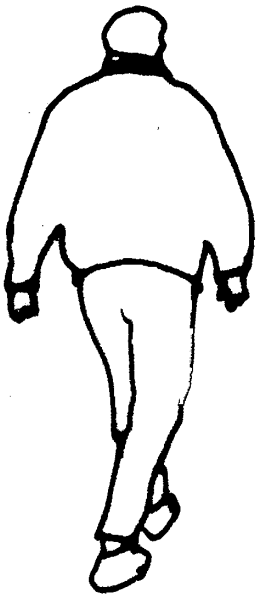
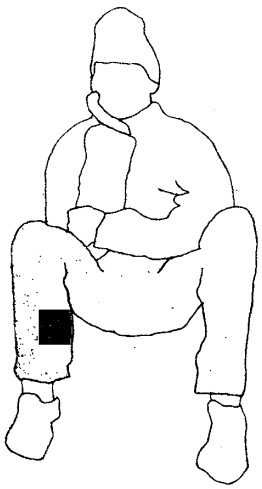
King's Fund

# Joined-up working with single homeless people

## Reflections from the Under One Roof project





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## Reflections from the Under One Roof project

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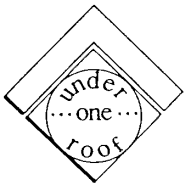

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## Foreword

Homelessness is a symbol of a society that is not working. That people are forced to sleep rough, live in temporary accommodation or spend time in hostels and shelters is unacceptable in what claims to be a civilised society.

People who do not have a home are excluded on many levels. The fact that they lack shelter is the symptom of deeper problems in society and its public services. People become homeless because of poverty, family problems, isolation, illness or a lack of opportunity in life. When they become homeless, the whole system of public services can desert them. Health care, benefits, education, training and other services suddenly become harder to use from below the safety net they were designed to patrol.

The King's Fund commissioned the Under One Roof project to tackle some of these issues. We wanted to ensure that homeless people could gain access to the whole range of services they need to help them get back above the safety net. We aimed to develop an integrated service in which a proper package of support could be provided in one place.

In its first year, Under One Roof has provided a great deal of learning for all of us. It has drawn our attention very closely to the fact that homelessness is not an issue all to itself, but part of a wider system of exclusion and impoverishment. It has shown that the solution to homelessness lies within the very range of factors that create it – that tackling the lack of a home in itself is not the whole answer to the complex and enduring difficulties homeless people face.

Under One Roof is pointing us in the direction of a massive challenge. The task none of us can ignore, in which all of us will have to participate, is the need to develop a new ethic of public service that supports people in all facets of their lives. It should give those who are most vulnerable the chance to make their way in life, as they see fit, by battling against the barriers that society puts in their way. To do so will take

money, leadership, commitment and honesty. There are no easy answers, but to continue avoiding the problem any longer would make the work we do, and what we claim to stand for, irrelevant.

*Rabbi Julia Neuberger*
Chief Executive of the King's Fund

## Executive summary

- Under One Roof is a partnership of over 30 statutory and voluntary organisations addressing the needs of single homeless people in Lambeth & Southwark. It is designed to bring together different parts of a disparate service, offering a process by which organisations, and the individuals within them, interact with each other.

- Under One Roof was awarded a King's Fund Programme Grant in 1997, with the intention of offering a new one-stop service for single homeless people and improving relationships between local statutory and voluntary organisations. It was initially funded for two years and this has now been extended until November 2000.

- The project is managed by START, a multidisciplinary team providing mental health services for single homeless people in Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham (set up under the Department of Health's Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative), which is, in turn, part of the South London & Maudsley NHS Trust.

- Under One Roof is supported by a Policy Group, a Steering Group and a Management Group, and reflects on progress and the learning from the initiative at regular review days.

- The two multi-agency teams, initially based at St Giles and North Lambeth Day Centres, have seen over 200 clients. The interim evaluation suggests, however, that these cases do not indicate improved effectiveness when compared to a control group using existing services, and the service has been of limited use to outside agencies.

- Under One Roof has tested two other models for developing 'joined-up services' for single homeless people. It has succeeded in piloting a new type of multi-agency panel, focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable rough sleepers identified by Thames Reach. It has also identified a new approach to 'generic assessment', which requires further development.

- There have been identifiable improvements in joint working, at both strategic and operational levels, with Under One Roof facilitating a number of opportunities for sharing ideas and experiences.

- A final report will be produced in October 2000, including an independent evaluation. If you have any questions arising from this report, or would like to know more about the project, please contact the Under One Roof Co-ordinator, Graham Park, on 020 7840 0654 or on e-mail at admin@underoneroof.org.uk

# 1. Placing the project in context

## *1.1 What are we seeking to achieve?*

Under One Roof is a response by local agencies in Lambeth & Southwark to the needs of the most vulnerable rough sleepers. It reflects a growing awareness that the answer is not to develop another new service, but to put together the existing services in a different way.

Under One Roof offers a process by which organisations, and the individuals within them, interact with each other. It is trying to 'hide the wiring', recognising that the person sleeping on the streets wants a solution to their problems and has no interest in the way services come together to provide them. The 'wiring' – the links, networks and connections between agencies, made up of numerous phone calls, meetings, applications and adjudications – is not their concern. It is our responsibility to provide a timely and appropriate response to rough sleepers' needs, rather than an explanation of why services fail to match up in an imperfect world.

Through this process, we hoped not only to improve opportunities for some of the most disadvantaged, but also to find a new way of working together across the wide network of statutory and voluntary agencies working with homeless people in one area of Inner London.

## *1.2 Developing service models*

Under One Roof offers a unique opportunity to test out different models for providing services. Our initial assumption, based on an innovative model in Bristol called the 'HUB', was that, by bringing together a wide range of services in one place at one time, we could provide a fast-track route in to local services, providing a comprehensive response to an individual's needs. In practice, this failed to work in the way we had planned. The strength of the project has been our ability to learn and adapt. The focus has

shifted away from bringing all the services together in one place, to exploring whether we could bring them together in one person (generic assessors) and then to bringing together the 'expertise' in one place (panels). Each experience provides clear pointers for planners and service providers elsewhere and this report begins to document our successes and failures.

### *1.3 A framework for learning*

Central to our approach has been a commitment to reflect and learn from our experiences. We have held regular review days, inviting both managers and practitioners from across the network of local agencies to review progress and explore changes. They have also provided opportunities for staff to learn more about other local organisations and to discuss current changes in policy and practice. These events have been characterised by a healthy scepticism and have been central to developing new ideas and models. The project is also being independently evaluated in a way that provides regular information about our progress that, in turn, has informed our development.

# 2. Current achievements

## *2.1 Describing the project*

Under One Roof provides a new way of bringing together existing resources. The only new posts are a full-time co-ordinator and a part-time administrator, who are based within the offices of the managing agency, START (a multidisciplinary team providing mental health services for single homeless people in Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham).

The project supports two teams of practitioners, one in Southwark and one in Lambeth. Each team meets for up to a day a week. The teams represent the key local agencies providing advice, treatment and access to services for single homeless people. This includes staff from the local housing department, social services, primary health care team, mental health services, the benefits agency, housing advice and voluntary sector day centres.

The time of most of the members of the Under One Roof teams is *not* funded through the initiative. One of the strengths from the start of the project has been the willingness of most of the partners to provide free staff time, on the basis that they are seeking to meet the aims of their organisations in a new collective way. The exception to this has been Social Services, who have required additional funding to free up social workers to join the teams. The flexibility of the funding from the King's Fund has enabled us to fund social work input in this way.

The activities of the co-ordinator and administrator cover not just the co-ordination of the two teams, but involve promoting the initiative, sharing information across the network of agencies, identifying referrals, servicing meetings and preparing reports, and supporting the advisory structure (see below).

Under One Roof has an extended framework for providing support, advice and direction (see Table 1 below). This includes:

- a **Steering Group**, initially meeting monthly and then quarterly, with representation from all agencies providing direct input into Under One Roof as well as key local statutory agencies. Chaired by the Director of Homeless Network

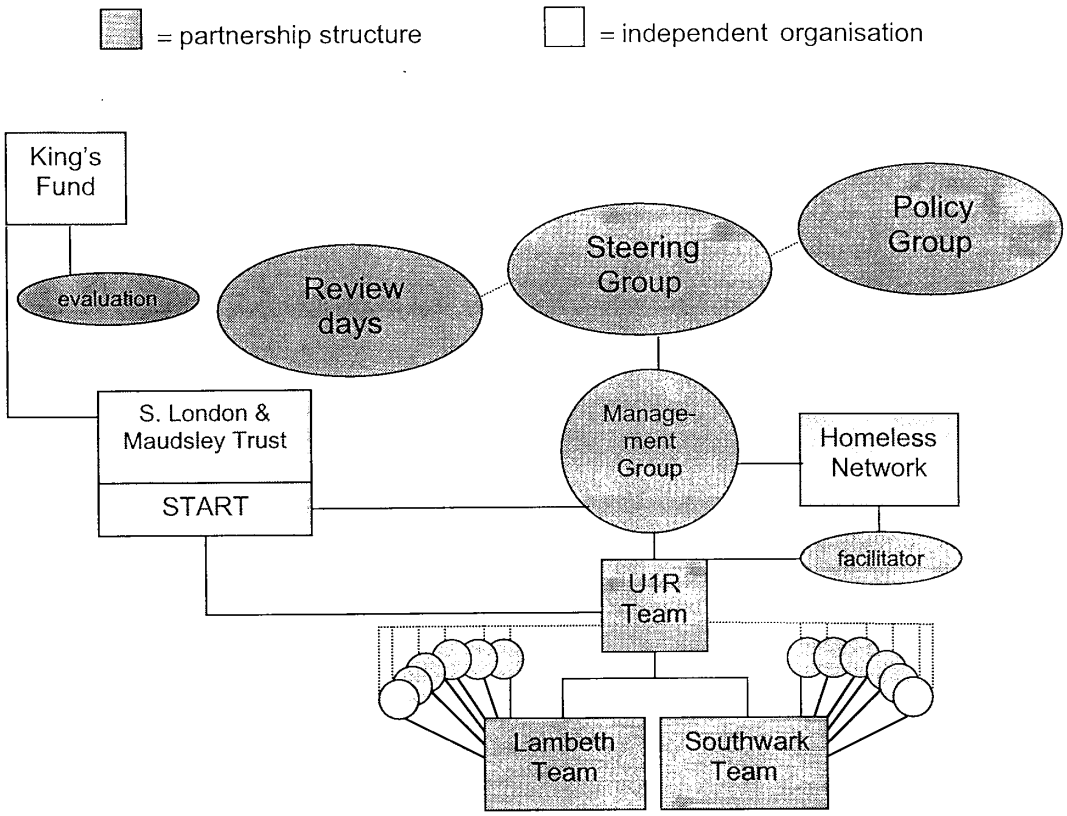
- a **Policy Group**, meeting twice a year, with leading figures from local statutory agencies and leading homelessness agencies, to advise on the broader policy implications. Chaired by the Chief Executive of the King's Fund

- **review days**, every three to six months, bringing together managers and frontline workers to reflect on the learning from the project

- a **Management Group** has recently been added. With just four members, it meets every month and reports to the Steering Group, taking decisions about the development of the project.

In addition, the King's Fund appointed two independent consultants, a facilitator to provide occasional support to the project (troubleshooting and leading the review days) and a researcher to carry out a full evaluation.

**Figure 1:** Partnership structure of Under One Roof



### *2.2 What we have achieved so far*

1. The service began at North Lambeth Day Centre and St Giles Day Centre in March 1998. Findings from this first phase include:
   - after a slow start the service has come to be valued by the host day centres and their clients, and there are now several examples of good collaborative work
   - agencies took from a few weeks to several months to feel properly involved with the project but staff are now able to co-operate as equals despite differences in discipline, training and experience
   - on the other hand, outcome data from over 200 cases do not indicate improved effectiveness when compared to a control group using existing services, and the service has been of limited use to outside agencies
   - difficulties can be ascribed to the very small scale of the project, with the service restricted to a single day at each day centre and with a single member of staff available to attend from each agency.
2. Four Under One Roof conferences have been held with participant agencies and selected outside organisations primarily directed towards project development.
3. One outcome from these discussions is a proposal to train 'generic assessors' who are able to make formal assessments on behalf of a number of statutory agencies. This requires substantial development and Homeless Network is currently looking for separate funding and management for this.
4. In March 1999 the original service offering direct assistance for homeless clients was partly replaced by formal, minuted multidisciplinary panels providing a consultation, planning and referral service, initially for practitioners in the host day centres.
5. The project is currently testing a telephone conferencing service to enable agencies with insufficient resources to attend formal meetings to discuss clients held in common.
6. The project is also engaged in discussions with Southwark Social Services about responses to imminent initiatives over rough sleepers. Similar discussions with LB Lambeth and the Health Authority are underway.

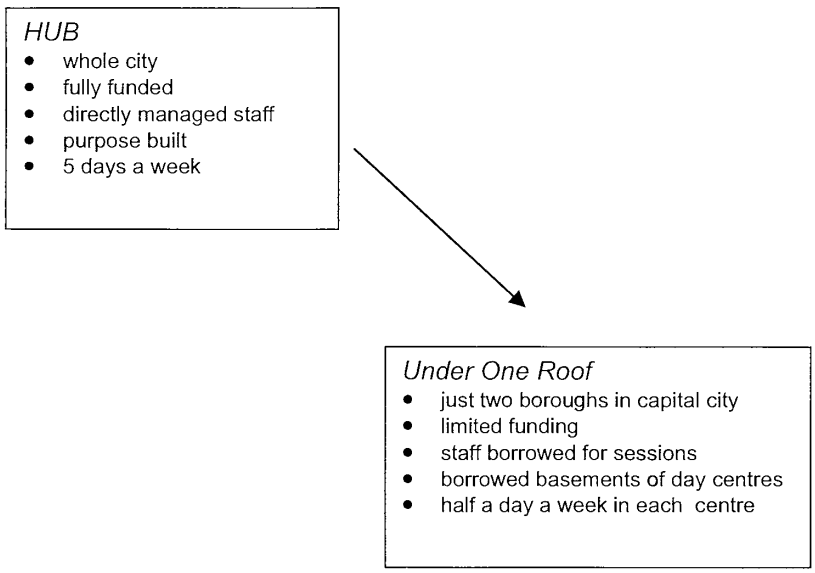
7. The Three Boroughs Primary Health Care Team has encountered recent poor practice in hospital discharge due to misunderstandings between the hospital and the local authority housing department. Under One Roof is now engaged in discussions about this and is drafting guidance on good practice.
8. As the project matures it is encountering re-referrals of previous clients, sometimes in different settings or in neighbouring boroughs, and it has been instrumental in obtaining the necessary responses from the appropriate agency or agencies.
9. From mid-August 1999, the multidisciplinary panel in Lambeth moved from North Lambeth Day Centre to Thames Reach. A more thorough procedure is now being developed, with Under One Roof gathering information from hostel case notes and elsewhere, and following discussion producing a detailed analysis and plan based on these various sources.

# 3. Key issues

## *3.1 Picking the right model*

The HUB provided a useful focus for our thinking. It offered a practical demonstration of how a one-stop service for single homeless people could work. Conceptually, it provided a neat peg for many of our ideas, but an increasingly misleading one. In practice, the service we sought to develop had more differences than similarities (see Table 2 below). It offered the appearance of agreement without any real understanding of how a much larger scale initiative in Bristol would be transplanted on a part-time basis into the complex environment of Inner London.

**Figure 2:** Contradictions in the model



## 3.2 Homelessness as a form of social exclusion

Under One Roof has tried to extend our understanding of social exclusion and explore what this means for the way services intervene and provide appropriate support. Our starting point is that single homelessness, as an extreme form of social exclusion, can only be understood in its broadest context:

> *single homelessness is not a problem in its own right and in consequence it does not have causes in its own right, and any attempt to understand it in these terms is doomed to fail. One cannot understand any one part of any system unless one considers the whole.*[*]

Experience at Under One Roof, together with observations elsewhere, certainly support such as a stance. At least for our primary target group of individuals irregularly or tangentially in touch with services, homelessness is a secondary factor. Rather, our client group can be defined as people for whom all the taken-for-granted social support systems that normally sustain people in their own accommodation – individual resources, the family, the market, and welfare services – have failed.

### *3.3 Referrals*

There was, initially, some uncertainty about who would access the service. The network of potential referring agencies were asked to refer the most vulnerable single homeless people with a history of sleeping rough, but it was left open for others who might benefit from a multi-agency assessment to access the service. After the first six months, it

[*] Pleace N. Single homelessness and social exclusion. *Social Policy & Administration* 1998; 32 (1).

became clear that few of those in the greatest need were finding their way into the new service.

The paradox of providing a service for those rough sleepers who were finding it hardest to access services, on a part-time basis from the basements of two day centres, became apparent. The evidence from the different outreach teams was that it might take months or years of casual contact before the most isolated rough sleepers are willing to consider accepting any support. This suggested that the service could be better targeted at supporting the keyworkers or outreach workers from different agencies rather than attempting to provide a direct service to clients who have complex needs or are hard to engage.

There were other obstacles to attracting appropriate clients. We had considered the location of the service very carefully, eventually opting for two local day centres. The advantages were the ready source of clients and the support of the staff teams based in the day centres. But, despite assurances that the service was open to all rough sleepers and welcoming referrals from other local agencies, most clients were from the host day centres. Whatever the message, a new service is likely to be identified with its host agency, making it even more difficult to establish its own distinctive identity. In light of these problems we made a decision to reshape the model, offering panels rather than a direct access service.

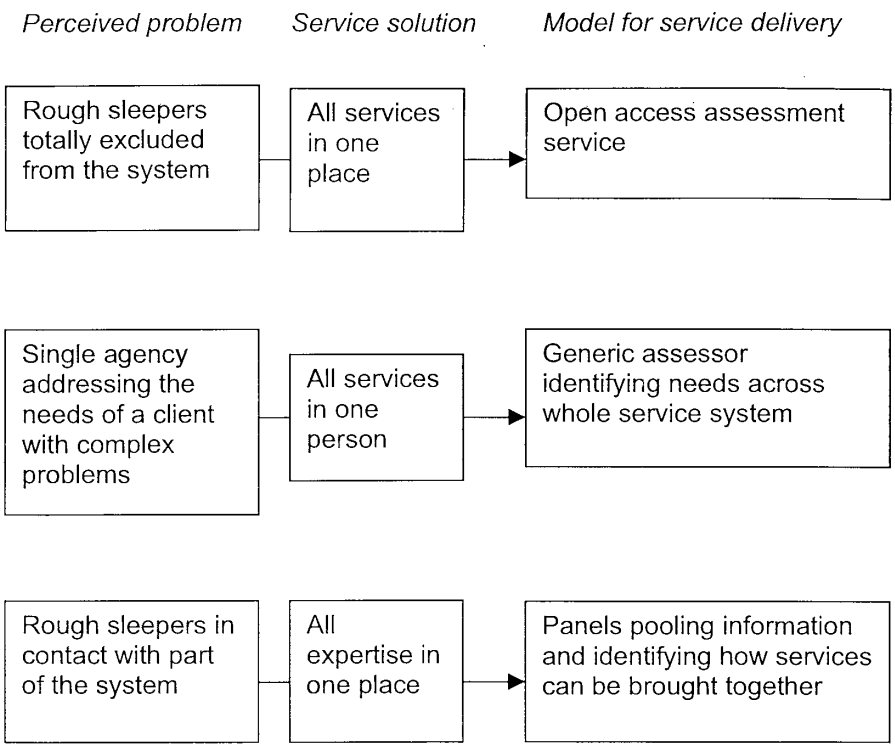
### *3.4 A new relationship between the voluntary and statutory sectors?*

A common assumption at the start of the project was that there is a group of highly marginalised rough sleepers who have no contact with any of the agencies in Central London. Our experience, supported by findings of the Victoria pilot, suggests that very few people remain completely outside the system, but are excluded from parts of it. There is also a changing perception of what is included within the 'system'. Previously, the voluntary sector was seen as working with people who failed to access statutory services,

but, increasingly, statutory and voluntary services are being seen as part of one system working with the same clients. It is important for statutory services to recognise that working in isolation from the system as a whole is unlikely to provide effective outcomes for rough sleepers with complex needs. In turn, voluntary organisations need to acknowledge that they are an integral part of the service system. This implies not just the right to be treated as equal partners, but the responsibility of working collectively rather than blaming statutory services when things fail to run smoothly.

The challenge has shifted from enabling voluntary sector clients to access statutory services to finding the most effective ways of sharing information and working together, acknowledging the different contributions to a collective endeavour. As our understanding of the problem has changed, so too have the service solutions, with a shift from one-stop assessment to multi-agency panels. The panels enable different services to jointly discuss how to intervene, informed by everyone else's understanding of the clients' needs, so that the approach is modified in the light of other practitioners' observations.

**Figure 3:** Service models




### *3.5 A new way forward – inter-agency panels*

Panels are a positive attempt to develop a rounded, three-dimensional understanding of a client's needs rather than the sketchy outline that sometimes emerges from a direct but cursory service. 'The homeless' are sometimes regarded as a social category in much the same way as others defined by gender or race, and it is sometimes forgotten that we are dealing with more or less ordinary people in an extraordinary predicament. Panels are an attempt to respond to the complexity and seriousness of this situation.

Panels are thought likely to be helpful where one or more of the following applies:

- the views of more than one discipline or agency are needed to formulate an action plan, and Care Programme Approach, Section 117 and equivalent meetings are inappropriate or insufficient
- homelessness services have repeatedly failed to meet a client's needs
- workers are conscious of having a partial understanding of a client's situation
- workers have tried helping a client and now feel stuck about what to do next
- a number of agencies are involved and a forum is required to summarise the current situation and plan further action
- a client feels confused about how services are supposed to help and would like clarification on where they stand.

The written product from the panel varies from simple minutes of the meeting to a detailed report. Reports present an in-depth history, analyse current problems and outline an action plan based both on the discussion and on information gathered from various sources before and after the meeting. The format for the report is based on a Community Care Assessment but offers an independent perspective, covering housing, health, support, and income and employment needs.

The detailed action plans are proving popular with the referring agencies. They are, however, likely to be of limited use if the agency working with the referral does not have a culture of reviewing progress with clients. If primary responsibility for the client passes to an agency that does not carry out regular reviews and monitor action plans, they are likely to be of temporary value.

### 3.6 Developing a partnership

There was no existing partnership in place to take forward this initiative. While the idea had been discussed by a number of the key players in the months before the bid was put together, the King's Fund's large grant provided a clear focus. This proved to be both a strength and weakness. Without the incentive of a potential source of funding (with the added kudos of the King's Fund name), the initiative might never have developed beyond being a 'good idea'. But the need to present a coherent proposal sped up the process of alliance building across agencies to the point where the partnership was more of a marriage of convenience than a genuine meeting of minds.

Local agencies providing services for homeless people were seeking individual solutions to their own problems. There was a general willingness to contribute to the initiative, although it was not always clear what they wanted or expected in return. This made it easier to get a wide range of agencies to agree to the initiative, but created increasing uncertainty as the project developed.

In practice, this is not an unusual starting point for a new partnership, although the failure to fully acknowledge this may have meant that the development of joint working through the project was more difficult than we expected. In hindsight, the key learning point was the importance of investing the time and energy at an early stage to ensure that there is genuine agreement about the purpose of the partnership and that everyone understands and acknowledges the different motivations and perspectives of all the stakeholders. Misunderstandings that are glossed over in the initial enthusiasm to work together are often much more difficult to address when they surface at a later stage.

### 3.7 Managing in partnership

One of the difficulties in developing Under One Roof has been creating the right structure to support and manage its progress. The original proposal identified three different

forums to support and advise the project, with line management through one of the agencies involved in developing the initiative.

By the end of the first year, this complex structure had led to two main problems. First, the level of advice and support was out of proportion to the scale of the project. It became increasingly difficult to justify the amount of senior management time being invested in a project providing a direct service to clients for just one day a week, especially when the level of referrals was lower than expected. This led to a certain level of cynicism amongst frontline staff in the Under One Roof teams.

The second problem was that the proliferation of advisory groups led to increasing uncertainty about where decisions could be made. The Steering Group appeared to be the main decision making forum, but with an attendance of 12 to 15 people it was too large to reach a consensus on difficult issues. Despite the need to revise the existing model of open access sessions based in the two day centres, no decision was taken. This may, in part, have been due to a reluctance to upset the host agencies represented on the group, but it also reflected a genuine confusion about where decision-making power sits in a partnership. The inertia was finally overcome by the creation of a small Management Group of four people, with power delegated by the Steering Group. The project has now moved forward and developed in new, more promising directions (see above, 'A new way forward – inter-agency panels').

This raises important issues about partnerships. While there are real advantages in working collaboratively, in building on the collective knowledge and experience of a broad network, and in the 'added value' gained through the opportunity to build other far-reaching initiatives on the back of new relationships and structures, there are also significant costs. Before plunging into partnership arrangements, agencies need to be clear that the outcomes cannot be achieved independently, as the cost in time and energy should not be underestimated. Partnerships create new challenges, heightening the need for effective communication and clear accountability, based on trust and respect for your partners. In hindsight, although we recognised the importance of these challenges, we

should have invested more time in developing a shared view and in understanding the conflicting agendas.

### 3.8 Innovation and learning

There is a need to regularly revisit what you are trying to achieve and to remain open to further innovation. Under One Roof has been able to change direction as a result of the learning coming from the project. The review days, led by the project's facilitator, have created opportunities for members of the Under One Roof teams to meet with practitioners and managers from the wider network. The review days provide a regular opportunity for the initiative to account to the wider community of organisations within the partnership, tackle disagreements or frustrations, and allow others to understand how the project is developing. Key issues addressed have included the difficulty of attracting referrals, decision-making within the project, and the options for redesigning Under One Roof.

The review days have been open and challenging and have paved the way for a number of changes and improvements. A potential danger, however, in a culture where learning and reflection are encouraged, is that a self-critical stance can slip into negativity when progress is slow. In general, staff from a wide range of agencies have enjoyed the time away from direct service delivery and benefited from learning more about colleagues and their agencies, as well as about the wider policy context.

### 3.9 Managing inter-agency multi-professional teams

The inter-agency teams within Under One Roof have created exciting opportunities for individual practitioners to learn more about the practice and culture of colleagues from other disciplines. They have also offered the potential for personal and professional development, as the teams address complex issues about working together and learn about each other's perspectives.

Inter-agency teams also challenge traditional ways of working. There is an extensive literature exploring the factors contributing to effective multidisciplinary teams and an inventory developed by Øvretveit suggests that the teams at Under One Roof still have some way to go before reaching peak performance.** There have been a number of practical obstacles. The project has been reliant on the goodwill of the partner agencies and the individuals they have identified. In some cases, the individuals who have been chosen to work with Under One Roof have resented being taken away from their normal workload, while other agencies have provided different workers on rotation, reducing continuity within the team. The levels of commitment have varied considerably. When referrals were particularly low for staff from specific agencies, some responded by leaving before the end of the session, further undermining the effectiveness of an open access service. Members of part-time teams will always be faced with conflicting priorities, with a primary allegiance to their employing organisation.

All of these issues emphasise the importance of being clear about the expectations placed on individuals and their organisations, as well as what they can expect in return (again, in both personal and organisational terms) for being part of the initiative. We would now advocate making a positive selection of team members against agreed criteria rather than relying on nominations. Being part of a partnership venture should be perceived as an achievement and privilege, not a chore. All of this, whether the agency is paid for the contribution or not, is best captured in a service level agreement that values the individual's involvement and is reviewed to ensure that all sides are benefiting from the arrangement. And, as with the partnership as a whole, more emphasis could have been given to team-building to ensure that each team member accepted a set of shared values and a common approach to delivering a service.

There is a balance to be struck, however, between being clear about what everyone is doing and leaving plenty of scope for flexibility. It may not be either practical or helpful to specify the nature of the service or the relationships within it too early on in a pilot

** Øvretveit J. *Coordinating community care: multidisciplinary teams and care management*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993.

project. There is bound to be an element of 'trial and error' and, initially, documents that address broad issues rather than individual agency functions may be more appropriate. Given both the experimental design of the project and the fact that homelessness services are about responding to random failures in various parts of the system, tight definitions are likely to prove unhelpful. Instead, all elements of projects benefit from regular review underpinned by constant re-examination of client needs.

### *3.10 Competencies for effective frontline inter-agency work*

Projects are not just about structure and process, but about people. The appointment of the co-ordinator and the administrator, with their particular skills and experience, were crucial to the emerging shape of Under One Roof. On reflection, some lessons can be drawn from this. An initiative of this kind, working across a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies, benefited considerably from having a co-ordinator who had worked in both sectors and in a range of settings. Beyond this, the fact that he was a qualified social worker enhanced his credibility, especially amongst statutory agencies. Similarly, the project has benefited from having an administrator who had an understanding of the culture, context and language of health and social care organisations. Both have worked well beyond their initial job descriptions and this flexibility and willingness to work in new and different ways has been vital to the success of the project.

A clearer understanding of the types of skills and experience or competencies that contribute to effective partnership working is beginning to emerge. Many of these are valued in other settings, but are of particular importance in initiatives relying on good communication between agencies, which seek to break new ground in a complex policy environment. Key competencies include:

- excellent inter-personal skills
- commitment to trying out new things and risking failure
- enjoyment of selling ideas and innovation to others

- creativity
- reflective practitioner
- experience of working across both statutory and voluntary sectors
- a professional qualification
- willingness to work flexibly and give up working practices that are proving ineffective
- an interest in whole systems – making sense of how it all fits together.

### *3.11 Relationships with funders*

There has been a positive relationship with the King's Fund as the funding body for this project, with a number of beneficial aspects adding value to the initiative. First, the reputation and standing of the King's Fund has helped ensure the active participation and interest of many stakeholders that might otherwise have given the project less priority. This was re-enforced by the chief executive of the King's Fund agreeing to chair our Policy Group. Second, the King's Fund modelled good practice in developing an inclusive process. To secure the initial grant, the initiative was required to work with an external consultant, shaping the proposal and building greater consensus amongst the partners. The continued involvement of a facilitator has supported the learning and helped overcome some of the inevitable difficulties in developing an effective inter-agency partnership. Third, there has been continued emphasis on disseminating findings, with support for producing reports and arranging conferences. Finally, we have always been encouraged to take risks. Rather than being penalised for shortcomings of the initial model, we have been supported with an extra year's funding to explore a new way forward.

## 4. Key learning points

- Under One Roof is designed to bring together different parts of a disparate service for single homeless people. It offers a process by which organisations, and the individuals within them, interact with each other. It is trying to 'hide the wiring', recognising that the person sleeping on the streets wants a solution to their problems and has no interest in the way services come together to provide them.

- The relationship between the voluntary and statutory sector, in addressing the needs of single homeless people, is changing. The need to work together as partners within an integrated system requires different behaviour, with statutory agencies accepting voluntary sector agencies as equal partners, and the voluntary sector acknowledging the responsibility to work collectively rather than blaming statutory services when things fail to run smoothly.

- There are many different ways of 'joining up' service provision for single homeless people. Under One Roof has explored models that bring together:
  - all services in one place (one-stop assessment)
  - all expertise in one place (panels)
  - all services in one person (generic assessor).

- A direct service for hard-to-reach rough sleepers needs to be highly accessible and flexible, rather than part-time in borrowed premises. A successful one-stop assessment service for this client group will, inevitably, be expensive to run. This initiative has confirmed many of the factors that are likely to prevent an effective one-stop service – it remains unproven whether there is sufficient demand for a resource intensive one-stop shop for single homeless people in Central London.

- Panels appear to offer a more effective way of using the combined resource of practitioners from partner agencies. Rather than offering a direct access service, panels support individual workers addressing the needs of the most vulnerable rough

sleepers. They have succeeded in carrying out and documenting high quality assessments, bringing together all the agencies involved and identifying a way forward. They also offer considerable personal and professional development – both for the members of the panel and the individual workers who are seeking advice and support.

- There is considerable potential in developing generic assessment for this client group. Whilst there are significant barriers in developing a generic assessment model, combining the assessment procedures of a number of the agencies providing services for single homeless people has the potential to reduce waiting times and improve access to services.

- Partnerships are being strongly promoted in the current political climate. This initiative has benefited from many of the advantages of this, including better relationships between individual and organisations. There needs to be more awareness, however, of the complexity of partnership working, including the importance of developing a shared agenda that acknowledges different interests and motivations, and creating structures that support effective decision-making. Without proper attention to these potential obstacles, many of the new partnerships tackling social exclusion may stumble or fail.

- Partnership teams based on individual practitioners released part-time from their substantive roles may benefit from clear service level agreements that spell out the obligations and expectations on all sides. But this needs to be balanced by a willingness to be flexible and respond to changing needs.

- There are a number of key competencies that appear to contribute to effective partnership working, including a commitment to try out new things and risk failure, an ability to sell ideas to others, and an interest in how the bigger system fits together.

- Review days offer an effective means of identifying and sharing learning, as well as tackling difficult issues and developing a consensus for a new way forward. They have also allowed managers and practitioners to meet people in local partner agencies, enabling greater collaboration beyond the scope of this initiative.

## 5. Recommendations

These recommendations are based around the three practical applications of our work at Under One Roof. They will be of particular interest to the Social Exclusion Unit, but will be of general interest to all agencies involved in addressing the needs of people facing social exclusion.

1. Health authorities and local authorities should work together to set up multi-agency panels to support agencies working with rough sleepers. Developing panels could be identified as an action in local Health Improvement Programmes (HImPs). We would also commend this model to the Rough Sleepers Unit as part of other localised initiatives (e.g. the Savoy Place pilot).

2. The Rough Sleepers Unit should explore the possibility of developing a one-stop shop for single homeless people in Central London. Although the work of Under One Roof has not produced evidence that this model is effective, rather showing the limitations of a part-time resource based within other services, there may be a good case for a properly funded resource of this kind in Central London.

3. Generic assessment offers a route for reducing bureaucracy and increasing timely access to services for single homeless people. Further funding should be found for a pilot in this area.

Appendix 1

## Membership of Under One Roof groups

### *Policy Group at October 1999*

| | |
|---|---|
| David Warner | Director, Homeless Network |
| Julia Neuberger | Chief Executive, The King's Fund |
| Susan Elizabeth | Grants Director, The King's Fund |
| Martin Roberts | Chief Executive, Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham Health Authority |
| Tony Edge | Director of Field Operations, South, Midlands & Wales Benefits Agency |
| Steve Cody | Acting Executive Director, Lambeth Social Services |
| June McKerrow | Director, Mental Health Foundation |
| Chris Holmes | Director, Shelter |
| Isobel Morris | Borough Director for Southwark, South London & Maudsley NHS Trust |
| Rick Stern | Salomons Centre |

### *Steering Group at October 1999*

| | |
|---|---|
| Sue Welikala | Benefits Agency |
| David Warner | Homeless Network |
| David Jones | The King's Fund |
| Kirsten Campbell | Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham Health Authority |
| Chris Knaggs | Lambeth Housing Department |
| Gerry Nicholas | Lambeth Social Services |
| Anne O'Toole | Southwark Housing Department |
| Cathy Jeffrey | Southwark Social Services |
| Debra Jones | Southwark Social Services |
| Annette Figueiredo | North Lambeth Day Centre |
| Geoffrey Randall | Research and Information Services |
| Martin Vincent | St Giles Trust |
| David Devoy | St Mungo's |
| Rick Stern | Salomons Centre |
| Peter Okali | Shelter |
| Emer O'Neill | START |
| Sue Sommers | Thames Reach |
| Louise Bouck-Standen | Three Boroughs Primary Health Care Team |
| Graham Park | Under One Roof |

### *Management Group at October 1999*

| | |
|---|---|
| Emer O'Neill | START |
| David Warner | Homeless Network |
| Rick Stern | Salomons Centre |
| Martin Vincent | St Giles Trust |
| Graham Park | Under One Roof |

### *Practitioners at Under One Roof at October 1999*

Lambeth

| | |
|---|---|
| Benefits Agency | Louis Nicholls |
| Lambeth Housing | Lloyd Dotting |
| Lambeth Social Services | Birgit Wagner |
| North Lambeth Day Centre | Heather Collins |
| START | Brigid O'Brien |
| Thames Reach | Marc McDonagh |
| 3 Boroughs Primary Health Care Team | Lesley Petrie |
| Under One Roof | Graham Park and Liz Barrington |

## Southwark

| | |
|---|---|
| Benefits Agency | Dionne Lewis |
| Piccadilly Advice Centre/Shelter | Shawn Bulbulia McLean |
| Southwark Housing | In rotation: Christine Fannell, Harcourt Jones, Juliette Ogbechie, Kate Sinar |
| START | In rotation: Simon Brewer, Sean Murphy, Marita Sparrow |
| St Giles Trust | Natty St Louis |
| 3 Boroughs Primary Health Care Team | Louise Bouck-Standen |
| Under One Roof | Graham Park and Liz Barrington |

Appendix 2

## Priorities and action for the remaining 12 months

### *Developing panels in Lambeth*

Through the autumn of 1999 the principal activity will be the further development of the panels begun at North Lambeth Day Centre but now transferred to Thames Reach.

Developments will include:

- a concentration on a limited number of clients who regularly sleep rough and have chronic difficulties that services have so far been unable to resolve
- documentation will change from simple minuting to the production of a detailed report and plan using material assembled before and after the meeting as well as during the discussion
- potential employment, however remote, will become a regular topic for discussion
- the project will consider how best to disseminate client information among agencies, considering in particular the need both to maximise co-operation between organisations and to ensure that the information is dealt with securely and competently.

At the end of this period the panels may:

1. transfer back to North Lambeth Day Centre
2. engage with a further agency or
3. be deployed in a combination of these.

### *Developing panels and casework in Southwark*

Panel meetings have developed rather differently at St. Giles, with casework on the original model continuing, interspersed with often less formal panel discussions, and a

with a higher proportion of day centre staff attending the panel for consultation. Another difference is that the Southwark social worker was so underused that attendance has been discontinued.

Although initially the more successful service, the Southwark service is due for review. Discussion will consider:

- whether the current structure has long term value in its own right
- whether the improved inter-agency understanding and co-operation can be sustained in the longer-term without meeting in the present way and, if so, what is needed to achieve this
- assuming that the focus on a small group of hard-to-help clients developing in Lambeth is a useful response to imminent initiatives over rough sleeping, whether this is adaptable to Southwark.

Whatever the outcome of the review, it may be assumed that this service will continue in some format until May 2000 or later, with a continuing need for administrative support.

### *User involvement*

The Steering Group has set up a sub-group to consider this issue and has drafted a discussion paper. The group's original plan was to obtain views about the Under One Roof service itself and about individual experiences of poor co-ordination. There have been delays with this, but a report will be soon.

An additional issue has been generated by the recent developments with inter-agency panels and the intention to make the reports from these available to participant agencies and others with a valid interest. Ethics and policy on this need careful examination, and the proposal is to:

- produce an initial paper outlining the issues
- consult the available literature
- obtain client views through individual and group discussion, possibly by offering a brief contract to carry out this work.

### *Telephone conferences*

Under One Roof will continue to promote this practice, particularly by integrating it into current developments with Thames Reach, and will report findings in or about January 2000.

### *Information about agencies*

Work on this has been delayed because of the concentration on developing the panels above, but Under One Roof will continue to assemble information about participating agencies and others, paying particular attention to process details including:

- who to contact
- what referrers can do to help the process
- what the client is likely to experience when accessing the service.

As well as written material, the project is considering using photography and the Internet. Because of the time demands of supporting panels, work on this will be continued irregularly when spaces occur. Draft written material is likely to be available in early 2000.

### *Other issues*

The following issues have come to Under One Roof's attention:

- inadequate support for people resettled into ordinary housing. Other agencies are engaged in this issue and major involvement is inappropriate, but Under One Roof will continue to contribute to local discussion on this subject
- inadequate responses to people with borderline learning difficulties. We are corresponding with the Norah Fry Research Centre and a London conference on this issue is being considered, but we are not yet in a position to timetable this.

### *Reporting and dissemination*

1. A report on the model of practice developed with Thames Reach will be produced shortly, addressing particularly the nature of inter-agency assessment, the detail of client need, strategy towards clients it seems impossible to help, and learning processes for frontline workers.
2. The Steering Group is considering engaging in discussion with the new Greater London Authority and with Public Health Directors in or about July 2000, and is examining the value of holding a further conference at that time. The principal topics will widen to a consideration of potential London-wide models of practice learned during the project.

## *Evaluation*

### Interim evaluation

Between September 1999 and January 2000 Research and Information Services will design a data collection system and monitoring form, attend four panel meetings, analyse records of ten panel meetings, review background papers and minutes, interview five key agency participants, and interview four staff who have referred clients for panel discussion.

An interim evaluation report will be available in January 2000.

### Final evaluation

Between February and September 2000 Research and Information Services will attend two further panel meetings, analyse records of 20 panel meetings, review background papers and minutes, interview six clients who have been discussed at or attended panels, interview eight key agency participants, interview four staff who have referred clients for panel discussion and review cases with them, and analyse panel monitoring and evaluation forms including longer-term outcomes.

A final report, including an analysis of all of the above, will be produced in October 2000.

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