



The Seeds of Exclusion

a report by The Salvation Army

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Salvation Army has produced *The Seeds of Exclusion* report in order to understand the indicators in early life which can lead to future problems of social exclusion and to understand the nature, complexity and severity of problems facing people in Salvation Army homeless centres.

The Salvation Army undertook in-depth interviews with nearly 450 homeless people in its centres in various regions of the UK between January 2006 and March 2008.

The Salvation Army is aware of problems associated with people at the extreme end of social exclusion. It instigated this research to better understand the people with whom it works and to identify how best to prevent future generations from facing social exclusion. In addition, the experiences of these homeless people can be extrapolated to form a better understanding of the key issues affecting the health of society as a whole and to better inform the support offered to those most in need.

The Salvation Army presents *The Seeds of Exclusion* report in the context of all the factors relating to the social, physical and mental wellbeing of Britain in 2008. It hopes its contribution to this ongoing debate will begin to inform us all, including Government, on how we can avoid the mistakes of the past and begin to mend society.

The Seeds of Exclusion report can be downloaded at www.salvationarmy.org.uk/seeds



REPORT SUMMARY

In its introduction *The Seeds of Exclusion* report examines factors which impact on health, happiness and wellbeing in society in 2008, considering the role of the voluntary or third sector, spirituality and faith in contributing to complete health and wellbeing, and tracking social exclusion as both cause and effect of people failing to thrive in society.

The study focused on interviewees' current needs in relation to early life experiences, relationships, mental health issues, substance misuse and support received for these complex needs. It identifies key issues and trajectories which have led some people into social exclusion and provides a clear and detailed picture of what those needs are and how they are failing to be addressed.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Importance of Childhood Experiences

Many of the people interviewed in Salvation Army homeless centres have had disruptive childhoods and suffered problematic relationships and even abuse from family and friends both now and in the past.

- A high proportion of interviewees had poor and abusive relationships with key family members in early life
- Nearly one in three (30 per cent) were homeless before 18, some on more than one occasion
- Traumatic experiences and poor relationships are key. Poor relationships with fathers are linked to criminal behaviour as an adult and the report also identifies how important it is to have good relationships with mothers as it shows that poor maternal relationships are linked to anti-social behaviour throughout life
- Over half of interviewees (54 per cent) spend most of their time alone
- Nearly one third consider themselves to have no close friends, which may leave them devoid of a vital support network

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The Seeds of Exclusion report warns that a new generation of children are at risk of becoming socially excluded and even homeless unless urgent action is taken to tackle issues like poor and abusive parenting and the creation of good relationships in childhood - one of the keys to healthy relationships in adulthood.

Mental Wellbeing

Homeless people have a much higher level of severe and untreated mental health problems than has been previously documented and many of these problems are untreated or unaddressed.

- Two thirds (65 per cent) screened positive for two or more psychological problems, such as personality disorders, a range of mental illnesses, drug and alcohol abuse
- Only one in eleven (11 per cent) had access to mental health care

There is a need for better understanding of the link between mental health and, particularly, the link between personality disorder and socially inappropriate behaviour.

Many of the problems faced by homeless people are not being addressed and even if services are available they are not being accessed. The voluntary sector, often working at the grass roots, is well placed to be the 'bridge' which enables people to access services.

Support for Vulnerable People

Apart from help for people struggling as parents, there is also a need for more consistent and integrated personal support for people leaving 'controlled' environments, especially those with mental health and/or substance misuse problems and lacking social networks.

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The Seeds of Exclusion identifies that people moving from institutional environments, like health care or prison, may struggle as they move into independent living. Ex-service personnel are another group who may become socially excluded once they are outside the relatively controlled environment of military life. If they also have other needs like substance misuse or mental health issues this group may struggle to cope. Even if adequate services are available, some have difficulty accessing that help.

The Salvation Army urges Government and society to:

- look beyond today's adult homeless person to the child whose upbringing left them vulnerable and less able to cope as an adult
- recognise the role of third sector (voluntary) and faith groups working in the community in identifying families and individuals at risk, and working with them to address poor relationships and family experiences in a way which is non-threatening and easier for them to engage with
- recognise the role of the third sector and faith groups in overcoming the problems of people with complex and severe problems failing to engage with statutory services which they may perceive as threatening or inaccessible
- support the third sector to maximise its potential to address the all-round needs of individuals with complex and severe problems through more equitable funding and a tendering process which is not based on simplistic or short-term indicators
- invest in long-term policies and funding, not short-term fixes

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THE SALVATION ARMY'S RESPONSE

In response to *The Seeds of Exclusion* report The Salvation Army commits to continue its work with vulnerable people whatever their needs. In the light of the report findings, The Salvation Army is dedicated to addressing these problems in the long term by building on our existing services with renewed focus and investment.

The Salvation Army will:

- adapt and expand its own services to address all-round needs of today's homeless people, supporting every aspect of their lives
- adapt and expand its own services to support families so that today's children are not at risk of becoming tomorrow's homeless people
- adapt and expand its own services for vulnerable people and those facing transition from prison and other controlled environments
- increase the understanding of the underlying problems causing social exclusion
- inform the debate and policy on social welfare and service provision and funding for vulnerable people through further quality research and ongoing campaigning
- continue to speak out on behalf of all vulnerable people

The Seeds of Exclusion report contains details of the work of The Salvation Army and an outline methodology and bibliography. The report was produced with the assistance of the Universities of Kent and Cardiff and was informed by consultation with key representatives of The Salvation Army across the United Kingdom. The Salvation Army would also like to express its gratitude to experts within the areas of social exclusion, social reform, mental health and spirituality who have given permission for their comments, captured during in-depth interviews, to be included in the report.

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