



Germany - National Report

Housing Solutions for People who are homeless

FEANTSA Annual Theme 2008

Housing and Homelessness



Questionnaire

Housing solutions for people who are homeless

German Report

Some preliminary remarks:

Due to the fact

- that Germany is a federal state with 16 federal states (Bundesländer)
- that the national government in Berlin through the reform of federalism in 2006 has passed the responsibility for legislation concerning social housing to these 16 federal states
- that there are important and significant differences between these 16 federal states concerning the housing market, the quality of the housing stock, the affordability, the home-ownership rates etc.
- that there are not only still big differences between the newly - formed German states and the Old German states but also between the northern and southern parts of Germany and within some federal states e.g. North Rhine-Westphalia with a high density of population

it is for BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V. impossible to stick to the questionnaire. For us to answer the questionnaire in a decent way would have meant to conduct a research.

But nevertheless it is not impossible to give an overview about the housing situation in Germany and especially about the solutions we as the National Federation of Service providers for the homeless see and demand from the federal government, the federal states, local authorities and not to forget from the European level.

In our report "Housing Policy to Act Against Homelessness and Social Exclusion from the Housing Market" you find the BAG W's analysis, our ideas for solutions and our demands. Enclosed you will see some up to date statistics from the Federal Statistical Office – Germany as well as the latest BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V. estimation of the number of homeless in Germany. (In Germany we don't have an official statistic of homelessness.)

1. Introduction

Our top priority is to be able to guarantee the humane provision of housing.

Germany requires a housing policy which makes a contribution to breaking down the growing social divides between the rich and the poor.

Housing policy occupies a lowly position on the political agenda since it isn't a housing shortage but in contrast, a housing shortage (vacant properties) which is the main problem of housing policy in Germany. Yet the foreseeable demographic developments, new studies about vacancy rates, a high level of homelessness, and the consequences of the reform of social legislation all speak a different language.

The BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V. has the vision of a society without homeless people. By the year 2010, at the very least, the goal must have been reached that nobody must sleep on the streets without accommodation against their will.

Based on a definition by the Council of Europe, housing which is humane satisfies the following criteria:

- it is physically inhabitable
- it is not dilapidated
- it offers a healthy environment
- legally secure over the long term
- not overcrowded
- provides adequate protection against burglary and forced entry

The definition of an urgent housing situation in Germany is also based on these criteria:

- Households defined as homeless are households which do not have humane housing.
- Households threatened by homelessness live in humane housing but are immediately threatened with the loss of their home, meaning they are threatened by the loss of a legally secure, long term contract of ownership / tenancy.
- Households in unacceptable housing conditions live in accommodation which is generally legally secure and physically inhabitable, but either overcrowded or insufficient in sanitary terms, or provides no protection against burglary or forced entry.

2. The Changing Framework Conditions of Housing Policy

During the 1990s, on average, the accommodation situation concerning low income households improved, but this situation is now on the threshold of a change for the worst. According to the details provided by „specialized departments for the prevention of homelessness, the numbers of households threatened by homelessness is on an upwards trend.

Current housing policy is determined by social framework conditions which have radically changed due to globalisation and new social developments, and which will continue to change. The following new developments are of key importance with concern to the

provision of accommodation to people in an housing emergency situation and low income households:

2.1 Changes in supply and demand

- On average, a balanced housing market – in contrast with the shortage of housing in comparable European countries like France and Britain. It appears to be the case, however, that the German market will soon catch up with this European trend.
- Regionalisation of housing markets, meaning among others, rates of vacancy and housing shortages occurring at the same time
- The increasing segregation of certain sections of the population
- New demand for housing and an increase in the number of households through a reduced number of young people living with their parents and demographic developments
- Decline in the provision of social housing
- An increased risk of poverty and therefore an increased risk of homelessness

2.2 Changed legal basis and basis of assistance in the areas of housing and social policy

In recent years, several laws have been passed with considerable direct or indirect negative effects on the supply of accommodation to people in urgent housing situations:

- The primary focus of the new Wohnraumförderungsgesetz (*Housing Assistance Act*) in the area of social housing is on particular target groups in the housing market, at the same time, however, funds provided by the federal government are being drastically cut. It is still the case that no reversal of the over proportional allocation of funds to social support for private home-ownership to rented social housing has occurred.
- In the framework of SGB (*The German Social Code*) II benefits for accommodation and heating have been arranged very restrictively. In addition to this, the previous procedure for the meeting of rent arrears has also become much more complicated and bureaucratised because of impractical terms and conditions. These factors mean that the risk of homelessness has increased.
- With the ‘Social City’ programme, a social-sphere oriented instrument of assistance has been created which is aimed at improving the life and living conditions of disadvantaged sections of the population but which remains too strongly oriented to property and too little to the social environment.

3. Goals, Criteria and Requirements of a Housing Policy for Housing Emergency Situations

The goal of housing policy must be as follows:

- to guarantee the provision of humane, need-oriented and reasonably priced housing to all poor citizens
- to provide its contribution to the improvement of life and living conditions in poor areas, especially unacceptable housing conditions

We take the view that without systematic housing policy based intervention, the goal of a long term removal of homelessness cannot be achieved. For this reason, a constitutional

right to housing is also required, and the firm anchoring of housing policy at the federal level.

Housing policy must be designed according to the following criteria:

- The prevention of homelessness, the provision of housing to persons who are currently homeless and the elimination of unacceptable housing conditions.
- Orientation towards those on low incomes and socially disadvantaged households
- The guaranteed provision of a sufficient amount of reasonably priced housing
- The guaranteeing of access to accommodation for people in poverty
- The need-oriented configuration of housing, the living environment and the social sphere
- The participation of citizens in social housing and in the design of the living environment
- The decentralisation of management structures concerning housing policy and the inclusion of the not-for-profit sector

Suggestion for the constitutional safeguarding of housing requirements (1)

'Section 1

The creation and maintaining of healthy living conditions for all people is the responsibility of the state. It provides for a forward-looking expansion to the provision of housing which is adjusted to the development of demand, and the creation of living environments which meet with the central significance of housing for a person's life. The legislator determines the contents and the limits of the economic use of housing, guarantees a social protection against termination of contracts, and provides rents which are affordable in terms of income levels.

Section 2

It is incumbent upon the federal government, federal states and local authorities to together ensure the provision of housing to low income sections of the population. They shall also encourage social housing and also private cooperative and initiatives. A sufficient provision of housing which is suited to the needs of old and disabled persons is also to be guaranteed.

Section 3

Housing clearance may only take place if acceptable replacement housing is available.'

(1) This suggestion was submitted to the constitutional commission by the BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V. in 1992 but was unfortunately not taken into consideration. The suggestion is based on the following publication by Frank-Walter Steinmeier: Bürger ohne Obdach – Zwischen Pflicht zur Unterkunft und Recht auf Wohnraum-Tradition und Perspektiven staatlicher Intervention zur Verhinderung und Beseitigung von Obdachlosigkeit, VSH Verlag Bielefeld, 1992, p. 395

Europe, the federal government, the federal states and local authorities - reorganising the co-operation

Housing policy is a shared task at all political levels.

The allocation of housing policy at the different political levels is to be arranged according to the principles of subsidiarity and the creation of an equitable and balanced supply of housing.

The European level should ensure that a constitutional right to accommodation is established in all of the countries of the European Union. At the same time, it must also guarantee the framework conditions for the protection of social housing, and prevent an unfettered advance of globalisation on the construction and housing markets.

The federal government shall create a national tax framework including the legal obligation for a plan for the provision of housing at the level of the local authority. It shall secure a minimum level of financing for social housing. The complete federalisation of social housing is to be declined.

The federal states will develop framework concepts for their regions and local authorities that guarantee low income families access to housing.

At the same time, the local authorities also require a framework for action which forces them to use federal and state money in the appropriate way. Every local authority must provide their own supply mandate to cover the needs of those in urgent need of housing. The local authorities will also provide a regional plan for the supply of housing.

4. Criteria and requirements at the European level

Almost parallel with German unification, the European process of integration has also been gathering speed. The facts that poverty, homelessness and social exclusion are no longer dependent on national conditions have entered the public consciousness. Homelessness exists in all of the member states of the European Union, and to a rapidly growing extent also in the Eastern European states which have recently joined the EU. Homelessness, social exclusion and steps to overcome these things are therefore affected by decisions at the European level.

More initiatives at the European level in the area of social and housing policy

In the area of housing policy, the European treaties provide no authority, and since the Amsterdam treaty, only minimal authority for the European Union in the area of housing and social policy. Even if it is in no way appropriate to move core areas of these policy fields to the European level, framework conditions governed by the treaties are still urgently necessary in these areas.

It isn't about providing direct legislative functions in the scope of a European housing policy, but about the clear and emphatic recognition of the role of housing in the area of social policy and in other policy fields. In the area of housing, we are therefore demanding specific initiatives from the federal government, from other national governments and from the European Commission for a housing policy concept which supplements national housing policy through the following measures in particular:

- The reform of the social fund with the goal of supporting projects which focus on the prevention of social exclusion in the area of housing. An exclusive limitation to labour market related measures is not appropriate.
- Initiatives for the creation and the harmonization of national statistics with the goal of a European statistic on homelessness.

- The provision of focal points in every office of the European commission in order to systematically evaluate the effects of European legislation and programmes in view of social exclusion and housing shortages.

5. Criteria and requirements at the federal level

5.1 The provision of a sufficient amount of needs-oriented housing

The construction of new units of social housing and a needs-oriented refurbishment of the existing stock are the most important guarantors of an adequate supply of housing over a wide range of social strata. A stock of socially supported housing must be made permanently available in Eastern and Western Germany for more than a third of all households, and in rural areas at least one fifth of households. In addition to this, substantial federal funding continues to be necessary in the area of social housing and to provide a socially oriented urban development.

In general, public funding must be used for new constructions and modernisation so that it reaches the target groups who rely on it the most. This means that all public support must be tested for its effectiveness to ensure the prevention of deadweight and of socially counterproductive effects (social compatibility testing with support programmes).

The new building of a sufficient amount of publicly supported homes also secures the supply of housing to low income families in the market segment for privately financed homes, as these homes compensate for shortages in supply and help prevent rents from going up. This leads to the relaxation of the market and as a result, also brings the development of rental prices under control, helping to act against social exclusion and supplying all population groups with adequate housing.

The provision of housing subsidies in the form of social housing (the first support path with long term commitments) must be extended. The securing of, and if necessary, the additional extension of long term commitments, must occur through the renovation of local authority housing stocks which are not currently inhabitable, particularly in the case of the federal states of the former GDR.

5.2 Secure and extend affordable and need-oriented housing through construction and rents policy

The securing and extension of affordable housing often relieves and facilitates the ability of households in a housing emergency situation to access the housing market. For this reason, measures for cost and space saving construction within the scope of construction law in order further encourage a reduction in both construction and construction related costs. These savings must then be passed on to the tenants in the form of lower renting costs.

With the ecological modernisation of housing, a corresponding compensation should take place through public funding in order to prevent the shifting of costs onto the tenants and therefore prevent the danger of the social exclusion of low income families.

For tenants with low incomes and who are not eligible to claim SGB (Social Code) II and SGB XII benefits, housing subsidies must be arranged in such a way as to ensure that housing space is secured over the long term. In the case of homes which are supported by public funds, the charging of a compensation payment continues to be required (formerly known as the 'Fehlbelegungsabgabe' - *compensation payment made to persons no longer entitled to social housing on the basis of income*). The local authorities should be allowed, as also demanded by the German Conference of Cities, to adjust this instrument flexibly according to the requirements of the housing market with binding criteria. The compensation payment is restricted to be used for adding to the provision of, or to improving the current stock of publicly supported housing, or to the stabilisation of burdened residential areas in the non-invested sector (e.g. for supporting neighbourhood initiatives and services to children and young persons).

The compulsory fixing of rent levels according to a rent price comparison list is a further important measure to secure affordable housing. In particular, binding regulations are able to protect those tenants from price increases who are in the weakest position in the market and whose choices regarding the accommodation on offer are very limited. Rent increases must be aligned with the increase in the general rate of inflation and may not exceed 15% of the rental price within a period of three years. The definition of the appropriateness of rents according to the SGB II/XII and the adjustment of social housing rents must be designed in a socially compatible way; if necessary, a special legal regulation will have to be created in this area which takes regional factors into account - at least for a limited period. The dependency of transfer payments must not lead to the loss of appropriate housing space.

In addition to this, excessive rent increases and exorbitant rents must also be consistently pursued and punished.

5.3 Securing housing space

The assistance designated in SGB books II and XII according to § 34 of the SGB XII, and also § 22 section 5 SGB II (assistance in the securing of accommodation) and § 67-69 SGB XII (assistance in special circumstances) is to be used for all urgent housing situations in order to secure housing over the long term or to obtain suitable long term housing.

The configuration of the prevention in SGB II has, however, lagged behind the social assistance regulations:

- According to the SGB II, rent arrears cannot be absorbed in the form of a benefit payment, only as a loan. Irrespective of the factor that as a rule, the level of debts to be absorbed are not in any fungible relationship with the administrative costs associated with the repayment of the loan, this means that for the majority of households - who don't just live in extremely straitened financial circumstances during the receipt of the benefits but also after they become employed - the debt situation is worsened.
- For this reason, the BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V. demands the acquisition of debts for accommodation and heating to also be provided in the form of a benefit.
- In terms of the relatively short deadlines which are available for the avoidance of an eviction notice, a reporting procedure which is as simple and as accurate as possible is essential. For this reason, a uniform office of enquiry must be specified for the courts. The local parish council appears suitable for this task, as the local

authority is already the responsible place for the acquisition of debts for accommodation and heating both in cases pertaining to § 34 SGB and § 22, section 5.

To ensure occupation of a home is not put at risk, cuts in SGB II or SGB XII benefits should not as a rule affect either housing costs or housing related costs. It must be ensured that in justified cases, a legal claim for the acquisition of costs for accommodation and heating also exists in justified cases if the local authority organisation did not agree to cover them prior to relocation. This also applies to persons who are under 25 years of age.

Specialized departments to prevent homelessness

With its recommendation for the 'securing of the provision of housing in housing emergency situations and the improvement of living conditions in social focal points', the German Conference of Cities laid down a concept for local social housing policy as long ago as 1987. Updated and developed further, among others through the incorporation of groups designated by the Conference of Cities as being 'special' - the so-called 'non-local single homeless', and also immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, the "specialized department to prevent homelessness" offers a chance to concentrate assistance facilities, expertise and resources which are generally split between the offices for social welfare, housing, public order and private property and social services.

The concept of the „specialized department“ isn't controversial amongst professionals. For the further implementation, within the scope of the 'Social City' programme, a nationwide support programme for the creation and development of „specialized departments to prevent homelessness“ is to be provided by the federal government, along the lines of the programme of the state of NRW (*North Rhine Westphalia*), 'Avoiding Homelessness - Securing Permanent Housing'.

If it is not possible to avoid an impending instance of homelessness in spite of the preventative measures which the concept of the „specialized department“ offers, then the replacement of the housing is to be the primary focus of all further help.

5.4 Securing protection against unwarranted eviction

As a general principle, protection against the termination of tenancy contracts must be secured for tenants, as well as for lodgers, interim tenants and hostel residents. In the event of conflicts between the contractual parties, arbitration boards and advice points are to be made available in order to prevent possible homelessness. Alongside the advice offered by tenants' associations, the provision of easily accessible advice through social organisations is also necessary. The conclusion of agreements between social welfare organisations, the local authorities and larger property letting companies obliges all participants to provide early information concerning imminent terminations of contract and eviction proceedings, and to complete intervention aimed at preserving home occupation.

Instead of default judgements, in the event of tenancy disagreements, an inspection obligation by the courts is necessary so that social hardships are prevented and that each conflicting party is able to participate in the solution to the tenancy disagreement equally (inspection obligation by courts parallel to administrative tribunal process). The two month deadline (according to BGB (*German Civil Code*) § 543, section 2 in comparison with §

569, section 3), can only be used for active securing of housing or the acquiring of replacement housing.

The duty of notification by the courts towards the local authorities concerning the issuing of eviction notices is to be extended to all demands for eviction in order to facilitate the social intervention of social welfare organisations and providers of social support work. As with the termination of contract procedure, arbitration is to be provided in the event of demands for increased rents, and a pre-judicial clarification is to be aimed at under the participation of competent citizens.

5.5 National federal programme for the ending of all homeless shelter type accommodation

Our vision is one of a city without any temporary homeless shelters. For this reason, we demand a nation wide, federal programme to end all 'homeless shelter type accommodation', e.g. in the scope of the 'Social City' programme.

5.6 Uniform federal reporting procedure concerning urgent housing

The basic requirement for an effective and needs-oriented assistance in the area of urgent housing is the uniform definition and coverage of urgent housing needs on the basis of the definition by the German Conference of Cities.

Whilst unemployment statistics have been subject to continual further development and social welfare statistics were subject to major reform on 1.1. 1994, comparable efforts in the area of urgent housing needs and homelessness are yet to have taken place. This is all the more urgent as there is as yet no national federal 'statistic on homelessness' in Germany. To bring an end to this anachronism, the federal government immediately execute begin the introduction of such a statistic.

We require a national, federal, gender-differentiated housing emergency statistic concerning the number of homeless households and the number of households threatened by homelessness in order to:

- find out the basic demographic data concerning the social structure and the extent of households affected by urgent housing needs
- be able to facilitate the planning of housing assistance at the level of the local authority
- –create a reliable planning basis for housing policy at the federal and state levels; the federal homelessness statistic can be used as a steering instrument for the regional distribution of social housing funds.
- –have elementary prerequisites on which to base academic research

6. Criteria and requirements at the federal states level

The problem areas concerning people who are homeless or have urgent housing needs generally cover several ministerial offices (housing / social / health / young people / internal affairs) which deal with their spheres of activity separately. For this reason it isn't possible to react to the wide ranging problems concerning urgent housing situations or to

develop effective programmes on a holistic basis. This means that decisions are made which do not sufficiently consider needs.

In the federal states, inter-ministerial working groups should be established in which professional experts are also included.

The state governments should be given the task of making effective use of the existing homelessness prevention possibilities and reacting to the needs of homeless persons with targeted and effective assistance.

6.1 Support programmes and framework concepts

In order to be able to meet the needs of homeless citizens and to make full use of all homelessness prevention measures, support programmes should be available in the federal states with the following focal points in terms of content.

- **Programmes for the prevention of housing emergencies** through the consistent support of the central „specialized departments to prevent homelessness“ in the local authorities parallel to the recommendation of the German Conference of Cities, as well as the support of visiting social workers and community workers / neighbourhood management in order to secure the long term retention of the housing. In large local authorities, these should be able to work on a district-oriented basis.
- **Programmes for the consistent implementation of the legal possibilities of SGB XII §§ 67 ff** in terms of a visiting housing care service, both as a preventative measure and in order to secure the new home subsequent to prior homelessness.
- **A programme to provide the comprehensive support of social housing projects in instances of housing emergencies**, which are of an ambulatory nature and that are based on the needs of real life situations.
- **A programme for the renovation of empty homes** which can then be let to homeless persons. These should be subject to a long term arrangement concerning the rental price. This primarily relates to the federal states of the former GDR which still have a high stock of homes which are not let.

The federal states will develop framework concepts for their regions that will guarantee low income families access to housing in the future.

- **Investment programme for social organisations:** Social organisations and service providers are potential investors for low income households. They require financial support so that an investment risk remains calculable. In return for this, however, they are obliged to provide socially compatible offers of integration housing. Housing developers which work on behalf of the socially disadvantaged and social service providers should be offered preferential support that encourages them to invest in integrative forms of housing. It will also be tested how social investment programmes are able to open up perspectives in housing policy so that the use of funds is more effective and targeted. Housing and social policy competences will be brought together.
- **Programme for maintaining social allocation:** A local authority housing policy is only possible if a sufficient stock of housing that is allocated to social tenants is

available. Both in older and newer buildings, allocation of housing space to social tenants must be permanently maintained and extended. Demand is set to continue in this area at a high level, meaning that a housing stock which is allocated to social tenants can only be secured through breaking down hurdles to investment and additional financing incentives.

– **Offers of housing to single person households and the long term homeless:**

Even today, homeless men and women are often excluded as being 'unwilling to occupy housing' or 'unsuitable for housing'. Frequently, they aren't even registered in the local authority as seeking social housing, which means they are not perceived to be a group in need. They often stay for protracted periods of time in expensive, so-called temporary accommodation. The result is a lifetime in the slums, an area in which social problems abound. For this reason, the creation and the encouragement of housing for single persons and the long term homeless is also necessary. Instead of financing expensive places in hostels, bed and breakfasts or hotels, the means to finance social occupancy rights should be converted to capital.

6.2 State level legislation concerning the law on protection against domestic violence

Women don't just lose their homes because of eviction notices but also frequently because they are fleeing a conflict-laden or a violent relationship / family environment. Women can become urgent housing cases in their own homes if they feel they have to stay in their home in spite of an escalating conflict situation either due to a lack of alternative accommodation or from fear of the consequences of their leaving.

The introduction of the law on protection against violence has clearly improved the situation of victims of domestic violence in view of the possibility it provides them for a rapid allocation of the shared accommodation. Simply improving the levels of protection provided by civil law on its own, however, is not sufficient either to provide effective protection against domestic violence or to contribute to securing housing for those in need.

The police must also be allowed to protect women against domestic violence on the basis of improved scope for police action which is only possible through state level legislation, and which would allow them to intervene quickly, e.g. through so-called 'place allocations', 'home allocations' and 'bans on returning home'. The necessary legislative bases must be created in all of the federal states to ensure that this can be achieved.

7. Criteria and requirements at the local authority level

7.1 Ensuring a sufficient stock of housing

The provision of a sufficient stock of suitable housing is dependent on the local authorities react to the demand for housing by actively using the current social housing support programmes both in the areas of the new building of housing allocated to social tenants and in the purchasing of occupancy rights in available housing.

7.2 Stop the sale of local authority housing organisations

Studies have shown that local authority housing organisations are more prepared than other providers of rented accommodation to provide housing to those on low incomes and seekers of accommodation who would be in a poor situation in the private rented market. The sale of local authority social housing organisations with their allocated housing stocks, as well as the loss of homes allocated to social tenants conflicts with the mandate to provide affordable housing.

The privatisation of whole housing stocks leads to a massive reduction in the stock of publicly managed housing. In such cases, local authorities are simply throwing away an important instrument of control through which it was previously possible to guarantee accommodation to large sections of the population, and through which economically and socially disadvantaged households in particular were secured access to accommodation.

If the orientation of housing policy towards the public good is simply abandoned, and it is instead determined by the profit expectations and business strategies of property owners, the idea of supplying accommodation to households who find it difficult to access the housing market will no longer play any role. The task of local authority housing policy is also to guarantee future access to housing for all sections of the population.

In terms of the planning of social housing, particular attention is to be paid to ensure that the designs of homes correspond with the needs of those seeking accommodation. This applies especially towards people who are disabled, to families with more than two children and to single mothers.

7.3 Specify upper rent limits and use compensation payments

The setting of appropriate upper limits to rent levels represents a key political bargaining instrument the maintaining the retaining and securing of the housing space. The setting of the upper rent limits to the current rent index, or if this is not available, to the comparative rents calculated in the local region, is imperative in order to allow persons who are on low incomes access to housing.

Specifying upper rent limits also opens up the possibility of exerting influence on rental price developments in the lower price segment. The instrument of compensation payments does not only offer the possibility of preventing segregation processes, it also secures substantial funds for securing the housing stock and providing needs-oriented social housing. The securing of housing stocks should also be achieved by effectively restricting its diversion from its intended use.

7.4 Guaranteeing access to housing

Households in housing emergencies also rely on help in obtaining housing with relatively relaxed housing markets. This is necessary, however, as this group of persons is reliant on affordable housing which isn't in sufficient supply. While the stock of affordable housing continues to decline, the number of low income groups in need is increasing.

In order to allow homeless families access to the regular housing market, binding, contractually secured cooperations are needed between publicly supported housing organisations, local authorities and providers of social welfare services.

In addition to influencing the housing market, the local authorities also have the task of supporting people without a home so that they are able to find a home, or to make accessing a home easier for them. Some examples of this are the provision of tenancy guarantees, socially oriented letting agencies, the initiation or targeted support of the construction of social housing projects, construction projects in the scope of self-help as well as the encouragement of homes for special housing needs (niche housing projects).

The means available for the acquiring and retaining of homes for homeless persons living on the streets, as stipulated in Social Codes II and XII, must also be aggressively applied. This especially applies to a consistent application of § 67 ff SGB XII for all cases of urgent housing need that have a claim to the provision of personal assistance in the acquiring or securing of a home. The use of social services (social care) must not be made a condition for the conclusion of a tenancy agreement, however.

Negative credit ratings (SCHUFA / Credit Reform) must not generally prevent the conclusion of a tenancy agreement. The local authority has a social responsibility to assist tenants who have negative credit ratings.

7.5 Ensuring housing space is retained

Retaining housing space takes top priority, as all forms of accommodation subsequent to becoming homeless lead to a worsening of the situation of the affected persons and also cost the local authorities money. It is generally applicable that every emergency housing case is to be solved where it occurs with preventative measures.

The „specialized departments” at the local authority level to prevent homelessness have been working successfully on this in many places for several decades. All of the legal avenues to prevent homelessness and to retain housing space must be fully used.

The Concept of „specialized departments”

The basis of today’s concept of „specialized departments is provided by the concept that was developed in 1987 for the ‘Securing the provision of housing in urgent housing situations and the improvement of housing conditions in social focal points.’ (DST article on social policy, book 21, Cologne, 1987). This concept is largely based on a concentration of the tasks of all local authority offices which contribute to the securing and retaining of homes, as well as socio- educational and personal help within and beyond the area of public administration. The goal of all measures is the long term securing of housing and/or the retention of alternative suitable housing space.

This doesn’t depend on a one-to-one implementation of the suggested concept, but much more importantly, the local structural conditions must provide the start situation for the planning in order to achieve an optimum effect. Previously existing concepts of „specialized departments” should be subject to a continual testing of their effectiveness and be appropriately adapted.

The procedure for the acquisition of debts for accommodation and heating is set out in § 22 section 5 of SGB II and in §34 of SGB XII. In terms of its implementation at the level of the local authority, this new regulation means unnecessary bureaucratic efforts, and above all, the danger that a considerable number of households will lose their homes.

The BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V. therefore strongly holds to its position that § 22 section 5 of SGB II should be completely abolished and be replaced through reference to the acquisition of rental arrears according to § 34 of the SGB XII.

In order to secure housing, a socially responsible form of housing management is also required which provides a timely checking of the tenancy accounts and the initiation of immediate contact in the event of rent arrears or if and when other infringements of tenancy agreements become known.

If it is not possible to avoid an impending instance of homelessness then the replacement of the housing is to be the primary focus of all further help. The work of the „specialized department should guarantee that nobody is left to live on the streets after losing their home or subsequent to living in a state institution.

7.6 Consistent application of the law on protection against domestic violence

With women, domestic violence is one of the most important factors that causes homelessness. To prevent this, the consistent application of the protection against violence laws is required at the local authority level.

Along with the sign-posting of the culprits by the police, points of intervention are also to be organised which are informed by the police of their interventions and which then take up contact with the woman who has been abused on the basis of this information and offer her support.

7.7 Cooperation between the housing industry, local authorities and non-profit organisations.

Along with the possibility of gaining private accommodation companies as cooperative partners for the supply of accommodation to those in urgent need, the public housing organisations should also act as partners to the local authorities and the social assistance systems through contractual regulations to reserve certain stocks for those in urgent need of housing.

Through agreements with large housing organisations, the social administration services of the local authorities should be obliged to provide early information concerning imminent terminations of contract and eviction proceedings, and to complete intervention aimed at preserving home occupation.

A social oriented housing stock management in the housing industry is required. This can only occur through framework contracts with non-profit providers of help to the homeless and/or through a strengthened application of social work by the housing industry itself. It is only in this way that personal help can be offered to those who would otherwise be threatened by homelessness.

7.8 End temporary homeless shelters and replace them with normal housing

After losing their home, in many areas, single people or families are provided with so-called homeless shelters. In many instances, periods in such accommodation which were originally supposed to be short term only, become long term stays.

The overall state of the facilities, their lack of furnishings and the size of such sheltered housing and temporary accommodation do generally correspond with the basic requirements of humane housing. The involuntary concentration of so-called problem households in stressful living conditions with a limited legal status (licence instead of tenancy agreement) leads to decreasing self-initiative and strengthens the processes of social exclusion.

We therefore welcome the initiatives of local authorities to renovate homeless persons' accommodation and to change it into rented flats, and to accommodate homeless households in normal social housing. Experience proves that these measures are successful in both social and financial terms.

7.9 Personal help in accommodation

Personal help in accommodation is to be developed to complement the local authority measures of securing and retaining housing. In doing so, expertise of non-profit organisations in the area of supported living which in many cases is already available, should also be used. Personal help supplements e.g. „specialized department concepts and makes a big contribution to securing housing over the long term. Possible forms of accompanying socio-educational help are the integration of non-profit social organisations into „specialized department concepts with e.g. the transfer of tasks similar to delegations, or contracting non-profit organisations with personal care services according to § 67 ff SGB in connection with economic retention of housing by the „specialized department.

Including socio-educational help in allocation procedures, in district-oriented concepts, in elimination of shelters and the contracting of non-profit organisations with the personal support and care of housing emergency cases within and outside the burdened quarters serves the long term securing of balanced stocks of housing.

In the setting up of socio-educational help, success also depends on the gender-specific setting up of the services. For this reason, some services must be reserved for women in urgent need of accommodation. Male specific concepts must also be developed. Gender specific services should, among others, take place at separate advice centers, and in smaller towns through separate consultations.

A large proportion of housing emergency cases are not reached via the conventional patterns of services. This applies to preventative work in the „specialized departments” and also to the work in town and city districts and with inhabitants, particularly long term inhabitants of local authority shelters. For this reason it is urgently necessary to develop forms of community social work. The special time requirements of this form of help must also be taken into consideration.

7.10 The socially oriented configuration of the help

The integration of all population groups in the community is a central housing policy task of the local authorities. This also includes the encouragement and maintaining of intact neighbourhoods. The basis for good neighbourhoods is community development plans and community networks as well as accompanying infrastructure. A wide range of support programmes are available for such concepts, such as the ‘Social City’ programme for example. They encourage the cooperation of the communes, the housing organisations

and the non-profit organisations and prevent segregation processes developing in quarters.

The experiences of community work provide the academic basis for implementing such concepts with sufficient adhesion.

The orientation of assistance to homeless persons towards single-case help in order to eliminate individual emergencies is not targeted to the participation of those seeking help in the life of the community. In addition to individual help, it is necessary to focus on the place of day-to-day living, the social environment. Individually oriented forms of socio-educational help must be linked with the socio-political goals which concern the social environment. This specifically concerns:

- neighbourhood and urban development
- the encouragement of civic engagement in connection with processes in the realm of civic society
- the development of grassroots and self help organisations.

7.11 Local authority concept for the provision of housing

The measures stated above concerning the provision of housing are to be defined in the form of an holistic housing policy concept by the corresponding local authority.

This local authority housing provision concept provides the basis for a housing policy which along with the demand for homes for middle and higher income groups, also considers those with low incomes and recipients of state benefits (SGB II and SGB XII).

The precondition for the creation of a housing provision concept is a standardised statistic on those in urgent need of housing. Planning relevant data for the creation of affordable housing are, for example, the number and presentation of eviction notices, forced evictions carried out, requests to vacate accommodation according to the SGB II and also the number of homeless persons accommodated and recipients of the ALG II unemployment benefit. In cooperation with the town and district councils and the federal state governments, the BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V. will help develop a concept for the gathering of data concerning the local authority provision of housing.

A local authority concept for the provision of housing also includes the contractually agreed cooperations of the local authorities with housing industry and providers of social services. Only contractually agreed tasks and procedures are in a position of being able to produce binding and good results. In addition to this, the concept for the provision of housing must also be aligned with the social planning of the local authorities. The concept should be implemented by the local authority housing organisations. All of this serves the purpose of using the possibilities of the local authorities for exerting influence on the provision of housing as effectively as possible.

*The housing programme was developed
by the expert housing committee of BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V. and confirmed by BAG
W's executive committee on 27th October 2006*

Good Practice: *Unterkünfte – besser (ist) wohnen* - ‘Accommodation: Better Accommodation, Better Life’

The ‘accommodation - better accommodation, better life’ project

A joint project of the city of Bielefeld and the Bielefelder Gemeinnützige Wohnungsgesellschaft (BGW) (*Bielefeld housing association*)

Goals

- The reduction of shelter style accommodation for local homeless persons on the basis of the ‘Integration Instead of Exclusion’ strategy.
- The integration and/or re-integration of occupants of shelters in ways of life which are suited to them,
- The purposeful configuration of the remaining accommodation.

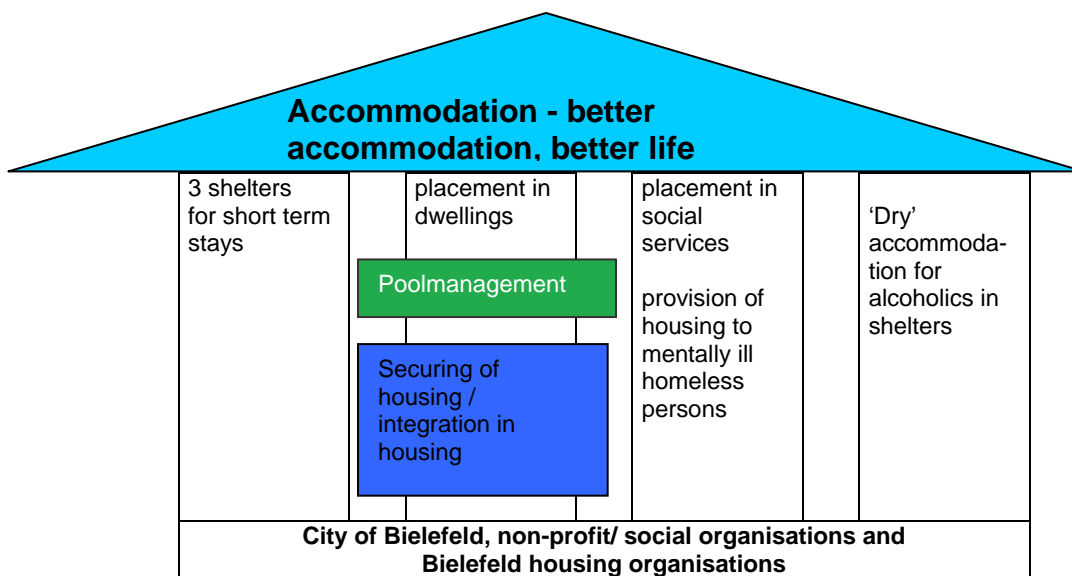
Duration

The project started on 01.01.04. On 31.12.03, 244 households with a total of 350 persons were living in accommodation for local homeless persons. It was originally planned for the project to last 6 years. By 2010, the number of accommodation centres is to be reduced from twelve to just three, accommodating just 100 people. According to the progress of the project so far, it is expected that the goals will be reached two years early and that the project can be successfully concluded in 2008.

Components of the project

1. Accommodation for short term stays

The city of Bielefeld will continue to provide space in three shelters for people who become homeless. This accommodation should be of a standard which is both purposeful and appropriate to the requirements of the stay.



The buildings for the accommodation are currently owned by the BGW and are being run by them and appropriately modernised and renovated. Since January 2007, single women

have been able to stay in modern accommodation which offers a single room with a private bathroom and kitchenette. In the women's shelter, there is also an easily accessible service which provides emergency sleeping and overnight facilities for urgent cases. For 2008, the conversion of the accommodation to the same standard is intended for single men. It is also planned that the accommodation be modernised for families with young and/or children of school age. The city social welfare department works with the inhabitants of the shelters with the following goals:

- Securing basic medical, psycho-social / socio-psychiatric and material supplies
- Organising the provision of hospital / outpatient treatment,
- Long term integration in regular accommodation.

2. Integration in rented housing

Since the start of the project, assisted and supported by social workers, a large proportion of the persons housed in the shelters have been integrated into rented housing. The help necessary for this is provided in the scope of a case management by the social workers. It starts in the shelters and continues in the subsequent support in the rented housing. The subsequent support is planned to last for 18 months.

At the same time, an active acquisition and care of the landlords is pursued:

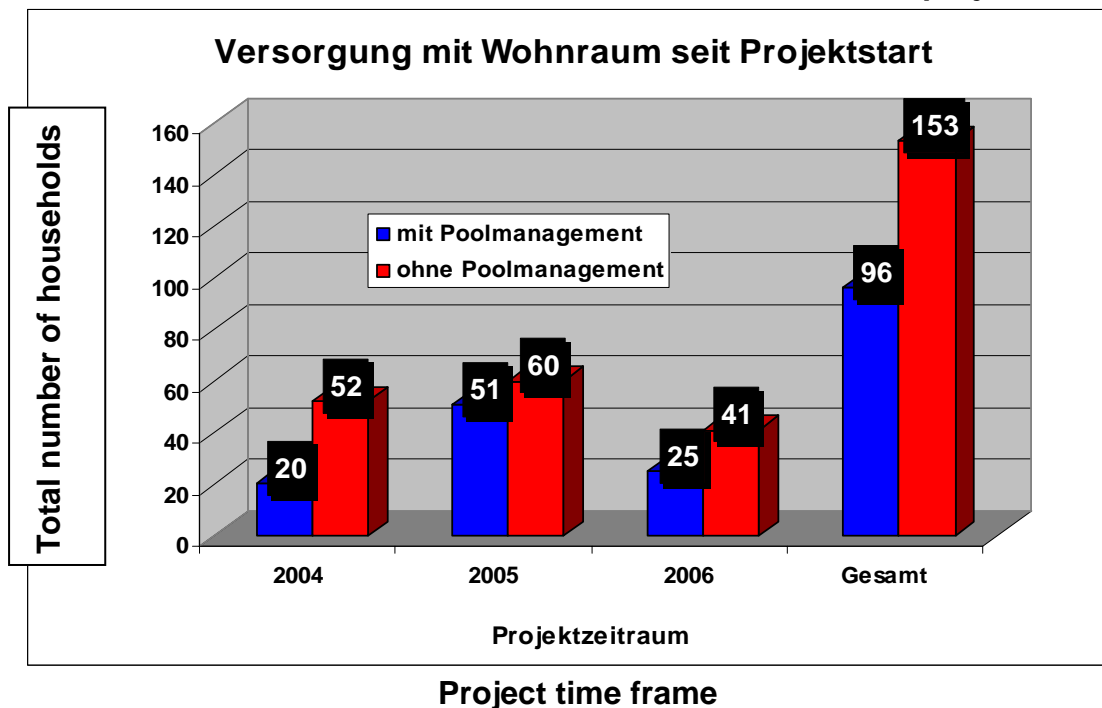
- A property panel, consisting of the housing organisations 'Haus und Grund' as the representative of private landlords, the BGW and the city of Bielefeld provides participants the opportunity to discuss issues concerning the cooperation and basic problems.
- A pool manager, based in the „specialized department to prevent homelessness“ actively works to acquire housing and works in a close cooperation with landlords.
- The social working team is available as a contact partner for individual problems.
- Financial incentives like the covering of losses of rent and the payment of damages to a certain level reduce the risks to landlords.

In total, it has been possible to provide 249 households totalling 387 persons with accommodation in normal rented housing.

3. The provision of housing to mentally ill homeless persons

With the opening of the 'Pension Plus' (Hotel plus) on the 15.05.06, a further conceptual pillar in the scope of the 'Accommodation - better accommodation, better life' project was implemented. The provider of the new housing and assistance offer is the company Pension Plus in Bielefeld GmbH, with whom two experienced providers of help in accordance with §§53 ff SGB XII, the organisations 'LebensRäume' and 'Die Grille' have joined forces.

Provision with accommodation since the start of the project



With the 'Pension (Hotel) Plus', an offer is provided to a target group which so far has not succeeded in being accommodated in community psychiatric institutions, and has refused to accept offers of accommodation that are of a socio-psychiatric or therapeutic orientation. The Pension Plus is an accessible offer which takes the critical psychiatric conditions of the target group into consideration in terms of its external communications and the way in which it directs this group towards help. The organisation does not present itself to potential applicants as a psychiatric care and treatment organisation, for instance, but has the provision of housing and the ending of homelessness as its core message. For this reason, the occupancy of Pension Plus does not just occur via assistance to psychiatric persons, but also via the assistant to homeless persons in the city in cooperation with the management of the organisation. In addition to this, the special financing of the offer means it is possible that the occupants can keep their incomes and pay for the costs of their accommodation as they would in a flat of their own. For the occupants, this means that they are able to live independently and that they also receive psychiatric and psycho-social help which is oriented towards their needs and is also acceptable to those affected.

The offer of the Pension Plus does not represent a permanent offer of accommodation. The service of assistance it provides is much more oriented towards enabling the occupants to use the available and regular offers of help on a long term basis.

Twelve places are available. The aid provided by Pension Plus is supplied as out-patient aid according to §§ 67 ff. SGB XII (the first year of individual aid) and as rehabilitation aid according to §§ 53 ff. SGB XII (the second year of aid).

4. House and flat shares

“Dry living area” within the accommodation

In 2005, with the dry living area for single men, the fourth conceptual pillar of the project was implemented. A strict ban on alcohol has been implemented in the accommodation, which provides eight places, with regular checks taking place at different times. In total eleven people with (severe) alcohol problems, who have resided in city-run shelters have used this service and have been successfully provided with housing (five persons in 2005 and six persons in 2006). Due to the changes in their addictive behaviour and the continuation of their abstinence in the new accommodation, some of the former inhabitants of the ‘dry area’ have been able to enter the labour market and find a job. Due to the decline of occupancy in the accommodation for single men, in the year of reporting, the target group for a dry housing group clearly declined. As the goal of providing motivated inhabitants with a dry living alternative as accommodation had been achieved by mid 2006, it has been possible to temporarily put the offer on hold.

Housing group for single homeless women

At the beginning of 2006, with the housing group for single homeless women, a new offer of housing was created using the accommodation. The living area comprises four places, and provides women from the city – owned shelter the possibility of preparing for re-homing in their own flat and long term integration into normal rented housing. The condition for acceptance in the accommodation is a willingness to make a change in lifestyle and cooperation and participation in the work and employment measures (assistance in finding work and employment opportunities).

Financing

Additional costs result through the provision of social-work based assistance and the financial securing of the landlords. These are covered by:

- the saved rent and administration costs that was being spent on the previous accommodation,
- the interest-free deferment of the administration costs in the first year by the BGW,
- the financial support provided according to the concept “Avoiding homelessness - securing long term accommodation” of the state of North Rhine Westphalia.

Within the scope of this project, through the reduction in the short-term homeless accommodation capacity and the reduction in the amount of accommodation, it was possible to achieve the following savings compared with the initial situation:

- 2004 - a total of € 92,583.05
- 2005 - a total of € 135,999.24
- 2006 - a total of € 290,653.51

In total: € 519,235.80

Further information about the ‘accommodation - better accommodation, better life’ project is available from:

Stadt Bielefeld (City of Bielefeld)
Zentraler Dienst Jugend, Soziales, Wohnen

Ulrich Fecke
Tel.: (05 21) 51 - 85 43
Email: ulrich.fecke@bielefeld.de

It is also available from:
<http://www.bielefeld.de>, Gesundheit & Soziales, städtische Beratungsangebote,
Wohnungsnotfallhilfe

Bielefelder Gemeinnützige Wohnungsgesellschaft mbH

Werner Stede
Tel.: (0521) 8809-225
Email: w.stede@bgw-bielefeld.de

Good practice: The ‘guides out of homelessness’ of the „specialized department for securing of housing”, Karlsruhe

The initial situation

Karlsruhe (approx. 300,000 inhabitants) is a large city with a growing population. Although work for the prevention of homelessness which has functioned very well in Karlsruhe for many years, since 1998, the number of persons living in homeless shelters has been on a continual increase. This has not been caused by an increase in the average number of homeless people, but by an insufficient number of people moving on from shelters for the homeless.

The idea

Becoming homeless is almost always a dramatic personal experience and an unpleasant shock. It means being thrown into completely foreign waters without orientation and without knowing about the obstacles which are all too frequently encountered on the way to resolving a situation. To be able to reach a safe port of call a homeless person requires guiding. This guide will take the ship they are sailing through the stormy waters to a safe port, where among the frequently confusing range of different docks, they are then provided access to their suitable pier. The task of the guide ends at this stage. It is not concerned with the subsequent passage of the ship, nor with the group dynamic situation of the ship’s crew. And organising leisure activities when the ship is docked isn’t its task either!

The campaign

The idea was initially tested within the scope of a cost-neutral pilot project from 2004 to 2006. Through changing priorities, it was possible to employ two social workers from the ‘city shelter for homeless men’ on the project, with each worker spending 50% of their working day on the project. The organisation SOZPÄDAL e.V. (non-profit organisation providing help to the homeless) also added some help, financed by ‘LOS funds’ (local capital for social initiatives - the Social City).

After presenting the good results of the pilot project to the social committee of the local council, in spring 2007, the „specialized department for securing of housing” was able to

conclude performance agreements for aid according to § 67 ff SGB XII with five non-profit social work organisations. With an agreed support ratio of 1:14 sufficient personnel for the management of 42 persons was secured.

Single men and women are offered assistance and advice through a social worker who functions as a 'guide out of their homelessness'. Approx. 2.5 hours of assistance time are available for those individually affected by homelessness.

The offer is arranged and the social worker provided with notification in the form of a written communication from the „specialized department for the securing of housing. This ideally occurs as soon as possible subsequent to the provision of accommodation in homeless accommodation owned by the city, or hotel accommodation for the homeless which it pays for.

The first discussion - there are sometimes many - serves the purpose of explaining the offer and motivating the cooperation. Only a very small number of those provided with this advice turn down what they are offered. From February to August 2007, this numbered just five or a total of 82 persons. (Within the pilot phase of the project, the share varied between 2.5 and 10%.)

Sometimes, despite several attempts, the guides are unable to make contact with the selected persons. In evaluating the findings of the phase of the pilot project - which involved the participation of only two workers on a 50% basis - in the current programme, more importance is placed on the visiting nature of the work.

Currently, the percentage of inaccessible people totals 4.9%. In the pilot phase of the project, it varied between 27.5 and 44.7%!

As this offer is financed as individual aid according to § 67 ff SGB XII, a very straightforward application form which the guide completes with those affected by homelessness is the basis of the approval. In cases in which the guide feels this to be counterproductive, a formal application is omitted. In such instances a data sheet which is completed by the guides is sufficient, who thereby confirm the conditions for the granting of the aid exist. This sheet functions as the basis for the provision of the aid. This approach is an especially good idea with mentally ill persons as it is easier to assist them in this way. If viewed as counterproductive, the signature and even the involvement of the client can also be omitted during the creation of the plan for aid which the guides have to submit within three months.

The task of the guide is above all the provision of practical support during the search for a home. A further task is the preservation and/or strengthening of self help forces and the prevention of a resigned approach with the homeless person. Single men in particular often view their situations of homelessness as simply being unchangeable and resign themselves to it. Situations like this, which can lead to 'chronic homelessness' are something that the guides actively work to counter.

It often turns out to be the case that there is a requirement for parallel social support or the provision of specific forms of social- and/or housing related assistance. In this respect it is the responsibility of the guides to narrow down the possibilities available on location and to motivate their client to avail themselves of them (e.g. assisted accommodation according to § 67 f SGB XII; long term assistance for people who are unable to find a

home; assisted accommodation for disabled adults, offers of assistance to alcoholics / drug addicts etc.) It has proven to be helpful with mentally ill homeless persons who do not have an insight into their illnesses for the „specialized department for the securing of housing also to provide assisted accommodation on the basis of specific service agreements, without the ill person having to state their problems or to provide medical certificates.

If such persons succeed in moving into their own rented home, the guides will continue to support their clients for a subsequent six weeks. They will provide assistance with all of the practical issues surrounding the move and in the transition to the new living situation. If the person moves into assisted accommodation, then the guide's job finishes when the move is complete.

The duration

The duration that one particular guide may work with one homeless person is limited to six months. An extension to this time is only possible in a very limited number of exceptional cases. During the phase of the pilot project in 2006, the average duration that one guide worked with a particular person was 14.9 weeks, and the longest period was 40 weeks.

Currently, in the year 2007, the average is 15.2 weeks, with the minimum currently being five weeks and the maximum so far of 24 weeks.

The effect

In 2006, the average period of time spent by a homeless person in the homeless persons' accommodation in Karlsruhe totalled approx. 30 weeks. It can therefore be concluded that due to the 'guides out of homelessness' programme, **periods of time spent in accommodation for homeless persons have been considerably shortened. Costs of accommodation are saved in each individual case, and at the same time, a lower amount of accommodation is required overall. With regard to the homeless person, above all else, this means that the negative effects which often result from long periods spent in homeless shelters are kept to a minimum.**

The task of the guide is viewed as being successful if the following occur(s):

- the homeless person finds a home
- the homeless person finds a home where any necessary care is also provided
- the provision of accommodation in the necessary educational / therapeutic / hospital institution.

In terms of the 82 persons who participated in this programme during the pilot phase of the project from 2004 to 2006, there was a successful outcome in 54 persons or 65.8% of all of the cases. With the programme that has now been running since February 2007, the current success rate stands at 70% (as at the end of August).

Evaluation

The 'guides out of homelessness' programme is subject to a permanent process of evaluation. This means that any negative developments are quickly detected and corrections made to the organisational concept to increase the levels of efficiency.

Thanks to the notice periods in the service agreements, the participating organisations are locked into the project for two years. The evaluation which is set to take place after the project has been up and running for 18 months will then provide the basis for any changes to the service agreements which may be necessary.

Further information about the 'guides out of homelessness' programme is available from:

Winfried Uhrig

Sozial- und Jugendbehörde Karlsruhe,
Fachstelle Wohnungssicherung
Scheffelstr. 37
Tel.: (Tues–Thurs) (07 21) 133 - 54 60
Email: winfried.uhrig@sjb.karlsruhe.de

Good practice: The Cologne ARGE – an example of organised cooperation

The possibilities and limits of organised cooperations between the „specialized department”, the ARGE¹ and non profit organisations

The Cologne ARGE

Through the merging of social welfare and unemployment welfare with the taking effect of SGB II on 01.01.2005, many forms of assistance to the person subgroup of homeless persons and/or persons threatened by homelessness changed from being the responsibility of the local authority provider of social assistance to that of the service provider according to SGB II.

Many years of experience is something which the many ARGEs (and their employees) responsible for granting assistance according to SGB II do not boast, neither in the provision of emergency accommodation to the homeless nor in the prevention of homelessness or its consequences.

To provide effective assistance, however, such experience is essential, as persons who are homeless or who are threatened by homelessness often demonstrate a wide range of additional problems.

It is for this reason that prior to the taking effect of the SGB II, the social welfare department in Cologne cooperated intensively with the employment service, with the intention of a long term cooperation, to bring together the assistance to homeless persons and to render them to local authority steering.

In result, the option provided in the ARGE-contract for the contractual partners to able to provide services for the ARGE itself, was used. With effect from 01.01.2005, two service agreements were concluded between the ARGE and the social welfare department of the city of Cologne:

¹ ARGEs were founded after implementation of the so called HARTZ IV –reforms in 2005. They are a new administration composed of the former local social services department and the employment agency.

- With the „specialized department” for the provision of assistance to homeless persons and people with particular social difficulties from the group of persons pertaining to SGB (inclusive of steering and responsibility)
- With the „specialized department for housing for the provision of emergency accommodation to homeless persons and for measures for the retention of housing and prevention of homelessness.

Above all else, the service agreement with the „specialized department for housing” is of considerable importance for the preventative work in the area of assistance to homeless persons.

All of the services provided by SGB II are granted in the „specialized department for housing”, particularly services in the context of the retention of housing according to § 22 SGB II.

On the basis of the service agreement, the Cologne ARGE is able to point homeless persons in the direction of the „specialized department for housing from where the necessary forms of help are developed, steered and provided. The further participants of the Cologne assistance system in this segment are the office for housing, with the housing agency and council housing department functioning as service providers, and also the organisations contracted by the city of Cologne.

Specialized employees work in the „specialized department for housing” in order to guarantee an adequate provision of help. It is also necessary that smoothly functioning structures of communication and cooperation exist between it and the employees of the ARGE. These are also guaranteed in Cologne.

From the view of the „specialized department for housing”, as yet, the introduction of SGB II is yet to have led to any serious ill effects on either its own work or the affected group of people. The total number of persons in city-owned shelters has now been stagnating for almost three years and has even shown a fall in 2007. The same thing applies to rental arrears, notices of eviction and forced evictions.

Under conditions where housing is in extremely short supply, the prevention of homelessness is extremely important. The primary goal is the retention of existing tenancies using measures to secure housing. Generally to be ensured that neither families nor single persons lose their homes. In this sense, the social welfare department of the city of Cologne and the Cologne ARGE are committed to a cooperative and constructive form of cooperation which is of mutual benefit to them and also benefits those affected by homelessness.

In this context, it is also worth pointing out the fact that so-called forced removals are also omitted in the Cologne approach. Instead of this, the methods that have been proven to work over many years and that originate from the ‘expensive rents’ case meetings, are applied by the ARGE. In such instances, cases with rents that are considerably above the upper rent limit are taken up and referred to the case meetings.

This initial procedural step has also been further supported by a comprehensive concept aimed at reducing the cost of accommodation. On 01.02.2007, a further service agreement was concluded with the „specialized department for housing” in the social welfare department. Two employees of the ARGE have since this time been appointed in

order to provide professional assistance to both employees of the ARGE and the affected service providers about instances where rent costs are unacceptably high.

Here also, the primary objective is to prevent homelessness but also to reduce unacceptably high accommodation costs and to highlight fresh perspectives.

All of the actors participating in Cologne are aware of their high levels of socio-political responsibility. With the help of the arrangements within the service agreement, expertise and resources are brought together, experience is made full use of, and possible disadvantages concerning the introduction of SGB II in terms of homeless persons and persons affected by homelessness are averted.

Further information is available from:

Petra Herrmann

ARbeitsGEmeinschaft Köln (*Cologne ARGE*)

Referentin der Geschäftsführung

Luxemburger Str. 121

50939 Cologne

Tel.: (02 21) 94 29 - 85 70

E-Mail: Petra.Herrmann3@arge.sgb2.de

Good practice: Proven cooperations between non-profit organisations and local authorities

In Pinneberg, the help for homeless persons that is provided by the pastoral mission has been arranged on the basis of a cooperative agreement with the city council in order to provide a form of socio-educational help to prevent new instances of homelessness. The pastoral mission has assumed the tasks of providing visit-based assistance in the event of eviction notices and rental arrears, of maintaining and making contact with tenants who are in arrears, of completing negotiations with tenants, of issuing statements of position for the acquisition of rent arrears or the new leasing of another home for the responsible funding agency (municipality, ARGE), and of guaranteeing subsequent and/or aftercare-oriented assistance.

Further information is available from:

Susanne Epskamp

Social Worker (*Dipl. / Professionally Qualified*)

Soziale Wohnraumhilfen

des Diakonischen Werkes Pinneberg

Bahnhofstr. 12

25421 Pinneberg

Tel.: (0 4101) 20 54 - 38, Fax: (0 4101) 20 54 - 78

Email: epskamp@dwpinneberg.de

www.wohnraumhilfe.diakonie-pinneberg.de