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Residualisation in supported housing: an organisational case study

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Abstract

Supported housing is a particular complex sub-section of the housing sector, and generally refers to social or state housing provided in conjunction with additional support to help people develop the skills required for independent living. This paper examines the current changes to the supported housing sector partly as a result of austerity and partly as a result of politically initiated structural and funding changes. This paper aims to examine the outcome of the UK government's reviews and a case study comprising first-hand accounts from stakeholders across a large supported housing provider, including all tiers of management and operations. The paper concludes that there are clear broad trends that can be identified across the sector, including state withdrawal, reduced and restructured funding models that constrain providers and, crucially, a process of residualisation that reduces state involvement in the sector to only individual support for the most vulnerable and 'at risk' clients. The authors express concern that these changes are detrimental and may actually leave already vulnerable social in even more vulnerable situation

Introduction

The housing support sector in the UK is complex, covering a range of different services and provision. One of the key distinctions is between general housing, which is concerned with the supply and management of housing stock, and supported and sheltered housing, which is concerned with the provision of accommodation and support for those considered to be 'at risk'. Although there is no universal definition for supported housing, the UK government describes it as services that are:

... provided by housing associations, with specialist projects for people with mental health or learning disabilities, with substance misuse problems (drugs or alcohol), the formerly homeless, young people, ex-offenders and women fleeing domestic violence' (Gov.UK, 2012).

The National Housing Federation (NHF) adds to this, describing provision as supporting "some of the most vulnerable people in society who face barriers that go far beyond housing," clients of which "can be socially isolated, have physical and mental health problems, histories of offending, or substance dependency issues" (NHF 2015, p3). In terms of provision, Ashton & Hempenstall (2009, p5) describe supported housing services as strategically planned "packages of support and potentially other services (which may be provided by the public, private or third sector)."

The funding of supported housing in England and Wales uses a variety of mechanisms; whilst some local councils may provide their own support, the provision of services is increasingly through private providers who bid for contracts from local authorities. To supplement this, clients accessing housing services may also contribute to the cost, often via the welfare support they receive from the state. For supported housing, this welfare contribution remains through Housing Benefit payments, however the overall welfare environment is complicated by the phased introduction of the new Universal Credit single payment system for those of working age on low income or out of work and the "potential disruption caused by working with two different benefit systems" (Howarth *et al*, 2018, p4).

The complicated funding arrangements make supported housing especially vulnerable to change, and this has become particularly clear in the current period of austerity and much reduced public spending in the United Kingdom under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition (2010-15) and Conservative administrations (2015-17 & 2017-19). As an extension of neoliberal politics that emphasises free market capitalism and individuation, austerity has been presented as "a rational response to soaring levels of both personal and public debt" that were the result of the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-8 (Cooper and Whyte, 2017, p5). The resulting pressures on public spending are felt not just in the UK but in many other countries where fiscal tightening, reduction in spending on public services, and broader reductions of state support have become a centre point of economic policy. Farnsworth and Irving (2018, p461) argue that rather than such policies being a rational response to balancing the books, narratives of austerity have become entrenched within global neoliberalism as "a new, elite-driven, capital-centric, shrunken welfare state project founded on ideology disguised as pragmatism and objective 'truths'". Similarly, Cooper and Whyte (2017, p16) state that "austerity is basically a strategy for the advancement of neoliberal policies that maintain and indeed worsen social inequality." In addition, it is worth noting that social housing providers are

also under pressure that is not just a restriction of funds. For example, many experience difficulties obtaining properties to lease.

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the 'on the ground' experiences of austerity-driven neoliberal policies on the supported housing sector. It does this through a case study focusing on a supported housing provider in an English county, complementing this with material from a series of UK government parliamentary reviews on the future shape of supported housing provision. The analysis focuses on three key dimensions of provision and practice: organisational provision, service provision, and the experiences of those supplying and receiving the services. The paper interprets these through the concept of residualisation; a framework first applied to the general housing sector that we argue is relevant to the wider implications of austerity and neoliberal ideology. In the context of supported housing, residualisation reflects the ways in the reduction of state support means housing are increasingly restricted to those most at need, making provision more complex and limiting support to those that fall outside of the most at-risk categories.

2. Supported housing and residualisation

Supported housing, vulnerability and change

The impacts of neoliberal retrenchment are increasingly well-documented and are certainly relevant in the context of supported housing provision. For instance, Dorling (2017, p50) describes the link between austerity measures and mortality in the elderly population of the UK, arguing that a significant spike in deaths was the result of "three decades of rising inequality and public service cuts" rather than often-cited cold weather and influenza. In the context of vulnerable groups, Jones et al (2019, p1) identify austerity as a form of "institutional violence" that impacts most heavily on poorer families and children, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and on other disadvantaged groups including women; and Cooper and Whyte (2017) describe the "toll of death and illness and injury that so-called austerity policies have caused." For clients in supported housing who often suffer multiple disadvantages, austerity means struggling not only with the issues of poverty and exclusion impacting across broader society, but also issues such as substance abuse, histories of offences, and long-term physical and mental illnesses (Scanlon & Adlam, 2006). These often complex and multifaceted needs make such client groups especially vulnerable to change (Jacobs & Manzi, 2013). One of the impacts of this, according to Whitehead and Williams (2011, p7), is that the supported housing sector is suffering from "major uncertainties as to the impact of a range of policies introduced by the new government, and by regulators which may further restrict housing options and choices into the long term." One significant manifestation of this, according to Goldup (2015), is an increasing shortfall of supported housing spaces for those in need.

Between 2016 and 2018, the UK Government undertook two significant exercises to explore the challenges faced by the supported housing sector in England and Wales. In 2017, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG, renamed the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government in 2018) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) launched a consultation process on the future funding for supported housing. The consultation ran for 6 weeks from 21 November 2016 to 13 February 2017 and consisted of 12 questions covering a range of issues on the nature of the proposed changes and potential actions to mitigate any potential negative impacts. Of the 592 responses, 511 answered at least one of these questions with the remaining 81 responses offering a "more general response" (DCLG & DWP 2017, p5 and p19). An additional 720 correspondences were received "mainly from tenants or providers of sheltered accommodation", and this material is collated and available online (DCLG & DWP, 2017). Whilst they were "largely positive about the engagement shown by the Government" (DCLG & DWP 2017, p6) a number of key issues were identified, including concern over whether "the new model would not

promote investment in new supply and could lead to the reduction in existing supply” (DCLG & DWP, 2017, p 6).

Coinciding with this, on the 15th December 2016, the Communities and Local Government (CLG) and Work and Pensions Committees (WPC) launched a public inquiry to examine the Government's reforms for supported housing. The CLGC & WPC Inquiry considered 99 written responses from a range of supported housing advocacy groups, providers and sector experts. It also heard oral evidence from 25 witnesses with involvement in the supported housing sector, including the authors of this paper. The final inquiry report was published in May 2017 and expressed concerns around the proposed changes to the funding of supported housing, which it identified as “unlikely to achieve ... a long-term, sustainable funding mechanism that ensures quality, provides value for money, and which protects and boosts the supply of supported housing” (CLG & WPC 2017, p41-42). The participant from Havant Housing Association described the government's current proposals as “the most serious threat to the supported housing sector in its history” (2017, p14).

Residualisation in supported housing

The UK government’s consultation and inquiry were a partial acknowledgement of the significant stress felt by the supported housing sector in recent years. In our earlier work (Lynch et al, 2016) we examined the threats faced by the sector at the outset of this new austerity-driven policy landscape, considering the fears for an already depleted service. We argued that the pressures on supported housing were leading to a process of residualisation: the reduction of services so that they supply a service only to those most in need, who may often then become further marginalised by an underfunded and under-resourced service. As a concept, residualisation has been applied to the housing sector for some time; for instance, Burrows (1999, p39) in an analysis of the English Housing Survey, identified processes of residualisation that go back to the mid-1970s and “a narrowing of the social and economic base” of those in the social housing sector. Fitzpatrick and Pawson (2007, p170) talk about the “long-term concerns over what has been termed the ‘residualisation’ of social housing.” Malpass and Murie (1982, p174) describe residualisation as “the process whereby public housing moves towards a position in which it provides only a ‘safety net’ for those who for reasons of poverty, age or infirmity cannot obtain suitable accommodation in the private sector.” For Pearce and Vine (2014, p658) it is

...a complex and multi-faceted process, relating to the role of social housing, its provision and consumption. It is associated with a downgrading in status of the tenure and is linked to issues of social exclusion, stigma and quality.

For Flynn (1988), building on the work of Forrest and Murie (1983, p299), residualisation is

...a broad concept entailing: the small minority size of the social rented tenure; the deteriorating condition of the stock; the concentration of socio-economic disadvantages among local authority tenants; and the widespread tendency to regard council tenants as marginal and council housing as a 'safety net' or last resort for welfare-dependent groups.

Residualisation, he argues, is “thus simultaneously an economic, political and social process” (1988, p308). Although most commonly applied in the reduction of council or state housing, we argue that residualisation as a concept applies to the supported housing sector in which the reduction of services to those at need risks these groups becoming further marginalised.

This impact of residualisation for supported housing manifests partly as a concentration of provision into predominantly high-risk support that is available to an increasingly small population of clients. Reduced services catering increasingly for the most at-need leave many with no support and increase the pressures on organisations who deal with the most difficult cases. For Jacobs & Manzi (2013, p7), this is a product of government policy that “reframe[s] public housing as a transitional mode of housing until tenants can exit to the private rental or owner-occupied sector, and thereby reconfigure the view of public housing as a residual tenure.”

Residualisation in supported housing is not restricted to the UK. In Stockholm, Sweden, Andersson & Turner (2014, p5) describe how in the 1990s, and again more recently, austerity measures resulted in the sale of public housing stock, thus leaving those within the remaining state-supported housing struggling with “increasing levels of socio-economic segregation”. In Australia, Morris (2013, p1) shows how the need for support has meant that access to social housing has become restricted to those that “usually have to be in greatest need.” In Amsterdam, Netherlands, Van Duijne and Ronald (2018, p 16) describe how “Social rental housing is being residualised in terms of size and the profile of its tenants.” Consequently, the socio-economic gap between social and private tenants is growing and social rented housing is now “housing more concentrated in terms of low-income households” (Van Duijne and Ronald 2018, p9). These examples are part of an international pattern of residualisation that Forrest and Wu (2014, p135) describe as part of a more widespread global reduction in state-run public services. They characterise this as a combination of ideological processes and societal changes that shape the “social role and social composition” of services. The result, they argue, is one of “growing social and spatial segregation, enclaves of concentrated and multiple disadvantage and increased stigmatisation” (2014, p135).

We argue both here and in our earlier work that the concept of residualisation applies to supported housing, reflecting a broader neoliberalisation of state welfare policy in which “fiscal consolidation is a handy tool to craft the harsher and more residualised welfare model” (Farnsworth and Irving, 2018, p16). This work contributes a case-study on the consequences of residualisation for a supported housing provider. It considers the impacts of this process on those responsible for the commissioning and management of services, those delivering services, and those receiving support. It conceptualises residualisation not just as a framework for understanding the retreat of the state, but as a series of lived impacts for those involved in this sector. Whilst this case study is based in one organisation, we believe that illustrating the institutional and lived impacts of residualisation can offer a wider perspective on the impacts across similar sectors and welfare states.

3. Data and Method

This paper aims to illustrate the ‘on the ground’ impacts of reducing state funding and support on the supported housing sector, focusing on key aspects of provision and practice, including organisational provision, service provision, and the experiences of those supplying and receiving services. It utilises a case-study approach that examines the impacts of residualisation across the work of a large supported housing provider within their provision in one English county. The organisation was chosen as it is part of one of the largest supported housing providers in the UK, and the geographical focus on a county with a mix of rural and urban settings has similarities with types of provision found elsewhere. This focus enabled us to analyse the impacts of residualisation as a systems-approach, providing in depth consideration of the ways in which such process relates across the working practices of an organisation.

Through prior working connections, we were in contact with the senior management of our case study organisation. Although they had limited time to give over to interviews, they supported us in accessing staff for interview across the organisation. With the limited time available to us, we chose to interview one person from each significant tier of the organisation, including a former recipient of those services that has since started working with the provider. Although this means the research is limited in its scope, it does provide an example of the experiences across a supported housing

provider that adds to the growing body of such case studies that illustrate the many impacts of austerity (Cooper and Whyte, 2017; Anderson, 2019; Jones *et al*, 2019) . We do not name the supported housing provider or use names of other practitioners or organisations, and the interviewees have simplified job titles for anonymity, as below.

- An ‘area manager’: responsible for overall supported housing provision for the organisation in the County
- A ‘service manager’: responsible for running a group of supported housing projects and dispersed services
- A ‘support worker’: responsible for day-to-day delivery of services to different client groups
- An ‘assessment centre link worker’: responsible for supporting clients to find supported housing and providing advice to those in, or in-need of supported housing
- A ‘former client’ of the services: with experience of different types of support across a period of several years.

Although the subject areas were consistent across all interviewees, the interview questions were tailored to the different interviewees. Table 1 sets out the questions and prompts for each group of interviews.

Table 1: Interview schedule

Interview tier	Questions (bold) and Prompts (italics)
Management: ‘Area manager’ ‘Service manager’	<p>What is the general landscape of supported housing provision in the area? <i>What has changed? What were the key points when you feel change occurred? Why have things changed? What are you doing in response to those changes?</i></p> <p>What is your opinion of the supported housing landscape/situation now compared to how it was before?</p> <p>How do you see your relationship with other providers? <i>Have you seen a change over time?</i></p> <p>How do you see your relationship with the local authority? <i>Have you seen a change over time?</i></p> <p>How do you see the future of supported housing?</p>
Delivery: ‘Support worker’ ‘Assessment centre link worker’	<p>What is the general landscape of supported housing provision in the area? <i>What has changed? What were the key points when you feel change occurred? Why have things changed? What are you doing in response to those changes?</i></p> <p>What is your opinion of the supported housing landscape/situation now compared to how it was before?</p> <p>What are the particular challenges that you are dealing with in relation to those changes? <i>What strategies have you used to meet those challenges? Have you tried anything that didn’t work or that works well?</i></p> <p>How do you see the future of supported housing/</p>
Service User: ‘Former client’	<p>Can you tell me about your journey through supported housing? <i>Where was the last placed you lived? What about before that? Did you move from high/medium to low support? What was that like? Have you noticed any changes in supported housing during your journey through services?</i></p> <p>How do you see your relationship with the service providers? <i>Has this changed, and if so how?</i></p> <p>How do you see the future of supported housing?</p>

The analysis is an in-depth exploration of the perspectives of the key actors in the case-study organisation. The analysis also incorporates material from the DCLG & DWP Consultation (2017) and the CLG & WPC Inquiry (2017), both of which were key explorations of the challenges faced by the supported housing sector. These reports help to place this case study in the wider context of supported housing provision in the UK and illustrates issues with residualised services that are relevant to a wider context. The analysis is in three parts, each considering a broad tier of housing provision in the organisation's work: firstly, it considers organisational provision, including the impacts of change on decisions on market entry and exit; secondly, it considers service provision and the changes being made to reflect the pressures on the sector; and finally, it considers the impacts on service delivery and the experiences of those that rely on the provision.

4. Analysis: experiences of residualisation in a supported housing provider

Organisational planning

It is clear from the Government's Consultation and the Parliamentary Inquiry that there are mounting pressures on budgets and that providers are concerned about the impact of this on their provision. We reflect these concerns in our earlier paper (Lynch et al 2016 p. 598), which discusses "significant issues with welfare policy reform", notably the directional changes to individual funding and benefits. Those we interview in this research express similar concerns in the context of ongoing difficulties around the turnover times for service contracts:

The contracts have been renegotiated year on year and it causes uncertainty in the service we deliver. (Area manager)

I think because people are fighting for funding there's this kind of push to be all-singing, all-dancing and trying to do all things. (Support worker)

A further impact of changes to the nature of funding and a pressure for 'value' has been market-entry of providers who have a stronger financial imperative rather than a support-driven approach. This was perceived in an extremely negative way by one of our interviewees:

I've noticed the proliferation of other sorts of semi-supported accommodation and it's usually privately-run companies...because they're run by private companies and they've got a different agenda than would have a charity or social landlord ... There's concerns now because they're getting £200-300 a week and not necessarily working with the people. It's all a higgly jiggly mess. (Assessment centre link worker)

Although the actual situation is not as extensive as the interviewee describes, the DCLG & DWP Consultation (2017) and the CLG & WPC Inquiry (2017) also identify that there is a danger of market-exit from smaller providers who may not have the capacity to manage the administrative burden of change and more frequent contract renegotiation and who may struggle to deliver the same economies of scale larger providers offer. Consequently, there is a loss of local knowledge that such providers offer. In evidence to the CLG & WPC Inquiry, it was described how:

We have seen smaller providers falling out of the market and being replaced by larger providers... a lot of these smaller providers have a lot of local knowledge, can be very reflective on local needs and sometimes more targeted in what they do. They are struggling with the demands of working out how they are going to provide this service. (CLG & WPC, 2017, p4)

The CLG & WPC Inquiry came to the same overall conclusion in its recommendations:

The evidence we received is clear that some providers are reconsidering their investment plans in light of concerns around the long-term reliability of funding, with many others fearing they will be forced to reduce existing levels of provision. (CLG & WPC, 2017, p41-2)

This concern over market-withdrawal is reflected in our case-study organisation, which despite being one of the largest providers of supported housing in the UK has recently announced that they are withdrawing from provision in our case study location. Market withdrawal is a significant concern across the sector, for instance in a study for the National Housing Federation, Goldup (2015, p3) examined the reduction of available supported housing spaces, concluding on a modest line that “availability has reduced by 7.5% between 2013/14 and 2015/16 (over 2 years) and that numbers will continue to go down by 2.5% per year in the future-year projections made”. The report finds that as a result of population increase vs projected need, the shortfall in available units will be 29,053 in 2019/10 and 46,771 in 2024/25 (2015. p13).

Service delivery

Although market-exit is the more extreme response, many providers have had to change or adapt working processes to continue to be competitive in the new market system. Both the DCLG & DWP Consultation and the GLC & WPC Inquiry discussed the importance of allowing the sector to adapt to the changes. The CLG & WPC Inquiry (2017, p44) argued for time and resources to allow local authorities to respond effectively to the proposed changes, and both reports highlighted concerns for particularly vulnerable clients. For instance, those in receipt of very-short term emergency accommodation may struggle with the “inability of Universal Credit to reflect short-term changes in circumstance” (CLG & WPC, 2017, p44). Women and children seeking refuge face “unique challenges within the supported housing sector” (CLG & WPC, 2017, p44) due to the complex nature of support they need. Young people (18-21 year olds) leaving the supported housing sector are finding difficulties in the reduced housing benefit entitlement, which can make it hard to move-on from supported housing and consequently lead to ‘blocking’ of available spaces or the risk of eviction into short-term accommodation or homelessness (CLG & WPC, 2017, p45). There are consequences to the changing funding of provision, at a basic level this is a reduction of available services:

The emergency accommodation - people who need it straight away - it isn't there most of the time. People are being told 'NO' left, right and centre; sometimes they just do not get the help they need. If you send them to the council, the council is overrun. If you send them to any of the housing providers, they're overrun.
(Assessment centre link worker)

The service provider we spoke with discussed the ways in which they have responded by changing priorities within and the nature of services:

I think what will happen ... the age ranges will not be banded so you won't have the young people or the adults. You'll probably just have people with complex needs in buildings. (Service manager)

The majority of the support provided now is housing management. We do have supported housing, but it's only for the most high, complex needs clients. (Support worker)

The second quote illustrates how reductions in specialist services are having a direct impact on the nature and type of provision. This is compounded by the wider landscape of cuts in support for vulnerable and in-need individuals and the “barriers to claiming Universal Credit” (Howarth *et al*, 2018, p2) faced by some of those in supported housing. In such circumstances, we can see the direct effect of a “residualised welfare model” (Farnsworth and Irving, 2018, p16) on supported housing:

The funding cuts in supported housing are impacted by further funding cuts from statutory agencies; so, the impact on funding cuts to social services, police and how that makes our job - and the boundaries of our job - harder to manage. (Area manager)

Provision does not exist in a vacuum, many of the clients also need support from other support agencies and services that are struggling with residualisation. The impacts of austerity on public services are increasingly well documented, for instance Cooper and Whyte (2017, p21) describe a situation in which “around 50 per cent of the cuts have been targeted at the welfare system and local Government. In other words, the services most required by the vulnerable have been those singled out for disassembling.” It has therefore become harder for those in supported housing to receive the support that they need, it is more difficult to move people into residualised services, and the wider lack of available and suitable housing means services struggle to move people back into the wider community. Consequently, services are increasingly full of high-risk, high-support clients to the detriment of those clients and the wider at-need population who struggle to access services. Furthermore, there is limited opportunity to move clients onto lower-support housing:

I think also with the changes that have come into place, because of funding issues ... the people that are coming into supported housing are becoming more and more highly complex ... or harder to move them on independently because they're much more highly complex than they used to be. (Support worker)

In their work on residualisation in the UK social rented sector, Clarke and Monk (2011, p419) describe a “sector that has increasingly become the preserve of the poorest in society” and this is reflected in the responses from our interviewees, where the concern is that residualised services cater increasingly only for those with the highest need in society, who find it hard to then successfully exit the strained system. This changes the nature of those services, concentrating in them the most at-need and complex service-users:

What I was surprised at is that when we went into the changes I thought because it went from high, medium and low support to just high complex and multiple support needs, I thought that there would be more of a levelling out of support needs. But what we have actually seen is a massive increase in support needs. (Area manager).

Mostly now it's all high support it seems. Previously it used to be lower, medium and high support ... It all seems to be high support now or no support. (Assessment centre link worker).

In the context of supported housing, residualisation results in services increasingly catering for clients with high and complex support needs, with a corresponding reduction in services for those who fall outside of the most at-need category. These pressures reflect the wider impacts of residualisation across state-run public services, exacerbating what Clarke and Monk describe as “concentrations of poverty” (2011, p431) and Forrest and Wu (2014, p135) as “enclaves of concentrated and multiple disadvantage.”

Service experience

A significant cluster of issues identified by our interviewees was the reduction in length-of-stay in supported housing projects. They reported to us that in many cases this had been reduced to 6 months, which gave limited time to address the often-complex needs of clients and to achieve ‘positive outcomes’ for them:

[W]ith some of the clients ... with the amount of complexities that they possess ... Six months is not a lot of time to do a lot of work with them. We can do short-term positive changes, but some of the clients' needs are quite entrenched. Six months needs to be longer. (Service manager)

Consequently, those with high-risk high-support needs may face eviction from properties with no onward address or are moved from one property or service to another in a “revolving-door process,” as the service manager described it. The result is services becoming full of high-risk high-need clients.

The idea was that once they get evicted from one property, they have a 6 week lie down before they go into another property to try and deter them from getting evicted and going straight into another supported housing and going around the houses so to speak. But it's still happening because there is literally no alternative plan for them. (Support worker)

The issue of finding appropriate move-on accommodation was identified in the CLG & WPC Inquiry (2017, p45). There are many reasons for this, for instance the lower levels of benefits for younger people and the limited stock of affordable rental accommodation in the private sector. The former service-user we spoke to describe the impact of these issues on them:

The very first time I moved, ... was at the end of January, so not warm weather, myself and my daughter ended up going from X Road to X Street. Not even a carpet on the floor, didn't have a bed, didn't have a seat to sit in and I don't think it was until we had been there for at least a month and a half before we actually started to get anything from the welfare grant, we could have carpets put down. (Former service user)

The impact on service experience is not only felt by those receiving services but also by those supplying services. Scanlon and Adlam (2006, p13) describe the pressures of "working with difficult clients in difficult circumstances", a situation that is exacerbated in residualised services that are increasingly stretched by growing numbers of high-risk high-needs service users with profound support needs, that are hard to engage and may be resistant to change:

... this environment isn't very fun to work in anymore and I think that's right across the board in supported housing staff. I think the stress levels are incredibly high. I think the outcomes that they expect are unrealistic, I think that clients are being let down because we're not able to provide what they need because we have less time, less staff, less funding. (Support worker)

I did kind of feel like... I don't know how to explain it... it was like you have to work harder. I know it sounds a bit mad, but it was like you had to work harder at making people see that you do need help. (Former service user)

This is the day-to-day experience of residualised services; a regressive redistribution of local government services that have "impacted on the capacity of staff to address the needs of service users" and are felt most significantly by the poor (Hastings et al, 2017, p20). For Pearce and Vine (2014, p658) this amounts to "a downgrading in status" that is "linked to issues of social exclusion, stigma and equality". Given this, it is understandable how those such as Cooper and Whyte (2017), Dorling (2017), and Jones et al (2019) link neoliberal and austerity policies to growing levels of mortality and liken its application to a form of structural violence. In its ultimate form, this violence is a risk to the lives of those within services:

We've had quite a few deaths across supported housing because the people that we are dealing with are much more highly complex, so that's really changed. (Support worker)

Such evidence shows the dangers inherent within neoliberal, austerity-driven policies, As McCulloch (2017, p175) states, "austerity has resulted in already stretched services rationing provision further, intensifying the marginalisation of those who are most excluded." We argue that residualisation is a manifestation of a process in which services are limited in number, leading to concentrations of high-risk clients which increases the dangers within services not equipped to deal with the volume and complexity of such cases. Furthermore, those excluded from services because of reduced availability also struggle without support thus compounding the structural and material violence of austerity from which they already suffer.

5. Conclusion

This paper illustrates the ‘on the ground’ experiences of residualisation in supported housing. We argue that declining state support means services are increasingly catering only for those most at need and excluding others. Furthermore, those delivering these stretched services struggle with the increased workload of more high-risk high-support clients. These concerns are reflected outside of our case-study, for example in the findings of the UK government consultation (DCLG & DWP, 2017) and combined Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry (CLG & DWP, 2017) which described serious misgivings about the nature, speed, and impact of changes in funding. Further analysis across other supported housing providers would help to develop the analysis in this organisational and geographically focused study. Speaking with a wider range of those involved in service delivery and service use would help to build up a greater picture of the everyday ‘on the ground’ experiences of residualisation, whilst broadening the research to encompass organisations of different shapes and sizes would help to establish a breadth of experience in the sector.

As with many of those cited in this work, we argue that austerity policies are creating systemic harms. The post-GFC period has seen welfare spending shrink as the neoliberal policies that cause the crash have become “reinvigorated through an alliance with a new form of austerity that emboldened claims for the residualisation of state welfare” (Farnsworth and Irving, 2018, p461). This is not limited to the site of this case study in the UK, but is reflected in a range of other international contexts (Forrest and Wu, 2014), including the specific examples identified earlier in Sweden (Andersson & Turner, 2014), Australia (Morris, 2013), and the Netherlands (Van Duijne and Ronald, 2018). To this body of work, we have added a contextualisation of what this means in terms of the experiences for staff and service users.

Such systemic harm in welfare systems is nothing new, and Watts and Fitzpatrick (2018, p1) identify, there is a much longer history of “welfare provision being deployed as a mechanism of ‘social control’ to shape the behaviour of those who avail themselves of state-funded support”. Similarly, and in the context of the UK welfare system, Anderson (2019) describes the introduction of Universal Credit as a “significant intensification and expansion of welfare conditionality.” Consequently, addressing the problems of residualisation needs a whole systems approach to managing welfare. Marsh (2013, p10), for instance, argues that de-residualisation “is only going to happen if political priorities are significantly rethought. At the macro level housing needs to come up the list of political priorities. [...] At the microlevel there needs to be substantial change both in terms of finance and in terms of allocations.” In considering different approaches, there are two of note: those that emphasise work-first and those that emphasise housing-first. Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl (2008, p1) describe work-first “activation” approaches that aim to lower the barriers to employment along with supplying support and training to make job-seekers more attractive to potential employers thus reducing reliance on welfare support. Common to elements of welfare systems in the UK, US, Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany, although such work-first policies move people off benefits they are “neither a panacea or a quick fix to inactivity and unemployment nor a measure to cut welfare state expenditure” (2008, p27).

In contrast to work-first approaches, “housing-first” approaches have been gathering attention across Europe and the US and emphasise the importance of stable housing to enable people to address additional needs (Tsemberis, Gulcur, and Nakae, 2004; Tsemberis, 2010). With such approaches, there is an understanding that housing is accompanied by support that can tackle additional issues experienced by those facing homelessness, although it is important to note that the nature and extent of this additional support can vary greatly depending on the wider national context and the range of state and other support available. Housing-first approaches are attracting attention and analysis for their success, for instance Baxter *et al* (2019) point to indications of benefits in terms of health and well-being, and Kerman *et al* (2019) to positive impacts for those struggling with mental health issues. Housing-first is having success in Finland, where there has been a dramatic reduction of long-term homelessness since the introduction of their PAAVO programmes

(Pittini and Whelan, 2018). These schemes have been successful in large part because they have relied on the provision of municipal housing mixed into the general housing stock to avoid stigmatisation, and the housing is accompanied by a commitment to a range of social support provided by a wide partnership network that includes the state, local authorities and NGOs (Pleace *et al*, 2015, p17).

Whether work-first or housing-first, when considering supported housing we return to the work of Scanlon and Adlam (2006, p13) and their description of “working with difficult clients in difficult circumstances.” Residualised supported housing increasingly deals with people that have the most difficult and complex personal circumstances; it is not just providing housing, but about structuring support to help those that are vulnerable and often marginalised deal with their problems and function as part of society. Residualisation of supported housing is taking away this opportunity, undermining those that are most at need in society as well as those who are struggling to help them.

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