Kent Academic Repository

Blizard, Jodi (2022) *Hidden Homelessness in the Context of Contemporary Homelessness Law and Policy.* **Master of Law by Research (LLMRes) thesis, University of Kent,.**

Downloaded from

The version of record is available from

This document version

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

Author Accepted Manuscripts

Enquiries

Hidden Homelessness in the Context of Contemporary Homelessness Law and Policy

Jodi Blizard

Master of Law by Research (LLMRes)

University of Kent

March 2022

Abstract

This research investigates the ways in which the concept of hidden homelessness is used in the context of contemporary homelessness law and policy. The concept is commonly understood as sofa surfers (a term used to describe individuals who temporarily stay with family and friends because they are homeless) who are missing from sight, support and statistics. The contextual legislation is the Housing Act 1996, Part VII and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002.

To examine the concept, I analyse legislation and case law in the context of theoretical case studies, national understandings (primarily represented by charitable organisations) and scholarly understandings on hidden homelessness. The last chapter evaluates Canterbury City Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023 and semi-structured interviews which I conducted with local homeless charities for the purpose of this research; this forms a comparative analysis to national understandings. Reeve and Batty's (2011) finding that hidden homelessness is conceptualised as visibility or exclusion is used to navigate understandings in chapters two to four. I consider the impact that this has on how hidden homelessness is understood, for example conceptualisations of visibility focus on sofa surfing. The thesis also develops Pleace and Hermans' argument that the concept of hidden homelessness should be made redundant (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52); it is argued that the concept is inconsistent and further obscures understandings of the housing problem. In addition to this, conceptualisations do not effectively relate to a problematic area of the law which already accepts that sofa surfing can be legally defined as homeless. The conclusion recommends that defining homelessness as statutory and non-statutory is a more constructive approach because it highlights the parts of legislation which exclude applicants from the main housing duty.

Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Helen Carr, Vivien Gambling and Edward Kirton-Darling who supervised and supported my research and writing of the thesis.

Introduction

Pleace and Hermans' argue that 'the term hidden homeless needs to be made redundant' (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52) because the term 'suggests that there are different levels of homelessness, some of which are less serious than others' (*ibid*). The literature is compelling, as my analysis demonstrates, but there are important arguments which the scholars do not directly address: the concept does not protect vulnerable people and it further obscures already obscure law; there are problems with both the hidden and the homelessness aspects of hidden homelessness. The aspect of homelessness is problematic because the issue is not whether applicants are homeless, rather they are excluded by other aspects of legislation. Furthermore, use of the term hidden is problematic because it introduces ideas of invisibility and exclusion which creates confusion about the conceptual basis of the category. This research shows that notions of visibility create misleading perceptions of homeless lives.

This research investigates concepts within a national and local setting, with a view to extending scholarly analyses and revealing the complexities of charities and government's use of the concept. This is achieved through case studies of how the law approaches individuals who are frequently treated as hidden homeless (in chapter one), by exploring the use of the concept by national charities and central government (chapter two), by looking at scholarly understandings of hidden homelessness (chapter three) and exploring the use of hidden homelessness by local charities and government, including a case study of Canterbury (chapter four). Comparisons between these narratives are made in the conclusion, drawing out the conceptions of visibility, exclusion and entitlement that emerge through the research. This thesis will demonstrate that the use of the concept of hidden homelessness does not effectively suggest improvements of contemporary homelessness law and policy and therefore concludes that the term should be made redundant. The main research question is: how is the concept of hidden homelessness used in the context of contemporary homelessness law and policy? This is divided into four sub questions, which relate to the order of the chapters, firstly, how does the concept of hidden homelessness relate to the law? Secondly, how is the concept of hidden homelessness used at a national level? Thirdly, how is the concept of hidden homelessness understood by scholars? And fourthly, how is the concept of hidden homelessness used on a local level?

Ideas of hidden homelessness surround that which is missing from sight, support or statistics, without being clear who this refers to specifically. The thesis highlights that charity, government, and academic resources commonly understand the concept as sofa surfing, which is understood as staying temporarily with another household known to the individual. Sofa surfing is less commonly known as staying temporarily with another as a form of exploitation which undermines it dangers. Language surrounding sofa surfing suggests that they are categorised as hidden because they are contrasted with rough sleepers who are visible, this is argued as misleading because rough sleeping can also be out of sight. The concept relates to exclusion and entitlement; Reeve and Batty (2011) define hidden homelessness as 'those who meet the legal definition of homeless but to whom the local authority owes no duty (because they have not approached a local authority or because the local authority has decided they are not owed the main housing duty), and [those] whose accommodation is not supplied by a housing/homelessness provider' (Reeve and Batty 2011, 11). This definition does not include temporary accommodation, even though the main housing duty has not come to an end. The lack of clarity surrounding temporary accommodation and hidden homelessness is explored in this research to reinforce the argument that the concept is vague and confused. On contemporary homelessness law and policy, this thesis analyses the Housing Act 1996, this shows that it is not the homelessness of the applicant which is the issue, because legislation already has a wide definition of who is homeless. Analysing relevant legislation and case law in the first chapter shows that applicants are typically not excluded because of the question of their homelessness, this is used to establish that hidden homeless campaigns unnecessarily focus on someone's homelessness.

My research contributes to understandings of hidden homelessness by critically analysing the concepts definition and usefulness, which is a unique contribution. I establish that it should be made redundant because of the following problems: it focusses on the definition of homelessness which does not relate to a problematic area of law, it is inconsistent, it suggests different levels of severity of homelessness, and subsequently, it creates a misleading image of rough sleeping. Analysing the concept on a national and local level offers a relevant perspective and creates space for comparative analysis which effectively evidences the above assertions. Additionally, my research suggests that focussing on

statutory/non-statutory homelessness in campaigns will simplify categorisation and drive campaigns to focus on law reform. Statutory homelessness refers to households who have approached their local authority and the local authority has decided that they *are owed* a main housing duty. Non-statutory homelessness refers to households who meet the legal definition of homelessness but the local authority has decided that they *are not owed* a main housing duty (or those who are homeless but have not approached their local authority). The legal tests for deciding whether a household is owed a main housing duty are shown in chapter one. The main housing duty imposes a duty on the local authority to secure that accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant (Housing Act 1996, s.193(2)).

The first chapter analyses theoretical case studies to suggest how the applicant journey would proceed for an individual who is hidden homeless, this is contrasted to an applicant who is rough sleeping. This intends to prove that applicants are not being excluded from housing provisions because of their homelessness and show the sections of the Housing Act 1996 which are. It is worth noting that some homeless people may not make an applicant which results in their exclusion, reasons behind this are referenced in later chapters. The next section explains the rationale behind the construction of these case studies and if they are representative of average cases.

The second chapter studies how the concept of hidden homelessness is used nationally by looking at charity publications. This is focussed on England, but will refer to the U.K. in places, such as where statistics are U.K. wide. To assess how organisations use the concept, I consider how it is defined, the context it is used in and what/who the discussion intends to advance. I use Reeve and Batty's (2011) finding that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness focus on issues of visibility or exclusion as the basis of analysis in this chapter. I further develop this by showing that where hidden homelessness is conceptualised as a visibility issue, rough sleeping is excluded because of the misconception that it is visible. The chapter is separated by different organisations, e.g., Crisis, Shelter and Homeless Link.

The third chapter looks at scholarship surrounding hidden homelessness, I explore how academics have defined hidden homelessness and more widely, their approach to homelessness categorisation and statistics. I analyse their approach to this because the

concept has been used to categorise homelessness and has been described as missing from statistics, some of the scholarship does not explicitly reference hidden homelessness but is relevant for reasons abovementioned. Furthermore, concepts that scholars have highlighted as relevant to hidden homelessness will be explored, this includes visibility, entitlement, and exclusion from homelessness provisions. As seen in national understandings, hidden homelessness is primarily understood as sofa surfing, highlighting this as a theme, however conceptualisations remain vastly inconsistent. I will separate the chapter by the piece of scholarship I will be focussing on, e.g., 'Counting All Homelessness in Europe: The Case for Ending Separate Enumeration of 'Hidden Homelessness' (Pleace and Hermans, 2020)'. In addition, I directly address two themes of hidden homelessness: sofa surfing and homeless identity, which fall under their own headings and draws upon multiple pieces of scholarship.

The fourth chapter explores how the concept of hidden homelessness is used on a local level. Canterbury has been selected as the site of my study because it is local to the University of Kent and the city has a high homeless population. To understand how the concept is used, I analysed Canterbury City Council's housing, homelessness, and rough sleeping strategy to see how it relates to hidden homelessness. In addition to this, I analysed interviews which I conducted for the purposes of the research. Semi-structured interviews took place in 2021 with two charities located in Canterbury City Centre. This forms a comparison between national and local use of the concept. The next section explains the methodology underpinning the interviews and an explanation for the chosen methods.

The thesis concludes by reflecting upon and comparing findings from chapters one to four, developing comparisons which have emerged throughout the thesis to answer the main research question. The conclusion summarises the problems when hidden homelessness is conceptualised as visibility and exclusion. Conceptualisations of visibility produces further exclusions for rough sleepers because they are excluded from conceptualisations, which falsely implies that they are visible and protected by services by virtue of their homelessness. Whereas conceptualisations which focus on exclusion describes non-statutory homelessness, this includes rough sleepers and sofa surfers, this inconsistency could create conflicting beliefs about homelessness. It is asserted that whilst conceptualising hidden homelessness as exclusion is a more constructive approach, visibility

will always re-enter the discussion. As abovementioned, conceptualisations of exclusion describe non-statutory homelessness and it is more straightforward to state it as that. I conclude the key arguments of my thesis, namely that the concept should be made redundant because it does not advance law reform, it does not protect vulnerable people in the housing sector and is inconsistently understood and applied to homelessness. It is recommended that campaigns should instead focus on statutory/non-statutory homelessness – categorisation which references hidden homelessness blur the lines between these categories and further obscures understandings of housing problems in the U.K.

Methodology

This section describes the research methods used and justification for these in the context of the research questions set out in the introduction. I address each chapter chronologically and discuss the thesis' structure.

The first chapter begins with doctrinal research, which can be understood as 'Research which provides a systematic exposition of the rules governing a particular legal category, analyses the relationship between [the] rules, explains areas of difficulty … ' (Pearce, Campbell and Harding 1987 in Hutchinson 2017, 15). This is because the chapter begins by explaining the contemporary legislation governing homelessness applications, namely sections of the Housing Act 1996 which assess whether someone is owed the main housing duty (Housing Act 1996, s.193). In addition to this, areas of difficulty are highlighted, such as the requirement of reasonableness (Housing Act 1996, s.175(3)) being ambiguous. Furthermore, doctrinal research is used 'to identify the pertinent law (legislation, rules and principles) before, for example, embarking on any empirical research' (Hutchinson 2017, 15), as seen here, the first chapter is used to identify the contemporary legislation before addressing the findings of qualitative research later in the thesis, such as semi-structured interviews. The chapter then analyses theoretical case studies as inspired by Reeve and Batty (2011) who also used case studies to demonstrate their arguments relating to hidden homelessness.

The case studies are used to analyse the legislation set out above, in the context of hidden homelessness, examples of rough sleeping are also used so that direct comparisons can be

made between them. The basis of my research (see introduction) outlines what is typically understood as hidden homelessness versus rough sleeping, meaning I could effectively construct these comparative cases. Additionally, the reasons behind their homelessness intend to be representative of average cases, Crisis cite relationship breakdown, unaffordable rent, unemployment, institutional backgrounds, mental and physical health problem as causes,[1] which reflects the single applicant's homelessness as shown in the case studies. A case of family homelessness is also created to make comparisons between a single applicant's journey and raises the issue of temporary accommodation being excluded from conceptualisations of hidden homelessness. However, to suggest that the case studies are entirely representative would be misleading because the causes of homelessness are not often straightforward, there a combination of factors including someone's background, life events and poverty which leads to someone becoming homeless.[2] Overall, this chapter sets the contextual scene for the arguments which will be made throughout the rest of the thesis.

The second chapter involved desk-based research where I analysed charity publications on hidden homelessness. I chose charities to represent national understandings because this is primarily who use the concept, through my research there was a notable absence of the concept in government publications. Structuring the chapters so that this is before scholarly and local understandings establishes how the concept is used before the thesis delves further into its analysis. The third chapter presents a literature review on existing scholarship, this offers a more critical version of how hidden homelessness is conceptualised. This analysis highlights why the thesis is unique in its criticism of hidden homelessness, as new arguments are made in addition to existing scholarship. The literature was chosen because it references hidden homelessness, or because it relates to issues surrounding the concept, such as absence from statistics. The discussion of statistics created an opportunity to highlight how quantitative data on hidden homelessness is not always reliable and is linked to inconsistency in understandings, having a broad range of literature develops complex arguments in this chapter.

---

[1] htttps://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/
[2] htttps://www.porchlight.org.uk/news/why-people-become-homeless

The fourth chapter involves qualitative research, which is an analysis of findings from interviews conducted with two representatives from homelessness charities in Canterbury. The participants were selected because they represent this chapter's area of interest, they understand homelessness in the local area through their work so their perspective can answer the research question focussed on in this chapter: how the concept is used locally. This is known as typical case sampling (a type of purposive sampling) because it exemplifies a dimension of interest in the research (Bryman 2016, 409). Selecting participants who are not homeless meant that the research was less likely to breach ethical principles, which I will later explain. This research has not investigated how homeless communities understand the concept and it has been argued that the term does not originate from individuals experiencing homelessness (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 47), thus their involvement was unnecessary. Interviewing charity representatives formed a comparison between chapter two (which also looks at charities) and this chapter, conclusions drawn from this demonstrated that campaigns should stop using hidden homelessness in their campaigns. On purposive sampling, this can also apply to things such as documents (Bryman 2016, 418), this is seen in the previous chapters which sampled charity publications and scholarship which was relevant to hidden homelessness. This can also be applied to the beginning of this chapter which analyses Canterbury's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023, this addresses how the council understand the concept and bolsters the arguments made throughout the research.

I conducted semi-structured interviews, this is a series of open questions in a general form of an interview guide; the sequence of questions can be varied and there is scope to ask further questions (Bryman 2016, 201). Considering that there is not an agreed definition of the concept, it is important that the interviews could follow the participants lead and discuss emerging ideas, the flexibility of the interview type was useful here (Bryan 2016, 469). The interview guide was designed to answer how the concept is understood locally and to address knowledge gaps in research. The guide did not include direct questions, for example 'do charities describe the concept consistently?' could influence the participant but asking the participant 'how would you describe the concept?' obtains their own understanding (Bryman 2016, 473-475). Additionally, the former question could be insensitive as it could put pressure on the participant to answer 'correctly,' similarly I would

not introduce complex legal topics into the interview guide because it would be unfair to expect the participants to know this; questions must be clear without jargon (Kvale 1996 in Bryman 2016, 473).

Ethical principles have been broken down into four main areas: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (Diener and Crandall 1978 in Bryman 2016, 125). I was able to show the University of Kent's ethics committee that the research did not breach these principles and that the project complied with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which has been incorporated by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). The GDPR principles overlap the areas abovementioned, for example data minimisation and storage limitation also limits harms to the participant and protects their privacy. Harm can be caused in many ways, and it is not possible to identify in all circumstances whether harm is likely (Bryman 2016, 127), because homelessness is a sensitive topic it is possible that this could cause distress, however this is limited because the interviewees are not experiencing it first hand and are not vulnerable in this sense. Although it may seem unlikely that the research could cause harm it is important that participants are adequately protected. This leads to the second principle of informed consent, prior to the interviews I gave the participants an information sheet and a consent form, the latter made them aware of their right to withdraw, take a break or skip a question, this aims to minimise the risk of harm. It also contained the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, and privacy associated to the research and the consent form obtained the participants signature to take part. This gave the interviewees the opportunity to be fully informed on the nature and implications of the research, as well as obtaining a signed record of their consent (Bryman 2016, 131). This also relates to the GDPR principle which states that 'personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly and transparently' (GDPR, article 5(1)), the research is transparent because it is clear, open and honest from the start.[3] The third area of concern is privacy, this relates to upholding anonymity and confidentiality although there are factors outside of a researchers control such as theft which means that it cannot be guaranteed (Bryman 2016, 133). I used pseudonyms of participant one and participant two and did not transcribe unnecessary information, such as their gender or the

---

[3] https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/principles/lawfulness-fairness-and-transparency/

charity which they work for so that the interviewees are less identifiable. I recorded the interviews on a password protected laptop and destroyed the audio once the relevant information had been transcribed, this is no longer accessible to me or to anyone who could have potentially hacked the laptop and identified the participants through their voice (this is a risk which interviewees were informed of). The last principle is deception which occurs when researchers present their work as something different to what it is (Bryman 2016, 133), this is not an issue here because I obtained fully informed consent whereby the research was explained to participants. I gained permission to undertake the interviews because there were not any obvious ethical concerns.

Chapter One: case studies

This chapter applies five statutory tests to four different case studies to analyse how the concept of hidden homelessness relates to the law and to show how elements of legislation excludes applicants from the main housing duty. The case studies will illustrate the complexities of the legal tests that are applied to determine the scope of the local authority's statutory duties towards someone in housing need who approaches it for help. I will show that the concept of hidden homelessness has no relevance to the question of which statutory duties apply. As shown in the following chapters, the concept of hidden homelessness is commonly understood as sofa surfing or other forms of homelessness within housing. This chapter explores whether the individuals in the case studies are owed a main housing duty through tests found in the Housing Act 1996. Robson and Watchman first described the tests as an obstacle race in 1981 and identified these as homelessness, priority need, intentional homelessness, and local connection (Robson and Watchman 1981, 2-12), these tests still exist although their precise meanings have evolved through caselaw and statutory amendments. Eligibility is an additional test that a household is required to meet before an authority will accept that they are owed a main housing duty; eligibility is based on a household's immigration status, as explained below.

The case studies firstly consider whether the applicant is homeless, the test for this is whether 'he has [] accommodation available for his occupation … which he is entitled to occupy … which it would be reasonable for him to continue to occupy' (Housing Act 1996, s.175(1)(3)). The requirement of reasonableness means that legislation has a wide definition

of who can be homeless, in some circumstances this includes people with accommodation,[4] as demonstrated through the third case study. A further requirement which shows that legislation requires more than merely accommodating applicants is that a local authority must ensure that the accommodation is suitable to discharge its full housing duty (Housing Act 1996, s.206). There is not a definitive test of whether accommodation is suitable, suitability is considered in relation to the person's relevant needs, however space and arrangement are key factors along with the location of accommodation (Homelessness Code of Guidance 2021, para 17.4). Testing suitability shows ambiguity in legislation, however the consideration of personal needs means that it is difficult for legislation to be definitive in this sense. Furthermore, someone who is likely to become homeless in 56 days is threatened with homelessness (Housing Act 1996, s.175(4)) as extended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 from 28 days. If someone is threatened with homelessness, the authority 'must take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for the applicant's occupation' (Housing Act 1996, s.195(2)), this is a lesser duty than the main housing duty which is to 'secure that accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant' (Housing Act 1996, s.193(2)). The last case study shows an applicant threatened with homelessness, whereas the other applicants are homeless – the inclusion of someone being threatened with homelessness shows that legislation includes preventative steps.

The second obstacle is eligibility, this affects 'a person subject to immigration control' who 'does not have leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom, or whose leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom is subject to a condition to maintain and accommodate himself, and any dependants, without recourse to public funds' (Housing Act 1996, s.184(7)).[5] All the case studies discussed are eligible, therefore this test is not critiqued in this piece, however it is still important to make reference to this statutory test as it forms a part of the five tests which can exclude applicants.

Thirdly, the applicant must show that they have a priority need, this consists of four main categories: households with dependent children, pregnant women, those in an emergency

---

[4] *Birmingham City Council (Appellants)* v *Ali (FC) and others (FC) (Respondents) Moran (FC) (Appellant)* [2009] UKHL 36.

[5] *Lekpo-Bozua* v *Hackney LBC* [2010] EWCA Civ 909, [2010] HLR 46.

and those who are vulnerable for one of the specified reasons (Housing Act 1996, s.189).

The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order 2002 expanded priority need to include children and young people, as well as those vulnerable because of institutional backgrounds or because they are fleeing violence or threats of violence. The categories of priority need which require the applicant to establish vulnerability are those who are vulnerable because of old age, mental illness or other special reason (Housing Act 1996, s.189(1)(c)) or those who are vulnerable as a result of an institutional background (The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002, s.5). How vulnerability is established is explained through the second case study, essentially it requires the applicant to prove that they are significantly more vulnerable than ordinarily vulnerable, compared to an ordinary person if made homeless.[6] There are other categories of priority need which do not have a requirement of vulnerability, such as applicants with dependent children, hence activists have campaigned against the prevalence of homeless single people. In addition to this, survivors of domestic abuse no longer have to show that they are vulnerable since the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 inserted section 189(e) into the 1996 Act, which provides that a person who is homeless because of being a victim of domestic abuse has a priority need for accommodation.

Fourthly, a person will be excluded from the main housing duty if they have become homeless intentionally, this is if he 'deliberately does or fails to do anything in consequence of which he ceases to occupy accommodation which … would have been reasonable for him to continue to occupy' (Housing Act 1996, s.191(1)). This section does not intend to imply that the applicant became homeless intentionally, rather it refers to a deliberate act or omission of the applicant,[7] as explained in the first case study.

Lastly, local connection means that a local authority can refer an applicant to another authority if they do not have a local connection to the local authority which they applied to but do have a local connection elsewhere. A local connection can be established where it has been their normal residence, they are employed there, they have family associations there or there are special circumstances (Housing Act 1996, s.199), how this might exclude someone is explored in the third case study. This test was criticised by Lord Denning for

---

[6] *Hotak & Ors* v *London Borough of Southwark* [2015] UKSC 30 [53, 58].
[7] *Din* v *Wandsworth LBC* (1983) 1 AC, 657.

being archaic and reminiscent of the Poor Law 1601, which featured sending paupers back to parishes where they had a settlement,[8] however this exclusion can be negated by applying to the local authority you are connected to, so it is less problematic for applicants compared to other sections of legislation. There are also exceptions to this rule whereby someone can be referred to another authority (Housing Act 1996, s.198), which can include applicants who need to escape domestic abuse or other violence (Homelessness Code of Guidance 2021, para 10.51).

The Hidden Truth About Homelessness (Reeve and Batty, 2011) used case studies to illustrate different homeless situations, e.g., rough sleeping and squatting, which inspired this chapter to use case studies to explore different homeless situations to show how the concept of hidden homelessness relates to the law. In addition to this, Reeve and Batty (*ibid*) used case studies through their research to spotlight issues relevant to hidden homelessness, similarly, case studies in this chapter spotlights arguments made in this research, namely, it is not the nature of someone's homelessness (sofa surfing/rough sleeping) which excludes them from statutory provisions.

This chapter aims to show the reader that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness are not advancing the protection of vulnerable people in the context of homelessness legislation. The definition of 'homeless' in the Housing Act 1996 is not limited to those who are rough sleeping, therefore hidden homeless campaigns are unnecessarily highlighting homelessness outside of rough sleeping. There are different elements of legislation which exclude applicants that campaigns do not focus on, this chapter shows how these sections work.

The first case study considers a rough sleeper called 'George', who is excluded from the main housing duty because he does not have a priority need; illustrating the fact that rough sleepers are not necessarily entitled to a main housing duty. Secondly, 'Steven' who is sofa surfing - his homelessness did not act as a barrier to him securing the main housing duty. This sets the scene for readers to question the organisations mentioned in the following chapters which focus on the different sleeping arrangements when one is homeless rather than statutory and non-statutory homelessness. Thirdly, I examine the case of 'Andrea and

---

[8] *R* v *Slough BC ex Ealing LBC* [1981] QB 801, CA.

Andrew' who live in unsuitable accommodation and could also be considered hidden homeless, they secure a main housing duty by virtue of having a dependent child, though priority need is just one element. Furthermore, a contrast is made between the first and third case study to highlight how single people are excluded from the main housing duty. Single people are often excluded if they cannot establish a priority need, hidden homeless campaigns do not effectively address this issue. In addition to this, arguments about temporary accommodation are made in this case study which relate more widely to the thesis and criticisms of hidden homelessness. The third case study also raises exclusivity issues in relation to temporary accommodation and local connection which are not focussed on elsewhere in the chapter, this is to show further complex issues of homelessness. The last case study focusses on 'Sarah', who is threatened with homelessness and is owed a duty under section 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996. This case study also references how the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has extended the duties towards those threatened with homelessness. Notably, those who are hidden homeless (Steven, Andrea and Andrew, and Sarah) were deemed to be owed a main housing duty, whereas George who is rough sleeping was not deemed to be owed a main duty, this reinforces that it is not the definitions of homelessness which excludes applicants from assistance.

1.1 George

George is a 45-year-old U.K. citizen who became homeless 3 months ago after his ex-partner's gambling problem caused them to fall into rent arrears which led their landlord to evict them. George was only made aware of his partner's addiction when they began to fall into rent arrears because she was not paying her half of the rent. George separated with his partner and has been unable to secure accommodation independently - he has been sleeping on the streets in Canterbury and has occasionally slept in hostels when he has collected enough change to afford to do so. Charities such as Shelter and Crisis have claimed that staying in hostels makes someone hidden homeless, however situations such as George's evidence that homelessness categories are fluid and because he spends most of his time rough sleeping, it is unlikely that George would be defined as hidden homeless.

George is rough sleeping and staying in hostels which shows that he is homeless, because there is no accommodation available for his occupation (Housing Act 1996, s.175(1)). Additionally, George is not a person from abroad, therefore he is eligible for housing

assistance (Housing Act 1996, s.185). However, George could be excluded from the main housing duty because he does not have a priority need (Housing Act 1996, s.189). The law has recently changed, a person who is homeless because of domestic abuse against them is now in priority need - 'domestic abuse' has replaced 'domestic violence' throughout part VII Housing Act 1996, as a result of section 78 Domestic Abuse Act 2021. I turn to consider whether this could benefit George's application, because Section (1)(d) of the 2021 Act defines domestic abuse as including economic abuse. The Act defines economic abuse as 'any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to … acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or … obtain goods or services' (Domestic Abuse Act 2021, s.4), his ex-partner's gambling had an effect of George's ability to maintain the property, because he was evicted. Reference to 'any behaviour' makes the definition seem broad, however it is unclear whether George's ex-partner's gambling problem could amount to abuse. There are numerous ambiguities throughout the Housing Act 1996 which make it hard for applicants to argue their entitlement, however there is no ambiguity as to whether George is homeless - George is likely to be excluded from the main housing duty if he cannot show that he has a priority need. However, because George is eligible and homeless, a relief duty would apply; Canterbury City Council must take reasonable steps to help secure that suitable accommodation becomes available for at least 6 months (Housing Act 1996, s.189B).

Lastly, it must be considered whether George is intentionally homeless (Housing Act 1996, s.191), that is whether his homelessness was a result of his deliberate action or omission. If it was not a result of his own actions, it must be considered whether he acquiesced in an action or omission which caused the homelessness (Homelessness Code of Guidance 2021, para 9.11). George's ex-partners gambling and consequent non-payment of rent can be deemed as the action causing their homelessness and George was not in a position to prevent the homelessness and clear the arrears because of his own financial situation, therefore it is unlikely that it could be said that he acquiesced in the behaviour that led to their homelessness.[9] Furthermore, an authority is permitted to consider whether a relationship breakdown was foreseeable,[10] however the relationship breakdown did not

---

[9] *R (Spruce)* v *East Northamptonshire* DC (1988) 20 HLR 508, QBD.
[10] *Carthew* v *Exeter County Council* (2012) CA (Civ Div).

break the chain of causation leading to their homelessness. George's ex-partner would still be unable to pay the rent regardless of whether they stayed together,[11] therefore it is unnecessary to look at the nature of the relationship breakdown. George's situation highlights the assessment of intentionality as a complex procedure in the statutory tests, the multiple angles which can be taken to imply that someone's homelessness was intentional shows how legislation is designed to exclude applicants.

George is unlikely to secure a main housing duty (Housing Act 1996, s.193(2)) because it is unlikely that he will be considered as having a priority need, this case study has shown that rough sleeping does not automatically entitle applicants to a main housing duty and it is not the question of an applicant's homelessness which excludes them. The next case study shows that someone who is sofa surfing can secure a main housing duty, because unlike George, he has a priority need. George could fit into understandings of hidden homelessness which have been conceptualised as exclusion (such as Reeve and Batty, 2011). The idea of a rough sleeper being conceptualised as hidden homeless, whereas in other contexts rough sleepers have been regarded as visible as opposed to hidden, shows that the term is inconsistently understood and applied – these distinctions will be explained and analysed further in later chapters.

Canterbury City Council owes a duty to provide advisory services under section 179 of the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 substituted this clause to expand this service. Canterbury City Council should provide George with advice on securing accommodation when homeless (Housing Act 1996, s.179(b)) and how to access help that is available for persons in his district who are homeless (Housing Act 1996, s.179(d)(e)). Prior to the 2017 Act, advisory services were only provided by the local authority to priority need households (Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016, 10), thus George would have previously been excluded from section 179. Additionally, Canterbury City Council owe George a duty to assess his case and agree a plan (Housing Act 1996 s.189A, inserted by section 3 of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017). Although George is being excluded from the main housing duty, provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 means that he is offered some support.

---

[11] *Haile* v *Waltham Forest BC* [2015] UKSC 34.

1.2 Steven

Steven is 38 and left the army 3 years ago, he moved back into accommodation in Canterbury (where he has lived all his life) until he was evicted a year ago. Steven was evicted because he failed to pay his rent after he resigned from his job because of mental health reasons. For the past year, Steven has been staying on the sofa of a friend who lives in a one bed flat in Canterbury, however on nights that his friend could not accommodate him he has slept on the streets. Steven has been diagnosed with PTSD, resulting from the deaths and casualties he witnessed during his service in the army, the main symptoms are flashbacks and anxiety, he has been hospitalised after a suicide attempt.

Steven is homeless because he has no accommodation available for his occupation which is reasonable for him to continue to occupy (Housing Act 1996, s.175) - his sofa surfing does not prevent him from being legally defined as homelessness because either he does not have accommodation or he is treated as having no accommodation as it is not reasonable to continue to occupy. Other cases exist whereby someone has a legal right to the accommodation, but they are still homeless because the accommodation is unsuitable, as shown in the following case study. Additionally, Steven is eligible for housing assistance because he is not a person from abroad (Housing Act 1996, s.185).

Steven may have a priority need because of his PTSD (Housing Act 1996, s.189(c)) and because of his army service (Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order 2002, s.5(2)). Proving priority need based on mental illness or other health issues is not an easy process, the applicant must prove that they are "significantly more vulnerable than ordinarily vulnerable"[12] and their vulnerability is compared to an ordinary person "if made homeless",[13] rather than an ordinary homeless person. I turn to consider whether the nature of someone's homelessness could affect the assessment of vulnerability, third party support can be considered[14] if it is on a consistent and predictable basis,[15] therefore it might be argued that the support offered through sofa surfing could make an applicant less vulnerable when homeless. However, the support given to Steven is neither consistent nor predictable - Steven is not entitled to occupy the property so his friend can ask him to leave

---

[12] *Hotak & Ors* v *London Borough of Southwark* [2015] UKSC 30 [53].
[13] ibid [58].
[14] *Hotak & Ors* v *London Borough of Southwark* [2015] UKSC 30 [62].
[15] ibid [65].

with no notice, this has been done before and Steven has had to sleep rough. This research shows the instability and dangers of sofa surfing and like Steven, many homeless people alternate between sofa surfing and rough sleeping. Furthermore, vulnerability is hard to prove because there is not a quantitative threshold when assessing whether someone is 'significantly more vulnerable' than an ordinary person if made homeless. The test of vulnerability is intended to be used in a qualitative sense, looking at an applicant's characteristics and whether the impact this will have on them whilst homeless will lead them to be 'at risk of harm in a more significant way',[16] previously, the comparator was to 'an ordinary homeless person'.[17] Crisis and Shelter, along with the Department for Communities and Local Government intervened in the *Hotak* case in the Supreme Court to argue that the way in which local authorities and the courts had been applying the test for vulnerability was flawed (Crisis 2015, 13); this shows that appropriate campaigning can lead to law reform which benefits applicants. Furthermore, the Local Authority must make enquiries as to whether Steven's mental health makes him more vulnerable than ordinarily vulnerable in comparison to an ordinary person if made homeless. It is advisable that Steven provides medical evidence from an independent medical assessor[18] and it is important that this is from an appropriately qualified medical professional.[19] Steven's condition has been diagnosed and he has been hospitalised, therefore he can medically evidence his PTSD and he has a good chance of proving his vulnerability as a result of this (relied on under s.189(c) of the Housing Act). However, Steven failed to pay his rent which caused him to cease occupation of his accommodation, this prompts the question of whether Steven is intentionally homeless. Steven resigned from his job which caused him to fall into rent arrears and there are not any apparent intervening events to this,[20] however Steven had to resign because of his mental illness, therefore it is unlikely that his authority would deem him intentionally homeless (Housing Act 1996, s.191).

It is likely that Steven would be owed a main housing duty from Canterbury City Council. The complex areas of law which exclude applicants are highlighted through this case study and

---

[16] *Panayiotou* v *London Borough of Waltham Forest and Smith v London Borough of Haringey* [2017] EWCA Civ 1624 [64].

[17] *R* v *London Borough of Camden ex p Pereira* [1998] EWCA Civ 863.

[18] *Hall* v *Wandsworth LBC; Carter v Wandsworth* LBC [2004] EWCA Civ 1740).

[19] *Guiste* v *The London Borough of Lambeth* [2019] EWCA Civ 1758.

[20] *R (B)* v *Camden* [2005] EWHC 1366.

Steven's sofa surfing did not act as a barrier to him in the application process, rather proving Steven's vulnerability under priority need complicated the application process. One might think that everyone who is homeless will become vulnerable, the comparative approach of priority need still implies that some people will be able to cope while homeless (Loveland 2017, 4). This case study showed that priority need is a complex area of law to evidence where someone must show their vulnerability, it is still very difficult to establish despite the threshold being lowered as a result of the judgment in the *Hotak* case. The following case study shows where it is not difficult to establish a priority need, which contrasts a single applicant's journey.

1.3 Andrea and Andrew

Andrea and Andrew have been renting a one bed flat in Maidstone for 20 years and have lived in the area all their lives. The couple agreed that when Clara (now 9) was born that they would move into bigger accommodation. However, Andrea and Andrew have not been able to do this for financial reasons, so the family are all sleeping in a single bedroom. Andrea does not like Maidstone and believes that there would be more opportunities for Clara in London so wishes to move to that area. Because they are living in their accommodation, the family are hidden homeless, this example shows that legislation can accept homelessness where the household has accommodation.

The household should be treated as homeless because it would not be reasonable for the family to continue occupation of the flat (Housing Act 1996, s.175(3)) because it is overcrowded, however proving this is not straightforward and I now turn to explore the steps that the applicants must go through. Andrea and Andrew have an assured tenancy to their flat, it is more complicated to prove their homelessness than a household who has no accommodation available, e.g., no legal title to accommodation. The Homelessness Code of Guidance outlines that there is 'no simple test of reasonableness, it is for the housing authority to make a judgment on the facts of each case, taking into account the circumstances of the applicant.' (Homelessness Code of Guidance 2021, 6.23). Furthermore, 'In determining whether it would be … reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation, regard may be had to the general circumstances prevailing in relation to housing in the district' (Housing Act 1996, s.177(2)) - it is possible that authorities may use this power to reject applicants who could be homeless, this is known as gatekeeping.

Alternatively, being non-specific in legislation gives room to a range of situations, which could give authorities considerable discretion when deciding who is legally homeless. Chapter two and three look at statutory homelessness statistics which can be used to make inferences on how authorities use their power in decision making and how many applicants are rejected from being owed a main housing duty. 'Continue to occupy' in legislation means that the future can be considered in the authority's decision;[21] as Clara grows older the flat will become increasingly unsuitable. Similarly to the woman's refuge in *Moran,* it is not reasonable to occupy the flat indefinitely because it is overcrowded, however it might still be reasonable to stay in the short term.[22] Considering that it would be suitable for a short period, a housing authority may deem that the family should stay in their accommodation and be put on a waiting list for suitable accommodation.[23] However, the alternative to this might have been temporary accommodation and the conditions of this could be worse than their current accommodation. An authority would not question the homelessness of a family rough sleeping; however, it must be accepted that there are certain dangers, let alone weather conditions, that rough sleepers will be more vulnerable to. Andrea and Andrew have a strong argument that they are homeless under section 175 of the 1996 Act because their accommodation is overcrowded, however there are clear ambiguities throughout testing reasonableness. Additionally, the family are eligible for assistance (Housing Act 1996, s.185).

Andrea and Andrew have a priority need for accommodation under section 189(1)(b) of the Housing Act 1996 because they have a dependent child, the following chapter establishes that this is the most common reason for households to be accepted as having a priority need. England's lack of social housing puts the country in a position where applicants must be prioritised, charities such as Crisis and scholars such as Pleace (1998) have argued that it is typically single people who are excluded from homelessness provisions, this suggests that campaigns should be aimed to meet the needs of homeless single people. Lastly, there is no evidence to suggest that Andrea and Andrew are intentionally homeless (Housing Act 1996, s.191). Therefore, it is likely that the family would be owed a main housing duty by

---

[21] *Birmingham City Council (Appellants)* v *Ali (FC) and others (FC) (Respondents) Moran (FC) (Appellant)* [2009] UKHL 36.
[22] ibid.
[23] *R (Safi)* v *Sandwell Borough Council* (2018) EWCA Civ 2876.

Maidstone Borough Council, however, Andrea's wish to move to London is unlikely to be successful, because their local connection is to Maidstone (Housing Act 1996, s.199). If the couple were to refuse a final accommodation offer, the main housing duty will no longer apply (Housing Act 1996, s.193A), the same applies to an offer of temporary accommodation. Therefore, the household would be excluded from statutory provisions if they refused offers to suitable accommodation.

It is possible that the family could be put into temporary accommodation, the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003 specifies that B&B accommodation is not suitable for families, this type of accommodation can only be used as a last resort for families and for a maximum of six weeks. There is a crisis across the UK regarding the long period of stays in temporary accommodation, there were 98,300 households in temporary accommodation in June 2020, including 127,240 children (Commons Library, 2021). Therefore, even where Andrea and Andrew are owed a main housing duty, this does not necessarily mean that their housing struggle has come to an end. This thesis argues that legislation is unfairly exclusive, and campaigns fail to address this, yet it is unusual that hidden homelessness campaigns are not used to draw attention to those in temporary accommodation. There is a paradox in these arguments, if legislation were more inclusive the length of temporary accommodation would most likely increase, therefore the first argument (that organisations should campaign to broaden the statutory duties owed to individuals) impacts a sub-argument of this thesis (that stays in temporary accommodation are too long and this is not considered in hidden homeless campaigns). Scotland abolished priority need in 2012, stays in temporary accommodation have since become longer and more frequent, in 2020 Scotland had their highest number on record of households in temporary accommodation (Scottish Government, 2020). With the lack of social housing and affordable private rented accommodation, there is confusion as to how to reform the law whilst not compounding the crisis of people stuck in temporary accommodation any further. This argument highlights the complexity of remedying issues related to homelessness.

1.4 Sarah

Sarah, 28, living in a one-bedroom flat in Whitstable was given a notice of eviction by her landlord on the 1st July 2021, the notice period for her eviction is 4 months, therefore it is

likely that Sarah will be homeless by the 1st November 2021. Sarah was aware of homeless provisions regarding threatened with homelessness, so she made a homeless application to Canterbury City Council on the 15th of September 2021. The reason for her eviction is that her landlord is selling the property, she cannot find another landlord who will accept her because she is unable to work and in receipt of disability benefits for her diagnosed MS.

Sarah is presumably eligible for assistance because it has not been stated that she is a person from abroad (Housing Act 1996, s.185) and she is threatened with homelessness, because she is likely to become homeless within 56 days (Housing Act 1996, s.175(4)). Sarah is not intentionally homeless, she did not do or fail to do anything which caused her to be threatened with homelessness, nor is it appropriate to say she acquiesced her landlord's decision (Housing Act 1996, s.191). Lastly, it is likely that Sarah has a priority need because of vulnerability linked to her MS and medical evidence will be available to show this (Housing Act, s.189(c)). Therefore, in due course, if Sarah's situation is not resolved through the prevention duty or the relief duty, Sarah is likely to be owed a main housing duty. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 extended 'threatened with homelessness' to someone who is likely to be homeless from 28 days to 56 days, preventing homelessness has been argued by campaigners as key to tackling it, hence this change has been commended by campaigners. The London Assembly Housing Committee's 2017 report praised the Homelessness Reduction Act in the context of hidden homelessness, however scholars such as Cowan (2019) have criticised effectiveness of the Act – arguing that it does not change the law in an effective or significant way to benefit applicants. The Act is relevant to hidden homelessness because it focusses on preventing homelessness.

1.5 Conclusion

The concept of hidden homelessness is not a part of the statutory tests, legislation is not testing whether someone is sofa surfing or rough sleeping as both fall within the definition of homeless. Therefore, understandings of hidden homelessness are flawed because it is not hidden homelessness (as it is commonly understood) which excludes the many homeless people from the main housing duty, but rather it is different elements of legislation which act to exclude applicants, such as priority need.

The first case study showed that someone who is rough sleeping may not necessarily be entitled to the main housing duty, although George passed the homeless test, there are three other tests that he must pass (as well as establishing a local connection). This case study shows the complexity of priority need and intentional homelessness and George was excluded because he did not have a priority need. The second case study contrasts this, Steven is seen as hidden homeless because he is sofa surfing, however Steven had a priority need and was owed the main housing duty - his sofa surfing did not act as a barrier to him accessing support. Furthermore, the third case study had a priority need because of their dependent child, contrasting the exclusion of George who is a single applicant, or the complexity of proving Steven has a priority need because of his vulnerability. Lastly, Sarah was threatened with homelessness, this highlighted the statute's preventative measures which were expanded by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Sarah is threatened with homelessness therefore it is likely that a prevention duty will be placed on Canterbury City Council to prevent her from becoming homeless (Housing Act 1996, s.195). The main housing duty could be applied if she becomes homeless.

The following chapters reflect on understandings of hidden homelessness nationally and locally, as well as drawing on scholarship; this is to assess whether they effectively advance the protection of vulnerable people. It will become evident that the concept of hidden homelessness is not relevant to the question of what duties a Local Authority has to assist an applicant and under what circumstances, i.e., depending on applying the legal test illustrated in this chapter.

Chapter Two: national understandings

This chapter explores the way in which the concept of hidden homelessness is used at a national level. In the context of this chapter, the national level includes charities which operate across England and a London Assembly report. These organisations have been chosen for analysis because they reference hidden homelessness, there is not a legislative or policy definition of hidden homelessness and the concept is primarily cited in charity campaigns, therefore this forms national understandings of hidden homelessness for the purposes of the chapter. The London Assembly Housing Committee's report is the only governmental resource which I found that focusses on hidden homelessness, this is analysed at the end of the chapter and focusses on exclusion. To analyse how the concept is

used, this chapter considers how hidden homelessness is defined, the context that the concept is used in and the objective of the organisation in using the term. This chapter establishes that the most common understanding of hidden homelessness is sofa surfing, and each of the organisations referenced include this in their definition. More broadly, hidden homelessness is conceptualised as those who are homeless within accommodation, which raises questions about conceptions of visibility. A further concept of hidden homelessness analysed throughout this chapter is exclusion, and this chapter will identify whether campaigns are conceptualising hidden homelessness as exclusion or visibility, which draws on Reeve and Batty's 2011 report. How organisations conceptualise hidden homelessness affects how they categorise hidden homelessness, and whether they include sofa surfing, hostels, squatting, and rough sleeping. This chapter has found that sources which conceptualise hidden homelessness as exclusion have a broader range of who they categorise as hidden homeless, as all non-statutory homeless people can be seen as excluded. Alternatively, conceptualisations which relate to visibility focusses on sofa surfing and excludes rough sleeping, this is because rough sleeping is described as more visible. This thesis heavily criticises this perspective for creating false narratives on rough sleeping.

In addition to analysing how the concept is used, this chapter makes six interlinked arguments. Firstly, this chapter argues that the way in which the organisations use the concept is inconsistent, with the exception of references to sofa surfing. Secondly, it is unclear why temporary accommodation has been categorised separately from hidden homelessness by organisations which conceptualise hidden homelessness as a visibility issue. Sofa surfing has been conceptualised as hidden because it lacks visibility by virtue of being inside accommodation, temporary accommodation also lacks visibility because of this, so it is not clear why it is excluded. Furthermore, it can be contrasted with rough sleeping, which is a common theme of hidden homeless campaigns focussing on visibility. To understand why it is excluded from conceptualisations, I consider the difference between temporary accommodation and sofa surfing. The difference is that the former has made a homeless application and has been found to be owed a main housing duty (unless they are in interim accommodation awaiting a decision on their application), whereas the latter have not. The exclusion of temporary accommodation is therefore used to argue that being excluded from statutory provisions is a criterion of hidden homelessness throughout

conceptualisations, even where it is not always explicitly mentioned. Regarding sofa surfers who are not owed a main housing duty, this is because they do not apply (they may not expect to be accepted or may not have access to the appropriate resources) or they apply and are excluded by one of the homeless tests established in the previous chapter. Conceptualising hidden homelessness as exclusion from statutory provisions is explained in *The Hidden Truth About Homelessness* (Reeve and Batty, 2011). Understanding hidden homelessness as exclusion leads conceptualisations to include rough sleeping; and how the organisation categorises rough sleeping can therefore signpost whether the resource is conceptualising hidden homelessness as a visibility or exclusion issue.

A third argument of this chapter is that the concept of hidden homelessness does not protect vulnerable people in the housing sector. A reason for this is because those who are typically seen as hidden homeless in campaigns are already seen as homeless in legislation. This leads to my fourth argument, that campaigns do not focus on law reform. Historically, legislation has been crucial in advancing the protection of vulnerable people and families, most notably the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 stopped homeless families from being separated. This was the result of successful campaigning, namely by the Joint Charities Group (Binger and Carr 2019, 337). This contrasts with the lack of collaboration shown in hidden homelessness campaigns; this is evidenced by there not being a shared working definition of the concept. Since 1977 there have been few changes to the main homelessness provisions (see chapter 1), this suggests that campaigns should focus on law reform, to achieve revolutionary change as seen in 1977. As per this chapter's third argument, it is unclear how understandings of hidden homelessness advance the protection of vulnerable people; conceptualisations are vague, inconsistent and do not relate to an area of law which needs reform. For example, understandings could instead focus on individuals who are not deemed vulnerable enough to have a priority need, despite homelessness being extremely dangerous for every individual who experiences it. However, campaigns are not necessarily aiming for law reform, this chapter identifies that most campaigns are directed towards the public instead of legislators or governments. Furthermore, charities intend to campaign for resources including donations and there is not sufficient space in this thesis to explore how effective campaigns are. However,

campaigns are criticised in this chapter because they represent conceptualisations of hidden homelessness on a national level and contributes to this thesis' arguments.

Following from above, my fifth argument is that hidden homeless campaigns produce further exclusion for rough sleepers, particularly ones which focus on visibility. Campaigns sometimes make false statements about the nature of rough sleeping, in addition to this, the contrast created between rough sleeping and sofa surfing creates false narratives of what each entail. By this I mean that, campaigns could lead the public to infer that rough sleeping is conceptualised by visibility, state support and statistics, whereas sofa surfing lacks these things and are hidden homeless. Although some sofa surfers will have these characteristics, it is not true for all cases, as shown in the previous chapter. Furthermore, it could be implied that rough sleepers (which academics have referred to as rooflessness, for example *Gyori* 2005) are being further protected because of the nature of their homelessness, i.e., they do not have a roof over their head. Alternatively, campaigns illustrate hidden homelessness/sofa surfing as a safer option to rough sleeping, because sofa surfing is described as staying with friends and family, this implies that they are safe; in actuality, individuals, particularly younger individuals, might stay with strangers who pose a threat to them (Shelagh O'Connor in The Big Issue, 2018). This relates to Pleace and Herman's argument that hidden homelessness suggests some forms of homelessness are less severe than others (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52). Therefore, although campaigns aim to promote awareness of sofa surfing, they may inadvertently downplay the dangers of this form of homelessness. Overall, a key criticism of conceptualisations in this chapter is that they tend to focus on the nature of someone's homelessness (i.e., sofa surfing versus rough sleeping) which creates false perceptions of what each entail despite their inherent similarities and legal entitlements. This is further exaggerated when considering the instability of the lives of those who are homeless, someone who is homeless is likely to alternate between types of homelessness, for example, they might sleep rough some nights and sofa surf other nights.

The sixth argument is that hidden homelessness is defined as being missing from statistics, this leads campaigns to criticise homeless statistics, despite inaccuracies of statistics in understandings of hidden homelessness. This is because organisations cite hidden homeless statistics from each other, despite having different definitions of hidden homelessness, thus

it is inaccurate in the context it is cited in. For example, an organisation which conceptualises hidden homelessness as an exclusion issue finds that x percentage of homeless people are hidden, this is then cited by an organisation which conceptualises hidden homelessness as a visibility issue, therefore this is inaccurate in the second context. This is due to the concepts inconsistency, the absence of an agreed definition leads to inaccurate statistics when cross referencing. Hidden homelessness is used to show that homelessness is greater in scale than just rough sleepers who are seen by the public; I argue that campaigns use statistics to bolster this argument, which risks inaccuracy. As a sub-argument, defining hidden homelessness as being missing from statistics leads this chapter to further criticise the exclusion of rough sleepers from conceptualisations of hidden homeless because they can also be missing from statistics.

This chapter works through the following organisations in turn, Crisis, Homeless Link, Shelter, The Big Issue, The New Horizon Youth Centre, and the London Assembly's Housing Committee. The first five charities conceptualise hidden homelessness as visibility, although who they encapsulate within this differs, except for sofa surfers; it is only the youth charities (the last two) who effectively describe the dangers of sofa surfing. The London Assembly's Housing Committee conceptualises hidden homelessness as exclusion.

2.1 Crisis

Crisis focus on single homelessness, single people are generally excluded by legislation unless they have a priority need (except for the duties of assessment, prevention and relief), therefore extending or abolishing categories of priority need would benefit single applicants. Considering this, Crisis' understanding of hidden homelessness as a visibility issue misses the opportunity to discuss the exclusion of many single applicants from the main housing duty which could advance the charity's aims. Crisis has defined hidden homelessness as those staying in 'hostels, squats or B&Bs, in overcrowded accommodation or 'concealed' housing, such as the floors or sofas of friends and family'.[24] I have identified that this definition relates to the concept of visibility because these examples exist within accommodation, thus the living situations are not seen by the public. Rough sleeping is not included in conceptualisations focussing on visibility issues because of the assumption that

---

[24] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/

rough sleeping is visible, this becomes more apparent throughout the chapter. If rough sleeping had been mentioned, I would have identified that Crisis' definition of hidden homelessness relates to exclusion, highlighting that rough sleeping signposts how hidden homelessness is conceptualised. Definitions of hidden homelessness which centre on exclusion have a greater opportunity to focus on law reform because it has the space to discuss statutory exclusions. Focussing on visibility does not advance law reform because applicants are not being excluded from statutory provisions on the premise of them not being seen; the very nature of making an application makes their presence/situation known to the authority. However, Crisis' campaign may not be aiming for law reform and their definition of hidden homelessness can still relate to single homelessness because family homelessness tends to be more exposed. Single people might be able to stay with family or friends, however it is less likely that larger households will be able to do this, because their friends and family may not have the space to accommodate them. Therefore, homeless families present themselves to the state who will house them because they will be deemed to have a priority need, whereas single people's homelessness is more easily concealed (Watson 1984, 62-63). Crisis' definition of hidden homelessness can be deemed as informative of the different homeless situations that single people find themselves in, thus raising awareness.

Whilst discussing law reform, I turn to consider what Crisis have published about homeless legislation.[25] This further shows that their conceptualisation of hidden homelessness does not relate to legislation. Crisis praise the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 for enacting provisions which mean that homeless people can get help from their council, regardless of whether they are deemed to have a priority need. The 2017 Act is often discussed in conceptualisations of hidden homelessness which focus on exclusion; it is not referenced in Crisis' conceptualisation of hidden homelessness, supporting the assertion that Crisis conceptualise hidden homelessness as exclusion. Notably, the 2017 Act has not changed the statutory tests regarding entitlement to the main housing duty and this is something that campaigns could focus on, although threatened with homelessness was extended to 56 days. Crisis commend Scotland's abolition of priority need in 2012, stating that it gives

---

[25] see https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/law-and-rights/homelessness-legislation/

Scotland 'some of the strongest homelessness rights in the world'[26] showing that Crisis see priority need as a weakness of homeless legislation. This raises the question, why are charities not focussing on abolishing priority need? A weakness of Scotland's progressive legislation is that it has increased the length of stays in temporary accommodation. This could be why the 2017 Act did not abolish the statutory test and why it is not focussed on in hidden homeless campaigns. Crisis' discussion of legislation is centred around priority need whereas this is not mentioned in the context of hidden homelessness, if Crisis intended to use the concept of hidden homelessness to promote law reform, it would reference priority need in these discussions. This suggests that the use of the concept is to influence the public's perception of homelessness (rather than government or legislators) with the aim of increasing donations.

I now explore how Crisis' use of the concept of hidden homelessness is inconsistent. Research commissioned by Crisis defines hidden homelessness as 'non-statutory homeless people living outside mainstream housing provision' (Reeve and Batty 2011, 10). This conceptualises hidden homelessness as exclusion, which is different to Crisis' webpages which conceptualise hidden homelessness as a visibility issue. The difference in approach shows that there is inconsistency in how the term is used, even from publications affiliated to the same charity. On Crisis' webpage which discusses hidden homelessness in the context of categorising types of homelessness, a reader can find quotes from Reeve and Batty's (2011) research, for example, 'the majority of the hidden homeless will have slept rough at some time'.[27] Reeve and Batty (2011) include rough sleeping within the category of hidden homelessness, however, Crisis' understanding does not, therefore the quote in this context is confusing. In the context of Crisis' webpage, it would appear that hidden homeless individuals hop between rough sleeping and hidden homelessness, however Reeve and Batty (2011) would understand the rough sleeper to be hidden homeless throughout the entire duration. Furthermore, Crisis reference Reeve and Batty's (*ibid*) statistic that '62% of respondents were hidden homeless on the day they were surveyed and 92% had experienced hidden homelessness',[28] once again, this is unreliable in the context of Crisis' webpage because they have different understandings of the concept. Reeve and Batty

---

[26]https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/law-and-rights/homelessness-legislation/
[27] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/
[28] ibid.

emphasise that this statistic relates to its definition, '62 per cent of the 437 single homeless people surveyed were hidden homeless according to the definition adopted for the study: the local authority had no statutory duty to house them and they were living outside mainstream homelessness provision, staying with friends, in squats, sleeping rough or in other marginal accommodation' (Reeve and Batty 2011, 12). This goes beyond 'staying with family and friends, sofa surfing, living in unsuitable housing such as squats or in 'beds in shed' situations,[29] as highlighted by reference to rough sleeping. Therefore, it is misleading to cross-reference hidden homeless discussions, even within the context of the same organisation.

In addition to Reeve and Batty's (2011) commission, Crisis have two different webpages offering different definitions of hidden homelessness, reinforcing the lack of consistency in how the concept is used and understood. I have referred to the second webpage above, it aims to explain different types of homelessness. Despite this, it is unclear where the boundaries between hidden homelessness, rough sleeping, temporary accommodation, and statutory homelessness lie. Firstly, I analyse the language used around rough sleeping, namely, that it is the 'most visible form of homelessness',[30] this is not stating that *all* rough sleeping is visible, however it fails to address that a lot of rough sleeping is invisible. Additionally, Crisis do not define rough sleeping, which suggests that the public already understand rough sleeping, which is a misconception; rough sleeping is much more complex than what is seen on the streets. Under rough sleeping, Crisis criticise rough sleeping statistics, this highlights that the scale of rough sleeping is not understood and is more reason for Crisis to give examples of rough sleeping, as is seen with hidden homelessness. Contrasting the attention given to hidden homelessness from rough sleeping furthers my argument that the discussion of hidden homelessness undermines rough sleeping.

This chapter addresses that it is unclear why temporary accommodation is excluded from understandings of hidden homelessness which focus on the concept's visibility, this is seen in Crisis' categorisation. Crisis define temporary accommodation as 'night/winter shelters, hostels, B&Bs, woman's refuges, private and social housing'.[31] Statistics are also discussed

---

[29] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/
[30] ibid.
[31] ibid.

here, '78,930 households were in temporary accommodation on 31 December 2017. 60,520 of these households included dependent children and/or a pregnant woman' (Statutory homelessness and prevention and relief, October to December 2016: England).[32] These numbers show that temporary accommodation is massively overcrowded, however it mainly affects families because they are usually owed a main housing duty. Because households in temporary accommodation are owed the main housing duty, they can be referred to as statutory homeless, however this is categorised separately by Crisis, highlighting that there is a lack of clear boundaries in homeless categorisation. Crisis set out that statutory homelessness refers to 'those deemed in 'priority need' are described as being statutory homeless because they are owed a duty by their local authority',[33] this directly links to homelessness legislation and emphasises the importance of priority need, which often excludes single people. Where hidden homelessness is seen as exclusion, it can be directly contrasted to this category as non-statutory homelessness. Instead, hidden homelessness is defined as 'staying with family and friends, sofa surfing, living in unsuitable housing such as squats or in 'beds in shed' situations'[34]. This is different from the definition first cited in this chapter by Crisis: 'hostels, squats or B&Bs, in overcrowded accommodation or 'concealed' housing, such as the floors or sofas of friends and family'.[35] By reflecting on the previous definition of hidden homelessness, a crossover between categories can be identified, for example, hostels and B&Bs are referenced under temporary accommodation on the second webpage[36] and are categorised under hidden homelessness on the first.[37] This supports my argument that temporary accommodation and hidden homelessness are not so different when categorising or discussing homelessness in relation to notions of visibility.

In addition to the exclusion of temporary accommodation, why rough sleeping is excluded from conceptualisations of hidden homelessness is also difficult to navigate. Under the category of hidden homelessness, it is stated that 'The majority of homeless people are

[32] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/
[33] ibid.
[34] ibid.
[35] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/
[36] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/
[37] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/

hidden from statistics and services as they are dealing with their situation informally'.[38] This suggests that being hidden from statistics and services is the consequence of hidden homelessness; rough sleeping can also be hidden from statistics and services, therefore it is misleading to suggest that hidden homelessness causes this and simplifies an incredibly complex field of understanding. There are crossovers between the types of homelessness and it is not clear why categories are separated, the blurred lines between rough sleeping and hidden homelessness is a key controversy of this piece. A further criticism of the above statement is that the language of 'dealing with' suggests that hidden homelessness is a way of managing homelessness, all homelessness imposes incredible risk on an individual and later resources discuss the dangers of sofa surfing. Furthermore, the choice of words could lead the reader to interpret hidden homelessness as a choice, when rather it is likely that people have been forced into this situation - 'dealing with' is a very casual description of the hardship. This also links to the idea that the concept of hidden homelessness implies that some types of homelessness are more serious than others (Pleace and Herman 2020, 52); this assertion is further analysed in scholarly understandings. It has been evidenced that there is a lack of boundaries between categories of homelessness, particularly hidden homelessness which consistently overlaps with other categories, this is likely to confuse the public and policy makers, both of whom the campaigns might be aimed at.

2.2 Homeless Link

Homeless Link is a national membership charity for organisations working with homelessness. Firstly, I turn to address how the charity have defined hidden homelessness, their focus on statistics and the impact this has on perceptions of rough sleeping. The charity defines hidden homelessness as the 'many people who become homeless [that] do not show up in official figures',[39] there is an evident focus on statistics, there is no mention of services as seen in Crisis' discussion. Homeless Link states that those not included in statistics are 'people who become homeless but find a temporary solution by staying with family members or friends, living in squats or other insecure accommodation'.[40] This is similar to Crisis' examples of hidden homelessness and touches upon notions of visibility

---

[38] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/
[39] https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/hidden-homelessness
[40] ibid.

because they are inside accommodation. Homeless Link's understanding of hidden homelessness can be understood as a combination of being in precarious housing and being absent from statistics. Rough sleepers are not exampled here either, although they can also be missing from statistics as rough sleeping counts are often inaccurate, as addressed by Crisis.[41] Considering Homeless Link's focus on statistics, it could be suggested that Homeless Link have faith in rough sleeping counts, hence they are not categorised as hidden homeless. Alternatively, the examples make clear that being within accommodation is essential to being hidden homeless, therefore rough sleeping cannot hidden despite them sharing other characteristics; categorisation is not clear and leaves ambiguities. Both rough sleepers and examples of hidden homeless could be included in homeless statistics if they made a homeless application. Therefore, it may appear that these campaigns are trying to persuade legislators that the above examples are homelessness, when it is already accepted, which could further obscure the public's understanding of homelessness. However, there is the question of whether homeless people who are not sleeping rough are less likely to approach their local authority, this is discussed by later charities who reference homeless identity. A further criticism of both charities referenced thus far, is that they have described hidden homelessness as a way of 'dealing with'[42] or 'temporarily solving'[43] their homelessness, this could imply that rough sleepers are not handling their situation whereas hidden homeless individuals are managing; neither have dealt with or solved their homelessness. Such implications could inadvertently undermine examples of hidden homelessness, suggesting that they are in less urgent need of help. I have shown that the separation of hidden homelessness and rough sleeping could create false perceptions on both 'types'[44] of homelessness.

As seen above with Crisis, Homeless Link also cite Reeve and Batty's (2011) statistic which is that '62% of single homeless people are hidden'.[45] As established, Reeve and Batty (2011) conceptualise hidden homelessness as exclusion and include rough sleeping whereas Homeless Link focus on issues with statistics and visibility and exclude rough sleeping from their definition, thus the statistic is not applicable. It appears that understandings of hidden

---

[41] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/
[42] ibid.
[43] https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/hidden-homelessness
[44] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/
[45] https://www.homeless.org.uk/what-is-homelessness

homelessness thus far centre around visibility because the housing situations are not visible to the public eye, statistics also touch upon visibility because they intend to expose the scale of something. This may not reform law however it may encourage public donations, which is useful in the context of charities.

Homeless Link demonstrate a common theme of hidden homelessness conceptualisations, which is that rough sleeping is excluded because of its association with visibility, it is described as 'the most visible form of homelessness',[46] this was also asserted by Crisis. This argues that depicting rough sleeping as visible is a misleading assertion, examples of rough sleeping listed by Homeless Link show that it may not be visible; 'sleeping anywhere outside or in buildings not designed for human habitation such as stairwells, stations or cars'.[47] Unlike Crisis, Homeless Link gives examples to show that rough sleeping is more than sleeping on the high street, this is constructive because the public seeing it on the high street could further contribute to the perception of it being visible. This chapter suggests that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness miss an opportunity to discuss that rough sleeping can also lack visibility. Categorising rough sleeping and hidden homelessness creates a contrast between them which could lead to people to make inaccurate presumptions about homelessness, homelessness is multifaceted - it is not as simple to say that one type entails something and the other does not. The charity claims that rough sleeping accounts for just 1% of homelessness, however it is unclear how this figure was reached. This is another example of campaigns aiming to show hidden homelessness as extensive at the cost of undermining rough sleeping.

The relevant webpage offers an alternative definition of hidden homelessness; 'Many "sofa surf" with family and friends or sleep out of sight in hostels, squats, public transport or other insecure and unsuitable accommodation'.[48] Reference to hostels could confuse readers as this could mean that hidden homeless individuals are not excluded from homelessness provisions, as suggested elsewhere. Furthermore, 'public transport'[49] is given as an example of hidden homelessness, this is not designed for human habitation, which is defined as rough sleeping above. Additionally, sleeping on public transport is visible to the

---

[46] https://www.homeless.org.uk/what-is-homelessness
[47] ibid.
[48] ibid.
[49] ibid.

public, as suggested by its title, so it is unclear why Homeless Link have conceptualised it as hidden (as they have understood hidden homelessness through a visibility perspective). Again, there are vast inconsistencies and overlaps within categorisation, which is likely to confuse the public. Furthermore, statutory homelessness is defined by Homeless Link as where 'Local authorities have a duty to find a home for families or individuals approaching them who fit 'priority need' criteria. These households are initially offered temporary housing such as private sector housing, nightly paid accommodation or B&Bs.'[50] Unlike Crisis who categorise temporary accommodation and statutory homelessness separately, Homeless Link categorises the two together - another inconsistency in homeless categorisation. Homeless Link's category of statutory homelessness encapsulates those who are seen to be owed a main housing duty by their authority, the other categories encapsulate those who have been excluded from statutory provisions or have not made an application, thus non-statutory – the thesis argues that using these two categories alone would be less complicated.

Further on statutory homelessness, Homeless Link has summarised government statistics which have been released on levels, types and outcomes of homelessness applications received by local authorities. This is interesting to the discussion of hidden homelessness, because Homeless Link have previously focussed on defining the concept by its absence from statistics. It is therefore interesting to see how the statistics presented by the charity can reflect upon understandings of hidden homelessness, namely, can anyone who is hidden homeless be included in this? If so, where would they fit into the statistics? The thesis finds that quantifying homelessness through statutory and non-statutory homelessness is a more accurate and less complicated approach, although it cannot encapsulate those who do not approach their council. Hidden homelessness can be understood as a way to number/draw attention to those who have not made a homeless application, because they are not accounted for by making an application. However, Homeless Link has defined hidden homelessness as people who may not ask for *or* be entitled to help,[51] therefore hidden homelessness goes beyond those who have not made an application. Those who are not entitled to help can fit into statistics showing the number

---

[50] https://www.homeless.org.uk/what-is-homelessness
[51] ibid.

of applications which are rejected, therefore not all hidden homeless people are absent from statistics, as campaigns have suggested (although this cannot account for those who have not made an application).

The reasons households are not accepted are, not homeless, or intentionally homeless and/or they are rejected not in priority need,[52] I consider how conceptualisations of hidden homelessness fit into these to show that the concept lacks a legal basis. The first test relates to hidden homeless campaigns, because campaigns focus on someone's homelessness, interestingly, this is the biggest category of applicants being rejected (26,160 in 2017).[53] Although this is the first test that authorities consider, so it is understandable that this has a larger figure. However, the number of applicants rejected on these grounds could counter argue the thesis' assertion that campaigns needlessly focus on the definition of homeless. However, the previous chapter looked at homelessness legislation and it is evident that there is a wide definition of homelessness (see Housing Act 1997, s.175). It is possible that applicants are legally homeless, but authorities are unlawfully gatekeeping services to homeless people who are not rough sleeping, due to stereotypes surrounding homelessness. This theory is not addressed in conceptions of hidden homelessness throughout this chapter, further research would have to be undertaken to establish this. Alternatively, the concept refers to someone who would be legally defined homeless, therefore households in this category are not to be conceptualised as hidden homelessness. Reeve and Batty assert that hidden homelessness refers to those who meet the legal definition of homeless but to whom the local authority owe no duty (Reeve and Batty 2011, p.11).

As previously addressed, discussions which focus on legislation/exclusion tend to focus on priority need, highlighting that it is deemed as a flawed point of legislation. In 2017, 18,990 applicants were rejected because they were not deemed to be in priority need by their local authority,[54] which gives an insight upon the impact that abolishing priority need would have on temporary accommodation. If it were abolished, it is possible that temporary accommodation would have had at least an extra 18,990 applicants to cater for and the

---

[52] https://homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/statutory-homelessness
[53] ibid.
[54] ibid.

total number of households in temporary accommodation on 30 June 2017 was already 78,180 (Department for Communities and Local Government 2017, 1) - these figures can reason legislation being exclusive. The number may be higher than this as it could encourage more to apply. Homeless Link state that single homeless people are rarely considered to be a priority need,[55] hence they are likely to take the forefront of campaigns conceptualising hidden homelessness as exclusion. The graph shown by Homeless Link highlights that households with dependent children are by far the most likely to be accepted as having a priority need, because hidden homelessness requires someone to be rejected by statute or not make an application, it is unlikely that families will be hidden homeless, unless they do not make an application. In addition to this, 9,170 households were rejected because their local authority found that they were intentionally homeless.

To summarise, any of the above could be hidden homeless, they could be sofa surfing or in other precarious housing situations, the data does not specify hidden homelessness which suggests that it lacks significance in counting homelessness. Both rough sleepers and examples of hidden homelessness form non-statutory homelessness statistics, thus the argument that they should be categorised together can be made from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective. It is unclear where exactly hidden homeless individuals lie in the context of non-statutory homelessness and the thesis concludes that the term hidden homeless should be abandoned. The above discussion of where hidden homelessness would fit into non-statutory homelessness is hypothetical and instead highlights controversies surrounding the use of the concept.

Homeless Link understand hidden homelessness as those who are precariously housed who do not make an application or are rejected by statute, thus absent from statistics; flaws and contradictions of this understanding have been highlighted.

2.3 Shelter

Shelter was established in 1966 and focusses mainly on family homelessness. Like most charities, Shelter has a page broadly defining homelessness under the title 'what is homelessness',[56] however they do not explicitly reference hidden homelessness under this.

---

[55] https://homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/statutory-homelessness
[56] https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/what_is_homelessness

However, they push a similar agenda to hidden homeless campaigns – 'you can be homeless even if you have a roof over your head',[57] the deemed necessity to make this assertion suggests homelessness is typically understood as rough sleeping. Furthermore, the examples they list are similar to that of Crisis and Homeless Link's examples of hidden homelessness, 'staying with friends or family, staying in a hostel, night shelter or B&B, squatting, at risk of violence or abuse in your home, living in poor conditions that affect your health, living apart from your family because you don't have a place to live together'.[58] These situations all exist within (unsuitable) accommodation and might be less visible, hence it is relevant to conceptualisations of hidden homelessness. Because the concept of hidden homelessness is not being explicitly referenced, this allows me to consider whether there is an issue with the concept/term itself or whether there are issues generally with conceptualisations of homelessness. I infer that this perspective of homelessness is not comprehensive, because rough sleeping is not referenced, which is a general theme of conceptualisations, presumably because of the assumption that the public is aware of this form of homelessness and not others. Alternatively, rough sleeping can be seen as rooflessness, whereas these examples relate more directly to homelessness, which focus on the idea of lacking a home whilst having a roof over your head. The emphasis on hidden homelessness has led to rough sleeping to be undermined across discussions of homelessness generally, the thesis later looks at stereotypes of homelessness which suggests that this emphasis is necessary. Not referencing the concept of hidden homelessness in their definition makes it clearer and more straightforward because of associated conceptual issues, such as implying some types of homelessness as visible, although this is seen in other campaigns.

Shelter use their platform to portray homelessness as lacking visibility, this is evidenced by their analogy of an iceberg which is used to represent categories of homelessness. Where visibility is the topic of discussion, it can be inferred that the aim is to show the extent of homelessness, this is evidenced in the iceberg analogy because each description is followed by a number. I now turn to analyse how Shelter has categorised homelessness and how this compares to conceptualisations of hidden homelessness. Firstly, rough sleeping is

---

[57] https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/what_is_homelessness
[58] ibid.

represented as the only visible category of homelessness, as shown by it being above sea level, which is ironic considering the lack of attention they are given in hidden homeless conceptualisations and definitions of homelessness. Rough sleeping is described as 'just the tip of the iceberg'[59] with only a small proportion of homeless people sleeping on the streets on a typical night in 2018 (4,677). Again, this could create false connotations of rough sleeping and downscale the issue, especially when it is considered that rough sleeping counts are known to be an underestimate. The UK Statistics Authority was highly critical of these statistics, stating that they did not meet the required standards to be designated as 'National Statistics'.[60] Also, using a statistic to prove rough sleeping as minor in comparison to the other categories is counterintuitive of the charity's aim to show homelessness as extensive. Furthermore, if hidden homelessness is invisibility, all categories below sea level could be categorised as hidden homelessness, however it is not, highlighting that hidden homelessness is used to conceptualise issues more complex than visibility, such as exclusion. Below rough sleeping is statutory homelessness, referring to the 82,310 households in temporary accommodation, this is a precise number which suggests it is reliable, in contrast to the categories which follow; it is easier to number statutory homelessness because it refers to successful applications. Statutory homelessness and temporary accommodation have been categorised together here, as seen in Homeless Link's categorisation. Thereafter, hidden homelessness is categorised as the 'many more who are sofa surfing, living in hostels or otherwise homeless',[61] the vagueness of this description reflects generally upon the concept and the lack of understanding surrounding it. It is not quantified like the two categories above, conforming to Crisis' and Homeless Link's understanding that it is missing from statistics. Lastly, it is described that 'even more [are at risk of homelessness who] spend more than 50% of their income on rent or live in unsuitable housing',[62] the statement of 'even more' is incredibly vague. This description contradicts homelessness legislation, living in unsuitable housing renders someone homeless rather than at risk of homelessness (which legislation would refer to as threatened with homelessness) and although affordability can make accommodation not

---

[59] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah506pg5TXI
[60] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness
[61] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah506pg5TXI
[62] ibid.

reasonable to continue to occupy, it is unclear why '50%' is referenced. This shows that Shelter's campaign does not correlate to legislative definitions, this is also shown by Shelter's definition of homelessness; 'living apart from your family because you don't have a place to live together'.[63] Legislation acknowledges someone's homelessness where there is not space for a person who is reasonably expected to reside with the household, such as a dependent child, however this example suggests that sisters living apart in their 30s could be defined as homeless. Shelter's campaigns are not centred around law reform, instead they are focussed on what housing situations are visible, other than showing homelessness or housing issues as extensive, it is unclear what this does for homeless people/applicants. Furthermore, the final categories are not numbered so how can the charity be sure that they are more extensive? This risks credibility of the campaign.

Furthering the argument that Shelter are intent on showing homelessness as extensive, the article titled '280,000 people in England are homeless, with thousands more at risk' (Shelter, 2019)[64] focusses on the number of homeless people in England. Scholarship in the following chapter criticises campaigners use of imprecise numbers such as 'thousands', which could diminish the credibility of campaigns. The article does not explicitly reference hidden homelessness, however it states that 'it's widely known that a lot of homelessness goes undocumented, including sofa-surfing and some rough sleeping.'[65] The notion of sofa-surfing and going undocumented resonates with understandings of hidden homelessness, although it is not explicitly mentioned, this advances the discussion because this chapter has shown that referencing the term complicates perceptions of homelessness. Furthermore, this has created the space to discuss rough sleeping, however, language surrounding this suggests that whilst 'some'[66] rough sleeping goes undocumented, all sofa surfing is undocumented, whereas individuals in both categories are entitled to make a homeless application. The charity could be referring to sofa surfers and rough sleepers who have not made an application, however this has gone unstated leaving it to the presumption of the reader, a layperson may not have the time or knowledge to pay this consideration. Shelter

---

[63] https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/what_is_homelessness
[64] https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk
[65] ibid.
[66] ibid.

further acknowledges rough sleepers absence from statistics, stating that official figures 'are widely considered to be an underestimate of the true scale of rough sleeping',[67] further contributing to the argument that it was misleading of the charity to connote rough sleeping as the 'visible tip of the iceberg'.[68] It is evident that being inside accommodation is vital to conceptualisations of hidden homelessness as a visibility issue, but it is unclear why when other forms lack visibility and legislation can accept homelessness within housing.

Shelter have referenced the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) statistics, 'Table 1'[69] consists of the estimated number of people who are homeless in England as at a given night in 2019, by type of homelessness, this enforces the correlation between categorisation and counting. Notably, the MHCLG has since changed and is now called the Department for Housing and Levelling up Communities (DHLUC)[70] in a bid to improve housing after the pandemic, however there is insufficient space in this research to explore the effects of this. The types of homelessness offered in table 1 are precise and this reflects in its figures (for example, '3,937' living in temporary accommodation arranged by social services),[71] this contrasts the vagueness of trying to quantify hidden homelessness (for example, stating 'many more')[72]. I analyse these statistics to see where hidden homelessness might fit into them, or how they contrast to hidden homelessness, such an analysis is relevant to the thesis because hidden homeless campaigns consistently reference statistics. I have used table 1 to show whereby it might be possible to count hidden homelessness, although homelessness statistics in general can been heavily criticised. Organisations might find that it is better to state thousands, rather than to potentially undermine homelessness, however this then leaves the reader to assume how far this reaches. Using the statistics below, Shelter have still reached the shocking figure of one in

---

[67] https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk

[68] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah506pg5TXI

[69] https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk

[70] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ambitious-plans-to-drive-levelling-up-agenda

[71] ibid.

[72] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah506pg5TXI

two hundred are homeless in England; without explicitly referencing hidden homelessness,[73] this is because the table includes temporary accommodation.

There are six categories of homelessness listed, the first being temporary accommodation provided by the council, this is the largest category (236,610) and a further 3,937 are in temporary accommodation arranged by social services. The ability to number temporary accommodation could act as another reason to exclude it from conceptualisations of hidden homelessness. The second type of homelessness listed is 'Homeless in temporary accommodation arranged by them or homeless at home' which amounted to 18,317 people,[74] this category can be understood as hidden homelessness because it refers to homelessness inside accommodation. 'Temporary accommodation arranged by them' could be understood as sofa surfing and 'homeless at home' could be those in unsuitable accommodation, both are conceptualised as hidden homeless because they lack visibility – although conceptualisations focus on sofa surfing. These figures could be used to estimate that hidden homelessness on any given night in 2019 was 18,317, numbering hidden homelessness is contrary to conceptualisations which define it as being absent from statistics. Shelter have also conceptualised shelters within hidden homelessness,[75] shelters are sometimes excluded from conceptualisations because users are being included by a homeless provision, however an additional 14,684[76] could be added to the above figure (from Shelter's perspective) making at least 33,001 people hidden homeless. However, the iceberg campaign suggests that 'many more' than 82,310 people were hidden homeless in 2019,[77] this is because it is shown below statutory homelessness (which is 82,310). This is much larger than the figures which I suggested that Shelter could estimate hidden homelessness, it is unclear how they estimate such a large proportion of homelessness to be which adds to the ambiguity surrounding the concept.

---

[73] https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk
[74] ibid.
[75] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah506pg5TXI
[76] https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk
[77] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah506pg5TXI

Returning to the topic of whether shelters are included in conceptualisations of hidden homelessness, conceptualisations which have included shelters are referring to those which the person has arranged by themselves. Shelters can be included in conceptualisations whilst temporary accommodation remains excluded because temporary accommodation is arranged by authorities – they may seem similar but this is a vital component which separates them. Table 1 acts as further evidence to this, as it separates those living in homeless shelters from temporary accommodation *arranged by council/social services*, the importance upon who arranges the accommodation is further emphasised by another category which includes homeless in temporary accommodation *arranged by them.*[78] This highlights that statutory exclusion is important in homeless categorisation, although this has not been effectively addressed in conceptualisations, and further suggests that conceptualisations of visibility lack substance in categorisation whilst exclusion is vital.

Shelter have followed conceptualisations of hidden homelessness as being homelessness inside of accommodation, contrasting it from rough sleeping because it is perceived as visible. Shelter did not number hidden homelessness in its campaign,[79] which could affirm conceptions of hidden homelessness as being missing from statistics, alternatively it shows that the concept is ambiguous. Inferences were made on an article citing MHCLG's statistics[80] to show that types of homelessness which are typically recognised as hidden homelessness can be numbered, which suggests that the vagueness of the term leads to ambiguity rather than missing figures - although these statistics should not be wholly relied upon. Charities use hidden homelessness to draw attention to homelessness which is missing from statistics, however examples of hidden homelessness given by organisations correlate with statistics. Although there are issues with homelessness statistics and they are known to be widely flawed, this is not limited to hidden homelessness.

---

[78]

https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk

[79] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah506pg5TXI

[80]

https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk

2.4 The Big Issue

The Big Issue supports vendors who sell the well-known magazine 'The Big Issue', vendors include those who are homeless, insecurely housed, long-term unemployed or otherwise financially struggling. By becoming micro-entrepreneurs and interacting with the public, the charity is tackling issues of hidden homelessness raised by scholars such as Pleace, such as social exclusion. The charity conceptualises hidden homeless in their articles to discuss homelessness statistics and visibility, notably, the charity does not have a main information page, however information found in articles written by researchers and published by The Big Issue come to represent the charity's understanding.

An article titled 'Thirteen times as many 'hidden homeless' in London as those sleeping rough' (Burns, 2017)[81] addresses the extent of hidden homelessness, drawing on the London Assembly's hidden homelessness report, which I analyse later in the chapter. There is a significant risk that this title has damaging connotations on rough sleeping, for reasons which have been addressed, i.e., suggesting that rough sleeping is visible and accurately numbered. The problem of contrasting these types of homelessness is further emphasised when it is considered that homeless lives are inconsistent, someone may be rough sleeping one night and 'hidden homeless' the next. Therefore, it could become unclear who the concept refers to. The report that the article refers to defines rough sleeping as hidden homelessness, yet they are separated from hidden homelessness in this statistic, highlighting that understandings of the concept are not clear and are contradictory. Burns (*ibid*) cites that 'each night, up to 12,500 people are forced to sleep on public transport, squatting or sofa surfing'.[82] Another article published by the Big Issue, which will be turned to momentarily, describes the concept as staying with family and friends,[83] therefore the Big Issue are putting forward different narratives of hidden homelessness. This shows a lack of reflection on what the basis of hidden homelessness is and a failure to engage with the important question of what the conceptual basis of hidden homelessness is. Scholars such as Reeve and Batty (2011) or Pleace and Hermans (2020) investigate this question, although it must be remembered that authors of The Big Issue may not have the academic background or investigative intentions of these scholars. Rather the issue lies with the

---

[81] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/thirteen-times-many-hidden-homeless-london-sleeping-rough/
[82] ibid.
[83] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/britains-homelessness-shame-cold-hard-facts

concept as a whole rather than the authors, without a working definition it makes it difficult for researchers to find accurate references. Burns (2017) asserts that 'The hidden homeless have no place to call home, but are hidden from official statistics, and aren't receiving support',[84] again enforcing the relevance of statistics, however the latter half of this statement encapsulates a further conceptualisation of hidden homelessness that has not been explicitly referenced in campaigns thus far, this is exclusion. Considering the multiple exclusions that rough sleepers face, it is problematic that they are often excluded from understandings of hidden homelessness.

Another article published 'Homelessness facts and statistics: The numbers you need to know in 2021' (Geraghty, 2021) hidden homelessness is described as a 'term used to describe people who do not have a permanent home and instead stay with friends or family'.[85] Lacking a permanent home could refer to a broad range of homeless situations, e.g., rough sleeping, squatting, temporary accommodation. However, the conceptualisation is narrowed by reference to family and friends which is reinforced as Geraghty (2021) continues, 'Also known as sofa surfing, many people in this situation may not consider themselves homeless and may not seek support from services. This makes it difficult to know exactly how many people are homeless, especially as they are not on the streets like rough sleepers and, therefore, not visible to frontline homelessness outreach workers.'[86] Geraghty has therefore described hidden homelessness as synonymous with sofa surfing, whereas other conceptualisations, including the article above,[87] have gone beyond this, for example, squatting, hostels, or living in unsuitable accommodation. Geraghty (2021) has limited sofa surfing to staying with friends and family, later conceptualisations address that people may stay with strangers which better illustrates sofa surfing as unstable and unsafe. Furthermore, Geraghty (*ibid*) has conceptualised hidden homelessness as visibility, exclusion (by reference to support), and statistics, yet has a narrow interpretation of who fits into this; most conceptions which discuss issues of exclusion include rough sleepers. This thesis has found that understandings of exclusion (in terms of hidden homelessness) refers to exclusion from statutory provisions, however Geraghty (2021) seems to be referring to any

---

[84] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/thirteen-times-many-hidden-homeless-london-sleeping-rough/
[85] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/britains-homelessness-shame-cold-hard-facts
[86] ibid.
[87] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/thirteen-times-many-hidden-homeless-london-sleeping-rough/

formal homelessness support, because he references homelessness outreach workers. This could explain the exclusion of rough sleepers from this definition, it is possible for outreach workers to identify rough sleepers as homeless whereas this identification might not be made for sofa surfers. Sofa surfers are likely to have access to washing facilities means that they may not fit the stereotype of a homeless person (as explored in the following chapter), in addition to not sleeping on the street. However, outreach workers could also miss rough sleepers, they may not have bedded down for the night or they may not fit the stereotype, additionally they might not be seen because they may sleep in secretive locations. Thus, this article is perpetuating the misleading notion of rough sleeping being visible, supported and numbered. Moreover, the article depicts hidden homeless individuals as not reaching out to services because they do not consider themselves homeless. This could displace blame from the state, homeless people may not make an application because of the lack of support and information available (see Reeve and Batty, 2011). In addition to this, individuals might be aware they do not meet the strict statutory criteria to be owed a main housing duty which discourages them from applying.

This chapter has highlighted that reference to statistics is a theme of hidden homelessness conceptualisation, Geraghty (2021) cites 'Homelessness charity Crisis has estimated that as many as 62 per cent of single homeless people do not show up on official figures and run the risk of slipping through the cracks.'[88] As seen in other campaigns, this statistic is inaccurate in the context of this article. Firstly, this was estimated by Reeve and Batty (*The Hidden Truth About Homelessness,* 2011) who were commissioned by Crisis, rather than Crisis who have a different definition of hidden homelessness on their webpage. Secondly, Geraghty (2021) has described hidden homelessness as synonymous to sofa surfing which is different to Reeve and Batty (2011) who conceptualise hidden homelessness as exclusion. It seems that this statistic has taken the forefront of hidden homeless campaigns without organisations considering the conceptual basis for the figure.

An article by the Big Issue titled 'out of sight, out of mind: the hidden homeless scandal' (Lobb, 2018)[89] also conceptualises hidden homelessness as a visibility issue. Out of mind suggests they are forgotten about, but forgotten about by whom? So far, it seems that the

---

[88] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/britains-homelessness-shame-cold-hard-facts
[89] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/sight-mind-hidden-homelessness-scandal/

campaigns are trying to raise awareness to the public, but the objective of doing this is unclear, other than it might encourage charitable donations. The article refers to hidden homelessness as staying on sofas, in shelters and in hostels, many of whom are young people,[90] thus a wider perspective than that seen above and a new focus introduced on who this might affect, this is because the article is primarily formed of information given by the New Horizon Youth Centre's CEO, therefore this article is addressed in more detail when this chapter turns to form that charity's perspective. Although this article offers wider examples upon who is hidden homeless, it still excludes rough sleeping, the article uses Shelter's metaphor of an iceberg;[91] describing rough sleeping as 'only the tip'[92] and uses Shelter's figures to show this. Lobb (2018) addresses that 'as of April [2017], while 4,500 people were sleeping rough in Britain, more than 300,000 were in hostels, temporary shelters or unsuitable and overcrowded accommodation. These figures do not include those sofa-surfing who are not registered by local authorities as being in need of housing assistance.'[93] It is unclear whether Lobb (2018) perceives those in hostels, temporary shelters or unsuitable and overcrowded accommodation as hidden homeless, or if he defines sofa surfing as hidden because it is not included in statistics - it is unclear who is hidden homeless which furthers speculation and ambiguity surrounding the concept. Furthermore, statements such as 'those sofa-surfing who are not registered by local authorities as being in need of housing assistance'[94] could imply that sofa surfers do not have the same rights as other types of homelessness. This could suggest that sofa surfers do not have legal entitlements could lead the public to question the validity of their homelessness, contrary to campaigns intentions.

Authors for the Big Issue have conceptualised hidden homelessness as missing from sight, support and statistics, how far the examples go of who is hidden homeless depends on the author - the one consistency is that hidden homelessness is conceptualised outside of rough sleeping. The articles do not reflect each other which suggests they have failed to question the conceptual basis of hidden homelessness, as seen across this chapter.

---

[90] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/sight-mind-hidden-homelessness-scandal/
[91] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah506pg5TXI
[92] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/sight-mind-hidden-homelessness-scandal/
[93] ibid.
[94] ibid.

2.5 New Horizon Youth Centre

New Horizon Youth Centre supports 16–24-year-olds experiencing homelessness through their day centre in North London. Their website does not contain a definition of hidden homelessness but their CEO, Shelagh O'Connor, gave insight on hidden homelessness and how it effects their users in an interview with a reporter for the Big Issue.[95] This highlights that this is a concept familiar to the charity however it may not be key to their campaign, O'Connor uses the concept to discuss issues relevant to youth homelessness.

In the article, O'Connor discusses issues of homeless identity which is common amongst the charity's users, 'What we are seeing is increasing numbers of young people coming through the doors who are homeless. But they wouldn't classify themselves that way … Our young people see themselves as quite apart. That guy sleeping in the doorway is 'homeless'. But they are not. In reality they are, because they don't have safe accommodation to be in.'[96] This suggests that there is a difference between legislators and charity workers definition of homeless compared to those who are experiencing it, the issues that young people have with homeless identity causes their homelessness to be hidden. O'Connor has described how individuals perceive rough sleeping and hidden homelessness differently, although her broad definition of homelessness, not having 'safe accommodation to be in',[97] iterates that they are inherently the same – an assertion commonly missed by hidden homeless campaigns. Considering the everchanging nature of the lives of those experiencing homelessness, i.e. someone might be sofa surfing one day and rough sleeping the next, it is peculiar that sofa surfers see themselves as distinct. Categorising hidden homelessness and rough sleeping separately might perpetuate this separation. Issues with homeless identity could explain why some young people do not seek help from the council, as addressed by the London Assembly report later in the chapter. Furthermore, it is possible that someone who is younger may care about their image more than an older person, they may not want to affiliate with the 'guy in the doorway' due to the embarrassment of not fitting into societal expectations surrounding housing. This thesis criticises hidden homeless campaigns apparent focus on explaining that sofa surfing is still homelessness, however where the nature of someone's homelessness affects their identification as such, campaigns could be

---

[95] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/sight-mind-hidden-homelessness-scandal/
[96] ibid.
[97] ibid.

useful in encouraging individuals to seek help, even if it is from a charity organisation rather than their local authority. There is a contradiction in O'Connor's statement, whereby she asserts that the young people are not identifying as homeless, however they are still approaching the New Horizon Youth Centre which is a service for young homeless people. It is unclear whether homeless identity is as much of an issue as hidden homeless campaigns might suggest and instead distracts from other issues in legislation and housing.

O'Connor goes on to describe the dangers of sofa surfing, offering a different perspective compared to organisations thus far, which suggest that sofa surfing is a safe alternative to rough sleeping because it is described staying with family and friends. This chapter has argued that the discussion surrounding sofa surfing is counterintuitive to the aims of hidden homeless campaigns, which is a sub argument from the six main arguments of this chapter set out in the introduction. O'Connor describes that sofa surfing "is not just your auntie offering you her sofa for a while. It is a stranger offering you a space to stay – and invariably our young people say that there are strings attached to that offer … So it can be a dangerous situation for young people to be in. As a society, we need to prevent that happening."[98] The last sentence iterates what her aim of discussing hidden homelessness; O'Connor is using the concept to make a call to wider society to prevent these situations, rather than a direct focus on law reform. It is difficult for laypeople to have a significant impact on homelessness, this argument can be used to reinforce the point that homeless campaigns could be more effective. Furthermore, the reference to strings attached highlights that it is not a genuine favour and young vulnerable people are being taking advantage of. O'Connor's assertion is supported by the account of one of their service users; 21-year-old Yuji used Craigslist to obtain free rooms however there were 'compensations for this', he described that he had to 'shut up the voice in my head telling me it was dangerous. I was not in a position of power',[99] Yuji had to ignore his instincts due to his position of vulnerability. Being inside accommodation did not protect Yuji and it can be inferred that being behind closed doors gives abusers cover to abuse young people. The power dynamic between homeless and homed people is evident through this conversation, this imbalance is further evident between homeless people and authorities/legislators. Legislation accepts a

---

[98] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/sight-mind-hidden-homelessness-scandal/
[99] ibid.

wide range of individuals as homeless, however Local Authorities can still reject applicants from the main housing duty on the basis of other legal tests, showing the desperation of many applicants. Homelessness puts people in an incredibly vulnerable situation and sofa surfing is not a solution to this. To protect vulnerable people in the housing sector, legislation and services need reforming so that they are less likely to turn to abusers who will exploit them.

This has highlighted hidden homelessness as an issue which affects young people, O'Connor iterates that sofa surfing is dangerous which other organisations have not done thus far. This suggests that conceptualisations focus too much on iterating the existence of homelessness within housing, without connoting its dangers.

2.6 Centrepoint

Centrepoint supports homeless young people (aged 16-25) in London, Manchester, Yorkshire, and the North-East of England by providing accommodation. Under What is Youth Homelessness, Centrepoint describe that 'Being homeless means not having a safe place to call home. We know many young people sleep rough every night, but there are thousands more sleeping on sofas, floors, night buses or with strangers. These are the "hidden homeless"'.[100] Centrepoint have used their definition of homelessness to emphasise hidden homelessness, highlighting that they see the issue as important to their campaign. Centrepoint have given a broad definition of homelessness whilst differentiating rough sleeping from hidden homelessness, this is to emphasise the latter as grand in scale, consequently rough sleepers are painted as the minority. Excluding rough sleeping from hidden homelessness signposts that Centrepoint conceptualise it as a visibility issue.

Quantifying hidden homelessness as 'thousands' suggests that Centrepoint are using the concept to show youth homelessness as extensive. It is counterintuitive to undermine rough sleeping within this, because this inadvertently undermines a part of their aim. The counterintuitive nature of undermining rough sleeping is further emphasised if it is considered that this type of homelessness is recognised as the most extreme, therefore it is likely to provoke public empathy which encourages donations. The charity also undermine rough sleeping whereby they state that 'Young people often become homeless and sleep

---

[100] https://centrepoint.org.uk/youth-homelessness/

rough because it's safer to leave home than to stay',[101] it is unnecessary to associate the word safe to rough sleeping to illustrate dangers of staying at home. Additionally, this statement is misleading because it is not possible to say which is 'safer', one cannot predict the dangers and uncertainty of the streets, someone could die on their first night on the streets due to an attack or adverse weather conditions – it is difficult to make accurate comparisons between types of homelessness. The aim of hidden homeless campaigns can be interpreted as showing homelessness outside of rough sleeping as extensive and extreme. This is reflected in the above statement, thus Centrepoint aligns to the objective of other hidden homeless campaigns. This works on the assumption that the public are unaware (or less aware) of homelessness outside of rough sleeping, evidence has not been provided for this, hence this thesis questions the usefulness of hidden homeless campaigns. Although, homeless identity issues suggest that homeless individuals do not identify themselves as such unless they are rough sleeping, although this relates more to the individual rather than public perception; this issue is further explored in the next chapter.

Centrepoint exampled hidden homelessness as 'sleeping on sofas, floors, night buses or with strangers',[102] the reference to staying with strangers highlights that hidden homelessness is not safe, as seen above with New Horizon Youth Centre – this must be a common issue amongst young people, considering it is referenced by youth charities. Furthermore, it is unclear why night buses are separate from rough sleeping because a night bus is not built for human habitation, which has previously been described as rough sleeping.[103] Centrepoint have not defined rough sleeping which makes it difficult to observe whether categorising night buses as hidden follows their perception of homelessness and if there is an overlap, charities tendency to not define rough sleeping contributes to ambiguity surrounding homeless categorisation. The inclusion of night buses could oppose an argument of the thesis, that hidden homelessness is conceptualised as existing inside (accommodation) because of notions relating to visibility - the public cannot see that someone is homeless if they are inside, thus they are hidden. The inclusion of night buses troubles this argument, it suggests that the nature of being inside is what is important to the definition of hidden homelessness, rather than the consequence of being inside - lacking

---

[101] https://centrepoint.org.uk/youth-homelessness/
[102] ibid.
[103] https://www.homeless.org.uk/what-is-homelessness

visibility. Exampling night buses as hidden homelessness suggests that being inside is the premise of the concept, regardless of whether it is a public domain, this suggests that organisations are losing touch of the original conceptualisation (lacking visibility) and campaigns lack focus. Whether public transport is a part of hidden homelessness is a further controversy of the concept that this chapter highlights. On statistics, Centrepoint address '58 per cent of those asking for help don't receive a statutory housing duty or any prevention or relief support' according to their youth homeless database 2016/17.[104] The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has since been enacted, meaning that relief support will be available to all eligible homeless applicants, although the London Assembly report below states that advisory services were available to applicants prior to the 2017 Act. If hidden homelessness is conceptualised as exclusion, it could be interpreted that 58 per cent of homeless young people were hidden in 2016/17.

Centrepoint have conceptualised hidden homelessness as a visibility issue and exclude rough sleeping from this conception, there is an apparent focus on showing hidden homelessness as extensive and dangerous. This chapter now turns to explore the London Assembly report.

2.7 London Assembly

The London Assembly is responsible for holding the Mayor of London to public account. It is rare that a governmental body reports on hidden homelessness, I did not find any except for this report, highlighting that it is typically a tool used by charities to campaign. In a Big Issue article, the chair of the housing committee is quoted to describe hidden homelessness as people who have 'no permanent home and live precariously'.[105] This is a broad definition of hidden homelessness and is reminiscent of Reeve and Batty's (2011) conceptualisation which focusses on exclusion. A common theme of hidden homeless conceptualisations is having accommodation on a temporary basis, which further suggests that temporary accommodation should be defined within the concept, however this is not seen throughout national understandings, for reasons explored below. In London Assembly's Housing Committee's 2017 report, 'Hidden homelessness in London', the concept is described as, 'precarious situations, including sofa surfing, sleeping rough, squatting and sleeping on

---

[104] https://centrepoint.org.uk/about-us/blog/more-than-a-number-scale-of-youth-homelessness-revealed/
[105] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/thirteen-times-many-hidden-homeless-london-sleeping-rough/

public transport'.[106] Unlike other organisations, rough sleeping is included in examples of hidden homelessness, signposting that hidden homelessness is conceptualised as exclusion. This is confirmed by hidden homelessness being described as those who 'are not entitled to homelessness support from the Government'.[107] Furthermore, temporary accommodation is not included in examples because these households are owed the main housing duty. Including temporary accommodation in homelessness statistics significantly increases figures, as shown previously,[108] this achieves the aim of showing homelessness as extensive. The report has referenced statistics throughout which highlights that the committee are using hidden homelessness to highlight to the Mayor the extent of homelessness. As seen with Shelter's statistics, if temporary accommodation was included this would largely increase figures. With the exception of temporary accommodation, the report has a wide definition of who can be hidden homeless, which seemingly includes all non-statutory homelessness. This suggests that the term hidden homelessness complicate the report, which could instead be titled non-statutory homelessness in London. This could also eliminate inconsistencies of the report, for example, the report later contrasts hidden homelessness and rough sleeping, despite defining rough sleeping as hidden homelessness. In this context the committee are presumably referring to hidden homelessness as sofa surfing. If the report did not reference the concept of hidden homelessness, the report could make comparisons between types of non-statutory homelessness, such as rough sleeping and sofa surfing, without contradicting their definition. Although this chapter has criticised comparing homelessness, at least it would be clear who the organisation is referring to.

The report addresses that the phrase hidden homelessness does not have a 'government or otherwise agreed definition' despite 'appearing frequently in press'.[109] Other organisations have not addressed the lack of definition, highlighting a lack of research into the concept. This chapter has not previously addressed the way the concept features in media outlets; it has thus been understood as a way for charities to draw attention to a supposedly

---

[106] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf [1].
[107] ibid [2].
[108] see https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk
[109] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf [3].

undermined sector of homelessness. The housing committee establish a working definition from their investigation, but this definition is futile unless it is applied nationally. Without an agreed definition the concept will still be inconsistent across different texts, as demonstrated by this chapter. If the reader understands the definition offered by the report, it is only useful in the context of the report – the report defines hidden homelessness as those who 'either have no right to live in a fixed place … cannot stay in a fixed place where they might have a right … are not receiving formal homelessness support from a local authority or specialist support service … have not made a formal homelessness application since they have become homeless … are not living with a parent or guardian … do not have the resources or financial means to avoid their current situation'.[110] This is a detailed definition which addresses that staying with parents is not hidden homelessness, definitions typically define sofa surfing as staying with friends and family but do not draw attention to this exception. Young people can be expected to stay with their parents and this report partly focusses upon young people, therefore this is an important exception so that there is not an abundance of people who could identify as hidden homeless. This further highlights that the context of campaigns influences how the concept is defines. By reference to abuse, absence of support and financial difficulties, the committee are showing that hidden homeless individuals face multiple exclusions, which has not been explored by other campaigns. The report suggests that individuals are not in receipt of formal support because they have not made an application, this could displace blame from the authority and have a damaging impact on perceptions of homeless people, suggesting that they are blameworthy. It must be considered that individuals might not have access facilities to make an application or may not trust that authorities will help them. Reference to applications and support further emphasises the reports focus on exclusion, whereas the organisations above focussed on visibility. Focussing on exclusion is more effective in campaigns because it can highlight ways to include and support homeless people, particularly where the address is to the Mayor. This shows that conceptualisations which focus on exclusion issues are motivated by policy/legal change, whereas conceptualisations which focus on visibility issues are motivated by raising awareness or donations.

---

[110] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf [3].

It has been addressed that this report defines hidden homelessness as not being entitled to homelessness support from the Government;[111] this suggests that issues of hidden homelessness would have reduced after the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 became effective on the 3rd April 2018. This is because the Act means that all eligible homeless people are entitled to support, the report suggests that states that the Act could improve the situations for homeless applicants, 'perhaps drastically'.[112] It is addressed that the policy landscape had remained unchanged for years up until this Act,[113] chapter one also addresses that legislation has remained relatively the same since 1977. This highlights the importance of law reform in the context of homelessness; focussing on exclusion creates an appropriate space to discuss legislation which is not seen with conceptualisations of visibility. However, Kesia Reeve told London Assembly that people were given advice and assistance by local authorities, but that it was of such little value to them that they had not even recognised it as such.[114] Therefore, individuals were entitled to some support prior to 2017, but the provision was ineffective. Furthermore, applicants are excluded from the main housing duty if they do not pass the statutory tests laid out in chapter one, therefore the main issues surrounding legislation still apply. The report acknowledges that the government should look at gaps in eligibility for support,[115] further highlighting the legislative focus and that the 2017 Act will not/does not do enough for applicants who could be seen as hidden homeless. Scholarship in the next chapter discusses whether the 2017 Act has been effective.

Chapter one showed the complex nature of establishing vulnerability. London Assembly explores the inconsistent process for assessing vulnerability, for example, some young people who seek help from the council fail to be recognised as vulnerable.[116] Everyone who is homeless is vulnerable according to the dictionary definition of vulnerable, however the legal definition as developed in the case law is complicated, and it is difficult to prove that someone is vulnerable.[117] The contrast of the dictionary definition of vulnerability and

---

[111] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf [2].
[112] ibid [9].
[113] ibid.
[114] Kesia Reeve in Housing Committee meeting 2017 [9].
[115] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf [1].
[116] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf
[117] ibid [13].

interpretation of vulnerability in legislation is similar to conceptualisations of 'hidden'; it is defined in the dictionary as being kept out of sight, however it is conceptualised further than this in the context of homelessness, which leads to inconsistencies. The report addresses the 'hierarchy of vulnerability';[118] section 189 of the Housing Act 1996 intends to prioritise applicants and this follows through to assessing vulnerability. The report describes that domestic abuse tends to be at the bottom of this. Since this report, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 means that domestic abuse survivors no longer have to prove their vulnerability, highlighting positive changes to the application process. Furthermore, the 2002 Order reformed homelessness law by extending categories of vulnerability in relation to priority need, but the issue is rather that applicants have to prove they are vulnerable as a result of one or more of the categories, which is a complex and inconsistent process. As well as legislation acting as a barrier to homeless people, homelessness support and advice are not well promoted, for example Shelter are useful in directing people to appropriate support but this is not well promoted,[119] highlighting exclusion issues as multifaceted.

Similarly to the above two charities, the report describes the dangers of hidden homelessness, which is said to 'leave people at risk of abuse, assault and exploitation'.[120] This could be because the London Assembly have also recognised the correlation between hidden homelessness and young people, particularly those who identify as LGBT.[121] By contrast, this suggests that older homeless people are more likely to sleep rough and further suggested by O'Connor when discussing homelessness identity.[122] The report offers an insight into sofa surfing, which this thesis identifies as the most common understanding of hidden homelessness by charities. This insight shows that the report recognises sofa surfing as key to the concept, as a similar insight is not offered upon rough sleeping. The insight articulates the dangers of sofa surfing, it is addressed that 16 per cent of survey respondents reported staying with a stranger[123] and that sofa surfing is 'more dangerous than it seems'.[124] This develops the youth charities arguments on rough sleeping.

---

[118] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf [13].
[119] ibid [14].
[120] ibid [1].
[121] Ibid.
[122] https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/sight-mind-hidden-homelessness-scandal/
[123] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf [20].
[124] ibid [5].

The report addresses the difficulty in estimating hidden homelessness in London, it is estimated that at least 12,500 people are hidden homeless on any one night in London,[125] this is based on data from Crisis' base estimates of sofa surfing, squatting and sleeping in cars/public transport in England 2016, weighted to London using mid-year population estimates.[126] Sofa surfing, squatting and sleeping in cars/public transport does not reflect the definition of hidden homelessness given in this report, which is defined as not receiving support and goes beyond the examples above - the statistic is not accurate in the context. This statistic was also used to estimate that, '13 times more people are homeless but hidden than are visibly sleeping rough – as many as 12,500 each night' -[127] this further shows that the report is inconsistent, rough sleeping has been conceptualised within hidden homelessness, whereas it is a comparator here. To compare hidden homelessness to rough sleeping, DCLG's single night street count statistics are cited, which found that 964 people slept rough in London in one night in 2016.[128] These statistics are known to be unreliable, as addressed by the report, 'In December 2015, the UK Statistics Authority … found that the Homelessness Prevention and Relief statistics 'do not currently meet the standard to be National Statistics''.[129] The report states that there must be better data on hidden homelessness to reflect the scale of the problem,[130] whilst knowingly citing inaccurate statistics which also contradicts their definition of hidden homelessness. Furthermore, how is it possible to collect reliable data on hidden homelessness when organisations have different definitions of the concept? How hidden homelessness is understood will affect who is being counted.

The London Assembly's Housing Committee have offered a different perspective of hidden homelessness by conceptualising it as exclusion, whereas the other conceptualisations have focussed on visibility, this is because they are offering recommendations to the mayor and the government, thus focussing on policy and law reform. The report discusses non-statutory homelessness, which contributes to the argument that the term hidden homelessness should be made redundant and replaced by less complicated language which

---

[125] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf [8].
[126] ibid [21].
[127] ibid [1].
[128] ibid [21].
[129] ibid.
[130] ibid [11].

could have led to the same recommendations – it is the term hidden homelessness which complicates and leads to inconsistencies in the report.

2.8 Conclusion

The use of hidden homelessness nationally can be broadly understood as referring to a category of homeless people, who lack visibility, are missing from statistics and are not offered a main housing duty. It is typically sofa surfers who are conceptualised as hidden homeless; this chapter has found that this is problematic because these issues affect all non-statutory homeless people. This chapter has argued the concept of hidden homelessness is used inconsistently across national understandings; it is unclear why temporary accommodation is excluded from conceptualisations of hidden homelessness focussing on visibility; how the concept is understood does not protect vulnerable people in the housing sector; campaigns produce further exclusion for rough sleepers; conceptions of hidden homelessness as visibility do not relate to law reform and; hidden homelessness statistics are potentially inaccurate. These findings are interlinked and relate more broadly to the entirety of the thesis' arguments. The organisations summarised below have demonstrated these arguments.

Firstly, Crisis, perceive hidden homelessness through the lens of visibility, although I contend that defining it as exclusion would better achieve their aim of protecting single people. Research commissioned by the charity, such as that of Reeve and Batty (The Hidden Truth About Homelessness, 2011), has understood hidden homelessness as exclusion, highlighting that use of the concept is inconsistent. A statistic established in this commission has been widely used in hidden homeless discussions, but it has been cited in incorrect contexts, casting doubt on the claims made in campaigns. Secondly, Homeless Link understand the concept as being missing from statistics and staying in insecure accommodation, suggesting that there is a correlation between the two, although rough sleepers can also be missing from statistics, this assertion thus produces further exclusion for them. Homeless Link has created statistical tables which could be used to suggest that authorities are gatekeeping services, a further barrier to homeless people in addition to legislation itself. This is not addressed in campaigns - thus they are missing an opportunity to protect vulnerable people in the housing sector who may have a legitimate entitlement to the main housing duty. Thirdly, Shelter use a metaphor of an iceberg whilst discussing

hidden homelessness, showing that the concept is seen as underrated yet deadly, this representation suggests some homelessness as more severe than others which could have negative implications on perceptions of homelessness. Shelter clearly categorises temporary accommodation separately to hidden homelessness, despite that they recognise visibility issues associated with it, this implies they associate hidden homelessness with exclusion, yet they do not reference this – adding to ambiguity. Fourthly, The Big Issue describes hidden homelessness as synonymous with sofa surfing and mainly cite other charities to form their articles, however they do not differentiate approaches, so the conceptual bases of hidden homelessness are unclear. Fifthly, The New Horizon Youth Centre conceptualises hidden homelessness as a youth issue (reflecting the charity's ETHOS), their CEO references the concept as sofa surfing and describes the dangers of this, which had not previously been seen in this chapter, which suggests that hidden homeless campaigns are not effectively articulating the dangers of homelessness and the vulnerability of those who they are focussing on. The last charity discussed, Centrepoint, also focusses on young people and directly contrasts hidden homelessness from rough sleeping – a problematic theme of campaigns. The last organisation referenced, the London Assembly's Housing Committee, is the only government agency cited, there is a lack of official/governmental organisations discussing the category, highlighting that hidden homelessness is typically used as a tool for charities to campaign. Unlike other organisations, they include rough sleeping in their definition of hidden homelessness, however they later compare it to hidden homelessness highlighting that the report is inconsistent. The committee offer a broad definition of hidden homelessness which encapsulates non-statutory homelessness, however using the concept of hidden homelessness complicates the campaign and leads to inconsistencies.

Chapter Three: scholarly understandings

This chapter explores how scholarship has understood the concept of hidden homelessness. Scholarship found in this chapter offers a different perspective from national or local organisations and advances arguments made in the thesis - the concept should be abandoned because it is used inconsistently and further contributes to the difficulty of understanding homelessness. I have analysed scholarship which relates to wider concepts relevant to hidden homelessness, such as exclusion, and explored homelessness definitions, including across Europe, which I compare to English law. I consider eight scholarly papers in

turn which I have selected because they give insight on understandings of hidden homelessness, I then move on from discussing specific pieces to considering themes relating to conceptualisations of hidden homelessness (hidden homelessness as sofa surfing and homeless identity). As well as analysing the scholarship in isolation, I consider the similarities and differences between the pieces, forming a comparative analysis. Below I address why each piece is useful in the context of the thesis.

Firstly, Pleace and Hermans (2020) raise arguments which have been developed throughout this thesis to criticise hidden homelessness, namely, U.K. public policy has been working on the basis that homelessness can exist within housing for over forty years (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 37). This refers to the definition of homelessness in legislation which does not require someone to be roofless to be homeless. This has been used to argue that the concept does not relate to a problematic point of law, because the concept unnecessarily focusses on the idea of a home and homelessness outside of rough sleeping. Additionally, the term is inherently vague and implies levels of severity of homelessness (*ibid* 2020, 52), i.e., sofa surfing is less severe than rough sleeping. This is contrary to the intentions of hidden homeless campaigns which focus on the extent of sofa surfing, thus conceptualisations of hidden homelessness are unsuccessful in meeting its aims. Secondly, Reeve and Batty identify that notions of visibility, entitlement and exclusion are central to definitions of hidden homelessness (Reeve and Batty 2011, 10), this finding has been useful throughout this thesis as it has been applied to understandings. Thirdly, Pleace (1998) focusses on single homelessness and does not explicitly reference hidden homelessness, however his commentary on single homelessness reflects on arguments that I have made on hidden homelessness, for example, homelessness needs to be reconceptualised. Additionally, single homelessness can be conceptualised as hidden, thus it is relevant to this research. Fourthly, Jones and Pleace (2010) consider that single homeless people can often be defined as hidden homeless, however the definition of hidden homelessness offered in this piece suggests that it does not fit into statutory definitions of homelessness. Fifthly, Bretherton (2017) argues that women are likely to be hidden homeless, however the paper's definition of the concept is vague so it is unclear what characterises women as hidden homeless. In the sixth piece of scholarship, I turn to analyse how Mostowska's (2019) criticism of homelessness statistics reflects more specifically on hidden homeless

statistics, which were criticised in the previous chapter. After this, I consider how ETHOS categorisation of homelessness across Europe reflects upon categorisation of homelessness nationally, which shows that categorisation is also inconsistent on an international level. This further perpetuates this thesis' recommendation that homelessness should be categorised as statutory and non-statutory across the U.K., as alternative forms of categorisation are vague and inconsistent. The typology has been frequently cited across homelessness scholarship, highlighting it as a valued reference to categorise homelessness, although it has been criticised by Pleace and Hermans (2020). Lastly, Cowan (2019) argues that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is likely to increase hidden homelessness, contrary to predictions made by organisations in the previous chapter. I then turn to address themes of hidden homelessness, which draws upon several different scholarships, firstly I show how scholars conceptualise hidden homelessness as sofa surfing, which has been identified as the only consistency in conceptualisations, but this presents its own issues which this thesis focusses on. Secondly, I analyse scholarship which reference homeless imagery, this works around the assumption that homelessness does not exist outside of rough sleeping – homeless imagery suggests that campaigns are useful because they show homelessness outside of the expected image of a homeless person.

3.1 Counting All Homelessness in Europe: The cowanCase for Ending Separate Enumeration of 'Hidden Homelessness' (Pleace and Hermans, 2020)

The paper is notably different from other discussions of the concept, Pleace and Hermans (2020) criticise the concept of hidden homelessness and suggest it should be made redundant. This is different from other conceptualisations which focus on emphasising the existence of homelessness outside of rough sleeping without considering the conceptual basis of hidden homelessness and its inconsistency. Pleace and Hermans (*ibid*) address that English law and public policy have been working on the basis that homelessness can exist within housing since the introduction of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 37), as the first chapter set out to demonstrate. This supports this thesis' argument that the concept of hidden homelessness does not effectively protect vulnerable people in the housing sector, because the concept does not address issues behind housing exclusion. The scholarship addresses that 'to define someone as homeless

requires a working definition of what constitutes a home' (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 36), English legislation does not directly address what a home is, which suggests that there is an issue with legislative definitions of homelessness. However, a definition of a home can be deduced from legislation, namely, someone has a home if they have accommodation available for their occupation which they are entitled to occupy and which would be reasonable for them to continue to occupy (Housing Act 1996, s.175), thus someone who is sofa surfing does not have a home. The criterion of reasonableness adds to the complexity of defining a home, however it makes it so that U.K. legislation has a wider definition of who is homeless, as shown in the first chapter. This means that being homeless in England is not bound to whether the individual(s) has legal title or right to occupy the accommodation, as seen in other European countries or ETHOS. This thesis has criticised conceptualisations of hidden homelessness for unnecessarily focussing on the definition of hidden homelessness, whilst there are other barriers which exclude applicants. However, it is necessary definitions of homelessness in a European context as there are different understandings, for example, some Eastern European countries define homelessness with a focus on rough sleeping and/or people living in emergency accommodation for homeless people (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 37). English definitions look more widely at homelessness, considering social and physical issues associated with the home, for example domestic abuse or the quality of the accommodation such as overcrowding. The contrast between England and the rest of Europe emphasises that it is not necessary to focus on the definition of homelessness in the context of English homeless campaigns.

The previous chapter criticised hidden homeless statistics and showed that they were inaccurate. Pleace and Hermans (2020) develop this by arguing that there should not be a separate enumeration of hidden homelessness. Furthermore, scholars such as Mostowska (2019) have suggested that scholars categorise homelessness to count it, thus ending the separate enumeration of hidden homelessness would give less reason for it to be categorised. This raises the question of how homelessness should be alternatively categorised, which this thesis makes suggestions for. Pleace and Hermans (2020) criticise ETHOS categorisation, for example exclusion from the physical and social domains is categorised as housing exclusion rather than homelessness, ETHOS argues that legal rights to occupy housing form the line between being homeless and being poorly housed. This

would mean that someone who is at risk of domestic abuse, but with legal rights to occupy the accommodation is not classified as homeless by ETHOS, although they would be in English law (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 38). There is a scholarly focus on defining homelessness across Europe or globally, Busch-Geertsema et al propose the global definition of homelessness as 'lacking access to minimally adequate housing' (Busch-Geertsema et al 2016, 125), this definition includes homelessness typically seen as hidden. It is possible that hidden homeless campaigns would be useful internationally where definitions of homelessness are narrower. Pleace and Hermans praise broader definitions of homelessness because it can find greater evidence of direct economic causation and because it can scale up homeless estimations (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 41). Finding greater causes of homelessness outside of individual pathology might trouble capitalist ideals of the political right who wish to drive the narrative of homelessness being rough sleepers, with addiction problems, severe mental illness, and criminal records, when this is only a minority of homeless people (Culhane 2018 in Pleace and Hermans 2020, 41). Rough sleepers may attract negative stereotypes, whereas drawing attention to those who are seen as hidden homeless shows that homelessness affects a lot of people and combat these stereotypes. Whilst this is useful, direct terms such as 'sofa surfers' should be referenced instead.

In the context of U.K. statistics, if definitions of homelessness included homeless households in temporary accommodation and people in emergency shelters and homelessness services, it would be estimated around 280,000 people would be homeless at any point (Shelter 2019, in Pleace and Hermans 2020, 41) rather than the 5000 people estimated to be sleeping rough at any one point by government (MHCLG, 2019 in Pleace and Hermans 2020, 41). However, hidden homelessness does not typically conceptualise temporary accommodation, although it raises statistical estimates (as campaigns intend) and fit conceptualisations because they lack visibility. Contrasting governmental estimates to charities highlights how the motivation of the collector impacts numbers. The above statistic was referenced in the previous chapter, it was argued that because the statistics used precise categorisation, they were more likely to be accurate. However, the data is lacking because it excludes forms of insecure accommodation whom it is not possible to count (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 41). This would include those typically seen as hidden

homelessness - however this an issue of homelessness in general, rather than just hidden homelessness as campaigns have implied. In 2020 the undercount of rough sleepers became apparent because the 'Everyone In' scheme placed a higher number in hotels or temporary accommodation to that estimated in the rough sleeping count. There is evidence that people living rough hide for safety reasons and people come and go for the night depending on whether they can find shelter that night (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 40). This highlights the fluidity and instability of homeless lives which means that it is hard to accurately count the population, but also that they may jump between different categories of homelessness. It is addressed that the idea of 'describing someone as a 'rough sleeper', as compared to someone who is 'hidden homeless', does not originate from people experiencing different dimensions of homelessness' (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 47). This suggests that researchers and advocates use the term whilst someone who is experiencing the different dimensions of homelessness understands that homelessness cannot be differentiated in this way. The above discussion further contributes to the argument that rough sleepers should be included in conceptualisations of hidden homelessness, as they are missing from sight and statistics.

The thesis' main argument is that hidden homelessness further complicates understandings of homelessness, because those people who are conceptualised as hidden homeless are protected, in the sense that they may be 'homeless' within the statutory definition. However, Pleace and Hermans do not argue that this is why the term should be made redundant, nor because of the concept's 'inherent vagueness' (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52) but rather because the term suggests that there are different 'levels' (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52) of homelessness, some of which are less serious than others. Rough sleeping might be the most extreme, but all homelessness is very destructive for every human being who experiences it (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52). It is contradictory to criticise the concept for implying levels of severity then to suggest rough sleeping as the most extreme, because this suggests that homelessness has good reason to be ranked. It is true that in terms of weather conditions and exposure to public threat, rough sleeping can be seen as the most severe, but individuals typically referred to as hidden homeless could be staying with an individual who pose an equal threat to their life. The dangers of sofa

surfing have been previously explored by youth homeless charities who described that homeless young people are being exploited by strangers that they stay with.

Pleace and Hermans (2020) offer a unique and contemporary perspective on hidden homelessness; their research is the most recent piece of scholarship cited in the chapter. Their argument that hidden homelessness should be made redundant is the basis of this research and is developed throughout the thesis by drawing on conceptualisations of hidden homelessness.

3.2 The Hidden Truth About Homelessness (Reeve and Batty, 2011)

Firstly, it is addressed that 'There is no agreed definition of hidden homelessness and the term is inconsistently conceptualised and applied' (Reeve and Batty 2011, 10) which is a key argument of this research and has been shown by comparing different conceptualisations – this has not change in the decade since Reeve and Batty wrote their piece. Reeve and Batty address that notions of 'exclusion', 'entitlement' and 'visibility' are often central to definitions of hidden homelessness (Reeve and Batty 2011, 10) this correlates with the findings of this research and has been used to navigate hidden homelessness. This finding is central to this thesis which has interpreted whether organisations conceptualise hidden homelessness as exclusion or visibility to draw conclusions on understandings of hidden homelessness. The basis for conceptualisations (as visibility or exclusion) has not been explained elsewhere. Reeve and Batty (2011) perceive hidden homelessness as *exclusion* from homelessness provisions, which is rooted in lacking statutory *entitlement*, therefore these two notions interlink. They define hidden homelessness as 'non-statutory homeless people living outside mainstream housing provision' (Reeve and Batty 2011, 10). This is where someone has met the legal definition of homelessness but to whom the local authority owes no housing duty, this is because they have not approached the local authority or because the local authority has decided they are not owed a main housing duty (Reeve and Batty 2011, 11). Therefore, it is not the question of the applicants homelessness which is excluding them from the main housing duty, as campaigns might suggest. Reeve and Batty (2011) recognise two categories of hidden homeless people who are not being supported - those who are hiding themselves from support and those who are being hidden from support. The former relates to homeless identity and the latter to the exclusivity of legislation, both are explored throughout this chapter. It should be noted that since this

research, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 means that all eligible homeless people are entitled to advisory services and further duties have been put on authorities to prevent homelessness (as well as the relief duty). However, the homeless tests which determine whether an applicant is owed a main housing duty have not changed much since 1977, as shown in the first chapter.

Reeve and Batty (2011) assert that hidden homelessness does not include those whose accommodation is provided by a formal system of housing support, this means that individuals in temporary accommodation, B&B's or hostels arranged by local authorities are excluded from the definition (Reeve and Batty 2011, 11). Following from the logic above, people staying temporarily with friends or relatives, squatting or sleeping rough are classed as hidden (*ibid*). Developing on Reeve and Batty's research, this research found that where hidden homelessness is conceptualised as exclusion, rough sleepers are included, hence it has been interpreted that most understandings conceptualise hidden homelessness as a visibility issue. Conceptualising hidden homelessness as exclusion rather than visibility is a more straightforward approach because there may be some days that someone's homelessness is visible and other times they are not, whereas they will continue to be excluded. Additionally, visibility is a more subjective term, it raises the question, visible to whom? Invisibility is a characteristic of homelessness rather than a factor which should be used to determine homelessness categories. Temporary accommodation is not included in conceptualisations focussing on exclusion because they are owed a main housing duty, however the main housing duty has not come to an end and they are in a state of limbo, advancing this definition further undermines this category.

Reeve and Batty's (2011) perspective of hidden homelessness is more effective because it relates to statute so it can promote law reform. If this thesis did not argue that the term should be made redundant, it may have argued that Reeve and Batty's definition should be adopted (2011, 11). Reeve and Batty seemingly refer to all non-statutory homelessness as hidden, which suggests that they should have titled their research as non-statutory homelessness rather than complicating it through the concept of hidden homeless. Although their discussion offered clarity on conceptualisations of hidden homelessness i.e., as visibility or exclusion. Regarding visibility, Reeve and Batty cites Somogyi and Tosics "The birth of the concept [of hidden homelessness] was bound to 'visibility', triggered by the

realisation that certain homeless groups stay invisible both for homeless care service providers, and for statistical studies or surveys (Somogyi and Tosics 2005, p3 in Reeve and Batty 2011, 10). Here, the concept of visibility is not used to refer to the public physically seeing homeless people, but rather hidden homeless people's conceptual invisibility from support and statistics – thus correlating to Reeve and Batty's definition (2011, 11). Reeve and Batty address that hidden homelessness is missing from official statistics, although this is not emphasised in their definition of hidden homelessness and the research references statistics throughout. One statistic of the study has taken the forefront of hidden homeless campaigns, that 62% of 437 single homeless people surveyed were hidden homeless, in accordance with their definition (Reeve and Batty 2011, 12). The previous chapter showed that campaigns have inaccurately applied this statistic to their campaign, because their definition of hidden homelessness is different. In addition to issues of visibility, exclusion and entitlement, the research addresses that hidden homelessness conceptualises those on the 'margins of homelessness' (Reeve and Batty 2011, 10). This refers to those who are precariously housed in insecure and unsatisfactory conditions, including those in severely overcrowded accommodation concealed households, and others whose accommodation is in very poor condition (Reeve and Batty 2011, 10). This suggests that they are not homeless but are rather in housing need – this is contradictory because Reeve and Batty defined hidden homelessness as being legally homeless (Reeve and Batty 2011, 11). Furthermore, the above can fit into legal definitions of homelessness, it would be unreasonable to continue occupation in those circumstances (Housing Act 1996 s.175), it is therefore misleading to state that it is on the margins of homelessness. Hidden homeless campaigns suggest that legislation has a narrower definition of homelessness, thus diverting attention from problematic areas of law.

The thesis argues that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness which focus on visibility issue are problematic because they exclude rough sleepers, rough sleepers sleep in out of sight locations and it is more prevalent than the public think and more invisible (Reeve and Batty 2011, 2). Visibility was an issue that emerged in interview data from participants who could be considered rough sleepers (Reeve and Batty 2011, 36), whereas hidden homeless campaigns have associated it with sofa surfers. This assertion correlates with Pleace and Hermans (2020) research which found that rough sleeping can be hidden, thus rough

sleeping should not be excluded from either conceptualisation of hidden homelessness (visibility or exclusion). Furthermore, Reeve and Batty address the exclusion of single people and assert that single people are not the focus of policy and rarely the subjects of research (Reeve and Batty 2011, 7), single people were not referred to in national hidden homeless campaigns, supporting this assertion. It is possible that there is a correlation between single people's absence in research and their absence in policy, contributing to the argument that they should be focussed upon more. Reeve and Batty draw attention to Jones and Pleace's research of single homelessness, 'single people in a situation of housing exclusion' are often referred to as hidden homeless (Jones and Pleace 2010, 9 in Reeve and Batty 2011, 10). This appears to be two straightforward criteria, however, housing exclusion is an ambiguous term which often refers to exclusion from homelessness care and provision but is influential in conceptualising hidden homelessness (Reeve and Batty 2011, 10). The idea of this being an ambiguous term resonates upon understandings of hidden homelessness. There is evidence that single homeless people have been deterred from applying, misinformed about their entitlements, and not given the opportunity to make a homelessness application (Reeve and Batty 2011, 4). Thus, the exclusion of homeless people is not always directive of statute, rather it can result from how authorities have treated and excluded homeless people. Exclusion is complex and multifaceted, its association to hidden homelessness which lacks a working definition further complicates this, this is further discussed over the next two pieces of scholarship.

Reeve and Batty (2011) conceptualise hidden homelessness as statutory exclusion, which has been clearly defined, although elements of exclusion remain ambiguous. Because single people are often excluded from homeless provisions, they are a vulnerable group in the housing sector, therefore this thesis argues that they should be a focus of homeless campaigns. Importantly, this research acknowledged the lack of clarity or consistency regarding the definition of hidden homelessness, it also explained how notions of exclusion (which links to entitlement) and visibility are often central to definitions of hidden homelessness (Reeve and Batty 2011, 10). This perspective has been used to navigate understandings of hidden homelessness.

3.3 Single Homelessness as Social Exclusion: The Unique and the Extreme (Pleace 1998)

This paper addresses single homelessness and social exclusion, although Pleace does not explicitly refer to hidden homelessness, issues and concepts discussed throughout the paper are relevant to hidden homelessness. Literature on single homelessness encapsulates hidden homelessness because single people lack visibility and are excluded, as will be further evidenced through analysing this paper. Pleace argues that 'single homelessness needs to be reconceptualised and viewed as one of the products generated by the process of social exclusion' (Pleace 1998, 46). Similarly, this thesis argues that homelessness needs to be reconceptualised by making the term hidden homelessness redundant, although Pleace wrote this over two decades ago, reconceptualising homelessness is still at the forefront of discussion. Thus far, this paper has focussed on statutory exclusion, which has the effect of keeping applicants homeless, whereas social exclusion can be deemed as creating and maintaining homelessness. Therefore, it is possible that the suggestion of conceptualising homelessness as social exclusion could replace hidden homelessness.

Hidden homelessness has focussed on the idea of a home, this relates to the dispute of when living in poor housing conditions amounts to homelessness (Pleace 1998, 47). The consideration of what point housing deprivation becomes homelessness is also raised in ETHOS. This dispute contradicts the argument that legislation already has a broad definition of who is homeless, and that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness unnecessarily focus on this. Furthermore, Pleace speculates that 'Few would disagree that people sleeping outside are homeless' (Pleace 1998, 47), this can be interpreted as a reason why rough sleeping is not conceptualised as hidden homelessness. It has been identified that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness focus on proving that homelessness exists outside of rough sleeping, this has been criticised thus far, however the above statement suggests that this might be a worthwhile assertion to make. Although this would be aimed at improving public perception rather than improving policy or legislation. Beyond definition, 'there are the arguments about which single homeless people or rough sleepers are in legitimate need of assistance and which are not' (Pleace 1998, 47). This further highlights the argument that it is not necessarily someone's homelessness status which affects them securing a statutory duty, it is rather whether the other statutory tests (as

shown in chapter one, eligibility, priority need and intentionally homeless) which affect an applicant's entitlement. There is a distinction between homeless people: those who can access social housing and those who cannot (Pleace 1998, 47). Conceptualisations of hidden homelessness (which focus on visibility) distract from this important distinction. In addition to rough sleepers, it is unlikely that someone would argue against parents with dependent children or wheelchair users accessing social housing (Pleace 1998, 46-47). This is reflected in categories of priority need (Housing Act 1996, s.189), consequently, single able-bodied people are often excluded from accessing social housing. Thus, a profile of statutory exclusion has been created, which is not specific to whether someone is sofa surfing or rough sleeping. I now turn to analyse social exclusion.

Pleace describes that social exclusion is characterised by the inability to access welfare services and social housing - single homelessness and rough sleeping are a form of social exclusion (Pleace 1998, 46). The inability to access social housing can be seen as a consequence of statutory exclusion (although there is also a lack of social housing, which acts to reason the exclusivity of legislation), in addition to this, the inability to access welfare services can prevent people from securing private housing. Pleace addresses that single homelessness used to be explained by illness and dependency meaning that individuals could not participate in economic life, thus it was suggested that they were excluded because of their own individual pathology. However, this was later found to be untrue, although single people did need housing assistance, this was because the market was not providing affordable, suitable accommodation (Pleace 1998, 50), this relates to Cowan's (2019) arguments which are later discussed. Furthermore, single people's inability to access welfare provisions as abovementioned means that the housing market becomes further unaffordable for households reliant on welfare provisions, where social housing is not available, if housing benefit reflected rent prices, single people could access housing independently. This conceptualisation of homelessness shifts blame towards the state rather than individual pathology, this thesis argues that holding the state accountable for homelessness, which can be done through conceptualisations of exclusion, better advances the protection of homeless people than focussing on visibility issues.

Pleace reflects on understandings of single homelessness, it 'is not a problem in its own right and in consequence it does not have causes in its own right, and any attempt to

understand it in these terms is doomed to fail' (Pleace 1998, 57). Similarly, hidden homelessness is not a problem in its own right, rather it exists within the problem of non-statutory homelessness. Furthermore, Pleace argues that 'Absolute truths about homelessness and homeless people do not exist' (1998, 57). This reflects upon conceptualisations of hidden homelessness which argue that sofa surfers experience of homelessness is discrete from rough sleepers, the thesis has shown that this is not true. To apply Pleace's argument to hidden homeless discussions, homelessness is one of the many manifestations of social exclusions and this can be characterised as lacking support and visibility, however conceptualising types of homelessness as hidden will be doomed to failure because there are no certainties in homelessness.

Pleace addresses issues of social exclusion and single homelessness, both of which are relevant to the concept of hidden homelessness. Pleace also discusses perceptions of homelessness, suggesting that rough sleepers are more likely to be perceived as homeless. This could suggest that organisations or academics should campaign for a wider recognition of homelessness. However, the thesis argues that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness unnecessarily distinguish types of homelessness and could create the perception that sofa surfers are not legally homeless.

3.4 A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000-2010 (Jones and Pleace, 2010)

A later report co-authored by Pleace reviews single homelessness between 2000-2010, however it also discusses the definition of hidden homelessness within single homelessness. 'Single homeless people can fit into three definitions, 1. statutorily homeless, 2. non-statutorily homeless: people who are legally homeless but not priority need so do not qualify for a main housing duty, and 3. those who are in a situation of housing exclusion' (Jones and Pleace 2010, 9) and asserts that housing exclusion is often referred to as hidden homelessness because their housing circumstances are often literally hidden from sight (Jones and Pleace 2010, 9), this suggests that hidden homelessness is typically conceptualised through physical visibility. This thesis has argued that conceptualising homelessness upon who is visible and who is not is a narrow way to distinguish an incredibly complex issue. Defining hidden homelessness as 'housing exclusion' contrasts other conceptions of hidden homelessness which suggest that hidden homeless individuals meet

the legal definition of homeless but are not owed a main statutory duty. Pleace and Herman's paper (although written a decade later) addresses the difference between homelessness and housing exclusion, according to ETHOS, 'legal rights to occupy housing forms the line between being homeless and being (very) poorly housed' (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 38). These households are homeless according to English legislative definitions, because legal rights do not stop someone being accepted as homeless, however the term housing exclusion is still associated with bordering homelessness rather than being a part of it. Furthermore, housing exclusion follows as a separate definition from non-statutory homelessness, which suggests that it does not meet the legal definition of homelessness. Using the term housing exclusion implies that the term homeless is being avoided, which suggests that homelessness is being denied or downplayed in the context of hidden homeless discussions. The report identifies that Crisis define hidden homelessness in accordance with the last two definitions. However, the definition of hidden homelessness on Crisis' webpages does not reflect that shown above.[131] Crisis have portrayed hidden homelessness as a visibility issue which contrasts rough sleeping, whereas these definitions encapsulate rough sleeping. The second definition is similar to Reeve and Batty's definition of hidden homelessness, also commissioned by Crisis, which defines hidden homelessness as 'non-statutory homeless people living outside mainstream housing provision' (Reeve and Batty 2011, 10). However, this research commissioned by Crisis (as is Jones and Pleace's), rather than the charity's main body of thought, which is represented through their webpage, highlighting that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness are difficult to understand and are inconsistent.

Jones and Pleace (2010) may not have intended to suggest that some hidden homeless individuals are not legally homeless, however this is not made clear, and reflects the lack of clarity surrounding the concept of hidden homelessness. Although their paper intended to research single homelessness rather than hidden homelessness which could explain vagueness in definition. Jones and Pleace's definition of single homelessness defines non-statutory homelessness (2010, 9), raising the question as to why it has been specified to single homelessness. Similarly, it is unclear why definitions of hidden homelessness which

---

[131] see previous chapter or https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/; https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/

define non-statutory homelessness reference the concept as this could complicate understandings.

3.5 Reconsidering Gender in Homelessness (Bretherton, 2017)

The 2017 paper identifies that women are more likely to be hidden homeless than men because of how they respond to homelessness, e.g., women avoid formal homelessness services and opt for informal support which can be seen as hidden homelessness (Baptista 2010 in Bretherton 2017, 6). Additionally, hidden homelessness may be more practical for women than men, this is because women are seen to be less threatening and victims of their situations and more vulnerable than men (Bretherton 2017, 8), therefore family and friends are more likely to welcome women into their homes. However, it is possible that women exchange sex for somewhere to stay (Bretherton 2017, 8), thus the combination of their homelessness and femininity allows them to be exploited by people with accommodation.

To identify that women are more likely to be hidden homeless requires a definition of what hidden homelessness is. The concept is described as lacking any legal right to occupancy and may lack privacy or any separate living space (Bretherton 2017, 7). This chapter has addressed that someone does not have to lack legal right to occupancy to be homeless in the U.K., someone can be homeless whereby it is unreasonable to continue occupation of accommodation (Housing Act 1996, s.175). Using the lack of legal title to example hidden homelessness narrows perceptions of homelessness when hidden homeless campaigns have been used to widen perspectives of who is homeless. Women's homelessness is largely the consequence of domestic abuse and these women may still have legal rights to their accommodation, therefore describing hidden homelessness narrows the scope of women who are hidden homeless. Bretherton recognises that women in refuges are often seen as 'victims' of domestic abuse rather than homeless (Bretherton 2017, 5), this chapter has highlighted that there is a discourse of questioning whether hidden homeless individuals are homeless. Furthermore, Bretherton (2017) is researching homelessness across Europe, some countries across Europe have a higher threshold of who is accepted as homeless compared to England, which further narrows perspectives of hidden homelessness.

Bretherton describes hidden homelessness as living as a concealed household with friends, family or acquaintances (Bretherton 2017, 4) who receive less attention from researchers because not all European countries recognise hidden homelessness and because the population is harder to find and research (Pleace and Bretherton 2013 in Bretherton 2017, 4). This conceptualisation focusses on visibility issues. Understanding hidden homelessness as a field of homelessness which is under-researched can be used to argue that campaigns are useful. However, this thesis argues that the concept of hidden homelessness should not be used, whilst issues relevant to the concept need exploring. Furthermore, it is evidenced that the concept is inconsistently understood, for example hidden homeless people are later referred to as not having contact with services or living rough (Bretherton 2017, 5). Hidden homelessness does not have a working definition, therefore literature referencing the concept should unambiguously define the concept in the context of the research.

Where research references homelessness across Europe, hidden homelessness is often discussed as separate from homelessness, for example 'Women were significantly less likely to be literally homeless, and more likely to report being at risk of homelessness or in a situation of hidden homelessness' (Bretherton 2017, 10). This statement suggests hidden homelessness is not 'literal homelessness', this is because not all European countries recognise situations typically considered to be hidden homelessness as homelessness. For example, Spain, France and Italy have a narrow definition of homelessness where hidden homelessness is not included, women's homelessness is not recorded or researched as a consequence (Bretherton 2017, 13). It is more apparent why hidden homelessness would be a topic of discussion in these countries - as an attempt to widen definitions of homelessness, which would also lead to more extensive research on women's homelessness. Alternatively, it is further evidence that the discussion of hidden homelessness is unnecessary in England. Regardless of context or country, using the term hidden homelessness is vague and should be replaced with more direct language, for example, the difference in this piece between 'literal' homelessness, at risk of homelessness and hidden homelessness is unclear.

Women who are homeless lack visibility and therefore can be conceptualised as hidden homeless. Although not discussed by Bretherton in this paper (2017), women tend to go through rough sleeping differently from men, rejecting highly visible locations in preference

of sleeping in hidden locations (Casey, Goudie and Reeve 2008, 903). This further perpetuates stereotypes of homelessness as a problem affecting men, the academic addresses that male homelessness has greater evidence and is more extensively researched (Bretherton 2017, 14), women are less visible, both physically and in terms of their presence in research. Despite this, women are not often the focus of hidden homeless conceptualisations.

3.6 Metaphors and Evidence. Producing Numbers in National Homelessness Counts (Mostowska, 2019)

Hidden homelessness has been widely understood as hidden from sight, support and statistics, leading researchers and campaigns to criticise homelessness statistics. Because there is a focus on statistics, hidden homelessness can be inferred as a way to show the extent of homelessness, where homelessness statistics are otherwise unreliable. However, I have argued that hidden homeless statistics are also unreliable, thus contributing to the problem. I turn to analyse Mostowska's article (2019), which offers criticisms of homelessness statistics, reflects on conceptualisations of hidden homelessness. Although the article is from the University of Warsaw, the article reflects on homelessness statistics internationally and conforms with arguments made in the thesis regarding England's homelessness statistics. Mostowska (*ibid*) refers to homelessness statistics as metaphors which conforms with findings in the previous chapter – statistics are used to represent homelessness as extensive, but they are not necessarily an accurate representation.

The article reflects upon the difficulty of defining homelessness 'because most conceptualizations of homelessness acknowledge that it is a dynamic and partly "hidden" phenomenon' (Mostowska 2019, 341), the article has not explored what is meant by hidden but the fact it is in quotation marks highlights that it is a common reference in homelessness discussions and could have different interpretations. Furthermore, if the difficulty in defining homelessness comes from it being hidden, defining the hidden aspect of it can be expected to be inconsistent. This statement reflects Pleace and Bretherton (in Bretherton 2017, 4) findings that the hidden homeless population is harder to find and research, thus homelessness (particularly that referred to as hidden) is hard to define, find and research. In terms of definition, U.K. law offers a wide working definition of who is homeless, however the difficulty of definition becomes apparent when looking at homelessness on a conceptual

or international level (as seen in ETHOS). Reference to definitions in an article focussing on statistics suggests there is a relationship between the two, Pleace and Hermans (2020) argue there is a relationship between definitions and statistics, wide definitions of homelessness affect who is seen as homeless, thus there will be more to count. Hidden homeless campaigns focus on recognising homelessness outside of rough sleeping, because of what this will do to numbers. Furthermore, it is addressed that 'definitions and categories used in homelessness surveys indicate how it is understood as a social problem' (Mostowska 2019, 339). England has a wide recognition of who can be homeless, thus a larger percentage of the population can be expected to be homeless (for example, Shelter estimated it to be 1 in 200 people),[132] compared to countries such as France who do not recognise individuals typically seen as hidden homeless as homeless. Pleace and Hermans argued that this shows greater evidence of economic causation (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 41). It has been shown that there is a broad recognition of homelessness however the boundaries between homelessness categories are unclear.

Homelessness statistics are 'crucial for attracting public attention', as it highlights the 'seriousness of the problem' (Mostowska 2019, 343). Similarly, charities use the concept of hidden homelessness to raise awareness of different types of homelessness, this attracts public attention as homelessness is shown as extensive. This shows the seriousness of the problem and is likely to encourage public donations. Hidden homeless campaigns also reference statistics to show this. It is argued that advocates might guess the extent of homelessness to show the seriousness of the issue, without being able to evidence the statistical 'guesstimate'. For example, homelessness was estimated to be between two and three million in the 1980s in the U.S. despite Mitch Synder having no idea of the actual number (Jenks 1994 in Mostowska 2019, 343). In addition to this, homelessness can be a subjective concept lacking visibility, so it is hard to obtain accurate statistics, as evidenced throughout this thesis. Mostowska addresses that the 'word "million" has become a synonym for "unimaginable lot"' (Mostowska 2019, 343), this is in the context of America who has a larger population than England. In the previous chapter, national organisations use of the words 'thousands' was criticised in relation to estimating hidden homelessness, it

---

[132]

https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk

is possible that 'thousands' is also being used as a synonym by national charities. Governments may wish to underestimate the extent of homelessness so that they appear to be handling the housing situation, leading activists to speculate about the accuracy of government statistics. The nature of homelessness leaves authorities' flexibility in the statistics that they gather and present, for example, whether they include temporary accommodation which led Shelter to have a larger estimate of who is homeless. Considering that temporary accommodation is so often excluded from conceptualisations, despite what it can do to numbers, this highlights another opportunity that campaigns have missed to raise awareness of vulnerable people. Political dimensions of homelessness centre on what broader definitions do to the numbers, whereas hidden homeless campaigns have an opposite agenda and want to showcase larger figures – this shows how political motivations influence understandings and statistics on homelessness.

3.7 European Typology on Homelessness and housing exclusion (ETHOS)

ETHOS categorises homelessness on a European level. This is relevant to the thesis because it highlights the difficulty of conceptualising and categorising homelessness and I consider how hidden homelessness fits into the typology. Similarly to hidden homelessness, where homelessness is conceptualised and categories follow, this can create a dispute in relation to how homelessness should be operationalised. ETHOS conceptualises the four main forms of homelessness and housing exclusion as rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing and operational categories follow this.[133] These forms of homelessness fit into legal, social and physical domains (as established in Busch-Geertsema, 2010). Across some countries in Europe and in this typology, hidden homelessness is housing exclusion rather than homelessness – this assertion is developed by considering where conceptualisations hidden homelessness fits into these categories. Other scholarship has found it 'strange' that someone can be physically unsafe in their own home but not homeless, for example someone experiencing domestic abuse (Bretherton, 2017 and 2020 in Pleace and Hermans 2020, 38). This is because someone must be excluded from all three domains or the legal and social domains to be classified as homeless by ETHOS (Pleace and

---

[133] ethos2484215748748239888.pdf (feantsa.org)

Hermans 2020, 38). This means that sofa surfers would be classified as homeless according to ETHOS and not all hidden homelessness is excluded.

Categorising homelessness has been a common objective amongst scholars, particularly across Europe, as highlighted by ETHOS which has been referenced across homelessness literature. It would be impossible to precisely categorise or define homelessness globally due to differing societal or cultural norms. These differences will also exist across Europe, and more importantly there are differences in legislation, which is significant in categorising homelessness. For example, this thesis has shown the role of exclusion in hidden homeless conceptualisations, even where it is not explicitly mentioned. This furthers the thesis' recommendation that homelessness should be categorised as statutory and non-statutory. However, I analyse how homelessness can been categorised across Europe to further consider understandings of hidden homelessness. ETHOS conceptualises homelessness as fitting into legal, social and physical domains, I consider how conceptualisations of hidden homelessness fit into this. Someone can be *excluded* legally, socially, or physically, whereas the concept of visibility does not correlate with ETHOS domains – this highlights that the conceptualisations of visibility are ambiguous. Categorising homelessness by whether it is visible is a complicated approach and it lacks substance, however most understandings of hidden homelessness take this approach.

In terms of ETHOS and some European countries, insecure and inadequate housing is housing hardship rather than homelessness, because they still have a legal title to the property. This is similar to conceptualisations of hidden homelessness which implies levels of severity (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52), those in housing hardship are being denied the status of homelessness which diminishes the severity of their situation. ETHOS' first conceptual category is rooflessness and this includes the operational category of people living rough, this reflects Pleace's argument that few would argue that rough sleeping is not homelessness (Pleace 1998, 47). Rough sleeping is rarely conceptualised as hidden because their homelessness is accepted by the public, in conceptualisations and legislation. The last conceptual category of inadequate housing includes extreme overcrowding, the occupants would be homeless in U.K. legislation, however the occupants would not be homeless according to ETHOS. This suggests that a campaign for hidden homelessness might be useful in a European context. It is becoming increasingly evident that boundaries of homelessness

and categories are unclear, and this is exacerbated when looking at homelessness definitions across Europe. Similarly, to U.K. legislation, ETHOS uses a broad definition of homelessness and housing exclusion, but this does not necessarily entitle individuals to appropriate housing across Europe. The concept of hidden homeless is inconsistent to ETHOS (although it is on a European level), this highlights the complexity of trying to conceptualise homelessness as there are multiple different approaches.

ETHOS has been analysed to reflect upon how understandings of hidden homelessness fit into a European context; what also became apparent through this analysis is that there are different understandings of who is homeless across Europe. Conceptualisations of hidden homelessness could be perceived as housing exclusion rather than homelessness across Europe. This shows that different legal systems make it difficult to categorise homelessness internationally, however, this draws attention to the importance of legal entitlements in categorising homelessness.

3.8 Reducing Homelessness or Reordering the Deckchairs? (Cowan 2019)

Thus far, conceptualisations of hidden homelessness which focus on exclusion have praised the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. However, Cowan (2019) writes after the Act became effective and thus has a greater insight. For example, the London Assembly Housing Committee's 2017 report argued that the Act would help hidden homeless individuals (if authorities are supported in implementing it) which is contrary to Cowan's conclusions (*ibid*). Cowan is critical of the Act, addressing that rather than 'reducing' homelessness it is likely to hide long-term systemic issues in the housing system. Neither the Housing Act 1977 nor the 2017 Act have affected the shortage of low cost private or social housing, therefore the '2017 Act's significant alterations are likely to result in a re-ordering of the deckchairs on the Titanic of housing policy.' (Cowan 2019, 106). Cowan identifies that the underlying issue of homelessness is 'the affordability of private renting in a market where tenant subsidy (housing benefit) has reduced and private rents are increasing' (Cowan 2019, 114), previously the issue was relationship breakdown (Cowan 2019, 106). This suggests that homelessness statutory provisions might be less effective in addressing homelessness and that welfare reforms could be more effective. Therefore, categorising homelessness as

statutory and non-statutory in order to focus understandings on homelessness legislation might not be effective.

In addition to this, there is a notion of blaming the individual rather than the system which produces homelessness. Cowan addresses the 'fundamental changes to the mentality of government of the homeless' (Cowan 2019, 122) the 2017 Act has had, namely it has shifted from the welfarist orientation underpinning the 1977 Act to a neo-liberal political rationality. Cowan criticises neo-liberalism as a concept, stating that it has 'lost any persuasive explanatory power because of its over-worked and multiple meanings across different contexts.' (*ibid*), suggesting that homelessness should not be conceptualised as this. The critique of neo-liberalism can be applied to hidden homelessness; hidden homelessness has multiple definitions leading to inconsistency and to lack in credibility. Additionally, it lacks persuasive explanatory power because it is unclear what the concept is and who it is trying to persuade. Neo-liberalism 'involves forms of governance that encourage both institutions and individuals to conform to the norms of the market' (W. Larner, 2000 in Cowan 2019, 122), which reflects the 2017 Act. The Act is designed so that the applicant has to take responsibility with the authority. There is thus the notion of punishing participants who are deemed to be unwilling or inactive by leaving them homeless, Cowan describes this 'tough love' as linked to 'punitive welfare, in which support is conditional to activity' (Cowan 2019, 123). This is reflective of capitalist ideals and governments attempts to end the 'something for nothing' culture.[134] This tough love approach would not be applied to families with dependent children who would are owed a priority need (Housing Act 1996, s.189(b)). Therefore, the government is selective in who they make work for support, which is typically single people, even though applicants are already potentially at their lowest. This again highlights whereby the concept of hidden homelessness has not advanced the protection of vulnerable people and suggests a lack of research.

Contrary to literature written prior to 2017, and charities such as Crisis who were a key supporter of the Act's introduction, Cowan concludes that 'the category of the 'hidden homeless' will be increasing' (Cowan 2019, 127). The concept has been put in quotation

---

[134] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/benefit-sanctions-ending-the-something-for-nothing-culture

marks, highlighting that it has different interpretations, however Cowan has not asserted his interpretation of the concept (2019). However, papers discussing Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and hidden homelessness, typically conceptualise hidden homelessness as an exclusion issue because of their focus on legislation. Cowan (*ibid*) has shown that homelessness goes beyond issues relevant to legislation and *argues* that homelessness is largely the result of increasing rent and a lack of social housing, therefore welfare reform might be more effective than law reform. If this is the issue, this suggests that campaigns should focus on issues with welfare, rather than visibility or the statutory tests (as explored in chapter one). However, revisiting the statutory tests seen in chapter one could give a wider range of applicants a main housing duty, whereas the 2017 Act only offers limited support in which the applicant must work for, which is ignorant of the multifaceted and complex issues homeless people face.

3.9 Theme one: hidden homelessness as sofa surfing

Moving on to discuss problematic aspects of the concept, the most obvious is that conceptualisations define hidden homelessness as sofa surfing and exclude rough sleeping. This section focusses on showing that hidden homelessness is conceptualised as sofa surfing, although this is shown throughout the thesis. The thesis argues that describing hidden homelessness as sofa surfing suggests that sofa surfing is not defined as homelessness in U.K. law. Furthermore, such conceptualisations create a contrast between sofa surfing and rough sleeping which could lead to misunderstandings of homelessness. Namely, rough sleepers are visible, supported and are not missing from statistics because they contrast sofa surfing which lack these qualities; alternatively sofa surfing is illustrated as safe because they are inside friends and family's accommodation (although chapter two pointed out that this could be strangers). These assertions are misleading because homelessness is much more complex than this.

Robinson and Coward's paper (2003) focusses on the homeless experience of staying with family and friends, they estimate that 'there are as many as 380,000 hidden homeless people in Great Britain, the majority of whom are sleeping on friends and family's floors' (Robinson and Coward 2003, 2). This highlights the scale of hidden homelessness but also asserts that hidden homelessness is typically sofa surfing. However, the paper later references ambiguity surrounding the term, stating that 'membership' of hidden

homelessness is 'rarely defined' (Robinson and Coward 2003, 7). Furthermore, a paper regarding social exclusion and hidden homelessness described the hidden homelessness population as living 'temporarily with others but lack immediate permanent housing and remain invisible and further excluded' (Watson, Crawley and Kane 2016, 97). This links to the concepts of exclusion and visibility, implying that invisibility is a casual factor of exclusion. The relationship between social exclusion and visibility has been raised elsewhere, 'exclusion from social and economic resources reinforces invisibility to the public and policy makers' (*ibid*). This implies that sofa surfing is the result of exclusion, whereas it is normally discussed in relation to visibility in isolation. Furthermore, a paper which intended to conceptualise and measure homelessness described hidden homelessness as those 'who may be living with others in conventional housing but on an emergency basis, such as 'couch surfers'' (Busch-Geertsema, Culhane and Fitzpatrick 2016, 130). Emergency basis suggests that this is a temporary measure. The term 'couch surfing' is also used in a report concerning health and hidden homelessness, which described hidden homelessness as being 'provisionally accommodated', meaning 'accommodation [which] is temporary or lacks security of tenure.' It can also be described as, 'concealed homeless', 'couch-surfing', or being 'doubled-up' (Crawley et al, 2013). They are invisible to the public because they have a temporary housing solution, the term is described as interchangeable with 'couch surfing'.

Contrary to Reeve and Batty (2011), by conceptualising hidden homelessness as sofa surfing, the focus is on what the public can see rather than state support, I argue that the latter is more impactful in the context of homelessness. Although, public awareness remains important. This section consolidates that hidden homelessness is typically conceptualised as sofa surfing, this is the only consistency in conceptualisations of hidden homelessness, although this is problematic, as shown throughout the chapters.

3.10 Theme two: homeless imagery

This thesis argues that the concept of hidden homelessness should be made redundant because homelessness typically seen as hidden (sofa surfing) is already accepted as homelessness in U.K. legislation, thus campaigns are not focussing on a vulnerable group in the housing sector. However, the argument that hidden homelessness should be made redundant because it is already accepted as homelessness could be challenged if the public

or individuals experiencing homelessness do not recognise sofa surfing as homelessness. Furthermore, it has been inferred that campaigns conceptualising visibility issues are typically used as a tool to raise public awareness rather than to address governments/legislators.

The projected image of homelessness matters because it has implications for who is seen as homeless, in reference to the public and people working in the field of homelessness (McCarthy 2013, 47). This suggests that hidden homeless campaigns project types of homelessness outside of rough sleeping so that people within those categories can be recognised as homeless. In the following chapter, a local charity worker questioned whether people in housing are legally homeless (in comparison to the vulnerability of rough sleepers), suggesting that arguments made in hidden homeless campaigns could be useful on a local level. Alternatively, it is the campaigns which have blurred the boundaries of homelessness. Scholarship has identified that the projected image of homelessness might focus on rough sleeping, Swain addresses that representations of homelessness occur through images of 'rooflessness' (Swain, 2011). Rooflessness can be operationalised as rough sleeping, as seen in ETHOS conceptualisations, therefore hidden homeless campaigns are informative because they offer a different representation of homelessness. Kemp (1997) affirms this suggestion by addressing forms of homelessness such as sleeping in temporary accommodation, hostels, or sleeping on the sofas of friends are likely to be left out of dominant representations (Kemp, 1997). The academic is referring to what other scholars have defined as hidden homelessness. Furthermore, the projected image of a homeless person tends to be a dishevelled man in a duffel coat on the street (Burman, 1994) or someone alone, on the street, sleeping amongst cardboard boxes (Swain, 2011). It is evident that the dominant image of homelessness tends to be an unkempt individual rough sleeping on a visible high street. Charity campaigns use this type of imagery because it is shocking and elicits empathy (Breeze and Dean, 2012). Considering the imagery of street homelessness or rough sleeping elicits empathy, hidden homelessness which focus on sofa surfing could elicit less of an emotional response from the public which could mean that they are less likely to donate in the context of charity's campaigns.

Thus, there is a stereotype of homelessness, which results from what passer-by's see and is perpetuated by homeless imagery. Although this research has found that definitions of

homelessness typically focus on that outside of rough sleeping. Kemp was writing over two decades ago, so representations could have overcompensated for assertions such as the above and have gone in the opposite direction, neglecting rough sleeping in conceptualisations and categorisation of homelessness. Despite the arguments made by scholars in this section, this thesis argues that hidden homeless campaigns are not progressive and conceptualisations have become too complicated.

3.11 Conclusion

Scholarship has been used to reflect on the issues of conceptualising hidden homelessness and have contributed to understanding national conceptualisations, overall they contribute to arguments on hidden homelessness made throughout the thesis. Pleace and Hermans (2020) argued that U.K. legislation accepts homelessness within housing, which the thesis used as a basis to argue that the concept should not be used. They raised other arguments for its redundancy which the chapter also explored, namely that it is inconsistent and suggests that some homelessness is more serious than others. Reeve and Batty (2011) conceptualise hidden homelessness as exclusion, which includes rough sleeping but excludes temporary accommodation, it would be more straightforward to categorise this as non-statutory homelessness, which contributes to this thesis' recommendation. The research describes that hidden homelessness is conceptualised as visibility or exclusion, which added clarity to this research, and was applied to national and local organisations to interpret how they understood the concept. Housing exclusion has been described as an ambiguous concept; the following pieces considered this in more depth. Pleace discusses the social exclusion that single homeless people face, raising issues of welfare provisions and affordable housing, highlighting that homelessness and exclusion are far more complex than statutory provisions or visibility. Jones and Pleace (2010) identify that hidden homelessness can be defined as non-statutory homelessness or housing exclusion, housing exclusion has been associated with individuals who are not legally homeless, therefore I find that this assertion is misleading - it implies that those who are seen as hidden homeless (sofa surfers) are not legally homeless. Bretherton (2017) addresses that women are likely to be hidden homeless; people are more likely to let them into their homes because of their vulnerability. There lacks a precise working definition of the concept in the paper, which contributes to vagueness surrounding the discussion. Mostowska (2019) criticises

homelessness statistics, which follows from the previous chapter that showed hidden homelessness statistics were bound to inaccuracies because the concept lacks a consistent working definition - this article was used to further criticise hidden homeless statistics. ETHOS attempts to categorise homelessness across Europe, hidden homelessness can be understood as a category of homelessness in the U.K., therefore the typology is relevant and offers a possible alternative. However, legislative differences across Europe meant that it is difficult to effectively apply the typology in the U.K., this highlighted how the law is impactful in homelessness categorisation. Cowan (2019) argues that the exclusion of homeless people is a consequence of limited welfare provisions and a lack of affordable housing, these issues are not addressed by homelessness legislation or hidden homeless campaigns. Furthermore, Cowan (*ibid*) argued that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is likely to increase hidden homelessness, highlighting that more needs to be done beyond legislation, or at least a different approach to law reform. This could raise counter arguments against this thesis' legal perspective on homelessness, however there is insufficient space to explore the effect of welfare reform compared to law reform. I then analysed themes of hidden homelessness, namely scholars have conceptualised hidden homelessness as sofa surfing and excluded rough sleeping because they focus on visibility issues. Lastly, I analysed scholarship which reference homeless imagery, this counterargues criticism of hidden homelessness by showing that the concept is useful in showing homelessness outside the expected image of a homeless person. Although, I argue that the concept of hidden homelessness has gone too far in this pursuit and has further complicated understandings, it is also unnecessary in the context of homelessness legislation.

Chapter Four: local understandings

This chapter analyses how the concept of hidden homeless is understood on a local level and how this compares to national understandings. Canterbury has been selected as the site of study because it is local to the University of Kent and has a high homeless population. In addition to analysing how the concept is understood in Canterbury, this chapter makes three key arguments, firstly that the term lacks a working definition and is inconsistent (other than reference to it being sofa surfing) and that understandings of hidden homelessness do not relate to the law – these arguments reflect those made in national understandings of homelessness. Alternatively, policy documents and interviewees in this

chapter do not regard hidden homelessness as homelessness which is contrary to national understandings and legislation, evidencing that the concept does not relate to the law. There are inconsistencies between local and national organisations, but inconsistency is a key finding in hidden homelessness conceptualisations – paradoxically, by being inconsistent, local understandings reflect national.

Firstly, this chapter looks at Canterbury's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023, reference is made to hidden homelessness which shows that the Council are familiar with the concept. I infer that Canterbury City Council conceptualise hidden homelessness as a visibility issue because the document defines hidden homelessness as sofa surfing. The document implies that the concept is not homelessness, which further obscures understandings of the housing problem on a local level. As seen with national conceptualisations, there is vagueness around the term, therefore I look more widely at the document to gain a further insight on their perspective. The key strategic priorities relate to issues relevant to the concept, such as housing quality, the document goes into detail of what can be done to change these issues whereas hidden homeless campaigns have typically brushed over this. In analysing this document, I address arguments made by Cowan (2019) – that the law is not sufficient in dealing with issues of homelessness which leads me to acknowledge that this thesis highlights that the concept is inconsistent and does not relate to the law, however there is insufficient space to explore the relationship between homelessness campaigning and law reform.

This chapter then turns to analyse interviews conducted with homeless charities in Canterbury for the purpose of this research. The semi-structured interviews took place in November 2021 and were designed to examine the ways in which the concept of hidden homelessness is understood on a local level from a first-hand perspective and whether local charities find the concept useful. I secured permission from the University of Kent's Research Ethics Committee to conduct the interviews; both participants gave their fully informed consent and were aware of their right to withdraw.

The first interviewee's responses conformed with national understandings of hidden homelessness by defining it as sofa surfing and being missing from statistics but differed where they categorised temporary accommodation as hidden homelessness. They also raised questions as to whether hidden homeless individuals are homeless, instead focusing

on the vulnerability of rough sleepers - whereas hidden homeless campaigns have asserted that someone can be homeless with a roof over their head. This discussion fits with the critique of Pleace and Hermans regarding levels of severity (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52), which I explore in the body of this chapter. The second interviewee also conceptualised hidden homelessness as a visibility issue, defining it as sofa surfing or vulnerable people hiding themselves – turning the conversation to vulnerability better reflects this thesis' aim of protecting vulnerable people in the housing sector. The second participant criticised legislation and I use this to suggest that this is what hidden homeless campaigns fails to address and categorising homelessness as statutory and non-statutory would open this discussion.

4.1 Canterbury City Council Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 – 2023

The term hidden homeless/homelessness is explicitly referenced four times throughout the 47-page document, suggesting that Canterbury City Council are familiar with the concept - I consider how the documents understanding/use of the concept compares to national organisations. The analysis below shows that the Council conceptualises hidden homelessness as a visibility issue; excluding rough sleeping signposts this. The document lacks an identifiable working definition of the concept, it is discussed under 'targeted support to prevent homelessness' which includes 'overcrowded households, hidden homelessness and vulnerable people' (Canterbury City Council 2018, 38). It is described that 'Overcrowding can indicate hidden homelessness as people may be 'sofa surfing' at friends or relatives houses' (Canterbury City Council 2018, 38). The document offers a different perception of overcrowding, normally overcrowding is discussed as a consequence of a growing family, rather than a member of one household joining another, this would typically be called sofa surfing. Stating that sofa surfing causes overcrowding, is technically correct, but in terms of the language used in homelessness law, overcrowding suggests that a household needs rehoming together into more suitable accommodation. Alternatively, it is just the sofa surfer who needs to be rehomed. Regarding legislation, sofa surfers are homeless because there is 'no accommodation available for his occupation, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, which he is entitled to occupy' (Housing Act 1996, s.175(1)(a)), whereas overcrowded accommodation relates to accommodation which would not be

reasonable to continue to occupy (Housing Act 1996, s.175(3)). The document does not make clear where the boundary between sofa surfers and overcrowded accommodation lies. This relates to the thesis' argument that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness do not relate to the law. Furthermore, it is described that overcrowding/hidden homelessness/sofa surfing has 'the potential to end in homelessness with little notice' (Canterbury City Council 2018, 38), this suggests that overcrowded households or sofa surfers are not legally defined as homeless, case studies in the first chapter showed that they can be. The report is not consistent because it later addresses that rough sleeping is only 'one element of homelessness, as it can also include people living in temporary, insecure or unsuitable accommodation' (Canterbury City Council 2018, 39), whereas the above suggested that a household is not homeless until they are out of accommodation.

Regarding statistics, the document cites Porchlight, a local charity, in the period between (01/04/17 – 31/03/18) they 'supported 52 'hidden households' with some form of advice and support and most of these cases were described as 'sofa surfers'' (Canterbury City Council 2018, 38). The language here highlights that hidden homelessness does not have an agreed definition, although the document does not address this. Additionally, this highlights that hidden homelessness is understood as sofa surfing on a local level, as seen in national understandings and scholarship. Furthermore, the data includes 'applicants who were either living with friends, sofa surfing, squatting or in hospital' (Canterbury City Council 2018, 38), suggesting that this is Porchlight's understanding of hidden homelessness. Conceptualising hidden homelessness (or households) as staying in hospital has not been a common theme, however like the other examples, it is homelessness which exists off the streets. The documents welcome page offers further insight on Canterbury City Council's perspective of homelessness, stating that: 'As prevention is far better than the cure, we are also trying to identify the hidden homeless who are staying with family and friends' (Canterbury City Council 2018, 7). Firstly, this tells the reader that the document defines hidden homelessness as those staying with family and friends, this is otherwise known as sofa surfing. However, it has been addressed that the documents perspective on sofa surfing is unclear. Furthermore, reference to 'prevention' suggests that hidden homeless individuals staying with family and friends are not yet homeless, which again contradicts homelessness legislation. Limiting the scope of who is seen as homeless is contrary to the sentiment of

national campaigns for hidden homeless, which aim to show homelessness as more extensive than the public may realise. The focus upon preventing rough sleeping is shown elsewhere in the document, 'In Canterbury the funding was targeted to help those new to the streets, or at imminent risk of sleeping rough to get the rapid support they need' (Canterbury City Council 2018, 38). This is discussed under the subheading of hidden homelessness, which suggests that their risk of rough sleeping is what presents an issue rather than their current situation, this is also seen in the interviews below. This suggests that Canterbury City Council are more concerned with homelessness that they deem visible, which raises questions as to whether the Council are more concerned with public perception. Alternatively, this reflects Pleace and Hermans (2020) argument that hidden homelessness imposes ranks of homelessness, which suggests some forms of homelessness as more severe than others, i.e., rough sleeping as the most severe.

The document sets out housing challenges within the district and how Canterbury City Council will respond to these challenges between 2018 and 2023, I assess how this corresponds to conceptualisations of hidden homelessness to gain further insight upon how the concept is used on a local level. The first strategic priority is to increase the supply and choice of good quality homes that local people can afford. Secondly, to make efficient and effective use of existing housing in the district and improve housing quality to ensure it meets current and future housing needs. Thirdly, to support vulnerable people to access and maintain housing including preventing and ending homelessness. Hidden homelessness can be understood as homelessness outside of rough sleeping, these issues can be deemed to relate to issues of hidden homelessness because they are not focussing on getting people off the street, although the concept is not referenced – suggesting that conceptualising these issues as hidden homelessness is unnecessary. By reference to 'good quality' the first priority relates to hidden homelessness, which focuses on conceptualisations of what make a house a home. Therefore, hidden homeless campaigns address issues which might have been applied on a local level, campaigns might have put pressure on councils to improve housing quality, however there is not sufficient space in the thesis to explore this. However, the argument remains that it is unnecessary to use the concept of hidden homeless because it further complicates approaches to housing/homelessness, although issues relevant to hidden homelessness could be campaigned for. The first priority relates to Cowan's

assertions, that a key cause of homelessness is unaffordable housing (Cowan 2019, 114), therefore legislation is not effective because it does not address this - it is being addressed here through local policy. This suggests that housing affordability is a policy issue and that the law may not equipped to influence this issue. If affordable housing and welfare issues are the key issues causing homelessness and this is a policy issue rather than a legal issue, this suggests that law reform lacks significance in reducing homelessness. As abovementioned, there is insufficient space in this thesis to fully explore this issue, and the relationship between homelessness campaigning and law reform, focused on hidden homelessness would be a productive future line of research. For the purposes of this project, it is acknowledged that an approach to campaigning which does not include any proposed law reform might reasonably adopt a different approach to the question of the efficacy of the category of hidden homelessness. The second strategic priority also relates to hidden homelessness by reference to improving housing which would lessen hidden homelessness (which has also been referred to as homelessness within housing). The third priority reflects this thesis' underlying argument that conceptualisations of homelessness should protect vulnerable people in the housing sector and it has been argued that hidden homeless campaigns do not effectively do this, therefore the third priority does not relate to typical conceptualisations of hidden homelessness. Reference to quality of housing relates to issues of hidden homelessness, however as seen above it was unnecessary to reference the term to articulate their aim, although the document references hidden homelessness elsewhere.

In conceptualising hidden homelessness, this document has excluded rough sleeping and included sofa surfers, which is consistent to some national understandings, particularly where hidden homelessness is conceptualised as visibility. Reference to housing quality suggest that issues identified in hidden homeless campaigns also exist on a local level. This is because hidden homeless campaigns which focus on visibility discuss homelessness within housing, which can be the consequence of poor-quality housing, overcrowding, or domestic abuse. However, it is not necessary to discuss these issues with reference to the concept of hidden homelessness, where hidden homelessness is referenced in the document, its definition is vague which further complicates understandings of housing and homelessness – reflecting national approaches. There has not been reference to the law in the discussion

of hidden homelessness, it can be inferred that where hidden homelessness is conceptualised as visibility, the law is not mentioned because there is no legal basis for their invisibility. Alternatively, conceptualising hidden homelessness as exclusion relates to the law whereby someone is excluded by statute, raising the conversation of homelessness law. There are points in the document which contradicted the law, this is also seen in the interview below.

4.2 Local Charity One

I began both interviews by asking the charity representatives how they would define the term hidden homelessness, the first answered that it is people who the service would see intermittently – those who are sofa surfing and might not ordinarily crop up on statistics. This definition conforms with national understandings of the concept which focussed on visibility. It is not made clear why hidden homeless individuals only use the services intermittently, again there is ambiguity. In the context of the interview, it might be because hidden homeless people do not need the service because they are somewhat protected by the household they are staying with, whereas rough sleepers need the service consistently. However, the interviewee later explains that someone is unlikely to rough sleep every day and will sometimes find friends to stay with, which would suggest that all service users are intermittent. Furthermore, this suggests that it is hard to separate rough sleeping from hidden homelessness. In contrast to national understandings, the representative stated that temporary accommodation is a part of hidden homelessness. It was not explained why temporary accommodation is included in their definition, however rough sleeping is clearly distinguished from hidden homelessness throughout this interview which suggests that the charity (or at least their representative) conceptualises hidden homelessness as a visibility issue. Previous chapters noted the peculiarity of excluding temporary accommodation from conceptualisations which centred on visibility, so this approach is more coherent.

Further on categorisation, the participant argued that hidden homelessness is the far bigger category and discusses the overlap between the categories, stating that most homeless people will not sleep on the streets seven nights a week - some might only sleep out once or twice, because they find friends or family to stay with occasionally. The everchanging nature of homeless lives makes it difficult to categorise as hidden, whereas who has been given a statutory duty and who has not can be clearly categorised. In reasoning why hidden

homelessness is the bigger category, the interviewee explains that hidden homelessness might include those sharing a flat with their mates or someone sleeping on their mum and dad's sofa. The London Assembly Housing Committee's report argued that hidden homelessness does not include those staying with parents, however it is understandable why someone would have this understanding, when the concept is described as 'staying with friends or family' the exception of parents is not often made. Additionally, sharing a flat may not be legally defined as homelessness, unless something made it unsuitable and sharing accommodation with friends is common practice particularly amongst young people. Therefore, the participant refers to a housing situation which would not ordinarily be homelessness, highlighting that conceptualising hidden homelessness may lead individuals to blur the boundaries of homelessness. This relates to the participants later point that it is unclear whether hidden homelessness is homelessness. Alternatively, national and scholarly understandings have defined hidden homelessness as legally homeless. It is apparent that the first participant has a wide scope of who can be defined as hidden homeless, this reflects national understandings of the concept which lack a precise definition.

In discussing whether the concept of hidden homelessness is useful in homeless campaigns, the participant asserted that the term disadvantages campaigns, firstly because it is unclear whether hidden homelessness is homelessness and secondly because it is not clear to everybody what it means. The first point contrasts national campaigns for hidden homelessness which focus on demonstrating that sofa surfers and other supposedly unexpected forms of homelessness are legally homeless. However, this relates to Pleace's argument that at what point poor housing conditions becomes homelessness can be unclear (Pleace 1998, 47). Other pieces of scholarship also suggested that hidden homelessness may not be legally defined as homeless, such as Jones and Pleace (2010). The second point has been argued through comparative analysis throughout this thesis, how hidden homelessness is understood is vastly inconsistent and differs upon how it has been conceptualised, i.e., as visibility or exclusion, therefore it is not clear what it means. Stating that it is not clear to 'everybody' what hidden homelessness means suggests that there are some people who understand it. Whilst someone can understand different perspectives of hidden homelessness, it is not possible to truly understand hidden homelessness because

there is not one definition – there is not a 'right' or 'wrong' meaning. This paper has explained different understandings of hidden homelessness, whilst doing so it has evidenced that there is not an agreed definition, this chapter shows this on a local level also.

National campaigns criticised homeless statistics for underestimating homelessness, however the participant criticised hidden homeless campaigns for giving larger estimates. The participant described that huge figures such as 400,000 homeless people or one in two hundred does not help, and is not an accurate reflection on the situation. Whereas Pleace and Hermans praised wide definitions of homelessness for scaling up homeless estimations (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 41). Mostowska suggested that homelessness statistics might be a 'guesstimate' to show the seriousness of the issue (Mostowska 2019, 343), however these statistics refer to Shelter's estimates cited in chapter two,[135] a larger figure was reached because Shelter included temporary accommodation in their estimate. Typically, hidden homeless conceptualisations have not included temporary accommodation, so this figure should not be used to criticise hidden homelessness. However, from the perspective of the participant, who recognises temporary accommodation as a part of hidden homelessness, it is hidden homelessness bolstering this figure. This shows that it is hard to gain accurate statistics on hidden homelessness where there are different ideas on what it is. Furthermore, the participant reinforces their focus on rough sleeping when they explain that individuals typically regarded as hidden homeless are not homeless because they have a roof over their head, hence it is inaccurate to include them in statistics. This shows that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness opens the question of whether people inside of accommodation can be homeless, which is regressive. The participant continues that someone in a tent is far more vulnerable, however Pleace and Hermans argue that all homelessness is very destructive (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52) so this kind of assertion downplays the dangers of other types of homelessness. Furthermore, the participant previously addressed that a rough sleeper might be sofa surfing some nights of the week - therefore it is difficult to argue who is more vulnerable because it is difficult to distinguish these types of homelessness.

---

[135]
https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk, see Table 1.

Similarly to Pleace and Hermans (2020), the participant criticises the concept, however their reasons largely differ – the participant suggests that the term should not be used because it takes attention away from rough sleepers. If local charities are paying less attention to homelessness outside of rough sleeping, this suggests the importance of advancing a wider range of homeless situations on a local level, as national hidden homeless campaigns have been seen to do. However, the concept itself has created false narratives on homelessness, such as sofa surfing being a less dangerous or valid form of homelessness, highlighting that a different approach to understanding or conceptualising homelessness is needed.

4.3 Local Charity Two

In the second interview, I followed a similar style of questions, however considering that it was semi-structured, the interview naturally took a different route. Firstly, I asked the participant, what does the term hidden homelessness mean to you? The participant identified two main issues associated with the concept, the first is sofa surfing, which the participant describes as one of the most harrowing experiences a person could go through. The New Horizon Youth Centre and London Assembly Housing Committee in chapter two described the dangers of sofa surfing in their campaign. However, this contrasts the first participant's view which focuses on the vulnerability of rough sleepers, highlighting a difference between local charities. Typically, the dangers of sofa surfing are not addressed in hidden homelessness discussions, despite having the appropriate platform, highlighting that the concept lacks direction. Furthermore, the representative described that sofa surfers are a misnomer, typically individuals might be sleeping on someone's floor for one week at most, as the host does not truly want them there – highlighting the bleak and unstable nature of 'sofa surfing'. The participant continues that the person can then become entrenched in rough sleeping and builds connections with people on the street, particularly young people who get drawn into exploitation. The relationship between rough sleeping and hidden homelessness was also discussed in Canterbury's Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Strategy, whereby hidden homelessness was characterised by their risk of rough sleeping. This relates to the participant's later point of hidden homeless individuals being 'stocks in reserve of people to come on the street'. This suggests that hidden homelessness is not a risk in its own right but rather poses a risk because it is likely to lead

to rough sleeping, which is counterintuitive to the earlier statement which expressed sofa surfing as harrowing.

The second issue discussed was vulnerable groups who keep themselves hidden and are not seen on the streets - the language here shows that it is a conscious decision for them not to be seen. Unlike the first participant, the vulnerability of hidden homeless individuals is expressed, highlighting different perspectives on a local level. The participant describes that it is typically women and people of colour who are targeted compared to others in the street community, they are often victims of physical or sexual abuse, hence they hide. Pleace and Hermans (2020) argued that homeless people may hide for safety reasons and Bretherton (2017) argued that women are more likely to be hidden homeless, however people of colour have been identified by organisations or scholarship thus far, suggesting a potential absence in research – a further example of hidden homeless campaigns missing an opportunity to discuss relevant issues. The participant describes that because women and people of colour visibly stand out as being different, this can make them look vulnerable and become targets of abuse to the public. This highlights the failure of services and authorities to protect people, forcing them into hiding. It is then a vicious cycle as they cannot be supported if they are hiding themselves and not reaching out to services. By discussing what can be physically seen, the participant has conceptualised hidden homelessness as a visibility issue which does not directly relate to the law. The second issue does not exclude rough sleeping, as conceptualisations focusing on visibility tend to. In contrast to the previous charity and in correlation with national understandings of hidden homelessness, the participant excludes temporary accommodation from conceptualisations, explaining that it has a definite meaning in housing and homelessness. The participant describes that it is used by authorities to discharge their duty under homelessness legislation, although most the people they work with are single and do not have a priority need. This touches upon notions of exclusion – highlighting that it is relevant to homelessness categorisation, although it is not always explicitly mentioned. The participant has identified categories of homelessness as temporary accommodation, rough sleeping and hidden homelessness, as argued throughout this paper (and evidenced by the participant), the latter two crossover with one another, therefore it is difficult to distinguish categories of homelessness in this way. However, statutory and non-statutory homelessness can be categorised and this would

fuse rough sleeping and hidden homelessness together. Additionally, this would dispel the noted peculiarity of excluding temporary accommodation from conceptions of hidden homelessness and relate to legislation.

Regarding legislation, the participant asserted that the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 missed the opportunity to help people, because it only supports people covered by priority need, rather than those who are simply poor. This relates to Cowan's piece (2019) which articulates that legislation is misdirected because it does not address the issues causing homelessness. Similarly, hidden homeless campaigns have missed an opportunity to focus on individuals excluded by statute and why this is, although some conceptualisations focus on exclusion, but this is less common. Discussing who is visibly homeless and who is not does little to provide the support non-statutory homeless people need. However, the participant finds that the term is often used in the charity's work, as it draws attention to the most vulnerable and frightened category of homelessness and allows the understanding that there is a stock in reserve of people coming onto the streets. Although the dangers of sofa surfing have been described, there was an undertone of focusing on the potential of rough sleeping, categorising homelessness as statutory and non-statutory would lead campaigns to discuss issues of legislation which the participant mentioned above.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored local understandings of hidden homelessness, it has been conceptualised as a visibility issue which is typically sofa surfing, however it was difficult to find an explicit definition and it differed between organisations. The second chapter (national understandings) argued that the concept is inconsistent, it is unclear why temporary accommodation is not conceptualised as hidden homelessness (where it is understood as a visibility issue), the concept does not protect vulnerable people, the concept does not relate to the law, further excludes rough sleepers and produces inaccurate statistics, partially as a result of cross referencing where there is not an agreed definition. This chapter showed these arguments on a local level, however focussed on the arguments that the concept is inconsistent and that the concept does not relate to the law. Unlike national and scholarly understandings, conceptualisations tended to relate to rough sleeping, although it was still defined as sofa surfing. In terms of vulnerable people, the first

charity criticised hidden homelessness for distracting from rough sleepers' vulnerability, this relates to the argument that campaigns produce further exclusion for rough sleepers. Although the participant took a different and controversial perspective by suggesting those seen as hidden homeless are not actually homeless. This evidences the criticism that the concept imposes levels of severity (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52). The second participant described the vulnerability of hidden homeless individuals, however still focussed on the potential of rough sleeping, highlighting that rough sleeping could be deemed more of an issue locally. It was not made clear how the law could be reformed to further protect these vulnerable people. Regarding statistics, the first participant suggested that homelessness statistics are exaggerated which distracts from those who are truly homeless, reflecting the participant's focus on rough sleeping. Previous chapters have criticised statistics for being inaccurate, however the participant argues this on the basis that homelessness outside of rough sleeping is not homelessness, which is contrary to legislation and this thesis' findings. This chapter has further highlighted that the discussion of hidden homelessness further complicates understandings of the housing problem.

Conclusion

This paper has shown how the concept of hidden homelessness is used in the context of contemporary homelessness law and policy through four chapters; this was shown by answering four sub questions, which relate to the order of the chapters, firstly, how does the concept of hidden homelessness relate to the law? Secondly, how is the concept of hidden homelessness used at a national level? Thirdly, how is the concept of hidden homelessness understood by scholars? And fourthly, how is the concept of hidden homelessness used on a local level?

The first chapter applied the five statutory tests to case studies to show that an applicant's homelessness does not stop them from being owed a main housing duty, but they may be excluded by other elements of legislation. This is shown through hidden households being owed a main housing duty whilst the applicant who was rough sleeping was rejected because he did not have a priority need (Housing Act 1996, s.189). This set the premise for the following chapters which showed how the concept is used/understood – reference to this chapter contributed to the understanding that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness do not relate to a problematic point of law.

The second chapter looked at conceptualisations of hidden homelessness from the perspective of organisations across England, considering whether it has been conceptualised as visibility or exclusion. Most organisations defined hidden homelessness as sofa surfing and excluded rough sleeping which signposts that it had been conceptualised as a visibility issue. This thesis has argued conceptualisations which focus on visibility leads to false narratives upon what each type of homelessness entails, for example, some campaigns described rough sleeping as visible even though rough sleepers may sleep in a range of secretive locations. A key finding of this analysis is that there is not an agreed definition of the concept, therefore campaigns were inconsistent and it is impossible to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept.

The third chapter looked at scholarship to obtain an academic insight, this reflected the previous chapters findings, scholars define hidden homelessness as sofa surfing, however conceptualisations remain vague and inconsistent. Importantly, this chapter refers to Reeve and Batty (2011) who highlight that hidden homelessness is conceptualised as visibility or exclusion, this perspective added clarity to an incredibly complex field of understanding. This thesis has developed their perspective by inferring that conceptualisations which include rough sleeping focus on exclusion, this led to the conclusion that conceptualisations tend to focus on visibility. In addition to this, Pleace and Hermans (2020) argue that hidden homelessness should be made redundant, which became the basis of this research – the thesis developed their arguments surrounding hidden homelessness which included that the term is vague and implies that homelessness has levels of severity (Pleace and Hermans 2020, 52).

The fourth chapter analysed local policy and semi-structured interviews which were conducted for the purposes of this research. The concept was understood as sofa surfing and conceptualised as a visibility issue although there was not an agreed definition between organisations, again reflecting national understandings. However, the suggestion that hidden homelessness is not legal homelessness contrasts national definitions, it was shown that this is misleading because sofa surfing and other examples of hidden homelessness fit into legal definitions of homelessness (Housing Act 1996, s.175). Additionally, there was a focus on rough sleeping at a local level whereas national campaigns neglected the dangers of rough sleeping, sofa surfing was discussed in relation to the risk of rough sleeping rather

than presenting a danger itself. This discussion further evidenced that conceptualisations of hidden homelessness create false images of homelessness.

The thesis concludes that the concept of hidden homelessness should be made redundant because it further obscures understandings of the housing problem and it does not protect vulnerable people in the housing sector. To reach this conclusion, the chapters have shown that the concept does not relate to a problematic area of homelessness law and campaigns suggest that an applicant's homelessness has a greater impact on whether they are owed a main housing duty. In addition to this, wider arguments have been made to suggest that the concept is not useful, firstly, the concept is inconsistent – an analysis of national, local and scholarly understandings showed that there is not an agreed definition. National campaigns did not reflect on the conceptual basis of hidden homelessness and therefore did not flag that there are vast inconsistencies in definition, it was shown that this led campaigns to inaccurately cite statistics. This produced further confusion surrounding the concept and highlighted that the conceptual basis of hidden homelessness is rarely considered, hence this thesis aimed to untangle understandings. Charities use the concept as a tool to campaign and there is not sufficient space in this thesis to explore the success of their campaigning, rather this thesis aimed to criticise the concept. Furthermore, the concept produces further false narratives of homelessness, for example, rough sleeping is visible and sofa surfing is a safe alternative to rough sleeping. A further issue highlighted in this thesis is that it is unclear why temporary accommodation is excluded from conceptualisations focussing on visibility, those in temporary accommodation could be construed as hidden because they are inside and thus lack visibility. It has been argued that temporary accommodation has been excluded from the concept because those individuals may be owed a main housing duty under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996. Therefore, hidden homelessness has been conceptualised as exclusion, even where it is not explicitly mentioned, this emphasises the importance of statutory exclusions in categorising homelessness. In light of these arguments, it is recommended that homelessness is discussed and categorised as statutory and non-statutory. Statutory are those who are owed a main housing duty and non-statutory are those who are legally defined as homeless, but the local authority has decided they are not owed a main housing duty (or they have not approached their local authority). Non-statutory homelessness encapsulates sofa surfers

and rough sleepers, this is a more consistent approach because it eliminates the blurred lines between the two types of homelessness, it also relates legislation more effectively.

This thesis contributes to an understanding of hidden homelessness in an under-researched field. It developed findings in *The Hidden Truth about Homelessness* (Reeve and Batty, 2011) and *Counting All Homelessness in Europe: The Case for Ending Separate Enumeration of 'Hidden Homelessness'* (Pleace and Hermans, 2020); this thesis applied notions of visibility and exclusion to gain a greater understanding of conceptualisations which contributed to arguments criticising hidden homelessness and concludes that the concept should be made redundant. Unlike other research, this thesis aimed to offer a legal perspective on hidden homelessness and recommended that categorisation should focus on statutory and non-statutory homelessness.

Bibliography

Bills

Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016.

Public Bill Committee, 2016. *Homelessness Reduction Bill.* House of Commons, 10-38.

Books

Arden, A., Orme, E., Vanhegan T., 2012. Homelessness and Allocations. *A guide to the Housing Act 1996 Parts 6 and 7,* 147-265.

Bryman, A., 2016. *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Burton, M. and Watkins, D., 2017. *Research Methods in Law* (2nd ed.). Routledge, 1-16.

Rackley, E. and Auchmuty, R., 2018. *Women's Legal Landmarks: Celebrating 100 Years of Women and Law in the UK and Ireland* (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc), 333-339.

Young, I., 2005. House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme. *Motherhood and Space*, 115-147.

Cases

Bankole-Jones v *Watford Borough Council* [2020] EWHC 3100.

Birmingham City Council (Appellants) v *Ali (FC) and others (FC) (Respondents) Moran (FC) (Appellant)* [2009] UKHL 36.

Carthew v *Exeter County Council* (2012) CA (Civ Div).

Din v *Wandsworth LBC* (1983) 1 AC, 657.

Dyson v *Kerrier DC* [1980] 1 WLR 1206.

Guiste v *The London Borough of Lambeth* [2019] EWCA Civ 1758.

Hall v *Wandsworth LBC; Carter v Wandsworth LBC* [2004] EWCA Civ 1740.

Haile v *Waltham Forest BC* [2015] UKSC 34.

Hotak & Ors v *London Borough of Southwark* [2015] UKSC 30.

Lekpo-Bozua v *Hackney LBC* [2010] EWCA Civ 909, [2010] HLR 46.

Moran v *Manchester City Council* [2009] UKHL 36.

Osmani v *Camden London Borough Council* (2004) CA 16.

Panayiotou v *London Borough of Waltham Forest and Smith v London Borough of Haringey* [2017] EWCA Civ 1624.

R (B) v *Camden* [2005] EWHC 1366.

R v *London Borough of Camden ex p Pereira* [1998] EWCA Civ 863.

R v *Newham LBC ex p Khan and Hussain* (2000) 33 HLR 29, QBD.

R (Safi) v *Sandwell BC* (2018) EWCA Civ 2876.

R v *Slough BC ex Ealing LBC* [1981] QB 801, CA.

R (Spruce) v *East Northamptonshire DC* (1988) 20 HLR 508, QBD.

Codes

Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018.

Documents

Canterbury City Council Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 – 2023.

Journals

Alden, S., 2015. On the Frontline: The Gatekeeper in Statutory Homelessness Services. *Housing Studies*, 30(6), 924-941.

Breeze, B. and Dean, J., 2012. Pictures of me: user views on their representation in homelessness fundraising appeals. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 17(2), 132-143.

Bretherton, J., 2017. Reconsidering Gender in Homelessness. *European Journal of Homelessness*, 1-17.

Busch-Geertsema, V., Culhane, D. and Fitzpatrick, S., 2016. Developing a global framework for conceptualising and measuring homelessness. *Habitat International*, 124-132.

Casey, R., Goudie, R. and Reeve, K., 2008. Homeless Women in Public Spaces: Strategies of Resistance. *Housing Studies*, 23(6), 899-916.

Cowan, D. (2019). Reducing homelessness or re-ordering the deckchairs? *Modern Law Review*, 82(1), 105-128.

Crawley, J., Kane, D., Atkinson-Plato, L., Hamilton, M., Dobson, K. and Watson, J., 2013. Needs of the hidden homeless – no longer hidden: a pilot study. *Public Health*, 127(7), 674-680.

Harter, L., Berquist, C., Scott Titsworth, B., Novak, D. and Brokaw, T., 2005. The Structuring of Invisibility Among the Hidden Homeless: The Politics of Space, Stigma, and Identity Construction. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 33(4), 305-327.

Loveland, I. (2017). Changing the meaning of 'vulnerable' under the homelessness legislation. Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law.

McCarthy, L., 2013. Homelessness and identity: a critical review of the literature and theory. *People, Place and Policy Online*, 46-58.

Mostowska, M. (2019) Metaphors and Evidence. Producing Numbers in National Homelessness Counts, *Housing, Theory and Society*, 339-356.

Pleace, N. and Hermans, K., 2020. Counting All Homelessness in Europe: The Case for Ending Separate Enumeration of 'Hidden Homelessness'. *European Journal of Homelessness*, 14(3), 35-55.

Robson, P. and Watchman, P., 1981. The Homeless Persons' Obstacle Race. *The Journal of Social Welfare Law*, 3(1), 1-15.

Veness, A., 1993. Neither homed nor homeless: Contested definitions and the personal worlds of the poor. *Political Geography*, 12(4), 319-340.

Watson, J., Crawley, J. and Kane, D., 2016. *Social exclusion, health and hidden homelessness* 96-102.

Watson, S., 1984. Definitions of homelessness: a feminist perspective. *Radical Philosophy*, (36), 60-72.

Legislation

Data Protection Act 2018.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Housing Act 1977.

Housing Act 1996.

The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order 2002.

The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003.

Reports

2012. *Research briefing: Young, hidden and homeless*. Crisis.

Bennett, K., 2011. *Homeless at Home in East Durham*. Editorial Board of Antipode.

Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N., 2018. *Women and Rough Sleeping*. University of York, Centre for Housing Policy.

Fitzpatrick, S., 2015. *The homelessness legislation: an independent review of the legal duties owed to homeless people*. Crisis.

Jones, A. and Pleace, N., 2010. *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000-2010*. Crisis.

Pleace, N., 1998. *Single Homelessness as Social Exclusion: The Unique and the Extreme*. Blackwell Publishers, 46-59.

Reeve, K. and Batty, E., 2011. *The Hidden Truth about Homelessness*. Crisis.

Robinson, D. and Coward, S., 2003. *Hidden Homelessness Your Place Not Mine*. Crisis.

Wardhaugh, J., 1999. *The Unaccommodated Woman: Home, Homelessness and Identity*. The Editorial Board of The Sociological Review.

Websites

Barton, C. and Wilson, W., 2021. *Households in temporary accommodation (England)*. [online] House of Commons Library. Available at:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-
briefings/sn02110/#:~:text=In%20each%20quarterly%20report%20since%20then%2C%20th
e%20number,placed%20in%20temporary%20accommodation%20by%20London%20local%2
0authorities.> [Accessed 5 September 2021].

Burns, A., 2017. *Thirteen times as many 'hidden homeless' in London as those sleeping rough
| The Big Issue*. [online] The Big Issue. Available at:
<https://www.bigissue.com/latest/thirteen-times-many-hidden-homeless-london-sleeping-
rough/> [Accessed 1 June 2021].

Crisis. *About Homelessness* [online] Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-
homelessness/about-homelessness/> [accessed 7 November 2022]

Crisis. *Enforcement | Crisis | Together we will end homelessness*. [online] Available at:
<https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/rough-sleeping/enforcement/> [accessed
15 December 2020].

Crisis. *Homelessness Knowledge Hub - Types of homelessness*. [online] Available at:
<https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-
homelessness/> [accessed 4 January 2021].

Crisis. *Homelessness legislation | Crisis | Together we will end homelessness*. [online]
Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/law-and-
rights/homelessness-legislation/> [accessed 29 November 2020].

Fitzpatrick, S., 2016. *English homelessness legislation's focus on priority need leaves single...*.
[online] Lag.org.uk. Available at: <https://www.lag.org.uk/article/201966/english-
homelessness-legislation-rsquo-s-focus-on-priority-need-leaves-single-people-and-childless-
couples-with-little-help--and-requires-reform> [Accessed 9 September 2021].

Gergahty, L., 2018. *Hidden homelessness: The cold hard facts | The Big Issue*. [online] The
Big Issue. Available at: <https://www.bigissue.com/latest/hidden-homelessness-cold-hard-
facts/> [Accessed 1 June 2021].

Gergahty, L., 2021. *Homelessness facts and statistics: The numbers you need to know in
2021 | The Big Issue*. [online] The Big Issue. Available at:

<https://www.bigissue.com/latest/britains-homelessness-shame-cold-hard-facts/>
[accessed 9 July 2021].

Gov.scot. 2020. *Homelessness statistics*. [online] Available at:
<https://www.gov.scot/news/homelessness-statistics-1/> [Accessed 5 August 2021].

GOV.UK. *Private renting for tenants: evictions* [online] Available at: < Private renting for
tenants: evictions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)> [Accessed 20 August 2021].

GOV.UK. *Live tables on homelessness*. [online] Available at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness
[Accessed 4 August 2021].

Hodge Jones & Allen. *What Does Gatekeeping Mean in Homeless Applications* [online]
Available at: https://www.hja.net/expert-comments/opinion/housing-rights/what-does-
gatekeeping-mean-in-homelessness-applications/ [Accessed 10 September 2021].

Homeless Link. *Statutory homelessness*. [online] Available at:
<https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/statutory-homelessness>
[Accessed 11 December 2020].

Husbands, J., 2020. *Hidden homelessness: Hidden from sight, from evidence, and hiding
yourself – Shelter Scotland Blog*. [online] Blog.scotland.shelter.org.uk. Available at:
<https://blog.scotland.shelter.org.uk/hidden-homelessness-hidden-from-sight-from-
evidence-and-hiding-yourself/> [Accessed 1 December 2020].

Information Commissioner's Office, 2018. *Principle (a): Lawfulness, fairness and
transparency* [online] ICO. Available at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-
protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/principles/lawfulness-
fairness-and-transparency/> [Accessed 1 October 2022]

Lobb, A., 2018. *Out of sight, out of mind: The hidden homelessness scandal | The Big Issue*.
[online] The Big Issue. Available at: <https://www.bigissue.com/latest/sight-mind-hidden-
homelessness-scandal/> [Accessed 10 January 2021].

New Horizon Youth Centre. *What we can offer*. [online] New Horizon Youth Centre. Available at: <https://nhyouthcentre.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work> [Accessed 8 January 2021].

Porchlight, 2022. *Why People Become Homeless* [online] Available at: <https://www.porchlight.org.uk/news/why-people-become-homeless> [accessed 7 November 2022].

Prime Minister's Office, 2021. *Ambitious Plans to Drive Levelling up Agenda* [online] GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ambitious-plans-to-drive-levelling-up-agenda> [accessed 10 October 2022].

Shelter England. 2019. *280,000 people in England are homeless, with thousands more at risk - Shelter England*. [online] Available at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk [Accessed 16 April 2021].

Shelter England. 2021. *Acquiescence resulting in intentional homelessness - Shelter England*. [online] Available at: <https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/homelessness_applications/intentional_homelessness/acquiescence_resulting_in_intentional_homelessness#reference-7> [Accessed 12 September 2021].

Shelter England. 2021. *Shelter Legal England - Who has a priority need in homeless applications - Shelter England*. [online] Available at: <https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/homelessness_applications/priority_need_in_homeless_applications/categories_of_priority_need> [Accessed 29 July 2021].

Shelter England. *What is homelessness? - Shelter England*. [online] Available at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/what_is_homelessness [Accessed 15 November 2021].

St Mungo's. 2018. *New research reveals women experiencing homelessness are often hidden from help - St Mungo's*. [online] Available at: https://www.mungos.org/news/women-and-rough-sleeping-report-released/ [Accessed 9 February 2021].

St Mungo's. *Ending homelessness? Fund domestic abuse services*. [online] Available at: <https://www.mungos.org/ending-homelessness-fund-domestic-abuse-services/> [Accessed 7 February 2021].

Webster, H., 2018. *More than a number: scale of youth homelessness revealed*. [online] Centrepoint. Available at: <https://centrepoint.org.uk/about-us/blog/more-than-a-number-scale-of-youth-homelessness-revealed/> [Accessed 21 March 2021].

Williams, M., 2018. *Women's Hidden Homelessness*. [online] Homeless Link. Available at: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/feb/27/women%E2%80%99s-hidden-homelessness> [Accessed 8 January 2021].

Youtube. 2019. *Rough sleeping is just the tip of the iceberg | homelessness | Shelter*. [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah506pg5TXI> [Accessed 1 June 2021].