



Arsyllfa **Wledig** Cymru
Wales **Rural** Observatory

Homelessness in Rural Wales

Research Report No. 9

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1. Introduction

Rural homelessness has emerged as a significant issue in Wales over recent years. Media coverage of the rising numbers of homeless households in rural areas and the recognition of the rural components of homelessness by the Welsh Assembly Government in its National Homelessness Strategy (2006-8) have pushed the issue higher up public, political and policy agendas. The research on which this report is based was commissioned by the Countryside Policy Division and the Social Justice and Regeneration Department of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to provide a comprehensive evidence-base of homelessness in rural Wales. The research utilised the WAG's broad definition of homelessness, as a situation in which 'a person lacks accommodation or where their tenure is not secure' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005). Two main areas of work were undertaken within the research project. First, an examination was made of the scale, nature and geography of homelessness in rural Wales. Second, attention was given to agency responses to rural homelessness and the identification of good practice for dealing with this problem.

The report is structured around five sections. The next section sets out the key objectives of the project and the methodological tools that have been utilised within the research to generate quantitative and qualitative evidence on rural homelessness in Wales. Section Three provides a broad range of statistical data on the nature, scale and geography of homelessness in rural Wales. In Section Four, material from interviews with national homeless organisations and homelessness officers from rural local authorities is drawn upon to examine the ways in which rural forms of homelessness are currently being tackled by different agencies. The focus of the report switches to the local scale in Section Five with evidence provided from six case-studies of local homelessness projects located in different parts of rural Wales. Section Six then discusses the key components of good practice for dealing with homelessness in rural areas that emerge from this and other research. The report ends with a summary of the main findings.

2. Research Objectives and Methods

There were four key objectives of the research project:

- ♦ To examine the nature, scale and geography of homelessness in rural Wales.
- ♦ To explore current agency responses to rural homelessness, including national and local agency, and statutory and voluntary sector activities.
- ♦ To highlight key obstacles to delivering services to homeless people in rural areas.
- ♦ To identify good practice in tackling rural homelessness.

The project commenced in June 2005 and was completed in July 2006¹. A multi-method approach was adopted consisting of three phases of work. Phase One was based around statistical analyses of Welsh Assembly Government homelessness data for Wales. Official homelessness data for the period 1978 – 2005 were obtained at local authority level to enable temporal and spatial analyses of the scale and nature of homelessness in rural Wales. Two forms of analysis were undertaken: the first looked at long-term trends over the last quarter of a century in rural and urban Wales; and the second considered changing homeless numbers in greater detail between 1997 and 2005 for different local authority areas in Wales. The spatial component of the analysis involved comparisons between rural and non-rural areas of Wales, and examinations of spatial variations within rural Wales. These official analyses were supplemented by data on homelessness cases obtained from Shelter Cymru. Based on electronic records of housing and homelessness-related client approaches to their offices in different parts of rural Wales, these data provide an alternative source of information on homelessness. Statistical information on the scale and nature of rural homelessness was analysed for the period 2001 – 2004 for the nine local authority areas in rural Wales.

For the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six national organisations with knowledge of homelessness in Wales – Big Issue Cymru, Citizen’s Advice, Salvation Army, Shelter Cymru, Wallich Clifford and the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations. Interviews were also secured with homelessness officers from the nine most rural local authorities in Wales

¹ The bulk of the research was undertaken between June and December 2005.

– Isle of Anglesey, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire and Powys. These interviews focused on two main themes: perspectives on the nature and scale of homelessness in rural areas; and initiatives that have been developed to tackle rural forms of homelessness. Within this latter theme, questions were asked about the key obstacles to delivering services to homeless people in rural areas and the essential components of good practice for dealing with rural homelessness.

The third phase of research was conducted at the local level. Drawing on information collected from the national agency and local authority interviews, six case-studies were undertaken of local homelessness projects that were identified as examples of practice likely to be effective in dealing with rural forms of homelessness. These projects were of different sizes, were meeting the needs of a range of homeless groups, and were located in different parts of rural Wales. The case-studies consisted of interviews with the managers of the local projects and focus group discussions with the clients of three of the projects. The interviews sought to collect details of the project, explore obstacles to delivering services and discuss good practice. The group discussions examined how clients had accessed the project and their experiences of being helped by the project.

3. Statistical Assessments of the Scale, Nature and Geography of Homelessness in Rural Wales

Introduction

In order to build a quantitative picture of homelessness in rural Wales, we first use official statistics² to examine various aspects of homelessness. This analysis looks at the changing scale, geography, characteristics, profile and causes of homelessness in rural Wales. Following this, Shelter Cymru data are analysed in order to provide an alternative assessment of rural homelessness in Wales.

Changing levels of official homelessness in rural Wales

Utilising data from the Welsh Housing Statistics it has been possible to analyse the changing scale of priority need homelessness over a 27 year period between 1978 and 2005, for 'Rural' areas, 'Urban' areas and Wales as a whole³. These data reveal that between 1978 and 2005, the overall number of homeless households in rural Wales increased by 309%, compared with 161% for Wales as a whole and 129% for urban areas.

Chart 1 shows the changing scale of rural homelessness over this long-term period. The pattern for rural areas broadly resembles that for Welsh urban areas, although there was an earlier peak in the rural homelessness total in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Levels of homelessness in rural areas remained below those of their urban counterpart for much of this period, but recent years have seen a notable change. From 2000 onward, the number of homeless households in rural areas has exceeded that for urban areas. It is also evident from this Chart that levels of homelessness are sensitive to the changing nature of the housing market, with rapid increases in homelessness totals in the periods following the late 1980s / early 1990s and late 1990s housing booms.

² The WAG's quarterly 'WHO12 Homelessness Statistical Return' collects the official statistics on homelessness in Wales, and information is available via quarterly Statistical Releases and annually in the Welsh Housing Statistics publication.

³ Given the local government boundary changes in 1996, the 'Rural' and 'Urban' categories are based on the current definitions (Rural comprises the nine most rural local authorities and Urban consists of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea), with these fitted to the pre-1996 spatial boundaries. It was not possible to incorporate data for the Valleys authority areas as boundary changes prevented any meaningful statistical analysis of changing homeless totals.

Chart 1: Number of Homeless Households in Priority Need in Wales/ Average House Prices 1978-2005.

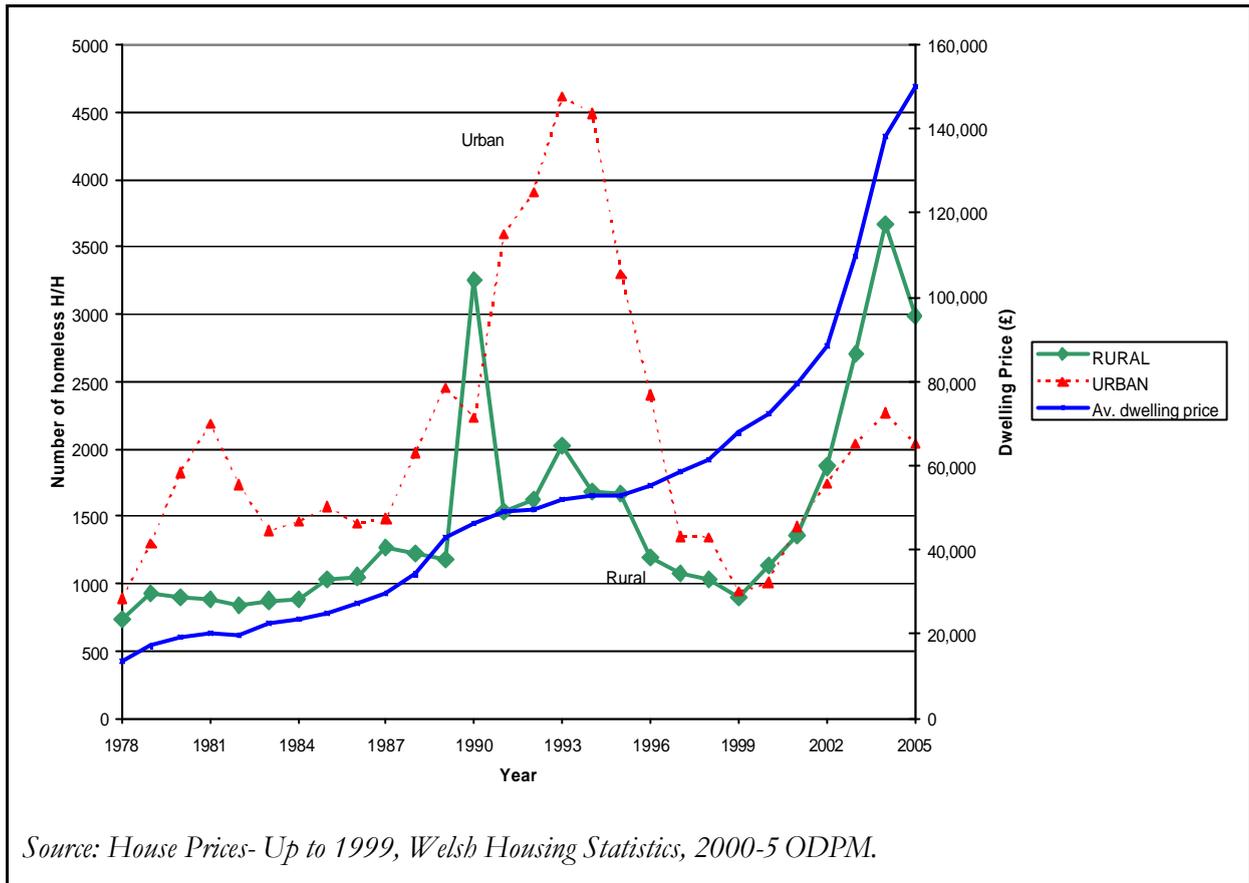


Chart 2: Number of Homeless Households in Priority Need in Wales 1997-2005.



Regarding more short term changes, Chart 2 shows the changing scale of homelessness over the period 1997-2005⁴ for Rural, Urban, Valleys⁵ and Other⁶ areas of Wales. This shows that in 1997, the total number of homeless households in rural areas was lower than that recorded for Urban and Valleys areas but higher than for Other areas. By 2005 however, the situation had changed noticeably, with the Rural total having risen over this period to overtake the total for Urban areas by 2002 and then to overtake the Valleys total in 2004.

In 2005, 2,987 households were accepted as homeless and in priority need by rural local authorities in Wales, representing 36% of all official homeless households in Wales in that year (see Table 1, overleaf). The official homelessness total in Rural areas in 2005 exceeded that in Urban areas by 951 households and the Valleys total by 556 households. These absolute numbers of homeless households are important for any comparison between the areas of Wales, and show that rural areas currently have a higher number of homeless households than the other areas. There is, however, a need to take into account the differing population sizes of the areas. That is, those areas with larger populations will tend to present more cases of homelessness. This can be done by calculating standardised homelessness rates.

The standardised level of homelessness for Rural Areas was identical to that recorded for Urban areas in 2005 (7.3 per thousand households) and higher than in the Valleys (6.7) and Other areas (5.7) (see Table 1). This standardised rural homelessness rate, however, does mask important spatial variations in homelessness levels *within* rural Wales. Pembrokeshire (11.6) and Monmouthshire (8.0) recorded highest rates amongst rural authority areas in 2005. These two authorities, along with Gwynedd (7.4), Conwy (7.3) and Powys (7.1), recorded rates above the average for Wales. The lowest rates of homelessness in rural Wales in 2005 were recorded in Denbighshire (5.1), Isle of Anglesey (6.0) and Carmarthenshire (6.1).

⁴ This period was chosen for the exploration of data at a lower spatial scale due to the fact that the earlier data is less robust at the Local Authority level.

⁵ 'Valleys' comprises Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Torfaen.

⁶ The 'Other' category contains Flintshire, Wrexham and the Vale of Glamorgan.

Table 1: Standardised levels of homelessness in rural Wales, 2005.

| Area | Number of Homeless Households (2005) ⁷ | All Households thousands (2003) | Standardised Levels: Homelessness per Thousand Households |
|------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Isle of Anglesey | 175 | 29 | 6.0 |
| Gwynedd | 362 | 49 | 7.4 |
| Conwy | 353 | 48 | 7.3 |
| Denbighshire | 203 | 40 | 5.0 |
| Powys | 388 | 54 | 7.1 |
| Ceredigion | 217 | 32 | 6.8 |
| Pembrokeshire | 564 | 48 | 11.6 |
| Carmarthenshire | 441 | 72 | 6.1 |
| Monmouthshire | 284 | 36 | 8.0 |
| | | | |
| Rural | 2,987 | 409 | 7.3 |
| Urban | 2,036 | 280 | 7.3 |
| Valleys | 2,431 | 361 | 6.7 |
| Other | 922 | 163 | 5.7 |
| Wales | 8,376 | 1,213 | 6.9 |

Source: Welsh Housing Statistics and Office for National Statistics.

The main reasons for official homelessness in rural Wales

For those households accepted as homeless and in priority need, data are collected in the WH012 WAG statistical return on the main reasons for their homelessness⁸. In 2005, three reasons accounted for 69.5% of all homelessness cases in rural Wales: parents / other relatives being unwilling / unable to accommodate the household (19.9%); loss of rented or tied housing (27.9%); and a relationship breakdown (21.7%) (Table 2: Appendix 1). Mortgage and rent arrears together accounted for 2.5% of all homeless cases in 2005, lower than the proportions of homelessness resulting from people leaving institutions / care (9.9%) and those experiencing violence or harassment (3.3%).

⁷ Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

⁸ The following categories are used: parents no longer willing/able to accommodate, other relatives/friends no longer able/willing to accommodate, breakdown of a relationship with a partner, mortgage arrears, rent arrears, other reasons for loss of accommodation, leaving an institution or care, and violence or harassment.

The main reasons for homelessness in rural Wales in 2005 appear similar to those recorded in Urban, Valleys and Other areas. Rural areas, however, had the lowest proportion of homeless cases resulting from parents or other relatives not being willing or able to accommodate the household, and the highest proportion of cases resulting from the loss of rented or tied housing, for reasons other than mortgage or rent arrears.

In order to examine the main reasons for homelessness in local authority areas within rural Wales, it is necessary to aggregate the data for the years 2004 and 2005⁹. Across these two years, some interesting differences between rural local authority areas are evident in relation to the main reasons for official homelessness (see Table 3: Appendix 1):

- The loss of rented or tied accommodation, for reasons other than mortgage or rent arrears, accounted for 40.4% of homeless households in Isle of Anglesey but only 14.8% in Monmouthshire.
- Homelessness resulting from parents or other relatives being unwilling or able to accommodate the household varied from 37.1% of households in Monmouthshire to only 17.8% of Powys households.
- Homelessness linked to a relationship breakdown accounted for 28.1% of homeless households in Powys but 14.7% of such households in Conwy.
- Homelessness associated with leaving institutions or care was particularly significant in Gwynedd and Conwy, while Ceredigion and Powys recorded the highest levels of homelessness resulting from violence or harassment.

⁹ This is because the numbers for individual categories in local authority areas were considered to be too small to analyse for single years.

The priority need categories of official homelessness in rural Wales.

Data on homelessness acceptances are categorised into a range of priority needs by local authorities. When a household applies to a local authority as homeless it may fit into a number of priority needs categories. For example, there may be dependent children but also domestic violence, or other combinations of priority needs. From the circumstances of the household, local authorities make a decision on which is the *primary* priority need. The following analysis discusses homelessness acceptances by recorded priority need.

A summary of homeless acceptances by priority need for the different areas of Wales in 2005 is provided in Table 4 (Appendix 1). In general terms, the priority needs for the different spatial categories are similar. The presence of dependent children was the most common priority need for homeless acceptances in rural Wales (as elsewhere in Wales) in 2005, accounting for 44.2% of all homeless acceptances. A further 6.9% of homeless acceptances in rural Wales were deemed in priority need due to the presence of a pregnant woman. Other significant priority need categories were young (16-17 years) people at risk (8.8% of homeless households), persons experiencing domestic violence (7.8%), households with members considered vulnerable due to mental illness (8.0%) and former prisoners with no accommodation (7.3%).

While the priority needs of homeless households in rural Wales in 2005 were similar to that of the other areas, some differences can be identified. Rural Wales had the highest proportion (of the four spatial categories) of homeless acceptances with the priority need being the presence of dependent children, a vulnerable older person, a vulnerable person with a physical disability, and a person in a situation of emergency homelessness. Domestic violence and former prisoners with no accommodation were the priority need categories that had the lowest proportion of the homeless acceptances in rural Wales in 2005.

Table 5 (Appendix 1) provides a spatial breakdown of homeless acceptances by priority need across the different authorities in rural Wales for 2004 and 2005. As was the case with the main reasons of homelessness, it is clear that there is considerable variation within the Welsh countryside:

- The presence of dependent children was the priority need for 32.6% of homeless acceptances in Ceredigion but about half of such acceptances in Isle of Anglesey, Pembrokeshire and Denbighshire.
- People suffering domestic violence or the threat of domestic violence was the priority need for a higher proportion of homeless acceptances in Ceredigion, Denbighshire and Powys (above 10% of cases) than in the rest of rural Wales.
- Former prisoners with no accommodation was the priority need for 11.2% of all homeless acceptances in Conwy but only 3.8% of Carmarthenshire homeless acceptances.
- Young people at risk, aged 16 or 17 years, was the priority need category for a more significant group of the homeless acceptances in Monmouthshire, Ceredigion and Denbighshire (where they made up more than 10% of homeless households) than in other local authority areas in rural Wales.

Shelter Cymru Statistics

Shelter Cymru records data for all approaches to its regional offices by local authority area. Each case is recorded on a 'HAC Statistics Sheet', which gathers information on household type, household size, housing status, primary and secondary problems, and actions and outcomes. Shelter Cymru data were obtained and analysed according to homelessness status, household type, and reasons for the approach for the nine rural local authority areas between 2001 and 2004¹⁰.

Slightly more than 8,000 households approached Shelter Cymru in the nine rural local authority areas over the four year period 1999-2001 (see Table 6, Appendix 1). Of these, 77.3% were deemed by Shelter Cymru to be homeless. The statistics reveal that 23.7% of cases were classified as imminently homeless¹¹, 22.8% as being at medium term¹² risk of becoming homeless and 7.6% of cases involved people who were roofless¹³. It is also clear that only a small proportion of homeless cases dealt with by Shelter Cymru were considered to satisfy the statutory definition of homelessness and in priority need. In fact, while the organisation processed 4,371 cases of imminent, medium risk and roofless homelessness between 2001 and 2004, only 1,874 cases were classified by Shelter Cymru as statutory homelessness¹⁴.

The Shelter Cymru figures shed more light on the geography of homelessness in rural Wales. The highest number of cases dealt with by the organisation were in Conwy (1,544), Denbighshire (1,471) and Carmarthenshire (1,324), with the lowest number in Monmouthshire (175 cases)¹⁵. Rates of rooflessness were highest in Denbighshire, accounting for 11.6% of all cases, with Conwy and Powys both recording rates of rooflessness of more than 7%. These situations contrast with that revealed in Pembrokeshire, where only 1.6% of cases dealt with by Shelter Cymru between 2001 and 2004 were classified as roofless. In relation to people who were deemed to be imminently homeless, Denbighshire recorded the highest proportion, at 37.0%, followed by Conwy (26.5%) and Pembrokeshire (24.4%). Lowest rates of imminent homelessness

¹⁰ The period for which electronic data were available.

¹¹ Clients are not yet homeless, but are facing homelessness after 28 days but within the next 3 months (it can be used to cover situations where there is a notice to seek possession, court date, eviction date etc. within that time).

¹² Medium term risk - People are potentially homeless if their situation does not improve e.g. with increasing arrears or housing benefit problems.

¹³ People without any accommodation, i.e. literally homeless on the day/night of contact (on the street, in car etc.)

¹⁴ Clients who are homeless or being threatened with homelessness as defined by the current homelessness legislation

¹⁵ These figures do not take into account the respective sizes of the resident populations or the extent of Shelter Cymru coverage in these areas.

were evident in Carmarthenshire (15.3%) and Ceredigion (17.6%). Turning now to cases classified as medium risk homelessness, Gwynedd (30.5%) and Denbighshire (30.0%) recorded the highest proportions, with lowest levels in Pembrokeshire (11.8%) and Ceredigion (14.8%).

In contrast to the official homelessness data, Shelter Cymru received the majority of enquiries from non-family households. In fact, only 41.3% cases dealt with by its offices involved couples with children or single parents. Approaches by single men (26.0%) and single women (17.6%) collectively made up a higher proportion of cases than those involving families, with a further 8.4% from childless couples. Within rural Wales, single person homelessness cases were most significant in Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion, where they comprised more than half of all cases. Denbighshire recorded the lowest proportion of such cases, at 36.2%.

Shelter Cymru record the type of housing tenure of those people who approach them for assistance. These data show that over one third (37.4%) of cases were from people in private rented accommodation, with 15.4% in local authority property, 7.6% renting from a housing association and 4.2% owner-occupiers. Others households were living in other people's property – 6.1% were staying with friends, 4.5% were living with their parents and 3.4% were living with other relatives. A smaller number were living in institutional accommodation, including hostels (2.9%) and refuges (0.6%).

4. Responding to Homelessness in Rural Wales

The Changing Homelessness Policy Context in Wales

Since 1977, local authorities in Wales have had a statutory duty to respond to certain defined forms of homelessness and homeless groups within their areas. The following groups are currently recognised as being in priority need: households with dependent children; households containing a pregnant woman; households with people deemed vulnerable on account of their old age, physical disability, mental illness; young people at risk; all 16 & 17 year olds; persons experiencing domestic violence; ex-members of the armed forces; and former prisoners. To qualify for a rehousing duty under the homelessness legislation a household has to be in one of these priority need categories, be unintentionally homeless and be eligible for assistance¹⁶.

The National Homelessness Strategy for Wales, 2006-2008 sits within this broader homelessness legislative context. The Strategy sets out how the Welsh Assembly Government intends to tackle homelessness through multi-agency working:

Homelessness can only be tackled by a partnership approach at local and national level...[the Assembly] intend to work with other public, voluntary and private agencies, and homeless people themselves, to prevent homelessness and alleviate it where it cannot be avoided. (National Homelessness Strategy for Wales, 2006-2008: 3).

The Assembly Government is developing its policies within the framework of ‘Making the Connections’. Published in October 2004, this document sets out the Assembly’s agenda for improving public services across Wales, with emphasis on joined-up policy making, efficiency, and participation, and the National Homelessness Strategy reflects these priorities:

In particular, it is intended as a truly national Strategy requiring constructive engagement from other policy sectors, including health, social services, and education... Services must be planned to connect so that they address these other problems alongside meeting their housing need. Homelessness is very often linked to other aspects of social disadvantage. We need to become much smarter at working jointly across boundaries to intervene to help people address these problems and break the cycle of deprivation (National Homelessness Strategy for Wales, 2006-2008: 3).

¹⁶ There is a presumption of duty where a local connection exists, and the duty can only be transferred if there is no local connection but there is with somewhere else, and that is subject to no risk of violence.

Agency Responses to Homelessness in Rural Wales

The research examined the actions of national and local agencies in tackling homelessness in rural Wales. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with homelessness officers within the nine rural local authorities, as well as representatives from the following national organisations: Big Issue Cymru, Citizen's Advice, Salvation Army, Shelter Cymru, Wallich Clifford, and Welsh Federation of Housing Associations (WFHA). These interviews explored agencies' perspectives on the nature and scale of rural homelessness, as well as the ways that they were dealing with homelessness in rural areas.

The Significance of Homelessness in Rural Wales

All interviewees acknowledged rural homelessness as a significant issue. Most homelessness officers considered that their local authority did recognise local homelessness of course. Officers in other departments and councillors were generally seen as sympathetic to local homelessness issues, although some homelessness officers felt that these issues could be treated more seriously by other officers and members. For example, one officer mentioned difficulties experienced with '*...getting [homelessness] up the corporate ladder?*'

National agencies and local authorities considered that there existed a more limited understanding of homelessness issues amongst the resident population of rural Wales, with local homelessness tending to be viewed as an external problem:

There is a perception amongst some local people that homeless people are all outsiders that are coming into the town/village to take houses for local people. This is not borne out in the statistics though, as most people we see have a local connection with that area, and many have lived there all their lives (Shelter Cymru).

The local population see the homeless as 'incomers' and will often blame them for any anti-social behaviour that affects the community (Wallich Clifford).

The general view is that local people don't become homeless; it is just people coming into the area. (Gwynedd)

The local authority homelessness officers pointed to important geographical variations in the scale and visibility of homelessness within their areas. Homelessness was considered to be most significant and visible in the towns of rural Wales. Officers suggested that the reasons for this spatial clustering of homelessness were that these places represent the largest settlements and that they contain almost all of the support services for homeless groups:

The only drop-in centre for homeless clients is based in Holyhead. (Isle of Anglesey)

Aberystwyth is where we still see the majority of people, because population-wise, it's where the people are. Cardigan is our second centre. We see a lot of people in Cardigan now. They tend to be in the two major towns...there's no great difference between rural and urban areas in what a homeless issue is, it's the numbers for us really. (Ceredigion)

Town areas do have more of a problem, but that's purely about population and where there is a lack of work. Our biggest problem is around Milford, Pembroke Dock area. They are fairly deprived areas; areas needing funding. They have problems other than homelessness, but they do impact on homelessness. (Pembrokeshire)

Raising the Profile of Homelessness in Rural Wales

Two important ways in which agencies have responded to homelessness in rural Wales are by undertaking research and by raising the profile of local homelessness. All local authorities had undertaken analyses of the official homelessness statistics but beyond this, research and evaluation varied from one authority to another. Ceredigion, for example, made use of their 'self-generated statistics, of the people [they] see and the people [they] house'. In reviewing its homelessness strategy, Monmouthshire had 'looked behind the main trends; we have also...tried to identify the main causes and the groups and things like that'. Carmarthenshire had analysed data only 'in terms of a performance monitoring point of view', but was looking to focus on specific issues through the Carmarthenshire Homelessness Forum:

We are starting to discuss now whether or not we need to commission further pieces of research on specific issues that are arising from that more sort of detailed analysis really. We haven't specifically done any specific research as yet.

Again, in terms of the national agencies, research activities varied. Citizen's Advice and Shelter Cymru stated that they had not conducted any specific research on rural homelessness. The WHFA had lobbied the Assembly to investigate rural homelessness and produced "a research proposal looking at the relationship between housing associations and local authorities in tackling homelessness", while Wallich Clifford had recently undertaken a pilot project in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Powys and Pembrokeshire to gather information about the nature and scale of rough sleeping in these areas:

These rural areas have little or no firm evidence of the extent to which rough sleeping occurs... We interviewed rough sleepers that we met in order to gather detailed, first hand, information about their history, what services they feel would benefit them and what issues rough sleepers face. (Wallich Clifford)

Attempts had also been made to raise levels of awareness of homelessness at local and national levels. Amongst the local authorities, information about homelessness issues had been circulated to other officers and members, and at the national level, agencies had lobbied the Welsh Assembly Government about homelessness, and particularly homelessness in rural areas:

We have done consultation responses... been involved in meetings with the Minister to raise the profile of homelessness in Wales, and we have also presented evidence to the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on what actions Housing Associations are undertaking to tackle homelessness in Wales. (WFHA)

[We have] undertaken some policy work, held a 'policy day' on rural homelessness and taken opportunities to raise the issue of research with the Welsh Assembly Government. In addition, opportunities are taken to raise the issue of the effect of homelessness on rural areas in press work. (Shelter Cymru)

Developing Services for Homeless Groups in Rural Wales

In addition to providing accommodation to those who are homeless, eligible for assistance, and in priority need, the local authorities offered housing advice and assistance to other homeless groups regarding social housing accommodation and waiting lists, and voluntary sector projects in their areas. Some officers stated that they went beyond their statutory obligations to provide a broader suite of homelessness services. For example, Isle of Anglesey referred to “*an unwritten policy to give all rough sleepers seven nights B&B accommodation even when they're not priority need*”. Most of the authorities were also involved in multi-agency partnerships, involving other departments and external organisations, to deal with local homelessness. These will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Some of the national agencies had developed schemes to address the rural components of homelessness in Wales. Wallich Clifford had established several homelessness projects that provided help and support across rural areas of Wales:

In Carmarthenshire, for example, we have a young person's mediation service to prevent homelessness occurring as a result of a dispute between carer and child, [provide] tenancy support, and have a residential project for young people in need of temporary accommodation. We also have tenancy support scheme in Aberystwyth as well as a Solutions Worker assisting any person who is, or is in danger of becoming, homeless. Our most recent project to be established in a rural area is our Temporary Accommodation

Project in Ponys, which provides support to people in B&Bs etc. and securing more permanent housing for those who are ready to move on.

Similarly, Shelter Cymru, in developing housing advice services, had recognised some of the particular issues associated with delivering services in rural areas:

Our services in rural areas operate on an outreach basis and are delivered from the local CAB, community centre, job centre or church hall etc. The services were developed in this way as there were identified housing needs in more rural areas, without a dedicated service. We also operate a home visits policy and can conduct a home visit to the client if they cannot get into their local service. We are also able to provide advice by telephone if needed. Our approach as an organisation is one of equal access and by aiming to provide these services in this way we hope to reach clients in more remote areas, who may not otherwise access services.

While local authorities and other agencies were involved in responding to the needs of the non-statutory homeless, most of the initiatives that had been developed were focused on the larger settlements in rural Wales. As the officer from Gwynedd pointed out:

If anything is happening at all, it is happening in places like Bangor and Caernarfon where most of the problems are. I can't think of anything that is happening in smaller, remote settlements to help.

However, in a small number of cases attention was beginning to be directed towards dealing with homelessness in smaller or more remote settlements:

a local member who is based within the rural area... is looking at some of the rural issues involved in accessing services, accessing accommodation. They have also held a series of workshops with local members in some of the northern [more remote parts] locations within the county to raise awareness, and talk to them around the issues of homelessness and reasons for homelessness within some of those smaller areas. (Pembrokeshire)

Multi-agency Working to Tackle Homelessness in Rural Areas

At national and local levels, multi-agency methods of working had been developed to respond to homelessness in rural areas. The national agencies were involved with other national organisations – including Shelter Cymru, Citizen's Advice, Welsh Assembly Government, Women's Aid, Welsh Federation of Housing Associations, Homeless Link and drug and alcohol agencies – as well as rural local authorities:

We work very closely with Homeless Link. They're not necessarily a hands-on organisation but they are a lobbying group in Wales (Salvation Army).

On a national level, the Director of Citizen's Advice is on the Board of Shelter Cymru. So we have fairly good interchange at all levels with Shelter (Citizen's Advice).

Shelter Cymru works with the Legal Services Commission, Welsh Assembly Government, Local Authorities, and Citizen's Advice to provide housing advice services across Wales – including rural and urban areas. Shelter Cymru works with other organisations e.g. Homeless Link, local homelessness organisations, Mental Health Teams, Community Drug and Alcohol Teams, Women's Aid to highlight the issues of homelessness (Shelter Cymru).

The local authorities were also actively involved in partnerships to deal with homelessness issues. All authorities identified cross-departmental working, mainly involving social services and benefit departments:

We have got Social Care heavily involved really, obviously our own department, Housing Benefit – we have got a very, very good relationship with Housing Benefit and that has got obviously natural advantages particularly around temporary accommodation, rental errors etc. (Carmarthenshire).

Within the council there is a homelessness sub-group which includes representatives from Housing Benefit, Supporting People, Legal and Finance in addition to Housing (Isle of Anglesey).

We work quite hard with Social Services, Enforcement Officers as well if people come in with notices that are not valid or there is harassment from landlords I pass them immediately on to our Enforcement Officers. The other one is Housing Benefits – we might ask them to fast track an application to prevent somebody becoming homeless (Gwynedd).

In addition, all authorities highlighted that they were working with a range of external agencies to deal with local homelessness issues. These agencies were drawn mainly from the voluntary sector, although some collaborative working did involve the private sector, particularly local private landlords. Examples of the types of external groups and agencies involved in these arrangements are provided below:

Shelter, CAB, Wallich Clifford, Supported Housing Providers, Probation and Prison Service, Yacht, Foundation Housing, CAB... there are loads more. We have got health visitors there also sitting on the [Homelessness] Forum (Carmarthenshire).

As far as vulnerable groups are concerned, we work with agencies like Mind that deal with people with mental health problems, the local Housing Associations..., also tenancy groups which are helping with sustaining such tenancies. Also there are agencies such as Perthyn, which primarily deal with mental disability, Ty Hafol... all of them have some work to do around vulnerability and the prevention of homelessness (Pembrokeshire).

We work with the Bond Scheme, GISDA, Shelter Cymru. We have an arrangement with CAB, where we pay for one of their Officers, one that specialises in housing issues (Gwynedd).

Key Obstacles to Delivering Homeless Services in Rural Areas

Agencies highlighted four main obstacles to delivering services to homeless groups in rural areas. First, the logistical difficulties and associated costs of providing services to homeless people across wide geographical areas were mentioned as a particular problem:

Geographical spread and cost of providing scattered services is prohibitive (Shelter Cymru).

Making information available to homeless people in rural areas can be difficult due to the vast and isolated parts of the countryside that are affected (Wallich Clifford).

It is harder and more costly to deliver services to remotes areas, in places that are difficult to access (WFHA).

Second, it was suggested that there was a *huge problem with assessing the need for housing, affordable housing, and evidencing the number of people that are homeless in rural areas*' (WFHA). Part of this, the Salvation Army argued, was related to the fact that people do not know to what extent they are eligible for services:

You can't expect people to come to you, you need to provide a bridge for people to access mainstream services, and I think education in schools and in the community would do this.

A third obstacle to delivering services to homeless people identified by agencies and local authorities related to the limited local provision of temporary accommodation:

We have got to use a lot of B&Bs out of the county. It's just you go where the accommodation is. We don't like doing it. We've got 3 B&Bs in the county that are constantly full. During the summer we lose some of our regular B&Bs because they go to the tourists (Monmouthshire).

Most Local Authorities will only have one (if that) hostel or emergency type provision in the county. This could potentially be miles away from where the client actually needs to be. Access to accommodation, anything that potentially could be offered can be in the wrong place or miles away from the clients support network, such as, family, friends, schools, GPs etc. (Shelter Cymru).

Fourth, the characteristics of local rural housing markets were mentioned by several local authorities as creating difficulties for them in responding to homelessness. Rising house prices and private rental levels and the limited provision of rental accommodation for young people were particular problems that were highlighted:

No single people accommodation in our rural areas, we've only got traditional 3-bedroom properties on small estates. We really haven't got anything for young single people, no single flats, no shared accommodation, bedsits, that would be ideal (Gwynedd).

The private sector is becoming more and more of a difficult area for us to access. There is less of it and it is currently being priced out of the market of the people that we are dealing with (Pembrokeshire).

Further Actions for Tackling Rural Homelessness

While national agencies and local authorities were generally positive about their homelessness work, they did point to ways that current approaches could be improved. Four main actions were identified by interviewees. The first relates to the provision of accommodation for homeless groups in rural areas near to where they live. It was stated that further units of temporary, social and affordable housing needs to be provided in rural areas, involving the development of social housing by Registered Social Landlords, the provision of affordable housing through Section 106 Agreements and community land trust schemes, and better usage of the existing stock, including the private rental sector and empty houses.

Second, responses to homelessness in rural areas are too narrowly focused. Authorities and agencies considered that a broader approach is required, one that involves a large number of local authority departments and external organisations, and concentrates on helping prevent homelessness:

Tackling the preventative agenda is key. It is actually preventing homelessness in the first place and ensuring that there are sufficient support services available which are easily accessible to stop it happening in the first instance (WFHA).

At the moment we're very process-driven and we are changing to a prevention role where we're looking much more at trying to get people early and help them maintain that accommodation (Monmouthshire).

Increased preventative measures, particularly for young people, will lessen the risk of an individual becoming homeless and entering a pattern of repeat homelessness (Wallich Clifford).

The third further action for dealing with homelessness that emerges from the interviews concerns relations with private landlords. It was stated that better working relations with the private sector would enable more accommodation to become available for homeless people and, through mediation, prevent people from becoming homeless. The Salvation Army, for example, suggested that “...private landlords need more reassurance in terms of payments. They are reluctant to take people on with benefits”.

Fourth, there were calls for more work to be undertaken by authorities and other agencies to raise levels of awareness of homelessness in rural areas amongst local residents and local councillors. Without this increased local recognition of homelessness it was felt that it would be difficult to develop effective support projects for homeless groups in rural Wales:

Local residents and councillors need to realise that it is affecting local people and it could be someone they know or a member of their family. (Shelter Cymru)

Communities need to accept that homelessness should be a concern in their own area – increased awareness and acceptance of the problem would facilitate the establishing of successful projects. (Wallich Clifford)

5. Local Case-studies of Homelessness Projects in Rural Wales

Introduction

Case-study research was undertaken to provide more detailed information on local projects providing support for homeless groups in rural Wales. Six projects were selected from information provided by the agencies and local authorities in the national phase of work. The projects were chosen to provide a mix of support services offered, the types of clients being assisted, their funding streams, and their spatial coverage. The six projects included in the local research were:

- Carmarthenshire Homelessness Forum
- Ceredigion Care Society
- Digartref Ynys Môn
- GISDA, Gwynedd
- Pembrokeshire Care Society
- StopOver, Monmouth.

Interviews were undertaken with the managers of these projects together with group discussions with a number of clients. The interviews with the managers covered a range of issues relating to the project, including the main activities, partnership working, funding, key obstacles to delivering services, and good practice in tackling issues of homelessness. The discussions with client groups focused mainly on their experiences of being assisted by these projects.

Descriptions of the Case-Study Projects

Carmarthenshire Homelessness Forum

The Forum is a partnership of agencies dealing with homelessness and its prevention in Carmarthenshire. Its work includes the collection and analysis of evidence on homelessness and service provision, and the development of a multi-agency approach to tackling homelessness in Carmarthenshire.

Ceredigion Care Society

Ceredigion Care Society was established in 1971 to deal with the needs of homeless ex-offenders but now addresses broader homelessness issues in Ceredigion. The Society provides emergency, intermediate and secure long term housing options. It also aims to provide help and support in addressing other problems experienced by homeless people, such as relationship breakdowns, substance misuse, domestic violence, and mental and physical health problems.

The Society is involved with the management and monitoring of two properties providing accommodation for homeless people. It operates a bond scheme, a floating support scheme and a 'young person leaving care' project. The Care Society also runs an emergency night shelter on behalf of a local single homelessness forum. It works with a range of organisations in Ceredigion.

Digartref Ynys Môn

Established in 1998, Digartref Ynys Môn deals with homelessness amongst young people in Ynys Môn. There are five main objectives of its work:

- ♦ To provide supported accommodation for homeless young people.
- ♦ To establish a resettlement service to assist the young people to maintain their own tenancies.
- ♦ To provide information and advice for potentially homeless young persons.
- ♦ To work in partnership with statutory agencies to create awareness of homelessness and promote initiatives to alleviate homelessness and tackle social exclusion.
- ♦ To develop a strategy to further investigate and alleviate young homelessness issues on Ynys Môn.

It provides hostel accommodation, move-on accommodation and a 'life and social skills' programme. Funding comes from the local authority, Welsh Assembly Government and a local housing association.

GISDA

GISDA was established in 1985 and deals with young person homelessness in Gwynedd. It aims to provide suitable permanent accommodation for young homeless people aged 16-25 years. GISDA provides a range of accommodation types for young homeless people in the area, including hostels, a move-on hostel, flats and houses, and offers support and training packages.

Pembrokeshire Care Society

Pembrokeshire Care Society was established in 1979. Its early work focused on the resettlement of offenders but it now provides general assistance to homeless people. It receives funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, local authority, a local housing association, the probation services and charitable trusts. It provides the following services: advice, assistance and advocacy services to homeless people; a bond certificate guarantee scheme; a resettlement package; crisis intervention; a support people scheme; furniture grant schemes; landlord advice groups.

StopOver

StopOver was established in 1997 by Churches Together. It provides temporary assistance for one homeless person in a property in Monmouth. StopOver also makes use of the homes of its members if there is greater need for its services. It only accepts homeless people who have been referred to it by other agencies. The running costs are met by Churches Together.

The case-studies clearly include a range of different projects in terms of their backgrounds, objectives, scales of operation, types of activities and funding sources. All of the projects involve multi-agency working geared towards meeting the needs of non-statutory homeless groups, particularly young people. Some projects provide temporary accommodation for homeless people while others are geared towards the provision of advice services. StopOver represents a small-scale and self-funded project whereas Ceredigion Care Society, GISDA and Digartref Ynys Môn are much larger projects that are funded by a range of external organisations. Several of the case-study projects also provide broader support services for homeless people.

Key Obstacles to Delivering Services in Rural Areas

A key purpose of the interviews with managers of the case-study projects was to explore current obstacles to delivering services to homeless people in rural Wales. Four main obstacles were highlighted by managers. The first obstacle to emerge was the limited availability of accommodation for homeless people, particularly hostel and move-on accommodation for young people:

The single biggest obstacle to delivering services to homeless people is the lack of 'move-on' accommodation. There are just not the appropriate types of single person accommodation available in this sort of rural setting. Also the lead-in time to getting 'move-on' accommodation is either new build, but there you're talking about 18 months, or by improving work with private landlords through the Bond Scheme or other landlord support (Digartref Ynys Môn).

We don't have any facilities in Bangor and that's the biggest town in Gwynedd, and people from Gwynedd won't come to Caernarfon, they would rather live on the streets and die on the streets in Bangor than have to come to Caernarfon. We have property there and that's all we've got. We always find that people from rural towns won't go into other rural towns; it's not just Bangor and Caernarfon. So that is one problem (GISDA).

The resourcing of homelessness projects was identified by project managers as a second obstacle to delivering services for homeless people. Pembrokeshire Care Society pointed to the costs associated with dealing with homeless people who are upwards of 30 miles from its main office, while Ceredigion Care Society suggested that more could be done by the organisation with additional funding:

A lot has been done and is being done, and in recent times provision has increased, but I think so much more probably could be done if a relatively small amount of funding was provided" (Ceredigion Care Society)

The third obstacle mentioned by managers was the limited local awareness of homelessness amongst local councillors and residents, and within the local media. Furthermore, it was claimed that when local homelessness was discussed it was seen as a non-local issue, involving homeless groups moving in to rural areas:

There is a sort of ingrained ...way of thinking that you have to get around. I think...it comes across in local press articles, the local councillors' view possibly...that a lot of the problem and issues [concerning homelessness] don't occur in...our small rural county...I think the only way to counter that is through effective publication of the facts... (Ceredigion Care Society)

Fourth, tensions between national and local homelessness agendas and between the different types of agencies tackling homelessness in local areas were highlighted by managers:

There are competing agendas that seemingly do not fit together. You have stuff in terms of the Assembly, funding advice services, the LSC funding advice services but they don't harmonise particularly well, because a large chunk of our work is target driven, you have to meet targets because targets are linked to funding, funding are linked to peoples jobs. (Carmarthenshire Homelessness Forum).

I think the bigger voices and the national organisations are getting too much control. When they go for funding I couldn't compete...And the next thing we'll hear is X [national homelessness organisation] is developing this new whatever in Pembrokeshire and you think...shouldn't we be working together on this? Shouldn't we be given the option to bid for that particular service? (Pembrokeshire Care Society)

Further Actions

Project managers identified three priority actions that would allow them to deal with homelessness more effectively. The first, and most important, was the provision of additional units of accommodation for homeless groups. StopOver, for example, identified the need for more long-term accommodation, particularly bed-sits, and supported places. Similarly, Digartref Ynys Môn highlighted the need to develop accommodation for homeless people in other parts of Isle of Anglesey:

“[we are] hoping to establish a private leasing scheme; we also hope to be working more closely with the Housing Associations, particularly on the south of the island. We don't have any properties there, but we have been advised that we will have two single person flats in a development at Menai Bridge”.

Increased provision of supported accommodation for homeless people in the smaller rural towns was also mentioned:

We have got young people from all of these towns who are in need of our services. We need small satellites really. We don't need large scale hostels, we don't need a hostel for 30 people in Bangor, and we need a hostel for 12 people, a small one of 4 or 5 beds in Bethesda, a small one in Pwllheli. We'd fill them straight away. It wouldn't have to be just for homeless people; it would be stepping stones for young people to gain the skills they need to live independently and in order for them to make a worthwhile contribution to the society that they live in. (GISDA)

Second, project managers called for increased and improved collaboration with local authority education departments to inform young people about homelessness and the support services that are provided by local agencies:

There should be more partnership working with schools and the education department to help us to identify individuals who have perhaps fallen through the system. It also about tapping into those agencies early enough and working on preventative work may reduce the problem (Digartref Ynys Môn).

I think one area could be through education, through schools. I think an area of concern is that we do have a number of young people presenting through relationship breakdowns, so maybe some intervention work in the schools is something that we should look at in the future (Ceredigion Care Society).

Third, it was considered that more corporate, pro-active and preventative homelessness agendas needed to be developed by the projects and their partner organisations:

We need concrete projects going on; we need to establish what our priorities are, how we can work together. I think there is a very clear issue there in terms of resources. I think maybe as an organisation ourselves maybe we have not done this perhaps as effectively as we could; but the whole housing finance issues, resources of local authorities, there is a lot more that needs to be done. Otherwise we are still going to be trying to fit resources as best we can and try to get bits and pieces of funding. This is still very much a crisis driven kind of service I think, and perhaps there ought to be more around intervention preventing problems. (Carmarthenshire Homelessness Forum)

Case-study Projects: clients' views

The final part of the research was focused on the groups using the case-study projects. Focused discussions were conducted with the users of three projects – Ceredigion Care Society, Digartref Ynys Môn, and Pembrokeshire Care Society¹⁷. The discussions were structured around two themes: the process of seeking advice and assessments of the projects.

¹⁷ For three of the case-studies, interviewing clients was not possible. StopOver is a small organisation and at the time of fieldwork it was not helping any homeless people. Carmarthenshire Homelessness Forum acts as an umbrella group for individual agencies tackling homelessness in the area and so was not able to provide any clients. GISDA, was unable to provide an opportunity to discuss the research with their clients as they had education and training commitments on the day of the interview with the project manager.

Seeking Advice

The clients involved in the group discussions considered that obtaining help and advice about their homelessness in the local area had been difficult. Consequently, some had been forced to travel large distances within rural Wales to obtain appropriate support services:

Go to the yellow pages; go under homeless, I mean you know, all these shelters and things... round here, there is nothing. You've got Carmarthen, you've got Swansea, round here there's nothing.

I'm from Colwyn Bay and had to come to Holyhead to get access to help that I needed.

Unless you live in Haverford or Milford you have to travel [for advice].

It also emerged from the discussions that rural homelessness is characterised by both local and non-local groups. The following extracts from discussions with users highlight some rather complex journeys to particular projects:

I've been on the streets all over England, Scotland and Wales... just travelled and ended up here.

I was on a psychiatric ward in Wrexham and they told me to get on a bus to Corris to find a hostel, but I couldn't find this place so I slept under the trees, I got hypothermic. I think the police found me. They wrapped me up like a turkey in the ambulance and I ended up in here [the night shelter].

The ways that homeless people found out about the projects that they were currently involved with were as varied as their journeys to the projects. While some people found the projects themselves, most were referred by friends, relatives, concerned individuals or organisations:

I moved up here and stayed with my friends and I went to the Council in Llangefni, they gave me a book of like all the hostels and I phoned St Mary's in Bangor, they had no spaces and so I phoned here and came for an interview two weeks later I moved in.

I was sleeping in a car you know and there was a woman who came along saying that she belonged to a night shelter, she was coasting around looking for people who looked a bit vulnerable and homeless I think.

I had a good idea where to get the help. I think it was my Dad that helped me out at the beginning and I moved over to Holyhead and I got all the help from my Uncle and the prison.

I've been pretty much in the same situation for the past five and a half years and I always knew where to get help from; I just came direct to the hostel.

Initially I didn't know where to go for advice, but I heard from word of mouth from the lads on the street, where to go for your hot sandwiches, your soups, clothes, bedding blankets.

I went to the Council and the Job Centre and they referred me.

One cold morning I went for a wander, just getting to know the area and I seen this place called MIND and on the door it said 'having problems with homelessness' so I walked in. They said have you been to PATH [Pembrokeshire Care Society]. So now I go there regular and meet people.

Assessments of the Projects

The homeless people involved in the case-study research were generally satisfied with the services and facilities provided by the six projects. Most mentioned the friendliness and helpfulness of the project staff as the main positive features of the projects. Some people highlighted the physical support and advice offered by the schemes, their role in diminishing some of the isolation associated with being homeless in a rural area, and their flexibility in meeting a diverse range of homeless situations. A selection of extracts from the group discussions is provided below to illustrate these themes:

I must admit this is the best support I've had...they sorted out counselling for me and everything...If you've got any problems you can talk to any of the staff really can't you...It's like having ten mums isn't it.

The people here are great. They are, they help you with anything. You know, they say it is bed and breakfast but if you are hungry in the evening they'll feed you as well. If there is anything I need to know they will help me.

They make you feel at home here...they don't make you feel nervous. They help you with everything you know—they give you floating support and stuff like that all the time. The staff are really good you know...they'll push you to do things...

...you come down here you felt part of their family. It didn't matter if you was in a good mood or whether you were in a bloody lousy mood or you just wanted somebody to give you a little bit of company for ten minutes, you know you were welcome...you can see they was up to their eyeballs in it but they still stopped, sat and chatted with you and gave you some reassurance...so that's what I found great about X [project name], not...what they can do for you, it's because they were there for you.

6. Identifying the Elements of Rural Homelessness Good Practice

Existing Evidence on Rural Homelessness Good Practice

Several reports on good practice in the delivery of services to homeless people have been published in recent years. In 2003, the Audit Commission reported on a major survey of homelessness practice amongst local authorities in England and Wales. The Commission identified several areas of work that it considered could improve the delivery of services to the homeless:

- ? “a higher priority to prevention work, ensuring that housing advice and support services are available and co-ordinated.
- ? review existing advice provision, identifying whether there is a need for independent housing advice services if these are not available.
- ? address repeat homelessness by taking a more holistic approach to people’s needs, and offering a one-stop assessment where possible.
- ? improve homelessness assessment and decision-making, ensuring that staff are trained to meet their legal duties and to provide customer care effectively.
- ? drive up standards and drive down costs for TA [temporary accommodation where this is used, and find alternatives to B&B.
- ? work with their partners to develop strategies that minimise homelessness in the longer term, co-ordinating their efforts with housing associations and the private sector to address local housing needs.”

Other studies have highlighted good practice principles in relation to the tackling of *rural* homelessness in England. Cloke *et al.* (2000) discussions of good practice amongst a broad range of national and local homeless organisations in 1999 identified the following themes as significant for the development of successful actions to tackle homelessness in rural areas:

- Identifying homelessness in rural areas – making effective use of existing information and generating new evidence on the scale and nature of local homelessness.
- Raising levels of awareness of rural homelessness – increasing the recognition of rural forms of homelessness amongst policy-makers and politicians (at local and national levels), local media organisations and rural residents.

- Tackling homelessness in rural areas - developing partnership working between local authorities and voluntary sector agencies, and including representatives of client / user groups. Tackling rural homelessness requires housing and non-housing responses. In the former category are the increased provision of social housing and the development of supported accommodation for young people, night stop initiatives, bond schemes, dispersed foyers and schemes to bring empty properties back into use. Non-housing responses cover prevention work, basic life skills training and mobile advice services.

More recent research commissioned by the Countryside Agency¹⁸ (Streich *et al.*, 2002) highlights seven principles that “*underpin good practice in the planning and delivery of services to homeless people in rural areas*” (p. 5):

- Identifying need - involving the development of research methodologies that are able to measure the extent of the more hidden forms of homelessness that exist in rural areas.
- Strategic and multi-agency working – developing effective linkages between different tiers of local government and partnerships between public and voluntary sector agencies.
- Prevention – delivering advice and support to prevent people from becoming homeless.
- Emergency accommodation – providing small and locally situated units of emergency accommodation for homeless groups.
- Permanent housing – improving access to permanent housing for the homeless through the private and social rental sectors.
- Support – recognising the wider support needs of homeless groups.
- Service delivery and rural costs – overcoming the additional difficulties and costs associated with delivering services to dispersed homeless groups in rural areas.

New Evidence on the Elements of Rural Homelessness Good Practice in Wales

An important aim of our research was the identification of the key elements of good practice for dealing with homelessness in rural Wales. The interviews with national agencies, local authority homelessness officers and case-study project managers identified similar areas of good practice to those identified in the two English studies. The research highlighted four main areas of good

¹⁸ This involved a survey of Rural Housing Enablers, interviews with national agencies dealing with homelessness and case-studies of good practice in Hampshire and Cumbria.

practice: identifying needs and awareness raising; multi-agency working; service delivery; and prevention. Further information on each of these areas is provided below.

1. Identifying needs and raising awareness

The need to improve the collection, analysis and application of data on homelessness was highlighted by several agencies. While the official homelessness data were recognised as providing an indication of the scale and profile of local homelessness, most considered that a more comprehensive evidence base was required. The commissioning of this research was viewed by one national agency as positive, but it was suggested by others that further research was required to identify local rural homelessness:

[Agencies need to be more] aware of their needs and know just how to identify homeless people and how to target those in terms of advertising services. (WFHA)

Robust and more detailed information is required on housing need and factors relating to the character of communities, and the potential effect of development. (Shelter Cymru)

The limited awareness of rural homelessness was also raised as an issue by several agencies. It was suggested that the level of awareness of homelessness at the local level needs to be increased amongst councillors, residents and homeless people:

I would say that it [the key elements of good practice] has to be raising awareness... (WFHA)

More awareness raising of the issues and the broader impact of homelessness on social policy. Local residents and councillors need to realise it is affecting local people and it could be someone they know or a member of their family. (Shelter Cymru)

2. Multi-agency working

Multi-agency working emerged as a second key element of good practice for dealing with homelessness in rural areas. Local authority homelessness officers highlighted a need to develop a corporate approach to tackling homelessness within their organisation and to establish partnership working with other agencies:

[Good practice involves] effective partnership working both inside and outside the Local Authority. (Isle of Anglesey)

We think by working in co-operation with various other organisations that do exist we can...do our best to provide the best service possible... (Ceredigion)

[Good practice involves] good clear processes [and] support from management and members. (Conwy)

Similarly, the local project managers highlighted inter-agency communication and working at the local level as a key element of good practice:

Good practice...it's partnership working, awareness raising, communication...communication between agencies avoids duplication and helps to provide a balance of support across the agencies. (Digartref Ynys Môn)

[Good practice involves] good communication with the clergy, CAB, local authority. There needs to be a network of trust, everybody working together. (StopOver)

The importance of involving client groups in partnerships and decision-making processes was also stressed by two of the case-study managers:

...feedback from clients...is sometimes an area that does get forgotten...it's crucial [to listen to their views] where they see things [that] can be improved. (Ceredigion Care Society)

...it's important to listen to people who come and stay [here] (StopOver)

3. Service delivery

A number of areas of good practice for delivering services to homeless people were highlighted by agencies. Some of these involve the delivery of specific or emergency services for homeless groups, while others are bound up with broader forms of service provision. In relation to the former type of service, agencies pointed to the importance of providing flexible, small-scale and accessible homelessness services in rural areas:

[we need to] help people stay within their community and I don't think it's good practice to tell people we've got a hostel 20 miles away...we just need more facilities to deal with local homelessness in our area. We need more accommodation for young people, we need more hostels, we need temporary accommodation... (Gwynedd)

Good practice...I think outreach services...practical things like transport, you know, advice at places where people are more likely to congregate in the rural areas. (Salvation Army)

In addition, agencies pointed to the need to address a broader set of service delivery issues in meeting the needs of homeless people in rural areas. These mainly involved the provision of

affordable and social housing in the local area, but reference was also made to specialist drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and health schemes:

Better use of empty homes will contribute to the supply...Better regulation and management of the private rented sector will also contribute [as well as] more effective use of the planning system (planning gain, section 106s)...and community land trusts. (Shelter Cymru)

We need more affordable housing for rents. There's just not enough...we need investment. (Monmouthshire)

Specialist drug, alcohol and mental health services are in short supply, as are move-on services – working with the individual to ensure a long, rather than short term solution to their homelessness. (Wallich Clifford)

4. Prevention

The final area of good practice highlighted by agencies concerns the development of the preventative agenda. While the increased provision of affordable housing needs to be viewed as an important component of homelessness prevention, agencies discussed some more specific approaches to dealing with the causes of homelessness in rural areas:

It is actually preventing homelessness in the first place and ensuring that there are sufficient support services available which are easily accessible for people. (WFHA)

Increased preventative measures, particularly for young people, will lessen the risk of an individual becoming homeless and entering a pattern of repeat homelessness. (Wallich Clifford)

I think that it's important that we deal with prevention...we should be looking at things like mediation, working with...private sector landlords making property more available and affordable and possible incentives for landlords to provide that accommodation...to tray and open up the market for some of our clients. (Pembrokeshire).

7. Summary of Main Findings

The Significance of Homelessness in Rural Wales

Homelessness in rural Wales needs to be viewed as a significant problem. In 2005, a total of 2,987 households were accepted as homeless and in priority need by rural local authorities in Wales. This represents 36% of all cases of homelessness in Wales. In addition, the homeless total in rural Wales in 2005 was higher than those in Urban and Valleys areas. The standardised homelessness rate in rural Wales in 2005 was identical to that in Urban areas (7.3 per thousand households) and higher than the Valleys average (6.7). Five rural local authority areas – Pembrokeshire (11.6), Monmouthshire (8.0), Gwynedd (7.4), Conwy (7.3) and Powys (7.1) - recorded rates of homelessness in 2005 that were higher than the Welsh average.

It is clear that officially defined homelessness in rural areas has become a more significant problem over recent decades. Between 1978 and 2005, for example, the number of homeless households in rural Wales increased by 309% compared with 129% in Urban areas.

The priority needs of officially defined homeless groups and the causes of their homelessness show relatively little variation between Rural, Urban, Valleys and Other areas, although differences are apparent between local authority areas in rural Wales.

Beyond these official indications of homelessness, Shelter Cymru recorded more than 6,000 rural households as homeless in the period 2001-04. Of these only 30% were deemed to satisfy the criteria for statutory homelessness.

Rural homelessness was acknowledged as a significant issue by the national homelessness agencies and rural local authorities involved in the research, although most considered that there exists a low level of recognition of homelessness amongst local councillors, media organisations, residents and homeless people in rural areas. Indeed, it was claimed that rural homelessness is often viewed as a non-local issue, mainly associated with in-moving homeless groups. The case-study research indicates, however, that the homeless population in rural areas is composed of both local and non-local elements. In addition, the research findings highlight that homelessness within rural Wales is mostly associated with the larger towns as it is in these spaces where the main, and in some cases only, support facilities for homeless groups are located.

Responding to Homelessness in Rural Wales

The research has highlighted a broad range of projects dealing with homelessness in rural areas that have been initiated by statutory and voluntary agencies at national and local levels. Important efforts have been made to gather evidence on the scale and nature of rural homelessness and to raise the profile of rural forms of homelessness. Initiatives have also been developed to provide advice and assistance to non-statutory homeless groups, particularly young people, in rural Wales. These initiatives have generally been based on multi-agency partnerships involving local authorities and the voluntary sector with funding provided by a range of organisations, including the Welsh Assembly Government.

National agencies, local authorities and local projects highlighted six main obstacles to delivering services to homeless people in rural areas:

- Difficulties assessing the scale of homelessness in rural areas, as the homeless remain a largely hidden group of the rural population.
- Logistical problems and additional costs associated with providing services to dispersed homeless people in rural areas.
- The limited provision of temporary accommodation that exists in many rural localities.
- Problems with securing accommodation for homeless groups within rural housing markets characterised by above average property prices and low levels of social housing.
- The limited awareness of homelessness in rural areas, particularly amongst local councillors and residents.
- Inter-agency tensions within homelessness work in rural areas, involving competing local and national agendas.

Four priority actions for dealing with rural homelessness were identified by the agencies involved with the research:

- The increased provision of housing, including emergency or temporary accommodation, social rental properties and affordable housing for purchase, to deal with problems associated with the structure of housing markets and the existing limited provision of local support facilities for homeless people in rural areas.
- A broader approach to dealing with homelessness in rural areas, involving the corporate ownership of homelessness programmes and more proactive / preventative schemes.
- Improved relations with private landlords given the relatively low levels of social housing provision in most rural localities.
- Recognising the hidden nature of homelessness in many rural areas, increasing levels of local awareness of homelessness.

Group discussions with users of local homeless projects revealed difficulties experienced in accessing advice and support services in rural areas and the large distances that some users were forced to travel to secure such services. Users provided extremely positive assessments of these local projects, pointing to the helpfulness and friendliness of project workers and the high quality of advice and support provision offered.

Following on from the priority action areas identified above, the research highlighted four areas of good practice for dealing with homelessness in rural areas, relating to:

- The identification of needs and awareness raising.
- The enhancement of multi-agency working.
- The provision of broader services for homeless groups.
- The development of preventative homelessness agendas.

These areas of good practice are similar to those highlighted by the Audit Commission and other studies of rural homelessness in England.

8. References

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Appendix 1: Statistical Tables.

Table 2: Reasons for Homelessness in Wales 2005 by Spatial Category.

| | Parents no longer willing/able to accommodate | Other relatives/friends unable/unwilling to accommodate. | Breakdown relationship with partner | Violence or harassment | Mortgage Arrears | Rent Arrears | Other reasons for loss of rented/tied accommodation | In institution/care | Other | Total |
|--------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|--------------|---|---------------------|------------|--------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | Numbers |
| Rural | 19.9 | 7.0 | 21.7 | 3.3 | 1.1 | 1.4 | 27.9 | 9.9 | 7.8 | 2,987 |
| Urban | 23.6 | 7.4 | 21.6 | 3.0 | 1.4 | 2.6 | 17.1 | 15.1 | 8.3 | 2,036 |
| Valley | 21.3 | 12.3 | 25.9 | 2.2 | 2.9 | 1.3 | 21.3 | 11.3 | 1.5 | 2,431 |
| Other | 20.8 | 7.9 | 23.2 | 5.0 | 3.7 | 4.9 | 15.6 | 12.1 | 6.7 | 922 |
| Wales | 21.3 | 8.7 | 23.1 | 3.1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 22.0 | 11.8 | 6.0 | 8,376 |

Source: Welsh Housing Statistics.

Table 3: Reasons for Homelessness in Wales 2004-5 by Spatial Category and Rural Local Authority

| | Parents no longer able/willing to accommodate | | Other relatives/friends no longer able/willing to accommodate | | Breakdown of relationship with partner | | Mortgage arrears | | Rent arrears | | Other reasons for loss of rented or tied accommodation | | In institution/care | | Violence or Harassment | | Other | | Total | |
|------------------|---|-------------|---|------------|--|-------------|------------------|------------|--------------|------------|--|-------------|---------------------|-------------|------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|--|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | |
| Carmarthenshire | 210 | 18.6 | 70 | 6.2 | 259 | 23.0 | 19 | 1.7 | 16 | 1.4 | 285 | 25.3 | 51 | 4.5 | 38 | 3.4 | 179 | 15.9 | 1127 | |
| Ceredigion | 90 | 15.5 | 27 | 4.7 | 107 | 18.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 14 | 2.4 | 191 | 33.0 | 48 | 8.3 | 36 | 6.2 | 66 | 11.4 | 579 | |
| Conwy | 163 | 23.3 | 49 | 7.0 | 103 | 14.7 | 3 | 0.4 | 2 | 0.3 | 211 | 30.2 | 90 | 12.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 78 | 11.2 | 699 | |
| Denbighshire | 61 | 13.4 | 26 | 5.7 | 107 | 23.5 | 7 | 1.5 | 33 | 7.3 | 164 | 36.0 | 35 | 7.7 | 7 | 1.5 | 15 | 3.3 | 455 | |
| Gwynedd | 161 | 20.9 | 50 | 6.5 | 183 | 23.7 | 10 | 1.3 | 3 | 0.4 | 194 | 25.2 | 117 | 15.2 | 9 | 1.2 | 44 | 5.7 | 771 | |
| Isle of Anglesey | 71 | 15.0 | 39 | 8.2 | 99 | 20.9 | 10 | 2.1 | 1 | 0.2 | 191 | 40.4 | 23 | 4.9 | 24 | 5.1 | 15 | 3.2 | 473 | |
| Monmouthshire | 135 | 24.9 | 66 | 12.2 | 122 | 22.5 | 12 | 2.2 | 12 | 2.2 | 80 | 14.8 | 54 | 10.0 | 18 | 3.3 | 43 | 7.9 | 542 | |
| Pembrokeshire | 243 | 22.1 | 107 | 9.7 | 213 | 19.3 | 9 | 0.8 | 21 | 1.9 | 382 | 34.7 | 85 | 7.7 | 29 | 2.6 | 12 | 1.1 | 1101 | |
| Powys | 142 | 15.6 | 20 | 2.2 | 256 | 28.1 | 8 | 0.9 | 10 | 1.1 | 166 | 18.2 | 53 | 5.8 | 55 | 6.0 | 200 | 22.0 | 910 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| RURAL | 1276 | 19.2 | 454 | 6.8 | 1449 | 21.8 | 78 | 1.2 | 112 | 1.7 | 1864 | 28 | 556 | 8.4 | 216 | 3.2 | 652 | 9.8 | 6657 | |
| Other | 459 | 21.8 | 162 | 7.7 | 472 | 22.4 | 81 | 3.8 | 105 | 5.0 | 330 | 15.7 | 214 | 10.2 | 101 | 4.8 | 183 | 8.7 | 2107 | |
| Urban | 940 | 21.8 | 353 | 8.2 | 930 | 21.6 | 53 | 1.2 | 91 | 2.1 | 839 | 19.5 | 578 | 13.4 | 125 | 2.9 | 394 | 9.2 | 4303 | |
| Valley | 1167 | 21.8 | 597 | 11.2 | 1355 | 25.3 | 126 | 2.4 | 113 | 2.1 | 1179 | 22.0 | 562 | 10.5 | 168 | 3.1 | 82 | 1.5 | 5349 | |
| Wales | 3842 | 20.9 | 1566 | 8.5 | 4206 | 22.8 | 338 | 1.8 | 421 | 2.3 | 4212 | 22.9 | 1910 | 10.4 | 610 | 3.3 | 1311 | 7.1 | 18416 | |

Table 4: Homeless Acceptances by Priority Need in Wales 2005 by Spatial Category.

| Area | H/H includes dependent children% | H/H member pregnant and no other dependent children% | Vulnerable H/H member: old age % | Vulnerable H/H member: physical disability % | Vulnerable H/H member: mental illness/handicap % | Young person at risk: (Ages 18-21) % | Young person at risk: (Ages 16- 17) % | Domestic violence/ threat of % | Homeless after leaving armed forces% | Former prisoner with no accomm. % | Other% | H/H homeless in emergency% |
|--------------|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|
| Rural | 44.2 | 6.9 | 4.2 | 5.4 | 8.0 | 2.3 | 8.8 | 7.8 | 1.2 | 7.3 | 2.5 | 1.2 |
| Other | 36.1 | 6.5 | 3.5 | 2.1 | 9.9 | 1.5 | 8.7 | 16.7 | 1.3 | 8.8 | 4.3 | 0.7 |
| Urban | 35.6 | 8.9 | 2.2 | 3.6 | 5.2 | 3.3 | 6.5 | 15.4 | 0.5 | 13.5 | 4.6 | 0.8 |
| Valley | 40.9 | 8.5 | 2.5 | 2.8 | 4.8 | 1.1 | 9.9 | 17.9 | 0.6 | 8.8 | 2.1 | 0.2 |
| Wales | 40.3 | 7.8 | 3.1 | 3.8 | 6.6 | 2.1 | 8.5 | 13.6 | 0.9 | 9.4 | 3.1 | 0.8 |

Source: Welsh Housing Statistics

Table 5: Homeless Acceptances by Priority Need in Rural Wales 2004-5 by Local Authority Area.

| | HH includes dependent children | HH member pregnant and no other dependent children | Vulnerable HH member: old age | Vulnerable HH member: physical disability | Vulnerable HH member: mental illness/handicap | Young person at risk:18-22 | Young person at risk:16/17yrs | Domestic violence or threat of | Homeless after leaving the armed forces | Former prisoner with no accommodation to return to | Other | Emergency Homeless |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|-------|--------------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Isle of Anglesey | 51.0 | 5.9 | 5.9 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 1.7 | 4.2 | 3.2 | 0.2 | 6.8 | 7.0 | 0.2 |
| Carmarthenshire | 43.2 | 9.8 | 3.4 | 6.9 | 9.4 | 2.0 | 8.3 | 8.4 | 1.4 | 3.8 | 2.2 | 1.1 |
| Ceredigion | 32.6 | 4.5 | 5.0 | 1.4 | 16.4 | 2.8 | 12.1 | 16.2 | 0.5 | 5.5 | 2.6 | 0.3 |
| Conwy | 42.5 | 5.6 | 5.7 | 6.7 | 7.9 | 1.7 | 10.3 | 4.7 | 1.3 | 11.2 | 0.0 | 2.4 |
| Denbighshire | 50.1 | 6.8 | 5.7 | 4.8 | 5.1 | 0.0 | 4.4 | 12.1 | 0.0 | 7.9 | 1.8 | 1.3 |
| Gwynedd | 42.7 | 9.9 | 4.3 | 7.8 | 7.5 | 1.6 | 9.6 | 6.4 | 0.6 | 7.7 | 1.2 | 0.9 |
| Monmouthshire | 42.6 | 4.8 | 3.7 | 1.1 | 8.7 | 3.7 | 15.3 | 9.6 | 0.2 | 5.9 | 4.1 | 0.4 |
| Pembrokeshire | 51.3 | 5.4 | 3.9 | 7.0 | 5.8 | 2.5 | 9.6 | 5.0 | 0.8 | 7.3 | 0.5 | 0.9 |
| Powys | 38.9 | 6.4 | 5.7 | 5.1 | 9.0 | 1.1 | 9.8 | 10.3 | 1.2 | 4.9 | 5.5 | 2.1 |

Source: Welsh Housing Statistics

Table 6: Shelter Cymru Cases by Homelessness Status in Rural Wales, 2001-2004, by Local Authority Area

| Homelessness Status | Carmarthenshire | | Ceredigion | | Conwy | | Denbighshire | | Gwynedd | | Isle of Anglesey | | Monmouthshire | | Pembrokeshire | | Powys | | Rural Wales | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------|------------|------|-------------|------|--------------|------|-------------|------|------------------|------|---------------|------|---------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Imminently Homeless | 203 | 15.3 | 95 | 17.6 | 409 | 26.5 | 544 | 37.0 | 232 | 20.8 | 103 | 21.3 | 33 | 18.9 | 91 | 24.4 | 202 | 19.3 | 1912 | 23.7 |
| Medium Term Risk | 217 | 16.4 | 80 | 14.8 | 406 | 26.3 | 441 | 30.0 | 341 | 30.5 | 103 | 21.3 | 32 | 18.3 | 44 | 11.8 | 176 | 16.8 | 1840 | 22.8 |
| Not Homeless | 406 | 30.7 | 146 | 27.0 | 318 | 20.6 | 128 | 8.7 | 226 | 20.2 | 89 | 18.4 | 53 | 30.3 | 118 | 31.6 | 347 | 33.1 | 1831 | 22.7 |
| Roofless / STR Homeless 1wk-3mths | 12 | 0.9 | 7 | 1.3 | 21 | 1.4 | 23 | 1.6 | 13 | 1.2 | 9 | 1.9 | 4 | 2.3 | 2 | 0.5 | 16 | 1.5 | 107 | 1.3 |
| Roofless / STR Homeless 3-6mths | 3 | 0.2 | 2 | 0.4 | 3 | 0.2 | 4 | 0.3 | 2 | 0.2 | 3 | 0.6 | 1 | 0.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 0.2 | 20 | 0.2 |
| Roofless / STR Homeless 6mths+ | 1 | 0.1 | 3 | 0.6 | 9 | 0.6 | 4 | 0.3 | 7 | 0.6 | 2 | 0.4 | 1 | 0.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 0.2 | 29 | 0.4 |
| Roofless / STR Homeless up to 1wk | 17 | 1.3 | 14 | 2.6 | 16 | 1.0 | 18 | 1.2 | 7 | 0.6 | 5 | 1.0 | 1 | 0.6 | 2 | 0.5 | 12 | 1.1 | 92 | 1.1 |
| Roofless-Potential Rough Sleeper | 58 | 4.4 | 24 | 4.4 | 63 | 4.1 | 121 | 8.2 | 34 | 3.0 | 19 | 3.9 | 1 | 0.6 | 4 | 1.1 | 47 | 4.5 | 371 | 4.6 |
| Statutory Homeless | 407 | 30.7 | 170 | 31.4 | 299 | 19.4 | 188 | 12.8 | 256 | 22.9 | 150 | 31.1 | 49 | 28.0 | 112 | 30.0 | 243 | 23.2 | 1874 | 23.2 |
| Total | 1324 | | 541 | | 1544 | | 1471 | | 1118 | | 483 | | 175 | | 373 | | 1047 | | 8076 | |

Source: Shelter Cymru

Appendix 2: Interview Schedules

Local Authority Interview Schedule

This major research project on rural homelessness in Wales is being undertaken by the Wales Rural Observatory. The Observatory is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government to undertake research and analysis on social, economic and environmental issues in rural Wales. As well as collecting material on low-income households in different areas of rural Wales, we are conducting a series of interviews with national and local stakeholders.

The interview is divided into two parts: the first is concerned with your assessment of the nature of homelessness in rural areas, and the second part considers local authority responses to rural homelessness. Your responses to all questions will be treated confidentially and any material used within the published report will not be attributed to any named individuals or organisations.

1. To begin, could you tell me a little about the nature of your department in terms of its main objectives and areas of work and also your own position within it? *[prompt for length of time in post]*

The scale and nature of homelessness in rural areas

2. How significant an issue do you feel that homelessness is in your area? *[evidence base]*
3. Would you say that homelessness in your area is widely recognised (amongst the resident population, your colleagues (in organisation / authority), politicians (AMs, local councillors)? *[reasons]*
4. What is your assessment of the main components / features of homelessness in your area? *[evidence base]*
5. How do you feel that homelessness in your area compares with the types of homelessness found in urban or valleys areas of Wales? *[similar / different – in what ways different?] [evidence base]*
6. Are there certain groups of people that are more prone to homelessness in your area? *[prompt for types of group] [evidence base]*
7. And do you think that homelessness impacts more or less evenly across your area, or are there particular geographical areas that it affects more significantly than others? *[for example, remote / accessible areas, towns / villages] [evidence base]*
8. What do you consider to be the main factors causing homelessness in your area? *[evidence base]*
9. In what ways has the scale and nature of homelessness in your area changed over the last 10 years? *[evidence base]*
10. Has your authority undertaken any surveys or other research on homelessness? *[prompt for details and how we obtain a copy]*

Responding to homelessness in rural areas

11. Could you explain to me how someone who approaches you as homeless is assessed by your department?
[prompts: types of approaches that are recorded in the official statistics, length of residence requirement, application / assessment process, re-housing options for those who are assessed as homeless and in priority need, assistance offered to non-successful applicants, etc.]
12. Are there any homeless groups who you feel do not approach the local authority for assistance? *[types of group, reasons for not approaching]*
13. How is the profile of those officially classed as homeless different to the profile of all homeless presentations?
14. What action is being taken to deal with the needs of those homeless groups who do not qualify for assistance under the homelessness legislation or who do not approach the authority for assistance? *[prompt: details of any current or recent projects]*
15. What actions have been taken by your authority to raise the profile of or tackle homelessness in your area generally? *[prompt for types of policy / service and locations] [how they deal with people who can't get to the office]*
16. ...and specifically in relation to smaller and, or more remote settlements? *[prompt: improve access to service / more localised provision of services / raising awareness of homelessness / promoting services where available]*
17. Do you work with other departments in the authority to tackle issues of homelessness?
[prompt for details of departments, types of actions]
18. What other organisations have you been involved with in tackling homelessness in your area?
[prompt for details of organisations, types of actions, partnership arrangements]
19. How does your authority's homelessness strategy address the needs of people living in smaller and, or more remote settlements?
20. How successful do you feel these actions have been in tackling homelessness in your area?
[prompt for reasons]
21. Are you aware of organisations, other than those that you have been involved with, that have been addressing homelessness in your area? *[prompt for details of organisations, types of actions, their success in dealing with homelessness]*
22. What are the key obstacles to delivering services to homeless people in your area?
23. What further actions are required to deal with homelessness in your area more effectively?
24. Could you identify what you consider to be the essential elements of good practice for dealing with homelessness in your area?
25. Do you make any use of the statistics relating to presentations? *[prompt for details]*
26. Finally, are there any other issues concerning homelessness in your area that we have not covered that you would like to raise?

Agency Interview Schedule

This major research project on rural homeless in Wales is being undertaken by the Wales Rural Observatory. The Observatory is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government to undertake research and analysis on social, economic and environmental issues in rural Wales. As well as collecting material on low-income households in different areas of rural Wales, we are conducting a series of interviews with national and local stakeholders.

The interview is divided into two parts: the first is concerned with your assessment of the nature of homelessness in rural areas, and the second part considers agency responses to rural homelessness. Your responses to all questions will be treated confidentially and any material used within the published report will not be attributed to any named individuals or organisations.

1. To begin, could you tell me a little about the nature of your organisation / agency in terms of its main objectives and areas of work and also your own position within it? *[prompt for length of time in post]*

The scale and nature of homelessness in rural areas

2. How significant an issue do you feel that homelessness is in rural areas? *[evidence base]*
3. Would you say that homelessness in rural areas is widely recognised (amongst the resident population, your colleagues (in organisation / authority), politicians (AMs, local councillors)? *[reasons]*
4. What is your assessment of the main components / features of homelessness in rural areas? *[evidence base]*
5. How do you feel that homelessness in rural areas compares with the types of homelessness found in urban or valleys areas of Wales? *[similar / different – in what ways different?] [evidence base]*
6. Are there certain groups of people that are more prone to homelessness in rural areas? *[prompt for types of group] [evidence base]*
7. And do you think that homelessness impacts more or less evenly across rural Wales, or are there particular geographical areas that it affects more significantly than others? *[for example, remote / accessible areas, towns / villages] [evidence base]*
8. What do you consider to be the main factors causing homelessness in rural areas? *[evidence base]*
9. In what ways has the scale and nature of homelessness in rural areas changed over the last 10 years? *[evidence base]*
10. Has your agency undertaken any surveys or other research on rural homelessness / homelessness? *[prompt for details and how we obtain a copy]*

Responding to homelessness in rural areas

11. What actions have been taken by your organisation to raise the profile of or tackle homelessness in rural areas? *[prompt for types of policy / service and locations]*
12. What other organisations have you been involved with in tackling homelessness in rural areas? *[prompt for details of organisations, types of actions]*
13. How successful do you feel these actions have been in tackling homelessness in rural areas? *[prompt for reasons]*
14. Are you aware of organisations, other than those that you have been involved with, that have been addressing homelessness in rural areas? *[prompt for details of organisations, types of actions, their success in dealing with homelessness]*
15. What are the key obstacles to delivering services to homeless people in rural areas?
16. What further actions are required to deal with homelessness in rural areas more effectively?
17. Could you identify what you consider to be the essential elements of good practice for dealing with homelessness in rural areas?
18. Finally, are there any other issues concerning homelessness in rural areas that we have not covered that you would like to raise?

Case Study Projects – Manager Interview Schedule

1. To begin, could you tell me a little about the nature of your organisation in terms of:
 - When, how and why it was established;
 - How it is funded;
 - Main objectives;
 - Main areas of work;
 - Numbers and roles of personnel.
2. Could you provide me with some details about the projects that you run to tackle homelessness?
 - What are the objectives of the project(s)?
 - How is it/are they funded?
 - Is it/are they delivered in partnership?
 - If so, with whom?
 - What is the relationship?
 - What client group do(es) the project(s) target?
 - What is the geographical coverage of the project(s)?
 - Work in the towns
 - Work in the more rural settlements
3. What *other* organisations are you/have you been involved with in tackling homelessness in the area that you operate?
 - With whom?
 - Relationship with organisation(s)
 - Types of actions
4. How do you promote your services/project(s)?
5. What actions are you taking/have you taken to raise the profile of homelessness in the area that you operate (in the towns, and more rural settlements)?
6. What do you consider to be the key obstacles to delivering services to homeless people in the area that you operate (in the towns, and more rural settlements)?
7. What further actions are required to deal with homelessness more effectively?
 - In the area that you operate?
 - More generally in i) towns, ii) more rural settlements
8. Could you identify what you consider to be the essential elements of good practice for dealing with homelessness in rural areas (that is towns and more rural settlements)?
 - What works?
 - What could work better?
9. Finally, are there any other issues concerning homelessness in rural areas that you would like to raise?

Case Study Projects – Client Group Topic Guide

1. Did you know where to get help/advice when you first became homeless?
 - a. Were you able to get the help you needed?
2. Were you able to get the help/advice you needed locally, or did you have to travel to receive help/advice?
3. How did you find out about the organisation/project?
4. How did you approach the organisation (ring, turn up, referred, wrote letter)
5. Did you approach other organisations?
6. In terms of the project, what works well and what could work better?

Carmarthenshire Homelessness Forum Interview Schedule

- 1. To begin, could you tell me a little about the nature of the Forum in terms of:**
 - When, how and why it was established;
 - How it is funded;
 - Main objectives;
 - Main areas of work;
 - How did your involvement originate?
 - who led the process?
 - Numbers and partners involved;
 - What contribution(s) do(es) each of the partners make?
- 2. What actions are you taking/have you taken to raise the profile of homelessness in Carmarthenshire (in both the towns, and more rural settlements)?**
- 3. What organisations is/has the Forum (been) involved with in tackling homelessness in Carmarthenshire?**
 - With whom?
 - Relationship with organisation(s)
 - Types of actions
- 4. How do you feel that the partnership is working?**
- 5. How could this be improved?**
- 6. What do you consider to be the key obstacles to delivering services to homeless people in the area that you operate (in the towns, and more rural settlements)?**
- 7. What further actions are required to deal with homelessness more effectively?**
 - In Carmarthenshire?
 - More generally in i) towns, ii) more rural settlements
- 8. Could you identify what you consider to be the essential elements of good practice for dealing with homelessness in rural areas (that is towns and more rural settlements)?**
 - What works?
 - What could work better?
- 9. Finally, are there any other issues concerning homelessness in rural areas that you would like to raise?**