Day Centres for Homeless People:

Spaces of Care or Fear?

Sarah Johnsen [1]
Paul Cloke [2]
Jon May [3]

Final Print Ready Version

16 April 2005

1. Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, Heslington, York, Y010 5DD, UK, phone +44 (0) 1904 -321-485, email SJ510@york.ac.uk

2. School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol, University Road, Bristol, BS8 1SS, UK, phone +44-(0)117-928-830, email P.Cloke@bristol.ac.uk

3. Department of Geography, Queen Mary, University of London, Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS, UK, phone +44-(0)20-7882-5427, email j.may@qmul.ac.uk

Abstract

It is now widely argued that the contemporary city is becoming an increasingly hostile environment for homeless people. As basic street survival strategies are criminalised and public space 'purified' of those whose 'spoiled' identities threaten to 'taint' fellow members of the public, city authorities seem to have turned from a position of 'malign neglect' to more obviously punitive measures designed to contain and control homeless people. Less widely acknowledged but equally prevalent, however, is a parallel rise in the 'urge to care'; evident in the growing number of night shelters, hostels, and day centres emerging in recent years to provide shelter and sustenance to homeless people. This paper contributes to a small but growing body of work examining the development of the 'spaces of care' springing up in the interstices of a 'revanchist' city, by examining the development and internal dynamics of day centres for homeless people in the United Kingdom. Drawing upon a national survey of service providers, and a series of interviews and participant observations with day centre staff and users, the paper argues that day centres act as important sources of material resource and refuge for a highly stigmatised group. However, it warns against the romantic tendencies implicit in the notion of 'spaces of care', emphasising that what for one person may operate as a 'space of care' might, for another, be experienced as a space of fear. The paper concludes by noting the ambiguity and fragility of such spaces within the wider 'revanchist' city.

Key words: homelessness, revanchist, day centre, space of care

Introduction

Academics have examined in detail the ways in which homeless people are increasingly being rendered 'out of place' in public space because of the ways in which their presence disturbs the economics and aesthetics of a 're-vitalised' urban environment (Cresswell 1996; Mair, 1986; Ruddick, 1996; Snow and Anderson 1993). There thus now exists a significant body of work documenting the increasing exclusion of homeless people from what Duncan (1983) calls 'prime' city space because of mainstream society's concern that their 'spoiled' identities (Goffman 1968) might in some way taint or infect such spaces and, by extension, the identities of others using those spaces. This 'purification' of public space (Sibley 1995) has occurred on two main fronts. First, recent years have seen a marked proliferation of ordinances designed to criminalise basic street survival strategies (Mitchell 1995, 1997). Second, the 'strategic armoury of the city against the poor' (Davis 1992: 160) has seen both ever more stringent policing and the introduction of manipulative architectural features (for example, 'bum proof' bus seats and sprinkler systems) designed to make it more difficult for homeless people to occupy key spaces of the central city (see also Soja 2000). In light of these developments, Mitchell (2001) has argued that we have in fact moved from an earlier 'malign neglect' of homeless people (Wolch and Dear, 1993) towards a more obviously punitive urban regime within which it is difficult if not impossible for "homeless and other street people simply to *live* (at least without breaking any laws)" (Mitchell 2001: 63, emphasis in original). Accordingly, Smith (1996) has charted the evolution of a 'revanchist' city, defined by the vengefulness of the middle classes against the poor and within which homeless people have to all intents and purposes become 'walking exiles' (Knowles, 2000a).

Such developments are indeed depressingly widespread with a number of cities across the United States, Canada and Britain now deploying a range of punitive measures designed to control and contain homeless people if not simply sweep them off the streets (Knowles, 2000a, 2000b; Ruddick, 1996; Wardhaugh, 2000). Yet however widespread the revanchist turn, care needs to be taken lest a focus upon control and containment blinds us to other developments. Not least, even as attention has been turned towards the ways in which

homeless people are increasingly being excluded from the prime spaces of the city, others have noted an upsurge in charitable care evident in the growing numbers of night shelters, hostels and day centres emerging in recent years to provide sustenance and shelter to homeless people (MacLeod, 2002). Thus, DeVerteuil (unpublished manuscript), for example, has recognised that concomitant with attempts to clear homeless people from the streets of Los Angeles there has been a rapid growth in the urban shelter system, with the number of emergency beds in the region increasing by no less than 20% between 1996 and 2000. In the UK too, even as the British government and urban managers have adopted an increasingly aggressive stance towards street homeless people, the number of night shelters and 'direct access' hostels (over 95% of which are provided by non-statutory organisations) almost doubled through the 1990s (May et al, forthcoming a; May et al, under review). Hence, geographers are slowly beginning to identify a second, if still not widely acknowledged, side to the 'revanchist' city: the various 'spaces of care' (Conradson, 1999, 2003) springing up in the interstices of a more hostile urban environment to offer comfort and care to those excluded from prime city space (Cooper, 2001; Parr, 2000, 2003). Catering to a wide variety of client groups, the vast majority of such services are provided by non-statutory/not-for-profit or charitable organisations. As mainstream statutory welfare services have been cut or out-sourced, the number of such organisations has grown significantly over the past two decades both in the US and Britain (for a review see Fyfe and Milligan, 2003).

Within a small but growing literature by geographers exploring this thematic, such spaces tend to be portrayed both as sites of material resource (particularly important as the availability of mainstream welfare resources declines) but also, and equally importantly, as spaces of refuge. For example, as Cooper has recognised, whilst the food offered by soup kitchens and day centres may be vital in helping to meet the basic nutritional requirements of those who otherwise find it difficult to afford enough to eat, such services may also provide spaces of security and stability where homeless people 'don't need to be tough to survive' and may temporarily discontinue the more aggressive performances entered in to on the streets for the purposes of their own protection (2001: 118). In a similar vein, Conradson's (2003)

reading of community drop-in centres reveals the potential of such centres to provide a genuine space of 'therapeutic encounter' that can aid in the personal growth of those suffering from the lack of self esteem that so often accompanies material deprivation. Finally, Parr (2000) has suggested that drop-in services for people with mental health problems might usefully be understood as 'spaces of licence'. This licence, she explains, is achieved via a collaboration between staff and service users to produce an environment where 'unusual norms' and 'unusual normal performances' are rendered acceptable: such that unconventional bodily aesthetics and behaviours may be expressed free from the threat of 'othering' that accompanies such behaviours in less forgiving public space (Parr 2000).

But, and surprisingly perhaps given the role that homeless people have played in wider discussions of the 'revanchist' city (Mitchell, 2001; Smith, 1996), there remains very little literature exploring these themes specifically in relation to homelessness (though see Cooper, 2001). In Britain at least, day centres have been an important feature of homeless service networks for many years (Llewellin and Murdoch 1996) and are relied upon by both 'visibly' and 'hidden' homeless people (those living on the streets or in hostels, or staying in squats or with friends or relatives respectively) (Reeve and Coward 2004; Robinson and Coward 2003). Yet, the services themselves have received far less research attention than accommodation-based responses to homelessness (Fitzpatrick et al. 2000). Indeed, with the exception of Waters' (1992) *Community or Ghetto? An Analysis of Day Centres for Single Homeless People* – which remains the last comprehensive reference point in the United Kingdom – existing literature consists almost exclusively of good practice guides (e.g. Ball and Randall, 1999; Cooper 1997; Cooper et al. 1999; Gordon 1997; Homeless Link 2004; Llewllin and Murdoch 1996). As a consequence, our understanding of the role that day centres currently play in the lives of homeless people remains severely limited.

In an attempt to redress this gap this paper explores the structural characteristics, development and internal dynamics of day centres for homeless people in Britain. The paper draws upon a national survey of service providers and interviews and participant observations in day centres for single[1] homeless people throughout Britain. The structural characteristics of

the services were explored by means of a national survey examining the organisational affiliation, history, ethos, facilities, funding, and staffing arrangements of day centres across England, Scotland and Wales (outside of London)[2]. The survey mailing list was compiled from records on the Resource Information Service's 'UK Advice Finder' on-line database and Homeless Link's 'National Day Centres Project' membership directory, together with additional information provided by a variety of organisations serving homeless people across Britain, including national and local charities, local authorities, and other homeless service providers (e.g. hostel managers). The questionnaire was piloted with ten day centre managers in London, before being distributed to projects outside the capital. Where possible, non-respondents were contacted and asked to participate in a telephone survey. In total, 165 project managers were involved in the survey, with 139 returning the postal questionnaire and 26 participating in the telephone survey, giving an overall response rate of 64%.

A more nuanced understanding of the internal dynamics of such spaces was gained during a 15 month period of intensive interviewing and participant observations in seven towns and cities throughout England (Banbury, Bristol, Bodmin, Doncaster, Dorchester, Scarborough and Worcester). Here, the research team conducted over 200 semi-structured interviews with project managers, paid and volunteer staff, homeless service users, and other key informants (for example, representatives of Local Authorities and the Police). Interviews with managers typically focussed on the history and ethos of the project, as well as the aspirations of, and difficulties encountered by, service providers, whilst staff interviews examined the motivations of employees and the challenges they face in trying to translate project ethos into practice. Service user interviews typically explored homeless people's life histories, survival tactics, and experiences of day centres and other emergency services, interviews with key informants the role of day centres in local initiatives aimed at combating street homelessness. The interviewing schedule was complemented by intensive overt participant observation in nine day centres. Here, a member of the research team worked as a volunteer or simply 'hung out' with service users – talking informally and participating in the daily life of the centres. Such work enabled sustained observation of the complex dynamics

shaping day centres, and proved invaluable in developing relationships of trust with service users who can otherwise be wary of talking with 'outsiders'. All names of individuals, organisations and services used in the following text are pseudonyms. Key demographic details pertaining to interviewees may be found in Appendix A.

The remainder of the paper is comprised of three sections. The first traces the emergence and basic characteristics of Britain's day centres, the second the role of day centres in providing a space of resource and refuge for homeless people. In the final section, however, we warn against romanticising this notion of refuge. Rather, we suggest that the extent to which day centres operate as 'spaces of care' depends upon the coming together of three dynamics: the guiding principle and ethos of different organisations, and the type of environment they seek to create; interactions between staff and service users; and the complex relationships between the different groups of homeless people using a centre. Though providing essential services for homeless people, such dynamics render the day centre an ambiguous and fragile space – as likely to emerge as a space of fear as a space of care for many homeless people.

The emergence and characteristics of day centres for homeless people

The number of day centres and community drop-ins increased significantly in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s as a community response to social welfare restructuring and the decline in statutory service provision for marginalised groups (Conradson 1999). Our survey data indicate that this is certainly true of day centres for single homeless people. Although a few (2%) of the projects involved in the survey dated back to the Victorian era or even earlier, 82% had developed since 1980, and 61% since 1990. Provision continues to be strongly dominated by the not-for-profit sector – with 85% of survey projects being run by churches and other voluntary/charitable organisations, 6% by Housing Associations, only 2% by statutory bodies, and 1% by private individuals. 88% of the projects had registered charity status, and 48% were part of or linked to a larger organisation or partnership (e.g. The Salvation Army, YMCA, Foyer Federation).

In tracing the history of case study projects, it appears that most day centres began as small-scale endeavours (often in the form of soup runs or soup kitchens) set up by local members of the public in response to specific and identified local needs – for example, following the death of a well-known rough sleeper. Whilst not true of *all* day services, the vast majority of case study projects had religious roots and were, at their outset, almost entirely dependent on donated resources and volunteer labour (typically of church members performing a range of Christian ethos[3]). From these rather modest beginnings, individual projects appear to have followed one of three main developmental trajectories.

Within the first group, are those organisations which have remained 'true' to their original aims, seeing provision for the poor and needy as part of their duty as Christians. Today, these projects typically offer only a basic level of service and remain almost entirely dependent on volunteer labour and donated resources. For a number of these, active (but very rarely aggressive) proselytisation may comprise an important part of their 'ministry'. Projects developing along the lines of the second trajectory tend to have retained their original religious ethos – this being overtly expressed in the way services are provided – but have 'professionalised' in the sense that the majority of staff are paid and service users are provided with a greater range of facilities and higher levels of support to move into independent living. For a third group, services have 'professionalised' in a similar way but the organisation has relinquished its original religious ethos in favour of a more secular approach, actively pursuing statutory grants even if this means altering the form of service delivery. For these day centres, religious roots tend to remain in palimpsestual form only (for example, in the project title) and no longer act as a driving force defining the nature of service provision.

To these three groups (with obvious religious roots) may be added a fourth which has evolved (indirectly) out of the (secular) statutory sector. These projects were most commonly set up by former social workers witnessing first-hand the challenges faced by homeless people (especially those under the age of 25) and frustrated by the plethora of barriers impeding their access to services. As a consequence, these highly motivated individuals left the statutory sector and developed their own voluntary or charitable organisation to redress

gaps in existing service networks. The resultant projects have tended to be highly 'professionalised' from the outset: employing paid staff, utilising statutory grants, and offering intensive support to service users.

Given their divergent developmental paths it is inevitable that day centres vary significantly in terms of their structural characteristics and the manner in which services are provided. All cater for the basic physical needs of homeless people, but most also offer essential advice, information and signposting services. Figure 1 shows that nearly all (90%) of the 165 survey projects provided food, hot drinks and/or basic advice (about the location of emergency accommodation, for example). Bathing and laundry facilities were offered by 65% and 55% of the projects respectively. Higher levels of support in the form of resettlement services were provided by 61% of survey projects, and a lesser, though still significant, proportion of day centres had branched out into other specialist services such as medical care, specialist advice/advocacy, education, and outreach.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Yet, as Waters (1992: 6) has argued, day centres for single homeless people continue to be "viewed and treated as the unprofessional and Cinderella subsidiary of direct housing provision" within the homelessness sector. As a consequence, providers typically struggle to deliver services in the face of severe funding constraints, fragile staffing bases, inadequate buildings and, often, in the face of public opposition. Indeed, 28% of survey projects operated with a budget of less than £25,000 in the 2000/2001 financial year. Although statutory funding (for example, *Rough Sleepers Initiative* or *Homelessness Action Programme* monies) was very important to a number of projects, contributing at least 75% of the total income of 28% of projects and being the sole financial provider for 13%, projects were on the whole more reliant on donations from charitable trusts, members of the public, the corporate sector and the national lottery. Such sources are inevitably less reliable than statutory funding and almost half (47%) of day centre managers expressed a desire to increase the reliability and sustainability of funding sources because the instability of current arrangements impaired

long-term planning. In an attempt to make up for resource shortfalls, the vast majority of projects thus accepted donations of gifts in kind. 45% of the survey projects, for example, relied on donated goods for at least half of the food served, and 13% were reliant on donations for their entire food supply. Likewise, 64% of the projects were reliant on gifts in kind for at least 75% of the clothing supplied, and 54% of projects for all of the clothing.

Such donations offer clear evidence of a broader charitable impulse rarely given space in discussions of homelessness in the mainstream geographical literature, where themes of stigma and exclusion continue to predominate (see, for example, Mitchell, 2001; Smith, 1996; Takahashi, 1996). But given the unpredictability and sporadic nature of such donations, many day centres continue to operate on a subsistence basis, struggling to generate the resources needed to function day-to-day. On this account, the following comment from Sally, the manager of a case study day centre, was not atypical:

> *I can't quite believe that we keep going … we have really severe funding problems … the next thing we are facing is that unless we can get a big trenche of core funding, either through Supporting People or locally, eventually those charitable sources will run out … We're struggling along really… (Sally, Day Centre Manager, Banbury)*

Volunteer labour is also vital in supporting the work of most day centres. In fact, no less than 88% of survey projects utilised the services of volunteer staff in some capacity – usually for cooking, cleaning, serving food and/or socialising with service users, but sometimes for providing formal advice (regarding welfare benefits for example) or assisting in resettlement. Unfortunately, constraints of funding dictated that only 50% of day centres offered training for all paid and volunteer staff involved in advice and advocacy, and that which was provided was predominantly conducted in-house.

In the early 1990s Waters (1992: 74) concluded that day centre buildings typically dictated services rather than served needs, and were commonly experienced by service users and staff as "substandard, depressing and institutional". In 2001, only 9% of survey projects were housed in purpose-built premises. Over half (52%) operated in converted buildings such as warehouses, factories, shops, offices, residential houses, garages, and former churches. 17% were located in existing churches and 9% in community centres[4]. The quality of

building interior remains a problem for many centres, as when asked to assess the condition of their premises on a likert scale, only 55% of project managers classified their centre as 'homely' (as opposed to institutional), 42% as 'spacious' (as opposed to cramped), and 27% as 'new'.

To compound matters, and as is typical of other services for homeless people (Dear and Wolch 1987; Dear et al. 1994; Ruddick 1996), the majority of day centres are located in run-down inner city areas characterised by high levels of crime, prostitution and illicit drug use. This raises issues regarding the safety of staff and service users who must navigate such spaces to access day centres and, furthermore, reinforces negative perceptions regarding the value of individuals needing to use the services at a time when their feelings of self worth are at an all-time low (Rowe and Wolch 1990). This being so, many of our case study day centres still encountered vociferous opposition from neighbouring residents anxious that their existence might attract 'undesirables'. In this vein, a member of staff in a day centre in Worcester claimed of local residents that:

> *I think they'd love for us to shut down 'cos then they [homeless people] wouldn't be here either ... We're just seen as part of the problem it feels sometimes. Again, if we wasn't here, neither would the clients, kind of that mentality. (Ann, Key worker, Worcester)*

In summary, day centres generally have their roots in small-scale projects set up as a direct response to local need by concerned members of the public. They have evolved in divergent ways, so today take a range of forms and articulate their charitable impulses in different ways. Yet, still regarded as 'Cinderella subsidiaries' within the sector (Waters 1992), most day centres operate in less than ideal circumstances – perpetually subject to unstable funding bases, fragile staffing arrangements, and public opposition. One might question, therefore, the degree to which they are able to offer 'spaces of care' for homeless people in the contemporary (revanchist) city. This question is the principal focus for the remainder of the paper.

Spaces of resource and refuge

At first sight, the most obvious function of day centres for homeless people is the creation of a space of material resource. Together with soup runs (Johnsen et al. forthcoming), day centres are often the only accessible means of clothing, bathing facilities, daytime shelter, and essential nutrition available to rough sleepers. The basic sustenance acquired via such services is, as Evans and Dowler (1999: 180) point out, vital simply to 'keep homeless people alive'. They are also often essential for making up shortfalls in income from welfare benefits for those housed in temporary or insecure accommodation. On this account, Zara[5], a 19 year old 'hidden homeless' woman who was staying with a friend explained during one of her regular visits to a local day centre that:

> *I never ever got money. Only get £82 every two weeks … I've never got food. The only*
> *time I ever have food is when I come in here. (Zara, Service user, Bristol)*

In providing such material resources, day centres minimise the need for many homeless people to resort to what Carlen (1996) refers to as 'survivalist crime'. This outcome was most tellingly exhibited when a member of the research team was conducting an informal group interview with three rough sleepers in a rural town that had no day centre. During this conversation one of the men stripped down to his underwear and began to bathe himself with a packet of 'wet wipes', announcing that he had stolen them that very morning "because there are no showers in this bloody town". Similarly, several other homeless interviewees admitted that they regularly shoplifted food when the day centres in their respective towns were closed (usually during the weekends)[6].

But for many homeless people day centres offer much more than spaces of material resource. They also operate as important environments of sociality and refuge from stigma – a 'space of care' (Conradson 2003). For those housed in temporary accommodation, for example, day centres may provide their only means of alleviating loneliness and social isolation. In this vein, the staff of a case study day centre often had difficulty removing one particular service user from the premises at closing time. The individual concerned (aged in his 50s and resident in a local B&B) would beg to be allowed to stay "to just sit here quietly

for a while with a cup of tea", claiming he was "starved of conversation". By engaging in light-hearted banter and listening more seriously to his concerns, the staff clearly offered conditions conducive to a therapeutic encounter (Gordon 1999). The primary outcome of similar such encounters was described simply by Dale as follows:

> *You come here because after sleeping rough for the night you're cold and you're depressed and you're beat up, so you come here to get warm, to get a wash etcetera, and that cheers you up and kick-starts your day. (Dale, Service user, Worcester)*

Day centres also offer a space of refuge from the threat of physical assault which commonly plagues those who are roofless (Dean 1999) and (in some instances) respite from frightening and/or depressing institutional hostel environments (Garside et al. 1990; Ham 1996; Harrison 1996; May et al, under review). John, for example, claimed of his hostel that:

> *John: It's dead heavy, it's dead hard, it's dead aggressive, because of the drugs, because of drugs, they just don't give a hoot ... The whole place is a barrel of gunpowder waiting for a spark. It's not like – it's all knives and all this and all that, you know what I mean? Sort of threatening you with an empty syringe, you know what I mean? ... The less time I'm there the better I feel about it like.*
> *Interviewer: Is that why you spend time in the day centres?*
> *John: It's bloody safer [here in the day centre] than being there. (John, Service user, Worcester)*

Moreover, in offering services as seemingly basic as showering and laundry facilities, day centres also provide a means of mitigating the stigma associated with life on the street. Pete, for example, recalls the stigma he felt when sleeping rough in a town with no established day centre:

> *During the day, I think that's the hardest part about being on the street, because, like, if you're looking a bit rough people look at you and think, 'Ooh, that scruffy cunt', but it's not your fault, you know what I mean? (Pete, Service user, Doncaster)*

Sam, another homeless man in the same city described the despair he feels when forced outdoors into an urban environment that doesn't want him as residents have to leave the city's only night shelter each morning:

> *I've got nowhere to go during the day, you know what I mean? ... Here you get kicked out at half past eight in the morning and get woken up at seven, and people are up and about until about half past twelve/one o'clock so by the time you get to sleep you're not getting enough sleep so you're feeling really drowsy and grumpy in the mornings and having to go out in the cold. It's just – I can't handle it really. (Sam, Service user, Doncaster)*

For Pete, Sam, and others like them in towns with no daytime facilities for homeless people, an average day consists of a constant search for spaces that are warm, dry and safe. On this account Tracey explains that:

> *In the day basically all I do is just sit in train stations, bus stations, anywhere just to keep warm. If I've got any money I'll sit in a café for an hour. ... and then we just wander around the streets ... If you haven't really got nowhere to go during the day, then there's nowt else for you to do. (Tracey, Service user, Doncaster)*

Such 'wanderings' inevitably necessitate complex negotiations of city space with other homeless people, members of the public, shop owners, the police and so on. By opening their doors, day centres thus provide an important space for homeless people simply to 'be' and 'belong' when they have no place to call their own. In so doing, they offer an environment where homeless people may drop the pretence so often adopted to justify their presence in other environments (for example, pretending to read in libraries, or sipping water from Styrofoam cups in coffee shops) (Cooper 2001; Knowles 2000a, 2000b; Ruddick 1996).

By offering a space of refuge in an increasingly harsh urban environment, day centres might therefore usefully be understood as operating as a key site in a wider 'geography of licence' (Goffman 1961; see also Sharp et al. 2000) which is tolerant of, and to some degree even welcomes, the expression of difference. The day centre is thus a place where an individual's homeless status – conferred 'other' in most contexts – becomes the 'norm'. Consequently, as Parr (2000) notes of drop-ins for people with mental health problems, bodily appearances, odours, and certain behaviours (for example, sleeping under a table) that might be deemed 'odd' or 'inappropriate' elsewhere, are accepted. The following excerpt from our field work diary describes one particular incident illustrating just such an expression of licence:

> The elderly man with a scraggly beard, quite emaciated and dressed in a filthy grey trenchcoat was seated by himself at the table behind us, eyes half closed and chin on chest, incessantly mumbling to himself as he usually does. At one point the volume of his voice rose dramatically and he began to swear profusely, appearing to be very upset (although nothing inadvertent had happened). One of the other service users seated at my table called out to him 'You're alright Bob' and then re-entered our conversation,

seemingly unphased. The old guy immediately calmed down, and resumed mumbling quietly in his usual manner... I've witnessed this happen on several different occasions. It appears that his mumbling is quietly accepted by the other service users who only intervene (and then kindly) when he gets genuinely upset by whatever is going on in his head... (Fieldnotes, Worcester, 12/2/03)

In this way, informal collaboration between service users allows for the expression of difference – or what Parr (2000) calls 'unusual norms' – and provides a degree of stability within which different behaviour codings are allowed and even perpetuated.

Yet, we must also warn against the potential romanticisation of such 'spaces of care', for whilst unusual norms may be tolerated there still exists (as in any setting) judgement regarding degrees of normalcy and deviancy expressed through peer pressure and policing. Day centres clearly offer important spaces of resource and refuge for many homeless people, but it would be a mistake to assume that the 'licence' referred to above extends to all people equally, or that individuals' experiences within such environments are uniformly positive. On the contrary, the manner in which care is provided, and consumed, is highly variable. In fact, what for some homeless people might constitute a therapeutic 'space of care' can, for others, be perceived as a 'space of fear'. Such complexities inspire careful consideration of the factors shaping the internal dynamics of care within the day centre.

'Spaces of care' … *and* fear

Whilst inextricably linked in practice, it is possible to identify three factors which coalesce in different ways to create very different infrastructural, social, and emotional dynamics within day centres. First, though virtually all day centres share the fundamental aim of providing a safe, warm and welcoming environment to those excluded from mainstream services (Llewellin and Murdoch 1996; Waters 1992), the organisations providing them are founded upon quite different forms of *ethos* or 'impulses toward care' (Cloke et al, forthcoming). In her earlier analyses of British day centres, Waters (1992) provides a useful framework that distinguishes between three main types of approach that, though not mutually exclusive, serve to illuminate differences in the range of ideological emphases represented. Rooted in

Christian philanthropy, the first of these aims to provide a non-interventionist place of *acceptance* where service users may just 'be'. Service provision in centres employing the second approach is conditional upon the expression of a desire for *rehabilitation and change*. The third approach is one of *empowerment* – where resources and advice to facilitate the transition toward mainstream society is provided, but where service users are free to choose their level of engagement with these services.

The mission statements of organisations operating day centres were collated via our national survey of service providers in an attempt to capture a sense of the ethos of individual projects. Whilst being conscious of problems inherent in accepting such statements at face value – not least the overlaps between these 'statements of intent' and the differing degrees to which such statements will be enacted by members of staff within a given project (see below) – we believe that such narratives are indicative of the key moral and ethical prompts to day centre provision within Britain. Of the 91 survey projects providing details of ethos, 43% emphasised non-interventionist acceptance, 44% empowerment, and only 13% rehabilitation and change. Supporting interview material from the case studies confirms that the fundamental difference between these forms of ethos is the emphasis placed on the conditions of receipt of care. The Church Centre in Bristol, for example, aims to provide an atmosphere of acceptance and has a completely open door policy, such that service users may access all services free of charge and without condition:

> *[Here] you can just come in, nobody's going to challenge you, ask who you are, take your name, address, anything else, and the ethos is about just welcoming people, making them feel at home in any way, and trying to provide the kind of services that you would get in a home. ... Our fundamental belief is that people need acceptance first, and the experience of many people who come here is that they are quite badly damaged in all kinds of ways, often over a long history, and they are often made to feel second-class and inferior, and we want to make people first of all feel accepted. (Bill, Manager, Church Centre, Bristol)*

In contrast, The HALO in Dorchester ascribes more to the rehabilitation and change approach. There, meals and facilities are free, but sustained receipt of services is contingent upon service users' desire to alter their behaviour and/or lifestyle:

Rough sleepers are allowed two meal tickets a week in the winter and one in summer. But saying that, if they're in a care plan and they're getting out of the street life, they wanna give up drugs, they wanna give up alcohol, they wanna make a change in their life, then we'll support them every day. But they have to be seen to be doing something, because I don't advocate keeping someone on the street. I won't give them a meal ticket so they can go and spend their money on drugs and alcohol. So it's about give and take here, you know, like meet me half way. (Irene, Manager, The HALO, Dorchester)

Finally, day centres aimed at empowering homeless people tend not to place conditions on receipt of services *per se*, but encourage service users to take responsibility for various aspects of their lives. The policy of The Lighthouse Day Centre regarding payment for meals is a case in point:

The ethos is centred around encouraging people to be aware that they do have to pay for certain things, and they do have to budget for certain things, and that food is actually an important part of that budgeting ... Hence we charge a pound per dinner ... The aim is not to try and force people down roads, but to provide opportunity ... I can't fix somebody's life, because the life I fix for them might not be one they like, but I can make opportunities happen where possible; I can provide services; I can provide access to services in order for people to make their own path ... It's empowerment, all down the line. (Robert, Manager, The Lighthouse Day Centre, Bristol)

The ethos of individual projects is clearly a key factor defining the rules and regulations that are upheld within. These in turn serve to create very different atmospheres in different day centres – some of which are more appealing to certain individuals than others. Whilst some people resent the imposition of 'strict' rules, others appreciate the more controlled environment afforded by such regulations. Sean, for example, noted of The Lighthouse Day Centre:

You tend to find that [some people] don't use this place - you know what I mean - they'd rather use places like The Basement - it's a bit quieter - you know what I mean - and it's - different clientele altogether, different clientele altogether. (Sean, Service user, Bristol)

The influence of project ethos and rules on shaping the codes of conduct within day centres is so strong that service users commonly alter their behaviour in an attempt to 'fit in' and avoid transgressing the boundaries of acceptability. On this note, Phil explained of one particular day centre that:

You tend to get a much gentler type of person in there, goes in there, for a start off. That goes without saying straightaway. And also the conversation in there, no one seems to swear in there, you won't hear bad language ... It's out of respect. There are posters of

Christ on the wall. They have free bibles. I think it's a bit like it's drummed into you as a child. You don't steal from a church, very, very wrong. And that's almost locked into everyone's head from a very young age and it sticks. So when you enter a Christian café you tend to behave in a slightly... You tend to moderate your behaviour to fit. It's the last bit of the jigsaw puzzle going in. You fit in. You make yourself fit. You alter your behaviour to fit. (Phil, Service user, Bristol)

But it is the interactions between staff and service users that have the most pronounced influence on how ethos is enacted, and experienced, in practice. The second major factor shaping the internal dynamics of day centres is therefore the relationships between project staff and clients. Literature examining hostels for homeless people has consistently identified staff/client relationships as the most important feature influencing the experiences of residents (Ann Rosengard and Associates 2001; Garside et al. 1990; Ham 1996; Harrison 1996; Neale 1997). Accordingly, such interactions proved to be key in shaping the experiences of people using day centres (see also Emberson 2002). It is within this relationship that homeless people receive support to move toward independent living, but equally importantly, that feelings of self worth might be fostered during what is inevitably a tremendously stressful period of life. For service users, the most positive interactions with staff would seem to be ones that construct the day centre as a genuine space of licence that minimises difference and provides an environment free from the stigma experienced elsewhere. Accordingly, 'good' staff are those who minimise feelings of 'otherness' by, for example:

...mingling with the service users, making them feel welcome and adding to an atmosphere of relaxation, somewhere where they don't feel as though they're not the norm. (Stuart, Key worker, Bristol)

However, the ability of staff to foster these relationships in an atmosphere of refuge and freedom from othering is often fundamentally compromised by the realities of working in an under-resourced sector involving direct contact with desperate people. In the early 1990s Waters (1992) noted that staff shortages and 'distressingly inadequate' resource levels were common in day centres, and these issues continue to be a problem today. Indeed, several of our case study day centres struggled to maintain the resource and staffing levels necessary to open on a day-to-day basis, placing staff under great pressure, and sometimes even failing to open due to staff shortages (even whilst service users waited outside). For example, Kate

recounted her experience of having to cover for absent colleagues 'on the floor' (i.e. co-supervising the main dining/recreation area) in one of these projects as follows:

I virtually haven't done anything as far as my job remit is concerned because I'm always having to cover on the floor, or doing things just to make sure things just sort of operate on a shoe string. So, yeah, and that has had a knock-on effect of making morale really low and people are off sick a lot and people don't feel like they're supported… It's just, on top of having to deal with all the stuff you deal with on the floor … It's like, you do whatever you do to make sure the drop-in opens and that's it. It's just like everything seems to be down to the bottom line of the budget. (Kate, Key worker, Bristol)

For day centre staff, dealing with 'all the stuff' alluded to by Kate frequently involves listening to disturbing tales of abuse and injustice, handling stressed service users, and resolving (sometimes potentially violent) conflicts. The potential volatility of such an environment is made all the more acute by substance dependencies and mental health problems which have become increasingly prevalent amongst the homeless population in recent years (Bines 1997; Croft-White and Parry-Crooke 2004; Danczuk 2000; Neale 2001; Fountain and Howes 2002; Pleace and Quilgars 1997, Pleace et al. 1997). On this account another member of staff, Cara, confessed that:

I find it quite scary because you can't always judge how people… If they're really drunk or on high levels of drugs, or you're not very confident with them or don't know them very well, that can be quite intimidating in a sense because you're not quite sure how the situation could turn out. Even if you know someone really really well and they're extremely drunk or they've taken drugs, you can't always predict can you how that will turn out. And that can be quite scary. (Cara, Key worker, Bristol)

Similarly, in another day centre Sandra explained that:

The most worrying thing for me was how to identify and build relationships with clients because on occasions there's been some sticky situations where people… I've been aware that people coming in have severe mental health problems and have violent histories, and that is very difficult… I have to humour them. Or it's really going on gut instinct and learning how to deal with somebody so as not to antagonise them because it's an open-plan office with other clients and only a desk between myself and a client – you've really got to be very careful (Sandra, Key worker, Scarborough)

Hence, even when a relaxed environment is achieved it is very fragile and may be disrupted within a moment as, for example, service users become overwhelmed by the stress of their circumstances or as personal grievances follow service users inside off the street. The following incident, recorded in our field work diary shortly after two regular service users

were given 'bans' from the day centre in question because of rule infringements, was a case in point:

> Returned to X day centre just after 12:30pm. Steve and Patrick were standing in the foyer, shouting drunkenly through the side window at a service user inside. They've both been serving bans for about a week now. Steve started yelling aggressively as I approached the door, "Hey you, lady, can you get me some food from in there, I'm fucking starving and those fuckers won't give me any". Very intimidating – especially given that several staff members and service users have already warned me about Steve's tendency to resort to violence with little provocation. Needless to say, I was more than a tad relieved when Ben (a staff member) responded to the doorbell and let me in immediately. There were 20-25ish people inside, most of whom were eating lunch silently, or talking quietly in small groups as they purveyed the situation in the foyer. 'Mad' Rex was however ranting loudly to no-one in particular (as usual) and another guy was hurling verbal abuse (replete with expletives) at Steve and Patrick through the foyer window. Frank, one of the other 'regulars', then began to abuse him, insisting loudly that he "shut the fuck up", ignore Steve and Patrick, and eat his lunch. The staff were clearly on edge and the whole place felt like a bomb about to explode… (Fieldnotes, Worcester, 23/1/03)

The stresses of such an environment can, as Stuart suggests, serve to 'harden' staff and reduce their empathy toward service users:

> *I know people can get hardened to the situation … Some people do come in and because they're a bit embarrassed about the situation, or because they have mental health issues or other issues going on, they don't always give you the full picture, and so you do get lied to … And it does tend to - at times it can make you switch off your feelings of sympathy and empathy for them. (Stuart, Key worker, Bristol)*

The ability of many day centres to create at atmosphere of refuge and relaxation is also limited by the funding constraints which mean that they are forced to operate in substandard buildings (Cooper 1997; Waters 1992). Indeed, the Chief Executive of one homelessness charity went so far as to say of his premises at the time that:

> *[This] is probably the most inappropriate place you could have to bring frightened and vulnerable people. Its cramped, overcrowded, dark, smelly. Dickensian is how I would describe it. The only saving grace is the warmth which comes from the people who work here. (Chris, Chief Executive, Homelessness Charity, Bodmin)*

Inadequate premises not only circumscribe the range of facilities that may be provided, and limit the number of service users that can be catered for, but also run the risk of reinforcing ideological distinctions between the 'professionals' providing the services and those receiving them. One project manager, for example, was concerned about the potential for her premises to send damaging messages to service users regarding their self-worth:

There's no confidentiality, as you've seen ... You're basically, in a way, saying to homeless clients 'Oh, you don't matter, you don't deserve to have private interview facilities. You can't possibly have an issue that you would want to discuss out of earshot of everybody else' (Claire, Day Centre Manager, Scarborough)

Conscious of the need to break down the them/us divide, and wary of the potential for poor quality interiors to exacerbate the stigma felt by homeless people, most day centre providers have attempted to create a cosy welcoming interior by, for example, providing soft furnishings. The maintenance of an aesthetically pleasing, welcoming and 'homely' environment is however very difficult in practice. This difficulty arises in part as a result of funding constraints, but just as importantly by the raw challenges of making the day centre open to people excluded from mainstream public spaces. In this way, day centre providers are resigned to the fact that they may (indeed are highly likely to) encounter dirty or ill bodies, unpredictable behaviour, and the trappings of lifestyles revolving around drug dependency. Although incidences of theft, violence, or disposal of drug-related 'gear' on the premises tend to be few and far between, these are realities that the majority of day centre managers face at some stage in the course of their work.

Hence, even while day centres aim to provide a space of refuge in which difference is minimised, the need to maintain the safety of staff and service users requires that they must, at least some degree, also be spaces of social control. This is partially achieved with the aid of rules governing behaviour, but also via building design and surveillance (Cooper et al., 1999). Consequently, it has become increasingly common to operate CCTV in entrance ways, install fluorescent lights in bathrooms (making it difficult for IV drug users to find a vein), or to close off "nooks and crannies where people can hide away and get up to things that they shouldn't be getting up to" (Stuart, Key worker, Bristol). Similarly, many day centres use formal reception areas to 'vet' incomers; so that individuals serving bans for previous rule infringements, or those obviously inebriated, for example, may be refused entry. Service providers thus face a major challenge, described by one day centre manager as follows:

It's a fine line between sort of creating a prison-like environment to actually making it a comfortable, warm, welcoming environment, but also safe. Difficult one. (Sally, Day Centre Manager Scarborough)

These factors encourage us to exercise caution before viewing the day centre merely as an inclusive refuge characterised by caring relations between staff and service users. Whilst the creation of such an environment may be the ultimate aim of service providers, the realities of the service spaces themselves, and complexities of the homeless lives engaged with, mean that day centres are under-girded by complex and fragile forms of social control and inter-personal relations.

The third factor shaping the internal dynamics of day centres are the relationships between different service users themselves, a consideration of which also warns against too easily identifying the day centre as a homogenous 'space of care'. Indeed, though day centres may aim to offer environments accepting of 'unusual norms' and tolerant of 'otherness', they may also be highly volatile and frightening spaces precisely because difference still exists. As Rowe and Wolch (1990) point out, homeless services inevitably expose the newly homeless to what may (for them) be alien social contexts of poverty, crime, and substance abuse. As a result, what is a space of licence for those familiar with such scenes may, for others, be a frightening place merely because it is full of homeless people. Thus, far from being spaces of refuge, for some people day centres are spaces of fear and stigma and some homeless people avoid using them for this very reason. In this regard, Adam, a hostel resident, admitted that:

The day centres, I've never been to one, they don't appeal to me, and from what I've heard they're pretty rough ... And I don't think people wanna be seen to go into them. Even now I'm embarrassed when I go out to walk back in, in case anybody sees me walking through the gate. I still have that feeling. (Adam, Service user, Worcester)

Similarly, Neil criticised the location of his town's day centre (which was in direct view of a main road) on the basis that:

If you're seen walking out of here it's like – more chance you'll get labelled. (Neil, Service user, Banbury)

Clearly, because day centres define themselves rather poignantly as places of last resort for those leading disenfranchised lives, their use can, as Waters (1992: 33) suggests, be experienced "as a public admission of being needy, or of having failed to lead lives judged according to normative standards of success".

Waters (1992) also emphasises that homeless day centre users are not a homogenous 'community'. Rather, users reflect the same diversity and prejudices inherent within wider society and which follow them in to the centre from the street. You are therefore just as likely to hear sexist, racist, or homophobic comments within a day centre as in other informal social settings (such as a pub, for example). Furthermore, day centres are almost without exception male-dominated spaces. Our survey respondents estimated that on average 74% of their service users were men and just 26% women. This gender imbalance, combined with the fragility of what can at times be an aggressive environment, means that day centres may be intimidating places for many women. Yet, even whilst some female service users interviewed spoke of feeling unsafe (to varying degrees) in such a setting, others claimed to feel comparably secure. The most confident women tended to be those attending in the company of other people (particularly a male partner), those with a reputation for asserting themselves via verbal or physical aggression when provoked, and (possibly most importantly) those with an understanding of the complex cultures and power dynamics influencing inter-personal relationships within such service spaces (May et al, forthcoming b).

Our discussions with homeless people also revealed that social relations within day centres are permeated by very different subcultures of homelessness. Crudely speaking, three main groups can be identified, differentiated by principal addictions[7]. In street nomenclature these are the 'pissheads' (alcoholics), 'smackheads' (heroin addicts), and 'straightheads' (individuals with no major substance dependencies)[8]. Outside of homeless services, these groups tend to colonise different parts of the city and do not mix to any significant degree:

> *...the two don't mix you see, if you're a drinker you're a drinker, if you're an addict, you're an addict, and if you meet each other in the street you're going to kick each others heads in ... We're the same but we're different, you know, I don't know if that even makes sense, you know. We're living in similar conditions, surviving in similar*

conditions, but our drug of choice does different things to us. (Craig, Service user, Truro)

People are very cliquey, right, very cliquey. You've got the drinkers, you've got the junkies, you've got the dope smokers – you know what I mean – and you've people who don't take nothing ... People who don't take nothing and the dope smokers get on alright, and it's the alcoholics and the smackheads and crackheads, like they don't get on with anybody – not even theirselves. (Sean, Service user, Bristol)

But though large cities may offer a range of day centres (with some becoming the preferred domain of one or more of the groups identified above), more often than not all three groups are brought together within a single project because there are no alternative options available. Much of the potential volatility of day centres, then, derives from the fact that these very different groups are brought together in confined (and often dilapidated) spaces where differences and pecking orders are accentuated. Bourgois (1995) and Tyler (1995) both note that people defined and treated as 'undesirables' or 'down and outs' typically react by creating their own hierarchies. This is certainly true of homeless day centre users who interpret the differences between the three groups according to (similar) hierarchies of stigma that they themselves enact. As a consequence, 'pissheads' see themselves as superior to 'smackheads' and vice versa, and 'straightheads' consider themselves more virtuous than either of the other two groups:

There's such snobbery. An alcoholic is obviously so much better than a junkie, according to the alcoholic ... there seems to be a built-in snobbery with the drinkers, that 'We are better than them because we never went that low'. (Nigel, Service user, Bristol)

Now, since this drugs and all like this, there's been this sort of class distinction. 'Our class is better than yours. We are better than you. We don't associate with you.' ... They [drug addicts] look down upon the drinker. They are more upper class than the drinker ... Okay, at the end of the day, the street drinker, he'll sit down there and he'll maybe make enough for two or three bottles of cider. His addiction is far less harmful. He can go without a drink for longer than what a guy can go without a fix for. (Alastair, Service user, Bristol)

Comments such as these peppered the narratives of homeless respondents, suggesting that they share mainstream society's intolerance of groups they consider very different from themselves. Takahashi's (1996) 'continuum of stigma' is helpful here in understanding how such hierarchies are constructed and maintained. In a review of the literature, Takahashi claims that contemporary representations of homeless people are defined by perceptions

regarding their productivity, degree of dangerousness, and personal culpability for homeless episodes. The first of these axes is perhaps less relevant to homeless peoples' own assessments of one another, as it is widely accepted by day centre users that substance dependencies are illnesses which render addicts unable to work and because fundamental contradictions in the British welfare and emergency accommodation systems tends to preclude the participation of homeless hostel residents in the paid workforce in any case[9]. But the second of Takahashi's axes of stigma – perceived degree of dangerousness – is an influential determinant of day centre users' views of one another. Indeed, 'straightheads' often expressed concern regarding the behavioural unpredictability and potential violence of 'pissheads'. Similarly, both 'straightheads' and 'pissheads' frequently complained about the threat that the practices of 'smackheads' posed to their own personal safety. Nigel, for example complained of 'smackheads' that:

They are really dirty people, most of them ... Some of them are vile, you know what I mean? They've never heard of soap and water and leave their syringes around the day centre ... They're all scummy to me. I wouldn't trust them as far as I could throw them. (Nigel, Service user, Bristol)

Indeed, the issue of personal hygiene alluded to by Nigel was a dominant feature in many service users' narratives, suggesting that their judgements of one another are also partially founded upon care of the body as a sign of respect for the self and, importantly, others.

Even more important to service users' assessments of one another is the issue of culpability – the third of the axes on Takahashi's (1996) continuum of stigma. Just like members of the housed public, day centre users routinely (even if unconsciously) classify one another according to one of three groups, recently coined 'unwilling victims', 'lackers', and 'slackers' by Rosenthal (2000). Amongst respondents, the 'unwilling victim' group included those who needed to utilise homelessness services because of structural forces deemed to be beyond their control (for example, the loss of a job, or eviction), thus rendering them 'deserving' in the eyes of fellow service users. Also considered 'deserving' by their peers, 'lackers' were assessed as not 'responsible' for their predicament because of some form of

'incompetence' (most often, mental illness or old age). In contrast, those positioned in the 'slacker' category tended to be deemed 'undeserving' because considered to be competent (that is, able to choose alternative lifestyles) and hence responsible for their homelessness. These categorisations are key influences upon the degree to which the 'unusual norms' exhibited by different people are tolerated within day centres. Service users may, for example, be sympathetic to outbursts such as that articulated by the frail elderly rough sleeper with a mental illness referred to earlier, but tended to be far less tolerant of aggressive behaviour such as that demonstrated by the inebriated street drinkers Steve and Patrick.

Even given such complex contingencies, perceptions of deservedness are also strongly shaped by the way in which service users relate to staff, such that individuals who contravene social norms of etiquette (such as being polite and expressing thanks for the services received) are subject to overt disapproval. Service users will in fact 'self-police' when they consider boundaries of acceptability to have been transgressed:

> *To some extent there's some ownership by people who make up the nucleus of the place. Like they'll say to someone 'look, we don't do that here', or 'don't speak like that to the staff, not here'... (Bill, Day Centre Manager, Bristol)*

> *Simon: [These places] are run by voluntary staff, so it only takes some person to go in there pissed who is gonna cause a problem. That person is a volunteer, and not being paid to be there; they aren't gonna stand there and have abuse thrown at them. They will shut the place ... [We] police [our]selves. If someone has mucked it up ... for everyone else, we know who has mucked it up. The lad's taken to one side -*
> *Ron: [interrupting] - and they'll have him. (Simon and Ron, Service users, Dorchester)*

Finally, also integral to assessments of deservedness is the issue of housing status, with the 'genuinely homeless' (i.e. rough sleepers) considered more deserving than those in hostels, who in turn are more 'deserving' than those who are housed:

> *People who should come here who ain't got a place. It's like the same – it's the same at St David's Church, they help the homeless get food and that lot, but there's people what uses this who's got places anyway. Which is wrong, which is wrong ... I can't see the point of them, if they've got a place... If I had a place I wouldn't be here. (Will, Service user, Worcester)*

Clearly, homeless day centre users share society's intolerance of those they cast as undeserving – partly because of the potential for the undeserving to abuse the goodwill of service providers (and thus threaten the sustainability of the service itself), but also because of

the threat such individuals present for their own identities. Self-identity is constructed at the boundary between self and other. Hence encounters with difference challenge not only an established social order (Cresswell 1996), but also the integrity of individual and collective identities (Wilton 1998). In this way, sharing a space with a person more 'deviant' than oneself risks tainting one's own identity via what Duncan (1983) refers to as the 'spread of stigma by spatial association'. The emphasis placed on hierarchies of deservedness by homeless day centre users might thus be read as an attempt to reinforce the boundaries between self and other in a desperate endeavour to 'salvage the self' (Snow and Anderson 1993; Wardhaugh 1999).

Conclusion

As recent developments within the service landscape, day centres have evolved as charitable responses to gaps in provision for homeless and other disenfranchised people. They provide what SHiL (1995) refers to as essential 'maintenance' (food, clothing, bathing facilities and primary health care), together with information and advice, and opportunities for social interaction. They are thus vital for sustaining life, preventing survivalist crime, and facilitating the transition of homeless people into independent living. Equally importantly, they provide an environment where homeless people may simply 'be' - within a (revanchist) city that (increasingly) does not want them.

The extent to which such spaces may be positioned in direct opposition to a more general revanchist turn in urban policy and politics is, of course, a matter for debate. Though presented here as articulating a space of refuge, as with night shelters and hostels, day centres too might also be read as providing simply another form of containment. Certainly, it is notable that as the British government have sought ways of reducing levels of street homelessness, they have tended to increase the funding available to the providers of night shelters, hostels and day centres - so providing a temporary exit from the streets - rather than significantly increasing the supply of affordable housing so as to offer a more permanent solution to the problems of homelessness (Fitzpatrick et al. 2000).

But even if day centres are indeed primarily understood by urban managers as a way of rendering the problems of street homelessness less *visible* (ODPM, 1999), the challenge they pose to a revanchist logic remains. Not least, it is clear that both the providers of such services, and their clients, understand day centres as articulating a quite different dynamic: notably, a genuine and deep-rooted 'urge to care' (Cloke et al, forthcoming). Moreover, through both the services they provide and the less tangible forms of support that they offer their clients, day centres offer people a vital first step on the journey out of homelessness.

Yet they remain ambiguous and fragile spaces. Certainly, in light of the 'Cambridge Two' the extent to which British day centres may continue to offer a space of sanctuary to those already subject to increasing control and regulation on the city streets is open to question[10]. More generally, though always intended to be places of shelter, resource and refuge in the face of an uncaring and hostile world (Waters, 1992), it is clear that what for some emerge as genuine 'spaces of care' are for others more commonly perceived as spaces of fear. Common to most day centres is in fact a discord between the intentions of service providers - who aim to create a therapeutic haven open to all - and the realities of such environments for staff and service users. For, day centres are themselves often operating in 'survival' mode, faced with the threat of imminent closure resulting from unsustainable funding arrangements and staffing shortages. Furthermore, they cater for desperate people, many of whom behave in challenging and unpredictable ways, and all of whom 'other one another' in an attempt to safeguard the sustainability of the service and to protect themselves from 'assaults on self-identity' (Wardhaugh 1999). The process of 'othering' within day centres reflects mainstream understandings and hierarchies of stigma (based in particular upon perceived degrees of dangerousness, culpability, and respect for the self and others), but is also imbued by pervasive codes of conduct and practices of self-policing that are imported directly from the streets. Hence, though service providers may aim to create spaces of care which are accepting of difference and where 'otherness' is minimised, divisions within the homeless population mean that difference still exists, and that orthodox understandings of stigma follow service users in off the street anyway. Understood in this way, just as homeless

people themselves emerge as more complex subjects than either the proponents or critics of revanchism would acknowledge, so the day centre too emerges to challenge dystopic accounts of the revanchist city *and* their utopic counterpart: uncritical celebrations of interstitial 'spaces of care'.

Notes

1. In Britain distinctions are commonly drawn between the 'statutory' and 'non-statutory' homeless, a division first made in relation to the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act and upheld in all subsequent revisions to the Act. The former group includes all those to whom local authorities have a statutory duty of care, namely the provision of accommodation and applies to people with dependants, those otherwise found in 'priority need' (by virtue of age or ill-health) and those who have not made themselves 'intentionally' homeless. In contrast, the non-statutory homeless have no such right to either emergency or more permanent accommodation and are mainly dependent upon voluntary and charitable organisations for emergency services. Because the majority (though by no means all) of the non-statutory homeless population are single, it has become commonplace in policy and practitioner discourse to refer to this group as 'single' homeless people.

[2] The data reported in this paper comprised part of a much broader project exploring the provision of emergency services for single homeless people (including also direct access hostels and night shelters, soup kitchens and soup runs). In total, the project involved three national surveys (responded to by over 400 projects) (Johnsen et al. 2002a, b and c), together with interviews with over 200 project managers, staff, volunteers, service users, and representatives of local government and homelessness support agencies in seven different case study areas.

[3] Questions of ethos are central to the aims of individual projects. For clarity of discussion, however, these issues are addressed in more detail later in the paper.

[4] Other types of premises (used by 12% of projects in total) included the store rooms, basements, halls, and annexes of other organisations (e.g. another voluntary organisation or sports club).

[5] See Appendix A for demographic details of homeless service user interviewees.

[6] Such a finding challenges the common assumption that the creation of services for homeless people will increase the incidence of crime in a given area. On the contrary, it appears that the absence of day services may in fact be associated with higher levels of survivalist crime – a finding with serious implications for countries such as Wales which, even with a population of approximately three million, offers only one day centre for homeless people.

[7] Importantly, the three groups are not mutually exclusive, with many individuals sitting on the borders of, or falling into overlaps between, more than one category – particularly in the current era where poly-drug use is becoming increasingly prevalent (e.g. where addicts use both heroin and alcohol). The three groups introduced here are also crosscut by divisions between younger and older homeless people, street homeless and those who are housed insecurely etc.

[8] It is important to point out that while these were the most common names used, they were by no means the only epithets used to describe each group. 'Pissheads' are often referred to as 'alkies' or 'drinkers', 'smackheads' as 'junkies', and 'straightheads' as 'normals', to name but a few examples. The most common titles introduced above will however be used throughout the paper for purposes of clarity.

[9] Many hostels in Britain are actually very expensive, with some of the high support projects for example charging residents upwards of £200 per week. Housing Benefit and Supporting People funding covers almost all of this cost for welfare recipients, with residents making up the difference from other benefits (e.g. Job Seekers Allowance or Disability Living Allowance) in the form of a 'service charge' (usually around £10-20 per week). Cumulatively, such accommodation charges well exceed what can be afforded by those not in receipt of welfare benefits and working in low paid jobs (and indeed for this reason many hostels will not accept applications from individuals not in receipt of welfare benefits). This situation acts as a powerful disincentive for residents who are capable of working to actually seek employment, as those who are successful will (ironically) no longer be able to afford to live in a hostel. To compound matters, if a resident does begin working and leaves a hostel they run the risk of having their name struck from the Local Authority Housing Register because they will be deemed to have made themselves 'intentionally homeless' (albeit from a hostel for 'the homeless'!).

[10] On December 17th 1999 Ruth Wyner and John Brock (Director and Manager) of the Wintercomfort Day Centre in Cambridge were sent to prison for five and four years respectively after a police raid found clients at their day centre exchanging drugs on the premises. Following a campaign to release the 'Cambridge Two', their sentences were subsequently reduced and the pair freed from prison – though the Court of Appeal did not overturn their convictions. As a growing proportion of single homeless people in Britain suffer problems of drug addiction (Neale, 2001) the case raises serious questions over the ability of day centres, night shelters and hostels to provide appropriate support to clients who already face an increased threat of arrest when on the streets. Read from the perspective of urban

theory, the case offers the most obvious example of a revanchist logic reaching in to, and fundamentally altering the dynamics of, a 'space of care'.

References

Ann Rosengard Associates with Scottish Health Feedback (2001) *The Future of Hostels for Homeless People*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Central Research Unit.

Ball, L. and Randall, S. (1999) *Breaking and Entering: Tackling the Cycle of Exclusion.* London: Homeless Network.

Bines, W. (1997) 'The health of single homeless people', in Burrows, R., Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (eds.) *Homelessness and Social Policy*. Routledge, London, pp. 132-148.

Bourgois, P. (1995) *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carlen, P. (1996) *Jigsaw: A Political Criminology of Youth Homelessness.* London: Routledge.

Cloke, P., Johnsen, S. and May, J. (forthcoming) 'Exploring ethos? Discourses of 'charity' in the provision of emergency services for homeless people', *Environment and Planning A.*

Conradson, D. (1999) 'Voluntary Welfare Spaces in the City'. Unpublished PhD Thesis, School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol, Bristol.

Conradson, D. (2003) 'Spaces of care in the city: the place of a community drop-in centre', *Social and Cultural Geography* 4: 507-525.

Cooper, A. (1997) *All in a Day's Work: A Guide to Good Practice in Day Centres Working with Homeless People.* London: CHAR.

Cooper, A., Evans, N. and Sutton, P. (1999) *Better by Design: A Practical Guide to Day Centre Design.* London: National Homeless Alliance.

Cooper, R. (2001) 'The Intersection of Space and Homelessness in Central Auckland', Unpublished MA Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Auckland, Auckland.

Cresswell, T. (1996) *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Identity and Transgression.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Croft-White, C. and Parry-Crooke, G. (2004) *Lost Voices: The Invisibility of Homeless People with Multiple Needs.* London: Crisis.

Danczuk, S. (2000) *Walk On By... Begging, Street Drinking and the Giving Age.* London: Crisis.

Davis, M. (1992) 'Fortress Los Angeles: the militarization of urban space', in Sorkin, M. (ed) *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*. Hill and Wang, New York, pp. 154-180.

Dean, H. (1999) (ed) *Begging Questions: Streel-level Economic Activity and Social Policy Failure*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Dear, M. and Wolch, J. (1987) *Landscapes of Despair: From Deinstitutionalization to Homelessness.* Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Dear, M., Wolch, J. and Wilton, R. (1994) 'The service hub concept in human services planning', *Progress in Planning* 42: 173-271.

Deverteuil, G. (unpublished manuscript) 'Hidden in the shadows: neoliberalism, the local state and homeless shelters'. Department of Geography, University of Manitoba, Canada.

Duncan, J. (1983) 'Men without property: the tramp's classification and use of urban space', in Lake, R. W. (ed) *Readings in Urban Analysis: Perspectives on Urban Form and Structure*. Centre for Urban Policy Research, New Brunswick, NJ, pp. 86-102.

Emberson, M. (2002) The Equity Theory of Motivation: An Ethnographic Case Study of a Voluntary Sector Organisation. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Kent at Canterbury, Canterbury.

Evans, N. S. and Dowler, E. A. (1999) 'Food, health and eating among single homeless and marginalized people in London', *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* 12: 179-199.

Fitzpatrick, S., Kemp, P. and Klinker, S. (2000) *Single Homelessness: An Overview of Research in Britain.* Bristol: The Policy Press.

Fyfe N. and Milligan C. (2003) Out of Shadows: Exploring contemporary geographies of voluntarism. *Progress in Human Geography* 27, 397-413

Fountain, J. and Howes, S. (2002) *Home and Dry: Homelessness and Substance Use in London.* London: Crisis.

Garside, P. L., Grimshaw, R. W. and Ward, F. J. (1990) *No Place Like Home: The Hostels Experience.* London: HMSO.

Goffman, E. (1961) *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situations of Mental Patients.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Goffman, E. (1968) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Gordon, A. (1997) *Pay-day or May-day? A Guide to Day Centre Funding in England and Wales.* London: National Homeless Alliance.

Gordon, P. (1999) *Face to Face: Therapy as Ethics.* London: Constable.

Ham, J. (1996) *Steps from the Street: A Report on Direct Access Hostel Provision*, London: CHAR.

Harrison, M. (1996) *Emergency Hostels: Direct Access Hostel Accommodation in London.* London: SHiL.

Homeless Link (2004) *The Day Centre Handbook.* London: Homeless Link.

Johnsen, S., Cloke, P. and May, J. (forthcoming) 'Transitory spaces of care: serving homeless people on the street', *Health and Place*.

Johnsen, S., Cloke, P. and May, J. (2002a) 'Homeless Places Project hostel and night shelter survey: summary of findings'. School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol with the Department of Geography, Queen Mary, University of London.

Johnsen, S., Cloke, P. and May, J. (2002b) 'Homeless Places Project day centre and drop-in centre survey: summary of findings'. School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol with the Department of Geography, Queen Mary, University of London.

Johnsen, S., Cloke, P. and May, J. (2002c) 'Homeless Places Project soup run and soup kitchen survey: summary of findings'. School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol with the Department of Geography, Queen Mary, University of London.

Knowles, C. (2000a) *Bedlam on the Streets*. London: Routledge.

Knowles, C. (2000b) 'Burger King, Dunkin Donuts and community mental health care', *Health and Place* 6: 213-224.

Llewellin, S. and Murdoch, A. (1996) *Saving the Day: The Importance of Day Centres for Homeless People*. London: National Day Centres Project, CHAR.

MacLeod, G. (2002) 'From urban entrepreneurialism to a 'revanchist city'? On the spatial injustices of Glasgow's renaissance', *Antipode* 34: 603-620.

Mair, A. (1986) 'The homeless and the post-industrial city', *Political Geography Quarterly* 5: 351-368.

May, J., Cloke, P. and Johnsen, S. (forthcoming a) 'Re-phasing neo-liberalism: New Labour and Britain's crisis of street homelessness', *Antipode*

May, J., Cloke, P. and Johnsen, S. (forthcoming b) 'Alternative cartographies of homelessness: women's experiences of 'on street' and 'in servive' homelessness', in submission to *Gender, Place and Culture*

May, J., Cloke, P. and Johnsen, S. (under review) 'Emergency accommodation for single homeless people: the changing context and character of the UK hostel', in submission to *Policy and Politics*

Mitchell, D. (1995) 'The end of public space? People's Park, definitions of the public, and democracy', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85: 108-133.

Mitchell, D. (1997) 'The annihilation of space by law: the roots and implications of anti-homeless laws in the United States', *Antipode* 29: 303-336.

Mitchell, D. (2001) 'Postmodern geographical praxis? The postmodern impulse and the war against homeless people in the 'post-justice' city', in Minca, C. (ed) *Postmodern Geography: Theory and Praxis*. Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 57-92.

Neale, J. (1997) 'Hostels: a useful policy and practice response?', in Burrows, R., Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (eds.) *Homelessness and Social Policy*. Routledge, London, pp. 203-215.

Neale, J. (2001) 'Homelessness amongst drug users: a double jeopardy explored', *International Journal of Drug Policy* 12: 353-69

ODPM (1999) *Coming in from the Cold: The Government's Strategy on Rough Sleeping.*

London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Parr, H. (2000) 'Interpreting the 'hidden social geographies' of mental health: ethnographies of inclusion and exclusion in semi-institutional places', *Health and Place* 6: 225-237.

Parr, H. (2003) 'Medical geography: care and caring', *Progress in Human Geography* 27: 212-221.

Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (1997) 'Health, homelessness and access to health care services in London', in Burrows, R., Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (eds.) *Homelessness and Social Policy*. Routledge, London, pp. 149-158.

Pleace, N., Burrows, R. and Quilgars, D. (1997) 'Homelessness in contemporary Britain: conceptualisation and measurement', in Burrows, R., Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (eds.) *Homelessness and Social Policy*. Routledge, London, pp. 1-19.

Reeve, K. and Coward, S. (2004) *Life on the Margins: The Experiences of Homeless People Living in Squats*. London: Crisis and the Countryside Agency.

Robinson, D. and Coward, S. (2003) *Your Place, Not Mine: The Experiences of Homeless People Staying with Family and Friends*. London: Crisis and The Countryside Agency.

Rosenthal, R. (2000) 'Imaging homelessness and homeless people: visions and strategies within the movement(s)', *Journal of Homelessness and Social Distress* 9: 111-126.

Rowe, S. and Wolch, J. (1990) 'Social networks in time and space: homeless women in Skid Row, Los Angeles', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80: 184-205.

Ruddick, S. (1996) *Young and Homeless in Hollywood: Mapping Social Identities*. London: Routledge.

Sharp, J. P., Routledge, P., Philo, C. and Paddison, R. (2000) (eds) *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Domination/Resistance*, London: Routledge.

Sibley, D. (1995) *Geographies of Exclusion*. London: Routledge.

SHiL (1995) *Time to Move On: A Review of Policies and Provision for Single Homeless People in London*. London: Single Homeless in London.

Smith, N. (1996) *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. Routledge: London.

Snow, D. A. and Anderson, L. (1993) *Down on Their Luck: A Study of Homeless Street People*. Berkely: University of California Press.

Soja, E. (2000) *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Takahashi, L. M. (1996) 'A decade of understanding homelessness in the USA: from characterization to representation', *Progress in Human Geography* 20: 291-310.

Tyler, A. (1995) *Street Drugs*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Wardhaugh, J. (1999) 'The unaccommodated woman: home, homelessness and identity', *The Sociological Review* 47: 91-109.

Wardhaugh, J. (2000) *Sub City: Young People, Homelessness and Crime.* Aldershot: Ashgate.

Waters, J. (1992) *Community or Ghetto? An Analysis of Day Centres for Single Homeless People*, London: CHAR.

Wilton, R. D. (1998) 'The constitution of difference: space and psyche in landscapes of exclusion', *Geoforum* 29: 173-185.

Wolch, J. and Dear, M. (1993) *Malign Neglect: Homelessness in an American City.* San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Figure 1: Services provided by UK day centres
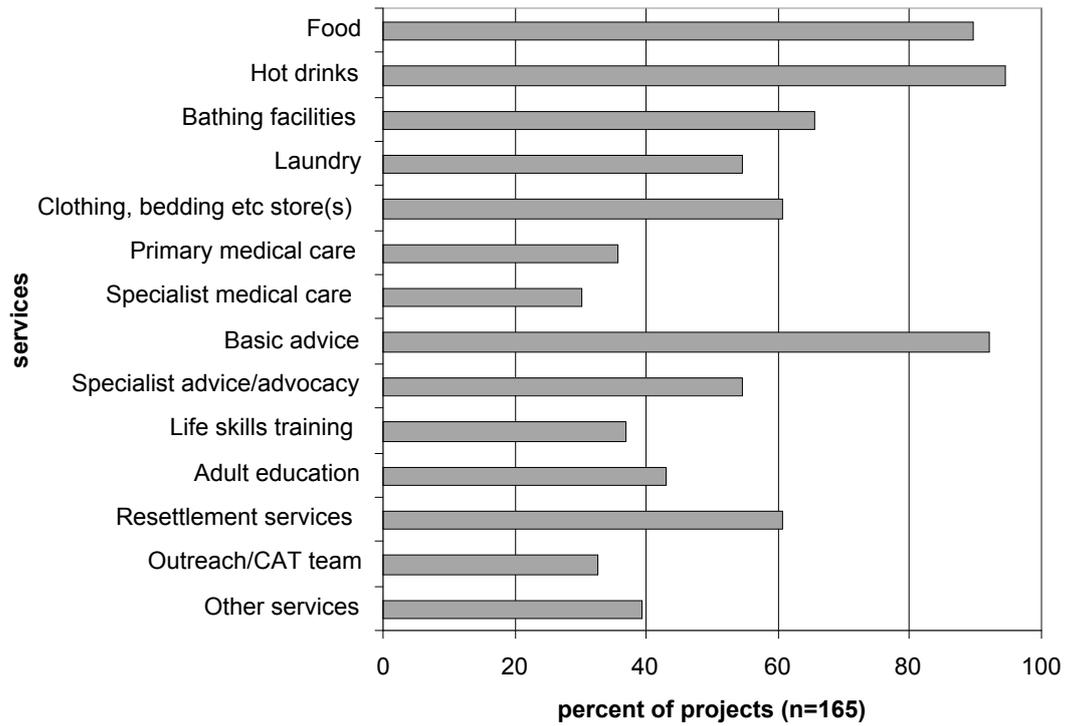
Source: Survey data, September/October 2001

APPENDIX A: Demographic details of service user interviewees

Zara – female, 19 years, interviewed in a day centre, Bristol, 5/3/02
Dale – male, 32 years, interviewed in a day centre, Worcester, 23/1/03
John – male, 52 years, interviewed in a day centre, Bristol, 15/3/02
Pete – male, 38 years, interviewed in a hostel, Doncaster, 26/11/02
Sam – male, 26 years, interviewed in a night shelter, Doncaster, 4/12/02
Tracey – female, 20, interviewed in a night shelter, Doncaster, 4/12/02
Sean – male, 43 years, interviewed in a day centre, Bristol, 15/2/02
Phil – male, 53 years, interviewed in a day centre, Bristol, 28/4/02
Adam – male, 54 years, interviewed in a hostel, Worcester, 21/1/03
Neil – male, 20 years, interviewed in a day centre, Banbury, 16/6/02
Craig – male, 24 years, interviewed in a hostel, Truro, 24/7/02
Nigel – male, 32 years, interviewed in a day centre, Bristol, 26/2/02
Alastair – male, 48 years, interviewed in a day centre, Bristol, 7/2/02
Simon – male, 28 years, interviewed in a night shelter, Dorchester, 8/10/02
Ron – male, 38 years, interviewed in a night shelter, Dorchester, 8/10/02
Will – male, 35 years, interviewed in a day centre, Worcester, 28/1/03