guardians to ingrain self-control inside young people. Such strategies have been fuelled by the thought that, if early intervention does not occur, there is little hope of change later in life. (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Preventative projects, (rather than post crime restoration initiatives) aimed at educating about positive child-rearing practices would be preferred. (Akers and Sellars, 2009).

There is little uncertainty that, in diverting consideration regarding the previously overlooked issue of conformity, and how this is caused and managed, control theory has made a huge commitment to the project of explaining offending and criminal conduct regarding young people. Control theory also shed light on the issue of homelessness, if a person is in street it is hard for him/her to get all necessary training from parents/guardian, and lack of training can put him/her in youth offending. How young people can take stability in life? How can someone in unstable accommodation cope with the basic life issues?

It neglects to supply the entire clarification claimed by Gottfredson and Hirschi. However, there is proof gained through research to recommend that some of the recent development in social control theories. For example, differential coercion theory and control balance theory have helped to extend the parameters of explanation without necessarily being able to provide a comprehensive explanation of all forms of deviancy and criminal behaviour.

"Unlike theorists in the functionalist and anomie tradition, social control theorists focus on variations in social bonding as the major source of deviance, rather than as a prelude to others, more important causes of crime, such as structured inequality" (Downes, Rock, and McLaughlin, 2016 p 236).

To conclude, the suppositions offer some help for the general theory, in that low self-control offers the impression of being a solid indicator of a range of criminal practices and behaviors among homeless young people. Moreover, it creates the impression that it has a scope of negative results, including peer pressure, street youth peer (gangs) activity and pressure, young people who are not in education, employment and training. Combine these circumstances and influences with life on the streets and the result can often be homelessness.

Realistically, rather than labelling and criminalising a young person (thus reducing chances of them being equipped to make positive changes), the policy makers and professionals must strategically change their approach with effective counselling, guidance and support that enable people or staff to make positive and lasting changes. Homeless young people need professionals who understand the complexity of the issues they face such as debt, family abuse, unemployment, mental and physical health challenges, which can all lead to criminal involvement.

In this study finding the influential factors behind the stigma or labelling theory is key in enabling the authorities or policy makers to rethink their narrow 'tough on crime' stance as it isn't a long term solution, and may in fact make things worse. Therefore, stereotypically labelling them (e.g. Youth crime, hoody and gang culture in British society), rather than addressing contributing issues that lead a young person into criminal behaviour is short-sighted. In fact, negative labels can cause apprehension and guilt whereas a system that shows belief in a young person can bring them confidence and respect and the positive life choices that can come from that.

According to the young people in this study, homelessness is stigmatised, and this stigma plays a key role in influencing their mental health and exacerbating self-harm issues. They discussed their experiences of how the general public perceives homelessness, and how these perceptions can sometimes lead to discrimination, suicide, poor mental health and an inferiority complex.

In reply to the general questions about the public attitude towards homelessness, fourteen out of eighteen participants articulated that there is major stigma around the issue of homelessness.

They went on to describe a life without nurture or a home. More than two thirds of young people believed that their attitude and behaviour had been changed during their period of homelessness. According to their accounts, homelessness made them seek ways to engage in criminal offending, more aggressive, short-tempered, and prone to bad or unhealthy decisions. Melisa, Wilano, Steve, Louise, Jana openly accepted that they have anger management issues and when they get angry, they lose control. For each of them, this lack of ability to control their anger has led to various kinds of criminal performance. The role of a caregiver in a child's life covers many things including the teaching of societal morality, instilling a strong sense of value, identity and belonging. When this intentional nurturing is lacking, emotional resilience fails to be instilled and renders young people devoid of the necessary coping skills when faced with struggles. This can result in youth faced with difficult circumstances making choices that appear to further deteriorate their situation rather than improve or positively change it. When the elements of positive nurturing are absent or indeed replaced with actions that instil fear, stunt emotional growth and seem to isolate the child from that much needed sense of being a valued part of their community (this includes the wider community as well as the nuclear family community), they have a significantly lower chance of being able to adopt a sense of self and morality that will supersede their need to survive.

Young people faced with, what can be or feels like, life or death decisions, homelessness and crime are obvious bedfellows. Had these young people been interconnected into a wider community network, the help and support they need, when they need it, would be more readily available. They would also be exposed to people who would be able to take on much of the role of the primary caregiver, in order to build their sense of identity and worth as well as instilling the required norms, values and beliefs that would enable them to make more positive decisions when it comes to criminal activity. Having dysfunctional parental environments is massively detrimental to a young person development as an emotional and mentally healthy individual. However, as social control theory proposes, if they had some strong, healthy relationships (even if these are outside the home environment) and felt a part of a community in some sense, their propensity towards crime would be limited precisely because those values, beliefs and sense of commitment would provide a healthier decision making framework, even in circumstances of survival. Having said that the connection between different negative results and wrongdoing is not fake (Downes, Rock, and McLaughlin, 2016). These social components keep on having an independent impact of low self-control aiding other hypothetical perspectives.

Chapter 8

Findings and Recommendations

This final chapter will discuss the findings related to the topic and each of the questions presented in the first chapter. Youth homelessness and offending is a key issue in London and the efforts to end youth homelessness and crime has received global interest (Quilgars et al., 2018). During both my formal and informal interviews with professionals, almost all acknowledged the fact that doing more to tackle youth homelessness and crime in London should not only be an option, but a priority.

This study was originally developed to in order create a more thorough understanding of how homeless young people think about and cope with their experiences of being homeless, their reasons for offending and how they envision their future life. The knowledge gained is also useful for people who are currently living in youth hostels but who are also unclear about their ability to cope with independent living in stable housing. The young people interviewed, were also asked to identify a key turning point in their life, and any thoughts or concerns they had about their future. The turning point each identified, was often nonspecific; rather it was events or developments that took place over a more prolonged period of time, such as leaving a gang, finding a romantic partner, acquiring a good job, leaving prostitution, becoming a parent, practising religion etc. These events seemed to stimulate two types of action: working toward the specified goals and ambitions by moving on from the past and building a new life in the best possible way or secondly, making their life ostensibly worse, by joining gangs and getting involved in criminal activities. All important and positive turning points took place over an extended period and involved the significant effort of professionals and programmes put in place by local authorities.

When we state that we can eliminate youth homelessness and youth, offending it is vital to ask key questions such as; does it sound realistic? Is it even achievable? Why do some young people end up becoming homeless? Why do some young homeless people offend when others do not? Is there any relationship between crime and youth homelessness? How do professionals and parents support former homeless young people into leading a crime free life? Why do some young people end up trapped in a life on the streets? These questions were at the forefront of this research and every facet of the study was designed to investigate the contributing factors to, and consequences of youth homelessness and crime through the examination of young

people's life stories (lived experiences). A concerted effort was made to explore the bitter and hidden realities of youth homelessness in the city of London.

It is a proven fact that youth homelessness is an unstoppable issue in the capital. The actual numbers of young people experiencing homelessness are often concealed (the hidden homeless) if they are not living with family or have been placed in stable, alternative accommodation. There are exceptionally few young people who leave their family home with an understanding of how to live independently and have the skills to cope up with other issues and responsibilities such as paying rent, health management, budgeting, hygiene, cooking etc.

Many of the young people given no choice but to leave their homes are severely struggling to overcome the challenges of a swift transition to adult responsibilities and dealing with significant personal development issues such as identity, emotional, mental and physical development. There is an urgent need to provide timely intervention, in order to engage them in a healthy lifestyle and activities to enable and empower them to both identify and be able to achieve positive goals and aspirations. When it comes to learning, development and having skills to live independently as an adolescent, as professionals, we should bear in mind that not all young people will be capable of learning and adapting to new circumstances as quickly as we may hope. In addition, young people may require a far greater investment of support in order to be able to gain the knowledge required to attain a more stable and positive lifestyle. In this manner, our understanding of youth vagrancy should essentially be confined in terms of the challenges young people face in our society.

Key findings

- We begin with identifying the root cause of youth homelessness. Common research echoes the findings of this study, namely challenging family circumstances and relationship breakdown as the main cause of youth homelessness. About two thirds of the young participants interviewed, expressed the experience of growing up with their parents or guardian as 'a nightmare' and went on to describe how they had been abused by their biological or stepparents. Family conflict was often related to issues including sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, and transgender), substance abuse, sexual harassment, poverty and gang related issues. Just under two fifths of young people were freedom seekers – wishing to find independence from what they viewed as restrictive or oppressive rules or households and had the history of being 'run aways'. In addition,

parental or guardian abuse and repeated exposure to domestic violence, as well as parental mental health issues and drug abuse were also identified as key factors.

- Financial circumstances or poverty was a key contributing factor in the young person's subsequent homelessness. Young people did not declare this to be a factor initially, but as they told their stories it became clear that financial instability had been a major cause of their family abusing them in various ways.
- Once they had left their primary home environment, the homeless young people cited the most common places to go as being a friend's house, sitting on buses and living on the streets. In the early days of their homelessness, half stayed in their friend's house, just over a quarter slept rough on the streets or huts, a fifth used buses to sleep on at nights. Almost all described how they spent most of their time on the streets, parks, train stations, coffee shops, subways, and heavily populated areas of the city such as Piccadilly Circus, the West End and shopping malls.
- A significant number of young people who receive assistance from the care system during their childhood identify as Black Asian and Ethnic Minorities (BAME) and Lesbian Gay Bisexual and transgender (LGTBQ+). Statistically these young people face a heightened risk of homelessness for many reasons including a lack of stability or consistent parenting in their childhood.
- Almost all of the young participants mentioned that stealing and shoplifting was a justifiable act in order to survive and fulfil the basic needs of life. All the participants interviewed, claimed that they were involved in various petty crimes primarily for the means of survival. The most common survival needs included; a safe place to sleep, food, warm clothing, personal safety, avoiding bullying etc.
- Virtually all of the young participants stated that homelessness and crime are interrelated. Being realistic about their need to survive, many homeless youths are not opposed to engaging in criminal activity. They mentioned different types of 'acts' they needed to 'put on' (e.g. pretending to be asking for directions and stealing something from the person they have approached) whilst criminally offending, primarily for survival and lifestyle needs.
- Well over two thirds of the participants believed that homelessness makes young people more vulnerable to occurrences of victimisation by different individuals or groups. They may have been previously as well as currently victimised by their families, friends, police, gang members, and members of the public. More than half the participants stated

that their main concern whilst living on the streets was being victimised by trespassers and people they identified as their friends, even when living in the hostels.

- In reply to the general questions about the public attitude towards homelessness, three quarter of participants articulated that there is a stigma around homelessness and half of the young participants actively and intentionally hid their homelessness from their friends and partners to begin with. When asked how homelessness affected them:
- One of the most common and potentially unexpected themes that emerged through approximately two thirds of the young people interviews concerned the positive aspects of homelessness. Many considered homelessness as a means to gain independence and caused them to think more about both the hardships and positive aspects of life. Over half of respondents believed that their experiences of a life on the streets and living in supported accommodation, made them more mature and independent in their decision-making.
- Almost half of the young participants appreciated the way professional staff had treated and helped them within the support services. They felt more confident about their transition into independent living and believed that they would be fine. They showed appreciation for the staff's level of concern regarding their future independent living situation.
- Almost all young participants stated that homelessness and crime are completely interconnected. Realistic about their need to survive, most homeless youth are not opposed to offending. They mentioned different types of acts they needed to 'put on' whilst offending in order to meet survival and lifestyle needs.

In their life-stories interviews, they confirmed that homeless youth in London used certain skills or tricks to earn a livelihood. These tricks were interconnected with the accessibility of sources. The most common illegal means of making money discussed in these interviews are mentioned below:

- **Stealing and shoplifting**
- **Drug dealing/selling**
- **Begging**
- **Prostitution**

Almost all respondents were at one or more times, involved in stealing food and drink. Perhaps, the principal thing that any new homeless youth arriving in London needs to learn is

that the environment a homeless person in London will experience is never what they expected.

- Virtually all of the female and just under half of the male respondents were actively involved in some kind of prostitution. In particular, the young female respondents thought that homelessness was a leading reason as to why a young girl would take the path into prostitution. Most of the male respondents confirmed this fact by stating that prostitution is the main source of income for most of the homeless girls they know.
- The young people had mixed views about life in the hostel; however, almost two thirds believed that when living in the hostel, it is a necessity for homeless youth to have the ability to adapt. In the first instance, they should figure out how to manage themselves in new environment and settle into that setting. Just over half of the young participants reported that they have never liked living in the hostel, but they adapted to life there because they had no other choice available to them.
- Black and Muslim participants described discriminatory practices they experienced both on the streets, in hostels and support services. They felt discrimination and racism were both a key cause of division in society, with white people receiving more dignity and respect. Whilst questions pertaining to discrimination or racism were not specifically included in the questionnaire, those who identified as BAME or LGBTQ+ (just over a quarter of the sample), referred to it as significant in their context. These participants explained how prolific an issue discrimination was and how deeply it affected them on an ongoing basis.

In truly tackling the issue of homelessness, one must also carefully examine the disadvantages young people face particularly in a social and economic context. According to the professional participants in this research, many young people experiencing the realities of homelessness may not show up in statistics. They are part of the 'hidden homeless' due to the fact that not all will seek support from the authorities or homeless charities. They survive by couch surfing, squatting and sleeping rough, largely flying under the radar of official support bodies such as local councils.

Research results illustrate that the principal causes of youth homelessness have remained unchanged, with the majority of young people becoming homeless due to parents or caregivers being unable or unwilling to provide accommodation. The reasons for this may stem from fraught or dysfunctional familial relationships in conjunction with failures by the systems and

structures that should in fact be supporting the families and individuals who need it most. Youth homelessness does not occur because of one factor, such as family dysfunction but tends to be a result of the cumulative impact of a number of factors.

Three quarters of the professionals sampled reported that homeless young people's primary or familial home settings/atmosphere had been unsupportive. This had been a significant obstacle to their development and caused them untold levels of anxiety and frustration. They pointed to the young people's problems in early years and childhood, as well as issues such as domestic violence, as key contributing factors leading them to life on the streets and rough sleeping. Homeless young people are society's most vulnerable group, and many are susceptible to long lasting effects of homelessness such as shock, mental disturbance, trauma etc. Numerous service providers backed up these findings about the homeless young people's negative life experiences contributing to their status as homeless. Sadly, because of the domestic violence young people experience in their early age, some of them prefer to live in the street in spite of the danger and challenges this lifestyle presents.

Almost all the young participant's avidly identified the various barriers they face during homelessness. The challenges they faced included understanding budgeting, maintaining health, drugs, education, employment and accessing services. All were commonly recognised as the most common barriers they faced in creating a more established and safe life for themselves. Stable accommodation or lack thereof, was the main issue identified and is a key factor in enabling young people to get back on the right track. Over two thirds of the professionals stated that even with the Government trying to implement various measures to assist young people, ranging from temporary accommodation to independent living, homeless youth are still facing profound problems when it comes to accessing stable and inexpensive accommodation. The main concerns expressed by the professionals, was the connection between recent welfare benefit reforms and the critical issues faced by the homeless youth in accessing sustainable accommodation.

The Government has to urgently consider the tilting effect of some welfare strategies on homeless youth, such as benefit cuts. Visibly, there are also barriers whilst they are in care, for example, a lack of funding, universal credit sanctions, benefit exclusions, social workers are hard to reach, or young people cannot access the resources they need easily or fast enough.

Almost all of the service providers pointed out that delayed Universal Credit payments are critically affecting homeless young people. Almost three quarters of professionals interviewed,

identified the sanctions and capping of the Local Housing Allowance as gravely affecting homeless youth. However, the recent reversal by the Government to remove Universal Credit housing costs for eighteen to twenty-one-year olds, is welcomed by most of the service providers. It accentuates the need to address the effect that other policy matters might be having on vulnerable youth. Policy makers must keep in mind the aftereffects of all the benefits cut on the wellbeing of homeless young people. There is currently a striking imbalance between what a young person needs and asks for, and the council's ability to provide it.

Three quarters of professionals and staff members interviewed, indicated that removing the automatic entitlement, and intensifies the complications for young people when accessing a place to live. In particular, this is happening due to the current deficit between benefit exclusions and high rental rates in London.

In this study's findings, almost all of the young people had experienced domestic abuse and a damaging childhood. The young people's previous home settings/atmosphere had been unsupportive, which had been a serious obstacle to their development and caused them untold levels of anxiety and frustration. Which illustrates that a young person's experience of being homeless frequently echoes earlier negative encounters of hindrance and adversity. In this scenario, early prevention initiatives are vitally important to save young people before they reach crisis point. At a national level, "The Homeless Reduction Act 2017" sounds like a positive step in tackling homelessness, providing early prevention strategies and solid information for young people as well as comprehensive support, which was not previously available.

Almost all of the professionals spoke clearly about the issue of obtaining accommodation as being a first step for many homeless young people, however keeping that accommodation offered many challenges. Transitioning from being homeless to being in stable housing is a key challenge for young people to overcome and there is a need for constant interaction to help young people adjust.

Almost all of the professionals believe that effective parental supervision is the key in preventing young people becoming homeless. As unsupervised and less emotionally attached young people are more likely to participate in delinquency, and substantial research has confirmed this correlation.

In this study, almost three quarters of the professionals think similarly. They stated that peer pressure, a lack of community and core values are the main reasons for offending amongst homeless young people. Many homeless young people feel like they have to prove themselves as being brave or daring to the people around them. This may be a survival technique or a coping mechanism when living on the streets. If they run away from an argument, they would therefore be known by peers as a coward or weak and therefore more vulnerable to violence or abuse. Many professionals also believe that the younger generation is not fully attached to or integrated into society and thus they are lacking values and morality as well. The professionals discussed many reasons for youth offending and homelessness. The most common reasons given by them for both were unemployment, peer pressure, poverty, isolation, lifestyle crimes, lack of hope and culture in London. The professional's main concerns were social groups, or peer groups such as gangs.

Close to the entirety of the professional respondents felt that in addition to the circumstances above, many homeless young people also experienced high levels of criminal victimisation ranging from verbal, physical, psychological abuse to assault. The common perception of them as criminals (based solely on their material circumstances), even with the absence of anti-social or criminal behaviours, may also heavily influence many young people in engaging in criminal activity. Thus, they succumb to a self (or societal) fulfilling prophecy. Another way vulnerable homeless young people are at risk of victimisation is through relationships with peers, their familial relatives, friends, police, gang members, and members of the public. Half of the professionals indicated that a significant concern of young people living on the streets was fear of being victimised by passers-by and their peers even when living in supported accommodation.

Most of the professionals mentioned that racial profiling happens more than they would like to think it does. Institutional racism in bodies such as the police means black and Muslim youth (particularly males) are far more likely to be stopped, searched or arrested than their Caucasian counterparts. This kind of misconception is often based on little more than ignorance or misunderstanding about the race, religion or social context of the individual. It seeps down to influence the perceptions of the public at large about black and Muslim young people.

The main objective should be positively engaging young people who live in marginalised situations and are struggling with everyday needs. However, this is not an easy task. Professionals and staff members must acknowledge the importance of establishing constructive

and positive relationships with homeless young people. The professionals approach must be non-judgemental and empathetic. Only when young people recognise that they are being accepted and understood will they begin to trust staff members and other professionals who are trying to help them. Every young person is an individual with their own unique experience of the world, and for young people whose primary experience of the world has been largely negative, it can prove extraordinarily difficult for them to open up, depend upon others and establish a solid relationship based on trust.

It is vitally important to train front line staff and make staff aware of the importance of these skills when working with homeless young people. This is key in enabling them to understand that they can ably meet young people's requirements and respond to whatever issues they bring up, regardless of how complex. Frequently, young people can come presenting one issue but there is often another, deeper and more complicated issue behind it. For example, a young person is referred because he is an offender, but he may also be suffering from a mental health issue. This is a one side of the picture, but it is always important to ask; 'what else is going on? What else is contributing to the circumstances that they are in?' It is more about helping and equipping staff members to be able to help young people according to their problems, whether seen or unseen in initial assessment meetings.

Most homeless young people do not think they can become anything other than what they see around them; therefore, they feel they have little option but to emulate the behaviours and lifestyles of family members or friends. It is hard for them to start thinking of possibilities or alternatives outside of that group because they do not yet know much about life. They are not mature and often do not have a completed sense of their own individuality or identity. In London, statistics show that half of knife crime offenders are teenagers or even younger children, whilst the police statistics show that forty-one percent of those being caught for knife crimes across capital's constituencies are now aged between 15 and 19 years of age (Evening Standard, 4th February 2019). It is not surprising that much street crime goes unreported. This may be due to factors such as young people being less likely to report crimes to police than adults. (Walker et al. 2006). This lack of reporting becomes more pronounced when it comes to younger children. Many young people do not report crimes because they feel it is either too trivial to report or perhaps does not even constitute an actual criminal act. Again, this trend is higher when it comes to children. (Porteous, 2008).

Well over three quarters of the professional participants strongly believed that youth homelessness and crime are interconnected. However, it is worth noting that some of the professionals mentioned that not all homeless youth get involved in criminal activity and not all criminally active youth are homeless. A recent research project by criminology lecturer Erin Mc-Dinagh in March 2019 appraised 100 young participants in London. The main topic of the research addressed the concern that youth homelessness is a major reason for knife crime and incorporated the fear of neighborhood violence as well. Most of the young people she spoke with were from highly deprived areas with conspicuously high degrees of offending rates as compared to other regions of London. The major finding of her study was that homelessness is the root cause of offending amongst young people in London (The Conservation, March 2019).

In relation to young people's accommodation, local authorities often abandon their responsibilities to these young people. Whereas they identify vulnerable or high-risk individuals as threatening, harmful or offenders. This kind of behavior only increases the possibility that these young people will continue to engage in offending activities.

Being homeless however, does up the ante in terms of the potential 'need' to commit a crime in order to be able to survive – for food, clothing etc. It also contributes to the likelihood of a vulnerable youth living on the streets, being targeted by opportunistic gangs (e.g. especially in the case of young girls who are often chosen to smuggle drugs or weapons across the city as they are deemed less likely to be stopped and searched by police etc.) There are gangs who will take advantage of the homeless youth's helplessness and lack of visible support. There is no doubt that if a young person feels secure, has a strong sense of belonging to a positive familial or peer group and has a sense of their own value, they will grow to be more emotionally, mentally and even morally resilient. He/she can make better choices and ultimately have a greater chance of having a future that is stable with opportunities for positive growth and advancement.

In the professional's interviews, almost every respondent expressed their concerns about the lack of stable and independent accommodation for young people. Over half of the participants addressed the fact that some young people in temporary accommodation may not be ready to live independently but are often moved on before they are ready. Sometimes young people do not have sufficient life skills or knowledge to take on the heavy responsibility associated with

independent living. Professionals who deal with housing benefits and work directly with pathway plans, claim that whilst 'housing young people', sounds attractive in the paperwork, the reality is starkly different. Not every young person is in an appropriate situation or condition to be placed in stable accommodation.

Three quarters of the professional's had major concerns around the government's strict housing policies regarding homeless young people. For professionals, the sign of success was securing accommodation for young people, through the government, housing association or private rental sectors. Almost every professional recognised the fact that there are inadequate affordable housing options in the U. K's capital city. In addition, private rented accommodations were considered unstable and often more expensive but were typically the only option available.

The fact that young people are homeless does not necessarily automatically render them prone to criminality. It is a common misperception that homeless youth are highly likely to resort to criminal behaviour. For many homeless youths however, the very reason they left the home context, was that they did not feel safe, independent or free. These are all the very things they stand to lose if they are caught, arrested or charged with a crime and then imprisoned.

In reply to the question, 'why don't all homeless young people commit crime?' Almost two thirds of the professionals mentioned the fact that the reason homeless youth refrain from offending or criminal activities is not because they fear societal punishment or the police. The major reason is their moral values and religious beliefs, which encourages them to avoid criminal activities. Most of the professionals, when talking about their young clients, mentioned how those clients perceived crime in the first place. They said many homeless young people do not really bother about the rules and laws, as they tend to be very impulsive and imperceptive, and always seek immediate gratification. On the other hand, about close to half of the professionals claimed that homeless young people they work with, are freedom seekers and do not like the restrictions of prison life and this acted as a strong deterrent to involvement in criminal activities.

Overall, the professional's interviews yielded mixed results on some topics. But on the whole, the majority were agreed that provided young people have strong role models, safe, supportive, stable accommodation and were able to access the help they needed through systems that were tailored around them and their needs, (as well as being simpler and easier to access) then most young people would be able to envision and realise a future that was crime free, independent

and had opportunities and hope. The professionals working in this field are often 'fighting too many fires' on a localised level to be able to change the systemic or societal issues leading to youth homelessness or indeed even implement the 'solutions' offered. However, what was clear, is that every one of those working with homeless young people, believed that an alternative, better future was possible for every young homeless person regardless of what challenges they had now or had experienced in their past. However, the constraints with funding and amenities meant they were constantly doing their already difficult jobs with a metaphorical hand tied behind their backs.

To conclude, the suppositions offer some help for the general theory, in that low self-control offers the impression of being a solid indicator of a range of criminal practices and behavior's amongst homeless young people. Moreover, it creates the impression that it has a scope of negative results, including peer pressure, street youth peer (gangs) activity, pressure, and young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET). Combine these circumstances and influences with life on the streets and the result can often be homelessness.

Recommendations

- Local authorities and other youth centred services need to put more preventative measures in place, rather than simply relying on inadequate, often 'too late' reactive methods in order to deal with the issues young people face long after the point of helpful intervention. Any professional working with young people needs to have a full understanding of the complexity of the issues they face - whether that's in a dysfunctional home setting, living on the streets or in a criminal, drugs or gangs context. Increasing the understanding and education of staff and policy makers is the first step to creating a system that is built around the needs of young people, rather than having a complicated, slow moving system that requires vulnerable youth who are in urgent need, having to jump through hoops just to get the help they so desperately need. Right now, too many of them fall between the cracks of the system.

  Additionally, if a professional is able to offer an individually tailored 'plan' for each young person, considering issues such as additional needs, trauma, mental health issues or substance abuse, they can ensure that young person is given the opportunity to engage with the right services. This would enable and empower the young person to

move into a healthy life that is based on independence, positive decisions and support – eradicating the need for crime to be a part of a survival plan for a homeless young person.

- Social care professionals should make every effort to engage homeless young people in education and training or apprenticeship. Thus, they will have something to positively engage them and are not unoccupied and bored. Engaging them in some physical and mental activities means they are too busy to find time for offending. It is all about showing them what all the alternative options are in order to help them to be busy in a progressive way through outlets such as education, apprenticeship or work. The main point being, that professionals have to create a tailored pathway through which the young person can reintegrate back into society by helping them understand the functionality of law and order and its benefits towards them and their community.

- Bodies like schools and social services do strive to help vulnerable young people. But due to funding cuts, understaffing, lack of resources and training, even the best intentioned within the youth services are struggling to be able to perform in a way that makes a real, lasting difference to issues such as youth homelessness. There needs to be a radical reimagining of the entire housing system for vulnerable young people. A different strategy needs to be implemented, so that young people with various needs are being housed in stable accommodation where they feel safe, are being looked after according to their specific needs (mental, emotional and physical). They must also have specialist staff who can offer the right levels of support for as long as it takes in order to equip them to live independently in a positive and productive way.
- Young people are entitled to several stages of housing related provision and guidance in order to gain the life-skills to live independently. The other part of the problem is the universal credit, which has brought about a drastic and oftentimes negative change for eighteen to twenty-one-year olds.

- Now is the time for the Government to tackle the issue of youth homelessness with a more robust strategy of funding support work, providing more low cost or affordable housing and shared accommodation options with adequate, systemic support for young people seeking to regain their independence, their dignity and their future potential. This must include a recognition by the Government that the current benefit policies for

young people are not fit for purpose and require significant review in order to protect and support the most vulnerable young people in our society.

- Youth services need to be concentrating on addressing the needs of each young person, providing tailored and achievable goals that will restore a young person's sense of identity, connection with community and meaningful activities to enable and empower them to reintegrate into social networks. Models of restorative justice should be implemented to repair broken relationships with families and communities in order to offer the young person the very best chance of leaving homelessness in their past as they forge a new, positive life direction. The general public, police and social services must be educated in order to address the stigma around the reasons young people become homeless, and how to interact and help vulnerable young people rather than engaging with them in a negative and damaging manner, thus worsening the problem by isolating the young person further.

- In order to achieve sustainable and transformational support structures, service providers must make a more concerted and deliberate effort to include the input of young service users in the development and delivery of their services. Opportunities including peer mentoring would further engage and empower young people to be able to access the support available and gain a fuller understanding of how to use these services to their best advantage. Assessment processes should be refined so that young people are quickly referred to appropriate external services who are best placed to meet their needs. When designing services such as accommodation for young homeless people, respect, humanity and dignity should be the driving factors – allowing young people to have a place they feel 'at home', feel safe and connected to staff who build healthy, nurturing, 'positively parental' style relationships with them is of paramount importance in any young person's recovery and development. As the Government considers its actions going forward in relation to funding of supported housing, they must ensure that in all respects, those proposals will protect and sustain supported housing services for vulnerable, at risk young people experiencing homelessness.
- The Homeless Reduction Act must be implemented in all regions of the UK. As most of the local authorities professionals raised concerns about implementation of the act, as there were no funds available.

- For the government to illustrate their seriousness in terms of tackling the causative factors for young homeless people, they must implement long term and sustainable funding, paying particular attention to preventative initiatives throughout all relevant public services. It is not enough to now merely 'react' to the issues and the results of ignoring the rising rates of homelessness over the past decade. The government must start to invest in identifying and preventing the root causes of the problem.

Summary

Any service providers working with vulnerable young people should offer as standard, a clear, tailored transition plan for each young person. Each staff member involved during this key time must understand that they have a duty of care as professionals to maintain regular supportive contact with each young person, and not to passively wait for them to contact the staff when urgent help is required. Every young person moving on from homelessness services into an independent tenancy should have provided, a personalised, flexible package of support that is non time-limited where they can access further support when required rather than being signed off and not offered support again until the risk factor has risen or they have reached a crisis point. This kind of preventative provision will require additional investment from central Government.

There is an urgent need for service providers, policy makers, police and other frontline intervention staff to gain a greater understanding of the issues young homeless people face on a daily basis. It is only when the cause (e.g. family dysfunction, mental health issues) rather than the outcome (homelessness or crime) is comprehended and addressed by these bodies, that real change will be able to take effect for the most vulnerable in society.

The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the ability of government to respond to urgent need. Homeless people were placed in accommodation in order to help tackle the spread of the virus. The motivation for this intervention could be questionable – was this a move to protect the vulnerable or the rest of society from them? Since the lockdown has eased, homeless people have been returned to the streets. Whilst for some this may have been their own choice, for many it will be confirmation of the lack of regard society and government have for the most at risk amongst us. With the increasing cuts to funding for services and initiatives addressing issues that cause homelessness, in contrast with the government's willingness to spend

seemingly uncapped amounts of money to keep the economy going, it is a sad indictment of the priorities our policy makers and funding bodies place on people in need.

Glossary

ADHD Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

APPG All Party Parliamentary Group

ATM Automated Teller machines

B&B Bed and Breakfast hotel

BAME Black and Minority Ethnic

BERA British Educational Research Association

CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CEE Central and Eastern European

CEO Chief Executive Officer

CGLC Communities and Local Government Committee

CHAIN Combined Homelessness and Information Network

CJS Criminal Justice System

CNN Cable News Network

CORE Continuous Recording of Lettings and Sales in Social Housing in England

DBS Disclosure Barring Service

DCLG Department for Communities and Local Government

DCSF Department for Children, Schools and Families

DHP Discretionary Housing Payment

DSD Department for Social Development

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

EEA European Economic Area

ESA Employment and Support Allowance

HRA Homeless reduction Act

JSA Jobseekers‟ Allowance

LGBT Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender

LHA Local Housing Allowance

MHFA Mental Health First Aid

NAO Nation Audit Office

NCY New Choices for Youth

NHS National Health Service

NSNO No Second Night Out

OCJS Offending Crime and Justice Survey

ONS Office for National Statistics

PRS Private Rented Sector

PSE Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey

RSI Rough Sleepers Initiative

SAR Shared Accommodation Rate

UC Universal Credit

YOT Youth Offending Team

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Middlesex University Research Project

Questionnaire for homeless young people: Age 17-21

1. Tell me about your life before you became homelessness?
   a. How good was it- tell me the positives?
   b. Why you became homeless- tell me the negative aspects of your life?

2. Can you please describe your understanding about homelessness and crime?
   a. What type of crime would you associate with being homeless?

3. Do you think your life is better now or before? And Why?
   a. What is the difference being a homeless?
   b. Why you feel this difference?

4. Do you think sometimes it's justified to commit a crime for survival?
   a. Like stealing food or shoplifting?
   b. Sex work, begging etc.

5. Do you think young people choose a life of crime or does it just happen?
   a. Opportunist or plan?

6. Why youth do crime? Factors that influence you/young people to commit crime?
   a. Any factors you can think off: give example?

7. If you get an opportunity to steal (expensive thing) will you steal? If yes/no, why?
   a. Like in someone's room an iPhone or jewellery?
   b. Why don't you steal, what stops you from stealing?

8. Have you ever committed any crime to make your friend's happy?
a. If yes how did those friends react after it?

9. Have any of your friends in gang and have been they ever pushed you to join in the gang?

a. If yes how did they encouraged you?

10. If you get an opportunity to change two things what would you like to change in your homeless setting?
    a. Any policy you think you could improve upon, bring in or get rid of?
    b. Staff's behaviour with you?

11. Have you ever experienced drug abuse in your family? Explain, how did that affect their parenting skills and you?
    a. Did they affect your life or mood?
    b. Was it really bad?

12. How would you describe your emotional relationship with your Parent? Which is your favorite and why?
    a. Which you feel comfortable to talking with?
    b. How did they respond you?

13. If you saw an opportunity to offend what would be the main thing that would stop, you?
    a. Fear or something else?

14. Do you think sometimes you have to take the law in your hand for the sake of happiness?
    a. Like put scratches on the parked cars.

Appendix 2

Middlesex University Research Project

Questionnaire for Professionals

For social workers, youth offending team members, Centrepoint and New choices for youth (NCY) staff members?

1. Why don't all homeless young people commit crime?

2. What is professional's role and responsibilities in helping young people to avoid them from re-offending?

3. In your opinion what are the 3 main reasons of youth offending by homeless?

4. Do you think homelessness and youth offending is interrelated? Are they perpetrators or victims?

5. What would you change to make your work with homeless young people more effective? Please highlight up to THREE changes.

6. Do you think ethnic minorities (black and Muslim homeless young people) are discriminated by staff and general public?

7. How effective are Services in dealing with young offenders or young people at risk of offending?

8. What are examples of good practice in your ways of working with young people and other agencies?

9. Do you agree with policies about youth homelessness? If not tell why?

10. Do you think parent's role is important in a child's life and if yes then why?

11. Do you think ethnic minorities (black and Muslim homeless young people) are discriminated by staff and general public?

Appendix 3

Middlesex University Research Project

Youth homelessness and crime

Motivating questions underlining this research: '**Why aren't more homeless young people committing crime? 'Why don't all homeless young people commit crime?**

The crux of this study is to gain a thorough insight into the realities of youth homelessness and crime, through the lens of the lived experiences of young homeless people and the professionals who work directly with them. I intended to establish if there is a direct correlation between homelessness and crime both in terms of offending and victimisation in relation to youth (17 – 21 years). If this was found to be the case, to then help to shed light on the reasons why they offend, as well as identifying the circumstances in which they may also be a victim of crime.

My primary research consisted of one-to-one life-story interviews, through carefully crafted questionnaires and open discussions. This offered me unique insights from individuals who were currently facing these issues (their lived experiences).

These one-to-one interviews were not one-off sessions but had follow up interviews with six of the young people, with the intention of seeing how their lives had been changed over time (approximately six-nine months after the initial interview). This was done for several reasons, which included the need to build rapport and ensure each interviewee felt safe and able to share openly and with confidence. This included that what they shared would remain confidential. This also ensured that the data collected would be as accurate and authentic as possible.

Appendix 4

Middlesex University Research Project

Youth homelessness and crime

Young Persons Consent Form

My signature on this form confirms that I agree to be interviewed by as part of research into **Youth homelessness and crime** conducted by Nadeem Rasheed, under the supervision of Middlesex University.

I understand that this research will be used to improve the understanding of how young people experience homelessness and crime and not to investigate specific people or criminal acts.

I understand that: -

- The interview is **strictly confidential.**
- All views or opinions will be anonymous (e.g. the use of an alias) so I cannot be identified in any way.
- I can withdraw from the interview at any time and can refuse to answer if I feel uncomfortable or unhappy with the question.
- If I choose to reveal any 'significant harm', to me or to others, this will need to be raised with the managers who will decide what to do.
- If I wish to seek support and speak to someone after my interview, I can approach one of the managers.

I ..... hereby give my consent to be interviewed as part of the above research.

Thank you for your assistance,

Nadeem Rasheed

Principal Investigator

Appendix 5

Middlesex University Research Project

Youth homelessness and crime

Right to withdraw form

Dear [Client Number],

My name is Nadeem Rasheed, and I am a student at Middlesex University, London. I am currently pursuing my PhD in the School of Law Department.

PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research is on voluntary basis. After making your decision (of your own volition) to volunteer for this study, you are still entitled to withdraw from the study at any point in time and you may decide not to respond to questions which pose discomfort to you.

FURTHER CONTACT:

For enquiries or concerns, you can contact the researcher via email NR410@live.mdx.ac.uk

You can also further contact my supervisor, Professor Anthony Goodman at a.goodman@mdx.ac.uk

Thank you for your assistance in this important research,

 (Signature of researcher) (Date) 08.12.2015

Nadeem Rasheed

Principal Investigator

Appendix 6

Middlesex University Research Project

Youth homelessness and crime

Information sheet of professionals

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research.

My name is Nadeem Rasheed, I am doing my Doctorate in School of Law at Middlesex University. I am conducting research into **why more homeless young people aren't committing crime? A study on the influences on young people's propensity to offend and the role of professionals in supporting homeless young people into living a crime free life.**

This research seeks to expand knowledge about the social phenomena of 'youth homelessness and crime' (both as victim and perpetrator), as experienced by homeless young people. It is intended to identify the key links between homelessness and crime and how and why some homeless young people get drawn into criminal activity, and some do not. It will also investigate their lived experiences of victimisation.

Such research is challenging and involves interviewing professionals who live/work with deprived or homeless youth and serious offenders.

I am not gathering information on specific individuals or their activities. All interviews are strictly **CONFIDENTIAL** and not attributable to any single participant. I will allocate unique reference numbers or pseudonyms to anonymise data. Data will be securely stored, and comments will relate to grouped professions.

If you have any further queries about the research, please email me at the address below. This research has been formally agreed with the University Ethics Committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in this research.

Nadeem Rasheed

Principal Investigator

NR410@live.mdx.ac.uk