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Streetscape

Research Report and Project Evaluation

by Abi Horsfield on behalf of the company

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CONTENTS

		page
1	Background to the project	3
	Project Outline	
	Research Aims	
	Research Methodologies	
	Project Funders	
	Staffing and Management	
	Timeframe	
2	Analysis and Evaluation of the research process	4
	Formal Interviews	
	Informal Interviews	
	8 session workshop programme	
	One off workshops	
	Psycho-geography Drift	
	Literature Review	
3	Research Findings	12
	Overview	
	Literature Review	
	Research with staff/service providers	
	Research with those living and working on the streets	
	Stories and anecdotes	
4	Creative Contributions	19
	Transcripts of the monologues written by participants	
	Other creative work	
5	Evaluation & Recommendations	27
	Analysis and evaluation of the overall project	
	Recommendations to inform future work	

1 Background to the project

1.1 Project Outline

As part of State of the Nation, Collective Encounters is planning a series of short 'scratch' projects, which will enable the company to begin working with some of the more marginalised communities in (north) Liverpool. These projects aim to help the company gather research into the current pressing needs, interests and concerns of the communities of north Liverpool, and to ascertain if there is a need for longer term arts initiatives. They will aim to gather stories and ideas from those involved, and to provide the company with a sense of what form longer-term initiatives may take.

Streetscape's specific aim is to uncover the day-to-day realities of those who live and/or work on our streets in a world largely hidden to the majority of our citizens. We were interested in collecting hidden stories and giving voice to the experiences of those who are marginalised within our society.

Building on Collective Encounters' previous experience of creative research and consultation this scratch project set out to involve drama workshops, psycho-geography trails, and both formal and informal interviews. The process has been fully informed by our Ethical Research Policy and was structured to allow participants to engage in a once-off intervention, consistently over a period of two months, or at more random points to suit their circumstances. Participants were able to contribute to our research either anonymously or openly.

1.2 Research Aims

The aims of the research were to:

- Introduce Collective Encounters to the issues confronting those who live and work on our streets
- Gather formal, statistical, and anecdotal evidence which would provide a background understanding as well as an insight into lived experience
- Identify the potential for theatre for social change to address/articulate some of these issues

1.3 Research Methodologies

The research process aimed to incorporate:

- Practical workshops (both one-off interventions and a short-term workshop programme)
- A psycho-geography drift
- Formal and informal interviews
- A literature review of key current documents relating to the subject matter

1.4 Project Funders

The funding for this project came from Liverpool City Council/Culture Company, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council England.

1.5 Staffing and Management

Collective Encounters employed Abi Horsfield, a freelance project facilitator to conduct the research, facilitate the workshops and coordinate the project; and a Creative Subject Consultant from 'Box of Frogs, a Manchester based organisation specialising in work with the homeless community. Collective Encounters also engaged a volunteer to participate in and support the running of the workshop programme. The Artistic Director of Collective Encounters managed the project, supported by a local researcher.

1.5 Timeframe

The project was delivered between, October – December 2008.

1.6 Report

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2 Analysis & Evaluation of the research process

2.1 Formal Interviews

Eighteen organisations were contacted and of those, ten agreed to have staff members interviewed, in total I talked to thirteen members of staff from these ten organisations: Anne Fowler House, The Basement Project, The Big Issue, Homeground Hostel, OSS, The Whitechapel Centre, Salvation Army Darbyshire House, Business Action on Homelessness, The City Mission and Homeless Link.

The kinds of questions asked in formal interviews were: - Do you have any experience of homelessness? What do you think are the main issues and concerns affecting people who are homeless and work on the streets? Do you feel that the government is making the right decisions in their policies about homelessness? Do you think that government policy is filtering down to the local authorities and are the local authorities acting on these? If you could change one thing about homelessness in Liverpool what would that be and why?

The Benefits of these formal interviews are that people are focused and able to go into depth about the key issues. You can ask the same questions to everyone and they are happy to answer questions because you have set up that structure.

The main problems with this kind of research were that people sometimes thought that I had an agenda and wanted specific answers, so they didn't feel that there was freedom to diversify from the questions. Most people didn't want to be taped as they felt it restricted what they had to say, even though I assured them that the information would be anonymous, they were still conscious that comments could be identified to them.

This way of gaining information was far more successful with people who worked with those who are homeless than with those who are homeless themselves: homeless people were far more reluctant to answer questions in a formalised way. They preferred the informal approach and the chance to talk about their lifestyles more freely. The interview process gave a real insight into the everyday difficulties of working with people with chaotic lifestyles, how needy people are and how no short-term fix is going to work with this client group. It became apparent that people were expected to be all things to all people and they have to work long and often anti social hours for not much pay, in very difficult and often abusive conditions, thus moral was low and sickness amongst staff was high. There didn't seem to be much support for staff and many of them talked in depth about having to deal with clients dying, and how hard it is for them. However when they did talk about the handful of success stories they said that they kept them going for months. There did seem to be a real commitment by staff and genuine love and respect for the client group. It was interesting to note that a few of the staff I interviewed had first hand experience of homelessness or addiction, and that is what motivated them to work in the field.

2.2 Informal Interviews

In total thirty-nine people were informally interviewed, none of them agreed to be recorded. Three of these interviews were done on the streets with Big Issue Vendors, the rest were done in drop ins at the Big Issue office, the Basement, Anne Fowler House and Homeground Hostel.

The main questions asked in the informal interviews were 'what are the main issues/pressing needs concerning people who are homeless in Liverpool today?' and 'if you were to advise the government/council on what to do to help people who are homeless, what would you like them to do?'

The main benefits of this type of research were that people who weren't in hostels or other structured settings could share their views, the interviews were often short so busy people also got the chance to contribute and they were less intimidating than a formal interview.

The main problems with this kind of research were that the answers were often not as detailed as in the formal interview, and because people were interviewed in a group setting answers often led to discussions and people saying the same thing.

There was a real consensus that you could never starve in Liverpool, as there are loads of provisions for food and being fed. All the answers were personal, rough sleepers talked about a lack of Hostel beds or the need to find a safe place to sleep, people in hostels talked about a lack of housing provision, people who had been in jail talked about a lack of job opportunities for people with criminal records etc. Across the board people said that they were looked down on by the public and how difficult it is to move on.

2.3 Eight-session workshop programme

Twelve people attended the eight-session workshop programme, five women and seven men. All of them were aged 24 – 60.

Of the twelve, four were ex-offenders who had been in prison, three were ex- army and four had been in care when they were teenagers. All five of the women had been in abusive relationships. One man was a refugee. Eight of them had children and of the eight who had children, only three had any sort of access to their children. Only three of them had never had alcohol or drug addictions. Two people attended all of the workshops and two people only came to one. The other eight had sporadic attendance.

The workshop programme centred around exploring everyday experiences of people who are homeless through a creative medium, developing drama skills and creating tools that participants could draw on and in the creation of non-stereotypical characters of people who are homeless. We always began with a check in to see where the group was up to and to give people a chance to share their worries and concerns so they didn't carry them through the workshop; we then played games and did drama exercises before moving onto rants, improvisations and character creation. The group decided really early on that they wanted to share their work with staff from different organisations and so we also spent some time working towards a short performance piece, which would enable the group to create scenes and monologues. The workshop content was often led by the issues that came up in the check in, if people came in and talked about being moved on by the police, we would use that as a theme for an improvisation or rant, so people could creatively work through everyday annoyances. You can see the characters they created in section 4 and some of their views are reflected in section 3.4.

The workshops worked very well, people's confidence grew, as did their trust in each other and their openness to sharing their lives and stories. We had a laugh and a real team spirit grew. Friendships were formed and people listened to each other's tales and testimonies. People also got to the point where they wanted to come to the workshops, as they didn't want to let each other down, and they started letting people know if they couldn't come. Talking to the staff, this is an unusual level of commitment, as people don't always get it together to come to an activity twice a week. The group responded really well to the games and activities, they didn't seem to have the usual inhibitions that I have come across when working facilitating drama work with groups of adults, they loved sharing stories and discussions and offered each other real emotional support. They also seemed without value judgement of each other, whatever people disclosed about their past was taken as what's done is done we all have a past and no right to judge. It was an honour and pleasure to work with this eclectic bunch of people.

Above all else I see the major benefit of this type of research as the ability to go really deep into the lives of the participants, to get beyond the stories they always tell, to see their vulnerability and strength. To gain a greater understanding of their lives and the steps that led them to becoming homeless. There are also benefits for the participants, they learn skills, gain confidence, build up trust, have their stories validated. Through working towards a performance, they get to consolidate and demonstrate their learning and gain a real sense of achievement.

I feel the main problem of this type of research is people disclose such a lot of personal information and build up such strong bonds, there are problems when the group stops, as people feel bereft. There are also difficulties in people's sustained attendance, only two of the twelve attended all of the sessions, this is due to people's chaotic life styles and needs. There is also a danger of these sessions becoming therapeutic so you need to be careful about how much of the work is about them and how much is invented characters, which is a hard balance to strike. Confidentiality and ownership were other issues that were raised and so we had a discussion about what that meant for this group, in some ways the group knowing it was a research project helped as the idea about this being a process that was set up to be shared was important. As a client group the participants were really frank and open, often disclosing deeply personal stories and issues, this was ok because as a facilitation team we had talked about these things before hand, however some information was hard to hear and deal with and did need processing afterwards. We developed de-briefing processes for after workshops, and this should be thought more about for future similar initiatives.

For all concerned this was evidently a really positive experience, one woman spoke about the workshops breaking the monotony of her week, another talked about feeling suicidal and this giving her a reason to go on. The work they produced although raw really came from their stories and experiences, which was informative and cathartic. It was easy to see a change in some of the group as confidence and skills increased. The driving force behind their work was to smash the stereotype of all homeless people being as they are portrayed in the media and when you look at the characters and monologues the group created you will see that they achieved this and so much more. The performance at the end of the 12 session project was important as it gave the group a focus and validated participants' experience. In the post show discussion, one of the group said: -

"I'd like some of the people who look down their noses at us to see this, to see what it's really like, and that we do try and do things"

In response to this an audience member said: -

"In all honesty I can't believe the respect I have now for you having seen the play...before when I saw some one on the streets I'd instantly presume that have an addiction to drugs or alcohol,

they have done something, not that they exactly deserve to be on the streets, but they've put themselves there, watching this made me realise that it's not your fault that you are there, that there's stuff behind it... you've achieved what you set out to do."

2.4 One off workshops

Twenty-six people participated in the one off workshops, seventeen women and nine men. Six of the participants fell into the 16-24-age range the other twenty fell into the 24 – 60.

The workshops began with an explanation of the company and the reason that we were researching homelessness in Liverpool. We then moved onto icebreakers and drama games to get people warmed up and feeling comfortable. This led to a pair's improvisation with one person playing somebody in authority and the other playing a person who was homeless, this was to explore people's responses and prejudices. In talking about this people used their own experiences and played out how they had been responded to. The next activity was 'a chance to moan', where each person was asked to think about something they would like to change in relation to homelessness and after some preparation time they had to stand up as if they were at a rally to persuade people of their point of view. These were really insightful and showed what people felt key issues were they included: -

"I am sick to bleeding death of people looking down their nose at me, just 'cause I've been homeless, It's not nice being homeless and you have enough problems without people staring down on you...I'm better than that"

"I'm fed up of going to all these drug places, they are trying to tell you this or that, and it's all out of a book, they've not lived the experience, they haven't been through it. I reckon that you should get people who have lived through the situation to work there, so they can really tell you how it"

"I'm sick and tired of going down to the housing and complaining about my repairs, I've had about eight inspectors out and no workmen. I've seen the housing officer and she was very sarcastic with me, she said, if you don't like it get in contact with your solicitor...I've been told they are non essential, my front door is hanging off and there is a faulty electric socket over a gas pipe... I don't like staying there, it doesn't feel safe"

"I am sick and tired of the way social services treat people, they think they can come in and take your kids off you... I get to see my daughter an hour a fortnight... I know I have done wrong in the past... I accept she lives where she lives, but who are they to say I can only have an hour?"

"I don't know where to start, before we got our house, we were on the street, we survived, now we have a house we are still waiting for it to be decorated, it's cold, there is no heating... what we are hoping for is for everything to get sorted and then we can get on with our lives and not look back"

Following these 'rants' we moved onto look at the media stereotype of homelessness and talked about how they would like to see homeless people portrayed with a real truth. This led to the creation of characters and the devising of monologues, these monologues were then written or recorded. We finished with more games and an evaluation. This is a rough outline, with each group things changed, depending on time, numbers, people's confidence levels and what the groups wanted to do.

People who participated were very positive in their evaluations of the workshops, after each one off workshop the groups asked if they could continue. The staff were impressed by the involvement of people who they had not anticipated would be interested. People in the workshops really engaged, they didn't have the same inhibitions that I have found when working with other adult groups.

The main benefits of this kind of research were: it generated a great deal of information from people about their lives and concerns in a short time and in a non-threatening way. People were brave and surprised themselves as to how much they wanted to get involved and disclose, people had fun and discovered talents in themselves and there was a sense of mutual benefit.

There are a number of reasons as to why the one off workshops were so successful, the fact that they were facilitated in a known space, either the hostel or Whitechapel meant that people were in their comfort zones, the way that people were asked to be the experts about their situation meant that people felt validated and able to share. The fact that I went into the hostels in a drop in capacity prior to the workshop meant that people knew my face and had already had a chance to suss me out. Getting a good balance between talking and doing was essential, people wanted to talk about their lives and themselves, they also wanted to try some drama, the best workshops were the ones where we checked in and then did an emotion/drama game and then we reflected and talked a bit about how that felt and who had done something like that before and then an improvisation and then another chat, a cig break and a cup of tea etc. All the groups responded well to the idea of creating a character that was real and broke away from the media stereotypes of someone who is homeless. The most important thing though was facilitating as a real person, who was an equal, everyone said they were sick of people coming into work with them and looking down on them, feeling sorry for them, they liked the fact that I answered the questions too and shared a bit about me.

Time was the main problem, in some of the workshops it took a while for people to trust us and open up. There was a feeling that if we could go back and build relationships the work would have grown. Space was another issue, often the rooms we were working in were open and people could look in, this was inhibiting to some of the participants. Depth too is another thing, there is only so far people can go in a short space of time.

It became really apparent from both staff and participants that there is a crying need for continuing to use the arts to engage people who are homeless, there is a lot of talent and life experience to draw on. People were begging for more, you could see confidence grow within the sessions and the participants talked about feeling they had achieved.

I feel that there is benefit in doing one off workshops as it enables people to give drama a go and it exists as a whole. In an ideal world the one off tasters would lead to a series of workshops for those who really engaged, but that is not always possible. It is good to have a goal, i.e. during this session we are going to create a character and explore them at different stages of their time in a hostel etc as it gives the session an end result and a sense of achievement. It is also important to remember that because of the chaotic lifestyle of some people a one off workshop is all they can commit to in the moment, they might not come at all if they thought they might have to commit to a longer time span.

2.5 Psycho-geography Drifts

We conducted two Psycho-geography drifts, one in the morning and one at night, the reason behind this was that the streets are very different in the day and night and for people who are rough sleepers they pose very different threats and problems.

The first drift in the morning started at Lime Street station and led us up through the university/court area, down through the city centre and up Fleet Street. The route was decided by each of us in turn giving a number and a left or right, e.g. third right, then second left, next left, sixth on the right etc.

The second drift started in Everton and took us into the centre of the city and back; the focus of this drift was to seek out safe places to sleep. It was a foggy night, which added a eerie almost Victorian feel to the city.

For the first drift three of us were involved, one had a video camera, one had an audio recorder the third had a stills camera, each person-recorded part of what they saw and what struck them. For the second seven of us drifted, and we took a stills camera and an audio recorder.

Both drifts were very different and interesting experiences, some parts of the city were really quiet and there wasn't a soul around, some places were really busy. The morning drift was on a really cold day and the temperature changed in different parts of the city, people were not aware of us and as we saw homeless people, they were invisible too. It was like we were doing something out side of the norm so people switched off to us. We found pockets of the city that were safe and warm, through doors at the back of cafes, where people obviously sleep. Here are some of the responses to the morning drift as it was happening:

"It feels colder near the sea, in the back streets it seems colder and quieter"
"I'm intrigued by the backs of buildings and no people"
"It's eerie outside of the bustle, no one is walking, and there's just no people"

At the end of the first drift these were some of the observations: -

"The experience from the station was ever changing, the views from the streets, the back streets, the different sounds with each environment, we covered about a quarter of the city, it's been good, very good"

"It's been a cold experience, coming out from Lime street it was busy with the buzzing of buses, yet it was a calming time as the rush hour was coming to an end, things were calming down, then we went to the back streets, these were a lot quieter, with fewer people...it's been interesting seeing graffiti on walls and questions, you question yourself too, a very unusual experience"

"As I was walking I was thinking about rough sleeping and looking for where I would feel safe to sleep, there was a great little door, that Dave found and we went through it and found a warm place, it was a bit smelly, but it was warm, it smelt of alcohol and staleness, but it was so much warmer in there, I can imagine seeking it out as a place to sleep and hid, it would be easier to sleep in there than on the main street...It was interesting watching the Big Issue Seller out side Marks and Spencer's, who talked to everyone who went passed, and the old man about seventy who was obviously just killing time in the bitter cold...it must be so hard staying warm on a day like today...I prefer down town backstreets, where there are people and signs of life, rather than the posh end of town, which is eerie and dead"

The evening drift was on a foggy night, there were more people, but there was a real sense of darkness and cold, trees, buildings and people were silhouetted, which made them somehow ominous and slightly scary. We looked in several car parks and doorways looking for signs of rough sleeping and found cardboard and empty bottles, we only met one man begging and there was a real lack of visibly homeless people on the streets.

Here are some of the comments people made on our drift: -

"I feel quite chilled here, but I think that's because we have safety in numbers...I like the quietness of it, I think if I were to bed down, that would be a big thing for me the noise..."

"I feel a lot safer in here, there are places that you could hide"

"I feel safe as there is a familiarity for me, but I know what the workers are like to homeless people, so I wouldn't stay here"

"If I were a homeless person in Liverpool because it's quite late I would head for the city centre, as there is more chance that there would be someone to talk to, and because I have to bed down quite soon, I've to find somewhere warm and safe, I'd try the back of restaurants, it's quite

warm and you have the big heaters, you'd find yourself a little somewhere safe...and with a bit of luck they might feed me before the nights out, if they've got spare food...I'd look to bed down about three or four o'clock in the morning till then I'd walk around and talk to people"

"You get really scared, the later it gets you see less and less people, it makes you feel sad and depressed, because you think all those people are going home to a nice family home, in your head you think everybody's at home nice and warm and you just have to look for the best place."

"I'm actually more scared than I would be as it doesn't look like Liverpool any more, it's not as familiar, the fogs covering it, so I'm intimidated a little bit. If I was on my own I would be terrified, scared and upset, 'cause there wouldn't be nobody here with me, it's cold, I just want to be at home, I feel privileged that I've got somewhere to go, I just feel sorry for anybody who is on the streets right now"

"If I were on my own, I wouldn't walk the streets, I'd try and find a hiding spec and stay there till it was light again, it's very different than it was in the day"

"I've seen door ways and entry's but nothing so far that I think is safe"

"It feels spooky, like something in a film."

"Before you bed down for the night you have to hang around and see if the supermarkets are leaving their empty boxes out near the bins...your bed is your cardboard, news paper is your coat or blanket, if it rains you try and stay...you get given blankets, but people steal your blankets...there is lots of fights over blankets and sleeping bags...it's a bit like prison, people tend to fight over the smallest things"

"I've gained a huge amount from being on this trail, I don't know where to begin really, it's just a whole other way of living that I don't know anything about, it about looking at things in a different light...it's the bleakness of it and the practicalities, like the cardboard for your mattress and such like"

This type of research is great to get a sense and feel of a place, especially with a project on homelessness where lots of homeless people spent lots of time, hanging out on the streets and killing time. It is good to begin to understand the elements and their impact on life in a place.

Everything about this type of research is subjective which is both fabulous and problematic; it is dependent on people's previous experiences and openness. It is difficult too to be random when you have knowledge of a place.

It was really good to do two drifts, at different times, as the city is so different in the day and night. It was great to have someone with genuine experience of rough sleeping with us as the added knowledge was a real education.

Time was a real frustration as there never seemed to be enough of it. Once you begin to look at a city with a new frame of reference you see more and more detail and this takes more and more time.

2.5 Literature Review

Papers and Policy

- Department for Communities and Local Government *Tackling Youth Homelessness Policy Briefing 18*, 2007
- Department for Communities and Local Government *Rough Sleeping 10 Years On: From the Streets to Independent Living and Opportunity* (discussion paper), 2008
- Department for Communities and Local Government *No One Left Out: Communities Ending Rough Sleeping*, 2008
- O'Hare, E *Rights and Wrongs: The Homelessness Safety Net 30 Years On* Shelter, 2007

- Hudson, Alastair *The Law on Homelessness* Sweet and Maxwell, 1997
- Hilbery, O & Edwards, J *Rough Sleeping 10 Years On: From the Streets to Independent Living and Opportunity Response by Homeless Link* Homeless Link, 2008
- Murray, A *Rough Sleeping 10 Years On: From the Streets to Independent Living and Opportunity Response by Housing Justice* Housing Justice, 2008
- Shrubsole, D *Crisis' response to the discussion paper from the Communities and Local Government Department* Crisis, 2008

Web and Newspaper Articles

- Shelter, *What's it like to be homeless?*, http://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_issues/homelessness/what_is_homelessness_like 23/10/08
- Groundswell, *Groundswell hears from 186 people about homelessness* http://www.groundswell.org.uk/news_item.php?id=46 18 Sep 2008
- Tyneside Cyrenians, *Homelessness and the Law – A Brief History* <http://www.tynesidecyrenians.co.uk/viewpage.aspx?pageid=31> 2008
- Sampson, Adam *Legal Pursuit of homeless people – Beggars Belief* The Guardian, 19/03/08
- Liverpool City Council, *Homelessness FAQ* http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/Housing/Housing_advice/Homelessness/FAQ.asp 13/10/08
- Homeless Link *Homeless Link Calls for the Vagrancy Act to be Scrapped* <http://www.homeless.org.uk/db/20030313230517> 19/04/07

The benefits of this research were that it gave a context and history to homelessness in the UK and the opportunity to see how the government and the voluntary/charity sector are working together. It also gave me the ability to discern what people's rights were, so that when I spoke to people and they were telling me what support they were or weren't getting I could know if they were entitled to more and could point them in the right direction.

The sheer volume of documents was a problem. There are hundreds of reports, papers and legislations around issues of homelessness. Most of them are dense and linguistically challenging as they use 'legal/government speak'. So it is difficult to get to the crux of what they are really saying. It was important to be selective in the reading, given the timeframe of the project, and so I was led by those working in the field.

There really did seem to be big gaps between what the government are saying and what the reality is for someone who is homeless. The figures the government give for rough sleepers in Liverpool is eleven, I met more rough sleepers in the course of my research and local agencies are sighting one hundred and twenty. The goal to end rough sleeping by 2012 looks good on paper but the reality is there are lots of people with lots of very real needs who will need a great deal of input and support to get them to a point where they can change their life style enough to be able to sustain themselves in accommodation. There also needs to be provisions made to help communities to counter the prejudice, which exists about people who are homeless. This prejudice has been part of British law and society since the seventh century and it is not going to diminish over night without some major investment.

3 Research Findings

3.1 Overview of the Issues

From this research project, I believe the key issues confronting people who are homeless are: -

Drink and drug addiction,

"There are many issues effecting us, but I think the biggest is addiction, drink and drugs and depression."

"We need more hostels and there is not enough professional people dealing with addiction inside the hostels that there are."

"There is no way anyone can stop using or drinking if they are living on the streets"

"I drink to survive the boredom"

This issue begs the question do people find themselves homeless because they have a drink/drugs problem, or do people begin to use very quickly when they become homeless?

Housing

There seems to be a lack of suitable housing and even less programmes which enable community members to be accepting of homeless people moving into their area, so when homeless people are housed in flats they tend to have a difficult time.

"Housing, they try and put us in flats, but people don't like us being there and it gets lonely, so you end up back with the people you know"

"There needs to be more bedsits, where people can be on their own."

People's attitude towards People who are homeless

"People looking down on us, like we're shit on their shoe or a bad smell"

"I am sick to bleeding death of people looking down their nose at me, just 'cause I've been homeless, It's not nice being homeless and you have enough problems without people staring down on you"

"People look at you as if you are low life and trash, even when you are wearing the Big Issue vest."

Safety and survival

"Men are the biggest issue, it's hard finding safe places to sleep, and keeping clean and having clean knickers, I just feel dirty"

"The cold, is the biggest issue, you just can't stay warm"

Access to children

"I get to see my daughter an hour a fortnight"

"I have been fighting to see my kids and no one is helping me"

Getting stuck in the way of life and it being really difficult to leave it once you are in it.

"The biggest issue is you just get stuck in the way of life and you can't move on, you use to survive and forget and then you've been on the street for fifteen years and you don't see your kids and they wouldn't want to see you, my dad died and I didn't even go to the funeral as I didn't get it together, my mum's now eighty and I haven't seen her for years and she lives in Liverpool, I just got stuck in living each day and not seeing past the end of the day, and now I want to get clean and it's really hard as people try and keep you with them"

"I'm trying to save up for a deposit for a flat, I try and keep myself busy, if I'm loafing about I'm closer to drink, occupying my mind is crucial, with an addict it's always tomorrow. If you stop drinking or using people are jealous, people try and drag you back to their level, so you get no support coming off"

"My advice is change your friends if you want to move"

There are of course the issues of employment, access to opportunities and self-esteem that run along side the other issues.

3.2 Potential of Theatre for Social Change

Theatre for social change would be a great vehicle for voicing some of these concerns as it is empowering, there is a lot of latent talent out there that is not being tapped into. It would give a sense of validation to people's lives, it could go along way to helping community members to see that there are many reasons why someone might become homeless and people need support and understanding rather than bullying and chastising. It would also support the government new policy that "People who sleep rough must have a greater voice and choice in services" because it is a really whole way of enabling people to have a voice about their lives.

There is a group of staff from the hostels, which meets on a monthly basis to share their learning and practice, they might benefit from engaging with a piece of Theatre for Social Change about homelessness as would the local authority, the police and all service providers. However I think it is the local community that would benefit the most as prejudice and misconceptions about hostels and homelessness are so prevalent in the community, it might go some way to building understanding.

Someone asked me, in the course of the research, how I could justify the spending of money on the creation of theatre with this client group when their practical needs are so great, I thought this was a really interesting question and in my view it has a definite answer. I believe that everyone has a story, which needs to be told and needs to be heard, this validates our very existence and sets us apart from other animals. People who are homeless are amongst some of the most invisible people in our communities. On the first Psycho-geography drift, we sat and watch a Big Issue seller in the city centre, this woman greeted everyone who walked past, "Good afternoon sir/madam Big Issue", "excuse me, would you like to buy a Big Issue", she was polite well spoken and didn't miss a single person. As we watched about thirty people walked past, four of them acknowledged her, one stopped and spoke to her, the rest acted as if she just wasn't there. This is one of many moments where we saw people ignore people who are homeless. I can but imagine the effect that this has on someone's sense of self worth. So many people I spoke to in the course of this research expressed the feeling of being looked down on, or being judged, people who hated themselves or who felt worthless. I believe that theatre for social change, which sets out to give a voice to people's experiences and their take on the world is a perfect tool to redress this balance and to build someone's self esteem and to make them feel human, I think this in turn might be a catalyst to enable people to see that change is possible.

3.3 Literature Review

The reading for this research made clear that homelessness is not a modern day dilemma, the issue was both identified and chronicled in medieval times, laws were passed by King Hlothaere of Kent to punish the homeless as early as the seventh century. Edward the first ordered weekly searches to round up the homeless in the thirteenth century. In 1530 a statute outlined that beggars and the visibly homeless should be put in stocks for two days or whipped if not from the local area. In 1535, the first English law was put into place to legislate charitable sustenance of the poor, where the able bodied were forced to work and invalids were supported by alms collected from the parish. This led to the commonly named 'poor law' of 1601, officially "The Act for relief of the Poor" where parish taxes were imposed to provide for the poor and destitute. Following this came attempts to house the homeless on mass in derelict buildings. Bridlewells were created, which were vast shelters, where attempts were made to teach a profession to hundreds of homeless people. In reality people were uncared for and the plight of the homeless was seemingly collected and hidden by the government. Workhouses followed but these schemes suffered from dire conditions and brutality. In 1713 an act was passed reducing the

laws relating to 'rouges', 'vagabonds', 'beggars' and 'vagrants' into one act, it advocated sending them home and for them to be whipped in every county they passed through. This act was repealed and reinstated throughout the century with reclassifications of who would be classified as 'rouges' or 'vagabonds'. 1824 saw the passing of the Vagrancy Act, an act for the 'Punishment of idle and disorderly Persons, and Rogues and Vagabonds, in England. An example of its' content is section 4, which provides that every person wandering abroad and lodging in any barn or outhouse, or in any deserted or unoccupied building, or in the open air, or under a tent, or in any cart or wagon... shall be deemed a rogue and a vagabond". On a subsequent offence the "rogue and vagabond" will be known as an "incorrigible rogue" and can be imprisoned for up to a year.

It is astonishing to think that even though there have been numbers of changes to the vagrancy act of 1824, specifically in 1935 where it was heavily amended, and in 1989 when the majority of the act was repealed, there are still parts of this act that form the basis of the laws today. These are the parts, which criminalise people who sleep rough and beg. These elements now form part of the serious crimes act of 2005, thus anti-begging measures are now part of 'our' fight against serious and organised crime.

Organisations like Homeless Link, Shelter and Crisis are all campaigning to stop the criminalisation of homelessness. During 2008 Homeless Link have noted that this year in Liverpool, the 1824 Vagrancy act was used to move people off the street. The government claim that rough sleeping has been reduced by two thirds in the last ten years and they are looking to eradicate rough sleeping by 2012. All the major homeless charities support this move and see that there is no quick fix.

The government states that

"People who end up on the streets have very different needs, and there are different challenges in different parts of the country. Most adults who experience sleeping rough simply need a place to live or some help to reconcile with family or friends or get into employment. Others have much deeper problems: people with multiple needs living chaotic lives. Often linked to substance misuse, many also have serious mental and physical health problems. This group need intensive, targeted and multi-disciplinary services. Young people who sleep rough are extremely vulnerable and also have very acute problems for example, resulting from a family breakdown, abuse or a forced marriage. But with the right help people can get their lives on track and make a real contribution to their communities."

The big question now is will the money be given to support this work, especially in the current economic climate and are people who are homeless being given a voice to help to direct their services?

3.4 Research with staff/service providers

The key learning that came from interviewing staff was that there is a real lack of joined up thinking when it comes to dealing with people's complex needs:

"There are lots of beds in the city but there are no joined up comprehensive services. As there are lots of services people are all vying for the same funding and workers feel threatened and protective over their client groups. Liverpool has so many beds that lots of people move on from one hostel to another and this leads to institutionalization."

"Most homeless people are ex-offenders or have cases pending, this discriminates against them getting work, without work, how are they able to move outside of their hostels and sustain homes, we are working with businesses to help people into work and our funding has just been cut to enable the council to invest more in housing rough sleepers, who won't be able to move on as they can't find work because they have a criminal record"

"People leaving prison are set up to fail; they are often discharged to the streets, with no back up from the probation services/prison."

"I personally feel there is loads of support, a lot of the men don't want to work or go further than this, it is a safe environment, if I had my way everyone clamming benefits should contribute in a positive way to society, we really aren't helping some people, putting them up in this lovely hostel, feeding them, paying the bills, why would they want to move out?"

"Lack of live affirming experiences/opportunities, especially for men, by this I mean that in order to move away from the streets you need to have found an alternative lifestyle. One man I worked with who had got into fixing things, TV's, fridges etc, this had pulled him out of the daily world of the homeless and he now has a job and has stayed clean. For women there are a few projects, like the women's project in Vauxhall that enable women to gain experiences and skills, the same provisions don't exist for men, in my opinion."

There is also a lot of discrimination by the public towards people who are homeless, which leads to problems in areas around hostels and difficulties for people who are homeless in trying to move on.

"People need to get respect, most homeless people are not respected outside of the homeless community so it is really hard for them to move out of that community"

In one Hostel there was an incident a few years ago where local residents were complaining about the "house of smack heads" that live on their street and petty crime and noise was being blamed on the hostel. To counter this the hostel invited members of the local residents committee into the hostel to gain a greater understanding of the people who lives there and what goes on inside. Staff felt that for that small group, attitudes did change but there is so much prejudice to fight against, it feels like a drop in the ocean. They were saying that no one wants a hostel in their street.

"Lots of homeless people have a chip on their shoulder about what people think of them, they have issues around trust and people believing in them, I believe if you give people responsibility they rise to the challenge"

Drug and Alcohol use and abuse is another issue

"99% of the people who come in are drug users, so the atmosphere is very dependent on what 'stuff' is out there, if there is good 'stuff' people are mellow and on form, if there is bad 'stuff' people are narky and if there is a shortage people are off the wall"

"I personally find the drug users easier to work with even though they are looked down on, as they don't tend to be as dirty, shit themselves or throw up in the same way as the alcoholics do. What they need is the same as us, warmth, food, comfort and rules/structure."

"Medical issues, a lack of viable rehab spaces and no real follow up from rehab."

Staff stress and workload is also a pressing concern, the amount of times over the three- month research period that people were off sick, was astounding.

In one hostel the staff work 12 hour shifts, when I asked what they saw there role as one said "We act as advocates for the clients, we help them make and keep appointments, we have to be all things to all people and it's hard" Another said "We catch triggers before they go off".

"The staff feel it and get demoralised I have to admit I have suffered from stress and depression and am often heart broken, but there is hope, one encouragement, i.e. one person who changes, moves on etc will last along time, and fuel me to continue for months."

The hostels that do exist need to be brought up to date with modern society and they need to be shaken up and given the resources to do more than they are currently doing. There are legacies from the past that don't meet the needs of people who are homeless now.

"There are no hostel provision for couples or people with pets, lots of people have dogs on the street for both company and protection, this often keeps them on the streets."

"There needs to be a massive culture shift and hostels need shaking up. Huge amounts of money have been pumped into the doing up of the direct access centres and they should be a beckon and yet they are still doing what they have always done."

“Appropriate housing, there are hostel beds but it is too easy to get drugs in the hostel environment, and people are surrounded by users.”

Other comments that people made when I asked about what are the pressing issues facing people who are homeless, which I felt were poignant were: -

“Legislation looks good on paper, but it is about ticking boxes”

“We can’t sort someone out in a fortnight, that is a false economy”

“We need to look at prevention, more pastoral work in schools, so kids who struggle don’t end up years later in our services”

“Joblessness, without a doubt”

“The Capital of Culture has been hard on the homeless; the police have been more assertive in clearing the streets, sometimes using the Vagrancy act. There has been an increase in numbers and some new faces.”

“National figures for rough sleeping are decreasing yet in Liverpool they are increasing.”

3.5 Research with people who are homeless and/or work on the streets

There was so much to learn from people who are homeless and/or work on the streets, even though people fell into a number of groups, there seemed to be a cross section of people from all back grounds and professions. A large percentage of the men I spoke to were ex army who had been in the forces and who had left and had difficulty adapting to civilian life and had ended up homeless, usually with drugs and/or alcohol problems. These men talked about having flash backs and drinking to drown their thoughts, they also talked about having anger issues and problems controlling their aggression, they also talked about not being able to get help because of their life styles. Another large group were people who had been in prison and had become homeless on release lots of this group had drugs and/or alcohol issues and problems with aggressive behaviour. Most of the women I talked to had become homeless on escaping violent relationships, and some of them were in violent relationships still. I also met a few care leavers who had ended up in hostels, or on the street. There were also quite a few people I spoke to who had mild learning difficulties and mental and finally others who were economic migrants who had come to the UK to earn money and had ended up with nowhere to stay.

Respect and self-esteem are major issues that people talked about and how they felt that people looked down their noses at them or treated them badly because they were homeless.

“People can be so fickle, when I was on the streets and drugged up and selling the big issue, people would look down their noses at me and now I have a job those same people treat me different, when I was a heroine addict it was oh you bang head, you smack head, you crack head and now it’s aren’t you great!”

“I want to be treated like a normal person...”

“I’m not a hero, people call used to call me a hero because I’ve got medals...but we’re all good people, that’s the bottom line”

“I’ve had domestic violence in the past and I’ve got learning difficulties. I want to be treated with a bit of respect and for people to stop treating me like a god damn stupid mug”

“I just want to be treated the way I treat other people, that’s all I ask for”

“I want to stop having flash backs, I hate it I hate the nightmares, the sweats, people say it will go away, but how can it when it happened when I was five and fifteen, the physical abuse, the sexual abuse the physiological abuse, every day I have to try and deal with it...I’ve tried to commit suicide six times, I don’t do that any more, I just want people to treat me with respect, how I treat them”

“All my life I’ve been mistreat, been abused, when your helping people out they just take the micky out of you. When you need help there is nobody there for you, to tell you everything is all right. Most people think they know everything, but they don’t know jack shit, I’ve lost half of my

family...I'm now on the streets because I was mistreat by my partner and his mates, I miss my family but what can I do? I just have to get on with my life and be strong"

"I had a bad relationship for seven years, I split up and can to Liverpool, I do see my kids a few times a month, I start college next week, I want people to treat me fair"

"I want to stop living in fear, look at me, all this is fake, I wear this to fit in with the kids and the gangs, when I see them they leave me alone, I wear black and a cap, if I look homeless I get shit from everyone...some people where I'm staying have started talking to me, you know it's nice, they say nice things to me...I wish we could all be safe, do you know what I mean, instead of thinking, who's going to rob us next and will I get nicked, that's about it"

People not having any access to their children is another really big issue: -

"... I get to see my daughter an hour a fortnight... I know I have done wrong in the past... I accept she lives where she lives, but who are they to say I can only have an hour?"

"I feel so happy today, I was crossing at the lights and a car stopped, I saw my daughter inside, she got out and gave me a hug, that was the first time I'd seen her in months, I just cried and cried, it's not right that I don't get to see her, I'm not a criminal, I'm homeless and trying to sort myself out"

"I've not seen my kids since I left, I saw them on Facebook and sent them a message, they haven't responded, I had to leave and had to leave them behind, I couldn't let him know, where I was and loosing my girls was the price I had to pay"

"I saw my son this weekend, it was the highlight of the year, we went to town"

"I want my son to be proud of me"

There is a general consensus that you can't stave in Liverpool as there are lots of places to eat, the Whitechapel centre, the City Mission, the Sisters and the Basement on a Thursday evening, there are also a lot of hostels and beds, but for the people that have addictions, there is not enough help and many of these people can't keep to the hostel rules so end up rough sleeping.

"There are many issues effecting us, but I think the biggest is addiction, drink and drugs and depression. We need more hostels and there is not enough professional people dealing with addiction inside the hostels that there are. I blame Maggie Thatcher; she sold off the council houses and caused a lot of the homeless problem. There's also the problem of peer pressure in the hostels, and stuff is in your face all the time. There needs to be more bedsits, where people can be on their own."

"There is no way anyone can stop using or drinking if they are living on the streets, yeah it's virtually impossible on the streets, there's no way to stop drinking if you're out there."

A lot of the people I met had problems with anger and aggression, I met lots of people who talked about being suicidal, mental health is a huge issue often masked by addictions of one kind or another. Finding doctors and dentists is also a huge issue, as is the way you are treated if you end up in hospital.

3.5 Stories and anecdotes

There are so many stories that people share with me about their lives; it is impossible to note them all down. Although homelessness can happen to any one from any background, there seemed to be four specific paths that lead to certain groups of people becoming homeless these were: -

- Ex- soldiers, people who had served in the army, usually who had done a number of tours of duty, many who had been decorated for their services, who came home and found that they couldn't function in their civilian lives, many who use drugs and alcohol to forget and who have anger issues, and ended up leaving their families and becoming homeless.
- People who came out of prison who had lost the support of their families whilst inside who were released onto the streets and who stayed there.
- Women who walked out of abusive relationships.
- Care leavers, people who had fled the system, or young people who the leaving care services had failed.

No surprises there, however when you begin to talk about real stories you get inside how difficult some of those journeys are.

One woman I spoke to said that she had gone to the doctors ten years ago and hadn't gone home since. She walked out of her front door and just kept walking, leaving two children and a marriage of ten years. She slept rough for months and then got into a hostel, she hasn't had any contact with her past at all. She said she had no regrets, as she wouldn't be alive today if she hadn't left. Her husband was a monster on all accounts and beat her and kept her locked in the house, she was given no clothes, no money and she was treated like a slave. She had tricked him into letting her go to the doctors and she had ceased the chance to flee. She talked about people judging her for leaving her kids, but she just couldn't go there, she had to believe that they were ok and that the authorities would have stepped in. She knew that they were alive as she had looked them up on Facebook, but she had to stay hidden so she couldn't be found.

One of the many ex-soldier stories that really resonated came from a alcoholic I worked with, he had joined the army when he was 18, shortly after marrying his childhood sweet heart, he had been posted to different places in the world and had been sent to the Gulf. He had two kids and a house car and life. While in the army he had in his own words 'done stuff that now appalled him'. He talked about how the army makes all men rapists and how war makes people do crazy barbaric acts. He said for the first six months when he left the army it was ok, he felt happy and life was normal, then the nightmares came and the flash backs. He couldn't talk about what he had done, so he started drinking, to stop the pictures. Gradually he had to drink more and more and the spaces between the flashbacks got less and less, then came the rage, the all-consuming anger that he just couldn't shake. He started getting angry with his wife and kids, all his friends, he started going out and starting fights with anyone and everyone. He got arrested, he got sent down, the anger grew. When he came out of prison his wife and kids had moved and he started sleeping rough. His drinking got more, he got a place in a hostel, but got kicked out for violent behaviour towards a staff member. He asked the army for help and they said they couldn't help him while he was drinking. He has to keep drinking to stop the pain and memories, he is still on the streets and feels like a time bomb, waiting to explode.

I met a young man in a hostel who was just 19, he had been on the streets for two years. When he was 16 his mum had died really suddenly of a brain haemorrhage and he had been put in foster care, as he had no other relatives. Six months after he moved in with his foster carer she died in a car accident. Thus he was left devastated and on the streets. He talked about selling sex and going to clubs and letting men pick him up so he could get a bed for the night. He eventually got a place in a hostel with loads of older men and 'sold his arse' for fags and booze. This was picked up by the hostel and he got moved into a more age appropriate hostel, he had just got a flat when I met him.

At one of the drop ins I met a guy with his hand in a bandage, I asked him what was wrong and he said: -

"I'm having my finger cut off tomorrow, I cut it and got an infection, I'm in a lot of pain, when I done it Kevin started kicking off and some wanker stole my phone, I left it a few days and went

to the walk in centre, they said it was a good job I had come in as if I'd left it, it would have got into my hand and I would have had to have that amputated. I just want my life to get back to normal."

I saw him a few days latter on the street and asked him how he was, he said he had discharged himself from hospital as he needed a fix, he had gone back for the operation and they had refused to do it on account that he had taken drugs and it was too dangerous to anaesthetise him. I subsequently heard that he had his whole arm amputated as the infection spread and that was the only way to save his life.

These are just a few examples there are many more, I met ex-police officers, living in hostels, a guy who had been a drag queen, a banker, a business woman, the daughter of a MP, thieves, doctors... the list goes on and on. Suffice to say nearly everyone I met had an addiction of one sort or another, most people didn't have the addiction before they became homeless, but developed it very quickly, I believe as a survival mechanism. There was a real sense of community in the hostels and drop ins I went to, people didn't all get on, but when I asked people about each other there was a pulling in of rank and people didn't want me, the outsider, to see any division. There was also a really high level of tolerance, people in the workshops I facilitated, really didn't judge each other, they allowed everyone to have their say and were patient with each other. There was a lot of banter, laughs and play. One woman in a workshop said

"Becoming homeless was like becoming a teenager again as suddenly I had no responsibility and the world expected me to misbehave"

I saw a lovely moment, whilst doing a drop in at the City Mission; I sat chatting to Kossie, just after kicking out time. A group of homeless men and women migrated to the nearest bus shelter. They were in high spirits and one of them had a plastic bottle with some kind of alcohol in, they were passing round the bottle, singing, dancing and being generally mad and animated, it was such a joyous sight I couldn't stop watching, really wanting to get in and enter their world. Then I began to see the people walking past, all wearing dark colours, looking miserable in the rain, totally ignoring the joy in the bus stop. This really highlighted the invisibility people who are homeless talk about.

4 Creative Responses

4.1 Transcripts of the monologues written by participants

Name (if happy to be attributed): Emma, Jeff and Bernadette	Gender of writer: One male two female
Age range of writer (please circle): <16 16-24 24-60 60+	No of sessions attended: One, the taster at the Whitechapel
Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc. Character Peter, he has been on the streets seven years after a break down of his marriage, he hits the bottle and takes drugs (crack), he survives by benefits and robbing, his favourite place to steel is WH Smiths. He's be caught several times and fined, but has so far escaped prison. He has four children but he never sees them "They wouldn't recognise me anyway". He's parents are dead, he is lonely, "I wouldn't class myself as a loner". He did get offered a hostel but doesn't like being told what to do. He loves music. He says "it's impossible to stave in Liverpool" so eats at the Sisters, Whitechapel, and the Basement. He lives day to day, and says "if I die I die"	
Script: Hi my name's Pete, I've been on drugs now for just over fifteen years,	

I walked out of my marriage after seven years, I eh just left, proper left.
 I just preferred the streets because there was nothing happening at home you know, I just hit the bottle and was on cracked cocaine.
 People are just well what they are, they just look at me and just walk away from me you know.
 I started robbing.
 I didn't want this life but I just had to have it,
 I've tried living in places and I just prefer to be on the streets, just, better that way for me , you know,
 People say to me how do homeless survive? You know, I get my money and I spend it on drugs, it's my life you know, I didn't want to do it, but it's just the way I ended up,
 I wish I had a better life, but, I gone too far now, it's bad, you know, (breath in)
 I mean, I'm sleeping near the pier head. It's cold of a night, people say to me you got to go and take shelter and all that,
 I'm used to it now. The open air,
 (The groups responses to the Pete monologue: -
 "I know what you've been through Pete, I mean I've lived on the street, and you do get used to sleeping, literally in rough places, stones, I've slept on stones, woke up with pains in my back, but it's nice living by nobodies rules, go and live by your own")
 Pete: - yeah, I've been beaten up a few times, people just walk passed you kick you while you are asleep
 ("I'm lucky nothing like that has happened to me, but I used to go where no one could find me, out of the way places, I'd walk for miles. I've never done drugs, or anything like that)
 Pete : - You're lucky, I'm drug dependent I have to rob my food to survive. I don't even recognise my kids no more, I've four kids they'd just walk past me.
 ("It's heart breaking, my children don't see me, it's all the break down of marriage)
 Pete:- it's absolutely crazy, they don't recognise me no more, I'm nothing to them.

Name (if happy to be attributed): This character was invented in a group where 12 people inputted	Gender of writer: all 12 were women.
Age range of writer (please circle): <16 16-24 4 24-60 8 60+	No of sessions attended: Two

Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc.
 The characters name was Molly she is 30 and had a job, a car, her own home, two kids and was married.
 She lost everything through no fault of her own; by everything this includes loosing her children.
 When her children were 5 & 3 her husband started to get violent, this escalated quickly, she tried to leave with the children, but he found her and the violence got worse towards her and the kids, she sought help from social services and the children were taken into care and place in a foster home. She was unable to go to work and lost her job, he became more and more possessive and abusive she saw no way out but to leave the town where she was living and head to a place where no one knew her, so she ended up in Liverpool and at Anne Fowlers.
 She arrived at the hostel in the evening and was risk assessed and given a room, the next morning she walked into the dinning room to get breakfast and felt 100s of eyes on her, people were staring and these were the thoughts going through her head: -

- "Why is everyone looking at me?"
- "Why am I here?"
- "I don't know where to sit"
- "What do I do?"
- "I don't belong here, look at these women"

She soon gets into the routine and makes friends with a group in the hostel, they are drinkers, so she starts to drink with them, she never settles as there are people coming and going, but she feels safe in the hostel. She gets used to how quickly the atmosphere can change and gets used to getting up for breakfast and then going back to bed 'till tea time then going out with the other girls drinking, this is of course except on a Thursday when they have lock out to clean the rooms,

so she drinks all day Thursday.

After 5 weeks this is what she thinks about herself: -

- I'm worthless
- I'm now in trouble with the police and I never was before
- I'm depressed and in a rut
- I miss my kids

The things she finds most difficult are; there is no privacy, if she has a shit the whole hostel knows; she has to share a bathroom, and some of the women in her section are on the game, so she doesn't like to sit on the toilet seat; people are using drugs all the time, she found a needle in the washing machine and she tested positive for heroine, even though she has never smoked it, she is around people who do.

She thinks "I'm going to be dead soon, because of all the drinking I'm doing, look how much weight I've put on"

She is having to use all her will power not to get into drugs and she feels like a teenager again because of the rules and the fact that she has no responsibility for anyone else.

She is asked what she would say to someone on the outside about living in Anne Fowler

- Everyone is great
- We look out for each other
- We lend each other money and cigs
- Anyone who wants to look down on us needs to come and try and live here
- Don't judge us, because one small twist of fate and it could be you

Script: there are three moments in three short monologues

Molly hitting rock bottom after six months in the Hostel: -

Who the hell am I? Don't even know who I am when I look in the mirror. I don't like what I see.

Always, always drinking you're never going to get the kids back you do realise that don't you? You do, your just not, they are gonna take them away. They are gonna come and see you one of these days, take one look at you and they are gonna go 'yeah right if you think we're giving you two fucking kids you can fuck them up as well. You must be joking they'd be better off with their dad'

Look at you, you just, you need to get yourself sorted, you just can't see anything can you, you just cant see, you just can't see pass your own, you can't see passed your own nose, can you, you're just self, self, self. You may as well just finish it 'cause there noting left for you

You don't work, you clam benefit, what do you do on benefit day, you go and get pissed. Then what do you do for the rest of the week, borrow money to get pissed.

What the hell have you done to yourself, there is absolutely no point in you being here, you're just, you're a shell, there's nothing of you left, just get over it.

Look at the state of your arms as well, for fuck sake what the hell do you think you are doing to yourself, you used to be a stand up women, decent job, now look at you you're a fucking mess. There's even men on the streets who look at that and think I wouldn't touch that with a ten-foot barge pole

There's just noting left of you, do yourself a favour, and do the kids a favour and just end it now. There really is nothing worth staying alive for

Molly talking to her counsellor after eight months in the hostel

I don't know why I did it. It just seemed like there was no other option.

The kids had gone.

He's got everything.

I had nothing.

Everyday I was just waking up drinking, drinking, drinking. I never had any money, I could just feel myself being swallowed into a pit, there was just nothing there.

I couldn't, I didn't feel anything.

But now I've realised, now I've got to see the kids again, I've started to realise there is someone there, who does need me and depends on me, that's why I'm here that's why, why I survived. I am a survivor, but, some days you just don't feel like it.

It's like living in that place, (Exhale of breath) I just feel like it's never gonna end. Everyday is a new challenge. Too much time on your hands, you can't go out to work, you just think 'what is the point?'

But now with the kids, they need their mum and I know that, and I know I'll get 'em back, but I know I won't get them back, till I've got myself sorted, 'cause really that's all there is.

I don't want to be on the medication for too long. The doctor thinks I need help. So I'm here to see a councillor, to speak to you and see what you think. I'll take it from there.

Molly after ten months in the hostel when she has got a flat, talking to her key worker

I feel great you know, I'm getting a flat, its really nice, fully furnished and everything, in Everton.

About the kids, the social services have said like that once I am settled and that, I can have them like, you know tea time and stuff after school and if that goes well, they can start staying in the weekends. It's been like, that long since I've seen them and that.

I move in tomorrow and get my keys and that,

I'm feeling amazing you know I can start afresh again, be me again.

Name: - The character was created by the group and six people inputted

Gender of writer: male

Age range of writer (please circle):

No of sessions attended: one

<16 **16-24**: -2 **24-60**: - 4 60+

Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc.

Name: - Sam

Age: - 50

Why is Sam in the hostel: - His boyfriend kicked him out when he confessed he was a transsexual and wanted to become a woman. He slept rough for a while and then tried to get a place in a women's hostel but was denied as he was still a man, and so they sent him to Darbyshire House.

Had he got kids: - Yes he had two but they didn't want anything to do with him. Since he has started dressing as a woman.

Was he ever married: - yes in his early 20's but it hadn't lasted, he left when his kids were 2 and 4

Had he ever worked: - Yes he has a job in a bank, but when his relationship broke down, so did his job.

Is there anything else we should know about Sam: - Yes he is a heroine user, who has cut right down and is still using and is being prescribed methadone. He is on hormone drugs too.

Script:

Sam's monologue on arriving in the dining room for breakfast wearing a dress on his first morning in the hostel: -

Oh God what am I doing here. Has he never seen anyone in a dress, oh eye candy. Oh God, what are they staring at. God, I'll have to sit down, but I don't know where to sit.

A few months in: -

I can't be doing with shit again today, that new resident he is gorgeous. I just don't want to face him today. I think I'll wait until they've all had their tea and go in after. Yeah that's what I'll do.

After seven months he gets a flat: -

I'm, I'm leaving on Friday and I can't wait to leave, I can't wait to get myself a place I'm made up I've got a place like. It will just, just be a great feeling to get out of here, to escape the two faced people, and be myself. Like just being free and that. Without any pressures from other people you know.

Name (if happy to be attributed): Emma	Gender of writer: Female
Age range of writer (please circle): <16 16-24 24-60 60+	No of sessions attended: 8

Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc.
Tommy is a 17 year old care leaver, he has been in care for some years and has decided that they are going to kick him out soon so he is just going to leave anyway. He has a girlfriend in care and is worried about her.
He goes to the Whitechapel centre and meets Johnny who tries to convince him to become a rent boy. He declines and tries to get advice on where he can go. Eventually he ends up sleeping rough, the monologue is Tommy's thoughts before he goes to sleep I a door way.

Script: God it's cold out here, freezing in fact, I wonder where my girlfriend is, she's probably tucked up in bed by now. I had some man come and try and help me before, and there was another one trying to lead me the wrong way, I'm only a kid, I'm only seventeen, I hope I wake up in the morning, I thought that it was best to leave care now, they were going to make me go when I was 18 anyway. I don't have anyone to help me now. I feel so lonely, I didn't know it would be so hard, I feel so tired, I feel weak. I have to sleep. Goodnight.

Name (if happy to be attributed): Dave	Gender of writer: Male
Age range of writer (please circle): <16 16-24 24-60 60+	No of sessions attended: 9

Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc. Sara is a 21 year old girl from Manchester, who came to Liverpool when she was released from prison, she works the streets to earn money, she is not happy with her way of life, but sees no way out. This is her monologue as the anger subsides and she reflects on her day.

Script:
Sarah's introduction: - I'm Sarah; I come from Manchester I've just come out of Styal. From Manchester, I came to Liverpool, I'm on the streets I went back to square one as a prostitute, trying to get some money behind me and people Just don't want to know, so I've got to do something to get money.
I feel dead terrible what I do, my mum and dad died while I was in prison so I can't go to them.
A social worker come to see me when I was in prison, I told them that social workers should sit on their fucking arse, they do fuck all for people like me.
I've got to get by. The police come along and hassle you, like a criminal, but I am sure they use our services too
Sarah's night time thoughts: - it's fucking freezing out here, no one doesn't give a fuck, I'm fucking

Sarah if anyone knows what I'm fucking like they can fuck off. I fucking hate my life, I fucking hate the men I fuck, I didn't want to work the street, I fucking hate it, I just want to be looked after to feel safe, I feel paranoid all the time, I feel dirty, I just want some fucking clean knickers, I fucking hate it, I hate fucking life.

Name (if happy to be attributed): Peter and Jean	Gender of writer: 1 male, 1 female
Age range of writer (please circle): <16 16-24 24-60 60+	No of sessions attended: Varied

Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc.
Ilan is 42 both his parents are dead. When he was born he was really ill and in a wheelchair until he was five. When he was in the wheelchair he got bullied by other children. His parents divorced when he was 9, which had really big impact on him. His dad walked out and he grew to hate his dad. He worked as a mechanic 'till he was 29, he married and had kids. When he was 29 his dad died in Walton Jail and he lost it. He handled the grief really badly and got depressed. That is when he hit the bottle and his marriage broke down. He ended up homeless.
Everyday Ilan took the bus to town to go to the Whitechapel centre. One day something happened, which changed his life. On this life-changing day there was a woman sitting a few seats back from him. She was in her 20's with a toddler, half way into town Ilan heard the woman scream and he went to help. The toddler had stopped breathing and was turning blue. Ilan calmly picked up the child, held her upside down and thumped her on the back. The child started to belch and out came a boiled sweet. The mum was in tears and everyone on the bus clapped. Ilan walked off the bus for the first time in ages feeling proud he had done something good. He had done it himself. This is Ilan talking about that moment

Script:
Well I didn't know what was happening at first, I was sat near the front of the bus, I had seen the young mum and smiled at the kid, but no one pays much attention to me, so I sat and looked out of the window. I think I might have dozed off, when I heard this scream, I didn't know what was happening, but where I come from if you hear a woman scream you help.
The kid looked awful, I thought it was dead, I'd done first aid years ago and so I thought she might be chocking, so I did what I thought was best, I just picked her up before anyone could object and I hit her. She started to move and splutter. I knew I'd dislodge something and then out it came an orange sweet. Then I heard the clapping and I felt embarrassed, I didn't know where to put myself, but I liked it too. People were smiling at me, the mum could say thank you enough.
Me I'd done something good. Ilan the waster, the pisshead had helped someone. Someone called me a hero and it made me smile. It makes me think maybe I can do stuff, maybe I'm not a total loser, maybe life ain't all bad.

Name (if happy to be attributed): Jean	Gender of writer: Female
Age range of writer (please circle): <16 16-24 24-60 60+	No of sessions attended: 7

Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc.
Gill is 24 her parents were abusive and so she leaves London and comes to Liverpool, she has slept on the street for the last two weeks. This is her introducing her self and what she is thinking and feeling on her first night in a hostel,

Script:
Her introduction: - My name is Gill I'm 24 from London, I had a bad relationship with my parents and never got on that's why I moved to Liverpool. I live on the streets now, I really, really hate it. I never got on with my mum and dad, I get on well with my brothers and sisters, but not with my mum and dad at the moment, so that's why I came here. I'm sleeping rough on the streets, been in Liverpool for two weeks now, I really, really hate it; it's really, really cold at night.
I'm scared to get raped or attacked. I'm scared of the police and what they would do if they found me. It's really bad it is.
Her thoughts the first night she is in the hostel: - I'm safe now at Anne fowlers, my friend Angela helped me get here, it's warm in here, being on the streets it was so cold, so, so cold and I didn't feel safe, I was scared, scared of getting rape, or attacked, scared of the police, but it's safe here, I'm happy here, I'm happy now. And so relaxed, I've not relaxed for weeks. But I can sleep now in

a bed, it's so warm and comfy, I am so happy now	
Name (if happy to be attributed): Bernie	Gender of writer: Female
Age range of writer (please circle): <16 16–24 24-60 60+	No of sessions attended: 6
Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc. Angela is a woman in her early 30's, who has escaped an abusive relationship, one day she just walked out leaving her partner and kids. She ended up in Liverpool, she slept rough for a few weeks and then got a place in a women's hostel, where she is very happy, Her toughest time is at night when she shuts her eyes and feels alone, missing her kids and not knowing what life will bring.	
Script: I hate this time of night. When I am alone with my thoughts, I miss my kids, I miss tucking them in and telling them stories, I miss my home and my things, my friends and my family, but I can't risk him finding me, so I have to stay away. I feel good that I helped someone today, that I made a difference. I hope once I've got my own flat I can get my kids back, it's a dream, but I hope that it happens. I hope that they don't hate me and they understand why I had to leave. I hope that they are safe and they are being looked after. I hope that he never hurts them. I get so lonely at night. I feel like I am alone in this great world and I ache for news of my kids. I hate the night. I feel blessed that I am safe. But I hate lying awake and missing my kids.	
Name (if happy to be attributed): Peter	Gender of writer: Male
Age range of writer (please circle): <16 16–24 24-60 60+	No of sessions attended: 5
Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc. George is a Georgian refugee he came to Britain to escape persecution by the Russians. He is settled here and is in college learning English. He is happy here, but would rather be at home, being a religious man; his monologue is in the form of a prayer.	
Script: Dear God, why did you let the Russians come in and change my life, it is ok here but it will never be home, I miss the mountains, my family, I miss the life I had. I was happy then, now it is hard. I cannot talk to people they don't hear me. People look at me like, I don't know. I am trying to learn English, to go to college to find work; I am still George from Georgia. I meet a young man today, I try and help him, it makes me sad, he is so young and he has no one, it is not the same in my country, people do not treat people like this. I think in England people are very hard. It is lonely people do not see me. But the situation is such that I cannot go back home so I have to stay and make it ok. I am grateful for the food I have had today and that I have a bed to sleep in.	
Name (if happy to be attributed): Mick	Gender of writer: Male
Age range of writer (please circle): <16 16–24 24-60 60+	No of sessions attended: 4
Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc. Jonny is an ex-soldier who has nightmares he wants to forget the things he did whilst serving in the army. He drinks to numb himself of all feeling and he drinks to forget. After leaving the army, Jonny ended up on the streets, to get money for booze he works as a rent boy, he is losing his identity and feels cheap. His monologue is a drunken rant.	
Script: I used to be in the army, I did loads of tours, I've got medals for bravery, I loved the army, but I went from hero to zero. I left and the nightmares started, I thought of all the things I did to people, things that I feel ashamed of, things I did to other human beings, to women, the army makes you rape, it's part of being a soldier, I did stuff I can't even say and I can't tell anyone about, I worked with men I hate now, but I can't get away from them, we are stuck together by what we did. So I started to drink, I love to drink, drink makes me forget and sometimes it makes	

me feel good, sometimes I feel like a king, a prince, a good person.
 I work the streets to pay for my drink. Jonny the rent boy is what they call me, I don't like it when they call me Jonny the fucking rent boy, fucking Jonny the fucking rent boy, that's who I have become and I drink. Drink to numb the pain, to hide, to make me feel good, drink to be alive, drink to knock me out so I can start my day again. Jonny the fucking rent boy.
 I need to sleep, I need to fucking sleep I'm so fucking tired, I'm sick of walking round. I need to find somewhere; I need to find somewhere that's fucking warm. I'm on my own now, who gives a fuck about Jonny now, no one. I'm on my fucking own again Jonny's on his own again. Fucking bastards, they don't give a shit; after all I fucking did for them. I need to sleep, I need to get down, I need to sleep. My leg hurts, my bones, fucking hell I need to sleep.

Name (if happy to be attributed): Emma, Bernie and Dave	Gender of writer: 2 female 1 male
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Age range of writer (please circle): <16 16–24 24-60 60+	No of sessions attended: Varied for each person
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Context of monologue (if any); stage directions etc.
 Billy was born in 1957, he never knew his parents and was brought up in an orphanage in Bootle, he joined the army at 17 and on leaving developed serious mental health issues, he got into drugs and subsequently his wife left him and took the kids with her. He has no access to his kids and this does his head in. He has been to his wife's house and stands outside waiting to see them, he is obsessed with gaining some access, this is him talking to his key worker at the Whitechapel centre.

Script:
 You don't fucking care. No one fucking cares, how would you like it to know that you can't see them, to know that, that bitch turns them against you? It's sick and wrong and I get done for trying to see my own kids.
 I miss them, I love them, they don't even know me any more, where is the justice in that.
 I'm a dad and I want to be involved, but no one lets me. There are loads of dads out there who don't give a shit, or who hurt their kids, I'd never hurt them, I love them, more than life itself, I'd do anything for them, she knows that but still she keeps me away.
 I've been to see a solicitor who said we could take it to court, but because I'm not clean, she thinks the chances are low. She talked about supervised access, but why should I have to have someone watching me to check on me, there are plenty of worst parents out there who don't get supervised!
 The fact that I live in a hostel doesn't help, as soon as you tell the authorities that they judge you. They forget that I was a hero, I fought for this country, I killed for this country, it owes me and look at all the thanks I get, they're all bastards, I fucking hate this city, I hate people looking down their noses at me like they are so superior, two faced cunts. I just want to take my kids to Mac Donald's of a weekend and to get to know them.
 It eats me up, it makes me so angry, I know how to kill and it makes me want to get out there. I just want to see my kids, I just want to see them, to spend time with them, to cuddle them, to be a dad and no one will let me.

4.2 Other Creative Responses

At the Whitechapel 'One off' as well as creating Pete and his monologue another group created a second character Mark aged 62, with no family or kids, a loner, who has never been loved and needs loving.

The group who created Mark, wrote a poem about him and then made up a few lines about what he might say, here is the poem,

Living on the Streets

Living on the streets

An old person been on the streets a long time

Using drugs and drinking

Using needles, weed

*Very cold on the streets
Living in boxes, begging on the streets
Fighting with other people,
Been on the streets for 10 years.*

*Going to Whitechapel to help them
To get off the streets
To get housed
To get off drugs*

This is what they said in character, when they began to explore his life: -

“ I live on the streets, I've been on the streets for 10 years, I've no family, no children. I live in cardboard boxes, in tunnels, under bridges, on stations, I'm an alcoholic, I take drugs I'm looking for a place to settle down”

5 Evaluation & Recommendations

5.1 Analysis and evaluation of the overall project

- One of the Key learning's in terms of the delivery of this project was it takes time to get into talks with organisations. People are really busy dealing with very real day-to-day existences and thus we are not a priority for them.
- Organisations are also really protective of their client group so it often took two or three meetings before I got access to the client group, a lot of the time I felt these initial meetings were very much to suss out my credentials and the motives of the company.
- People in organisations were always worried about the number of people who might attend, and had to be reassured that numbers weren't essential and I would work with who ever turned up.
- In all the one off workshops people would be reluctant to participate at first and would ask to watch, in all the sessions those people who watched soon joined in.
- Having clear a clear question to ask people at drop ins was key, as it meant people could engage for seconds or talk for ages.
- Be prepared for people to not want to disclose too much personal information or to be recorded. For many people anonymity is key to their survival.
- Be prepared that some of the issues people do talk about are very emotive and difficult so it is essential to have a good system for debriefing and evaluating with co- workers.

5.2 Recommendations

- In future projects with this client group it would be good to have a longer set up period
- It would be good to keep contact with the organisations, which engaged as it would make future work so much easier
- On going drama projects with this group would be highly beneficial to the participants, organisations, which work with people who are homeless and community members.
- It would be great to run a project with a mixed group of people who are homeless and members of the community as I believe it would go along way to breaking down stereotypes and prejudices.
- It would be really beneficial to extend the work, and to include work with children and families who are homeless, and living in overcrowded temporary accommodation

- It would be good to take point raised by some of the workers in hostels about the need for prevention work to be done in both formal and informal education establishments to show young people the harsh realities of homelessness.

Project Planning, Management and Delivery

- The project had a really clear structure and covered lots of different research styles, this was good as it enabled the information to come out in different forms and had a richness
- I have mentioned before we didn't anticipate the time we would need so for future projects it would be good to have longer
- The management worked well, it was great to have a clear timetable worked out and for that to be reviewed and changed on a regular basis.
- There could have been more clarity on the role of the consultants and how they fitted into the framework.
- It worked well in the workshop delivery having a lead facilitator and two co-facilitators as the groups needed a lot of support and encouragement.
- Having a facilitator who had been homeless added credibility to the work and really helped with trust and openness in the workshops.

Subject Matter/key issues

The key issues raised by people who are homeless were: -

- Respect and community prejudice
- Lack of access to their children
- Addiction
- Joblessness
- Lack of suitable accommodation and continued support when moving into the community
- Anger
- Mental health issues
- Access to medical and dental services
- Lack of access to opportunities

The staff I spoke to sighted these as the key issues affecting people who are homeless

- Appropriate housing
- Staff work load and stress that impacts on the services provided
- Addiction
- Lack of public understanding
- A lack of joined up thinking in service provision

- A need for prevention work in schools to prevent people becoming homeless
- Government policies looking good on paper but not being resourced on the ground.

Other

It was a great learning experience and a privilege to be let into people's thoughts and lives. People participated in a really generous way and were very open to talking and trying exercises and games. Everyone who participated said that they would like more and that there was a need for creative approaches to engage people. People who took part in workshops talked about their benefits and people who witnessed the performance were changed and moved by the experience. I would recommend that the work doesn't stop here, instead it develops and grows.