Transitory single homelessness in Wales

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Acknowledgements

Executive summary

This report provides an improved understanding of how and why single homeless people move between authorities within the context of a changing legislative and policy environment in Wales. Furthermore, it identifies key contemporary policy challenges and draws upon international lessons to make recommendations for improvements to the assistance offered to transitory single homeless people.

The research underpinning this report adopted a mixed methods approach, incorporating collection and analysis of basic administrative data held by local authorities, interviews with 14 Housing Options Managers and key third sector service providers, and semi-structured questionnaires with 24 single homeless people. The research was undertaken in a sample of local authorities identified as areas where single homeless people with no local connection have tended to seek assistance in higher proportions (larger cities and coastal towns). The five sampled local authorities were: Cardiff, Ceredigion, Newport, Swansea, and Wrexham.

The research posed five key questions and in this summary we synthesise our key findings in relation to each of these. In responding to the fifth question, we also make our recommendations.

1. **What is the scale of movement of single homeless people?**

   The percentage of all single homeless applicants with no local connection varies by local authority, with Cardiff receiving high levels (15%), Newport, Swansea and Wrexham facing relatively low levels (approximately 5%), and Ceredigion facing very low levels (approximately 1%). It is important to recognise that only Cardiff was able to provide reliable data, whereas all other local authorities provided broad estimates.

2. **Where are single homeless people coming from?**

   The origins of single homeless people are only recorded in Cardiff. We found that of the 15% without a local connection to Cardiff, 49% were from another Welsh local authority, 42% came from elsewhere in the UK/Ireland, and 9% came from outside the UK/Ireland.

   More specifically, of those with a connection to another Welsh local authority, applications were highest from areas immediately surrounding Cardiff (Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Caerphilly, and Newport) and to a slightly lesser extent from local authorities along the M4 corridor (Swansea and Bridgend). Notably, 25% of applications with a home connection to another Welsh local authority were from the Vale of Glamorgan.

3. **Why are single homeless people moving between local authorities?**

   The study reveals two key conclusions about the motivations that drive single homeless people to seek help in an area where they have no local connection.

   Firstly, people are rarely motivated by just one influence. In 21 of 24 instances, people reported two or more motivating influences, mostly (19 of 24 instances) consisting of both push and pull factors.

Secondly, people are motivated by a considerable range of influences. Local authority key informant assumptions that service provision acts as a key pull factor and that other local authorities are pushing individuals to more service-rich areas is true only to a limited degree - these factors are less prevalent and less significant than currently perceived.

Most important push factors include: loss of employment, transient lifestyles (lifestyles which include significant movement between local authorities with relatively short periods of stability in any given location). Other important push factors include: movement is required by a parole or bale condition, a household dispute/relationship breakdown, fleeing danger/persecution (including domestic violence), an unhelpful home local authority, and officials advising that an alternative area has more resources.

Most important pull factors include: knowing someone who lives in the area, and having visited the area before. Other important pull factors include: a desire for a fresh start, a preference for smaller towns, and the respondent had previously lived in the area. Only two people were attracted by more services.

4. **How is the 'Housing (Wales) Act' 2014 impacting on single homeless people who seek assistance in local authorities where they have no local connection?**

In responding to this important question we first summarise the impacts on the services being offered to single homeless people, before reflecting on the impacts of these services on single homeless people's experiences of seeking help.

A typology of local authority assistance for single people with no local connection

Previous studies have widely documented how single homeless people tended to fare badly and were often offered only general advice and assistance under previous legislation. By contract, under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 there is a strengthened duty to assist all single homeless households, however ambiguity in the statutory guidance regarding the prioritisation of those with a local connection, and very different levels of service demand across Wales, has resulted in divergence in the models of service delivery amongst the five case study local authorities. Three broad approaches are identifiable:

i] Local connection neutral: Single homeless people are offered the same suite of homelessness prevention and alleviation services, irrespective of whether they have a local connection or not. This approach is adopted in Ceredigion where there are very low levels of homelessness applications from people with no local connection.

ii] Prioritising locals: Assistance is prioritised, at least to some extent, to homeless people who have a connection to the area. Whilst we recognise that some very effective services are offered to people with no local connection in these local authorities (eg street outreach services), some form of prioritisation is taking place. This prioritisation predominantly occurs in two ways. First, in relation to prevention fund spending and second, in relation to emergency and temporary accommodation provision. Interestingly, the authorities rarely prioritised locals using both mechanisms so homeless people with no local connection would be able to access some form of assistance. This approach is adopted in Newport, Swansea and Ceredigion where there are relatively low levels of homelessness applications from people with no local connection.

iii] Reconnecting non-locals: In broad terms, this approach diverts single homeless people with no local connection to a separate service. They are not given access to wider prevention and relief services, however supportive efforts are made to reconnect individuals. This approach is adopted in Cardiff where there are high levels of homelessness applications from people with no local connection.

Single homeless people's experiences of accessing assistance

Single homeless people's experiences of seeking assistance under the new legislation (in 2016) appear to be generally more favourable than under the previous legislation (in 2014), however it remains a concern that under new legislation, which requires reasonable steps to be taken with everyone, approximately one quarter of single homeless people continue to receive no advice. Under the new legislation we found:

▪ People are more likely to be offered temporary accommodation (42% vs 24%) and fewer people are likely to be offered no advice (25% vs 32%)

▪ The assistance offered is more likely to be rated as quite or very helpful (65% vs 42%)

▪ People are more likely to feel they were treated quite well or very well by staff (74% vs 57%)

5. What are the major policy challenges and solutions?

This research has provided answers to many unanswered questions surrounding the movement of single homeless people in Wales but it has also revealed four key and inter-related policy challenges. We make recommendations in response to each challenge.

i] Implementing reasonable steps

Whilst there appears to have been an improvement in services for single homeless people in Wales and this has impacted positively on experiences of seeking help, in a significant proportion of cases local authorities are not taking reasonable steps to help single homeless people with no local connection. For example, some people reported being offered no advice, some are universally offered only a single solution (eg reconnection), and others are informally directed to other service-rich local authorities. The policy challenge is to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent or alleviate homelessness with all single homeless households, irrespective of their connection to a local area.

Recommendation 1
Welsh Government should determine whether or not it believes any of the models of intervention currently being employed to assist those without a local connection, and identified in this report, are likely to result in a systematic failure to take reasonable steps. If systematic failings are identified then guidance and support should be provided to local authorities adopting those particular approaches.

Recommendation 2
Irrespective of any findings in relation to systematic failings under Recommendation 1, there is sufficient evidence to show reasonable steps are not being taken with some households. Hence, Welsh Government should issue further guidance and/or develop training to provide greater clarity on the process of taking reasonable steps with homeless households who have no connection to the local area. Failure to do this is likely to result in legal challenges, with courts deciding what reasonable steps should look like. Past experience has shown that court decisions often fall far from the original policy intentions and this should be avoided.

ii] Addressing the current prioritisation of resources to those with a local connection

This study has found that in most local authorities some form of prioritisation is taking place, where individuals with a local connection are being offered a wider range of support services than those without a local connection. Both the intention and the wording of the legislation suggest that local connection should not be considered when seeking to prevent or alleviate homelessness. However, statutory guidance appears to contradict the legislation, stating that priority may be given to people with a local connection, so long as reasonable steps are still taken with all households. The consequence of this ambiguous legal position is the emergence of a two-tier system in all local authorities, with the exception

of those operating a local connection neutral model. The challenge for Welsh Government is to determine whether it wishes priority to be given to those with a local connection during prevention and relief efforts and to subsequently address the ambiguity that exists between the legislation and the statutory guidance.

Recommendation 3
Welsh Government should decide whether it wishes priority to be given to those with a local connection during prevention and relief efforts. A decision to allow prioritisation of services to local people at prevention and relief stages (beyond those entitled to interim accommodation) would seem to run counter to the principles and wording of the current legislation. Having reached a decision on this matter, Welsh Government should address the ambiguity that exists between the legislation and the statutory guidance on whether or not priority can be afforded to people with a local connection.

iii] Funding

Homeless people are moving between local authorities, with Cardiff facing by far the highest proportion of applications from people with no local connection. This movement is driven by a diverse range of motivations and we can anticipate that the movement will continue. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to take reasonable steps to help these households but it is unclear whether funding mechanisms sufficiently support net recipient local authorities, like Cardiff. International evidence suggests locally funded service models such as those employed in Wales are likely to lead to restrictions being placed on those without a local connection. The policy challenge is to ensure that local authorities are effectively funded to enable them to meet the needs of those who move to the area and seek help. Alternative funding models adopted across Europe may be more effective in enabling net recipient local authorities, such as Cardiff, to meet their duties.

Recommendation 4
Welsh Government should explore the possibility of implementing an alternative funding model to assist those who seek assistance in an area where they have no local connection. International evidence suggests that centrally (national government) funded services lead to more effective provision. However, Welsh Government might also wish to consider piloting the Danish 'self-presenter principle'. This approach requires local authorities to pay for their citizens when they are homeless in another local authority. This approach has the potential added benefit of driving innovation and development in home authorities to reduce the costs associated with citizens being accommodated or assisted elsewhere (most frequently in more expensive cities). Of course the self-presenter principle comes with the challenge of reaching some form of reciprocal agreement with other UK local authorities but an initial pilot could be pursued with only Welsh local authorities.

iv] Data and monitoring

This study has provided some insight into the scale and geography of the movement of single homeless people in Wales, however only Cardiff could provide reliable data. If we wish to monitor the services offered to single homeless people with no local connection, and this study would suggest that we do, then data needs to be more effectively recorded on the origins of households who seek assistance.

Recommendation 5
Welsh Government should consider instructing local authorities to amend their ongoing data recording and reporting activities to capture the origins of homeless applicants. It would also be vital to know the outcomes of prevention and relief efforts with these households.

Conclusion

This study has provided answers to many long-standing questions about the scale, geography and motivations behind the movement of single homeless people in Wales. This information provides an important basis for future discussions about how policy in this area develops in Wales. Significantly, this research has also provided an indication of the positive impacts of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 on the services for and experiences of single homeless people who seek help in Welsh local authorities where they have no local connection. However, the implementation of the new legislation has inevitably raised several key policy concerns relating to how people should be helped, whether prioritisation should be permitted or promoted, how services should be funded, and what information needs to be collected. We hope Housing Leadership Cymru, the Local Authority Homelessness Network and Welsh Government will work with us to reflect on the report recommendations and act to ensure the best possible outcomes for homeless people in Wales.

Introduction

Introduction

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 brought into force progressive new duties on Welsh local authorities to take reasonable steps to help all homeless households who seek assistance, irrespective of any vulnerability, their previous actions, or their connection to the local area. Whilst there are many indications of very positive early impacts of the new Welsh legislation[1], specific concerns have been raised about the possibility of single homeless people being excluded or diverted from services where they have no local connection to the area. Currently, there is a lack of information about the experiences of single homeless people who seek help in an area where they have no local connection, hence this small-scale study has been commissioned.

Research aims

The purpose of this study is to provide Housing Leadership Cymru, the Local Authority Homelessness Network and Welsh Government a greater understanding of how and why single homeless people move between authorities within the context of a changing legislative and policy environment in Wales. The research will also identify possible policy and service improvements in response to any key challenges identified. The research responds to five broad questions:

1. **What is the scale of movement of single homeless people?**
   Currently it is unclear what number and proportion of people seeking homelessness assistance come from outside the area where help is sought. Therefore the study aims to establish how many single people approaching authorities for homelessness assistance come from outside the local authority?

2. **Where are single homeless people coming from?**
   In addition to seeking to understand the scale of movement by single homeless people the study aims to explore where single homeless people are coming from. Origins of single homeless people will include other Welsh authorities, English authorities, other European countries and beyond.

3. **Why are single homeless people moving between local authorities?**
   There will be a myriad of reasons why single people gravitate towards particular local authorities in Wales but we do not have a firm understanding of their reasons. The study seeks to develop a clearer understanding of people's motivations.

4. **How is the 'Housing (Wales) Act' 2014 impacting on single homeless people who seek assistance in local authorities where they have no local connection?**
   The study attempts to compare the experiences of single homeless people with no local connection under the new Housing (Wales) Act 2014 with experiences under the previous legislation. Given the enhanced duties to assist single homeless people under new legislation, it is anticipated that recent experiences should be more positive.

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[1] www.sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/A-brand-new-start-homelessness-and-the-Housing-Wales-Act.pdf

5. **What are the major policy challenges and solutions?**

    The study aims to identify the key challenges facing single homeless people who move between local authorities and the main challenges faced by local authorities. The report explores possible responses to these key challenges.

Report structure

The report begins with three contextual chapters. First, we introduce the legislative context in Wales: we succinctly summarise the duties placed on local authorities by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, drawing out key implications for single homeless households with no local connection. Second, we introduce the international context, identifying alternative approaches to managing the movement of homeless people. This chapter draws primarily from a recent review of European local connection policies by the European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA). The final contextual chapter offers an overview of the research methodology.

The subsequent four chapters present the findings of the primary research. We first present a typology of the different approaches local authorities are adopting in assisting single homeless people with no local connection. Second, we explore the geography and scale of movement, before thirdly investigating the motives why homeless people move between authorities. Our final findings chapter examines the experiences of single homeless people who seek assistance in an area where they have no local connection and draws comparisons with results from a survey undertaken prior to legislative change.

The final chapter summarises the conclusions of the study and makes policy recommendations.

Legislative Context

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 brought into force new duties on local authorities to take reasonable steps to help all homeless households. This is not a guarantee of accommodation, simply a guarantee of meaningful assistance. Significantly, the legislation sought to remove selectivity and prioritisation which existed under the previous homelessness legislation. In this important contextual chapter we summarise key sections of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the statutory guidance which accompanies it, with particular reference to local connection criteria and duties owed to single homeless people.

Information, advice and assistance in accessing help: Section 60 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to provide accessible, free of charge, quality assured, advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. The service should be available to everyone in housing need approaching the local authority, including people with no local connection and those from abroad who do not otherwise qualify for housing assistance.

Help to prevent homelessness: Section 66 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to help to prevent a household from becoming homeless where they are threatened with homelessness. The household must be eligible for help (i.e. eligible for public funds) but they do not have to hold a connection to the local area. Under this duty the local authority is not required to provide accommodation, instead they must take reasonable steps to help. Statutory guidance, and indeed the legislation itself, provides a lengthy list of interventions that local authorities ought to have available to support households threatened with homelessness. Notably, the legislation states that in helping to prevent homelessness, local authorities may have regard to making best use of the authority's resources. Guidance then further specifies: '*when allocating resources, an Authority may give some priority to people with local connections to the area…, provided they continue to meet their statutory duties to all applicants*'.

Interim accommodation: Section 68 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to provide interim accommodation if a person is homeless, eligible for help and is likely to be in priority need. The duty under this section arises irrespective of whether the applicant has a local connection to the area. Given that relatively few single people are determined to be in priority need, there is limited requirement to provide interim accommodation to single homeless people.

Help to secure accommodation: Section 73 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to help to secure accommodation for homeless households. Under this duty the local authority is not required to provide accommodation, instead they must take reasonable steps to help. Statutory guidance and the legislation again provides a lengthy list of interventions that local authorities ought to have available to support homeless households. The household must be eligible for help (i.e. eligible for public funds). Under this duty, if the household has no local connection, the Local Authority is able to make a referral to an authority where a connection exists but only in instances where the household is in priority need and unintentionally homeless. Referrals cannot be made if the household is not in priority need, hence most single homeless households will be owed a duty to help to secure accommodation wherever they seek assistance. However, as with the duty to help to prevent homelessness, statutory guidance states that some priority may be given to people with local connections when allocating resources, so long as they continue to meet their statutory duties to all applicants.

Duty to secure accommodation: Section 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on Local Authorities to secure accommodation for households in priority need but only where the duty in Section 73 (help to secure accommodation) has ended. If a household has no local connection, a decision should have been made at Section 73 on whether or not a referral should be made to another local authority, hence the legislation does not provide grounds for a referral at Section 75.

Reflecting on the different sections of Welsh homelessness legislation, it is clear that local authorities are under a duty to help single homeless households to secure accommodation, irrespective of their connection to the local area. However, there are limits to this support. Firstly, there is no requirement to provide interim accommodation (unless the person is in priority need) and secondly, statutory guidance suggests that priority may be given to people with local connections, so long as reasonable steps are still taken with all households.

International context

Concerns over the movement of homeless people, and the responsibilities of the home and receiving local authorities, are not unique to Wales or the UK. Across the globe there is widespread use of local connection criteria to restrict access to homelessness services. However, there are also examples where such restrictions are prohibited. In this brief final chapter we summarise the key findings of a recent review of local connection policies in homelessness services across Europe, undertaken on behalf of the European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)[2]. The FEANTSA review considered local connection policies affecting access to emergency accommodation[3], supported housing, and social housing. Few pertinent lessons can be drawn from the sections on supported and social housing, however the findings relating to emergency accommodation access offer useful insights into alternative local connection models, which we will be able to draw upon in developing solutions to any challenges faced in Wales. The two primary approaches to be discussed are: i] the local connection model and ii] the universal access model.

Local connection model

The FEANTSA review found that in Italy, Poland, Portugal and the UK, local authorities had the discretion to decide whether or not to provide emergency accommodation to people who had no connection to the local area. Inevitably, these local powers result in the exclusion of many people without a local connection. Notably, the FEANTSA review finds that local connection models of emergency accommodation provision tend to be associated with local and regional funding mechanisms (as opposed to a single national funding mechanism). In essence, local funds are being restricted to local residents.

Universal access model

The universal access model prevents local authorities from restricting access on the basis of a local connection. According to the FEANTSA review, countries adopting such a strategy include: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany and Slovakia. However, it is important to note that not all these countries have an accompanying duty to provide emergency accommodation to all households in need, hence a person may be restricted on the basis of a lack of sufficient bed spaces, rather than their origin.

Germany and Denmark offer the most progressive examples of the universal access model; combining a duty to provide emergency accommodation with a requirement to assist all households, irrespective of their origin. In Germany, every local authority must provide basic shelter to people who would otherwise be roofless, irrespective of any local connection. In Denmark, a homeless person has the right to access any shelter and whilst services are permitted the discretion as to whether or not to admit them, the reason for refusal cannot be because that person lacks a local connection. If a shelter has no available beds then it must refer the individual to a shelter with an available place.

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[2] Baptista, I, Benjaminsen, L & Pleace, N 2015, *Local Connection Rules and Access to Homelessness Services in Europe: EOH Comparative Studies on Homelessness No. 5*. FEANTSA

[3] See Appendix B for a detailed summary of local connection policies affecting emergency accommodation across selected European countries.

The FEANTSA review concludes that universal access models tend to be centrally (not locally) funded. In essence, access to central funds limits the need to ration 'local' resources. However, perhaps the most interesting funding framework for a universal access model is the Danish, 'self-presenter principle'. The Danish approach requires local authorities to pay for their citizens when they are homeless in another local authority, meaning there should be no financial disincentive for municipalities in providing emergency accommodation to homeless people from another area. Indeed, it may even drive some authorities, where demand is less and emergency accommodation costs are perhaps lower, to ensure sufficient provision is available locally, or else expensive emergency accommodation costs will be accrued elsewhere. In Denmark, the Social Appeals Board intervenes if there is a dispute as to who is responsible for the costs.

The final point to draw from the FEANSTA study is that any universal access model must ensure local authorities are sufficiently funded to meet the increased costs associated with addressing the needs of homeless people who approach their services without a local connection. The FEANTSA review suggests that insufficient funding may lead to net recipient local authorities reducing their provision – it may be 'a powerful deterrent to funding sufficient shelter and emergency accommodation services.' Reportedly, this has been an issue in the Netherlands, Slovakia and the UK.

Research methods

This study adopted a mixed methods approach in order to address the challenging research questions. The design incorporated collection and analysis of basic administrative data held by local authorities, interviews with Housing Options Managers and key third sector service providers, and semi-structured questionnaires with single homeless people. Each of the methods adopted is outlined below.

Case study cities

Ideally this research would have been undertaken in all local authorities in Wales, enabling us to establish a concrete understanding of which local authorities receive the greatest number and proportion of homelessness applications from people with no local connection, and whether motivations for making an application vary. However, the resources were not available to enable engagement with all Welsh local authorities. Therefore, the focus was on a sample of local authorities identified by Housing Leadership Cymru as areas where single homeless people with no local connection have tended to seek assistance in higher proportions (larger cities and coastal towns). The five sampled local authorities were: Cardiff, Ceredigion, Newport, Swansea, and Wrexham.

Administrative data collection and analysis

Attempts were made to obtain administrative data relating to single homelessness applications from the five local authorities, in order to determine:

- The scale/proportion of single people making a homeless application with no local connection
- The origins of single homeless people with no local connection
- Changes in the proportion of single homeless people making an application following legislative change

Data were requested for the period April to September 2013, and again for April to September 2015, in order to compare pre- and post-legislative changes.

Whilst we received responses from all local authorities, the necessary data were only recorded and returned by one authority (Cardiff). Whilst the other authorities were able to give a general indication of the scale of no local connection applications they received, data on the origins of applicants were not collected because it was not a requirement within the current statutory reporting of homelessness data to Welsh Government.

Although the data from Cardiff enabled us to analyse the area of origin for those with no local connection, there were issues surrounding the quality of the data collected for the April to September 2015 period. After the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, collection of data on the origins of transitory single people largely stopped. Therefore, only data relating to the period prior to the legislative change could be analysed. The sample size for those with no local connection was sufficiently large enough (N=219) to enable us to conduct an area based analysis, thereby addressing the question of where single homeless people were coming from, albeit focused only on Cardiff.

In combination with the useable data from Cardiff, the more limited responses from the other local authorities enabled some comments to be made regarding the scale of single homeless applications from people with no local connection in all local authorities.

Interviews with Housing Options managers and key third sector service providers

Housing Options Managers and a representative from a third sector service provider (night shelter or outreach services) in the five case study cities were invited to take part in a telephone or face-to-face interview. These interviews gathered informed qualitative perspectives on the assistance local authorities offer to single homeless people who have no local connection. Interviewees were specifically asked to comment on:

- The processes followed when an application is made by a single homeless person
- Any differences in the processes followed when an application is made by a single homeless person with no local connection
- Perceived motivations for movement by single homeless people.

Interviews were achieved with stakeholders in all five of the sampled authorities, via face-to-face, telephone, and group interviews. A mixture of local authority and third sector individuals in each sampled area were interviewed, and Table 1 summarises the breakdown of these by area and sector (Local Authority/Third Sector).

In total, 14 stakeholders were interviewed, with this being greater than the planned number of interviews due to the increased availability and engagement of key stakeholders. Data from key stakeholder interviews contributed to our understanding of the impacts of the Housing (Wales) Act on single people, by revealing the different types of assistance currently being offered.

Table 1.   Number of key stakeholders interviewed in each local authority, by sector

	Local Authority	Third Sector
Cardiff	2	2
Ceredigion	2	1
Newport	1	2
Swansea	2	1
Wrexham	1	1

Semi-structured questionnaires with single homeless people

Perhaps the most important element of this study was to gather the relatively unheard views of single homeless people who had sought homelessness assistance and had no local connection. Our aim was to gather sufficiently robust data to be able to draw firm conclusions about the motivations behind people's decision to seek assistance in a local authority where they have no local connection. Given the resources for the study, a careful balance was struck between the detail in questionnaires and the quantity of response required.

As the research was highly focused, a relatively brief semi-structured questionnaire was constructed. Questions asked were predominantly closed, including Likert scale attitudinal variables (e.g. How helpful or unhelpful was the assistance you received from the council?), and multiple item response questions (e.g. Which of the following experiences have you faced?). The questionnaire addressed the following broad themes:

- *Profile questions:* Age, gender, previously homeless, support needs
- *Movement questions:* 'home' local authority, motivation for moving to the area
- *Implications of no local connection questions:* A hypothetical question on the actions the individual would/did take in the absence of accommodation being secured (remain without support, move to another local authority, return to home local authority)

There were several key questions where respondents were able to give a more open ended response. These questions included a more detailed account of the reasons for applying for assistance in a local authority where they did not have a local connection, as well as questions where they could explain their responses to hypothetical situations (i.e. why they would act in a certain way if refused assistance).

The aim was to achieve up to 100 completed and valid questionnaires with single people who had sought assistance in a local authority where they had no local connection. Our initial assumption was that a sufficient number of people would be recruited via local authorities, however, as we discover in the study, the scale of movement in most local authorities is lower than anticipated. Therefore, the research team attempted numerous alternative avenues of making contact with individuals, including non-council venues, which included attending physical spaces where single homeless people may be: Huggard, Salvation Army Big Purple Bus, Rainbow of Hope Soup Run, The Wallich Office breakfast drop in, The Olive Branch drop in centre, Missionaries of Charity night shelter, and the Access Point drop in centre. Whilst every effort was made to obtain 100 questionnaires responses, it quickly became evident that this was an entirely unviable number.

After exhausting all avenues of access, given time and budget constraints, 24 questionnaires were completed: 11 in Cardiff, 9 in Swansea, 1 in Ceredigion, and 3 in Newport. Although the small sample size prevents the reliable use of statistical testing, it did allow us to answer, very broadly, the research questions posed. Specifically, interview questionnaire data provided an important insight into people's reasons for seeking assistance in an area where they have no local connection and their experiences of seeking local authority help.

In order to give an indication of the demographics of the respondents, Figure 1 is an age breakdown of the respondents. Those between the ages of 20 to 39 accounted for over half of the sample, roughly 54%. The proportion of men in the sample was far greater than the number of women, at 88%. There were also a higher proportion of single homeless people who's nationality was British (75%), compared to those who indicated European (17%), and Other (8%).

Figure 1. Breakdown of achieved sample for interview questionnaires, by age group (N=24)
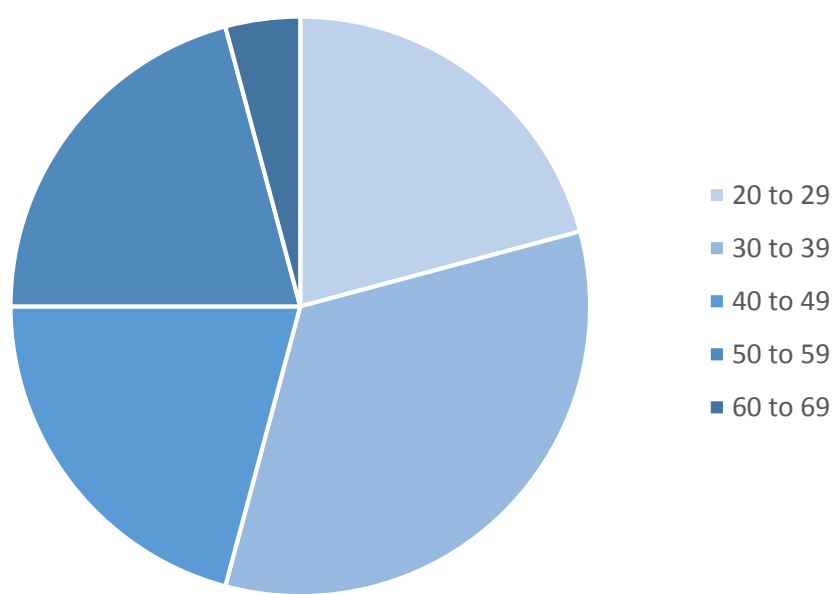
20 to 29
30 to 39
40 to 49
50 to 59
60 to 69

A typology of local authority assistance for single homeless people with no local connection

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the different approaches local authorities are taking towards assisting single homeless people who have no local connection. Our analysis of in-depth interviews with key informants from local authorities and third sector organisations revealed three broad types of approach are currently being pursued: 1] Local connection neutral; 2] Prioritising locals; 3] Reconnecting non-locals. However, it is important to note that this study only examined the practices of five local authorities, hence it is possible that further variation exists across Wales.

Type 1. Local Connection Neutral

Ceredigion provides an example of a local authority operating a 'local connection neutral' policy. Under this type of approach single homeless people are offered the same suite of homelessness prevention and alleviation services, irrespective of whether they have a local connection or not. Whilst this approach does not guarantee a solution for single homeless people who have no local connection, it presents them with the same opportunities as people who have a connection to the area. This approach seems to be consistent with the principles and requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. In fact, it goes beyond legislative requirements by also offering access to temporary accommodation for people with no local connection.

It is worth noting that in Ceredigion key informants reported a very low number of presentations by homeless people with no local connection. If there were greater pressures on resources from homeless people with no local connection this might challenge the adoption of a local connection neutral approach.

Type 2. Prioritising Locals

Newport, Swansea and Wrexham local authorities all adopt approaches which, at least to some extent, prioritise assistance to homeless people who have a local connection to the area. Whilst we recognise the configuration of services varies considerably across these authorities and that some very effective services are offered to people with no local connection (eg street outreach services), this typology is a generalisation and serves to illustrate the important observation that some form of prioritisation is taking place. This prioritisation predominantly occurs in two ways. First, prevention funds (e.g. to enable access the Private Rented Sector) are used to a lesser extent to assist single homeless people with no local connection. Importantly, there is no blanket ban on access to prevention funds – however resources are prioritised for those with a connection. Second, and more commonly, restrictions relate to emergency and temporary accommodation provision. Local authorities either exclude non-locals from such provision, or they would be placed on the waiting list behind those who have a connection. Interestingly, the authorities rarely prioritised locals using both mechanisms so homeless people with no local connection would be able to access some form of assistance.

In broad terms the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires that local connection is not considered when taking reasonable steps to prevent or alleviate homelessness, however statutory guidance does suggest that priority can be given to local people so long as reasonable steps continue to be taken with others. Therefore, local authorities which restrict access to prevention services for those without a local connection may be falling short of legislative requirements if they cannot demonstrate that reasonable steps have been taken. By

contrast, those local authorities which prioritise locals in the allocation of temporary accommodation, are unlikely to fall foul of the legislation, given that there is only a duty to provide temporary accommodation to single homeless people with no local connection if they may be in priority need.

Again, the context in these local authorities is worth noting. Key informants across all three local authorities claimed that no more than 5% of people seeking homelessness assistance lacked a local connection, although no data was available to support these assumptions – largely because there was no requirement to collect this data. Key informants generally felt that applications for homelessness assistance from people with no local connection was not a significant issue. If there were greater pressures on resources from homeless people with no local connection, how might these local authorities respond? This is the challenge faced by Cardiff - a local authority which we examine in the third type of approach.

Type 3. Reconnecting non-locals

Cardiff was the only local authority in this study to be adopting an approach which focuses on the reconnection of single homeless people to other local authorities in instances where they have no connection to the area. In broad terms, Cardiff's reconnection approach diverts single homeless people with no local connection to a separate service. This service involves an interview where the individual will discuss why they are in Cardiff, their support needs and their connections to other areas. If needed, temporary accommodation will then be made available in Cardiff until the individual can travel, with travel costs met by Cardiff local authority. The reconnections team will also make appointments for the individual to meet with support workers in the authority where they have a connection if this is deemed necessary for an effective reconnection. Significantly, single homeless people without a local connection are not given access to prevention and relief services (eg. bonds, rent in advance) and are only offered temporary accommodation as part of the reconnection process. It is important to note that a 'waiver' system also exists, whereby the local authority may remove the need for an individual to hold a local connection, primarily where the person would be at risk or at harm if they were to be reconnected. Equally, if an individual has developed strong support networks or is engaging with support services in Cardiff, they may be offered a waiver.

Given the unique nature of the reconnection service being delivered in Cardiff, at least in the Welsh context, it is important to reflect a little on the evolution of the service. Key informants in Cardiff suggested that developments were largely resource driven. Unlike most local authorities, Cardiff had excellent data on the origins of homeless people accessing services, with approximately 15% coming from outside the city (further detail in the following chapter). Prior to legislative change these individuals were offered temporary accommodation and were essentially treated equally to those with a local connection. However, in light of increased expectations of assistance for single homeless people under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, resources were then focused on those with a local connection. In essence, a progressive, all-encompassing service which includes temporary accommodation and action to alleviate homelessness (eg. through rent in advance) is offered to those with a local connection. For those who have no local connection, the reconnections service was developed. According to key informants, one reason why reconnecting people was deemed appropriate is because single homeless people with no local connection in Cardiff were rarely interested in remaining and securing suitable accommodation, rather they sought transitional and temporary accommodation not available in other local authorities.

Clearly consideration is being given to the origins of single homeless people in Cardiff and this is determining the service being offered. Whilst reconnecting people to areas where they have a connection may offer a suitable solution, it is questionable whether this universal single offer could be considered as having taken the reasonable steps required under the housing (Wales) Act 2014, particularly given the range of steps set out in statutory guidance.

Single homeless people surveyed across the five local authorities in this study were asked whether they would be happy if the local authority supported them to return to a local authority where they have a recent connection and responses were largely negative. Whilst the number of respondents to this question was

relatively low (n=23), the majority (65%) would prefer not to be reconnected. This finding raises questions about the extent to which reconnection should be deemed suitable for all.

Challenges of assisting those who are ineligible for public funds

In this final section we briefly comment on a cross-cutting issue which, according to key informants, affects all local authorities, albeit to different degrees. Providing assistance to those with no recourse to public funds is a Wales-wide issue, and particularly concentrated in local authorities which attract high levels of economic migration. Currently, this particular group of people with no local connection are restricted to services delivered by charities and religious organisations. As one key informant stated:

> *'We have got a group of East European nationals that we can't, well legally we can't use these funds for them, and that's very difficult at the moment because they make up a large proportion of our rough sleepers.'* (local authority key informant)

Geography and scale of movement

As Cardiff was the only authority to provide useful data on the scale and the origins of movement, the analysis in this chapter is limited to a single authority and does not reflect transiency across Wales. However, the Cardiff data does enable us to undertake a detailed analysis of the geographies and scale of movement by single homeless people into Cardiff. Furthermore, from stakeholder interviews it was suggested that the movement of single homeless people was not an issue to the same scale in other local authorities as it was in Cardiff. To an extent, Cardiff therefore provides an exception but also a good case study to explore the mobility of single homeless people, given that it is here that the issue is most pronounced.

An overview of movement by single homeless people to Cardiff

In order to give a broad overview of the scale of the movement of single homeless people presenting to Cardiff Housing services, Table 2 provides a breakdown of the area of origin for applicants during the April-September 2013 period (see Appendix A for a more detailed breakdown). The largest proportion of applications to Cardiff came from single homeless people with a local connection (85%). Of the total applicants during the period, roughly 15% of single people had no local connection.

Just under half of those without a local connection were from another Welsh local authority (49%), whilst 42% came from elsewhere in the UK/Ireland. Individuals came from each of the other three UK nations, and Ireland (see Appendix A). England was by far the largest contributor of single homeless people within the UK/Ireland group (n=82), with London accounting for the biggest proportion of England's total (n=22).

Single homeless people from outside the UK/Ireland accounted for 9% of the no local connection cases. However, only 1% of the total single homelessness applications received by Cardiff Housing for the period came from outside the UK/Ireland. Countries of origin included a mixture of European (e.g. Latvia and Greece), Middle Eastern (e.g. Iran, Pakistan, and Egypt), African, and Australasian countries (e.g. New Zealand). Having outlined the general mobility of single homeless people, the following discussion more specifically explores movement from other Welsh authorities into Cardiff.

Table 2.   Area of origin of single homeless people making an application for assistance to Cardiff Council, April-September 2013

Area of origin	Count	Percent
Cardiff	1,290	85
Other Welsh authority	108	7
Elsewhere in UK/Ireland	92	6
Outside UK/Ireland	19	1
Total Single	1,509	100

Movement of single homeless people to Cardiff from other Welsh local authorities

The broad number of people presenting to Cardiff Housing services by local authority area is shown in Figure 2. This figure gives an indication of the scale of single people's movements between other authorities and Cardiff. Cardiff is indicated in green, representing the 1,290 single people who applied to Cardiff Housing services who had a local connection to the area. In total, single people came from 14 of the 22 local authorities in Wales. There were no single homeless people from the majority of authorities in North Wales and those bordering England (e.g. Isle of Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham, and Powys). Furthermore, no single homeless people originated from Torfaen.

Figure 2.   Map indicating the number of single people presenting at Cardiff Housing services with no local connection to Cardiff, by originating Welsh Local Authority
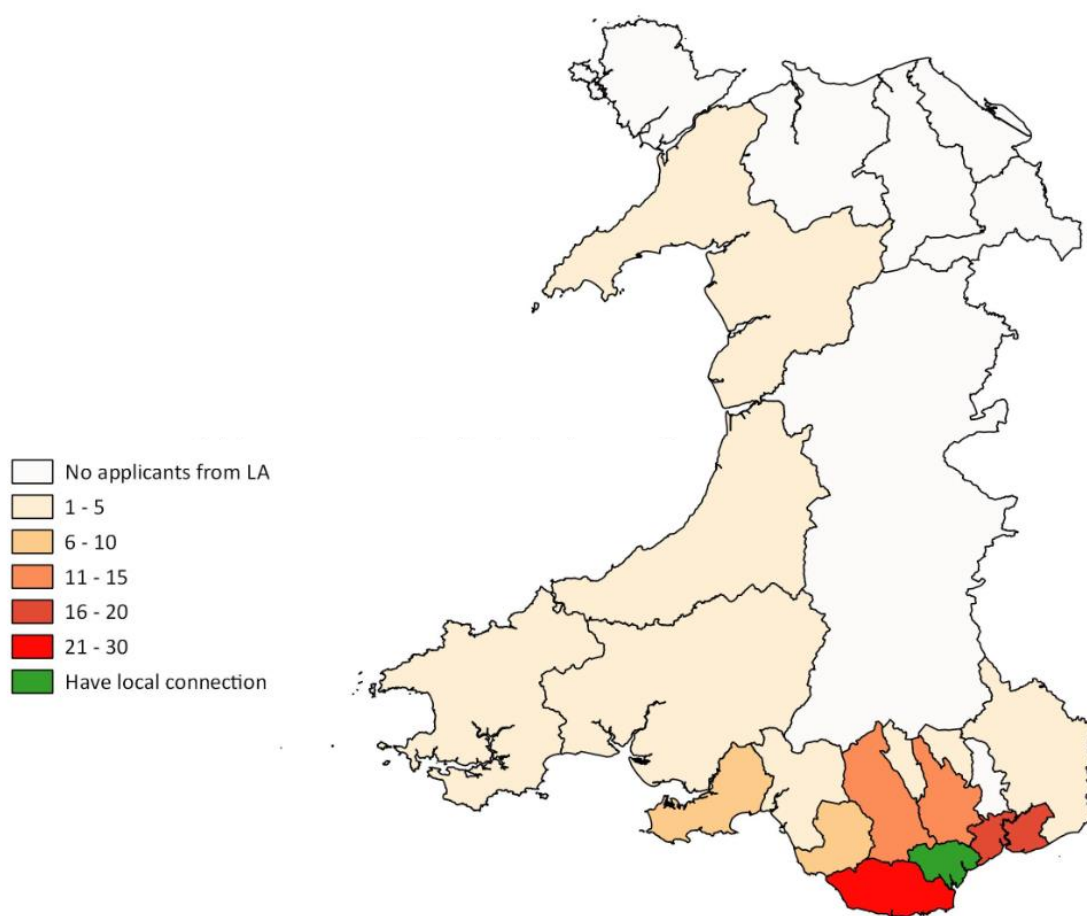
Of all the Welsh local authorities where single homeless people originated, the greatest number of cases came from the Vale of Glamorgan. In fact, applications from the Vale of Glamorgan constituted 25% of all no local connection applications to Cardiff from Welsh local authorities (Table 3). More generally, applications from individuals with no local connection were higher from the local areas surrounding Cardiff (Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Caerphilly, and Newport). The four authorities encircling Cardiff accounted for over half of the Welsh no local connection cases presenting to Cardiff Housing (68%). Furthermore, the number/proportion of single persons from local authorities along the M4 corridor was also high, including those from Swansea and Bridgend.

When comparing across the total number of no local connection cases received by Cardiff Housing, individuals from London were as numerous as those from the local authorities surrounding Cardiff. The number of single homeless people from the Vale of Glamorgan was 27, compared to the 22 individuals originating from London (see Appendix A).

Table 3. Breakdown of no local connection applicants to Cardiff Housing services, where origin was within Wales, by local authority

Local authority	Percent
Blaenau Gwent	5
Bridgend	9
Caerphilly	12
Carmarthenshire	1
Ceredigion	1
Merthyr Tydfil	5
Gwynedd	1
Monmouthshire	2
Newport	17
Neath Port Talbot	1
Rhondda Cynon Taff	14
Swansea	7
Pembrokeshire	1
Vale of Glamorgan	25

Motives for movement

This chapter aims to provide a clearer understanding of why single homeless people seek housing assistance in areas where they have no local connection. We draw upon the findings of semi-structured questionnaires with 24 single homeless people who had recently sought assistance in a local authority where they had no local connection. Whilst a larger sample size might have led to more robust findings, several clear messages emerge. We begin by commenting on the complexity of motivations, before focusing on both the push and pull factors which influence single homeless people.

Complex motivations

During semi-structured questionnaires, single homeless people were asked; 'What prompted you to move here and ask for help, rather than remain in the area where you were living previously?' Respondents were asked to provide as much detail as possible. Table 4 illustrates that only three respondents reported a single motive for moving, whereas the vast majority reported either 2 (13 respondents) or more motives (8 respondents). These motives can be broadly categorised into factors which push individuals away from the authority where they were living or factors which pull them towards another authority. In most (19 of 24) instances, people reported a combination of both push and pull factors.

Table 4. Total number of factors identified by single homeless people as motivations for seeking assistance in a local authority where they have no connection

Total number of factors	Number of respondents
1	3
2	13
3 or more	8

Push factors

Table 5 illustrates the considerable range of push factors which drive single homeless people to seek housing assistance elsewhere. Rarely have studies provided such an account of the heterogeneity of motivating factors.

The most significant push factor is loss of employment (5 respondents), followed closely by the rather anomalous factor; 'a transient lifestyle' (4 respondents). By transient lifestyle, we refer to those individuals who currently adopt a lifestyle which includes significant movement between local authorities, and indeed countries, with relatively short periods of stability in any given location:

> *'I have been on the road for 34 years rough sleeping in a tent. I came to (town name removed) from (town name removed) but I've always stayed about two weeks in each place before that. I came to (town name removed) because I had lived here a long time ago and I've stopped off here*

a couple of times a year each year… I'm planning to continue to 'travel' but to keep this flat as a base.' (Male, single homeless interviewee)

Table 5. Frequencies of push factors identified by single homeless people as motivations for seeking assistance in a local authority where they have no connection

Push factor	Number of respondents
Lost employment	5
Transient lifestyle	4
Parole/Bale condition requires movement	3
Household dispute / relationship breakdown	3
Fleeing danger/ persecution (inc. domestic violence)	3
Home local authority was unhelpful	3
Officials advised that an alternative area had more resources	3
Evicted - individual responsibility	2
Perceived poor housing conditions	2
Evicted - not the responsibility of the individual	1
Bad memories in an area	1

Several push factors were identified by at least three respondents: movement is required by a parole or bale condition, a household dispute/relationship breakdown, fleeing danger/persecution (including domestic violence), an unhelpful home local authority, and officials advising that an alternative area has more resources. The latter two of these push factors are particularly interesting, given that amongst local authority key informants there was a widespread perception that the primary reason for people seeking help in areas where they have no connection is due to the advice given by other local authorities:

'I would talk to people who were from say (town name removed), or other boroughs…, who would say "oh yeah the council told me to come here"…' (Local authority key informant)

In total, six respondents stated that the local authority where they have a connection had either been unhelpful or they had more specifically been advised to seek assistance elsewhere due to the availability of additional resources in another area – essentially the respondents were being pushed towards another area. This provides some support for the claims of local authority key informants but the motivating factors are clearly far more complex.

'I was told I'd get more help in (town name removed) than (town name removed)…. so I moved to (town name removed).' (Male, single homeless interviewee)

Other factors identified by at least one respondent included; eviction, perceived poor housing conditions, and bad memories in an area.

Pull factors

Table 6 presents the considerable range of pull factors which attract single homeless people to seek housing assistance elsewhere. The two most significant pull factors are: knowing someone who lives in the area, and having visited the area before, often on holiday or on a day visit. As one respondent stated:

'I decided to come to (town name removed) as I'd been on holiday to Wales a few times in the past and liked it.' (Male, single homeless interviewee)

Table 6. Frequencies of pull factors identified by single homeless people as motivations for seeking assistance in a local authority where they have no connection

Pull factor	Number of respondents
Visited the area before and liked it	5
Know someone in the area	5
For a fresh start	4
Preference for smaller towns	3
Lived in the area previously	3
Hoped area would have more services	2
Council offices closer than offices of home LA	1
Officials organised the move	1
Employment	1

The third most cited factor was the desire for a fresh start. These respondents cited no other pull factors, hence it is not clear exactly why particular local authorities were chosen as the location for a fresh start. As one individual currently sleeping rough stated:

> *'I went to (town name removed) for seven months and then decided to come to (town name removed). I didn't know (town name removed) but thought it would be a "new start".'* (Male, single homeless interviewee)

Two push factors were identified by at least three respondents: a preference for smaller towns, and the respondent had previously lived in the area:

> *'I had lived in (town name removed) before, so I decided to move to (town name removed) when I had to leave my flat in (town name removed).'* (Male, single homeless interviewee)

Four further pull factors were identified by at least one respondent: it was hoped the area would have more services, the council offices were closer than the offices in the home authority, officials organised the move, and better employment prospects. It is notable that only two respondents were drawn to an area due to a perception of better service provision. This contradicts the broadly held view amongst key informants in Welsh local authorities, several of whom felt individuals were attracted due to the services available:

> *'If you have a conversation with somebody who is part of the rough sleeping community in (place name removed) it would be… because no other borough provides provision like we do… were are a victim of our own success.'* (Local authority key informant)

Whilst we recognise the limitations of the data in this chapter, it has revealed two important findings about the motivations behind the movement of single homeless people. Firstly, most movement is driven by at least two factors, generally consisting of push and pull factors. Secondly, there is a great range of both push and pull factors influencing the movement of single homeless people. Hence, local authority perspectives that service provision acts as a key pull factor and that other local authorities are pushing individuals to more service-rich areas is true only to a limited degree - these factors are less prevalent and less significant than currently perceived.

Experiences of seeking assistance

This chapter explores the experiences and perspectives of single homeless people who have sought assistance from a local authority where they have no local connection. Since the commencement of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, single homeless people have been entitled to help to secure accommodation wherever they seek assistance; an entitlement they did not have under previous legislation. Therefore, this chapter begins by comparing recent experiences of assistance with experiences under the previous legislation. Given that this study is at least partly driven by an assumption that some individuals are being turned away by local authorities due to a lack of local connection, and we know very little about the impacts of such actions, this chapter also explores how individuals would react if no assistance could be offered where they sought help.

Experiences of seeking assistance: the impacts of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014

Single homeless people were asked what assistance they were offered when they approached a local authority for help but had no connection to the area. Table 7 presents the results of our 2016 survey and compares them to the results of a 2014 survey which asked the same question of 94 single homeless households in Wales[4]. It is important to note that the 2014 survey was administered in similar local authorities but respondents may have had a connection to the local area. This difference is unlikely to be significant, given that single homeless household were generally entitled only to information and advice under the previous legislation, irrespective of their connection to the area.

Whilst we recognise the limited sample size of the 2016 survey, Table 7 shows that the types of assistance offered appear to be more favourable since the legislative changes in Wales. Approximately 50% of people were offered temporary accommodation or floor space (compared to 24% in 2014), a provision that is not a duty under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 but clearly it is being extended to those without a local connection. Similar proportions of people were offered council or housing association accommodation before and after the legislative changes (7-8%). Significantly, since the legislative change far fewer people appear to be offered only general advice (4% vs 12%), a referral elsewhere (4% vs 24%), or no advice (25% vs 32%). It appears the offer to single homeless people has improved but it remains a concern that under new legislation, which requires reasonable steps to be taken with everyone, approximately one quarter of single homeless people continue to receive no advice.

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[4] Based on a survey of 94 single homeless people accessing assistance in three Welsh local authorities in 2014. Notably, some single homeless people in the comparison group may have had a local connection. Full findings of this survey can be found here: http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/NationsApart.pdf

Table 7. Assistance given to single homeless households following an application for help in an area where they have no local connection[5]

	2016		2014 (%)
	Number	Percent	
Assistance to remain in home	0	0	*
Temporary accommodation	10	42	24
Council or housing association accommodation	2	8	7
House/flat rented from private landlord	0	0	*
Information about hostels or landlords	6	25	14
General advice	1	4	12
Referred elsewhere	1	4	24
No Advice	6	25	32
Floor space	2	8	*
Other	0	0	2

* less than 1%

In 2016 single homeless people reported fewer instances of limited or no advice, or a referral elsewhere, hence it follows that a greater proportion of respondents felt the assistance was helpful or very helpful when compared to 2014 (65% vs 42%). However, given that local authorities must take reasonable steps with everyone who seeks assistance, the proportion of people claiming the assistance was quite or very unhelpful (30%) appears high (Table 8).

Table 8. Perceived helpfulness of assistance given to single homeless households following an application for help in an area where they have no local connection

	2016		2014 (%)
	Number	Percent	
Very helpful	10	43	26
Quite helpful	5	22	16
Neither helpful nor unhelpful	1	4	19
Quite unhelpful	1	4	8
Very unhelpful	6	26	32
Total	23	100	100

One of the aims of the legislative changes in Wales was to create a problem solving ethos – a shift away from efforts to immediately prioritise and exclude. Table 9 suggests that there has been an ethos shift, with nearly three quarters of respondents perceiving that they were treated either very well or quite well by local authority staff, compared to only 57% in 2014. Fewer than 1 in 5 respondents reported that they had been treated badly.

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[5] Respondents could report more than one type of assistance. Percentages refer to the percentage of respondents who stated they received the named type of assistance. Therefore column percentages do not total 100.

Table 9. Perceived treatment of single homeless households by local authority staff following an application for help in an area where they have no local connection

	2016		2014 (%)
	Number	Percent	
Very well	15	65	37
Quite well	2	9	20
Neither well nor badly	2	9	20
Quite badly	4	17	3
Very badly	0	0	19
Total	23	100	100

Actions in the absence of assistance

In this study we have found that a small but significant minority of people are being offered no advice in the local authority where they sought assistance and some local authorities are prioritising assistance to those with a local connection. These practices exist without a firm understanding of how people are likely to react to a lack of assistance. Will they remain? Will they return to another local authority? Will they move on to another area? Single homeless people were asked how they would respond to a lack of assistance and Table 10 shows the results.

Table 10. Actions single homeless people would reportedly take if no assistance were to be offered due to a lack of a connection to the local authority

	Frequency	Percent
Remain in this local authority	11	46
Move to a different local authority	4	17
Return to 'home' local authority	4	17
Unsure	5	21
Total	24	100

Nearly half of all respondents would remain if the local authority failed to provide assistance, with explanations for this decision extremely varied. For example, people suggested that they would remain for reasons such as; a fear of returning, greater third sector and church provision, the presence of friends, and greater employment opportunities. A much lower proportion of people (1 in 6) said they would move to another local authority if they could not get assistance, with explanations including: friends and family living elsewhere, a fear of returning, and a transient lifestyle (the preference to keep travelling). A similarly low proportion of people (1 in 6) explained that they would return to an area where they have a local connection, largely because they have friends and family there or they would feel more comfortable sleeping rough in an area that they know.

Whilst the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to take reasonable steps to help all homeless households, this small-scale study has found that despite significant improvements since the commencement of the legislation, many single homeless households who have no local connection continue to receive relatively limited, unhelpful assistance. Where provision is not made available in a local authority it is clear that most people will remain, with far fewer moving to another local authority or returning to the authority they left.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter returns to the five questions posed at the outset of the report. We draw on the research findings to respond to each question in turn. In this final chapter we also make our policy and practice recommendations.

1. What is the scale of movement of single homeless people?

The percentage of all single homeless applicants with no local connection varies by local authority, with Cardiff receiving high levels (15%), Newport, Swansea and Wrexham facing relatively low levels (approximately 5%), and Ceredigion facing very low levels (approximately 1%). It is important to recognise that only Cardiff was able to provide reliable data, whereas all other local authorities provided broad estimates.

2. Where are single homeless people coming from?

The origins of single homeless people are only recorded in Cardiff. We found that of the 15% without a local connection to Cardiff, 49% were from another Welsh local authority, 42% came from elsewhere in the UK/Ireland, and 9% came from outside the UK/Ireland.

More specifically, of those with a connection to another Welsh local authority, applications were highest from areas immediately surrounding Cardiff (Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Caerphilly, and Newport) and to a slightly lesser extent from local authorities along the M4 corridor (Swansea and Bridgend). Notably, 25% of applications with a home connection to another Welsh local authority were from the Vale of Glamorgan.

3. Why are single homeless people moving between local authorities?

The study reveals two key conclusions about the motivations that drive single homeless people to seek help in an area where they have no local connection.

Firstly, people are rarely motivated by just one influence. In 21 of 24 instances, people reported two or more motivating influences, mostly (19 of 24 instances) consisting of both push and pull factors.

Secondly, people are motivated by a considerable range of influences. Local authority key informant assumptions that service provision acts as a key pull factor and that other local authorities are pushing individuals to more service-rich areas is true only to a limited degree - these factors are less prevalent and less significant than currently perceived.

Most important push factors include: loss of employment, transient lifestyles (lifestyles which include significant movement between local authorities with relatively short periods of stability in any given location). Other important push factors include: movement is required by a parole or bale condition, a household dispute/relationship breakdown, fleeing danger/persecution (including domestic violence), an unhelpful home local authority, and officials advising that an alternative area has more resources.

Most important pull factors include: knowing someone who lives in the area, and having visited the area before. Other important pull factors include: a desire for a fresh start, a preference for smaller towns, and the respondent had previously lived in the area. Only two people were attracted by more services.

4. How is the 'Housing (Wales) Act' 2014 impacting on single homeless people who seek assistance in local authorities where they have no local connection?

In responding to this important question we first summarise the impacts on the services being offered to single homeless people, before reflecting on the impacts of these services on single homeless people's experiences of seeking help.

A typology of local authority assistance for single people with no local connection

Previous studies have widely documented how single homeless people tended to fare badly and were often offered only general advice and assistance under previous legislation. By contract, under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 there is a strengthened duty to assist all single homeless households, however ambiguity in the statutory guidance regarding the prioritisation of those with a local connection, and very different levels of service demand across Wales, has resulted in divergence in the models of service delivery amongst the five case study local authorities. Three broad approaches are identifiable:

i] Local connection neutral: Single homeless people are offered the same suite of homelessness prevention and alleviation services, irrespective of whether they have a local connection or not. This approach is adopted in Ceredigion where there are very low levels of homelessness applications from people with no local connection.

ii] Prioritising locals: Assistance is prioritised, at least to some extent, to homeless people who have a connection to the area. Whilst we recognise that some very effective services are offered to people with no local connection in these local authorities (eg street outreach services), some form of prioritisation is taking place. This prioritisation predominantly occurs in two ways. First, in relation to prevention fund spending and second, in relation to emergency and temporary accommodation provision. Interestingly, the authorities rarely prioritised locals using both mechanisms so homeless people with no local connection would be able to access some form of assistance. This approach is adopted in Newport, Swansea and Ceredigion where there are relatively low levels of homelessness applications from people with no local connection

iii] Reconnecting non-locals: In broad terms, this approach diverts single homeless people with no local connection to a separate service. They are not given access to wider prevention and relief services, however supportive efforts are made to reconnect individuals. This approach is adopted in Cardiff where there are high levels of homelessness applications from people with no local connection.

Single homeless people's experiences of accessing assistance

Single homeless people's experiences of seeking assistance under the new legislation (in 2016) appear to be generally more favourable than under the previous legislation (in 2014), however it remains a concern that under new legislation, which requires reasonable steps to be taken with everyone, approximately one quarter of single homeless people continue to receive no advice. Under the new legislation we found:

▪ People are more likely to be offered temporary accommodation (42% vs 24%) and fewer people are likely to be offered no advice (25% vs 32%)

▪ The assistance offered is more likely to be rated as quite or very helpful (65% vs 42%)

▪ People are more likely to feel they were treated quite well or very well by staff (74% vs 57%)

5. What are the major policy challenges and solutions?

This research has provided answers to many unanswered questions surrounding the movement of single homeless people in Wales but it has also revealed four key and inter-related policy challenges. We make recommendations in response to each challenge.

i] Implementing reasonable steps

Whilst there appears to have been an improvement in services for single homeless people in Wales and this has impacted positively on experiences of seeking help, in a significant proportion of cases local authorities are not taking reasonable steps to help single homeless people with no local connection. For example, some people reported being offered no advice, some are universally offered only a single solution (eg reconnection), and others are informally directed to other service-rich local authorities. The policy challenge is to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent or alleviate homelessness with all single homeless households, irrespective of their connection to a local area.

Recommendation 1

Welsh Government should determine whether or not it believes any of the models of intervention currently being employed to assist those without a local connection, and identified in this report, are likely to result in a systematic failure to take reasonable steps. If systematic failings are identified then guidance and support should be provided to local authorities adopting those particular approaches.

Recommendation 2

Irrespective of any findings in relation to systematic failings under Recommendation 1, there is sufficient evidence to show reasonable steps are not being taken with some households. Hence, Welsh Government should issue further guidance and/or develop training to provide greater clarity on the process of taking reasonable steps with homeless households who have no connection to the local area. Failure to do this is likely to result in legal challenges, with courts deciding what reasonable steps should look like. Past experience has shown that court decisions often fall far from the original policy intentions and this should be avoided.

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ii] Addressing the current prioritisation of resources to those with a local connection

This study has found that in most local authorities some form of prioritisation is taking place, where individuals with a local connection are being offered a wider range of support services than those without a local connection. Both the intention and the wording of the legislation suggest that local connection should not be considered when seeking to prevent or alleviate homelessness. However, statutory guidance appears to contradict the legislation, stating that priority may be given to people with a local connection, so long as reasonable steps are still taken with all households. The consequence of this ambiguous legal position is the emergence of a two-tier system in all local authorities, with the exception of those operating a local connection neutral model. The challenge for Welsh Government is to determine whether it wishes priority to be given to those with a local connection during prevention and relief efforts and to subsequently address the ambiguity that exists between the legislation and the statutory guidance.

Recommendation 3

Welsh Government should decide whether it wishes priority to be given to those with a local connection during prevention and relief efforts. A decision to allow prioritisation of services to local people at prevention and relief stages (beyond those entitled to interim accommodation) would seem to run counter to the principles and wording of the current legislation. Having reached a decision on this matter, Welsh Government should address the ambiguity that exists between the legislation and the statutory guidance on whether or not priority can be afforded to people with a local connection.

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iii] Funding

Homeless people are moving between local authorities, with Cardiff facing by far the highest proportion of applications from people with no local connection. This movement is driven by a diverse range of motivations and we can anticipate that the movement will continue. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to take reasonable steps to help these households but it is unclear whether funding mechanisms sufficiently support net recipient local authorities, like Cardiff. International evidence suggests locally funded service models such as those employed in Wales are likely to lead to restrictions being placed on those without a local connection. The policy challenge is to ensure that local authorities are effectively funded to enable them to meet the needs of those who move to the area and seek help. Alternative funding models adopted across Europe may be more effective in enabling net recipient local authorities, such as Cardiff, to meet their duties.

Recommendation 4
Welsh Government should explore the possibility of implementing an alternative funding model to assist those who seek assistance in an area where they have no local connection. International evidence suggests that centrally (national government) funded services lead to more effective provision. However, Welsh Government might also wish to consider piloting the Danish 'self-presenter principle'. This approach requires local authorities to pay for their citizens when they are homeless in another local authority. This approach has the potential added benefit of driving innovation and development in home authorities to reduce the costs associated with citizens being accommodated or assisted elsewhere (most frequently in more expensive cities). Of course the self-presenter principle comes with the challenge of reaching some form of reciprocal agreement with other UK local authorities but an initial pilot could be pursued with only Welsh local authorities.

iv] Data and monitoring

This study has provided some insight into the scale and geography of the movement of single homeless people in Wales, however only Cardiff could provide reliable data. If we wish to monitor the services offered to single homeless people with no local connection, and this study would suggest that we do, then data needs to be more effectively recorded on the origins of households who seek assistance.

Recommendation 5
Welsh Government should consider instructing local authorities to amend their ongoing data recording and reporting activities to capture the origins of homeless applicants. It would also be vital to know the outcomes of prevention and relief efforts with these households.

Conclusion

This study has provided answers to many long-standing questions about the scale, geography and motivations behind the movement of single homeless people in Wales. This information provides an important basis for future discussions about how policy in this area develops in Wales. Significantly, this research has also provided an indication of the positive impacts of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 on the services for and experiences of single homeless people who seek help in Welsh local authorities where they have no local connection. However, the implementation of the new legislation has inevitably raised several key policy concerns relating to how people should be helped, whether prioritisation should be permitted or promoted, how services should be funded, and what information needs to be collected. We hope Housing Leadership Cymru, the Local Authority Homelessness Network and Welsh Government will work with us to reflect on the report recommendations and act to ensure the best possible outcomes for homeless people in Wales.

Appendices

Appendix A.

Detailed single person homelessness applications received by Cardiff Council for the period April to September 2013, by area of origin

		Count	Percent (Total)	Percent (No local connection)
Cardiff:		1,290	85	-
Other Welsh authority:		108	7	49
	Blaenau Gwent	5	0	2
	Bridgend	10	1	5
	Caerphilly	13	1	6
	Carmarthenshire	*	0	0
	Ceredigion	*	0	0
	Merthyr Tydfil	5	0	2
	Gwynedd	*	0	0
	Monmouthshire	*	0	1
	Newport	18	1	8
	Neath Port Talbot	*	0	0
	Rhondda Cynon Taff	15	1	7
	Swansea	8	1	4
	Pembrokeshire	*	0	0
	Vale of Glamorgan	27	2	12
Elsewhere in UK/Ireland:		92	6	42
	Scotland	*	0	2
	England (Excl. London)	60	4	27
	London	22	1	10
	NI	*	0	1
	Ireland	*	0	2
Outside the UK/Ireland:		19	1	9
Total single persons:		1,509	100	-
Total no local connection:		219	15	100

* Indicates count less than 5 individuals
NB: Breakdown for different countries outside of UK/Ireland not shown for disclosure reasons

Appendix B. Local connection rules relating to emergency accommodation access in selected European countries

Table 4.1: Shelters, Other Emergency Accommodation and Local Connection

Country	Local Connection Rules
Austria	No local connection criteria are applied to emergency services in Austria.
Bulgaria	No legal requirements; municipalities are able to use local connection rules and do so. There is a legal requirement not to use local connection criteria when a woman is escaping gender-based/domestic violence.
Denmark	Assistance must be provided regardless of local connection. There is a nationally regulated system to recover costs.
France	For central government funded shelter services, discrimination on the basis of local connection is illegal and could result in prosecution. Compensation is payable when the right to shelter is not fulfilled.
Germany	Assistance must be provided regardless of local connection.
Greece	Recent legislative changes create capacity to use local connection rules.
Hungary	Municipalities were able to use local connection rules and did so, but a legal challenge in 2000 changed this situation in Budapest and some other cities when it comes to allocating social housing, although use of local connection continues in some areas.
Ireland	Local authorities are obliged to consider local connection; access to emergency services is largely restricted to local people, but the criteria by which a local connection can be established are quite broad and there is very short stay emergency accommodation open to anyone in Dublin.
Italy	Gradual legislative change has given municipalities wide discretion to use local connection rules, which vary markedly, from effectively allowing universal access through to strict restriction of access.
Netherlands	Law is interpreted as allowing use of local connection rules. The majority of municipalities voluntarily use local connection rules for which there is a national model policy. There is evidence of inconsistent use of local connection rules, although practice has been challenged in the courts and a new law introduced in January 2015 (see Box 4.1).
Poland	Only municipalities to which someone can show a local connection have any responsibility for providing a shelter place.
Portugal	The right to housing cannot be used as a legal mechanism to require municipalities to provide emergency shelter but, in general, actual access to emergency services is not conditioned by any connection to the local area.
Slovakia	A regulation prohibits the use of local connection rules for access to emergency shelters for homeless people.
United Kingdom	Law does not require or disallow use of local connection rules; there is evidence of inconsistent use of local connection rules for emergency accommodation and shelters, although emergency (direct access) services have become less common.

Source: Baptista, I, Benjaminsen, L & Pleace, N 2015, *Local Connection Rules and Access to Homelessness Services in Europe: EOH Comparative Studies on Homelessness No. 5*. FEANTSA