



# I·SPHERE

## **Lost worlds of welfare:**

Local homelessness systems in England

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# Literature review

## Regimes and systems

- Welfare regime:  
*“constellation of power in society”* (Kemeny, 1995:89).
- Welfare regimes structure welfare systems
- Welfare systems: tax, social security, pensions, health, education, housing, etc

## Homeless policy decentralisation

- **Homeless prevention**
  - Independence and Opportunity, Making Every Contact Count
  - Homeless Prevention Grant, Supporting People, Supported Housing
  - TA Subsidy to Flexible Homelessness Support Grant
- **Statutory homelessness framework**
  - S.193, Localism Act
- **Place based initiatives**
  - Rough sleeper (RSI, RS205, NSNO; LRSSIB)
  - MEAM, Homeless Hospital Discharge Fund (NHS), Pathways; Lankelly Chase, Fulfilling Lives
- **Homelessness ‘more than a roof’**
  - Local welfare schemes (DHP, CTS, LWA)
  - Health (Health & Wellbeing Boards, CCGs)

# Research design

## Key informant interviews

Scale	Number
National	5
Metro (regional)	6
Cross borough (sub-regional)	4
Total	15

## Research questions

1. Do distinct homelessness systems exist?
2. How, if at all, can local homelessness systems be classified?
3. What causes local homelessness systems variation?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of local homelessness system variation?

# Local homelessness systems

## Variation in ‘front door’ services

*“I know Croydon have taken a Gateway approach, which is a holistic approach of looking at homelessness... The gateway and welfare model... not just in identifying someone’s homeless needs, but welfare needs, training needs, employment needs...”* (Metro-level policy manager, statutory sector)

*“Brent have developed an approach. I think its called find your own... They say this is the housing benefit support you can receive. If you can find a private rented sector property in Brent, you go and do the research and come back to us...”* (Metro-level policy manager, statutory sector)

*“Lewisham have... got a single homelessness service called SHIP that runs parallel to their housing options services, but is separate and works with single people to prevent homelessness”* (Cross-borough coordinator, statutory sector)

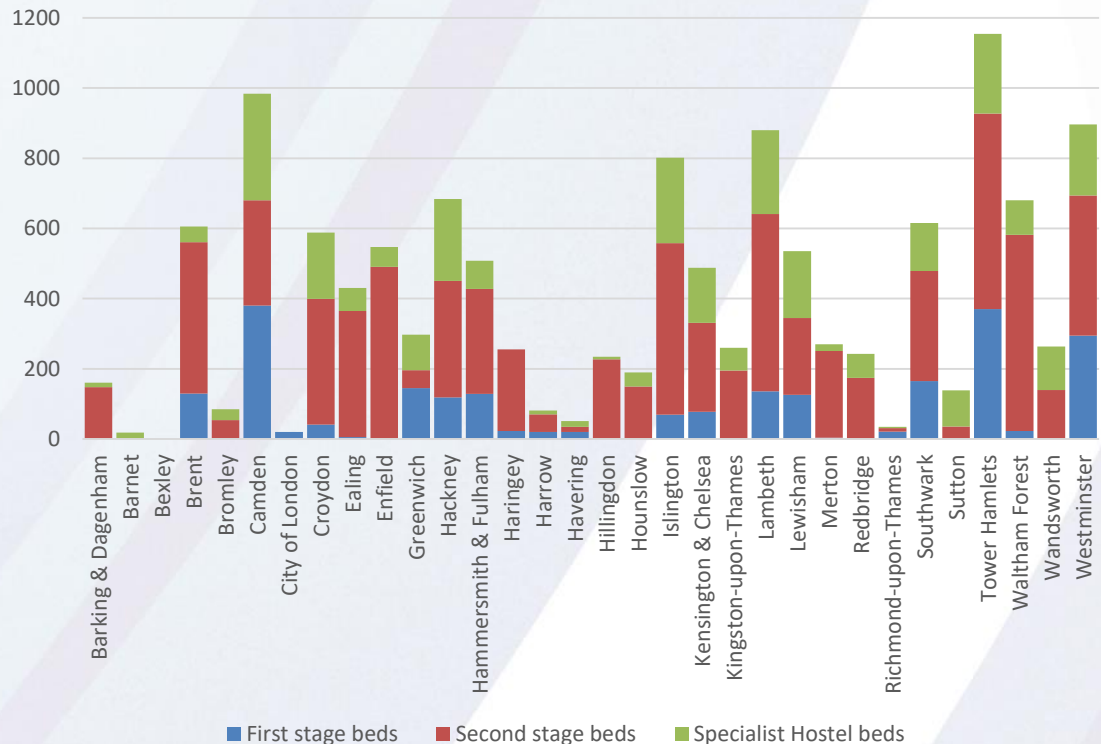
*“So if someone comes in clearly after hearing their story and their main issues is around their health, that’s where they get triaged to. But we’re here to help with some of their issues around maintaining their accommodation, looking at their level of debt, helping them reduce their rent repayments, that kind of stuff. What’s added onto that is and this very unusual and quite radical, the housing options team at Hackney has moved in with us there...”* (Metro-level executive, voluntary sector)

# Local homelessness systems

## Variation in (s.193) provision

*“[Brent have] done a lot more than that (PRSOs), but they’ve also done a lot more out of London placements. In Brent you’re more likely to end up in the private rented sector and you might end up in Birmingham whereas in Hillingdon... they’ve never liked anyone move out of the borough. They haven’t wanted to discharge into the private rented sector so that means you’re likely to be in temporary accommodation for longer. single people to prevent homelessness” (Cross-borough manager, statutory sector)*

## Variation in bed-space



(LHF, 2016)

# Local homelessness systems

## Variation in integration

Lambeth Council, Mental Health Trust and CCG:

*“decided that they had to be a different way of offering mental health services, which would have the benefit of helping people stay well and... improve the quality of their life and avoid homelessness.” (Metro-level executive, voluntary sector).*

*“There are some local authorities with a unified approach; a range of partners; some statutory; some third sector; some housing association all working together and doing different activities... but they’re all working to an agreed set of process and systems” (National actor, voluntary sector)*

*“... they’re passing them between Children’s Services and Housing. Passing 16 & 17 years olds between each other; arguing the toss about who is responsible... They just don’t work together. All they do is complain about each other.” (National actor, voluntary sector)*

# Local homelessness systems classification

## More 'universal'

*"I think the main demonstration of the local authority ceasing the initiative on homelessness is to see more than just statutory homelessness. If there's an authority that sees single homeless people as a priority and prevention regardless of household type as a priority, if there is a typology, that is the most effective way to look at it." (National level actor, voluntary sector)*

## More 'selective'

*"... most authorities don't provide a good service. It's a minority that do... A lot of authorities its minimalist in London" (Cross-borough manager, statutory sector)*

# Drivers of variation: contextual factors

## Welfare reform

*“A need to help support people into work and into training. It all merges into one. I think the welfare reform agenda... has been a key driver in helping support peoples housing needs...” (Metro-level policy manager, statutory sector)*

## Local government austerity

*“I also think that it’s a point worth making that our homelessness teams have had to reduce as have the strategic teams in the local authorities which makes it very difficult for them to consider issues proactively... Most of the services are about responding to need as opposed to being able to take an oversight on things.” (Cross-borough manager, statutory sector)*



# Drivers of variation: contextual factors

## Homelessness (funding) policy

*“You have the funding streams from the DCLG and homeless prevention grant... That’s creates a very... very large differences in funding awards between millions and millions of pounds in one borough and hundreds of thousands in another borough.”*  
(Metro-level actor, statutory sector)

*“The homeless prevention grant which itself is not ring-fenced and can be spent on potholes... It doesn’t necessarily follow that if you’ve got the biggest problem, you get the most amount of money. That’s a big deal.”*  
(National level actor, voluntary sector)

## Local housing systems

*“I think boroughs are in very different positions because of variations in the housing market across east London.... The percentage of social housing varies massively between boroughs and the cost of the private rented sector varies massively and I think that determines to a certain extent the approach that local authorities are able to take...”* (Cross borough manager, statutory sector).

# Drivers of variation: local actors

## Members

*“Hillingdon officers can’t make decisions. Everything goes to the leader.” (Cross borough manager, statutory sector)*

*“In relation to placements out of London and whether the local politicians support those placements out of London. So Tower Hamlets and Hackney its always been very difficult to place out of London and therefore customers will receive a different service within those boroughs.” (Metro-level actor, statutory sector)*

## Political control

*“Ealing, Brent and Harrow [swing and their] policies may change every election. At least Kensington and Chelsea you know it’s always going to be the same. They are clearly Tories, but they are different Tories from the last Hammersmith and Fulham Tories who were much more right wing and less caring... At least Kensington and Chelsea have been able to avoid or minimise the cuts, particularly because they have loads of money, but partly because they have the political support and don’t have to worry about who is going to be in power.” (Cross borough manager, statutory sector)*

# Drivers of variation: local actors

## Senior officers

*“If you have an officer led set up where there where they understand the potential of delivering good services, then you get really good things happening. There are transformations in local authorities that are not to do with political decisions, they are to do with good officers” (National actor, voluntary sector)*

## Members v senior officers

*“The key decision makers are the members but it depends on how well they understand the issues. Senior managers are obviously pretty important because it’s their ideas that are likely to influence the members. In terms of actually making decisions it’s the lead members and senior managers.” (National actor, statutory sector)*

# Drivers of variation: local actors

## Budget holders

*“Whatever idea a borough manages to come up with, it has to be supported by either your chief executive, leader or someone with influence in the borough because obviously a lot of change needs support; it needs resources. Without the resources, it’s not going to happen...” (National actor, voluntary sector)*

# Drivers of variation: local actors

## CCG

*“In Lambeth, its much the CCG commissioner as it is the housing side. Then you get a key councillor... who is also very very supportive. So you get that driven at the highest level. The council has been very supportive. That’s the combination you would normally expect to see. If you get both, that’s brilliant (Metro-level-executive, voluntary sector)*

## Police and Crime Commissioners

*“I think it’s worth saying that political momentum comes from other agencies too. I recently up in Leeds where there had been some really good stuff going in terms of street outreach that had come from the Police and Crime Commissioner... That’s really exciting. That’s a good way to reimagine not just who’s responsible but with how local authorities can be helped with a shared agenda...” (National actor, voluntary sector)*

# Drivers of variation: local actors

## Voluntary sector

*“The presence of an active voluntary sector is not guaranteed of having a positive influence over a local authority. In fact, I know one of the big providers... who are openly trying to get mass outsourcing contracts for homelessness provision... by undercutting and selling at a cheaper rate (National actor, voluntary sector)*

## Public

*“You might have people in the borough saying its everyone coming from abroad and taking our houses. They’re not, but that’s the perception people.... and this is an issue for Barking & Dagenham...” (Cross borough officer, statutory sector)*

# Local homelessness systems

## Advantages

*“Local advantages are you do tend to have better relationships at a local level then you will from a national perspective... I think at a local level you can identify where difference and variant approaches can add value... So health and local authorities are trying to come closer together but they probably need to go a little bit further.” (National actor, voluntary sector)*

## Disadvantages

*“When you start looking at localised variation it becomes very difficult to get a picture of what’s happening across the country. I think it depends on what specific areas you’re looking at in relation to provision. I can envision it becoming a very complex network of provision that’s very hard to monitor and legislation becomes very difficult. That again doesn’t create a very clear picture for clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.” (Cross-borough manager, statutory sector)*

# Concluding remarks

- National regimes have lack power to address social problems
  - Fragmented & under resourced
  - Complex and diverse society
  - Demand for devolution/decentralisation
- Local ‘regimes’ also have power
  - Local housing systems
  - Human resources (Leadership, skills, knowledge)
  - Relationships and networks
  - Culture/history of implementation
- Local (implementation/welfare) regimes combine multi-level powers to:
  - Fill policy gaps (single homelessness)
  - Mitigate policy (welfare reform, PRS regulations)
  - Combine policy (integration, system change)
  - Vary policy (discretion, gatekeeping)
  - Exploit policy (Supporting People)
- Urban regimes:
 

*“The power struggle concerns, not control and resistance, but gaining and fusing a capacity to act – power to, not power over” (Stone, 1988:29)*