

Seminar 21: (zoom link) Service Delivery for Homeless People

Chair: Isabel Baptista, PT

Claudia Engelmann, DE: De jure Temporary, de facto Permanent: Shelters for People Experiencing Homelessness in Germany



Claudia Engelmann is a senior researcher and policy adviser at the German Institute for Human Rights, the National Human Rights Institution of Germany. She works on homelessness, the right to housing and asylum/migration. She also coordinated the annual human rights report to the parliament. She has studied Political Science, Law and German Literature in Konstanz, Oxford and Stockholm.

The paper focuses on one element of homelessness services in Germany: temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. Tens of thousands of people experiencing homelessness currently live in such accommodation. Numbers are rising. Originally intended as a short-term measure – for a few days or weeks – people increasingly stay there for a longer time. The paper looks at temporary shelter from a legal and an empirical point of view.

From a human rights perspective, standards which suffice for short-term housing may not be adequate for longer-term accommodation. The human right to adequate housing thus demands more than the minimum standards that currently apply for temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. The empirical analysis is based on 28 interviews with people experiencing homelessness, officials in municipalities and social workers. It reveals large differences across German municipalities in such accommodation. Differences relate to accessibility, conditions inside, as well as the chances of moving on from shelter to regular housing.

The presented paper is an updated version of a paper previously published in the European Journal of Homelessness (Vol 15, No 1, 2021). It will be complemented by recent evidence for shelters in other EU countries as well as a discussion on recent national developments towards the adoption of minimum standards in homeless shelters.

Imogen Blood and Nicholas Pleace, UK: Homelessness Service Commissioning in England: A Traumatized System



Professor Nicholas Pleace is Director of the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York and has been working in academic and policy research on homelessness since the early 1990s. Nicholas joined the European Observatory on Homelessness in 2009. He is also the University of York Research Champion for justice and equalities research, focusing on interdisciplinary research development on inequalities at University level.

Research conducted by Imogen Blood and Nicholas Pleace, supported by the Riverside Group explored the local government commissioning arrangements for homelessness services in England in 2019, revisiting the question in early 2021 in the context of the pandemic. Many of the services supporting lone homeless adults, women at risk of domestic abuse and people whose homelessness and living rough are associated with high and complex needs are provided by the NGO sector in England, funded largely through commissioning by local authorities (elected municipalities/regional authorities). The research found tensions between delivering known models of good practice demonstrated in the UK, elsewhere in Europe and in other OECD



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countries, including integrated strategies and the pursuit of properly and sustainably resourced housing-led and Housing First models and commissioning systems that were often under-resourced, erratic and inconsistent as a result of heavily devolved control and continual, unrelenting pressure to cut funding. By contrast, a flood of resources into these systems, targeted on people living rough through the 'Everyone In' programme in response to the pandemic has given important insights into what may be achieved when homelessness service providers are not competing for contracts and higher levels of funding are made available.