

Research Paper 32

**Single homelessness, geographical mobility
and the homelessness process**

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Abstract

Despite continued research a number of key gaps remain in our understanding of single homelessness in the United Kingdom. Of these, one of the most important may be the role that geographical mobility plays in the homelessness process. Re-analysing data collected as part of a survey of single homeless people in ten local authorities in England in the early 1990s this paper demonstrates that, contrary to the position of a number of advocates but in line with popular belief, rates of geographical mobility amongst the homeless hostel population are high. Drawing upon a framework for examining the connections between geographical mobility and the homelessness process developed in the United States the paper demonstrates the impact of geographical mobility upon the coping status of different hostel residents, in terms of access to employment and benefits; the referral process; welfare systems and social networks; and the ability to find immediate shelter. Whilst mobility levels and the characteristics of 'migrants' would appear to differ between areas, and especially between London and a number of other cities, the reduced coping status of homeless people who move are consistent across areas and between areas. The paper concludes that rather than deny high levels of mobility amongst the homeless hostel population, advocates should therefore attempt to develop a better understanding of why homeless people move and ways of assessing the likely impact of such mobility upon single homeless people themselves.

Single homelessness, geographical mobility and the homelessness process

Despite a marked increase in the amount and diversity of research in to the problems of single homelessness in recent years, concomitant with an increase in size and changes in the nature of the single homeless population, a number of key gaps remain in our understanding of single homelessness and of the homelessness process more broadly in the United Kingdom (Cohen, 1994; Craig and Timms, 1992; Kennett, 1992; Tomas and Dittmar, 1995). Not least, and notwithstanding problems of definition, next to nothing is known of the extent of single homelessness in areas outside of London or of the ways in which the nature of the single homeless population might differ between areas. Questions of definition are not unimportant and different classificatory systems will lead to different estimates as to the size and nature of the homeless population and thus to different responses to the problems of homelessness (Shlay and Rossi, 1992). But, whilst estimates of the size of the single homeless population in London vary most frequently according to which forms of accommodation are included and different estimates as to the extent of a 'hidden homeless' population, irrespective of the definition used outside of London no such composite picture of the single homeless population is available, at either the national or regional level (Dennison, 1995; though see Randall, 1992). Rather, even when working with a minimal definition of single homelessness based upon the number of people sleeping rough or using emergency hostel or shelter accommodation, analysts attempting to construct a picture of areal differences in the size of the single homeless population must rely on local estimates which, even when available, vary considerably in accuracy and are rarely comparable (for a discussion of variations in the definition of 'statutory' homelessness and the caution that must be taken when estimating areal differences in statutory homelessness, see Bramley, 1993, Butler et al, 1994; for a more general discussion of different classificatory systems, Pleace and Quilgars, 1996; and for an account of the politics of definitions of homelessness more broadly, Veness, 1992, 1994).

Yet, in-so-far as changes in the extent and form of homelessness need to be understood in relation to changes in and the connections between housing and labour markets, demographic and household change and welfare regimes, all of which will differ in form and come together in different ways in different places, even a crude understanding of areal differences in the extent and nature of single homelessness is likely to be of some importance to an understanding of the homelessness process and thus to the formulation of any long term response to the growing problems of homelessness. More immediately, such differences are clearly vital to the appropriate planning of emergency provision. For example, in the absence of any real understanding of differences in the size of the single homeless population in different areas of England it is difficult to see how it can be assured that the increased provision of emergency accommodation and services for the homeless funded through the recent extension of the Department of Environment's *Rough Sleeper Initiative* is in fact being targeted at those areas most in need (D.o.E., 1996; and see Anderson, 1993).

At the same time, where a recent study of hostel use has shown the single homeless hostel population at least to be highly mobile, it could also be argued that any effective planning of temporary accommodation and services for the single homeless needs to take account of

geographical mobility amongst the single homeless and of the likely effects of such mobility upon the demand for services and accommodation in different areas (Whynes, 1991). The mobility of single homeless people is, however, a highly contentious issue. In recent years advocates have in the main attempted to play down the extent to which homeless people move such that single homelessness, and including that defined via hostel and night shelter use, has tended to become conceptualised as a 'localised phenomenon' (Anderson, 1994). As with statutory homelessness, it is commonly argued that the level of single homelessness in different areas relates most strongly to pressures on the local housing stock as homelessness is seen to be locally generated and agencies serving the homeless as largely meeting the needs of local people (Kennedy, 1993).

The move to conceptualise single homelessness as a localised phenomenon needs to be understood at a number of levels. In part, it can be seen as an attempt by advocates to disassociate a more heterogeneous contemporary single homeless population from a more obviously mobile hostel population of earlier decades with whom the homeless in general continue to be associated in the public imagination and thus become characterised in familiar terms - as aimless 'drifters' or 'transients', for example, or the 'undeserving poor' (Malpass, 1985). In part too, it can be seen as an attempt to side-step the apparent 'moral dilemma' that is faced by service providers who must struggle to serve a growing homeless population, many of whom may not be local, by stressing the local origin of that population. These arguments are connected, of course. Securing accommodation and services for the single homeless is often made more difficult at the local level precisely because the homeless, and homeless hostel residents in particular, continue to be perceived as a highly transient population that includes a large number of those who may not wish to settle (or who are beyond 'rehabilitation') and whose lifestyles anyway render them undeserving of services and accommodation that could be better used to provide for those with a 'legitimate' claim on local resources by virtue of previous residence.

There are, however, a number of problems with the attempt to frame single homelessness as a localised phenomenon, and especially when that attempt is made with reference to some kind of shift in the nature of the hostel population. For example, differences between the 'new' homeless and an earlier homeless population drawn up around notions of lifestyle and mobility may be more apparent than real. In fact, the highly mobile and long-term homeless man who was seen until recently to fill the beds of hostels and reception centres, and who earlier still made use of the casual wards, only ever made up a minority of the residents of this kind of accommodation. The majority of hostel and shelter residents have always either been local or, if they had moved, had usually moved in search of work or as part of a long term solution to their housing difficulties rather than as part of some kind of transient and dependent lifestyle (National Assistance Board, 1966; Rose, 1988). Moreover, if the single homeless population of earlier periods is expanded to include those using other forms of temporary accommodation - the residents of common lodging houses, for example, many of whom were women - it is clear that such men accounted for only a tiny fraction of the single homeless population as a whole and such that, without denying some significant shifts in the characteristics of single homeless people over the last fifteen years or so, changes that are apparent in the nature of the hostel population in recent years may be better understood in relation to the decline of other forms of temporary accommodation on which single homeless people have traditionally relied rather than a radical shift in the nature of the homeless population itself (Watson and Austerberry, 1986).

The danger with drawing comparisons between an 'old' and 'new' homeless hostel population according to mobility is therefore not only that such comparisons may rest upon an inaccurate picture of past hostel use, but that they fail to locate changes in the hostel population within the context of broader changes in accommodation provision for single homeless people as a whole. At the same time, such comparisons may in any case also be inaccurate in-so-far as the actual extent of mobility amongst the contemporary single homeless hostel population is in fact not at all clear. Very few studies have attempted to monitor the level of geographical mobility amongst either hostel users or other homeless people and those which have point to quite different results (Kennedy, 1993; c.f. May, 1997). Clearly, before it is asserted that single homelessness in general and single homeless hostel use in particular is a localised phenomenon, a far more accurate assessment is needed of the extent of geographical mobility across the single homeless population as a whole, and one which can offer some indication of how levels of mobility differ between areas.

In the long term it is of course important to challenge the underlying attitudes that see mobility per se as part of a 'deviant' lifestyle, attitudes that lead to the marginalisation not only of homeless people but of a wide range of other groups and which simplistic comparisons between the old and new homeless may in fact perpetuate (see Cresswell, 1996). In the short term, however, studies are needed that demystify the mobility patterns of homeless people. Analysts need to try and understand not only the extent of geographical movement amongst the single homeless population but why homeless people move, how patterns of mobility differ between groups and, most importantly, what the effects of such mobility might be upon homeless people themselves. Given the widespread public image of high levels of mobility amongst the hostel population especially, and recent initiatives aimed at reducing rough sleeping via an expansion in night shelter and hostel provision, such studies might most profitably start with an analysis of mobility amongst the single homeless hostel population. Whilst such studies are liable to be of considerable importance to the better planning of emergency accommodation and service provision for the homeless they may also be vital to the development of a better understanding of the dynamics of the homelessness process itself.

Geographical mobility and the homelessness process

Despite a widespread popular conception of the single homeless hostel population as a highly mobile group, few studies have addressed the issue of geographical mobility amongst hostel users directly. More often, the question of mobility appears as only a secondary concern within more general studies of hostel use or is reported on via anecdotal evidence (see, for example, Chandler et al, 1995; Deacon et al, 1995). Such evidence, much of it relating to the movement of single homeless people from rural to urban areas, most commonly reports the experience of people moving in search of emergency accommodation (where none is available in their home areas) more and less expensive housing, or in order to try and find work (Bramley, 1994). Though such studies would suggest that any conclusion to the effect that single homelessness is primarily a local phenomenon - in the sense that hostel users have initially become homeless in the areas in which they are currently resident - may be premature and offer some account of why single homeless people move, they give little indication of the extent of mobility across the hostel population as a whole, of how mobility patterns differ between different hostel residents or of the impact of such mobility upon homeless people themselves. As such, their value in the planning of accommodation and services for the homeless is limited both in

terms of where such services might best be located and as regards the kinds of services that may be needed by different hostel residents.

Some suggestions as to the latter might usefully be taken from the analysis of geographical mobility amongst hostel users in Nottingham undertaken by Whynes, the only study to focus explicitly on the mobility of single homeless hostel users conducted in the United Kingdom (Whynes, 1991). In a study of 2,800 lets collated over a fifteen month period, Whynes reveals both the extent of mobility amongst male hostel users and a number of significant differences between the profiles of users who became homeless in the Nottingham area and those who, having become homeless elsewhere, subsequently moved to the city. Thus, whilst Whynes found some 40% of all hostel users in the period monitored had initially become homeless beyond the Nottingham area, as importantly hostel residents who had moved to Nottingham were in general older than users who had previously held accommodation in Nottingham, with higher rates of unemployment and - in contrast to local users who would often seem to be turning to a hostel in the face of a short term accommodation crisis - to have a more prolonged history of accommodation insecurity. Significant too was that such profiles tended to change in line with the distance of a person's origin from the city. Especially where levels of previous hostel use increased with distance, the suggestion is therefore that Nottingham is serving (at least) two quite distinct user groups - each with quite different service needs; a large group of, predominantly local, people for whom homelessness is representative of a short term accommodation crisis and whose primary need is therefore for immediate accommodation and some support in finding more permanent housing; and a smaller but still significant group of long-term homeless men whose use of the Nottingham hostels would seem to form part of a continuous pattern of mobility between centres of provision and who may not wish to stay in the Nottingham area.

Whynes's study also included some evidence as to why people had moved to Nottingham, with the most common reason cited being a search for work. The study is therefore of some use in helping to counter stereotypes of aimless drifting amongst a mobile hostel population. But it offers little detailed information as to either the ways in which mobility impacts upon homeless people themselves - as regards their success in finding immediate shelter, for example - or of the ways in which geographical mobility intersects with the homelessness process more broadly. In-so-far as the study did not ask people of their intentions of staying within the city or about their attempts to find more permanent accommodation, the study may also over-estimate the proportion of hostel users for whom geographical mobility and hostel use represents an on-going and long term process, and perpetuate the picture of a relatively large group of homeless 'transients' moving continuously around the country using a network of hostels and shelters and perhaps at the expense of local users (and see the discussion of the 'moral dilemma' this poses for Whynes, 1991:117).

Rather than the kind of study conducted by Whynes (1991) those wishing to develop a fuller understanding of patterns of mobility amongst homeless hostel residents and of the role that such mobility plays within the homelessness process more generally would do better to turn to a body of work that has recently emerged in the United States which has started to investigate the nature of both inter and intra-urban mobility amongst the homeless (Rahimian et al, 1992; Rowe and Wolch, 1990; Wolch et al, 1993). Care should be taken in comparing homelessness, and the nature of geographical mobility amongst homeless people, in Britain and north America. Not least, differences in housing stock, the reduced role of social housing and the more limited assistance given to homeless people in the United States makes direct comparisons of

homelessness in either country difficult (Daly, 1996). Particular regard should be given to differences in the definitions of homelessness deployed in the two countries, and especially to distinctions between the statutory and non-statutory homeless. Similarly, different welfare regimes and in particular variations in benefit levels and eligibility rules between states may mean that inter-urban mobility plays a more significant, or at least rather different, role in the homelessness dynamic in the United States than it does in Britain.

Even accepting these constraints, however, the American literature may be of some use when trying to understand mobility patterns amongst homeless hostel users in the United Kingdom. For example, in their study of inter-urban mobility amongst skid-row residents in Los Angeles using secondary survey data from a sample population of 379 homeless men, Rahimian et al (1992) found that, contra to popular belief, the majority of skid-row residents showed a high degree of locational stability. Thus, over half (53.4%) of the sample population had not moved either to or from Los Angeles in the previous year, and almost three-quarters (70.6%) had no plans to move in the future. Moreover, amongst those who had moved there was little evidence of 'aimless drifting' or of simply moving between centres of temporary accommodation provision¹. Rather, the single most frequently cited reason for a move away from a home area (36.2%) had been in order to find work, whilst the decision to move to Los Angeles was similarly directed; with 45.4% having moved to the city having heard of an employment opportunity and only 13.1% and 10.8% respectively moving simply because Los Angeles was a "good place to live" or because of weather or climate considerations (Rahimian et al, 1992:1323-1325).

As well as clarifying the reasons why homeless people move and to what extent, in their development of the concept of the homelessness 'coping process' Rahimian et al's (1992) study is also useful to those trying to understand the impact that geographical mobility has upon homeless people themselves and of different peoples' abilities to negotiate the difficulties that being homeless encompasses. Within their framework an individual's 'coping status' is linked to a person's success or failure within the five "quality of life domains" identified by Kearns et al (1987); shelter, food, jobs or money, social services and social support (Rahimian, 1992:1318). As with migration in general, mobility amongst the homeless is thus understood as a function of an individual's coping status (as people move in an attempt to find work or accommodation, or access social support networks) but one which works through in a complex and often ambiguous manner. For example, whilst mobility may be seen as a reflection of an individual's increased ability to cope - as the move to find work or accommodation may primarily be undertaken by those with better employment prospects, for example - so too mobility may in itself reduce the coping status of those same individuals, as migrants are less able to draw upon local knowledge to access employment and accommodation or welfare and support networks than local homeless people. Coping status is in turn influenced by a number of factors, including; individual characteristics and vulnerabilities (age and gender, educational attainment, employment status or mental and physical health); the number and duration of previous homelessness episodes; and the institutional and structural context (accommodation and service provision and location, the nature of and access to employment and housing markets, or welfare rules and benefit levels).

Using this framework, Rahimian et al (1992) also found a number of important differences in the profiles and coping status of migrants and locals, though such differences took a rather different form to those found by Whynes (1991). Most significantly, in Los Angeles homeless migrants (defined as those resident in Los Angeles for less than twelve months) tended to be younger than those resident in Los Angeles for over a year, in better physical (though not mental)

health, enjoy higher educational qualifications and contained a higher proportion of those recently homeless. Migrants also tended to display higher access to support networks of friends and relatives, suggesting that the decision to move may partly have been influenced by the possibility of accessing such networks, and no discernible reduction in their ability to negotiate systems of welfare provision and service support (perhaps reflecting their ability to draw upon advice and assistance from friends and relatives in the city).

Whilst the study by Rahimian et al (1992) is therefore capable of revealing much about the connections between mobility and the experience of homelessness, the coping status framework also represents a significant move towards developing a more sophisticated understanding of the homelessness process in general (and see also, Rowe and Wolch, 1990; Wolch et al, 1993). Not least, in locating homelessness within the wider context of an individual's negotiation of intersecting housing and employment markets, networks of provision, welfare regimes and social support networks - and recognising how this negotiation process varies according, in part, to a person's individual characteristics and vulnerabilities - the approach moves beyond a simplistic tendency still evident in much homelessness research to explain homelessness according to either structure or agency (for a discussion of this tendency and its implications, see Neale, 1996). Crucially too, it clarifies how not only the scale but also the nature of single homelessness is liable to vary geographically as the nature of housing and employment markets, accommodation and service provision and welfare regimes differ in form, and come together in different ways, in different places (see also, Wolch et al, 1988).

Geographical mobility and the geographies of single homelessness

The single most extensive study of single homeless hostel residents in the United Kingdom in recent years - in terms of sample size, geographical coverage and individual respondent profiles - is the survey of single homeless people undertaken by Anderson et al on behalf of the Department of Environment in the early 1990s (Anderson et al, 1993). The survey, of 1346 single homeless people staying in hostel and bed and breakfast accommodation in different local authorities in England, covered a wide range of issues including; peoples' housing and employment biographies, demographic characteristics, benefit receipt, use of services and social support networks, mental and physical health, reasons for becoming homeless, experience of accommodation searches and accommodation needs (for a technical report see, Lynn, 1992). In their report, Anderson et al use the results of the survey data to report on the profile of single homeless people interviewed, drawing out differences between those staying in hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation and, for example, according to age, gender, ethnicity and length of time homeless (Anderson et al, 1993).

But, though the survey was conducted in ten different local authorities - five within London, and in Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Newcastle and Nottingham - each of which was estimated to be experiencing especially high levels of single homelessness at the time of the study, the report does not distinguish any areal differences in the nature of the single homeless population nor does it differentiate between those people who having become homeless had moved to the area in which they were interviewed and those originating in that area. Data from the survey is now available as a computerised spreadsheet which can be analysed on the basis of individual respondents (University of York Centre for Housing Policy, Crown Copyright, 1997). Here analysis has therefore been undertaken to see what the data can tell us about the extent of

geographical mobility amongst the homeless hostel population, and on a wider basis than a single area study; of what kinds of homeless people move; and of the effect that such mobility has on homeless people themselves.

Such analysis is possible because the original survey recorded whether the place in which a person was interviewed was the place of their last 'home' (rather than last settled accommodation) and where a person's home was self-defined. The data does not allow any consideration of how long a person has been in the area in which they were interviewed, of their area of origin or the pattern of their mobility (how far or how frequently they have moved). Nor, though it is possible to trace a person's reason for having lost their home, does it allow for any direct consideration of why a person moved rather than stayed within the area in which they became homeless or why they chose to come to the place in which they were interviewed. It does, however, give a clear indication that the individual considers themselves to have moved since becoming 'homeless' and can therefore be used to construct a crude indication of a person's homeless mobility status. Using this, here a distinction is drawn between those who having become homeless have subsequently moved ('migrants') and those who have remained in the place in which they became homeless ('locals') (c.f. Rahimian et al, 1992; Whynes, 1991). Using this distinction clear differences are apparent in the profiles of either group.

The data is also used to trace the relative success of different hostel residents within a modified version of Kearns et al's (1987) five quality of life domains and thus to establish some measure of a person's coping status (Rahimian et al, 1992). The degree to which the coping status of different hostel residents can be related to mobility status is clearly limited by the constrained understanding of mobility dynamics that the data imposes. To assess the relationship between coping and mobility status, though not the strength of this relationship, the data has therefore been subjected to chi square analysis. Though this reveals that the relationship is not always statistically significant, differences that emerge in the coping status of migrants and locals are consistent with the assumed effects of geographical mobility upon the dynamics of the homelessness process and with the profiles of either group. Moreover, and in contrast to previous studies which have focused only upon patterns of mobility amongst homeless men, the data also allows a consideration of how such relationships differ according to gender. Because of the small number of female respondents, these relationships have not been tested for significance. By comparing the profiles of different groups it is possible, however, to offer a descriptive assessment of the likely impact that other factors, most notably gender but also length of time homeless, have upon the coping status of different individuals and whether such differences disrupt those relationships evident between coping and mobility status.

Finally, where the data records the place in which the respondent was interviewed it is also possible to draw some broad comparisons between the nature of hostel residents in different areas. Though because the original survey was conducted on the basis of a random sample, and without knowledge of the total hostel population of each area, it is not possible to estimate areal differences in the size of the homeless hostel population. Nor can the data be weighted so as to allow for variations in sample size, such that care must be taken before attributing significance to any apparent differences in the nature of the hostel population in different places, especially on an individual authority basis. Though preliminary analysis therefore suggested interesting local differences between hostel populations in different areas, and especially within London, a detailed areal analysis has not been undertaken. Rather, the data has been re-coded so as to combine all those interviewed in the London boroughs and all those interviewed in either of the five

boroughs outside of London, giving two areal sets of approximately equal size (333 and 320 individuals respectively). To allow comparison with previous studies, the data has also been filtered so as to exclude those staying in bed and breakfast accommodation and all those who record their place of last 'home' as outside of England, Wales or Scotland. The latter population are largely to be found in the London boroughs and a significant proportion are refugees whose profiles suggest quite different experiences from the main sample population.

Notwithstanding the limits to any measure of significance in areal differences noted above, a descriptive comparison of mobility profiles in London and other cities is useful for three reasons. First, though it is clear that single homelessness is by no means only a problem in London - and indeed that particular forms of single homelessness, for example rough sleeping, may in fact be more severe, relational to population, in some areas outside of London - attempts to estimate the numbers of single homeless people in England and Wales as a whole suggest that London alone still accounts for a little over a quarter of the total single homeless population and as such that it represents something of a 'special case' (Brown et al, 1996; Randall, 1992). Second, the single homeless population of London is commonly perceived to be not only larger but of a different nature to the single homeless population elsewhere. Media representations especially, for example, continue to portray London as having an especially high proportion of young single homeless people, many of whom are understood to have moved to the capital (see, for example, Grant, 1997). Moreover, whilst London is often represented as acting as something of a 'magnet' for the single homeless in general, agency reports too have shown that the referral process often works to 'funnel' people towards the capital (and not least because inner London especially has the highest concentration of emergency accommodation and services for the homeless of any area in the United Kingdom) in ways that would indeed suggest the single homeless hostel population of London to contain an especially high proportion of homeless migrants (Chandler et al, 1995; Llewellyn, 1996; Resource Information Services, 1995). Third, given that Whynes (1991) found those single homeless people who had moved to Nottingham to be older than local homeless people this would suggest either that familiar representations of the mobility profiles of London's homeless are inaccurate, or that mobility profiles are somewhat different in London than in other areas of the country. Indeed, it might well prove that cities outside of London tend to attract the kind of older, long-term homeless person identified by Whynes (1991) as someone who might be considered part of a more obviously 'transient' hostel population. In contrast, London may well be the focus for the kind of migration identified by Rahimian et al (1992). Here it would be the younger, better qualified and more recently homeless who make the move to the capital - perhaps in order to access the capital's more extensive and more diverse housing and labour markets - and for whom, rather than simply part of a pattern of general transience, mobility plays a significant role in the strategy to exit homelessness. If so, and given possible differences in the profiles of different groups, we might also therefore expect to see significant differences in the coping status of groups; between both locals and migrants in general, for example, and between either group in different areas.

Migration profiles

Re-coding the data it is possible to establish a basic profile of hostel use according to area and mobility status. **Table 1** records the age, sex, ethnicity, length of time homeless and location of last home for local and migrant hostel users in London and, at an aggregate level, in five other cities in England.

Table 1. Profile of single homeless hostel residents by area and mobility status

	London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Total	216	64.8	117	35.2	159	49.6	161	50.3
Age								
16 & 17	6	2.8	5	4.3	20	12.6	8	5.0
18 - 24	41	19.0	33	28.2	46	28.9	40	24.8
25 - 44	92	42.6	39	33.3	38	23.9	42	26.1
45 - 49	45	20.8	27	23.1	23	14.5	35	21.7
60 yrs +	32	14.8	13	11.1	32	20.1	36	22.4
Mean age	40.4 years		35.1 years		37.3 years		41.9 years	
Sex								
Male	169	78.2	94	169	121	76.1	139	86.3
Female	45	20.8	23	45	36	22.6	17	10.6
Ethnicity								
White	144	66.7	105	144	134	84.3	146	90.7
Black Afr	19	8.8	1	19	2	1.3	1	0.6
Black Carib	25	11.6	4	25	8	5.0	2	1.2
Indian	3	1.4	0	3	4	2.5	0	0
Pakistani	0	0	0	0	2	1.3	2	1.2
Other	25	11.8	7	25	9	5.5	10	7
Length of time homeless								
> 1 week		1.4		0		1.9		0
1 wk - 1 month		6.0		3.4		10.7		3.4
1 - 6 months		19.4		18.8		20.8		18.8
6 m - 1 year		16.7		14.5		13.8		14.5
1 - 5 years		37.0		35.9		28.9		35.9
5 - 10 years		8.8		9.4		11.3		9.4
10 years +		9.3		17.9		11.9		29.8
Location of last home (urban or rural)								
Urban	216	100	67	57.3	159	100	97	60.2
Rural	—	—	30	25.6	—	—	41	25.5

Considering these profiles, a number of issues are immediately apparent. First, though the proportion of hostel users who initially became homeless in areas other than the one in which they were interviewed differs between cities - with the highest proportion of migrant hostel users found in Newcastle, for example, where they make up some 65% of all residents, and the lowest in Birmingham where they account for 39.5% of those interviewed - taken as a whole, mobility levels amongst England's hostel population are remarkably high. Certainly, if homelessness is defined at the point of accommodation loss rather than the inability to gain access to subsequent accommodation, it is clear that single homeless hostel use is not only a localised phenomenon and that a large proportion of hostel users have at some point moved to the areas in which they are now staying after losing their homes. Contrary to popular belief, however, migrants would appear to make up a lower proportion of the homeless hostel population in London than they do in a number of other cities in England even whilst the general origin of residents remains similar across cities, with approximately a quarter of residents coming to a hostel having lost their homes in a 'rural' area.

The counter-intuitive nature of the latter finding may in part be explained with reference to the effects of scale. As those working in migration studies have long recognised, the proportion of migrants within a population will decrease in line with an increase in size of the urban system. Such relationships hold even in those cases where the specialist functions of a larger urban system attracts a disproportionate number of a particular migrant population. For example, though the greater service class employment opportunities in London and the south-east of England attract a disproportionate number of service class migrants to the south-east urban system, the size of the local service class is such as to 'dampen down' the size of the migrant population proportional to the local population and relative to other urban centres where opportunities are fewer but where the local service class population is also smaller (Fielding, 1992). A similar 'scale effect' may be in operation as regards migration amongst the single homeless hostel population. Here, though large numbers of single homeless people are indeed attracted to the capital, whether in search of employment, housing, emergency accommodation or services - and as reported by agencies in the field - the size of the local homeless hostel population is such that people moving to the capital make up a lower proportion of the total homeless hostel population of London than they do in a number of other cities.

Second, a number of differences are apparent in the profile of hostel residents according to both area and mobility status. Not least, and in line with previous studies, those people who have moved to a hostel in cities outside of London are both older than the local hostel users in those cities, and have been homeless for longer. Thus, for example, whilst the mean age of these two groups is 41.9 and 37.3 years respectively, using chi square to investigate the relationship between mobility status and age generates a Pearson χ^2 value of 8.46735 at four degrees of freedom, significant at the 0.10. Likewise, whilst 43.5% of those coming to hostels in cities outside of London have been homeless for five years or longer, only 23.2% of local hostel users fall within this group. Using chi square to test for a relationship between mobility status and length of time homeless shows a Pearson χ^2 value of 26.56407 at seven degrees of freedom, significant at the 0.01. As might be expected, the long term homeless are mainly concentrated within the older age groups.

Within London, however, these patterns are quite different. First, those coming to the capital are younger than local hostel residents (with mean ages of 35.1 and 40.4 years respectively) and show a marked concentration of those under twenty five years of age. Indeed, in line with popular belief, it is those coming to London who skew London's hostel population towards a younger age group and, if looking only at those people who were interviewed in the areas in which they initially became homeless, it is cities outside of London which show the highest proportion of hostel users under twenty five years of age. Those coming to London are, however, by no means only the recently homeless. Indeed, the homeless profiles of migrants and locals within the London sample are remarkably similar with in fact a slightly higher proportion of the long term homeless to be found amongst the migrant population rather than amongst local hostel users, though the over-representation of the long term homeless amongst the former is not as marked as it is amongst the migrant population elsewhere. Furthermore, and in contrast to cities elsewhere, London's long term homeless migrants are not only concentrated amongst the older age groups.

Table 1 also reveals the clear over-representation of people of Black African and Black Caribbean descent especially in London's local hostel population found by others, and the far lower proportion of ethnic minority hostel users to be found amongst those homeless people who have moved, whether to London or other cities (SHiL, 1995). Finally, important differences

Table 2. Profile of single homeless hostel residents by area, mobility status and sex

	London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
	Men % n = 169	Women % n = 45	Men % n = 94	Women % n = 23	Men % n = 121	Women % n = 36	Men % n = 139	Women % n = 17
Age								
16 & 17	1.8	6.7	4.3	4.3	9.1	25.0	2.9	23.5
18 - 24	17.2	26.7	21.3	56.6	23.1	50.0	23.0	47.1
25 - 44	43.8	40.0	35.1	26.1	25.6	16.7	25.9	11.8
45 - 49	21.3	17.8	27.7	4.3	16.5	5.6	23.0	17.6
60 yrs +	16.0	8.9	11.7	8.7	25.6	2.8	25.2	0
Length of time homeless								
> 1 week	1.8	0	0	0	1.7	2.8	2.9	0
1 wk - 1 month	5.3	8.9	3.2	4.3	6.6	25.0	2.2	5.9
1 - 6 months	18.9	22.2	21.3	8.7	15.7	36.1	12.9	23.5
6 m - 1 year	16.6	17.8	10.6	30.4	15.7	8.3	14.4	35.3
1 - 5 years	37.9	35.6	37.2	30.4	29.8	25.0	20.1	17.6
5 - 10 years	9.5	6.7	9.6	8.7	14.9	0	14.4	11.8
10 years +	8.9	8.9	18.1	17.4	14.9	2.8	33.1	5.9

are also apparent between areas and by mobility status in terms of the distribution of hostel use by gender. Such differences are expanded upon in **Table 2** which shows age and length of time homeless of hostel residents by area, mobility status and gender.

Whilst it is clear that female hostel residents in general show a marked concentration in the younger age ranges and - at least when expressed as a proportion of the sample population - that having become homeless women are far less likely than men to move, outside of London the profiles of male and female migrants differ markedly. Where male migrants are concentrated in the long term homeless population and within the older age groups, homeless women who have moved to cities other than London are far more like their local counterparts. Thus, such women tend to be overwhelmingly concentrated in the younger age groups (and the under 25's especially) and include far less long term homeless than are to be found amongst the male migrants, though a higher proportion than amongst the local female homeless population. Within London, differences amongst those homeless women who have come to London and local female hostel residents tend to mirror the differences to be found amongst male hostel users. Though the female migrant population too has an especially high concentration of those under twenty-five, length of time homeless differs little by mobility status asides again for a small concentration of those homeless for more than ten years amongst those moving to the capital.

Expanding these profiles it is possible to gain some measure of a person's housing history and qualifications status. The latter is important in light of the suggestion that it may be the better qualified who initially undertake a move having become homeless. As regards the former, two aspects may be especially significant. First, previous surveys of the hostel population have revealed high rates of institutionalisation in the biographies of homeless hostel residents (Randall, 1992). Amongst younger residents this most frequently takes the form of a period spent in a children's home or some other form of state care, for example with foster parents, the exit from which often precedes a period of homelessness. Likewise, exit from the armed forces has also been noted as a significant route in to homelessness. In the context of the current study such histories may also be considered important factors in the preponderance to mobility, in-so-far as

where residence in a children's home or foster care may signal the absence of extended family ties and time in the armed forces an already mobile housing history, all three forms of institutionalisation could be taken as mitigating against a person forming strong ties to a particular place and thus increasing the likelihood of geographical mobility. Second, though the current data does not allow for any direct assessment of why a person has moved, some measure of this can be taken from the reason a person lost or left their last home. **Table 3** therefore records both the extent and level of educational qualifications of each sample population, and incidences of 'institutionalisation' (defined as any time spent in a children's home, foster care or the armed forces); **Table 4** the most frequently cited 'main final reason' reported by people for having left or lost their last home, by area, mobility status and gender.

Table 3. Educational qualifications and institutional history, by area and mobility status

	London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Formal educational qualifications								
Post 16	12	5.5	10	8.6	4	2.5	14	8.7
GSE/CSE	44	34.2	47	40.2	63	39.6	42	26.0
Any	95	44.0	57	48.7	68	42.8	56	34.8
None	121	56.0	57	51.3	91	57.2	105	65.2
Person has spent time in children's home, foster care or armed forces								
	79	36.6	61	52.1	57	35.8	80	49.7

Table 4. Main final reason for having left/lost last home

	London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
	Men % n = 169	Women % n = 45	Men % n = 94	Women % n = 23	Men % n = 121	Women % n = 36	Men % n = 139	Women % n = 17
Rel. breakdown	12.4	2.2	14.9	8.7	16.5	11.1	10.8	5.9
Domestic violence	0	8.9	1.1	0	2.5	2.8	2.2	23.5
Asked to leave	8.3	6.7	5.3	8.7	5.0	16.7	7.9	11.8
Wanted to leave	4.7	13.3	2.1	8.7	6.6	5.6	5.8	11.8
Move accom.	2.4	4.4	3.2	13.0	2.5	5.6	0	5.9
Death	3.0	6.7	4.3	4.3	6.6	0	7.2	11.8
Rent problems	6.5	4.4	1.1	0	3.3	8.3	2.9	0
Mortgage probs	0	0	4.3	0	0	0	0	0
Evicted	13.0	17.8	2.1	4.3	7.4	5.6	7.9	0
Look for work	1.8	0	27.7	13.0	1.7	0	10.8	0
Lost job	5.3	2.2	6.4	0	0.8	0	4.3	0
Harassed/insec.	4.1	6.7	1.1	4.3	5.8	19.4	0.7	0
To travel	1.8	4.4	9.6	8.7	5.0	0	7.9	17.6

Despite a slight increase in the proportion of those with some form of formal educational qualification, and a higher level of qualification, to be found amongst those people coming to London and a slight rise, relative to the local homeless population, in the proportion of those without any form of qualification amongst those moving to other cities, neither the extent nor level of educational qualification differs greatly by mobility status. In contrast, however, clear differences are evident in the institutional histories of local and migrant hostel users. Levels of

past 'institutionalisation' differ markedly with mobility status and show a sharp increase amongst those people who have at some point left the area in which they initially became homeless. Such differences are consistent across cities with, for example, some 52.1% of those moving to London and 49.7% of those moving to cities elsewhere reporting some form of past institutionalisation, compared to 36.6% and 35.8% of the local homeless hostel population in either place respectively. Though the proportion of all hostel residents who have at some stage stayed in a children's home, with foster parents or served in the armed forces is high, differences in the extent of past institutionalisation between local and migrant hostel users are clearly in line with the argument that an institutional or care background reduces ties to a local area and increases the likelihood of geographical mobility.

Less clear are any differences in the reason given by different groups as to the reason they finally lost their last home, though two aspects in these housing histories require further elaboration. First, and as has been found by others, domestic abuse figures strongly in the housing histories of homeless women (Tomas and Dittmar, 1996). Where incidences of past domestic abuse are also liable to be recorded under a different category, for example as 'wanting' or being 'asked' to leave home, it is also likely that such figures are an under-estimate. However, despite the far greater proportion of cases of domestic abuse recorded amongst those women outside of London who have moved as compared to local women, and as would be consistent with women seeking to escape the context within which abuse occurred, the small size of the latter sample means that such figures must be treated with caution. Given this, no clear relationship is evident between domestic abuse and mobility status. A person's mobility may, however, be strongly connected to the search for employment. Thus, within the London sample whilst fully a quarter (27.7%) of all men who have at some point moved to the capital left their last home in order to try and find work, for local (male) hostel users this figure is just 1.8%. The search for employment also figures strongly in the reasons for leaving home cited by homeless women moving to London, and certainly in comparison to the proportion of local female users citing this reason for the loss of their last accommodation (13% and 0% respectively). Finally, it is notable that, alongside relationship breakdown, the search for work is also the most commonly reported reason for leaving home amongst men moving to cities other than London, though it accounts for a smaller proportion of the reported reasons amongst this group than it does in the London sample. Even accepting that the data does not allow for a consideration of why people have chosen to come to the area in which they were interviewed, areal differences between migrants reporting the search for employment as the primary cause of their accommodation loss therefore strongly suggests that the search for work can also be read as a reason for movement and is most strongly related to a move to the capital.

Though in many cases the search for work may also be considered evidence of a directed attempt to exit homelessness, and within which geographical mobility therefore plays a central part, the two are not necessarily connected. In the study of geographical mobility amongst hostel users in Nottingham, for example, Whynes (1991) found that the choice of destination was most often made in relation to expected employment opportunities even amongst those who formed part of a more obviously transient hostel population. A better measure of both the desire to exit homelessness, and of the desire to stay within a given area, is therefore the extent to which people are seeking their own accommodation. Since the tendency to try and find alternative accommodation shows a marked decline over time - in part because peoples' expectation as to the success of any such search tends to diminish the longer a person has been homeless, and in part as long term hostel residence leads to a degree of institutionalisation - any measure of this

relationship must, however, also take account of the length of time a person has been homeless (Anderson et al, 1993). **Table 5** therefore shows the proportion of each group who report looking for their own accommodation by area, mobility status and length of time homeless, with the latter category divided in to those who have been homeless for up to a year and those homeless for five years or longer.

Table 5. Proportion of people looking for their own accommodation by area, mobility status and length of time homeless

London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
Homeless > 1 year n = 94 73.4%	Homeless 5 years + n = 39 48.7%	Homeless > 1 year n = 43 79.1%	Homeless 5 years + n = 32 46.9%	Homeless > 1 year n = 75 66.7%	Homeless 5 years + n = 37 43.2%	Homeless > 1 year n = 58 69.0%	Homeless 5 years + n = 37 22.9%

Whilst **Table 5** shows that the tendency to search for alternative accommodation declines over the time, and within the capital with few differences according to mobility status, outside of London a far more marked decline in the proportion of those actively looking for their own accommodation is evident amongst the long term homeless who are currently staying in areas other than the one in which they became homeless - with just 22.9% of this group actively seeking their own accommodation, compared to 43.2% of the local long term homeless population. Whilst mobility per se would not therefore seem to reduce the likelihood of a person attempting to find their own accommodation, and contra to those who would see all mobility amongst the homeless hostel population as evidence of some general tendency towards a 'transient' and 'dependent' lifestyle, outside of London a clear distinction can be drawn between the majority of hostel residents who whether local or not are seeking to move to their own place (and therefore presumably planning to stay in the area) and a minority of long term homeless hostel users not seeking to move away from hostel accommodation. Though this latter group indeed represent a sizeable proportion (33.5%) of all those who have at some point moved to hostel accommodation in cities outside of London, taken as a proportion of all hostel residents in these cities they represent only a small minority (16.9%).

Geographical mobility and coping status: suggested patterns

An examination of hostel use therefore contradicts the assertion that single homeless hostel use is wholly or even largely a localised phenomenon. Rather, mobility levels amongst the single homeless hostel population as a whole are high, with migrants making up a sizeable proportion of the total single homeless hostel population especially in cities outside of London. Moreover, dividing the hostel population according to mobility status demonstrates a number of significant differences in the profiles of those people who stay in the area in which they became homeless and those who, having become homeless, move. Though homeless people who move would seem to share certain characteristics, and most obviously a higher level of past institutionalisation relative to local homeless people, a more detailed profile of hostel residents also reveals important differences between those people who move to the capital and those moving to other cities within England. Outside of London, men who have moved at some point after becoming homeless are older than local homeless hostel users and include a large proportion of the long term homeless. A significant proportion of this group might also be considered part of a more obviously transient hostel population, though such people make up only a small proportion of all hostel residents in

these cities (c.f. Whynes, 1991). In contrast, the profiles of those moving to London are quite different. Homeless people who make the move to London are younger than London's local homeless hostel population and are primarily moving in order to try and find work, though there is no evidence to suggest that it is the better qualified who tend to move on becoming homeless nor that geographical mobility is most pronounced amongst the recently homeless (c.f. Rahimian et al, 1992).

In-so-far as they may be useful to those attempting to plan the level of emergency accommodation and service provision necessary in different areas, and the type of provision needed by different homeless people, such profiles are clearly important. On their own, however, they tell us little of how geographical mobility impacts upon homeless people themselves, on a person's ability to cope with the problems that being homeless entails or of the role of geographical mobility within the homelessness process more broadly. More important is therefore whether any significant differences are apparent in the coping status of different hostel residents and whether such differences are related to differences in mobility status. Here, since it is widely assumed that homeless people in Britain are at least able to find adequate sources of food (whether via hostels, day centres or the growing number of soup kitchens now operating in towns and cities across the United Kingdom) coping is defined in relation to peoples' success within four of Kearns et al's (1987) quality of life domains; jobs and money; social services; informal networks of support, and shelter.

Though the impact of geographical mobility upon a person's coping status may often be ambiguous, it is possible to hypothesise as to the likely impact that a move will have upon a person's success in each of these domains. For example, in relation to jobs and money, it might be expected that it would be those with rather better employment prospects who would be most likely to undertake a move, and especially perhaps to London where it is indeed a search for work that is most frequently cited as the reason for a move to the capital (Rahimian et al, 1992). Thus, though few differences are evident in either the educational status or length of time homeless between those moving to the capital and London's local homeless population, we might reasonably expect people who have moved to have been unemployed for less time than local homeless people with such differences feeding through to higher levels of paid employment amongst those not local to London. It also possible, however, that the more limited access of such people to the kind of localised and informal networks through which employment is often found - especially amongst the long term or frequently unemployed - will work to limit any such differences, whilst delays in benefit transfer might in turn work to reduce the income of those undertaking a move relative to the local homeless population (Morris and Irwin, 1992). Given the high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity amongst the homeless hostel population as a whole, such differences may have a rather greater impact upon differences in the income of different groups than differences in employment status between locals and migrants (Randall, 1992).

Likewise, the ability to access local service networks may also be considerably reduced amongst those moving to a new area. For single homeless people four types of service are especially important; the referral system, for those seeking immediate shelter; advice agencies, for those seeking more permanent accommodation; local authority housing departments, for those seeking social housing and not deemed ineligible by virtue of not being in 'priority need'; and health and related services, via general practitioners, hospitals and/or specialist services for the homeless such as day centres. Given that service provision varies geographically, but also that access to services is often dependent in the first instance on knowledge of the range and type

of services available within a local area, if not also local residence, it is liable that for the homeless especially access to services will differ according to both area and mobility status - and to the detriment of homeless people who have moved (Pinch, 1997). For example, the mobility of homeless people in general, and single homeless people in particular, has been found to be a significant factor in low levels of permanent registration with general practitioners by the homeless; resulting in lower levels of prevention and screening and higher levels of tertiary management and ill health amongst the homeless than amongst the housed population (Hinton, 1994). Likewise, whilst local residence is itself one of the criteria for being accepted statutory homeless, homeless people who have moved are clearly less likely to be eligible for social housing, though where an increasing number of larger metropolitan authorities especially are now accepting single homeless people for housing - and including those not local to the area - it is clearly important to assess how mobility status impacts upon the likelihood of a person approaching a local authority (Pleace and Quilgars, 1996). People moving to an area might also reasonably be expected to make rather less use of local advice and referral networks than local homeless people, and not least because their knowledge of such networks may be considerably constrained. If so, whether assessed in terms of the ability to find immediate shelter - in the form of hostels or shelters, for example - or more permanent accommodation, people who move may therefore have rather poorer chances than local homeless people as regards an exit from homelessness.

Though a move may be undertaken in order to access a set of social networks, it is also possible that people who move away from the area in which they initially became homeless may also find themselves moving away from the kind of informal sources of support that are often vital to homeless people. Such networks, whether of friends or relatives, provide for a series of functions, including; the provision of local knowledge - of accommodation or employment opportunities, for example, or of the services network; financial or other forms of material assistance, including accommodation; and advice and emotional support. Such networks can also take a variety of forms, and amongst the homeless would include both housed and homeless contacts (Rowe and Wolch, 1990; Wolch et al, 1993). For single homeless people they are of particular importance as regards a source of accommodation. Though most commonly recognised within some concept of 'hidden homelessness', amongst people using hostels too hostel use is often only one part of a homelessness dynamic that sees people moving between staying with friends and relatives, gaining access to other (often insecure) accommodation, sleeping rough, and the use of hostels, shelters and other forms of temporary accommodation such as bed and breakfast establishments (Sosin et al, 1990). The use of friends and relatives as a source of accommodation has been recognised as especially important to patterns of homelessness amongst women, but it is clear that it also needs considering in the context of a person's mobility (Watson and Austerberry, 1986).

Finally, given the more limited access to both formal networks of service provision (manifesting itself, perhaps, in lower levels of hostel use) and to informal sources of support, far from improving a person's coping status the effects of geographical movement may be to severely reduce a person's success within the last, and for homeless people the most important, of Kearns et al's (1987) coping domains - the ability to find immediate shelter. Thus, we might reasonably expect far higher levels of rough sleeping amongst those moving to an area relative to the local homeless population, where rough sleeping is taken as a measure of the inability to find any kind of shelter and the most extreme evidence of an absolute failure to cope.

Geographical mobility and coping status: the evidence

Reviewing the evidence, the apparent impact of geographical mobility upon the coping status of homeless hostel users is mixed, though in part this reflects constraints imposed by the data and especially the inability to assess how long a person has been in the place to which they have moved. First, in relation to jobs and money, **Table 6** profiles levels of economic activity and length of time unemployed by area, mobility status and gender.

Table 6. Economic activity and length of time unemployed, by area, mobility status and gender

	London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
	Men % n = 169	Women % n = 45	Men % n = 94	Women % n = 23	Men % n = 121	Women % n = 36	Men % n = 139	Women % n = 17
Economic activity								
Looking for work	50.9	46.7	42.6	39.1	39.7	41.7	34.5	47.1
Intending to look	4.7	4.4	5.3	8.7	2.5	2.8	5.0	0
Long-term sick/disab.	11.8	11.1	12.8	8.7	14.9	5.6	17.3	17.6
Unempl/not looking	11.2	11.1	8.5	17.4	6.6	16.7	7.9	17.6
Retired	13.0	11.1	7.4	8.7	14.0	2.8	18.0	0
Length of time unemployed								
1 wk - 1 month	3.6	2.2	1.1	4.3	1.7	5.6	3.6	5.9
1 - 6 months	13.6	24.4	21.3	8.7	9.9	19.4	8.6	35.3
6 m - 1 year	14.8	13.3	11.7	26.1	11.6	13.9	12.2	11.8
1 - 2 years	14.8	11.1	22.3	8.7	8.3	8.3	13.7	0
2 - 5 years	14.2	13.3	13.8	0	11.6	5.6	11.5	5.9
5 - 10 years	10.7	6.7	8.5	8.7	10.7	11.1	10.1	5.9
10 years +	16.0	15.6	2.1	8.7	21.5	19.4	26.6	11.8
Never worked	5.9	4.4	3.2	13.0	4.1	2.8	2.2	5.9

From here, and contrary to expectations, besides from a slight reduction in the proportion of those unemployed for over five years amongst men moving to the capital, few differences are evident in either levels of economic activity or unemployment profile by mobility status. Together with patterns of educational qualification and length of time homeless outlined above, it would not therefore appear that it is primarily those with better employment prospects who undertake a move when becoming homeless, even to London. However, this does not necessarily mean that either the likelihood of finding employment once unemployed and homeless, or the nature of employment found by homeless people, is unaffected by mobility status. Further, both the likelihood of finding any kind of employment and the type of employment found, might also reasonably be expected to differ according to the length of time a person has been homeless. Taking both factors in to account, and given the high proportion of long term homeless people who might best be described as fitting some notion of an obviously transient hostel population within the migrant hostel population outside of London, it is therefore possible that the type of work found, if any, by this group especially will differ significantly from the kind of employment found by others - with far higher levels of only casual employment evident amongst the former. **Table 7** therefore records both the proportion of those people reporting some form of paid employment in the week preceding the interview, and whilst already homeless, and the type of work found; by area, mobility status and length of time homeless.

Table 7. Nature and extent of paid employment, by area, mobility status and length of time homeless

London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants		
Men % n = 169	Women % n = 45	Men % n = 94	Women % n = 23	Men % n = 121	Women % n = 36	Men % n = 139	Women % n = 17	
Paid employment in last week								
3.6	6.7	12.8	8.7	9.9	8.3	9.4	5.9	
London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants		
Homeless > 1 year % n = 94	Homeless 5 years + n = 39	Homeless > 1 year n = 43	Homeless 5 years + n = 32	Homeless > 1 year n = 75	Homeless 5 years + n = 37	Homeless > 1 year n = 58	Homeless 5 years + n = 37	
Nature of employment found								
In work	4.3	5.1	11.4	9.4	13.3	8.1	8.6	12.9
of those working, % in:								
Formal work	64.4	68.4	58.3	68.0	55.9	53.3	56.0	65.0
Casual work	35.6	31.6	41.7	31.6	44.1	46.7	42.0	35.0

Here it can be seen that levels of paid employment, though universally low, are indeed higher amongst those who have moved to London than amongst London's local homeless population. The relationship between paid employment and mobility status within London is both significantly significant - at 0.01 level of significance (Pearson $\chi^2 = 7.17940$ at one degree of freedom) - and does not appear to differ by gender; with levels of paid employment also higher amongst homeless women moving to the capital than amongst local female hostel residents, a higher proportion of whom were working at the time of being interviewed than their male counterparts. The reasons behind such differences are unclear, however. Though such people have found work since being homeless and since having moved to London, within this group employment is by no means concentrated amongst either the young or the more recently homeless. Indeed neither levels of paid employment nor the type of work found differ according to length of time homeless either within London, or in other cities where levels of formal paid employment are as high amongst a long term homeless migrant population as amongst the more recently or locally homeless. In fact, outside of London no differences are evident according to mobility status as regards levels of paid employment, though - and counter intuitively perhaps - a rather higher proportion of the hostel population have found some kind of work relative to hostel users in the capital.

Given the high rates of economic inactivity amongst hostel residents, however, differences in the income of hostel residents might in fact be more closely related to differences in eligibility and access to benefits to be found amongst different groups. Certainly, recent changes in the benefit system have clearly had an important impact upon homeless people in general - both in relation to forcing more, especially younger people, out of accommodation and in to homelessness, and in terms of a general reduction in the amount paid to single homeless people in temporary accommodation (Anderson, 1993). The data has already been used to track the proportion of those claiming some kind of state income and a number of the difficulties experienced by hostel users in claiming benefits, including delays in benefit receipt (Anderson et al, 1993). As regards the current project, however, no differences in either benefit receipt or problems in claiming benefits are evident relative to mobility status. Nor can any differences be traced in relation to either length of time homeless or gender. Moreover, though differences are apparent in levels of Housing Benefit receipt, with a far higher proportion of people outside of London and irrespective

of mobility status in receipt of Housing Benefit than is the case for London hostel residents - such differences more likely relate to differences in hostel regime (whether or not hostels charge their clients through the Housing Benefit system, for example) than to differences in eligibility and receipt. Differences that are apparent in the proportion of those with no recorded income at all (13.9% of local users and 11.1% of migrants within London, and 7.5% of all hostel residents outside of London) must therefore be related to differences in access to paid employment noted above, and thus to mobility status, though such differences are small and as reflects the very low levels of paid employment to be found amongst the hostel population as a whole.

Clearer differences between locals and migrants can be found in the apparent ability of either group to access local services. To assess such access, **Table 8** records the proportion of locals and migrants within each areal sample passing through the referral system; the form of accommodation search undertaken by each group (and including approaching a local authority); registration levels; knowledge of a doctor or of a place where medical treatment can be found; and the use of day centres.

Table 8. Service access by mobility status and area

	London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Referral to current accommodation								
Housing Dept.	16	7.4	4	3.4	14	8.8	5	3.1
Other Agency	149	69.0	79	67.5	99	62.3	75	46.6
Self Referral	48	22.2	34	29.1	45	28.3	79	49.1
Mode of accommodation search								
Approach L.A.	93	43.1	32	27.4	78	49.1	66	41.0
Approach Agency	53	24.5	24	20.5	22	13.8	17	10.6
Look Private	55	25.5	44	37.6	49	30.8	52	32.3
Access to health care and use of specialist services for the homeless								
Reg. with Doctor	176	81.5	86	73.5	134	84.3	124	77.0
Know Doctor	200	92.6	108	92.3	144	90.6	146	90.7
Use Day Centre in last 7 days	16	7.4	15	12.8	18	11.3	26	16.1

First, in relation to registration levels, and as might be expected, a lower proportion of migrants than locals report being registered with a doctor. Further, though the relationship between registration levels and mobility status is statistically significant only within the London sample (at 0.10 level of significance; Pearson $\chi^2 = 2.87890$ at two degrees of freedom) where the data does not allow an assessment of where a person is registered it is likely that the impact of mobility upon affective registration is considerably under-estimated. This is because, though the majority even of those who have at some stage moved report being registered with a doctor, if a person remains registered only in the place of their last home the effects of geographical mobility upon the likelihood of an individual gaining access to the kind of primary care and secondary screening with which (permanent) registration is associated, and that is so essential to better health care, may be considerably greater than the current data suggests (for a discussion see Pleace and Quilgars, 1996). But, the extent to which people have knowledge of a place to which they could turn if necessary for some kind of medical treatment is apparently unaffected by mobility status. This would suggest that those moving to an area are able to gain knowledge of

local systems of medical care, either perhaps via the hostels in which they are staying or through word of mouth, though again the data is limiting in-so-far as it is not possible to distinguish how long a person has been in the area in which they were interviewed and therefore assess how effective these advice networks are for those new to an area. The absence of any differences in the extent to which different people show knowledge of medical services may also be a reflection of the slightly higher use by the migrant population in either sample of the kind of services, for example day centres, which commonly provide medical treatment for the homeless, though such differences are not statistically significant and day centre use is low across the population as a whole (and see Llewellyn, 1996).

One measure of the success of current advice and service provision for the homeless might be that contrary to expectations, registration levels in fact rise with length of time homeless and irrespective of mobility status. Similarly, as regards attempts to find more permanent accommodation, only minor differences are evident in the proportion of locals and migrants turning to advice agencies in their search for accommodation, even though within both areal samples the likelihood of those who have moved to an area accessing such services is lower than for local people. Use of agencies is also considerably higher within London than in other cities and most obviously reflecting the locational bias of such services within the capital (Chandler et al, 1995).

Within London especially, however, and to a lesser extent elsewhere, homeless people who have moved are far less likely than local homeless people to approach a local authority in their search for housing (with a relationship between mobility status and approaches to a local authority within London significant at 0.05; Pearson $\chi^2 = 8.79058$ at three degrees of freedom). The most obvious explanation for such differences is expectation as to the implementation of the local connection' rule, though authority practice as regards the implementation of this and definitions of 'priority need' differ considerably at the local level (Butler et al, 1994). Whilst this will therefore likely lower the chances of those moving to an area in gaining access to social housing, one effect within London at least would appear to be the greater likelihood of people moving to London having to concentrate their search for accommodation in the (extremely expensive and often insecure) private sector (relationship between mobility status and private sector search significant at 0.10; Pearson $\chi^2 = 5.78618$ at two degrees of freedom).

Finally, differences are also apparent in the extent to which local homeless people and those moving to an area make use of local referral networks, with possible ramifications for the relative success of either group in finding immediate shelter, at least outside of London. Here, people who have moved to cities other than London are far more likely to have found their current accommodation themselves, rather than coming to a hostel via the referral network (relationship between mobility status and mode of accommodation access outside of London significant at 0.01, Pearson $\chi^2 = 17.21759$ at three degrees of freedom). Given the decline in direct access accommodation in recent years and the increasing importance of referral agencies, where use of such agencies is far less prevalent amongst those people who have moved to an area this would imply that outside of London homeless people who move are at a distinct disadvantage in their search for immediate shelter (Harrison, 1996; Resource Information Service, 1996). Moreover, where neither rates of self referral nor of agency use differ significantly within the migrant population outside of London according to length of time homeless, the more limited use of the referral system can not simply be seen as reflecting the application patterns of a group of long term homeless hostel users who may simply be by-passing the referral system in favour

of direct application to a well known network of hostels. Instead, it would appear that outside of London at least mobility status is indeed of some considerable importance to service access and thus perhaps to the ability of different groups to gain shelter.

Within London, no such differences are apparent and suggesting again the success of London's non-statutory agencies in particular in reaching single homeless people, whether such people are local to London or have moved to the capital. This does not necessarily imply, however, that people moving to London do not still face more severe difficulties than local homeless people when it comes to finding immediate shelter. In times of accommodation crisis (when hostels are full, for example, or when a person can not afford a hostel place) the ability to find shelter may well be more dependent upon the extent and strength of a person's informal support networks than their abilities to negotiate the referral system. Here the importance of these networks as a possible source of alternative accommodation is assessed in relation to a person's previous accommodation - whether or not they have stayed with friends and relatives immediately prior to gaining a hostel bed - and whether or not an individual has been able to ask friends or relatives if they can stay. Since use of such networks has been found to be especially important to homeless women, **Table 9** also distinguishes the reliance for accommodation upon friends and relatives by gender. Because it has also been found that an extended period of (street) homelessness can lead to progressive isolation and the reduction of contact with (housed) friends and relatives, **Table 11** traces these networks in relation to the length of time a person has been homeless - distinguishing between those who have become homeless relatively recently (homeless for less than a year) and those homeless for considerably longer (five years or more).

Table 9. Informal support networks, by area, mobility status and gender

	London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
	Men % n = 169	Women % n = 45	Men % n = 94	Women % n = 23	Men % n = 121	Women % n = 36	Men % n = 139	Women % n = 17
Most frequently reported last accommodation								
Own accomm.	10.1	8.9	5.3	4.3	17.4	13.9	9.4	0
Parental home	5.9	6.7	5.3	0	4.1	5.6	1.4	5.9
Foster Parents	0	0	0	0	0.8	0	0	5.9
Friends/Rela.	17.2	37.8	7.4	34.8	22.3	41.7	18.0	47.1
Squat	3.0	4.4	0	0	1.7	2.8	0	0
B & B	4.7	4.4	3.2	0	4.1	2.8	5.8	0
Hostel	20.7	13.3	19.1	34.8	16.5	11.1	20.1	29.4
Shelter	1.2	6.7	2.1	0	1.7	0	2.9	0
Gen. Hospital	5.3	2.2	2.1	0	2.5	2.8	2.2	0
Prison/Cell	4.1	2.2	4.3	0	5.0	0	6.5	0
Sleeping Rough	23.1	6.7	39.4	17.4	14.0	8.3	18.7	5.9
Person has asked friends or relatives if can stay								
	29.0	28.9	17.0	39.1	25.6	36.1	13.7	35.3

Regarding **Table 9**, it can be seen that for homeless men mobility status would seem to exert a considerable influence upon the ability to access networks of informal support, at least as regards the search for accommodation. If traced in relation to the proportion of those staying with friends or relatives prior to their current accommodation, differences are apparent within this broader pattern according to area. In-so-far as it might give some indication of how far such

options have become exhausted, however, a stronger measure of such networks would be whether a person has been able to ask a friend or relative if they can stay. Considering these figures, it is clear that across the male hostel population as whole the networks of friends and relatives upon which a person might draw in their search for accommodation are considerably less extensive amongst those who have moved away from the area in which they became homeless than amongst local homeless people. This might in turn suggest that, rather than guided by the possibility of accessing such networks, moving away from the area in which a person originally became homeless also therefore takes a person away from alternative sources of accommodation (c.f. Rahimian, et al 1992). At the same time, the extent of such networks also differs considerably by gender. In accordance with previous studies, **Table 9** demonstrates that homeless women are both much more likely than men to have come to their current accommodation having previously stayed with friends and relatives and far more likely to report having asked friends and relatives if they can stay (c.f. Watson and Austerberry, 1987). The extent to which women are able to draw upon informal networks of accommodation would appear to be little influenced by whether or not a woman has moved away from the place in which she originally became homeless, though the reasons for this are unclear.

Such networks are most obviously important because of the way they appear to intersect with the last, and for homeless people perhaps the most significant, of Kearn's et al's (1988) coping domains - the ability to find shelter. At its most extreme, the inability to find any kind of shelter will result in a period of sleeping rough. As **Table 10** shows rough sleeping should indeed primarily be understood as reflecting people's inability to find accommodation (in which questions of cost play a part) and certainly not as the result of a desire to sleep rough or as part of some kind of lifestyle pattern (see also Anderson et al, 1993).

Table 10. Extent of and reasons for sleeping rough, by area, mobility status and gender

	London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
	Men % n = 169	Women % n = 45	Men % n = 94	Women % n = 23	Men % n = 121	Women % n = 36	Men % n = 139	Women % n = 17
Person has slept rough at least once in previous 12 months	27.8	15.6	43.6	26.1	29.8	27.8	41.7	17.6
Main reasons for sleeping rough								
No accom. avail.	17.8	13.3	29.8	21.7	19.0	27.8	25.9	17.6
Not like accom.	1.2	0	1.1	8.7	1.7	2.8	4.3	0
Not afford accom.	10.7	6.7	14.9	8.7	5.8	2.8	14.4	5.9
Accom. unsafe	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.2	0
Drink problem	1.8	0	3.2	0	0.8	0	3.6	0
Drug problem	0.6	0	2.1	0	0	0	2.9	0
Prefer it	0	0	1.1	0	1.7	0	1.4	0
Used to it	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Important here is that, amongst homeless men at least, the proportion of those who have at some point in the previous twelve months had to resort to a period of sleeping rough is far greater amongst those who have moved than amongst local homeless people, both in London and in cities elsewhere. For example, **Table 10** shows that whilst 27.8% of London's local (male) hostel population have had to resort to a period of rough sleeping within the last twelve months amongst those moving to London the figure is 43.6%. Outside of London equally clear differences are apparent between the two populations, with figures of 29.8% and 41.7% respectively.

Examining the previous accommodation of either group, however, use of the shelter and hostels network is broadly similar - indeed higher amongst those moving to cities outside of London than amongst the local homeless population of those cities, and despite the more limited use by this group of the referral network (Table 9). Rather than reflecting differences in access to hostels or shelters, then, where patterns of rough sleeping parallel differences in the proportion of either group able to turn to alternative networks of accommodation, it can be suggested that it is in large part the inability of those who move away from the area in which they initially became homeless to draw upon a network of friends and relatives in a period of accommodation crisis that is the primary factor in the greater likelihood of this group having to resort to a period of rough sleeping. Differences in patterns of rough sleeping amongst homeless women are far less clear. Not least, though within London it is also those women who have moved to the capital who report a higher incidence of sleeping rough, and despite a higher level of previous hostel use, outside of London this pattern is reversed. Though, and as might be expected, rough sleeping is in general far less extensive amongst the female hostel population than it is amongst men, given the similarities in access to informal networks of accommodation across the female hostel population as whole it is not clear why levels of rough sleeping should differ between groups.

Finally, it is important to trace differences in the extent of both access to informal networks of support and of rough sleeping over time. In terms of access to alternative networks of accommodation, whilst the proportion of people who have been able to ask friends and relatives if they can stay differs markedly between those homeless for up to a year and those homeless for five years or longer, differences in the proportion of locals and migrants seeking accommodation from this source are far less marked amongst the long term homeless hostel population than amongst those more recently homeless, both in London and in cities elsewhere (Table 11). Such shifts are in line with evidence concerning the growing isolation of the long term homeless noted by others and which would appear to undermine any difference in the extent of contact with (housed) friends and family that might be enjoyed by different hostel users according to their mobility status.

Table 11. Informal support networks, by area, mobility status and length of time homeless

	London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
	Homeless > 1 year % n = 94	Homeless 5 years + n = 39	Homeless > 1 year n = 43	Homeless 5 years + n = 32	Homeless > 1 year n = 75	Homeless 5 years + n = 37	Homeless > 1 year n = 58	Homeless 5 years + n = 70
Most frequently reported last accommodation								
Own accomm.	12.8	2.6	4.7	9.4	17.3	21.6	6.9	8.6
Parental home	10.6	0	9.3	3.1	8.0	0	3.4	0
Foster Parents	0	0	0	0	1.3	0	0	0
Friends/Rela.	22.3	17.9	11.6	9.4	37.3	16.2	34.5	10
Squat	3.2	0	0	3.1	2.7	0	0	0
B & B	6.4	0	2.3	0	1.3	5.4	5.2	7.1
Hostel	19.1	33.3	18.6	21.9	8.0	29.7	15.5	25.7
Shelter	3.2	2.6	2.3	0	1.3	2.7	3.4	2.9
Gen. Hospital	0	5.1	0	0	1.3	2.7	10.7	2.9
Prison/Cell	0	10.3	0	3.1	0	5.4	5.2	2.9
Sleeping Rough	17.0	15.4	41.9	34.4	13.3	10.8	13.8	22.9
Person has asked friends or relatives if can stay								
	35.1	12.8	32.6	12.5	32.0	13.5	27.6	8.6

More surprising, perhaps, is that levels of rough sleeping also show a marked decline over time, and despite the reduced access to informal networks of accommodation enjoyed by the long term homeless. Within London, there is also a flattening out of any differences in the extent of rough sleeping to be found between a local long term homeless hostel population and those who have moved to the capital, though in other cities levels of rough sleeping amongst the long term homeless are still higher amongst those who have moved than amongst local homeless people (Table 12).

Table 12. Extent of and reasons for sleeping rough, by area, mobility status and length of time homeless

	London Locals		London Migrants		Elsewhere Locals		Elsewhere Migrants	
	Homeless > 1 year % n = 94	Homeless 5 years + n = 39	Homeless > 1 year n = 43	Homeless 5 years + n = 32	Homeless > 1 year n = 75	Homeless 5 years + n = 37	Homeless > 1 year n = 58	Homeless 5 years + n = 70
Person has slept rough at least once in previous 12 months								
	31.9	17.9	37.2	18.8	40.0	10.8	46.6	28.6
Main reasons for sleeping rough								
No accom. avail.	22.3	7.7	44.2	15.6	28.0	5.4	36.2	15.7
Not like accom.	0	0	4.7	0	1.3	0	3.4	2.9
Not afford accom.	17.0	5.1	16.3	9.4	8.0	0	17.2	11.4
Accom. unsafe	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.7	1.4
Drink problem	1.1	2.6	2.3	0	0	0	1.7	4.3
Drug problem	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.7	2.9
Prefer it	0	0	2.3	0	2.7	0	1.7	1.4
Used to it	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

One explanation for these areal differences in the extent of rough sleeping may be the presence of a more obviously transient group within the long term homeless migrant population in cities outside of London. Thus, whilst the decline in both access to networks of friends and relatives but also in rough sleeping over time could be explained in relation to the more extensive use of the hostels and shelter system by the long term homeless population as a whole (Table 11) it is possible that the movement of those outside of London between centres of provision leads to an increased likelihood that such people must at some time resort to sleeping rough.

Given such patterns, three preliminary conclusions can be made. First, far from improving a person's ability to cope, homeless (men) who move away from the areas in which they become homeless in fact tend to cope far less well than local homeless people - especially as regards the ability to find shelter. Though, outside of London, people who move also make less use of the referral network than local homeless people, this is not the primary factor for the higher levels of rough sleeping to be found amongst this group relative to local homeless people. Rather, the main effect of geographical mobility would seem to be to take people away from a network of friends and relatives on whom they might otherwise rely for shelter in times of accommodation crisis. Thus, such differentials hold even within London where the formal services network is much better at reaching people moving to the capital than it is in cities elsewhere. Second, the effects of mobility upon a person's ability to find immediate accommodation declines over time. It is the more recently homeless who suffer most from the inability to find any kind of shelter, and the recently homeless who move who suffer most of all. Over time, though peoples' access

would seem to become more adept at gaining access to a formal network of night shelters and hostels - as is evident in both the higher levels of hostel use and lower levels of rough sleeping recorded by the long term homeless. Third, though hostel use does indeed increase with length of time homeless, there is no evidence to suggest that a more obviously transient long term homeless population is depriving local homeless people of scarce emergency accommodation - at least in-so-far as levels of rough sleeping in fact remain high, and levels of previous hostel use are lower, amongst this population relative to the local long term homeless population (c.f. Whynes, 1991).

Conclusions

Advocates for the homeless have in the main been reluctant to consider the extent to which homeless people move, preferring instead to conceptualise single homelessness as a localised phenomenon. Though perhaps politically expedient, at least in the short term, such conceptualisations sit uneasily with public perceptions of the homeless hostel population as containing a high proportion of people not local to the area in which they have found hostel accommodation and are in any case inaccurate. Taking the homeless hostel population of England as a whole, whilst levels of geographical mobility clearly differ between cities, the proportion of hostel residents who have moved away from the areas in which they originally became homeless is high. Indeed, in a number of larger cities outside of London people moving to these cities can account for anything up to 65% of those gaining access to the hostel system and, taking an average, make up approximately half of the hostel population as a whole. Within London, the effects of scale mean that those moving to the capital make up a smaller proportion of the total hostel population but still account for some one third of all homeless hostel residents whilst, in line with public perceptions, it is those moving to London that skews the capital's homeless hostel population to the over-representation of young homeless people under the age of twenty-five.

Beyond the fact that framing single homeless hostel use as a largely localised phenomenon is liable to continue to sit uneasily with the evidence, however, the failure to properly consider questions of geographical mobility in discussions of single homelessness may in any case only add to the continued misrepresentation of homeless people themselves. Not least, though those moving to cities outside of London include a high proportion of long term and older homeless men whose profiles suggest they might well fit best within some notion of a highly transient population not seeking to settle, such men make up only a small proportion of the hostel population as a whole within these cities. Both in these cities, and in London, the majority of those who have at some point moved away from the areas in which they became homeless differ little from the local hostel population in their desire to find their own accommodation and it is in this sense that single homelessness should be defined as a localised phenomenon; as homeless people are unable to find accommodation in the areas to which either they have moved or within which they became and continue to be homeless. Thus, whilst single homelessness may not in fact be wholly or even largely locally generated, it remains a problem that is firmly wedded to local housing and labour markets conditions.

The current reluctance to consider questions of geographical mobility also makes it extremely difficult to gain an understanding of which kinds of people move when becoming homeless, of why homeless people move and, more importantly, of what the effects of such mobility might be upon homeless people themselves. Here, analysis has therefore had to rely upon secondary data

which, though offering the most extensive profile of homeless hostel residents and their experiences yet constructed in the United Kingdom, imposes a number of limitations upon our understanding of the mobility process. Not least, it allows only a crude understanding of an individual's mobility status and can not be used to assess how far or how frequently a person has moved, or how long they have been in their place of current residence. Even within these constraints, however, a number of clear differences are evident in the profiles and experiences of homeless people who move and those who remain in the area in which they became homeless.

Most importantly, it would appear that - amongst homeless men at least - moving away from the place in which one becomes homeless tends also to distance a person from the kind of support networks that can offer an important source of (temporary) accommodation. Thus, far from improving their chances of exiting homelessness, in the short term at least, homeless people who move are far more likely than local homeless people to experience an episode of rough sleeping. Outside of London, people who have moved are also less likely to gain access to local services, and especially referral and advice networks, a factor which may in turn reduce their chances of gaining a more permanent exit from homelessness. Though within London the more extensive services network would seem to be serving people who have moved to the capital as well as those who have become homeless in London, people who have moved are much less likely to approach a local authority for housing than local people and must subsequently concentrate their search for accommodation in the (more expensive and less secure) private sector.

In other arenas, though moving would appear to exert less influence upon people's abilities to cope with the problems that being homeless entails movement does not in any sense improve a person's coping status. For example, though there is some evidence that people moving to London are more likely to find work than local homeless people, the reasons for this are not clear. Those working are concentrated neither within the more recently homeless nor the younger population and levels of economic inactivity and unemployment are universally high across the hostel population as a whole. Moreover, though a person's mobility would seem not to reduce their chances of gaining benefits, recent and proposed changes in the benefits system, taking effect only after the current data was collected, may well work to significantly disadvantage those who move away from the area in which they became homeless. The change from *Income Support* to *Job Seeker's Allowance*, for example, means that rather than simply transferring one's claim, people who move must now first sign off from the area in which they are claiming before signing back on upon reaching their destination. Despite calls for greater labour mobility, the effects of such changes will therefore most likely mean that those people who move will experience delays in benefit receipt. Given that the reason most often given here for a move to London especially would seem to be a search for work, for the homeless such changes are likely not only to be especially hard felt but are also perhaps especially ironic. Likewise, whilst recent proposals to make the benefits system more 'locally accountable' may work to encourage geographical mobility - as people move in order to take advantage of different benefit levels for example - it is also possible that such changes will be framed in such a way as to specifically penalise people not local to the area in which they are claiming assistance.

Such changes mean that questions surrounding geographical mobility are likely to become of greater not less significance to homeless people and to our understanding of the homelessness process. Given that, notwithstanding the limitations of the data, the current analysis would suggest that homeless hostel residents who have moved appear to cope less well than local

homeless people - especially as regards the most important requirement of finding shelter - it is clear that far greater attention must therefore be paid to questions of geographical mobility amongst the homeless hostel population than has hitherto been the case, and especially as the provisions made for the homeless under Parts VI and VII of the 1996 Housing Act are liable to produce a significant increase in the numbers of people living in hostel accommodation².

Such studies can usefully build upon the framework deployed here, examining in more detail the effects of mobility upon the coping status of different hostel residents. In particular, greater understanding is needed as to the dynamics of mobility to assess, for example; how quickly people who move to an area are able to gain access to local services, and how such access is achieved; the ways in which mobility intersects with employment - whether people regularly move in search of work, for example; of how movement effects a person's abilities to access networks of informal support, the form of that support and the nature of such networks - both housed and homeless; and, within larger urban centres especially, of how daily coping processes are influenced by patterns of intra-urban mobility (see Rowe and Wolch, 1990; Wolch et al, 1993). Such studies must therefore have a longitudinal dimension, both in the sense that anecdotal evidence suggests that homeless people will often move on a regular basis and in order to better understand how mobility intersects with the broader contours of a person's housing biography, and may well proceed best via in-depth interview work rather than through the use of extensive social surveys (see, Tomas and Dittmar, 1995).

Most importantly, attempts should be made to try and understand why homeless people move, and not only why they might come to a particular place but why they move away from the place in which they became homeless. The answer to the former might well be in order to access localised concentrations of accommodation and service provision. Rather than deny such mobility, however, advocates will be better placed to plan the appropriate location and nature of such services only when they can assess the magnitude of such movement and gain some understanding at least of the geographies of single homelessness - of how the size and nature of single homelessness differs between areas and thus which areas are in greatest need of provision. Moreover, rather than of use only to the planning of emergency services, and thus in one sense to an understanding of how best to respond to the immediate difficulties that homelessness poses, some understanding of this broader national geography is vital to a fuller understanding of the homelessness process in general. Not least, if homelessness is to be understood as the result of a dynamic intersection of housing and labour markets, demographic and household change and welfare regimes, all of which will take a different form and come together in different ways in different places, it is clearly vital to gain some understanding of precisely the quite different way in which such processes come together in different places and generate quite different levels and forms of homelessness. In other words, only when homelessness ceases to be understood as a purely localised phenomenon and analysts are able to build a broader picture is a longer term solution to the problems of homelessness liable to emerge.

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Notes

¹ In contrast this also means that almost half of the sample population had moved to Los Angeles within the last year, and perhaps suggesting a relatively high degree of mobility especially when compared to the housed population. As Rahimian et al (1992) argue, however, direct comparisons of levels of mobility between the housed and homeless population need to take account of the rather different context within which the two populations make a decision to move. For single homeless people in particular, with limited or no family, employment or housing ties, the notion of 'moving' is of course quite different to that held by the housed population. As regards the decision to move between centres of provision, notice may need to be taken of the rather different systems of accommodation provision for the homeless in Britain and the United States and the possible constraints on movement in the United States posed by areal differences in welfare benefits and rules (particularly to California where single men are now almost exempt from any welfare assistance).

² Such studies would also want to consider the impacts of geographical mobility upon those living in other forms of temporary accommodation. For example, as the number of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation in boroughs other than the one in which they applied for housing continues to increase in London, studies of intra-urban mobility and its effects upon, for example, the disruption of employment, social networks or children's schooling are also liable to become especially important (and see below).

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