

Hidden Homelessness and definitions of Homelessness in the UK
– some issues for European definitions of homelessness.

Dr Joan Smith
Centre for Housing and Community Research
Cities Institute, London Metropolitan University.
joan.smith@londonmet.ac.uk

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Introduction

The situation in the UK with regard to the definition of 'hidden homelessness' is complicated by the existence, discussed in previous papers, of legislation defining homelessness that applies in each of the four countries of the UK.

This legislation has had several consequences for the discussion of hidden homelessness in the UK. First, the definition of homelessness itself has not been debated to the same extent as in France. Homeless legislation has provided a working definition of homelessness that includes security of tenure, quality of housing, and degree of safety (violence that renders housing unsafe is included in the definition of homelessness). The legislation separately uses social factors such as the vulnerability of the individual (mental or physical ill-health, and those leaving institutions – hospitals, prisons, armed forces, the local authority care system for children) and social priorities in relation to the protection of dependent children, older person households and young people aged 16 and 17 years to define who is in priority need among the homeless and must be offered accommodation. (See the discussion in Section 1 that expands on this.).

Second, because each local authority must return P(1)E forms to the government department responsible for homelessness (currently the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) there are statistical returns, from 1978 to date, on the number of households that have been accepted as both homeless and in priority need. These statistical returns are available at the national and regional level and for some local authorities. Therefore there has been less concern over the lack of survey information on 'hidden homelessness' except in periods of high housing stress such as the early 1990s and in this current period. Current discussions on the estimate of homelessness, including 'hidden homeless', derive from the concerns of organisations working on behalf of the single homeless and young homeless, many but not all of whom are excluded from official estimates, and from organisations like SHELTER that believe that many homeless households are also not being accepted under the legislation.

Third, and this is critical for this paper, UK homelessness legislation has not based a definition of homelessness on any degree of visibility – being 'literally' homeless, living on the streets or on a hostel, is not the basis of the definition of homelessness. This contrasts with proposals to estimate homelessness that use 'scales' based on the description of different states of homelessness ranging from those living on the streets (most visible) to those living in unsafe conditions in private houses (least visible).

Such scales of homelessness can allow contrasts between the number of people/ households who are homeless within the 'narrow' or 'literal' definition (living on the streets, or in hostels) compared with the number of people/ households who are homeless under the 'broad' definition of homelessness, which includes those living concealed within other households. As the Hungarian paper worrying remarks many governments would wish to confine their definition of homelessness to the literal definition. However, in any society where the definition of homelessness is confined to the 'literal' homeless the types of household considered as homeless will largely be single persons because they will be those sleeping rough or living in hostels.

The most important and central fact about UK legislation is that the image of the homelessness that is embedded within it is that of the homeless household or person that has no right to occupy a house, not of the homeless person who is living on the streets. The establishment of priority need groups within the legislation clearly

identify the type of homeless household that must be offered assistance to housing. The priority need groups are first and foremost those households that are homeless that include within them children or a pregnant woman (two thirds of all homeless households accepted) and those vulnerable due to old age, mental ill-health or physical ill-health and, since 2002, those vulnerable due to discharge from institutions (armed forces, prison, local authority care, hospital).

This clear link between the purpose of a broad definition – to offer housing support to homeless households that are priority need for reasons other than their homelessness - raises the question of what is the purpose of the ‘homelessness scales’ that are being produced by Meert for FEANTSA and for CRISIS in the UK. Do scales of homelessness based on visibility (from the most visible, the street homeless, to the least visible homeless households living temporarily with another household) provide a definition of homelessness that privileges the way single people live as homeless rather than families live as homeless? If such a scale became an operational European definition of homeless (which is suggested in the title of the Meert paper) would it result in a ‘hostel’ solution to homelessness rather than a housing solution to homelessness?

This paper is therefore in three sections. Section 1 begins from the legal definition of homelessness in the UK legislation and the separation of that legislation from debates on degrees of homelessness – is a rough sleeper more homeless than someone living in a situation of domestic violence, for example – through the separate identification of need based on social criteria (‘the priority need groups’). It discusses the merits of that approach compared with a scale of homelessness approach that is based on three domains – physical, legal and social – but is also based on visibility. It discusses the purposes of developing scales in the UK, which are to estimate numbers of homeless not included in the official homeless statistics - and why these purposes would become different if they were applied across Europe outside of the context of the UK homeless legislation.

Section 2 asks how is it possible to distinguish those households that are hidden homeless? It then asks what questions are important in order to distinguish ‘hidden homeless’ households among those households living as ‘concealed’ households and all those that are ‘potential households’.

- To identify ‘hidden homelessness’ what is the role of questions (such as in the French housing survey) that identify whether the households, single person or couples, have previously lived independently for even a short period.
- To identify ‘hidden homelessness’ what is the balance between the perspective of the person and the perspective of the researcher. What of those homeless people who say they are not homeless? Who actually defines it? How is this dealt with in a survey?
- To identify ‘hidden homelessness’ how is it possible to establish the degree of risk of eviction by the host household?

In the UK there are a new set of questions being proposed for the Survey of English Housing. Will these questions be adequate to identify hidden homeless households?

Section 3 briefly raises the concepts of ‘risk’ and ‘vulnerability’ and asks how are households differently vulnerable? As in Péter Gyori’s paper it is concerned to think through the implications of definitions of homelessness in relation to concrete household types. Are women living in unsafe households less vulnerable than those who are literally homeless living in hostels? Are young people who are sofa surfing less vulnerable? Are all interventions appropriate for all households? If a single adult household is living extremely over-crowded is it always in their interest to move out. For example, if through housing intervention, a single person leaves their

overcrowded (to bedroom standard minus two for example) accommodation with their family and is accepted as homeless and becomes housed in a hostel or in bed and breakfast has their risk increased? Has their vulnerability to other forms of social exclusion increased?

Section 1 Defining homelessness in the UK – legislative definitions and the ‘additional’ definitions used by NGOs to estimate total need, or single and youth homelessness NGOs. How do such scales apply in Europe?

1.1 Principles behind the legal definitions of homelessness in the UK

The UK definition of homelessness is a legal one that is extremely broad and is based on a conception of ‘houselessness’ not rooflessness. It was given in full to Appendix A of the UK short paper in Paris but it is repeated here in order to contrast this definition of homelessness with the ‘scale’ of definitions provided in the paper by Meert et al.

Box 1 The definition of homeless and priority need groups in UK legislation

<p>From Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, ratified with one change in 2002*</p> <p>Definition of homeless</p> <p>175.-(1) A person is homeless if he has no accommodation available for his occupation, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, which he -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or by virtue of an order of court, (b) has an express or implied licence to occupy, or (c) occupies as a residence by virtue of any enactment or rule of law giving him the right to remain in occupation or restricting the right of another person to recover possession. <p>(2) A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but – (a) he cannot secure entry to it, or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (b) it consists of a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where is entitled or permitted both to place it and reside in it. <p>(3) A person shall not be treated as having accommodation unless it is accommodation which it would be reasonable for him to continue to occupy.</p> <p>(4) A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that he will become homeless within 28 days.</p> <p>176-Accommodation shall be regarded as available for a person’s occupation only if it is available for occupation by him together with –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) any other person who normally resides with him as a member of his family, or (b) any other person who might reasonable he expected to reside with him. <p>...</p> <p>177- It is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation if it is probably that this will lead to domestic violence against him, or against –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) any other person who normally resides with him as a member of his family, or (b) any other person who might reasonable he expected to reside with him. <p>2002 Act: The reference to domestic violence has become changed to violence in order to include racial violence</p>	<p>Housing Act, 1996</p> <p>Priority Need Groups</p> <p>189 – (1) The following have a priority need for accommodation-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) a pregnant woman or person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside; (b) a person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside; (c) a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonable be expected to reside. (d) a person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster. <p>2002 Act included (a) young people aged 16 and 17 years, (b) looked after young people up to the age of 21 years, (c) those leaving institutions whether army, prison or hospital.</p>
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There are four observations to make about the UK legal definition:

- (i) There is no mention of 'rooflessness' or hostel accommodation. There is no distinction made between homeless persons who are 'literally' homeless and those who are living as a concealed or potential household on the basis of their current housing situation.
- (ii) Households are defined as homeless not only if they are living in circumstances in which they have no legal right of occupation but also if they are potentially homeless (within 28 days).
- (iii) The definition of homelessness includes four aspects – the legal right to occupy, the physical suitability of the accommodation, the safety of the accommodation for the person concerned, and the right to live with people that the person normally lives with.
- (iv) Those living in unsafe conditions and experiencing violence within their home are defined as homeless. This category was previously used to distinguish domestic violence but now also includes those at risk of racial violence.

Secondly, it is important to note that prioritisation of support for homeless households or persons is through a social dimension that is separate – the priority need groups – not through a scale of homeless situations. In 2001-2 households accepted by local authorities in England included:

1. Households with dependent children – 55.5%
2. Households with a pregnant women – 10%
3. Vulnerable due to mental ill health - 8.7%
4. Domestic violence – 6.1%
5. Vulnerable due to physical health problems - 5.3%
6. Young people i.e. single and not included above – 5%
7. Other – 4.8%
8. Old age – 3.7%
9. Emergency – 1% (e.g. flood, fire).

In 2003, after the introduction of the 2002 legislation, 8% of homeless acceptances were of young people who were either aged 16 and 17 years or were aged 20 years and under and had been in local authority care.¹

In 2001-2 just under a third of households accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need by local authorities were living as 'concealed households' as shown by their 'reason for homelessness': 30% were homeless because relatives and friends no longer willing to accommodate. Just under a quarter, 23%, were homeless because of relationship breakdown including domestic violence. However, 29% were homeless because of housing problems: 15% because their assured shorthold tenancy had ended, 8% because of the loss of other rented or tied accommodation, 3% through rent arrears, 3% through mortgage arrears. 17% were homeless for other reasons including up to 3% of all acceptances being of asylum seekers.

In a small minority of cases some households are accepted as 'homeless at home'; this category often includes young women who are pregnant but have not yet had their baby and can stay in their parents' or relatives' home until the birth but will be homeless after.

¹ For all figures see the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister website www.odpm.gov.uk An annual report is posted on the website reporting figures for each year and the breakdown and also reporting on particular issues such as domestic violence etc.

Overall therefore the working of the homelessness legislation in the UK has rationed housing support in relation to social criteria that includes protection of children and protection of the vulnerable. In the 2002 legislation those protections have been extended to young people and those leaving institutions.

1.2 Estimates of homelessness and the development of 'scales' of homelessness

Because of UK homelessness legislation the discussion of 'hidden homelessness' and estimates of the number of homeless has, in the UK, had several purposes. One of these is to **supplement** the official homelessness figures. There have been different approaches to estimating homelessness according to the purpose of the estimate.

1.2 a) Estimating the number of hidden homeless households including those rejected under the 'intentionally homeless' and local rules

Some NGO estimates have been based on the current number of homeless households accepted as homeless (derived from the P(1)E returns and reported by OPDM) adding additional numbers based on an estimate of those rejected as homeless plus additional numbers of 'hostel homeless'. SHELTER has principally used this system because of their reports and campaigns for an increase in the total number of new social housing units that are required to meet existing homeless and housing need. They have also used estimates of the number of households that are homeless but have been excluded from the official figures each year because, although they were judged to be homeless, their claims for housing were excluded on the basis that they were homeless through their own actions ('intentionality') or failed the local test, or failed the priority need test, particularly the tests of vulnerability.²

1.2 b) Estimating youth homelessness

A method designed to estimate the number of young homeless people, of whom half might be absent from any figures because they are not in priority need, has been devised using information on homelessness collected in Scotland. The homelessness returns for Scotland record the age of the person applying, which has not been the case for England. Evans (1996) used this method to produce an estimate of youth homelessness, in 1996 for the National Inquiry into Youth Homelessness.³ More recently Pearce and Fitzgerald (2004) have used this method for an estimate for the number of young homeless people in England for Centrepoint. This method begins by an estimate of the numbers found homeless by local authorities (similar to Shelter) and then adds figures as follows:

i) From 2002 it is possible to include the numbers of young people accepted as homeless and in priority need aged 16-17 years and up to 20 years if in care; for 2003 the total number was 10,910

ii) The estimate then adds the proportion of young people who were household heads of those found to be homeless across Scotland – a figure not available in England. The proportion was 35%

iii) It then adds figures for those sleeping rough (rough sleepers database) and figures for those living in hostels from the CORE database

The final figure for England is that between 36,000 and 52,000 households headed by 16-24 year olds are homeless.

The estimate also used the trends in Scottish data to argue that youth homelessness was likely to be rising. In Scotland the proportion of households headed by young people aged 16-24 among those who have been accepted as homeless has increased from 41% in 1996/7 to 47% in 2003/4; as the number of households accepted has risen

² See www.shelter.org for their latest 1 million campaign.

³ Evans, A, 1996, 'We don't choose to be homeless'. CHAR

from nearly 14,000 households to over 20,000, in that period it is possible to argue that youth homelessness is rising.⁴

This method of estimating homelessness makes no provision for an estimate of hidden homelessness including young people 'sofa surfing' who have not applied to local authorities as homeless and is assumed to be a limited estimate.

The first and second methods are particular to the UK and not discussed here in further detail, although it is important to note that the second method of estimating rates of homelessness based on Scottish figures did not work well for London in 1996, the area with the highest number of concealed households (Smith, 2004).

1.2 c) Estimating single homelessness

A third method has been used by NGOs working with the single homeless to identify those not included in the priority need groups. This method uses a scale of all the different homeless/housing situations to make an estimate of how many single people are homeless. The most recent estimate has been made by the New Policy Institute for CRISIS in their report *How Many, How Much* (2004: at www.crisis.org).

The method is given in detail in Table 1 because some of the filters that are applied in this method address some of the issues around 'double-counting' raised in the other papers, particularly by the French team. It is the one most similar to that proposed by Meert et al for FEANTSA. But it should be noted that this estimate has taken place in the context of UK homelessness legislation and is part of a campaign by CRISIS to recognise the extent of single homelessness and to extend more protection to the single homeless. It is not proposed, I think, as a scale that can encompass all of homelessness as the Meert scale is.

For the final estimate NPI made a distinction in the two categories of 'involuntary sharing' between those aged 25 and over living with friends only (high likelihood but lower numbers) and those aged under 25 and living with family (low likelihood but greater numbers). The NPI estimate is an estimate of homelessness among a specific household type i.e. the number of **homeless adults without dependent children, the single homeless**. For that particular population NPI produced a low estimate of 310,000 and a high estimate of 380,000 (see Table 4.11).

⁴ Pleace N and Fitzpatrick S, 2004, Centrepoint Youth Homelessness Index. An estimate of youth homelessness for England

Table 1 Estimate of single homelessness, 2004 CRISIS/ NPI

Group	Filters to focus on homelessness	Data source	Estimate
Rough sleepers	None	Rough sleeper counts	800
Provided with supported housing – hostels, ymcas, shelters	Include only those not previously in supported housing in order to avoid double counting. Include only those for whom supported housing is not a permanent solution.	CORE database (supported housing) and CENSUS 2000	25,000
Bed and breakfast and other boarded accommodation	Include only those in receipt of housing benefit.	Dept of Work and Pensions Housing Benefit statistics	50,000
People in owner occupied and rented accommodation at imminent risk of eviction	Include those for whom rent and mortgage arrears is the main reason for their potential eviction because they will not have income to secure alternative	The court service for eviction statistics	2,000
Squatters	Not data to distinguish those squatting voluntarily and of necessity	No reliable data	Up to 10,000
Involuntary sharing - Multiple family units sharing accommodation which is overcrowded	Include only those living in concealed households (no explicit licence to occupy). For the higher likelihood sub-group include those living with friends rather than parents or relatives	Survey of English Housing –2000/01, 2001/2, 2002/3	160,000 for the higher likelihood (330000 lower)
Involuntary sharing - Multiple family units sharing accommodation which is not overcrowded	Include those who meet both the following conditions – living in concealed households and where head of household is dissatisfied. Higher likelihood group as above	Survey of English Housing –2000/01, 2001/2, 2002/3	60,000 for higher likelihood (120,000 lower)
People in institutions because they have nowhere else	Not counted because no data is available		
People staying on the floors and sofas of friends and relatives	Not data but most would be included above among the concealed households		
People whose personal safety or well-being is at risk	Not counted because no data available		

Source CRISIS/NPI, 2004, based on Table 3.1 p. 12, Table 4.1 p.15 and Table 4.10 p.22

1.3 Definitions of homelessness and the development of scales in the European context

It is important to note that the early definitions of homelessness that were produced for the European Observatory on Homelessness (FEANTSA) by Daly and Draganov were as broad as those used in the UK or in the UN. The 1994 definition from Daly was a four-fold classification of housing situations that should be included in any evaluation of the extent of **homelessness** within Europe. These were:

- rooflessness (i.e. sleeping rough);
- houselessness (i.e. living in institutions or short term 'guest' accommodation);
- insecure accommodation;
- inferior or substandard housing. (Daly, 1994).

Later definitions built on this scale. Dragova's definition was similar in its scope. Neither researcher produced, from this four-fold classification, a 'scale' of homelessness.

The paper '*Towards an Operational Definition of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion*' (2004) by Meert, Edgar and Doherty who are the joint co-ordinators of the European Observatory on Homelessness takes these four categories and produces a 'scale' of homelessness that is less inclusive than the UK official definition and excludes from the homeless categories many households accepted as homeless in the UK (see Table 2, column 4).

Meert et al's (2004) describe three circles, or domains, of homelessness – exclusion from the legal domain (this is the same as the UK), exclusion from the physical domain (this is the same as the UK) and exclusion from the social domain (this is partly the same in that safety is built into the UK definition). However in Table 1 it uses these three domains to produce a classification of seven homeless/housing situations, four of which are labelled *Homeless* (the original four above) and three of which are labelled *Housing Exclusion*. The seven domains are given below in Table 2, which also reports the precise type of housing circumstances the authors believe are captured by each category – Table 2 is based on the authors' own Tables 1 and 3 from pages 9 and 14 of their paper.

The important point to note is that these seven domains are being proposed outside of any pan-European legislation that has as broad a definition of homelessness as the UK legislation. The scale of the seven domains therefore has to be understood as substituting for that broad definition rather than simply providing a method of estimating homeless people. It produces a scale that would actually label households responsible for dependent children and women suffering domestic violence as being 'housing excluded' rather than homeless. It is similar to the scales produced by the single homeless organisations in the UK (Crisis for example) but those scales are intended to **supplement** homeless acceptance statistics by adding an estimate of the number of single homeless (and I have used them this way myself to provide an estimate of youth homelessness), not to provide an **alternative** approach to defining homelessness among all types of households, including homeless households within which live dependent children or older persons.

In Table 2 Cols 1-3 are derived from the Meert et al paper and Col 4 is a commentary added by myself.

Table 2. Definition of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion from Meert et al

Type of housing circumstances Table 1 Meert et al	Three domains of physical, legal and social. Table 1	Examples Table 2 Meert	Comparison with the UK legal definition of homelessness
Homelessness (1) Rooflessness	No dwelling, no legal title, not private or safe	Living in a public space, staying a night shelter	80-85% single males
Homelessness (2) Houselessness	Place to live, no legal title, not private or safe	Hostels for the homeless or for women. Interim accommodation. Temporary accomm from authorities, bed and breakfast etc Immigration accom Institutions Supported accom	Homeless Hostels predominantly single male In England 3,700 hostel spaces for women from domestic violence
Homelessness (3) Insecure and inadequate housing	Has a place to live (unfit). No legal title. Space for social relations	Mobile home/caravan not legally sited. Dwelling unfit for habitation	Accepted as homeless under the UK legislation
Homelessness (4) Inadequate housing and social isolation within a legally occupied dwelling	Inadequate dwelling, security of tenure or legal title, but no private and safe personal space	Dwelling severely overcrowded	Is this homelessness? Or is it housing need? Is this where women facing violence, or children facing abuse, or those facing racial violence are included?
Housing Exclusion (5) Inadequate housing – secure tenure	Dwelling unfit, legal title or security of tenure, space for social relations	Temporary structure and shanty dwelling	<i>Temporary structures are accepted as homeless under the UK legislation.</i>
Housing Exclusion (6) Insecure housing (adequate housing)	Place to live, no security of tenure, space for social relations	Legal notice to quit/eviction Living temporarily with family and friends not through choice Living without normal legal tenancy Living in designated supported accommodation	<i>This category would include 30% of households accepted as homeless in England under the homeless legislation</i>
Housing Exclusion (7) Social isolation within a secure	Place to live, legal title or security of tenure, no private or safe personal space for social relations	Living under threat of violence from partner or family	<i>Accepted as homeless under the UK legislation</i>

In their paper Meert et al remark that the homeless legislation in the UK is flawed in its operation and this is true. The lack of available social and private housing for homeless families has led to rising numbers of the families accepted as homeless by local authorities being placed in temporary and emergency accommodation because the local authority has nowhere else to house them. The crisis is particularly acute in London where in 2003 more than 61,000 households were living in temporary

accommodation by London borough housing departments according to the Mayor's office (www.london.gov.uk/mayor/housing). Other households that are homeless and in the priority need groups are denied acceptance as homeless through strict application of the 'intentionality' and 'local' rules. Many housing authorities in low supply areas are meeting their statutory obligations only through very tight gate-keeping and the use of long-term temporary accommodation, or by transferring social housing applicants to other areas of the country – from Haringey and Camden to Leeds or Stoke-on-Trent. However this does not mean that the broad definition of homelessness should be compromised by labelling those living as 'hidden homeless' living in situations of housing exclusion.

In contrast to Meert et al scales the UN definition of homeless quoted in the paper from Eszther Somogyi and Ivan Tosics (p. 4) is more in the spirit of the earlier FEANTSA definition and one that we should look at more carefully in relation to **who** is being included and excluded within the various categories of the definition of homelessness. Péter Gyori's paper has the same approach – considering who and what type of household is homeless.

This raises the question of how we can ensure that the French definition of homelessness made by CNIS through the four categories of housing does not create a scale that privileges the 'literal homeless' compared with other forms of homelessness. As the paper by Maryse Marpsat reminds us four dimensions of housing situations have been used to identify housing and homeless situations in French surveys:

HOUSING TYPE - from individual dwelling (1) through to hostel or shelter (6) other institution, (7) mobile dwellings, through to use of public places (13)

OCCUPANCY STATUS - from owner-occupier (1) through to housed by a private individual (5) through to non-legal occupant (8) and homeless with a mail address or without.

HOUSING QUALITY – evaluated through running water, indoor toilet, shower/bath, overcrowding, damp.

STABILITY/INSECURITY– all tenures but no risk of having to move out, risk of having to move out within a year, no security but doesn't have to move within the year, no security and most move six to 12 months through to sleeps outside in the same place and have no regular place to sleep outside.

My question is how can these definitions be operationalised without a consideration of the type of household that is homeless. The French team are concerned to preserve a purely housing definition of homelessness in order to be able to interrogate other social variables in relation to that definition and this may be correct for the purpose of housing surveys and statistical analysis. But what if such definitions are used to define the limits of the problem of homelessness in relation to policy. My concern is that we should not create definitions of homelessness that appear to be neutral in relation to social categories but, in fact, produce definitions that privilege a particular type of homelessness. For example in the Housing Type, 13, the extreme is the use of public places and in Occupancy Status, 8 is homeless without a mail address. In the UK (and perhaps in other European countries) the two extremes of these two dimensions would be occupied by single people, principally male and in the UK principally white – not by families with children. As argued above, the legislation in the UK was designed to protect a particular type of homeless household (households with dependent children and the vulnerable) and therefore the definition of homelessness used in the legislation is not that of 'literal homelessness' (as in the usage of the US – street and hostel homeless) but broad, in order to include homeless households living within other households.

A similar problem occurs with the construction of the Meert et al scale. This scale has been built from the perspective of the single homeless person and their degree of visibility on the streets, or in hostels. In the UK the first two categories of homelessness are almost exclusively occupied by single person households (the street and the hostel, with the exception of hostels for women fleeing domestic violence). Across the four homeless categories single person households are more likely to be found and to meet the homeless criteria, whilst homeless households are found in categories 3 and 4 of the Homeless categories and 5 and 6 of the Housing Exclusion criteria. Indeed there is some confusion in the categorisation as Homeless 4 could well be described as Housing Need – many single people living in overcrowded space without privacy would not be homeless.

How should we concretise these scales?

One possible proposal is that all such scales and definitions of homelessness should also report the household types that would be captured by each category: the percentages of the single vs household homeless, women vs men, ethnic minorities, young people etc. It is important that these abstract categories are made concrete in their potential outcomes.

In a previous CUHP debate in Paris the Spanish and Italian teams raised the question, in relation to the definition of homelessness through four housing dimensions as in the French model, of whether there was a qualitative break that separated the homeless situation from the non-homeless. In that meeting this question was raised in relation to a consideration of the degree of social exclusion – were homeless people also characterised by other characteristics such as mental ill-health, extreme social exclusion etc. In this paper I am raising the question as to the meaning of homelessness for different types of households in these different situations? In Table 4 I take the four dimensions of the French definition of housing situation and asks which housing situations would be classified as homeless and which as 'hidden' and what questions might be asked in relation to gender, age, or household type. The reason for raising these questions is that I have found it difficult to think through, in terms of concrete examples, how we could ensure a broad definition of homelessness that would include all household types through using the French system of classification housing situations in relation to four housing dimensions.

Table 4. Definitions in the French Paper and the need to consider which people might they refer to.

Definition category	Country/ Agency	Situations in that category that might be classified as literally Homeless	Situations in that category that might be classified as 'at risk' or 'hidden' rather than literally homeless	Social domain – questions that would be asked in the UK re. Household type
Housing type	France/C NIS-2	mobile dwellings that are intended to be mobile or are mobile; makeshift shelters of different types, public places	hostels; institutional accommodation	What is the age of the person involved? What is the gender?
Occupancy Status	France/C NIS-2	hostels; illegal occupation; public places	housed by a private individual – family or friend	Are children involved? Is there a risk of domestic pr racial violence
Quality of housing	France/C NIS-3	Poor quality - inadequate	Overcrowding?	As above
Housing security	France/C NIS-4	security less than one week; public spaces	lived there from 1 to 6 months	As above

Similar problems are found with other scales based on visibility. In the UK, the estimate of homelessness made by CRISIS has several categories, but the largest part of the estimate is derived from figures on those living temporarily with family and friends. Again the majority would be single people. But what is the significance of the word 'temporary' and how can it be qualified in order to give a real estimate of homelessness. Some of the questions that would need to be asked are: Has this household been asked to leave? Has this household previously lived independently before returning? (a question asked in the French Housing Survey). Does the host household want the temporarily staying household to move out immediately? Moreover the CRISIS estimate was for single homeless people. If the concealed or hidden homeless household is not a single person household but a couple, of a couple with children or a lone parent household, then what difference does that make to our assessment of their situation?

The next section of this paper discusses the relationship between concealed households, potential households and 'hidden homeless' households.

Section 2. The problem of definition: ‘concealed households’, ‘potential households’ and ‘hidden homeless households’ in relation to household type.

In the UK there have been two periods of intense discussion on the nature of ‘Hidden Homelessness’ since the passing of the 1977 homeless legislation: the period 1986-1994, and 1999 to date. Both of these periods were, and are, periods of house price inflation with low-income households priced out of the owner-occupation housing market, and out of the private rental market. In the first period Greve and Currie (1990) argued that the majority of the ‘hidden homeless’ were women as men were more visible on the street and women were more likely to find themselves living as homeless in unsafe conditions. In the second period CRISIS has argued that all the single homeless are more likely to be ‘hidden homeless’, by virtue of not being registered as homeless with local authorities under the homeless legislation. registered.

This section considers what distinguishes the ‘hidden homeless’ living as concealed households from other concealed households, as this is by far the greatest number of ‘hidden homeless’ households in the UK. First it looks at the surveys on concealed households that were undertaken in the earlier period, and second, briefly, at issues raised by more recent surveys of hidden homelessness. Third, it reports on the new questions on concealed households to be included in the Survey of English Housing 2004/5 and asks what other questions should be included in a survey of hidden homeless. This begins the discussion on one of the outputs of this workshop which is to consider good practice survey questions that would identify hidden homeless households in a survey of the general population.

2.1 1986-96 studies of concealed households

The period from 1985 through to 1988 (London) and 1990 (the rest of the UK) saw a rise in house prices that excluded many from the housing market, particularly in London. It was also a period when the continuing sale of local authority (social housing) stock meant that in many areas the constraints on who was accepted as homeless increased, as did the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households, rather than immediate placement in permanent social housing. It was a period in which the number of households accepted as homeless in England peaked in 1992 at over 137,000 households. Moreover, this period coincided with the rise in London of rough sleeping, and particularly rough sleeping among young people following the withdrawal of the right of 16 and 17 year olds to welfare benefits. These factors led to an awareness of a general housing crisis and a homelessness crisis, and to a range of studies on homelessness including the problem of households living ‘doubled up’ (the US term).

An early survey of concealed households by the London Research Centre (1988) used the results of the 1986 London Household Survey to identify a sample of 1,112 concealed households and to conduct a survey as to their intentions in relation to forming an independent household. The purpose of this survey was to establish what proportion of concealed households in London were intending to form new households. The most important finding of the study was that rates of ‘potential households’, as opposed to concealed households, varied according to household type. As shown in Table 5 only 28% of single person households living with relatives, friends or parents wanted to move to form an independent household, compared with 79% of couples and couple parents, and 71% of single parents. Because of the greater number of single adults living as concealed households, however, single adults were the largest number of potential households.

Table 5: Concealed and Potential Households, London 1986/7

	Single People	Couples / Families	Lone Parents	Other	Total
% of all concealed households	95%	3%	2%	0	100%
concealed number	873,000	28,000	14,000	0	915,000
% of concealed that wish to move	28	79	71	n/a	31
% of all potential households	84%	8%	3%	5%	100%
potential number	242,000	22,000	10,000	14,000	288,000

Source: LRC (1988)

However, there is no way of knowing, from this study, the number of 'hidden homeless' households among the potential households because the following questions were not asked: What was their level of security? Were they living with parents and relatives who wanted them to leave? Were they a householder who had previously lived independently and been forced to return to the parental or relative or friend's home because of economic and social circumstances? To identify 'potential households' as 'hidden homeless' households requires decisions as to the weight of these factors and survey questions that identify

- a) the intentions of the tenured householder,
- b) the intentions of the concealed householder and/or
- c) the past housing history of the concealed households.

Moreover there needs to be an assessment of the impact of the level of overcrowding in these households: London households have an average rate of overcrowding higher than anywhere else in England.

Therefore although the study could demonstrate the much lower rate of single person households that wished to move ('potential households') it could not identify which were hidden homeless in relation to the criteria given above.

The issue of 'concealed households' and 'potential households' however, was of sufficient interest that this study was followed two others into what was described as 'shared accommodation' by the Department then responsible for Housing and for Homelessness, the Department of the Environment. The first study, in 1990, had difficulties locating its sample, which was derived from Labour Force Survey household records. The second survey therefore used the 1991 Census returns to identify shared accommodation in five selected areas, and devised a scale of desire to move (Green, 1994). Again, rates of potential households varied by household type. We consider Green's study a better base for an estimate of the proportion of concealed households who were potential households because it allows us to identify the proportion who strongly want to move. However, Green's study was based on five different areas in order to establish the different pattern in each area, it therefore did not establish national rates but local rates and its findings on average rates of wanting to move must be compared with the 1990 study (see Table 6 below).

Concealed households in Camden (the London borough studied by Green) had different characteristics and different rates of wanting to move than concealed

households in other parts of England, although they were not always the highest. Camden's rate of concealed households was much higher for unmarried adults living with non-relatives. Table 6 summarises the results of Green's study for the proportion of concealed households who want to move and the proportion (included in the former) of those who strongly want to move. This gives us two measures of potential households. Proportions are reported for Camden, the average for Green's other four areas, and the rates found in the 1990 Sharers Survey reported in Green (Green, 1994)

Table 6. Identifying Potential Households among concealed households. Green 1994

Desire to move by Concealed Household type	Camden %	Other 4 areas av %	1990 Survey %
Concealed Couple Want to Move	56	47	49
	28	28	25
Concealed Lone Parent Wants to Move	46	58	53
	24	33	32
Concealed Adult with parents (*18+)Wants to move	45	43	39
	20	15	11
Concealed Adult with other relative. Wants to move	34	10	15
	10	5	4
Concealed Adult with non-relative** Wants to move	26	26	25
	30	31	...
Strongly wants to move	14	15	9

Source: adapted from Green (1994) Tables and Table 4.6.3

*Young people aged 16-24 years were included in each category except for that of concealed adults living with parents which included 18-24 year olds only.

** Concealed adults living with non-relatives were the only category to be split into student and non-student in the Green study.

In this study there was not only a measure of 'potential households' but also a measure of 'housing exclusion'. At that time local authorities not only ran a system for applying for social housing through the homelessness route but also a system for applying for social housing through a 'waiting list'; households were awarded points in most local authorities for numbers in the household, any medical conditions, degree of overcrowding. Green therefore also reported the proportion of households on the waiting list of a local authority or housing association. In her study the proportion of concealed households also registered on the waiting list was higher in the London Borough of Camden than in the other four areas for all types of concealed households which suggests that the housing exclusion experience in this borough overlapped with that of 'hidden homelessness'.

Table 7. Registered for Social Housing, on the waiting list of a local authority or housing association

Households	London Borough of Camden %	Other 4 areas%	1990 Study %
Concealed Couple	46	22	24
Concealed Lone Parent	41	29	45
Concealed Adult with parents	21	3	8
Concealed Adult with other relatives	22	4	5
Concealed Adult with non-relative	10	8	5

Source: Green (1994)

Therefore, from this study, it was possible to argue that housing type had an enormous impact on whether a concealed household was a potential household that was also possibly 'hidden homeless'. Homeless criteria that might be considered by local authority housing departments includes those living in over-crowded or unsuitable conditions, or those that have been asked to move or are at risk of losing their accommodation but acceptance on any of these criteria is more difficult in areas of housing stress.

Green also reported on levels of overcrowding using a benchmark of bedroom standard – 1. In both the London borough and in the four other areas the degree of over-crowding amongst concealed households was greatest for a couple, followed by a lone parent and then followed by concealed adults (single person households).

Table 8 Accommodation below bedroom standard. Green 1994.

Households	London Borough of Camden %	Other 4 areas%	1990 Study %
Concealed Couple	69	59	18
Concealed Lone Parent	35	35	35
Concealed Adult with parents	10	12	10
Concealed Adult with other relatives	14	15	8
Concealed Adult with non-relative	21	5	5

Source: Green (1994)

From these two studies in that period it was apparent that the meaning of living as a concealed household is quite different for households that are couples or lone parents compared with households that are single adults. This fits with argument put forward in the Appendix to the paper from the Hungarian Team by Gyorgi, that 'hidden homelessness' must also be measured in relation to the right to form a household.

2.2. Evidence on concealed households, potential households and hidden homeless households from 1999-2004. The problem of over-crowding as a measure of 'hidden homelessness' and alternative measures

In 2000 our Centre produced an estimate of youth homelessness among young people aged 16-24 that used a similar methodology to NPI for an estimate of overcrowding (bedroom standard minus 2) but was based on averaging several surveys over two years (Survey of English Housing, Labour Force Survey, General Household Survey) and investigating concealed households and households at risk across them, as well as using benefit data, both income support and housing benefit.

However, we became concerned about the use of 'overcrowding' as a measure of hidden homeless among young people when we looked at who it was that this measure captured. Looking at our information for those living at bedroom standard minus 2:

- For those living with parents there were equal numbers of men and women (49%, 51%) but 38% were living in London, and 39% were from black and minority ethnic groups.
- For those living with other relatives or friends there was a higher proportion of men (67% men, 31% women), and 87% were living in London and 35% were from black and minority ethnic groups.

Therefore what are we measuring when we measure overcrowding? Are we measuring the housing crisis of a capital city? Are we measuring poverty? Are we measuring households with large families in small houses?⁵

It is therefore important to find other, direct, ways of measuring 'hidden homelessness' rather than measuring potential households living in extremely overcrowded conditions. One way is to consider whether the host family is dissatisfied. Information on this was available to NPI for their estimate of housing need and the risk of homelessness in London based on information collected in the London Household Survey of 2002. At the request of the Greater London Authority, NPI did not include the roofless category in their estimate, as there is information on rough-sleeping through the CHAIN database in London, but they did include the other three definitions used in the early (Daly, Abramov) FEANTSA definition. Many of the sources were the same as used for the CRISIS estimate, however additional information was gained from the London Household Survey to identify particular concealed households i.e. those households where either the owner or the renter was dissatisfied.⁶

Table 9. Groups Included In The Analysis and the estimate, NPI for the GLA

Major Category	Sub-Category	Estimate	
1. Houselessness	A. People living involuntarily in B&Bs and other boarded accommodation	9,000	High
	B. People living in hostels, night shelters and refuges on a non-permanent basis	15,000	High
	C. People staying in institutions who are due for discharge/release but have no accommodation to go to	no data	
2. Insecure Accommodation	D. Concealed households living in overcrowded conditions	80,000 aged 25+ London Household Survey, 2002	Medium
	E. Concealed households where the owner/renter is dissatisfied	110,000 aged 16-24 London Household Survey, 2002	Low
	F. Households where someone is being harassed	30,000 aged 25+	Medium
	G. People at imminent risk of eviction	20,000 aged 16-24	Low
	H. People squatting involuntarily	210,000	Varies
3. Inadequate Accommodation	I. Severely overcrowded households	700	High
	J. Households without central heating who are also dissatisfied with their accommodation	8,000 at most	High

⁵ This was an estimate made for DETR that is unpublished. Neither they nor we were happy with the results of using this method of estimating homelessness.

⁶ Report is available at www.london.gov.uk

It is, however, important to note that this estimate is once again one that is additional to those who are accepted as homeless under the homeless legislation as they report:

“To provide some context for these estimates, in the latest quarter for which London data is available (the third quarter of 2003):

- Around 9,000 households were accepted as statutorily homeless and in priority need.
- Around 4,000 households were accepted as statutorily homeless but not in priority need.
- Around 60,000 households were in temporary accommodation.

Even for those accepted as statutorily homeless and in priority need (mainly families), the biggest reason causing them to apply was because friends and family were no longer willing to support them.” (NPI estimate for GLA, 2004 p4).

2.3. Survey questions to identify ‘hidden homeless’ households from potential households and concealed households.

In order to refute the Meert et al scale that identifies the situation of households (family and single) living concealed as ‘housing exclusion’ rather than homelessness, it is important to agree on criteria that would identify households living as ‘hidden homeless’ through survey questions that identify this particular group within concealed households.

From the previous discussion in the UK we have to distinguish between:

- 1. Concealed households i.e. ‘sub households or subordinate households’ living in accommodation where ownership or tenancy rights are vested in another household. It is not possible to use the term ‘sharing households’ because this term has a precise meaning in UK national surveys; it is used to identify households that share facilities with other households within the same building, but are not living within that household.
- 2. ‘Potential households’ is the term used for those households living as concealed households who want to move or strongly want to move. From earlier evidence it is likely that the majority of single person households are sub-households who do not strongly want to move, whilst the majority of lone parents, couples and couple parent households would all strongly want to move.
- 3. ‘Hidden homeless’ households are those living as concealed households whose living conditions or relationships with the host household is such that either:
 - a) They have been asked to leave and are ‘potentially homeless’, or
 - b) It would be considered “unreasonable to remain”
 - c) Their safety is at risk.

Under what other circumstances are concealed households hidden homeless? It is difficult to agree that all overcrowded households, including all single person households are hidden homeless because some single person households might become homeless through leaving a parental home where their circumstances were overcrowded but they were not required to leave. ‘Hidden homeless’ would also include those women living with a partner in a relationship in which it is ‘unreasonable to remain’ but that also poses problems – when the homeless legislation was first passed local authorities demanded proof of injury through violence.

The Survey of English Housing (SEH) has four proposed questions for inclusion in the 2004/05 survey. These are:

- “Which statement best describes the way in which you/household member name lives at this accommodation?
 - (1) Living here temporarily based on an informal arrangement
 - (2) Or living here based on a formal agreement?
- Which of the statements on this card best describes why you/household member name are/is living here temporarily?
 - (1) Looking for permanent accommodation to buy or rent
 - (2) Waiting for the completion of the purchase of new accommodation
 - (3) Waiting for rental period on permanent accommodation to begin
 - (4) Building repairs are being carried out on permanent accommodation
 - (5) Unable to afford to move into permanent accommodation
 - (6) Soon to be going travelling, going on an extended holiday or going abroad
 - (7) Waiting to live with someone else (outside this household) who is unable to move at present
 - (8) Have been recognised as homeless by the council and are living here temporarily
 - (9) Other reason
- Do you expect the next place where you/household member name live/s will be permanent?
 - (1) Yes
 - (2) No
- For those with formal arrangements, do any of the statements on this card apply to you/household member name?
 - (1) Looking for permanent accommodation to buy or rent
 - (2) Waiting for the completion of the purchase of new accommodation
 - (3) Building repairs are being carried out on more permanent accommodation
 - (4) Have been recognised as homeless by the council and have been re-housed into current accommodation
 - (5) None of these”

The inclusion of such questions may help with estimates of the scale of the problem of potential households among the concealed but are insufficient to determine the extent of hidden homelessness. Most of the questions in this survey are collected at the level of the household from the household head therefore background information on the individual is limited.

What other questions should be asked of someone living as a concealed household? First, the questions included in earlier French Surveys on housing history appear to be important, and currently they are under revision:

- ‘1) Have you already lived in an independent form of housing for more than three months excluding study periods (and military service)?
- 2) For how long did you live in an independent form of housing, excluding study periods (and military service)?
- 3) From what kind of situation did you return to live here after having had an independent form of housing?
 1. On losing a job
 2. On changing your place of work
 3. Following a family dispute
 4. Following financial problems
 5. Other reasons’

The questions then continue to inquire as to whether the individual is looking for independent accommodation, and has the financial means to acquire independent accommodation. Most important, separate questions are also asked of the head of the host household about reasons the concealed household is present although not about how the host household feels about this.

If we begin to think about the set of questions that would identify hidden homeless households within a housing survey what else could be asked? Questions to the host household and to the concealed household as to whether the concealed household has been asked to leave at any time. Questions on safety are difficult to ask unless interviews are conducted independently. What else needs to be added to the inquiry?
How the household sleeps? How privacy is managed?

Section Three. The risks of homelessness for different types of households.

One of the problems of producing a scale of homelessness that places 'rooflessness' or rough-sleeping at the top of the scale is that it invokes the response that the most visibly homeless are the most vulnerable and the most at risk. However, there are different types of vulnerability and different types of risk. There are risks associated with the street and the risks of living in someone else's home, up to and including murder for women facing domestic violence.

When homeless legislation was first introduced into the UK in 1977 it followed campaigns by SHELTER and other charities on the risks to women and children of insecure housing, agitation over domestic violence, and a Royal Commission on Single Parents. The image of homelessness that was embedded in the legislation was that of the homeless household 'at risk' at many levels and the choices of who to protect were made through the 'priority need' categories, whilst the definition of homelessness itself was as broad as possible. Local authorities have the right to enquire if the household fits the criteria but the priority need criteria are ones that prioritise children, older persons, those with mental and physical health conditions and now those previously living in an institution. If a person is facing domestic or racial violence then they can argue they are homeless whatever their housing circumstances.

3.1 Women and the need for safe accommodation:

The most immediate outcome of the adoption of the type of definition of homelessness produced by Meert et al, and the use of the CRISIS definition across all categories of homeless persons, rather than just across the single homeless, would be a reduction in the protection afforded women, children and the elderly.

As many writers have recognised women have a specific need for safe shelter, whatever their household circumstances or their age. The issues surrounding a 'place of safety' are, however, complex. Women are much less likely than men to sleep on the streets, or in public places, partly because of their physical needs (keeping clean, dealing with menstruation) and also because of fear of sexual attack and harassment (Golden 1992; Jones 1999; Sahlin and Thorn 2000). On the other hand, many women face their greatest threat within their home and domestic violence has been recognised as a major cause of homelessness among women within UK homelessness legislation. Women facing domestic violence have to create a safe home for themselves or themselves and social housing provision plays a greater role in housing women compared with men.

A recent survey (1999) by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) of low-income families and *all* lone parent families, based on a national sample of households in receipt of child benefit, provides precise evidence on the proportion of previous cohabiting or married lone parents who had experienced domestic violence. The survey asked all ever-partnered lone parents they interviewed about violence in their previous partnership. Of all ever-partnered lone mothers, eight per cent reported violence without injury, and 27 per cent violence with injury in the previous partnership (derived from Marsh *et al.* 2001: 90, Table 4.7; 91, Table 4.8). In all, therefore, 35 per cent reported violence within their previous relationship. The lack of good quality social housing and affordable housing also results in some women not declaring themselves homeless and remaining in abusive relationships.

The housing provision occupied by women has come increasingly to rely on resources she can access, rather than resources of a domestic partner. Family

stability shifted decisively in the UK in the 1970s when both separation and never married cohabitation became increasingly common (Joshi 1989), precisely at the time that the predominant housing tenure became owner occupation. After the house price rises of the early 1970s, late 1970s, mid 1980s and now late 1990s/2000s, the majority of households require two incomes in order to enter home-ownership or to rent in some areas, a major risk in a period of domestic partnership instability. For women to run their own independent household requires either one very good income or a housing safety net that is especially protective towards women, compensating for their lower average earnings compared with men.

Although social housing is a particularly important tenure for women, the special needs of women are rarely acknowledged as such. Women have been able to access social housing in the UK through the homeless legislation, either as part of a couple or as a single parent, through the fact that they were mothers rather than their own lack of income and vulnerability in the housing market. Despite the increasing absolute numbers of single parent fathers, during the dissolution of a partnership it is still overwhelmingly the case that women take responsibility for the children of a partnership. In the UK, survey data records a rate of 94 per cent of women among all lone parents, and 6 per cent men, although official statistics place the distribution at between 8 per cent-10 per cent men (Marsh et al. 2001: 35). The lack of good quality affordable child-care in the UK and the heavy load of working, parenting and running a household means that single parent mothers are most likely to either remain on benefit or work part-time. In the current political climate, however, social policy is increasingly dominated by the work ethic and in requiring single mothers to prove their commitment to the labour market, the UK is following US practice, albeit more moderately (Orloff, 2002).

Women with dependent children have accessed social housing through applying as homeless under the legislation and they and their children became amongst the chief beneficiaries of the homeless persons legislation, as by 1990 four out of every five acceptances were households with children or where a woman was pregnant (Greve and Currie 1990). As the primary care-givers of children, women had a statutory right to apply for social housing whatever the primary cause of their homelessness: domestic violence, welfare benefit poverty or low-wage poverty. By 1991 nearly a half (45 per cent) of divorced or separated women heads of household occupied social (local authority or housing association). Woods (1996: 69, Table 5.2) also calculated that in 1991 31 per cent of *single* women heads of household occupied social housing compared with 18 per cent of men. Therefore by 1991, fourteen years after the 1977 Act, the Act was seen as working in its central task of providing accommodation for homeless families, and the provision was of particular importance for women. At the time, however, public concern was most engaged with the overwhelming and visible problem of single homelessness, particularly among young people who were living on the streets.

Women heads of household faced an increasingly difficult housing situation. Ford *et al.*'s (2001) study of repossession of housing after mortgage arrears, and Christie's (2000) study of women facing repossession following family breakdown, point to particular problems facing women in these circumstances. Many women faced not only mortgage and utility bills arrears, but also liability for their partner's debts or the house being re-mortgaged to support a business. Under the impact of both changing patterns of marriage, divorce and cohabitation, which gave rise to an increasing number of lone mothers, and the 'feminisation of poverty', social housing has become an increasingly *gendered* tenure. Two thirds of lone parents live in independent households:

- 49 per cent rent from local authorities compared to 22 per cent of the general population.
- 14 per cent rent privately (compared to nine per cent),
- 37 per cent, seek to retain owner occupation status (Webster 2000).

As in the US it has become increasingly difficult for poor families, the majority of whom are women headed single parent families, to find housing. Families in the US are, like those in the UK, facing what Stone described as 'shelter poverty';

The problem of rents is easy for a non-economist, even a sparsely educated low-wage worker, to grasp: it's the market, stupid. When the rich and the poor compete for housing on the open market, the poor don't stand a chance. The rich can always outbid them, buy up their tenements or trailer parks, and replace them with condos, McMansions, golf courses, or whatever they like. (Ehrenreich 2001:199)

Ehrenreich reports that in the 1960s in the US the food bill took 24 per cent of the average family budget, and housing costs 29 per cent; by 1999 housing costs had risen to 37 per cent and food fallen to 16 per cent. Ehrenreich's study reports a situation in which families have to live in trailer parks or low cost housing further and further from their jobs in order to be able to afford housing. For the UK Wilcox has estimated that the poorest one fifth of homeowners spend 42 per cent of their income on housing costs, including mortgages and repairs (Wilcox 1999, quoted in Ford et al. 2001).

All of these problems facing women living on their own and women raising children pose the question: Who is vulnerable? It also raises the question: What is homeless? To separate categories of homelessness and housing exclusion as in the Meert scale is to identify the majority of women and children households as being housing excluded rather than homeless. The identification of 'hidden homeless' households as being homeless has been an important cornerstone of homelessness legislation in the UK.

3.2 Young people and their need for safe accommodation.

Another group of homeless people that avoid the streets are the young homeless. They sofa surf, they move from friend to friend and they live in unsafe bed and breakfasts whilst attempting to move into hostel accommodation. In the UK young people are over-represented amongst all groups of homeless including women with children, single parents, single people except for those living on the streets and attending day centres. They are visible as the hostel homeless and they became increasingly visible as dedicated youth homeless hostels became available; they avoided the night shelters.

From all four 'risk' studies undertaken by our centre (described in the London paper), in London, Birmingham, the Cotswolds and North Staffordshire, young people living in hostels had similar risk profiles. They came from more disrupted and poorer families, relationships within their family were much more frequently violent, were much less likely to get on with their mother and have higher rates of school exclusion than the local reference sample in London of young people still living at home, despite the London local reference sample being drawn from similarly deprived areas.

Our Birmingham risk study provides some evidence as to young people's housing circumstances prior to coming to a hostel, an advice agency, or to a housing provider (Smith, 2000). Over a six month period any young person aged between 16 and 25 years who reported as homeless to any agency, including the local authority and major housing associations, was included in a count of youth homelessness across

the city. Over 6,000 records were collected and, after excluding young people who appeared twice in records, 5,374 individuals were included in the database. It was found that the majority of applicants were either homeless or potentially homeless – 3,287 over a six month period (61% of all applicants). Comparing the homeless figure with the number of 16-25 year olds in Birmingham gave a rate of homeless of five per cent, i.e., one in twenty.

Among all applications, young white British applicants were under-represented (59% compared with being 72% of the local population), as were young Asian people from the Indian sub-continent (10% of applicants, 19% of the local population). Young people of ethnic origins that they described as Black British, or African-Caribbean or African were over-represented (20% of applicants, 8% of the local population). Half of applications were from men and half from women. However, one third of young women applied as a single parent (34%) and only just over half as a single person (54%), whilst other young women applied as a part of a couple, with or without children. The vast majority of young men applied as single (88%), three per cent as single parents, and 10 per cent as part of a couple (Smith et al, 2000).

However, amongst the homeless young people only a tiny minority slept rough before they came to any agency, although a larger group (over one in 10) had been in a hostel. The majority had been living either with their parents, or with other relatives or with friends. The reason the majority were homeless was either being thrown out of their parental home, or partnership breakdown.

Table 10 Young single homeless men and women – night prior accommodation and their reason for leaving and

Young single homeless only	Men %	Women %
Night Prior to coming to agency accommodation		
With parents	17	21
Partner	-	1
On Own	7	8
Other relatives	26	22
Friends	19	24
Institution (incl.foster)	9	4
Bed and Breakfast	1	1
Other Hostel	11	12
Squat	1	-
On the streets	4	2
Other	6	5
Reason for leaving		
Own choice/looking for work	16	21
Violence/harassment	2	6
Household friction/thrown out	48	43
Partnership breakdown	14	13
Leaving institution	8	3
Insecure accommodation/no tenancy	12	14
Total N	1637	1122

*Rounded to nearest percentage. Smith et al, 2000

In this study, and in an earlier one undertaken in 1996 (Smith et al, 1996) young people from black and minority ethnic groups were less likely to sleep rough than young whites. They are less visibly homeless on the streets, although more likely to be found in hostels.

Conclusion

This paper has argued for the inclusion of 'hidden homeless' households within the category of homeless rather than within a category of housing exclusion. It has argued that broad definitions of homelessness are necessary in order to include women headed households, households headed by young people, and households of black and ethnic minorities amongst those defined as homeless.

It has argued that there are several issues that need to be addressed in any definition of homelessness:

1. What is the purpose of this definition? Is it a device to create an estimate or does it have some other agenda?
2. What household types are included are excluded within the definition, or within each category of the definition if it is a scale?
3. What vision of the homeless household is contained within the definition?
4. What is the understanding of the different risks and vulnerabilities associated with different household types, different genders, different ages, different ethnic groups?

This paper has also argued that it is also important to think about all the questions necessary in order to identify all hidden homeless households through a general surveys.

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NB In the UK, alongside estimates produced by NGOs there are also homeless estimates produced by each local authority, each one of whom was charged, under the 2002 Act, with the duty to create a homeless strategy and have, in addressing their homeless strategy, made estimates of the depth of homelessness in their area. One area of particular concern has been the creation of estimates in rural areas where even 'rough sleeping' is largely invisible. These strategies can be accessed through www.homelesspages.org

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