



'Destitution in the UK'

Glasgow Homelessness Network and Heriot-Watt University

Aims of the project

From May 2014 to October 2015, academics from Heriot-Watt University worked in collaboration with a number of third sector organisations, including Glasgow Homelessness Network, to understand the scale and scope of destitution in the UK. In particular it aimed to:

- develop a working definition of destitution;
- identify who is affected by destitution;
- understand the main pathways in and out of destitution; and
- make recommendations about how public policy should respond to the situation.

The research was commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and led by the academic partner.

Gathering evidence

Each of the partners played a key role in ensuring that the evidence collected was useful and robust. For example, academics from the University completed all of the desk-based research and were also able to analyse the data from the surveys. In contrast, Glasgow Homelessness Network and the other third sector organisations were able to use their local knowledge to identify suitable projects for the research, help people to complete the questionnaires and highlight potential case studies to the researchers. *"Sometimes we were a familiar face [for agencies and service users], sometimes we were an extra pair of hands" [GHN]*

By utilising the skills and knowledge of the third sector organisations the academics were able to generate more meaningful evidence: *"Our response rate was better in some case study areas than others and it was largely to do with how proactive the locality co-ordinator was." [Heriot-Watt University]*

A collaborative approach

Although the research bid was designed by Heriot-Watt University, third sector organisations were always intended to be key partners in the process. Indeed, the bid confirmed that, if successful, one of the first tasks would be to recruit locality co-ordinators from the third sector. In addition to this, academics at Heriot-Watt University are in continuous dialogue with third sector organisations

and so they know what the key questions are for the sector. *"The third sector makes you accountable but it also helps you to ask the right questions."* [Heriot-Watt University]

Although the funding for third sector engagement was largely tokenistic, Glasgow Homelessness Network was keen to be involved as it recognised that it would get a lot more out of the process than it put in. By drawing on the knowledge, resources and expertise of different partners the project was able to produce evidence which was relevant to both academic partners and third sector providers.

For further information please contact

Professor Sarah Johnsen, Heriot-Watt University, by email at S.Johnsen@hw.ac.uk or by phone on 0131 451 3642

Claire Frew, Glasgow Homelessness Network, by email at cfrew@ghn.org.uk or by phone on 0141 420 7272