

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: The University of Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh Strategic Alliance)		
Unit of Assessment: UoA13 Architecture, Built Environment and Planning		
Title of case study: Transforming Responses to Homelessness		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Suzanne Fitzpatrick	Professor of Housing and Social Policy and Director of the Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE)	2010 – Present
Glen Bramley	Professor of Urban Studies	1994 – Present
Sarah Johnsen	Professorial Fellow	2010 – Present
Beth Watts	Senior Research Fellow	2011 – Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: January 2014 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) has been pivotal in the two largest revolutions in UK homelessness policy/law in the past 40 years: The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 explicitly implemented the recommendations of an I-SPHERE-led review, building on earlier I-SPHERE-informed redesigns of homelessness legislation in Scotland and Wales; and a paradigm shift to 'Housing First', was propelled by I-SPHERE research. The 2017 Act radically expanded single homeless people's entitlements in England, backed by GBP72,200,000 of government funding. Government support was also given to the 'Housing First' approach, injecting GBP28,000,000 into tackling rough sleeping. In 2019, Heriot-Watt University was awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize in recognition of I-SPHERE's work on addressing homelessness and extreme disadvantage.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>This case study highlights three interconnected and long-running research programmes on homelessness supported by major funders including the ESRC, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), Lankelly Chase Foundation and Crisis.</p>		
<p>Mapping the scale, nature, trends and projected trajectory of homelessness: I-SPHERE's state-of-the-nation Homelessness Monitor, funded for fifteen years by Crisis/JRF (2011-2026) provides authoritative analysis of the homelessness impacts of economic and policy developments across the four UK countries. Led by Fitzpatrick, and subsequently Watts, the statistical, policy and legal analysis undertaken for the Monitor has laid the foundation for a series of high impact academic papers. One such paper shattered the harmful media myth that 'we're all two pay cheques from homelessness' [3.1]. Additionally, drawing on the ESRC-funded 'Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey' (2010-2014), it underlines the centrality of poverty to the</p>		

generation of homelessness, while also demonstrating the impact of broader labour and housing market contexts, and certain demographic and social support characteristics, reinforcing the moral imperative for policy action on homelessness, and at the same time signals opportunities to target preventative interventions on high-risk groups.

Understanding ‘complex needs’: It has long been acknowledged that some homeless people have complex support needs which go well beyond lack of a home, but the scale and nature of these needs were not well understood. In a series of linked projects running from 2012-2019, funded by the Lankelly Chase Foundation, Robertson Trust and JRF, I-SPHERE researchers triangulated an array of previously separate statistical datasets, demonstrating huge overlap between the offender, substance misusing and homeless populations in England and Scotland and the disproportionate costs to the public purse associated with these intertwined groups. These “Hard Edges” studies also showed that these issues were heavily concentrated in areas of the country affected by long-term economic decline, and that 85% of those affected had experienced childhood trauma [3.2]. They underpinned Fitzpatrick’s collaboration with US and UK public health colleagues on a ground-breaking paper in *The Lancet* which provided the first ever evidence synthesis on health and social interventions for people with experience of homelessness, drug use, imprisonment, and sex work - populations that are ten times more likely to die early than the general population [3.3].

Conceptually framing international research: I-SPHERE research is also shaping international debates on homelessness. In a series of papers arising from a 5-year ESRC project on ‘Welfare Conditionality’ (2013-2018), I-SPHERE researchers have interrogated the ‘criminalization’ of rough sleeping across the Global North and the use of conditional modes of intervention [3.4]. Via the application of rigorous philosophical frameworks, Johnsen, Watts and Fitzpatrick have challenged the dominant assumption that ‘tolerant’ responses to rough sleeping are morally unproblematic, while at the same time clarifying the high ethical bar that must be cleared to justify ‘hard’ enforcement measures targeting this vulnerable population [3.5]. A linked philosophically-informed agenda concerns the application of ‘rights-based frameworks’ to the resolution of homelessness, where Watts and Fitzpatrick have broken new ground in demonstrating the efficacy of individually-enforceable ‘legal rights’ over abstract ‘moral’ or ‘human’ rights in this field [3.6].

3. References to the research

[3.1] Bramley, G. & Fitzpatrick, S. Homelessness in the UK: Who is most at risk? *Housing Studies*, 33(1): 96-116 (2017) <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2017.1344957>

[3.2] Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S. & Sosenko, F. ‘Mapping the ‘hard edges’ of disadvantage in England: adults involved in homelessness, substance misuse and offending’, *Geographical Journal*. (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12358>

[3.3] Luchenski, S., Maguire, N. Aldridge, R. W., Hayward, A., Story, A., Perri, P., Withers, J, Clint, S., Fitzpatrick, S., & Hewett, N. What works in inclusion health: overview of effective interventions for marginalised and excluded populations, *The Lancet*, 391 (10117): 266-280 (2018) DOI: [10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)31959-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)31959-1)

[3.4] Johnsen, S., Watts, B., & Fitzpatrick, S. ‘Rebalancing the rhetoric: a normative analysis of enforcement in street homelessness policy’, *Urban Studies*, (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019898369>

[3.5] Watts, B., Fitzpatrick, S. & Johnsen, S. ‘Controlling homeless people: power, interventionism and legitimacy’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 47(2): 235-252 (2017) <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279417000289>

[3.6] Fitzpatrick, S., Bengtsson, B., & Watts, B. Rights to housing: reviewing the terrain and exploring a way forward. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 31(4): 447-463 (2014)
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2014.923506>

4. Details of the impact

Transforming homelessness legislation, policy and statistical reporting in England

Until 2017, England's homelessness legislation had remained fundamentally unchanged for 40 years, offering only very limited protection to homeless households without children. In summer 2015, Fitzpatrick, who had previously played a pivotal role in modernising the homelessness legislation in both Scotland and Wales, chaired an independent review panel, convened by the charity Crisis, which recommended a radical expansion in single homeless people's legal entitlements in England [5.1]. In shaping the Panel's recommendations, Fitzpatrick brought to bear the substantial body of research on "rights-based" approaches to addressing homelessness she has developed with Watts, and international collaborator Professor Bo Bengtsson (Uppsala University, Sweden), as well as the extensive programme of quantitative work on mapping the scale and profile undertaken with Bramley and Johnsen.

The Panel's report formed the basis of a Private Members Bill, introduced to Parliament on 29th June 2016 by Bob Blackman MP. Lord Richard Best OBE, charged with piloting the Bill through the House of Lords, opened the Second Reading debate in the House of Lords thus:

"The Bill... is indeed ground-breaking because of the fundamental change it brings to the way that homelessness is tackled in this country... The story began two years ago with a report from an inquiry... chaired by the leading academic in this field, Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick. This report showed that very many of those becoming homeless were not receiving the help they needed and that some people were being treated very badly... I suspect that no Private Member's Bill has ever had quite so much...cross-party support..." [5.2]

Having received pre-legislative scrutiny from the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, and the support of Government, The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) received Royal Assent on 27th April 2017, and came into force on 1st April 2018, accompanied by GBP72,200,000 of 'new burdens' funding. Official statistics indicate that English local authorities successfully prevented homelessness for 58,290 households during 2018/19 alone [5.3].

I-SPHERE research was also instrumental in forcing the Government to overhaul official homelessness statistics in England following a highly critical UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) report, published in December 2015, which drew extensively on what the UKSA described as I-SPHERE's "influential" Homelessness Monitor series (a series that was shortlisted for 'research project of the year' by three national newspapers in 2017) [5.4]. This UKSA Inquiry was itself prompted by the then Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Ian Duncan Smith, referring the Homelessness Monitor England 2015 to the UKSA because he disputed the challenge it laid down to the official statistics. Having found in favour of the I-SPHERE-led research team [5.5], the UKSA then launched an inquiry into the Government's own statistics [5.4] and, as a direct result, an individual case record-based national monitoring system on homelessness applications and outcomes (H-CLIC) has replaced the very basic, 'headcount' data supplied under the previous 'P1E' system [5.3].

I-SPHERE research has also significantly aided public scrutiny in this field via its profound influence on a high-profile National Audit Office (NAO) report on the Government's record on homelessness, which forced DWP and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to work more closely together on understanding and addressing its underlying causes. Matthew Wilkins, manager, MHCLG Value for Money team, NAO comments:

"I-SPHERE research provided a crucial analytical framework for our report which achieved significant press coverage and culminated in a hearing of the Committee of Public Accounts, which made recommendations that the Government has responded to. It is therefore fair to say that the assistance of I-SPHERE researchers contributed to delivering specific public policy change in homelessness."

Revolutionising rough sleepers' support across the UK

Rough sleeping in England has doubled since 2010, but traditional 'housing readiness'-focused, highly conditional interventions remained dominant in the UK, even as the success of the US-inspired Housing First approach became increasingly apparent across many other European countries. Johnsen, drawing on a wealth of philosophically-informed I-SPHERE research on enforcement, social control and interventionism in homelessness, was an early advocate of Housing First in the UK, which sees permanent housing offered as a first, rather than last, response for homeless people with complex support needs. Our research has now seen this evidence-based model adopted by both leading charities and governments across the country. Specifically, Fitzpatrick, drawing on the work of Bramley, Johnsen and Watts, was instrumental in shaping the content and recommendations of a Centre for Social Justice report [5.6] that persuaded the then Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, to back Housing First, securing its inclusion in the May 2017 Conservative Manifesto and subsequently GBP28,000,000 of funding in the November 2017 Budget [5.7].

More broadly, I-SPHERE's "Hard Edges" research, cited in the 2015 UK Budget [5.8], has fundamentally reframed charity/government understanding of homelessness, rough sleeping and complex support needs. For example, this and other I-SPHERE research was extensively referenced as the underlying evidence base for the national "Rough Sleeping Strategy" for England published in August 2018 [5.9].

Matt Howarth, Scottish Government Homelessness Unit, comments in relation to the parallel "Hard Edges Scotland" report, that *"it has had a significant impact on Scottish Government thinking and policy making in relation to improving outcomes for those facing severe and multiple disadvantage. On publication, Scottish Ministers asked officials to consider its implications for developing better joined up policy and practice, and it is has influenced key strategic documents and current collaborative working."* The rapid, cross-sectoral momentum generated by this research directly informed the Scottish Government's commitment in the 2019 Programme for Government to develop a "national vision for severe, multiple disadvantage" and to establish an "Inclusive Scotland Fund" of GBP10,000,000 to contribute towards the delivery of this vision.

I-SPHERE research has also been core to the fundamental shift towards Housing First in Scotland. Josh Littlejohn MBE, co-founder of Social Bite, a leading Scottish homelessness charity comments, *"I-SPHERE research has revolutionised the approach taken to homelessness policy in Scotland. Their work was crucial in our decision to commit GBP3,000,000 of publicly donated funds from our Sleepout to the Housing First model."*

In June 2018, Kevin Stewart, Housing Minister, announced new investment of GBP21,000,000 in 'rapid rehousing' for homeless people, including GBP4,000,000 for Housing First services in five Scottish cities. This investment was based on the recommendations of the First Minister-appointed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG), of which Fitzpatrick was a member and Watts an expert advisor [5.10]. Arising directly from the HARSAG work, Fitzpatrick is now chairing a Prevention Review Group, at the invitation of the Scottish Government, to bring forward legislative proposals to extend more robust homelessness prevention duties to a range of public bodies.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] Report of Independent Review of the Legal Duties Owed to Homeless People in England (see p.5, and footnotes 12,14,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26) – see linked quote from Lord Best in House of Lords in main text above/Ref 5.2 below).

[5.2] Hansard, -Second Reading Debate of HRA (2017) in House of Lords

[5.3] Statutory homelessness, January to March (Q1) 2019: England (Table 1).

[5.4] UK Statistics Authority report–references to *Homelessness Monitor* (see paras 2.14, 3.19), confirming I-SPHERE research was pivotal to overhaul of homelessness statistics in England.

[5.5] UK Statistics Authority – response from Andrew Dilnot (CED) to Ian Duncan Smith (Secretary of State for Work and Pensions) – see link with report above in Ref 4, esp Para 6.

[5.6] Centre for Social Justice (2017) Housing First: Housing-led solutions to rough sleeping and homelessness (p26, 27, 33, 46, 48, 52, 68).

[5.7] E-mail correspondence from Member of Parliament (MP), Communities Secretary, evidencing the link between Centre for Social Justice report (Ref 5.6) and a) Conservative Manifesto 2017 commitment to HF and b) Budget 2017 announcement of £28M for the programme in England.

[5.8] HM Treasury Budget 2015, Mention of *Hard Edges* research in main Budget document (p30, Footnote 57).

[5.9] Rough Sleeping Strategy England (p16-19, endnotes on p74).

[5.10] Letter from Member of Scottish Parliament (MSP), Minister for Local Government and Housing and Planning, confirming additional investment for repaid rehousing of homeless people.