



# **CRISIS INNOVATIONS FAIR**

## **Homelessness and Loneliness: Building Social Capital in the twenty-first Century**

**19<sup>th</sup> October 2004 - Conference report**

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media solutions to the third sector

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## Crisis Innovations Fair: Homelessness and Loneliness



***Our sixth Crisis Innovations Fair, on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2004 was both interesting and inspiring, and continues to show what a broad range of views there are in the homelessness sector. More than 140 professionals, volunteers, services users and interested parties attended, contributing fully to the day. We came together to explore the theme Homelessness and Loneliness: Building Social Capital in the twenty-first Century. Through a series of keynote addresses, break-out workshops, a diverse exhibition and our Big Debate to round off the day, we were able to recognise how important personal and professional networks are in work tackling homelessness in all its forms.***

***This report is our attempt to reflect the atmosphere of the day, record some of the main points made by our speakers, and to highlight some of the main features of the day. It is not intended to be a verbatim account of the proceedings, but our attempt to illustrate a busy but inspiring day. We hope you find it useful, and look forward to another really successful Innovations Fair next year.***

**Jo O'Rourke, Innovations Fair**

### WELCOME:

#### **Tarig Hilal, head of policy at Crisis**

**Tarig Hilal** began by welcoming delegates to the sixth annual Innovations Fair. He went on to speak about visiting his native Sudan for the first time after eleven years away, and trying to explain to his family what he does for a living.

"Explaining what a policy manager at homeless charity does can be a bit of a challenge in England," he said. "Cross-countries, cultures, language and religion and I can assure you the task gets no easier."

It wasn't the *policy* part of his job that was the problem, Hilal explained, since everyone understands politics. But conveying what homelessness means was more of a problem.

"How,' they implored, 'can Britain, our former colonial master, fourth wealthiest country in the world – how can they have homelessness?'," he

said. "Then it dawned on me. We do not have a word for homelessness in Sudan - I needed to explain what a home meant to a Briton."

He continued that in Britain, a home is more than bricks and mortar, it is a place of safety and security and part of our identity. It lies "at the heart of family, friends and community," he said. In Sudan, he continued, homelessness is equivalent to tribelessness.

Hilal went on to warn that the physical has dominated the debate for too long.

"That is why today is so important," he said. "Social Capital is an old idea reformulated. Strip away the academic language and we are talking about people and community. It is up to us to forge the kind of community that we want."

Hilal went on to discuss the ambitious targets set by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, such as providing opportunities for all and ending child poverty. He then

#### **VOX POP: Tony Dodson, researcher, Groundswell**

**What was the highlight of your day?** The final panel discussion – it was a great chance to be able to respond, rather than it just being a one-way process.

**What could the UK homelessness sector export abroad?** Ideas. For example the type of peer-led research that I work on.

**How could the UK homelessness sector be encouraged to think internationally?** I usually prefer face-to-face contact rather than email, but I think it would have to start by emailing similar groups abroad and exchanging ideas.

**What would be in your ideal manifesto for the next election?** More 'user involvement' (although I hate that term!) from people who have experienced homelessness. Also less paternalism. Many people working in the sector are in their 30s and talk down to people like me, who are old enough to be their father.

challenged delegates to set out their own ambitious goal.

“It is time that we made the call to end homelessness,” he said. “Not just rough sleeping, not families living in bed and breakfasts – homelessness.”

He concluded by saying that, as a nation, Britain has the means to defeat homelessness, but questioned whether it has the will.

“If it is not there it is up to us to create it,” he said. “But that is all for tomorrow. Today is an opportunity to reflect and learn. I hope you enjoy.”

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## KEYNOTE:

**Dr Michael Woolcock, senior social scientist, The World Bank and lecturer at Harvard University**

**Michael Woolcock** began by comparing the problems faced by the World Bank when working across many different countries with the diversity of issues faced by the UK homelessness sector.

He went on to assert that to have the “type of conversation we need to be having” it is vital to develop a shared language. Having a shared understanding of the concept of social capital, he suggested, could provide the “conceptual space” to achieve this.

Next, Woolcock looked at how social capital can be defined and understood. Referring to a graph, he showed that participation in all kinds of voluntary and civic activity has been in free fall since the 1960s. This applied from giving money and time through to socialising with neighbours.

This is relevant, he said, because the most frequently used definition of social capital is of the “norms and networks that enable people to share resources and work together”.

“The notion of capital is meant to put an emphasis on the role that relationships play as real tangible assets in our lives,” he said. “We are all familiar with the saying ‘it’s not what you know it’s who you know’. For many vulnerable people, the social relationships they have, or crucially do not have, are very powerful in shaping the opportunities they have.”

Woolcock then outlined the three main types of social capital. *Bonding social capital* is the relationship people have with others like them, including family, friends and close colleagues, which are crucial for people’s survival. *Bridging social capital* is the connection that people have with others unlike them, such as those with a different background, religion or salary structure. These are vital in finding out about new opportunities, such as jobs and promotions. *Linking social capital* is made up of the vertical networks with people in power, such as teachers, and doctors. These relationships are often not present for homeless

people, Woolcock said.

After looking at the definitions, Woolcock moved on to consider how the concept of social capital can be applied.

“There is the temptation in some circles to view social capital as just another variable to be considered – add social capital and stir,” he said. “But I think it is more radical than that. The challenge is ‘what does it mean for policies?’”

Homelessness and poverty, said Woolcock are not issues that can be addressed just by “ten clever people sat in a room”. A comprehensive strategy, he argued, must go beyond just thinking about rule and guideline changes, which are technocratic (involving few people coming up with expert solutions). He said it must also include programme work, which is bureaucratic (and tries to provide a standardised, easy-to-replicate answers), and practice, which is idiosyncratic (requiring lots of adaptation by frontline service providers to respond to specific clients).

“We need to come up with new policies, programmes and practices to address bonding, bridging and

### **BREAKOUT: From social exclusion to active citizenship**

Kate Bowgett from Off the Streets and Into Work and Chris Reed from Volunteer Centre Westminster explored how homeless people can benefit from volunteering.

“There are a lot of schemes to help homeless people into employment, but not many to helping them find volunteering opportunities,” said Bowgett. “Yet in my experience, this is something clients are interested in.”

Volunteering is flexible, there are a variety of roles and it doesn’t affect welfare benefits. It increases employability by building skills and experience and improves quality of life by providing new social networks and giving people a positive social identity.

Materials are available from OSW’s website at: [www.osw.org.uk](http://www.osw.org.uk).

linking relationships," said Woolcock. "This might include teaching life skills and vocational skills as well as helping people to engage with power structures by teaching civic skills and

## CRISIS SKYLIGHT

### Hidden Talent

Throughout the day, delegates were able to view sculptures and paintings created by homeless artists from Crisis's Skylight Centre.

Performing artists, including traditional jugglers and an elegant performance with a glass ball, mingled between delegates during breaks and networking sessions.

Painters and sculptors also worked and conversed with delegates in the main exhibition area.

"I have always liked art," said one clay sculptor. "As a child I used to make cars and stick people from the earth from old termite heaps – its like really silky clay."

The Skylight Centre is open to all and encourages homeless people to integrate with the public through practical and creative workshops ranging from bicycle repair to arts.

### Skylight Café

The newly opened Skylight Café, which provides training and opportunities for people who have experienced homelessness, provided a range of cakes and biscuits for delegates to sample.

The café, which currently has 11 regular students, will act as a route back into work and independent living.

ensuring people have access to their GP."

In conclusion, Woolcock said: "we have got to find a way of putting social relationships back into the way we think about the poorest and most vulnerable."

Responding a question from the floor about whether practice always has to follow policy and programmes, Woolcock said:

"The logic we believe we work to is that we start with an idea, debate the idea, try to measure it, and turn it into practice. A key part of moving forward is recognising that it also flows the other way. At the World Bank, our directors sometimes spend a week in a village. After a week of going to collect water from a hole in the ground, some come back with the equivalent of a religious conversion and want to start basing policy on practice."

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## KEYNOTE:

### Jack Tafari, poet, street trader and spokesman and founder

### member of Dignity Village, Portland, USA

"I come from a little village on the edge of Portland, Oregon," said Jack Tafari, introducing himself. "That's a kind of misnomer really. We began in tents, but now we are a village and we are building houses – cob houses."

Showing a photo of Dignity Village, Tafari explained that the village flies two flags. The first is the waking planet new world flag, designed to represent world peace and harmony post 9/11. The second was presented to Dignity Village when it was awarded the Lewis Mumford Award from architects, designers and planners for social responsibility.

Dignity Village is the result of a social struggle and direct action, said Tafari. "Here you talk about hidden homeless," he said. "We don't have hidden homeless. In the town where I live, there are 3,500 homeless people. There are 600 emergency shelter beds in winter and about 1,700 people on the streets at any one time."

He continued, "We began a direct

### VOX POP: Sarah Willis, head of training, Training for Life

**What was the highlight of your day?** There were magic moments throughout the day, so I think the highlight for me is the potential for the future, rather than any specific workshop. That's the most exciting thing.

**What could the UK homelessness sector export abroad?** The idea of setting up social enterprises as a way of giving people the chance of getting real experience of working and earning real money.

**How could the UK homelessness sector be encouraged to think internationally?** We need to invite more different kinds of people to events like this: it's really hard to think out of the box where everyone at an event is from the same box.

**What would be in your ideal manifesto for the next election?** Policies such as ASBOs divide communities and blame groups. We need policies that reduce the divisions and create connectedness.

**BREAKOUT: Social inclusion: the role of education advice and financial inclusion**

Toynbee Hall's Services Against Financial Exclusion (SAFE) project uses education and advice to help vulnerable people access financial services such as debt support and saving opportunities.

"If you have a bank account, more often than not you can also access standing order and direct debit services," explained SAFE co-ordinator Alice Rogers. "That can save you as much as £5 a month on utility bills alone."

The project uses innovative approaches such as integrating financial education into existing courses including a hostel's re-settlement agenda and courses teaching the use of the Excel spreadsheet programme.

action 'out of the doorways' campaign. We got together with our next doorway neighbours and worked to bring in a legal side, architects and the wider community - to engage them to help us move out of the doorways."

When the campaign started in 2000, Portland's camping ban had just been overturned on two constitutional grounds. Tafari explained how the campaigners began by setting up camp on public land and then moved from site to site, carrying their belongings in shopping carts. Each time they left the sites spotless, obeying the official regulations that gave them 24 hours to move on.

When the group found it's current site, it began by building a shanty town, then moved on to building straw bale homes, before settling on the current cob house design. "We linked homeless activism and advocacy with green sustainability," said Tafari.

Explaining why the village was so important, Tafari said: "If you stay in a hostel, you get kicked out into the rain at 6am and if you go looking for a job with your backpack, they take one look at you and say 'no thanks'."

Dignity is, said Tafari, a successful example of social capital and a self-help model where problems and opportunities are the flip side of each other.

"But the fact that it is the only village of its kind attests that Dignity is not an easy model to replicate," warned Tafari, concluding his talk. "Dignity is under constant threat. To maintain it, we need to recognise that homelessness is a permanent challenge and that it requires a permanent solution."

**DEBATE:**

**Social Capital in Action**

Chaired by Rachel O'Brien, director of external affairs at IPPR.

**BREAKOUT: Measuring soft outcomes with hard to reach clients**

Many not-for-profit organisations struggle to demonstrate the outcomes that they have achieved. In this workshop, Mick Carroll, head of quality at St Mungo's asked delegates to visualise their projects in terms of a triangle with the overall aims at the top, the specific aims needed to achieve the larger goal in the middle and the activities needed to achieve these at the base. Activities give way to outputs, while specific aims lead to outcomes, he explained. These should be contextualised with other measures, such as staff and client satisfaction and financial performance. See [www.mickcarroll.co.uk](http://www.mickcarroll.co.uk)

Charles Fraser, chief executive at St Mungo's, focused on the idea that building relationships and tackling social isolation are the key to opening up opportunities for homeless people.

"More than half of the people who come to St Mungo's, when asked about their next of kin, say they have none," said Fraser. "So building a shared identity that is not based on homelessness is very valuable."

Fraser talked about how at a college course it ran for clients, the carrier bags were really precious because they conferred the identity of 'student' rather than 'homeless' or 'mental health patient'.

He went on to suggest that employers most want people with social and soft skills, such as self motivation, being a team player, being able to work on you initiative and being trainable. These skills, he said rely on confidence.

Fay Selvan, chief executive at The Big Life Company spoke about the success of the homeless soccer world cup initiative, which is run by the international network of street newspapers.

"The trials alone are a great experience even for those that didn't make the team," said Selvan.

Selvan then talked about two team members. Kevin, the smallest in the team, wasn't taken seriously at first. In the end, he was awarded goalie of the tournament, he socialised with players from other teams and was reunited with his foster parents.

Aivan, a 16-year-old Nigerian refugee, was unable to go to the tournament because his extended leave prevented him from leaving the UK. He continued to train, has joined a local team and will be trying out for the Manchester United under 21 team.

**Jenny Davis**, senior manager at Bain and Company, made three key points about corporate involvement in social capital.

"Firstly, I believe that business has a crucial and unique role to play in fostering social inclusion in the UK," said Davis. The challenge, she said, is for them to improve on current efforts by thinking about stakeholders rather than shareholders.

"Secondly, businesses will respond if they see a compelling business case," she said. If homelessness is on customers' agendas, it should matter to business too, she argued.

"Thirdly, there is a lot to learn from business," said Davis. This could include looking at how companies foster inclusion internally, for example with mentoring and buddying schemes, she said.

**Anthony Lawton**, chief executive at Centrepoint, began by picking up Davis' point about making a business case. "The point of social capital is that we do things not because there is a business case, but because they are the right thing to do," he said.

He continued: "Social capital is based on a financial analogy. The usefulness of that is that it

emphasises that capital costs and actually you have to find the resources to pay for creating that asset."

He concluded: "We have favourable relationships with many businesses. But businesses also have a major role in excluding."

A speaker from the floor questioned Lawton and Fraser about the rent rates that the hostels run by their organisations. Fraser answered: "When I started out rents was £10 per week and benefits were £15. Now rent is £150 a week and benefits are £40. Hostels now play a role that they didn't have to before. Ideally I would like the same rent for our hostels as for housing." Lawton added: "I feel uncomfortable. But there is a cost and somehow that has got to be met. But you are right that it creates huge barriers to allow some people to move on."

Speaking from the floor, Justin Varney from Greenwich PCT asked the panellists to comment on the opportunity cost of social capital. Fraser replied: "I want to put health in the dock here. There is no end of

### **BREAKOUT: From dependence to independence to interdependence**

Sarah Willis from Training for Life introduced a number of ways to interact and engage with clients.

Demonstrating and interactive model, Willis asked delegates to empathise with various players in the story of Jack, a fictional character who had left the armed forces, started abusing alcohol and found himself homeless. By thinking about the interaction between Jack, his drinking buddy Jill, his army probation officer, a counsellor and a mentor, the group considered the best outcome for Jack.

"The model makes you think about a whole situation and allows you to see the full complexity," said Willis. "I use it a lot with homeless young offenders to help them see the impact of their action on their families and victims. They are often very responsive."

### **VOX POP: Justin Varney, Greenwich PCT**

**What was the highlight of your day?** Either the final debate or the earlier discussion about social capital in action. It was really useful to reflect on the practicalities of social capital, because it is all very well in theory, but it is the reality that counts.

**What could the UK homelessness sector export abroad?** Free health care at the point of access – it's under used by the homeless community, but it is what stands us apart from some other first world countries.

**How could the UK homelessness sector be encouraged to think internationally?** They need encouraging – Crisis is already doing work with New York and St Mungo's has started working with Holland.

**What would be in your ideal manifesto for the next election?** A realistic approach to funding which is holistic in attitude and cross cutting in terms of representing government departments.

evidence saying that health is more of an issue for homeless people than the general population, yet we get no money from the Department of Health. I challenge them to make the case for not supplying.”

Answering a question about funding, Selvan agreed that more funding was needed but stressed that organisations need to stress the successes to funders and policy-makers.

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## KEYNOTE:

### Rt Hon Paul Boateng MP, chief secretary, The Treasury

Paul Boateng began by saying how glad he was to spend some time “albeit it all too brief”, at the conference. Making the link between homelessness and loneliness, he said, is vital. “Each on its own is bad enough, but when they come together, that is a crisis,” he said, adding that a conceptual framework is needed to make the links.

He continued: “In preparation for my time here, I reflected on the words of Mother Theresa – it was the twenty-fifth anniversary of her Nobel Peace Prize last Sunday. She said ‘we think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty of all.’” Mother Theresa was “exceptional and special”, he added, but many more people do exceptional and special things.

“I really do applaud the work of Crisis and the work that all of you do,” he said. “What we have got to do in government is reach behind, alongside and with you in the task. We are pledged to building a fairer society. I’m afraid we cannot say that we have achieved that or are as far

along the way as we would want. Almost 100,000 people are literally homeless. We have to meet that challenge.”

He went on to highlight that in 2003/4 and 2005/6, the government has allocated £260m to help local authorities maintain a reduction in rough sleeping. He added that they met their target that no family with children should be living in B&B accommodation, except in an emergency. He also highlighted the good work of the Homelessness Act in requiring local authorities to have a strategy, but acknowledged that there is still a distance between the statutory provision and the reality. Supporting people had also delivered promising results, he said.

Boateng went on to emphasise the importance of viewing the issue of homelessness and loneliness in a holistic sense. This, he said, presented a challenge for government. “We need to break out from the silo mentality,” he said. “That requires us to think differently, across government.” A multidisciplinary approach makes quite a difference, he added.

Boateng then spoke about the government’s commitment to building social capital. “We recognise that social capital often has to be built from the bottom up,” he said. The Home Office Active Community Unit is playing an important role in fostering active citizenship, he added.

Volunteering is an important part of this, he asserted. He continued that the Russell Commission is working to consider the potential for a national youth volunteering policy that might harness young people’s energy and strengthen communities.

Speaking about building civic spirit and a sense of community, Boateng

## EXHIBITION:

### A diverse mix of charities and social businesses exhibited at this year’s Innovations Fair.

**Dogs Trust** introduced delegates to its Hope Project, which gives free veterinary care for dog owners in housing crisis. It also distributed its dog information pack for hostels, shelters and day centres.

[www.dogstrusthopeproject.org.uk](http://www.dogstrusthopeproject.org.uk)

**Praxis**, the charity helping refugees and displaced people, showcased its “Welcome to Tower Hamlets” pack. The pull-out guide, available in eight languages, gives full details of the area’s public and emergency services and local amenities. [www.praxis.org.uk](http://www.praxis.org.uk)

**Homelessness Link** told delegates about the training, information and support services it offers frontline homelessness agencies. [www.homeless.org.uk](http://www.homeless.org.uk)

**Shelter** promoted its campaign to give Britain’s children decent homes. It also unveiled it’s new magazine supplement, “Room for improvement”. [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

**The Big Life Company** introduced delegates to its family of charities and social businesses, which includes The Big Issue in the North. The enterprise plans to grow its turnover to £10m in the next five years and begin acquiring additional businesses. [www.thebiglifecompany.com](http://www.thebiglifecompany.com)

**St Mungo’s** worked to raise awareness of its services for homeless people in London, including free training and help with seeking employment. [www.mungos.org](http://www.mungos.org)

commented on the importance of public spaces where people can go and feel safe and play. He recalled the high profile launch of a renovated estate, where we was required to speak to a resident who was very angry about litter, graffiti and the state of public spaces. Recounting the encounter, he said: "I said, 'but look at your garden'. He said 'yes, but'. I though, what right have I, as someone who takes a garden for granted, but is still concerned about public spaces - what right have I, actually, to expect him to be any less anxious than me about public spaces?"

Boateng concluded by talking about the importance of aspirations. "What we need to do better," he said, "is focus on those aspirations, not of the few but of the many."

Answering a question from the floor about the restrictive nature of the LSC's decision to fund on NVQ programmes, Boateng said that it is important to link to recognised courses like NVQs and modern apprenticeships to ensure that access to employment is opened up.

Answering another question, about building links to create communities, Boateng emphasised that it is important not only to look at actual interrelationships, but also the potential interrelationships. "You are not just going to get a relationship developing between a young man who is into Eminem and the old lady with a blue rinse who lives next door," he said.

## THE BIG DEBATE:

**Chair:** Nick O'Shea, director of development at Revolving Doors.  
**Panellists:** Debra Levison, homelessness policy manager at Greater London Authority, Campbell Robb, director of public policy at NCVO, Gerard Lemos, partner of Lemos and Crane, Philippa Stroud, adviser at The Centre for Social Justice, Jenny Edwards, chief executive at Homelessness Link, John Humpston, deputy chief executive, Crisis.

Nick O'Shea began the debate by recounting a story about his school days. Aged 11, he was socially excluded at school, and a well-meaning attempt by his teacher to reintegrate him by talking to his peers

### WORKSHOP: Brainstorming Social Capital

**In the afternoon, delegates separated into workshop groups to discuss how the concept of social capital could be practically used and applied. Each group fed back via their facilitator.**

**Mark Parker**, network development manager at Bassac, discussed with his group how delegates might use the concept of social capital in their own organisations. They decided that the next step was to think about issues such as how to measure our outcomes, looking at aspirations rather than deficits, finding common beyond the homeless community and using social capital to empower clients. Practical suggestions included: taking up the language of social capital in applications, highlighting social capital in current working practice, keying into the potential of clients (using existing skills to develop togetherness) and helping clients to explore developing their bonding networks.

A group led by **Jenny Davies**, senior manager at Bain and Company, looked at social capital and employment. They decided that social capital is a critical supporting factor in helping people get back into employment, but felt that employment needs to be more broadly defined, beyond the confines of traditional full time work. They suggested that greater information sharing between agencies, peer networks and mentor/mentee and/or coach/coachee relationships are key social capital tools that could help. They also identified the following challenges: the benefits system (if disincentives are so strong to keep people off the path, no social capital programme will help), communication and trust (including that amongst agencies, between agencies and clients and between agencies and government).

**Hannah Lownsborough**, re-researcher at Demos, and her group considered the skills and players involved in developing social capital. They concluded that confidence, communication, reflection & goal-setting, literacy and language, a sense of self-worth, the ability to understand other people, adaptability and the ability to negotiate positive relationships and understand support networks were key to developing social capital. They felt that these skills were important for funders, staff, users/members/clients, policy makers, other organisations in the sector, potential users, their own organisations and central and local government.

was unsuccessful. At 16, he got a hair cut and moved to a new school. The reinvention was successful and he became head boy. "If the government was my teacher, how can it back off without abandoning people?" O'Shea asked the panellists.

**Stroud** replied that services need to be user led. "When we come to look at policies, we need to look at what homeless people have to say. If the teacher had asked you, perhaps it would have turned out differently," she said.

**Robb** added that the government's rhetoric about the reform of public services has been about choice, but the focus should actually be giving people a voice.

**Lemos** said that the key is to move from viewing clients as people with needs towards viewing them as people with aspirations and as contributors not just users.

**Edwards** suggested that the government send mixed messages. "Some messages portray people with some needs as a collection of needs and problems," she said. "That makes people more likely to have preconceptions that get in the way of building social capital."

**Humpston** added that if the government were to back off, that should be part of a social contract that is subject to activism and agitation.

**O'shea** asked how the sector can agitate without being seen as a "professional stroppy teenager".

**Humpston** replied: "I think the homelessness sector is good at articulating needs while also working in partnership with government top address issues and test solutions."

Responding to a point from the floor, **Lemos** explained that in his research, when he asked a focus group of homeless people about relationships, they said that peer support was very important. When he asked the same group individually, a lot of them said that actually it was important for them to make relationship with people who had not experienced the same thing.

Speaking from the floor, **Tony Dodson**, a researcher at Groundswell, said that is to do with trust and confidence in the researchers. "I have been involved in research into homeless people by homeless people, which is much more successful," he said. He added that this had helped him personally to move on. "The only problem I have now is that people keep labelling me as 'ex-homeless' – I hate it," he said.

Taking the issue of trust further, a speaker from the floor questioned whether the lack of opportunities for homeless people was down to a lack of trust in them from other people.

Speaking from the floor, **Kate Bowgett** from Off the Streets and Into Work commented on a scheme she runs to help homeless people find volunteering opportunities both within and outside the homelessness sector. "People working in homelessness often don't recognise the value that their clients can bring to others through volunteering," she said.

**Humpston** commented on the importance of the Dignity Village model in showing that everybody is somebody.

**Edwards** mentioned that many people working in homelessness used to be homeless themselves and suggested that perhaps there is less stigma within the sector than elsewhere.

**Lemos** said: "Social attitudes to homelessness are schizophrenic. When you ask what makes people feel unsafe, they say homeless people and beggars. But the same people are the ones that Shelter and Crisis fundraise from. My challenge is to agitate with government but also to change public attitudes. This means challenging the increasingly alarming rhetoric where the poor have become the problem."

#### **BREAKOUT: Removing barriers to employment**

Candy Munro, chief executive of the Gorbals Initiative, spoke to delegates about how her organisation has actively tried to remove the barriers to employment faced by the long-term jobless in Glasgow.

For every person claiming job seekers allowance in the city, a further five are out of the job market on other "inactive benefits". Although the city's job base has grown and unemployment has fallen in the general population, this has not been the case for those on inactive benefits. Employers were finding that they couldn't find the staff they wanted, so began asking how to reach this group.

The project researched the barriers and aspirations of this group. More than half reported five or more barriers, such as caring responsibilities, the benefit trap and employer attitudes.

The project abandoned traditional careers guidance and instead sought to find solutions to these problems, such as finding nursery places and offering financial advice. They also focused on clients' positive aspirations and skills. Everyone completed the programme and half found jobs.

A speaker from the floor suggested that low cost housing is the answer, or a model like Dignity Village where homeless people can help themselves.

**Robb** replied: "We need to challenge the fact that everybody is time poor and money rich and that people are happy to give money and do so because they don't want homeless people in their town. But that challenge has to start in our own organisations. We need to know what are we doing – we need to ask 'why aren't you talking to donors and trustees about it?' We have to do that before we start targeting anyone else."

**Edwards** commented that debate must be stimulated. "People switch off news or current affairs if it is not in snippets," she said. "It would be telling to have a "Kathy Come Home" for today – preferably written by someone who has been through it." She added that not everyone has a 'not in my back yard' mentality.

**Robb** replied that people are passionate. "Four million people formally volunteer," he said. "It's those people we've got to get arguing our case. We have to tap into them."

Picking up on an earlier point, **Lemos** said: "I don't agree that if every homeless person had a house that would be a solution." He added that there is a housing surplus in many towns. "If housing alone was the issue, there would be hardly any problems except in London Cambridge, Brighton, Bath and maybe Oxford," he said.

**O'Shea** then introduced the issue of antisocial behaviour orders. "There seems to be two completely different agendas," he said. "asbos on one hand, and trying to kick start the Jubilee age of street parties on the other."

**Edwards** said: "There seems to be a crude way of talking about asbos in terms of targets – 'we must hand out 180 asbos' – rather than using them as necessary." She added that some people awarded asbos are treated antisocially by the authorities.

**O'Shea** asked Levison if her authority was ever antisocial. She replied: "By listening to one group you are effectively discriminating against another – it is a difficult thing to balance."

**Humpston** recalled an article from the Guardian about a man given an asbo for constantly being sarcastic to a local policeman. "He appealed, protesting that he was being ironic and got let off," said Humpston. He added that society needs to think about whether it really wants to criminalise so much behaviour.

**Lemos** said: "We have been led to believe that crime is falling except violent crime and antisocial behaviour. I think there are some strange definitions being used. I think that public expectations rather have changed rather than the problem itself. Government are doing their job and representing people's expectations."

**Robb** suggested that it is necessary to bring together individual communities to discuss issues such as asbos and what worries them in their area and to find local solutions. "The ballot box is becoming an increasingly blunt instrument for this," he said. "We need proper discussions, and without that we are on a slippery slope."

**Edwards** said: "You can tackle people's fear. The Booth Day Centre in Manchester intervened when there was a problem with people drinking in a local church garden. The people created their own garden. It is still a wet centre – they go there to drink –

but they are proud of it and take care of it. They have now been asked to help build a garden at a local primary school."

**O'shea** drew the debate to a close by asking the panellists to come up with some parting words or something for delegates to "take home to their loved ones".

Responses included **Levison**, who encouraged people to appreciate the opportunities for homeless people in places such as boards of governors. **Robb** told delegates: "Go back to your own organisations and find out why you are not using homeless volunteers in your projects." While **Lemos** ended with: "What homeless people need is friends and loved ones."

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

**Tarig Hilal** drew the day to a close by thanking the panellists and expressing gratitude to ABN AMRO for their support and for hosting the event. He also thanked delegates and said that he hoped to welcome them back again next year.

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